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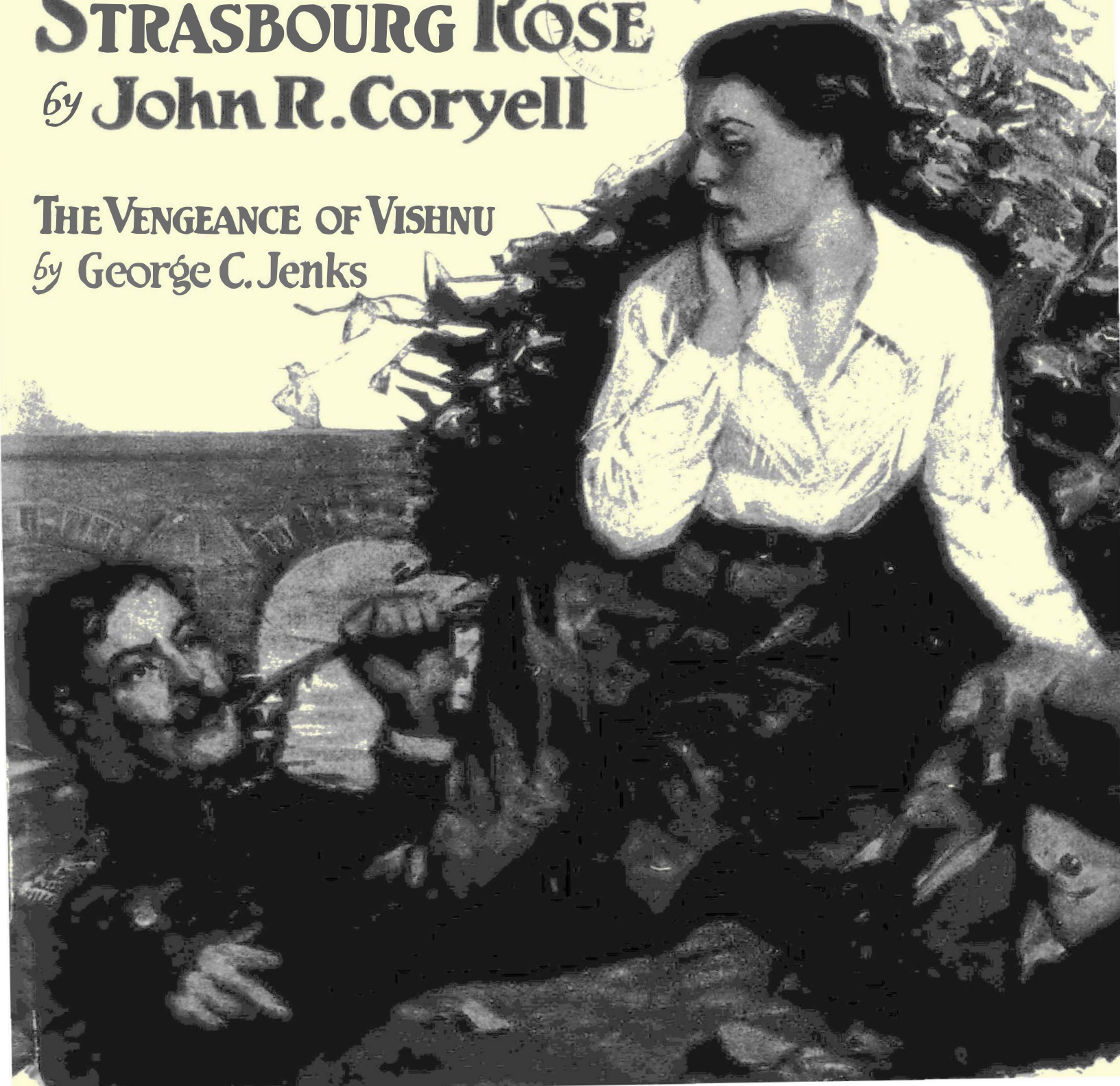
VOL. I No. 1

## STRASBOURG ROSE

*by* John R. Coryell

### THE VENGEANCE OF VISHNU

*by* George C. Jenks





# THE THRILL BOOK

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## The Vengeance Of Vishnu

By

George C.  
Jenks



IT was a quiet night in the police station. Lieutenant Craig, behind the desk, yawned at the empty blotter and wished the clock didn't tick so loudly. Terry Maginnis, of the reserves, in the back room, dropped his briar pipe, and it sounded almost like a pistol shot. Then, when Terry had sworn devoutly for a second or two over losing a pipeful of tobacco, the deadly silence gathered again and the lieutenant shook himself to keep awake.

He was in the middle of a long-drawn out yawn when the telephone clanged with its usual startling suddenness, and Craig reached eagerly for the instrument, hoping for something to break the monotony.

"This is the police station. What do you want?" he demanded sharply.

The voice that came jerkily over the wire had a curious, hollow sound and waxed fainter toward the end. "Send an officer to Overview Lodge and notify the morgue. I shall be dead when your man gets here." There was a pause. Then: "Listen!"

Lieutenant Craig, experienced in the sound of gunshots, heard a roar on the wire that could have been caused only by one thing, and called out excitedly to Maginnis: "Terry, you and Jim Callery beat it to that Overview joint, overlooking the river. You know where it is. That old guy down there has just plugged himself. I heard the shot on the phone. Get a move on. I'll call up the hospital to send an ambulance. He may not be dead, though he said he would be. Telephone me from the house."

Maginnis and Callery were out of the front door by this time, but the former called back: "All right, 'loot.' I got ye. What'll we do wid th' corpse if there is wan?"

"We'll send the wagon later and bring it here," snapped Craig, who already was ringing up the hospital. "On your way!"

Overview Lodge was a rambling two-story stone house, whose damp walls suggested that the river must often creep up there, while its small-paned windows, the old-fashioned weather vane on the Moorish cupola, and the flagree ornamentation of the rotting wooden veranda, were all in the style of architecture a hundred years old at least. Standing back from the narrow, unfrequented road, amid a funereal thicket of birches, elms, and hemlocks, it looked like an ideal home for a student, to whom the street noises of a great city would be a real distress.

As a matter of fact, it was a student, Doctor Theophilus Yeager, who lived there. He had inherited the home from his father and grandfather, and there he wrote his books about the strange peoples of little-known countries he had visited, and particularly about their religious beliefs and the curious manner of their devotional rites and sacrifices. Regarded as an authority on the lore of Asiatic nations, he was said to know more about Thibet and the unexplored regions north of the Himalayas than any other man in America.

With him in Overview Lodge was only one person, his tall, bronze-visaged, black-bearded, white-turbaned attendant, whom he called Chundah. This tall, silent man bought what food was required for himself and his employer, and did all other errands necessary. He also prepared their meals. The doctor did not require any personal attendance; he made his own bed and kept his room clean himself, Chundah having no more to do with it than to supply clean linen.

