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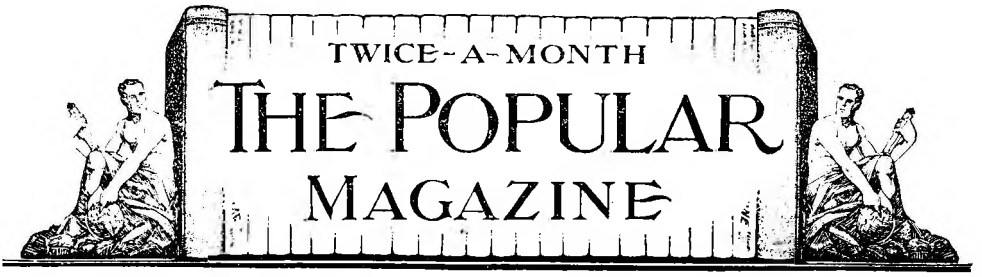

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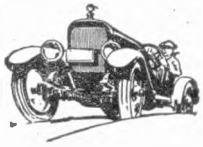

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From a speech by HON JAMES J. DAVIS
Secretary of Labor

Nowhere is there such abundant evidence of the verity of Secretary Davis' contention that there is a trend toward blatant and cynical immorality, as in the reading matter that is so much in evidence upon the news stands these days. There are a huge number of tainted publications.

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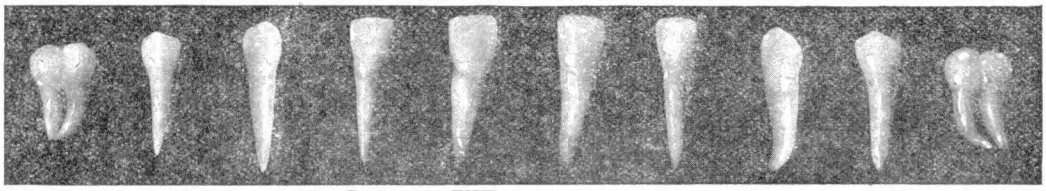
Free from decay —*yet these teeth dropped out*



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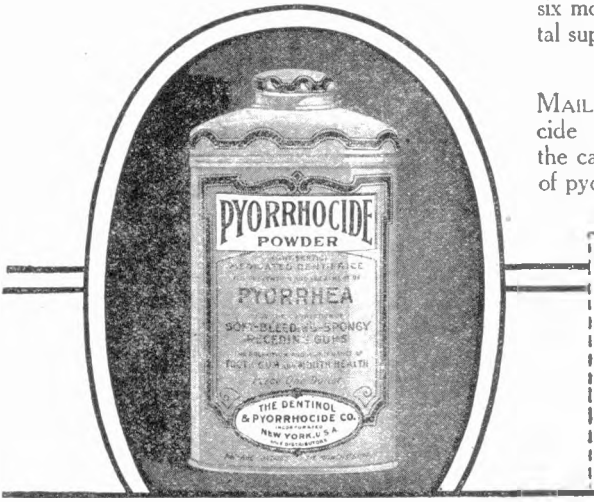

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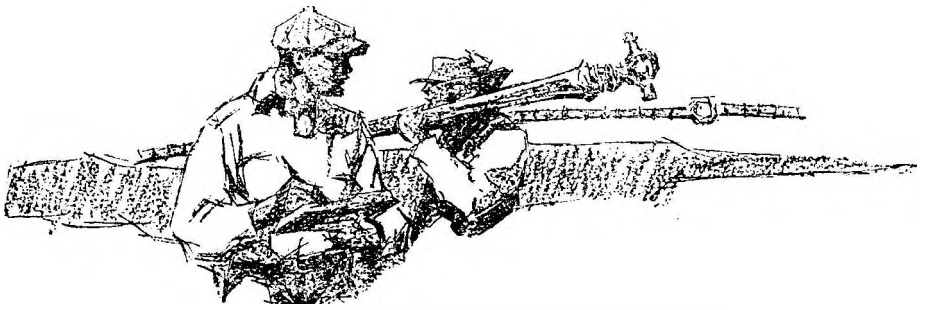


The Valley of Power

By William West Winter

Author of "Millions in Motors," "That Nice Dragon," Etc.

Here is another romance of American industry by the author of "Millions in Motors." In this tale Mr. Winter foreshadows the coming of a new era in the economic and industrial life of the country, when every source of power—water, coal, gas, oil—will be husbanded and conserved for transmutation into the miracle of electric energy. The vision that haunted Raymond Blaisdell while he ran his levels and checked his soundings in the fastnesses of the Glacier Lake country was no vain vaporing. Outside the pages of fiction, on an ever-widening scale, his dream of centralized power distribution is already materializing. Mr. Winter has sensed the dramatic possibilities of what is coming and has woven them into a stirring American epic in which the glamour of a pioneer setting contrasts strikingly with the development of a latter-day theme.

(A Complete Novel)

CHAPTER I.

IT was a worse than discontented man who listened to what Folsom had to say.

Major Raymond John Blaisdell, formerly one of the principal cogs in the organization of the B. F. Folsom Company, engineers, builders, contractors and managers of industrial enterprises, was not only discontented but he also was badly soured. He listened to Ben Folsom, his former employer, as he explained the conditions that, since the armistice, had arisen to render his employment in his original capacity inadvisable. It was all true, no doubt, and he had no impulse to contradict what was being said. Still, true as it might be, there was small comfort for Blaisdell who wanted not truth nor hard facts but forgetfulness, hard work in his own line, a chance to rebuild a shattered life.

Ben was a good friend and spoke from his heart, endeavoring to make clear what was already too clear. There were no more dams to build since the government had been constructing gigantic works which were now on the market to the highest bidder. Construction in all branches was now at its low ebb. Taxes were prohibitive, public

construction was at a standstill. There was no work, in that capacity, for engineers, even of Blaisdell's ability, though in the revival that was bound to come in time the man who had built the great power dam at Crescent Bluffs on the Beryl River would no doubt be remembered and recognized.

In the meantime, Folsom had no intention of forgetting the war-time promises. Blaisdell need not worry about a job which should yield larger financial returns than his proper profession. Folsom did not confine his activities to construction but also undertook the financing and management of industrial concerns of merit. As an engineer there was work for Blaisdell in the appraisal and inspection of plants and in the placing of securities of such as met the standards of the B. F. Folsom Company.

Blaisdell listened, unenthused. It was hardly what he was expecting yet it was an offer at which he could not complain. Financially, as Ben hinted, it meant returns which would be larger than those he had made as one of the construction experts of the company, although for some years he had drawn a considerable salary and bonuses which had enabled him although still a young man to lay aside almost fifty thousand dollars when the war interrupted his career. Folsom talked convincingly of earnings of twenty-five thousand or more a year. Yet Ray knew that, however the fact might be glossed over, his real job would be that of a stock salesman. Appraisal, examination, technical judgment might be involved but when all was said and done he would be depended on not to be infallible as an expert but to be convincing as a technical exponent of technicalities to men whom it was desired to impress and convince to the point of buying securities.

It did not interest him. He was not sure that anything interested him except some job which would take him out of himself, out from contact with humanity, bury him and swamp him in grueling hard work which would help him forget the brooding disgust and anger that overwhelmed him. For that he needed congenial work, work in which he could lose himself, and he felt that selling securities was not such work.

"I want to think it over," he growled when Folsom had put his proposition fairly to him. Ben, sensing what lay behind the sullen face and brooding discontent, was sympathetic and understanding.

"Take your time, old man," he said. "You know we are for you down here. You've had your jolt—but don't let it down you, Ray."

Blaisdell nodded and walked to the window which, from a height of a dozen stories, overlooked lower Broadway. He could see the crawling brood of humanity and vehicles far below him, filling the street with what seemed from that height to be senseless activity. He felt the real reaction of Folsom to his troubles and his buried and suppressed bitterness welled up in response to it.

"I'll think it over," he muttered. "Maybe it's because I'm not normal, Ben. I guess I'm a bit sick and things don't look normal to me. I've been two years in—in pretty distasteful surroundings—besides all the rest. I've had one bad disappointment, you know, in my work, and this comes almost like another."

"I know," said Ben. "But because there were fools in the war department, as was natural under the circumstances——"

"I don't hold it against the fools," said Ray gloomily. "They stuck me to building cantonments, work for some architect's clerk, and I did it. But then some supreme idiot of a desk lieutenant down in Washington happened to spot on my qualification card that I was a wood technician—as if any engineer in my line didn't know something of that sort. What does he do but order me into the Northwest woods to get out spruce for airplanes! I got out there and found that what was wanted was a hard-boiled woods foreman to handle lumberjacks. They stuck me at timber cruising and rule-of-thumb road building and there I've been for two years, wasting my time and capacity when I might have been doing something worth while. I've lived like a savage in the woods, counting trees, cutting trees, living with trees. I've thought spruce, watched spruce, smelled spruce until the odor of it is in my brain and I can't get it out. I tell you, Ben, that even here where there isn't a spruce tree within miles I smell it and *feel* it until I've grown to hate it and fear it."

Ben nodded. He knew that there was something else behind his friend's manner other than the gnawing disappointment of lost opportunities in the war.

"You've been too much alone," he said. "After what you experienced it would have

been best to have been where isolation wouldn't have encouraged you to brood. But after all, Ray, you can't waste your life regretting an unworthy woman. There are other things in life, other things to do."

"Yes," said Ray bitterly. "Other women, you should say, to make it complete. I've had my fling with women. If there are others I don't want to know 'em. One has been enough for me."

Ben shrugged his shoulders, recognizing that this was a subject on which his voice was ineffective.

"I came back looking for work, for my kind of work," said Ray ironically. "That was what was left for me, I thought. I was prepared to bury myself in that and forget the rest. But there isn't any work of that kind. Instead, you ask me to sell stock to greedy speculators. I want something to make me forget. I want to forget her and I want to forget that there ever was a spruce tree in the world."

Folsom looked at him, noting the lowering face above the splendid body clothed in rather rough-looking ready-made clothes bought in the West when Ray had received his discharge from the army. Physically he had immensely improved but Folsom regretfully concluded that mentally the iron had struck deep into him. Knowing his story, he did not wonder at the fact.

"I'm afraid," he said, "that it is Myla Ratcliffe and not spruce trees that is bothering you, Ray."

Blaisdell turned and glowered at him. "They go together," he snarled. His hands were flexing where they hung at his sides and the muscles of his shoulders seemed to gather under his ill-fitting coat. "For two years I've smelled spruce—and thought of her. I was buried in the spruce forests when I saw the papers, brought in by runners to a logging camp. I had heard from her only a week before, as sweet and loving a letter as any poor fool ever got from a fiendish woman. She was wearing my ring—she's still wearing it, I suppose, and she wrote of the time when I would come back and we should be married. It was full of sentiment. She recalled the time when we first met, when she was trying to be an artist and had come down to selling on commission, the work of other and more successful artists. She sold us some stuff for advertising matter, you remember, and that was when I met her.

"She was the same girl I had fallen in love with, Ben. The same shy, timid, rather lonely girl from a country town struggling to beat the New York game. And I was the same as I always had been up to that time. I didn't know many women. I was about as lonely as she was, I suppose. I'd been engrossed in designing and superintending construction too closely to play the social game. I was mighty glad that I was getting on well and could offer her something worth while.

"And then that newspaper came and I read the story. It was fine stuff for the reporters, as you remember. Here was the great Starck Burgess, financier and magnate, sued sensationally for divorce and a Greenwich Village artist named as corespondent. There it all was, sordid, rotten stuff, proved up to the hilt, a girl bought with her eyes open, purchased with his dirty money—my girl, mind you, the girl who was even then writing to me, the poor, silly fish, slopping over with sentiment while she laughed at my simplicity over the champagne that Burgess drank with her!

"I tell you, Ben, that since that time I've smelled spruce with loathing because it calls her to mind—her and Burgess! The days and nights I've spent in the woods, unable to escape them, unable to get out of them, unable to reach the throat of that man and to strangle him with my fingers!"

"I tell you you've been too much alone!" said Ben brusquely. "You've got things on your mind. It's up to you to get out and forget them, Ray. There are other women. There is other work."

"Damn all women!" said Ray fervently. "As for work, give me work that I can do and let me forget it all if I can."

"There's work here for you," replied Ben. "If it isn't exactly what you want there may be other openings after a time."

Blaisdell abruptly fell silent and dejected again.

"I'll think it over," he said wearily. "And let you know."

CHAPTER II.

Blaisdell made his unseeing way to the street, into the subway and northward to Times Square.

He got off the train and fought his way to the street, bending his thoughts resolutely to his own business interests during the walk

to the Engineers' Club on Fortieth Street, which he was making his temporary home. He debated vague plans such as that of setting up as a consulting engineer. He had a fine reputation, his rise had been almost sensational and many prominent men were well acquainted with him. But at the club, when he had entered it, he heard around him the same story that Folsom had told. There was small demand for builders and designers of his type. The railroads were practically bankrupt, municipalities were struggling under enormous taxes. There was a larger plant already than the country could use, which had been built by the government or with government subsidies, and the problem was now to put that plant to use. There was no capital going into construction where there was already too much construction. It was all going into production which could and must be expanded to utilize the surplus plant left from war times. Consulting engineer? Where would such a one find clients when competent engineers by the thousand were taking jobs as draftsmen, as salesmen and even as mechanics?

He looked out on the crowded, bustling streets, at busy, prosperous people and he felt disinclination to join them in striving for the material prosperity which was the goal of every one of them. A feeling of irritation at them and at their complacent conviction that the things they knew and the indulgences which they permitted themselves were the only things worth while, the rightful indulgences due to their merits. The things he wore, by no means as sleek and fashionable as the vestments of the crowd, again impressed him as being, somehow, uncomfortable in their lack of substance and weight.

He had the clothes he had possessed before the war, still good and still in good style. They had been made for him by tailors of repute. He went up to his room and dug out his evening clothes and sent them to be pressed. He would at least be dressed as others were dressed. He would go to a theater that evening and try to get in touch with things.

But when he dressed for dinner he got a shock. Ill fitting his ready-mades might be but compared to his old clothes they were superb. The shoulders of his dress coat strained and bulged under the pressure of the muscles beneath them. The waist of his trousers was ample but the thighs of them stretched like tights above the vast muscles of the thighs and his calves bulged and disarranged the set of the lower legs. The open waistcoat pressed with strangulating force against his floating ribs, its buttons threatening to yield, while the shirt front bulged through the opening in a manner reminiscent of a coal heaver at a public dance in a rented hand-me-down.

The thing was impossible and it also enhanced his conviction of change in himself. If two years could do this much to his body what might they not do to his soul? He stripped the ridiculous garments off, tossed them into the closet without troubling to hang them up and got back into his looser suit. It felt almost comfortable by contrast with that terrible restriction.

He dined at the club, exchanging a few short and rather shy greetings with men whom he knew. None of them were intimates. Some he had known rather well but he felt out of touch with them. Most of them, at least the younger men, had served in France, had experienced everything that he had not. He did not wish to talk to them, to have them ask him what he had done, to listen to what they had done. He escaped after dinner and walked to a theater. It was some musical comedy, staged elaborately, exhibiting some wonderful dancing, some pathetically silly comedy and a lot of pretty girls. Around him was an odor of cosmetics, of scented powder on bared shoulders, of rouge. And in the midst of that scent he got again the pungent aroma of spruce!

The play ended and he pushed his way slowly out to the sidewalk with the crowd. Outside, under glaring nitrogen lamps, crowded and swirled and pushed the throngs while the barking shouts of announcers and the rattle of taxis driving up and away again with their loads of well-dressed men and women made a turmoil that smote upon his nerves, attuned to the quiet of empty wildernesses, almost frightening him. He walked away, turned down a side street and pushed rapidly into the comparative peace of a dingy residence district of the West Side.

Blaisdell passed an open space inclosed by a high board fence and again he smelled the smell of spruce. A glance inside the open gate showed rows of stacked lumber. A dark and dingy shed beside the gate re-

flected the feeble light of a street lamp from dusty, cracked windows. Blaisdell shivered. He could not get away from that smell even in New York. He had heard of forms of insanity like that. Evidently the thing was assuming serious proportions.

To satisfy the quick, panic alarm that the thought roused he paused and then stepped inside the gateway. There was a stack of lumber looming ghostly white just ahead of him to his left. Opposite it, on the right, was the shed that formed the office and behind that the lumber was stacked in rows along a sort of street, where, according to the evidence of tire tracks, loaded trucks drove in and out.

Behind the stack and toward the boundary of the lot a lamp hung from a wire to illuminate the space between stacks on that side. It cast its shadow toward Blaisdell and he made his way through the narrow lane at the side of the stack and into a wider lane at the rear. Here he could stoop over the boards and examine them carefully. He did so and sighed with relief as he rose. The lumber *was* spruce, not fully seasoned and still sappy enough to carry a trace of the characteristic odor which seemed to saturate both his body and his mind. His hypersensitive nerves had caught even that trace of odor. But even such sensitiveness was reassuring. It was not incipient insanity, at any rate.

He was about to step around the stack and leave the place when he heard the drumming of a fast-running motor just outside the gate and what seemed to be a voice speaking low but with excitement. He could not be sure, though his hearing, like his sense of smell, was acute. He had no time to debate the question however, for as he stepped into the dark lane hardly shoulder wide, between the stacks leading to the roadway, there was the whirl and rattle of gears shifted to first speed, the squeak of brakes applied, the hiss of power shut off. A car had driven precipitately into the lane, flashing momentarily before his dark retreat.

And now he heard unmistakable voices, speaking in whispers but shrill with suppressed excitement.

"Chuck him out, 'Bozo!' Into the shed wit' him! Get a wiggle on you!"

Blaisdell stepped cautiously out into the shadowy roadway and looked toward the rear of the shed and the back of a taxi that stood there without lights. The doors were open on the side toward the shed and two men were dragging and tugging at something heavy.

"Hell! You croaked him, Bozo!" the voice shrilled again.

"Aw! Who gives a damn!" came the reply in a throaty growl. "D'je think I wanted a holler from him? Chuck him out!"

Blaisdell stopped short and watched. It was but a momentary pause. Strangely enough, in view of his past disquietude, that pause was filled with a satisfying sense of fullness as though here at last was something with which he could cope, something that he could engage in as a matter of course without thought of whether or not it was within his capacity. It had nothing to do with engineering. It had nothing to do with spruce. Yet in some way it was such a happening as, it seemed, he had been waiting for: such an event as he had needed to put him again in tune with the universe.

And then he heard the voices again.

"What about the jane, Steve?"

There was no direct answer but Blaisdell, who was moving forward slowly and calmly, sensed that the reply was in effect both answer and explanation.

"Who's the guy, then?"

The voice of Bozo, shrill in its suppression, made answer which Blaisdell did not catch. It made no difference, however, to him.

"Well, the jane's good for a few grand then, ain't she? Hang on to her."

The two men had heaved the limp body from the taxi in the few moments in which Blaisdell had listened to their conversation and they now stooped to pick it up by head and heels and convey it to the selected place of concealment. But they never arrived there. Blaisdell walked up to them as they were still bent toward each other, arms outstretched to the ground, hands extended under head and feet of the body. He stood between them, towering, powerful, and utterly at ease.

"Just a moment!" he said. "What are you doing to this man?"

The man named Steve gaped in total dismay for a moment and then vented a startled, panicky oath. His hand shot up and to a coat pocket. But Blaisdell's foot reached him first with a powerful thrust that sent him catapulting backward on his neck.

The man called Bozo had squawked like a

startled turkey at this apparition but the momentary diversion created by Steve's effort gave him an instant of time to act instinctively and viciously. He straightened on his half-bent legs and leaped for Blaisdell. The engineer, poised still on one foot, was in no position to receive him. The clumsy tackle swept his one support from under him and he fell prone with Bozo clutching at his leg.

"Git him, Steve!" shrilled Bozo. And Steve endeavored to act in obedience to the command. He rolled over, tugging at his coat pocket, dragging out, with clumsy tugs and pulls, a revolver that had become caught in the folds of the pocket.

Blaisdell's one free foot went to join its companion held by Bozo. It kicked swiftly under the crouching, hugging bulk that bound his leg, the toes locked under the muffled ankle, the two legs together rose, carrying the man with them, his feet dragging. Blaisdell's body lurched and pivoted, his legs straightened again with their burden and slammed it over and down against the ground. It smashed to earth fair between the major and Steve, who was just rolling to a sitting position.

Bozo was jarred loose and Blaisdell gave him no opportunity to secure another hold. Those steel-and-rubber legs gathered swiftly and he came up upon his feet with the same motion that shook the thug from his hold. Over Bozo he dived and down upon Steve. There was a flash and roar as the latter delivered a futile shot that went wild. The next instant the man was locked in a grip that twice his strength would not have sufficed to break.

There was hardly a struggle. To be sure, Steve bit and kicked but no heed was paid to that. Blaisdell gathered him into his hands, got his own feet under him and rose, jerked Steve upright, held him at arm's length and with one sudden, smashing straight-arm jab that splashed against his features sent the thug rocketing back and toward the entrance to the yard. He staggered and fell, rolled over, got up, staggered again, and with tardily recovered strength ducked rabbitlike through the gate and down the street.

Blaisdell looked about for the other man. He was not to be seen. In that brief instant of Homeric combat Bozo had fled as his colleague had just now done.

He turned to the body of the man that lay on the ground where it had been left but before stooping over it some sound from the car attracted him. He went to it and looked into the open door. On the seat, stirring feebly and moaning, leaned a young woman, bare of shoulder under a great fur cape, white and glistening of skin, fair and delicate of complexion. The sweet odor of chloroform filled the tonneau of the machine.

Blaisdell went back to the man after a touch had shown him that the young woman's skin was warm. The man was in a worse way. He was breathing jerkily and stertorously and there was blood on his head, matting his scanty hair. But in spite of that Blaisdell recognized him, even in that dim light.

He recognized him and felt inclined to laugh at the irony of the affair. He had saved from what might well enough have been death the man among millions whom he considered his worst enemy; a man whom he had once intended to kill!

CHAPTER III.

Ray was not sure as he stood looking down at the sodden figure outspread on the rough lane whether he did not even now intend to kill him. Yet revulsion was stealing over him. Instead of active hatred which had surged hotly in him, he found himself yielding gradually to a feeling of contempt, as though this poor lump of flesh was too insignificant to warrant great feeling from him.

He recalled with a little shiver of repulsion that vague scent of the spruce boards which had led him into this adventure. Spruce and Burgess were linked inseparably in his mind. He could get away from neither the one nor the other. And yet, who and what was this man that he should trouble his peace of mind? A sleek, round, well-preserved man of fifty, good looking in a way, commanding money and power, ruling industries from his desk in the financial district. But he was a poor enough thing as he lay there while the man he had wronged towered over him, virile and strong, lean, hard bitted and magnificent in the glory of his young manhood. Ray sneered sardonically as he looked at the man. This was the thing who had made him rave and threaten the unchanging skies against the time he could get his hands on the soft

throat of him. Here was his chance—and he had not the slightest wish to take it.

Here was Burgess, rumpled, blood-stained, helpless, his immaculate vesture soiled and crumpled as he lay on the ground, his scanty hair clotted where the blackjack had struck. And in the dark taxi still standing there was a girl. It had not occurred to Ray Blaisdell that the girl might be an old acquaintance also, but now, with a queer, sneering twist of the lips, he went back to the car and again looked in. He struck a match and held it up. His suspicions were fully confirmed. The girl was Myla, dressed as he had never seen her dressed, rich in silk and fur.

He stepped back from the car and paused to think. There had been no alarm at all and no one had as yet noticed the car standing in the obscure driveway. The best thing he could do would be to leave them and get away unknown and unsuspected. He had no mind to figure in any inquiry or to be forced to accept thanks from these people whom he hated and despised with a feeling that almost surprised himself.

He stooped and lifted Burgess up by the shoulders, dragging him back toward the cab. He had left the door open and now bundled the man in and to the seat beside the girl. He hardly noticed what seemed to be a slight movement on her part or the deep sigh that accompanied it and in the dark he could not see that her eyes were open and staring blankly at him. He stepped away from the car, dusting off his hands as though to rid them of contamination, took another last look about him and then stooped to pick up a square of paper which apparently had fallen from Burgess' garments.

The man had been robbed and on the woman's neck he had seen the red streak left by a necklace rudely torn from its place. There had been no rings on her hands, either, though he had not noticed whether they had been dragged off. He chuckled grimly, recalling that she probably had worn his own ring, which she had never returned. Burgess' wallet and watch were gone. This letter, also, had been hastily examined and then carelessly thrust back into the envelope as of no value to the thieves, Blaisdell deduced, seeing the inclosure thrusting a corner from the envelope. Whether they had dropped it intentionally or not he did not know.

He was about to toss it into the car when his streak of vindictiveness stayed his hand. It was Burgess' letter, it probably had no interest for him any more than it had for the bandits, but on the other hand there might be something in it which would enable him to get the whip hand over Burgess. It was a bare chance but he felt no scruple in taking it. He ripped out the letter and read it hastily, stepping to the side of one of the stacks where the light was better.

It was a letter from some correspondent in Washington who merely signed his initials but its contents interested Blaisdell, especially one portion of them:

> The graft can't last long, old man, because it is bound to be discovered soon that there is a leak, although our tracks are well covered. Still, we have to go pretty slow, as B. is losing his nerve, and if the justices ever get wise to it it will be good night and good-by! Just now there's only one thing up, but that happens to be pretty good! It's the final opinion in Whitman's Mills Co. *vs.* Amalgamated Pulp and Paper Co. It has been signed and will be read by Associate Justice K. day after to-morrow, the sixteenth. If you get busy you can take over Whitman's for a song and clean up for the supreme court has upheld them on their water right and sustained every contention against the Amalgamated. It's a sweeping decision and A. must certainly come through with big money if the rule goes and they get treble damages.

This talk of leaks in some court or other disappointed Blaisdell. It confirmed him in his previous opinion that Burgess was not above underhanded methods in his dealings but at first he attached little importance to it. He replaced the letter in its envelope and tossed it contemptuously into the car. Then, with a last look around him, which still failed to show any evidence of an alarm, he turned and walked out of the place, heading back toward Seventh Avenue.

His intentions, as yet barely half formed, were to stop the nearest policeman encountered and send him to the scene of the crime. He might easily have summoned help before this but his examination had convinced him that neither of the victims was badly hurt and he felt sullenly regretful that he of all people should have been the one to save them. He had done enough and more than he wished to do for them. He wanted no further connection with the matter and even debated with himself leaving them until they were found in the course of events. His own part in the affair would then remain unknown and he would be spared any embarrassment arising out of acknowledgment

by Myla or Burgess of the debt they owed to him.

But although this appealed to him as the sensible thing to do he reluctantly acknowledged the call to go one step farther and make sure that they were taken care of. As he stepped out on the street and looked about him he saw no one under the grimy and scattered lights. He walked a half block and then stooped as something caught his eye.

He picked it up and stood there holding it, half of a mind to go back and restore it to its owner. To leave it where he found it would be to invite its theft by the first person who came along. But he recalled that sigh by Myla and guessed that the effect of the drug was wearing off. She might already have awakened to life and surely would recognize him. He hesitated, holding in his hand the strand of pearls that undoubtedly had been torn from the girl's neck.

Then, clear and shrill on the night air rang out a scream for help! It echoed from the open gateway that he had just left and he knew that Myla was awake. For a moment he stood irresolute. The street in which he stood, which a moment ago had been deserted and silent, seemed to spring into life. Around the corner ahead of him a policeman popped and began to run heavily in his direction. Out of a dimly lighted and apparently closed cigar store boiled several men. A door or two slammed as people rushed out to their front steps.

Blaisdell instinctively stuffed the necklace into his pocket, hesitating. Then as the incriminating jewels left his hand like a flash of light it dawned upon him that he, himself, might be in danger. There was stolen property on him and here was he just leaving the scene of the crime. Sudden panic, the panic of the wild animal threatened with capture, surged over him. He had to fight it back, to grip himself tightly to avoid the crowning folly of instant and expeditious flight which would have brought the whole pack on his heels.

He had no time to think but he acted with what he thought was instant grasp of the situation. It would never do to be suspected. He must pose as an uninterested and uninformed pedestrian chancing by at the moment. The policeman was lumbering down upon him and he turned, looking back as though stopped in his progress by the cry. It came again just as the officer shouted a question:

"Where was that holler?"

The second scream rendered an answer unnecessary and with an oath the policeman dashed toward the gate, swinging his club and pounding on the pavement with every stride. Blaisdell clutched the necklace in his hand inside his pocket and began to walk away, trying not to let his growing fear tempt him to too precipitate flight.

Men dashed past him and he had sense enough to turn and watch them as though curious. As he turned the corner he could see the crowd surging about the gateway to the lumber yard, dim and unformed in the dingy light from the arcs inside.

He was safe. He gained Seventh Avenue and Broadway and made his way to the club without further molestation, mingling with and lost in the after-theater crowds. There was nothing to connect him with the crime except the necklace. That he would mail to its owner as soon as he could safely do so and he fell to considering every means to avoid identification of the sender, recalling every clever deduction he had read in detective stories by which mailed parcels were traced. Typewriting the address would be dangerous, for typewriters could be traced. Cutting letters from printed matter had also led to betrayal because the paper or book from which they were cut had often been discovered and traced. The more he thought of it the more difficult the task seemed to be. Of course the detective of fiction was a far more omniscient individual than the real life detective, but even so there was foundation for those stories. The very fact that a writer could think of ways to trace such things argued that other people could do so and that those who made a profession of discovering criminals would certainly know and understand all the methods of their trade.

He went up to bed rather ruefully considering the problem. No way of getting the thing back to its owner occurred to him as he undressed and he finally decided to sleep on it and go back to the problem in the morning. But he found that he could not sleep. On the contrary, he lay awake almost through the night, recalling every detail of his adventure and, as his casual, thoughtless actions came back to him, gradually growing more and more uneasy. If suspicion should happen to fall upon him, how

could he meet it? He had been seen apparently coming away from the scene by at least one policeman. How could he tell who had passed the gateway and had looked in while he was engrossed with the senseless Burgess?

Yet there was comfort also. Burgess and Myla must have known their assailants, or at least have seen them. They would be able to tell the story and fix suspicion where it belonged, upon some ordinary bandits engaging in a crude and bold holdup such as one reads of in every morning's papers nowadays.

Yet he was uneasy, too uneasy to sleep. He tossed away the night and rose early looking haggard and distressed. He bathed and dressed and made his way to the dining room for his breakfast, trying to assume a matter-of-fact, casual bearing—and overdoing it. To tell the truth, the smell of spruce was no longer in his nostrils. In its place he sniffed the musty, clammy atmosphere of prison walls!

He picked up the paper at the side of his plate and fumbled with it, half afraid to open it and read what he felt must be blazoned on the front page. But curiosity and fear both spurred him and after a glance around at indifferent fellow breakfasters he unfolded the sheet and searched the headlines.

FINANCIER ASSAULTED AND ROBBED!

Another Bold Holdup Added to Crime List! Taxicab Bandits Assault and Plunder Starck Burgess and Woman Companion!

It was all there, as prominently displayed as he had feared. The account of the affair was more or less meager, eked out with reportorial imagination. Screams from Miss Myla Ratcliffe, who was just recovering from the effects of chloroform administered by the bandits, had drawn help to the scene. The well-known promoter and financier, lately prominent through his connection with the reorganization of the Amalgamated Pulp and Paper Company, had been found half unconscious from the effects of a blow from a blackjack or other blunt instrument. Both had been robbed and apparently left with the abandoned taxicab in this secluded spot. But Miss Ratcliffe was able to add details to those apparent to all.

She and Mr. Burgess had been returning from the theater and had engaged a taxicab at the door. It drove off but instead of heading straight south toward Miss Ratcliffe's apartment in Greenwich Village, as ordered, it had suddenly swung into a side street and stopped an instant. Before they could remonstrate with the driver he had struck Burgess with a blackjack while the door was being jerked open by a man who had been standing by the curb as the car drove up. This man had thrown a cloth over Miss Ratcliffe's head before she had any idea of what was happening. The car almost immediately had started and driven away and while it was moving the thug had chloroformed the girl.

She had recovered her senses partially, to find the car drawn up where it was found. Burgess was on the ground and a man was searching him. Her own necklace and rings were gone, violently torn off. The driver of the taxi evidently had gone either to make his get-away or to act as lookout, but the second criminal had put Burgess back in the car and then hastened away. She had been able to give a fairly good description of him since, at one time, he had lit a match to examine her own condition. She had feigned to be still insensible but had seen his face clearly.

It was recalled that Miss Ratcliffe had once figured rather prominently and scandalously in the suit for divorce brought by the former Mrs. Burgess and several details were given regarding the activities of Burgess during recent years.

In conclusion, the police were said to have refused all information to the press beyond a hint that they had a clew to the man who had chloroformed Miss Ratcliffe and who had remained behind to finish the search for valuables. A policeman it seemed, had let slip a word before he could be silenced. He had encountered a man who must have been the bandit just outside the gate to the lumber yard, but the man, with cool effrontery, had indicated the direction from which the alarm had come and had strolled away. Afterward a reporter had picked up at the spot where the officer had encountered this man a single pearl which undoubtedly was from Miss Ratcliffe's necklace.

The paper had much more to say about the incompetence of the police and their folly in concealing all details of the pursuit but all this was not comforting to Blaisdell. The girl claimed to have seen him.

If she had, she undoubtedly had recognized him. The question now was, had she betrayed her knowledge to Burgess and the police?

It was a hard question to answer. Blaisdell hardly knew what sort of woman Myla was at heart. She might still retain some feeling for him. She would, conceivably, be reluctant to betray her former fiancé. She might, if she had a spark of decency left in her, keep that knowledge to herself. But, if this was her intention, why had she already said so much? Why had she admitted that she had seen him in the light of his match and could describe and identify him? What description of him had she given?

He still had the necklace in his pocket and at any moment the police might enter to seize him!

CHAPTER IV.

At that moment Myla Ratcliffe was sitting beside the couch on which Starck Burgess was lying in his home in the East Sixties. It was a handsome home, in a most exclusive neighborhood and Myla, instead of giving her chief attention to the injured man, was settled in an easy-chair like a contented cat, soaking in the atmosphere of luxury and distinction with which she was surrounded. There were servants, a man, a cook and two maids who could have done everything necessary to take care of their employer but Myla had no intention of letting them do it. Burgess' injury had given her an opportunity which she was not slow to seize upon. This was almost the only time she had won entrance to this house and having once entered it she had every intention of seeing to it that the doors were henceforth open to her.

She had declined the offer of the policeman to send them to a hospital and had taken Burgess to his home in a taxi. Then she had assumed charge of him, with every aspect of a devotion that bespoke an intimate and privileged status toward him. She was the picture of a devoted fiancée while the maids and the manservant had been at hand to question her right to wait upon their master. As for Burgess, he had a bad concussion and did not recover consciousness until almost daylight. In the meantime Myla sat at his bedside and played nurse.

He had recovered rapidly however when consciousness returned to him and had insisted upon being brought down to the library that morning. The doctor had gone, after assuring him that there would be no bad consequences beyond an enforced quiet for a few days, and now Burgess was lying there glaring at Myla, who lolled in her easy-chair and smoked a cigarette while she let her eyes roam complacently over the rich furnishings with which she was surrounded.

"Well!" said Burgess, with suppressed rage veiled under a pretense of cold indifference. "Well!"

It was a question as much as an interjection. It asked many things of Myla. It demanded what she was doing there, by what right she did it, how long she intended to remain and what she expected to gain by acting as she did. And Myla understood all the inquiry and smiled complacently at Burgess.

"It is a lovely place, Starck," she said and waved her cigarette at the heavy wainscoting, the walls of Spanish leather, the carved black oak of the furniture. The door was open into the hall and its brightness of cream and gold contrasted sharply with the more somber effect of the library. Starck's breakfast was set on a tray and tea table beside his couch. She leaned forward and offered him a piece of toast which he waved away.

"Why in the devil didn't you go home last night?" he inquired impatiently. "Hasn't there been enough——"

Myla broke in on him with perfect understanding.

"Altogether too much," she said. "But then—a little more or less wouldn't damage —me."

There was a slight pause and emphasis on the personal pronoun which had its significance.

"It will damage me though," snarled Burgess. "D'you think I want it all raked up again? Enough is enough, Myla!"

"You think I go too far?" she asked innocently.

He swore affirmatively and emphatically and she smiled again.

"I think not, Starck. A woman can go no farther than I went long ago. Where she goes from there depends not on her but on the man. You may drive me farther, but I can't go any farther."

"I'm not driving you," he said sullenly. "But for your sake as much as mine you

ought to avoid such an open scandal as this will mean."

Myla laughed. "I'm quite used to scandal, thank you," she said calmly. "Used to it and tired of it. Respectability and freedom from it would be a change, don't you think?"

"Coming here is no way to win it," growled Burgess.

"Think so?" asked Myla with a lift of her brows.

Burgess, vaguely uneasy beneath his anger, made no reply but watched her warily, scowling with as much perplexity as threat.

"I don't agree with you, Starck dear," said Myla calmly. "You see, the more or less surreptitious nature of this affair makes scandal obvious and inevitable. *You* may survive it, so long as I am not allowed to intrude on your—other—circles, but *I* live in it and with it day and night. I'm used to it, as I said, but——"

She leaned forward suddenly and her lips set in a straight line.

"I'm tired of it. I'm done with it! I want no more of it!"

He stared at her, a little bewildered.

"You mean—you're going to quit?"

She sneered at what might have been some slight note of relief in his query.

"I'm going to quit, Starck. I'm going to quit being what I have been. I'm going to be something else."

"Well," said Burgess awkwardly, trying to force into his voice some note of regret and dismay becoming a lover, "well—you know I never looked for this, Myla. I never thought——"

"You never thought I'd aspire to be Mrs. Starck Burgess, I suppose," she sneered. "I'll bet that never occurred to you."

"What!"

The exclamation was sharp, peremptory, threatening, but Myla only shrugged her shoulders, crushed her cigarette into the ash tray and leaned forward to meet the glare with which he favored her.

"Isn't the stage all set, dear?" she said with ironic sweetness. "Isn't the occasion properly managed? What more natural than that Miss Ratcliffe, your fiancée, overcome with grief and anxiety for you, should personally take charge of your convalescence and hover solicitously over your sick bed? Scandal? Why, there should be no scandal. Quite the contrary. It ought to set at rest all the scandal that has been bruited for so many months, it seems to me."

Burgess stared at her blankly. "Fiancée?" he repeated. "You're as crazy as a fish, Myla!"

"I think not," said Myla confidently and lit another cigarette.

He continued to observe her for a while, noting uneasily the air of quiet certainty that enveloped her.

"What's up your sleeve?" he asked at last.

Myla cast him a sidelong glance and then let her eyes return to the tip of her cigarette.

"Do you recall that I was once engaged to another man?" she asked.

Burgess nodded. "That engineer, Blaisdell! Poor fish, he was."

"Yes, Blaisdell. Ray *was* a rather unsophisticated fellow if that is what you mean. But as for being a poor fish, with all that it implies, I am not so sure that he was that."

"Well, what has he to do with it? He went into the army, didn't he—and disappeared?"

"He did—and he's reappeared, it seems."

Starck snorted with contempt. "If you think I'm going to be threatened with vengeance, blackmailed by you and your former lover, you're guessing wrong. I'm not that easy."

"You won't consider marrying me, then, Starck?" The question was mild, almost meek.

"We needn't talk about that, Myla. You know how I stand. Later, perhaps——"

"Yes, I know how you stand—and how I stand. But we neither of us have ever considered seriously how Ray Blaisdell may stand."

"And I don't give a damn how he stands. That won't go down with me, Myla, not for a moment!"

But Myla smiled pensively at his brusque defiance. "You've read the accounts in the papers, of course?" she said idly.

"Yes, I have, and I see that you recognized—or saw—one of the thugs. That's all right. We'll have them by the heels before they're much older."

"Recognized is the right word, Starck. I *did* recognize the man. Funny you should have used that expression!"

"Well, that makes it all the easier. You've told the police who it was?"

"No," said Myla slowly, "I didn't. It didn't seem the thing to do without first talking it over with you."

"With me! But, good Lord, what have I got to do with it? They got away with my wallet and watch and some important papers. And here you dally and debate while the word from you would lay them up right away! What the deuce is the matter with you, Myla?"

"I wanted advice," said Myla deprecatingly, "and you were unconscious. You see, Starck, the man I recognized was——"

She paused and smiled slightly and Starck gulped in his rage.

"Was Ray Blaisdell," she concluded. Burgess continued to look blank and angry and understanding.

"Blaisdell?" he repeated.

"I think we have rather underestimated Ray," said Myla. "I am sure I'd never have given him credit for that much enterprise. Of course, I thought he'd very likely be angry and revengeful but he seemed so mild, such a studious, theoretical, flabby sort of creature, full of figures and statistics and all that rot, that I never considered the possibility of his possessing initiative. Yet it seems that he had enough to come back here from wherever he has been and plot a holdup and assault on you."

"And on you too," said Burgess. "Or was that chloroform merely a blind?"

"It wasn't," said Myla. "It was quite real. I am half sick from it yet. I assure you that I had no hand in the plot, although you may suspect it. I didn't even know he was here. That, however, isn't the point, as I see it. The real point is that Ray held you up, robbed you and knocked you out with a blackjack. He did not, for some reason unknown to me, go as far as he might have and make away with you completely. But evidently we have had a wrong idea about Ray, don't you think?"

"What did he want to rob me for?" asked Burgess thoughtfully. He was still inclined to look with suspicion on Myla but she was quite serene under his eyes.

"I can't say," said Myla. "But surely it wasn't for money."

"Oh!" said Burgess. "He got my wallet, then?"

"I suppose so," said Myla. "At any rate he got a letter and read it. You probably know what was in the letter."

"Humph!" said Burgess. But he was uneasy and Myla, in whose bosom the letter even then reposed, smiled at the betrayal.

"It wasn't much of a letter," said Burgess. "It was merely a tip from a friend about a deal which he thought meant a clean-up. But if Burgess acts on that tip he'll get stung. There is nothing in it."

"Nothing in the deal—or in the letter?" asked Myla.

"The letter was about the deal," said Burgess impatiently.

"Oh," said Myla, "I thought there was something else in it. Something, for example, about a 'leak,' I think it was called."

Burgess sat upright so suddenly that his head swam.

"Where's that letter now?" he stammered.

"I am quite sure it's in a safe place," said Myla. "But I hardly thought it wise, in view of the fact that I saw Ray read the letter, to be precipitate in having him arrested, since he might talk about it."

Burgess nodded. "But the letter?" he asked.

Myla straightened up in her chair. "Oh, yes! The letter, of course! I don't believe Ray had any idea what the letter might mean. At any rate, after reading it he tossed it into the car after you. Then he went away."

Burgess drew a long breath of relief. "And you picked it up? I see. That was a bully good idea of yours, Myla, and I won't forget it. What did you do with it—tear it up?"

"No," said Myla. "I put it in a safe place."

Again she and Burgess exchanged glances. The man's was questioning, resistant, and yet uneasy. Hers was bold, defiant, threatening. After a moment her eyes fell and she spoke meekly.

"And I *do* think it is quite time you put an end to—my equivocal position, Starck."

"If money will——" he began awkwardly. But she shook her head.

"It won't do," she replied. Burgess seemed to age all of a sudden.

"Have you said anything—to any one?" he asked.

"Only to Watson, the man. He was inclined to question my remaining. I hinted that we were engaged."

"I'll bet it was a broad enough hint," growled Burgess. He sank back on his couch. "All right! You've got the whip

hand!" he acquiesced. Myla leaned over him and kissed him. He smiled a little and both of their eyes softened somewhat. "Maybe it won't be so—awkward," he muttered. "You've got brains. But there is Blaisdell. He knows."

Myla nodded. "But he has no evidence," she said. "Still it would be awkward if he talked. And he'd talk if he were arrested. Let me think."

She did think and the result was voiced a little later.

"We can't have him arrested but we can run him out, maybe. I think I can attend to that. A description that will be near enough to set the police on an active hunt without much chance of hitting on the right man, yet which will frighten him by its accuracy, ought to do it. And a hint to his friends—Ben Folsom, for example, who will pass it on to him. Yes, I believe we can deal with Mr. Blaisdell."

Burgess smiled at her. In truth, the competence with which she had handled him and now took hold of this new problem had impressed him. He was sick enough to feel his own weakness, to want some one on whom he could lean and it seemed that he had found such help.

CHAPTER V.

Ben Folsom was frowning as he walked up and down his office and glanced every now and then at Blaisdell, who sat beside his desk restlessly fidgeting with a paper cutter. Ray's clothes were brushed but they still retained some signs of combat, and his eyes were uneasy.

"It's a damn bad thing," said Folsom. He carried an afternoon paper in his hand and referred to it occasionally. "Miss Ratcliffe has been talking to the reporters, Ray, and there's no doubt that she has given a description that comes pretty near marking you as the man. And she will carry it through, you can depend on it. Never mind saying you didn't do it! I know you didn't. But will any one else know it? I don't agree with you that she would tell who it was if she intended to push the matter. You know the old story about the woman scorned? Well, if you didn't scorn her she'll naturally think you did and knowing that she's wronged you she'll be all the more vindictive against you. But of course she'll play the innocent. She wouldn't come right out with your name. On the contrary, she'll swear, naturally enough, that she had no thought that it was you in spite of the resemblance and that she never mentioned the resemblance because she would not even wrong you so far in her thoughts. And who'll believe you played the good Samaritan to them, your worst enemies? I tell you, you're in bad!"

"You needn't tell me," said Ray grimly. "I know it." He laughed a little, recklessly. He seemed to have become a different man in these few hours. There was something hard and disagreeable behind his manner. But there was not any great amount of fear.

"There's one thing you can do," he said, his left hand diving in and out of his pocket. "I told you about picking up this infernal thing off the sidewalk near the place and holding on to it without thinking. Since then I've been afraid to get rid of it. They'll search my rooms, of course, and I can't keep it with me. Besides, I don't want it. *He* probably gave her the damned thing! I've got to get rid of it and I don't know how to do it."

Folsom took the necklace and grinned.

"If I'd been you I'd have dropped it into the nearest wastepaper receptacle as I went past," he said. "If you had no time to consider that, why the deuce didn't you wrap it up and mail it to her from your club?"

He pressed a bell and his secretary came in.

"Will you get me a sheet of plain wrapping paper?" he asked. The girl went out and returned almost at once with what he required. Folsom made a bundle of the necklace, wrapped in layers of paper, tied it up securely and then personally went to the typewriter and pecked out the address on a plain sticker which he pasted on the bundle. Then he tossed it to the girl.

"Put the right amount of stamps on that and mail it," he said. "Then forget about it." He turned again to Ray.

"The sleuth of fiction might trace that," he said, "but I'm willing to bet that Miss Ratcliffe won't."

Ray held out his hand. "I'm off, Ben. I know you'll keep on the job at this end. Find that chauffeur and the other fellow if there's a chance. If you get the right men the charge against me falls to the ground, of course. I know it will be a tough job.

The paper says the taxi was stolen from in front of a lunch room that evening and there is no clew to the thieves who took it. But there's a 'Bozo' and a 'Steve' knocking around somewhere and they may be found some day.

"As for me, the less you know of my whereabouts the better. If I can I will let you know where I am after a while. So long, old man!"

Folsom held out his hand. "So long and good luck!" he said.

"Good luck?" questioned Blaisdell harshly. "The only luck I hope for is the chance to get my hands on Burgess and that——"

But Folsom suddenly held up a hand with a sibilant hiss of warning. Through the door came the sound of a woman's voice speaking arrogantly.

"Where's Mr. Folsom?"

"Atalanta!" groaned Ben in mock dismay. "She'll be the death of me!"

"Who is it?" asked Ray absently. Folsom seemed to feel momentary embarrassment.

"A client," he explained. "A young woman who has a trust interest in Atlantic Light and Power. She and her mother are the biggest individual stockholders and we are managers of the concern. Ought to know enough to leave us alone, but Atalanta has ideas of her own, the chief of which is that no mere man knows anything at all in comparison with what she knows. Feminist, she is! Thinks men have been making a botch of things so long that it is time the women took charge and put them straight."

Blaisdell shrugged his contempt. He felt that any woman at all was a contemptible creature. He hated their sex with a hatred that was stronger for being something new, or rather, renewed.

"She'll see you if you go out that way—and she's sharp. I think you'd better go out through Waring's office and out to the hall, Ray."

"She must be sharp," said Blaisdell sneeringly. "She's a woman. They've a gift of low cunning with which no mere man may cope. I'll agree. But I'm not going to sneak out. Open the door."

Reluctantly Folsom threw the door open and Ray stalked out, his head held defiantly. He came into the outer office where Folsom's secretary sat at her desk. A young woman on a chair at one side of the room came to her feet with a spring. She was a girl of about twenty-two or three, brown of hair and eyes and face, slender but lithe and capable. There was a hint of something vaguely familiar to Blaisdell in her attractive features.

"Well, so long, Ray!" said Folsom hurriedly, again holding out his hand. Blaisdell took it, dropped it, put on his hat and stared with hard, critical eyes at the young woman. She returned his stare with interest and supercilious contempt.

"If you're through with your ridiculous conference, Ben, I'd like to see you," she said sharply. Ben bowed and held his door open for her. As Blaisdell went out her eyes followed him and she kept Folsom holding his office door open until Ray had gone. Then she entered the room.

"Who is that man who just went out?" she demanded. Folsom answered with a good affectation of carelessness.

"Used to be one of our engineers," he said. "Just got out of the army."

"I didn't ask for his history," the young woman said tartly. "What's his name?"

Folsom hesitated. He did not know how much the girl knew of past history and felt that he could not afford to take chances on her ignorance. But she perceived his reluctance at once.

"Don't say a word if you don't want to," she said. "*I* don't care what fugitives you harbor. I want to know why Atlantic Light and Power is cutting dividends and what you are going to do about it."

Folsom made a wry face. "We can't do much," he said. "I've told you and told you that we haven't enough power to compete with some of the other companies. Costs are going up constantly. We haven't the stations to expand and we can't get them as long as Amalgamated holds most of the water powers. We could build coal-burning stations but that won't do in a region where cheap power is a thing that is taken for granted."

He plunged patiently and wearily into an exposition of the state of affairs and she listened without compromise of her attitude of critical disdain.

"There are two cities we could serve if we had the plant. Here is Bramstead, on the Casto River. There is a pretty big industrial development there but they are served by the Amalgamated plant at Paisley Falls. They get the extra power that they

don't need for the mill. It isn't as much as they need and they are dissatisfied with it, but we can't horn in there because we haven't any extra juice to sell. The same goes for Wales Ferry on Whitman's Creek. The creek doesn't amount to much and although the town is ideally situated for a manufacturing center—much more so than Bramstead, as a matter of fact—there isn't power enough to be had from the creek to admit of development. They have a little municipal plant but it is operating on a low head and without much volume. We can't horn in there either although they are the best prospects for expansion in that part of the country. Amalgamated Pulp and Paper Company have taken up all the available water powers that we might otherwise use."

The girl was looking closely at the map and she now pointed at it with the paper cutter she had idly picked from the desk.

"Bramstead and Wales Ferry aren't on the same streams," she asserted.

"No. One's on Casto and the other on Whitman's Creek," said Folsom.

"But, see here! Whitman's Creek and the Casto both head in this lake up here, don't they. What is it? Glacier Lake, isn't it?"

"Yes," said Folsom. "It's a rather peculiar formation up there. Geologically, the strata lie in parallel folds, sharply folded. The region was glaciated and a pretty big terminal moraine was thrown up at the foot of one valley. It backed up a lake there which is pretty important—drains a big watershed. The Casto carries off most of the flow through a channel cut in the terminal moraine. But over on the east and south sides, there happens to be a fault in the steep sides of the valley. There was a slip there, away back, and the next valley lies at a considerably lower level than Glacier Lake. Anyway, some little run-off on the side of Whitman Creek gradually cut back and into the lake so that, in time, Whitman's Creek either captured the lake or the lake captured the creek. I don't know which you'd call it. But at any rate the only effect was to make Whitman's Creek a bit larger and create a nice little head right there at the cut. There's a mill there and has been for years. But it doesn't amount to much. Creek gets its name from it, I suppose."

"What kind of mill?"

"Pulp. That's a nice little water power there and if we could get it it might be valuable, though not very important. But it is in litigation. Old Whitman claims under some ancient grant from the Indians and the Amalgamated have been fighting him for it for several years. They finally brought suit in the State courts to annul his right on the ground that the continued erosion and cutting of the creek was lowering the water level of the lake. More probable that their cutting the timber was doing it. Whitman retaliated by throwing the whole thing into the United States courts on the ground that there was a conspiracy to put him out of business. He hasn't much chance, as I see it."

"It looks as if my father got the best of us, doesn't it?" said the girl with vexation.

"I'm afraid he did, Miss Burgess. Your mother accepted the settlement and at the time it looked as though she had done well. But your father is pretty shrewd and since he has become active in control of Amalgamated he has had every opportunity to lower the value of your stock without in any way overstepping the bounds of legitimate business."

"I hope he chokes." said Miss Burgess viciously. "Beast!"

Folsom remained discreetly silent.

"And now he's bringing on another scandal with this robbery—and in company with that woman! And—by the way, who did you say that man was?"

"I didn't say," said Folsom, startled at her abruptness.

"You needn't! That woman described him well enough. Well, what was he doing here, this bandit for whom the police are looking?"

"He—he is one of our old men, as I said," stammered Folsom.

"After a job? Hope you didn't give it to him. I sympathize with him, of course, but I don't think it would be well to employ robbers to look after your affairs. Not that they may not come in handy at times. I may even want a private bandit myself some day. If so I will get his address from you."

Again Folsom took refuge in silence and the girl turned to the map, lost in thought. Then, explosively:

"I don't think you men know at all what you are doing. You haven't any imagination or vision. That place looks funny to me. I've half a notion to go up there and

see what there is to be seen. If there is anything, I know I'd see it plainer and clearer than all the engineers and experts you have on your staff. What kind of country is it?"

"Wild," said Folsom. "Woods, mountains, bears, snakes and all that."

The girl nodded. "Well, I'll be going. Nothing to hope from you hide-bound men. It might be right under your nose and you'd never see it."

"What?" asked Folsom meekly.

"Anything. What I'm going to see up there at Glacier Lake. If there's water power there that we can get hold of I'm going to get hold of it."

"If you do," said Folsom, "we'll pay you a salary and commission like one of our regular engineers. But whatever's there is probably in the hands of your esteemed father long before this."

"I suppose so," said the girl. "Drat him!"

CHAPTER VI.

A bearded man, roughly clad, shaggy of hair, lounged in the lobby or main room of the hotel at Seeley's Corners. It was not much of a hotel, being a board structure of a dozen rooms or so. Even in that bleak climate it was heated only by huge base-burner stoves. There was one in the lobby but in the mild spring weather it was not in use. Yet chairs were ranged about it and a box of sawdust was in place on either side. Patrons of the hotel were so used to loafing about the stove that they continued the practice even when there was no need for its heat. To one side of the main room was the dining room, closed off by double doors. The other side looked out on the hills sloping down to the banks of the river. In front was a veranda also commanding a view of the river and a road that ran along its banks. Back of the hotel rose the hills, ragged and scarred, some of them dotted with old stumps. Here and there hung shacks and houses, perhaps half a dozen in all, and between them were scattered patches of precariously cultivated garden and potato patches. The road was of dirt, rutted and rough.

The landlord of the hotel, a large, stout man who habitually went without a coat, came in and went to the register. He glanced about, picked up a broom, dabbed tentatively at the dust which lay plentifully about, thought better of it and sauntered out to the stove, standing with his back to its cold surface. He spat copiously into the box of sawdust.

"Nice day," he said agreeably. The stranger, hunched in a chair which was tilted back by a foot resting on the guard rail of the stove, grunted.

"Calculate to stay or be you just goin' through?"

The stranger looked sidelong at him and was slow in replying.

"Any work around here?" he asked at last. The landlord pursed his full lips judicially.

"That depends on what sort of work" he said. "What kind of job be you lookin' for?"

"Cruising timber," said the man shortly. The landlord looked perplexed for a moment and then his face cleared.

"A land looker!" he corrected. "Waal, now, there ain't much doing in that line no more. I remember the time when there was white pine and spruce timber aplenty all over these hills and we used to have a right smart of woodsmen and land lookers through here right along. That was back around twenty, thirty years ago. They was buying up timber right along in them days. Went for almost nothing, it did, too, specially the spruce. But the mills got away with it long ago. No, there ain't no land-looking jobs to be had hereabouts. Land's all owned by this un and that un for one thing, what hasn't been abandoned for lack of tax money. There's a right smart of timber left around the lake, they do say, but that's up forty mile or so. And it's second growth, at that."

The man grunted again.

"I calculate that gitting a timber job 'u'd be right difficult, Mr.—Mr.——" He paused, questioning the name which he had been unable to make out in the smudged register. The man shot a short glance at him from the corner of his eyes.

"Higgins," he said. "'Gilly' Higgins."

"Oh, yes, Mr. Higgins. Any kin to the Higginses o' Bramstead? There was old Mark Higgins what used to own the pasture up along the no'th side of the town, where the O. K. Hardware Store is to-day. He had a son name of Jim Higgins and a datter Jinnie and she married Ike Carrier out Paisley way. Jim, he wa'n't much account an' went West. Come back along in 'ninety-

nine, he did, and went into politics. He was elected sheriff a couple times running but he was killed finally by Jean Christophe from Nine Mile Crossing. Jim, he had a datter that——"

"They were no kin of mine," said the stranger shortly as the narrative bade fair to run into several volumes of local history. "I come from south of here."

"From York? Now, there was quite a passel of folks left here one time or another and went down to York. There was Bill Boggs. He went to Syracuse where he was in the trucking business last I heard. Maybe you run into him?"

"No," said the stranger. "Is there any work around here besides work in the timber? Any road work, building dams, bridges or the like?"

The landlord shook his head. "There ain't been no building around here since 1895, when they built the Paisley Falls dam and mills, excepting the year they mended the covered bridge over at Nine Mile Crossing. There was talk of building another big dam on the Casto when the trust got hold of Paisley Falls back in 1910. They was going to back up the water ten or twenty feet more and put in a larger mill but there was some trouble about not having enough flow. They do say that the trust tried to buy old man Whitman's place and shut off the flow at the Falls to git a higher level but Whitman wouldn't sell. Anyhow, they give it up and took to lawing about who owned the right to the water from the lake and they been lawing ever since. The State courts had it for a while, but Whitman, he threw it into the United States court. He claimed they was conspiring against trade or something and anyhow, the lake lies in two States and the gov'mint had juris—juris—something or other. They been lawing all the way up to the soc-preme court and it wa'n't settled till the other day. I hear Whitman done won his water right and there was some talk of his gitting damages for the conspiracy part but that didn't amount to nothing. The court done said there hadn't been no great damage done and when they give him what they call nominal damages he didn't have no trouble taking all he got home in his pocket. So there you be. Old man Whitman has his water right in Glacier Lake, which ain't much good to him, but the trust can't fill up the falls nor build any larger dam because they ain't got the water to fill it nohow."

"What trust is that?" asked Higgins.

"The Amalgamated. The big paper fellers. They sort of got the bulge on Whitman, two ways. He's been makin' a pretty fair grade of coated stock right along. Had a right good reputation at one time down to Boston and them big towns. But he ain't got the money to bring his mills up to date while the trust has been branching out all the time and taking in his trade. Then he took to making news print but the trust has most of the spruce and popple sewed up and he can't git much more'n enough wood to keep his pulp mill going. He finally has to come to selling pulp to the trust and I reckon he'll sell out to 'em before long."

"Fellow named Burgess ever come up here for the Amalgamated?" asked Higgins, who was not at all interested in Whitman and his troubles.

"Starck Burgess—or his datter?"

"His daughter? Has he a daughter?"

"Land love ye, has he a daughter? He certainly has. They calls her 'Atlanta' or something like that because she comes from down around that town I suppose. She's a heller, she is. Squandering round here and over on Whitman's Creek, hunting and riding around all alone like a man. I reckon she owns about all there is to own of the lighting company over to Warnersville and all down the valley to Portland."

"That's the Atlantic Light and Power Company, isn't it?"

"I reckon so. I never did see this here girl before last week, although I heard tell of her when Burgess come into the Amalgamated. She come through then going up to Glacier, hunting I reckon, though it ain't the season. They stayed up at the deacon's house on the hill and the deacon nigh had a fit because she went around in pants and high boots. I heard they was going down to see Whitman later on. Reckon she's maybe trying to buy his water rights for her pop, don't you?"

"I suppose so," said Higgins. He had fallen silent, reflecting on something unpleasant apparently, for his eyes held a grim, smoldering light. The landlord went on with his gossip.

"Burgess, he's been here several times along the river. He come up to Paisley Falls once or twice. I reckon he gets around

to see all the mills ever' so often. Learning the paper business, I reckon. Don't allow them Wall Street fellers knows a Fourdrinier from a log boom down in the city so they has to come up and see how they work it after they've gone and bought them up. I reckon they find out how to make the paper they put in them stocks and bonds, hey!"

He chuckled comfortably at his jest but Higgins remained silent and unresponsive.

"I don't reckon there's any work around here in your line," the man dropped back to the original subject of discussion as his victim showed no sign of returning confidence for confidence. "They got to have hands down to the mill, though, and if you're wanting a job there's the place to go. With the water high they'll be running full time down there fer several weeks and they'll take on any that can work. Ever been in a mill?"

"No."

"Well. there ain't so much to learn. Course you couldn't do skilled work like back tending, but I reckon you could get on grinding or marking or maybe booming. That'd be more in your line if you been working in the timber."

Higgins nodded. "I guess I'll try it," he said.

A little later he went to bed, or at least to his room, a bleak bare, dingy cubbyhole furnished with an iron bed whose springs sagged dejectedly, a couple of straight chairs, a chipped bureau and a washstand. The only mark of modernity about the hotel were the electric lights and a telephone. Down in the big common room, which had begun to fill up with the regular clientele of evening loafers, the landlord informed all who cared to listen that the stranger was from down in York State, that he was a land looker out of a job and was going to work in the mills.

Up in his room Higgins sat on his bed and smoked while he considered his future course. He had had no idea of working in the mills. He had had only the most vague ideas of working at all, though he eventually did intend to start at something. He was feeling a rather surprising sense of freedom and relief at getting back into rough garments and into the more remote sections. The smell of spruce was again in his nostrils but this time it was a welcome smell, a sweet, familiar odor that comforted him. The days were bright and warm, the leaves greening on the trees, the grass soft underfoot. For the time being he was content to be away from cities and swarming people, from problems and perils. Later he would face his future as it must be faced, but now he was content to be somebody else than Ray Blaisdell, fugitive from justice, wanted in New York on a charge of robbery and felonious assault.

That is, he had been content until the landlord had brought Burgess into the conversation—and Burgess' daughter. Queer that he had never known that Burgess had a daughter. If he had known—but he preferred not to speculate about that. Come to think about it, the fact was not so strange after all. Burgess was a man of middle age, over forty in fact. He might even be fifty. He had been married for many years. That fact had made Myla Ratcliffe's defection more contemptible.

Higgins, who had once been Blaisdell, drew from a wallet a clipping from a paper that was several days old. It contained an announcement of the coming marriage of Starck Burgess, the financier, to Miss Myla Ratcliffe. It was discreet, that article, mentioning the fact that Burgess was divorced but not going into details. There was also another clipping, which Higgins compared sardonically with the first. It was the brief announcement that the grand jury of New York County had returned an indictment against Raymond Blaisdell, a formerly well-known engineer, charging robbery and felonious assault. Evidently, after some hesitation, Myla had told what she knew. Higgins laughed harshly as he touched a match to the two clippings and watched them burn in his soap dish.

"A job in the mill," he considered. "Well, why not? They've driven me out. And why shouldn't Burgess' outfit give me a living? Besides, it won't hurt me to know as much as I can find out about his business. Who knows what chance may turn up to let me hit back at him?"

He chuckled grimly to himself and began to undress for the night.

CHAPTER VII.

Gilly Higgins, after two weeks at Paisley Falls, had reason to regret his decision, hastily made and hastily acted upon. He had had no trouble in getting work at the big paper mill. He had only had to apply

to be put on, for men were scarce and the water at its highest in these spring months. But as far as gaining much insight into the business or prying into some secret that would give him a chance at Burgess the experiment was a failure.

He had had his choice of going on the booms, which meant that he would stand for nine hours a day on an eighteen-inch raft of boards stretching out into the slack water in which the logs which were floated down the river were gathered, and pole these sticks with a pike against a traveling chain drag which caught them and conveyed them in endless lines up an incline to the mill, where they were shot under saws and cut into short lengths for the barkers. The wages were just twenty-three cents an hour.

Or he could go on the barkers. Here he would sit for nine hours again before a whirling, shrieking cylinder of metal, armed with blades which sliced the bark from the short logs. One plucked these logs from another traveling chain which conveyed them from the saws, jammed them against the cylinder for a few seconds, held them there while the bark flew from them in a cloud and then tossed them to another carrier which dumped them into a trough of water. It was wearisome work, hard on muscles, eyes and lungs. It commanded the same wages as the boom job.

Or he could go on the grinders. That was in a way a sort of semiskilled work, although Higgins smiled to himself at the actual skill required. The grinders stood in a long row along one side of the pulp mill. Behind them ran the trough with flowing water in which the short, barked logs floated down.

Higgins had elected the grinders, an eight-hour job without time off for lunch, as it at least took him into the mill. He got about the same wages as on the two other jobs, or two dollars a day. For this he stood on a square floor of wood, almost constantly damp, faced on either side by big, iron, red-painted machines. They were semicircular castings inclosing huge grindstones and had, projecting from the perimeter, three cylinders in which were water-operated pistons. The cylinders had doors opening toward him and on each of them was a valve to control the water pressure. The big grindstone was operated by a thick shaft connected to the turbines by belts. Just below and in front of the platform, with openings to the face of the grindstones, ran another trough which led to a centrifugal pump and a pipe which in turn ran up to a huge tank placed under the roof of the building among the wilderness of shafting and pulleys and belts.

Armed with a short pike he stabbed logs from the trough at his back and, opening the doors of his grinder and throwing over the lever which set the piston back, he thrust in the log, endwise, to rest against the grindstone. The lever was turned back, the piston descended and crushed the log against the stone which ground it into pulp and threw it out into the trough in front where it was drawn to the pump and pumped up to the tank. There were two machines, containing six cylinders, which he had to attend. The only skill required was a slight knack, acquired in an hour, in handling the pike and spearing the logs and also some simple care to adjust the water valve so that the pulp would have the right consistency. If too watery it was wasteful, if too dry it would get hot and the wood would tear instead of grinding. The stones required burring, or sharpening, at times, but this he did not have to do himself. The floor boss attended to this and as it was his one ambition to keep the stones so "sharp," or rough, that they ground fast enough to keep the grinder men piking logs as fast as they could manage there was no need for Higgins to trouble himself about it. Before he had been there long he wished there was no such thing as a burr in existence.

Still the work was no more than irksome and wearying. He soon got used to it, except for the monotony, and the wages did not trouble him at all. Why should they when he had nearly fifty thousand dollars in bonds safely deposited where he could reach the income?

Across the floor from Higgins' station was a double row of wet presses set back to back down the center of the mill. They were much more complicated machines, and at first he felt an ambition to run them. They consisted of several big rolls—"couche rolls," they were called, around which were stretched endless widths of a thick, woolen cloth, like a thin blanket. From the trough containing the screened and watered pulp a revolving wire screen roll caught up a film and deftly deposited it on the "felt" or

cloth. This in turn ran in an even layer to the front of the press where it was again deposited on a heavy, smooth iron roll which was faced by a table at about the height of a man's waist. The operator stood on a wooden runway before two presses, armed with a wooden pin about two and a half feet long and tapered to a blunt point. The pulp on the couche roll was laid on with each revolution until it gained a thickness of from a quarter to half an inch. If allowed to thicken more than this it was likely to begin to sag from the roll of its own weight, and break, with disastrous results, piling up crumbled pulp in great masses on the table and floor. When this happened the unfortunate press tender had to work frantically, sweeping the iron roll clear with his hands until he got an even line of firm pulp once more going on the smooth surface. In the meantime he had to look out that his other press did not pile up while he was correcting the mischief, and then shovel the fouled and crumbled pulp back into the trough to be conveyed again to the tank.

When the roll of pulp was at the right thickness the operator, standing to the right of his couche roll, and holding his pin in both hands, swept it with a deceptively easy and graceful movement through the cylinder of pulp, cutting it neatly and cleanly. Then, letting go of the pin with one hand, he caught the edge of severed pulp before it rolled over the top of the rotation, folded it back and stripped the sheet from the roll, letting it flop onto the table where he folded it into a bundle about two feet long, a bit over a foot wide and six or eight inches thick. This was piled on a truck and when the latter was loaded as high as the operator could reach dragged by the floor men to the elevator and sent up to be unloaded and piled against need of it in the paper mill.

The grinder men all had ambitions to be press tenders. Whenever there was time they left their machines and sought some pressman who was complacent, borrowed his pin and essayed to cut a sheet of pulp. The results were often more than amusing. The pin that in the hands of an expert slid so easily and leisurely through the sheet of pulp had a disconcerting way of jabbing raggedly into the mass for an inch or two and then sticking, to be dragged over the roll and down against the felt behind and under it. A pin caught between the rolls would cut the felt or tear it, while the pulp would break all over the place.

Felts cost money and the foreman was a facile blasphemer. In addition, cleaning up a mess of pulp was an annoying addition to one's regular labor, so that the clumsier men were not welcome to try their hands at it. Those who caught the knack, however, were allowed to learn, because they often took short spells at running the presses for the regular men, allowing them to go out and smoke or loll around.

Higgins did not at first plunge into efforts to manipulate a pin. He saw that other men met with disaster and he set himself to watch the pressmen, following the sweep of wrist and arm that sent the pin unerringly through without catching. He noted the angle at which they held the stick and the exact moment when they let it slide the remaining distance, while they let go with one hand and caught the edge of the sheet. It all seemed very simple and easy but he knew it was not until one had mastered the technique of it. As for the rest, it did not worry him. One had to adjust the pressure of the rolls to squeeze the right amount of water from the saturated pulp and there was a wheel which guided the felt, adjusting it when it showed a tendency to slide off the rolls and gather at the edges. One also had to watch the gate from the trough to see that the pulp did not come through to the felt too fast or too dry. That was all.

It seemed to be a more interesting job than the grinders and not so wearisome. After a few days he thought he had mastered the secret and went to one of the pressmen and asked to be allowed to try. The man gave him a brief, condescending instruction or two, handed him the pin, signaled when the thickness was right, and Higgins stabbed.

He had to tug frantically at the stubborn stick, wedged into the mass, to pull it out before it went over the roll and tore the felt. The pulp burst, crumbled and showered onto the table and floor in a soggy mess. The press tender cursed like a mule driver, called him a name in Canadian French which evidently meant something disrespectful and plunged at the press, sweeping with both hands at the iron roll, to scrape the crumbled pulp from it. He had to leave it, however, as another man

yelled and pointed to his other press, from which the pulp was beginning to sag. He leaped to that, slashed viciously at it with his pin and was just in time to avert a second catastrophe. Then he ran back and began again to sweep the couche roll clear, succeeding at last. He paused, rolled his eyes, swept his moist forhead with his hand and uttered a heartfelt sigh which embodied resignation, relief and contempt.

"Mojee!" he said. "Mojee!"

Higgins had to guess at its meaning. He thought it was a local rendering of *Mon Dieu*, and it probably was. At any rate the man's English supplemented it.

"By gar!" he said again. "By gar She's de damn mos' clomsee son of a gun evaire wass! Mojee!"

Higgins apologized and retreated to his grinders. The pressman was, however, a good-natured fellow at heart. Before long he looked over at Gilly and grinned. Later he even shouted some derisive but peaceful witticism at him. Gilly grinned and when a little later the same man invited him to try again he shook his head.

"Not yet," he said. "Wait a while."

The man was disgusted, thinking Higgins afraid to attempt the feat again. He loudly declaimed some wisdom to the effect that the only way to learn was to try and said Higgins was a quitter. Gilly only shrugged.

He watched narrowly however and a few days later when one of them left his press for a moment, the stick lying on the table, Higgins walked across, picked it up and, with one deft sweep, a bit too hurried but otherwise as skillfully as one could wish, he cut through the sheet and stripped it from the roll. His friend at the other presses looked over with staring eyes.

"By gar!" he cried. "W'at you say to dat! Look at dat feller how she cut heem now! Mojee!"

The press tender came running back glaring at him, but his face relaxed when he saw the sheet safely cut, although thinner than usual. Higgins had noted that it was easier to cut a thin sheet than a thick. He had caught the knack, also, and driven his pin at the right angle although without the exact amount of force required. That would come with experience, however.

In another week he was as good a press tender as there was on the floor and a bit later when a man quit he was given the place. But the wages remained the same.

A day or two later his friend, Gaston Grêve, as he was named, came up to him as he was going off shift at eleven o'clock at night. With him was the chief mechanic who ordinarily went off at five in the afternoon. Gilly guessed that something had brought him to the mill at that hour. He was a rather hard-faced Irishman named Brady.

"Dees de president of de local, Gilly," Gaston said, with his cheerful grin. "I tell heem you ees *bon gar'*—good mans fer de union."

"Union?" said Higgins. "Is there a union in this dump?"

"Sure there is," said Brady rather belligerently, perhaps sensing some contempt in Higgins' tone. He had actually felt some, though not for unions as such. But he had regarded them generally as organizations of men boasting some real skill, and this sort of child's play that was not even hard labor and could be picked up in a few days of practice, roused the disdain of the engineer used to intricate and minute calculations and tremendous plans. "The Amalgamated Pulp and Paper Makers of America! You got any objections to it?"

"Not in the least," said Higgins. "Go as far as you like."

"Well," said Brady, "we aim to go as far as needful, me friend. You got a card?"

"A union card?" asked Gilly.

"That's what I said. A union card!"

"Haven't one and never had one," Higgins replied. "What about it?"

"You don't work here unless you join the union," said Brady. "And I don't know that we'll let you join it."

"Mojee! Brady!" begged Gaston, his brown, snub-nosed face wrinkling in kindly distress. "By gar! Dees Gilly, she's good mans! She's mak *bon* union mans!"

"I ain't so sure," said Brady. "I been watching this guy. He talks pretty good for a press tender or a grinder hand. And he lives up to the company hotel at ten dollars a week just like a machine tender or a master mechanic. Where does he get the money? Not at the wages he's getting! And he ain't none of these college boys the comp'ny sends in to learn the business, neither. Too old for that. I'm thinking he's some sort of spy for the company and we don't want spies in the union."

The thing struck Higgins as funny and he laughed. But Brady was in no laughing

mood. He was a tough, ignorant man, all the more sensitive because his leadership rested on physical prowess rather than on brains.

"You laughing at me, bo?" he demanded, taking a step forward.

Higgins shook his head. "No, I wasn't," he said. "I was just laughing at the idea that I was a spy for the company. It's funnier than you've any idea."

"Oh, it's funny, is it?" Brady demanded. "Well, I don't see the joke. And you can do your laughing somewhere else than in this mill. We don't want no damn scabs and spies round here. Get that?"

"Oh, sure!" said Higgins. "I get it. But what are you going to do about it?"

"By gar, Brady, dees mans ees all right, I tell you!" begged Gaston in real distress.

"All right, is he?" yelled Brady, working himself into a rage. "Laughing and joshing about it and asking me what I'll do about it! I'll *make* him all right, all right! I'll put a head on him!"

Men going off shift were gathering around. Most of them did not like Higgins, who kept somewhat to himself and who lived at the hotel, where the better-paid men alone were considered able to afford the accommodation. But there were a few of the light-hearted French Canadians who favored him.

"You'll put a head on me?" Higgins asked wonderingly. Then he laughed again. What there was to laugh at most of the men did not see. Brady was a big, powerful man, with the iron muscles of his trade, and while Higgins was also big and looked as though he might give a good account of himself no one thought he had a chance with the fighting Irishman.

But Higgins did. Mechanics, used to heavy weights, heavy work and lots of it, might have muscles of iron but lumbermen, who had been his associates for two years, could match them with muscles of tempered steel and an agility that no mechanic could match. Against those knotted sinews trained on spanner and pulleys he would pit thews that were hardened by swinging four-pound axes and reflexes trained on floating logs and in front of rolling, tumbling skidways. So he laughed in Brady's face.

Brady snarled, leaped and smote, swinging hammerlike fists. But Higgins swerved like a snake, back and out of reach, and like a snake he recoiled and leaped in. One foot shot forward, taking his weight as he bent against it but also cunningly sliding behind the heel of Brady's shoe. Then Higgins struck, short armed and upward, his fist crashing against Brady's chin and lifting him up and backward. At the same time that foot tangled with Brady's heel. The Irishman did not exactly fall. He shot backward as though expelled from a gun and his head and shoulders crashed resoundingly against the floor.

"Get up!" said Higgins, smiling; "so I can knock you down again."

Brady was not so much hurt as astonished. He had plenty of courage and he was as tough as leather. But he knew that he was overmatched and it did not seem worth while to try and demonstrate the faot any further. He shook his head and lay where he was.

"You got the call on me," he growled. "But I ain't takin' nothin' back."

"All right," shrugged Higgins. "Suit yourself. And, as for your union, suit yourself also. I don't give a damn whether I join it or not. If you want me to join, all right. If you don't, all right again. But if any man wants to get free with names like 'scab' and 'spy' he'd better take 'em somewhere else, because I don't like 'em. I hope you understand me!"

"Mojee!" said Gaston, in utter awe. "Mojee!" And that seemed to be the prevailing sentiment among the other men, voiced as well as they could have done it themselves.

CHAPTER VIII.

Higgins revised his original ideas which had led him to take lodgings at the company hotel following this collision with Brady. It had seemed the obvious and natural thing to do upon his arrival but he had already discovered that his presence there was looked upon as out of the ordinary by the comparatively well-paid skilled workers who formed the bulk of the boarders. They held themselves as a sort of aristocracy of mechanics, team engineers, electricians, machine tenders and back tenders; and the pulp makers were conspicuous by their absence. There seemed also, on reflection, to be danger to himself in remaining there. Paisley Falls was a very small village and its facilities for receiving guests were hardly up to date. Whenever officials

of the company came there they were either put up at the superintendent's house or occupied a special suite set aside for them at the hotel. Aside from this suite, which was a good one, the hotel was hardly more than a large barracks containing about fifty or sixty small rooms.

Higgins had had the idea that at the hotel he would be more likely to pick up information of value to him than if he boarded somewhere in the straggling village along the Casto. But none of the men were inclined to admit him to any intimacy and he could not avoid the conviction that if Burgess should come to the place he would be in danger of recognition. He concluded therefore that he would make a change.

In order to do this he consulted his new friend, Gaston Grêve, who since his feat in disposing of Brady was inclined to make a hero of him. Gaston was all on edge to help. He, himself, just boarded around wherever a room was to be had. He worked in the mills only during the summer, flitting, with the first frost, into the North woods where he spent the winter in trapping. The accommodations with which Gaston put up were hardly to Higgins' taste, but the little man—he was five feet five inches tall and as restless and active as a monkey—boasted, like most of the Canucks, a wide relationship all over that region. He had an uncle—or cousin, the exact relationship being somewhat confusing—who owned or rented a house in Paisley and worked in the acid tower at the mill. The relative would probably be glad to add to his meager income by taking a boarder of substance who would not be a menace to his daughter, who kept house for him. Gaston was sublimely eager to vouch for Higgins' respectability, of which of course he knew nothing beyond the fact that Higgins did not "spark" the girls of the neighborhood.

This was arranged without much trouble. Jean Christophe—the name seemed vaguely familiar to Higgins but he could not place where he had heard it—was an elderly dried-up Frenchman, probably nowhere near as old as he looked, rather taciturn but as good-natured and mild a subject as one could wish. His silence seemed to come from his habit of dreamy contemplation rather than from reticence. His home was plain and simple, a little six-room cottage, but neat and clean, thanks to the daughter, Renee. The girl herself was a surprise to Higgins when he first saw her. She had little in common with her father or Gaston. She was a rather tall, willowy maiden of about twenty-six or seven, dark of hair but with gray eyes set in a still face that was classic in its purity of line. She moved, when she had occasion to, with easy, leisurely grace, never hurried or abrupt. To match her classic, cold beauty, she had little to say and that little with what bordered on indifference. Her voice was sweet in tone but without feeling; cold, emotionless. The name of Christophe had seemed vaguely familiar to Higgins and now also, something in the girl's appearance reminded him of a memory which he could not place. Certainly he had never seen her before nor any one much like her, yet she called up in his mind some haunting vision.

He moved to the Christophe house and was given a small but comfortable room. He took breakfast and supper there when he was not on the evening shift from three to eleven, and he had no reason to complain of his accommodation. The meals were plain but good, well cooked and, he suspected, better than they would have been had he not been there. He insisted on paying them the same as he had paid at the hotel. Christophe objected weakly to this but was easily induced to yield.

Here Higgins settled down and for a while was content to drone through the warm spring days, doing his monotonous work, lounging about on the river bank when at liberty, walking the countryside on Sundays and gradually getting used to an existence which was hardly living. He began to find his mind becoming blunted, his brain lazy. Manual work made no calls on his intellect, eight hours at a shift formed a short day, he had no complicated necessities, no obligations, no responsibilities. Gradually he found his previous hot anger and brooding desire for revenge sinking into a formula which he had to repeat to himself to recall at all. He was thirty-five, in perfect health, without a real care in the world.

Jean and Renee, and Gaston, when he came to see them, which was much oftener now that Higgins had settled down there, generally spoke together in the French *patois* except when their guest joined in the conversation. Jean spoke English better than Gaston but not without accent. Re-

nee, on the contrary, spoke it as well as Higgins did and he soon guessed that she had been convent trained. At first it amused Higgins to listen idly and without thought, as in their ignorance that he understood French they occasionally made frank comments about himself. That is, Gaston and Jean did. Renee never discussed him nor any one else, that he ever heard.

He meant no breach of confidence in this. Indeed, the dialect they spoke was so broad and corrupt that he had difficulty in fully understanding it, his French being of the Parisian variety. There seemed no harm in it and he fully intended betraying the fact that he understood them after a fashion before they had gone far with it. But as what they said of him was in the way of kindly compliment or friendly witticism he felt little reproach in preserving the secret of his knowledge.

Then one evening as he sat before the table in the living room reading a paper by the light of the lamp, the girl came in, after finishing her tasks, and sat down on one side of the room to sew. Old Jean, in shirt sleeves and socks, lolled back on the plush-covered sofa and smoked his pipe. The usual silent, somnolent evening seemed to be at hand.