Doctor Yeager—although mixing not at all with the outside world, except that he went to see his publishers now and then, and had some friends in a certain learned society to which he belonged—had not the traditional appearance of a recluse. He was an ordinary-looking person, who might have been a lawyer or business man. He wore up-to-date clothing, shaved regularly, and seemed to enjoy life in a healthy, wholesome way. Chundah also dressed like an average American—when out of doors. In the house, however, he wore the white trousers drawn in at the ankles, and a loose white blouse—both, like his turban, immaculately white—which had been his customary garb in India before he entered the service of Doctor Yeager and came with him to America.

A swift ten-minute walk brought the two policemen to the lodge. They were on the veranda, with Maginnis keeping a sharp lookout for possible thugs about the grounds, and Callery trying the front door, before the ambulance left the hospital.

"The door's open, Maginnis," called out Callery cautiously. "Come on!"

"D'ye mean it was act'ally open, or jist unlocked, Cal?" asked Terry.

"Open, I said," rapped out Callery impatiently. "Where's that Injun? Hey, Chundy!" he whispered, slipping along the dark hall to where he supposed the kitchen must be. "Come out, if you're there." He turned his flash light on the hall and into the kitchen, but both were empty.

"Arrah! Phwat's th' use o' skitterin' aroun' down here, Cal?" broke in Terry Maginnis impatiently. "Sure this lad, Chundy, or phwatever his name is, has beat it. Av coorse he has. An', be th' same token—git up the shtairs or let me go." And he moved to push Callery aside.

But Callery was just as eager to go up as Maginnis, and the two were side by side as they pushed open the door of the room which they knew Doctor Yeager used as a library and general living room. There was a green-shaded student lamp alight on the massive table, and some manuscript lay in front of the big swivel chair which apparently had been carelessly pushed back when its owner got up. Maginnis looked at the top sheet of paper, and he saw that the person writing on it had stopped so abruptly that he had not finished the last word, leaving it "amu," but with an up stroke after it, like the beginning of another letter.

"Faith, phwat d'ye make o' this now, Cal?" asked Terry, pointing to the paper. "Do ye think he was thryin' to write 'a mule,' an' got tangled up in his shpellin'? Annyhow, he shtopped writin' mighty sudden." Maginnis had walked to a heavy portiere of wine-colored velvet, deeply edged with massive gold fringe, and swept it aside. "Howly saints, phwat's that beyant? Come here, Cal. Begorry it's himself. He laid down on the bed, so that he c'u'd pass out aisy—rest his sowl!—then he put th' gun to his ear, or somewhere that suited him, pulled th' trigger, an' niver moved. But"—Maginnis stopped and scratched his head, knocking his cap sideways over one ear—"how th' divil did he lay that sheet all so smooth an' nice over his own corpse whin he was as dead as Mike Mulligan's p'isened cow? That's phwat stumps me."

"He was a much smaller man than I thought, too," remarked Callery, who, with Terry Maginnis, was staring at the long, grisly form stretched on the bed under its white covering. "He don't make much of a ridge under the sheet."

"Ye're right," assented Maginnis in awed tones. "Be the Lord, he's shrunk a whole lot since I last laid eyes on him. He must have been sick. Well, we'll take a look an' see. We don't even know he's dead up to now."

There was a lamp in a bracket against the wall, with a reflector which sent a powerful shaft of white light full upon the bed. Terry Maginnis, as an experienced policeman, had often seen dead persons, so it was with perfect coolness that he seized one side

of the sheet, and, with a twitch, revealed what lay beneath. Then he jumped back, and from his mottled white lips there came forth, in a husky, awe-stricken whisper, as he touched himself piously on forehead and chest in the symbol of his religion: "D'ye see it, Callery? Or has the divil bewitched me eyesight? Phwat is it lyin' there before ye?"

"It's a skeleton, Maginnis. That's what it is," returned Callery, as much puzzled as his companion.

"Well, begorry, we know he's dead annyhow," said Terry, adding, with a sigh of relief: "Well, I'm glad I'm not crazy, Cal. If ye hadn't said it was what ye did say it was, faith, I'd have resigned from the force, because I'd ha' been no further good to it even if I shtayed."

It was a grotesquely horrible sight upon which the two policemen gazed, for the skeleton was attired in a comparatively new suit of bright-blue silk pajamas, with a round mandarin's cap of the same hue stuck rakishly on one side of the smooth white skull, which, together with the grinning mouth, gave the impression of an awful bald-headed creature enjoying some ghastly joke of the other world. The blue silk blouse was open at the top, revealing the crumbling breast bone and partly sunken ribs, while at the bottoms of the blue trousers long, fleshless feet, the big toe gone from one of them, pointed straight upward side by side.

There was no disorder about the bed: From all appearances, the skeleton might have gone calmly to bed like a living person, having prepared for rest in night clothes, and, straightening out comfortably, drawn the sheet over its face and dropped off to sleep. Or, what was the reasonable supposition, some person or persons had brought the dreadful relic of mortality from somewhere, dressed it in Doctor Yeager's pajamas, and left it in the bed. Still another theory, which occurred simultaneously to both Maginnis and Callery, but was dismissed at once, was that the doctor might have died a long time ago and lain in bed long enough for his outer tissues to decay.

"Ah, what are ye talkin' about?" grunted Terry Maginnis, when Callery ventured this suggestion. "Didn't we both see th' doctor on th' street within the mont', an' annyhow didn't he call up th' station an' say he was goin' to die, and didn't Craig hear th' gun go off whin he done it?"

"And you think Doctor Yeager could have shot himself twenty minutes ago and shed all the flesh off his bones—eyes, hair, and all—by now?" sneered Callery.

"I didn't say that," was Terry's indignant rejoinder. "It's puttin' foolish talk in me mout' ye are. But here's the skeleton, an' the' doctor's gone, wid that heathen hired man av his also missin', an', be jabers, I'm goin' to telephone th' station like th' loot told me, an' let him say phwat's to be done. Howld on! There's th' ambulance!" he exclaimed, as the clang of a bell sounded outside. "Kape yesel' quiet, Cal. Don't say a worrd till th' doctor boy gives his opinion. L'ave it all t' me. It's young Doc Griffiths."

The young fellow in the white jacket and uniform cap, who breezed into the room, nodded familiarly to the policemen. "Hello, Terry! What's broke loose in here?"

"Faith ye c'n see fer ye'sel', doc," returned Maginnis, stepping aside and pointing to the bed. "This here's what we found. Give it a name if ye wull."

Doctor Paul Griffiths glanced at the bed and turned wrathfully on the two officers. "Say, what kind of game is this you're giving me? Who rung up the ambulance?"

"Lieutenant Craig done it," replied Maginnis with dignity. "He didn't know phwat was down here. All he had to go by was a repoort that there was a suicide or killin', an' he sint Callery an' me to look intil it. How long sh'u'd ye say that bird on th' bed has been there?"

Doctor Griffiths did not reply at once. His professional interest was aroused, and he was bending closely over the bed.

"Think it's Doctor Yeager?" asked Maginnis ironically.

"It may be," was the startling and unexpected reply of the ambulance surgeon. "Wait till I've finished my examination. Here's something around the neck, held by a thin silver chain. I wonder— Yes, here's a clasp."

He took the chain from around the spinal bones where in life there had been a neck, and held up to the lamp, in the hollow of his hand, a flat, bronze disk of irregular shape. On it were some strange characters that showed plainly through the green corrosive surface of the medal.

"It's an ancient Brahminical amulet, dating from the time of Genghis Khan or thereabouts," pronounced Griffiths, after a minute examination. "I know Doctor Yeager used to wear something of this kind around his neck under his clothing. I remember seeing it when he was operated upon at a clinic in the hospital about a year ago."

"Sure, I rec'llect," interrupted Maginnis. "Something th' matter wid his head, wasn't it?"

"Yes, there was a trepanning operation, and——" Doctor Griffith had lifted the skull, which came away in his hand from the rotting spinal column, and at the same time the mandarin cap fell off. "By Jove! Look here, Maginnis—and Callery. Get this! See this hole at the back? Here's where the round piece of bone was cut out. You can see the teeth marks of the trepan if you look close. I wish I could tell when this was done by looking at it. But I can't. But it is in exactly the same place as the operation on Doctor Yeager's head. Could it be possible that——"

Doctor Paul Griffith did not finish his thought aloud, but, putting the chain and amulet on a table near the bed, he replaced the skull at the top of the spine, and, looking at it critically with his head on one side, remarked: "That seems to fit all right. He looks quite himself again. Now I'll see how these bones were all arranged so well without being articulated. Without any ligaments, it is queer they hang together."

He worked in silence for ten minutes. Then, looking up as Terry Maginnis came into the room after he and Callery had searched the house and telephoned Lieutenant Craig, he said: "I can't tell anything about it. If that Hindu valet of his were here——"

"Well, he isn't," declared Terry disgustedly. "Sorra

wan of him or any wan else is about the place. There ain't a sowl here, barrin' our three selves."

"The only thing is to hold a regular inquest," interrupted Griffiths in a brisk tone. "Take care of that amulet and chain, Terry. Good night!"

"You stay here an' watch this thing on th' bed don't git away, Cal," said Maginnis, when they were alone. "I'm goin' to th' station to repoort to the loot. It's a quare thing—a mighty quare thing."

## II.

WHEN a real tempest is raging down the Hudson, with fiercely driving rain and spiteful squalls, then look out for a bad night on the wooded heights of upper Manhatta. It was on such a night—chilly, misty, black, and full of eerie sounds as the wind whistled through the trees or shook the creaky old slatted sun blinds of the ancient houses still numerous in that historic region—that Doctor Paul Griffiths, now a full-fledged M. D., with a practice of his own, stood by the side of the large, open fireplace in his newly furnished library, looking down at his former classmate, Murray Plange, who sat in a morris chair and puffed thoughtfully at a long-stemmed hubble-bubble.

"I tell you, Murray," Griffiths was saying, "I never was satisfied with the perfunctory finding of that coroner's jury in the Yeager matter. The fact was that neither the coroner nor the police could make anything of it, and they took the easiest way out. They buried the skeleton in the grave in a corner of the grounds from whence it had obviously been taken, and laid it all to somebody or other who wanted to play a grim joke. Bah! That's nonsense!"

Murray Plange, pulling luxuriously at his pipe, expelled a mouthful of the water-cooled smoke and grunted.

"Well, go on, Murray," blurted out Griffiths. "Say it. I can see you have a suggestion. What do you think?"

"I haven't come to any conclusion yet," answered the tall, lean, bronzed man in the chair, stretching his feet toward the blaze of the hickory logs on the hearth. "But didn't the police try to find Doctor Yeager?"

"Of course they did," was the impatient reply. "They set all the ordinary police machinery in motion, and would have made some arrests if they could have found anybody to pinch. But Doctor Yeager had lived absolutely alone except for his Indian valet, Chundah, and Chundah vanished on that night, too."

"They went away together, eh?"

"No one knows," said Griffiths. "They were not seen to come away from the house, either singly or otherwise. That is not strange, for the house is very lonely, and there are several ways to approach or leave it—by water, as well as land. Old Theophilus Yeager, grandfather of the last one, built the place when there were no street cars or railroads or any other public means of getting about in this neighborhood—it's only a mile from here—and it was a natural thing for him to make a boat landing at the foot of the cliff, with rough steps leading down to the water. The old fellow was a great hand for having all conveniences. He even had his own private cemetery, in which he was interred according to strict injunctions in his will. He is the only person who was buried there, how-

ever. The second Theophilus Yeager died and was buried at sea, and the third one has vanished, as you know."

"And all this about the last Yeager was three months ago," observed Murray thoughtfully. "I suppose the police have stopped thinking about the case?"

"Well, yes—actively, I should say. But of course they have the records and would get busy if anything new turned up. Otherwise, it will have to go into the list of criminal mysteries never solved, of which New York, like all other large cities the world over, has its share. I've sometimes thought it must have been the work of a crazy man."

"I don't," exclaimed Murray Plange crisply. "But go on. Was anything stolen from the house?"

"Nothing," replied Doctor Griffiths. "Moreover, there was no confusion indicating a struggle. It seemed as if Doctor Theophilus Yeager might have dug up the bones of his grandfather himself, arranged them in his own bed, and then departed on some mysterious journey. That's why I say it may have been the work of a crazy man. It is quite possible for a person to go insane on the instant, and this Yeager was a curious sort of chap, always delving into mysticism and uncanny possibilities, and it might have turned his brain. I was present at the trepanning operation— By the way, I have the skull. Lieutenant Craig, of the police, was a friend of mine—he's captain of the same precinct now—and he helped me to get it just before they closed the casket. Like to see it?"

Murray looked at him sharply. "You speak as if it were Doctor Yeager's skull, Paul. What has the trepanning operation on his head to do with the hole in the old skull you found with the rest of the skeleton on that bed?"

Griffiths laughed as he went to a glass cabinet and unlocked it. He brought out a white skull in one hand and something that he did not at once show in the other. "I did not mean that, of course, Murray," he said. "But it happens that a similar operation had been performed on the owner of this headpiece, whoever he was. That was one reason I wanted to have it. Look!"

"Curious coincidence," observed Murray Plange, smoking calmly, without offering to touch the ghastly thing, although the doctor extended it. "Put it on the table, won't you? What's that in your other hand?"

"Not so curious, from a medical point of view," declared Griffiths. "The brain trouble may have been hereditary. As to what I have here, you can see for yourself," he added, as he held up a thin chain of tarnished silver, with an irregularly shaped bronze medal dangling from it. "You've been in India. What do you make of this?"

Murray Plange took the medal, glanced at it cursorily, and then put down his pipe and bent closer to study the characters, nearly obliterated by time, which covered it on both sides. "Where did you get this," he asked without looking up.