Renee spoke without warning in her cold, even tones.

"He will come, then, next week? It is time you were having your rheumatism."

Jean puffed out a cloud of smoke and spoke with teeth clenched on his pipestem. There was a subtle change in his tone which might have been caused by his speaking through his teeth, yet Higgins felt that this did not account for the hard rasp of his voice. It startled him and caused him to listen a moment.

"It will be hard. There is a new company doctor and it is required that all illness be under his care. Otherwise there will be no pay."

"But there never has been pay before."

"What matter? It is not the pay. But if one lays off on the plea of illness they send the doctor. If it is found that it is not true there will be trouble. One cannot afford to attract attention."

"That is true," said the girl and fell silent. Jean also smoked without speaking for a time.

"May the good God condemn him to everlasting fire!" he suddenly remarked and the rasp was now so distinct that Higgins know it did not spring from speaking through teeth clenched on a pipestem. In fact Jean had removed his pipe and held it in his hand.

"He will," said the girl, "but I am not inclined to wait on God."

The coldness and evenness of her tones were in such sharp contrast to her father's that Higgins was sure they concealed a feeling even deeper than his. He felt uneasily that he was inadvertently listening to a self-betrayal which went deeper than he could now guess. Uneasily, in response to that secret hatred, his own slumbering feelings began to smolder and kindle. He, too, had his buried hatred, his secret craving for revenge.

He had no right to intrude upon this and without thinking he suddenly dropped his paper.

"I beg your pardon," he said hurriedly. "I should have let you know before, but it seemed unnecessary since you never said anything you could regret my overhearing. I speak French and understand it."

They took it in different ways. Jean, meek, dreamy and quiet, came to his feet with an oath so vicious that it seemed spat from the depths of his being. The girl raised her eyes, stared at Higgins for one long minute, and then dropped them to her sewing. That was all, yet he forgot the stifled rage of the old man and only felt a wave of shame and humiliation, induced by that supreme contempt which her eyes had spoken.

"It is no matter, father," said the girl quietly.

"It really isn't," Higgins stammered. "I didn't hear anything important and I'm not a spy. I spoke as soon as I realized that what you were saying was private."

"Thees is fine beezness!" Jean muttered. "You com' here lak frien' from my nephew an' you leesten all tam! Thees is damn fine beezness!"

"I haven't listened to anything important," Higgins protested. But now he got another surprise. Beneath Jean's dreaminess lay the excitability and recklessness of his race and now it was in full control of him. He thrust his face forward.

"W'at for you leesten, then? Ees it dat you are *espion?* Ees it dat thees Burgess send——"

"Father!" said Renee sharply. It was the first note of emotion that had crept into her voice since Higgins had met her. He noted it even as the mention of that name burned into his brain.

"Burgess! Spy for Burgess!" he stuttered. And then his hatred swept over him in a wave of sardonic mirth. He leaned back and laughed.

"For w'y you laugh?" growled Jean, perplexed. The girl watched him through eyes that were no longer cold, but bright and watchful.

"Is Burgess your enemy?" Higgins asked abruptly. Jean turned uncertainly to Renee but she kept her eyes on Higgins, keen, alert and watchful.

"Why should we have enemies?" she asked coldly. "Poor folk like us?"

"If Burgess is the man your father spoke of——"

"Mr. Burgess is merely one of the important officers of the company. It is natural that my father should fear that he may have set spies to watch the men and that such a spy might find out that he is occasionally taking—a vacation under plea of illness."

Suddenly Jean shrilled a discovery. "Heeggins! Heeggins!" he cried. "For w'y I not theenk! Eet is the same!"

That memory was slowly deepening and gathering strength. Christophe? Where had he heard the name in connection with his own? He had long ago decided that his familiarity with the name had arisen out of its occurring as the name of a novel written by a Frenchman, which he had never read, but now he was not so sure. Higgins? Christophe? They had some connection.

"Be quiet, father!" said the girl again. "We will find out." She turned to Higgins and her eyes compelled him with their quiet force. "Why did you come here?"

"I came without a thought of anything except to get away from the hotel where the men had begun to think me a spy for the company. I have no idea of what your father may mean by calling attention to my name. Still, I admit that there seems to be some connection in my mind between your own name and mine, although I cannot place it."

"Who was your father?" said the girl suddenly.

He gaped and, caught unawares, answered without thought: "Why—John Blaisdell, of course! Er—I—that is——"

But Renee was frowning on him. "Blaisdell?" she repeated, and again, with rising emphasis: "Blaisdell?"

Higgins—or Blaisdell—fell silent. He had betrayed himself and he could only wave a futile hand and raise his eyebrows in resignation.

"Then—are you related in any way to James Higgins, Jim Higgins, of Bramstead?"

"Jim Higgins?" repeated Blaisdell, stupidly—and then he felt his memory slowly rolling back the veil. He was listening, half listening, to a fat and comfortable gossip reeling off local legend:

"He had a son name of Jim Higgins and a datter Jinnie—Jim, he wa'n't much account and went West. Come back along in 'ninety-nine and went into politics. He was elected sheriff a couple times running but he was killed finally by Jean Christophe from Nine Mile Crossing."

The words, forgotten as soon as heard, had sunk into his subconsciousness and now came flooding back to him. Jean Christophe! Jim Higgins! And he had taken the name of Higgins! Here was a fine complication. But there was only one way out.

"Miss Christophe," he said earnestly, "there is an explanation coming to you and you shall have it. My name isn't Higgins. I'd never heard of Jim Higgins or yourselves until quite some time after I had assumed that name for reasons of—expediency. A few weeks ago I happened to stop at a hotel at Seeley's Corners and the landlord, hearing that my name was—that I called myself Higgins, asked me if I were related to the Higgins from Bramstead. He related something of Jim Higgins, and mentioned your father, as I now recall."

"Did he mention that my father killed Higgins and served a term in prison for it?" asked the girl. She spoke as quietly as ever but Ray was made hot and uncomfortable by her still composure.

"Y-yes—or he mentioned that Higgins was killed by—I never heard of the prison term!" Ray stammered.

"Nor why he killed Higgins—and wasn't hanged for it?" she went on mercilessly.

"He didn't say anything about that—and I paid no heed at the time. I had never heard of Higgins—or you—and wasn't interested. I'm not interested—or rather I

am, now. But I mean that if there is anything I can do, any way in which I can reassure you——"

The girl laughed for the first time since he had met her, but it was not a pleasant laugh.

"Why do you call yourself Higgins?" she asked uncompromisingly.

Ray was silent. Yet he had betrayed his real name and if the fact got about there would probably be those curious enough to make inquiries. He had no doubt that, since his indictment, his name and description had been broadcasted over the country. Even if he was out of New York State there was extradition to be thought of.

He thought deeply in the next moment. He wanted to trust them, wanted to tell his story, but he was not sure. If he could only rely on them and if, as he suspected, they too had some grudge against Burgess, he would be glad to speak. But how was he to make them believe him?

He asked a question in his turn, earnestly, compellingly.

"I will tell you truthfully," he said, "if in turn you will first inform me what your feeling is toward Burgess."

The girl stared at him without expression for some time and he looked straight and firmly into her eyes. Finally she opened her lips.

"Starck Burgess?" she said. "He is the man my father called upon God to punish!"

CHAPTER IX.

Blaisdell finished his confession, conscious that it all sounded like a piece of fiction made up for the occasion. What was there to prove that he was not pretending wrongs in order to worm his way into the confidence of these people who, in some way, had also suffered at the hands of his enemy? He was conscious that the long arm of coincidence had been stretched beyond credulity here. If the positions had been reversed he would not have believed his own story.

But Jean listened intently and the girl also listened although she did not show the emotion her father did. His frequent interjections of "mojee!" betrayed a comforting excitement but she was as cold and stony as ever. Yet when he had finished she arose and got a scrap book from a locked drawer of the table. Blaisdell had been a bit surprised to find that this poor, half-illiterate French Canadian subscribed to a New York and a Boston paper but when he saw the book opened he got the explanation. It was full of clippings from those papers and every clipping had its bearing on Burgess or on the Amalgamated Pulp and Paper Company. Evidently they had for years been collecting every bit of information about the man and his interests that their means allowed them.

"We know the story—as far as it is contained in the papers," said Renee. "It all checks up, father. I had forgotten the name but that, too, is correct. The crime occurred on April 18th. That was about six weeks ago."

"I was two weeks on the way here. I've been here four weeks," said Ray.

"But this speaks of you as an engineer. And you are not exactly——"

He nodded and explained. "I've been in the army two years and spent the time in the Northwest spruce woods. I'm more of a timber man than an engineer, now. That's why I headed for this region. Later, when I found that Burgess had interests here, I thought of getting into his mills on the chance of reaching him in some way, as I've told you."

"Mojee!" said Jean wonderingly. His anger and suspicion had apparently evaporated and he was ready to give Ray his full trust. But the girl was not. True, she closed the book and sat down with a comforting word.

"I think it is all right, father. We need not fear that Mr.—Blaisdell is a spy. We all hate Burgess."

But she saw to it that old Jean did not tell why they hated him nor did she betray it herself. And Blaisdell was too thankful to have regained their good will to try to force their confidence. In that moment when they had turned on him with anger and suspicion he had suddenly realized that the meek, quiet, dreamy old man and the still, cold, lovely girl had won a place in his heart; that he had grown to be fond of them and would feel more than lonely if they had turned him out.

But now, although French was spoken oftener than before, there were no more secrets to be overheard. Only Blaisdell, being warned of Burgess' arrival, himself wished to be away. Instead of pleading sickness he suggested that he and Jean

merely take a week off and go upriver to fish. They might lose their jobs but that was not likely in this period of shorthandedness. To this Renee aquiesced and Ray knew by the fact that she would trust her father alone with him that he had been accepted into her confidence. The fact pleased him immensely.

On that idle trip, lolling in the sun or paddling on the river, camping on the strands and sleeping under the stars, old Jean crept more and more into Ray's esteem. He was a woodsman by inheritance and instinct and his long term in prison had not served to deaden his faculties. Ray, trained in a hard school which his keen brains had made the most of, was fully capable of holding his own in most respects, in spite of the differences between this country and that he was more used to.

They went upriver in a canoe, starting from just above the dam which furnished power and head for the mills. That dam always intrigued Blaisdell. It was a big structure, though small in comparison to some he had seen or worked on. The head was no more, however, than forty-five or fifty feet and the storage was rather shallow, inundating a wide and low valley which narrowed at the lower end where the dam spanned it. The engineer had often walked out on it, looking down at the sweep of the curtain, mentally figuring the total horse power by the size of the penstock. He had watched the spillways, also, in this season of high water, but he had never seen them running full except in the rare instances when repairs had necessitated shutting down some of the turbines. His conclusion was that the dam would have impounded a great deal more water than was available except in extraordinary flood times.

He also knew, because it was subject for frequent casual comment around the mill, that the small city of Bramstead, some twenty-five miles down the river, drew a portion of its power from the excess not needed for the turbines and the mill. There was complaint that the supply was uncertain and the town maintained a small plant to supplement the current obtained from the Paisley Falls power house. Bramstead had ambitions to be an industrial center and this lack of power annoyed it. It was also true that Wales Ferry, a town some fifty miles away, on a smaller stream, was much better situated from the point of transportation and access to labor than Bramstead, but Wales Ferry had no power to speak of and therefore languished. Both towns grumbled and agitated for service from the Atlantic Light and Power Company, the only public utility serving this part of the State, but that company was unable to expand because the ubiquitous paper combination in consolidating nearly all the mills had also taken great pains to secure every available source of power.

Blaisdell knew this situation from gossip he heard about the mills and town but it had no great interest for him. In fact it had been only his engineer's instinct that had even led him to calculate the actual potentiality of the available water supply impounded by the Paisley Falls dam. It furnished power for the mill with a surplus and that seemed to dispose of it. Bramstead and Wales Ferry were names to him and no more. As for the source of the power, he knew that it sprang from Glacier Lake, where the Casto headed and from tributary streams along the way.

He and Christophe paddled leisurely up the Casto in a rented canoe and camped some thirty miles above the dam and halfway to the lake. They had started early and had little difficulty in making the distance in one day as the stream was placid and the current slowed almost to nothing by the dam. On the second day they struck rougher water as they entered a more rugged country, with steeply sloping hills, well covered with second-growth timber. It was small but furnished good cover and the streams that tumbled into the Casto began to be frequent. As they ascended the river became narrower and deeper but broken by shallows where rapids once or twice forced a portage. The current was growing swift and the next stage took them two days, as they stopped to fish at likely places. By the end of that third day they had come into a country of abrupt hills, heavily wooded, still with second growth for the most part, but such conifers as there were among the more predominant hardwoods were almost of a size for pulp wood. Here there was a good deal of young "popple," which Ray recognized as the quaking aspen of the Western mountains, but larger in size. This, he knew, was utilized for pulp to a very considerable extent, since the longer and stronger-fibered spruce was growing scarce and hard to get.

At last they came to a series of benches shelving up to a plateau, down which the stream tumbled in broad, brawling rapids and cataracts. But instead of growing narrower and deeper on the level it now seemed to broaden somewhat and grow shallower, breaking into small branches, coursing around obstructions which split it, forming a number of estuaries. The hills were flattening out ahead of them. The pitch of the country was so peculiar that Ray felt an awakening interest in it.

On the fourth day they camped on the lake after coming into it through the head of the Casto. Ray found it to be a huge sheet of water flanked by hills that sloped steeply up on the left bank and rolled more gently on the right. At the lower end of the lake the valley was quite wide and flat, without great relief and he was not surprised to find, when paddling out of the river head, that the water was shoal. In fact it was only because the flat land allowed the water to escape over a wide area of swamp and through small estuaries that the Casto was able to carry off the drainage of the watershed.

Ray's engineering lore enabled him to classify the place pretty well. Those steep escarpments and high hills to the right, when coupled with the lower banks to the left, meant a severe dip of the underlying strata toward the southwest. The regularity of the axis of the hills told him that here were parallel folds. Outcrops that they passed gave him dip and strike and he easily saw that the strata were steeply folded and leaned to the southwest. It was also apparent that the place was glaciated severely and he guessed that the entire lower end of the valley had been leveled and filled by an enormous terminal moraine which had, in fact, formed the lake itself by damming back the waters.

Some vague presentiment that here were matters of interest to him began to form in his mind. He could not guess in what way a slightly unique glacial lake feeding a second-rate stream, whose run-off was already fully utilized, could feed the smoldering desire for revenge against his enemies, but somewhere in the recesses of his mind half-recalled fragments of information were beginning to struggle to the surface. Somehow the names of Wales Ferry and Whitman's Creek obtruded themselves into his consideration of these lovely, wooded banks and placid waters stretching far back into the hills.

The fishing was not very good and could not divert him from that insistent casting back, that curiosity concerning something that he could not describe or identify. On the night of the fourth day out, when they had settled down in the camp about ten miles from the bottom of the lake he began a cross-examination of old Jean.

"You've lived here a long time?" he asked him. The old man was communicative enough on all but one subject and Ray never approached him on that.

"Oui, m'sieu'!" said Jean readily. "Eet is long tam I live een dees country. I know heem all. Long tam back I am huntaire an' trappaire w'en de woods was theeck on de hills. W'en de lumbaire mens com' for de pine I am reevaire mans an' loggaire. Den dey tak' de spruce for mak' de paper an' I have de contrac' for cut de logs. All dees co'ntree was beeg trees w'en ol' Jean was yo'ng. De beeg timber, she go, de hills becom' bare. *Sacré!* Eet is many year w'en I com' again an' fin' de hills cover once more with trees—leetle trees that have not yet tam to becom' beeg."

His face clouded with gloom and sadness and Ray tactfully made no attempt to force his confidence on that subject. He understood now that during the years in which the seedlings were gaining their growth the old man was languishing in prison.

"You know the lake and the country round here, then?" he asked.

"Ah, m'sieu', should I not know heem? Over dere"—he pointed to the northeast over the high hills—"I live many year. De Nine Mile Crossing, dey call heem, w'ere I have de cabin. Dere I hunt and trap and cut de spruce and run de reevaire. But dere ees no more spruce and no more log to cut. Dere ees only de mills for a mans to work in and de logs com' on de railway."

"But there were mills in those days too?"

"Oh, oui, certainement! Dere were more mills as now. Dey mak' de lumber on Casto an' on Nine Mile Creek. On Wheetman's Creek dere ees flour mill an' w'en ol' Wheetman die de yo'ng Wheetman build de pulp mill. Dere ees not water for de pulp mill so he move heem down to de Bridal Falls, w'ich com' out of de lak'. He build de dam below de falls an' he have ver' fine mill for dose days. But not like de beeg mill at Paisley w'ich com' later."

"Below the falls?" said Ray blankly. "Not enough water for the mill? But why in time should he build *below* the falls? Where'd he get his head?"

Jean grew interested in his subject and entered on a voluble explanation. As he talked he drew a rough map on the sand, and in the fading evening light Ray bent over it and stared at what it told him.

"Eet is funny falls, dat. De creek, she head op in de hills ovaire here." He indicated the general region rolling away to the southwest. "She ees not moch creek but she ees moch lowaire dan de lak'. De ground fall off dat way away from de lak'. All dees side"—he swept a hand to indicate the whole region north, east and northwest of them—"ees drain to de lak'. So eet ees not moch creek and dere ees not moch head. Bot long tam ago on de west of de lak' dere ees som't'ing happen. De ground fall an' de wataire eat down until she cut back to de rim of de valley on dees side." Again he indicated a place on his rough map which was not, apparently, far from their present camping ground. "De stream dat flow into de lak' right dere, she cut too far and de lak' begin to run out de hole into Wheetman's Creek. She ees ver' steep on dat side and she fall a long way. Dose ees w'at ees call' de Bridal Falls. An' dose falls, she's run into Wheetman's Creek and mak' dat pretty beeg creek. So Wheetman build de dam below de falls w'ere he get enough wataire for run hees mill. You *compris, m'sieu'?*"

"Whitman's Creek captured a feeder to the lake," said Ray wonderingly. "Yes, I understand that. There are other cases of the kind. But——"

He fell silent, frowning over this. It was understandable, of course, but it was more than that. It was interesting, although he could hardly have said why.

"Will you show that falls to me in the morning?" he asked.

"But certainly," said Jean in French. "I shall show you anything you may desire to see."

CHAPTER X.

In the morning, as soon as they had eaten, old Jean led Ray along the bank of the lake, through the underbrush, for a mile toward the north. The slope of the banks and surrounding hills lessened as they went and the sky line of the ridge around the valley grew constantly lower, though normally it should have risen somewhat to conform to the geological scheme. At every outcrop of rock, of which there were not many on this side of the ridge, Ray stopped and tried to figure what had caused this condition. That there had been a fault and slipping of the strata was certain but he could not recall ever having read of anything like this. Still, the only theory that could explain that lowering the wrong way was that there had been a break transversely across the strata and that one side of the crack had slipped down, leaving the other looming up. He could see ahead of them the ground again rising abruptly over what seemed a notch where the ridge ran down to form a gully leading back from the side of the lake.

Finally they came into this notch to find it running back below the water line in a steep-sided gully, in a tangle of brush and small trees. Through it water from the lake ran singingly.

It was difficult to force a way in this miniature cañon, lined with spruce saplings and brush as it was. But by wading in the shallow stream where the going was too rough on land they finally came out on the other side of the ridge where, with a swift, leaping acceleration, the little stream suddenly quickened and went tumbling down abrupt slopes in a series of cataracts, finally to plunge over what seemed to be a cliff and go thundering into space.

They made their way to the edge of the falls and sought a place where the entire slope of the ridge was to be seen. The slope down to the valley of Whitman's Creek fell off in a series of cliffs to a gigantic talus slope. It was a hundred feet to the top of the slope and the great heap of soil fell away to another bench below it and that, in turn, to a third. Fully five hundred feet below them and half a mile or more distant the floor of the valley lay and down it meandered the silver ribbon of the creek. The valley was fairly level and wide but narrowed sharply just to their left. The creek swerved around and cut close to the lower slopes before it reached the spot opposite them.

The little stream from the lake fell and leaped down the cliff and over the benches and slashed its way to join the slower waters that properly belonged to the valley. A considerable distance below, where the val-

ley narrowed to its least width, ran the low line of a dam, holding back the augmented current. Below the dam, Ray knew, must lie the mill he had heard of. It could not be much of a mill, for neither volume nor head of water was sufficient to produce a great amount of power.

He understood, however, why the stream had not been dammed at its outlet. The fissure was in solid rock, it was shallow and the volume of water was not great. A dam thrown across the outlet would have given a tremendous head, to be sure, but hardly sufficient volume to do more than run one small turbine.

But his eye roved restlessly along the escarpment of the valley, back to the north and west. The general trend of Whitman's valley was away from the lake, approaching it at this point as closely as anywhere, perhaps. Yet, looking along the steep slopes he noted, here and there, gullies cutting back raggedly into the bare rock and débris. There were no trees on this slope and, in fact, very little vegetation. That meant severe erosion such as for the most part the lake banks had escaped.

He was very thoughtful now, when he turned away and followed old Jean back through the fissure. It had taken them a long time to make the journey up to the fissure and through it and it was noon before they returned to their camp. Silently they set about preparing a meal, Ray lost in thought and old Jean dreamily sunk in memories of old times.

"We will be going home," said Ray at last, "down Whitman's Creek and past Whitman's mill."

And then, with the utterance of that name, another of those elusive memories leaped to life. Whitman's Mills. *Whitman's Mills Company vs. Amalgamated Pulp and Paper Company!* That was where he had seen that name, on that letter he had read and carelessly tossed away as of slight interest to him, who already had no need of proof regarding Burgess' iniquities! Of course! And he had heard something more of that lawsuit from the loquacious landlord at Seeley's Corners. There was litigation over this water right and he could now understand why. A dam across the fissure would not furnish power of any value but it would be possible to close the fissure and thus raise the water line of the lake to just the extent by which this other outlet lowered it. And the Paisley Falls dam could take care of much more volume than it had. To get that additional flow would be worth something to Amalgamated, although perhaps not very much. It would at least give them a much evener flow than they now had, shortening the period of low water by an appreciable time.

According to the letter Whitman had won his suit. That was rather puzzling to Ray. Certainly he could not have been much of a menace to Amalgamated with his little dam and mill, yet he was rather inclined to consider that Amalgamated had the better claim. As an engineer his sympathy, professionally, would be with the side which utilized the power to the best interest of all and he thought the courts should take that view also. Evidently they had not. Ray was inclined to think that there must be something in Whitman's right beyond the mere grant under existing laws, and he proposed to look into it.

If there was—if there was anything that would justify the scheme that was slowly taking shape in his mind, there would be a day of reckoning for Burgess! His rage and desire for revenge leaped into hot life as he saw at last the means to accomplish it. Saw it dimly, tentatively, it is true, but at least there was a ray of light where there had been none before. Here was power—*power*—right under his eyes and every bit of it, every foot pound of it, should be riven from the great company which Burgess headed! He set his teeth on his pipestem and grinned like a wolf as he envisioned those great mills below droning to full stop of the turbines while the water behind their big dam fell and fell to trickling impotence, while the huge penstock drained dry and the dynamos ceased to whir.

Atlantic Light and Power! And Ben Folsom's company was managing that corporation. It was stifling for lack of expansion but here was such a water right as it had never dreamed of, right to its hand. Amalgamated was choking Atlantic to death, was it? But here was the turn of the under dog. Atlantic would wax fat and prosper while Amalgamated would see one of its prize units languish and die. All this might happen if——

That "if" was the crucial point. "If" Whitman had a grant that was unique, all this might happen. But that must await his call on Whitman.

Grown grim and silent now he urged Jean to activity and hustled him into the canoe. He directed their course along the bank and with every available fishing line spliced into one he took rough soundings along the shore as he worked north. Past the fissure and the captured stream they went, dropping their line close to the shore and again, farther out. The banks grew steeper as they went on, scooped out by the ice of ages past, the water along the shore deeper, and with each sign of added depth Blaisdell's glee mounted in him.

They camped that night far to the north of their last stopping place and old Jean mildly wondered at the sudden interest of his companion in details of the lake and its bed. But Ray told him nothing now. He would wait and see what was to come of all this before taking him into his confidence.

Next morning they landed, left the canoe cached on the bank and with their equipment on their backs started to climb the ridge that bordered the lake on the western side. They gained the top and found themselves about a mile from the lake looking down across steep, rocky slopes that fell from bench to bench down into Whitman's valley. Ray paid little heed to this spot. It was not what he was looking for. He skirted the ridge until he came to a gully leading downward and led the way down this until they gained the first bench where the going, though rough, was fairly level. Along this bench, high above the valley, they worked downward for two or three miles. Every time they came to a gully cutting back into the ridge Blaisdell explored it, but he always went on after a bit.

He kept rough note of course and distance by means of a compass and counting paces. It was rather slow work but he was patient, realizing its importance. At last he noted that the general trend of the valley side was as he had guessed on seeing it from above the fissure the day before, curving back into the ridge and toward the lake.

And again he found luck with him. Where the valley cut deepest into the ridge, not more than a quarter mile from the lake, though separated from it by towering heights of solid rock, he came upon a deeper, wider gully than usual and followed it back. It rose only slightly and he soon discovered that his guess that what had happened in one spot would probably have happened in another had proved correct.

There was another fissure here, a lower, deeper, greater crack than the one before. Here extended a deep cañon reaching back far toward the lake, until it was blocked by the solid cliff of the main ridge.

He eagerly made a rough plot of his course, and guessed as well as he could how far this split extended toward the lake. The result, while merely an approximation, pleased him.

He had what he wanted. There might possibly, though not probably, be a better spot than this but that could be determined at leisure. This was good enough, at any rate. If Whitman could produce anything worth while the problem was solved.

Now he took every slope that led down to the valley and after some pretty rough going they came out on the level floor where cultivated land and a road bespoke civilization of a sort. Down this they hurried and finally came to the narrow part of the valley which was spanned by the dam. Blaisdell chuckled grimly as he examined this. It was an old, stout masonry affair with crude gates and spillways and a wooden penstock. The head, he judged, was not more than twenty feet. Below it the mill nestled drowsily, the drone of its one little turbine singing sleepily above the rattle of the shafting and gears of the machines it drove.

There was a small house on the slope of the valley about a hundred yards from the mill, and a narrow-gauge railroad, rusty with slight use, held a few cars, one of which was half loaded with bundles of pulp. But there was little wood in the pile beside the track and the air of the place was that of hopeless decay and idleness.

They made their way to the house and knocked on the door. It was opened by a faded woman of middle age, the heiress of old Whitman, Ray supposed. She nodded listlessly when they asked for Whitman and led them through a musty kitchen into a mustier living room.

Seated in an old rocker, with his feet, in woolen socks, lifted to an old center table, sat an old man, big and gnarled, white of beard, bald of head. He wore a hickory shirt and fustian breeches and he seemed tired—very tired, as he smoked meditatively from a corncob pipe.

"Father, yere's strangers to see you ag'in," said the lady.

The old man heaved his feet ponderously down and syung slowly toward them.

"They be, be they?" he growled. "Waal, what is it now?"

Old Jean ducked his head and grinned ingratiatingly.

"*Bo' jou'*, M'sieu' Wheetman," he said.

The old man looked and looked at him, slowly ruminating. At last he got the idea he was after.

"*Bo' jou'*, Christophe," he said. "Whar'd ye come from? Throught ye was jailed fer killin' Jim Higgins?"

Jean shrugged and smiled deprecatingly. "Dat ees all by," he said. "I 'ave serve my term an' eet ees ovaire!"

"But Jim Higgins is jest as dead as ever, I reckon," said Whitman, with a short chuckle. "Well, are you round lookin' fer more victims?"

"*Ah, non!*" said Jean. "I 'ave brought a frien' who weesh to spik with you."

Whitman looked at Blaisdell. "Well, why don't he say somethin' then?" he asked pertinently.

Ray took the hint. "I'm an engineer, Mr. Whitman——" he began, and then the old man stopped him.

"And ye're pesterin' around about my water right and ye want to make a million dollars fer me er else ye want to buy it fer ten cents in Confederate money! I know all about it. There's been a whole boilin' of ye up here before you."

"There has?" said Ray, alarmed. "Who were they representing?"

"One of 'em was a lawyer that wanted to represent me as soon as he heerd how the suit come out. He was goin' to sell me out to Amalgamated fer more'n a million an' he only wanted me to put up five thousand dollars expense money and give him half o' what I got. Then there was a gal that wore pants come along an' she was talkin' about bein' from Atlantic Light and Power and she wanted to know would I sell to them. I said I'd sell to ary one that would pay me what I was out and she wanted to know what hoss power I had. I told her and she like to 'a' fell dead. He! He!"

His chuckle was half humorous, half bitter. But it was clear that old Whitman had lost hope for his little mill and his water power.

"Well, I'm not here for any one yet except myself and I don't know whether I want to offer you anything or not. What I did want was to get the exact details regarding your water right, what it embraces and what the court decided. That, I presume, will be reported in time, but if you will let me see a copy of the opinion——"

The old man heaved himself slowly around. "Jane!" he bellowed. "Jane, git that law report out and bring it yere!"

To Ray he said, hopelessly and stolidly. "You're welcome to read it but I don't reckon you'll find it interestin'. However, go to it!"

Ray received a printed pamphlet from the faded woman and eagerly opened it. He skimmed through the opening statement detailing the genesis and claims of the parties to the litigation and then read on with growing excitement. The opinion was long and involved but it was fairly clear. He read it through and then handed it to the old man.

"Mr. Whitman," he said, "I'm not in a position to say anything definite now and I don't want to rouse false hopes. But you've a water right here whose value I don't think you or any one else knows. If you'll consider an option on it—or would you prefer to sell an interest?"

Whitman, old and broken, stared at him without understanding.

"Option? Sell an interest? What fer?"

"Not for your mill or the little jag of pulp you are able to make and sell. In fact, I judge that what pulp you are making is being sold at a loss. Nor is there any hope of developing your creek to a respectable output of current. I suppose Amalgamated have not offered you anything for it?"

"Not enough to make it worth while," said Whitman dryly. "They wanted to stop me usin' the falls and git the right to block up the outlet on the ground that it was a diversion of the nateral flow of the lake. Waal, ye see what the soo-preme court had to say about that. They allowed my grant, which come down from the colonial legislature through my great-grandfather, was good and valid and took precedence over any subsequent acts governin' the disposition of the water rights of this yere State. And that there grant, ye see, allows me to take an' impound and use fer my own benefit ary an' all flow and run-off whatsoever and wha'rever originatin', whether naterally er artificially, which finds its outlet through this here valley, an' it also grants me the right to develop sech flow in ary way whatsoever an' from ary source, makin' specific

mention of Glacier Lake. Which the court allows that sech a right, ef it was carried out to extremes, would maybe be null an' void on account it might conceivably gimme the right to all the water in the State, so it sets out to define the actooal limits of the grant."

"So I see," said Ray. "The justice says that, for practical purposes, the scope of the grant may be confined to such sources of power as are actually and potentially available to you. Of these, it describes the normal drainage basin of Whitman's Creek as the chief but it also points out that, even in the time of the original grant, some of the water of Glacier Lake had been diverted by nature into Whitman's valley and that the grant specifically recognized this fact. The terms of the grant, according to the court, are clear, and embrace the possibility that what had happened in the past might conceivably happen in the future. It states that improbable and remote as such a contingency may appear, it is nevertheless within the realms of possibility. The question of perpetuities is discussed in some length and dismissed with the statement that the right under consideration is merely an outright title, in no way creating an entailed estate since the right of disposition is not restricted nor are any rules of descent imposed. The final conclusion is: that your right to the present flow is incontestable and unaffected by restrictive laws passed since the date of the grant and that, in the opinion of the court, not only is your title to the present flow secure but that if, by either natural or artificial means, that flow could be increased by diversion from other drainage areas—by which, under natural limitations and more specific mention in the grant, is undoubtedly meant from Glacier Lake—such diversion would be within your rights and should it result in loss to other users of the flow from said lake, such as the present respondent, no remedy would lie as against you. That, substantially, is the gist of the decision."

"Barrin' the damages. However, they done found I can't been damaged none to speak of an' assessed nominal damages agin' Amalgamated. Time I collected it it didn't even pay attorney's fees."

"That's a sweeping and unusual grant, Mr. Whitman. It has its value."

"What value?" asked the old man. "Of course I could blast out a deeper channel fer that creek but it'd jest give me so much more flow. Countin' the cost agin' the extry power it'd be a dead loss."

Ray nodded. "But I think there is another way," he said. "I don't want to hold out unjustified hope but I'll pay you two thousand dollars for a six months' option on the grant and the rights under it at fifty thousand dollars."

The old man stared at him with growing suspicion. Slowly he shed his air of hopelessness for one of Yankee shrewdness.

"It seems to be wuth a lot to you," he said. "An' thar'fore it may be wuth a lot to me. You was speakin' of an interest, also?"

"As an alternative," said Ray, "I'll take a conditional one half interest in the rights under the grant, with the agreement that I bind myself to spend such sums up to a maximum of fifty thousand dollars, in preliminary surveys and investigations which shall determine the feasibility of additional development. Should nothing come of this, my interest to revert to you."

Whitman cogitated a long time. "And ye won't state what yer scheme is?" he said at last.

"No," said Ray. "Not because I haven't made you a fair offer but because I can't take even that chance of its leaking out." He rose with an air of finality. "What is your answer?"

Whitman had been scrutinizing him closely and appeared to make up his mind.

"Draw up a memo of it an' I'll have my lawyer put it in legal shape," he said. "I reckon if you can take a sportin' chance, I ain't too old to do the same. Drap 'round in a week er so."

CHAPTER XI.

On the hurried trip back across the ridge to the lake and then down to the river and back to the mill Ray Blaisdell found himself elated and light-hearted as he had not been for many weeks. He found himself humming songs to the accompaniment of the dipping paddles and old Jean fell into his mood, leading in old boat songs of the *couriers du bois,* mostly sad and mournful in cadence if not in words. Yet Ray did not feel sad nor mournful and in fact he did not even feel such elation as he had expected to feel when his chance came. True, he now had an opportunity of striking at his enemy, striking heavily and effectively,

but he found difficulty in even recalling that fact. His mind was disposed to shift eagerly and confluently to technical details, to avidly settle upon the work to be done, to envision an engineering achievement that would be unique and striking. The creative instinct, the builder's urge, somnolent for so long, was awake and active, crowding his personal affairs into the background until he had to remind himself of them and fan his hatred by repeating his wrongs to himself.

Again and again the memory of Burgess, sleek, prosperous and complacent, with his round flesh and scanty hair; the memory of Myla Ratcliffe, callous and careless of the wreck she had made of his ideals, faded out to be replaced by phantoms of white, towering walls impounding blue water, of the thunder of falling floods, the lofty walls of power houses, whence sang the droning music of turbines and giant generators, the tangled order of transmission cables leading outward to the ends of the earth. At times, even as he forced himself to gloat over what his revenge would be, a wave of what was almost disgust swept over him, revealing that motive in all its pettiness and futility.

But he held to it stubbornly in spite of the difficulty. And the thought of Burgess drew him to a consideration of his own situation. There was no more need of his staying at the mill, since his work lay otherwhere and yet he hesitated at leaving it. There might be something to pick up there. There might, indeed, be an advantage to be gained in watching Burgess should he come again during the next few weeks.

But Burgess might recognize him if he came and that would be fatal. He asked Jean, casually, how he had escaped such recognition, which he evidently feared. Jean was quite frank about it.

"Som'tam I get seek an' go away w'en I hear he ees com'. But som'tam I do not hear in tam. So, eet ees no matter! I tak' de reesk. Bot de beeg boss, Meester Burgess, he not com' een de acid tower an' by dose sulphur stoves. Dose stoves dey make de boys cough too moch! Non! Old Jean he seet in front de stove een de sulphur smell an' de beeg boss, he steek hees head een. 'Whew!' he say, an' sneeze an' cough! 'Whow! Dees damn stink too moch for me!' So he don' see old Jean an' go away."

"That's an idea," said Ray. "Are there any more jobs like that?"

"There ees worse as dat! De stoves dey are bad bot de cookers are de worst! W'en dey are close' and de chips are cookin' dey are not so bad. Bot w'en dey shoot de cookin', mojee! By gar I see dem mans ron out de plac' and roll on de hill an' cough 'teel dey choke! An' no one see anyt'ing for de steam. Dat's not place w'ere de beeg boss com' ver' moch!"

Ray nodded. He had seen something of the kind himself and it occurred to him that a job in the cooking plant would be fairly safe while, at the same time, bringing him actually closer to the main activities of the mills. The pulp mill was, after all, merely a backwater. It was not large, the main end of the Paisley Falls plant being to make paper, and to that end there was shipped to it from a number of other pulp mills a vast quantity of the pulp in bundles. Even Whitman's little jag, now almost infinitesimal, was purchased by Amalgamated, besides the huge quantities its own mills turned out.

There were some preparations to make before Ray was ready to begin his work in the woods. While he made them he had the wish to stay at Paisley Falls as the most convenient spot. Therefore when he and Jean had returned to find that Burgess and his party had gone he first called in Gaston Grêve and asked him if he were wedded to his job at the presses. Gaston was profanely scornful. If there was other work to do which would pay as much he would never wish to see another wet press.

"There is a cabin on Nine Mile Creek, I understand, which Jean owns. Also, there is a road to Nine Mile from Bramstead. How would you like to go into the woods with me this summer and work on a surveying party?"

"I see dose mans survey de railroad once," said Gaston. "Dat's fine job for loaf, by gar! You geev' me chance for work een de woods an' pull leetle tape once, I show you! Mojee! Dat's beeg cinch!"

Gaston was puzzled when he found that Blaisdell was going to lead the party himself, not understanding how a mere mill hand could do it, but he was trustful and loyal. The prospect of work in the woods delighted him also and when he understood that his first duty would be to open the cabin on Nine Mile Creek and loaf there after making arrangements to have certain supplies and express parcels hauled to it, he

was overcome with joy. Active as a wild animal, never idle, he yet looked upon a prospect of idleness as being the next thing to heavenly. He would probably work as hard at Nine Mile as at the mill but it would be voluntary work. If he cared to he might lie on his back all day and look at the sky.

He was sent on his way after Ray had written letters to Folsom. In these he did not tell his plans but merely requested that a complete outfit of instruments and equipment be sent to Gaston Grêve, at Bramstead. He also made arrangements through Folsom to have his securities sold and the money made available to him. He had taken the precaution before leaving to arrange a power of attorney and indorse them for transfer in case he should have to realize on them. He did not even give his present address nor betray what he was doing. This letter he had Gaston mail at Bramstead.

Then he set about to secure a job in the sulphite-cooking plant and found that not at all difficult. Men were prone to quit that job after a short experience of it and the superintendent was not particular who he put on it. There was not much to learn about his own share of the work. It was common labor of an unpleasant sort.

The sulphite cookers were housed in a building about sixty or seventy feet high built against the side of a hill. The lower part of it was an open room, with a ceiling forty feet above the floor. Next to it was the power house where steam was generated. In this huge, high room, on cement floors, stood three enormous steel cylinders fitted with gauges and pipes from the acid tower and the steam plant. The tops of the cylinders narrowed to about three feet and were closed by big, round iron lids which clamped solidly to the body. Above each of them, in the ceiling, were trapdoors. Below each cylinder big pipes ran to the sulphite storage tanks in an adjoining building.

The genesis of this process was in the acid tower where Jean loafed away most of his working hours. This tower was a tall, skeleton affair of wood with a lift in it. From vast piles of broken marble Jean and his colleagues conveyed barrow loads to the lift and carried them up to pile in the tower at various levels. Below was a tank of water through which ran a network of pipes connected with the top of the tower and also with the sulphur stoves in a low building near by. The stoves, which Jean also tended, were merely flat, deep affairs of sheet iron with a fire door across the front about five inches high and six feet wide. From a storage room back of these flour sulphur was wheeled and shoveled deftly into the narrow openings to burn luridly and with a stiffling odor in the stoves. Pipes carried the sulphur fumes to the tank.

From this tank the fumes mixed with water were carried to the top of the tower and allowed to drip down over the marble. The chemical reaction set up resulted in the liquid becoming sulphurous acid by the time it reached the bottom and was drawn off to storage.

Above the loft where Ray now had his position was another in which huge quantities of spruce chips were gathered. Openings in the form of big wooden funnels were situated exactly over the trapdoors which hid the tops of the cookers. Ray's job was to fill the cookers with these chips, by removing the lids, opening the traps above the funnels and shoveling the chips into the cookers. When they were full, the lids were fastened down and the sulphurous liquor turned on to run into them.

There was nothing annoying about this part of it. That came later. The cookers were filled and emptied in series, of course, and as soon as one was filled and the steam turned on to cook it, it was nearly time to open another. It was when it was opened that the trouble came. The cooked and disintegrated fibers in the acid liquor, looking like bundles of silk, were drawn off, but the steam remained. When the lid was opened this steam, charged with sulphurous acid fumes, rushed out in choking, blinding clouds of terrific, penetrating odor. It set one to coughing and strangling until disaster to the lungs was threatened. More than once on that first day and afterward Ray was compelled to leap to the hill behind the loft and roll in the fresh air until the paroxysms abated.

He still had his problems, and plans to perfect also. The matter of assistants worried him. He wanted no one to know what he was doing yet he could not get along with only two helpers. Old Jean was quite willing to go but another man was necessary. He broached the subject of getting some one whom they could trust to Jean

that evening after his first day on the cookers as he sat, red eyed and still coughing. Jean was willing but dubious.

"I do not know so many mans," he said. "And dere ees not any I teenk I tell moch to. Gaston, he may find some one."

And then Renee looked up from her sewing, and said quietly:

"I will go, father."

"You!" ejaculated Ray. She turned her calm eyes on him.

"Why not?" she demanded. "I am strong, I can live in a camp. Why cannot I hold a rod or drag a tape?"

"I suppose you could," said Ray doubtfully. "But it will come to rough work, climbing, wading in water, chopping brush."

Renee only shrugged her shapely shoulders. "What is that?" she said disdainfully. "You must have one whom you can trust. I am that one."

He had hinted somewhat what this work meant and they were eager to aid him in it. After all, Renee was right. She could do the work as well as a man and much more intelligently than any man he could have found. So it was finally settled on that basis and Ray was surprised to find that the prospect of her presence pleased him a great deal.

In the meantime he went on with his work, grimly convinced that wherever else Burgess might come on his visits to the mills he would not come to the cookers. There were stretches of an hour or half an hour when Ray found himself idle with all the cookers full and being steamed. The insistent, biting, strangling fumes of the steamed acid, lingering in the loft drove the men out to sit on the hillside and await the ordeal of the next discharge of sulphite pulp but he did not take to the idleness when the time might be utilized to better advantage in inquiring into the processes of paper making. He generally wandered about the mill, noting every process; the big tank where the pulp was received and thinned out, the presses for making it into bundles, almost identical with those he himself had operated in the pulp mill. But when he tried his hand at running one he found that he had to acquire a new technique in cutting the tough, silky sulphite pulp from that required in slicing the ground wood pulp.

Here and there he wandered during that week and the next, his engineer's brain taking in and readily comprehending all the intricate and involved processes of the manufacture, his interest leading him to lend a hand at beaters, screens, and back tending until he could crouch between the calendars and the Fourdrinier, deftly rip the sheet of endlessly running paper, sweep the end about his arm and twist it until he could shoot it through the calendars and on to form another reel. He also caught the technique of picking up the film of pulp at the other end of the machine and leading it onto the canvas, a delicate operation by reason of the flimsy strength of the sheet at that point. He prowled around the machine tender as he walked out over his screens and felts on narrow boards, adjusting tensions and direction, inspecting them for holes and tears. In it all he had no other motive than the urge and instinct to learn whatever he could about an interesting mechanical process in which his enemy was concerned financially.

Sometimes he met scarcely veiled hostility and suspicion from men who shared Brady's belief that he was a spy of the company, but for the most part he found these laborers and mechanics a kindly, good-natured lot who were glad to show him what they knew and initiate him into the secrets of the trade. He gave no heed to the possible consequences that might follow on his curiosity, absorbed as he was in a growing conviction of the immensity and importance of this industry which supported hundreds of mills like this, turning out tremendous quantities of the news print that would go to inform an avid country in its search for current news.

But before long he sensed a certain hostility, half veiled, among certain of the men. One of the foremen was a leading union official and he began to show interest in Ray's movements. He watched him closely and sullenly, speaking to him only gruffly when Ray addressed him, grunting noncommittal and uninformative monosyllables in reply to his requests for information about processes. With him, one of the machine tenders, the aristocrats of the trade, grew unpleasant and ordered him away from his machine when Ray appeared. Other of the men, even among the lowly beatermen and screen tenders, scowled at him when they encountered him and pointedly refused to let him assist in their work.

He also caught the superintendent of the

factory watching him surreptitiously and when caught at it rather ostentatiously turning away in an evident attempt to show that he was ignored. But the superintendent's expression was mysterious. It was not hostile but rather curious and contemplative. Once Ray observed him talking to the cooker foreman as that individual was testing the sulphurous acid liquor in a test tube, in the tiny room where this chemical process was conducted on every charge of the cookers. Ray had investigated that also, readily grasping the simple reactions on which the test was based.

He had no idea what this interest meant to him and went on about his work with the underlying idea that he would soon be ready to leave and take up his real mission. If he could have been present at a meeting in the superintendent's office at the end of that second week he would have been more than surprised.

Without warning Burgess returned, accompanied by two or three officials of the company and with his wife also in the party. Myla had met him at Albany and declared that she was interested in his business affairs and would accompany him on the rest of his trip. She had come along and went everywhere with Burgess, inspecting the mills, making a great pose of absorbed interest, asking endless and rather silly questions of officers, especially the younger and more handsome of them and always keeping a close and suspicious eye on Burgess.

Things were not going entirely well with her. True, she had achieved her ambition and was now the wife of the man she had coveted. But socially she had gained little benefit. People whom she wanted to know did not reciprocate the desire. Nor, after some briefly satisfactory days, had Burgess continued to respond to what she regarded as affection. There had been a period when it had seemed that common interest would draw them together and make this marriage a success, but Burgess was the sort who lost interest as soon as possession involved responsibility. He was already, as she more than suspected, hunting other women as he had hunted her before Blaisdell had gone out of her life and when she still looked forward to respectability and commonplace happiness.

She sat now in the room off the superintendent's office awaiting the end of the conference, yawning and gloomily considering the situation. She had tried to arouse Starck's jealousy but had only succeeded in producing sneers and disagreeable remarks. She knew he was fast drifting away from her and she fiercely resented losing what she had striven so hard to attain. She eyed the door behind which he sat, her anger growing and smoldering into an ugly mood. In her bosom, put there recently, rested the letter which she had once held over him as a threat and her hand crept to the spot every now and then. She might not have his care and affection, which, strangely enough, she wanted, but she would at least have his outward respect, or she would make him rue his neglect and disdain.

All unconscious Starck Burgess listened to the superintendent, who, after more important matters had been discussed, had called his attention to a man in the mills.

"It's always been the policy of the company to look for good men," he said, "and I presume it still is. Well, there's one in this mill that I think it would pay to watch. A fellow named Higgins drifted in some weeks ago and went to work in the pulp mill. He stayed on there until he had some trouble with the union. They thought he was a spy, as near as I can make out, because he seems to have a good education and much more ability than the average. He asked for a shift to the paper mill and I put him on the cookers. But I've been watching him for some time and he isn't an ordinary laborer by a long shot. Understands chemistry and is a pretty good engineer, if I'm not mistaken. He's shown unusual interest, too, and he already makes a pretty fair back tender and grasps a machine tender's job as well or better than I do myself."

"What have you done with him?" asked the general manager of the company.

"I haven't done anything. He keeps very much to himself and Callahan and Brady both are bristling about him. Callahan was in here just a day or so back demanding to know what this fellow was doing here and making threats unless he joined the union or was fired. They don't want him in the local, with their usual consistency, and I don't want to fire him. I judge that he's a man of education and ability, I know he has brains, and he's fast getting a grasp of paper making that is unusual in a novice.

"Still, his usefulness here is about over. With Callahan snarling about spies, if I

took him off and put him in the office or gave him a good job they'd be convinced that he was a spy and we might have trouble. On the other hand I can't risk a row over keeping on a common laborer. One way or the other he'll have to go. We don't want to lose a man of that caliber, who, in my opinion, is fine timber for a superintendent. I'd suggest that you see him and talk to him. Then you could consider transferring him to another mill and putting him on in some more responsible position. That's my recommendation, gentlemen."

"And worth considering," said the general manager. "Have the man sent up here and let's talk to him."

But Burgess spoke up. "I'd rather take a look at him first, in his natural environment," he said. "If he comes in here we won't get a true line on him. He'll be wary, and if he suspects, he'll be putting his best foot forward. Let's go and see him on the job and talk to him where it won't be apparent that we've some interest in him."

The general manager acquiesced readily enough but the superintendent smiled.

"I thought you weren't fond of the cookers since the first time you ran into them," he said.

"I can do without 'em when the job is merely looking around," grinned Burgess. "But far be it from me to shirk any hardship when there's an object to be gained. Besides," he grinned, "Mrs. Burgess is keen to see everything and she might as well see the cookers. We'll take her along."

They acquiesced in this and in a moment the four men were strolling across the yards toward the sulphite plant where wisps of white, fleecy smoke hung about the tall building whose top showed above the hill into which it was built. It was pretty smoke, not at all sinister to the eye, and Myla, walking a little behind the other two in Burgess' company, had no suspicion. She was more interested in her own problems.

"Going to show you a paragon in overalls," said Burgess sneeringly. "MacKrail has dug up a new phenom'. I guess you can vamp him all you wish, if your taste runs to that sort."

"My taste is at least as good as yours," she retorted. "That female salesman at Bramstead would offset almost any one I could produce. And there are enough others to make it inadvisable for you to talk. I'm getting tired of it, Starck!"

"Well, you can always take a rest whenever you want to," he answered callously.

"And so can you," she replied with suppressed rage. "The rest you may take won't be so satisfying, however. You might spend it behind bars if you're not careful."

Burgess shrugged his stout shoulders and grinned. "A wife can't give evidence against her husband," he reminded her.

"I don't have to give it," she replied. "That letter is evidence enough, isn't it? Suppose it got into the hands of the department of justice?"

"It would be awkward for both of us, wouldn't it?" he answered. "But as you can't get it until we're back in New York, suppose we drop the discussion until then?"

"We won't drop it," she answered. "I've got the letter nearer than New York."

He started and eyed her closely, his eyes taking on a cunning look. He had often noted a woman's distrust of man-made safeguards and her tendency to desert such things as safe-deposit vaults for hiding places in stockings, tins of talcum powder, vases on a mantelshelf, but somehow he had never credited his hard-headed wife with the same failings. She had it with her, hidden in some ridiculous place! Well, if that was the case she would not have it long.

He became ingratiating with suspicious suddenness, professing contrition and promising reform. Myla listened, half convinced, half doubting.

A moment later they came into the pungent, biting steam and the first breath of the cookers set them to coughing. Burgess seized Myla by the arm as she shrank back and mercilessly pulled her into the loft.

CHAPTER XII.

There were three men in the loft, two of whom were crouched above the big cooker top almost ready to lift it and release its suffocating steam. Above them, looking down through a trap above a great, wooden funnel, the third man was all ready to start the slide of cascading chips down to recharge the giant cylinder. The steam had cleared away from the last charge although the odor and strangling fumes still remained.

"Hold up, Jensen!" shouted the superintendent hurriedly. "Don't open up until we're through!"

The man in charge rose up from his

crouch, though Ray, who was helping him, remained squatting by the lid. Jensen made his way slowly to the superintendent and Blaisdell, conscious that his crisis had come, bent his bearded face and felt his heart leap in the fear that he would be recognized. The studs were out of the lid and a slow seepage of steam rose and beclouded his face. He gave thanks for that although the fumes were almost choking him.

Beside the other men Jensen listened stolidly as the superintendent asked for Higgins. He turned around and shouted loudly.

"Higgins! You ban com' har? Boss wants you!"

Ray noted the stout, immaculate Burgess, coughing in the murk, the general manager, a stranger to him, whose eyes were running with the effort to suppress the discomfort of the atmosphere. There, clinging to Burgess, was Myla, recognized with a surge of rage. She had a handkerchief to her face and was bent over trying to avoid the murk. He started to straighten, grimly desperate with the knowledge that his immunity was at an end, with no idea but that detectives had found him out and betrayed him to Burgess. Otherwise why should this director ask after an obscure laborer?

Like a cornered rat he looked around for some weapon with which to fight, for some opening through which to flee. The only way led past the group and there was nothing with which he could defend himself.

Or, stay! There was one thing. The heavy lid lay beneath him and the faint wreaths of steam curling through the loosened rim were weapons almost deadly even to men like himself, who had grown accustomed to them. To novices whose lungs had never felt the bite of the acid they would be like a dose of poison gas. He saw them coming, and desperate and yet vindictively triumphant he suddenly laughed out loud and stooped to heave the lid upward.

There was a cry from the superintendent, an oath from Jensen. From the lifted lid the steam shot upward and the man at the trap, seeing the orifice gaping below and the steam coming up not knowing that orders had been given to delay, pulled the trap of the funnel and sent a cloud of chips pouring downward to fall into the cooker and force the sluggish steam upward and out in great billowing clouds.

For an instant Ray stood the reek, strangling and choking. Then in spite of himself he pawed and groped his way back out of the worst of it. To get out of it as it spread and sifted through the room, was impossible, but to stay at the mouth of the cooker was equally impossible even for him. Jensen, hardened by long experience, was pawing his way toward him but the others, even the superintendent, were swirling in a mist of strangling fumes, cursing or crying out as their instincts guided them.

Ray groped, half blinded by the full charge he had received, throat and lungs burning and coughing, gulping for purer air. He heard a shriek and saw dimly a form clad in silk and white flannel skirt which clutched him and clung. He tried to shake her off but he was grasped on the other side by another form, clinging desperately.

He felt the woman grow limp but she retained her spasmodic hold on him and he could not shake it off. The man clung and wrestled, swearing, ordering him furiously to take them out of this inferno. In the comparative purity of the air at this distance from the cooker, although none of it was at all pure, he could stand it himself, but they could not. Yet he did not intend to stay there. His opportunity to get out unrecognized was at hand. He swore as fervently as Burgess as he realized that he was being held back and delayed.

There was no shaking them off so he suddenly seized the woman about the knees and lifted her, staggering toward the wide doors to the hillside. Burgess clung frantically to him and dragged along with them. He fought his way out and into the air, staggering along until he reached the round top of the hill where the refreshing winds blew the reek away from them.

Here, in the full glare of the sun, he tried to drop Myla but her hands clung convulsively to him as he shook and squirmed in the paroxysms of coughing from tortured throat and lungs. Burgess whooped and strangled beside him, sinking to the ground and doubling over in his discomfort. Ray himself was coughing and stuttering raucously. Where the others were they could not see.

Hastily, between spasms of coughing, Ray tried to tear Myla's frantic grip from his coat. But she struggled and choked and dug her fingers deeper as he wrestled with her. Her hat fell off above her reddened, streaming eyes and she loosened one hand

to clutch her bosom. Rocking with knees clasped together, Burgess barked away.

Ray seized Myla's wrists and tried to force them from their constricting grip. He made an effort of his whole strength and she gave way with the hand that clutched his coat. But the other hand, yielding also, tore the light silk of her blouse and the lingerie underneath, coming away with a grip of flimsy material and something else that crackled and crumpled in her clutching hand.

Burgess, whooping and barking, caught a glimpse of it as Ray stooped to let her down to the ground. Shaken and shattered as he was he was able to command his actions. He leaned suddenly over and clutched for the paper which she held onto with the tenacity of a drowned person.

"Gimme—gimme that—paper. 'S mine —gimme."

With his own raucous whoopings beating a tattoo Ray reached for the outstretched hand and flung it back. The girl clutched at him as his arm came across her body and opened her hand to grasp his solid support against which she might still her shaking body. The paper came away and remained in his grasp, forgotten and unthought of. He wrenched his hand free again and Myla groped to clutch at Burgess. Her eyes stared wildly at both of them.

"Ray!" she suddenly screamed and then was racked by another spasm. "Starck!" Incoherent coughs choked back her utterance again but Blaisdell caught a word or two. "Don't—don't! Oh, my God! Don't —let—have it!"

And then he found Burgess staring at him and knew that he had caught that betraying name.

"Blaisdell! Morrison! Morrison! Damn this stench! Where are you?"

It was high time to be going. The fat was in the fire now. Ray shook himself free from the last detaining clutch and sprang to his feet. He darted down the hill and toward the sulphite tower, plunging into the sulphur-burning room where old Jean sat curled on a bench reading lazily.

"Jean! Jean!" he gasped, striving to get his breath. "The jig's up! Burgess ——" He was wracked by another spasm of coughing.

But his gestures were eloquent if his words were incoherent. The old man jumped up and ran to him. He grasped Jean's arm and dragged him from the building.

"Never mind the stoves!" he choked as well as he could. "Some one will look after them. We've got to get going while the going's good! Burgess knows me!"

Old Jean fell into a run by his side as they ducked through the yard where the piles of logs hid them; here and there great stacks of pulp piled under canvas gave them shelter from observation. One or two stolid laborers, Italian or newly arrived Irish stared at their evident haste. But it was none of their business and they were not inclined to interfere in things which they did not understand. They gained the outer gates and struck off down the road to the straggling village.

It was not until Ray, breathless and still coughing, had burst in on Renee that he was able to explain. Even then he gave them the barest sketch of what had happened, urging them to hurry in assisting him to flight. He still clutched the scrap of lace and paper that was in his hand and now was able to note it for the first time with some wonder as to what it was. He was about to drop it when he noted something vaguely familiar about the envelope he held. He looked at it hastily, recognizing it.

He was alert and with all his wits by this time, action and peril spurring him into mental activity. The letter! The letter about Whitman's Mills! He had thought about it more than once since recalling it, sensing now that it referred to no bribery of possibly venal State court officials but to some tampering with no less a body than the United States Supreme Court, an offense as serious as could be imagined. He had it at last—had the weapon he had often longed for. He need no longer wait to strike at his enemy!

Flaming with newly roused rage and the desire for vengeance he hurried the two along, gathering scraps of his belongings, bundling them together any way. Then, with Jean assisting, he rushed to the river bank and loaded the canoe. Jean stood on the bank as he leaped in and seized the paddle, waving a farewell to them against the time they could follow him.

He drove himself mercilessly up the river, all that day, forcing his stiffening muscles to their task in spite of rebellion. The afternoon faded into the long, glorious summer twilight and still he kept on, though his

strength, exhausted before he had started by that bout with the acid steam, was almost gone. The twilight faded into dark until the black, swirling water, dotted with stars reflected in its depths, merged into the black tree-lined shore. He could go no farther unless he wished to run the risk of ripping the bottom out of the canoe against some half-submerged rock.

He caught a flickering glimpse of a fire on the bank and headed in to it, too tired to reflect except that here was shelter of some sort. He did not think that by going ashore to join some camper he might be leaving a trail. All he wanted was to gain the bank, roll up and sleep.

His canoe grounded and he leaped out and pulled it to the shingle. The thick saplings came down close to the shore but he groped to a ribbon of lighter shade against the ground where a trail broke through them. It climbed rather steeply and led his wearied body out to a bench, clear of trees and covered with grass where the fire blazed cheerfully and a tent glowed wanly in the blackness of the night.

A slender figure in breeches rose from before the fire and faced him.

"My heavens!" it said. "What's the matter with you?"

Ray recognized a woman but he was too tired to speculate on what a woman should be doing, evidently alone, in these wilds.

"Excuse me!" he said. "I thought a man might be camping here. I didn't mean to intrude and I'll be getting back to my boat."

"You look played out," the girl said half critically, half pitying.

"I'm all right," he protested. "I only hope I haven't frightened you. If I'd known who it was I wouldn't have come up here."

The girl looked at him closely, evidently classifying him.

"It's quite all right," she said. "I'm not in the least frightened. In fact, you had better stop a while and have something to eat. You look as though you needed it."

"I haven't eaten since morning, that's a fact," said Ray, laughing a little. "And I'm shamelessly hungry—and almost too tired to cook for myself."

She nodded pleasantly and as the firelight lit up her face he recognized her as that "Atalanta" whom he had encountered in Folsom's office. But now he felt no such contempt and scorn as he had manifested toward her on that occasion, when women meant to him nothing but something evil and treacherous and gifted with low cunning. Instead he found the contemplation of her clear, delicate features silhouetted against the flame under the great coils of hair singularly comforting and soothing. He had lived long with himself, without confidante or any one to minister to him, to extend the little aids to comfort that women always have available for their menfolk. He had never realized how heart warming it could seem to lie supine while a girl deftly worked for his comfort.

Then his hand crept to his face in an instinctive gesture but one long forgotten. It crept over the rough bush of his beard, grown suddenly distasteful to him. The disguise of it was useless now in any case. Indeed, it rather marked him. He would be described as a bearded man and, if he were clean shaven again it might well be the more difficult to trace him.

He had his razor and mirror in his bundle down by the river bank. He rose stiffly and murmured an apology to the girl, to stumble down the path to the water. Here he hauled his canoe farther up the bank and dumped out his packs. He found an electric lantern and his toilet articles and at once set to shaving. This done he washed carefully in the stream, the cold water infinitely comforting to his eyes, and then climbed back to the girl's camp.

She looked up and stared, not recognizing him until he spoke with a smiling apology. Then her brows met in a frown of dawning recollection and immediately smoothed out again as she laughed.

"Why, you're Ben Folsom's mysterious fugitive from justice," she said. "Evidently they didn't catch you."

CHAPTER XIII.

Ray felt a great shock of indignation as the conviction swept him that Folsom, his trusted friend, must have betrayed his secret to this girl. He took a step backward, frowning, and with face set in hard lines of defiance.

"You appear to know a great deal," he growled. But the girl only laughed again.

"Why, I have eyes and occasionally use them. You're the man I met in B. F. Folsom's office six or seven weeks ago. Ben

was reticent but clumsy. I'd read the description of you in the papers and I guessed your identity."

"You ought to be on the police force," sneered Ray. But he was relieved to know that Folsom had not turned traitor.

"It certainly would improve it to have a few women of intelligence," admitted the girl complacently. "However, I haven't any taste for man hunting, I'm willing to leave that to your incompetent sex. You need not be afraid that I am going to betray you."

"I don't know that I'm afraid, exactly," said Ray, "whether you betray me or not. However, under the circumstances, I'll not trouble you any longer."

The girl shrugged her shoulders.

"Oh, sit down!" she said impatiently. "You'll hardly gain anything by scurrying off to hide yourself in the woods, using up the rest of your strength when you may need it for an emergency. If I wanted to inform on you I'd hardly be feeding and helping you, would I? I'd be only too glad to send you off and hurry to the nearest telephone as soon as you were gone. In any case, I hardly think you are able to take care of yourself. If you had been you would have thought twice before you blundered into the first camp along the river to leave a trail any fool could follow. But that's like a man and so is the petty vanity which led you to shave off your disguising beard as soon as it occurred to you that you had a chance to make an impression on a silly woman."

Ray flamed with indignation.

"Vanity! D'you think I was trying to make an impression on you? You're quite mistaken, miss. I certainly wouldn't go out of my way——"

"Oh, yes, you would! You have just done it, you see. It's no use, however. I never yet saw the man who could make an impression on me. I have no use for them and you might as well know it first as last."

Ray tried to look as scornful as possible. "Unfortunately, you are wrong," he said. "I hate to contradict you but my reason for getting rid of that brush was that it had ceased to be a disguise and was rather a mark of identification."

"So you shaved it off the moment you saw me, thereby attracting inevitable attention and placing information of the change right where your pursuers could get it! Brilliant, I call that!"

"You're very clever," said Blaisdell. "You appear to know a great deal about me."

The girl removed a frying pan and coffeepot from the fire and pulled a plate and knife and fork from a pile of utensils. She deftly put food ready for him and then smiled cheerfully into his lowering face.

"It wasn't even clever to guess that you were being pursued," she said. "You come in here fairly staggering with weariness and with a wild, hunted stare in your eyes. You are a fugitive from justice and it is elementary to deduce that the hounds of the law probably are on your track. The mystery to me is that they haven't long ago landed you. They must be even stupider than you."

Blaisdell ignored the plate placed before him and stepped away.

"Thank you," he said stiffly. "I'll not trouble you. I could hardly accept your hospitality under the circumstances."

The girl whom he knew as Atalanta shrugged again. "Suit yourself," she said disdainfully. "I don't particularly mind having gone to the trouble all for nothing. But I'd advise you to stop somewhere very soon and rest. You look as though you needed it. You're sick, aren't you?"

"Sick!" he repeated stupidly. "Why, no! What makes you think——"

"Oh, you've been coughing like anything for the last quarter hour or more. But I suppose you'd deny being ill. They always do, I've heard."

"Who do?"

"Consumptives, of course. Maybe you are not one, but if I had that cough I'd be scared. I could hear you barking on the river long before you landed."

Blaisdell grinned a little, glad at last to have found this cocksure young woman mistaken in one item at least.

"It's pretty bad," he acknowledged hypocritically. "But I will be all right as soon as I get over the cold. Settled in my throat, you know, and hangs on. Only—only I guess I ought to keep outdoors. If they catch me they'll lock me up and that would be bad."

He even encouraged the lingering cough that he had brought with him, making it more hollow and distressing than it normally was. The girl showed instant pity.

"You certainly couldn't stand confinement," she said. "There, go ahead and eat,

Mr. Blaisdell, isn't it? You're safe enough with me. I wouldn't betray a dog that was hunted by those brutes. And take care of that cough. I know how hopeful people in your condition are, but you mustn't deceive yourself to the extent of neglecting it. You must live outdoors, of course, and you must eat eggs and red meat and lots of milk. But you also must avoid such violent exercise as this precipitate flight is necessitating. You were nearly exhausted when you staggered in here."

"I feel much better now, though," said Blaisdell complacently as he shamelessly attacked the food and hot coffee he had disdained and rejected but a moment before.

"Oh, of course! And feeling better, with a man's usual idiocy, you'll probably ignore all advice and set out to induce a serious relapse. Now, you listen to me, because I know a lot better than you what's best for you. You eat that food and then you go down and select a good, dry, sheltered place to sleep. Have you plenty of blankets?"

"A reasonable supply," said Blaisdell meekly.

"Probably meaning a couple of old, moth-eaten, thin things. Well, I'll give you one of mine. They're Hudson Bay blankets and that's what you ought to have. Then you wrap up warm and sleep as long as you can. In the morning you come up here and I'll give you breakfast and see that you eat what's good for you."

"I couldn't think of troubling you," said Blaisdell hastily.

"It's no particular trouble. You do what I tell you, young man. As for the men who are after you, I'll attend to them. Who are they, by the way?"

"I don't exactly know," said Blaisdell, almost forgetting to cough in the interest the situation was beginning to bear. Fortunately occasional convulsive spasms were still beyond his control and acted automatically to keep up the deception. "You see, I was recognized suddenly by Mr. Burgess, the man I'm supposed to have robbed, and his wife. I was working in his mills, you know."

"Of course I don't know! How should I?"

"You seem to know so much," said Blaisdell, with ironic meekness. "I thought you must know that. Anyhow," he went on hastily, observing her frowning impatience at his jibe, "I was. And they saw me. So I beat it while I had the chance and of course they probably have got all the local officers of the law on my trail by this time."

The girl looked at him thoughtfully.

"Do you think so?" she asked scornfully.

"Of course I do. What else is there to think?"

"Why, I suppose that thought is quite as deep and devious as anything you could expect from a man," she answered loftily. "I'll wager you have been indulging equally lucid thought all these weeks while you slunk in disguise imagining that every resource of the law was being used to hunt you down. You have doubtless been patting yourself on the back these many days at how cleverly you have outwitted them."

"I have not," said Ray angrily. "I had other things to think of."

"Well, I've not given it as much thought as you, no doubt, but I venture to say that I've thought to better purpose than you. This entire affair seems rather queer to me. I read Myla Ratcliffe's testimony——"

"You know her?" asked Blaisdell sharply.

Atalanta's scorn was withering. "That woman! Know her! I'd rather cut off my hand than let it be soiled by her touch!"

She paused for lack of ladylike words in which to express her feelings and then went on abruptly:

"I have a slight—*interest*—in her inasmuch as she married my father, though I feel humiliated to acknowledge his relationship. He is as—as bad as she, I suppose."

"Your father!" But Blaisdell was not so surprised as he might have been. He was recalling the innkeeper's description of Burgess' daughter, "called 'Atlanta,' because she come from that town maybe." No, he had been prepared for that revelation. And he also began to recall patchwork information which had reached him at the time of the rather sensational Burgess divorce suit. Mrs. Burgess, this girl's mother, had made a settlement out of court in lieu of alimony, taking over her husband's interest in Atlantic Light and Power. This was the girl who had been up here for that company investigating Whitman's water-power rights.

"I am Ruth Burgess," she answered coldly. "I trust that my relationship, which I regret, will not add to your uneasiness."

"Not in the least," said Ray. "I'm only wondering—but never mind. We were discussing your thoughts."

"Well, they are less blistering on your affairs than on my own. I read that testimony and it seemed to me it was cunningly calculated at first, to reach *you*. That is, the description of the bandit was yours, one you would recognize at once and yet one that would not mean so much to the authorities, notoriously unimaginative as they are. And there is no doubt that she knew perfectly who you were all the time and could have given your name. Yet it was not until it was certain that you had left town and were in hiding that she reluctantly gave further information which resulted in that indictment. Now that might have been due to the fact that she hesitated to betray you, but I can't be charitable enough to credit her with a decent motive."

"Nor I," said Blaisdell.

"I am quite sure she hates you bitterly. She wronged you. I know about your engagement to her, you see. That kind always hate any one they have injured. And my father would also hate you. He's vindictive and pitiless. I've heard my mother tell —but never mind that.

"Obviously those two would have had you behind bars without a day's delay if there hadn't been some reason why they didn't want you there. And that's borne out by the fact that the search hasn't been any too energetic. Don't flatter yourself that you could have deceived the detectives had they really been intent on getting you. I would bet anything that my father used a hint of influence to make the chase merely perfunctory."

"But why?" asked Blaisdell, puzzled.

"I don't know why. Perhaps he knew you were not guilty. Perhaps he was afraid that you knew something. In any event, whatever it was, it shows that he didn't want you caught. But the fact that you were indicted leads me to believe that they wanted to run you out of the city and make it impossible for you to come back."

"That may be true," said Ray thoughtfully. "You see——"

He paused, thinking that he did, indeed, know something. And now he not only knew it but had proof of what he knew. If his mere knowledge had deterred the chase before what might this turn in the situation not mean?

"If it is true," he said. "I hardly think they will press me very hard now."

"If you had been guilty, even," she said, "I doubt if they would have pressed the matter. As it is——"

"But how do you know I am not guilty?" he asked.

She laughed openly at him. "Why, I think even the average male juryman would acquit a simpleton like you of deliberate banditry, Mr. Blaisdell. All one has to do is to see you in all your charmingly transparent honesty to know that you would hardly commit assault and highway robbery. I don't know what *did* happen but I'll stake my life that you weren't guilty."

"I thank you for that trust in me," Ray said stiltedly, but she laughed again.

"Oh, don't feel gratitude that isn't deserved. I'm not being complimentary. Indeed, I think I'd like it better if you *had* knocked him out and plundered both of them."

Ray arose in injured dignity. "I think I'd better be going," he said. "I am keeping you from your rest."

"I think you *had* better run along," she replied. "And don't forget to sleep well and come here and be fed properly in the morning. And I'll get the blanket."

"I don't need the blanket," said Ray angrily. "I have plenty."

He stalked away and behind him he heard her laugh low and to herself. He half turned to mutter an anathema on her. Then he went on to his canoe and set to making camp. But it seemed unutterably lonely down there by the river.

CHAPTER XIV.

There were two reasons why Ray did not go to Miss Ruth Burgess' camp for breakfast, as she had ordered. One was that he awoke decidedly angry at her. The other lay in the deception he had practiced on her in allowing her to assume that he was sick. By morning all but the last faint traces of that terrible cough had vanished and it would have been quite evident to one less shrewd than she that this stalwart man, no longer haggard from fatigue nor coughing distressfully, was far from being an invalid. When Ray tried to visualize the scorn with which she would greet this discovery of his perfidy his courage failed him. He accordingly ate a very hearty breakfast but not at all such as a consumptive should have indulged in, packed his dunnage by the early-morning light and fled surreptitiously.

There had been no indication of any pursuit and he was inclined to share Miss Burgess' opinion that there would be none. In any case, as long as he had that letter he did not greatly fear what Burgess might do. He accordingly took it easy going up the river as far as the mouth of Nine Mile Creek and continued up that tributary in a leisurely manner. He arrived at the old cabin at Nine Mile Crossing in the afternoon and found Gaston Grêve making ready to depart for Bramstead to fetch a last consignment of material for their expedition.

The little Frenchman welcomed him with lively delight and many "mojees" although his curiosity was alive for an explanation of how a mere mill hand earning two dollars a day could afford to finance such a trip as this promised to be. Gaston had hauled one load of boxes from an instrument maker and he had seen the figures of value marked on the crates. His eyes had fairly bulged at the sight of cases no bigger than would have held a typewriter but with values stated at five hundred dollars. He knew nothing of the cost of a good theodolite or level, of course.

The instruments were nearly all there but there was another case or two yet to arrive. There were current meters and sounding lines in these and also maps and data which had been ordered. It was to get these that Gaston departed that evening so that he might be able to start back in the morning and make the trip through in the same day.

Ray busied himself in getting the equipment ready against his return and the arrival of Jean and Renee. These came in by the river route next day and a little later Gaston returned with his last load. The latter had been instructed to report, if asked about his recent activities, that he had been engaged to assist in a topographic survey by an engineer named Raymond. The boldest course had seemed to be the safest to Blaisdell. He calculated that if any serious pursuit was instituted the officers would be looking for a man named Higgins, bearded and dressed as a laborer. They would give only the most casual attention to an engineer who wore no beard and dressed, to be sure, in rough clothes, but with a difference, and who openly went about his business even though that business did take him into the untraveled wilderness.

The only other detail worthy of notice was attended to by Gaston, who at Blaisdell's direction took with him to Bramstead and mailed from there an envelope addressed to Folsom containing the letter so opportunely regained from Myla Burgess. With it went a short letter asking Ben to use his own judgment in the use he put this to.

Renee and Jean came prepared to spend an indefinite time in the woods. The girl was dressed in rough, serviceable clothes, among which were knickerbockers. When Ray saw her in these for the first time he started with surprise. That indefinite resemblance to some one else suddenly leaped to the fore and he recognized it immediately. He had seen, only two days before, another girl, also dressed in rough coat and knickers, a girl a little smaller, not quite so stately, with some differences in coloring and feature, but nevertheless bearing a striking resemblance to Jean's daughter. The two might well have been sisters, he thought, and some slight presentiment of the truth began to percolate into his mind.

He had other things to think of, however, and wasted no time in speculation about what after all did not concern him particularly. Everything went smoothly as could be expected. Gaston, although he had kept his ears open, had heard no mention of a hue and cry out for "Higgins," and so in due time they loaded their equipment into the canoes and set out.

His assistants were strong, intelligent and capable and Ray found his problems being solved without difficulty so far as the gathering of the data he needed was concerned. The geological survey maps were good, requiring a minimum of verification. The preliminary work of checking roughly the data he had been able to get regarding the total storage capacity of the lake and the mean annual run-off was quickly done. Then they began the real work of surveying the bank of the lake near the Bridal Falls and down to the cleft Ray had marked out.

He had been on this location no more than a few days when, after returning to the camp pitched on the bank of the lake, Gaston observed a canoe coming slowly along in the placid water and hailed Ray. He ran down to the bank and watched it coming in, recognizing the slender form of the paddler as she sat erect and dipped the blade with easy grace. She drifted in as casually and as much at her ease as though

merely paying a social call on an acquaintance.

"Good evening!" she said as she stepped onto the bank, Ray holding the canoe steady. "Where have you been keeping yourself? I've been looking for you everywhere."

"What set you looking for me, if I may ask?" he demanded.

"Well, I happened to remember that you are an engineer—and I need an engineer. I see I was right—also that you appear already to have a job." She glanced significantly at the tents standing back from the lake and the transit and level perched on their tripods with telescopes uptilted. Her eye swept on over the coils of steel tape, the pile of stakes, the level and stadia rods leaning against a tree.

"I'm not looking for work, that's a fact," said Ray shortly. "However, I'd be glad to return your hospitality, if I may."

He nodded toward the sheet-iron stove where Renee bent over, to prepare, with Gaston's help, the evening meal for the party. Miss Burgess noted the girl and looked closer as she slowly followed Blaisdell.

"Who is the young lady?" she asked. Ray hesitated just a moment. He recalled his previous suspicion and he had the same uneasy conviction of the likeness of these two though now, when they were close together, it was not quite so strong as he had thought.

"Her name is Miss Christophe," he said, watching the effect of this upon her. It had some effect, though not as much as he had expected. "She is here with her father, assisting me."

"So I see," said Miss Burgess. Her lips were pursed and her forehead creased in a little perpendicular line which might have meant displeasure or deep thought. "Miss Christophe! Yes!"

But she still followed until they were almost at the camp. Then she plucked Ray's sleeve.

"If you please," she whispered, "would you mind presenting me as—as Miss Henderson?"

Ray stopped and grinned at her. "Why?" he asked. She did not show the confusion he expected, thinking he had her at a disadvantage. Instead, she stared haughtily at him and tossed her scornful head.

"Oh, a mere whim of mine," she said airily. "Of course, you will suit yourself. It is really of small importance."

Crestfallen and half doubting his original suspicion Ray led her to the fire and as Renee rose, curtly introduced her, using the assumed name. He watched the two carefully, but they baffled him again. Ruth was cool, at ease, only a slight narrowing of the eyes betraying any wariness. Renee did, it is true, level her own cold gaze on the other girl, sweeping her slowly and comprehensively. Ray thought she stiffened and became more statuesque and cold than ever, but he could not be sure. Yet as Renee returned to her culinary labors Ruth kept her eyes on her. And more than once the French girl cast swift, keen glances at Ruth.

Then the cheery Gaston appeared with more wood and again Ray briefly presented Miss "Henderson." Gaston grinned and bowed gallantly.

"She's *bien venue!*" he cried. "De woods ees get ver' lofely all sudden, mamselle! By gar! I teenk I nevaire leave dem no more!"

For a moment it appeared that he would notice nothing, as Ruth laughed and retorted in kind. Then Ray observed a swift surprise sweep his mobile features. "Mojee!" he muttered to himself and turned to look at Renee. Then he scratched his head, wrinkled his forehead and shook his round poll in bewilderment. "Mojee!" he repeated.

A moment later he found opportunity to approach Ray.

"M'sieu'," he said in a whisper, "dees ees fonny business: W'at you say dees girl ees call'?"

"Miss Henderson," repeated Ray. But Gaston beckoned him aside and led him down to the water.

"Maybe so you are right," he said when they were out of hearing. "Maybe so dees girl she's w'at you say. Bot me, I teenk dat's damn lie!"

"What makes you think so?" asked Ray curiously.

Gaston broke into French which Ray had almost as much difficulty in following as his garbled English.

"Have you not noticed it then? Observe Rence and then look again at this one who has come. I tell you, m'sieu', it is not Henderson she should be called!"

"What then?" again asked Ray.

"That is not for me to say. But you, at least, can tell me why she comes?"

"She came to look for me, so she says. She knew I was an engineer and wanted me to do some work for her."

"Bah!" Gaston snarled. "She is here for no good. And there will be trouble, m'sieu', I warn you. That is no good light that shines in the eyes of Renee!"

"What!" cried Ray, but Gaston merely shrugged, frowning, and waved his hands as though disclaiming responsibility. He turned and stalked back to the camp, busying himself at some distance from the two girls.

Old Jean had been back in the woods cutting stakes and it was suppertime before he came in. The sun, though low, was still above the horizon and when he too faced Ruth and heard Ray, still on the watch for verification of his deductions, murmur the name of Henderson, there crept over his ancient features the queerest compound of expressions Ray ever had seen. Blank astonishment came first, to be chased away by a blend that the young man read as fear, fury, yearning, affection.

"Mees 'Enderson," he muttered. "Mojee! Mees 'Enderson! By gar! W'y you say dat?"

Then suddenly he reached out a clutching hand. "Dat ees not true!" he exclaimed. "Dat Mees 'Enderson! You tell me, w'at ees your nam'?"

Ray's absorbed glance flitted to Renee, who had straightened up and stood watching, still and cold as always, but with an avid light in her smoldering eyes.

Ruth made no attempt to avoid the clutching hand and Jean let it fall again without taking hold of her. She was slightly pale and Ray thought there was a defiant look in her face but she remained calm and collected.

"My name is Ruth Burgess," she said clearly.

"By gar!" snorted Gaston below his breath. "W'at I say, now?"

Renee made no move. Old Jean glared in what might have been fury or might have been bewilderment. Then he swept his forehead with his hand.

"Mojee!" was all he said, that exclamation apparently summing up in him every emotion that could be expressed. Ruth nodded slightly to Ray.

"I'm afraid that I'll have to forgo your hospitality," she said. "It is a pity, for we should be allies—not enemies."

And it was indeed pity that Ray read in her mobile features, pity for these folk who seemed so strangely torn between conflicting desires and emotions where she was concerned. The engineer accompanied her to her canoe.

"At least you will camp near," he said regretfully. "There is something that needs discussion— something I want to tell you."

The girl cast a suggestive glance back at the two figures that stood motionless, one grim, uncompromising, the other drooping, feeble, aged all of a sudden. The third, that of Gaston, paced restlessly like a prowling cat before them. Ray had a feeling that he was standing guard to prevent an outbreak.

"I had something to tell you," she said. "But the time was hardly propitious." She nodded in the direction of the camp. "Poor people!" she said and Ray felt the quick, sincere pity she felt, the same pity that had warmed her toward himself when she thought him sick.

She may have read his thought for she added to him:

"It seems that I was mistaken about your health, Mr. Blaisdell."

"Let it go," said Ray hurriedly. He was afraid that she would relapse into her attitude of superiority and scorn and he did not want her to do that. "But there's something here that is of interest to you. Probably what you are up here about. I'd be glad to talk it over with you if you are going to be here long."

"I'll probably camp a mile or so up the lake," she said quietly. "If you care to stop some time I'd be glad to hear you. As for what I had to say to you, it is simply this: My father went past my camp last night with another man and the other man was an officer. He wore a badge. But, if you ask me, I don't think you need to be afraid."

"Why not?" asked Ray.

"He wouldn't be hunting you himself if there was any intention of catching you, nor would there be only one man with him. I don't know all the facts but I imagine you can guess why he wants to *find* you but isn't anxious to arrest you, though he comes prepared to make you think he is."