"It was around the neck of the skeleton," answered Griffiths. "I took the liberty of appropriating that, too, when the police decided it would not help them to find the people who had put the skeleton there. I

could see for myself that it had the name of Genghis Khan, with some hieroglyphics I could not read, on one side, and some small writing, in what looked like Sanskrit, on the other. I could not decipher it, even if I knew the meaning of the words, anyhow. But —"

Murray Plange got up from the chair to look at the medal in the shaded light of the reading lamp on the table. Then he turned to Griffiths: "This is an amulet, given by a Brahmin priest, which preserves its wearer from punishment for all evil deeds of which he may be guilty——" He paused, and a strange light came into the clear gray eyes beneath their heavy pent of black brown. "*Except one.*"

"You mean——"

"I mean," answered Murray impressively, "that the wearer of this amulet, if he were killed, must have desecrated the temple of Vishnu, the Sun God, in one of the many ways in which it can be done, especially by a white man. That, and that only, would account for his being put violently to death while he wore this protecting emblem."

"Always presuming that he was killed by some fanatical Hindu, a follower of Brahma, eh?" smiled Griffiths.

"Great heavens, man!" burst out Plange. "Do you doubt that? Of course it was done by an East Indian. I had made up my mind to that as soon as you began to tell me about the way the skeleton was found, with all the larger bones, at least, in their places. And many of the smaller ones, too, for that matter, where it was possible to make them stay after being assembled. I spent six months in northern India, in the very shadow of the Himalayas, and although the natives never trusted me entirely—they are always suspicious of white men—I had an opportunity to see more of their religious observances than falls to the lot of the average traveler. Of course, being American helped a lot. If I'd been English, I guess I'd never have come out of that region alive. Back in the hills they are not so loyal to the British flag as they are in Cawnpore, Calcutta, and Bombay. It was then I learned about these amulets. You can see that the sacred language of the Indo-Aryans, Sanskrit, is used on this one, and that the name of Genghis Khan is added, making it seem as if that jolly old potentate indorsed what is written. Nothing slow about those Brahminical priests, let me tell you."

"But all that doesn't explain whose skeleton this was?" objected the doctor. "The police thought the old grave of the original Yeager, who died a quarter of a century ago, had been opened, but were not sure. But even so, assuming that the bones belonged to the old man, how do you connect that skeleton with the disappearance of his grandson, who we know was alive within three months?"

"Are you sure the skeleton did not belong to the grandson?" asked Murray in a curious, tense tone. "This hole in the skull is just where, at the clinic, you saw the trepan go in. How do you know his grandfather had a similar operation?"

"By this skull," answered Griffiths with an impatient shrug. "Here's the hole. You are not asking me to believe that our Doctor Yeager could have been killed and all the flesh stripped from his bones be-

tween the time that the police lieutenant was called up by the dead man and the moment when the two policemen found the skeleton?"

Murray Plange smiled wearily as he placed the amulet and chain on the table and looked at the skull, still in the doctor's hand. "My dear Paul," he said, "in the first place we don't know when Doctor Yeager was killed. It might have been a week before the lieutenant was called up on the phone. Of course, I don't suppose it was the dead man who did it. You've said that the voice was not clear, and that it came in jerks, which would make it still easier to disguise it. These Indians are clever. They can imitate anything. And, by George, they can *do* anything. If you've ever seen the Indian fakirs——"

"I haven't," interjected Griffiths. "But I've read about them."

"I've *seen* them," went on Murray. "Among things I have seen them do is to take the flesh off the bones of a *living* man, showing a skeleton, right in the open, in broad daylight, and put it on again. Mind you, I *saw* that."

"Imagination—hypnotism!" explained Griffiths, with a contemptuous grin.

"Perhaps," conceded Murray Plange. "But it didn't seem so. Well, as I was saying, we don't know when Doctor Yeager was killed, or whether he was killed at all. We only know that he vanished that night and that a skeleton, dressed in his pajamas, lay on his bed. Also that there is a hole in the skull such as you had seen made by surgeons in the hospital some months previously, and that there are other small scraps of evidence which indicate that this was his skull in life and that the bones on the bed were his."

"How could they be?" ridiculed Doctor Griffiths.

"Let me see that," requested Murray, nodding toward the skull. "No, I don't care to handle it. Put it on the table. Have you a magnifying glass—a strong one?"

"Certainly," replied Doctor Griffiths, going to the cabinet from whence he had taken the skull, and where an imposing array of glittering surgical instruments and other clinical paraphernalia showed in the light of the lamp and fire. "Here's one. It's very powerful. I need good glasses in my profession."

Murray Plange took the magnifier without comment and held it over the skull. Then he placed a finger gingerly on the gray-white frontal bone and examined his finger tip through the glass.

"The East Indians have a process by which they remove all the flesh from a corpse in about two hours," he said half musingly. "They use some strong corrosive which is their own secret, and afterward apply another substance that dries the bones and removes all traces of the first process—except that they can't prevent this fine powder forming on the surface. See!" He held the glass in front of his finger, and Griffiths nodded. "Now," went on Murray, "here's a theory. It may be all wrong, but I give it for what it may be worth. You see, this powder——"

He stopped and looked at the door of the room leading to the rear part of the house. It was of ground glass halfway down, and silhouetted dimly on this semitransparent window was the figure of a tall

man wearing a large turban. "Who's out there?" he demanded in the sharp tones of a man whose nerves are on edge. "Looks like some one in Indian dress."

"It's my man," answered Griffiths coolly. "A mighty useful fellow. Acts as chauffeur, does most of the housework that the maid finds too heavy, and I have an expert knowledge of chemistry. He and I have had many pleasant hours in my laboratory. Name's Lunga Sen, speaks excellent English, and is a high-caste Hindu. He prepares and eats his meals apart from the rest of us, and I dare say he goes through his devotions in his own way in his room on the top floor. Aside from that, he's as matter-of-fact as you or I. Want to see him?"

Before Murray Plange could answer, the telephone on the table rang clamorously, and Paul Griffiths, picking up the instrument with the celerity of a young doctor who is after all the patients he can get, placed the receiver to his ear and sent forth a well-modulated "Hello!" A moment's pause, and he replied to something from the other end: "Yes, this is Doctor Griffiths speaking. . . . *What?* Overview Lodge? Doctor Theophilus Yeager's old home? Why, I thought the house had been empty for three months. . . . You—you are——. . . *What do you say?*" hurriedly. "You are Doctor—— Say it again! . . . Wait! Wait!"

The awful expression of horror on his usually placid face made Murray Plange wonder just what Doctor Griffiths had heard over the wire, but he had to wait till the doctor had called in vain three or four times, and at last, after jiggling the hook without result, had banged the receiver into its place and turned to his friend with a blanched face and quivering lips.

"Murray," he stammered in hollow tones, "it was, I think, Doctor Yeager speaking, and he said '*Come quickly. By the time you get here I shall be dead.*'"

"Good God!" exclaimed Murray Plange. "Why, those were the very words of the telephone into the police station from Overview Lodge on that night three months ago, weren't they?"