"I think I can guess," said Ray, thoughtfully.

Then he and Ruth shook hands and she stepped into her canoe.

CHAPTER XV.

Ray came back to his camp to find a group gathered about the fireplace, charged with suppressed emotions that seemed likely to explode at any moment. Yet no one said anything to him either about the girl or anything else. Renee, as soon as he had returned, set about placing the meal on the rough table. Old Jean sat sunk in thought. Gaston roamed restlessly about, now helping Renee, now pacing aimlessly before the fire.

In order to divert them from their brooding Blaisdell had a quick impulse to betray the fact that Burgess was in the vicinity, and then he caught himself up in swift reaction. He had wanted Burgess within reach; for months he had plotted and brooded over what he would do to him if he ever did get him there, and yet, sitting near this grim-faced girl, sensing her still, deadly determination and the fierce vindictiveness that lay behind it, grasping, feebly enough perhaps, the depth of the wrongs that Jean had suffered and the single desire for revenge that filled her breast, his own persecution, his own indignation seemed petty spite and irritation against a petty object. Burgess suddenly enlisted something strangely like sympathy.

The man seemed to assume the proportions of a poor, cunning, spiteful animal, unworthy of serious attention. The things he had done to Raymond faded in his consciousness back to an existence with which he had no present connection and he remembered them with the shocking consciousness that they had lost most of their importance. The loss of Myla, the mockery she had made of his genuine love, no longer roused him to fierce anger and pain. Almost, he considered that old love and the hurt that had resulted from its desecration as a grown man looks back at his callow adolescence and the poignant heart affairs which he has almost forgotten.

He had come in contact with a grievance so much greater than his own, as he knew instinctively, and with a thirst for vengeance so much more deadly, that his own passions paled before it. What he, himself, would have done to Burgess had the opportunity offered, as it had seemed it might, he had never considered seriously. Thrashed him within an inch of his life, he supposed. But neither Jean nor Renee were bound by limitations such as his less primitive nature imposed upon him. It was not a thrashing they would give the man. Indeed, Blaisdell suspected that if they murdered him outright and quickly Burgess might be lucky.

Then too he was uneasy because their antagonism to the father very apparently extended to the daughter also. Now, Ray was quite certain that he disliked the daughter, almost hated her, but the idea that she might run the risk of injury at the hands of these two fanatics sent a thrill of fear through him. He was also quite sure that the girl, though he thought she despised Burgess and disliked him, would not wish him injured. Somehow that idea had great weight with him.

So he took quick second thought and said nothing about Burgess. As that was about the only subject which could have broken his companions' reticence and taciturnity the meal passed off silently. Only Gaston, restless and impatient under the suppression, fidgeted and muttered and, early for his excellent appetite, rose and stepped into the deepening twilight to smoke a pipe and roam away his agitation down by the shore. A little later Ray followed him.

The Frenchman appeared to be doubtful about his presence and continued his impatient walk, interjected with occasional "mojees" and *"sacrés."* But Ray, seeing that he had no intention of saying anything further, took the offensive.

"Gaston," he said, "this is a bad business and I'd like to know more about it. I don't think there's a chance of hearing it except from you."

"Non, by gar! I have not anyt'eeng to say!" said Gaston emphatically. "Eet ees bad business and it ees better you leave heem alone."

"Unfortunately I can't do that. I've become wound up in it whether I want to be or not. There are certain things I know and more that I can guess but unless the gaps are filled for me I'm going to be in an uncomfortable position.

"I don't want to force your confidence, Gaston, but let me tell you what I know, what I guess, and then you may be willing to fill in the missing spaces for me.

"I know that Jean killed a man, an

officer, more than twenty years ago and that he served a term in the penitentiary for it. I know that he hates Starck Burgess with a deadly hatred and that Renee shares that hatred. I guess that Starck Burgess had something to do with the old killing and that Jean puts the responsibility for it—and maybe for more—on his shoulders.

"Now, I also know, by the evidence of my eyesight, that this Miss Burgess and Renee resemble each other in a way that is a little more than coincidence. Neither of them resemble Burgess nor Jean nor could either of those be the father of both. I guess that they get their resemblance through their mother—or mothers. Were, then, the two daughters of mothers who were closely related—or are they, by any chance, daughters of the *same* mother?"

He shot this at Gaston rapidly and that open subject gaped in confusion. He tried to control his betrayal.

"Mojee! *Sacré!*" he blurted. "Dat's damn joke, dat ees."

No, it isn't, Gaston, and you know it. Burgess was a young man in those days. Did he run foul of Jean—and of Jean's wife?"

But Gaston shook a sullen, obstinate head.

"By gar! I tell you notting!" he said. "You mak' de guess all you like. But dees I say! Dees mans Burgess, she's better not com' where dees Jean and Renee get heem! Mojee! I'm sorre for heem eef dey do!"

Ray gave it up, only nodding in confirmation of his understanding of that last warning.

"I don't know," he said dubiously. "A day ago I'd have said any one could have flayed Burgess alive and I'd have stood by and laughed. But that was before the prospect became so vivid. Now—I'm like you. I'm sorry for Burgess."

"She's bad mans," said Gaston gloomily. "Eef old Jean shoot heem I do not care moch. Bot Jean she ees not de worse. Eet ees Renee dat mak' me shiver like de chill."

It was not so much the words as the tone, blended of pathos and longing, that awoke Ray to the truth. He glanced sympathetically at the little man, reading the secret that he tried to keep buried. He sensed the fear of the lover held at bay, condemned to watch the growing cloud of tragedy that enveloped the person of his sweetheart. He wondered if, in that hard, cold nature there could ever be response to any passion other than that of hate. He doubted it. He thought that Gaston, too, doubted and despaired.

But there was no more to be gained by persisting in questioning Gaston and he sought his blankets for the night. He lay long awake, puzzling over the matter, piecing the fragments that he knew or guessed to make a whole and complete story, beside the tragedy of which his own grievances sank into insignificance.

Just before he fell asleep he had an inspiration. If these people would not tell, there was one who could—if she would. Ruth Burgess, surely, could not be ignorant of the story. Indeed she had recognized the name of Christophe, had thought it wise to keep her identity secret from them before she realized that the resemblance between her and her half sister, as Ray was convinced Renee was, was too great to avoid attention.

Not that he had much hope that Ruth would tell anything. She probably would taunt him with his inability to deduce the facts for himself and flaunt her superiority in his face in an annoying way. Still, it would furnish another excuse to see her. The first was good enough, in any case, and gave him satisfaction. He was going to tell *her* something; something that with all her perspicacity she could not find out for herself; something that she had tried to discover and failed. It gave him an absurd sense of complacency and triumph to realize that in one respect at least he could jolt her cocksure superiority.

Even in this respect however he found his thoughts dwelling on his coming triumph without much reference to his original inspiration. The prospect of revenge against Burgess had taken a decidedly remote position in his thoughts. In fact, he found himself forgetting that prospect entirely.

In the morning he gave his men and Renee careful instructions in regard to taking a series of soundings along the shores for the purpose of determining the factors governing the construction of a cofferdam opposite the mouth of the tunnel he planned. They were sufficiently coached by this time to do this work without supervision and he left them in the confidence that they would be busy during the entire day, with no time to conduct any offensive against either Ruth Burgess or her father.

He had given little thought to the situa-

tion of the girl who appeared to be alone in the woods, yet entirely at her ease. But as he walked along the lake bank in the direction of her camp he began to wonder at this, speculating on whether or not she was self-sufficient and confident enough to abandon all company and pitch her lonely camps in this semiwilderness. It seemed to be carrying her independence too far even for these modern days.

But after half an hour's walk along the winding shore he came upon a little clearing on a bench set back from the lake and saw the silk tent pitched in the sunlight. It was a rather large tent, although light and packing in a small bundle. Scattered around in front of it were other articles of equipment, all of the lightest and most compact form. There was an ingenious folding table and folding chairs and where the girl bent over the fire, engaged in the prosaic task of washing dishes, were cooking utensils of aluminum, a folding grill and reflector. The problem of her company was also solved by the sight of another woman reclining comfortably in a light canvas lounge chair before the tent.

Ray walked out into the clearing and the girl looked up with a nod. The woman in the chair turned to him a face much like the girl's and as much like Renee's, but older and very, very sad. She might have been forty-five and was still handsome, though her hair was graying. Dull and resigned grief looked out of her eyes.

"Don't get up, mother," said Ruth cheerfully. "It is only that engineer from down the lake."

Ray had the feeling that "that engineer from down the lake" was a remarkably insignificant individual in her opinion, hardly to be considered at all. It exasperated him, angered him, made him long for a chance to prove that he was to be considered seriously.

"This is my mother," said Ruth shortly. The elder woman listlessly inclined her head and murmured a conventional acknowledgment. There was a trace of accent in her pronunciation, reminding him of Jean and Gaston.

Blaisdell's idea of questioning Ruth died abruptly. Certainly the presence of the mother would render that impossible, even if she were willing to tell him what, after all, did not concern him. He glanced around, noting the pistol and belt that hung at the tent pole and the small high-powered rifle leaning against the tent. Evidently the girl was not only chaperoned but went equipped to protect herself.

"Mother," said the girl, "was asleep when you dropped in on me the other night. She is not as well as she might be, but her health is benefiting by this camping trip."

"I do find the woods very refreshing," said Mrs. Burgess wistfully, her eyes resting on the cool green of the fringed banks and the blue water of the lake. "I was born and brought up in them, Mr. Blaisdell."

"She's more of a mistress of woodcraft than I am," said Ruth lightly. "And either of us is better than most men."

Ray's glance flitted rather disparagingly to the equipment, which, to his masculine mind, trained in a rougher school, seemed too elaborate and complete. But he said nothing.

He dropped to one knee beside the girl and picked up a dish towel, casually assuming the duty of wiping the utensils. Ruth went on with her work as though his presence were an ordinary thing. But he found this quasi-intimacy, this sharing of a homely task, wonderfully interesting. Wiping dishes suddenly assumed something of a romantic aspect.

"I take it you did not come here altogether for the camping trip?" he ventured after a bit.

"No," said Ruth absently. "I wanted to come on business and dragged mother with me. She was wilting in the city."

Then without looking at him she spoke in a half whisper so that the elder woman could not hear.

"Don't you dare mention who your companions are! You understand?"

Ray nodded meekly at her peremptory order before he had even time to resent the tone she used. That came later, gradually mounting to a sense of injury.

"I wasn't going to mention it," he growled after a bit. "Think I'm a fool?"

"I don't think anything," said Ruth indifferently. "I take it for granted that all men are obtuse."

"Maybe," said Ray darkly. "Still, I'm not so obtuse that I can't make an occasional deduction. You're interested in Atlantic Light and Power Company, aren't you?"

"Marvelous, Sherlock! Marvelous!" said the girl mockingly. "Such incisive reason-

ing! I am, sir! But don't strain yourself telling me how you guessed it. Ben Folsom informed me that you were one of their engineers and presumably fairly well informed regarding the company."

"And also that you have been endeavoring to find a water power in this vicinity that you could pick up for the company," added Ray calmly. Ruth rewarded this guess with a quick, inquiring glance.

"Ben must be communicating with you," she said.

"Not on that subject," said Ray complacently, pleased to see that her interest was quickening. "I deduced it from things I've observed from time to time. You didn't find any, did you?"

"Not yet," said Ruth shortly.

"Do you expect to?"

"I'm not sure. I've been exploring some. But the entire flow from this lake seems to be taken already and I don't believe there is a possibility of developing it further. Maybe, however," she added with something like a sneer, "you, with your trained mind, can find grounds for thinking differently."

Then Ray fired his shot. He rocked back on his heels, stacked the last dish neatly and then fished out tobacco and cigarette paper. He rolled and lit a smoke.

"Oh, I don't know. In a way, of course, you're right. Not much use trying to increase the development of power. Of course, there *is* a very considerable waste in the headwaters of the Casto. There seems to be a very porous bottom for several miles which results in a good deal of the flow being lost before the first tributaries are reached. Limestone formation, I judge. But a trained mind, such as you flatteringly ascribe to me, certainly can see things an untrained mind can't. Although in this case it does seem to me that the facts are obvious enough to be apparent even to an untrained one, provided the faculty of observation and the reasoning powers are moderately active. However, you seem to have missed them, if you'll pardon my saying so."

The girl stared at him belligerently. "Missed what?" she demanded.

"The possibilities in the way of securing a very valuable water right for Atlantic Light and Power," said Ray; "it's the more extraordinary because you evidently were right on the trail when you approached old man Whitman."

"Whitman! Why, man, you're positively amusing. Whitman has no water power of any value. I assure you I found that out."

"No?" said Ray. "Are you sure of that?"

"Certainly I'm sure of it. He has an old, superannuated mill, and he can develop about five hundred horse power using every drop of water. I'd like to know what use that would be to us."

Ray nodded and sighed with mock regret. "All very true," he said. "Silly of me, no doubt, to think there might be something in it. Worst of it is that I backed my fallible judgment to the extent of buying a half interest in his grant from Whitman. Of course, I thought A. L. & P. might be interested. But since you say not——"

"Now, what do you know?" Ruth suddenly commanded him. She had straightened up and stood looking down at him as he squatted on his heels. He had thrown his hat aside and his head was about at the level of her waist. His hair was crisp and short cropped. She emphasized her insistence by suddenly grasping a handful of it in her strong fingers and tilting his head back with a twist of her wrist. "Don't try to be so superior. It won't do. You come right out with it, Mr. Man, or I—I don't know what I'll do to you."

"Let go!" said Blaisdell plaintively. "I'm not holding out on you. You're welcome to all the information I've got. But you're pulling my hair!"

"If you try to be so smart I'll pull it again," said Ruth, releasing him. "Now, what have you in the back of your head. It couldn't be brains, could it?"

"Oh, no," said Ray ironically. "There's nothing there at all. But I've a little special knowledge, learned like a parrot, we will say, and it is at your service. All of it is in these notebooks, by the way. You may look them over. I really wouldn't venture to explain it verbally. You'll be able to get it so much clearer from the data themselves."

He drew two or three notebooks from his coat pocket and handed them to her. She sensed the sarcasm which he was at such pains to express and looked at him suspiciously as she took them. Then, with a disdainful flirt of her head, she sat down on one of the little folding canvas stools and began to pore over the books. Pretty soon she frowned, rose and went into the tent to return with paper and a pencil and ruler.

Ray sat where he was and smoked cigarettes, patient and satisfied. He preserved a blank and emotionless gravity but inwardly he was chuckling delightedly as an occasional glance revealed the line of exasperation growing deeper between her eyebrows. She hauled the little folding table up before her and began laboriously to plot the notes. She had no tables, no protractor and she knew very little about it. Yet she did manage, after a fashion, to draw a rough sketch of one of his survey lines and plot from it several stations on side shots. But it was quite evident that after she had this done it meant nothing whatever to her.

Finally she threw down her pencil with an exclamation of annoyance.

"I don't see what this ridiculous zigzag means," she asserted. "It's nothing but a line twisting around every which way with a lot of other lines and points sticking out from it."

Ray rose and walked over to her, examining her attempt with patronizing interest.

"That's not at all bad for a beginner," he said. "But you'd do much better with a straight edge and a protractor. I haven't the first with me, but here's a little pocket protractor by which you may get the angles more accurately."

"Oh, drat the thing!" said Ruth angrily. "I'm not taking a drawing lesson. What is it, anyhow?"

"Why, it is a line to locate certain key points on the main ridge between Whitman's valley and Glacier Lake," said Ray wickedly. "I thought you'd recognize *that*, at once."

"Even if I did," she retorted, "what would it mean to me? I don't see what it has to do with——"

"With Whitman's water right? Well, perhaps not. But you see, that survey is merely a part of it all. It was made to be projected onto the regular maps of this region. If you'll look farther you'll see where I have handed you one of those maps with that line properly drawn on it. Here it is."

Ruth took the map and observed the line plotted on it much more accurately than she had drawn it. But still she made nothing of it.

"I don't grasp it," she said. "It's nothing but a line that follows one of the contours approximately, with other points located from it. It looks like an acute angle in the ridge but there is another perfectly straight line drawn from the apex right across to the lake. Then you've got a lot of figures penciled in where the water shows out from the bank of the lake."

"Those are soundings," said Ray, "for depth. They are not as accurate as they might be and I am having better ones made. That's why they are in pencil as merely indicating the facts approximately."

"But," she cried, "what does it all *mean?* If you're simply using your silly engineering knowledge to make a fool of me, I'll——"

Ray stepped away and bowed, with a smile.

"Not at all, Miss Burgess," he said. "The whole story is in those notes. But I would never venture to assume that you could not unravel it unaided. A mere man like me can't——"

Ruth also rose with fire blazing in her eyes. She walked up to Ray and he walked backward, holding out his hands in protest against her threat. So she forced him almost to the bank of the lake.

"If you don't explain that right away," she cried furiously, "I'll—I'll pull your ears! You—you—*man*, you!"

She gave force to this by doubling her small fingers into a ball and planting them viciously against his barrellike ribs. The blow bounced from his tough muscles as from rubber but he threw his hands up as though pleading for mercy.

"I'll explain!" he cried. "But——"

"What? Don't you dare to make conditions."

"I won't. Only—it isn't a condition. It's because I really ought to know in order to judge what I should do, Miss Burgess." He had fallen suddenly earnest and convincing and the girl's mock anger gave way to seriousness as she sensed his earnestness. "I don't want to force your confidence but —is it a fact that the Christophe girl is your half sister?"

Ruth hesitated and then nodded assent. Ray went rapidly on.

"And what had your mother and father to do with the killing of the man, Higgins?"

But here she shook her head. "That's something I don't care to discuss," she said shortly. Ray shrugged his shoulders.

"Very well," he said, disappointed. Then abruptly: "As for the notes, they refer to a tunnel to be driven through that ridge

and a cofferdam to be built in the lake opposite its intake. Without a dam, except the cofferdam, it is possible to tap the lake for every drop of its flow with a direct head of over two hundred feet."

Ruth frowned over this as deeply puzzled as ever.

"But what good would that do? The flow is utilized by the Amalgamated already. It goes out through the Casto."

"Ah, it does now. But that tunnel will be at a lower level than the Casto. It will lower the level of the lake so that not a drop will go over the moraine and down the river. It will make a river out of Whitman's Creek down to its junction with the Casto and change the face of the country. There will be twenty or thirty thousand horse power developed right below here where Whitman holds his grant."

"Nonsense!" said Ruth impatiently. "It would never be allowed."

But Ray drew forth that printed pamphlet with the decision of the highest court in the land in favor of Whitman.

"That question has been decided," he said. "If you'll read this——"

CHAPTER XVI.

When the superintendent and the general manager had found their way to Burgess and his wife and they all had recovered breath enough to ask and make explanations, the two latter had also recovered their wits enough to reconsider the first impulse that had led to Burgess' call for help. He had some idea of capturing Blaisdell and forcibly recovering that damaging letter but it was evident that Ray was gone and it was by no means sure that the letter could be recovered, even if they intercepted him, without embarrassing explanations. Suppose Ray was caught and insisted on telling what was in the letter. That would be almost as bad as for the letter to fall into the hands of the authorities. Once set them on the right track with a hint of its contents and the Federal officers would never rest until they had ferreted out his connection with a scandal which had stirred the judicial authorities of the country.

Thus Burgess, who was in better shape to talk than Myla, made some vague explanation to the superintendent, professing to be at a loss to explain Blaisdell's—or Higgins' —sudden action and flight. Burgess did say that he had been robbed and the superintendent was all in favor of a hue and cry, but he would have none of that. Instead he pleaded illness from the effects of the steam and endeavored to get where he and Myla could discuss the matter in privacy.

Finally closeted in their suite at the hotel Burgess broke out against his wife.

"This is what comes of your damned blackmailing methods!" he cried furiously. "That and your crazy woman's notion of carrying such a thing about with you. If you'd only left it in a safe-deposit box; but, no! You must carry it in a place where any one could find it. Of all the——"

"It wasn't my fault," said Myla. "If you'd only act decently instead of running after every woman you see——"

"You're a fine one to talk like that. I didn't run after you, did I? Where'd you have been if I hadn't? Now you've gone and spilled the beans right. I've half a notion——"

"You've half a notion to what?"

"Well, young woman, you blackmailed me into marrying you, didn't you? And now you haven't got the evidence with which you did it."

Myla faced him with eyes in which rage and fear blazed.

"You—you mean that? You mean it? Oh, if I'd ever guessed how vile and low you could be!"

Burgess whirled upon her. "That's enough. We'll not discuss who is worst in the thing. You've gone and turned that thing over to a man who has every reason to hate you and me. *I'll* be the one to suffer, remember. There's no danger of your going to the penitentiary. You'd even swell around and live high on my money while I rotted there. But you've got another guess coming. That letter has got to be recovered or I'll see that you don't wear my name much longer."

"How can I recover it?" she demanded.

"I don't think you can. You were great at cunning schemes when it came to getting Blaisdell into trouble but on a proposition like this you haven't an idea. You drive him out of town, make an enemy of him and now you turn this over to him! I was a fool to ever listen to the scheme."

"Instead of talking like that why don't you do something to remedy matters?"

"I'm trying to think. But you! My stars, what an ass I was to fall for this!"

She lashed out at him in desperate anger.

"Ass! Ass! Of course you are, as you've always been. A petty, plotting coward who's afraid to do the obvious. Why don't you go after him like a man and meet him like a man? Why don't you go and take that letter away from him? You took *me* away from him, remember, when he was too far away to reach you. Now he's nearer and all you can do is revile *me*, instead of acting like a man and going after him. You coward!"

Then Burgess boiled over with rage and struck her.

Yet her words had given him an idea that recurred when that scene and its red mist of rage and vituperation had faded into approximate calmness of mind. He knew that Myla had fled, hiding her bruised face beneath a veil, but he had become the schemer again. Ray Blaisdell must not be arrested and brought back to trial. Indeed he had long doubted that Ray had had anything to do with that holdup. But he was under indictment, a fugitive from justice, and in that fact he held a weapon with which to fight him. There were venal officers of the law in this region as he well knew. He recalled another occasion long ago when he had used one such. A deputy sheriff who could be handled and himself should be able to find Blaisdell and then it was unthinkable that with the threat of arrest and prison for a crime he had never committed held over him Ray would not consent to surrender the letter. As for Myla, he was well rid of her. Such a fool as she would end by ruining him.

He went slowly, making sure of his man before anything else. He found one within a few days, a deputy who could be handled easily enough. Then when inquiry had indicated that Ray had gone upriver he set out after him. He did not hear about the Christophes, whose sudden departure was not connected with Ray's flight.

He and the deputy assumed that Ray was fleeing up to the headwaters of the river and would then go up the lake and cross the divide to head northwestward into Canada through the untrodden woods. Thus they hurried on, passing his daughter's camp and plunging on through the lake without stopping.

Myla Burgess had fled from that brutal assault but yet more from the threats that followed it and which left her in no doubt of her status. With the loss of the letter she had lost her power over the man. Her days of semirespectability and wealth were over, or drawing near to their close. There was no question what Burgess would do. He had money and influence and she could not hope to fight successfully. Yet he should not divorce her without a struggle. Nor should he beat and assault her without retaliation. She was seething with hatred and humiliation, reckless to all consequences, bent only on making him pay, pay and pay again for all he had made her suffer.

She did not have the letter which was evidence of her power. She could not testify in court against the man who was still her husband. But there was something she could do and something that she would do at once.

She went to the Federal attorney in New York and told her tale. He listened noncommittally, pointing out that she could not appear as a witness. But she had her answer to that.

"He's gone after that letter. Ray Blaisdell has it. He may even let loose the officers of the law against him, depending on getting the letter after he's arrested. It's up to you to find Blaisdell first."

"Why not let him find him and then get the letter? We have nothing against Blaisdell. He isn't under Federal indictment."

"He never committed that robbery. We never thought he did. Burgess wanted to run him out of town where he couldn't tell what he knew. But if Starck gets to him you'll never get that evidence. You may dig up something to connect him with the thing, but it will be difficult. I tell you to get Blaisdell before Burgess finds him."

"He's got a good start on us," said the attorney dryly. "Still, we may be able to do something. In any event we will look into the matter thoroughly."

When Myla had gone he became a little more animated. In a short time agents were at work in Washington and elsewhere running down every lead she had given him. And one was on the way north to start after Burgess and Blaisdell.

This man knew his business better than Burgess did when it came to trailing men. He made inquiries in Paisley Falls and soon discovered that the Christophes had gone as suddenly as Ray and that, two weeks be-

fore this, another man had left the mills, who was a friend of "Higgins." Gaston Grêve was easily traced to the cabin on Nine Mile Creek and further patient inquiry developed the facts regarding the shipments of instruments to him. To connect this with the known fact that Blaisdell was an engineer was elementary. To discover that there was a newly established surveying outfit up at Glacier Lake followed as a matter of course.

But all this took time running into more than a week before the agent was finally ready to start with confidence to get his man.

CHAPTER XVII.

Ruth Burgess and Blaisdell stood on the steep slopes looking down into Whitman's valley, while he pointed out the salient points of the situation, describing the geological conditions which had led to the original capture, by Whitman's Creek, of the outlet from the lake and how that fact had led to the unusual provisions of the old grant. He indicated with reference to the map the deep cut in the ridge leading toward the lake, showing how it simplified the task of driving a tunnel, from which it was only necessary to drop a sufficiently large penstock down the cliffs to the valley bottom, thus doing away with the usual dam. Indeed the banks of the lake themselves made his dam.

He also showed her his drawings, made from rough notes, it is true, but sufficiently indicative of what might be done. These portrayed elevations and details of a cofferdam to be built opposite the intake to the tunnel and he went into an explanation of how he had taken soundings and sampled the bottom along the shores for data which had established the feasibility of this. She was intelligent and well grounded, understanding readily the broad features of his scheme.

But finally when they had climbed again to the summit of the range she paused there to look back into the deep valley and then to turn her thoughtful gaze southward to the long shelving flats which marked the outlet through the Casto River. She had fallen serious, losing the rather arrogant assumption of superiority she favored.

"It is undoubtedly what I came to look for—much more, in fact. It would mean everything to the power company. And yet —I don't know. It seems unfair to the mills down there. To be cut off, without warning, from the water supply that makes them possible! And through no fault of their own!"

"There is no doubt," said Ray dryly, "that it will mean a serious loss to your father—and his company."

She flared up at this. "I was not thinking of my father. I have no illusions about him nor pity for him. I have no reason to have them. I realize fully what he has done, not only to my mother and me but to others. He instigated his lawyers to offer a settlement involving a majority interest in A. L. & P., which looked like an advantageous one, but all the time he was plotting and scheming, getting control of Amalgamated and buying up or controlling all the water powers that alone could make a real public utility of A. L. & P. If it were merely a question of his suffering I'm afraid I am vindictive enough to rejoice at the prospect. But it isn't.

"Amalgamated Pulp and Paper, after all, is bigger than my father. It has thousands of stockholders. It supplies enormous interests with the paper which has become essential to civilization. On the whole, even if it is a trust it has not been an oppressive one. Its methods have been fair enough, I think. Even men like Whitman, who have suffered from its competition, acknowledge that it has never tried to beat them by unfair means and has always bought all their product they had to offer and at fair prices. If you destroy them, if you seriously injure them, you strike at a great industry and at people who have bought the stock in good faith. I am wondering if it is right to do it."

"How about your own stock, taken in good faith?" asked Ray.

"Mother and I are only two individuals and the others who are involved with A. L. & P. are comparatively few compared to those who hold Amalgamated securities. We would suffer most. It is probable that dividends may even cease altogether unless we get new territory. But I am not sure that our gain would justify a blow at Amalgamated."

Ray nodded understandingly. "I know how you feel," he said. "I've felt the same way myself at times. Every now and then, when I was hottest on the trail of this project and its success seemed most assured, I

had an uneasy feeling that, after all, I was hitting at your father, trying to revenge myself on him, by striking at entirely innocent people. And I felt and still feel that it would be a shame to destroy those splendid mills, to reduce their activity to nothing, to throw men out of work and curtail the supply of paper even by a small amount. It seemed to me that I was aping Samson, trying to pull down a temple to destroy my enemy."

Ruth looked at him with a quick understanding and sympathy which had hitherto been lacking in her.

"I'm *glad* you see it too," she said. "It seemed to me that you were a singularly unimaginative creature of limited perceptions, letting your narrow vision dwell on the ugly spectacle of your grievance and its avenging, without raising it high enough to get perspective, to see how really petty and unimportant that grievance was. I thought you were just the average man, the center of your little universe, forming your judgments from the limited background of your own egoism. Your wrongs, your sufferings, your enemies and the vengeance you might be able to plot against them took precedence over all the interests of all the myriads with whom we share responsibility. And how silly it is when one thinks of it in its due proportion. Who or what is that man that he should assume importance in anybody's scheme of life? Surely not in mine, even though he is my father and wrecked my mother's life. Nor in yours, though I understand what he has done to you. Let the Christophes be as limited and primitive as they like; their wrongs, at least, are poignant enough. But you and I, Mr. Blaisdell, aren't going to let our little grievances and wrongs, our pygmy loves and hatreds influence us to strike out blindly to injure any and all who happen to be in our way if we can only wound ever so slightly the object of our dislike. That's what I hope, at any rate."

"Of course," said Ray, "I don't claim to be your equal in anything——"

She broke in indignantly on his half-burlesque irony.

"That's not fair and you know it. I *do* make myself unpleasant. But I am not really fool enough to think myself so superior to—men. It is merely because they insist always upon showing themselves inferior. I hate their sentiment and their conceit, their assumption that all a woman is interested in is love-making, dancing, enjoyment; that no girl can legitimately take an interest in serious things. And all the time it is they who show a limited outlook, with their own petty interests, their business, the money they make, the things that they do forming the center and the sum of their universe. So I—make myself unpleasant because they irritate me."

"I'm sorry about that," said Ray. "I don't want to irritate you."

"Well, you don't as long as you talk sensibly."

"I'll be a regular Solon from now on, then. Only, as I was about to say, I have my human failings. I've eschewed the melodramatic vengeance. I don't think I'd even take the trouble to thumb my nose at an enemy now. But there's one phase of this business you mentioned that I insist upon being humanly limited in. I'm just as self-centered as ever in that."

"If you are I don't want to hear anything about it," said Ruth. "I prefer that you act generously and largely and give up this——"

But Ray raised his hand. "I'm afraid you go too fast," he said and he was quite grave now. "I'm willing to look at things as broadly as possible but it seems to me that you are a bit self-centered yourself; inclined to plume yourself on magnanimity and largeness that you aren't showing. You're rather patting yourself on the back because you think you are showing vision and public spirit but I'm afraid that vision is limited and that public spirit shortsighted.

"We'll admit that your father is nothing, that you and I are nothing, though I'm beginning to doubt my ability to honestly accept that estimate regarding every one of the three. We'll even admit that Amalgamated is a bigger item than A. L. & P., in the mere particulars of capital and present value of its production. But A. L. & P. doesn't stand alone. We aren't considering individual companies as though they were the ultimate in factors. We have to look further than that."

Then, in an incisive, clear way he plunged into an exposition of what might eventuate from his scheme. He showed her on the map the tributary system of the Casto of which Whitman's Creek was a unit. He sketched its possibilities for development not only where they stood but at in-

tervals down to its very mouth. He visualized the ordered, systematic development of cities and towns, humming with manufacturing plants, buzzing with beelike activities, growing and being enriched under the benign influence of cheap power. He pictured plainly and simply her own power company, not as a mere money-making and dividend-paying machine but as one cog in an ever-growing, ever-spreading mastery of the earth that the fruits of the earth might be increased and reaped for the good of mankind.

Then he spoke interestingly of that dream of the engineer, the vast, developed network of power plants stretching its spider web of cables far and wide over the land, every water power utilized to its fullest extent, every coal mine worked sanely to develop power at the mines instead of wastefully shoveling and transporting the coal. He linked the oil fields and the peat bogs, the lakes and the rivers and the coal mines into one enormous whole which should at some time produce unlimited and cheap power, to emancipate mankind from the worst of its toil and poverty.

"There you have it," he said. "I suppose I can't make it convincing. But that's a dream that will some day come true. And when it does—I think you'll admit that neither steel, nor railroads, nor any other industry may take precedence over that basic need of *all* industry. Power is king. Power is a savior. Power is all powerful in this new civilization of ours. With that prospect in view by what right can you spare and pity a mere paper mill? Why, in the time to come, paper itself will be made by and through that power cheaper and better than it is made now."

He had spoken calmly, simply and well and she had listened absorbed, grasping the gigantic scheme in all its grandeur. When he stopped she drew a breath like a sigh. It was followed by a little uncertain laugh as she rose from the rock on which they sat.

"You've certainly shattered my prejudices," she said. "I wish I had met more men who could see the bigger things as you can."

But Ray shook his head. "I'm as limited as others—only I'm an engineer. I think men who design and build, use and play with forces and powers so vast, utilize and train Nature, so to speak, and get so well acquainted with her that they grasp to some extent her infinite vastness. Engineers are almost like astronomers, their own insignificance appalling to themselves in contrast to the vastness of what they look at and measure. Or they're like a man standing on the brink of the Grand Cañon. There's small room for egoism there, although there seems to be room for a thousand worlds, otherwise."

"At least you have no room for selfishness and pettiness," said Ruth.

"Haven't we?" said Ray grimly, looking at her. "I'm afraid you don't know us."

His tone and that look perhaps struck home to her. At any rate she felt a vague unease, a sense of trouble which was not altogether unpleasant and was manifested on the surface by a slight flush that overspread the clear tan of her cheeks. She pursued the subject but there was an unaccustomed meekness in the tone with which she closed it.

"I can see at any rate that it is I who have been limited in vision. I'm going to be wholly frank and yield unconditionally. You shall go ahead, Mr. Blaisdell, and whatever you decide is best, that we shall do."

Ray was warmed by that acknowledgment of community of interest. It admitted him to partnership with her, made their aims and ends identical. It was almost as demoralizing to his self-control as holding hands with her would have been. But he was still wary and merely acknowledged her new manner with a smile of understanding.

They turned back to descend to the lake and were making their way downward when they came out upon a bench from which they could see the blue water spread out below them. They stopped a moment to sweep the charming vista with appreciative glances and then Ruth suddenly clutched his arm and pointed.

"Look!" she said. "Isn't that your boat?"

He could see the canoe far out on the lake, making northward, and unslung a pair of field glasses. They revealed the hazy figures of two paddlers driving rapidly as though bent on making some destination without delay.

"That's queer," he said. "Jean Christophe and his daughter. But they were to work on soundings all day."

"They've evidently quit," said Ruth

dryly. Ray sensed some trouble beneath her assumed unconcern.

"But why?"

"I think there is only one reason that would influence them to that action," she answered. "My father went up that way a few days ago."

Ray met her eye and read the meaning in it. "They've learned it and gone after him, you mean?"

"Probably. Some woodsman may have drifted past and told them, or that girl who is so still and deep may have heard me mention it. But it doesn't matter how. They've heard it and they've gone."

"And what do you think they will do?"

Instead of answering directly Ruth spoke slowly and reluctantly.

"He used to be a clerk up here in the paper mills, many years ago. Jean Christophe was a logger and trapper and my mother was his wife. I don't know the rights or wrongs of it, whether she was to blame or Jean. It doesn't matter—now. But my father—made love to her, and she believed him, and finally—ran away with him. There was a man named Higgins who was sheriff and he helped my father. I think he was a villainous, hard character, and my father had some influence over him. At any rate when Jean found his wife gone he went after them and Higgins met him and tried to prevent the pursuit. Jean killed him.

"He did not succeed in stopping my father and mother. They got away together and afterward my father used every bit of influence he had to have Jean convicted of murder and sent to prison. I think he was even disappointed that he wasn't hanged. It was not difficult to secure a divorce from a convicted felon and that was done by my mother. I think my father was not quite so bad then as he became later. He married my mother. Afterward he began to make money and then he became—what he is. And Jean became what he is: Renee became what she is. I am afraid of what may happen now."

"I guessed something of the story," said Ray quietly. He dropped his glasses to his side and held out his hand to her. "We'll have to hurry," he said.

She gave him her hand a bit doubtfully. "I don't see what we can do."

"I'm going after them," said Ray. "I think I can catch them. He's old and she's a girl. And there is Gaston. But we'll have to hurry."

She yielded then and they leaped rapidly downward toward the bank, cutting over toward Ray's camp. As they ran Ruth spoke again.

"It's rather more than one could ask of you."

But he only laughed grimly.

"Don't make me out a saint. I'm not concerned with saving your father. But that girl—she looks like you—and if she killed him she'd be jailed as sure as fate. Think of her in prison for years!"

CHAPTER XVIII.

At Ray's loud hail Gaston came running from a grove of trees at some distance from the camp where he had been engaged in cutting wood. He showed unmistakable agitation when Ray excitedly asked him how it came that work had been dropped and the other two had gone off together.

"Mojee!" he exclaimed. "Dat's fonny! We stop de work for eat an' I leave dem down by de bank to com' here. Dey not say anyt'ing to me. W'y you t'eenk dey gone?"

"You probably know as well as I do," said Ray grimly. "Haven't they talked in your hearing? Hasn't any one been here yesterday or to-day?"

"By gar!" said Gaston, scratching his head. "Dey's mans com' down de lak' yesterday w'ile you go to see mamselle. He stop an' talk bot all he say ees dat dey are som' mans up de lak' looking for som' one. I t'eenk maybe dey look for m'sieu' an' I say not'ing. Bot Renee she ask w'at she's look like, dose mans. One he say ees deputy an' de oder ees som' one he don't know. But Renee an' Jean, dey look at each othaire an' say not'ing."

"He described the other man?"

"Oui, m'sieu'. Bot she ees not any one I know."

"That's because you don't know Burgess," said Ray dryly. Gaston reacted to this explosively.

"Burgess! By gar! Ees dat so? Den, m'sieu', dere ees hell to pay in one minute! You excuse! I am een moch hurry!"

Ray seized the agile little fellow as he was about to dart away. "Hold on!" he said. "Where are you going?"

"Bot you do not understan', m'sieu'!" ex-

claimed Gaston. "Dees mans, she ees een damn bad way! Eef I do not go queek dere weel be de hell to pay!"

"But what do you care about Burgess?" asked Ruth. Gaston waved his hand.

"For heem I do not care. Eet ees all one eef som' one keel him. Bot Renee—an' Jean! Eet ees dat I not let dem do eet!"

Ray nodded. "Quite so," he said. "I agree with you. But two will go farther and faster than one and they've nearly two hours' start of us. Come on, Gaston. We'll run out the other canoe and see what we can do."

Gaston was surprised and showed it, hesitating even in his haste to be off.

"Bot, m'sieu'! Dees Burgess ees——"

"He's just a petty scoundrel not worth any one's getting into trouble over, Gaston. Besides"—his voice fell to a whisper—"he's mamselle's father, after all." This with a nod toward Ruth. Gaston's eyes widened and he grinned understandingly in spite of his agitation.

Ruth swung in beside them as they ran down toward the sandy shore. Ray indicated the stretch of beach lying between the two camps.

"You'd better run along back to your mother, Miss Burgess. We'll do everything possible, you know."

"I'm quite sure you will," answered Ruth. "But I'm going too."

He stopped to remonstrate with her, wasting more of their precious time.

"But your mother can't be left alone. And there's Renee! I'm afraid——"

"I'm not afraid; neither is mother. She knows the woods better than I do and can take care of herself. Besides, we can skirt the shore and I'll call and tell her not to worry. As for Renee—maybe she'll need me."

Ray would have continued to expostulate but she impatiently waved him to silence and grasped the bow of the canoe. "You're wasting time," she said angrily. "Get in!"

Ray gave it up and took his place while Gaston, after Ruth had slid down into the waist of the craft, stepped in and shoved off. He and Ray paddled and were soon sending the light boat along at racing pace, heading along shore to pass Ruth's camp.

They were perhaps halfway there when they heard what sounded like faint shouts behind them. Ruth looked back while the two men continued to paddle, bending rhythmically over the blades and sending the canoe along with powerful coördinated strokes.

"It's a canoe with two men in it," she said. "They're about opposite your camp and are waving. Evidently they want us to stop."

"Who is it, can you see?" asked Ray. "Not your father?"

"No, I'm sure of that. One looks like a city man though. He's firing a shot into the air."

The faint thud of the shot came a moment later to confirm her report. But Ray set his jaw.

"They'll have to wait," he said. "We aren't going to stop now."

They shot past Ruth's camp and the girl hailed her mother, who may or may not have understood the vague and high-pitched shouts with which she endeavored to explain and reassure her. At any rate the elder woman raised a hand as though acknowledging the explanation and stood watching them out of sight without any sign of agitation.

The shouts and hails of the boat behind them were growing fainter as the two stalwart woodsmen, one of whom was a wizard with a paddle and the other making up for what he lacked in finesse with a strength that was almost gigantic, sent their craft shooting past the wooded banks and hissing through the calm waters of the lake. There seemed to be only one paddler in the other canoe, the city man apparently being without experience at the art, and they were rapidly being distanced. Yet they kept on doggedly until the curving banks and distance hid them from sight.

It had been about two o'clock when they started and Renee and Jean must have been gone nearly two hours. When Ruth saw them, though, they were not attempting any great speed and Ray calculated that, if they went as leisurely, the quarry would come in sight by four or five. It was broad daylight still at that time, so he had little fear of missing them.

But two hours of steady, hard paddling revealed only the unbroken, silent ranks of trees along the banks and an unruffled stretch of water ahead of them. It was getting evident that, with some cunning, the two avengers had made slight haste while they were still within view of the camps in order not to attract attention, but as soon

as they had passed from sight they must have speeded up the pace. Ray muttered a conviction of this to Gaston and at his acquiescing nod silently speeded up the stroke, reaching farther and applying his strength until the corded muscles stood out like ropes on his forearms and the paddle bent in his hands. Gaston made no such effort, working smoothly and easily as a machine, but the bow of the boat never wavered from the straight course he kept it in.

After a while Ruth spoke. "I'll take your paddle," she said to Ray. "I can relieve you for a while."

He shook his head, with gritted teeth, resenting that this slender slip of a girl should believe herself capable of replacing his might. But Gaston turned his head and spoke also.

"Mamselle ees right. No use you keel yourself!"

The cords were standing out on Ray's forehead and his muscles were kinking on his arms. He would have resisted but Ruth leaned back and seized the paddle, settling farther toward the stern almost against him. There was just room for her to get full play for the stroke.

In exasperation he surrendered the paddle and she swung it forward and dipped it without losing the time. Deftly it slid into the water, sweeping backward without a ripple and without visible evidence of effort on her part. But the boat after one swing, settled into its rush again and shot onward without loss of speed.

And now Gaston began to shoot out little, suppressed grunts in time to his stroking. His sturdy back swung farther and swayed back again. The paddles reached out and gripped and slid back and out again. Ray saw with amazement that, fast as they had gone before, the canoe was picking up speed over his best efforts. The slender torso of the girl swayed before him in perfect time to Gaston's long reaching. The paddle dipped and twisted cunningly in her hand that was hardly large enough to fully grasp it. The open collar of her waist showed the smooth, soft skin of her neck, with little strands of hair curling on it. The supple body took on new lines of grace with every movement.

"By George!" he muttered in some chagrin, "you're a better man than I am, Miss Burgess."

She half turned her head until the soft curve of her cheek was visible and the angle of her forehead with damp hair clustered on it. The cheek curve sharpened in a smile.

"For a sprint—perhaps," she said, panting slightly, that and the dampness on her brow being the only signs of exertion she showed. "In the long—run—you'd wear—me down!"

It was absurd but Ray felt gratification and something like humble gratitude that she should admit so much. Then he fell to watching her, fascinated. He knew why Ben Folsom had called her Atalanta, now. In all his life he had never seen such perfect poise and grace as that slender form exhibited. He felt humbled, humiliated, awed by her.

What a mate she would make for a man!

The canoe swept on for another hour and yet there was no sign of their quarry on all the expanse of the lake, although they were drawing near its head by now. They began to wonder if they had overshot, passing the others after they had turned up some creek. But there was no place behind them where they could have gone and Gaston declared that Burgess was up at the head of the lake. So in spite of the lateness of the hour they continued their course with unabated speed.

And now, as he sat there, watching wonderingly and worshipfully the lithe perfection of the girl who sat in front of him, the smell of spruce came to Blaisdell's nostrils, aromatic, pungent, refreshing. Mingled with the scent of balsam and the odor of pines, fresh, enlivening and sweet, the breath of the woods swept down on him. And it was the most delicious breath he had ever encountered, he thought.

Yet he had worked for weeks in the mills, among the spruce logs and he had never even caught their scent as far as he remembered, while now he was breathing in the fragrance as though he had encountered it for the first time in his life. Despite the grim errand they were on, the shadow of tragedy that might lie ahead of them, he was uplifted and joyous as the cool water swirled around the bows of the canoe.

Back against his cramping knees against which Ruth's little feet, curled under her, rested lightly, the girl's body swayed with the finish of her stroke. A strand of hair, caught by the breeze, blew away from its fastenings and whipped across his face. It too was fragrant, as fragrant as the balsam

and the spruce, as fragrant as the wild violets in the spring. Ray's heart suddenly swelled with wild intoxication and knowledge. Why! He never had loved that other; never had known what love was! A thankful wave of gratitude toward Myla and toward Burgess suddenly swept him. They had, together, saved him from folly; from a mistake that would have embittered all his life. They had set him free! They had made it possible for him to know this girl, to realize her perfection and her superiority, to worship her, even if at a distance, all the rest of his time on earth.

The thought of telling her so never occurred to him. She was Atalanta, the superior, the protégée of Diana or some other goddess representing independence of men, superiority and perfection. She was lovely, proud and self-sufficient. All that man could do was to bow humbly and worshipfully before her, grateful even for the little, kindly and cold smile which might be his only guerdon.

To be sure, according to some dimly remembered legend, Atalanta had been tricked and won by some juggling of golden apples or other, but that only went to show that the original Atalanta was inferior to this one. She, meaning Ruth, would never have been swayed by petty, feminine covetousness. That Greek fellow might have thrown diamonds and pearls before her and she would have run disdainfully on.

At this moment in his maudlin reflections, Ruth, whose breath had been gradually becoming more labored, raised her paddle clear of the water and passed it over her head.

"I'm afraid," she said, "you'll have to take it! I'm about—all—in."

Ray uttered an exclamation of self-reproach and seized the paddle. For a moment she sank back against his knees, breathing quickly. He bent forward and her head, thrown back, came under his eyes. She was breathing rapidly and her cheeks were flushed with a delicate bloom. Her hair was tumbled on her brow.

Her eyes, half closed, opened suddenly to meet his own which were directed downward in a hungry, yearning but inverted gaze. She caught her breath with a little laugh, the flush grew deeper, spreading over neck and throat in a rosy glory. Then the clear eyes grew slightly troubled, uncertain, almost pleading and the lids fluttered down over them. She laughed with a little catch and twisted erect, her hands going to her hair to pat it back into place.

"I know I look like a sight," she said. All notions about goddesses and remote devotional worship crashed to atoms in Ray's mind. Their place was taken by a flaming desire and a wild, leaping joy that was half mingled with fear—fear that now that she had come down to earth she might not be for him.

"A sight for the gods!" he grunted, in reply and viciously plunged his paddle into the water, sweeping it back until the tough ash creaked and bent alarmingly. Gaston felt the lurch and half turned his head.

"By gar! you upset heem!" he said and then rested his own paddle across the thwarts as he pointed ahead.

"I t'eenk we find som' one!" he said.

Ray looked. Ruth looked. There ahead of them lay a small islet sparsely overgrown with sapling trees and with a sharp outcrop of rock rising at one end of it. It contained hardly more than an acre of ground and it had a rough, rocky beach surrounding it. Near its center was a half-hidden log cabin almost in ruins. Before the cabin burned a fire. There was a canoe lying on the beach not far from it. Under the overhanging outcrop of rock which dominated the whole island lay another canoe.

They drifted on, slowly and silently. No one was to be seen, yet it was evident that some one was camping there. The place, as Gaston explained in a troubled whisper, was one that had been utilized in times past by muskrat trappers, but had been deserted for some time.

They were wondering what that second canoe meant and where were Jean and Renee. The silent waters and the equally silent shore gave no answer. The cabin lay as silent and the fire smoldered in the waning light without attendance.

Slowly and warily Gaston worked the canoe in to the shore, until it came ghostlike and silent to the beach and grounded. He climbed out, Ruth after him, and held it while Ray clambered forward and stepped to the shore. Beside them lay the other canoe and Gaston stooped over it with his inevitable exclamation:

"Mojee!"

They also looked to see the flimsy sides ripped and shattered with holes, where bullets had pierced it. Then they straightened to gaze questioningly at each other.

Then came the sharp crack of a rifle shot and the splintering crash of a bullet striking home against wood. A splinter shot from the canoe they had just abandoned. Then, steady and measured, shot after shot came beating against their eardrums, and the thin cedar planks of the boat echoed to the shattering impact of mushrooming bullets that sieved it into uselessness.

CHAPTER XIX.

With the first sinister report Ray had taken one short leap and swept Ruth into his arms, whirling with her until his body was between her and the lurid flashes that ripped from the rocky outcrop not fifty yards away. Gaston stood stupidly until the second shot echoed and then leaped into the air, leaped sideways, leaped back again, at a loss in which direction to seek refuge.

"Mojee!" he spluttered. "*Sacré!* By gar!"

"Ray Blaisdell! Ray, let me go! Do you hear?" Ruth panted and commanded. But Ray was in an agony of fear that the next bullet might strike at them and he held her in spite of her lithe struggles.

Then Gaston grabbed him by the arm and tugged.

"De cabeen!" he shouted. "By gar, we better ron, I t'eenk!"

Ruth attempted again to writhe free and follow the Canadian but Ray's arms had caught the habit of grasping her and he refused to be diverted. Instead he stooped and swung her up from the ground and went after Gaston.

"Idiot!" said Ruth resignedly and sensibly refrained from further handicapping his speed by struggling. She even, he thought in the whirl of excitement, nestled down a little more comfortably in his arms.

They had almost reached the cabin in the wake of Gaston, who heroically loitered on his way so as not to distance them, when a last shot echoed and Ray felt the bullet sting past his temple. The girl's head showed just above his shoulder and the ball could not have missed her by more than an inch or two. He cried out with sudden rage and fear at the danger she was in.

Ruth started in his arms and cried out with him. He thought she must have been hit but her words undeceived him.

"Ray! Oh, they've shot you!"

There was a panic terror, a poignant fear in the tone that thrilled him. He had no time to analyze it but shook his head, sending drops of blood flying. Then as Gaston suddenly doubled around the wall of the cabin he plunged after him and came to rest in its shelter. Ruth squirmed from his grasp and seized his shoulder with one hand, fumbling for a handkerchief with the other.

"By gar, she's close call, dat!" grunted Gaston. But Ruth paid no heed. She was dabbing at Ray's head where a streak of blood showed. He tried to tear away.

"The damned murderer!" he growled. "Let me go while I finish one or two of them!"

"No, no! You stay where you are!" she cried. "You aren't armed, Ray!"

And then for the first time he realized that she had called him by that name not once but twice or three times. He did not even know how she knew the name but his seething rage at the cowardly attack melted into a growing comfort that was almost compounded of thankfulness for the assault that had led her to this intimacy. Yet he was ashamed to feed her agitation by false pretenses.

"It's no more than a scratch," he protested. "It barely broke the skin."

He dragged out his own bandanna and bound it around his head, tying it behind and setting his rough felt hat rakishly over it. And then Ruth laughed, a bit hysterically.

"You'd make a fine pirate," she said. Then she shook her own attire straight and tucked in her hair. "But I wish you'd not be so rough! You've rumpled me up like a scratch owl!"

"What kind of a bird is that?" said Ray. "Any relation to a bird of paradise?"

She made a face at him and blushed slightly. He and she seemed to have almost forgotten the situation they were in, but Gaston had not.

"Mojee!" he said. "W'at we do now?"

It was something of a question. On that side was nothing but the blank wall and dilapidated stone chimney of the hut. Opposite them, but facing the mysterious ambush, was the door.

"Why didn't you run in?" asked Ray.

"I try," said Gaston simply. "Eet ees lock an' I have no time to ask admission. By gar! Dose bullet do not wait w'ile I mak' de introduction."

"I'd like to know who the devil are bush-whacking us like that," growled Ray. Gaston shrugged his expressive shoulders.

"Eet ees not far to look," he said. "I t'eenk we find Renee an' Jean."

"Renee and Jean! But why should they fire at us?"

Again Gaston shrugged. "Eet ees not at us dey fire, I t'eenk. Eet ees at de canoe —except de one shot. And dat shot—eet com' as near mamselle as you!"

Ray glared at him stonily. "Who—who would——"

"I guess Renee maybe fire dat shot, m'sieu'," said Gaston sadly.

Ray turned to Ruth to find her looking soberly at him. There was pain and regret in that glance.

"I'm afraid she—hates me, too," said Ruth.

He fell silent and the three of them leaned against the log wall for a minute or two without further comment. Then Ray said:

"Whose canoe is that other—and where are they?"

"I t'eenk we guess right," said Gaston. "De canoe ees shot all up—bot dere ees a fire out dere—and de cabeen ees lock'."

"You mean they're inside?" Gaston shrugged his shoulders as though to point the obviousness of that deduction.

"And they can't get out," added Ruth.

They looked helplessly at one another while the brooding silence of coming night loomed over the lake and the island. Once or twice they thought to hear some one moving inside the cabin but the log walls were thick and they could not be sure.

"And we can't get away either," said Ray. "It appears that we are up against it. Not one of us thought to bring a gun."

"I t'eenk of heem," said Gaston simply. "Bot de gun ees not dere. Renee, she have leetle rifle and Jean, he tak' mine!"

"So I see," said Ray dryly. "At any rate we are rather helpless. But maybe your father and the man he brought with him are armed."

"It doesn't seem to have done them much good if they are," said Ruth. "We don't even know they are alive."

"I t'eenk so," said Gaston. "Eef dey are dead Jean an' Renee would go away."

Ray squared his shoulders suddenly. "If that's the case," he said, "I am going in there."

He shook himself a little, to get rid of the little chill that attacked his spine, pulled his hat down and started to step around the corner of the cabin. But Ruth grabbed his arm.

"You're not going out there to be shot, Ray Blaisdell," she declared firmly.

"I'd like to know why not," he replied, more belligerently than he felt. It was necessary to assume some bravado, assert his manhood, for to tell the truth he already felt a bullet tickling his ribs and the sensation was not pleasant.

"Because I say you shan't," declared Ruth. She stamped her foot impressively to emphasize her command. "It is perfectly silly of you to walk right out to be shot. You might have a bit more consideration for me."

The glow of pleasure this gave him was voiced in his question.

"For you?"

"You ought to know that having people shot up and killed all over the place is exceedingly—annoying to me," she replied with spirit. "You've already got blood on my tie."

She held the black neckerchief tied in a four-in-hand around her collar, sailor fashion, out to his view and he saw two or three stains on it where they had fallen from his head.

"Oh!" he said stupidly. "I'm sorry."

Then the old flame of resentment, borne now, however, of disappointment at her motive, flared up.

"I apologize," he said ironically. "And I'll try to be considerate in the rest of it. However, I'm going into that cabin unless I get killed, and if I do get killed I'll endeavor to fall so that my corpse will not be in sight to mess up the landscape and the view. Otherwise you'll be out here all night without a chaperon."

"You're not going!" said Ruth flatly.

"I'd like to know why not," he repeated defiantly and started.

She was at his side in an instant, her arm through his and her body pressed tightly to his side.

"Very well," she said sweetly. "I'll go with you then."

She had taken such a position that if he emerged on the side he intended she would be between him and the rocks that hid the ambush. She had a firm hold on him and he could not disengage it unless he became rough. He glared down at her and she

smiled up at him. He looked about for Gaston. Gaston had crept to the other end of the cabin and with back turned to them was peering cautiously out to see what he could see.

"If you don't let go," said Ray sternly, but in a whisper, "I'll—I'll——"

"You'll what?" Ruth defied him.

"I'll—I'll kiss you!" he blurted, which was not at all the threat he had intended making. She started a little and looked frightened, that being the first time he had ever seen anything like fear in her expressions, varied as these were. There was also indignation and, he thought, contempt, behind the fear.

"I'm going with you," she said coldly.

Then he kissed her, not very satisfactorily, because she twisted and strained her face away, though she would not let go of his arm locked in her own. He had all the advantage and having kissed her once, on one eyebrow, he felt that he had to go through with it. His free hand reached her chin, and the arm she had bound down was not so bound that he could not get it around her waist. She stiffened but he brought her face around and stooped.

Ruth made no sound, only her eyes met his, and they were neither defiant nor scornful. They merely asked him not to.

He released her abruptly and stepped away. She no longer tried to hold him.

"I'm—sorry!" Ray stammered. "I didn't mean to——"

"Oh, don't apologize," said Ruth with sly irony. "Why didn't you?"

"Because I think too much of you—to—to do anything you wouldn't wish me to," he stammered, while she seemed quite self-possessed.

"Very well," she said demurely. "And now, I'm not holding you and I'm not going with you. Why don't you go out there?"

"Do you want me to?"

She did not reply, only continued to look at him with that sly, inscrutable look, much as a cat looks at a mouse which is in front of its paw. Ray grew very uncomfortable and felt sorry for himself.

"Very well," he said with an attempt at dignity. He stepped resolutely to the corner of the cabin. Gaston, at the other end, having failed to see anything of consequence, straightened up and looked around, somewhat astonished to find them acting as they were.

Ray started to take the last step around the corner when there was a flurry and his arm was seized and violently jerked.

"*Don't* you go out there, you—you insufferable—— Oh, why *can't* you be sensible?"

The last was an appeal that almost sprang from tears and he reacted to it at once, stepping back from the danger spot.

"If you don't want me to——" he began. Then she burst out on him.

"Of course I don't want you to! What have I been telling you all this time? You—you—try to make me act—like a fool!"

There *were* tears in her eyes and they were too much for him. He retreated awkwardly.

"I'm not going," he said with an effect of sullenness. "I'm the fool, I guess."

Ruth dabbed her eyes with the handkerchief that was specked with his blood and then looked once more at him before turning away.

"Maybe!" she said.

For a moment he had an impulse to leap around the corner and meet a hundred bullets but this was checked by a call from Gaston who had been digging into the chinks between the logs with a clasp knife. He had opened a hole and was shouting through it.

"Hey!" he called. "On de eenside! W'y you not ansaire?"

They plainly heard the sound of cautious steps and then a voice hoarse with fear but recognizable as that of Burgess.

"Jake! Don't you let 'em in! It's that damned Blaisdell, I tell you! He's as bad as the others!"

Another voice growled something in assurance and then spoke through the hole.

"You got any guns?" it asked.

"*Non!*" said Gaston.

"Got any grub?"

"Not a damn' bit an' we are hongree," said Gaston frankly.

"Well, then, stay where you are and be damned to you! What the hell use 'd you be except to eat what we got in here? And that ain't any too much."

"Ah!" said Gaston thoughtfully. In another moment he asked:

"An' w'at about wataire?"

The answer was eager. "Can you fetch it?"

"Maybe," said Gaston.

The others had gathered close and were

absorbed in this byplay. They plainly heard Burgess' remonstrance.

"Don't you let that damned Blaisdell in, Jake!"

"If you git water up here," said Jake, "we'll open the door. But you'll have to take your own chance makin' it. I've got a carbine but shells are runnin' low and I can't waste any more valuable ammunition coverin' you."

Ray and Gaston looked at the lake. The cabin would cover them for a certain distance but it was certain that they could not reach water without coming into view of the ambushers. Besides, they had nothing in which to carry it.

They acknowledged as much to the disappointed Jake.

"Then rot out there and be damned to you!" he replied with vicious callousness.

The three looked at each other in the fading light. It was almost dark and the fire in front of the cabin still flared redly in the murky twilight. There was nothing more to be done. Ray took off his coat and held it for Ruth. She let him put it around her shoulders and they all sat silently down on the ground with their backs to the cabin wall.

The darkness crept down on them, the shadow of the cabin grew blacker and blacker against the failing light of the fire whose beams danced eerily in fans to either side of it. They heard the rustle of a breeze among the trees on the lake shore and Ray again caught that sweet odor compounded of balsam, pine and spruce. It seemed to him, half drowsing, that the fragrance of Ruth's hair mingled with it.

Then he felt a light pressure against his heart and his arm went out. There was a low sigh as it closed around a slender waist. He sat still, almost holding his breath, for Ruth was dozing with her head against his waistcoat and his arm about her.

He had ascended to some region considerably above and more glorious than the seventh heaven when his trance was interrupted by a sound and an incisive, inhuman voice.

"None of you had better move, m'sieurs! Nor make any noise. I have you covered."

He knew the voice was Renee's and that the vague shape in the gloom was hers, holding a capable rifle. He held his breath as Ruth sighed again and moved slightly, praying that she would not awake.

CHAPTER XX.

Gaston, of course, fell back upon his one comprehensive ejaculation: "Mojee!"

Ray let it go at that. There did not seem to be anything else to be added. For the moment he was chiefly concerned with hoping that no one would say or do anything to awake Ruth. As long as they sat silent in the pitchy shadow of the cabin, Renee, no matter how inclined, could not distinguish Ruth to harm her. But let the girl move and betray her position, or let her awake and realize the situation, and there would probably be disaster. The hand that had fired that shot which had missed her by fractions of an inch probably would be quick and pitiless to strike again.

So they sat for a full minute while slight sounds of some one moving about outside the cabin tantalized Ray's curious ears. The dim, slender shape before them, vaguely outlined against the lighter ground of the beach, never moved nor made another sound. Patient, silent, cold and inhuman, Renee stood guard.

Finally the rustling and movement of that other—undoubtedly Jean—ceased, to be followed by a chuckling laugh and a slight crackling sound. The fire seemed to have died down.

Cackling words in French *patois*, whispered shrilly, accompanied that continued laugh.

"It is done! A really efficient inferno, Renee!"

Something of that horror dawned on Ray and he opened his mouth to cry out. But what was the use? The figure of Fate stood there, in the person of Renee and if Ruth awoke——

He could not face that possibility. Nor would pleading avail him. The signs of monomania were all too plain both in that laugh and cackling voice of Jean's and in the unfeeling calm that was Renee's.

The crackling grew louder and pungent wisps of smoke were wafted in little swirls around the corners of the cabin. Ruth stirred in his arms and sighed. He felt the first movement of her awakening and was in a panic for fear she would cry out or otherwise betray her presence.

And then, silently, Renee faded into the gloom, going around to rejoin her father. The crackling grew louder, the swirls of smoke more noticeable. Ruth came awake with a start.

"What is it? I dreamed——"

And then she realized where she was and jerked away. She was probably about to say something severe to Ray about taking advantage of her unconsciousness but at that moment the crackling mounted to a sustained rush of sibilant sounds and the shadows deepened against a widely glowing background.

"Why! Why! It's a fire!" she cried.

Ray and Gaston were both on their feet pounding on the thick logs and shouting.

"Inside there! Burgess! For God's sake, come alive!"

There came rustlings and exclamations from the cabin, muffled by the logs, but something of the words could be distinguished.

"Hell and damnation!" said Jake's voice. "I'm chokin' with smoke! Who let that fire git away?"

There came Burgess' wail.

"What's the matter, Jake? I'm suffocating in this infernal smoke! Don't you let 'em in!"

"Let 'em in!" yelled Ray angrily. "You fool! It's getting out you'd better be thinking of. They've set the cabin on fire!"

He thought he heard laughter from out in the gloom beyond the light of the fire. Two laughed; one in chuckling, insane glee, the other in low-toned enjoyment that was infinitely more horrible.

Renee's measured voice followed.

"Yes, let them come out!" she invited. "We are waiting."

But Jake could not hear her and in any event his panic realization drove him to desperate measures. Ray, peering around the corner of the cabin, heard him unlock and jerk the door open. Instantly there was a shot, a cry from Jake and the door closed again.

Ruth, awake to the tragedy at last, seized upon Ray.

"They are insane!" she cried. "They're bent on burning them to death!"

"And you too!" Renee's inhuman, mocking voice came out of the gloom. "All the rats of that breed!"

Burgess was pounding on the logs near them.

"Blaisdell! Ruth! For God's sake, can't you do something! They'll roast us like cornered rats! Blaisdell! I never did you any harm! It was Myla said you did it! Get me out of here, for the love of God! And I'll take the stand for you and swear you never did it!"

"You've got a gun!" yelled Ray in disgust. "Why don't you shoot your way out?"

"Gun! There's no more shells. Jake shot them away when we were driven in here. They ambushed us from the rocks after shooting holes in the canoe! Oh! My God! Can't you *do* something?"

They could hear Jake, made of sterner stuff, swearing and coughing in the reek, nerving himself to dash out and meet a bullet. But Burgess evidently was half crazed with fear, unable to face death outside or torture inside. Ray gritted his teeth.

"I'm for the roof!" he cried to Gaston.

"Sacré!" said that doughty little man.

"Get them out!" said Ruth harshly. "Get them out, Ray Blaisdell."

And Ray, as though his fury had never lain against the man inside laughed a cheerful acquiescence to her command, laughed grimly yet with the joy of fighting. He stooped and made a back for Gaston, the smaller and lighter man. But Gaston was wise in his own generation.

"By gar! *Non!* I am strong, m'sieu'! You are heavy! I could not pull you op. Mount!"

He stooped, bracing his sturdy legs, and Ray leaped to his shoulders. The blocky little man heaved himself upright and Ray swung to the sloping roof of slabs. He scrambled sideways, clutching the eaves with one hand, reaching down with the other, his long legs sprawled to get the utmost purchase. Gaston seized his wrist and, active as a monkey, scrambled up beside him.

With heavy hobnailed boots Ray kicked at the slabs, shattering them and tearing them loose. Gaston worked like a beaver with his clasp knife, biting at the brittle, dry wood. Sparks fell over them and smoke swirled blindingly about their heads. It was a godsend for it hid them from the watchers beyond the firelight. Otherwise the ready rifles would soon have put an end to their activity.

They beat and tore and cut a hole while the smoke and the sparks tortured them and the fire crept luridly higher and higher. The entire corner of the cabin was burning and the flames roared up against the black sky. They could hear nothing, see nothing. Ruth might be down there, overcome, burned or

seized by that inhuman half sister of hers. Still Ray worked on, soot stained and scorched, to rescue at her command the man whom he had hated and wished to kill. And Gaston worked beside him, gallantly risking his life for no such motive.

At last Ray stooped over the hole and saw the man Jake beneath him, face distorted and red in the stiffing smoke. But he was a man, was Jake.

"The boss is all in!" he gasped. "Reach down an' I'll hand him up to you."

He stooped into the murk and Ray, as he lay over the hole and stretched his arm down, heard him groan and gasp. He came up again out of that misty sea, face contorted in final effort, and in his arms was a bundle, lying inert and heavy.

Then Jake uttered a last, muffled groan as he heaved vainly. He folded together and sank with his burden into the curling, choking mists.

"Gaston!" shouted Ray. "Stand by! I'm going down!"

"M'sieu'!" cried Gaston. "Let me!"

"Positions reversed!" gasped Ray as the smoke welled up and choked him. He thanked his stars for the toughened lungs hardened on sulphurous-acid steam more strangling than this reek. He swung down through the hole and groped as he struck the floor. The heat swept up and over him, bringing the sweat streaming out on his skin.

He felt a rotund body and seized it in hands that were like iron talons. He tossed it up as though it were a sack and felt the relief as Gaston grasped it and tugged it through the ragged hole. Then sparks fell through it and the edge of the tinderlike slabs caught and began to burn.

He stooped again and seized Jake. This was a bigger and heavier man but the broad back and the strong legs were equal to the task. He had well learned the knack of swinging seventy-five-pound bundles of pulp, with one smooth motion, from the floor to arm's length overhead. A hundred pounds added to that weight made a great difference, but the knack was the same and aided now. He grasped the man about the waist, straddling his body. Legs, back and arms creaked under the strain but they moved in unison. Slowly, slowly, and then with rapider, easier swing, the limp weight swung out and up, Ray's torso crouched and then the arms were at length and in his hands the body swung in the hole rimmed with fire and clouded with smoke.

He heard dimly the all-comprehensive grunt with which Gaston seized upon Jake and dragged him through the hole. Streaming with sweat, eyes blinded and smarting, head swimming, he went limp and relaxed as the smoke curled around him and strove to drag him down. He had need of taking a great breath into his laboring lungs and yet he dimly felt that he must not, though the blood was pounding in his head. He staggered under the hole, groping blindly upward. His hand encountered something. Then steel fingers locked on his wrist.

He could give no assistance, could only hang limp until his other hand reached the edge of the orifice. Looking up he saw the blockey arch of Gaston's legs spanning the hole. Its edge was again burning and Gaston's feet bade fair to crash through the flimsy slabs.

Then his hand and half his arm were through the hole. He reached out with the other hand and grabbed the edge, heedless of the burn. Wiggling and twisting, with Gaston pulling like a mule, he fought his way out onto the burning roof and half fell at the edge of the hole.

Then he and Gaston leaped. They were only in time. Ruth was on them instantly, beating out the flames that had taken hold of their clothing. The entire cabin was blazing like a bonfire.

"We've got to get out of here," croaked Ray hoarsely. She pointed to the two unconscious men on the ground.

There was not much strength left in him but he stooped over Burgess. Gaston did the same for Jake, and Ruth, after a critical glance at Ray, appraising his haggard, blackened face and heaving lungs, turned to assist Gaston, who had the heavier burden. There was pride in that look and in that action, the pride of a woman who estimates a man and his strength rightly.

Keeping in the uncertain shadow of the house, now lit up by flames, they dragged their way to the beach, in some vague hope that rescue might lie that way. But as they went, imperfectly concealed, or not at all, since the whole landscape was now lit up, they heard again that mocking laugh. It was nearer than they had calculated, too. Evidently in the shadows Renee and Jean were keeping pace with them, playing with them as cats play with mice.

There was nothing for it but to seek the coolness of the beach, however, although the two shattered canoes offered them no refuge. The sand under their feet was welcome, the water called to their parched and burned bodies. They dragged their burdens to the edge of the shore and threw them down, sinking beside them to plunge their faces in the water.

When they arose again they looked up into the faces of Jean and his daughter, rifles in the hollows of their arms, standing some twenty feet away. On Jean's features was a wrinkling, horrible smile, gloating and joyful. On Renee's was no expression whatever except a tiny curl of the lips that gave her a startling resemblance to the "Mona Lisa." Yet of the two they feared the girl more.

"Pour water on him," said Renee quietly, pointing to Burgess' body. "Bring him out of it. We are not through with him yet."

"He's suffered enough!" said Ruth harshly. "Even you ought to be satisfied!"

"My father suffered more," said Renee. "As for my satisfaction—you underestimate my appetite!"

Ray was growling and gathering himself. He looked on Renee with that vicious antagonism with which a dog contemplates a wolf. A shiver seized him as he recalled the days and evenings when he had sat with the handsome, still girl, sympathetic, almost sentimental toward her. And now—he was tensing himself for the leap that would end either in his death or the twisting of her neck. Then Ruth laid a hand on his arm.

"Be still!" she commanded, and like a faithful dog, he obeyed. Ruth faced Renee boldly.

"I can guess your vindictiveness," she said. "I can guess it—and I'm not afraid of it! As for you, you can't begin to guess —to realize—the horror and regret that will be your portion for what you have done."

"And am going to do!" added Renee calmly. "Your father is coming round. If you'll stand back we'll attend to him—and then to you."

Ruth did not stand back. She would have thrown herself in front of Burgess, who was beginning to sit up, groaning and coughing. Jake had also almost come around. But Ray held her back. Gaston anticipated her, suddenly stepping out of the shadows and before the crouching man.

"Renee!" he said in his atrocious French, "you are not yourself. This man is not for you. Leave him to the good God!"

"God has nothing to do with him," said Renee tonelessly, shifting her rifle.

"God and I have something to do with you, though. You cannot do it. I, Gaston, who have loved you always, say you shall not!"

"I have no use for love," said Renee. "Only for hate! Stand aside."

"You will have use for my love before it is over," retorted Gaston. "I do not stand aside."

The two stood looking at each other, the man's sturdy figure erect, his arms folded. His homely face was set and earnest and boasted a beauty that was not of features. It was impressive, and Renee, crazed as she was, felt it. Her glance wavered, clouded, grew troubled.

"I don't want to kill you, Gaston."

None of them had recalled Jean. Ray had noted him as he stood ready to protect Ruth but he had seen that the old man had no eyes for her, no thought against her, in his obsession against Burgess. Her danger was to be met from Renee. Realizing this Ray had given his whole attention to the drama enacted between Gaston and the girl.

Nor did any of them particularly notice Burgess, crouched in the shadow of Gaston's blocky form. The little Canadian had seized upon all of them, held them spellbound, simple and big in his dramatic moment.

Burgess must have sensed this, or perhaps he did not sense anything as yet except the necessity of flight. At any rate while Renee stared at Gaston and hesitated the man had crept, like a snake, back and back to the shelter of a bush. Here, with a squirm and a plunge, he rolled into shelter, rose to his feet and sprang in full flight away from the beach. They heard his panic yell, as he scuttled away.

They also heard another yell, harsh and mirthful, as old Jean, who had no eyes for Gaston or any other than Burgess, leaped out in pursuit of him.

Renee swung around and seemed about to dart after the two. But Ray, sensing only danger to Ruth, was quicker than she. He flung himself at her, clamped her arms downward at her sides, wrenched the rifle from her and bore her to the ground. Gaston's hand fell on his shoulder.

"Don't hurt her, m'sieu'! Leave her to me."

Ray shook the red anger from his eyes and rose. But he took the rifle as he stepped back to Ruth's side. Gaston helped Renee to rise from the ground. She seemed dazed and sullen, sweeping a hand across her brow and eying Gaston with what almost seemed perplexity.

The tableau continued an instant, every one poised and tense, awaiting the inevitable break. It came in the form of a hail from the water.

"Hello! On land there! What's the bonfire for?"

No one spoke for a moment and then Ruth, the most collected of them all, answered.

"Cabin burned," she shouted. "Who are you? What do you want?"

"Looking for a fellow named Burgess and one named Blaisdell—or Higgins," answered the voice. "Seen anything of them?"

She hesitated, looking for assistance to Ray. But Jake solved their problem unexpectedly. He had recovered by this time and had stood more or less unnoticed.

"I've got Blaisdell," he said, "and Burgess was here a minute gone. What do you want of them? Come ashore and let's have a look at you!"

Ray grinned at the idea that the man had "got" him and fingered the rifle expressively. Ruth looked at him and smiled. It was a fleeting smile, with no mirth behind it. There was no room for mirth in any mind. They could hear the snapping of brush behind them as Burgess fled before Jean. They turned as a canoe made its way toward the shore.

The pinnacle of rock behind which the ambush had been made was plainly in sight against the sky, overhanging the deep water of the lake. It was not a hundred yards away. On its black top shot a figure, round and grotesque in its scuttering flight. It leaped across the rugged line against the sky, paused an instant and then shot out toward the water. They heard the splash and the muffled cry that went with it.

Hard on that sight came another figure, gaunt and bent low like a dog on the scent. It too leaped across the sky line, paused, straightened up and leaped. Its laugh echoed back to them, gleeful and childish, as the second splash floated to their ears.

With one accord they turned to run that way, Jake and Ray and Ruth. Gaston held back, his concern with Renee, and she seemed weary and indifferent. The men from the canoe landed, asked a question and were waved in the direction the others had gone. They looked curiously at the pair and then hastened after the running group.

The three came to the top of the rock together and stood looking down. There was nothing to be seen except some ripples and the canoe moored to a rock and rocking up and down in the disturbed water.

CHAPTER XXI.

The sober, saddened group met the strangers as they turned back to the beach. Ruth stopped and laid a hand upon Ray's wrist where he grasped the rifle he had taken from Renee. He nodded.

"Oh, don't be afraid. If they've come for me—I shall go. There's nothing to be afraid of."

"That's right," she said approvingly. Ray had a queer feeling that he was being treated like a dog, that he was, in fact, her dog; a pet to be ordered about, directed, teased or romped with. Well, if that was all, he would not complain. She owned him. He was abjectly and wholly hers to do with as she chose.

He met the man who led the party, a sturdy fellow in street habiliments, a soft hat, light shoes, but with waistcoat open, collar off and all the signs of strenuous exertion written large on a costume unsuited for it. The man who followed him was much such as Jake was. Indeed, they seemed to know each other.

"I'm looking for a man named Burgess," said the first.

"I think," said Blaisdell slowly, "that you will find him in the lake."

"Dead?" said the man regretfully. Ray nodded assent.

"If you're also after a man named Blaisdell," he added, "I'm at your service."

"I've got him already," interjected Jake, stepping forward. "I ain't asserted myself up to now but I'm a deputy sheriff and I got a warrant here fer Blaisdell, alias Higgins, wanted in Noo Yawk account of felonious assault and robbery. Of course, if ye want to fight extradition——"

"I have no intention——" began Ray.

"And no need to," broke in the man in the soft hat; "*I* had a warrant for Starck

Burgess on a Federal charge and brought this deputy from the marshal's office to serve it. I also have a subpœna for Mr. Blaisdell as a witness against him on a charge of conspiring to corrupt a Federal officer, contempt of court and a few other things. If Burgess is dead—however, I may as well serve it."

Ray took the paper indifferently and then turned to Jake.

"All right, go ahead with your warrant," he said. But Jake was a bit dubious.

"You see," he said, "I didn't rightly intend servin' it. This here Burgess swore it out but he ain't so anxious to arrest the guy as he might be. Still, since he's dead an' you're wanted, I reckon——"

"That's all right, Mr. Deputy," broke in the government agent. "Go ahead and serve your paper. But I'll inform Mr. Blaisdell that the indictment against him has been quashed. He isn't wanted in New York on a charge of felony, although——"

The other man stepped forward. "I got a subpœna too," he said. "Servin' it as a matter of accommodation to the sheriff. Mr. Blaisdell?"

Ray took the second paper automatically.

"Wanted as a witness in the case of the *People vs. Jim Gallegher, alias 'Bozo,' and Steve Jackson, alias Slimy Jack,* charged with felonious assault and robbery."

Ray stood there dazed and Jake scratched his head.

"What about the charge against this guy?" the latter said.

"Why," said the government agent, "it seems that the police finally caught the two men who really did hold up the Burgesses and got most of the story out of them. Caught trying to pawn some of the stuff, I believe. They told an interesting tale of a man who interfered with them and drove them off, who, I take it, was Mr. Blaisdell. The facts developed, at least, led the district attorney to *nolle* the indictment.

"On the other matter, however, it appears that Mr. Folsom turned over to the department of justice a letter written to Burgess which implicated him in the recent conspiracy to obtain and utilize advance information regarding decisions of the supreme court. This letter was sent him by you and you are wanted to identify it and relate the circumstances under which it came into your possession. And now, if you'll just give me a little on what did happen I'll be obliged."

Ruth had come up to Ray and grasped his arm. She pressed it reassuringly and he became suddenly light-hearted and almost light-headed.

"Why, yes," he said. "But, Mr. Officer, if you don't mind, it's getting mighty late and this young lady's mother is probably beginning to worry about her. I don't know how we're going to get back to her as it is, but we must try. In the meantime, there is plenty of time to tell that story."

The officer bowed and stepped back. Jake scratched his head again and slowly tore up his warrant.

"It ain't accordin' to Hoyle and rules," he said, "but I'm damned glad to do it, young feller. You're a game guy if ever I saw one. And I ain't forgettin' you pulled me out o' that furnace."

They went back to the beach to find it apparently deserted. But after a bit they saw a dark shadow against a stunted tree near by. Ruth and Ray walked up to it to find Gaston seated there with Renee. The latter was asleep, with Gaston's arm around her. Her face looked white and wan but peaceful and once she even smiled as they looked at her.

"Be quiet!" said Gaston; "she is asleep. When she awakes—she will be restored."

Jake and the other deputy went off to the rock and soon returned paddling the canoe left there by Jean and Renee. Then there was a debate. They discussed the feasibility of taking seven people in two canoes but in the midst of it Gaston, who had gently pillowed Renee's head on his coat, came to them.

"Eet ees not necessaire that you stay," he said. "Renee and I, we wait here. You go in de canoe. To-morrow I feex de oder and we go—together."

"There is nothing to eat," remonstrated Ray but Gaston pointed briefly to Jean's canoe.

"Dey breeng plenty," he said sadly. "We will not need moch, m'sieu'. And after dees —w'atever she need, I weel get for her. *Bon!*"

And Ray saw that it was good and nodded understanding.

He looked at his watch, undamaged after all it had passed through, as is the way of watches which will demonstrate a finicky delicateness in everyday life only to survive terrible vicissitudes when a watchmaker is not at hand, and was astonished to find

that it was only half past nine. He had supposed it was verging on midnight.

The government agent and the marshal's deputy entered their canoe. Jake and Ray and Ruth entered the other and they pushed off. Under a rising moon, Gaston, standing lonely over his sleeping charge, waved them a farewell. Then the paddles dipped and they began the long journey back to the camps they had left on that eventful day.

As before, Ray sat in the stern and paddled. He was thankful that the bow paddle in Jake's hands kept the man's back to him, for Ruth sat just in front of him, leaning back against his knees and every now and then she threw her head back so that the moonlight shone on her eyes and on the white throat above the sailor tie. She was quite silent and so was he but the sight of that inverted face was terribly disturbing to his stroke. They were taking their time, however, so that it did not make much difference. As for Jake, he assumed that his companion was a tenderfoot and was not surprised at the vagaries of their course. He never even turned around.

Ruth reclined there comfortably looking at Ray and Ray looked, for the most part, at everything and nothing, to keep his gaze away from her. But it would not do. He could not resist the temptation of glancing down at her. The first time he did it she smiled. The second time, as he turned resolutely and guiltily away she frowned. The third time she looked thoughtful. The fourth time his face turned her way she made that same little face at him, compounded of challenge and derision. It was too much. With all his resentment of her airs flaming in him, Ray bent down—and she did not move and——

After a long time Jake growled:

"Why'n hell don't you keep this here boat straight?"

"Jake," said Ray, "you're a mighty undiscerning person. This boat is going straight as straight can be to——"

"Hell!" said Jake with disgust.

"No! Heaven!" retorted Ray.

There was a wagon down below awaiting them, already packed with part of the equipment that was going out. Ray and Ruth stood on the brow of the ridge and looked down at Whitman's Creek. Then they turned and looked out to where the Casto flowed out of the lake over the spreading shallows. Quite shamelessly, they held hands.

"There'll be work here for quite a while, dearest," said Ray. "After that we'll find other things to do."

"Of course," Ruth replied enthusiastically. "I've been poring over all the maps you had in your kit. There are just dozens of streams right around here and we'll go to work to develop them all. Then, Ben Folsom doesn't half enough appreciate you, Ray, and I'm going to tell him so. We're just going to get busy and build dams and things until we have the biggest and most comprehensive——"

Ray put his hand over her mouth and she bit it, but not very hard.

"Now, hold on," he said. "You go too fast. All these streams are developed and owned and it's a long, slow growth before we get where we are going. You've got to look at the practical side of things, sweetheart."

But Ruth grabbed his arm and shook him.

"Oh, you—*man!*" she said in utter scorn. "Stumbling around already over the difficulties! There aren't any difficulties. If there are, we'll overcome them. With you—the greatest engineer——"

"Here! Here!" he remonstrated.

"Well, the worst then. And me to drive you and make you do all you're capable of doing—if Ben Folsom doesn't make you a partner or something, I'll—I don't know what I'll do to him."

"It'll be aplenty, I have no doubt," said Ray. Then he bent and kissed her. She became sober at once.

"But you *will* work for that dream, Ray," she said. "We'll both work for it, won't we?"

He nodded silently and they stood a moment, arm in arm, looking down to the valley, visualizing the great white power plant with its lacing network of cables, its humming turbines, its foaming spillways. Then they turned away and went down to the wagon that was waiting to take them out.

The complete novel in the next issue will be "The Cage of Glory," by Leroy Scott.

Mad Dog!

By Percival Wilde

Author of "The Hunch," "Between Trains," Etc.

The difference between the injured Rory and the outraged Mr. Brown was all in the dog's favor.

RORY pushed open the gate with his sensitive nose and gazed into the quiet street. It had been an exceedingly uneventful autumn day. It had begun promisingly with the discovery of a cinnamon-hued cat which had venturesomely strayed into the big collie's domain. Rory had charged, giving tongue as he did so. The cat had vanished and Rory had spent a noisy half hour investigating possible places of concealment, to be sternly rebuked by his master. "Hey! Cut it out!" this latter had admonished him. "Don't you know it's Sunday?" The collie had wagged his tail submissively and had subsided. Fine distinctions between the days of the week have never impressed their importance upon him but he deferred unhesitatingly to the superior wisdom of his owner.

Some twenty minutes later he had ventured into the street. A familiar group of children attracted his attention. He trotted casually in their direction, recalling happy romps—and sundry lumps of sugar candy, none the less appetizing for the warm, moist hands which offered them. Usually the bigger children made amateurish attempts at riding him; having been on terms of intimacy with them since his puppyhood days, he did not object. Sometimes the smaller children pulled his ears; that he cared for less but accepted with good-natured tolerance. He found it more enjoyable when his human friends threw objects for him to retrieve; when they indulged in races which found him an easy winner; when, upon certain blissful and never-to-be-forgotten occasions, they repaired to the near-by swimming hole and invited him into the water with them.

Usually his reception was cordial in the extreme. This morning, however, he had found it different. "Go on home, Rory," they had told him, "can't you see it's Sunday?" Being unable to appreciate the significance of that fact, he had persisted, gamboling invitingly in a manner most inappropriate for a dog of his size and respectability. But the response had been most discouraging.

"Huh! That old dog thinks he's going to Sunday school with us, don't he?"

"Fat chance!"

"We'll show him where he gets off!"

They had done so in a fashion whose meaning was quite unmistakable, and Rory, unable to fathom their reasoning but aware beyond the shadow of a doubt that his presence was unwelcome had trotted disconsolately back to his kennel.

He had amused himself for a half hour by

disinterring a bone thriftily withheld from an earlier meal but the result had not been entirely satisfactory. The big collie felt sociable, thrilled with the joy of living, and found scant comfort in his lonely repast. The weather was inviting; a thousand confused scents in the crisp air commanded activity; every powerful muscle in Rory's body longed to respond, yet omniscient humanity for some unknown reason had rebuked him twice within an hour. Unable to solve the mystery he had fallen into a restless sleep, punctuated vividly by dreams of cornered cats—and endless races—and kindred delights.

At one o'clock he had been summoned to the kitchen for a remarkably excellent meal. If Sunday brought with it certain deprivations, it made up for them, in part, by the superior quality of its rations. He had done them justice.

Gorged to repletion he had sauntered gravely into the dining room and had obligingly swallowed a rapid succession of proffered titbits. He did not want them, but when his master condescended to feed him from his own plate Rory could not find it in his heart to refuse. The dictates of canine etiquette were not to be lightly ignored.

The meal over, Rory had indicated his eagerness for action: had tossed his head eloquently toward the great outdoors; had pawed expressively at the lintel.

"Nothing doing," his master had replied decisively, "I'm going to take a nap." With dismay Rory had watched him saunter into the parlor, stretch himself out luxuriously on a couch and cross his hands contentedly over his middle.

It was wrong, all wrong. The tingling breezes, the song of birds, the yielding grass far flung over hill and dale, these cried aloud for long tramps, day-long excursions. Every nerve in the big collie's body responded to the call, yet so strong was force of habit that as his master's eyes closed the dog sank to the ground, resting quivering muzzle on eager paws, waiting—waiting—waiting.

He cocked his ears in hopeful anticipation as the man snored raucously, to be disappointed again as he relapsed into deeper slumber. He ventured to sniff inquisitively at the carelessly extended hand; to tread on velvet pads from the couch to the door, and from the door to the couch again. Time was flying; the golden day was passing swiftly, and the human, to whom, above all others, he owed allegiance, lay sleeping as if he would never wake.

Rory moved again to the door. It was ajar. He pushed it open gently and found his way out of the house. The sunlight beamed down upon him as he hesitated at the gate. The air was vibrant—electric—with energy. The collie paused. A hundred yards up the street he recalled a hotel with an unfailing supply of scraps; a hundred yards down the street he recalled a friend of the gentler sex, an Airedale whom he had courted assiduously for months. Perhaps because his appetite was satiated, perhaps because of a seductive undertone in the bracing air, the collie made the fatal decision to yield to the dictates of love.

A single street to cross—his inamorata lived halfway down the next block. Rory broke into a trot. Twenty-four hours earlier, and his day would have ended as uneventfully as it had begun. But a careless motorist, tacking around the corner that morning, had collided with a lamp-post and had strewn the road with fragments of a shattered wind shield. The wreck of the car had been hauled away; the razor-keen splinters of glass remained in the dust, a deadly menace to the feet that trod upon them. Rory, leaping a minute puddle with a spring that carried him six feet beyond it, landed among the splinters.

The pain, as an inch-long sliver buried itself in a forepaw, was maddening. The collie yelped and made for the pavement. A million red-hot needles burned in the injured foot. He bit at it, to feel a searing agony throb through the entire limb. Blinded with pain, dizzy with anguish, he rose unsteadily on three legs and began to hobble toward home.

It was this moment that his friends, the children, chose to atone for the morning's aloofness. Unaware of what had happened they greeted him with shouts of joy.

"Rory! Good old Rory!" he heard. There came the patter of running feet. Then the catapult was upon him. He would have run, but it was impossible.

"Let me ride him!"

"No; I want to!"

"I'm going to do it! It's my turn!"

He had stood the weight many times before. Now it was intolerable. His injured foot touched the ground. Ripples of agony spurted from it into his quivering body. He growled, and for the first time in his life

flung his child rider angrily from him. Had it not been for the first time his tormentors might have kept at a respectful distance; most unfortunately he had established a reputation for docility.

As he resumed his laborious progress toward home, one of the older boys stepped into his path.

"What do you mean by that, sir?"

A snarl rose to Rory's lips. He halted.

"What do you mean by that?" insisted his persecutor. "Bad dog! Bad dog!" Emboldened by the collie's passivity he struck him with a hockey stick.

Trembling, but unable to shake off the habits of a lifetime, Rory did not move. Came a second blow, badly aimed, striking the injured foot. All the pain that the collie had suffered was as nothing compared with this. Quivering needles, blazing, incandescent, darted through the tortured limb.

Insane with agony he slashed back at his tormentor. The saberlike teeth fleshed themselves. There was a scream. Other figures barred his path. He struck a second time—and a third.

Pandemonium broke loose.

Conscious only of a suddenly overpowering weariness, blind with pain, oblivious of the rapidly gathering crowd, the big collie moved again toward home. Fifty yards to go—he had covered ten.

A new shape rose before him. He struck at it mechanically, burying his gleaming teeth in cloth that ripped and tore.

From about him rose the ominous cry of "Mad dog!" If it meant anything to Rory, he gave no sign. Forty yards to go. A figure menaced at the right. He struck. Thirty yards. A figure at the left. He struck again.

Sticks and stones began to fly. The mob, keeping a safe distance, attacked with weapons against which he had no defense.

Twenty yards. A stone struck him on the head and brought him to his knees. Dizzy and blind, he rose again to his feet.

Ten yards. The mob was growing bolder. Slash! Slash! They gave way.

"Mad dog!"

"Jim Denton's Rory!"

"Mad dog!"

Through the pandemonium that surrounded him came the calm voice of Officer Steele, the best shot in Madison.

"If you'll get out of the way for a second——"

Home.

Flying down the path came the master, Denton.

"Rory! Rory! What's the matter?"

Collapsing in a piteous heap the dog feebly raised a bleeding foot.

"Mad dog!"

"Can't you see?" shouted Denton. "He's cut himself! He's hurt his paw!"

"If you'll get out of the way for a second ——" The revolver was leveled.

"Mad dog!"

"He's bitten half a dozen children!"

"He's not mad!" screamed Denton. "He's not——"

The revolver spoke.

II.

Mr. Thaddeus Brown pushed open the door of the log cabin which he glorified with the appellation of "my hunting lodge" and gazed into the quiet pine forest. A gentle wind sighed through the trees. The autumn sunlight glinted through the dense foliage. A clean, pure smell came to his city-bred nostrils. The advantages of town and country combined, reflected Thaddeus: Madison, not ten miles away, supplied him with comforts; the forest, at his door, the lake, not a stone's throw distant, supplied him with sport. Madison provided a living —a most comfortable living. The hunting lodge provided relaxation, and being a portly individual well on his way to the fifties, Mr. Brown felt the need of occasional rest.

A branch snapped with a loud report. He peered anxiously into the woody depths and glimpsed a fleeting form. He grinned; a week more, and the hunting season would be open. He glanced happily around the single room which constituted the cabin; whatever the game, he was prepared to meet it.

Deer? Bear? Mr. Brown's eye caressed an assortment of automatic rifles of the very latest model. Quail? Partridge? Pheasant? Automatic shotguns, glistening dully under a film of oil proclaimed his readiness. Did the lake invite him? A little thicket of rods, a shelf full of plugs, none mounting less than half a dozen hooks, were at his elbow.

Thaddeus gazed contentedly around his cabin; from the freshly opened cases of ammunition to the shiny hunting knife and the collapsible landing net, everything an-

nounced that here was a killer prepared for any game.

Up to date? More than up to date, Mr. Brown's triumphant glance seemed to declare. An acquaintance, he recalled, had animadverted upon the automatic shotguns, had objected to the supply of multiple hook plugs.

"That's not sportsmanship," he had declared.

Mr. Brown had laughed aloud. "Sportsmanship?" he had echoed. "You want to kill 'em, don't you?"

"Yes," his acquaintance had admitted, "but you want to give them half a chance."

"Not I," Mr. Brown had asserted positively. "Not I!"

Being youthful, the other had persisted: "it's unfair, I say. It's damnably unfair."

In a manner of speaking, Thaddeus had become hot under the collar. "Listen," he had replied politely, "you make two thousand a year, don't you? I know; your boss told me. Well, when you make what I make you can tell me where I get off! See?"

The interview had terminated then and there.

Thaddeus smiled as he thought of the absurd incident. "Guess that gave him something to put in his pipe," he muttered approvingly. Lovingly he took up a high-powered rifle and worked half a dozen shells through the chamber. He patted the glistening breech. "Sportsmanship? My eye!" he ejaculated. From squirrel to grizzly, from minnow to pike, Mr. Brown was ready.

Carefully he closed the door of the cabin and climbed into his speedy roadster. He had spent a happy afternoon putting everything in order. A week more and coincident with the opening of the hunting season his vacation would commence. Fifty hard weeks of presiding over a real-estate office and then two glorious weeks of communion with nature. "Communion with nature." Mr. Brown had culled the phrase from the catalogue advertising the automatic shotguns. "Yes, that's it," he said aloud as the car sped over the narrow road. "Communion with nature."

More than two weeks he could not allow himself; the effect upon his employees might be bad. Yet he had been sorely tempted a year ago when the rain had descended in solid sheets for six consecutive days. He had sat morosely at the door of his cabin with a shotgun on his lap, firing buckshot at the few squirrels that showed themselves. Being an indifferent marksman, most of his shots had spent themselves tearing up underbrush; but eventually he had gotten a squirrel, had blown it to bloody rags and atoms with the gigantic pellets.

"Ah!" Mr. Brown had sighed, "ah!"

He hoped sincerely that he would have better luck this year. Last year he had discharged a thousand rounds of ammunition —had fired at every living thing that moved in the forest—and had been compelled to subsist on canned goods. He had been luckier with the plugs; but after eating fish for three consecutive days he had returned incontinently to potted beef. Potted beef when he had looked forward to nothing less than haunch of venison; the memory of the taste still haunted him.

As he turned into the main residential street of Madison a crowd some distance ahead stimulated his curiosity. The sudden sharp crack of a revolver piqued it to the uttermost. He speeded up, and came to a stop at the scene of the tragedy.

"What's happened?" he inquired.

"Mad dog. Bit half a dozen children."

"Tst! Tst! Tst!" remarked Thaddeus. Having neither wife nor child he was not directly concerned. Yet he descended eagerly and inspected the pathetic heap at Denton's gate. The crowd made way for him; Thaddeus possessed a trick of radiating his importance.

He took cognizance of the cleanly drilled hole in the collie's temple and turned with approbation to his executioner: "Good work, officer; fine shooting."

Officer Steele nodded his appreciation. "Thank you, sir. A dangerous animal."

"Doubtless. Yes, doubtless." Without voicing it Thaddeus managed to convey the impression that nothing smaller than bear commanded his own attention. "A good day's work, officer."

Denton, kneeling broken-heartedly at Rory's side, glared at him. "The dog wasn't mad! The dog wasn't mad, I tell you!"

Thaddeus smiled with conscious superiority. "Mad is as mad does," he observed pontifically. An approving murmur came from the crowd. "Mad is as mad does," he repeated solemnly. "How are you going to know if a dog's mad? Because he acts mad! And when he acts mad, you shoot him. See?" The ripple of approbation which rose behind him was as wine to Mr.

Brown's vanity. "There are too many dogs running around this town anyhow," he pointed out genially. "I'd like to see every last one of 'em shot."

"In the summer," volunteered an individual in the crowd, "you ought to put sulphur in their water."

"Put poison in it," corrected Mr. Brown. "Poison."

Denton rose slowly to his feet and faced the portly oracle. "See here," he said slowly, "I have yet to see a mad dog. But when it comes to mad men——"

Thaddeus drew himself up with dignity. "Are you, by any chance, referring to me, sir?"

Denton gazed from the dead collie at his feet to the militant features of his interrogator. "Oh, what's the use?" he murmured helplessly and walked away.

Mr. Brown thrilled with satisfaction. He kicked the body with lordly disdain. "Mad is as mad does," he proclaimed yet again, "and then you shoot 'em!"

Glowing with the consciousness that he had borne himself as became a representative citizen he climbed into his car and threw out the clutch.

"Good day, officer."

"Good day, sir."

Mr. Brown let in the gears and rolled off.

Later in the day Jim Denton buried what was left of Rory.

III.

It was a glorious morning. Mr. Brown stood on the threshold of his home and debated. "Shall I get out the car," he asked himself, "or shall I walk to the office?" The sun beamed down warmly. Thaddeus sensed new life pulsating through his well-preserved body. He sniffed the vibrant air and felt the weight of twenty years slipping from his shoulders. "I shall walk," decided Mr. Brown.

He set out briskly. He had slept well. Less than a week more and the hunting season would commence. In anticipation of that happy event, he felt youthful—inexhaustible—tireless—as became a mighty hunter. He stepped along blithely, hardly conscious of the earth under his feet.

A chance acquaintance passed in an automobile. Mr. Brown nodded gayly. "Fine morning!" he shouted.

"Want a lift?" his friend called back.

"No; no." said Thaddeus, "wouldn't think of riding on a day like this." Unconsciously he quickened his brisk walk.

It was good to be alive. It was good to hear the rhythmic click of his heels on the stone-flagged pavement. He threw back his shoulders and breathed deeply.

He came to Denton's gate. A brownish stain, conspicuous on the grayish stone, testified to yesterday's tragedy. "A big animal," thought Mr. Brown; "funny that the spot isn't larger." He marched past, carrying himself with a jaunty swing. "Mad is as mad does," he murmured audibly. Ah, yes! that had been a brilliant remark, worthy of his position as a leading citizen. "Mad—is—as mad—does," he repeated, keeping time with his stride. A friend of the gentler sex passed. He bowed merrily.

His sharp eyes spied broken glass mixed with the dust of the crossing. "Wrong," reflected Thaddeus, leaving the curb and making a wide detour to avoid the glittering splinters, "all wrong. This should not be allowed!" And on the instant, a fast-driven motor truck, swerving dizzily around the corner, plopped a huge wheel into an all but evaporated puddle at Mr. Brown's feet. The truck drove off without stopping. The puddle rose in a mass to plaster itself intimately to Mr. Brown's clothing.

Thaddeus drew back in dismay. He gazed at the havoc. He had set forth in a neat blue business suit; in a twinkling of an eye it had been converted to a futuristic affair ill comporting with his dignity.

He shook his fist at the departing driver. "You ought to be in jail!" he shouted. There should be a law against such drivers, he reflected angrily. There was such a law; of that he was fully aware; but Thaddeus felt the need of a special ordinance dealing most rigorously with the case in point.

He gained the safety of the opposite curb and rubbed his streaming coat vigorously with a handkerchief. The result, if possible, was worse. The viscous mixture spread to the spots which had escaped it and once having seized new ground clung to it with admirable tenacity. Mr. Brown crumpled the soiled handkerchief into a ball and flung it impatiently into the street.

Still another acquaintance drove by. "Fine morning!" he shouted to Mr. Brown.

"Umph," grunted the real-estate agent, "wonder why he doesn't offer me a lift?"

He continued on his way to his office with

his good humor notably abated. For an instant he thought of turning back and changing the suit. He glanced at his watch. He could not afford the time, and were he late his employees might commence to pattern their hours upon his. He lengthened his stride. Once at the office he would send for another suit of clothes.

But his tribulations were not over. As he turned into the business section a group of street urchins, moving in his direction spied him and stopped to point eloquently at his physiognomy.

"Well, what is it?" growled Thaddeus.

"Mister!"

"Well?"

"Hey, mister!"

"Well?" rumbled Mr. Brown.

"Mister, go home and wash your face!"

Thaddeus possessed a single-acting, nonreversible sense of humor. If the joke were at the expense of another person he invariably saw the point—and relished it loudly. But with the joke at his own expense he was seldom able to enjoy it. He lunged at his tormentors. They kept easily out of his reach.

"Hully gee, what a map!"

"Mister, did your mother let you go out like that?"

"Shame on you! Oh, shame!"—this last in a shrill, piping falsetto.

The taunts infuriated the real-estate agent.

"Just wait till I get my hands on you," he panted, "and I'll break your necks!"

They awaited his charge with keen delight, melting away as he plunged at them and dancing with glee a few feet beyond his reach. Thaddeus gave up the vain attempt.

"If I ever catch you——" he threatened.

"But you won't! You won't!"

With the infuriating chorus ringing in his ears he attempted to proceed. A stone, hurled with mathematical accuracy, knocked his hat from his head. He bent to retrieve it from the gutter, when, to the delight of his persecutors, the wheel of an automobile rolled neatly over it.

Trembling with rage, inchoate with fury, Mr. Brown stood on the curb and for the second time in a single morning shouted maledictions upon the tribe of careless drivers. His performance was visibly enjoyed by his juvenile audience. He was not ordinarily a profane man but his vocabulary rose excellently to the occasion.

Came a touch upon his sleeve: "Hey!"

Thaddeus whirled about: "What d'you want?"

Officer Steele did not so much as raise his voice. "That's no way to be talking in front of the kids," he pointed out gently.

Mr. Brown exploded in his wrath. "Why, you——" he began.

Officer Steele's voice became gentler than ever. "None of your lip," he warned. "Move on or I'll run you in."

"My name is B-Brown!" sputtered the mud-incrusted individual facing him.

"I don't care if it's Jones or Robinson—see? I'm telling you to beat it."

Leaving his home, a bare half hour earlier, Thaddeus had been hardly conscious of the earth under his feet. He finished his brief walk in a similar condition, with the important modification that rage, and not good humor, gave him wings.

He burst open the door of his office and pressed the push button on his desk. After an irritating pause the timid features of Miss Seward, his stenographer, peered into the room.

"I wasn't ringing for you," said Mr. Brown.

"I know it."

"I was ringing for Tommy."

"Yes, sir, but——"

"Send Tommy here!" commanded Mr. Brown.

"But——"

Mr. Brown lost his temper once again. "Do as I say!" he shouted and flung himself angrily into his chair.

He tore open half a dozen letters. Their rapid perusal did little to soothe his lacerated feelings. Murchison, to whom he had offered the lease of the drug store at the corner, had found a better location at a lower price, and declined politely. Rieger, whose trifling rent roll he collected, had discovered a ten-dollar error in his last statement and waxed sarcastic, with inefficiency as his text. Kneeland, whom he had hoped would sell the property at the corner of Fifth and Vine, had finally sold it—through another agent.

Thaddeus ripped off his mud-caked coat. It had stiffened in awkward places and it incommoded him. He pressed the push button with mounting wrath.

Again Miss Seward.

"I want the office boy," screamed Mr. Brown. "Tommy—the office boy!"

"Yes, sir——"

"Why doesn't he answer the bell?"

"Mr. Brown," the trembling stenographer explained at length, "Tommy is on his vacation."

"Vacation?" repeated Thaddeus blankly.

"Don't you remember? He doesn't get back till next Monday." She paused. "If there is anything I can do——"

"No—yes!" he corrected. "Sit down. Take a letter."

He dictated brief but pungently worded epistles telling Murchison what he thought of him; informing Rieger that he might take his account away and be damned to him; warning Kneeland that his action was no less than dishonest and that he would sue him for the commission involved. Far from diminishing his anger, the procedure simply increased it.

"Get that last line right," he commanded in a voice trembling with wrath: " 'I am instructing my lawyer to sue you for commission—and damages.' "

"And damages," repeated Miss Seward.

"Knock those letters out. Quick!"

He glanced at his watch as the stenographer beat a hasty retreat. With the aid of his roadster he could be home, into a fresh suit of clothes, and back in half an hour. Miss Seward he could not send; and the bookkeepers he could not spare. Hatless and coatless he plunged into the street.

IV.

Being a methodical man, Mr. Brown had parked his automobile at the same spot, day after day, week after week, for over a year. Being an economical man, it was of a popular make, differing in no important detail from a dozen others to be found in Madison. Being an angry man, it did not occur to him that upon this momentous day he had left his car in his garage.

To leave his office, walk twenty steps to the right, and climb to his seat, had become an automatic sequence of events. Almost without thinking he found himself at the wheel of a car like his own—but not his own, found his foot pressing the starting pedal and his hand letting in the gears.

"Hey!" The shout came from the sidewalk. "Hey, you! Stop!"

Upon any other morning Thaddeus would have stopped, if for no other reason than to gratify his overweening curiosity. Following upon the events of this particular morning the shout merely infuriated him. "Oh, shut up!" he growled and let in the clutch with a jerk.

"Stop! Stop thief!"

If Thaddeus heard he gave no sign. He stepped on the throttle and swung around the corner at twenty miles an hour. The world had gone mad, he reflected angrily as he came out of his turn and headed north on the broad avenue. The world had gone mad and was bent upon persecuting him. The world had gone mad and was making him its victim. Well, he would not take it lying down. Not he!

Little did he know of the interest that his doings had created. The owner of the car, a stranger to the town, had pursued him ineffectually as far as the corner, had raced back through the gathering crowd and had corralled a policeman.

"My car's been stolen!" he gasped. "It was standing here at the curb and a fellow jumped in and drove off!"

The officer wasted no time on idle words. "Come on," he shouted. He leaped for the running board of a second automobile. "Give her the gas!" he commanded the driver. "Do you know the man who took your car?" he asked as they turned the corner.

"No."

"What's he look like?"

"A fat man; no hat or coat; mud on his face." He strained his eyes into the distance. "There he is! D'you see him?"

The police officer turned to the driver. "Catch that man," he commanded briefly. He drew his revolver.

For some minutes Mr. Brown was unconscious of the fact that he was being pursued. He blew his horn in a rage as a car ahead, swerving inopportunely, nearly precipitated a collision. Then, glancing back, he discovered half a dozen cars hot upon his trail. He discerned a lanky individual in the first standing up and shouting.

For an instant Thaddeus doubted the evidence of his senses. At top speed he turned into a side street, whizzing around the corner on two wheels, and glanced back to see his hunters making the turn after him. There could be no doubt of it; he was the pursued; they the pursuers.

Thaddeus did not stop to reason. He had read of motor-car holdups. Perhaps this was one.

"I'll show them!" he breathed. "I'll show

them!" He opened the throttle wider, passed his own home at fifty miles an hour and swung south. A fitting climax for a nightmare morning that he, Thaddeus Brown, should be pursued by bandits!

The policeman in the car following sighted his revolver as they swung around the corner after Thaddeus. "Hold her steady a second!" He fired.

Thaddeus felt a burning pain shoot through his right foot as a bullet, drilling through the paper-thin metal of the roadster, tore the sole from his shoe. His pressure on the accelerator relaxed. Instinctively he jerked the hand throttle open. He twisted around and shook his fist at his tormentors. "Cowards!" he yelled. "I'll show you!"

Abruptly he swung into the narrow road leading to his log cabin. He knew every inch of it; knew where he might safely speed; knew where he must slow down for fear of broken springs. He was gaining on his hunters—that he could see. "I'll show them!" he cried, "I'll show them!"

The foot pained him and he writhed. "Sportsmanship!" he muttered. "Twenty men after one!"

In the car behind the policeman tried in vain for a shot at his fleeing target. "Hold her steady a second—just a second," he begged.

"Can't do it," said the driver. "It's all I can do to hold her on the road."

Ten miles had separated Thaddeus from his arsenal in the wilderness. He covered the distance in a little under twenty minutes. He looked back. His pursuers, now recruited to a dozen cars, were nowhere in sight. He drove the roadster to the door of his cabin, opened the door, and locked it behind him.

He nearly fell as for an incautious moment he placed his weight on the injured foot. He recovered himself with a twinge, snatched up an automatic rifle and crammed shells into the magazine. "I'll show them!" he muttered. "I'll show them!" With feverish haste he placed an open box of ammunition at his side and made ready a shotgun should his attackers come to close quarters.

A moment's reflection would have shown him the insanity of his actions; would have suggested that bandits did not pursue their prey in such fashion; would have indicated that it was not yet too late to stop. But Mr. Brown was far too angry to reflect. For the first time in a long morning it was in his power to strike back at the world which harassed him; he hobbled to the window, knelt, and sighted his weapon upon the point at which the first pursuing car must emerge.

An automobile swung into the clearing. The thunderous report of a high-powered rifle crashed through the silence of the forest, echoed and reëchoed through the woods as an expanding bullet smashed into the laboring engine, and the vehicle stopped. From its running board a terrified policeman leaped to the ground. "He's a crazy man!" he warned. "Take cover!"

In the cabin Mr. Brown exulted aloud. "Big game!" he cried. "Big game!" He sent another bullet crashing into the wrecked automobile—the target was so large that he could not miss—and shouted in joy as an explosion from the gasoline tank rewarded him.

A revolver shot rang out from the woods and a bullet buried itself somewhere in the massive pine logs of the cabin. Atavistic blood in Mr. Brown's veins thrilled with the joy of combat. "Come on!" he shouted, firing at the point from which the shot had come. "Come on! I'm ready for you!"

Four sharp shots from his unseen assailants and the firing ceased. "Only one revolver between 'em," gloated Thaddeus, "and it's empty now!"

He had guessed the state of affairs correctly. A hasty council of war had been summoned and an automobile sent racing back to Madison for reënforcements. The policeman had taken command. "Lay low," he warned his companions. "If that crazy man came out he could kill off the lot of us!"

His reasoning must have telegraphed itself to Thaddeus. He hobbled to the door of his cabin, unable to go farther for his bleeding foot, leveled an automatic shotgun and blazed away at the surrounding brush. Once a scream rewarded him; a pellet had drilled into an unsheltered arm. The scream was music to Mr. Brown's ears.

"How do you like it?" he shouted. "It's your own medicine! How do you like it?"

In a normal moment it would have occurred to him that he could not hold out indefinitely; that no matter how well armed he could not forever resist the pressure of numbers. And it would have struck him that living in a civilized community, no body of mere bandits would venture to at-

tack him so openly, or, having begun the attack, cease so soon for lack of ammunition. But Mr. Brown was far from normal. He shouted with glee as his bullets shattered leafy branches. He would have danced with delight had not his wound made it impossible. He was intoxicated with rage, drunk with fury. His shoulder ached from the recoil of his heavy weapons. He hardly noticed it.

After the lapse of an hour he observed a movement in the underbrush and discerned a white handkerchief fastened to a stick. It was raised and waved invitingly. Thaddeus sighted carefully and blew it into rags with a load of buckshot. A report from the woods answered him and a heavy bullet splintered the threshold underfoot. Reënforcements had arrived. Thaddeus retreated hastily into the cabin and shut the door.

A second rifle blazed fifty feet to the right and a bullet, flying through the window, wrought destruction upon the thicket of fishing rods at the opposite wall. Taking in the damage, Thaddeus groaned in agony, and fired vindictively at the unseen marksman. A dozen shots, from as many different rifles, answered him. He seized a handful of fresh cartridges and reloaded hastily.

"Twenty against one! Twenty against one!" he cried aloud. "And they call that sportsmanship!"

In the woods Officer Steele, just arrived, gave his orders. "You fellows keep him busy on this side," he instructed, "and I'll work my way around in back. Look out you don't shoot me."

The firing redoubled in volume as he moved away through the underbrush. Bullets spattered upon the stoutly built walls of the cabin, sang through the solitary window, gnawed at the sill over which Mr. Brown's weapons peered. The air of the cabin became filled with smoke; the floor became covered with empty shells; rifle barrels became hot in Thaddeus' hands.

"Big game!" he shouted. "Big game!" He had wounded at least one man—that he knew—and except for his foot, he himself was without a scratch. Mad—insane—he exposed himself again and again at the window, taking preposterous chances, firing and loading, loading and firing, returning shot for shot. A bullet seared his cheek. He laughed. A second tore a rifle from his hands. He seized another. The joy of battle was upon him; his heart pounded; the sweat streamed from his forehead. He pushed his weapon through the window and fired.

Officer Steele, finest shot in Madison, gained the rear of the cabin and thrust the barrel of his revolver through a chink. His voice was as gentle as ever.

"Throw up your hands!"

Mr. Brown, rifle cocked, whirled like a flash.

The revolver spoke.

V.

Cleaning his revolver that night Officer Steele discussed the tragedy with Officer Pinkham.

"Only yesterday," said Steele, "I shot a mad dog. To-day——" He paused eloquently and gazed through the spotless barrel of his weapon. "I wonder which of the two was the madder!"

Officer Pinkham, busily reading the extra which the local paper had issued upon hearing of the event, shook his head. "He wasn't mad. He was a real-estate agent. His name was Brown. He was a deacon in the church."

Officer Steele dropped fresh cartridges into the cylinder and closed the weapon with a snap. "Mad is as mad does," he commented pithily.

Mr. Wilde will have another story, "The Haunted Ticker," in the next number.

THE UNDER DOG

THERE is now another place in which man, the lord of creation, has to figure as the weaker sex, the under dog and anything else that indicates humility, obscurity and unimportance. It is the new headquarters of the National Woman's Party known as the "Watchtower on the Hill" and situated within a stone's throw of the nation's capitol. When Mrs. O. H. P. Belmont gave a big pile of her money for the purchase of the building, she solemnly and bindingly stipulated that no male could be employed in, on or about the house "except in a menial capacity."

Settled Out of Court

By Thomas McMorrow

Author of "A Man of Principle," "The Man of Three Lives," Etc.

Scannel was a fox and a Sicilian but Ambrose Hinkle was "Little Amov."

A STOUT man was coming slowly down the dirty and uncarpeted stair of a rooming house on upper Eighth Avenue. He was holding onto the banister and supporting himself on the other side by his hand placed flat against the discolored plaster of the inner wall and sliding his feet uncertainly forward to the edge of the treads: he moved like one who walks in darkness or who is traversing unknown ground, and yet a gas light was flaring brightly on the landing above and showing out his path and this man who was coming with so hesitating a gait was walking down the stairs of his own rooming house. He was Frank Scannel, the landlord.

His dark eyes were open and staring, like the unseeing eyes of a sleepwalker. It was unlikely, though, that he had just arisen from his bed or couch; he was fully and carefully dressed. He wore an expensive suit of a loud, black-and-white check, a standing collar, a red cravat of silk in which was a single large yellow diamond, and low patent leather shoes. The costume went well with his dark and sleek and handsome face and his glossy black hair; just now his face was a dirty white and his hair was rumpled.

He opened the door which gave onto Eighth Avenue and peered out. He stepped forth swiftly onto the pavement, which was splattered and variegated by the lights from the store windows and from the passing cars on the roaring elevated above.

"Hello, Frank!"

The landlord of the rooming house drew in his breath sharply and faltered in his stride. But almost on the instant he caught himself masterfully and was suddenly again the plausible and amiable Frank Scannel who was a familiar of the dark hours on upper Eighth Avenue.

"Hello, Al, my boy!" he cried with unusual cordiality. And he stepped forward again to grasp the hand of the man who had intercepted him.

He knew this man well. It was Al Tinelli, an Americanized Italian of about thirty, a well-to-do importer of dried fruits and olive oils and nuts—Al Tinelli of Tinelli & Co. of Washington Street.

"Where are you heading for, Frank?"

"Nowhere."

"Let's both go," said Tinelli, walking beside him.

They walked in silence. An iron-wheeled truck was rocketing over the Belgian blocks of the roadway; when it passed, another elevated train took up the burden of supplying upper Eighth Avenue with deafening noise.

Scannel made no attempt to speak; perhaps he was glad of the necessity for keep-

ing mute. He glanced aside several times at his companion, as any one will when walking without conversation with a friend.

But now something of the dread and uneasiness of face which he had shown upon the stair of the rooming house returned upon him. It was uncontrollable or he no longer sought to dissimulate it, for it was there to be seen when Tinelli glanced casually back at him.

"What's the matter, Frank?"

"Nothing," said Scannel in a troubled voice. "Oh, nothing!"

They walked onward. Suddenly Scannel stopped short, stared with those rounded and frightening eyes at his friend and caught his hand.

"Al!" he began in an explosive voice, as though the pent-up words must burst forth now. But he dropped the hand and turned away, breathing hurriedly and shaking his head.

"What the devil's the matter with you, Al?"

"Let's go in here," suggested Scannel.

They entered a small Italian restaurant. Upper Eighth Avenue is cosmopolitan and not Italian but it has more night life than have the streets of the Italian quarter to the east and it receives accessions of spenders and merry-makers thence. The restaurant at this hour, ten in the evening, was nearly deserted; three guests at different tables were lingering over their smooth and delicious *spumoni*. The round and shining proprietor bowed to the two men from behind the rampart of baskets of twisted bread on the counter near the kitchen entrance. He approached.

"Brandy," said Scannel.

He wanted always the best and the proprietor knew it. He returned with a wicker-covered bottle, ostentatiously rubbing at it and blowing upon it, as though it had accumulated decades of dust during the three months since the restaurant had opened for business.

Scannel poured the tiny goblets brimming full.

"Drink it, Al," he urged. "You'll need the strength!"

Tinelli tossed off the liquor. He was only mildly curious as to the cause of his friend's excitement: indeed, he had commenced perceptibly to chill and stiffen and to harden himself against interest, fearing that Scannel might design to communicate his uneasiness to him for selfish reasons—a sudden pressing call for money, say. He had been often in Scannel's company and knew him at least superficially, and he could not imagine at once any other contingency which would so deeply stir and perturb him. But good brandy needed no argument.

"I want to talk to you about Karin—don't get nervous now! Don't get excited!"

"I'm not getting excited," said Tinelli. "Why should I get excited?" He laughed to show that the mere mention of the name of Karin Holmberg, the young beauty to whom he was engaged, did not excite him in the least, not even when it was spoken impressively by a man who had been obviously seeing ghosts.

"I have read somewhere," said Scannel, "that no man is dead sure of his sweetheart until he has had two children by her."

"Don't talk that way, Frank," said Tinelli coldly. "What about Karin?"

Scannel poured the little glasses full again.

"Al, you know I'm your friend, don't you?"

"I suppose so."

"You know it!" said Scannel strongly. "And I'm going to say, Al, that I'd rather lose ten thousand dollars than have to tell you what I found out to-night."

"What do you mean?" growled Tinelli, paling.

"I mean—about Karin Holmberg. Al, supposing you found out that Karin loved another man——"

"What!" snarled Tinelli, half rising. "It's a lie!"

"Keep *cool!*" implored Scannel, growing frightened but facing his friend stubbornly. "I'm saying nothing against Karin. She's as honest as the daylight, but—well, Al, blood calls to blood. It would be nothing more than natural—I put it to you as man to man—that she should feel a friendly feeling toward a Swedish fellow more than toward you or me? Just as a matter of *blood*, Al!"

He studied his friend, calculating the danger to himself when the hot Latin blood which was flowing back toward Tinelli's heart should leap out again under the impulse of fury.

"I'm saying nothing against Karin," he repeated, hastily. "Here, Al—drink this—no, drink it! You need it! Not a word against Karin would I say—but blood calls

for blood. She's married, Al. She's married a Swedish fellow."

The life flickered entirely out of Tinelli's face; except in his eyes—it gathered there, burning.

"If you're joking, Frank," said Tinelli softly, "I'll kill you. Don't joke about this with me, Frank. Where is she?"

"Al," said Scannel, reaching out and grasping Tinelli's hand, "I wouldn't tell you this if I didn't think I ought to—as your friend! I know what Karin means to you. I know you think more of her than you do of anything else—and when I found out what I found out to-night I was fairly knocked silly. But I can prove it to you, Al. I'm sorry, but I can prove it. I can take you there, Al."

Tinelli bent his head aside so as to shield his face.

"Just one thing, Al, and then we'll go, if you want to. You got to swear to me you won't harm her. You got to swear that, Al."

Tinelli nodded his head with one quick jerk.

"You got to swear it, Al," repeated Scannel. "On a cross! Where's a cross? Have you got your knife with you, Al?"

He knew that it was a fad, a silly custom, of the importer to carry a stiletto. Tinelli was not at all vicious or malignant, but was a whole-souled and merry fellow who was afflicted with a taste for low company after dark; he was theatrical and he sought a picturesque touch to carry out the tradition of his Sicilian birth. That Scannel saw the reality under the pretense and knew and feared the possibilities of this man before him may be partly explained by the fact that Scannel was born Scannelli.

"I swear it," said Tinelli, exhibiting the handle and guard of the sheathed dagger.

"Then, come ahead!" said Scannel, throwing a two-dollar bill onto the cloth and rising to leave the restaurant.

They strode into the street together, Tinelli crowding him in the doorway.

"I saw her in my house to-night!" shouted Scannel against the street noise. "There is a man in my house named Dunwoody! He is some kind of a Swede! He has a room on the third floor. I saw her there to-night when he opened the door to go out and I demanded an explanation! He said that she was his wife!"

"I knew it," gritted Tinelli. "I have suspected her for a long time. Ah, we shall have an understanding now. I have not been watching her for nothing, I tell you."

"He called out Karin to face me," resumed Scannel.

"Yes? Yes? What did she say? What did Karin say to you?"

"Nothing."

"Nothing? *Nothing?*"

"Nothing," repeated Scannel. "She laughed."

"A-ah!"

"He knew her in the old country. Well, Al, blood calls to blood. It is a matter of blood, Al. You must see that."

He opened the door to the rooming house. "Here is the place," he whispered. "Walk quietly!"

They tiptoed up the stairs to the room on the third floor. "I have the master key," whispered Scannel. "Keep cool now, Al! What have you in your hand there?"

"Nothing," said Tinelli whose teeth were chattering.

"You must go away very quietly," warned Scannel. "I will prove to you that she is lost to you and then you must go away quietly. Now—look!"

He pushed the door in, retaining hold of the knob. Tinelli looked past the restraining arm.

Karin Holmberg was lying on the bed in the chamber, asleep. Her shining hair flowed loose over the coverings. The shabby room was illuminated by a gas light in the farther wall, so that the face of the sleeping girl was shadowed; the yellow light showed male clothing hanging on hooks on the walls. The air was heavy with stale cigarette smoke and Tinelli knew that his sweetheart did not smoke.

Tinelli uttered an inarticulate snarl and burst the barrier of Scannel's arm.

"Don't!" cried Scannel, leaping into the room after him. "What are you going to do? Stop, Al! *Stop!*"

He hurled himself upon the raging man who was bent over the girl in the bed with one clenched hand driven down. He drew him back, wrestled with him to throw him, drove against him with all his strength. Tinelli tottered backward from the bed, straining with rage so that the veins on his forehead stood out, clutching at the air over Scannel's shoulder and screaming at the top of his voice.

"For Heaven's sake, Al," implored Scan-

nel as the bureau went over with a resounding crash and the struggling men stumbled and tripped over an upset chair. "Keep cool, Al! Don't get so excited!"

"Laughed!" screamed Tinelli. "She laughed! Ah, she won't laugh now!"

Hurrying feet echoed from the uncarpeted hall.

"Help!" shouted Scannel. "Here—help me!"

The doorway was crowded with half-clothed men. They came awkwardly to Scannel's aid and laid hold of Tinelli. They overcame him and pinned him to the wall, against which he suddenly relaxed while the color went out of his face again.

"You're all right now, Al?"

"The girl's stabbed!"

"There's a knife in her!"

"She's *dead!*"

"You've killed her, Al!" breathed Scannel, slouching exhausted into a chair while sweat trickled down his forehead from his wet hair. "God help you now, Al. You *would* get excited!"

II.

Counselor Ambrose Hinkle—familiarly though not affectionately known as "Little Amby" to all who had occasion to use New York's criminal courts—was in his private room in his private building on Centre Street. He was standing at the window, with sharp chin on narrow chest; his large eyes, black and brilliant, were fixed on the Tombs across the way. Many of the unfortunates buried in the dark and iron-barred depths of the city prison were clients of Little Amby; with no maudlin sympathy, with no sympathy at all, but with a light of purely intellectual interest in his eyes he stared at their somber prison house.

He pursed his lips, smiled and returned to his shining mahogany desk. He pressed the buzzer to notify Cohen in the outer office that he was disengaged.

The door opened and a client entered. He was an olive-skinned and full-bodied man in middle life, expensively but badly dressed in a suit of loud black-and-white check.

"Good morning, counselor," said the visitor, smiling jauntily to keep up his nerve in the face of the rather terrible little advocate. "My name is Scannel, counselor."

He seated himself and hitched himself forward alertly. Little Amby nodded, hardly courteously, merely acknowledging receipt of information. He was never a very courteous man by nature and restrained his natural *brusquerie* least in his own office; he was at this time and in his own sphere the most powerful man in New York; in his heart he respected only power.

"There's a friend of mine in the Tombs, counselor—held without bail."

"Murder?"

"Murder. You read about it in the papers, didn't you? His name is Tinelli."

"Oh, yes. That murder on Eighth Avenue, eh? What did you say his name was?"

"Tinelli. Albert Tinelli."

Little Amby nodded again. He had asked Scannel to repeat the name that he might hear again the peculiar lingering pronunciation of the penultimate syllable of the name, which pronunciation told him that his visitor was Italian.

"Confessed, didn't he?"

"Hardly necessary, counselor. He was caught in the act; in fact, I myself saw him kill the girl."

"Did he confess?"

"Yes. Sure!"

"Did he send you here?"

"Not exactly. I told him I'd get him a good lawyer; and you're the best in the business, counselor. I'm his friend, I say!"

"Who's going to pay me?"

"Tinelli. He's rich. He's got a big business over on Washington Street. He can afford the biggest lawyer in New York."

"Five thousand for a retainer?"

"That's pretty serious, counselor!"

"So is murder."

Scannel frowned in calculation and then shrugged his shoulders dismissingly. "He'll pay it, counselor!"

Little Amby spoke into his desk telephone. "There's a man named Albert Tinelli held in the Tombs without bail on a charge of homicide. Go up and see him and get his story and have him sign the usual retainer."

"When I say that he'll pay it, counselor," said Scannel, "I don't mean that he's any kind of a sucker. It's only that he's caught with the goods and he's got no defense, and it all depends on me! Now, one good turn deserves another, counselor, and seeing that it will be no trick at all to turn him out and I am giving you a very nice thing, I should expect a piece of it, and no more than is right."

"What do you want?"

"A half. Twenty-five hundred! I'll have to do a lot of work on this business, and while I am his friend, and all that——"

Little Amby waved his hand, and picked up the mouthpiece again. "Cohen! Make the retainer in the Tinelli case seventy-five hundred."

"There'll be nothing to it," said Scannel confidently. "I could beat a case like this myself and I'm no lawyer, counselor. What you want to do here, counselor, is plead the unwritten law, see? The girl was engaged to be married to him and——"

"I shall have to consult you on the handling of this case, no doubt, Mr. Scannel," interrupted Little Amby. "Save your opinion, for the present. Tell me how this thing happened."

Under the guidance of the lawyer Scannel recounted the incident of the murder, substantially as given above.

"Who is this Dunwoody?"

"A Swedish fellow."

"Perhaps Norwegian?"

"I didn't know him very well."

"What did he look like?"

"He was a tall thin man, with yellow hair and blue eyes and a red face," said Scannel quickly. "A young fellow—I guess he was about twenty-five or maybe seven. I didn't know him very well, counselor. He had the room about six weeks and I hardly ever saw him except at night when I called for the rent."

"Have you seen him since the homicide?"

"No. I figure he blew."

"Why?"

"Well, he was that kind of a fellow. A shifty fellow! He wasn't in his room every night—sometimes he wouldn't be there for four or five days—and between you and me and the desk, counselor, I don't think he was married to the girl. That's just my opinion, counselor."

"Were you there every night?"

"What do you mean? Oh, I see. Well, yes, I would drop in practically every night to look things over. I live right near there—over on Manhattan Avenue."

"What do you do for a living?"

"What do you care?"

"Don't mind that! What do you do?"

"Well—I'm a speculator."

"I like to know who my witnesses are," said Little Amby with an encouraging nod. "It's annoying when I find it out suddenly in court, from the district attorney. Speculator, eh?"

"Speculator. The district attorney's not going to tell you anything about me, counselor. He's not got a thing on me—not as much as he could scrape up with his finger nail."

Little Amby pressed the buzzer. When the boy answered the attorney pointed to a long table littered with law volumes.

"Put those books back in those cases, where they belong," he directed. "I'll be back in a moment, Mr. Scannel."

He rose, leaving the visitor and the boy in his office, and left the room. He walked down the corridor to the outer office and looked over the clients there; he passed through and stepped out into the stair hall, where a number of men were lounging under the burning gas jets. They were mostly well-dressed and capable-looking men, burly and insolent of glance or furtive and wrapped in calculation. Here were gang leaders with a simple faith in fists and bullets, here were professional spies and informers putting their trust in treachery, drug dealers, counterfeiters, forgers, men who believed as stoutly as any theologian in the essential corruption of human nature. They straightened as his glance fell upon them, and eyed him attentively and even with a sort of faithfulness; they were his clients, and, to an extent, his creatures. He brought several of them to him with a jerk of the head.

"A man is going to pass by here from my office in a few minutes," he said. "Cohen will let you know. Look at him. Recognize him, if you can. Don't let him notice you."

"A speculator," he murmured as he returned to his room. "What is a speculator?

"We should find this Dunwoody," he said, when he sat again at his desk and had sent the boy from the room.

"I'm afraid we can't, counselor."

"If I need him," said Little Amby, "I will dig him up from under the ground! We need his testimony, to establish the state of facts you have told me of. You are Tinelli's friend and your testimony will lose weight for that reason. As you brought him here, you might even come under suspicion of complicity!"

"I!" exclaimed Scannel agressively.

"You say this Dunwoody told you they were married?"

"Yes."

"It should be possible to find a record of the marriage. From what you tell me of Miss Holmberg, it seems likely to me that they were married. The marriage certificate would help. If properly handled the district attorney might be induced to offer it himself as evidence of the motive."

"Perhaps it was only a forged certificate." Scannel winked. "Maybe it was only a marriage *license*, eh, counselor?"

"You've given this matter considerable thought," complimented Little Amby but he looked very sharply at Scannel. "Even if Dunwoody were dead"—he added slowly, reflecting aloud.

"And he might have been killed, too!" cried Scannel. "You know how that sort passes out. Oh, he was a bird of darkness fast enough, that Dunwoody! He might have been killed by some other friend of Karin Holmberg's, or—but between you and me and the desk, counselor, I think he didn't want to get in this jam and he simply blew."

"Perhaps," nodded Little Amby.

After Scannel had gone, Cohen spoke through the telephone from the outer office. "Freeman knows this Scannel!"

"Send him in!"

After he had interviewed this Freeman—a black-hearted rascal whom he had snatched from the aching jaws of State's prison and who was touchingly grateful through his fear of being in a like fix again—Little Amby walked slowly to the window and stood with sharp chin on chest staring into that dark mirror in which he saw best the future and the fruition of his plans—the gray wall of the Tombs across the way.

There was something eager and amused in his pale and triangular face as he turned about and went to his desk and to the telephone.

"Let me have the coroner's office. . . . Doctor McGurran, please! . . . Doctor, in reference to that killing on Eighth Avenue—a Miss Karin Holmberg, in a rooming house—what was the physician's report as to the cause of death, doctor?"

"Internal hemorrhage, from the knife."

"Internal?"

"Yes, certainly. There was no external extravasation of blood—practically none. The rupture was in the cardiac arteries, evidently so."

"You didn't examine the body for the presence of drugs, did you?"

"Who is this, please?"

"Ambrose Hinkle, on Centre Street. I'm acting for the prisoner."

"Oh, yes, Mr. Hinkle! Certainly, Mr. Hinkle. Drugs? Why, no. Why do you ask? The cause of death was evident—a child could see it."

"This is a fishing excursion, my dear doctor—a suggestion as to my line of cross-examination, if you will. It is part of the People's case, my dear Doctor McGurran, to establish that the decedent came to her death through the agency of the prisoner. For your own comfort, I respectfully suggest that you do not rest content with the evidence that a child might see."

He sent for Cohen, his managing clerk.

"Have Taylor go up to this address on Eighth Avenue to-night after dinner and ask all the tenants in the house about a roomer called Dunwoody—the man in whose room the Holmberg girl was killed. Tell him to get a description of Dunwoody—as many descriptions as he can. Send him in, if he comes back from the Tombs before five o'clock."

III.

On a morning a week later Scannel entered the little house on Centre Street, coming in obedience to a call from Little Amby. Cohen sent him in to the private office at once.

Little Amby rose to greet him—an unusual honor, reserved ordinarily for ladies, defaulters on a grand scale, eminent statesmen, millionaires seeking or avoiding a divorce. He shook Scannel's hand and then clapped him lightly on the shoulder.

"We have found Dunwoody!" he cried.

"Eh? What is that? What do you say?"

"Perhaps I should say that I believe we have found Dunwoody," amended Little Amby. "There is very little doubt in my mind. The man whom we have traced corresponds in all details to your description and my people picked up his trail in the immediate neighborhood of your house on Eighth Avenue. It is he—barring an extraordinary coincidence, and I am very skeptical of coincidences."

"Where is he?"

"He lives on Little West Twelfth Street. He is not known there as Dunwoody; he is known by the name of Henry Asher. That may be another alias, but we will settle his identity at once. We will go up there now and confront him—the once over, you un-

derstand—and you will identify him, or we will eliminate him from the case and look for another."

"Very well."

Little Amby's closed car was waiting in the side street below. They went down and entered it; the chauffeur drove it west to Hudson Street and up that broad thoroughfare to Little West Twelfth.

"Here is the place," said Little Amby, jumping out before one of a dingy row of red-brick private houses. It was evidently a rooming house—a type of dwelling in which a person can most easily preserve his incognito. A neat and genteel card bearing the single word *Vacancies* was in the corner of the window beside the marble-framed vestibule.

"Mr. Asher," repeated the elderly woman who opened the door. "Are you friends of Mr. Asher?"

"Yes."

"Then I have bad news for you," she said, wiping her red hands in her untidy house dress. "He's dead."

"Dead!" echoed Scannel loudly.

"Yes, sir—he's dead. I read about finding him in the paper—in the North River they found him, off of the amusement park near the ferry—and being that he was not in his room for nigh a week I thought it might be himself and I went around to the morgue. And it was himself, sure enough. Yes, sir, it was himself; in the North River they found him, where you can see the big sign on the Jersey shore that says 'Warden Sugar Company.' Near there, but on the New York side of the river, the man said."

The men looked at each other.

"He lived here, you say?" asked Little Amby, who was evidently at a loss for the next move.

"Yes, sir."

"Did you know him well—his habits and friends, and so on?"

"He had no friends and he had no habits, sir. Sometimes he would sleep all day, and sometimes he would sleep all night, and then again he would stay out day and night. I don't know nothing about him, sir—nor nobody else. Being that his room was standing idle and I having inquiries for rooms every day I went down to the morgue; and when I saw it was himself I didn't want to see him go to the potter's field and so I made inquiries all roundabout and the people said it was all news to them and the first they heard tell of him. They didn't know him at any of the saloons where a man would get to be known if he got to be known at all. They didn't know him nowhere, so what shall I do with his bits of things?"

"Send a note to the public administrator. Was he an American?"

"Well, he was a sort of an American, sir, though he didn't speak English very well. He was one of these black foreigners but a decent American-looking man."

Little Amby thanked the landlady, who had been most obliging in her manner, and they descended the steps to the waiting car.

"You know, counselor," said Scannel, "I got a hunch this is Dunwoody! This fellow's way of living would fit right in with Dunwoody, wouldn't it? And nobody knows him here, just like nobody knows Dunwoody!"

"You better go over to the morgue and look at him," said the lawyer. "I've got to get back to the office but I'll let you have the car. I'll send Taylor of my office around with you so that you'll have no difficulty."

Scannel waited in the car while the lawyer hurried into the house on Centre Street.

"All set," said Little Amby to Taylor, an admitted clerk. "Take him up to the morgue! Be sure to get Mahoney up there who knows what is wanted."

He plunged into the routine business of his office. At half past twelve sharp he left the office and went over to Lavelle's Rathskeller on Broadway and ate his usual ample and leisurely lunch.

Taylor was waiting for him when he returned to the office.

"Scannel identified the body," said Taylor. "He says it's Dunwoody!"

"Very good. Where's Scannel?"

"He's coming here any minute. I told him that you wouldn't be back until a quarter after one, so he went about his own business. He ought to be here any time now."

And very shortly Scannel appeared and was shown into the private room.

"We will have to give this information to the police," said Little Amby after Scannel had detailed his recognition of the body of his late tenant. "In fact, it is to our interest to do so. I have not yet decided on the defense but it cannot do any harm to establish the identity of this man in the

morgue with Dunwoody. We shall have to bring Dunwoody into the case; it will be well to show his intimacy with the girl even if our primary defense is not that the deed was an act of sudden passion. If we establish that this man is Dunwoody we will not have to rely on your testimony alone. The People's argument, you understand, might be that there never was any Dunwoody, and that this killing was the unfortunate result of a meeting in your house, and that Tinelli's sudden and maddening discovery of the relations between his sweetheart and Dunwoody is all a lie to cover Tinelli and to shield you from your responsibility—which, Dunwoody eliminated, would be that of an accessory before the fact—a principal in the first degree. I am showing you the People's case, you understand."

"Well, counselor, to tell you the truth I been thinking along those lines myself and I thought it would be a good idea for us to go up there and search that room on Little West Twelfth Street and see if we don't find something to prove this dead man is Dunwoody!"

"You have a legal mind, Mr. Scannel," smiled Little Amby. "That is what we will do—with the police present. I've telephoned to the central office for them to send a man down here."

He answered the telephone. "The detective is waiting outside now," he said.

They joined the detective and the three men went down to the car and so to the shabby old house on Little West Twelfth Street. The detective had been assigned to cover the case several days before and required little explanation beyond that of the manner in which the recognition of Dunwoody's body had come about. Little Amby did not explain the investigation through which he had first connected Dunwoody of upper Eighth Avenue with the Henry Asher of Little West Twelfth Street. If connective material was discovered in the room it would speak for itself.

The landlady admitted them and delivered over the key to the room upon seeing the detective's badge.

They went to the second floor back and opened the door. Little Amby walked through to the window and drew up the shade.

It was the room of a man of quiet tastes, possibly that of a recluse but there was no evident suggestion in it of criminality. There was a shelf of popular novels on top of a painted dry-goods box; in the box was a half-emptied bottle of brown liquid—apparently ginger ale gone flat—and two soiled water tumblers. There was a cheap alarm clock on the deal board which was the mantel over the iron-fronted fireplace; on the mantel also were a box of poker chips, a cigar box labeled "Havana Perfectos" and containing four cigars of a five-cent brand, a photograph of a young man in his Sunday best framed in gilt iron, and an evening newspaper of the week before. There were two chromos on the wall which had evidently been art calendars in their day: one showed a buxom young woman sitting not overdressed on a marble bench by a deep-blue river and the other depicted a similar lady similarly slovenly of dress sitting in a flat-bottomed rowboat and trailing her hand in the river by moonlight. It might have been the room of a divinity student with more sides to him than one; it might have been the room of almost any clerk; it might, indeed, have been the room of a desperate rascal who had no yearning for self-expression and was quite indifferent to domestic interiors.

Little Amby stood by the window, leaving the search to the others. The police official took charge of the only clothes closet, starting at the top shelf with his flash light. Scannel tried the lid of a trunk on whose well-worn side was stenciled the name Henry Asher.

Little Amby turned his back to the room and stood gazing out into the rear court.

He heard a triumphant exclamation from Scannel and turned again.

"Come *here!*" cried Scannel. "Look at this!"

The detective descended from his exploration of the clothespress. Little Amby stepped from the window.

"Marriage license!" cried Scannel. "What did I say, counselor? Here's a license for Harold Dunwoody to marry Karin Holmberg!"

"That's what it is all right," murmured Little Amby, scanning it. "I wonder if this thing is on the level."

"It goes to show he is our man, doesn't it, whether it is on the level or not?" argued Scannel.

"Yes, it does. There's no use in talking, Scannel—there's a lawyer lost in you. Is this all there was?"

"Here's something!" cried the detective who was on his knees before the trunk. "Here's letters addressed to Dunwoody at the Eighth Avenue address—look, there's dozens of them!"

"All in women's handwriting, too," commented Little Amby, shuffling them. "And all from out of town. I guess this fellow must have been a member of one of those 'Are You Lonely?' bureaus."

"I shouldn't be a bit surprised," agreed Scannel. "He got a lot of mail. If you ask me, I think he kept that room under his Elias just so he could pull stuff he wouldn't want to be caught at. Well, he's dead now, and it's a principle of mine not to knock dead people—I'm funny that way—but such is my opinion, counselor."

"I think you're right about him, too," nodded Little Amby, who had been reading the letters. "But I don't share your prejudice about speaking the truth of dead people. In fact, I might be induced to lie about them if it would do a living man any good. Anything you can blame on a dead man is so much velvet—it doesn't do him any harm."

They returned to the sidewalk. Little Amby thanked the detective, pressed a half dozen fine cigars on him and suavely dismissed him. He lingered in thought on the pavement beside Scannel.

"Do you know, Scannel," he exclaimed, clapping the stout man on the shoulder for the second time that day, "I think I see a way in which we can saddle this thing on Dunwoody! Let me overrule your fine feelings on this point and try it on."

"Why, that's nonsense!" growled Scannel. "Everybody knows that Al Tinelli did it—he confessed as much! How can you go back on that?"

"Easily," said Little Amby cheeringly. "That confession won't amount to a hill of beans if he wants to contradict it. He confessed to the police, didn't he? Well, it's no trick at all to turn a jury against police testimony. And so far as the law goes, I can tell you that even if he formally pleaded guilty to the charge when first arraigned he'd still have a legal right to change his plea and make it not guilty!"

"No, no," frowned Scannel. "It won't wash!"

"You'll stand by him, won't you? You won't testify for the People?"

"Oh, I'll stand by Al Tinelli, certainly!"

"Then we'll put it over," snapped Little Amby. "With the help of these letters it will go down like a cat lapping milk. Supposing Dunwoody had stabbed the girl, for instance, and had bolted out before the house was aroused, and—but give me time to get my idea straight! I'll tell you what we'll do; we'll jump right down to the district attorney's office and try it on before they hear about Dunwoody from the police, and if we play a bold hand we may be able to stampede them and turn Tinelli out today!"

"I tell you it's a fool thing to do, counselor," pleaded Scannel, following the lawyer into the car. "Take my word for it, you're pulling an awful bone. What we want here is the unwritten law, see?"

But Little Amby, sunk into a corner of the car and pleasantly busied in cutting and fitting his story, paid no heed to Scannel's misgivings. The stout man was still arguing and whining when the car stopped before the criminal courts.

They descended and walked up the wide steps between the couching sphinxes and entered the rotunda and went to the district attorney's elevator. They were whisked aloft to the office of the public prosecutor.

IV.

"Who's in charge of that Albert Tinelli murder case?"

"Mr. Dewsnap."

"Tell him Ambrose Hinkle is out here and wants to see him at once."

The law clerk at the desk in the outer office rose with alacrity after a look of respectful interest at the famous advocate and went in to advise Mr. Dewsnap of the visitor.

"He says come right in!"

They entered the office of the assistant district attorney. Mr. Dewsnap, a youngish man partly bald, was at his desk. A policeman attached to the criminal courts was tipped back in a chair by the window. By the square table against the farther wall was seated a gentleman who proved to be an employee of the bureau of missing persons.

"This is Mr. Scannel, Mr. Dewsnap," said Little Amby. "You will want to know him, as he will be the principal witness for the People in the trial of Albert Tinelli. I do not think you have his statement yet."

"It is kind of you to bring him forward," bowed Dewsnap with irony.

"As an officer of the court," said Little Amby smilingly, "it is my duty to further the ends of justice. You will find that I do not want anything for Tinelli but justice."

"But not too much of it, perhaps," said Dewsnap, bowing again.

"Off the record," said Little Amby, "I will not conceal from you that your principal witness is well disposed toward the prisoner, who is his friend. But I have every confidence in Mr. Scannel and I am sure that he will put no obstacle in the way of a just verdict. He is a business man of standing—a speculator, I believe."

"A speculator," said Scannel, sitting down with composure.

"May we have a stenographer, Mr. Dewsnap?"

"Certainly."

A male stenographer entered and took his place with book and pencil at a gesture.

"I suggest that you permit me to ask a few questions, Mr. Dewsnap," said Little Amby. "You may then proceed to take the statement of Mr. Scannel in your own way and in my absence, if you wish. But I think I can be of help to you.

"How long did you know Albert Tinelli, Mr. Scannel?"

"A year or so."

"You were fairly intimate with him?"

"We were friends."

"Not merely business acquaintances?"

"I did not meet him in business at all. During his leisure time."

"You knew Karin Holmberg?"

"Yes."

"Very well?"

"We were friends."

"You introduced her to Tinelli, didn't you?"

"I don't remember that. Well, I think I knew her first!"

"Do you know if she used drugs?"

Scannel glanced at him sharply, hesitated in his reply and then regained his composure. "I cannot say as to that."

"I asked you if you knew."

"I don't know."

"Do you know if Tinelli was a drug user?"

"I don't know."

"Did he look like a drug user?"

"Of course," interposed Dewsnap, "none of this is binding on the People for any purpose. And, for the matter of that, Mr. Scannel is not qualified to state."

"This is just for your information, Mr. Dewsnap," nodded Little Amby. "Well, Scannel?"

"No, he didn't."

"You knew Dunwoody, of course?"

"In a business way."

"Would you say that he showed signs of drug using—narcotics?"

"I didn't notice."

"Now, when you looked into Dunwoody's room and first saw Karin Holmberg that night, would you say that she had been drugged?"

"Of course not!"

"You're sure?"

"Certainly. She was asleep! Well, of course, counselor, I don't pretend to know anything about such matters and I'm just giving my opinion."

Little Amby spoke to the assistant district attorney. "You got the supplementary report from the coroner's office to-day or yesterday, didn't you?"

"It's here. You wish to see it?"

"I'm familiar with it. On the basis of that report, Mr. Dewsnap, and with the help of Mr. Scannel's testimony, which he will put under oath if you wish, I am going to ask you to withdraw the charge of homicide against Albert Tinelli. You will hardly care to proceed against him if you are reasonably convinced that it would be a waste of the People's money. I am prepared to convince you that the guilty party in this case, if any one, is Dunwoody—and he is dead."

"He is dead?" repeated Dewsnap.

"Yes. He's lying up in the morgue at this minute. Mr. Scannel identified him an hour ago. That's so, isn't it, Scannel?"

"Yes!" exclaimed Scannel, again after hesitation, stirring uneasily in his seat.

"May I show Mr. Scannel the medical report?"

"Certainly."

Little Amby handed the paper to Scannel and hung helpfully over his shoulder.

"You see?" he said. "The immediate cause of death was an overdose of a narcotic drug! It is evident that the girl was dead when Tinelli stabbed her. In view of the fact that you are prepared to vouch, so far as you are competent, that Tinelli did not administer the drug, he is practically disassociated from the case. That ends your connection with the affair also, as you know nothing further about Dunwoody."

Scannel raised his eyes slowly from the paper.

"Who then—killed the girl?"

"There is the strongest reason to suspect this Dunwoody, in whose room the girl was found dead. Inasmuch as Dunwoody is dead also, the case would seem to collapse—for the present and until further evidence is brought out. You need not trouble yourself further—unless you feel that it is your duty to assist the People."

Scannel sat slouched in his chair. Slowly his hand crushed the paper. Suddenly he hurled it to the floor and sat forward with inflamed face and clenched jaw.

"It's a lie!" he shouted. "All lies!"

"Careful," breathed Little Amby.

"How's that?" interposed Dewsnap. "Let the man talk! What is a lie, Scannel?"

"This trick to fix the thing on Dunwoody! He's no more guilty than you are! The man who did it is Tinelli, the prisoner in the Tombs!"

Little Amby pursed his lips, smiled whimsically at Dewsnap and leaned back in his chair.

"Now," cried Scannel, starting to his feet, and throwing out his hand, "I will tell how this thing was!

"That night I met Tinelli on Eighth Avenue. Eh—I told you that. He was much excited. I am his friend. He talked to me about Dunwoody, who lived in my house. He said Dunwoody was too friendly with Karin Holmberg. He showed me a stiletto—a knife—he said he would kill them. He was very much excited—jealous—mad! I tried to calm him. We sat in a restaurant there—the proprietor will tell you—he saw—he saw me trying to calm Tinelli. But he was mad! He accused me—his friend! He said I was friend to Dunwoody. He said he had proof, and he would kill them that night!

"Very well. I leave him. What is the use talking to a crazy man? I look for Dunwoody to warn him. He told me that day he was going to the amusement park in Jersey. I go there to look. I do not find him. I hurry back to my house. I go upstairs to Dunwoody's room. It is closed. I think it is locked and I try it with my master key. I open it. Some one springs upon me with a knife! I grab him, and we fight. It is Tinelli! He sees it is me, his friend, Scannel. I throw him back toward the bed, not seeing Karin Holmberg there. I cry for help! Too late—he has stabbed her."

Scannel paused, and drew a long and shuddering sigh.

"While we are waiting for the police," he continued, "he told me how this came about. After I left him, he had found Karin Holmberg and had been drinking with her. He had drugged her and brought her to the room, meaning to wait for Dunwoody and to kill them both after confronting them. He had doped her, you understand? Well, that is how she died. I can find the cab in which he brought her."

"My people have already found the cab," said Little Amby. "But the driver did not know the man he drove, except that he was dark and looked like a Greek or an Italian. He remembered the sick woman."

"There it is," said Scannel, sitting down and wiping his face.

Dewsnap lifted his eyebrows at Little Amby. He had not been particularly moved by the hectic recital; he had heard many such.

"A very interesting story," said Little Amby. "But it is not quite complete. Perhaps I can help Mr. Scannel. Will you call a Mr. Harris, who is waiting outside? Thank you."

The detective who had accompanied them to the house on Little West Twelfth Street entered.

"Mr. Harris is an operative of the Gormley Investigations, Inc., a private detective bureau. Mr. Scannel has met him. I said at the time that Mr. Harris was from the central office; some people have prejudices against private detectives. As a matter of policy I prefer to conduct my cases without police assistance. Mr. Harris was with us when you found the material—the license and letters—in the room on Little West Twelfth Street?"

"He was," said Scannel, eying the detective.

"And now would you be good enough to call a Mr. Jake Freeman—he's waiting somewhere in the rotunda downstairs. Thank you."

He picked up the telephone and called his office. "Send Henry Asher over to the district attorney's office at once! I'm waiting for him in Mr. Dewsnap's room."

He put down the receiver.

"We have here also," he said, looking around, "a representative from the bureau

of missing persons, who is interested in the identification of the man found in the river. Will you please tell Mr. Dewsnap, sir, if you have succeeded in identifying the body which was found in the North River yesterday?"

"No—not unless this gentleman here can do it for us."

"You may remember that I asked you to let me have the descriptions of all persons found dead and unidentified during the past week?"

"Yes. We sent you a number, including this one."

The law clerk on the desk outside put his head through the doorway. "A Mr. Asher to see Mr. Hinkle."

"Send him in. Good afternoon, Mr. Asher. Is this man Dunwoody, Scannel?"

"No, certainly not!"

"Where do you live, Mr. Asher?"

"At seven hundred and five Little West Twelfth Street."

"What room do you occupy there?"

"The second floor, rear."

"Very good. Mr. Asher is a clerk in my office, Mr. Dewsnap. We used his room this afternoon for a special purpose. It is evident that Mr. Scannel was mistaken in his identification of the body of Dunwoody. Hello, Freeman—come right in. Do you know our friend Scannel here?"

"Sure!" said Freeman, looking at the whitening face of the landlord of the rooming house. "He's in the business."

"What business?"

"Shoving dope."

"You mean he deals illicitly in narcotic drugs?"

"Sure. Now, counselor, listen here—you know you told me there wasn't anything coming off to get me in trouble. I don't want to get in wrong, counselor."

"Shut up. Sit down there. And now, Mr. Harris, I believe you took the liberty to look over the rooms of Mr. Scannel at Manhattan Avenue within the last hour. Tell Mr. Dewsnap what you found!"

"Here's another bunch of letters addressed to Dunwoody," said the private detective. "And here's some packages of dope. Here we have what I call——"

"Look out!"

Scannel had snatched a revolver from his breast, and his arm was struck up just as he pressed the trigger. The bullet, which had been intended for Little Amby, plowed into the ceiling. He was borne down, with his arm still held aloft; twice more he pressed the trigger and fired aimlessly in his blind passion.

"I think the new yarn of the People's principal witness has been sufficiently discredited," said Little Amby when Scannel had been taken out and quiet restored.

"Very completely," nodded Dewsnap. "It is evident that Scannel and Dunwoody are the same person."

"And in view of the medical certificate there is no reason to hold Tinelli in the Tombs?"

"I think we can arrange to release him. I am wondering at the way you uncovered the plans of our new prisoner."

"A wide acquaintance among the criminal classes is a natural result of my practice, Mr. Dewsnap."

"Nevertheless, you deserve a great deal of credit for preventing what promised to be a serious miscarriage of justice and clearing up a most bizarre and unusual case."

"You may take the credit to yourself," said Little Amby. "It would be no help to me—rather the contrary; my clients are peculiar people with peculiar views on law enforcement. In fact, I may have to call upon you to witness that I was of assistance to your office solely with the purpose of protecting my client, Tinelli. Scannel forced my hand."

"Would you defend Scannel?"

"With a great deal of hesitation. He has a legal mind—he thinks too much and such clients are dangerous. I prefer to do my clients' thinking. However, I imagine he will not be inclined to retain me."

He nodded to the assistant and started back to his office on Centre Street to get the day's report from Cohen.

Another "Little Amby" in the next POPULAR.

In the Tenth Moon

By Sidney Williams

Author of "The Body in the Blue Room," "The Eastern Window," Etc.

Sidney Williams, who makes his bow to POPULAR readers with this serial, is the author of several widely read mystery stories. "In the Tenth Moon" is a mystery story. Who killed Frank Slayton in his millionaire father's New York home? What did beautiful Mrs. Slayton know about the crime? What part did George Slayton have in the affair—and why did Captain Clifford, big-game hunter and soldier of fortune, act as he did? All these questions are answered—"in the tenth moon" after the crime.—THE EDITOR.

(A Four-Part Story—Part I.)

CHAPTER I.

A HAND IN THE DARKNESS.

BR-R-R-R! Br-r-r-r!"

"Yes, I'm coming. I'm coming," the old butler muttered, fumbling his waistcoat buttons, released for the evening's ease, a little, in his haste.

"It's late," he grumbled, "for her bell."

He put away his spectacles, and straightened his tie.

"Br-r-r-rr!"

"What's the hurry, I'd like to know?"

With little sighs and half articulated complaint he pushed open the pantry door and started cautiously up the dark back stairs. No lights in the hall above. He felt his way along. What was the matter with everything? As he gained the upper level a gouty toe came into sharp contact with a newel post and he paused a moment with an imprecation.

"Carlin."

The voice stiffened him like a cold spray.

"Yes, madam."

A little light came by a slightly opened door on the right, and a few yards down the hall. A woman's figure was silhouetted as she stood there. Though vouchsafed no vision of her dimly seen face Carlin knew her voice as that of the wife of the elder son of the house, Mrs. Frank Slayton.

"It's got a lot in it that she don't let out," a parlor maid once said, endeavoring to describe a certain effect of habitual self-repression. Carlin admired her for it, without seeking a reason. For he was a butler.

"There is trouble, Carlin."

Her voice was a trifle higher pitched than usual, but well controlled.

"Yes, madam."
"Mr. Slayton is hurt."
"What shall I do, mad——"
She checked the word on his lips.
"Telephone to Doctor Gordon."
"Yes, madam."
"And the police."
Carlin flinched.
"Ye—es, madam."
"At once, Carlin."
"Yes, madam."

He spoke to her back. The door closed behind her, softly, leaving him in darkness. Groping for a switch in the wall he turned it twice in his nervousness, with an effect like that of a passing searchlight. Then he turned it again and the hall was flooded with sudden light.

He blinked once, twice, thrice. For shrinking against the wall near Mrs. Slayton's boudoir door was her maid, Marie.

"What's it all about, Mary?" Carlin demanded, regaining the hauteur of a major-domo.

"I don't know." She spoke confusedly. "I was feeling my way in the dark."

"Br-r-r!"

"She's calling me again," Marie observed, edging past the butler. "I was upstairs with Rachel."

The boudoir door closed again, so quickly that Carlin's somewhat aged eyes could detect nothing within; and he was left alone.

"'At once,'" he repeated to himself as he walked stiffly to the telephone. The usual delay with late night calls attended and he pursed his lips in disapproval.

"Yes. Very important. Police," he said at last when a rather sleepy "Hello!" came to his ears. He awaited results, full armed in dignity. Presently he spoke again:

"Yes, the police are wanted. I can't say what for. Mistress' order. Yes. . . . This is Mr. Jabez Slayton's house. On the Avenue. . . . No. I can't say. I am informed Mr. Frank Slayton is hurt. Wanted at once. . . . Yes."

Carlin hung up the receiver with a certain dignity. Even with things he was ceremonious. Then he looked up and down the hall. It was quiet and warm and still. The same as usual, yet somehow not the same. He looked at the door of the green room, occupied by Mr. Frank Slayton. At the door of the blue room that was Mrs. Slayton's chamber. And at the door of the dressing room between.

Of what was behind them he had no sign. With a half-incredulous shake of his head he began thumbing the pages of a pocket memorandum. The desired number found, he took up the telephone again. This time he was brief, with no accent of condescension.

"This is Carlin, Doctor Gordon. Could you come at once? Yes, sir. Mrs. Frank Slayton's request. An accident to Mr. Slayton, sir."

The doctor's voice came briskly from the other end of the line. "All right. I'll be there within fifteen minutes."

Now Carlin pocketed his dignity to do an unprofessional thing. Carefully but vainly he listened outside each of the three doors of mystery. Not a sound rewarded him. So he carefully rose with readjusted dignity, and straightened his tie. As he went down the stairs to await expectative arrivals at the front door all the prestige of the Slaytons was incarnate in his person.

It was not long to wait. He heard the gong of the police patrol as it turned the corner and from his place at the window saw it stop near the steps. Out jumped a sergeant and two burly roundsmen. Before he could admit them Doctor Gordon's car stopped by the opposite curb. And, bag in hand, the doctor himself hastened across the street.

"What's this?" he was saying as Carlin opened the door. "A police case, too!"

"They sent for us," the sergeant said. "That's all I know."

The doctor turned to Carlin inquiringly. He was a tall, thin man, and prematurely gray, with brilliant gray eyes that often emphasized a slightly mocking look. But their expression in that moment was deeply serious.

"What is it?" he asked the butler.

"I don't know, sir." One might have thought from Carlin's solemn manner that he spoke by order, noncommittally. "I've just orders, sir, to take you all upstairs."

Silently, after brief hesitation in which the officers gave way to the man of medicine, the four followed Carlin to the floor above. He knocked at the boudoir door. At that summons it was opened promptly by Marie, who stepped aside for them to enter. Only as Carlin moved to follow the others she closed the door quietly but decisively against his outraged face.

Mrs. Slayton rose as they stood at the

threshold, a woman strikingly beautiful. Her hair of the shade of beaten African gold was loosely coiled and secured, in a way that revealed its opulent abundance, with a great silver pin. A robe of black, bordered with dark fur and belted with a curious Eastern girdle, loosely wrapped a figure of medium height and slender strength. Thus the pallor of her skin, with the hint of warmer ivory, was accentuated. And the mystery of eyes darkly blue.

"Come in," she said. And the four entered.

"Frank is hurt." She addressed Doctor Gordon, with a slight gesture toward the half-open dressing-room door. "In there. Will you look, please?"

"Certainly."

There was more than professional interest in the doctor's mind as he passed the threshold of mystery. For he knew something of cross currents in the Slayton mansion. But his air was none the less professional; even as professional as that of the officers tramping stolidly at his heels, with a glance at Mrs. Slayton like the irresolute look of a dog wondering if it may bite.

She did not follow them with her eyes. But when the feeling of their presence was past she lifted her right hand to her throat with a quick, sharp pressure, as if she would stifle an impulse to shriek. But her face, save for a feverish light in her eyes, retained its mask of cold composure. Seating herself before the dying fire in the grate she gazed steadfastly at its embers.

What went on in the room beyond?

The doctor and the policemen gazed at the body before them. Before they touched it professional and lay mind united in the conclusion that life was extinct. It wore the indefinable look of life's deserted mansion.

In evening dress, what remained of Frank Slayton lay on the dressing-room floor. He had fallen on his left side, about halfway between the wall and the hall door. His clothing was neither torn, it seemed, nor soiled. Nor was there any evident disarrangement of furniture or any sign of a struggle. At first sight, hardly a trace of blood. But he was as dead as one of the Incas.

Death had come from behind, probably without warning. A shot to the base of the brain and fired at close range. There were slight powder marks on the skin. Stooping the doctor noted how blood had stiffened a red rug on which the head lay. And he also saw a scrap of paper nearly hidden by the left thigh.

Then Doctor Gordon acted on impulse. It was his theory that impulse seldom leads one astray. Still crouched by the body he seemed to listen with questioning interest to something outside the hall door. The three policemen, standing about like uneasy mastiffs, looked and listened, too.

"Do you hear anything out there?" asked the doctor.

As one man they moved to the door.

"You look down the stairs," he heard the sergeant say.

With a swift movement, yet careful lest he tear it, he drew the scrap of paper from under the body, and devoured its written content:

You get me the invitation, or there'll be trouble

Unsigned and seemingly unfinished. A woman's scrawl. And to it clung the scent of geranium. He thrust it into a coat pocket as he heard the officers again at the door.

"Find anything?" he said to the sergeant.

"Nobody there. How about you?"

"Murder."

The doctor rose and carefully brushed his knees.

"Shot and killed. Must have died almost instantly."

"Any clew?"

Stooping again to the body the doctor raised the lid of a hooded eye. Its expression was peacefully glassy.

"I don't find a thing," he observed.

"I guess," said the sergeant, "I'll take a look around." He moved toward the dressing-room door.

"A moment, please." The doctor raised a detaining hand. "Let me prepare the widow."

Mrs. Slayton stood with one hand on a table, waiting.

"I am sorry to say," the doctor announced gravely, "that Frank is dead."

"Yes."

The word came with tense steadiness.

"And it seems"—the doctor hesitated to finish the sentence—"that he was murdered."

There was no wavering in the erect figure.

"I thought so," she said.

Now the sergeant, who had followed close behind, intervened.

"If you have any clews, ma'am, time is valuable," he suggested.

"I will tell you what I know. But it is very little."

There was neither fear nor aversion in her voice. Neither pride nor supplication. She spoke as one might speak of something remote, impersonal. And the man of medicine feared it was the unnatural calm of one near the breaking point.

"Won't you have something to brace you?" he asked.

She shook her head.

"Then at least sit down."

The sergeant pushed forward a chair, so that she sat with the light of a reading lamp full on her face. It was the first sign of the law conducting a criminal inquiry by process of elimination. A moment's silence followed. Then one of the roundsmen coughed expectantly.

"I hardly know," she said, "how to begin."

"Just give us the story of the evening," the sergeant urged. "In your own way."

"It is such a strange story, you may find it impossible to believe. I only do because it is my own experience."

"We find strange things," said the sergeant sententiously.

"Not so strange as this. You want the story of the evening. I suppose that begins with dinner. We dined alone."

"'We?'"

"I mean my husband and myself. There were no guests. And other members of the family were absent. Afterward we played a while at cribbage. It was not very diverting to either of us. For I," with a slightly apologetic expression, "am a very poor player. Then I read a while and my husband was busy with some papers at his desk in the library. The story wasn't much more interesting than the game. So I went up to my boudoir."