"The same—in effect, at least," answered Griffiths, pressing an electric bell button at the side of his table to summon Lunga Sen to bring out his automobile. "Coming with me, Murray?"

"You couldn't keep me away," was the emphatic response.

### III.

LUNGA Sen sat stonily at the steering wheel. He had not taken time to put on the long leather coat and chauffeur's cap he usually wore in the car, and his voluminous white turban shone in the blackness of the road almost like another headlight. The rain had stopped and the wind gone down, but it was one of the darkest nights Lunga Sen ever had seen in New York. There was not even a solitary star in the heavens to break the mystic, velvetlike blackness.

"Drive carefully on this road, Lunga Sen," warned Griffiths from the rear seat, which he shared with Murray Plange. "There are holes and big stones in the way. But we're nearly there. The next wide gateway. You can drive right into the grounds."

There was no reply, but Griffiths knew the taciturn

Lunga Sen always did as he was told so long as he was silent. When he took the trouble to speak it was usually to make some objection, for, as a high-caste Hindu, he had somewhat inflated ideas of his own dignity and was inclined to be independent on occasion. With calm skill he slowed down the car to turn into the gateway. Then he jammed on the brake and threw off the power in one swift movement, as out of the deep shadows suddenly appeared two men, who stood full in his path. In the strong light of the car lamps it could be seen that one was in police uniform, while the other wore a civilian business suit, with a broad-brimmed soft hat pulled down over his eyes.

Griffiths recognized them at once. "Hello, captain!" he hailed. "Did you get a telephone call, too?"

"I sure did, doc," replied a gruff voice, unmistakably that of Hugh Craig, who had been a police lieutenant three months before, but who since had been made a captain, in charge of this same precinct. "It was the same nutty spiel from somebody who said he'd be dead when we got here that came to the station that night my men found the skeleton in bed. I have Maginnis with me. He's the man who found it. How is it you are here, doc?"

"The same telephone message came to me," replied Griffiths. "The voice was jerky, but it sounded something like Doctor Yeager's. There's a light up in his room, I see. I didn't know any one was living in this house since he and his man—that East Indian guy—vanished on the same night."

"There hasn't been any one here till now," broke in Maginnis. "Faith it ain't no longer agone than lasht night thot I tuk th' throuble to walk all 'round th' primises, thrying th' dures an' sich loike, for me own satisfaction. Not thot I wanted to be doin' it nayther, f'r I'm not seekin' th' society av no man phwat passes off in th' quare way this same Yeager —"

The pushing open of the house door by Craig cut off Maginnis' long-winded exposition, and a minute later all four—Craig, Griffiths, Murray Plange, and Maginnis—were in the library. All except Plange had been in this same room three months before, and they noticed that the table and swivel chair looked just as they had then. The manuscript, with its half-written word at the end, was gone, but the shaded lamp, alight, was there, and in a general way there was nothing to indicate that thirteen weeks had elapsed since they had passed through to find the grisly remains of mortality stretched upon the bed in that other room.

"There's the telephone," remarked Captain Craig fatuously as he pointed to the instrument on the table. "But who used it? I could have sworn it was Yeager. Well," he continued, in what he meant to be a careless tone, "I guess we'd better take a look into this other room. Want to open the door, doc? You'll have to pull the portière aside first."

Doctor Paul Griffiths knew the reputation of Captain Craig for bravery, so he only smiled as he walked over to the doorway and reached for one of the heavy portières. But he did not get a chance to move it, after all. Lunga Sen, who, unnoticed, had followed them up to this room, stepped in front of the young

man, snatched the portière out of the way, and flung the door beyond wide open.

Doctor Griffiths was the first to enter the bedroom, however. He swept past the tall Hindu, and after one glance at the bed uttered an ejaculation of horrified amazement and fell back for the others all to see.

Stretched out on the bed, in a suit of bright-blue pajamas that might have been the identical garments worn by the skeleton three months ago, and with a mandarin's cap of blue perched on one side of his head, was Doctor Theophilus Yeager, stone dead, with a long-bladed, jewel-hilted dagger of Oriental design plunged into his left breast. Griffiths seized the handle of the weapon, and with some difficulty—for the blade had gone completely through the dead man's heart and the point was imbedded in one of the ribs—drew it out. He hardly noticed that Lunga Sen had taken the dagger from him, for he was bending over the body to determine, if possible, how long Yeager had been dead.

"Not more than ten minutes, I should say," was his verdict when he had assured himself that no life remained, and after he had felt the back of the neck. "It's still warm. He must have died instantly. The dagger did not go through the pajamas, and—"

"Ah!" cried Captain Craig, stepping forward. "That looks as if he were killed before they were put on him."

"I should say that was the way of it," replied Doctor Griffiths coolly, as he fumbled inside the garment. "The coat was pulled open a little and the dagger forced in between the two sides in such a narrow opening that it would have been practically impossible for a hard blow, such as this was, to have been delivered while it was on. If it had been, the murderer could hardly have avoided making some kind of mark on the silk."

"You're sure it is Theophilus Yeager, doc?" asked Craig. "No mistake about the identity, is there?"

"I don't think so," replied Griffiths. "But you knew him in life. Look and tell me what you think."

"It's Doctor Yeager all right," replied Craig, staring at the set, unruffled dead face. "He doesn't look like a man that died a violent death, either. But that's nothing. He probably got it so quick that he didn't have time to know he was attacked."

"Niver knowed he was hurted, I'd say," added Terry Maginnis. "As for it's bein' Doctor Yeager, why, I'll shwear to that. I'd know him anywhere, dead or alive. Thot is," he added cautiously, "so long as he has flesh on his bones. All *skeletons* look alike to me, av coorse."

"The dagger ought to help us find the person who did it," went on Captain Craig. "Where is it, Terry?" he asked, looking about.

"Lunga Sen had it in his hand the last I saw of it," said Griffiths over his shoulder, for he was still examining the body. "There's no amulet around his neck, Murray," he continued in a lower tone to Plange.

"Why should there be?" asked Plange.

"I don't know," was Griffiths' slow reply as he straightened and looked steadily into his friend's eyes. "But somehow I couldn't help thinking that the amulet



we found three months ago on the skeleton might—that is—you see——”

“There would not be anything of the kind here. The amulet you showed me at your house to-night is the only one in the possession of the Yeager family, you may be sure of that. Such things are not thrown around lightly by the Brahmin priesthood,” declared Murray in a tone of conviction.

“But don’t you think there is any connection between the disappearance and subsequent murder of this Doctor Yeager and the skeleton we found here three months ago?” asked Griffiths, rearranging the blue coat of the pajamas on the dead man’s breast where he had been searching for the amulet. “This affair now is as strange as the finding of those bones, it seems to me.”

“Say, where the deuce did that cheese knife go?” spluttered Captain Craig, who, with Maginnis, had been looking about the bed for the dagger. “If that guy in the white turban is doing any monkey business with it, he’ll find himself under arrest the first thing he knows. Terry, go down and see whether he——”

He was interrupted by a great scuffling and banging in the adjoining library, accompanied by ejaculations in a strange tongue, followed by a heavy thump, as if somebody had fallen to the floor.

Griffiths was first through the doorway, with Murray Plange by his side and the two police officers close behind. What they saw was Lunga Sen, holding the long-missing Chundah by the throat with his left hand, while with his right hand he flourished the jeweled dagger that had killed Doctor Theophilus Yeager. At his feet lay another man in the same sort of white Indian raiment, except that his turban had fallen off, allowing his long black hair to trail over the rug.

“Look out there, Terry!” bawled Captain Craig. “Get that knife!”

Terry Maginnis was too far back to get it, but Doctor Griffiths, with the activity and readiness of a skilled football player, leaped headlong at Lunga Sen and snatched the knife away just as it came within a few inches of Chundah’s breast.

“Good work, doc!” shouted Craig, his sturdy arm going around Chundah’s neck and pulling him away, while Murray secured Lunga Sen. “Look after that guy on the floor. What’s wrong with him?”

It was Murray Plange who answered. Dropping to one knee by the side of the still form, he pulled aside part of the white robe and showed a rapidly widening stain of dark red over the chest. “Stabbed through the heart, captain,” he said solemnly. “Look!” He pointed to the dead man’s forehead, on which three white lines had been made with some sort of indelible pigment. “He’s a Brahmin high priest.”

“Baboo Keshub Chundah Sen!” said Lunga Sen stonily. “I know him. He was here to avenge Vishnu, the high god. He finished his work. Then he used the dagger on himself. The vengeance of Vishnu was complete. He killed the man who insulted the god in Benares, who was the grandfather of this man on the bed. Three generations have died for it. The second Yeager was killed at sea. The third was obliged to wait till the holy moon was in the sky, which came to-night.”

“What kind of jargon is this, Lunga Sen?” de-

manded Griffiths angrily. “What are you talking about?”

“He is telling the truth, Paul,” interrupted Murray Plange. “The vengeance of Vishnu is always worked out in one way. The eldest son of the family of the offender is killed up to and including the third generation, as the holy writings of the god demand, and the same form is followed. The stabbing is done always when the moon is in a certain quarter, while the victim is sitting or standing. Then he is arrayed in sleeping garments and stretched upon his own bed.”

“But the skeleton we found lying on this same bed three months ago, after Doctor Yeager had telephoned the police station that he was about to die—how do you account for that, Murray?”

“If the sahib will listen, I think I can clear that up,” broke in Lunga Sen. “Baboo Keshub Chundah Sen bound me to secrecy in the name of Vishnu of the Ten Avatars. But Baboo Keshub Chundah Sen is dead, and I may speak. Know, then, that there was a secretary whose name I do not know who was in the service of Doctor Yeager, the grandfather of this one,” he pointed to the bed, but immediately brought his hands back to his side as before, “and this secretary was killed by mistake by the avengers, who believed him to be the doctor, violator of the temple at Benares.”

“Can’t you get along a little faster, Lunga Sen?” urged Griffiths. “Do you mean that the skeleton we found on that bed was the secretary’s?”

“Suffering Mike!” interposed Captain Craig excitedly. “Why, that would be Morrison! I worked on that case. He disappeared when old Doctor Yeager was killed, and it was thought that the secretary might have killed Yeager. I was just on the force then. I wasn’t much more than a kid, but I was big and husky, and they took me on. Go on, Lunga, or whatever it is. Let her loose!”

“The secretary was stabbed by one of the avengers. But when Baboo Keshub Chundah Sen came in to see that the work was well done he knew there had been a mistake. So he had the body taken down into the old cellar, where no one ever went, for the walls were crumbling in. A hole was dug by four of the avengers he had brought with him to America in case there might be an attempt to interfere with the holy work——”

“Holy work!” shouted Craig indignantly. “I always knew there was something wrong with these Indians snooping around up here. But go on.”

“The hole was dug and the body was laid there, anointed with something that would soon remove the flesh, except at the hinges of the joints,” went on Lunga Sen coolly. “Afterward, when Doctor Yeager, the grandsire, came back to his house, he suffered the death as it had been written, and was buried in the corner of his own grounds, where the grave is to-day. It is the will of Vishnu that always a condemned man shall be warned in some way what is to be his fate, and Baboo Keshub Chundah Sen, when he found that the moon was not in the sacred quarter at the time that he and the avengers came to kill this present Yeager, three months ago, had the secretary’s skeleton brought up from the old cellar, carried on a stretched blanket, and laid it on Doctor Yeager’s bed, dressed

in the doctor's own night raiment. Then the doctor's amulet, which came down to him from his grandfather, was put on the neck of the skeleton, and Yeager was taken away until a fitting time should arrive for his punishment."

"You mean to-night, Lunga Sen?" asked Murray Plange gravely.

Lunga Sen raised his eyebrows and spread out his hands, palms upward, for an instant.

"You see!" was all he said, nodding toward the bed. "According to the commands in the holy writings, it is always a skeleton that is used as a warning. The laws of the god are immutable, except when the execution must be carried out at sea, as was the case with the father of this third and last Yeager. That is all. I have told what I know."

"It is, eh?" cried Captain Craig indignantly. "Well, if this Baboo Catchup, or whatever his name is, has croaked himself, by the Lord, we've got you, Lunger! Get that fellow, Maginnis!"

In a flash Terry Maginnis had seized Lunga Sen's long brown hands and clapped handcuffs about his wrists, the Indian submitting in dignified silence.

"You don't think Lunga Sen had anything to do with it, do you, captain?" asked Griffiths. "I should be sorry to think so, for he has always seemed to be seven-eighths American. Besides, he is hardly old enough to have taken part in killing and burying that secretary. This dead man, Baboo Keshub, is over seventy, I should say, and even Chundah must be nearly fifty."

"That's right," agreed Craig. "I'm taking him, too. Get the bracelets on him, Terry. Here!" holding out a pair of handcuffs from his own pocket. "Use mine. I'm going to break up this whole Indian game as sure as I'm a policeman. I wouldn't trust Lunger any more than I would Chundah or any of the others in the gang. I'll take them into my back room, and if they don't come across with the truth, why——"

It was not necessary for him to finish. The sinister meaning was all too plain. But neither Lunga Sen nor Chundah betrayed emotion. Both were standing with their hands crossed flatly on their breasts. The handcuffs just allowed them to take that attitude.

"Well, I hope you're right—that Lunga Sen is innocent," declared Murray with a shrug. "But that fellow, Chundah, seems to be in bad. It looks as if Baboo Keshub has had him working for Doctor Yeager just so he could play the spy and arrange matters easily for Vishnu's orders to be carried out. Where has Chundah been for three months, and where did he keep Doctor Yeager all that time, out of sight?"