"Where was your husband then?" asked the sergeant.

"I left him sitting at his desk. When I went to my room I made my toilet for the night."

"Have you a maid?"

To Doctor Gordon it seemed the sergeant's ears somehow pointed like those of a terrier.

"Yes."

"She was there. I suppose. All right. Go on."

"Marie brushed my hair. Then I sent her away. I was not in a mood to sleep. So I tried another book, not much better than the first one. I think I must have grown drowsy. You know how it is sometimes, when you are not quite sure if you have slept a bit?"

It was the doctor who answered: "Yes, we know how that is."

"Thank you."

She gave him a look of gratitude, her first sign of sensitiveness.

"I don't know just what it was. A slight sound or maybe the feeling one sometimes has of a strange influence near by. Whatever it was drew my eyes to the door opening from this room into the hall. I thought I saw the knob turn a bit. And I was curious enough to investigate."

"You were not frightened?"

Though he put it as a question, the sergeant's tone was more skeptical than interrogative.

"No," she answered quietly. "I have never been a timid person."

After brief silence, in which she seemed to await further questions, she went on.

"Now this is the incredible. So strange, I myself almost wonder if it really happened."

The sergeant was licking his lips like a dog that has relished a bone.

"I opened the door to darkness," she said. "In the surprise of it I stepped into the hall. It was perfectly quiet and I felt my way along toward the electric switch that is only a few yards, as you will see, from my door. I must have almost reached it when a cloth saturated with something was suddenly and violently pressed over my mouth. And an arm about my shoulders forced me against the wall."

"You called for help, didn't you?" the sergeant suggested.

"No. For I couldn't. The man was too strong. And the chloroform began to work."

"How do you know it was a man?"

"Surely, that is simple enough. By his strength, by the feeling of his hand and arm—his clothing, the whole feeling of personality."

She regarded her inquisitor patiently.

"And how did you know it was chloroform?" he pursued, professional skepticism again overcoming him.

"I know its odor and effect. I nursed

two years at a base hospital in France," she explained.

Doctor Gordon, who had been standing with an elbow on the mantel over the fireplace, listening with eyes on the embers, turned to the sergeant with a look of irritation.

"Don't you think," he asked acidly, "that Mrs. Slayton may be allowed to tell her story in her own way, without this cross-questioning? She is not on the witness stand, is she?"

"No," said the sergeant respectfully, suppressing a natural inclination to bluster. "Just tell it in your own words, ma'am."

She looked at the doctor with a flicker of gratefulness and clasped her hands a little tighter as she resumed:

"I knew I was losing consciousness but could do nothing to prevent it. Then it came. I can't tell how long I lay there. It must have been, I suppose, only a short time. For in the last two hours it has all happened. When I came to I was lying on the hall floor. And it was still dark and quiet. At first I didn't know where I was or what had happened. Then it came to me—what I have told you and all I know now. I managed to rise and reach this room. The very chair I am sitting in now. I felt faint and dizzy, as one does after inhaling chloroform. So I called to Frank."

"Meaning——" the sergeant interjected.

"My husband, Mr. Slayton."

She hesitated and the doctor noted a slight movement of her shoulders, as of a suppressed shiver. But her voice kept its coldly even quality as she resumed.

"He didn't answer. So I summoned energy enough to rise and look for him. I thought perhaps he was in his bedroom and had not heard me. When I stepped into the dressing room I saw him lying there on the floor. I spoke again and he didn't answer. Then I thought he had been treated as I was, and hadn't recovered from the chloroform. I got smelling salts. But of course they did no good."

"Did you realize then what had happened?"

Again the sergeant's instinct of investigation overcame his promise of silence.

"No," she said. "But I knew it was something of a serious nature. I couldn't get his pulse. And there were bloodstains on the rug under his head. At first I didn't see them in the red of the pattern. Whatever it was, I could do nothing. So I rang for Carlin to summon aid."

"It didn't occur to you, under the circumstances, to telephone yourself?" the sergeant asked.

"No, it didn't." She looked at him with a tincture of surprise. "I did what seems to me a perfectly natural thing."

"And what made you think of the police, ma'am?"

"No definite reason, except that it seemed what I ought to do. I had been attacked; and my husband was hurt by some one."

"About what time did the attack on you happen?" Before she could answer the sergeant looked at his watch, adding, "It's about midnight now."

"I can't be precise. But just before I stopped reading I looked at my wrist watch. It was a little after ten then. It may have been a half hour later when I started to see if there was anything wrong in the hall."

"Who was in the house?"

Now the sergeant was more businesslike and less deferential. The doctor regarded him with unconcealed irritation. He opened his lips to speak but suppressed his protest.

"I cannot tell," Mrs. Slayton replied. "But Carlin knows."

She pressed a button in the table beside her. Then they waited—it seemed to them very long. Less rapid than their heartbeats, but moving with unwonted alacrity, the old butler's feet were bearing him upward from the pantry. It was a matter of minutes, but two or three, before he entered with his almost priestly air.

His mistress acknowledged his appearance with a passing glance.

"These gentlemen," she said quietly, "would like to know who has been in the house to-night, Carlin. I have told them you are the person best qualified to inform them."

"Yes, madam."

The butler turned to the sergeant with a preliminary cough.

"The servants are in attendance at a party. All but Mary and Rachel. And"—Carlin's pause was indicative of the gap in rank—"myself."

"Where are Mary and Rachel?"

"This is Marie." Mrs. Slayton lightly touched the arm of her shrinking, sweet-faced maid. "And Rachel is a chambermaid."

"I was with her upstairs." The maid's voice was hardly raised above a whisper.

"Have her down," the sergeant said. "Who else has been in the house since afternoon? Any of the family?"

"Mr. Slayton—Mr. Jabez Slayton has not returned from his club. And Mr. George is out."

"They'd better be sent for."

"Excuse me, madam." Carlin turned to his mistress, subtly deferential again. "I took the liberty of doing so."

"Thank you, Carlin. That was very thoughtful." She spoke gently now, with a certain tenderness. "And did you reach them?"

"Mr. Slayton was at the club, madam. He will be here presently."

"And Mr. George?"

"I'm not quite sure. He said to call Mr. Struthers, if any one wanted him. I did call, and he wasn't there. Harry—Mr. Struthers' man—said they expected him soon. So I left a message."

"Thank you, Carlin. You have done all you could."

The butler's grateful bow ushered in a minute or so of electrical silence. Those in the room might have posed for a tableau. Two policemen by the door, with the superfluous look of chorus men in opera. Mrs. Slayton sitting at the table, where the full light fell upon her mercilessly, yet revealed no tremor, or quick change of startled blood. At her elbow the maid Marie, shrinking yet stanch. Carlin, with his look of one at once affronted and apprehensive. The doctor, with a certain air of studious detachment. And the sergeant stroking his chin, as one brooding deeply.

"Did your husband have a revolver?"

The head of danger, like the red crest of running fire, rose suddenly on the horizon. But Mrs. Slayton seemed merely thoughtful.

"I don't know," she said after a moment's meditation. Then she qualified her statement. "But I remember now I have seen one on his dresser."

"What caliber?" pressed the sergeant.

"I can't say. I never examined it. And I know nothing about firearms."

Her inquisitor pondered.

"How did it sound when he was shot?" he finally asked.

"I think I told you that I heard no report."

"Well, then——" the sentence perished on his lips. For there came a knocking, a rather imperative knocking, at the door.

"Come in," said Mrs. Slayton in a voice so low it did not carry to the one without.

With a hasty stride the doctor reached the door and opened it wide.

A young man of slightly disheveled appearance stood there, returning the glances of the party with interest.

"What's all the row about?"

No prompt answer forthcoming, he pursued his inquiry.

"What are the police doing here?"

"Frank is dead," said the doctor.

"He can't be. I left him all right not five hours ago."

Vehement speech, as if repelling a charge.

"He was murdered," said the doctor bluntly.

"Oh!"

The doctor noted he looked first at his sister-in-law but Mrs. Slayton was no longer looking at him. Her eyes seemed fixed on some conjured vision.

"Why didn't you let me know before?"

He addressed Carlin now and spoke imperatively.

"We did our best, sir. You may remember you told me to telephone to Mr. Struthers' apartment if anything important came up."

"Did you?"

"Yes, Mr. George. And Harry, Mr. Struthers' man, said they expected you soon."

"I did mean to. But I didn't feel like playing bridge. So I came home."

"About what time was that?"

The tip of the sergeant's tongue, like the tail of a little snake, moved rapidly across his lips. The only remaining son of Jabez Slayton regarded him with seeming curiosity.

"About ten o'clock. I guess. I don't know exactly when. Didn't look at my watch."

"Where did you go—I mean what did you do, then?"

Young Mr. Slayton stood a little straighter and red came to his cheek. Seeing him in profile, the doctor noted a suggestion of the granitic quality of old Jabez, who still bore the impress of strenuous victory in his deeply seamed face. As yet his younger son had only a good fellow's reputation. Men liked him, and women, too, for a certain amiable frankness, and the candor

of gray eyes that habitually seemed bent on smiling. Now they were rather cold and very steady; and the forward thrust of the head brought out the long, strong line of the Slayton chin. And he seemed taller than the five feet ten inches or so with which the yardstick credited him.

But if he was displeased at the manner of the sergeant's questioning he did not show it in his voice. He answered courteously:

"You ask where I went. In the house, I suppose you mean. Nowhere but the library, until I came here. I sat down to look at the London *Sporting News*. But I didn't get far in it. I woke with it in my hand."

"Didn't you hear any disturbance?"

"Not a thing out of the common."

"But your brother was shot."

"So I learn—now. Naturally I was not listening for a noise of that sort. And I was on the floor below toward the rear of the house. Also I was asleep. Probably," he added reflectively, "it was the motor of your patrol wagon running outside that roused me."

His explanation sank into silence. Mrs. Slayton looked up. For a moment her eyes were on his face. Then she looked away again. His eyes unwaveringly engaged those of the sergeant.

"Well," the officer asserted, "there's a murderer somewhere about. But we make no headway in finding him." He closed his notebook with a snap, and thrust it into a breast pocket. "I'd like to go over the house."

"Let me show you," George Slayton said courteously.

They went out together. And Doctor Gordon followed them. Last trailed the two roundsmen, after a moment of uncertainty in which they looked at Mrs. Slayton, who seemed unaware of their existence. Leaning slightly forward, with folded hands, she looked steadily at the cooling ashes of the grate. She gave no sign of consciousness of the inquiry below.

Led by young Mr. Slayton the party went down the broad front stairs and turned left, past a man in armor and an old Spanish cabinet, to where a shaft of pale light marked the library door. It was partly open as they went in.

Now the sergeant took precedence. Staying those behind with a gesture he took a brisk observation. Nothing in that much repaid him. A reading lamp was on, apparently as George Slayton had left it. And a London weekly, probably dropped in sleep, lay on the floor near by. On the table a pipe, the usual supply of tobacco and accessories—paper and pens, a few magazines—the miscellania of such places. Mentally checking them off, the sergeant peered into the shadows.

"Can we have more light?" he said curtly.

"Certainly."

Slayton stooped to a button and a cluster of lights in the ceiling burst into bloom.

"Ah!"

With the word the cer strode to a window behind the desk and a few yards distant. It was open, almost to the full extent of the lower sash; he leaned out to see what was below and beyond. Some six feet from the ground it gave on a passageway between the Slayton house and the equally imposing, glumly ostentatious dwelling next door. Somewhat shaded by trees, a light across the Avenue accentuated its shadows with feeble rays. As the sergeant swept it with his eyes, to where it met a mysterious area in the rear, a furtive cat was all the life it revealed.

"How long has this been open?" he asked.

"I opened it," Slayton explained, "when I sat down to read. It was pretty warm."

"And you fell asleep?"

"I thought I told you that."

"Sound asleep?"

"I don't know. I wasn't at the same time awake, taking notes."

"You wouldn't have heard anybody climbing in?"

"See here, sergeant, what's the use of asking such questions? I thought you were looking for a clew to my brother's murderer."

The hound of the law ignored young Slayton's manifest resentment.

"So I am," he said imperturbably. "You never know what'll turn into something."

He walked to the window again and took another look up and down.

"So far's opportunity is concerned," he observed, "we don't need to look further. Any lively man could climb in there. And with you a-snoozing he'd have his chance to kill or steal. Maybe both. We don't know yet if anything is missing from the house."

"What's that?"

"A little accident," the doctor explained. "I carelessly knocked a glass from a corner of the desk."

He stooped to look more closely at minute pieces shining on the darkly polished floor. No one noted that before the glass fell with a tinkling sound he had lifted it to his nose and appraised the dregs of its contents with a swift breath. For a few seconds afterward he regarded Slayton with a certain curiosity.

"Well," the sergeant suggested, "let's go on back."

Once more the little procession silently ascended the stairs. But this time Carlin did not lead. With a feeling of personal injury, even of affront in what had befallen, he laggardly brought up the rear.

Young Slayton knocked at the boudoir door, and opened it, on receiving a call, "Come in." His brother's widow still sat by the fireplace, with its cheerless ashes. There was no sign that she had stirred in their absence.

"One thing we have found out, anyway," the sergeant announced.

Her eyes questioned him.

"How somebody might get in," he continued. "There's an open window on the ground floor. Jones," with a sudden sharpness to one of his men, "go back and lock it. We might have another crime in the house. There's plenty of light-fingered and heavy-handed gents about."

The roundsman addressed went out silently. The sergeant produced his notebook and moistened his pencil on his tongue.

"Now, ma'am, is anything missing?"

"I haven't investigated."

"Suppose you take a look."

She stepped to her dressing table and inventoried its scattered treasures.

"I miss a diamond pin I wore at dinner," she said presently.

"Describe it."

The sergeant's pencil was poised aloft.

"Just a simple circle of diamonds in a gold setting. Good stones but far from splendid."

"Is that all?"

"So far."

Opening a drawer in her dressing table she turned over its contents.

"What about your ruby ring?" George Slayton suggested. "You wore it in the afternoon."

"Yes, that is gone too." She looked at her hand as if still in doubt of its absence and glanced again over the jewels before her.

"Describe it."

Now the sergeant was warming to his work.

"It was a rather heavy ring. A ruby set in diamonds—four of them. And the ruby has a black speck near the base."

"That would be easy to identify."

He wrote "black speck near the base" carefully.

"Are you sure that's all?"

"I think so. At least, there's nothing else I know of now."

The sergeant closed his notebook and tucked it away. And with the act his manner changed. He spoke now with a trace of the police official's customary accent of intimidation.

"Where's the cloth they chloroformed you with?"

"Here."

She turned to take it from the table, holding it by her finger tips. With equal care the sergeant received it, holding it cautiously under his nose.

"Sure enough—chloroform. And must have been pretty well loaded." He held it up to the light. "No laundry mark. And no initial. Thousands of handkerchiefs like it sold every day. I'm afraid it won't help us much. But you never can tell."

Carefully folded, the handkerchief was added to the contents of a capacious wallet. The sergeant took another observation and punctuated it with, "Well." He would have added, "I guess we'd better be going," but the sound of a motor came to his ears. He listened, and the others with him.

They heard the engine shut off, the slam of the door. And, since a boudoir window was open to the night air, the rasp of boots on the doorstep, and the sharp tapping of a stick came to their ears. Then a door under the window was closed with a certain decisiveness.

"Who's that?" asked the sergeant.

"My father, I think," George Slayton answered.

He did not go to meet him. Only Carlin, regaining his customary slightly pompous air, left the room. The others stood there in silence. It was but a minute or two they had to wait. Then an imperative rap on the door.

"Come in," called Mrs. Slayton.

Evidently permission was unimportant to the one without. With the words on her lips the door was opened. And what remained of the Slayton family came in.

"Did you get a message, father?" George asked.

"Yes," snapped Jabez.

His cold gray eyes inventoried the little group. It was a look that had caused many men to shiver. And his shaven cheeks were like corrugated iron. One might have thought he had come as a steel king, not as a bereaved father.

"What's this I hear?" he demanded.

"Frank is dead," said the doctor laconically.

"Dead!" One word rasped, with a betraying undertone of anguish. Then Jabez turned to his remaining son. It was a piercing look he gave him, a deliberately sustained inspection. George flushed but did not wince under it.

"So *you're* all I have left now!" his father said at length, and turned to the doctor.

"Where's the body?"

"In here."

After him marched Jabez, with the air of one outraged, not crushed. Without a word to the widow of his elder son he left the room. If she was affected by his behavior she did not show it. But it was discussed by the policemen as they went down the steps. And, passed on to his superiors by the diligent sergeant, it bore on a development of the Slayton case.

For a moment George and his brother's widow were left together. No words were spoken. But stooping, he touched with gentle fingers her bowed head. Then the doctor reëntered.

"Father——" George questioned.

"Has gone to his rooms. And you'd better follow suit."

"But there are things to do."

"Nothing for you. I'll attend to everything."

"If you don't mind——"

"But I do mind. And you've got to. Here." From his bag he took a small vial and shook two tablets into his palm. "Take one of these in a little water. And now get to bed. You're done up."

Still he lingered.

"Good night, George," said Mrs. Slayton quietly.

"Good night, Leila."

She did not raise her eyes as he slowly left the room. Not until she heard the door close softly behind him. Then for the first time the doctor saw in her set features how she struggled with a heavy strain.

"You have been very brave," he said.

"We must bear the inevitable." She spoke as one noting a simple fact.

He did not at the moment sense anything curious in her statement. She had slightly turned away, as though more fully to commune with herself. And he, to check brooding upon what must be monstrous, began gently to prepare her for certain painful requirements of the law in cases of doubtful or obviously violent death.

Soon the undertaker's men came on their dolorous mission, transporting what was mortal of Frank Slayton to the morgue. Then the doctor, too, departed, leaving the house in darkness.

Within its silent walls Jabez slept, being very old and stoical. But his son's widow looked with burning eyes into the shadows. And George Slayton kept a secret.

CHAPTER II.

THE THIRTY-EIGHT IN THE CHIFFONIER.

Another morning.

When Carlin appeared to collect the papers frost was yet fresh on the guardian lions that flanked Jabez Slayton's steps. But, early as it was, the reporters of evening papers swarmed there to amplify the morning news.

Carlin repelled them with difficulty and a jabbing thumb. Then he disconnected the telephone, which had been ringing with unheeded persistence since crack of dawn, and bore his booty to the pantry. The cook was there, with other habitués of the early conference below stairs; and one arrival they viewed with astonishment.

"Couldn't you sleep, my girl?" said Carlin to Rachel, the chambermaid reported as having been with Mrs. Slayton's maid, Marie, that fateful hour of the evening before. Rachel but shook her head.

"Tell us something," importuned the cook, who was comparatively new to the household and thought no more of the Slayton heir's death than of the demise of any other presumably rackety son of great wealth. "You must know a little about it."

"If you know what I know, there's no

need of my telling it to you," Rachel observed and would say no more. And it is not on record that the police and lawyers, armed with authority, had better luck with her in later queries.

The officials suspected that Mrs. Slayton's maid, Marie, held something back in devotion to her mistress. But Rachel was a puzzle. A big girl, with auburn hair and a wide mouth, and a rare capacity for silence. She only listened in the pantry powwow that followed.

Reading papers before the family was not a safe habit for servants in Jabez Slayton's household. But for once Carlin threw discretion to the winds, with scattered sheets. Soon his kingdom was agog.

In every morning daily of New York—even, it is safe to say, the foreign sheets of the swarming East Side—the Slayton murder was a first-page spread. More conservative members of the press were content with black type. But those virtuous journals consecrated to interests of the poor reveled in red ink and pictorial display.

There was the Slayton mansion on the Avenue. The Slayton house at the shore; Jabez's modest home at the time of his marriage; even his alleged birthplace on English Dartmoor. Frank Slayton in an infantry captain's uniform and George on a polo pony. Lack of Leila Slayton's photograph was no bar to display. With a caption, "The Enigma of the Case," they beheld her name affixed to the likeness of a Spanish lady with downy lip.

"Slumgullions!" said Carlin resentfully and crumpled the page. What he might have added remained unknown. The sharp ringing of George Slayton's bell diverted his attention.

"Up after midnight," he grumbled, "and hard at it again early in the morning. Now straighten out here," to the other servants.

Young Mr. Slayton was disclosed to Carlin's eyes somewhat haggard but composed. He took his coffee and eggs as usual, the while he viewed in silence sensational embroideries of the press. Only he stepped heavily on one blatant sheet when he rose from the table and ground it as if he would crush the writer under his heel.

Then he went downstairs and began a careful examination of the hall and library. If he had a special object in view, the possibility that something else might turn up was not overlooked.

It was not until he raised the window shades a little higher, for a second general survey of the room, that anything rewarded him. It was caught in the fringe of the library portières. A monocle on a silken cord. From the height at which it hung one might guess it had been caught and detached from some one's waistcoat pocket in entering or leaving the room.

Taking it into the full morning light by a window Slayton applied the monocle to his left eye. Now he closed his right eye to get a better test. It was a powerful lens of unusual grinding. George took note of its curious whorls. He was still turning it in his hand as he went back to his rooms.

Mrs. Slayton did not come down that day. Even Carlin did not see her. To Doctor Gordon she sent word she was grateful for his interest but in no need of his aid. Only Marie was with her. And to Marie she was both sun and moon.

Before sunset old Jabez had made a new will and endowed a hospital. Thus the eminent attorney called to draw the instrument whetted the interest of reporters who picketed the house, even to its cellar windows.

Truth to tell, in its first phase the Slayton case thinned out rapidly as a newspaper sensation. Police and reporters were equally at sea. Even city editors—those men gifted in writing a volume of fancy from a scrap of fact—turned elsewhere in weariness. But the "big news" did break. And of the case's eclipse we speak in weeks—not months.

Silly as it may seem, a ouija board gave the police the clew to their start. An evening newspaper had it first. Thanks to a constant reader who called with a supposed message from the spirit of her husband—in this life a policeman.

"Look in her second bureau drawer."

That was the message. To the police "her" meant Mrs. Slayton. No other woman had appeared in the case.

"What do you say?" queried the superintendent, who took no stock in spirits but was sensitive to criticism. "Anything might be worth trying. The papers are giving us hell."

"We've got to show a little life somehow," observed the chief of inspectors. And he went forth in person, with two of his men.

It was a time of day when most women of the seldom idle rich are at a matinée, or shopping, or perhaps lingering at one of those lunches where to see and be seen is

quite as important as delicacies consumed. Leila Slayton was engaged in none of these. Nor was she mourning as ritual prescribes.

She was sitting at her boudoir window looking out into the park, where sunlight played and frisking squirrels and children mocked her mood. For weeks seeming like months she had lived under the harrow of unspoken, and thus the more intolerable, suspicion. And her face just then, with no need of the mask of pride, showed the strain.

"I suppose I must go down," she said as Marie with manifest reluctance came to announce more "officer men" were waiting below.

"But it is that they would come up," Marie explained.

"Very well," her mistress said, and looked about. "I see nothing to prevent."

The chief inspector came alone, taking the open door as a sign of invitation. He was not flattered by his reception. For he was driven to the extremity of coughing to notify Mrs. Slayton of his presence. She turned from the window with a slight inclination of her head and a composed, "Good afternoon. Did you knock?"

"No, ma'am."

To himself the inspector's answer sounded schoolboyish. He made haste to bolster himself in the feeling of authority. With her inquiring look, Mrs. Slayton waited for him to continue.

"I wonder," he said, "what changes have been made in these rooms, Mrs. Slayton, since your husband's death."

"None that I know of."

"Then things are just as they were?"

"I suppose so." She did not seem keenly interested in his inquiry but added: "Except, of course, what happens incidentally in servants' care of a room."

The chief inspector meditated, biting his under lip. Then he put his next question:

"Has a thorough search of the various pieces of furniture been made?"

"I don't think so."

Though she did not say it, her face asked the question, "Why?"

"Sometimes valuable clews turn up where they are least expected," the inspector observed.

"I have no objection to a search," she said and turned to the window.

Somewhat nonplused, the inspector was by no means paralyzed. Her extraordinary behavior was not without advantage to him as an officer. With the glint of satisfaction in his eyes he stepped briskly to a chiffonier.

The top drawer opened, he paused before its array of frilly finery. Even to a policeman, examination of a lady's lingerie in her presence was not without embarrassment.

"You don't care to go through the drawers yourself?" he suggested.

"No, thank you."

Her back still turned he pulled the drawer wide open and began his gingerly search. It would have puzzled him to make an inventory of the contents. But at least he knew he found nothing of importance.

"Look in the second drawer," the ouija board had advised. The inspector opened it without enthusiasm. More stuff than the first drawer contained was revealed, and of the same sort. He pressed here and there with exploring fingers. Nothing rewarded him. And he closed the drawer with a little bang.

Mrs. Slayton turned at the sound. "Have you finished?" she asked.

"No, ma'am."

The inspector felt his face redden again at the humble locution.

"Please do not let me embarrass you."

She turned once more to the mid-afternoon brightness of the park.

For a moment he hesitated. Then stooped again, with an aggressive thrust of his shoulders. The third drawer. More petticoats and stockings.

Feeling nervously about, his hand came in contact with something that turned him into a statue of rigid astonishment.

His eyes turned instinctively to that back at the window. To the figure that seemed so completely oblivious of his presence. Then, feverishly, he felt again, and looked triumphant. With an impatient jerk that scattered garments right and left he held his discovery up to feasting eyes.

"Is this your revolver?"

Mrs. Slayton turned to behold the weapon extended. And a transformed inspector, with a threat in voice and manner. He no longer saw a woman surrounded by millions, a superior being who somehow subdued him to humble speech. Now a possible criminal was before him. But she neither trembled nor turned pale. Her face registered only surprise.

"No," she answered and looked at the revolver with seeming curiosity.

"How did it get here?" he demanded, tapping the open drawer.

"I don't know." She looked at him inquiringly. "Did you find it there?"

"It would be better," he said sternly, "to tell the truth."

She did not answer. With a slight shrug of her shoulders she turned again to the window. Hands clasped behind her back she stood looking across the Avenue into the park. Was it disdain? Or hardihood?

The inspector regarded her with a heavy frown. Then with an incredulous shake of his head he turned again to his prize. A French pistol, caliber .38, and one cartridge discharged. With the inquiring nose of an expert in small arms he sniffed at the barrel. Then he held the weapon higher, to get a stronger light. It had not been fired within a few hours.

Dropping the revolver into a pocket he removed the contents of the drawer that had held it. Then he went through the remaining drawers with equal care. It was fruitless. But he had his great prize. Feeling it in his pocket, he bent his gaze again upon that back seemingly so impassive, so inhumanly calm. It was not thus that criminals behaved. Nor yet, in his experience, the deportment of the innocent, circumstantially threatened. What was brutal within him, both the man and the official, resolved to break down her barrier of icy calm. His voice was harshly peremptory as he next addressed her:

"Have you any explanation of the revolver now?"

"No. Do you want me to make up one?"

She did not turn. The inspector buttoned up his coat. He had seen many a suspect composed enough in familiar surroundings crumble under police interrogation in the shadow of the jail. But one observation escaped his lips as he turned to the door: "You will be at home to-night?" Put in the form of a question, it had an undertone of command.

"I think so," she assented.

His last vision was of a woman who seemed still oblivious, even unconscious, of the potential instrument of death—death by the law's decree, in his pocket. As he drove away with his subordinates he sat silent, with a puzzled frown and little shakes of his grizzled head.

"I can't make her out," he reported to the superintendent. "I've seen brassy ones and sassy ones and the kind that cries. This woman acts as if she had nothing to do with the case. And this is real evidence, or I'm a boob." He looked at the revolver almost lovingly. "Same caliber Slayton was shot with," he added.

"Well," said his superior, "I never saw one, guilty or innocent, that wouldn't talk in the end. If this woman feels herself injured by suspicion she has a chance to help set us on the right trail."

"Then we'd better bring her down?"

The chief inspector's eagerness was manifest. The superintendent stroked his nose.

"Let's see what the district attorney says," he observed finally. "Get him on the phone."

The conference occurred, and swelled. The district attorney was there; likewise his chief of medical examiners. And the police commissioner himself sat in. With a city election coming on there was too much dynamite in the Slayton case for precipitate action. If the voters have a way of praising at the polls they are even quicker to censure.

But there was enough, by all rules of the game, to justify interrogation. The bullet removed from Slayton's brain was the same caliber as the cartridges in the revolver found in his wife's dresser. And from that weapon one bullet had been fired. The widow had possession of the lethal firearm. And indisputably she had opportunity to kill her husband. It was not in evidence that any other person was near, save in her wild tale of mysterious drugging. Ample evidence, urged the district attorney, for taking her into custody.

"I don't want to arrest at this time," the police commissioner objected. "Suppose she used the revolver and hid it in her bureau. Then why didn't she put it later in a less dangerous place? She must have known it was there, and had plenty of chances."

Cunning, the district attorney answered, or the timidity of a novice in crime.

"And the motive?" pressed the commissioner.

"There's a backstairs story," the chief inspector remarked, "about a disagreement between Slayton and his wife that night. A maid told one of our men she heard them jawing."

"Still, I can't believe a woman of her in-

telligence would leave the revolver in her room for you to find it, if she had reason to dread its discovery," the commissioner persisted. "We've got to question her. But I draw the line on arrest just now. Unless," he turned to the district attorney, "you insist upon it. It's your right, if you want to."

"Have your way," said the prosecutor a bit sulkily. "I was the goat in the Foroney case. That'll do for a while."

That evening a dark motor stopped at Jabez Slayton's door. And two plain-clothes men stepped out. Their summons was not unexpected. For the chief inspector's discovery of a revolver in Leila Slayton's chiffonier was known to both Jabez and George.

The old man took the first overt act of the authorities against his daugher-in-law with one suggestion.

"I'll send my lawyer down with you if the police will let him in."

"Thanks," she said quietly. "I prefer to go alone."

"All right," he assented. With the inscrutable glance men had dreaded in business he made measured exit from the room.

"What does it mean, Leila?" Desperate intensity colored George's question.

"It's as much a mystery to me," she replied.

"It is damnable," he said fiercely.

If he had thought of accompanying her to police headquarters, the escorting officers made plain that would not be permitted.

"Your pardon, sir," said one as he came with Leila to the door. Flanked on either side, she was on the steps in a twinkling. And almost before Slayton realized it she was gone. But he followed after as she was whirled downtown through the gay and gabbling after-theater crowd. And he sat in his roadster, silently waiting outside the dark pile of headquarters, with a few windows outlined in cautious light, until the immediate ordeal was over.

While the morning press made much of discovery of a revolver in Leila Slayton's boudoir its alert reporters knew nothing of the heavily veiled woman admitted to the police commissioner's office by his private entrance. The commissioner himself was there and the district attorney, who promptly took the laboring oar. He was a strong believer in frontal attack.

"We have sent for you, Mrs. Slayton, to ask you a question."

"Yes," she assented without evidence of trepidation.

"What did you and your husband quarrel about the night he was killed?"

"I wouldn't say that we did quarrel."

"You had no disagreement?"

"Yes," she admitted. "Just that."

"What was it about?"

"I don't think it has anything to do with his death," she fended, with momentary hesitation.

"Perhaps you are not the best judge of that."

The district attorney's voice was charged with sarcasm. With his next question it took on a sudden cutting edge.

"Did you have trouble over a woman?"

"Yes." Her reply conveyed only the barest monosyllabic significance.

"Tell us about it."

Another momentary pause. Then she answered calmly. "I'm sorry. But I can't do that."

"Then you have nothing further to say about it?"

She bowed affirmatively. Within five minutes of her arrival they had reached this impasse. Now the police commissioner took a hand. There was nothing threatening in his manner. Rather it was fatherly.

"I trust you realize, Mrs. Slayton," he said, "that we are not actuated by personal curiosity in these questions."

"Certainly."

She gave no sign of wavering. But as she sat very straight in her chair her hands were clasped with such tensity it seemed the interlocking fingers would never loosen. Below her partially lifted veil her lips were pale and very firm. There was curiosity in the look the commissioner bent upon her. Curiosity and something akin to pity.

"And you know, do you not," he went on, "that certain circumstances have made your present position somewhat unfortunate?"

"I realize that."

"And still you cannot answer the question just asked?"

"It is impossible."

"We thank you for the visit," the district attorney said suavely. "I only regret it was not more to your advantage."

He turned to collect papers on a table beside him. The commissioner pressed a button. As if summoned by Aladdin's lamp the waiting detectives appeared.

Without further words, but saluted with polite bows, she passed from headquarters to the waiting car. A little to the rear came her police escort. Once more they drove rapidly through the intermediate region of the "Great White Way," on to quiet reaches of the upper Avenue. Far behind followed George, furious victim to a street blockade.

Old Jabez was waiting but asked no questions. One remembering his behavior the night of the murder might have suspected something bordering on disappointment in his expression. With a formal "Good night" he went stiffly up to his rooms.

But Marie waited, adoring, with all her heart in one word: "Madame!" And her tears of love were as ointment to a lacerated spirit.

Night passed. The morning brought the blow. Again Leila Slayton was called to police headquarters. And that time she did not return.

CHAPTER III.

JUST A SCRAP OF PAPER.

"The reverse English."

It happened that on the day of Leila Slayton's arrest for the murder of her husband a poor Polish woman was taken for killing her lover. She confessed and justified herself on the ground of infidelity. Thus the saffron press, licking a morsel of backstairs gossip, found a way to insinuate what it dared not assert. It suggested a parallel between the fury of Bleecker Street and the "Enigma of Fifth Avenue."

Mrs. Slayton said nothing. Nor did Jabez or his surviving son issue any statement. Their mutual repugnance was deepened by Mr. Robert Kent's aversion to publicity; or at least to premature publicity. Long accustomed to sitting in the presence of the financially august and making confidential suggestions to appellate judges, Mr. Kent had turned back to criminal practice for the nonce at Jabez's behest. A favor of questionable benefit. For Mr. Kent, with all his allurement of genially courtly personality, and his undoubted eminent standing, was far removed from sprightly tricks of criminal practice. One of those able young lawyers wolfing their way upward might better have served Leila in her tragic predicament.

There was no talk of bail after a tentative suggestion the district attorney violently opposed. He had instant vision of "discrimination in favor of the rich" chanted against himself in the impending election. George did what he could for Leila, when she would consent to see him. And Marie was indefatigable. But inevitably she suffered. To the gently nurtured prison life is terrible, even at its best. But no one saw her flinch or weep.

One boon, if it were to hasten the swinging open of prison gates, was vouchsafed her. Backed by the Slayton millions and the professional prestige of Robert Kent an early date on the trial calendar was obtained. The district attorney objected vigorously. With blended vehemence and ready pathos he reminded the court of all the men and women of lowly station, who had no one to cushion imprisonment, waiting months and months for their day in court. He spoke feelingly of equality of all before the law and won the coveted place on the newspaper page. But the court overruled him.

The district attorney was a politician-at-law rejoicing in the name of Isaac Vickery. He pleaded the need of more time needed to prepare the State's case. What he really hoped was that somehow or other more evidence for the prosecution would be turned up. In the back of his head nestled a surmise that Leila herself would unwittingly strengthen the case against herself.

Months wore on and as the time of trial approached the city press again brought the name of Slayton to the fore. It had been some years since New York newspaper readers reveled in a society murder case. Now city editors proposed to make the most of this one. Court attachés charged with provision for multitudinous reporters and photographers, all timed to the second in visualization of a *cause célèbre,* groaned with their labor. Preparation for trial by the State and the defense seemed comparatively simple.

Apparently it would be a trial strictly upon the evidence. It was not intimated that the defense would set up a claim of emotional insanity or any other variation of mental weakness. For once "Dementia Americana" failed to rear its head. And the alienists would have no pickings.

Would the defendant take the stand? Only Leila and Mr. Kent knew. What he thought of her story, at which the police scoffed, he kept to himself. He seemed to

find the case very simple. Too simple even. As the time drew near she felt added to the major terror of her position the loneliness of an abandoned child. Upon George, with what was between them, and the ordeal before her, she could not lean.

Though he came as often as prison rules and her sense of discretion would permit they were only little frozen calls within the hearing of some guard, unless they talked in careful undertones. Even when men in uniform were briefly absent there was the paralyzing possibility that they listened at some secret peephole. So neither spoke what was in the heart. On her side, the barrier of pride intensified her position. With him, the chilling fear of adding to her heavy burden imposed restraint.

He was not at her side when the call to court came. The shock of emergence into a strange and roaring world was little softened by the companionship of a sad-faced prison matron whose lips seemed perpetually about to frame, "Though your sins be as scarlet ——" Leila summoned again the reserves of self-control. Even the gaping crowd that stared as if she were a strange animal, pressing with hands curved to tear aside her veil in the few steps between cab and courthouse, she took as a manifestation of her via dolorosa leading—perhaps—to deliverance.

The courtroom audience found her unsatisfactory. Unsatisfactory, because strange. A woman charged with murder who sat veiled; who neither wept nor shuddered; nor even clasped and unclasped nervous hands, robbed them of accustomed vicarious thrills. Women who had dropped in from shopping, or nothing in particular, called her "brazen." To male experts gravitating between court and pool room she was a "deep one." Reporters quickly discovered her "iron nerve." What the jury thought we shall later see.

With "May it please the court" the battle was on. In the matter of counsel the balance of personality was with the defense. That was speedily evident. Both mentally and physically Kent overcame the district attorney in their passages at arms. His disadvantage established, the prosecutor steered clear of such encounters. For that matter, points of law were few indeed to wrangle over.

Matters went smoothly enough, as if money only and not a human life were involved. Most of the State's witnesses told the truth, or seemed to do so, as they understood it. Carlin and the maid whose careless tongue gave the police their clew of domestic discord were unwilling witnesses for the prosecution. Sympathy with their mistress was evident and they did her no material harm. For the maid only remembered hearing voices slightly raised as she passed the room in which Frank Slayton and his wife were dining. The purport of their conversation she could not tell. Trying to stimulate her imagination the district attorney was squelched.

Policemen who came to the Slayton house the night of the murder were more obliging. That they would find ground for suspicion in Leila's bearing after the crime was to be expected.

With but trifling cross-examination by the defense the State presented its case rapidly. There was the established opportunity of the defendant to kill her husband. And who else had it? There was the revolver of the caliber with which he was slain, found in a drawer of her chiffonier. Who put it there? And why had she refused any aid in running down her husband's murderer? Was it not fear of entanglement through a treacherous tongue? The State rested.

Witnesses for the defense were few. Members of the household testified they had never known of wrangling between Frank Slayton and his wife. Doctor Gordon took the stand to say that he thought her bearing after the murder nowise suspicious. Only what might be expected of, and admired in, a person of superior mentality with unusual power of self-control. The prosecution did not shake him.

Without warning came the great moment for which the crowd waited.

"And now, Mrs. Slayton, will you kindly take the stand?"

At Mr. Kent's urbane request as one person the spectators craned their necks. It was the first opportunity of many clearly to see her face. They took eager inventory as walking with the easy precision of one crossing her own drawing-room she crossed those long yards between the counsel table and witness box and sat facing friend and foe.

How curious the psychology of the crowd. It demands of the harried appropriate symptoms. No wave of sympathy went out to Leila, sitting there with a firm front.

Direct examination was soon over. "The story of the evening, as you remember it, in your own way," Mr. Kent requested when the oath had been administered.

She told it simply, never glancing at the district attorney, who leaned far forward endeavoring to engage her eyes. How she was reading in her boudoir, not yet in the mood for bed. Yet she thought she had slept a little when suddenly she had the feeling, not easily described, of some one near by. Startled, she looked instinctively at the door leading into the hall. It seemed to her that the knob turned a bit. She rose to investigate and opened the door to darkness. And out of the darkness, as she stepped into the hall to test the switch came a hand that sealed her lips with the stupefying chloroform. When she came to she sought help of her husband. And she found him dead. Only she was not sure of it at the time. She at once sent for the police, because a crime had been committed; and for the doctor, to determine her husband's injury. That was all.

"Your witness," Mr. Kent said to the district attorney.

"Now, Mrs. Slayton, is this *all* you can remember of what took place that evening?" the prosecutor inquired, approaching the witness stand as if to emphasize his question.

"Yes," she answered.

"With time so precious, why did you not yourself summon aid on discovery of your husband's body, instead of sending for the butler to do it?"

The question was thrown at her abruptly. She answered promptly.

"I can only say I did what seemed to me the natural thing. Carlin had a telephone list. I myself would hardly know how to get a policeman quickly."

"I see." The district attorney pulled his mustache. "We must make allowance for your naïveté."

"Your honor, I protest against such insinuations." Mr. Kent's voice was sharp with anger.

"The district attorney knows his comment was improper. He must not indulge in such observations again."

"I crave your honor's pardon."

The district attorney bowed and shifted his ground.

"Do you think it possible for a normal adult—a woman, we will say, of your age and apparent vigor—to be seized and held as you have described without knowing something about her assailant?"

"I can only say it happened to me."

"Very good." He pushed a sheaf of papers to one side. "Now, Mrs. Slayton, you have heard your butler's testimony that you quarreled with your husband but a short time before the shooting."

"I object," Mr. Kent interjected. "There is nothing of that sort in the butler's evidence."

"Never mind," said the district attorney testily. "The maid, then. Both are servants in the house. You did quarrel with your husband, Mrs. Slayton, did you not?"

"A disagreement, not a 'quarrel,'" she corrected him.

"Very well. Let's call it a disagreement. At any rate, unpleasant words. What was it about?"

"I cannot answer that question."

"You must."

The district attorney raised a menacing forefinger. Almost instantly Mr. Kent was on his feet. But the judge anticipated his protest.

"It is my duty," he said paternally, "to instruct the defendant that she is not obliged to answer questions bearing upon the crime with which she stands charged. She will, however, realize that failure to do so may count against her."

"It's not that I'm afraid," Leila turned to the bench. "Only it is something I dislike to have bruited about. If it is put in this light I will say we disagreed about a woman."

"Ah!" said the district attorney. "What woman?"

"I don't think it fair to give her name."

"You refuse?"

"I must do so."

"Were you jealous of her?"

The district attorney took a few rapid steps, as if to add to his question the force of physical persuasion. Leila did not flinch.

"Not exactly," she said.

"What was your feeling, then?"

"Simply that I did not care to have her in my house."

"But he wanted her?"

"That was it."

"Was George Slayton's name mentioned in that quarrel?"

Leila flushed to her temples; with momentary hesitation she opened her lips to

speak. But Mr. Kent was on his feet thundering a protest.

"I object, your honor, to this unmanly and utterly malicious insinuation."

The judge adjusted his glasses. "Do you propose, Mr. District Attorney, to follow this question with any evidence?" he inquired.

"I withdraw the question, your honor," the prosecutor said. "If my brother will bear with me in brief delay," with a nod to Mr. Kent, "I would like to consult with my assistant."

"Be at ease, Mrs. Slayton," the judge observed, "while you wait."

She sat pale and still as a statue. The rage of George, whose solicitude for her had been patent throughout the trial, was obvious. His clenched fists menaced the district attorney who stood almost within reach, stooped over the counsel table in whispered conversation with one of his juniors, who produced a small envelope from the dispatch case before him.

"May it please the court, I have one more question to put to the defendant."

Leila stiffened again. Her eyes darkly blue met those of the district attorney, sauntering toward her with something triumphant in his elaborately careless air.

"Do you mind telling me," he asked, "if you ever saw this before?"

She took from his hand a somewhat scorched and crumpled scrap of paper. For a moment her head was bent in inspection. As she straightened, returning the exhibit to his outstretched hand, her carriage was proud, not pitiful.

"I think so," she said. Her voice was low.

"And did you ever before have it in your possession?"

The same answer. "I think so."

"May I see the paper?" Mr. Kent requested with manifest anxiety.

"It is offered as an exhibit," the district attorney said and turned again to Leila.

"Now what, if you remember, did you do with this paper when you had it before?"

"I thought I had burned it."

"How did it come into your possession?"

"By mail."

Again he handed the scrap of paper to her. "Will you be kind enough to read what is legible?"

"I object," snapped Mr. Kent.

The defendant did not avail herself of his protection. With every eye on her she forced her stiffened lips to read:

"DARLING: We can be alone to-day. I must see you——"

"Who wrote it?" the district attorney demanded.

"I don't know," she said slowly.

He looked at her with feigned solicitude. "Have you no explanation to give?"

Now impotent to protect, Mr. Kent solicitously stood near.

"This"—she slightly raised the note in her hand—"was one of the letters I received from some stranger. They were violent love letters, and unsigned. I didn't know what to do about them. Burning seemed the best thing."

"You never told your husband about them?"

"Never."

"Why not?" he asked sharply.

"He would not have understood."

The district attorney turned with a significant look to the panel. "But you expect the jury to understand?"

"I can only tell them the truth."

Taking the ominous bit of paper from her hand the prosecutor returned to his table with a self-satisfied smile.

"Now, Mrs. Slayton," he pursued, "doesn't this note help to explain your misunderstanding with your husband?"

"It does not," she said evenly.

"Does it not help to explain the killing of Mr. Slayton?"

"Not to me."

"That is all."

With an air of indifference he sat down. Leila's lawyer asked a question or two of no avail, and desisted.

"If counsel have completed their evidence we will take a recess of thirty minutes before hearing arguments," the judge announced and disappeared in his chamber while the crier was still busy with his proclamation.

Even before that minute reporters scribbling furiously and reporters with much physical ardor besieging telephone booths were racing for editions with the long-awaited sensation of the case. The hostile camps of prosecution and defense, one jubilant, the other grim in the shadow of great defeat, were busy in consultation. The speculative crowd, each fearing to leave a coveted seat, was busy with argument over

the jury's prospective verdict. And the jury was somewhere smoking the fraternal pipe in an officer's care. Leila sat beside Mr. Kent, obviously much shaken by the State's surprise attack. After a word or two of attempted cheer George hovered near, of all eyes defiant. In a sense not less evident because the attack was covertly made he had been suggested as a motive for the killing of his brother.

How would this suggestion of a vile and secret motive for the murder of Frank Slayton affect the jury? It was an average panel, for the most part composed of honest, unimaginative men.

The drama of life and death came now to its third and last act. For the crowd, the forensic display. Mr. Kent for the defense was a sort of trip hammer. The district attorney beat a tattoo. On one side an eloquent effort to overcome the blind force of circumstantial evidence. On the other insistence that Leila Slayton, and she alone, had opportunity to kill her husband. And the motive for the crime the district attorney flourished in that charred note.

It was not the jury's duty, the prosecutor observed in closing, to be sympathetic. It was their obligation to be just. Just to the law, to the public they were sworn to serve. The same justice to rich and poor alike. To the defendant's beauty and the exalted social position she had occupied they must close their eyes. He demanded a verdict of guilty, for the sanctity of the home.

The judge rose to deliver his charge. He was not an imposing high priest of justice. Constitutional mildness peering from somewhat baggy blue eyes remained uncured by the autocratic sway of the bench. "Equity" Brown—so his confrères called him—did not relish presiding over a murder trial. In his exposition of law he was painstaking, never severe. The jury felt in him a candid counselor, a sympathetic friend.

"Take the case, gentlemen," he said in closing. "Consider it in its every phase. Consider it solemnly as if it were to be the last act of your life, and you knew it. And when you have arrived at that conclusion which to you seems just, declare your verdict in the fear of God and without fear of man. Gentlemen, you may retire."

Officers collected the exhibits of the case and one of imposing bearing led the file of jurors to their fateful consultation. As the door closed behind them a sigh of relaxation, of mournful anticipation, seemed to fill the room.

CHAPTER IV.

THE PANEL CELEBRATES.

From behind a smoke screen came the voice of Juror Isaac Hurwicz, asthmatic but firm: "Well, I think the same."

"Aw!"

The chair of Juror Joseph Flynn came down with a bang.

"You don't think. That's the trouble. You won't listen to reason."

"It ain't because you don't give him a chance, Joe," said Juror Freddy McNeil, with a chuckle. "You talk enough."

"You mean to say I hog the floor?"

Juror McNeil disarmed irritation with a deeper chuckle and genial advice: "Keep your shirt on, Joe, old boy."

Juror George Curtin grew plaintive and slightly musical as he chanted:

> "Where do we go from here, boys,
> Where do we go from here——"

"Nowhere. Not a chance," growled Juror Frank Stellberger. "Another night in that damned hotel. Cooped like poultry. And I have to sleep with Bill Carey. You're a wonder, Bill, with that snore like a freight engine with a hundred cars hitched on working up grade."

"I've got nothing on you at that," retorted Juror Carey and ground his spearmint more vehemently. "You need a Maxim silencer in your sleep. Ever hear a factory exhaust pipe letting off steam, boys?"

Juror Stellberger's quest of a really crushing retort was interrupted by the turning key of the jury-room door. Officer Corrigan stepped into the room.

"Well, boys," he inquired genially, "got a verdict for the court?"

"A fat chance!" Juror Samuel Carr commented disgustedly.

"I guess you can run me for representative from this ward next time," Juror Freddy McNeil observed.

"You're sticking to it well," said Officer Corrigan with noble disregard of personal inconvenience. "It's about closing time. I guess I'd better take any messages you want to send before the telephone operator goes off duty."

"You know what to say," Foreman Bernard Stone suggested. "The same thing: 'Jury hung up. Can't tell when it will

agree, if it ever does. Expect me when I come.' "

"Ditto," said Juror Carr.

"And that goes for me," added Juror Flynn.

"Take it down the line," urged a fourth man.

Juror Isaac Hurwicz laboriously wrote a name and telephone number and handed Officer Corrigan the slip of paper.

"Will you ask, please, is she well yet?"

"Sure," said the officer good-naturedly and departed, locking the door.

"Anybody got a cigar?" asked Juror Curtin as members of the panel tilted back their chairs, once more prepared to give battle for justice. Only it appeared in the faces of several that they regarded members of the obstinate minority as nearly entitled to rating with the defendant.

"It's my fifth wedding anniversary tonight," said Juror Howard Hanson accusingly.

"I guess my company will have to get along without its president at the directors' quarterly meeting," grumbled Juror Solomon Finley, a wholesale fish dealer.

"I got nothing on my mind. But I'll bet my girl has on hers." Juror Freddy McNeil spoke merrily. "This'll be the second Tuesday I've failed to take her out."

"Let's go over the evidence just once more," urged Juror Flynn, who had small respect for the court's appointment of Juror Bernard Stone as foreman. "There must be something somebody don't understand."

"I guess there is," offered the irrepressible McNeil.

"It's just like this——"

Juror Flynn was not to be lightly interrupted. He looked at his cigar to make sure it was well lighted and at his fellow jurors to compel attention as he resumed:

"I paid particular attention. And I can't see but that the facts are plain. Is the woman guilty? Or ain't she? We don't have to bother about any corespondents."

"This isn't a divorce case, you know," Juror Clifford reminded him, as he lounged at ease, still keeping his eyes on some spot in the ceiling. His suggestion mildly offered was respectfully received.

"Thanks, captain," said Juror Flynn. "It's another defendant I mean.

"Now what are the facts? Here are some big-bugs. Rolling in money. Old Jabez Slayton made ten millions in the steel business. My father worked for him when he was getting his start. And he was a tight-fisted boss."

"What's that got to do with the facts in this murder case?" asked Foreman Stone, briefly suggesting authority.

"Well, we've got to weigh folks' character with the evidence," Juror Flynn answered defiantly. "The judge told us to. Now, old Slayton has two sons—Frank and George. Only he hasn't got Frank any more. And if there's anything in what people say—and usually there is—it might better have happened the other way."

"Is this what you call listening to reason?" inquired Juror Carr and fell to champing his cigar.

"Do you mean to say I'm foolish?" demanded Juror Flynn, thumping the table.

"No. You're the only man that thinks in this room. Tell me some more."

Juror Flynn complied.

"As I was saying, old Jabez Slayton had two sons, Frank and George. His wife died a long while ago. Before he ever thought of moving into the house with the lions out front, on the Avenue. She was a nice woman, they said. And Frank sort of favored her. What's the matter?"

"Oh, nothing," Juror Carr said resignedly. "I can *look* tired if I want to, can't I?"

Juror Flynn snorted. "As I was saying when somebody interrupted me, Frank had some of Jabez's good qualities, too. A quiet, steady feller with a head for business. Vice president of the Slayton Company when he went into the army; and not thirty at that."

"George for me, every time," cut in Juror Freddy McNeil.

"What do *you* know about the Slayton family?"

Sarcasm saturated the voice of Juror Flynn.

"Well, anyway I don't fall back on father." The zest of the born baiter twinkled in Juror McNeil's eyes. "We used to sell coal to the Slayton Company. I've been to their offices. Once or twice I got as far as the cellar and basement of their house. Ever there, Joe?"

Juror Flynn drew a long breath. "As I was saying, what we got to do here is be convinced beyond a reasonable doubt. That's what the judge said. He meant—just be sure of the facts. And you can't

do that without making up your mind who's lying. Stands to reason somebody is, with two sides to the case. You got to go back a piece to see what kind of stuff Jabez Slayton's family was. To my way of thinkin' it helps to show what might have tempted his wife to put Frank Slayton out of the way. Am I right?"

"I don't see it," observed Juror Carr.

"I'm telling you," explained Juror Flynn. "Now here's the woman in the case. You remember a lot about her in the papers when they got married. Leily Ransom her name was."

"Leila Ransom," said Juror Clifford, never removing his hands from his pockets or relaxing his steadfast inspection of the ceiling.

"All right, captain. 'Leila' it is. I recollect she was an English girl; nursing in a base hospital when Frank Slayton met her. Well fitted for such work, I'd say. She's shown plenty of nerve in the courtroom."

"The district attorney roasted her for fair," commented Juror Curtin. "Of course, a murder trial is no tea party. But I've my opinion of him. The little beast!"

"Maybe so." Juror Flynn passed on. "But that's neither here nor there. All we have to do is consider the facts in the case. Now there's got to be a motive. People don't kill for nothing. What do we find here?" He lifted a magisterial forefinger. "She admitted on the stand that she had a row with her husband at dinner."

"Just a minute." Juror Carr took a hand. "She said there was no real trouble. And probably there wasn't. Lots of people row a little at times. Don't you ever disagree with your wife? It's no crime."

"Well," Juror Flynn insisted, "it amounts to considerable when Frank Slayton gets a bullet in his brain an hour or two later."

Juror Carr's chair came down with a thump.

"Oh, what's the use? If you've found a verdict for the jury, we might as well report now. It would have saved time to tell us a day or two ago."

"Somebody's got to do some thinking," said Juror Flynn kindly. "To help those that don't know how. Now let's get back to the facts. Leily—Leila, I mean, marries Frank in London after the armistice. And they come back here to live. Frank goes back into the Slayton business and settles down with his wife in old Jabez's house.

"Now what? After a while George is discharged from the army, too. But he don't come back to the Slayton business. Why not?"

"Say, Joe," Juror Carey inquired, "are you trying to convict George Slayton of this crime? Or are you just after his sister-in-law?"

Foreman Stone rapped on the table with his knuckles.

"Can't we get back to the evidence?" he inquired.

Juror Flynn shifted his cigar to get a fresh grip on his narrative. "Now both sides agree about considerable in the case. Jabez was at his club. And George seems to have a handy alibi. Who was in the house, then? Frank and his wife. Most of the servants at a party. So they don't know anything about the murder. But the butler was there. And a maid that says she was in a room on the third floor sewing with the French girl that waits on Frank's wife. They may be honest when they say they don't know anything about the shooting. It's different with the butler. I think he's keeping something back."

"I suppose he ought to tell a story connecting George with the case somehow," sarcastically suggested Juror Carr.

Juror Flynn rolled on. "Well, he took care not to know too much. Just as soon as he heard Frank and his wife jawing he went off to polish some silver. And he never heard the shot! Why not? He wasn't more than fifty feet away, with a door or two between. How could he help hearing?"

"The murderer possibly used a Maxim silencer," suggested Juror Clifford.

"That's so, captain," Juror Flynn admitted. "I hadn't thought of that. And the lawyers never mentioned it."

"They ain't so wise," said Juror Freddy McNeil.

"I'll say so," allowed Juror Flynn. "Now about this cock-and-bull story of how she was grabbed and chloroformed in the dark. Quicker than you could say Jack Robinson. Didn't she give up easy?"

Juror Flynn looked about wisely.

"I'll say she did. Too darned easy. She couldn't speak; she couldn't see; she couldn't move her hands. All done as slick as you please. Then she passed out of the picture. What next? When it's time she comes to. Does she call for help? Oh, no. And why not? I ask you."

"Play fair, Joe." Juror Carey shifted his spearmint and cleared his throat disapprovingly. "She says she didn't know then what had happened."

"Have it your own way. But a woman's first impulse is to holler when she is frightened. Everybody knows that. But it seems Frank Slayton's wife is an exception. First, she takes a look around her own room. It seems all right. So, all calm and collected, she steps into—what do you call it?—the dressing room between hers and her husband's. And there he is on the floor. Having all her wits about her, she noticed he was turned on his left side.

"What now? Does she call for help? Not yet. She stoops to look him over. She sees blood. But she don't scream. Nothing of the sort. She just goes to work on first-aid remedies.

"It's no go. She can't revive him. But still she don't call for help." Juror Flynn raised his right hand impressively. "It may be the last minute to save his life. And she rings for an old, rheumatic butler to tell him to get a doctor."

"I don't know what right you've got to say what was in her mind and what wasn't," protested Juror Carr. "It's our job to sift the evidence."

"It is." Juror Flynn bit off the end of a cigar decisively. "And we've got a right to put two and two together. Frank's wife was pretty shrewd. But they always overlook something. You remember the police asked her if she knew of any firearms in the house. And she said Frank had a revolver she saw once on his bureau.

"The police didn't find one there. Who would expect to? But where did they find it? In her bureau. She never thought they would look there."

Juror Clifford brought his eyes down from the ceiling to examine the militant Flynn with speculative interest.

"There's no proof," he observed, "that the revolver found belonged to either Mrs. Slayton or her husband."

"But it's a .38. The caliber Frank Slayton was shot with," Juror Flynn persisted. "And one cartridge had been exploded."

"But where's the motive for her to kill her husband?" asked Juror Curtin.

"Plain as the nose on your face. They quarreled. What about? A man, or a woman? Or both? I've a notion George came into it somehow. And what happened? Rich folks usually rely on the divorce court in making a change of husband, or wife. But there's a shorter cut. And Frank Slayton's wife took it."

"You think George had com-promised her?" inquired Juror Max Schlesinger.

"'Com-promised,'" echoed Juror Hanson. "You mean compromised."

"I speak four languages!" Juror Schlesinger flushed darkly. "How many do you speak?"

"One—straight," answered Juror Hanson.

"Time!" called Juror Freddy McNeil, examining his watch.

"Opinions are well enough," said Juror Carr. "But a woman's life is at stake here. Suppose somebody put the revolver in her bureau, after shooting Slayton."

"Suppose your grandmother." Juror Flynn was scornful. "Would you expect her to say she put it there? What could she do but deny any knowledge of it? They took her by surprise. She never thought they'd poke through her bureau drawers. For once the police showed shrewdness.

"Now there are the facts." Juror Flynn tilted his chair back and put his feet on the table, this signifying his abandonment of the rostrum. "Can anybody deny them?"

"It looks pretty bad," Juror Carr admitted. "But I can't help feeling she is the victim of circumstances."

"She seemed a nice lady to me." Juror Isaac Hurwicz broke habitual silence with this mild observation, for a moment opening wider his habitually half closed eyes.

Juror Flynn put both feet down—very emphatically.

"What are we trying here, anyway?" he demanded. "This is no civil service examination to see if Frank Slayton's wife is a good woman for primary-school teacher. It's a jury session to say whether this woman is guilty of murder. If she is—and I say she is—we've got to return a verdict of guilty. Didn't we swear to do our duty? We don't punish her. The law does that."

"Well," said Foreman Bernard Stone, "shall we take another ballot?"

"Might as well," observed Juror Freddy McNeil. "They won't let us play poker."

"How shall we vote this time?" Juror Curtin inquired. "Standing? Or use the cards again?"

"Better stick to the cards," said Juror Hanson. "It helps to pass the time."

"All right. You distribute and collect

them," directed the foreman. "The rule we've had all the way through holds good. The two cards marked 'Guilty' and 'Innocent.' Put the one you want to vote in the hat and hold on to the other."

Once more the fateful bits of pasteboard were carefully sorted and distributed in twos. The jurors received them with gingerly care. And having made their choice they looked at it, again and again, lest some magic change the word it bore before they could register their vote. In such moments each held himself aloof, keeping his ballots face downward.

But the opinion of most members of the panel was well known to all. In the give and take of offhand argument there had been little concealment. As the count proceeded interest was mainly in this question: "Had any of the minority come over?"

Foreman Bernard Stone adjusted his glasses and cleared his throat. He cleared it again as he turned the last two ballots over and added them to the larger heap.

"The vote," he announced, "stands nine for conviction and three for acquittal."

A long breath bore testimony to the natural clemency of man. Then the voice of Juror Flynn rasped the silence:

"Who is it that can't understand the facts in the case?"

"Yes," said Juror Carey. "It's about time to come into the open and thrash the question out—man to man."

But pressing inquiry was prevented by the return of Officer Corrigan. Still smiling ruddily he stood in the doorway.

"I sent your messages," he said, with a nod for jurors in general. "All but yours."

"No?" Juror Hurwicz's voice had an appealing note.

"Couldn't put it through. The number you gave me was a pay station and they said they had no messenger handy." Something in Juror Hurwicz's heavy face touched his sympathy. "Sorry," he added kindly, "that I couldn't wait."

"Now what about it?" His voice was brisk again. "Got a verdict for me?"

"No such luck," Juror Hanson assured him.

"Then I guess it's time to feed you."

"Make it the theater, too," suggested the irrepressible McNeil.

"No luxuries, boy." The officer grinned broadly. "Think of what you're costing the county. Wash up now. I'll be back in five minutes."

"I wonder where they'll take us to-night," mused Juror Curtin, trying to dry his expansive countenance on a paper towel.

"Cut out the Plaza idea," remarked Juror Carey. "We'll be trotted off to some nearby joint—as uncomfortable as possible. I think the court is getting tired of us, anyhow."

"It has nothing on me," said Juror McNeil.

An officer behind, and one before, they presently emerged from the elevator and passed through dusky, silent corridors into the street. It was early evening, with the vanguard of movie patrons already afoot. Stares and audible conjectures were lavished upon them as they raggedly marched, two by two, with court officers guarding.

"I suppose they think we're bolsheviki on the way to Ellis Island," said Juror Hanson disgustedly.

As they neared their destination a girl of twelve or so darted from the opposite curb to the side of Juror Hurwicz. Her appearance was so sudden, and her disappearance succeeding swiftly, other jurors only noted she was dark and thin.

"Your mamma?" he questioned, bending toward her.

"Is worse, father."

"The doctor. What does he say?"

"He won't tell me, father."

A tear rolled down her cheek. And in the eyes of Juror Hurwicz the lamp of love was lighted suddenly.

"Father will be with you soon," he said, patting her shoulder tenderly. "Go now."

"What's this?" Officer Corrigan came forward hastily. "You can't speak to outsiders, you know."

"My daughter," said Juror Hurwicz simply.

"Oh! All right." The officer was suddenly mollified. "That message you wanted put through, I suppose."

The party turned into a doorway beside the wide window of what had been a popular saloon and all-night café. The bar was still there but no thronging patrons scraped its rail with urgent feet. The jury climbed to the second floor and entered a private dining room. Juror Carey's foreboding was justified. It was one of those dinners in which what should be hot is lukewarm and what should be cold is clammy.

But most of the panel ate with the vigor of hearty and hungry men. Save Juror Hurwicz, whose hooded eyes completed the puzzle of a masklike face. And Juror Clifford, by common consent treated as a cut above his fellow jurors, surveyed them dispassionately in their hour of ease. Varying somewhat in age and circumstances, they were the composite incarnation of the middle-aged, middle-class American husband and father.

With this company "Tiger" Clifford, traveler, sportsman and soldier, remembered in the Foreign Legion and in big-game haunts of Asia and Africa, had been called to decide the fate of Leila Slayton. He had the air of a *grand seigneur*, a sort of remote serenity other jurors liked. Sometimes he seemed to listen when his thoughts were far away.

"I suppose we're off for the night, Phil," suggested Juror Freddy McNeil when a waiter brought toothpicks in a holder, with a dime reposing beside it as a delicate hint.

"Sorry to break your heart," Officer Corrigan replied. "But the judge said to take you back to the courthouse."

"And him toasting his toes at home. Have a heart," protested McNeil.

"Well, I'm in the same boat," said the officer amiably. "Only there's this difference: You can go out when you want to. I've got to stay as long as you keep me."

"Oh, yes, we can get out," grunted Juror Flynn, jamming on his hat. "How can you let daylight into a blockhead?"

"There's the ax," suggested Juror Carey.

In silence they tramped back to the courthouse. Never cheerful to the eye, now it frowned darkly, its portals closed. The guiding officer led on through a basement door. They passed grimy engineers, charwomen on their knees, scrubbing the stone floors. At last they reached their room of weary deliberation and heard the key turn once more, with Officer Corrigan's cheery counsel:

"Good-by, boys. Be good."

"Now what are the facts of the case?" asked Juror Freddy McNeil and followed the question with a mocking snore.

"You're a funny boy, Freddy," said Juror Carr gravely. "Only remember what's at stake."

"Say," suggested Juror Curtin, stuffing his pipe, "let's smoke a little while in peace."

"We came pretty near a verdict last time," remarked Juror Hanson.

Foreman Bernard Stone reflected, and decreed.

"It can't do any harm. You distribute and collect the ballots, Howard."

Once more the process of careful and renewed scrutiny. A closely guarded ballot placed in the serviceable hat; and a discarded ballot with equal care deposited face down on the table. Again the foreman, first polishing his glasses, examined the bits of pasteboard. He was very deliberate, as if always verifying the verdict of first glance. As he put down the last ballot he looked about with eyes that questioned. Announcing the result, his voice trembled slightly.

"The vote is unanimous. All twelve are for conviction."

"But I want to say," Juror Carr hastened to stipulate, "that I vote 'guilty' only on condition that the jury recommends mercy."

"I'm no butcher." Juror Flynn spoke resentfully, considering himself addressed.

"Have it your own way about that."

"Yes. Nobody'll kick," assented Juror Carey.

Juror Isaac Hurwicz shifted uneasily in his chair. "I think I made a mistake," he began deprecatingly.

"No, you didn't," interrupted Juror Flynn. "You voted right for the first time. Ring for the officer, Freddy."

"Some ice water, and beer," said Juror McNeil as Officer Corrigan appeared in the doorway.

"Is it a joke?" asked the officer.

"No. We've got it at last," declared Juror Flynn. "Does that let us out tonight?"

"You've my permission. I got a house of my own. I guess you'll get your discharge. The judge is in his room now. Fix up the paper while I tell him you're ready."

Foreman Bernard Stone adjusted his glasses. Then with his duly shaken fountain pen he began writing in the word "guilty," with his signature as foreman.

Juror Isaac Hurwicz mopped his forehead and took a fresh start:

"But I did not mean it."

"It's too late to change your mind now," snapped Juror Flynn. "The judge has been notified."

"But——" began Juror Hurwicz.

The door was opened, and opened wide, as if its swinging signified the jury's release.

"All right," said Officer Corrigan and stepped off ahead. "Here, keep your place," he added.

With a ruddier complexion Juror Flynn fell back, and Foreman Stone headed the little procession, moving raggedly and with a certain reluctance. They sank again into well-worn cushions of chairs vacated two days since and awaited the court's coming. Free from avid loungers that thronged its sessions the room seemed like the auditorium of a penitentiary. An appropriate audience chamber of the doomed, with its dim light and empty spaces.

A door opened and the clerk of the court came to his desk, spare and spectacled. His whitened beard and parchmentlike skin were bright under his shaded lamp. Now Leila entered and took her chair. As through the trial, when not on the witness stand, she was heavily veiled. Looking steadily at a little purse in her hands she sat quiet and motionless. Mr. Kent shifted in his chair uneasily after a questioning look at the jury. For they bore their secret of sorrow with the perturbation of simple men.

"The court!" an officer announced.

Another brass-buttoned retainer of justice preceded the judge through a swinging door by the bench. The assemblage rose as he entered. All but the defendant, who did not raise her head. Nervously the judge tarried a moment by the water pitcher, then settled in his chair. He saw the jury, the defendant, the lawyers and court officers—all in their respective places. Drawing his robe closer about his shoulders, he nodded to the clerk to proceed.

"Mr. Foreman, and gentlemen of the jury——" said the clerk.

The panel stood at attention.

"The court understands that in the case of the State against Slayton you have found a verdict."

"We have," said Foreman Stone.

"Will you hand the report to the officer."

Officer Corrigan received the paper from a hand that seemed reluctant to release it and bore it to the clerk. That functionary examined it impassively and presented it for the inspection of the judge. Again the clerk received it, and turned to Leila, sitting statuelike at the bar. As he addressed her his voice was tinged with kindness.

"The defendant will please rise."

She stood up very straight and of her own volition faced her judges.

"Gentlemen of the jury"—the clerk read evenly—"hearken unto your verdict. On your oath, you find the defendant guilty of the murder of Frank Slayton."

"With a recommendation of mercy," said Foreman Bernard Stone.

"So say you all?"

"We do," trailed the murmurs of assent.

Only Juror Hurwicz attempted more. "I would say——" he began in a low voice and deprecatingly.

"Shut up!" admonished Juror Flynn, who stood beside him, in a hoarse whisper.

The judge looked at them inquiringly, sensing the slight disturbance but hearing no words. As they stood silent he frowned slightly and turned his attention to Leila, who stood with clasped hands, like a woman of stone.

"The defendant may be seated," he directed, nervously adjusting his glasses. "Her attendance is dispensed with until ten o'clock to-morrow morning. At that time I will pronounce sentence."

With a sheriff on either side and Mr. Kent, whose manner suggested the grief-stricken father more than a professional adviser, bringing up the rear, Leila walked quietly from the courtroom.

On her departure the tension instinctively relaxed.

"You may be seated, gentlemen," said the judge, with a benevolent glance at the jury. "I desire to express my appreciation of your conscientious discharge of a painful duty. How repugnant it is to natural instinct I well know. But what we might forgive as individuals we cannot condone as representatives of the State. The service you have rendered, and mine yet undischarged, are required of us in the interest of law and order, without which society could not exist. Be assured the recommendation accompanying your verdict will be carefully considered. You are discharged, gentlemen, from further attendance."

For the last time to their coat room, where Officer Corrigan, closing one door, opened another with the explicit direction, "Scat!"

There was little said as a grumpy elevator man carried them to the street floor. And they scattered silently at the door.

"There goes the Slayton jury," said a passer-by.

"Must have found a verdict," his companion surmised. "I wonder what it is."

"You 'wonder?'" The oracle's voice expressed pity tinged with contempt. "Did you ever hear of a jury in a murder case bringing in a verdict of 'guilty' against a good-looking skirt?"

CHAPTER V.

THROUGH ABRAHAM HURWICZ.

The breath of a mild morning. And the city basked in the moist brightness. In the parks nursemaids were tender with policemen. And downtown in the cañons of streets that admitted some beauty of the gracious sky fruit venders praised their wares with extra fervor, sometimes interpolating a lay of Napoli.

On worn steps of the Criminal Courts Building lounged the morally dull and the physically unfit. Young lawyers with hawk-like faces ran nimbly in and out, clutching thin brief cases as if they were their open sesame. The politican was there, usually potbellied and sometimes silk-hatted, with the symbolic cigar shifting in his mouth. And for such gentry bond brokers, law clerks, heelers in general, ran errands to oblige the master's friends. The air was redolent of intrigue.

Within doors the fifth session was packed almost to suffocation. Officers gave battle to later comers insistent upon standing room. "Death? Or life imprisonment?" The question was eagerly debated. But only the implacable, the idly adamant, forecasted the extreme penalty. Others recalled that Equity Brown, in his capacity as private citizen, had favored abolition of capital punishment.

So speculation was rife. Only the pigeons, primping in the sunshine as they roosted on the window ledge, and the sob sisters and cynical young men of the press, busily writing their "human-interest" stories for early evening editions, seemed unmoved by Leila Slayton's prospects.

The district attorney entered fingering his waxed mustache and sauntered to his chair with a certain complacency, as one that had won a victory. Entering a moment later Mr. Kent brushed by him with the merest nod and buried his face in the contents of a brief case.

Beside the senior counsel for defense was a vacant chair. It had been occupied by the convicted woman during the trial. Would she still sit there? Or, being convicted, go to the dock? More food for speculation. A door opened and she entered—the ever-attentive police matron and a sheriff at her side. Without hesitation, neither shrinking nor conspicuously nerved to the ordeal, she walked to the counsel table and took her place at Mr. Kent's side. He paused for a courteous salutation. And seemingly for a word of comfort; then went on with his examination of a paper.

"Gee! She's a stingy one," said a newspaper cartoonist resentful of Leila's veil.

"With her looks I'd not be convicted of murder," offered a petticoat reporter with liberal opinions and bobbed hair. "I thought she was stalling for mystery till she took the stand. Since then I've thought the proper defense was insanity. No woman in her right mind would throw away the advantage of good looks with a jury. With eyes like hers I'd distance Theda Bara."

"The court!" called an officer sharply.

The judge looked ill. Clear morning light emphasized dark shadows under his eyes as he stooped for his customary glass of water. He settled himself in his chair and looked at the prosecuting officer.

"I will hear you, Mr. District Attorney, on the question of sentence," he said.

The prosecutor came to his feet, straddling slightly, as was his wont.

"May it please the court, the case speaks for itself. After fair trial the defendant stands convicted of murdering her husband. Needless for me to point out wherein such killing is morally more heinous than the slaughter of a stranger. The victim is struck down by one at whose hands he has a right to expect tenderness, love. The jury's recommendation of mercy seems to me more creditable to its heart than to its head. I must ask for the extreme penalty of the law."

The judge inclined his head to counsel for the defense.

"I will hear you now, Mr. Kent," he said.

A stalwart figure, Leila's counsel stood for a moment in meditation. Then he put in an amazing plea:

"Your honor, if the court will so direct, I desire the presence of the jury sitting in this case during my remarks."

Lawyers within hearing looked incredulous, as if doubting their ears.

"But the jury has been discharged," said the district attorney.

"The jury is here."

A flush of irritation came readily to the district attorney's cheek.

"Is this some trick?" he asked irascibly. Then, rising, "May I inquire, your honor, what this means?"

"Only this, Mr. District Attorney." Tapping the bench with a pencil, the judge seemed in his turn annoyed. "At the request of the defense I have had the members of the panel recalled for attendance at this morning's session. I have Mr. Kent's assurance that his reason is urgent."

"It seems to me," said the district attorney, "I should have been notified."

"I regret," the judge responded, "that you were not."

"Will the court issue the order?" inquired imperturbable Mr. Kent.

"Mr. Officer, bring in the jury," the judge directed.

Once more they entered, the fateful twelve. On all faces wonder was written; and some mirrored resentment.

"We're probably stuck here for the rest of our lives," Juror Flynn grumbled sotto voce, with a sour look for mankind in general.

"Anyway, we got off for a night," whispered back the optimistic McNeil.

The jury watched with lively curiosity unheard colloquy between Mr. Kent and the clerk of the court. Presently the judge gave ear for a moment and nodded his assent.

The district attorney half rose but sank back into his chair as Mr. Kent turned away from the bench. His face expressed wonder tinctured with apprehension.

Glancing at a jury list in his hand, the clerk called a name:

"Isaac Hurwicz!"

Juror Isaac Hurwicz sat blinking.

"Isaac Hurwicz!" the clerk called again imperatively.

Urged by his companions, both right and left, Juror Hurwicz rose slowly.

"Bring him here," the judge commanded.

An officer's hand at his elbow he crossed with the unhurried gait of a large animal the few yards between jury box and bench. For a full minute of suspense that seemed to those about him intolerably prolonged he stood there. And the heavy fixity of his face was unchanged as he held his slouch hat before him, fingering it with both hands.

"Is your name Isaac Hurwicz?"

The judge spoke sharply. Though the juror's mouth opened no sound issued from it.

"What is your name?"

"Abraham Hurwicz—I am Isaac's brother."

The words came thickly, with a supreme effort of will.

"Why did you impersonate him?"

No answer.

"Take him in custody," the judge directed. "We will look into this later."

Preceding a sheriff who pointed to a rear door Abraham Hurwicz passed from the room a prisoner. And in his eyes, as he looked his last upon the scene of trial, was an expression that seemed reproach. With the closing of the door Mr. Kent again rose to address the court.

"Your honor, we have proof of the truth of Abraham Hurwicz's admission. Isaac and Abraham were twins. Both were cabinetmakers. And they lived in the same house, a tenement building. Isaac, a bachelor, is a boarder in Abraham's family. The name of Isaac was on the jury list. And he was drawn for service in the case now before the court. But, your honor, when the venire issued Isaac was dead. To him, a few days previously, the great summons had come. What led Abraham, relying upon resemblance said to have puzzled even those well acquainted with both brothers, to impersonate Isaac here I am not at present prepared to state."

As the counsel for the defense paused the district attorney came to his feet with a belligerent inquiry:

"Does my brother insinuate that the district attorney's office had anything to do with the fraud?"

Mr. Kent smiled. "My brother," he said ironically, "is needlessly troubled. I had not thought of suspecting him or any member of his staff. On the contrary I am sure he will join me in asking that the jury's verdict of 'guilty' be set aside—for the reason that a stranger participated in deliberations of the panel. And further, your honor, that a new trial be ordered."

The district attorney did not at once respond. Pondering the situation, he tugged at his mustache nervously. With a look of displeasure the judge turned to Mr. Kent.

"There can be no question," he observed, "of the justice of your request. Mr. Clerk, enter the order for a new trial."

With "Yes, your honor," the clerk turned to his docket.

The counsel for defense again addressed

the court. "Your honor, I now ask that the defendant, Mrs. Slayton, be admitted to bail. She has been some months in custody. And the strain of that period, with the trial just ended, has been heavy. So heavy that her health is impaired. We pray you, therefore, that she be released pending the trial ordered, with bond in such sum as the court directs."

"Is that agreeable to the State?" the judge inquired.

"I object," snapped the district attorney.

"On what ground?" pursued the court.

"I see no reason why this defendant should be accorded special privileges."

The judge flushed. "I asked your view," he said with asperity, "as a district attorney. Not as an elder brother of the court."

"Bail is never accepted in murder cases."

" 'Seldom,' Mr. District Attorney, is a better word than 'Never.' The statute does not forbid. In the present case I shall exercise my discretion and grant Mr. Kent's petition."

"But——" began the district attorney.

"I do not care to hear you further. Can you furnish sureties in the sum of fifty thousand dollars, Mr. Kent?"

"Yes, your honor. We stand ready to furnish twice that sum if desired."

"Fifty thousand, Mr. Clerk," the judge directed. "Enter the order. Court stands adjourned until two o'clock this afternoon."

With the crier's stentorian "Hear ye!" still ringing through the courtroom the judge picked up his papers and disappeared by a door behind the bench. Next the defendant passed swiftly from view, her counsel striding after her. The reporters vanished, with attendant artists and messenger boys, racing for their respective offices like whippets speeded to a mark. Only the district attorney was left, a discomfited leading actor.

The "I told you so" wiseacre had nothing to say as the crowd jostled its way down the winding iron stairs.

"She's got a horseshoe all right," observed a scrubby-mustached man.

"How?" asked his elbowing intimate of the moment.

" 'How?' Why, convicted of murder, got a new trial and let out on bail—all in twenty-four hours. Can you beat it?"

"Well, it does seem pretty good luck."

Meantime the object of their felicitations sat in a detention room of the courthouse as rigid as when she had faced the district attorney's blasting attack.

"Come, my dear. You must relax," said Mr. Kent, patting her shoulder paternally.

"How can I?" A light fan snapped in her hand clenched with sudden passion. "It is all so indelible."

"Not 'indelible,' " he said. "We'll wipe the black mark out in the next trial. Now I want you to rest."

"I'll try." Her voice was suddenly unsteady. And tears long denied came to her eyes. "You have been very good to me. Believe that I am grateful."

"Yes, my dear. I understand. And here is Marie." With a man's fear of a scene he turned to the waiting maid. "Is the motor outside?"

"Yes, monsieur."

As she answered she was busy, with loving touch smoothing Leila's hair and tying her veil.

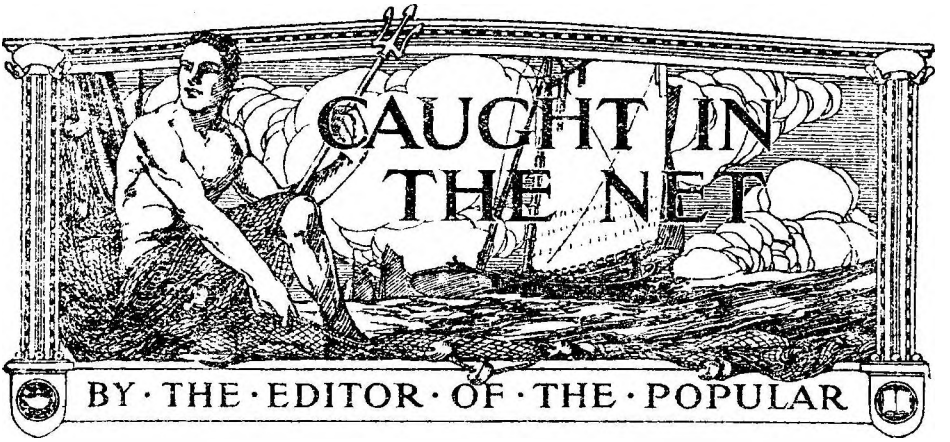
"Then we'll go." Suiting action to speech he opened a door revealing a spiral staircase. No word was spoken as they descended in single file.

"This way," he said when they reached the floor below and led on through a dark corridor from which they stepped suddenly into the brightness of noon. Almost unnoticed they gained the waiting car.

"I will telephone in a few days," the lawyer promised.

Closing the door with a courtly salutation, he turned away. With factory whistles signifying release to many that labored ringing in her ears Leila began the long ride uptown. She too was released. But not acquitted. Society, which had petted her, held her still in the thrall of indictment for a monstrous crime.

TO BE CONTINUED.



INDIANS TRYING TO SAVE THEIR RACE

SINCE the Bursum bill—which if it became law would be an invasion of the land rights of and an injustice to the Pueblo Indians of New Mexico and is bitterly opposed on their behalf—was introduced into Congress, some of the best-known tribes have started a campaign to save the American Indian race from extinction. There is a division of opinion among the people of this country about the future of the Indians. Some believe that the Indian race will ultimately meet the fate of a number of other ancient races, which in time lost their identity through absorption by other races. It is pointed out by them that many white citizens have married Indian women and lived harmoniously with them, and that the number of such marriages is increasing.