"We'll get that," put in Captain Craig grimly. "He'll tell when I get to questioning him. They all do. To me it looks like the chair for him. He was the fellow who telephoned to-night to me and Doc Griffiths, I'll bet. He turned sharply on Chundah. "Where have you been keeping yourself since that night you faded out of here, Chundah? And who killed this Doctor Yeager?"

But Chundah, his handcuffed hands still crossed on his bosom, merely bowed his head in silence.



## U. S. GRAVES IN FRANCE TO BE PHOTOGRAPHED.

Every identified grave of an American soldier in France will be photographed by the American Red Cross and the picture sent to the soldier's next of kin.

Several hundred photographs have been forwarded to relatives, the war department has recently announced.

Each photograph will be mounted on a cardboard folding frame, on one side of which will be inscribed the record of the soldier.



## EAGLE STEALS PIG.

A large eagle, which at first was thought to be an aeroplane, swooped down into a cornfield adjacent to the farmhouse of Edward Hanrahan, four miles north of Lemont, Ill., clutched a pig in its talons, and flew away. Hanrahan, who was near by with Peter Muldner, deputy coroner, said the pig weighed more than twenty-five pounds.



## HORSES RESPOND TO KINDNESS.

Corporal Gilbert Neff, of Neenah, Wis., now in France, and a few brother Yanks were Paris-bound one day. Walking along the road, they encountered a four-horse team stuck in the mud. The driver was lashing the animals and cursing loudly.

Pity for the struggling horses found a sympathetic friend in Corporal Neff, and he asked a lieutenant near by for permission to extricate the loaded wagon. It was granted.

A few words of assurance and a few gentle pulls on the lines and the wagon was moving again, with Corporal Neff guiding.

A report of this incident found its way to headquarters and he was promoted to a sergeancy soon afterward.



## AGLAIA.

By Arnold Tyson.

AND now when the evening flutters dim  
The ghost of her memory comes to him,  
Her shadow passes along the wall  
Where the heavy velvet curtains fall  
And the scent of a rare and dim perfume  
Pervades the silence of the room. . . .



## ANSWERING THE DEMAND.

Beginning with the July 1st number, THE THRILL BOOK will be bigger, brighter, and better. It will change in shape and size so that we can give you three times the amount of reading matter. In its new form it will have one hundred and sixty pages, and will sell for fifteen cents. We are making this change because of the instantaneous popularity which THE THRILL BOOK has attained everywhere.

The July 1st number will contain a new serial by H. Bedford-Jones and work from the pens of Nina Wilcox Putnam, Tod Robbins, J. U. Giesy, Robert W. Sneddon, L. J. Beeston, John R. Coryell, and Clarence L. Andrews.



# The Unseen Seventh

By Sophie Louise Wenzel

**M**Y head still aches from the sleepless nights I have spent since last Thursday, trying to make my tumbled thoughts piece the strange incidents together into some sort of logical explanation. There must be an explanation, I am sure. So I am going to set the facts down just as they occurred, and perhaps some one wiser than I in the laws of cause and effect can make the whole matter clear to me.

It was the first time we had gathered together in the card room of Sidney Kent's bachelor home since the death of Standish. Force of habit had sent us there because it was Thursday night, and for two years none of us had missed playing poker with Kent on this night.

Only five men were present out of our former stanch seven. Poor Standish was beyond ever appearing among us again, but we all silently wondered what kept Wickersham away. Wickersham, the most zealous poker player of us all, had never allowed anything to detain him from Thursday night's game.

Kent has a weird taste for antiques used by swarthy Easterners who died a few thousand years ago. In a far corner of the room squatted a heathen god lamp, modernized by electric globes hidden in the hands that sent out pale-green shafts of light. No one had thought to light the dome in the middle of the room. The light flickered in patches of half light and black shadows about our sober faces and the fantastic Oriental furnishings. The usual careless flow of conver-

sation was missing, but in a strained, low-voiced way we spoke of the tragedy that had taken the best man from our midst.

Dane ran a big hand through the heavy gray curls that clung damply to his broad forehead, and shook his head like a huge mastiff.

"If any one else had committed suicide in Standish's strange fashion the soundness of his mentality would have been questioned," he declared.

"Standish's taking off was curiously characteristic of him," put in Keeton, a wizen-faced college professor. "Everything he ever did was well out of the rut of conventionality."

Only one week ago Standish was alive and sitting in this very room with his six cronies. None of us had noticed any shadow upon his gayety. He was the same versatile Standish, full of brilliant conversation and wit. That same night, soon after he had gone home, he wrote a farewell letter to the club, then sent a bullet through his brain.

"Poor Standish," murmured Parker. "We'll miss him, boys. It won't be the same without him sitting in his chair over there, raking in his fat pots and cracking his jokes."

Kent choked awkwardly over a half-suppressed cough.

"He was a demon for luck, all right," he agreed. "Wickersham has often said, half in fun, but partly in earnest, that some genii must have always stood behind him while he was playing poker and told Stan

what cards he held, for as sure as Wickersham went into a pot with Standish he lost."

"Wonder where Wickersham is to-night?" I asked.

Nobody knew, but they all agreed that Wickersham probably felt too depressed over his friend's death to appear in the old crowd for the first time without him. He and Standish had kept bachelor apartments together for several years, and if any one of us had been nearer to Standish than the rest it was Philip Wickersham.

The Buddha who lighted the room with the sickly green glow stared at me from heavy bronze eyes until I turned my back on it. Kent began to pace restlessly up and down the room. He was young yet, and the tragedy which we older men could discuss so calmly must have fed his brain with unhealthy fancies.

A light rain tapped monotonously against the window panes and increased the dismal air that hung about the half-lighted room. Kent stopped suddenly in his walking to switch on the huge electric dome that hung from the ceiling. In the bright glare his handsome face was drawn and pale.

"I can't believe it, boys," he said hoarsely. "Standish didn't kill himself. Even if he did have some secret annoyance, he wasn't the sort of fellow who would crawl away from it in such a caddish manner."

A sudden shock seemed to strike us, for Kent had spoken the doubt that lay deep within our minds.

"In God's name, what do you mean?" thundered Dane. "Do you mean that he was—murdered?"

A sickly hue blanched Kent's face, and his tongue slipped over his dry lips.

"I don't know what I mean," he parried. "I have no foundation, no proof on which to base my suspicions, but I have a feeling that Standish was done to death by some one—some arch fiend who was almost superhumanly clever in covering up his tracks."

We stared at him, bewildered. Through the blue haze of smoke in the room our faces were white and solemn.

"But the letter to the club," said Parker; "it is in his handwriting, and the diction is purely Standishesque."

Kent eyed him in defiance.

"Could not some one—some one who knew Standish's foibles and eccentricities—have written the letter?"

There was a dead silence. We looked questioningly at each other over our cigars.

"Kent, you're 'way off," scoffed Parker. "Don't you know that the police have sifted the matter thoroughly? Besides, what enemies did Standish have? None whatever! He was liked by all who knew him clean down to your nigger butler."