Many other friends of the Indians and sympathizers with them among our citizens are trying with them to preserve the identity of the Indian race, and hold that the characteristics of the American Indians are so distinctly their own that they cannot become extinct. The Cherokees belonging to one of the most civilized of the American Indian tribes are now engaged in a supreme effort to save their race. The Nighthawk Keetowah Society, a fraternal order with a membership of 3,700 full-blooded Indians of the Cherokee tribe—which has 40,000 members in all—is an important factor in this work.

Eugene L. Graves, a white lawyer and the largest individual oil and gas royalty owner in Oklahoma has for eighteen years lent his aid and time to the struggle of the Cherokee Indians to preserve their race. He is the authorized delegate and representative of the Nighthawk Keetowah in all its dealings with the United States government and in a recent statement said that the Cherokees are highly civilized, that the Cherokee tribe is believed to be descended from the Incas and that there is a legend that it represents five of the ten lost tribes of Israel.

The Iroquois tribe is appealing to the League of Nations for recognition of its sovereignty and to save it from extinction at the hands of the Canadian government.

Whether the Indians will preserve their identity as a race or not, it is generally believed by their sympathizers that the Bursum bill in relation to the Pueblo Indians of New Mexico will not pass. If the friends of these original Americans are able to defeat the proposed legisiation the result will be a new lease of life for the Indian race.

FOR AERIAL EXPANSION

IT is a pity that some silver-tongued supersalesman cannot be found to sell this country an adequate air defense policy. Each year the lessons of the war grow dimmer and dimmer in the minds of the persons responsible for our national security and each year the scope of our aërial arm dwindles ever more rapidly. During the coming fiscal year the appropriation set aside by Congress for the purpose

of maintaining and developing military aviation is even less than it was when last our national legislators loosened the country's purse strings.

In the next war aviation will not be an auxiliary arm. It will be a capital weapon of offense. Instead of merely assisting the troops on the ground to spy on the activities of the enemy it will drive home attacks itself. It is scarcely extravagant to predict that the side which gains complete control of the air in any future war will count the victory won the day control is established.

The layman does not yet understand that no effective ground defense against airplanes has ever been devised. Less than one tenth of one per cent of the Allied aircraft crossing the enemy's lines during the war with Germany were brought down or disabled by antiaircraft cannon and machine guns. Nearly a hundred per cent of the Allied air casualties were caused by enemy aircraft. The only known effective defense against the airplane is the airplane itself. Altitude has little to do with aërial security. Experience of American airmen who flew in France shows that ground defenses were equally ineffective against craft flying at one hundred feet and craft flying at twenty thousand feet.

Control of the air—which implies the destruction of at least seventy-five per cent of the enemy's aërial fleets—means that no portion of an enemy's territory is immune from attack. In the last war neither the Allies nor Germany could drive home a massed and continuous aërial attack against the rear organization of the opposing side because neither side was strong enough in the air at any time to establish control. Airplanes were always in danger of being attacked by superior forces of airplanes. In the next war both sides will work desperately to gain aërial control. If they meet on an equal basis at the outset the contest may be protracted. But if either side enters the war with a decisively superior mobilization of air troops it will quickly reduce its opponent to aërial impotence. And it will probably win the war in short order. Invading its enemy's country with impunity it will bomb and gas the populace into panic and submission almost at will. Nothing on the ground that we know of could stop the aërial offensive. And with no barrier of airplanes barring the route there could be but one issue.

The startling fact is that this country is not now provided with enough up-to-date fighting planes to accompany one full army unit into action. Excepting for the factor of isolation we are at the mercy of any enemy well armed with aircraft. It is hard to believe that the responsible authorities do not realize how precarious is our situation, but we cannot think they would recognize it and still fail to provide the obvious remedies.

METHUSELAH'S SECRET

WHENEVER some modern Methuselah breaks into the public prints with another birthday party staged on the yonder side of the hundred-year post, the inevitable interview about "How I Keep Young at a Hundred" burgeons into type.

Merely out of curiosity—not because we ardently long to join the Centenarian Club—we have been keeping track of the methods pursued by a number of champion longevitists. We find that the rules of the game of long life are strangely confusing. As nearly as we can make out, after carefully consolidating and codifying the personal maxims of the game's leading exponents, long life is dependent upon a rigid observance of the following régime:

Eschew all spirituous beverages, tea, coffee and ice-cream sodas. Drink nothing but the purest water—preferably sterilized.

Never drink water. It chills the stomach, induces gastric congestion, promotes dyspepsia and is the root of all digestive evils. Consume only seasoned liquids well aged in the wood.

Eat sparingly and particularly shun red meat, potatoes, hot bread and boiled puddings. Regularity in meals is essential. Discipline your appetite. Eating between meals is fatal.

Eat what you like, when you like, and as much as you can comfortably hold.

Plenty of good rich food builds up a reserve stock of vitality that will add years to your life.

Exercise morning, noon and night. Sleep on the roof or the front porch—never in the house. Fresh air is the greatest known conserver of life.

Don't overexert yourself. Horde your strength. Do everything with a minimum of effort. Be careful of the night air. It is deadly. Nail down all the windows.

Go to bed early. Eight o'clock is not too early. Arise at dawn—in winter a couple of hours before dawn. Get your day's work over before breakfast. Do four more days' work between breakfast and supper. The mind must be kept active. Never relax excepting in bed. Strenuosity is the greatest tonic. Sleep and work. They are the great preservatives.

Sleep as little as possible. Sleep makes you sluggish. Look at Edison. Three hours' sleep is enough for any man.

Don't worry about your business. Keep your mind free of dull care. Let things slide. Fate will provide. Worry poisons the system. Hire somebody else to do it.

Never touch tobacco. Live in Wisconsin.

Start smoking before breakfast and smoke until you go to bed. Be careful not to burn the sheets. Tobacco fumes are a specific against germs of all kinds. Germs are the cause of all disease and old age is just a disease. Try to cultivate the habit of smoking in your sleep. If you can consume a box of perfectos every twenty-four hours you are almost certain to outlive all your contemporaries.

Anybody who can follow these few simple precepts ought to be able to vote for the presidential candidate in 2000 with sprightly enthusiasm. The essential thing is to stick rigidly to the system. A few days' lapse may be disastrous. Just a little while ago we read of an unfortunate young man, only 117 years old, who was cut off in his prime because he stopped drinking beer for three weeks. And only a week or two prior to that tragic incident there occurred the death of a young matron of 99 summers whose clay pipe fell to the floor and was broken. Before her great-great-grandson could rush out to the corner and purchase another she suffered a stroke and expired.

RADIO AND POLITICS

AT a recent convention of engineers a speaker dwelt on the future development of radio, stating that as wonderful as the instrumentality was to-day, it would perform more astonishing feats within the experience of the present generation. And not alone in the mere conquest of matter and distance, but in its effect upon human institutions. Take the political possibilities of radio.

For centuries philosophers and scholars have pondered and written on the inexhaustible subject of government and, in particular, the structure and form of democracy have been given close analysis and many theories and interpretations of government by the people have been promulgated and discussed.

Differ as these experts might upon other phases of this political institution they could all agree upon the possible dangers and disintegration of a democracy whose physical, material growth outdistanced its mental, spiritual development, to the disadvantage of all its constituents. To some extent we witness this result in our own midst. Never in the history of the world, at least to our knowledge, has a democracy of the components of the United States been erected as a human institution and never before has a country grown with such rapidity and been composed of such miscellaneous humanity. And to fuse it into harmonious government has been a task that neither philosopher nor seer would have predicated.

Which may seem far away from radio but in reality is decidedly to the point. Dissemination of knowledge and ideas is the chief factor in social and political fusion. Railroads, telegraph, telephone and newspapers have done and are doing their work of rapid intercommunication, binding a continent of diverse people and interests into a workable whole. Now appears radio, swifter than the wind, to further the cause of fellowship and union.

To the ancient Greeks, the creators of democracy, our country would have been inconceivable. Their ideal democracy was a small republic, not exceeding, perhaps, thirty thousand free citizens, where, as Aristotle said, one man's voice could be heard by the whole assembly of voters. Because all could hear their political candidates at one and the same time, discuss their relative merits, and vote on the spot, representative government as we understand it was unknown and superfluous.

Thus we glimpse an analogy. It is conceded that, some day not far off, through the medium of radio our political candidates will be able to address the whole electorate, that the President of the United States can be listened to in every home and that even Congress may have the country eavesdropping on its debates and deliberations!

Who, then, can say what changes may not be brought about, and how the radio, to all intents and purposes, may coalesce our millions of inhabitants into one intent, intelligent audience?

RUBBER MAY BOUNCE—IN PRICE

BRITISH capital controls three quarters of the world's rubber acreage. The United States uses two thirds of the world's rubber production. The British government, by means of a sliding-scale tax on exports of crude rubber, is able to dictate the price at which it is sold. Those are the important elements of a situation which is worrying our department of commerce and which last year cost us a hundred million dollars in increased prices of rubber goods. If Secretary Hoover isn't able to convince our British friends of the error of their ways it is likely to cost us considerably more this year.

To most of us mention of crude rubber calls to mind a picture of the tropical forests of Brazil. A quarter of a century ago about half of the world's supply did come from there, the other half being gathered from wild trees in other parts of the world. But in 1900 the production of cultivated rubber began, four tons of hevea or plantation rubber being produced in addition to 50,000 tons of wild rubber. This hevea rubber began to supplant other varieties in various parts of the world and in 1910 its production had grown to 8,200 tons; in that year Brazil produced 40,000 tons of wild rubber and the rest of the world 21,000 tons. In 1921 273,000 tons of the world's production of 300,000 tons of rubber was of the plantation variety. British Malaya was the most important rubber-producing territory, followed by the Dutch East Indies, where thirty per cent of the output is controlled by British capital. Brazil produced only 20,000 tons.

In an effort to make American rubber users independent of the British-controlled market Congress has appropriated a half million dollars to finance an investigation into the rubber-growing possibilities of the Philippine Islands and of some Central American nations, and Secretary Hoover has been assured of the support of our automobile and rubber manufacturing industries in an attempt to reduce the cost of what has become one of the vital raw materials of present-day civilization.

POPULAR TOPICS

OUR national birth rate was lower and our death rate higher in 1922 than in 1921, according to preliminary reports of the census bureau. The death rate for the first half of last year was 12.6 per thousand of population as compared with 11.6 for 1921; the birth rate for the same period 22.7 as compared with 24.3 for 1921. In spite of this temporary setback the average death rate is decreasing steadily; in 1900 it was 17.6. A rate of less than 10 per thousand is hoped for by 1930.

AFTER following the sea for almost fifty years Captain A. E. S. Hambleton of the big steamship *Olympic* has retired. He has crossed the Atlantic more than four hundred times, and the Pacific sixty times

THE Swedes and the Norwegians are the tallest peoples of Europe, according to French statistics covering forty years. Then come the Scotch, the Icelanders and the English. The French are the smallest Europeans.

THIS lack of inches doesn't seem to be a very severe handicap to the French in either peace or war. The part of a man that counts most in the work of the world lies within three inches of the top of his head and if the right sort of mind is there it doesn't make any difference just how far it is elevated above the ground.

OLD Omar Khayyám wondered "what the vintners buy one half so precious as the stuff they sell." If the old tent maker could go cruising off the New Jersey and Long Island coasts just beyond the three-mile limit he wouldn't have to wonder any more. The answer is water. The seagoing rum runners are so heavily loaded with alcoholic cargoes that supplies for the crews are curtailed and when the ships have to wait longer than usual to dispose of their contraband the men suffer. In one case they offered a case of Scotch whisky for a case of spring water.

ONE of the favorite arguments of the people who used legislative blotting paper on the land of the free was that prohibition would reduce the amount of crime. Unfortunately, prohibition seems to have done no such thing. On July 1, 1917, there were 140,186 persons in various penal institutions throughout the country; on July 1st five years later there were 163,889.

IF all the people who have sprained, fractured or broken the prohibition law were serving time the jails would have to be built as high as the Woolworth Building.

UNCLE SAM is puffing out his chest because in the last year he has succeeded in reducing his debts by a trifle of three quarters of a billion dollars. At last reports the old gentleman owed about twenty-two and a half billions—and his creditors weren't losing a bit of sleep over his ability to pay.

KNOW your city; agree on things it needs, then go out and fight shoulder to shoulder to get them," was the slogan of 185 civic organizations that helped celebrate "Minneapolis Week" recently. There is no city or town that we know of that would be hurt by its citizens adopting that platform and the spirit behind it.

SOME of our railroads have decided that a good law will work both ways and have started entering counter suits against automobilists who take action against them for damages caused by crossing accidents—provided, of course, that the roads' lawyers think that they can prove that the motorist was at fault. The Pennsylvania recently collected $106 for damages to a crossing shanty, danger sign and locomotive that resulted from a speeding motorist crashing through the gates.

JAIL the masher" is the battle cry of New York's new Anti-Flirt Association, organized to free the streets, especially in the theatrical district, of male persons who think introductions unnecessary. Times do change! Once "the youth who winked a roving eye" was in danger of being frozen by an icy stare; now he's likely to find himself in hot water.

Mayo's Last Case

By Ralph Durand

Author of "The Cocaine Smuggler," "Set a Thief——," Etc.

Mayo comes to the parting of the ways.

FOR the first time since he had turned from a life of crime to become a revivalist preacher Mr. Albert Mayo felt inclined to take a holiday. He felt he deserved it. At first he had found his self-appointed task a hard one. Many people had jeered at him. Still more had thought him a hypocrite. Then a few earnest philanthropists had begun to take an interest in him. His influence grew. A stroke of luck made him master of money enough to buy the lease of the chapel in which he preached, and established his work on a sound foundation. On the day that the purchase was concluded the sun was shining. Street hawkers were selling spring flowers. He knew that within a few miles of his dingy London lodgings the cuckoos were calling. He decided to put some money into his pocket and take the first train to the suburbs.

It was curious that he chose to go to the suburbs instead of into the open country. The fact was that he had a fancy to revisit the scenes of some of his former crimes. He looked back on the past with mingled feelings. There was shame for the sin he had committed, but apart from that there was, deep down in his heart, a craving for the excitement of a burglar's life. There had been the elaborate preliminary campaign; the crafty disguise in which he cautiously questioned nursemaids, chauffeurs, postmen, shopkeepers and even policemen as to the habits of the wealthy inhabitants of the district he proposed to attack; the tense waiting for a favorable opportunity; the swift action when the opportunity came; the breathless work with jimmy and drill; the catch at the heart when a board creaked or a dog barked; the triumph of the successful escape. There had been much that was fascinating about the old unregenerate life and instinct led Mr. Mayo back to the scene of his reprobate exploits to fight his campaigns anew in memory.

At Victoria Station he met a former enemy and later friend. Detective Simmonds had had a hand in the capture of Mayo, the burglar, and had afterward been one of the stanchest champions of Mayo, the revivalist preacher. And the ex-burglar had rewarded the detective's kindness by helping him, in an unofficial way, to investigate the Mallard diamond case, the Carlton Theater mystery and other difficult problems.

"Hulloa, Mayo!" said the detective. "Off for a holiday?"

"I thought I'd take a run down to somewhere where the chestnuts are in flower."

"I'm going down to Carshot. There was a burglary there last night. Not an impor-

tant one, but it has a few rum problems by what I hear. Do you care to come along and see what you make of them?"

Mayo hesitated.

"I've been thinking that I've got to give up taking a hand in your cases," he said. "I sometimes have too much of a fellow feeling for the criminal."

"You won't in this case, by all accounts. Wanton damage and brutal assault on top of burglary, I hear. You'd better come."

"I don't mind then," assented Mayo. "So long as I see a bit of greenery. That's what I'm after to-day."

They found Carshot railway station to be one of those that has two bursts of frenzied activity during the day—in the morning when the residents entrain for their daily work in the city and in the evening when they return—and goes fast asleep in between. The station porter, arguing with the station master about a lost milk can was too busy to collect their tickets or tell them in which direction to find Nut Tree Hall, but an elderly clergyman, exchanging a library book at the station bookstall, volunteered to be their guide.

"You gentlemen are detectives, I suppose?" he said as they breasted the hill.

"I don't mind admitting it," answered Simmonds.

"Then I sincerely hope that you will catch the burglar. It was a most abominable crime. Mr. Philemon is an old man and I'm told the burglar half killed him. Not only that, he turned the Shetland ponies loose into the garden and ruined the tulips. They would certainly have won a prize at our local show. The whole thing was detestable—absolutely detestable!"

"It sounds as if revenge had something to do with it," commented Mayo.

"Revenge! Quite impossible. Though Mr. Philemon is not a member of my congregation he is a man for whom I, and every one who knows him, have the highest respect. He is a patron of the Workingmen's Club and gives largely to charity; why, as a typical example of his generosity I may tell you that he keeps the Cottage Hospital supplied with milk."

"Cattle breeder?" asked Simmonds.

"You don't mean to tell me that you don't know that Mr. Philemon's milk and butter take first prize almost every year at the All-England Amateur Dairy Farmer's Show? Or that he has one of the finest collections of Oriental pottery in England? I should have supposed that every one had heard of Mr. Philemon for either of these reasons. Dear me now! I must think what else I can tell you about him. He is a naturalized British subject but was born in one of the Balkan States and—let me see—I've told you about the tulips——"

"Business man?" asked Simmonds.

"Almost retired. He only goes up to the city two or three days a week. He is a financier of some kind, I believe, but he never talks about his business. He says that it is bad enough to be plagued with it when he is in London. He is at heart too much a lover of the country. A kind, generous, simple, unaffected gentleman and I most sincerely hope you will lay the burglar by the heels. Now here I must leave you. That is his house on the crest of the hill."

The two men approached the house through a miniature park. The Shetland ponies that had ruined the tulips galloped up to them, snorted, flourished their heels and scampered off again. Jersey cattle were lying under the shade of a stately oak. A pair of black swans swam in a miniature, reed-fringed lake.

"Quite a simple sort of place," commented Simmonds. "But I bet it takes a lot of money to keep up. What do you make of the business so far?"

"Some gardener or stableman that the old boy sacked trying to get a bit of his own back. Took it into his head all of a sudden to try his hand at burglary—burglars don't waste their time chasing Shetland ponies as a rule. Got caught in the act by the old boy and hit him in self-defense."

"And do you know what I think it is? It's some of the Steblitski gang's doings. This Philemon is a Greek or a Bulgarian or something. He's a financier too. He had probably been lending money or doing something for some political gang that Steblitski has his knife into. If so it wasn't money they were after or revenge either—or they wouldn't have let him off so lightly. It was confidential documents most likely. Whether they got 'em or whether they didn't old Philemon wouldn't say anything about it—not to us at any rate—but he'd naturally bring a charge of burglary in the hopes of getting his man caught. And I'll tell you why I think it's the Steblitski gang. They aways do something there doesn't

seem any sense in just to put us on a false scent; such as kidnaping a baby and leaving him at a railway station fifty miles away."

They were received at the door by a stately old lady in black silk, who after informing them that she was Mr. Philemon's housekeeper led them into the drawing-room.

"Mr. Philemon is much too shaken to see you," she said. "I have had to paint arnica all over his face and his lips are so swollen that it was as much as I could do to persuade him to swallow a little gruel. The poor dear gentleman——"

The detective interrupted a flow of irrevelant talk that seemed likely to become a flood.

"Let's hear exactly what happened, so far as you know," he asked.

"The dawn was breaking," said the housekeeper in superbly dramatic tones, "when I was awakened by the crash of breaking glass. I rapped on the walls of the cook's room which is next to mine and told her to go immediately and call Jenkins. He is the chauffeur and sleeps in a room above the garage at the back of the house. While I was putting on some clothes I heard Mr. Philemon, whose room is immediately below mine, going downstairs. I called to him over the banisters and urged him not to endanger his life but he took no notice of me. I heard the sound of a man's voice using the most shocking language—I couldn't demean myself by repeating it—and then a crash——"

"Broken glass again?"

"No. Poor Mr. Philemon falling on the floor. As soon as I heard Jenkins' step in the hall I hurried downstairs and found the poor gentleman in a pool of blood."

"Where from? His throat, chest or where?"

"His nose."

"Not a very big pool then."

"A horrible pool!" insisted the housekeeper with a shudder. "I looked out of the window and saw a man running across the park. I told Jenkins to get the motor car immediately and chase him. But the thief was so cunning as to climb a wall where the car could not follow him, so Jenkins drove down to the village instead and communicated with the police."

"Have you any idea who the man was?" asked Mayo, seeking support for his own theory.

"I only know that he was here a month ago. Mr. Philemon had been to the city and walked up from the station because it was a fine day. I was looking out for him and as soon as I heard him come into the house—he went straight into his study through the French window without passing through the hall—I went to ask if he was ready for his tea. I found him engaged in an altercation with a man. When my master saw me he told me to call Jenkins and tell him to see the man off the premises. Now it's my belief that the man had dogged Mr. Philemon all the way from the city for the gardener says he saw a man follow Mr. Philemon up the drive to the house and the butcher's boy told the cook that he had seen a man follow Mr. Philemon out of the railway station. Jenkins is positive that the man who committed the burglary last night was the same man."

"One up for my theory, Mayo," said Simmonds. "What sort of man was he? Did he look at all like a foreigner?"

"He was dressed in an ordinary dark suit such as a working man wears on Sunday. Now I come to think of it the suit was quite new and a very bad fit, so it may well have been a disguise. He had a big black beard, I remember."

"Ah! Now show us where the burglary was committed."

The housekeeper rose and led the way across the hall to the study. As soon as her back was turned Mayo made a hurried examination of a very ugly representation in earthenware of a Chinese dragon, and followed her. There was a twinkle in his eye as if he had made a discovery in which there was an element of humor.

The housekeeper had little to show. Nothing was out of place except the drawers of a writing desk which had been forced open with some blunt instrument. But she pointed to it with the air of Mark Antony pointing to the corpse of Cæsar.

"The money was taken from the bottom right-hand drawer," she said.

Simmonds looked in the drawer.

"But there is still a good deal of money here," he said.

"Mr. Philemon says that the drawer should contain a hundred and fifty pounds in one-pound notes and eight pounds in silver."

Simmonds counted the money that remained and made a calculation.

"You say there should be a hundred and fifty-eight pounds here," he said, "and there is actually fifty-seven pounds in notes and seven pounds one shilling in silver." He tapped his teeth thoughtfully with his pencil and stared at the figures. "The notes are in bundles of ten. Now I wonder why the thief left five bundles—and left them intact—and took three notes out of the sixth bundle. And I wonder why he took exactly nineteen shillings and left the rest of the silver. Why, in fact, he took exactly ninety-three pounds nineteen shillings."

"A hundred and fifty pounds is a lot of money for a gentleman to keep about him," commented Mayo.

"Mr. Philemon likes to have a good stock of money always by him," explained the housekeeper. "He is always most generous if the rector or anybody makes demands on his charity and besides there were the monthly tradesmen's bills and wages to pay to-morrow."

"Doesn't he pay by check?"

"He gave up the practice a year ago after making a rather curious mistake. After paying the bills on one occasion they were all returned by the tradesmen because he had signed the wrong name to them. Of course in the case of a gentleman so well known and respected as Mr. Philemon it did not really matter—but it might have seemed queer to any one who did not know him. The mistake upset Mr. Philemon a good deal. He said he was getting old and absent-minded and ever since he has paid in cash."

"The gentleman has so many names that he doesn't always remember which to use," commented Mayo. "That's one up for your theory, Simmonds."

"That's so," said Simmonds. "Puzzling us about the amount of money he took would be the sort of thing one of the Steblitski gang would think of, too. Now if only we could find the instrument he forced these drawers with we might find finger prints on it and then we shall be able to make a start."

With an air of great pride at her own intelligence the housekeeper took from a cupboard a hedge cutter's billhook.

"I found this lying by the side of the desk," she said, "and I put it aside for you to see."

"Well, the Steblitski crowd might use a clumsy thing like that," said Simmonds doubtfully. "They'll always use something you wouldn't expect them to use. I don't see any blood on it."

"I understand that the burglar hit Mr. Philemon with his fists," said the housekeeper. "But you wouldn't see any blood on it because I had to have it washed. It bore evidence of having been dropped in the mud of the cattle yard."

"Had it washed, did you!" said Simmonds with disgust. "That's done it! Never you wash anything that a burglar touches. Now if you will leave us to think things over a bit I'll trouble you again when I've some more questions to ask."

Mayo listened to the housekeeper's retreating footsteps till he was sure that she was out of earshot then turned eagerly to the detective.

"I'll tell you something you don't know about this Philemon," he said. "Simple, honest, kind, generous old gentleman—that's the reputation he has down here, isn't it? I know better. He's a low tyke. He's the kind that gets poor thieves to do their dirty work for them and keep out of harm's way themselves. How do I know it? Did you see that thing over the mantelpiece in the next room? It's a very rare and valuable specimen of Oriental pottery and it was stolen from the Louvre in Paris. Don't tell me he doesn't know it was stolen. A man doesn't buy a valuable thing like that without knowing something of its history."

"But how do you know it was stolen from the Louvre?"

"Because I stole it—that's why. It was the first job ever I did on the cross. Did I never tell you about it? Well, listen. When I was a young man I earned good wages and like a lot more found they weren't enough for me. I got into a money lender's clutches—Montague Howard, Chancery House, Fetter Lane. When he'd got me so tight that he could ruin me with a stroke of his pen he said that a clever young fellow like me could easy get out of debt if I had the pluck. He knew I was smart at my trade—safe-maker's mechanic—for I'd done a bit of straight work for him. And he said he'd pay all my expenses and wipe out my debt if I would go over to Paris and pinch that bit of pottery from the Louvre for him. I did it and that's what sent me wrong. How Montague Howard came to pass it on to this Philemon I don't know and it don't matter, but take my word

for it he must know that it wasn't come by honestly."

"But the money that the burglar pinched was," said Simmonds; "and that's all we've got to worry ourselves about. And the more of a crook he is the more likely that I'm right about this job being done by one of the Steblitski gang."

"There's one thing you haven't thought of. The burglar wasn't a foreigner. He went for this Philemon with his fists, although he had a billhook all handy. That's English fashion all over. A foreigner uses a knife, as a rule, but an Englishman uses his fists by instinct. Why I've even known a man drop a revolver to use his fists."

"That's so," said Simmonds thoughtfully. "Well now I'll go and talk to the men about the place and see what I can pick up. Maybe I'll have to come round to your sacked gardener theory. What'll you do?"

"I'll stay here and think things out a bit."

For a while Mayo sat lost in thought, his chin on his hands, staring out into the sunshine. The cuckoos were calling but he was too much interested in the case to remember that he had set out for a country holiday. Then as his speculations seemed to lead nowhere in particular he rose and walked about the room, looking at the books and ornaments, searching for something that would give him a new train of thought. He found a press-cutting album and more from idle curiosity than because he hoped it would help him he opened it and began to read the newspaper cuttings that had been pasted into it. There were announcements of flower and cattle shows; hints on gardening; lists of prize winners. Over these he did not linger. His curiosity was more attracted by cuttings which showed that Mr. Philemon took an interest in the sordid side of life. There were a number of advertisements warning the public that certain husbands would no longer be responsible for their wives' debts. There were several police-court reports of young men and women of good position who had been convicted of swindling. But most of the cuttings were paragraphs recording suits brought by a money lender against his victims—and the money lender in each case was none other than Mr. Montague Howard of Chancery House, Fetter Lane.

A less astute person than Albert Mayo would have guessed from these cuttings that Mr. Philemon was leading a double life. At Nut Tree Hall he was a country gentleman, proud of his tulips, his cows and his collection of Oriental pottery. At Chancery Buildings he was a cold-blooded brute whose revolting trade it was to draw swollen profits from the folly of the spendthrift and the bitter necessities of the poor.

With renewed interest he read the last cutting in the album, a paragraph taken from a newspaper almost exactly a month before:

A FARMER'S DEBTS.

MR. JUSTICE DAWBARN ON MONEY LENDERS AND THEIR CREDITORS.

Emphatic comments on the folly of reckless borrowing were made by Mr. Justice Dawbarn in an action heard at the Acton County Court yesterday, in which Montague Howard, registered money lender, of Chancery Buildings, Fetter Lane, sued Thomas Knowles, cow keeper and dairyman, of Three Wents Farm, Tolhurst, to recover £34.8.0 due on a promissory note.

Knowles did not dispute that by the letter of his bond the money was due to Howard but pleaded that he had been misled and appealed for consideration. Three years ago his wife—since dead—fell ill and needed expensive treatment. Knowles did not like the idea of sending her for free treatment to an infirmary but would have done so but for the opportune arrival of a letter from Howard offering to lend him any sum from £10 to £100 on his note of hand alone. Concerned for his wife's comfort, Knowles allowed himself to be tempted and borrowed the sum of £21. Knowles pleaded that he was too worried to carefully scrutinize the promissory note which he signed and did not realize until a year later he offered a payment of £24.3.0 that the 15% interest charged was not per year but per month. The burden of this interest was so heavy that he had never been able to discharge his liability. During the past three years he had paid in all £100. Howard claimed a balance of £34.8.0.

Mr. Justice Dawbarn said that the money must be paid. He had to administer the law not as he or Knowles or any other individual person would like to have it, but as it stood on the statute books. Howard was a registered money lender, the promissory note was a lawful document, no counter claim of fraud had been made or could be established. The plea that Knowles was too worried at the time of signing the document to realize how great was the interest he undertook to pay did not affect the case. Payment must be made within fifteen days.

Knowles—"I shall have to sell my business and break up my home."

Mr. Justice Dawbarn—"If you are such a fool as to put yourself in the hands of a money lender you must take the consequences."

"Poor fool!" said Mayo to himself. "Thought he had to pay fifteen per cent a year and finds himself stuck with fifteen per cent a month."

Then an idea occurred to him. He took pencil and paper from the writing desk and made a calculation. Fifteen per cent a month interest plus the original capital was £134.8.0. Fifteen per cent a year interest plus the original capital was £30.9.0. The difference between the two sums was £93.19.0, exactly the sum that had been stolen from the drawer.

Mayo pondered. He was on the trail of the thief now. Bit by bit he reconstructed exactly what had happened After losing his case Knowles had followed the money lender home, intending to plead for mercy. That accounted for his first visit. After his business had come under the auctioneer's hammer the wretched man, homeless and desperate, had come again to Nut Tree Hall to do some act of revenge. After doing his best to ruin the garden he had been suddenly tempted—perhaps on his first visit an accident had shown him where Philemon kept his current cash—to repay himself the amount of which he considered he had been robbed. Philemon had caught him in the act and Knowles had very naturally used his fists.

The detective's steps sounded on the veranda outside. Mayo, acting on impulse, closed the album and hid it under a pile of newspapers.

"I've got a new clew," said Simmonds. "Our man is a dairyman."

"How did you find that out?"

"The dairymaid discovered a while back that this morning's milk is tainted. She searched the cows' mangers and found that some one had put wild garlic in them. She tells me that no one who wasn't accustomed to cows would have thought of a trick like that."

"I dare say you're right," said Mayo languidly. "Well, Simmonds, I'm going to leave you to run this show on your own. I'm on a holiday and I'm not going to spoil it working for a fence, especially the fence that first made me turn cracksman."

Simmonds did not find the album that Mayo had hidden and it was another clew altogether that led him, two days later at nine in the morning, to Three Wents Farm. He found it just such a country farm as strikes its roots deep into the heart of an English yeoman. In front of a low, thatched, heavily timbered house was a tiny garden gay with stocks, wall flowers and sweet Williams. At one side was a vegetable garden sweet with the scent of bean flowers. In the orchard gnarled old apple trees were beginning to show their fruit. But an out-of-date announcement of an auctioneer's sale was plastered on the gatepost and the walls of the barn, and in the empty farmyard, leaning dejectedly against an empty pigsty, was a black-bearded man in a new suit of cheap, badly fitting clothes, whom Simmonds at once guessed to be Knowles himself.

At sight of Simmonds the man dodged behind a haystack. The detective crossed the yard at a brisk pace, passed beyond the farm buidings and saw him crossing the orchard. He called but the man without looking back climbed over a stile and disappeared behind a hedge. When Simmonds reached the stile the man was halfway across a pasture, wading recklessly through hay that was almost ripe for mowing. Simmonds broke into a run. The man quickened his pace and dodged into a copse. When the detective reached the copse he saw the man a clear hundred yards ahead of him, going at a dogged trot across a field of young beets toward the road that led to Tolhurst. By the time that Simmonds had reached the road his man had increased his lead to two hundred yards. Simmonds buttoned his jacket, squared his elbows and gave chase in earnest, reaching the village just in time to see his quarry dodge into the stable yard of the George Inn. A moment later a shabby taxicab drove out of the yard and headed southward along the Brighton road—and on the seat beside the driver sat the man he was chasing.

The George had no other taxicabs for hire and the only taxicab possessed by the Rose and Crown, the rival inn, was at that moment having a tire mended. Fully a quarter of an hour was lost before Simmonds, seated beside its driver, took up the chase again, but the driver was confident that he could catch the George car within a dozen miles. He could pick out its tracks, he said, among a hundred. It was a poor car driven by a bad driver, and as for himself, having a police officer for passenger, he could exceed the speed limit with impunity.

All through the timber of the Ashdown Forest the road stretched empty in front of them but at the foot of Handcross Hill they caught sight of the George car a mile ahead of them laboring heavily on its lowest gear

up the last steep gradient. At Handcross the crossroads puzzled them. Many garrulous inhabitants of the village volunteered information as to the direction which the car in front of them had taken but as opinion was equally divided between three possible directions the information was of less value than it might have been. The Rose and Crown driver proved less clever at distinguishing the George car's tracks than he had claimed to be and it was with no strong conviction of being on the right track that they took the westward road. At Lower Beeding they overtook a Tolhurst farmer driving sheep to Horsham market and learned from him that the George car had passed less than five minutes before. At West Grinstead a policeman told them that it had turned south toward Worthing. Crossing the Adur they caught sight of it again and all across the Weald they chased it, sometimes catching sight of it where the road ran among crops, again losing it in the shade of oaks that had harbored outlaws five hundred years ago.

"We'll catch 'em the other side of Washington," said Simmonds' driver. "The George car will lie down and die if it's asked to climb the Downs."

And at the foot of the Downs they overtook it. It was standing by the side of the road; its driver by its side, filling his pipe as calmly as if there had been no race at all.

"I'm a police officer," shouted Simmonds as the Rose and Crown cab slid to a standstill. "Where's your passenger?"

The George driver pointed to the scarp of the Downs that towered above their heads. Already halfway toward the crest and working farther from the road with each yard he climbed was the man that Simmonds had chased across half a county. He was in full view, for on that naked hillside no bush grows large enough to hide a rabbit. The detective threw his coat, waistcoat, collar and tie into the Rose and Crown car, tied his braces round his waist to give better play to his shoulders, stuffed his warrant into his hip pocket and followed.

When, half spent and breathless, he reached the top of the Downs the man he was chasing was out of sight. To east, south and west the table-land stretched for miles as level as the sea, and except for one solitary ring of aged oaks, as empty. Knowing that his man must have taken cover in the timber Simmonds slowed down to a walk. For all he knew a fight was in store for him and he might need all his breath and all his strength.

From the shelter of the trees he flushed his quarry as a beater flushes a partridge. With a bare twenty yards' start the man broke cover and headed southward across the empty table-land. For the first mile he gained ground. Then he slackened speed. Again he made a desperate spurt. At last he reeled and flung himself face downward on the short turf.

Simmonds slowed up and looked about him. He began to regret that he had brought no weapon.

But the hunted man showed no wish to fight. As the detective approached him he sat up, threw off his hat, pulled off his beard, and showed, grimed with dust and sweat, the face of Albert Mayo.

"You!" gasped Simmonds.

"Yes, me. I couldn't let you take that poor chap. He's had all the trouble that's good for him without going to quod on top of it. I've been hanging about his farm for the last two days ready to lead you off on a false scent as soon as you turned up."

"The deuce you have! And a nice row you'll get me into," said the detective sulkily, dropping on to the turf by Mayo's side. "Where has he gone to—anyway?"

"Out of the country. I'll not tell you where but his ship sails at noon to-day. That's why I've decoyed you away from telegraph offices."

"That's no use. You forget there's such a thing as wireless. We can nab him wherever he is."

"Do you really want to nab him? The man has had trouble enough to drive him crazy. Wife dead! Business ruined! Home sold up! When the home was sold he had nothing to do but sit and brood over his troubles. Think of it! He borrowed twenty-one pounds and that blood-sucking octopus of a money lender got a hundred out of him and ruined him to get more. Isn't it natural that he should try and get even with the old skinflint? Mind you, I don't say that he showed a proper, forgiving, Christian spirit when he wrecked Philemon's garden and put garlic in the cows' food. But I do say that the chances are that you and me would have done the same. At first it seems he only meant to spoil Philemon's chance of taking a prize

for his milk and butter at the dairy show. Then he let the ponies into the flower garden for a bit of extra devilment. Then he was tempted to get at the old man's money and get back what he considered was his by rights. He took no more than that, mark you—only just so much as he considered he had been robbed of. You've got to make allowances for a man that's half crazed with worry."

"Have I! I've got to do my duty, that's all I know. I've got no instructions about making allowances. And my duty is to get back to town and get the wireless busy."

"Is it worth it? He didn't take the money at the last. I persuaded him to give it back to me to give to you as a condition of my helping him get clear of the country." Mayo took a roll of notes and tossed them into the detective's lap. "So all you've got against him now is the matter of the doped cattle food, and the broken tulips, a smashed window and the thrashing that old Philemon got. Is it worth while to get the police busy, and take out extradition warrants just for the sake of jugging a poor fellow that's pretty well down and out already?"

"I shall get an awful wigging for this," said Simmonds ruefully, rising to his feet and pocketing the notes. "I'll be blamed for letting you meddle in the business. I bet you I get orders not to let you have any hand in any more cases of mine."

"Ah, well!" answered Mayo. "It had to come to that sooner or later. You see all you care about is nabbing your man—and quite right, too—it's your duty. But I'm an old lag and as like as not I want to get him off. Do we part friends, Simmonds?"

The detective hesitated—and grasped the offered hand. Then one went north and one went south—each to his own duty.

And on the empty Downs the larks were singing and the cuckoos calling.

Another series of stories about Mayo will appear shortly.

TO SAVE NELSON'S FLAGSHIP

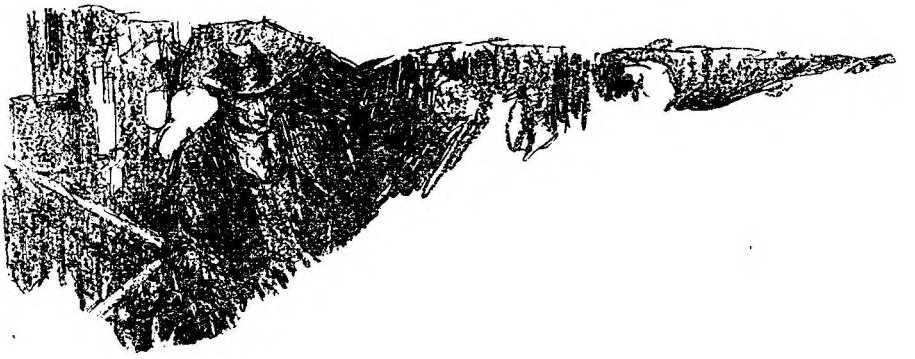
EFFORTS are being made in England to raise a fund of a quarter of a million dollars to restore to good condition the famous warship *Victory* now rotting in Portsmouth harbor. It is planned to make the old ship look as she did that October day in 1805 when flying Nelson's famous signal "England expects every man to do his duty" the *Victory* led the weather line of the British fleet into the Battle of Trafalgar Bay which cost Nelson his life and won him his glory.

The old ship was launched at Chatham in 1765 after being six years under construction. She was a ship of the line of about two thousand tons and carried one hundred and four guns. For those times her cost was tremendous—almost a half million dollars.

Even before Nelson made her famous the *Victory* had seen hard fighting and had been almost reconstructed. She was Kempenfelt's flagship in the battle against De Guichen in 1718 and Jervis' flagship in the Battle of St. Vincent.

A KNIGHT OF THE RAIL

BACK in 1894 a young draftsman went to work for the Pennsylvania Railroad. His name was Henry Worth Thornton. Twenty years later, at the age of forty-three, Henry Worth Thornton was general superintendent of the Long Island Railroad. Nothing remarkable about that—just a true business story of the rise to high station in the railroad industry of an efficient worker. But in 1914 unusual things began to happen to Thornton. In April of that year he was offered a job as general manager of the Great Eastern Railway in England. He took it. Within a half year things began to happen to the world. Thornton knew railroading and railroaded his best for his adopted country. He came out of the war Major General Sir Henry Worth Thornton, K. B. E. Now Sir Henry has come back to America as managing head of the Canadian National Railways at a salary of $50,000 a year.



The Ten-thousand-dollar Kite

By Calvin Johnston

Author of "Mrs. Kadiak's Fortune," "Whistle: The Flagman's Dog," Etc.

Whether it is railroading that he is writing about or the wiles of those who make their livings by devious ways, Calvin Johnston is "different." His stories have a flavor all their own. "The Ten-thousand-dollar Kite" is the first of a series of tales about a new sort of crook, and we are sure that after you have read it you will make a mental note not to miss any of the later adventures of the redoubtable Rook.

"CRIMES are born, not made," explained Rook with rather less than his usual urbanity, "by which I mean that the conditions under which true crime can be promoted must be entirely of a providential order."

"I'll frame up a job and show you different," boasted Jackson, his partner. The latter was a limp sallow youth with seamed forehead and eyes of evil old age.

"Go to it," said Rook, examining his cigar thoughtfully; since their successful coup in which a bank had been held up, a Liberty Bond broker double crossed and a welshing third partner triple crossed Jackson had developed a cocksureness which made him a bad risk as a comrade while police and surety-company agents were beating the cover.

Rook kept his wide gray eyes blandly and inoffensively on his partner as he pursued his meditation. "Jackson, being a rash and conscienceless man is sure fire in dangerous emergencies," he thought. "But during a period like this he is more apt to draw fire." Rook decided to isolate his partner for the present. "Go to it," he said, "frame up an opportunity, then successfully promote your crime. It is the only way to convert me."

The two were seated in Rook's lodgings on the respectable side of a street which ran as a boundary to the shabby neighborhood fringing the business district. The hour was midnight and Rook, as was his invariable custom, rose on the first stroke of a distant clock to prepare for bed.

The limp and sallow Jackson a moment followed enviously the movements of his companion, a man in his mid-thirties and distinguished for a physical make-up as symmetrical and poised as his intellectual. Rook wound his watch deliberately and, under the light before the half-raised shade, tested the mechanism and examined the loads of a revolver which he had taken from his trunk.

"You want to wait till some opportunity comes along already organized?" reproved Jackson. "We might wait a lifetime before pulling off a job."

"That is not too long to wait before being caught," returned Rook composedly.

"Caught!" The vainglorious young man chuckled sinisterly. "You haven't learned yet how hard I am to stop. Now I know

an old bird—clerk in a pawnshop twenty years. Sore on his boss and ready to plant the diamonds in easy reach and fake a defense in a holdup. All he wants from me is some sort of guarantee of a one-third split——"

"Does he give you any guarantee that he will fake the defense?" asked Rook. He was indeed desirous that his rash partner should find work in other company during these days of pursuit for the bond robbery. But he was too conscientious a man to see Jackson advancing into unknown dangers without a warning.

"For that matter," he resumed, "the pawnbroker's clerk cannot guarantee that he will shoot over or past your head instead of through it while staging his defense. He has been twenty years with one employer and only one minute with you. No matter what he plots to do, nor how honest his intention to fake his defense, honor dies hard. There is a furious last-moment struggle between a man's two natures. I felt it myself at our bank holdup and came near shooting you. You have here attempted to create or force an opportunity for a robbery by tempting an honest man. Beware! The conditions under which true crime can be promoted are providential."

"What's a true crime?" asked Jackson irrelevantly.

The answer was stayed as a footfall passed the door and down the hall. Though light and regular the footfall lingered like that of a very tired person.

"Miss Lane will not be able to keep these hours much longer," observed Rook, gazing at his companion calmly as if inviting comment.

Jackson's eyes narrowed. "Are you falling for that skirt? I want it straight," he demanded. This was a tone which he had never before taken but Rook consistently made his own conduct proof of his moral maxims. He would not, for all a slight frown at Jackson's coarseness, resent a question which bore directly on the life of the partnership.

"I recognize the right of a partner to scrutinize my personal affairs," he admitted frankly, "particularly as they relate to a lady of mystery, such affairs being in their nature antagonistic to the cautious but fearless policy to be maintained in a firm of this sort. In fact, I have lately been tempted to let the firm go to the devil and offer myself to Miss Lane on her own terms. But I haven't done so and may be turned down if I do."

Thus the matter stood and though Jackson snarled noiselessly he asked no further questions but only, "What's her business?"

"Insurance."

The well-dressed handsome man who for three weeks had been bowing genteelly to Miss Lane when they passed in the hall of their rooming house or met at the door had not failed to impress her favorably. They dismounted from the same street car, ate at the same restaurant on the avenue corner and only a ridiculous reserve could have kept silence and space between them. Miss Lane had been glad of somebody, especially a stranger, to talk to. Her father had died after a year's sickness, leaving her alone and broke, but with the valuable admonition that she never engage in the insurance brokerage business, which he had pursued with an unsuccess which increased in ratio to his experience. She was far from being convinced and had taken his desk in the office of the insurance company where brokers come and go almost without notice. Lane had left her some renewals and she had written a little on her own solicitation, but the manager had told her: "The first year you may make your bread, the second year have butter spread on it, the third year, a little jam." While waiting the butter and jam period Bertha Lane was subsisting as best she could on the respectable side of this obscure street.

"She is an insurance broker," resumed Rook, "and is plainly hard up. I'd like to throw some business her way." Since the conversation turned on Miss Lane he had refrained from further negligee with innate delicacy. He stood in his shirt sleeves, firmly on his heels, a model of grace and urbanity.

Jackson snarled quietly and passed the subject. "No police news?" he asked, rising and yawning; "or anything?"

Rook had again begun removing collar and tie. "No, to your first question. But I witnessed an incident out of the ordinary this afternoon at the stockbroker's where I sometimes watch the board. Allerton, an old customer and supposedly rich, sat there for hours with a haggard countenance. Then at a sudden movement in a steel stock he roused, flushed, gritted his teeth—I had been watching him—and was writing in his check book on his knee.

"Suddenly he glanced up and met the steady frowning look of one of the brokerage firm. And, after an instant's defiance, he flushed deeply."

"What of it?"

"His blush was one of guilt. He tore up the check. He didn't have money in the bank to cover and the broker knew it. I'm thinking the affair over in connection with some astonishing statistics I read the other day."

"Figuring out a providential opportunity?" sneered Jackson, at the door.

"If it exists there, I shall discover it," replied Rook confidently. His partner grinned sarcastically.

"Some insurance business for Miss Lane?"

Jackson went on downstairs and across the street to his room in a dingy flat.

"I forgot to get Rook's definition of a perfect crime, after all," he was reflecting and paused in the act of switching on the light. The street door had opened and closed after him and on the stair was heard the tread of heavy feet placed flatly and positively as if the owner thus announced his progress to be irresistible.

"Bull," breathed Jackson, drawing his too-ready revolver. But there was only one, and looming suddenly at the head of the stair, he demanded:

"What you hidin' for?"

"I'm standing in my own door," replied Jackson.

"Well, turn on your light."

Jackson did so, retreating warily with his hand on the weapon in his coat pocket. The policeman in plain clothes, followed him grumbling and closed the door.

"You visit that bird across the street; I see you through the window. What does he mean by counting his roll under the spotlight before going to bed every night?"

"Pastiming," replied Jackson. "Gives him pleasant dreams." Privately he regarded this habit of his partner's as that of a fool.

"Tell him to quit it; pull down the shade. He's getting all this side of the street worked up. He'll have a crooks' mass meeting there some night."

"He has a revolver too," said Jackson brightly.

"Well, well," said the bull; "and he can shoot in his sleep too! That bird is so easy I'll be tempted into robbing him myself." He leered with heavy humor and lumbered out.

Jackson snarled disgustedly; no matter what Rook did he scored. So far was he from being suspected as a bank robber and fugitive that the police went around passing him warnings to protect his money. "I believe he's a boob for luck," Jackson said; "but I don't need any luck; or any providential opportunity. I can frame a job and get away with it. Rook likes to highbrow me, I think. To-morrow I'll show him up."

Before going to bed he glanced under the shade across at Rook's window, as indeed all that side of the street was doing. For Rook, contrary to custom, was pacing measuredly in his shirt sleeves, as Jackson had left him, instead of going to bed. "I wonder what brain freak is keeping him up," said Jackson, for as brain freaks he designated Rook's profound calculations, which filled him with rage.

Yet Jackson had given the lead for the calculations which now absorbed his partner. "Insurance," Rook was repeating at the very moment. "Insurance—the premiums to be paid Miss Lane. It is perhaps the highest development of crime to commit it so that the moral will appear to the victims and induce them to insure against future losses; and that the insurance premiums shall come to the criminal—in this case diverted to Miss Lane. Surely Providence will not refuse opportunity for a perfect crime, in this world so saddened with imperfections."

Next morning Rook, who never practiced dissimulation, was frankly awaiting Miss Lane at the corner restaurant. She was a slender dusky-haired girl of good figure and would have been pretty but for the tired droop to her mouth and the tired hazel eyes, which however looked a grouchy, indifferent world levelly in the face. Rook, being neither grouchy nor indifferent, she gazed at him with an unfailing surprise which he found very pathetic. And at these times she smiled, her eyes brightened and an unconscious flush came into her cheeks.

"This is a busy day with me and ours must be a business meeting," Rook said briskly. "I am talking insurance. Are you aware, my dear agent, that the amount of money stolen last year by means of forged and raised checks amounted to over fifty million dollars? I confess that I was shocked when I heard of it!"

So was Miss Lane, it was evident; and even more, to learn that by far the greater portion of this vast sum had been obtained on raised checks, whose loss falls not on the bank who pays them but almost invariably on the depositor whose name appears under the falsified amount. She had supposed that the various protective devices in check making, perforations, patent inks and papers, corrugation and engraving made alteration impossible.

Rook explained briefly the counters employed by check falsifiers. "So you will readily see," he concluded, "that insurance is the only security offered bank depositors against these ingenious criminals. Have you ever gone into this form of underwriting?"

She shook her head. "I don't believe it would be worth while for me to look it up," she said timidly. "I am not acquainted with people whose bank balances would interest check raisers."

"You must extend your acquaintance. And to begin with I know two men, crafty, cautious men of wealth who would not sleep at night without check insurance once they learned these wolves prowl in such numbers. So look up your policies covering this form of loss and to-morrow I will introduce you to them."

Obtaining her promise, he said no more of the matter and accompanied her downtown on the car, speaking animatedly of various things, with an unconscious flush of his own. Bertha remembered this all day and his promised effort to secure her the two policies when, so to speak, money was at a premium. Her astonishment at his actions increased and while looking into the matter of check insurance her lips instead of drooping, trembled and were bitten into a straight line again and again. Such was only one of the phenomena of a perfect crime as engineered by Rook, given of course his providential opportunity to put it over.

Rook began testing the opportunity immediately upon his arrival at the stockbroker's office, where he had been playing a stiff and fairly successful game on the proceeds of the stolen Liberty Bonds. His test consisted on the one hand in informing the stockbroker that he was ready to put ten thousand into N. A. Steel at the psychological moment. The broker nodded as Rook displayed his check drawn to that amount and a moment later went to the telephone. He was, as Rook knew, calling the bank which would inform him that the check was good.

Allerton, the late wealthy, conservative trader whom Rook believed to have been hard hit in N. A. Steel, was there. As on the day before he sat isolated, his red eyes on the hypnotic board, his body tense and hands gripped between his knees.

Seating himself by the unfortunate speculator, he said frankly: "I observed the byplay between you and Franklin, the broker, yesterday, when you tore up a check you had made out to him."

Allerton did not move and only a tightening of the muscles of the jaw indicated that the remark had reached him.

"It has not yet been rumored that you are bankrupt," said Rook.

"It is not known at all. I am not bankrupt," grated Allerton. "unless the decline of another point in N. A. wipes out my margin."

"The market sags," replied Rook. "Still I will cash your check for a thousand and take the chance of it saving you." As he spoke the check book appeared by magic in Allerton's hand. Shakily he wrote "One thousand," and signed; Rook made out his own check and traded for the other one; in a moment Rook's check was up on the steel margin, the broker of course asking no question about it.

Rook had himself been a New York stockbroker until six months before, when an irresistible temptation to play had seized him, as it often does those who handle stakes for others. He had been thoroughly shaken down in a market convulsion but sold out his business for enough to pay his losses and come out to this Midwestern city to start over again.

He had met Jackson and engaged in the bond robbery casually but had no wish to extend his acquaintance to the underworld, which contaminates socially. So now that the providential opportunity was proven and he held in his hand Allerton's check, the vehicle of the crime, he did not know personally a single forger or "scratcher" to make the alterations.

Rook had discounted that necessity in this manner. What expert scratcher by putting something into the check could aid him so well as Allerton by not putting in enough? Allerton, grasping at this first and last aid in his distress, had not taken the time to use Franklin's perforating machine,

as he always had done when making checks in the broker's office. His haste and agitation could be foreseen; in fact the word "One" was a deformity, the capital "O" straggled and was not closed at the top; the small "n" and "e" were mere heavy vertical scratches. The ink was the ordinary blue-black of the fountain pen.

Rook went out and purchased a bottle of such ink and a chemical to remove ink from paper. The last was hardly needed. There was only a fraction of the downward stroke of the "O" to remove, a cross flourish to be made at the top, a tiny loop to make an "e" of the first stroke of the "n" and he had the word "Ten." It was easy to insert a cipher among the sprawling numerals. Five minutes in a hotel writing room, and he had a ten-thousand-dollar check.

"A check-raising gang," he ruminated, now on the way to his own bank, "consists of a backer, a scratcher, a middleman who selects the opportunity, and a putter-out who actually passes the falsified check. In this case Allerton himself is the backer, for he gave me a check he knew to be worthless; he made me the opportunity, therefore he is the middleman. As for the scratching, he contributed by his carelessness to that. Anyway, not a court in the land would convict me for altering a piece of paper already worthless." Rook was pleased; unlike the depraved Jackson who delighted in crime for its own sake, Rook delighted in making his profession as blameless as possible.

Arriving at his bank he deposited the Allerton check which brought his balance up to twenty-two thousand dollars. Then he drew out eleven thousand. This was the bank of Franklin, the broker; in fact Rook had placed his deposit there on the latter's recommendation; and he knew that if he drew out his money, leaving only a thousand to his credit, so soon after Franklin's inquiry into his account, the cashier would promptly notify the broker. But now he had all but a thousand of his money in his pocket and the deposit of the raised check gave him a balance of eleven thousand. Allerton was well known and the validity of his check would not be questioned. The thousand cash he left on deposit was to protect the check he had given Allerton.

Now our financier returned to the stock-broker's where he walked about the customer's room watching the board and exchanging comments with the traders. N. A. Steel had sagged another fraction and Allerton lurked deep in his corner sagging and breaking with it, fiber and bone. Rook's own judgment for the past three days had favored N. A. as the best buy in the market. Now he beckoned to the unlucky trader whom a point's decline would wipe out and the latter shuffled after him into the broker's office. There he assented immediately to Rook's taking over a half interest in his account in N. A.; the transfer was made and Franklin accepted Rook's ten-thousand-dollar check for margining without question.

They all stood watching the tape; N. A. sank; Allerton would have been wiped out.

"Whether N. A. is struggling into new life or merely dying hard," smiled Rook, "it is a painful process to watch. All we are interested in is the result." He ordered Franklin to close when seventy-five was bid for N. A. and took himself off to lunch.

Half an hour before the market closed he returned to find that N. A. had remained stationary; but now during the last half hour, as if this fact had encouraged a lot of buyers waiting to get in, N. A. advanced to seventy-five under a rush of orders. Rook closed out ahead twenty thousand dollars, half of which belonged to Allerton.

This gave the latter a grubstake, for of course he would buy in again on the morrow; he heartily blessed Rook, who shook hands laughingly.

"By the way," he said, "I have a little business suggestion to make in the morning; one which demands the serious consideration of yourself and Franklin."

"Count us in; you're a man whose hunches ought to be taken seriously," said Franklin.

Rook chose to walk home that evening, pondering pleasantly a meeting with the tired, drooping little neighbor whose eyes would brighten charmingly with the encouragement his two policies would give her. Hard up as she was, Miss Lane could get by several weeks on the premiums which the friends of Mr. Rook would pay her.

But that evening Miss Lane had gone to the industrial quarter to try to collect a small payment from a man who was out of a job; she did not come to the corner restaurant for dinner and when she passed down the hall of the rooming house her very footfalls were eloquent to Rook of disappointment.

For once he muttered a curse and Jackson, who was there, frowned suspiciously. The latter had framed up the diamond robbery with the pawnbroker's clerk and it was to be pulled off the next afternoon. He was so abominably vainglorious that Rook could hardly endure him, much less repeat his warning.

When ten o'clock struck and Rook approached his table under the light and laid down his watch and fold of bills Jackson was reminded of the policeman's visit the night before. He delivered the latter's message and added; "I'll tip you it's a good time to quit making that flash with the window shade up, when the police begin asking who you are."

"What business have the police to meddle with it?" grated Rook, startling his companion with his quick and unprecedented fury. "Isn't a citizen free to count his money in his own room and show by his revolver that he is ready to defend it against thieves? I don't purpose being annoyed by any such officiousness."

Jackson, for all his swaggering controversies with Rook, had always the uneasy conviction that the latter was nearer right than himself. His partner had some queer notions, did unexpected things, which at a show-down were proven rational enough. And though this outburst of temper seemed absurd on the face of it, Jackson was impressed and demanded curiously:

"How do you figure that the police haven't any business with you—and you on the run for that bond holdup?"

The flush receded from Rook's face and he explained patiently:

"That is one thing—and if they identify me or suspect me as a robber it follows they are bound to kill or take me. Such is the nature and duty of policemen. But I am not suspected. As far as the police know I am a quiet, honest citizen. Under that relationship I am immune from arrest or espionage." Again his face darkened with a rush of blood. "If you see the man again, warn him not to annoy me by his gossip," he said angrily.

"You have a nerve of reënforced concrete," admitted Jackson; he puzzled over Rook's meaning while the latter coolly disgorged his money and valuables on the table and took his revolver from his trunk. "Say, Rook," he exclaimed brightly, "you don't really believe you're going straight the time you're not actually on a job!" This seemed an enormous hypocrisy to Jackson who never wanted to be anything but crooked.

"Don't you know, ignorant as you are," demanded Rook sternly, "that man has two natures? First one and then the other dominates every man. But nearly all men make the mistake of playing host to them both simultaneously; in other words to entertain bad and good at the same time. I have adopted the only rational system. I feed up my evil nature with a crime; and then gratify my better nature by charity or acts of good nature. Thus the two are never in conflict and I keep a tranquil mind. By this system I maintain a very good average morality also and this is the most important feature of all. If a man fails to maintain a certain standard he is soon depraved and not fit to live in the world."

Jackson rubbed his ear: "There's sure something in all you say, Rook," he admitted, "but damned if I can quite get it."

"You will understand, however," said Rook, "that I don't purpose having my better self persecuted by the law when my other or worse self is at liberty with a price on his head."

"Sure!" said Jackson, who sat staring a while at his companion and went home shaking his head.

The following morning Rook and Miss Lane met at the restaurant and during breakfast he put her through a brisk examination on check insurance. Her answers told him much more than he had known and after making an appointment with her at the stockbroker's office for eleven o'clock he hurried forward to inform Franklin and Allerton of the financial risk they were running, which could be eliminated at a relatively small expense.

He arrived in time to make the settlement of their N. A. transaction before the market opened; Allerton immediately bought in, and Rook, after cashing his check at the bank in the exchange, came together with them again in Franklin's office.

"Now, gentlemen," he smiled, "we have come to that suggestion which I believe to be invaluable to you both." He gave them the statistics on check raising and forging which had so shocked himself and Miss Lane, but these two listened with impatience.

"I've been canvassed for check insurance and I don't doubt Allerton has, too," said Franklin. "I didn't fall for it. What's the need? I use check protection." The man wished to rise and hurry about his business, but there was at times in Rook's manner a spell hard to resist. A plausibility, firmness, and a threat, too, very subtly conveyed.

"But, Franklin and Allerton, you are perfectly aware that the perforations in a check can and are filled up by raisers who understand the art of paper making; then the patch is given the tint of the check surface with water color; corrugations stamped on the check are ironed flat; all inks are subject to erasure by acid. You must admit all that; it is a matter of a thousand records."

The others readily admitted all he stated to be true but laughingly added that a business man had to take some chances. To insure life and property against all the different sorts of crookedness would require twenty policies.

"I am speaking of one form of crookedness," reminded Rook, "of which you have both been victims. Check raising. Let me first take up the case of Allerton who gave me a check only yesterday."

The others settled back in their chairs with a revived interest in the conversation, Allerton exclaiming huskily: "Yes; for one thousand dollars."

"It was for ten thousand when I deposited it," said Rook gravely, "and I drew on it to that amount in favor of Franklin when I went into N. A."

"But you already had a balance of over ten thousand there yesterday," said Franklin. "I phoned."

"I withdrew that and deposited Allerton's check to cover the one I gave you."

The latter drew rigidly to his feet; "Almighty! My check in, raised to ten thousand. Franklin, call the police."

Rook shrugged his shoulders and the hard-featured stockbroker, accustomed to dealing with the unusual in human nature and interested only in getting the money on Rook's check, said shortly, "Sit tight, sit tight, Allerton."

Rook nodded approvingly, "The police would not be interested; there was no crime. Allerton gave me the check knowing it would not be protected. I simply changed the figures on a worthless piece of paper."

"It is a legal point but I believe he has you there, Allerton," said Franklin, biting a cigar. "Now Rook, where do I get off? Will the check you gave me be protected?"

"It will, of course, if Allerton's check which I deposited to cover it is good." As the others glared, Rook resumed, reverting to the topic of the insurance which in the light of their present predicament he urged upon them warningly.

Franklin had been studying this curious criminal absorbedly; at the close of Rook's argument he nodded brusquely. "Our friend here has pointed his moral in a way that compels converts," he told Allerton. "If anybody ever needed check insurance, you do, Allerton."

"And yourself?" asked Rook blandly.

"Write the policy," replied Franklin hurriedly with a manner peculiarly soothing for one of his piratical mien and practices.

Rook explained that an agent with a presentiment of their needs was waiting in the customers' room. Stepping to the door he beckoned in Miss Lane who, having come fully prepared, wrote the policies and collected a premium of several hundred dollars. Rook bowed her to the door then returned to his companions and paid nine thousand from his pocket to Allerton, leaving himself neither gainer nor loser by the transaction. As Allerton started for his bank on the run to deposit enough money to protect the raised check Franklin spoke up for the first time in many minutes.

"What's a raised check among friends?" Though endeavoring earnestly to humor Rook he could not help adding: "It was a rattlesnake finish to bite us and then warn and insure us against it."

Rook exclaimed rather impatiently: "What could have been more perfect?"

"Nothing, Mr. Rook, nothing," soothed the broker. "It was some crime!" he added enthusiastically.

They stood chatting and watching the tape and presently Rook bought in to the extent of five thousand. Of course the use of checks between them would not have been in good taste after what had transpired and Rook consummated the deal with cash. Even this the broker scrutinized closely. "I can buck genius," he told himself, "but not a bug."

The meeting between Miss Lane and Rook that evening was marked by one of the most pleasing phenomena in human na-

ture—that of lonely people who have found a partner, and, conversing principally by smiles and glances, devote themselves to speculating on the wonders each believes the other to possess in himself.

The dinner over they loitered oblivious to the movement and clatter of dishes in the restaurant and when they must leave Miss Lane declared it was her party by way of celebrating her good luck and insisted on paying the check.

Rook, enjoying her blush at her own boldness, permitted this and they sauntered homeward in a comradeship which promised never to be broken.

It was now about eight o'clock on an October evening, cloudy and dark. Into the dingy hall of their rooming house the couple entered and mounted the stair with its threadbare carpet. Rook accompanied his friend down the dim-lit upper hall to her door; their hands touched, clasped. "Good night, comrade," she whispered.

Rook had turned away smiling and was unlocking his own door when Miss Lane reappeared in the hall. "Come—quick," she implored in a frightened whisper. Rook passed her and preceded her into the room with a noiseless rush.

On the couch sat Jackson, half sprawling; he was coatless, and his shirt torn from his right shoulder revealed a dark spot on his chest and a streak of blood. He motioned savagely to the others to close the door.

The pawnbroker's clerk had not faked his defense.

Rook stood over the wounded man, his hands clenching. "Get up; get out of there," but the other, embodiment of ferocity, snarled defiance. He had managed to get away after the shooting, but having given the pawnbroker his address was afraid to go home. And as a cop on the beat knew that he visited Rook he could not risk the latter's room as a refuge. Of course he had had no difficulty in picking the lock of Miss Lane's door. All this he stated in a few broken sentences.

"If your dame's any good she'll come across—get me a doctor," he commanded.

"I'll throw you out in the road—you crook."

Jackson pushed himself up on his elbow to study his partner fearlessly, contemptuously. His words and manner actually lent the little monster a certain dignity. "You'd throw me out, would you?" he said between his teeth; "and when the cops pick me up I could tell just who did it—Rook, my partner, a wanted bank robber! But I wouldn't tell 'em. Because I never yet double crossed anybody; I'm more of a man half dead and thrown into the gutter, than you ever were. Now go ahead! You're safe." He looked the other up and down in ghastly triumph.

Miss Lane, a moment paralyzed by the denunciation, said tremblingly: "Oh, Mr. Rook, it isn't true; it isn't true!" She clung to his arm and gazing into the appealing face he hesitated; looked from her to Jackson with growing perplexity.

"There is one Rook who is a robber," he said; "and one who is an honest man."

"I knew it! This wounded man is mistaken; he is lying." She was willing to believe anything Rook told her, whatever the accusation against him.

"Wait," he admonished. "Understand I am both one and the other. But it had not occurred to me that I was liable to be penalized for what I obtained honestly in order to keep faith with my criminal self." He explained his philosophy of man's dual personality briefly while Jackson gritted his teeth. "Surely you understand, Miss Lane," urged Rook, "and will not take away the regard I have honestly won from you."

She had recoiled from him. "But you are a criminal! You don't know what you are asking."

"And you can make no distinction between the Rook of criminal practices and the Rook of the better nature?" he continued anxiously.

"You are mad," she exclaimed, but he ignored the answer and spoke again in quiet despair.

"Jackson, you have cost me more than you know; but you ask only what is due. You are my partner in crime and when injured in the pursuit of our profession, I must take care of you. Had you been wounded while behaving honorably you could look after yourself. If it will, however, console you in your pain, I assure you that I took ten thousand dollars from the market on a raised check yesterday; half of it, or five thousand, is to your credit in my pocket."

With that air of grave commiseration which distinguished Rook, as if he felt all humanity to be in need of sympathy, he bowed to Miss Lane and went out to call a

doctor. After the wound was dressed, he knew where to take Jackson for cover, and would himself give up his room and go along to look after him.

For a moment the young woman stared after Rook, then at the wounded man who had the hardihood to smoke a cigarette and grin at her. She shuddered.

Jackson, grinding down on his pain, indulged his own philosophy: "Rook sure located another providential opportunity that he's always waiting for. Ten thousand in his pocket! Miss," he warned Bertha Lane earnestly, "don't you ever try to fake up an opportunity. Look at me! But Rook, he waits for Providence and he don't get shot up. Of course, he's crazy as a coot—but as a crook he's an all-time winner."

"Crazy, did you say?"

"You understand, with all that two personality talk. He must have gone off when he bankrupted in New York. But what of it? He can put over a better job——"

To the astonishment of the speaker Miss Lane burst out sobbing and dried her tears and laughed joyously all in a moment. "Bless him, of course he's crazy or he wouldn't care for me," she declared. "Oh, I'm so glad it's that's the matter with him."

Jackson's cigarette dropped from his lips. "Glad he's crazy!"

Rook came back in. "Jackson, there's a dope doctor two doors up across the street. He says he will treat and hide you if I can get you over. Now get up; do your best; lean on me. It's dark and the street is empty." He glanced fleetingly at the girl, held out his hand and withdrew it all with the manner of a man who is crushed with troubles which he cannot cope with or understand. "Good-by; I am sorry," he said.

But the girl laid a firm hand on his shoulder and looked deep into the gray eyes usually so clear, now clouded and fearful. "It may be that we can stay friends," she said. "I understand only a little of what you have told me about yourself. But I know you and like you in your better nature and believe it could overcome the other."

"Yes? And you of course would like that?"

"Cut it out," snarled Jackson. "What about the providential opportunities? Do you want him to miss them?"

Rook repeated the words; even while gazing at the woman wistfully. He was between them, in the clutch of both; then Jackson, staggering away with him, glanced back grinning at the woman, his teeth clenched with pain. But the woman too grinned fiercely, challengingly, pressing her hands to her breast.

It seemed that Rook in his nature clung to her, whatever singular temptation the committing of intellectual crime had for him. He was a supercriminal, Jackson had intimated, so infallible in recognizing and seizing opportunities as to consider them providential. Yet he surely clung to the girl in his nature; wistfully he had listened to her.

"I'm too poor to hire science and medicine to readjust his brain—even if they could do it," said Bertha. "I'll have to straighten him out with only the Lord to help. And if He won't, I know He won't help Jackson against me. For I'll have Jackson to contend with!"

The eyes of the gentle, rather plodding Bertha glittered. "I have Mr. Rook's confidence and when the next providential opportunity shows up I'll declare in on the partnership."

Another story about Rook in the next issue.

THE VOICE OF ENVY

HE was a miserable millionaire. He had but recently amassed his money, and he was under the domination of his wife who had "society ambitions." One evening she gave a dinner to which she invited many artists and writers but to which only the third-raters came. For several hours he suffered manfully, listening to their excruciatingly boring talk about "I" and "my work." Desperate at last he murmured an excuse and went into the hall. There he found the footman sound asleep, snoring prodigiously.

This was too much for the millionaire.

"Wake up!" he shouted, shaking the fellow furiously. "You've been listening at the keyhole!"

The Garden of God

By H. de Vere Stacpoole

Author of "The Blue Lagoon," "Picaroons," Etc.

(A Four-Part Story—Part IV.)

CHAPTER XXXIX.

THE GREAT WIND.

CREEPING close to the wood edge she had watched like a person in a dream while Dick rose to his feet and faced the spearman. She had heard the words of Laminai, she had seen him point the spear, and in those few seconds she had seen death and she had known love, the real love that heeds nothing, even death.

In those few seconds self vanished and with it the spell that had bound her since childhood, the spell that hatred could not break, that nothing could have broken in the mind of a Kanaka.

As the arm flung back for the fatal stroke she launched herself. Laminai came crashing to earth; the spear flew from his hand and Dick caught it. Useless, but for one thing, the cry that went up from Laminai's men as Dick seizing the spear cried "Katafa!" Instantly they recognized her, the girl who was dead, the *taminanite* whom no man dare touch, who dared touch no man, they saw her ghost clinging to Laminai and breaking they ran like curs, filling the woods with their cries.

But Laminai did not run. Rolling on the ground, fighting and struggling to free himself from the creature that had him in its grip, teeth in his hair and arms round his neck, and legs locked in his, screaming like a horse in terror or rage, he tried to rise while Dick, the spear held short, not daring to thrust, called on Katafa to release him. Then as with a great and mighty effort the brute half rose Dick seeing his chance drove the spear into his gaping mouth, raising the butt with the stroke so that the point emerged from the neck.

Then with Katafa in his arms, Katafa clinging to him almost as tightly as she had clung to the other, he made upward across the sward till he reached the rock. He was making for the southern woods where the bad lands would give them a hiding place and protection but as he reached the summit something seized him and wrestled with him and tried to drive him back. It was the wind.

Hot as the breath of a tiger, blowing up from southward through the clear night it had come, tremendous and sudden like a giant springing on the island; shouting and dashing the trees together, clashing the branches, stripping the leaves and sending the nuts flying like cannon balls.

It took Nan from his post and sent him flying into the lagoon, the post after him; it stripped the mat sails from the anchored fleet and sent them sailing off like dish-cloths, it drove the limp dead body of Laminai up against the trees, the spear still sticking in its throat.

Dick, with Katafa's hair streaming across his face, half bent, nearly blown from his feet, took shelter to leeward of the rock. Here there was peace though the whole island beneath them was yelling and tossing under an absolutely cloudless sky and in the strong clear light of the moon. It was the *Naya e Matadi*, the great wind without rain that once in a decade swept Karolin and the sea for a hundred miles beyond, coming always at night and always at the full

of the moon, lasting only an hour and more dreaded than a hurricane because more mysterious.

Here sheltered in the cup of the wind they lay in the light of the quiet moon, the fight, the killing of Laminai, the still imminent presence of death, all as remote from them as the tossing trees below, the thundering reef and the infinite moonlit sea.

CHAPTER XL.

DEBACLE.

When the fighting men of Karolin began their assault on the woods they broke into two companies, one under Laminai and Ma, the other under Utali, a son of Makara, once chief of the southern tribe. When the southern tribe had been destroyed, Utali, a boy of some fourteen years had been spared, he and a few old men and several old women. He had grown up with the northern tribe, become one of them, fought in their wars and fished in their waters and forgotten and forgiven. He knew that Makara had been slain by the followers of Uta Matu—slain on Palm Tree beach. That did not matter a bit to him, he bore no grudge, he had always been well treated by Uta, and his father, as he remembered him, had been a brute, "a mouth to shout, a foot to kick and a hand to strike."

He had bravely set off with the others, thinking of nothing but the work in hand. As the finest and most powerful man, after Laminai, the command of the second division had been given to him and leading it he went off through the trees by the bank of the left arm of the lagoon while Laminai's men struck due west.

Now Utali carried no love for his father but he carried still the fear of him, a much more enduring possession if a parent gives it to his offspring, and it was not till the woods of Palm Tree surrounded him that Utali remembered that Makara was a ghost and that he had been made a ghost here on this island by the chief whom he—Utali—was now serving.

A nice complication!

"Suppose," thought Utali, "my father were to appear at the head of his men armed as of old and thirsting to kill!"

His mind drew the picture and cast it aside as he drove forward, trampling the ground lianas and shouldering the branches aside.

Suddenly he bolted. The boom of the great wave that Katafa had heard came through the trees followed by the garrulous chanting of the gulls. He stood listening. He knew every sound of the sea and the meaning of each. A storm of some sort was approaching and his first thought was of the canoes.

Then he heard Laminai giving tongue and the sound of the chase as it swept to the hilltop and turning, leading his men, he began to climb. Laminai evidently had taken no heed of the warning from the sea.

It had been arranged that the two divisions should join up should the elusive enemy give battle to either. Each division considered itself all powerful and ready to meet any contingency and it was right, for the spears were poisoned with angara, deadly and instantaneous in its effect. So Utali did not hasten his steps unduly, keeping his men fresh and going cautiously with an eye and ear for surprises.

The shouting suddenly ceased as if cut off by a closed door, and Utali, holding up his hand in the green twilight, halted.

The cries he had heard had been the sounds of pursuit, not of battle. Why had they ceased so suddenly?

He listened and waited, not a sound. He stood still listening, his mind filled with wild conjectures while up above, Laminai, spear in hand, stood fronting Dick, touching his breast with the spear point, flinging back his arm for the thrust.

A yell split the night above as Laminai's division caught sight of Katafa, and Utali, taking it for the shout of battle, charged upward through the trees followed by his men to the assistance of Laminai.

They had not gone twenty paces when they found that they were being charged. Down through the trees toward them a host was pouring—there was only one instantaneous solution; Laminai's division had been utterly and silently destroyed and the destroyers were coming, ghosts and evil spirits no doubt led by the ghostly Makara.

"Makara's men are coming! Makara's men are coming! Death! Death!" shrieked Utali, not daring to turn and run as he might have done from a living enemy. Then thrusting with his spear at a dark form that sprang at him out of the gloom ahead he missed and fell, pierced to death while the form yelling with fright and rage pressed over him.

The whole of Laminai's followers stampeded by the vision of the ghost of the girl who had been eaten by sharks, charging down through the trees of a place now filled with ghosts, only wanted the cry that Makara's men were coming to finish them. Makara, that terrible chief who had been slain here by their fathers and brothers.

The yell of the new risen wind from the south, the dashing about of the trees and the great alternating splashes of moonlight and shadow raised their rage and terror to dementia and as they saw Utali and his warriors they charged them and were charged in turn, imaginary ghosts attacking imaginary ghosts. Nothing on earth could be compared to the fight, and nothing in dreamland.

Twenty men alone escaped from that psychological battle, twenty of Laminai's men, spearless, daggerless, torn by brambles, gasping and running for the canoes while the trees roared above them and tossed them out to the shouting beach where three of the canoes, dragged from their anchorage, lay broken and ruined.

One canoe alone remained straining at its rope, the fellow in her waving his arms and shouting, screaming as he saw the survivors taking the water. *"Karaka, karaka, karaka!"* "Sharks, sharks, sharks!"

The lagoon was full of sharks driven in by the storm but the survivors neither heard the cries of the anchor watch nor would they have heeded. Worse things were behind them than sharks. Makara and his ghostly followers were on their heels. They struck out across the tossing water, the moonlight steady on the bobbing heads that vanished one by one till ten only were left, saved by the number and rapacity of the sharks.

Thick as women at a bargain counter the brutes foiled themselves by getting in each other's way and the ten survivors scrambling on board, some over the outrigger gratings, some over the side, cut free from the anchor rope, seized the paddles and headed for the break.

No sooner had they cut the rope and struck the water with the paddles than they saw their blunder.

The tide had caught them. The full ebb tide rushing from the two arms of the lagoon had them in its grip bearing them to the break beyond which the outboiling water had set up a terrible cross sea.

The heavy canoe was undermanned, they could do nothing but steer and shout as they went, swept as a toboggan on the seething foam, stern lifting, bow lifting, shooting through the break into the lumping sea that turned them turtle.

A wave took the canoe and smashed it on the coral, destroying the outrigger, and a great king wave festooned with foam took the wreck and hove it on to the reef high and dry, stern stuck in a cleft and bow in air, a last touch of the fantasy of the sea, that sister of Fate.

So at a stroke went the navy of Karolin and all her fighting men, destroyed by their own imaginations and the child of the woman they had slain long years ago.

CHAPTER XLI.

AFTER THE BATTLE.

The gulls were crying above the reef and away in the east below the sea line a rose-red fire was burning, paling gradually, passing into the starless infinite distance of the true dawn.

Then as the ripple of light on the horizon waters turned to a ripple of fire and the birds in the groves chattered out in answer to the gulls, Dick, flinging sleep off suddenly as one flings a blanket, sat up, striking out at the vision of Laminai—Laminai, spear in hand and ready to lunge. For a moment the dead chief stood before him, hard in the imagination as a real figure, then it vanished and his eyes fell on Katafa.

She was lying on her side fast asleep, her face buried in her arms. He watched her, his eyes consuming her in the strengthening light.

He knew nothing of love, he only knew that the something that had revealed itself to him and evaded him was his, his and the whole unearthly world that surrounded it.

The voices of the gulls and the sound of the reef were part of her, and the strengthening light part of her, the rising sun, his own very life were part of her—and she was his.

Had she suddenly been snatched from him the voices of the gulls and the sound of the reef, the rising sun—every bit of the old world she had made new would have fallen in on him and crushed him with despair, and yet only yesterday he had run past her bent on the business of making a

sail for the dinghy, run past her heedless as though she had been a tree stump, and, had she been taken from him then, would he have cared?

As the sun struck Katafa full from her night-black hair to her little feet, she moved, then suddenly casting sleep away she sat up.

Just as Dick's waking vision had been the man he had fought with, hers was Dick.

She saw him, with wide-pupiled eyes that saw nothing of this world, and holding out her arms to the vision, cried: "Taori!"

It faded as her arms clasped themselves round the reality.

They had climbed the sun-warmed rock.

The vast columnar swell was marching across the Pacific smooth as though the *Naya e Matadi* had never blown, and nothing to tell of the great wind remained but a few broken trees in the groves and the upended canoe on the reef. Dick could see it as they sat, the sun now high above the horizon and the land breeze fanning out across the sea in spaces of violet shadow.

He pointed it out to Katafa and she nodded her head. She knew.

Instinct told her that the men of Karolin had been destroyed, that something had happened, something that came with that wind which she remembered now like a wind that had blown in dreamland.

The sense of security was everywhere ringed and completed by the peace of the violet sea.

Here, high above the world as the birds, they could see a thousand square leagues of the blue Pacific from the limitless north to the far pale sky trace that was Karolin, the world of the sea gulls ever clanging and clanging about the reef, the lagoon, and rising up toward them from the lagoon, the trees. Not a trunk, not a stem, nothing but the glory of the foliage: the dancing, feathery palm fronds, the still dark spread of the breadfruits, the piercing green of the new-leaved artus, and here and there, lords of the forest and the groves, the matamatas striking boldly to the sky.

Over all the breeze dancing light-footed as a fawn and colored birds like blossoms blown from the trees.

Some drinking nuts had been blown right from the mid-zone of trees up to the sward: he had fetched them and they had drunk the contents. Neither of them had eaten since the day before, but Dick, who had not the sure instinct for safety that possessed Katafa, had no idea of returning to the house till he was sure that the enemy was gone. He wanted to explore and see. The wrecked canoe filled his mind with a thrill; from it came a waft of the battle of the night before bringing up the vision of Ma, the man he had speared like a fish, and with the recollection his nostrils broadened as the sound of pursuit came again to his ears and the feel of the branches he had dashed aside in his escape: he tripped again on the sward and again he faced Laminai and death; again he thrust the spear into the gaping mouth.

He almost forgot Katafa; love and passion were nothing for a moment as the blaze of anger broke up again in his mind. The fury of the man who has been attacked and who has killed his attacker, the rage of the defenseless man who being unarmed, has had to run.

Telling Katafa not to move from the hilltop till his return he slipped down from the rock and ran toward the groves. Laminai, spear and all, had been blown by a last gust of the great wind in among the trees. Dick, coming on the body, disengaged the spear and carrying it slanted over his shoulder came along down taking the track that Manua, Leopa and Talia had taken the night before as they raced howling with terror and driven by imagination to their death.

Nothing could be more peaceful than the woods this morning: the great wind, broken by the hill, had left scarcely a trace; the morning breeze left scarcely a sound louder than the rainy patter of leaf on leaf.

Bursting from beneath the great apron leaves of a breadfruit Dick suddenly found his path barred by a brown, naked man on all fours.

The man seemed crawling on hands and knees. In the merry dancing lights that showered as the breeze footed it in the foliage overhead he seemed to move, but he was dead and supported in his position by a decayed tree stump across which he had fallen.

The rigor mortis setting in instantly from the poison of some spear or dagger had turned his limbs stiff as the legs of a table, on his back the sifting of the forest had already fallen, a leaf, a single, gummy, colored petal of the hootoo.

Beyond this man who crawled yet never moved stood a man clasping a tree bole

tightly; with head thrown back and a light wandlike spear through his shoulder. He had caught at the tree before falling and clung; still clinging in the death rigor, his face turned back, with eyes wide open and mouth agape, seemed gazing wildly in search of the man who had struck him, yet there was nothing in his line of sight but an orchid swinging in the perfumed air on a loop of liantasse.

Beyond, men were lying in heaps, singly, in pairs, on their backs with arms outspread, clasped together in a deadly embrace, petrified by the poison that kills like a poleax, half hidden, half revealed by the trees and the brambles and the still green beauty of the ferns.

Makara and his men, slain long ago on the eastern beach, had taken their revenge in full, and as Dick passed swiftly, glancing to left and right, by the mounds of the dead and glades that told their tale, the knowledge came to him that there was nothing more to fear; all the men in the world seemed lying here stricken, done for.

As he broke on to the eastern beach he saw the three canoes that had been driven up on the sands. Two lay on their sides and one bottom up with outrigger smashed; away on the reef the fourth stuck up just as he had seen it from the hilltop.

A coral-headed club lay near one of the canoes. He cast away the spear he was holding and seized the club. That was a weapon worth carrying, yet having handled it and swung it in the face of the quiet lagoon and desolate eastern sea he lost interest in it and let it drop and turned to examine the canoes. There was no one here to use a weapon against, no one but the men in the woods, those strange brown men so stiff yet so seemingly alive, so full of anger, rage and terror, so swiftly running, so furiously hitting, yet so still.

As he overhauled the canoes, pictures from the woods came before him; a man who had been stricken running just as he had dashed into a tangle of vines, still erect, upheld and preserved in position by the vines; a green glade where ferns grew, and out of the ferns a brown leg, stiff as the leg of a table, making as if to kick at the sky through the roof of foliage and merry dancing lights and liquid shadows.

But he did not think of those things long. He was too much interested in the canoes and their make and their huge size.

Nothing born of the sea is more fascinating than a native canoe with its outrigger, outrigger poles and grating, its mast and yard and mat sail, its paddles, the perfume of its wood, the cunning of its coconut-fiber lashings, the mystery of its whole being.

What an antiquity lies behind it and what a history. While the galleys and caravels of the Eastern world were in evolution it was as now, a thing never to develop like the boat that carries the seed of the plant on the wind.

Dick saw that the construction was identical with that of the canoe of Katafa. The old smashed canoe had engraved itself upon his memory in every detail, nothing was different but the size and the number of paddles that would be used. He examined the broken mast and the sail of the only one from which the wind had not stripped the sail. It was the same as Katafa's.

Then as he turned away something that had been washed up on the sand caught his eye. He stooped and picked it up. It was Nan.

Nan's head that the wind had blown into the lagoon and the lagoon had faithfully delivered to the sands; Nan looking terribly debauched and battered, but still Nan.

How Katafa had created so much personality with a few cuts of a knife must remain a mystery. She had and the thing was itself. Every moment was making it more so, for its fuzzy head was drying rapidly in the sun and Dick, recognizing this, placed it on the hot sand higher up and started to hunt for the pole.

There was no pole to be seen on the reef and he reckoned that if it had been blown into the lagoon after the head it would come ashore on the same drift.

He was right. He found it, just where the tree roots on the left of the beach came into the water like great claws, and fetching it fixed Nan again on its tip.

Then with the pole on his shoulder he came running along the lagoon side through the trees. Canoes, clubs, dead men, even Nan himself, were forgotten. The memory of Katafa had rushed suddenly out at him from the trees and the sudden desire to see her nearly drove him back along the road he had come, would have done so but for the fact that his main purpose, after scouting, that morning, was food.

There was food at the house, a crab he had put by and some baked fish and taro,

and the quickest way to the house was by the lagoon bank.

Arrived there he stuck Nan against the house, fetched out the food from where he had hidden it to protect it from the robber crabs and sat down to eat.

Katafa must have been as hungry as himself, but his hunger made him forget that fact, although all the time he was eating he was thinking of her; when he reached her at last, laboring up the hillside with the remains of the food wrapped in a great leaf, she was in the shelter of the rock, asleep, and placing the leaf on the ground he sat down beside her.

CHAPTER XLII.

THE CALL OF KAROLIN.

If the blue parua birds resting above the house were indeed the birds of long ago they might have fancied nothing changed since those days when the father of Dick returned from the valley of the idol with Emmeline.

Love never alters and the forms of the lovers were almost the same, and the incidents of their simple and humble lives made beautiful by love and the absolute innocence which is Nature, were the same.

The joyous awakening to mornings of new life, the sudden embraces, the sudden and seeming forgetfulness of one another, as when the figure of Dick could be seen far away on the reef, heedless of everything but the fish he was hunting for, followed by the figure of Katafa faithful as his shadow.

All was the same and yet, touched by the wizard spell of Karolin beyond the southern sea, all was vaguely different. The spell of Karolin had seized Dick through Katafa; though he had never seen the reef and the gulls and the forty-mile sweep of lagoon. The great atoll island had begun its work upon him even before Kearney had died.

It had made him talk its language, it had made him forget his past; little by little and strand by strand it had broken him away from all things connecting him with the world, drifting him farther than his parents had ever drifted from civilization and its fantastic labors, its hopes, dreams and ambitions.

And this it had done through Katafa.

He was no longer Dick but Taori, the language of his early childhood had gone from him like a bird flown, Kearney was the recollection of something that had once been part of a dream, Nan on his pole by the house was far more potent and living.

At nights, sometimes now, Katafa, as they sat under the stars, would talk to him in an extraordinary way. It was as though Karolin were speaking, telling of itself.

Karolin had never released its hold on her and in some strange manner the coming of love, the breaking of the spell of *taminan,* the new meaning of life, all revived in her mind the memory of the environment of her childhood. She told him of Le Juan, the priestess of Nanawa, and of Nanawa and of Uta Matu, the king, so old that his skin was beginning to scale off in white scales like the scales of the alomba. She told him that at Karolin there was nothing but reef —no island, nothing but reef.

Dick laughed at this, a short hard laugh that struck through the starlight like the cough of a stabbing spear. She took his hand as they lay there side by side, as if to lead his imagination.

At Karolin there was nothing but reef, a reef so great that sight could not follow it, on one side the lagoon—the quiet water—and on the other the sea. Were you to follow it on foot you would walk for days before it led you round back to the break. Two days' journey it was and you had to sleep at night without a roof under the stars. The lagoon was so wide that it held all the stars, even the Milky Way—the great smoke—and the moon traveling all night could not cross it.

She told of the great fish that came in from the outer sea and made thunder, whip rays tossing themselves into the air and falling back in fountains of foam, the coral ringing to the echo of the concussions.

Then, in a voice more remote and as if telling a secret: "There are no trees there, only the palms."

It was Karolin speaking, not Katafa; Karolin the treeless, Karolin that had become part of her through the magic of environment. If the great sea spaces, the forty-mile reef, the lagoon mirror and the snow of surf had found voices to tell of themselves, could they have spoken more clearly than they spoke through her?

Her antagonism to the trees, felt when she first viewed them in their great masses had become increased by the part they had played in trapping her, yet at base it was the antagonism of Karolin expressed by the human mind.

In all these talks there was no word of herself or the spell that had been put upon her by Le Juan. She herself scarcely knew the meaning of it or why for years she had lived in the world as a shadow among shadows, or how it was that she had awakened to this new world in the arms of Dick. Yet deep in her heart a light had pierced showing something vague and monstrous, something nameless that named itself Le Juan.

And now as though Karolin had placed its finger upon the very woods themselves and upon the trees it hated because it had no trees, sometimes, when the wind was in a certain quarter the dead men from Karolin would hint of their presence vaguely and dreadfully, driving Dick and Katafa to the reef to escape them.

The rigor had long since lost its grip and the fantastic show had collapsed, figures falling apart and in pieces like waxworks melted by heat, in the furious corruption of the tropics.

Then, in a month, the woods were sweet again but the stain remained in memory.

Dick had never loved the woods. His passion was all for the sea and the reef and the stories of the girl about Karolin, while only half believed in, had left their mark on his mind. She had never indicated where the island lay, only conveying to him that somewhere there was a place where she had come from where nothing existed but sea and reef and lagoon; it was just a story, yet it dwelt with him and, working in the inner recesses of his mind, it joined itself with vague recollections of what Kearney had said about the place where she had come from. Kearney had shown him one day the stain on the southern horizon telling him that another island lay there and that the girl had come from it in all likelihood.

The thing had passed almost out of recollection.

One morning, a month or so after the woods had regained their sweetness, Dick, who had completed the sail for the dinghy, was standing by the little boat as she lay moored to the bank when suddenly a whole lot of things grouped themselves together in his mind, the dinghy, the mast and sail, the open sea, recollections of Katafa's stories about the great reef and the lagoon where fish made thunder.

Katafa was in the boat ready to push off but instead of joining her; he beckoned her on shore again and saying, "Come," led the way off toward the trees. She followed him through the woods and up to the hilltop; there, on the southernmost side of the great rock he stood and pointed south across the morning sea. She gazed and saw nothing.

"I see nothing, Taori, but the water and the wind on the water and the sea birds on the wind. Ah! There!"

Her eyes had caught the stain on the southern horizon.

Out on the fishing bank long ago she had seen the full blaze of the lagoon striking upward to the sky making a vague pale window in the blue; this was the same, though remote.

"Karolin," said Dick.

She stood, the wind lifting her hair and her eyes fixed on the stain which grew and spread in her imagination till the song of the reef came round her and the freedom of the infinite spaces of sea and sky. All she longed for lay there and all she loved stood beside her. She said nothing. Never once in her talk of her old home had she expressed the wish to go back. The place where she had found Dick was antagonistic to her, yet it was the place where she had found him and was in some way part of him, and she could not put her dislike of it in speech, nor her desire to leave it. Even now she said nothing.

She did not know that the craving for adventure, for movement, for change, and the desire for newness was stirring in Dick's heart.

He scarcely knew it himself. The thing that had come in his mind was scarcely formed as yet, or being formed, had not yet developed its wings.

They left the hilltop and came down through the trees, scarcely speaking. One might have thought that they had quarreled but for the fact that his arm was about her neck.

Before leaving the hilltop had they turned their eyes to the north, they might have seen across the blue morning sea a vision that seemed cast on the screen of things by the gods in opposition to the far, faint vision of Karolin.

There on the northern horizon, white as the wing of a gull, stood a sail, remote, lonely, only visible from this height, the sail of the first copra trader in these waters.

CHAPTER XLIII.

THE MORNING LIGHT.

When the *Portsoy* had turned her stern to the reef long ago she had done more than fire the shot that smashed the canoe of Katafa. She had logged the position of Palm Tree and her captain in his drunken brain had logged the fact that it was "full of copra." He was no trader but he drank where traders were, and in Pacific barrooms in a blue haze of smoke the fact made itself known after a time. That is how islands were discovered in the old days that are not so very old, through chance and schooner captains and the dingy pages of logs, through memories and conversations and the haze of barrooms the islands unknown came into the world of the known, and not only the islands but their qualities.

For years Nauru in its desolate beauty laughed at the sun till chance betrayed it and the phosphates that lay beneath its surface, and for years the Garden of God might have remained unknown but for what its palm trees had said to the *Portsoy* and the fact that copra had taken the place of sandalwood in the world of trade.

It was from Papeete that the *Morning Light* set out, a topsail schooner of a hundred and fifty tons with enough native labor to work the island if found. Owing to a slight error in the *Portsoy's* reckoning she nearly missed it and was about to give up the hunt when one morning, just as the sun broke above the sea line it showed, far to the south, just a point on the new-born blue of the sky.

For an hour and more the favorable wind held strong and the island grew apace, then the wind failed and faded as if in regret at the ruin it was helping on, the ruin of nature by trade.

All day long the *Morning Light* held south under the play of light and variable winds making the lagoon only at dusk and entering with the first of the stars.

Dick had put out the cooking fire; it was after supper and they were talking of the day's work. Over on the southern bank at certain times of the tide the fishing was better than anywhere else in the lagoon, the water was deep there and you could reach the place either by striking across through the woods or going round the lagoon in the dinghy—this was the longer way but they generally used it for the convenience of the boat in bringing back the fish. They had seen nothing of the *Morning Light* nor had they exchanged a word about Karolin.

Night was the time for talking as a rule, unless the business of the day had tired them out, as it had this evening.

Dick, having put out the fire, turned on his side and was just about to speak to Katafa when through the woods, from the direction of the eastern beach, came a sound, a long low rumble, suddenly beginning and suddenly ceasing, the sound of the anchor chain of the *Morning Light* running out.

Instantly he was on his feet.

Every sound of the island was known to him; this was something new, new as the voice of the conch that had roused him from sleep to face Laminai and his tribe.

"Did you hear?" said Dick.

"Yes," said Katafa. "I heard." She was standing close to him, her head thrown back, listening.

The moon in its first quarter had risen above the trees and a wan rosy light fell on Dick, on Katafa, on the house beside which Nan leaned on his pole and within which could be dimly discovered the outline of the little ships.

Dick, as though fearful of listeners, raised his finger and then motioned to Katafa to follow him, leading the way toward the trees on the opposite side. He had not gone a dozen paces when, remembering his spear, he turned back for it and then resuming the lead plunged among the trees, keeping along the lagoon bank, the glitter of the water showing through the branches and the green glow of the forest lighting them as they walked, in single file, and silent as Indians on the warpath in a hostile country.

As they drew close to the eastern beach a red spark of light showed through the leaves ahead. A fire was burning on the beach and as Dick parted the last branches and stood, Katafa beside him, the fire blazed up till the trunks of the cocoa palms took the light.

A boat was beached near the fire, around which half a dozen dark, nearly naked men were busy cooking, while two white men dressed as Kearney had been dressed were seated on the sands, knees up and with a bottle before them. Some drinking nuts lay close to the man on the left.

Away out on the lagoon the *Morning Light* lay at her moorings, the ebb showing a silver streak where the chain met it and where it passed away astern.

Katafa drew closer and drew her arm round Dick.

The dark naked men swarming about the cooking fire fascinated her. Never had she seen such faces. The people of Karolin, owing to a Melanesian taint, were fierce enough and some of them were plain enough, but the ugliest man of Karolin would have been handsome compared with any of these.

Recruited from the New Hebrides and beyond, wearing little but a Gee string, with slit ear lobes and nose rings all complete, they seemed less like men than apes, less like apes than devils.

Sometimes one of the two seated men would cry out a harsh order or rise to boot one of the ape men, and now, as Katafa watched, something broke the lagoon near the schooner, another boat, a boat laden with stores, tent poles, canvas, crawling slowly across the lagoon to beach where the zone of firelight met the ripples of the outgoing tide.

Dick drew Katafa away, the branches closed, and turning they made their way back through the clear clean night of the woods, the green gloom of the thickets, the glades where the young moon lit the ferns.

What had happened to the island, to the night, to the very trees, to life itself? How and in what way did they sense the fact that what they had seen was bad, they who knew not even the name of evil, and how and in what way did they know that what had come had come to stay? That something had broken in on them, incomprehensible but loathsome, that the island would never be the same again?

Not a word did they speak the whole way back to the house, Dick leading, Katafa following. The most extraordinary thing in their strange life alone and cut off from the world was the fact that though they spoke little to each other with their tongues, they were always conversing together; a movement, a look, a touch, a change of expression could convey what would have taken a dozen words to convey, and above and beyond that they had a mind relationship perhaps purely psychic. They could think together. Often some wish or want of Dick would be understood by Katafa, and before he could stretch out his hand for something it would be handed to him. Or a wish of Katafa's would become known to Dick without a word conveying it.

Arrived at the house they consulted together for a moment.

"From where have they come?" asked Katafa—as though Dick could know.

He shook his head. Then standing, his eyes fixed on the house and his brow wrinkled, he came to a sudden decision. Everything must be hidden, even the dinghy, they must take to the trees—and before he had finished speaking, Katafa who knew his mind, turned to the house while he ran down to the lagoon bank where the dinghy was moored, to see that the mast and sail were in her and that the fishing gear was safe in the locker. There were three fish spears in the boat: he let them lie. Then running back to the house he helped in the removal of the things.

The dinghy of the *Raratonga* was an outsized boat of her type, caravel built, broad of beam and with plenty of space for their wants. They brought nearly everything down, Nan and the little ships, which they placed in the bow, the two mats on which they slept, the ax and saw, a knife, and a huge bunch of bananas that Dick had cut two days before. Everything they treasured they took away, leaving everything else, the plates, the cooking utensils and all the stuff in the shack behind the house. Then when they had finished they got in and Dick, taking the sculls, brought the boat to the cape where the wild coconut and arita bushes spread out over the water; then, taking in the sculls and seizing the branches, he dragged the boat in, far in till the branches and bushes covered her entirely, and tied up to a root. Then avoiding the house they made their beds among the trees where Katafa had slept once.

Neither of them spoke of the thing that had been in the depths of their minds since, standing on the hilltop yesterday morning, Dick had pointed to the stain on the southern sky.

Karolin.

The call that had come to them had remained unspoken of; mysterious as the call of the south to the northern swallow, the call of the great lagoon island would have fetched them at last as the suck of the whirlpool fetches flotsam remote from it and seemingly beyond attraction, but the scene on the eastern beach to-night had brought

them leagues closer to their goal. The instinct to seek Karolin had been joined to the desire for flight, the *Morning Light* and her crew had acted as the touch of cold that intensifies the swallow's vision of the palm trees and the south. It was only when, the dinghy loaded and securely hidden, they laid themselves down in the nest of fern that Dick spoke.

"If they stay," said Dick, "we will go there."

"Karolin?" said Katafa. "But if the big canoe is not gone, how can we pass it?"

"We will pass it," said Dick.

He had brought some bananas from the dinghy for their supper; he divided them and as they ate he sketched the plan that had formulated itself in his mind.

If the new people left to-morrow it would make no difference—they would start for Karolin; if the new people remained it would make no difference, they would start all the same, with the slack of the tide to-morrow night, late; when the newcomers were asleep they would put down the lagoon and make past the big canoe for the break. The big canoe would not be able to stop them.

He spoke with the assurance of daring and power but quietly as though he were speaking of some ordinary matter of routine.

They would sail for the south. The wind from the north that had been dying and waking again all day was blowing strong again; it would last like that for days, it was the prevailing wind of the year and the moon was a fair-weather moon.

Then he went calmly asleep, but Katafa could not sleep.

She was already in her imagination on her way to her old home. The men of Karolin were all dead, their bones were whitening in the trees up there, there was nothing to fear. Only the women and children were left and Uta Matu, the old king, worn out and approaching his end.

With her woman's imagination, she saw Dick, the man she loved and gloried in, standing on the beach of Karolin, king and ruler.

Perhaps it was a prevision of this and the whitening bones of the men of Karolin that had made Le Juan years ago urge Uta Matu to destroy Katafa, and, failing, made her segregate the girl under the taboo of *tamiaan*. Who knows?

CHAPTER XLIV.

THE DEATH OF A SEA KING.

On the morning when Laminai and all his host set out, never to return, Uta Matu, sitting where his women had placed him on the sand of the beach, watched the canoes depart.

It was a glorious morning and the waters of the lagoon stirring to the first of the ebb were sweeping toward the break beyond which lay the outer sea like a vision of shattered sapphires.

He saw the paddles flashing and the sheening foam of the outriggers, he watched the mat sails take the wind, gulls following the canoes, escorting them, wheeling, sweeping and clanging on the wind. Then the gulls passed away and the sails vanished beyond the reef and Uta found himself alone.

Alone with the women and the children and the crabs of the beach, he who had always led the fight and directed the rowers and dispensed the laws of Karolin for sixty long years. Alone and useless as the smallest child. Uta had been a hard and stern ruler, merciless to enemies, yet just according to his lights; he had known three gods; himself; Nanawa, the shark-toothed one; and Nan of the coconuts.

He had worshiped only the first.

Just as a clever man believes in ghosts without letting the belief interfere in the least with his renting a house supposed to be haunted, Uta believed in his cogods without letting his belief worry him much.

Even if the verdict of Le Juan had been against the expedition it is highly probable that he would have sent it off all the same. His fighting instincts had been raised and the death of his grandson, Sru, had vexed his soul.

Having sat for a while contemplating the ripples breaking on the sand and the gulls flighting above the water the king of Karolin called to his women to carry him back to his house.

That night the great hot wind from the south blew and while Laminai and his men were slaughtering each other and the waves were roaring on the reef of Karolin, Le Juan, full of kava and the fear that Nanawa had taken it into his head to play them some dirty trick instead of running straight, was clinging to a tree before the house of the king shouting that Karolin was triumphant

and her enemies slain, that Nanawa was riding the great south wind hastening to fight with the men of Karolin.

Then came the peaceful morning and after that came the next day, and the next, and a week passed and a fortnight, and still the men of Karolin did not return, and still another fortnight.

Uta would cause himself to be carried on his litter down to the canoe houses and there, resting and reviewing things, he would gaze into the great half-lit interiors of the houses where the long canoes once had rested. He could see the ridge poles and the thatch of the roofs, the rollers and the tackle that had once held the canoes. The great hot wind, broken by a coconut grove, had left the houses almost undamaged, but the canoes—where were they? "Of what use are the houses without the canoes?" Uta would say to himself, "or of what use is life without the men who made the life of Karolin—and my son Laminai and my grandsons, where are they?"

He ordered three women to take a fishing canoe and start for the north, find Palm Tree, and see what they could see, but never to come back unless they brought news of the missing ones, and the three women he chose were the wives of Talia, Marua and Leopa, the three men who had been with Sru and who had brought the news of his death to Karolin.

The three wretched women started with food enough for four days and they never came back. Weeks vanished, the days flighting from east to west like gorgeous birds, born in purple dawns and vanishing in amber sunsets, but no word came, nothing but the voice of the sea mumbling on the reef and the wind in the cocoa palms and the challenge of the gulls.

Uta lost touch with life, for days he would neither speak nor eat; then one morning he called for Le Juan and she came, her knees knocking together.

"Well," said Uta in a voice suddenly grown strong again, "what have you done with my men? What have you done with Laminai, my son, with his son and the men who went with him? Speak!"

The wretched creature stood without a word. She had been honest; born of a priestess to Nanawa and brought up in the faith, she had always served faithfully her belief and her god.

She knew his trickery, his capriciousness, how sometimes he would answer a wish favorably and sometimes he would do exactly the reverse of what was desired. He had let her down now once and for all. She could tell that by the light in Uta's eye which meant death to her.

But though honest, her heart was wicked and her wicked heart came now to her assistance and she found her voice.

"It is not my fault, O Uta," said Le Juan, "nor the fault of he who speaks through me. Last night in my dreams he revealed his form and his voice was like the voice of the reef when the great waves come in. The men of Karolin are held by Nanawa the shark-toothed one, nor will he let them go till a woman of Karolin is given to him. *O Kai O fai Kanaka*"—to be staked out on the reef for the sharks to eat.

"And the name of the woman?" asked Uta.

"It has not been told to me yet," replied the wretched creature fighting for time in the presence of imminent death.

But Uta had suddenly failed and lost interest, the spurt of energy had passed and the light of rage had faded from his eyes. Perhaps in his inmost heart he knew that nothing availed, that his men had gone where the dead men go and that all the women of Karolin staked out on the reef for the servants of the shark-toothed one to devour would be a sacrifice offered in vain.

He moved his hand as if dismissing Le Juan. "To-morrow," said Uta. Then turning on his side he seemed to forget things and Le Juan took her departure, saved for the moment.

But the king's women had heard and in an hour there was not a woman of Karolin who did not know that their men were held by Nanawa and that nothing would free them but the great sacrifice which might fall to the lot of any one of them.

Never for a moment did it occur to any of these unfortunates that since Nanawa wanted a woman and since Le Juan was a woman the simplest way out would be to stake Le Juan on the reef.

Not a bit. She was sacred, being a priestess. On Karolin there was not enough morality to divide in two pieces, but there was enough religion of a sort to furnish a world.

By sunset, from Le Juan sweating in her hut, word went forth that the victim had

been revealed to her. Nalia, the wife of Leopa and failing Nalia, her daughter Ooma, a half-witted girl of fourteen.

Never was fox cuter than Le Juan. Nalia was one of the women sent in the canoe to scout for the lost expedition; she had not come back, but she might still come back, so nothing would be done for a while and in the meantime Uta might die and Uta once dead she would have no fear of anything. Having sent this pronouncement abroad Le Juan set to work whole-heartedly to light a fire and wish Uta dead, and dead quickly.

She might have saved her fire. Uta was dying. The King of Karolin's time had come and by midnight the fact was known.

It was the night before the new moon, a hot breathless night and round the king's house the air was filled with the piping and whistling of little shells, tiny varieties of the conch, blown to keep away evil spirits; the surf on the reef sounded low and its respirations were long-spaced like the breathing of the dying man.

Not a soul was in the house with him though the whole population of Karolin, every woman and every child, was seated outside in rows and rings beneath the stars.

The chief wife sat by the right door post listening, waiting to signal the fact of death, and though not a breath of wind stirred a vague whispering came and went like the sound the sand makes when the wind blows over it. It was the whispering of the women.

All Uta's life was running about that night outside his house from lip to lip, from memory to memory. The battles he had fought, the children he had begotten, the men he had executed with his own hand or caused to be killed. The fight with the Spanish ship people and the people of the Paumotus. Katafa's name was mentioned, the child whom he had saved from Laminai and who had been drowned and devoured by the sharks. And as they whispered and talked the lagoon water whispering on the beach seemed telling also of the deeds of the departing one and in the far rumble of the reef the voice of the outer sea seemed joining in.

If Uta had never loved a human being he had loved the sea, as the gulls love it and the fish. It was part of him.

Then suddenly the whispering ceased. The chief wife had risen and was standing like a brown statue by the door.

Deceived by a cessation of the breathing in the house she gave the signal that her lord and master was dead, but scarcely had she raised her arm to lower it again when a voice from the house made her jump as though she had received a slap.

The King of Karolin was not the man to depart from this world like a sickly child; he who had entered it shouting eighty-one years ago was not the man to leave it without saying good-by.

He was calling for his women, calling them to carry him down to the water's edge. "It is hot here," cried Uta. "I wish to be cool. I want the wind."

There was no wind but they carried him, four women, one at each shoulder and one at each thigh, and lo! as they reached the lagoon edge and placed him on the sand facing the water and propped in their arms, the air stirred with a breath that shivered the star reflections on the lagoon.

The wind of dawn had begun to blow and in the east beyond the break the dawn itself showed a dubious light that brightened and burned as though day were hurrying to greet Uta and crown him for the last time with the only crown he had ever worn. With the strengthening light the tide could be seen sweeping into the lagoon; it had turned half an hour ago and was coming strong, sweeping past the coral piers from the dim violet sea above which the high-flying gulls showed bright with the day.

Uta watched. He was not the man to go out with the tide, the full flood was the time for him when, bravely swimming, his soul might go fearless to the God who made the sharks and the gulls and the kings and peoples of the sea.

He watched the light break on the water and the brow of the sun rise from the ocean; then as the morning lit the lagoon in the whole of its forty-mile stretch, Uta, straightening in the arms of the women gave a shout.

"They come!"

Past the piers of the break they were coming, the whole fleet of Karolin, sailing against the wind and with all the paddles flashing, gulls wheeling and crying above them and the flood tide boiling in their wake.

Rising like a young man and swift as a boy he ran where, curving inward, they made to beach on the cream-white sand. Laminai, shouting his name, sprang on the

outrigger gratings to meet him—and as he sprang on board and they grasped each other the great canoe, turning, shot up into the eyes of the sun.

But the women saw nothing of this, nothing but the monstrous dead body of Uta that had fallen together supported in the arms of his wives.

CHAPTER XLV.

THE CLUB OF MA.

"Taori!"

The birds were twittering on the branches above and the first sunbeams breaking through the leaves.

"Taori!" whispered Katafa, her arm around the neck of the sleeper and her lips close to his ear.

He stirred, raised himself on his elbow and sat up, sleep dropping from him suddenly like a cloak.

"Listen!" said Katafa.

Awakening with the first beam of light she had heard vague and far-away sounds, caught and repeated by the echoes of the hated woods.

The woods that had imprisoned her once, that seemed in league against her again, the woods she had always hated, that had always hated her, barring her from the freedom she craved for and the wide spaces that were part of her soul.

Karolin was calling and the sea was open and the boat was there ready; nothing was wanting but the dark of the next night, and just in that first clear minute of waking from sleep with her arm around the man she loved, came a sense of oppression, imprisonment and evil—the woods.

The vision of the copra traders and the great canoe guarding the lagoon was almost forgotten, the sense of hate and imprisonment came from the trees and maybe in that waking moment her mind had glimpsed the core of things, for it was the trees that had brought the traders.

Then came the far-away sounds; shouts and vague indefinite noises heard through the movement of the wind in the leaves, now dying to nothing, now more clear and purposeful, almost like the sound of pursuit—it was the sound of search.

The copra traders were combing the groves. The remains of the canoes broken on the beach had given them pause before taking full possession of the place and they wished to see what might possibly be lurking amid the trees.

Even as Dick listened the sounds grew clearer. They would die away as though finished and done with and then they would break out of a sudden closer. There is nothing more deceptive than the trees with their dense patches, their winding runways, their echo-haunted dells, their drafts and stillnesses. Sound enters here like a runner and gets lost, and goes far or fails or drops dead, according to the road it takes, according to the wind it meets or the absence of wind.

A shout came from the sward. Dick parted the leaves and there, running across the sward toward the house, was a man, a red-bearded man, gun in hand. Four others came after him, brown and naked, with frizzy black beards, and Dick whose piercing eyes noted everything saw the marks on their bodies, marks of old wounds and ringworm sores.

He stooped and picked up the coral-headed club he had found that day on the eastern beach and resting his hands lightly on it continued to watch.

They made for the house and surrounded it while the red-bearded man went in. Dick could see him inside looking here and there at the shelves, at the walls and round on the floor as if searching for trace of the owners; then he came out and the whole party disappeared into the grove to the left.

Ten minutes later they reappeared, recrossed the sward and entered the woods again, making, evidently, for the eastern beach.

"They are gone," said Katafa, "but let us still keep hidden, for they may return."

Dick without answering stood listening. "No," said he, "they are gone but they will not return yet."

He pushed his way through the branches to where the boat was hidden, fetched out a fishing line, caught a robber crab and using its flesh for bait came out and began to fish from the bank in the full light of day. A bream was in the hook in a couple of minutes, and, leaving it for Katafa to clean and prepare, he went straight across the sward to the old firehole and began to light a fire.

Then putting some breadfruit to bake he made off behind the house to the shack that the search party had missed, found the old water breaker of the dinghy, filled it at the

little well at the back of the yam patch and returned with it on his shoulder.

He placed it carefully in the boat, then he came back to where Katafa was cooking the fish and stood with his brow knotted, watching but scarcely seeing her.

He was reviewing everything in his mind, that mind so simple yet so straight-thinking and clear-sighted; another person might have been bothering about the strangers and the possibility of their return to the sward, he was thinking of nothing but the journey ahead and the meal in hand.

Having determined to risk being found he dismissed the matter from his mind.

After standing for a moment like this he suddenly turned, went back to the bank and having rebaited the hook with the remains of the crab began to fish again, landing in the course of five minutes or so a three-pound schnapper and another bream. "For to-morrow," said he as he threw them on the ground by the girl and sat down to the meal she had prepared.

Katafa said nothing. Fear was at her heart. She could scarcely eat, every breath of the breeze was a footstep and the hateful woods that surrounded the sward seemed only waiting to seize her, but she said nothing. The calm, certain courage of Dick bore her along with it, his coolness became part of her but without destroying the fear that breathed on her from the woods.

Then when the meal was over and Dick, picking up the club that had never left him even when fishing, gave her directions to cook the remaining fish, place them in the boat and stay in the boat till his return, she made no objection, though the fear of being alone was like the fear of death.

"I am going to look," said Dick, "to see if the big canoe is still there and how it lies and count how many of them there are and see what they are doing. Wait for me." He swept the sward, the trees and the lagoon with a glance, then he made off, trailing the club, toward the eastern trees.

She had played her part so well that he did not guess her terror. He himself had no fear even of the apelike men, fear had been left out of his composition when he was born in those same woods he was treading now, light of foot, silent as a panther and as swift on the trail.

Katafa, left to herself, bent her head for a moment as though a heavy hand were pressing it down, then straightening herself and flinging out her arms as though casting fear away she set to on the work before her.

In half an hour it was finished, the fish cooked and wrapped in leaves and placed in the boat, the fire put out and all traces of the meal cast into the lagoon.

Then, snuggling down in the dinghy, she waited. Nothing could be more hidden than her position, nothing more secure, yet fear lay with her, clawing at her heart. Never had she felt such fear as this fear, not for herself now but for Dick.

It was their first parting. She had not known at all what Dick was to her till now, how every fiber of her being was tied to him and the true and awful meaning of love.

The sexless love that is akin to mother love, the one thing deathless, if there is no death.

For a moment she had felt it on that night when the point of Laminai's spear killed *taminan* and self in her.

Since then life had been a dream almost without thought, a happiness whose only stain was the far-off vision of Karolin.

Now alone, with the branches moving above her in the wind, she knew what love really was, the cruelest gift the gods ever gave to man and the most beautiful; the most terrible and yet the most benign.

The soul of Katafa passed through all the forms of human soul states in its change from the nebulous to the formed.

Antagonism when Kearney tried to hit her with the whip of seaweed, hatred when he hit her with the tia-wood ball, the longing for revenge which brought him death, the boundless irritation that had been born in her from Dick, the mad desire to destroy him, pity born in her at his cry for help, tenderness brought to her by the bird, love that turned all other things to nothing, even the spell of *taminan*.

Who finds a soul finds sorrow, and who finds love finds death. Death surely and at last, and almost as surely a hundred little deaths in imagination, absence or estrangement.

She heard the movement of the leaves in the wind and the eternal voice of the surf on the reef and beyond them the silence so full of possibilities.

Katafa knew more of the world than Dick. Dick was the child of two people who had gone far to a state of savagery,

Katafa had been born in civilization. On Karolin, when she had walked as a ghost among ghosts, she had seen terrible things that had left her unmoved owing to the gulf that had separated her from humanity, and now from that past came all sorts of half-formless imaginings threatening Dick.

Time and again, but for his order she would have left the boat and made for the eastern beach to see what had happened. She was to stay in the boat and wait for him. She could not resist that order and fortunately for them both she did not try.

As she lay there listening, waiting, loathing her own security and inaction, the one thing giving her comfort and strength was the fact that she was obeying his order. It was as though he had left with her part of his mind, warm, living and sustaining.

An hour passed and then from the trees came a sound, the sound of something moving swiftly and moving toward her; a form dashed the leaves and branches aside—it was Dick.

The club was trailing from his left hand, his right, grasping a branch, was holding it thrust aside, around his neck a tendril of convolvulus twined as though the woods, worshiping, had wreathed him, and his face was lit with battle, triumph and the light of something terrible that was almost laughter. For a moment he stood there like a god of old time before his worshiper, then letting the branches close behind him he slipped into the boat and lay holding her in his arms, his lips almost to her ear.

He had stolen through the trees to spy on the strangers and drawing toward the eastern beach had heard the sound of axes at work. The men with holes in their ears and slit noses were cutting down trees away to the right of the beach, in among the trees and invisible from the beach. Having watched them through the leaves without being seen he made for the beach itself. The great canoe was in the lagoon just as she had been on the night before and on the sands walking up and down were two white men. Men the same as Kearney only different in face, men with hair on their faces, one red, the other black.

What happened then he told in few words.

Watching the bearded men walking up and down and talking together the wish came on him to go up to them and look them in the face and speak to them; his pride had somehow risen against the fact that he was hiding there in concealment while they were walking free with command of the beach, and besides that there was the wish to speak to them, to hear them speak, to see them closer. Yet something held him back. Caution, maybe, who knows?—but it did not hold him long. Just as though something were pushing him from behind out he came from the trees and crossing the sands approached the two men. They stopped in their walk, turned and stared at him.

Dick's description of the two men was succinct. They stank, gin probably, but whatever it was it offended his fine sense of smell and the memory of it made him spit over the side of the dinghy as he told of it.

One can fancy that the disgust was written on his beautiful and expressive face as he came toward the strangers, chin uptilted and with level eyes like an object lesson in what man ought to be contrasted with what man is, and one may fancy what the products of high civilization may have felt at the sight of a Kanaka walking as if the world belonged to him as well as the beach, and with a look like that on his mug.

Nothing is so infectious as dislike and distaste and the gentlemen from the ship exchanged remarks and laughed, and though Dick had all but forgotten the language of his birth, he knew. An animal would have known what they said and what they thought, for the language of insult is universal, and Dick, standing before them, forgetting Katafa, forgetting everything, replied. Just one word: *"Panaka!"*

Panaka in Karolinese means a dogfish, just as Kanaka means a shark. Do the Karolinites know the relationship between the two creatures since they use only a single letter to differentiate one name from the other—who knows? But the single letter concludes the business as far as insult is concerned, for the shark is feared and respected; the dogfish loathed and despised—it steals the bait, it bites the fish on the hook, it will sometimes attack a man if he is defenseless, or a child. It was Katafa's term of dishonor and reproach for the robber crabs and scavenger gulls, and the bula fish all spines and snap, the ink-jetting octopods and the green eels that tangled the lines when caught.

The word heaped with insult had scarcely left Dick's mouth when the red man struck. Dick nearly fell, recovered himself and with

a great half moon sweep of the club brought the red man low, then he chased the black-bearded man for half a hundred yards till reason returned and he remembered the ape men, Katafa and all the things he ought never to have forgotten.

Shouts from the anchored schooner did not delay his steps as he took cover in the trees, making with all speed for the hidden dinghy.

That was the story he told into Katafa's ear.

"Remembering you, I came back," he finished.

That was the truth. Only for Katafa he would have no doubt done to the black-bearded man what he had done to the red. Heaven knows what the end of the whole adventure might have been or the end of that dominant and fearless spirit, whether he would have fallen beneath the weight of numbers and been trodden out on the sand, or whether he would have brought the New Hebrideans to heel, taken the schooner, sailed and found civilization and risen to Napoleonic heights. No one knows where a human rocket may go once fired, but Katafa and Fate interposed—at least to delay the firing and alter the direction of the line of energy.

They lay listening, yet hearing nothing but the wind and the surf, but they knew that this silence was absolutely deceptive, the woods were full of trickery and the altering of a few points in the wind would cut off or increase sound traveling from a distance.

More, the altering of the time of day made a difference. Here in the twenty-four hours of a day leaves, twigs, branches, the very trees themselves, altered in pose or position and every alteration of the great green curtain interposed or removed barriers to sound. The energy expended in the opening and closing of earth flowers, what mill might it not drive if "properly directed" and the energy Palm Tree Island expended in a day—who could measure it? It was unknown or only instinctively known to Dick and Katafa in the recognition that the sound-carrying qualities of the woods varied with morning, noon and night.

As they lay secure, hidden and listening, Katafa, whose left arm was about the neck of her companion, let her right hand rest on the club that lay beside her.

The coconut fiber always wrapped round the club handles in war time so as to give a better grip had unwound a bit and her fingers straying felt a ring surrounding the wood, lower down another ring and lower down another. It was the three-ringed club of Karolin, the sacred *Pasht* always carried by the eldest son of the king or his representative in battle. It had been carried by Laminai in the attack on the Spanish ship long years ago and recently by Ma, the only son of Laminai. When Dick had killed Ma in the glade it had lain there in the moonlight and had been picked up by one of the fugitives from the battle who cast it away on the beach before plunging into the water in his vain attempt to escape.

Katafa knew that it was the royal club, a thing equivalent to a scepter. She had seen it naked of its coconut-fiber wrapping, carried in state, worshiped.

No woman of Karolin dared handle it on the pain of death and as her fingers touched the sacred rings a thrill of pride went through her.

It was Dick's.

Karolin's symbol of power and success in war had fallen into the hands of Taori.

She did not know that she was handling the weapon that had slain her mother.

The weapon that had fallen into the hands of Taori not through coincidence but the iron logic of events.

CHAPTER XLVI.

THE CLUB OF MA.—(CONTINUED.)

Dismiss the clumsy and brutal affair that sculptors have placed in the hand of Hercules and which inevitably is recalled to mind by the word club.

The *Pasht* of Karolin might almost have been called a sword, almost likened to a hockey stick. Four feet two inches from extremity to extremity, curved and broadened and flattened at the striking end, with a tip rim of coral mortised to the wood, it could strike with the convexity, the concavity or the flat. It could sever a head if properly used or make a gash half a foot deep in a man, or simply stun. No man knew its age, the fire-hardened wood of which it was made had ceased to grow on Karolin and the art by which the coral tip had been mortised to the wood was a forgotten art.

There is no doubt that this terrible weapon had a history as bloodstained as it

was long, but it was the blood of battle it had spilled, not the blood of sacrifice and superstition, not the blood of greed and trade. Laminai alone had disgraced it by killing a woman with it. But Laminai was dead and his sons and his seed destroyed forever.

Lying by Dick, Katafa told him what she knew about it, showed him the rings on the handle, told him that now, since Ma and all the fighting men of Karolin were gone and Uta of no account, it was his to keep and hold and wield above the heads of all other men.

Talking to him her voice suddenly ceased. The wind through the branches had brought a sound. Now it came clear, a sound like the cry of hounds in pursuit of game; it died off, grew louder, ceased. Then came another sound, sudden and close, and bursting through the branches and between the trees so close to the lagoon bank that Dick could have hit him with a biscuit came a man. He was the black-bearded man of the beach and he was running for his life. Dick concealed by the branches just glimpsed him but the glimpse was enough. Right on the heels of the fugitive came three of the ape men, the leader armed with an ax.

They were no longer giving tongue but he could hear their breath coming as they ran: "Waugh—waugh—waugh."

They passed, then came a shriek from the sward and then pandemonium.

Dick, listening with Katafa's arm about him, knew what had happened but he did not know all, or how that the red-bearded man, the owner of the schooner and the terrible personality that had dominated the expedition, being put out of count, the New Hebrideans armed with their tree-cutting axes had risen in revolt. That of the four white men and the dozen Polynesian sailors of the schooner, not one man remained alive; that a hundred and forty Nahanesians held the island in their grasp, the schooner and the trade goods and rum on board.

At one stroke the club of Ma had done this work of magic with no magic to help it but that of its own perfect balance and the personality of its wielder.

Safe hidden in the bushes they heard the sounds from the sward die down. Then came silence broken only by the old tune of the reef, the whisper of the wind and the sounds of the birds in the branches.

CHAPTER XLVII.

THE FETE OF DEATH.

It was close on midnight and the ebb running strong showed through the branches an occasional lazy swirl on the moonlit lagoon water. At the break it was racing strong but here the water seemed hardly to move. The wind still held from the north and as Dick untied from the tree roots it parted and closed the branches above, showering Katafa with moonlight and shadow. He pushed off with a scull and before he could take his seat again the current, lazy though it looked, had slued the bow of the little boat right round.

They had settled to get away when the schooner people were asleep, but sleep was far from the island that night to judge by the vague sounds that came from the east between the breathings of the wind.

But the tide was outrunning and the hour was come and Dick was not of the order that waits for a better opportunity.

Stepping the mast with the sail lightly brailed and ready to break out he took the sculls and the moonlit glade and the cape of wild coconuts passed behind them out of sight forever.

And now as they moved swiftly, great ripples running out from the divided water and spreading toward bank and reef, Katafa, who was steering, saw something beyond the treetops, a rose-red pulsating light that seemed fighting the light of the moon, and above the light smoke like blown hair streaming on the wind toward the south; and now, as the dinghy driven by sculls and current drew on to the great curve that led to the eastern beach the sounds that had reached them by the sward loudened and became more shrill and through the voices of men outshouting gulls and gulls outshouting men came a new sound, sudden, sonorous and without cease, the roar of flame triumphant.

The dinghy turned the last cape into a world of light. The schooner, fired by accident or design and straining at her anchor chain, was blazing against the night like a bonfire; lagoon, reef and woods were lit broad as by day and crossing the roar of the flames the shouting of the reef gulls came mixing with the yelling from the beach where a hundred black forms danced and sang and screeched, mad with the black joy of rum and destruction.

It was like breaking into a fête.

At a stroke the desolation of the island was shattered and the world, holding clamorous festival, had taken the beach. Katafa, half standing up for a moment with the red light shining on her face, gazed fascinated with the terrible glamour of the thing, then she sank back, steadily steering right for the broad fairway between ship and shore.

Dick shouted to her, she knew, and leaving the tiller for a moment she leaned over, unbrailed the sail and gave it to the following wind.

Then as the boat raced for salvation and without releasing the tiller she saw two things; to left and for a moment the blazing schooner pouring flame to the sky, roaring at her, scorching her and with its bowsprit festooned with wretches who dared not drop into the shark-filled lagoon; to right the white beach a stone's throw away, and racing the boat along the beach, shouting at her, threatening her, a great crowd of men, black and mad with rum.

Then, in a flash, all this was wiped out and the firelit concave of the sail was before her outlined on the calm night beyond.

Dick who had spoken no word since his order to her, half rose; she saw his face lit by the retreating blaze and the rage and hatred in it, she saw him fling out his arm at the beach and schooner and she heard his voice shrill against the cries that followed him. It was the cry that the companions of Sru had hurled at him long ago.

"Kara! Kara! Kara!" "War! War! War!"

Turning he brailed the sail and seized again the sculls. The dinghy was rocking and racing in the confluence of the floods from the arms of the lagoon. They passed the palm tree in the northern pier of the break as an arrow passes the mark, tossed to the meeting of current and flood and with sail filling again headed south against the long heave of the Pacific. Behind them lay the glow of the still burning wreck that was seen that night at Karolin.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

FROM GARDEN TO GARDEN LIKE SEEDS ON THE WIND.

Here there was peace. The great dark swell coming up and passing in the moonlight, the following wind, the stars; nothing remained but these, these and the whisper of the reef far astern and the far glow of the burning ship.

Katafa steered, the great bunch of bananas up against her legs, Nan on his stick beside her, the head of Nan hanging over the transom like the head of a person contemplating seasickness.

They had never thought of dishonoring him by taking him off his stick. He was something real to them and without thinking back and putting things together they felt that he was an influence in their lives.

He was. Only for him Sru would not have landed to be killed, the army and navy of Karolin would never have sailed to break the charm of *taminan*. Only for him the idea of making a mast for the dinghy would never have occurred to Dick, for it was the cut sapling that gave him the idea. Only for the mast the idea of journeying to Karolin would never have arisen.

Nan had literally put the club of Ma into the hands of Dick, the blazing schooner, the dread white men, the revolt of the Melanesians, all these were part of the work of Nan, who seemed only a coconut, but was, yet, an idea. The fish, the breadfruit, the water breaker and all the odds and ends they had brought away were stowed, some in the stern sheets and some amidships, while in the bow reposed the little ships like the toys of these children who had never learned to play with toys, but with men and events and with Destiny itself.

The wind blew steady and strong from the north.

Palm Tree had never depended on the trades. Owing to the influence of the Low Archipelago the trade law did not hold either here or at Karolin, neither could the strength of the northern-running current be depended on. South winds increased its rate of flow; north winds decreased it. Tonight the dinghy had to face only a knot-and-a-half current.

Toward ten o'clock in the evening the far glow of the burning schooner suddenly vanished from the northern sky. The sound of the reef had been left long ago astern, nothing remained but the sea, the wind and the stars.

Dick, who had not spoken for some time had slipped down into the bottom of the boat and was leaning his arm on the thwart and his head on his arm. He was asleep. Katafa did not awaken him. She was almost glad to be alone in these first solemn

hours of return to all that her heart desired. The frigate bird had found its home again among the infinite sea distances, and the wide-spaced columns of the swell as they passed, saluted her.

Now to port the tremendous vagueness and secrecy of the night began to give before something that seemed less like light than life, the sky showed scarcely a change, yet the sea had altered and now, low in the east, dim, red and luminous like the banked smoke of burning cities, a line of mist lay suddenly revealed above the line of sea.

A gull passed the boat soaring on the wind and the wind whipped the sea with renewed life and freshness and the sea cast its spray at Katafa as she steered, her eyes wandering from the sail to the old and accustomed glory, the wild, triumphant splendor of the east aflame.

Two great zones of light, like the knees of the angel of the dawn,. showed, and, far above, wings in tumultuous color and wide-spread arms of light struggling as if to smash down the crystal doors—and then, tumult dying and color fading, at a stroke the western sky showed not a single star and in the eastern sky stood day.

Dick awoke from sleep with the sun half lifted above the horizon. Creeping aft he took his place beside Katafa, but though she gave the tiller to him and slipping down rested her head against her knee, she could not sleep.

The island they had left vanished utterly from sight. They were alone with the sea and now for the first time came doubt.

She knew the sea and its absolute infidelity, its traps and surprises, should they not find Karolin; should some storm rise suddenly and blow them into the unknown east or the west where the dead men warm themselves round the dying sun!

She glanced up at Dick.

Dick, beautiful as the god of youth and as serene, Dick who had only known the waters of the lagoon and the sea beyond the reef and who was gazing now at the sea itself, untroubled by its vastness and unafraid.

While her eyes held him she knew no fear but when her eyes left him doubt returned. She had been so long separated from the sea that the guiding sense and instinct that served the fishermen for compass had all but deserted her. She felt lost.

She had forgotten the guiding sign placed long ago above the great lagoon by God whose garden is nature and whose rivers are the currents of the sea. Dick, perhaps divining her trouble by that subtle sense which enabled them to communicate without words, leaned sideways toward her as he steered and letting the boat a few points off her course, pointed to where far ahead the light of the great lagoon formed its wan miraculous window in the sky.

CHAPTER XLIX.

THE BIRTH OF A SEA KING.

They had with them food and water enough for a week. Dick had left little to chance. When a tiny child he had almost frightened Kearney by putting the fish away in the shadow of the thwart to prevent the sun from spoiling it, and this natural ability for dealing with things which had been a gift from his parents had not been decreased by life on the island.

Now with all he had ever known taken away from him by distance, facing a new world and the unknown sea, this ability to deal with things showed itself in his fearlessness and absolute confidence in himself, the boat and the course they steered.

By noon they had been twelve hours on their journey, making two and a half knots against the current. Thirty miles to the north lay Palm Tree, while in the south, like a beacon, the forty-mile lagoon of Karolin signaled to them from the blue; and now as it drew toward sunset, Katafa, who had fallen asleep, awoke and sitting up seemed listening as though to catch the sound of something she had heard in her dreams.

There was nothing, nothing but the slap of the bow wash and the creak of the mast and the lapping of the long swell as it kissed the planks, nothing but the cry of a gull that passed them. It was flying south.

Yet still she listened, resting her head against the gunnel, her eyes fixed on the space of sky beneath the sail. Nothing.

Then as the sun, now far down in the west, was reaching to the sea that boiled up in gold to meet him, Katafa raised her head.

Dick heard it now, a faint, far breathing, a murmur that came and passed and came again, a voice that was not the wind.

It was Karolin.

Karolin invisible but singing, calling the gulls home across the evening sea.

Far away they could be seen flying from east and west toward the invisible land and now as the sun went down like a ship on fire and a single great star broke out above the purple west the whisper of the great forty-mile reef loudened and changed to a definite murmur like the voice of a far-off multitude.

Katafa standing up for a moment and steadying herself with her hand on the mast seemed to have forgotten Dick. Karolin was still a great way off but its voice was enough to dispel all doubt and fear. She knew these waters and all the old sea instincts that had given her distance and direction when out in the fishing canoes returned, led by memory and the voice of the reef.

The fishing bank where the squall had struck her canoe, blowing Taiofa overboard, lay straight before them. They could anchor there for the night; it was safer to make the lagoon entrance in the morning.

She told him this and then resting in the bottom of the boat with her elbow on a thwart she watched and listened while the moon and the stars took the sky and the voice of the distant reef came louder against the wind.

The tide was beginning to flood on Karolin and the wind and tide were building the sea on the coral. The air was filled with the rumor of it, it seemed to come from everywhere around, from the very stars that lit the night.

Then the running swell looming up and passing in the gloom altered in character and away to starboard something showed white, something that came and went like the flicker of a handkerchief; a natural sea beacon, the foam on the Kanaka rock.

Katafa knew. They were on the fishing bank.

The Kanaka rises sharp like the spire of a cathedral from the great mountain range that forms the Palu Bank. At full flood it is submerged entirely but even then it will break if there is a heavy swell on. It is the only sign of the bank and the only danger to ships, but to Katafa it was a friend.

Crawling forward while Dick let go the sheet she dropped the anchor they had so often used when fishing off Palm Tree; it fell in twelve fathom water and held.

It was near here that she had anchored when the squall struck the canoe, driving her from Karolin, but to-night there was no danger of squalls. The wind had sunk to a steady breathing from the north and the swell had fallen to a gentle heave that rocked the little boat like a cradle to the lullaby of the surf.

Dick, tired out, had fallen asleep lying in the bottom of the boat, and clasped by the girl, just as his father had fallen asleep long years ago clasped by Emmeline and death.

But death was far away to-night. Life ringed the sleepers with its charm and the future spoke in the voice of the reef.

"Taori, Karolin has called you to be her king and rule her people and make her laws and break her chains of error, for this you were born, for this you still live, and war shall be your portion while you live, and peace shall crown your victories and lead you at last to the eternal peace which is Freedom."

With his head on the *Pasht,* unconscious as the dead, he slept while the sea wind blew and the great reef sang, mourned, murmured and spoke.

CHAPTER L.

HIS KINGDOM.

Broad as the reef break was at Karolin, no ship under sail could enter at the full ebb. Sweeping with an eight-knot clip and boiling round the coral piers the waters of the great lagoon met the northward-running current in a leaping cross sea of aquamarine and emerald whipped to snow when the wind was in the east. At slack all this died away; a child might have swum the passage and a leaf would have drifted with scarce a change of place. This was the sea gate of Karolin and the keepers of the gate were the sun and the moon.

The sun and the moon and the wind and the sea, these four held the great atoll between them and had here a significance unguessed by dwellers on the continents and lands of the world, for here the new and the full moons were manifestly the letters in of the great spring tides, and the first and third quarter moons the admitters of the neaps. Here the sun was seen from his rising to his setting, from his leap to his plunge, and storm and halcyon and calm cast their spells on life unbroken and uninterfered with by hills or walls or mountains or forests.

Here for undated ages man had lived alone with the sea and the gulls and the fish, and had remained man, learning little, forgetting nothing, with a memory and tradition kept alive by the necessities of the moment that urged him to build canoes as his forefathers had built them, and houses to shelter the canoes and houses to protect him from the rains and winds.

Here there was nothing that did not date from the remote past, nothing that was not of use in the immediate present.

So is it with the beavers and the ants and the bees whose work ever advances from the time of Nineveh and beyond. yet never advances to the future, who build as they built, who live as they lived, who die as they died, and as first they built and lived and died in the Garden of God which is nature.

Only man can change, only man can live for ages without change yet remain capable of change, only man can be sealed away in the land of instinct yet remain capable of entering the land of reason.

So was it with the people of Karolin gathered together this morning on the beach by the gridiron of coral where for ages past victims had been sacrificed to Nanawa the shark-toothed one, by his priests and through the agency of his servants the sharks.

Le Juan, after the death of Uta Matu, had temporized. She did not in the least mind sacrificing the half-witted girl Ooma but she greatly dreaded barren results.

Including the king's wives, there were over two hundred women in Karolin all wanting their men back, and close on three hundred children, more than half of which were boys; of these boys a large number were over twelve and a good number over fourteen, all ripe for mischief, without much fear of Nanawa and with the antagonism of all boys toward old women of Le Juan's type.

Le Juan had sent the fathers and husbands of this terrible population to a war from which they had not returned and worse than that she had made herself responsible under Nanawa for their return.

She had declared that they were "held" by Nanawa till the great sacrifice of a woman had been offered to him, yet feeling that the tricky shark god had played her another trick she simply dared not make the sacrifice. She knew what would happen if it failed, she felt the temper of the people as a man feels the sharp point of a dagger against his breast, so, as before said, she temporized, fell into pretended trances, had pretended visions, declared that nothing was to be done until it was absolutely sure that the mother of Ooma would not return and sweated consumedly at night as she lay in her shack listening to the sounds of the village and the shouting of the ribald boys and the boom of the surf on the reef, while Ooma, half-witted and happy, slept protected from death by the ferocious beast that was the soul of Le Juan and whose one dread was extinction—through failure.

But the time had come and the death warrant was sealed by the far red speck of light on the northern sky caused by the burning of the schooner.

A boy had seen it, two minutes later the whole village was watching it and next day it had got into the minds of the people. It was looked on as a sign, of what no one could say, but it was an angry sign and that night Nalia, the chief wife of the dead Uta, had a dream.

She dreamed that Uta appeared to her and that the red light was his wrath that the great sacrifice had not been made. He also declared that if it was not made at once worse would befall Karolin. That was the end. Before dawn Le Juan, dragged from her hut to hear the news, gave in, and as the sun broke above the lagoon the preparations began.

Ooma awakening to another happy day of life was anointed and rubbed with palm oil to make her acceptable to the god. She laughed with pleasure. She was of the happy half-witted kind with sense enough to know that she was being fêted; when they put flowers in her hair she laughed and laughed and when they led her by the hand to a suddenly prepared banquet where she alone was the guest she went laughing, the boys dancing around her and shouting. *"Karak, o he, Ooma, karaka."*

The last of the tide was flowing out of the lagoon when, the banquet over, Le Juan taking the hand of Ooma led her along by the waterside followed by the whole population of Karolin.

By the break great sheets and coils of glass-smooth water, pale as forget-me-nots, could be seen moving between the wind flaws where a half-dead breeze touched the surface; ahead of the advancing crowd the

gridiron of coral lay almost entirely uncovered by the tide.

Nature with that assistance which she sometimes lends to inhumanity had tilted this terrible shelf so that the gradually rising water would take the victim to the waist at greater flood, art had driven in iron bars for the binding.

At quarter flood, or before, the sharks who always knew what was going on, instructed maybe by Nanawa, would begin their struggle for the prize.

As the procession approached the gridiron Ooma suddenly began to hold back.

Some instinctive warning had come to her that danger lay ahead, that all things were not as they pictured themselves to be; that the flowers and the feasting and all the splendors of that most glorious morning of her life were veils of illusion behind which lay Terror.

She stopped, trying to release her hand from the grip of Le Juan, then struggling with her captor she began to scream. They seized her, still screaming, and brutally cast her on the coral, binding her to it by each thigh, by the wrist and by the shoulders. Then, as she lay there half stunned, voiceless and staring at the sky, suddenly from the great ring of the atoll, rising to heaven like a protest, came a sigh, profound, from the very heart of the sea. It was the turning of the tide.

CHAPTER LI.

RULER OF KAROLIN.

At sunrise that morning Katafa had awakened to find the wind fallen to a gentle breeze. Away to the south she could see the palms of Karolin and across the scarcely ruffled swell she could hear the song of the surf on the coral.

The Kanaka rock spouting to starboard told her the state of the tide; it was falling. Hours must elapse before they could make the break with the flood so instead of waking Dick who was still soundly asleep she sat watching the gulls and the wind flaws on the water, listening, dreaming.

Far away over the past her mind flitted like the frigate bird, her namesake, tireless, covering vast distances. She saw again the reef where she had wandered as a child, that endless sunlit coral road, the sea wrack and the shells and the gulls always flying, the beaches where she had played like a ghost child with children untouchable as ghosts. The vast sunsets, the tumultuous dawns, the nights when under the coil of the great snake she had watched the torches of the fish spearers on the reef, and the night when under the sickle moon the sea had taken her and swept her away to find love and a soul.

A gull sweeping past saluted the boat with a cry and Dick, stirring in his sleep, awoke, stretched, held out his arms and then clasped them around Katafa, gazing as she pointed away to the south where every lift of the swell showed the palms of the great atoll whose mirror blaze was paling the sky.

Then hauling in the anchor and setting the sail to the light wind that had shifted to the west of north, Katafa steered heading for the east while Dick handed her food and water from the breaker, eating scarcely anything himself.

His eyes were fixed on the far-off shore to starboard, the endless shore that showed nothing but gulls and palms, foam jets when a greater breaker broke on the coral, all seen against air luminous with the dazzle of the vast lagoon.

And now, still following the turn of the reef, Katafa pointed ahead where far away past the northern pier of the break the whole sea danced as the outpouring waters met the current, the last of the ebb rushing like a river, foam dashed, jubilant, green against blue, white against green and gulls over all, gulls wheeling and shouting and diving and drifting on the wind like turbulent spirits on the sun blaze. Katafa held on, still steering due east as though to leave Karolin behind, on and on till the vast sea disclosed itself to the south and the turmoil at the break died and oiled away into the slack. Deep in the knowledge of those waters she held on steering now to the southwest against the current, then turning the boat at last she made due west. The wind had freshened and backed to the east of north as if to help them, yet it was half flood before the piers of the break showed clear before them, the water pouring in and lashing the coral, leaping on the outer beach and filling the air with its fume and song; great fish went with them, albacores leaping like whirled swords, bream, garfish, all in the grip of the mighty river of the flood.

And now the blue and blazing lagoon where the fleets of the world might have harbored flung out its mighty arms, the roar

and thunder and spray of the breakers saluted them, and then, under a storm of gulls, the spray and thunder and torrent of the sea passed like a dream and before them across the untroubled waters lay the white beach where Uta Matu had watched the dawn and the return of the fleet that never more could return.

The beach was crowded. It was half flood and the sharks had snatched away the last of the last offering ever to be made to the great god Nanawa. Steering for the beach Katafa saw nothing but the crowd; women, children, boys all lined by the water's edge, dumb with scarcely a movement, watching the approaching boat that had appeared as if in answer to the sacrifice of Ooma.

Among them stood Le Juan and as she watched, wondering like the others and as dumb, the rapidly approaching boat called up in her mind a vision from far away—the boat of the Spanish ship of years ago, the ship that had brought Katafa and whose timbers lay sunk ten fathoms deep, crusted by the ever-building coral.

She saw in the boat the answer of Nanawa, the evil god who was to play her one last trick, for as the prow dashed on the sand and as though the god had suddenly stripped a curtain aside she saw Katafa.

Ah, the spirit of prophecy had not been denied to her those long years ago when urging Uta Matu to destroy the child she saw in her the agent of revenge for the murdered *papalagi*. Katafa who had brought Taiofa to his death and Sru, Laminai, and all the men of Karolin. Katafa who had destroyed half a nation to recreate it, Katafa who had vanished to return, a woman beautiful like a star risen from the sea.

She saw nothing else, neither Taori who stood on the sands beside the girl nor the people who had surged back as the cry rang along the beach: "Katafa, from the dead she has returned! Katafa!"

She saw neither the boat that the lagoon waves were driving broadside on to the sand, nor the lagoon, nor the sky beyond; like a beast the spirit that had dwelt with her always, swelled and seized her and shook her and spoke: spoke in words that were strange and unknown as though it had flung human speech aside for the language of the devils.

Then, as though the great hand that had used her was crushing her and dropping her, she fell, and with her the power of Nanawa forever.

The sun was near his setting and in the evening light Nan stood on his post erected by the house of Uta, once King of Karolin, and in the house dimly to be seen were the little ships of Taori, toys of the long ago, symbols now of the sea power that he dreamed of vaguely as he stood in the sunset on the reef with Katafa.

Only yesterday he had stood armed with the *Pasht* by the dead body of Le Juan while the people, listening to the words of Katafa, proclaimed him their chief, yet by this evening he had visited the canoe houses and had sent fisher boys to the southern beach to fetch Aioma, Palia and Tafuta, the three old men, too old for war, but canoe builders all of them and holding between them the secret of the construction of the great war canoes.

For to Dick, standing with uptilted chin before the women and the children and the boys who with the sure instinct of children and women and boys had seen in him their ruler, a vision had come, God sent, of the world that lay beyond the world he knew. He had seen again Ma in the moonlight and the spear of Laminai, the red-bearded man he had put to death, and the black-bearded man chased through the woods, the burning schooner and the ape men who still held the beach of Palm Tree, and as he looked on Katafa, on the women and helpless children, on the boys growing toward war age but still unripe, the great knowledge came to him, as it came to the earliest men who fronted the wolf, that strength is possession and that without possession love is a mockery. That dreams based on unreality are dreams.

Katafa, turning from the canoe houses with the last of the sunset lighting her face, swept the sea with her eyes to where, far away above the unbroken sky line, something floated that was not cloud, that was not land, that was not sea. The ghost of an island, lovely and illusive as the land where Lestrange in his dream had met his vanished children.

Palm Tree, far lifted above all things earthly—by mirage.

They turned from the canoe houses and came along the reef. Here on the outer

beach, the village far behind them, they sat down to rest.

It was the first time they had found themselves alone since reaching Karolin. All last night the village had hummed around them, bonfires burning all along the coral and bonfires answering from the southern beach, conch answering conch, while the great stars watched and the breakers thundered as they had thundered at the coming of Uta Matu to power, of Uta Maru his father, and all the line of the kings of Karolin stretching to the remote past, but never beyond the voice of the sea.

Here they were at last alone, all trouble done with for the moment, the past like a tempestuous sea, the future veiled and vague but great and full of the splendors of Promise.

For a moment neither of them spoke, their eyes following the spray clouds of the breakers and the flighting gulls wheeling above the flooding sea. Then as they turned one to the other and as he seized her by the shoulders, to Katafa for the first time, fully came the knowledge of the splendor of man crowned with power. Man triumphant, mighty, kingly and dominant. For in the past few hours Taori had changed from a boy to a man fit to be the ruler of men.

Holding her from him for a moment, his head drawn back like the head of a cobra, he consumed her with his eyes.

Then he struck, crushing her with his arms, his lips to her lips, her throat, while the full flooding sea shook the coral with its thunder and the gulls in great circles swung chanting above the haze of the spray.

As the sea touched the horizon, pouring its gold across the outgoing tide, Katafa, turning from her lover and sweeping the sea with her eyes, saw floating far above the northern sky line something that was not cloud, that was not land, that was not sea. The ghost of an island, lonely and illusive as the land where in his dream Lestrange had met his vanished children.

Palm Tree, far lifted above all things earthly—by mirage.

THE END.

Short stories by Mr. Stacpoole will appear in early numbers.

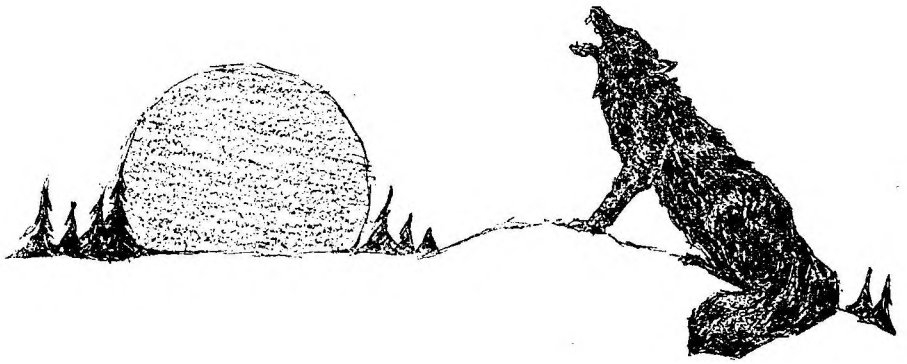
MERE MAN REVOLTS

"TO reëstablish, maintain and operate the household primarily as a masculine institution"—that is the avowed intention of the newly formed Association of Brothers Under the Skin which has applied for a charter in New York State. But that isn't all that these rebel husbands want to do. Their declaration of independence—if they can get their wives to pay any attention to it, of course—will do away with most of the grievances of the married male. The association intends to protect husbands from the performance of household duties and marketing; to prevent unauthorized purchases by friend wife; to abolish "delicatessen" meals; to prevent reference by the wife to any past faults of the husband; to develop "cave-man" methods for the control of unreasonable better halves; to establish the right of the male partner to determine the length of his wife's hair and the shortness of her skirt, and to compel the wife to share the troubles as well as the pleasures of married life. All of which a person of fine imagination might conceive of the ladies accepting. But there is another paragraph in the declaration which we think spells ruin for the new association. It reads: "To prevent the entrance into the home of mothers-in-law and all relatives on the wife's side, except upon written permit signed by an officer of the association, which permit shall not be issued for use on Saturdays, Sundays or holidays."

There is also an association song which members will sing at their weekly meetings. Part of it runs:

So husbands all, attend the call—
To arms! Rise up! Declare your freedom.
Why even horses leave their stall—
So loose your chains—revolt from she-dom.

Here's to you, brothers. We wish you luck. You're going to need it.



The Call of the Running Moon

By T. von Ziekursch

Author of "The Red Queen," "Mitzli," Etc.

An ancient fear and an ancient hatred die at the call of the running moon.

THE world was tinged with red. The flats that reached away interminably into vague reaches were of brownish dun and in the distance was a sharp height against the sky of liquid brass. Distinct and clear cut as though it had been chiseled by some adroit carver of wood the plateaulike crest of the western ranges stood out. There was no impression of rising levels. Here was the desert waste of alkali plain, rolling off unevenly to eventually end at that sharp crest. The only visible indication of the slopes was in the undulations where the heights cast blue-gray shadow. The earth was hard. Sparse tuftings of buffalo grass scattered far apart were meager offerings of vegetation. It was a place of thirst, thirst and heat, of dust and silence. Somewhere overhead was the inverted caldron of flame that was the sun and the whole sky became an incandescent thing. In the sinks the air was dead, dead with all the stillness of this place and the omnipresent, wracking heat that came as a solid thing from above. This was a power of four dimensions before which life was awed.

There in the west were heights and on all other sides a fantastic array, confusing, tossed and jumbled, mesa and butte piled as by some mad deity in the utmost of delirium—a place of death and torture. Only where this alkali plain stretched away westward was there interruption of this place of rock and lava, of sheer abutments and sharp coulees.

In the east that quality of liquid metal was gone at last from the sky and in its place was a perceptible graying. Sharply cut shadows were thrown by every mesa and rock and the molten disk of the sun sank fast behind those irregular heights. In every minute detail now as evening approached there was the impression that this place was false yet hard, a region made of toy blocks magnified many times in size.

Then in the blackness that marked the rift in a massive pile of lava rock there was a feeling that something moved and a part of the darkness came out to where the uncanny light from the early night sky gave it form. It was a mystic shadow of reality, something that had life.

The great lobo tested the air but here there was no breeze to bring its varied news. It was merely the habit of untold ages that ruled. Her hind quarters sloped and she seemed to glide in that sliding lope of her species. With no more effort than some wild goat of the mountains she climbed the pile of lava rock, a hundred feet and more where it jutted up crazily. There toward the south was the desert, a place of frightfulness, and from here the mountains were visible on all other sides, strange, weirdly grotesque masses of queer-cut rock. But behind that series of heights that seemed a

barrier wall in the west was the land of man, of ranches and plenty.

And there lurked death for the lobo, relentless, even as it had lurked for all others of her breed, grimly pursuing until none was left but her. There were the dogs, the fighting packs, and the wolfers that were the Nemesis of her kind with their traps and poison and guns. Uninterruptedly this warfare against the lobo had gone on for years, unceasing, until this lone straggler remained lurking here on the very edge of the desert and in the fastness of this place of stone and hardness.

Here the men did not come. They were unaware of the stray bands of antelope that, too, had sought the refuge of this inaccessible region.

Atop the lava pile the lobo sank to her haunches and her head went back. The cry that rose on the night was an awful sound, throbbing and reverberating, frightful as the wail of some wraith in agonies of ghostly torture, most terrible of all sounds in the realm of the beast. It beat against the rocks, was magnified and echoed in this wild place of stone. Afar off the antelope band, resting in the safety of a wide flat where every slightest shadow was plain, started uneasily and gathered close, ready for the eerie flight of their marvelous speed. These the great lobo could not catch and only dragged down an occasional youngster through the craft of her skulking. But now the young ones were half grown and the speed of their start in moments of danger was almost that of the adults. Like things that were half bird and half animal they bounded away at her approach, in leaps that were beyond the powers of any other four-footed kind.

But in this cry of the lobo was something other than the usual warning given at the start of the blood trail. This was not the hard sound which all of her species voiced at the very beginning of the hunt as the rattlesnake warns before it strikes. From the east the early moon came full and round and in this night air was a lessening of the tremendous heat of the previous months.

This was the time of the running moon and the lobo gave voice to her longings, the supreme dictate of the wild. Hungry she was and there was a thirst that could not be allayed in these dry arroyos and the sinks of this place of dead things. She could hunt ultimately and the miles that had to be traveled to the nearest water were nothing, but this other want there was no way of fulfilling. A year previous the wolfers had finished their task and there never came an answer to her call. Alone and friendless, without the mate she craved, a pariah, she existed only because she had fled or been driven far from the edge of the range into this place of loneliness.

Yet hers was a regal exile. Feared her kind were by all things save the huge grizzlies that lived in the far fastnesses of the mountains and the great, tawny pumas that skulked in the most inaccessible regions. She was the straggler from another time, the lone lobo, the last of the gray buffalo wolves that formerly had hung on the edge of the bison herds, fierce, powerful, a constant danger even to these cloven-hoofed monsters whose passing had been the death knell to her breed.

Once more as she sat atop the lava pile that awful wail throbbed in the place of stone, echoing miles away in the fastnesses among the rocks. She waited but no answer came and she went down and was gone toward the west. There, far away, was a place of plenty. Here were miles on miles of hot alkali sand, of broken, jumbled rock to be traversed. This was safety and this she left behind. Now she hunted but not in the usual fashion. Perhaps it was because the remaining antelope were wary and she had not eaten for days, perhaps because even in her hunger there was the other thing which came stronger and stronger, more compelling, for this was the season of the running moon.

But this fast, tireless lope increased the pangs which demanded food. Here was the southern end of a mountain spur where the Gold Range was broken by a huge gap above the awful desert which was the valley of death. Through this gap she went and turned north. Now the alkali sand gave way to a softening feel on her pads. Here was the very edge of the range country and all about it in the mountains the mines where men had sought gold and silver and where forgotten towns were a mockery to their quest.

Just before the advent of dawn she dragged down a calf and surfeited the cravings within. Then she retreated among the hills to rest in fancied safety. Time after time she made kills from the herds of men, avoiding the carcasses of her previous forays

with their strychnine-laden meat and the traps that encircled them. And the wolfer who came in answer to the appeal of the ranchers knew that at this time there would be no den to which she could be tracked. But a rancher from the upper country near Silver Peak brought the solution—a fighting pack led by a great wolfhound.

From the foothills the dogs heard her cry, not the hunting cry, for now she was back in the land of plenty and killed only at intervals of two or three days, but the long wail of the running moon. For days the mounted men rode with the pack, casting them off early in the mornings and taking them up late, following the crisscross of her many trails for miles where she came into the flatlands at night and seeking her among the hills where she found safety during the hours of daylight. At last it came; late one afternoon they found her as the trailing dogs led the way along the foot of a steep hill where she had settled near the crest to have uninterrupted view for miles. As she moved the great wolfhound saw her and leaped away, leaving the rest of the eager dogs far behind. This was the thing for which his kind had been bred up. The trailing dogs would ultimately come close enough so the quarry would be forced into movement in the open and then the enormous speed of his long legs and mighty sinews would come into play.

The lobo knew that they had seen her. That great brown creature that suddenly catapulted from the midst of the others came straight toward her as she fled over the crest of the hill and turned toward the south with a long lead. Now she was superbly conditioned by the feasting on the herds and the trailing of the pack which had kept her on the move enough to prevent any logging heaviness in her muscles.

It was toward that gap in the mountains through which she had come on her way into this country that she raced so far ahead of the great wolfhound that she was only slightly more than visible. They seemed some big objects blown before a wind as the miles went by unnoticed, uncounted in this race of death. Her lead had been a long one and this saved her, for even her magnificent speed was unequal to that of the long-legged creature that pursued and would have turned her or engaged her in combat until the pack could arrive. But she ran in along the base of the mountains where there was no level grassland to serve literally as a race course for this fleet thing behind her.

Dusk fell and now the stamina of the wild alone held the lobo in front as the powers and speed of the hunter and hunted ebbed. She turned that southern end of the Gold Range and there in front lay the alkali stretches, broken by dead arroyos and coulees, and beyond it the place of lava rock and buttes that she had left under the dictates of hunger and the call of the running moon.

Somewhere in the shadows of the broken flat the wolfhound lost sight of her and the chase was over. And then the silence was broken by that wailing cry, uncanny, pleading, and in the heavens the running moon was high.

Back in the range country the rancher whose pack had pursued her listened to the words of wisdom from the wolfer as the fighting pack came home without the great leader.

"Like as not she's killed him when she got him far enough away from the others. The only way to run wolfhounds is two together so one can come up on each side. Then the lobo can't turn on either one without giving the other a chance to nail it in the neck."

But it was too late and for three days the fighting pack with its trailing dogs was turned loose in vain. There were no fresh tracks.

A week passed and then the great wolfhound returned, disheveled, tired almost to exhaustion and with the pads on his feet worn thin and tender. There was blood, too, on his muzzle, and some stray hairs, and the wolfer examining them swore they were of a jack rabbit.

Then peace was on the range country again and the wolfer left with the pelts of the coyotes that had been the only prey of his traps and strychnine.

The wet months were on the lowlands of the range and high among the mountains came snow while even in the dead alkali plains and that vast region of crazily piled rock there was a lessening of the terrific heat of the long summer months. But it was only a short respite, for on the southern ranges the sun never entirely lost its overwhelming force.

At last the lobo returned once again to

plunder the herds, back as she had come before through the gap in the mountains. Perhaps in the passing of the weeks she had forgotten the lesson of that grim chase when the heavy-fanged and fleet wolfhound cut down her lead as she turned the end of the mountains into the vast region that meant security and safety from men for her. Now she was gaunt and starved. Surely it had taken the stress of fierce hunger to drive her back here again where the cattle of the range were such an easy prey and where one kill would surfeit her for two or three days. And one kill she made only and was gone. Then for three days there was no sign of her; but on the fourth there was a big heifer dead with throat torn out and the riders of the herd knew that this was the work of a lobo once more.

Thus it continued. Her kills were always at intervals of several days and invariably from the band of cattle that had strayed farthest southward toward that gap in the mountains through which she came. Extra riders guarded the herds there at night and once revolver shots disturbed the silence of the darkness as a cow hand saw a black shadow that moved with incredible swiftness on the plain. The next morning a cow was dead several miles north and they knew that she had seen these guardian horsemen and gone on beyond them to where the prey was easy.

Then came the fighting pack again with the great wolfhound veteran of that other chase and a companion, a huge and rangy borzoi, white with brown patchings, one of the Russian kind. His legs were thinner and his speed greater than the shaggy veteran who had led the pack that other time and who had some resemblance to a long-bodied Airedale with lengthened legs.

Twice the trailing dogs were taken to fresh kills and turned loose with the others following. Both times they tracked her down through the gap in the mountains and then lost the trail when their keen nostrils could not hold the scent there in the hot alkali sand. This would not retain an odor long.

Then the men solved the problem and waited with the dogs where that great rift in the mountains marked the entrance of the lobo on her forays into the range country. Here was a wide flat where the alkali sand ended and merged gradually with the soil of the range like a quiet sea ending at a flat shore. On either side of the huge gap the sharp-cut heights of the mountains stood like cardboard things. Two mornings they sought her trail in vain and on the third found it just as a rider arrived from the north with the message of another slain cow.

Vague as some shadow, she had come during the night, silent death personified, passing the camp of the watchful men and keen-eared dogs to go on and make the kill and then return to the place of heat and silence that afforded her sanctuary.

This trail was fresh and the pack went off at full cry, the trailing dogs in front, the scent plain to their noses now before the sun's heat dried it out. After them came the Airedales and two big wolfhounds, trained and versed in the ways of the hunt. And in back were the men mounted on the fleetest horses of the range.

Perhaps the lobo heard them. Far ahead her loping gait increased; but she was heavy with food, gorged with the recent kill. She had come only at long intervals this time instead of hanging about the range country among the hills. And she had eaten heavily, for the days that elapsed between her visits were days of hunger. The alkali plain in front fell away, a down grade into the place of hot sinks and miles beyond the safety of those mesas and lava piles where men and dogs never came, where nothing lived.

Now the pack had the advantage. They would come sweeping down from the higher ground and there she would be in front, fleeing across those miles of open flat, miles that were long to the jumbled wilderness of rock almost at the base of the Kawich Range on the other side of this great valley that was in reality a plain unto itself.

One of the mounted men peered through a glass and shouted even as the borzoi leaped forward like a thing of steel springs and rubber, with the other wolfhound at his haunches. A dot in the distance, moving, vague, they saw her, these marvelous-sighted dogs, and raced away from the shorter-legged fighting breeds which gave over the scent and followed in full career.

Now the race of life was on, a thing of speed and endurance. The men spurred their mounts but dropped back gradually, and the two great wolfhounds drew farther and farther away, the white borzoi leading and the brown veteran of Irish descent close in back, gathering and leaping with legs and bodies bending in great circles.

And ahead the lobo gave her all. The meat was heavy in her stomach and the thinning about her body told of poor condition. At last her jaws opened and her tongue came out while there was a throbbing in her veins. Then it became a pounding as she taxed every ounce of reserve to the utmost to hold that pace. Where the wolfhounds came in enormous leaps she raced without waste energy, flattening away in a terrific lope that was almost like a machine. If only she had not eaten so heavily there would not have been that extra tax of her system, but her body had needed food, had craved it madly after those days without it. Or if only dusk were near and she could have turned aside in the shadow of some undulation in the alkali plain. But now the sun was high, beating down in all its power and the red-tinted plain held no refuge.

On, on, gathering new shreds of strength to carry her forward—and in back those two leaping things of speed incarnate closed the distance slowly but surely.

Ahead she could see in the far distance the broken outline of rock that marked safety. There fleetness of foot would not avail these pursuers and the stone would hold no trail for the others when they came up eventually to aid the baffled pair that could hunt only by sight, who would be lost in this place of tossed and piled hardness.

She gave new effort and the wolfhound's gaining was slower, but that new effort cost heavily and even the plain in front dimmed before the lobo's eyes. A haze was circling her sight and her body throbbed and beat with the mad pounding inside. It was the impossible thing. Nothing that lived, unless it be the antelope, could outrun these dogs. They were close, and the place of rocks was nearing, a mirage of safety luring and mocking as the lobo raced toward it.

Now the wolfhounds had separated. They were adepts at this game. There was one on either side and they would close in gradually, coming from the rear, forcing in toward her a little at a time like two swift frigates swooping on a fleet pirate junk. Soon or late she would turn her head just a little toward one and those long jaws of the other would clamp on her neck and hold until the second one could drive long fangs in the opposite side. Then she would go down, unable to turn or move to either side, would be helpless and die.

The borzoi was still in front, fleeter than the heavier Irish, but his pace had slowed enough so that the other would be even when the closing rush came. The misty haze thickened over the lobo's eyes, that mad pounding of her veins became a tumult, she had given her all and staggered in the exhaustion that had come. But hers was a fighting breed, a heavy-fanged and strong-bodied relic of the days when the great herds roamed the plains. At least she would end it gamely. Now it was a hopeless battle. Under other conditions she might have turned before while strength and her enormous vitality still held.

She tried to whirl and stumbled forward. The borzoi leaped and the lobo went down as struggling bodies surged over her. The borzoi reared and fell backward, crushed down under the heavier weight of the shaggy hound that had run just behind him in this pursuit. The white body of the borzoi lashed about but the heavy jaws of the other hound were on his throat and that shaggy muzzle concealed enormous power.

The lobo was on her haunches, forcing herself up, and turned toward the struggling dogs with her fierce fangs bared. She arose to all fours and broke into an unsteady lope, headed for the place of rocks.

At last the borzoi ceased his writhing and lay still and the other wolfhound released his hold and looked about. There was the lobo. A few of those mighty leaps and he would overtake her. In back he came and she turned her head and her fangs showed, then she went on and he trotted close.

Far toward the rear came the fighting pack, those that had not dropped out exhausted in this place of heat, and the men. One of them peered through the glass and saw the white body of the borzoi stretched in death on the alkali and also saw the lobo at the very edge of the wild place of jumbled rocks with the great brown wolfhound still in pursuit.

He cursed and turned to the nearest rider.

"That fool Russian was too fast and must have tried to do the job alone. She's killed him before the big fellow could come up to help out."

Into a rift that split an enormous pile of lava rock the lobo went and the great wolfhound in back of her, while the man who looked through the glass grunted resignedly.

"Now she's got him up there in the rocks and he won't have a chance."

Scrambling and leaping the lobo led on and the wolfhound followed at a slackened pace, unable to travel as fast in this place as the lobo. She was lost to sight but he went on unerringly, over boulders and through rifts and breaks, leaping chasms that yawned scores of feet deep, but mounting higher always. At last he came around a sharp wall and there in a cuplike formation the lobo stood facing him, barring his advance, lips wreathed back hesitantly.

The wolfhound sniffed and shifted uncertainly from place to place, then turned and slowly retraced his way. Dimly came the barks of the fighting pack as they reached the edge of this place of rock and were baffled where the bare stone and lava held no scent. They were tired and gave it up. One of the riders had dismounted and picked his way carefully in among this maze of hardness, crawling sometimes, going slowly in the dangerous footing, listening for any sound that might indicate that the wolfhound had caught her. Then he saw the great, shaggy body of the dog, coming back slowly, leaping from one secure place to another, and it reached him at last, slinking with hanging head.

The man patted him.

"It's all right, old boy, you did your best. If that fool Russian had waited for you to close in she wouldn't have got away."

Together they went back to where the fighting pack had settled down after the long run and where sweating and tired horses were still arriving with disappointed riders. Then the whole array turned for the long ride to the range country.

In the distance on the red-tinted alkali plain they became smaller and smaller, were mere spots and at last were swallowed up by distance and the undulations. There was silence, silence and heat, waves of it danced from the plain, throbbing and pulsing. Away to the north an antelope band came out from their retreat in the mountains to graze at the sparse tufts of coarse grass that grew at their edge.

In the cuplike formation deep among the rocks the lobo arose from where her body had barred the way and four youngsters came out, weeks old now and sturdy of leg. She curled up on the flat surface of stone and they sought relief from the hunger pangs. Two were pure lobo in their markings, one a queer mixture and the fourth had nothing except a dark line of hair along the spine to indicate he was other than a shaggy wolfhound of unmarred lineage.

The lobo peered around the corner of the rock and saw the antelope. To her keen eyes it was evident that among them were many young ones, then she stretched and her body relaxed contentedly.

Look for more stories by Mr. von Ziekursch in future issues.

A "REVENUER" HERO

H. J. HARKINS, a well-known lawyer of Asheville, North Carolina, is a son of the greatest fighter who ever went out for the government against the mountaineer moonshiners. Old Hersh Harkins was a "revenuer" in the days when the whisky makers went full armed and in companies ready to wage war. One day he took shelter in an abandoned old schoolhouse on a mountainside. Surrounded by a crowd of thirteen moonshiners he found that the hardwood ceiling of the room made the bullets from their guns ricochet so that he was in constant danger.

With only three bullets left in his revolver he sprang from a window and faced his enemies. Each of his three bullets brought down a man, leaving ten facing him. Having tremendous stature and strength Harkins grasped two or three in each arm and went down with them. The result was like a football scrimmage with Harkins at the bottom. Nobody shot. It was a matter of knives, fists, feet and teeth. Incredible as it may seem Harkins disposed of nine of the mountaineers in a fight that was a whirlwind for three-quarters of an hour.

Staggering to his feet he found the last of the thirteen rushing at him. With a supreme effort Harkins hurled his empty revolver, catching the fellow on the forehead and splitting his skull. As a result of that battle the hero found twenty-one bullet holes in his heavy overcoat and seven bullet wounds and four knife thrusts in his body. The affair is still famous as the greatest one-man fight ever put up against moonshiners.

Alberta Clings

By Carl Clausen

Author of "Skid Chains," "The Skipper and the Shark," Etc.

A real man is willing to risk all for what he holds dear—even if it is only a can of peaches.

BEFORE he lit his camp fire Dougal Grant climbed the ridge above him and examined the snow-choked gullies to the west, which he had traversed during the day.

A cold, bleak wind moaned through the cedars of the high slope upon which he was standing. He stamped his snowshoe-harnessed feet and observed the sky with his dim but experienced old eyes.

Yes, another snowstorm was coming. But he did not worry about that. His thirty years of trapping had taught him what to do when caught on the trail in a blizzard. He was worrying about something else. Early that morning when he broke camp on the frozen shores of Cardinal Creek he had noted the smoke of a camp fire five or six miles back on the trail.

He had wondered mildly who could be abroad in the High Sierras at this time of the year. He knew that Forster, the government ranger, had left the mountains over six weeks ago. As far as he knew, in a territory of a hundred square miles, there was no cabin occupied during the winter except his own and no human being except himself and Jennie, his wife.

Once more he scanned the ridges and ravines to the west of him. Seeing nothing to alarm him he retraced his steps to the clump of cedars upon the shoulder of the mountain where he had left Jock, his collie, tied to the sled, and started to make camp against the threatening blizzard.

He worked swiftly and with experienced hands; nevertheless, he paused now and then to glance over his shoulder to the west and once he ran his fingers over the heavy leather belt to assure himself that his old six-gun was ready for a quick draw and that the small wad of bills in the pouch beside it was safe. The amount was not large—a little over two hundred dollars—but it represented his net earnings from three months of trapping.

Dragging the fur-laden sled to the trading post over two hundred miles of soft snow had taken him ten days. Ordinarily he would not have attempted the trip. But Jennie had set her heart on canned peaches. Dougal smiled grimly. The old lady was gettin' childish an' no mistake. Well, p'r'aps she was entitled to, at that, after livin' in the mountains for thirty years with an old no-account like himself.

He paused in his unpacking as his hand came in contact with the half-gallon tin of Alberta cling peaches, the only can of peaches left on Milliken's shelves, which the grocery man had reluctantly parted with for two dollars.

Pulling the can from the knapsack Dougal placed it on the sled and stood looking at it

with a quizzical half smile on his old leathery face.

"Two hundred miles for a half-gallon can o' peaches," he muttered scratching his head. "The old lady'll sure have the horse laugh on me."

And then as the fire of dry cedar limbs blazed up and shot the lithographed peach upon the label of the can with a golden glow that would have sent the manufacturer of the contents of the tin into spasms of delight Dougal's mind moved back through the years and his dim old eyes lit with a gentle seriousness.

The picture which came to him was that of a young woman with eager blue eyes waving to him from the door of a newly built log cabin set among the tamaracks of a small mountain meadow. The cabin was old now, but the woman's eyes were still eager, as if she expected some eleventh-hour fulfillment of deferred hopes.

"Yes, I reckon she's entitled to canned peaches if she wants 'em," old Dougal mused.

He was brought back to the present by the collie growling deep in his throat. Dougal stiffened and glanced at the dog. The hair along Jock's spine had risen and the dog's eyes were fixed on the trail below where two men were struggling toward them through the deep snow.

It was just light enough for Dougal to note that neither of the men wore snowshoes but that both carried rifles.

As they approached Jock strained at the sled rope. The dog's furious barking filled the still woods with a deafening clamor.

"Call off your dog," one of the men growled as he raised his rifle to his hip.

"Lie down, Jock!" Dougal spoke sharply to the dog. "Shucks, he won't hurt you," he told the man.

"He won't get no chance to," the man replied harshly as the two of them advanced within the circle of firelight. "Got anything to eat, old un?" he added as he noticed the well-filled knapsack on the sled.

Dougal glanced at the speaker, an uncouth, lumbering fellow with ratty eyes set close together under a porcine brow. His face was covered with a two weeks' growth of bristle and he moved with an odd halting step. His companion was the opposite in type, a slight weasel-faced man with thin, cruel lips upon which a permanent sneer seemed to ride.

Instinctively Dougal knew that trouble had entered his camp and as instinctively his right hand moved to his six-gun. Jock, too, sensed it. He barked ferociously and lunged to the end of the sled rope.

Noting the movement of Dougal's hand the spokesman swung his rifle to bear on the old man.

"I wouldn't if I was you," he growled, " 'less you want your head blown off."

Dougal's arm dropped to his side. The man nodded to his companion.

"Frisk him," he said.

The weasel-faced one stepped up behind Dougal and drew the old six-gun from its holster, broke it and dropped the shells into his own coat pocket. The empty gun he tossed on the snow ten feet away. Noting the leather belt pouch he ripped it open and jerked out the wad of currency.

"We're in luck, Jake," he told his companion as he tossed him the roll of money, which Jake caught and pocketed dexterously with his left hand without lowering the rifle.

"Luck is right," said Jake. He raised the gun and pointed it at old Dougal's head. "Hustle us some grub, old un, and make it snappy."

Dougal drew in his breath sharply. He was no coward but neither was he a fool.

"What'll you have?" he asked, playing for time and meeting the ratty eyes of the other unflinchingly.

"What yer got?"

"Bacon and hard-tack and coffee."

"What else?"

"That's all."

"All right, get it then. Don't ask no fool questions." The man's shifty eyes roved to the can of peaches on the sled. "Oho, canned peaches," he grinned. "Thought you said you'd nothing but hard-tack and bacon."

Old Dougal's body tensed.

"Those peaches belong to the wife—she's sick," he lied. "You can't have them."

The man raised the rifle a fraction of an inch higher.

"Shut your trap or have it closed—permanent," he growled. He grinned at his pal. "We'll have canned peaches for dessert, Tony." As he took a step forward Jock leaped through the air at the end of his rope. The collie's jaws snapped shut a foot from the fellow's throat. The man sprang back and threw his rifle to his chin.

Old Dougal uttered a cry and flung himself forward, knocking the gun aside. The weapon exploded harmlessly in the air. Jock rose on his hind legs, straining on the rope, his fangs bared in a fury of insane snarls.

Dougal was on his feet in an instant, his old eyes blazing.

"Lay off on the dog or I'll kill you if you had a million guns," he cried.

The man addressed as Jake pumped out the exploded shell and threw a fresh one into the chamber. His companion hurled a stick of wood at the dog with all his strength. It struck Jock a glancing blow. The dog subsided but there was no yelp of pain. Only a deep-throated growl as it crouched beside the sled.

Jake whirled upon old Dougal, gun poised.

"I ought to drill you for that," he growled. "P'r'aps I will. But first we'll eat. Trot out that grub."

With an admonitory look at Jock lying by the sled watching the two men with smoldering eyes old Dougal went about getting supper for his unwelcome guests.

Before they touched the food they made Dougal eat a portion of everything.

"Might try to slip us something," Jake explained with a leer. "We ain't taking any chances."

While they ate they made Dougal sit on the sled on the opposite side of the fire. They watched him between bites, their rifles across their knees. The old man observed them gulping their food with obscene noisiness. He also observed beneath Jake's Mackinaw a glint of white-and-black-striped cloth as the man moved his hairy right paw to his face.

Old Dougal drew a long breath. The State penitentiary was more than three hundred miles away, on the peaty flats of the San Joachim Valley. They must have been hard pressed to have chosen the hazardous Sierra route to liberty, in midwinter.

He knew he was dealing with desperate men, so watching his chance he scraped some loose snow with his boot over the half side of bacon upon the ground beside the sled—where he had dropped it after cutting and frying their supper from it—covering it completely.

That this precaution was well taken was soon apparent. When the two men had eaten their fill Jake ordered old Dougal to untie the dog from the sled and stand aside. While the old man watched, with Jock crouched in the snow beside him, the two men loaded his blankets, snowshoes and his grub upon the sled.

"We forgot the dessert," said the weasel as he picked up the can of peaches. He was reaching for the hatchet to open the can when Jake stopped him.

"We've got a long way to go," he said. "Better save it."

Old Dougal took a step forward.

"You're not going to leave me stripped?" he asked. His voice carried no hint of fear, only righteous indignation.

"Shut up," Jake retorted.

"Better bump him off," the weasel-faced one advised, raising the hatchet in his hand.

Jake put out a restraining paw.

"Don't be a fool," he said harshly. "They'd find him in the spring." He looked up at the threatening sky. "I ain't going to run no risk having me neck stretched for croaking the likes of him. The blizzard'll do it without fuss nor feathers." He jerked his thumb over his shoulder. "Better frisk him for matches. We don't want no slip-up on this job."

The weasel-faced one went through Dougal's pockets and found his match box.

"It'll make it short and painless," he told Dougal as he pocketed the box. "We don't like to see you suffer," he explained with a grating laugh. "We're long on the milk of human kindness."

Crossing to the fire he scattered the glowing embers with his hobnailed boots and stamped them out.

"You and your pup'll be frapped good and plenty by daylight," he observed cheerfully to Dougal as he ground the last of the hissing embers into the snow with the heel of his boot. "G'-by and take good care of yourself," he finished with a crooked leer as he followed Jake who had already started with the sled.

Old Dougal stood stock-still with Jock shivering upon the snow between his legs until the men disappeared in the shadows among the cedars. Then he roused himself and dropped to his knees beside the steaming embers and raked them together in the hope of saving his fire. As he bent, lips pursed, over the small heap of charred, steaming cedar boughs in futile efforts to blow them back into life a gust of wind tore down the slope and drove the first snowflakes of the blizzard against his cheek.

Arising, he considered his position briefly.

A less resourceful man would have abandoned himself to his fate. But old Dougal had grown hoary in the lore of the woods. Picking up his short-handled shovel and the half side of bacon which he had hidden in the snow from the two marauders he called his dog to heel and made his way to the south side of the ridge where the winds of former blizzards, deflected by an outjutting spur of granite, had piled a great drift of snow against the mountainside.

Working swiftly with the shovel he dug a tunnel six feet deep and just large enough in diameter to fit his body snugly. Then he pushed himself into the tunnel feet first and scooped out a place near his shoulder for Jock, closing the mouth of the tunnel with the scooped-out snow.

In the entrance wall he left two airholes three inches in diameter, one at the top to permit the vitiated heated air to escape and one at the bottom for the fresh and colder air to enter. Thus, with the comforting warmth of each other's bodies to cheer them the man and his dog prepared to ride out the blizzard.

Once more old Dougal considered his position. He was a hundred miles from his cabin. Without snowshoes the five-day journey would take him ten, perhaps twelve days. He'd be forced to wait at least twenty-four hours after the blizzard had blown itself out for a crust to form upon the young snow, before traveling would be possible. A three-pound chunk of bacon divided into twenty-four equal parts would give himself and his dog just one eighth of a pound per day each for twelve days.

Not exactly a rosy prospect but to a man of a race whose middle, first and last name is frugality, more of an inconvenient gastronomic feat than a calamity.

It took the blizzard just fourteen hours to blow itself to exhaustion. At nine o'clock the next morning old Dougal and his collie crawled from their lair and stretched their cramped legs in the wan rays of the midwinter sun which had just risen over the barren peaks of the divide.

"A whale of a snowfall," said Dougal to himself as his eyes swept the vast white expanse of snow-choked ravines and gullies in which his dog and himself were as two black specks of dust in a pan of milk frozen solid in the act of being agitated. "A whale of a snowfall and no mistake," he repeated.

Floundering up to his waist in the young snow he made his way to the ridge above and traced the black ribbon of the middle fork of the San Joachim River up its sinuous course across the ancient terminal moraines of the seven-thousand-foot levels.

Through the feathery crowns of a small clump of tamaracks, two miles above him, a thin spiral of smoke rose lazily to the sky.

"Bet a fire feels good to you two highbinders," he muttered as he shook his fist at the smoke.

Returning to his camping place of the evening before he dug into the soft snow at the foot of the big cedar where the weasel-faced one had tossed his gun. After fifteen minutes of hard digging he found the weapon and slipped it into the holster of his belt.

"You ain't much good without your forty-five soft-nose thunder," he soliloquized, "but maybe you'll come in handy to whack something over the head with.

"I wonder if they'll be fools enough to try to travel while the snow is soft," was his next thought.

Retracing his steps to his tunnel he carved the first day's eighth of a pound of bacon for himself and Jock.

After he had eaten he crawled back into his cave for his twenty-four-hour wait to give Jack Frost a chance to show his prowess as a road maker. He slept most of the day. In the late afternoon, refreshed by the nap, he crept out and worked up a circulation by playing tag with Jock for an hour in the rapidly hardening snow among the cedars.

By sundown the freeze came on with a will and by midnight old Jack Frost had hammered the mercury to thirty below. Dougal, safe and snug in his retreat with Jock, smiled with satisfaction.

"She'll carry an army of elephants by daylight," he told himself.

His prophecy proved correct. The next morning, when he crawled from his retreat after dividing the day's allowance of bacon with Jock, the surface of the snow was hard and smooth as a sheet of metal and studded with brilliant crystals that sparkled like gems in the morning sun.

After wrestling with Jock to get his blood to flowing freely through his cramped limbs old Dougal shouldered his shovel and trotted to the crest of the ridge with the dog at his heels.

As he had suspected, the two men had broken camp and had moved on. Not far

however. The smoke of their camp fire was visible some six miles up the river.

"The greenhorns," he smiled grimly, "they didn't even know enough to lay low while the snow was soft. Bet they spent a mighty uncomfortable night."

By the direction the two men were traveling he knew that they were heading for Owens Valley, by the way of French Cañon and Piute Pass. This route would take them within twenty miles of his cabin on Evolution Meadows. Old Dougal knew a thing or two about French Cañon in midwinter that made him smile softly to himself.

Jock looked up at him with his brown, intelligent eyes and nuzzled his hand, whining as if in approbation of Dougal's unspoken thoughts.

"Guess we'll stay on their trail for a couple of days," the old man said. "Something might happen and if it does we'll want to be in at the finish." He sighed. "I hate to lose that can of peaches. The old woman'll sure be disappointed, Jock."

Again shouldering the shovel he started down the slope with the dog loping away down the mountainside, eager to be on the way.

An hour's brisk traveling brought them to where the two convicts had camped the first night. A glance was sufficient to disclose their utter ignorance of woodcraft. Instead of digging themselves into the snow they had huddled about their fire until the blizzard had put it out. There was every evidence of a hard night spent in trying to keep from freezing to death.

Once more Dougal smiled grimly. Between them and Owens Valley lay over a hundred miles of snow-choked ravines and lofty mountain passes, most of them above the eight-thousand-foot level and culminating in the dangerous Piute Pass nearly twelve thousand feet above sea level.

Humming an old tune Dougal took up their trail with a dogged cheerfulness that was characteristic of anything he undertook.

A short mile farther on he found his snowshoes sticking out of the snow. He knew what had happened. They had tried to wear them in the soft snow and had found them useless to their inexperienced feet.

Dougal put them on his own and executed a web-footed caricature of the Highland fling in his exuberance of spirit.

"Didn't have sense enough to keep 'em until the snow hardened," he chuckled.

Shortly before dusk he came upon the still-smoking embers of their camp fire of the night before. Near the fire he found a large piece of bacon rind and by that knew that they had eaten up the second of his two sides of bacon.

Dougal always traveled light in winter. He never carried more grub than would take himself and his dog through comfortably. In two days the two men had eaten up what would have lasted Jock and himself six. They were no doubt relying upon their rifles to furnish them with fresh meat—another token of their ignorance. Deer and rabbits had long since sought the lower free-grass levels.

Dividing the piece of bacon rind into two pieces Dougal cut one half of it into small squares and fed it to Jock in the hollow of his hand. The other half he stowed away in the pocket of his rabbit-skin coat for the following day.

Then he piled wood on the fire, filled his pipe for the first time in forty-eight hours and abandoned himself to the sweetness of a long-deferred smoke and a warm fire at the expense of his enemies.

Having no blankets he was forced to dig himself into a snowdrift for the night, to the leeward of the fire. But before going to sleep he piled on enough wood to keep the fire burning until midnight and stacked up more within reach near the mouth of the tunnel so it wouldn't be necessary for him to leave his retreat in the biting frost of the night.

At dawn he was up warming his hands by the still glowing embers. He did not pile any more wood on the fire for fear that the smoke would betray him. He did not see the smoke of their fire, so he knew that they were pushing along fast upon finding their grub giving out; but when he walked into Blaney Meadows late that afternoon he came upon their abandoned camp. The fire had gone out. There was every sign of a hurried departure.

Dougal pushed on until dusk, when he saw their fire in a clump of tamaracks a short mile ahead. Then he dug himself into a snowdrift for the night.

Two more days and nights he followed this system of trailing them during the day and of digging himself in at night within sight of their fire. At midnight on the third night, after having found his empty knapsack in their tracks during the day, he ven-

tured within a hundred yards of their camp at the mouth of French Cañon, where Piute and Evolution Creeks join to form the middle fork of the San Joachim River.

The two men were huddled together in the blankets beside the fire. Upon the sled near-by stood the can of peaches, its bright golden label a challenge to Dougal in the dancing firelight.

"Guess you're out your can of Albertas, old lady," he sighed. "It's all the varmints got left. Drat the luck."

A wild idea of sneaking up and stealing the can of peaches occurred to him but he abandoned it at once. He was a fair runner for his age but hardly a match for the speed of a bullet.

The more he thought about it the madder he got. A hard look crept into his deep-set, kindly eyes. The loss of the money gave him but a passing regret. His cabin was well stocked with food and the severity of the winter promised a good season's trapping. The thing that worried him was that Jennie would have to go without her peaches.

Dougal was an honest, God-fearing man. He shrank from meeting her disappointed inquiry with the lie that Milliken had been out of peaches. Besides the grocery man would be sure to ask her in the spring how she had liked them. To be caught in a lie was even worse than telling one. Telling her the truth would be admitting that he had allowed a pair of greenhorns to bluff him in his own mountains. A chill ran down his spine at this thought. He was as proud as he was honest and God-fearing.

He had always felt himself a hero in Jennie's eyes. To destroy this illusion after thirty years of keeping up a front was too horrible to contemplate. As he thought of the unheroic figure he was cutting at this moment, lying on his stomach in the snow watching his can of Golden Albertas, his teeth came together with a snap that made Jock prick up his ears and regard him with solemn speculation.

When one of the men stirred from the blankets Dougal held his breath. It was the weasel-faced one. Dougal put his hand on Jock's muzzle, stifling the low growl that rose in the dog's throat.

The man did not rise to his feet but sat upright, head cocked to one side as if listening. Then to Dougal's amazement he slipped out of the blankets and proceeded to work himself on his belly across the snow toward the sled where the can of peaches stood glowing faintly in the now dying fire. In one hand the weasel carried his rifle, in the other a hatchet.

Dougal groaned inwardly. Jennie's can of peaches was about to be slaughtered before his very eyes. He came near crying out to warn the sleeping one of his pal's perfidy. Fascinated he watched the weasel draw himself to his knees beside the sled.

When the man raised his right hand with the hatchet, the mountaineer's can opener, poised in mid-air, Dougal buried his face in his hands and waited for the coup de grâce.

"Jennie, girl," he almost sobbed, "there goes your Alberta clings."

The blow never came. Instead the silence of the woods was rent by a terrific roar. A livid tongue of flame leaped from the blankets. Jake threw his covers aside and pumped a fresh shell into the chamber of his rifle as the weasel-faced one leaped with the impact of the bullet and hurled the hatchet at his assailant. His rifle flew to his hip. Both guns barked simultaneously. The weasel-faced one fell face forward across the sled. His pal spun around with the impact of the bullet and crumpled up among the blankets.

"And that's that," said Dougal. He quietly regarded the two huddled forms for movement. Then he approached the fire.

Turning the dead Jake over he discovered a hole in the middle of the man's forehead from which the blood oozed, so he dragged him to one side, carefully, to keep his woolen blankets from being soiled. The weasel-faced one he found had received one bullet through the heart and another through the abdomen. Either one would have killed him. In the crook of his arm lay the can of Alberta clings.

Dougal disengaged the tin gently and pushed the body off the sled.

"You got your dessert, son, and no mistake," he said grimly.

After piling wood on the fire he lit his pipe and extracted his two hundred dollars from Jake's pocket and his box of matches and six revolver bullets from the weasel's. Then he rolled into his blankets with Jock, after placing the can of peaches in the snow near his head with the old six-gun on top of it.

At daylight he was up, performing a sim-

ple rite over the mound of snow and planting a rude cross of cedar boughs upon its apex. When he divided the day's allowance of bacon with Jock he glanced at the can of peaches hungrily.

"Gosh, but they'd taste good right now," he sighed, smacking his lips. "But," he added, putting aside the temptation resolutely, "they'll be tasting better to Jennie."

One morning, three days later, weak from continued short rations, he stumbled into the camp of a lone traveler on Evolution Creek, ten miles from his cabin. The traveler, clothed in furs from tip to toe, arose from the fire to greet him. In his left hand he held a frying pan full of sizzling ham. The other he extended to Dougal.

The old trapper blinked his hunger-flaming eyes.

"Hello, McKenna," he said as he recognized the sheriff of Cardinal County within the furs and shook the proffered hand limply.

"Haven't seen anything of a pair of escaped convicts along the trail, have you, Grant?" the sheriff asked.

Dougal glanced hungrily at the pan full of ham and Jock sat up on his haunches in the snow, sniffing the air and whining softly.

"Did they have their numbers on 'em?" Dougal asked innocently.

"Well—hardly," the sheriff grunted.

"How in blazes would I know if they were convicts, then?" Dougal asked.

"Your idea of humor would make a laughing jackass weep," the sheriff commented sourly. "Had your breakfast yet?"

Old Dougal drew a long breath.

"I did and I didn't," he said. "If you've got a bite to spare, I wouldn't mind."

Fifteen minutes later, when the sheriff emptied the third pan full of fried ham into Dougal's plate he said, without raising his eyes from the frying pan:

"How long since you had a square meal, Grant?"

Old Dougal heaved a sigh of content and cocked his head at Jock cracking a hambone with a businesslike air.

" 'Bout eight days, I reckon."

McKenna drew a long breath and reached for a firebrand to light his pipe.

"Wild cat get into your grub?" he asked.

"A couple of them," said Dougal.

"A couple of them?" the sheriff reiterated. "I never heard of wild cats traveling in pairs."

Dougal reached for the coffeepot and poured himself a third cup.

"Them convicts you mentioned a while back—reckon you'll get 'em?" he asked, avoiding the sheriff's questioning look.

"I never count my chickens before they're hatched," McKenna retorted, "but I'm figuring that the five-thousand-dollar reward is about as good as earned," he added modestly.

Dougal permitted himself an almost imperceptible start. When he reached for his pipe there was a thoughtful look upon his old wrinkled face.

"They must be ornery cusses to be worth that to Uncle Sam," he remarked.

"Ornery is right. They were serving twenty-year sentences for robbing a bank up North and shooting up the cashier and a citizen."

Dougal lit his pipe and blew a cloud of smoke skyward.

"That bounty you mentioned—does it mean dead or alive?" he asked casually.

"Either way," said McKenna.

Dougal puffed away in silence for some moments. A plan was forming in his canny old brain.

"Supposing I knew where you could find them and helped you round 'em up—would it be a fifty-fifty proposition?" he asked.

"What d'you mean—know where I can find them?" the sheriff demanded.

"Would it or wouldn't it?" Dougal repeated.

"I'll tell the world it would," McKenna replied tersely. Almost involuntarily he picked up his rifle and squinted along its barrel.

"You won't need your gun, Mac," Dougal said. "I've got 'em cached in a snowdrift down the line a ways."

The sheriff stared at him.

"You've got them—what? You killed them? Are they dead?"

"I reckon they are," Dougal observed mildly. "I buried them three days ago."

McKenna's jaw dropped. He stared at the other in silence as if trying to make up his mind whether he was being spoofed or not. But the expression on Grant's face reassured him. Knowing the trapper for the taciturn old mountaineer that he was he asked gently:

"Where you got them cached, Grant?"

"Down by the junction of Piute and Evolution, at the mouth of French Cañon."

"H'm," said McKenna briskly, "let's be on our way."

"Can't go with you," Dougal said. "Got to get home to the old lady with this can of peaches," he explained, pointing to the open knapsack. "She's likely worrying a mite too. I ought to've been back a week ago. But you'll have no trouble finding them yourself. I planted a cross atop of the snowdrift and covered up their rifles with pine bark. Saw Uncle Sam's name on the stocks. Figured he might want 'em back."

He paused as if struck by a sudden thought.

"Understand, Mac, I don't want the old lady to know anything about this. It might get her to fretting. You've got to take the blame for killin' them yourself."

"Blame!" the sheriff exclaimed. "Glory, you mean!"

"Call it what you like," said Dougal, "only don't get me mixed up in it. Understand? When you collect the bounty you can leave my share in Milliken's safe. Wrap it up in brown paper so he won't know what it is. I'll get it in the spring and take it down to Los Angeles. I'm figuring on giving the old lady a bit of a treat on it."

"All right," said McKenna. "You're sure white to let me in on this, Grant. You could've collected the whole five thousand yourself."

"Maybe I could," Dougal replied as he shook the departing man's hand, "only the old woman would've found out. It's worth twenty-five hundred dollars to keep her from fretting."

It was dark when Dougal walked through the door of his cabin with the half-gallon can of fancy Alberta cling peaches under his arm and chucked Jennie under the chin.

"It was the only can Milliken had left," he said apologetically.

Jennie took the can from his arms with a smile.

"It's no matter, Dougal," she said. "What kept you so long? I was getting worried!"

"There was a bit o' a blizzard," he answered her. "And we had to tarry for the snow to harden. Run a wee bit short of rations, but we made out—didn't we, Jock?"

The collie, who had made a dash for his place by the open hearth, looked up at him with its clear brown eyes and beat a joyous staccato on the floor with his bushy tail. Dougal could have sworn that Jock winked back at him.

A little while later, when he and Jennie sat down to supper, the old trapper said to his wife:

"I made a good bargain with Milliken for the furs. Suppose we go down to the city in the spring and jazz around a bit. It'll do us both good."

Jennie looked up at her man, her old eyes brimming with the excitement of anticipation.

"Better pry that can of peaches open," she said, to hide her emotion.

Dougal pushed his chair back and went to the wood box for the hatchet. Placing the can on the corner of the table, he drove the hatchet into the end of it with a dexterity born of long practice.

The can emitted a long, sibilant hiss, like an angry cornered cobra. From the gash bubbled a green, viscous substance that filled the room with a sickening odor.

Dougal stepped back with an exclamation of disgust, then picked up the can and carried it to the door at arm's length and flung it far and wide into the snow.

It was not often that he permitted himself the luxury of profanity.

"Don't that beat hell!" he snorted. "The last can he had left and it had to be spoiled."

WELCOME FIT FOR A KING

THE death last spring of Colonel Henry Watterson was the occasion of many politicians recalling striking things that had been spoken or written by the "ole marster" of journalism. Unique among them all was his speech welcoming Grover Cleveland to Louisville, Kentucky.

"Mr. President," he said, "we turn over to you our houses and our horses, and there is the jug, and the sugar, and the ice, and the mint. We even surrender to you the hip pocket playthings with which we are wont sometimes to amuse ourselves. And if you and your friends can't make yourselves at home and pass the time pleasantly, may the Lord have mercy on your souls!"

Red Magic

By Robert H. Rohde

Author of "Black Art," "Unsummoned," Etc.

The Great Macumber puts some reverse English on the science of Dr. Coue.

THE revolving door spun vehemently under the impulse of a straight-arm jab and spilled into the lobby that same effervescent young Mr. William Anson Race who lately had adorned a page in the *Sunday Sphere* with an enthusiastic if not altogether accurate special article purporting to plumb the mysteries of the Great Macumber's magic.

Macumber and I had stopped at the hotel desk for our mail. Race, waving a salute with the jaunty stick which he had explained he carried solely for its "psychological effect on great men's office boys," came loping directly to us.

"Behold one man of his word, Professor!" was his greeting. "I have come to redeem a promise."

"And if I may judge by your haste," smiled the Great One, "at some cost to your conscience. You would be haunted by the thought of hungry presses that wait and wait while——"

"On a conservative morning journal like the *Sphere* the presses never develop an appetite before midnight, and midnight is more than twelve hours away," intervened William Anson Race. "As for haste, I'm chronically in a hurry. It's nothing but a professional affectation, you know—like the young doctor's hothouse Vandyke and the budding barrister's brief case. Thus under a cloak of simulated energy I hide what is really the most languid of natures. As a dynamic personality I'm a delusion. But in another way, I assure you, I'm sound; I worry about promises until I finally keep them—which sometimes is long after they've been forgotten by the promisee. For instance, do *you* happen to remember our hoary agreement, Professor?"

"Indeed I do," said Macumber with a promptness and heartiness reflecting the instantaneous fancy he had taken to the *Sphere's* breezy Billy Race. "It bears on the interest you were good enough to take in my magician's penchant for real-life mysteries—in crimes that bear the hallmark of art. When assigned to a case having what you considered a genuine element of mystery you were going to invite me along. And I take it——"

"I'm here with the invitation, Professor!"

The Great One's face lighted. Many weeks had gone by since chance last had swept him into the midst of a train of circumstances calling into requisition the unique capabilities which had proved so potent when directed toward the detection of crime. With his friend Inspector Clancy gone from the homicide bureau at police headquarters he had for an unwontedly long period been bound to the rack of routine.

"Accepted without reserve," said Macumber.

"I'm not guaranteeing this will be inter-

esting to you," hedged Race with a sudden access of caution. "But when the office roused me out of bed the assignment sounded as if it might be in your line. I thought I'd stop off here, anyhow, on the way to the station and see. No train leaves for more than a half hour yet."

"Train?" echoed the Great One. "That stumps me, I'm afraid. We have our regular performance to-night, you know."

"The place—Creston—is just across the river in Jersey and less than forty minutes from the Pennsylvania Station by train," Race hastily reassured him. "For that matter, you'll not only be at the theater in time but could be back in New York for dinner. If you haven't made other plans for the afternoon——"

"I haven't. But——"

"At first blush what's happened in Creston seems to be what Park Row would classify as a 'rattling good murder.' That implies almost always that the victim is a beautiful and mysterious woman or a person of known consequence and that the identity and motive of the murderer are matters of conjecture."

Tucking his stick under his arm so that both acquisitive hands might be free William Anson Race helped himself to one of my cigarettes and in further deference to the traditions of his craft borrowed a light from the Great One's pipe.

"In this case," he regretted, "the beautiful woman doesn't figure—at least, not yet. But Addison Prime, considering everything, ought to make good enough copy for me and a good enough mystery for you. He was a lawyer, a former State senator, a power in politics and one of the richest men in his section of Jersey. This morning they found him dead on the floor of his office, with his skull cracked wide open."

Race caught a glimpse of the big clock behind the desk.

"Holee cat!" he cried. "Ten minutes to do a mile through noon-hour traffic. Come on, Professor! Taxi's on the *Sphere!* Let's get going."

Macumber threw back his head and laughed.

"You've struck me on my weaker side," said he. "'Twould be the wickedest waste of money or transportation for one to ride alone when three could ride as cheaply. And when it comes to buying the railroad tickets, I'll—well, I'll match you!"

II.

Creston, a commuting village in the north Jersey hills, proved no farther from New York than represented by the ebullient Mr. Race. Scarcely more than an hour after we had left our hotel, within two minutes of Times Square, our cicerone was exhibiting to a paunchy and puffy suburban constable an official-looking card on which the legend "Police Department" stood out boldly from a background of bureaucratic blue.

In New York a mere permit privileging the holder to pass through parade and fire lines, Billy Race's reporter-pass took rank as a shield of authority in Creston. The stout policeman blew out his cheeks and waved the cardcase away.

"Yep," said he; "them's proper credentials. There's a couple other paper men here from the city and I've seen 'em already. These gentlemen with you, I s'pose?"

"Both," announced William Anson Race and then unblushingly departed from the truth to add: "Sketch man and—ah—technical expert." He winked at me, twirled his stick and followed the constable into the single-story detached stucco building at the upper end of Creston's hill-climbing Main Street which had been the office of Addison Prime, attorney at law, and as the gold-lettered sign on the window further proclaimed, real-estate broker, insurance agent and negotiator of loans.

The great black shade had been drawn down behind the front window to shut off from morbid stares the still form which lay face down beside the oversize safe at the rear of the office. Through the brief interval during which our eyes were accustoming themselves to the gloom the voice of the constable boomed importantly.

"There he lies, back yonder—see, by the safe? That's Mr. Prime; his body, that is to say. The coroner's been a long time coming but here the body's got to stay till he gets around if it takes him a week. Pity.

"Fine man, he was. Hard-headed in money matters, maybe, but there's no one else looks out for us in this world but ourselves. I've heard him say that man's the time. Last night—it must 'a' been about half past nine—I seen him with his feet cocked up on his desk as full of life as you or me and no more expecting *this* than any of us is this minute. He nodded to me when I went past. That was just before it started to rain so hard. It was midnight when I

come by again and then the place was dark —and I guess Mr. Prime was dead. The doctor that was here this mornin' says the bang on the head finished him on the spot, likely enough."

A sudden flare illuminated the sharp-featured countenance of Billy Race. In a moment of abstraction he apparently had found a cigarette and match of his own.

"It didn't rain all night, did it?" he queried.

"Nope; just a half dozen cat-an'-dog showers between ten and eleven mostly."

"Footprints?" suggested Race hopefully.

"Plenty. But not the kind to be worth much. There was a lot of 'em in the alley at the side of the building and more in the yard in back. You couldn't tell anything from them, though. Al Curtis—th' county detective himself—passed 'em up. They was made after the rain had softened the ground but before it had stopped rainin' for good. The last showers mussed up the prints so's Al couldn't deduct nothing."

"You could get the direction taken by the murderer, couldn't you?" asked the Great One, who until then had been silent.

"Just about," said the constable. "But that wasn't no help. When the man that killed Mr. Prime made up his mind which way to go he jumped over the back fence and cut cross lots to Maple Avenue, the next block back of Main Street. Soon's he got on the sidewalk and pavement there wasn't any more trail, of course."

Having thus disposed of the subject of footprints the constable became conscious of his dual duties as host and as policeman.

"You can use your eyes all you want, gentlemen," he said, "but I got to warn you not to touch nothing until the coroner arrives."

Billy Race glanced quickly toward Macumber.

"Light enough for you to make your sketch?" he inquired. "My instructions are to see that everything's the way you want it."

"I'm going to report your splendid cooperation to the art editor, Mr. Race," said the Great One unctuously. He addressed the Creston policeman again: "The room is just as it was when the body was found?" he questioned.

The constable nodded. "It was my business to see nothing was moved—and I've tended to it."

"The county detective made a careful search of the office, didn't he?" put in Race.

"Me and him together. And it's hardly worth while for any one else to go over it again. We didn't miss nothing."

"Sure?" shot William Anson Race.

"Positive," replied the constable with great calm. "There wasn't nothing to miss. Whoever killed Ad Prime didn't leave behind no weapon, or monogramed cigarette or even as much as a suspender button."

He grinned complacently.

"No," he said, "this don't happen to be New York, but all that's been looked into. There ain't any finger prints on the safe nor on the top of the desk. There ain't any evidence of robbery. There ain't any clews whatsoever. All the information I got is that Mr. Prime's housekeeper got nervous this morning when she seen his bed hadn't been slept in and phoned the chief. He come down, and——"

The constable concluded with a wave of a pudgy hand.

"How about the office doors?" asked Macumber. "Locked or unlocked?"

"Didn't I tell you, mister? Guess I didn't, come to think of it. Well, sir, the front door was locked and the back door was unlocked. Sort of funny, that. You'd think it'd been the other way 'round, wouldn't you?"

"You would," said Macumber. "And I suppose the key was on the inside of the front door?"

The answer was delayed while the constable took careful stock of the question—and of Macumber.

"Well," he said at last, his voice sunk to a confidential whisper, "that's something I wasn't aimin' to talk about. It may mean something and it may mean nothing, but now that you've asked you may's well know. The fact is there wasn't no key in the front door at all and the key that belongs to it ain't been found yet. The locksmith down the street come up and fitted the one we're using, after the chief had gone around and found the back door open and Mr. Prime lyin' dead inside it."

"Strange," commented William Anson Race, hooking the unhandy stick into the V of his vest the while he scribbled a hasty note. "And what do you and the county detective deduce from the disappearance of the key, officer?"

The constable shook his head. "At the

present moment," he vouchsafed, "we don't neither of us deduct nothing. We got to get other facts to add it up to."

Race walked to the rear of the office and came slowly back.

"Everything shipshape, it seems," he said. "Looks as if the place had been freshly swept, officer."

"That," said the constable, "is the way Ad Prime always had his office looking."

"Not even so much as a scrap of paper in the wastebasket."

"Wouldn't likely be. He wasn't no hand for correspondence and what figurin' he did was in the books that are locked up in the safe. And there wasn't no one else around to make a muss. Ad Prime was his own secretary and clerk and office boy. Even when he was active in politics he wasn't much of a man for company."

Billy Race tapped his shoe thoughtfully with the ferule of his stick. "Enemies?" he suggested.

"There was plenty didn't wish him any too well, I reckon," said the constable. "If Ad Prime saw a dollar lyin' loose around he'd put his foot on it. That was his way. There wouldn't be room in the county jail for them that won't weep when they hear what's happened. But as for anybody that'd be likely to go as far as murder—I dunno. My theery is that some crook from the city, prospectin' out this way, dropped in to try a job and killed Mr. Prime when he put up a fight. He'd 'a' fought, sure."

William Anson Race looked blankly at Macumber.

"What do you think?" he asked. *"My* experience has been that the guess of the local police on crimes of this sort is usually the right one. Their knowledge of the community lets 'em discount theories that a stranger's likely to waste a lot of time on."

"Policemen, wherever you find them," smiled the Great One, "are usually about as good at their line of business as the next man is at his." He turned the smile on the constable and got a wide and contented grin in response.

"A while back, officer," he went on, "you said something that I thought extremely interesting. Possibly I misunderstood, but didn't you remark that the murderer left evidence of some indecision concerning the method of his get-away?"

The constable nodded and shifted his quid in the interest of articulation.

"Yep; that's what I read in the tracks. Come along and I'll show you."

He led the way rearward, passing the half-covered body with a sidelong glance, and flung open the back door. We stood on a small covered porch raised only a few inches above the mud of the grassless yard.

"There's a lot of footprints out there, if you look close," said the policeman, "but two sets of 'em you can see pretty plain. They're the ones that was made last night. The fainter ones was made by me and Al Curtis this morning, and maybe some by the chief, too.

"It seems that the murderer first was a mind to run out into Main Street. Then he got another idea all of a sudden, like as if he'd heard somebody comin' along, and turned right smack around in his tracks. I'll show you how it was."

The constable, gingerly testing the surface ground with his foot to make certain that no chemical changes had softened the loam since he last adventured onto it, pointed out the particular prints which had been settled on as those of Addison Prime's slayer and followed them into the alley between Prime's office and the two-story building which was its downhill neighbor.

This unpaved space between the buildings was scarcely more than six feet in width. At the end farthest from us a ladder, braced at its base against the opposite wall, rose to the roof of Prime's office.

"Ho!" cried Race. "That there last night?"

"Yep; and all day yesterday," said the unperturbed suburban Vidocq. "Me and Curtis don't figure it's important, seein' how nobody'd need a ladder to climb into an office that's all on the ground floor." He chuckled. "Fact is, Ad Prime was having some patchin' done on his roof. They was to have gone ahead on the job to-day, but the roofer didn't stay long enough to gather up his stuff after the chief showed him the body."

Mr. William Anson Race was in no degree discomforted by the abrupt collapse of the theory he might have conjured up involving the use of the ladder. It was rather in triumph that he turned to Macumber.

"There you are, Professor! Didn't I tell you? It's the people who know local conditions who can take the short cuts in investigations of this kind!"

The Great One murmured a smiling as-

sent; but to me, knowing him so well, it was patent that the reporter's words had not registered. His eyes were on the footprints. He stooped low to examine them a moment after Race had spoken, walked crouching to the street end of the alley and came back to us whistling.

"Could you follow th' prints?" asked the constable.

"Pretty well," Macumber told him.

"Yep; they're clear enough. The murderer got up about where the ladder is when he changed his mind and come runnin' back. You can tell he was goin' some by the distance between the prints. Now, follow them wide-apart ones and they'll lead you directly to the fence. He didn't climb it, but vaulted. On the other side there's a couple of deeper prints that shows where he landed. Then the tracks lead through the back lots over to Maple Avenue, just like I said."

"Your word goes for that," said Race, directing a glance of concern down toward his glossy shoes. "And now let's reconstruct. Two sets of prints in the alley made by the same pair of feet, one going up and the other coming back—but none going out. Lack of footprints at the street end might mean that the man who left Prime's office by the back door came in through the front door, which subsequently in some manner not now to be explained was locked. Am I right, officer?"

The constable nodded.

"Likely enough," he agreed. "Leastwise, the only tracks that was in the yard this mornin' showed somebody comin' out of the office, trottin' up the alley and runnin' back to vault the back fence. None of 'em points to the back door."

From his concealed source of smoker's supplies the surprising Mr. Race produced two rotund and opulently speckled cigars, which he slipped into the hands of the policeman.

"Souvenirs from the *Sphere*," he said. "And thanks for your help."

He turned tentatively to Macumber.

"Got everything registered in your mind for the sketches and diagram, Professor?"

"I think so," said the Great One.

In single file, pursuant to the constable's parting injunction that we keep out of the other tracks, we made our way through the alley into Main Street. Macumber and Race walked blithely and unconcernedly under the ladder. I didn't follow them. Smiling at myself for yielding to the childish impulse, I did what most stage folk of my acquaintance would have done. When Macumber turned to see what had become of me I was climbing carefully around the ladder.

He smiled faintly, shrugged and shook his head.

"Poor lad," he said, and nudged Billy Race, who also shook his head and grinned widely. But a moment later, serious and contrite, he was apologizing to the Great One and me.

"It's been a wild-goose chase for you people after all," he declared. "I'm ready to declare here and now that the murder of Addison Prime is a mystery without class. It looks like the work of a plain and vulgar stick-up man—and probably only a hungry amateur at that. Personally, I've got to hang around this hamlet of disappointment to see the coroner, et al, but——"

He consulted a railroad schedule he had picked up at the station on our arrival and squinted at a wrist watch worn so discreetly high on his left arm that it now came into view for the first time.

"In fourteen minutes a train for New York hesitates here," he announced. "I haven't the heart to keep you off it. Leave me to my misery and give my regards to Broadway. If things take a turn for the better you can depend on me to let you know, Professor—if you have the faintest interest left in this lamentably commonplace affair."

Race, more abject at every step, walked with us to the station. The Great One listened with twinkling eyes. As we were climbing aboard the train he said:

"I assure you in all honesty that it has been a most interesting afternoon. To me the case really makes a very strong appeal through certain elements. By all means keep me advised of developments. I——"

With a wailing of released brakes our train got under way and the rest of Macumber's parting sentence was lost. Nor did he finish it after we had taken possession of the one double seat left unoccupied in the smoker.

We were scooting through the tunnel before he turned his attention from his newspaper to me.

"Yes, lad," he said, "I have found this a valuable experience. The case, although it leaves friend Race so cold, most surely has its points."

I was inclined to agreement. One angle of mystery I had been turning over and over on the trip back to the city and still it was uppermost in my mind.

"The key——" I began, but Macumber interrupted with inexplicable asperity:

"Is of course no key to the mystery, wherever it may have got to. It is the key to Prime's office, and nothing more. On the other hand the innocent ladder——"

I stared at the Great One in amazement.

"After hearing how it got where it was and why it stayed there I see no reason for giving the ladder a second thought," said I. "Weren't you listening?"

Macumber groaned. "Do you mean to say, lad, that *you* don't know what I'm driving at?" he demanded and then took his usual revenge by leaving me puzzled and changing the subject. Not until after our evening show, in fact, did he refer again to our trip to Creston with William Anson Race of the *Sphere*.

"I *would* like to check on my theory," said he. "But, alas! Before I can do that some superintelligent detective must dash out and discover the murderer!"

III.

From William Anson Race we heard promptly enough. The morning following our trip to Creston in his company his dismal voice came over our phone. It was I who spoke to him, for Macumber had sallied forth for a stroll.

"No, I'm not sick," Race assured me. "I know I sound it but that's because of the cruel fate that's overtaken me. I'm still over in Creston and the *Sphere* has ordered me to stay indefinitely and dig. Don't make any difference whether I've a line of news or not—I stay. There've been so many mysteries and unsolved Jersey murders lately that the *Sphere's* developed a bug on 'em. We're going to solve one, by jinks, and I'm the victim."

The marooned reporter's voice became direder when I asked him if there had been any developments.

"Nary one. We're just holding our own. The coroner wasn't a bit of help. He isn't sure, in fact, that the 'blunt instrument' that made the hole in Prime's head wasn't a corner of the safe. Prime's face was pretty well bunged up, too, and the autopsy developed that a couple of his ribs had been cracked. Except for that the case is just where it was yesterday. Tell Macumber I'm going to call him up there at the hotel every day and report progress or nonprogress. Oh, it isn't for his entertainment, but my own. It'll be *one* thing to look forward to. This town hasn't even got a pool table in it and this is a murder I could investigate just as well pushing the balls around as sitting with my head in my hands."

And William Anson Race, man of his word, faithfully kept that promise, too. Daily he got either Macumber or myself on the wire and poured through our phone all the woes of his exile. Presently he began to strike occasionally an almost cheerful note. He had effected an alliance with Curtis, the county detective, and the two were working together on the understanding that no word of their activities should be printed until either the case was complete and an arrest was made or the last theory had been run out and the investigation was officially abandoned.

"Things are looking up," Billy Race reported one day. "Being clothed with delegated police power I'm able to do a lot better than I would as a plain newspaper man, and Curtis has dug up some likely looking stuff. I'm planning to grab a day off the end of the week and run into town. I'll drop in on you if I do."

And when he came to New York on his day-off trip, as per schedule, William Anson Race brought with him his stick, his swagger, his glittering shine and his abnormal taste for other people's cigarettes.

"It hasn't turned out such a rotten assignment, after all," he told Macumber a moment after he had breezed into our hotel apartment.

"No one should object to being kept in the country in beautiful Indian-summer weather like this," said the Great One.

"Oh, I don't mean that way," the reporter countered hastily. "I'm passing up the tennis and the golf and the good commuters' daughters."

He plunged his hand into my cigarette tin, standing open on the center table and lit up with a match he walked halfway across the room to get although I could see the corner of a pasteboard packet of matches peeping coyly from his waistcoat pocket.

"No, Professor," continued the regenerated Mr. Race, "it isn't that at all. What I mean is that Curtis and I have been get-

ting real results. He's satisfied himself it wasn't any casual crook that killed Addison Prime and that the motive wasn't robbery."

"Good!" cried the Great One, sitting up.

"I said the same," Race rattled on. "But that was just a real practical starting point. Having established as a practical certainty that Prime was murdered by some one who knew him——"

"Hold on!" said Macumber. "How do you arrive at your certainty?"

"By knowledge," replied Race, smiling beatifically, "of local conditions, the value of which I believe I have mentioned before. Knowledge, that is, of railroad passenger and freight schedules; knowledge of roads running through the town; knowledge that old Mrs. So-and-so, who wakes up every time an automobile passes her house, slept undisturbed the night of the murder; knowledge of a hundred and one things, subconsciously acquired perhaps, which taken together say that *this* probably isn't so, but *that* probably is!"

"Good!" cried Macumber again. "Don't for the Lord's sake be specific. I wouldn't want to know so much about Creston, New Jersey. We'll concede right here that you're right. And then?"

"And then," said Race, "it simmers directly down to a question of which of three men killed Addison Prime!"

The Great One leaped to his feet.

"After all, I'll——"

Billy Race, too full of his news to brook comment, didn't let Macumber finish.

"Just three men we've singled out and not one of 'em knows he's under suspicion. Each would have had a motive for attacking Prime—not necessarily with murderous intent but with an ambition to leave more than skin-deep marks on him. And each *might* have been the man, so far as we've been able to check up their whereabouts that night. One *is* the man, dollars to fried oysters. Neither Curtis nor myself has the slightest doubt of it—and if you have questions of that I'll refer you once more to knowledge of local conditions and give you the history of considerable cute sleuthing on top of that."

"Please don't divert from your main theme," begged Macumber. "Your conclusions are enough. But why haven't you called for a show-down?"

The Great One's voice was eager and his eyes were aglow with excitement.

"That's the last thing we want to do," said Race seriously. "The three all are reputable men. They can't be roughed or bluffed very well and we haven't got a thing more on one than another. In each case the evidence is purely circumstantial and might be blown sky-high by an alibi of which Curtis and I know nothing. What we have learned simply is that none of the three was in his own home at the hour of the murder and that all were out for Prime's scalp. The merits of their individual grievances I may have my private opinion about, but it was one of these men who killed Prime. *There's* a problem for a magician, Professor; certainly it isn't one for a detective or a reporter any longer. Which of the three is a murderer? S'pose you could find an answer to that down among the rabbits and the ribbons in your old high hat?"

Macumber gave no more than a second's consideration to the question. "I might," he said briefly.

Plainly it wasn't the sort of answer Billy Race had expected. For once he was taken aback, a fact of which he gave evidence not only in the blankness of his expression but by meditatively fishing a personal cigarette, badly crumpled, from the breast pocket of his coat.

"Do I get you right, Professor?" he asked.

"I think I might be able to help out," the Great One repeated. "I really mean it. When I left Creston I carried with me a certain very definite impression. It was nothing which would have been helpful to you at the time. But, believe me, it might in the present circumstances come decidedly into point."

Macumber's tall forehead became a network of wrinkles.

"Three of 'em, eh?" he said, half to himself. "That in itself suggests something—simple, neat, effective. Three! By George, Race! there wouldn't be a chance of getting the three men together, would there? Together, I mean, and off their guard?"

William Anson Race grabbed the Great Macumber's hand.

"Wouldn't there?" he shouted. "That end of it you can leave strictly to me, Professor. I'm the best little fixer in the United States. In the phrase of the detective, I've been 'roping' the three gentlemen suspected by Al Curtis and myself. That's been my end of the job. So far as they're individually and collectively concerned I'm no

longer Billy Race of the *Sphere*. No, sir, the Addison Prime murder case was my last assignment. I fell in love with Creston and quit my job and now I'm figuring on starting a local paper with a little of the money my rich uncle left me! Get me?"

The trig masquerader became serious.

"Crime's crime, Professor," he said in an altered tone, "and I've doped it that a man can't be too scrupulous on the matter of his own methods when he's out to uncover a criminal. I've had to sail under false colors, but the fact is that I've got pretty well acquainted with these three men whom Curtis has his astute eye on. I've even discussed the murder with them—for the eventual greater glory of the *Sphere*. For that matter the men know one another well enough, being neighbors, and I don't doubt I could rig up an excuse to bring all three right in to New York with me one of these days, if that's where you want 'em."

"You could get them here—into the hotel —you think?" the Great One asked incredulously.

"Yep!" said William Anson Race.

Macumber beamed.

"Then go to it. If one of your three suspects killed Prime, I truly believe I'll be able to point him out to you—or even to arrange it so he'll do the pointing himself!"

"Then I'll promise that you will have the chance," said Race. "And you know *me*."

He settled back comfortably after another raid on the cigarette tin.

"In the meantime, Professor," he went on, "I s'pose I'd better let you know who the men are and exactly what we've got on each of them."

"Not a bit of it," said the Great One firmly. "That's just what I don't want you to do. The less I know about your three friends the better. All I would be enlightened on is the pretext through which you lure them to my den, for it is a most delicate experiment which I project. For the rest, let me go into the matter blindfolded —like the Lady with the Scales."

And though William Anson Race made a dozen adroit attempts to break through Macumber's defenses with a narration of his adventures and discoveries as right-hand man to County Detective Curtis he had succeeded in unbosoming not the smallest fragment of information when he took his last drink of the Great One's Scotch and bade us adieu.

IV.

It was only two days later that we heard from the "greatest little fixer in the United States." He had made good again. Over the phone from Creston, where the indomitable *Sphere* still was keeping him though the Addison Prime murder had vanished utterly out of the news a week before, he told Macumber that we might expect a call shortly. He had arranged, tentatively, a dinner party in New York at which the three men among whom his suspicions were divided were to be his guests.

To the three the Great One had been mentioned casually as "the Professor," an old friend of the pseudo heir's family. And what more natural, argued Billy Race, than that four convivial associates should drop in on an intimate of one of them whose taste in Scotch was known to be equaled only by his faculty for keeping himself well supplied with the best?

"Extremely logical," Macumber told Billy. And on the third evening thereafter, more than an hour before we were due to start for the theater, William Anson Race arrived at the hotel with his three dinner guests.

In two respects the Messrs. Truman, Anders and Tracy—as Race introduced his companions—were much alike. All were in or verging upon middle age and not one of them by the widest stretch of imagination could have been picked as a man likely to commit a murder.

"I probably won't have to say more about Professor Macumber," said Billy Race after he had introduced his friends, "than that professionally he is the Great Macumber. That is one surprise I reserved for your meeting with him. The second he will uncork himself—a heaven-sent, heathery liquor that one must surely be a true magician to get hold of these days. This I predict in all confidence. Never has the Professor failed in supply or hospitality since the drought!"

Soda, Scotch and glasses came forth. Within five minutes conversation was going at a lively clip and our visitors were as thoroughly at home as if Macumber had been a friend of months' standing.

I took little part in the talk, but, sensing the approach of a dramatic moment, covertly studied the others.

In the circumstances the aplomb of young Mr. Race seemed nothing short of remark-

able. Not a trace of self-consciousness did he display. And Macumber played the conscientiously affable host to perfection, revealing only pleasure in this ostensibly unexpected visit of a friend and a friend's friends.

The men from Creston were just such as may be seen alighting from an evening train at any of New York's better-class suburbs or lolling away week-end afternoons on country-club verandas. Years of commuting had put on each an indefinable but unmistakable stamp; their dress reflected the quiet of their lives. In their individual enterprises I pictured Truman as inclined to be pompous, Anders as shrewd and dominating, Tracy as nervous, energetic and likely on occasion to be short of temper.

So intent was I on my appraisal of the three that I lost all track of the talk until a sharp exclamation attracted my attention.

"Hold on, Professor! Not three lights from one match—if you please!"

As my eyes shifted to him Anders leaned forward, smiling, and blew out the flame which Macumber was holding to Truman's cigarette.

"I beg your pardon," said Anders. "There isn't anything to it, of course, but I can't help being a little finicky about third lights."

Macumber laughed.

"And I beg *your* pardon," he returned. "Can you imagine a man who has spent his life in the show business making a slip like that? The theater is honeycombed with hoodoos and superstitions, you know."

His eyes went to the mantel and rested on a thick brown bowl of earthenware, crudely shaped, which I had noticed there for the first time that afternoon and had meant to ask him about.

"Speaking of superstitions, gentlemen," he said, crossing the room and lifting down the bowl, "here's something of rather more than ordinary interest."

I noted that there had been a subtle change in the Great One's tone—one that after my years with him I could scarcely have failed to identify. The voice in which he spoke now was not that of the urbane host, but of Macumber the magician, the insinuating, compelling diction of the professional illusionist. Nor had the change been lost on alert Billy Race. As the bowl passed from hand to hand he betrayed a quickening interest in the proceedings.

"Magic as I deal in it," said the Great One, placing the brown bowl on the table after it had traveled the circle, "is of course a matter of specially constructed apparatus and a certain skill at legerdemain. My audiences know that; they come to match their wits against my efforts to puzzle and bewilder them. It is an eternal contest between us.

"But among primitive peoples, as you all have doubtless often heard, magic is a more serious business. I have seen in India, for instance, fakir magic for which I myself could find no natural, logical explanation. And tales vouched for by responsible men come to us of the mumbo-jumbo miracles of the jungle witch doctors. For instance, this bowl——"

Macumber paused and met the eyes of each of us in turn. His own were grave.

"Well," he resumed, "a strange story came to me with the bowl. It was given to me by a friend who spent several years in the African interior and returned to Broadway civilization recently full of fever and weird beliefs. Originally it was part of the paraphernalia of a witch doctor—an arbiter of life and death."

"Upon my word!" exclaimed Truman. "That *is* interesting."

"Very!" agreed Tracy.

"What's the idea of it?" the more practical Anders wanted to know.

Macumber appeared to weigh the question.

"Oh, to us it's absurd," he said after a moment. "And yet my friend, a man with a considerable reputation as a natural scientist and certainly nobody's fool, solemnly asserts he has seen its magic worked in circumstances barring all possibility of trickery. And he furthermore assures me he has seen more than one shivering black wretch, whose guilt the bowl has attested, go to his death on no more evidence than its say-so."

Cried Tracy: "Really now? Ghastly!"

And Anders reiterated: "What *is* the idea?"

"Mumbo jumbo," said Macumber. "The bowl, in connection with other supernatural properties, is supposed to lend an extraordinary virtue to water placed in it. Immerse in the water an article owned by or associated with one who has another's blood on his conscience and it comes forth crimson. That's the allegation of my learned friend

of the jungle sojourn—and he says, mind you, he's seen it done! He took the presentation of the bowl as a parting gift as the most delicate of compliments and passed it on to me as a treasure after my own heart."

The Great One paused again, looking from one of us to another.

"Dare we try it?" he asked lightly.

William Anson Race was as quick as I to pick up Macumber's lead.

"Let's give mumbo jumbo a whirl," he said. "You're sure, Professor, it won't react to a record of doctored expense accounts?"

"Go ahead, maestro," urged I. "Let's have the truth about Race."

The Great One already was filling the bowl with water from a carafe.

"Very good, Billy," he acquiesced. "What shall we make the test with?"

Race offered him a handkerchief and immediately Macumber plunged it into the bowl. A second later he brought it up dripping and unstained. Squeezing the water from it he tossed it back.

"There you are, Billy," said he. "It's a souvenir now. Next!"

Macumber was looking directly at Truman. The man's round face was a study.

"Oh, come now, really——" he protested, reddening.

"Tush, man," jeered the Great One. "You'll not convince us by hesitating that your life holds a dark secret." And smiling disarmingly he flipped the handkerchief peeping from Truman's breast pocket into the bowl.

Before the stout man had time for a second gasp the handkerchief was back in his hand, wet but white. He burst into laughter.

"Your own tricks have more to them, Professor," he said. "The place to give your witch doctor's bowl a real trial would be Sing Sing, don't you think?"

"A real trial, yes," said the Great One. "Sometime I may take it up there. This evening——"

He was standing in front of the divan which Tracy and Anders were sharing.

"Handkerchiefs please, gentlemen. One try, all try! Dry ones from my own drawer if you don't like 'em damp."

Tracy was fumbling nervously in his pockets; Anders' handkerchief was already in his hand.

"I'll take a chance," he said, surrendering it. "And a dry one, if you don't mind. I don't happen to have another."

Into the bowl went the handkerchief. Macumber poked at it with a finger, submerging it. Almost immediately a cry escaped him. He was peering down into the water, his face set in an expression of frozen astonishment.

"Look, man!" he ejaculated. "Look at your handkerchief!"

And gingerly dipping into the bowl the Great One brought forth what had been a second before a square of immaculate linen—now, body and border, blood red.

An interval of stunned silence ensued. It was Anders himself who was first to speak, his face chalky but his voice low and cool.

"I agree with Truman, Professor," he said. "Your bowl is—interesting!"

The thin lips of Anders' neighbor on the divan parted to emit an explosion of choler.

"By George, Macumber!" he protested. "This is carrying a——"

"Just a second, Tracy," said Anders, touching his elbow. "I don't know exactly what to call this, but the one thing it's *not* is a joke. It happens—and it might as well be told now as later—that it was I who killed Ad Prime!"

He raised his head and squarely met the startled eyes turned upon him.

"Oh, I'm quite in my right mind, although perhaps I put it strongly when I say *I* killed him. I don't think any jury in New Jersey would say so. It was the sharp corner of his own safe that did the trick. I only struck the blow that sent him against it."

Finding evident relief in the unbosoming, Anders talked on, uninterrupted.

"Prime," he said, "was as complete a crook as ever used the law as shield and buckler. For nearly three months before that night I had been trying to collect from him my share of what should have been a split commission on a real-estate deal in another part of the State. I had nothing in writing and Prime laughed at me, as he had laughed at many another man over whom he held a like advantage. He invited me to sue him.

"In the end I decided to do what probably any of you men would have thought of doing—made up my mind to take it out of his hide and call the cost, whatever it might be, the best investment of my life.

"Passing his office, I saw Prime sitting there alone. It was late and Main Street

was deserted. I walked in, locked the door and tossed the key on top of that high cabinet in front of his desk. Then I knew I'd have him to myself for a while.

"Physically it was a fair match. Prime had been a rough customer in his day. He was heavier than I and not more than a year or two older. I proved faster and kept away from him, punishing him as I could. At one point he picked up a chair. I got it from him and let him have it in the chest. He began to give ground then. I dropped the chair and went at him again with my fists. We had shifted to the rear of the office when I struck him the final blow. As he fell his head struck the corner of the safe. After he struck the floor he didn't move. I tried desperately to bring him to —half made up my mind to phone for a doctor. Then panic overmastered me. I knew he was dead.

"My one thought was to get away. To get the key I'd thrown away I'd have to pull a table over to the cabinet, put a chair on it and climb. I tried the back door. It was unlocked. I switched off the lights and ran until I struck Maple Avenue. In the morning, I thought, I'd make a clean breast of it. But the next day I temporized.

"Considering everything," he concluded, "I'm glad I came here to-night. Fortunately I've no family to worry about. My course is clear. I'm going to tell the county prosecutor's office what I've told you and face the music. And I can't do it too soon. How about the eight-forty-six for Creston, gentlemen?"

V.

No sooner was Race alone with the Great One and me than he began to spout a geyser flow of questions.

"One thing at a time, Billy," Macumber entreated. "What was that last, now? The bowl? It came this afternoon from the florist's around the corner and you may have it for the dollar I gave for it."

"Sold!" said Race. "It's a memento I'll never let go of."

Macumber brought a handkerchief from the tail pocket of his cutaway and tossed it to Race, who deftly caught it and demanded: "What's this?"

"Another memento, my boy, since you're collecting them," said the Great One. "It's the handkerchief I got from your friend Mr. Anders. The red one, of course, was a property of my own, held in readiness to flash on the man I thought guilty."

"But how in the name of crime did you pick Anders?"

Macumber grinned his broadest.

"Wasn't it Anders who raised the cry against three lights on one match?" he asked.

Billy Race stared at him wildly.

"Wait a second, Professor," he said. "You're getting 'way ahead of me. I remember the match incident, but what did that signify?"

"That Anders was the superstitious one of the three and thus most likely to be our man," was Macumber's placid explanation.

Young Mr. Race dropped into a chair.

"Quarter!" he cried. "I take the count. Please talk so I can understand you."

"I suppose I'd better," agreed the Great One, "for I've got to get on to the theater. The first point is that I had reason to believe the man who killed Addison Prime cherished deep-rooted superstitions. That didn't mean necessarily that the slayer was a moron. Superstitions assimilated in childhood are things that no amount of education will completely eradicate; a man can rise to the Presidency of the United States and still stoop to pick up pins.

"Now, you had eliminated all but three suspects. From the three I singled out one and played on his superstitious side. It was an experiment in applied psychology, if you like, although it might equally well be termed a gamble. The saving grace was that had I proved wrong no harm would have been done; the whole rigmarole of witch doctor, bowl, and returned traveler, culminating in the production of the crimson handkerchief, would merely have been a magician's fun. So there you are, Billy!"

The Great One seized his hat.

"Wait!" cried Race. "Before you go tell me where you got the idea that our man was superstitious."

Macumber halted on the threshold.

"I refer you to the evidence of the footprints in the alley," he said. "Would a man escaping after a killing be otherwise when he'd double in his tracks and run a needless quarter mile to avoid passing under a ladder?"

Another "Great Macumber" story in the next POPULAR.

A Chat With You

ONCE, for a while, we had to live on ten dollars a week. It was a good while ago and ten dollars in those days represented so considerable a sum of money that the feat was possible.

It was possible, not pleasant at first. A suit of clothes, the trousers of which shrank three inches during a rainstorm, is one of its memories. Had we been in the country the ten dollars might have gone further, but this was in New York and we were supposed to wear a white collar and look as if we had plenty of money. There was no hardship in it, save that it was dull. Then something happened to change the whole atmosphere and feeling of the life we were leading.

* * * *

IT was a book that a young lady librarian recommended to us in a public library. We are not sure but we think it was "Idle Thoughts of an Idle Fellow," by Jerome K. Jerome. The part that we remember and that made the happy impression upon us was the essay describing the author's adventure of living in London on one pound a week.

Before reading that essay we were depressed and rather ashamed that we had not more than ten dollars a week. We regarded ourself as a failure in life. But the book made everything different. Here was a brilliant, witty, scholarly man of the world, famous and successful who had been living not on ten dollars a week, but on five. It was not that Mr. Jerome offered any practical suggestions that were of any help. In fact the only suggestion we remember even bordering on the practical was that a man might pawn his watch and tell the time of day by looking at the clocks in "public houses." Our watch cost a dollar and there were no "public houses" in New York but only unromantic and generally clockless saloons so there was nothing in that.

But it was the spirit of the thing that helped. Life changed from the prosaic routine of a drudge to a romantic and light-hearted adventure of a swashbuckling hero. An hour before we were a cog in a machine, earning ten dollars a week and with no hope of getting any more; we were about to grow gray in the service and finally die a stunted soul. And now we had become the boon companion and fellow adventurer of Mr. Jerome, a fellow of infinite wit and most excellent fancy, who had lived on one pound a week and then gone on to affluence so that now he could look back upon his narrow early days and joke about them. Mr. Jerome was more than an author. He was a sign and an omen. We would be able some day to look back as he did and write about it. There are two stories we like—the tale of the poor boy who became rich, the tale of the rich man who once was so poor; and we think we like the latter one better.

* * * *

THIS is one of the many advantages of one who has formed the habit of reading something beside the daily paper. He can go at will into the society of those stronger and wiser than himself. He can associate at choice with the rarest spirits.

We have never been a national lawn tennis champion. This is a rather startling confession but we might as well have the worst over at once. We have never won any tournament whatsoever although we have had liberal handicaps in our day. And

yet last week, for the time being, we were a national champion. We had won at Forest Hills. We could win anywhere.

It was interesting but not what we expected. We were surprised to find that sometimes a champion is sick of his championship and wants to get out of it. There are no more worlds to conquer and the championship is a sort of cage, holding a man in from wider fields of activity. We found this all out by reading the manuscript of "The Cage of Glory," a novel by Leroy Scott which will appear complete in the next issue of THE POPULAR. It is the best lawn-tennis story we have ever read. It is really a stirring, gripping drama of modern American athletics. Be sure to get it.

* * * *

BY this time you have finished McMorrow's two-part story, "A Man of Principle," and the short story following it in this issue. We are curious to know how you feel about this series. When we read it we thought it something altogether exceptional. For us Little Amby has become, not a man in a story but a flesh-and-blood, human character. He seems real. You will meet him again in the story "To Preserve the Evidence" which appears in the issue of the magazine out two weeks from to-day.

Do you remember Percival Wilde's novel "The Hunch," a Wall Street story? Mr. Wilde has a long short story in the next issue. "The Haunted Ticker."

* * * *

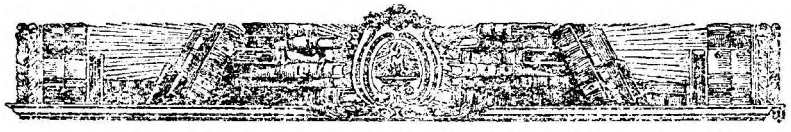
THERE are other things worth noting in the next issue. There is a baseball story, "Don't Aim It—Throw It!" by Norman Beasley who has spent a good many seasons with the Detroit Tigers. There is a South Sea story by Eleanor Gates and Frederick Moore. There is a detective story about the Great Macumber by Rohde. There is a story of financial intrigue by Calvin Johnston, a motor-car story by Wilbur Hall, a prize-fight story by Raymond Brown and another big installment of the serial, "In the Tenth Moon," by Sidney Williams.

* * * *

ARE you trying to live on ten dollars a week? Or twenty? Or fifty? Or a hundred?

Whatever it is, it is not enough. You need help. You need human companionship. You need a lot of interesting, stirring, adventurous people about you, to keep you company and to make you sure that after all, "Life is glorious, and the goal a golden thing."

We try to get them into every issue of THE POPULAR, so look for them at any news stand.



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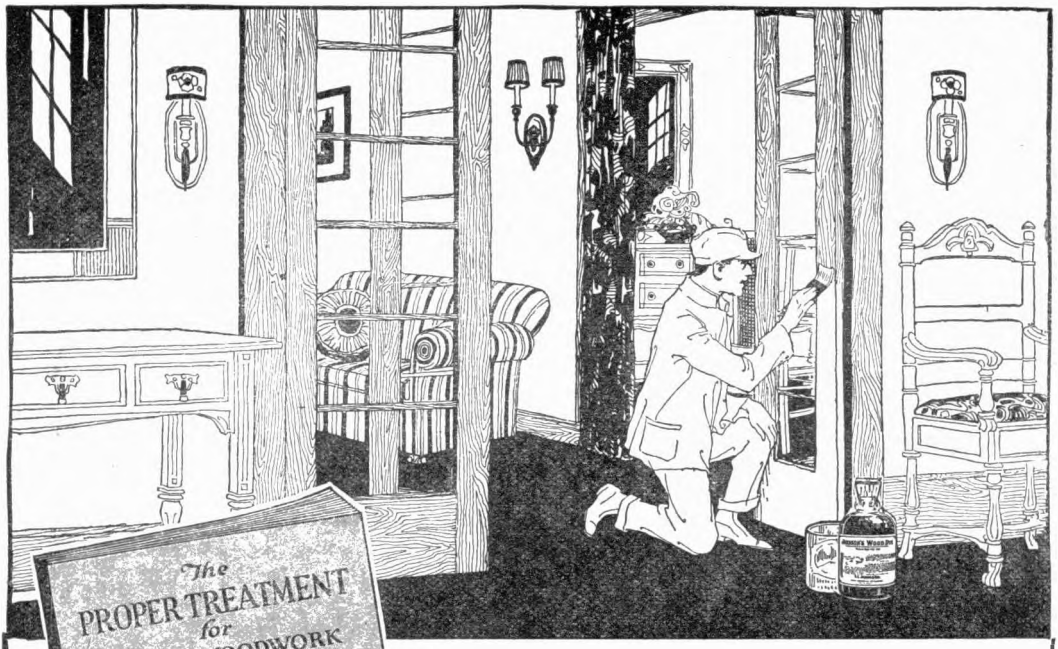

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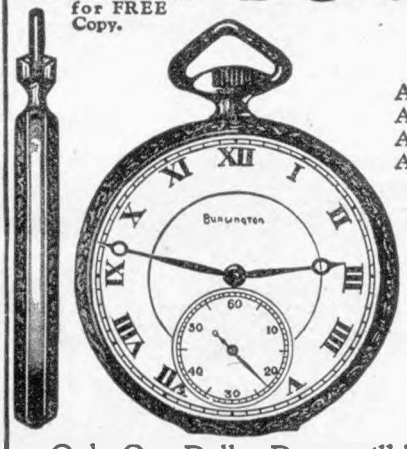

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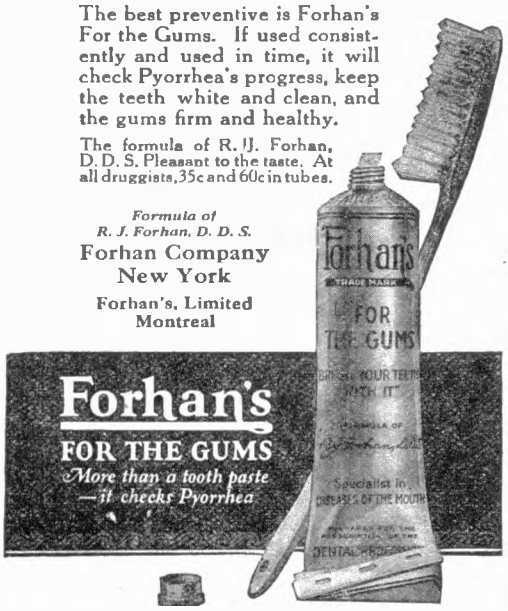

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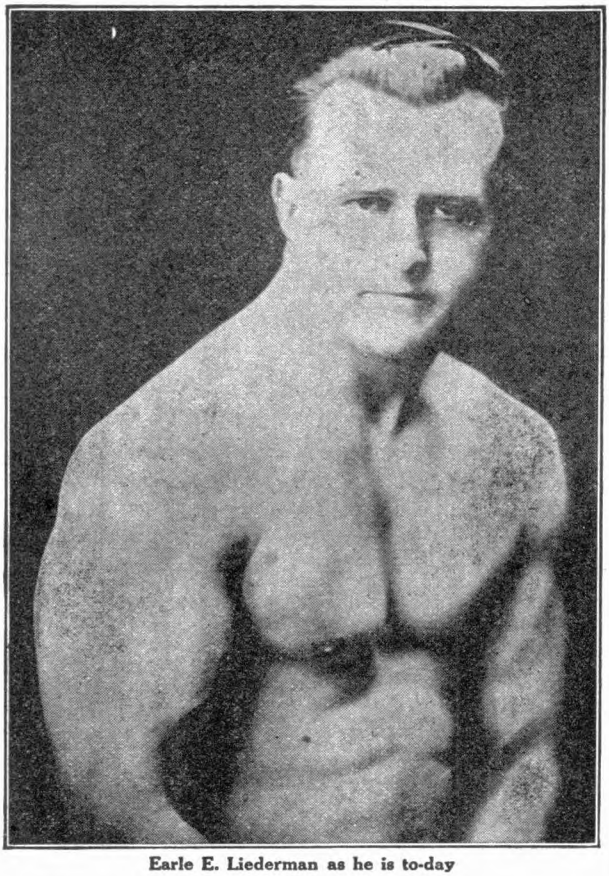
To look at the average man you would swear he never knew the laws of Nature or else he is just plumb crazy. He goes on stuffing any kind of food into his stomach till it sticks out like a loose meal sack, while his chest looks so flat you would think a steam roller had run over it. He stays out most of the night and then abuses his body most of the day. He never gives his lungs half a chance while his arms swing like pieces of rope with knots on the end.

Freedom

Cut it out fellows. Get wise to yourself. If Adam had looked like some of you, Eve would have fed him poison ivy instead of apples. This foolishness will never get you anywhere but the grave-yard. Get back to Nature's laws and be a real He-man. Pull in your belt and throw out your chest. Give your lungs a treat with that good pure oxygen that is all about you and you will get a better kick than you could get out of a case of bum whiskey.



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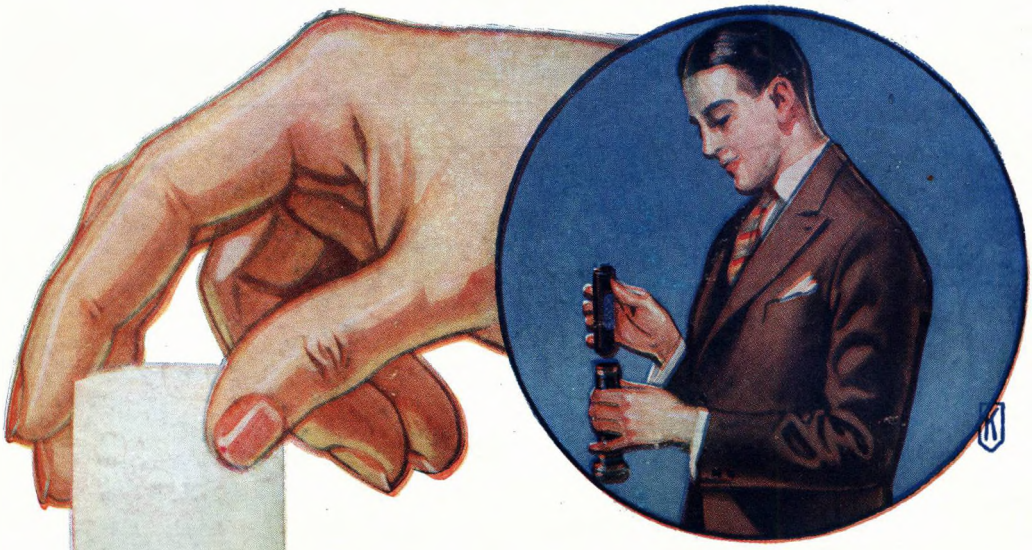

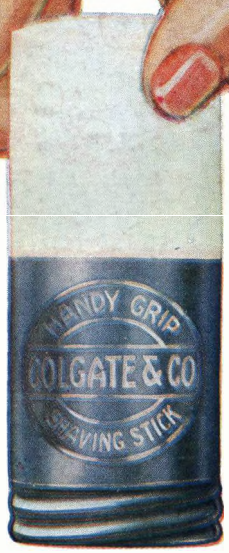

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