Kent ruffled his black hair with excited fingers. Two spots of color relieved his cheeks of their dead pallor.

"Murder is not always done by enemies," he snapped. "Perhaps Standish may have indulged in some clandestine love affair for all we know. Or perhaps he was about to smash some one in Wall Street. Phil Wickersham told me he had been speculating heavily lately."

"You may be right there, Sidney," put in Dane.

"Phil said that he wanted to sink a few thousand in a deal himself, until he found out that Standish was interested, when he withdrew. Poor Phil had a horror of investing in anything connected with Standish, for Standish was a regular Jonah for him, or at least he thought so. Now, why couldn't some one else have felt the same way toward Standish, some one who did not have the warm friendship for him that Phil had?"

"Romantic bosh," I sniffed, reaching for another cigar. "We just simply didn't know old Standish as well as we fondly believed. All of us have a grinning skeleton locked up in some secret closet. God knows I can often hear the bones of mine rattling."

"You're right, Gibson," declared Dane solemnly. "I'll bet there isn't a man in this room who is not withholding some dark secret from the rest—and here is Wickersham to back my statement." Hello, Phil, we'd about given you up."

Wickersham was standing in the doorway, where he had paused a moment to take in the group around the fire. He was a tall, cadaverous, sharp-eyed man with an unsettled gaze that seemed to seize on several objects at once.

"What's the discussion?" he asked, draping his long limbs over a table near the fire.

"We were talking about the secret skeletons we all keep locked up somewhere in our interiors," offered Dane. "You have your own secret that sort of nags at your peace of mind, too, haven't you, Phil?"

Wickersham hesitated and eyed him keenly.

"Naturally I have certain things that I keep to myself, but nothing particularly black." He laughed shortly and fingered over the box of cigars.

"And I suppose old Standish was no different from the rest of us," commented Parker, blowing smoke rings dreamily. "No doubt he was hag-ridden by something dragging at his mind until he preferred a bullet in his brain to the thing that pestered its peace."

Kent drummed impatiently on the mantel.

"Your arguments are satisfactory, but not conclusive. I still maintain that Standish was not a cheap coward."

Wickersham paused with a lighted match halfway to his cigar.

"What in thunder are you driving at, Kent?" he demanded.

"I'm trying to impress you loggerheads with my conviction that Standish did not kill himself."

The match burned Wickersham's fingers and fell unnoticed to the floor.

"Well, I'll be damned!" he muttered slowly. "If he didn't kill himself, how in thunder did the bullet get into his head?"

A half-suppressed laugh fluttered through our group.

"A murderer did it, of course," went on Kent doggedly. "You fellows can try to argue me down, if you refuse to be convinced, but I am going to have the matter stirred up again."

"Better be careful that you don't mess things up and make an ass of yourself," warned Wickersham dryly.

"Cut it, and let's play poker," suggested Parker.

There were exactly seven chairs around the card table, and after we were all seated in our accustomed

places our eyes rested a little sadly on the one empty chair.

"Let's move it, boys," said Wickersham with an almost imperceptible tremor in his voice, nodding at the chair which stood beside him on the right.

"No, let it stay," remonstrated Kent. "I am so used to seeing poor Standish sit there it actually seems to bring him nearer to us."

I felt a cold shiver crawl like a wet snake down my back.

"I was fond enough of Standish when he was alive, but I'd hate to have him near me now," I blurted.

"Gibson was always afraid of ghosts," laughed Keeton, winking his faded eyes at the rest.

I considered this a rather stupid remark to make toward a man weighing two hundred and three pounds, with brains enough to earn an income of fifteen thousand dollars a year. But even stolid business men suffer from nerves now and then.

"Deal, Kent," broke in Wickersham.

Kent drew a pack of cards from the drawer, and his long, nervous fingers began shuffling them. Kent's shuffling always had a fascination for me, for the cards twinkled under his magnetic touch with a grace that I envied.

"I wonder if your luck will change now, Phil?" said Dane. Kent stopped shuffling and looked intently at Wickersham, with a curious smile on his lips. A whiteness crept under Wickersham's sallow skin, and Dane went on hurriedly: "Excuse me, old man. I don't think any of us want our luck to be changed by the absence of poor Standish. And you loved him more than the rest of us. But, Phil, it was odd how you'd always lose when betting with him, and I was just wondering if now——"

He stopped suddenly, for Wickersham was clearly disturbed. Kent laughed shortly and began dealing the cards one by one. There was an uncomfortable silence in the room, broken only by the faint crackling of the fire. The relics of dead men and bygone days that filled the room seemed to crowd around me. There was not a thing in the room that was less than a few hundred years old, except the buffet and its burden of liquors. When the dealing was over we snatched eagerly at the cards as though for something to do besides staring uneasily at each other.

"Why, where is my hand?" cried Wickersham, looking vacantly at the empty table.

A hearty laugh came from us.

"Good joke on you, Wickersham," twitted Parker. "Kent forgot to deal to you."

"But I'm positive I dealt six hands," said Kent, peeping under the table with a puzzled frown.

"Misdeal. Try again, Kent," said Dane.

"But I'm sure I dealt to him," insisted Kent.

I thought of the envious look I had given Kent's shuffling.

"Gad, it's queer!" I muttered. "I was watching you deal, and didn't notice that you missed Wickersham."

"You make me tired," bawled Dane. "All this fuss over nothing. Gibson, you were not looking at Kent at all. I was watching you and chuckling inwardly when I saw the horrified looks you kept on giving poor Stan's empty chair. If he is actually capable

of seeing us now, it wouldn't afford him much satisfaction to know that his old pals are actually afraid of his memory."

Kent gathered the cards together and began dealing again. The deal was successful this time, and the game was opened by Parker. Wickersham and Dane came in, with Dane raising the draw ten more. Wickersham's dark, restless gaze went swiftly to Dane's face as though to pierce its careful mask.

"Twenty-five more," he said, carelessly pushing his chips forward.

Parker's eyes narrowed slightly, and he hesitated a moment before he came back.

"Twenty-five again."

With a short oath Dane withdrew. Wickersham's lips trembled almost imperceptibly, and I knew he was making a violent effort to keep victory from showing in his face. He hesitated a moment, as though he were pondering whether or not to raise the bet.

"Fifty more," he said nonchalantly.

Parker quietly pushed his last chip into the pot and smothered a soft chuckle as he looked at his opponent. Wickersham met the bet eagerly, and, with poorly concealed joy, placed his chips in the pot.

"Phil's luck has changed at last," burst from Dane as Wickersham displayed his hand.

It was a straight flush.

Slowly Parker laid down his hand and showed a royal flush. Wickersham, wild-eyed and sickly pale, rose halfway from his chair and crouched in that position for a moment.

"My God—no use—no use!" he gasped almost inaudibly.

Suddenly his face became livid with rage, and the muscles in his hands worked convulsively. Parker uttered a low cry and shrank away from the table as though he feared physical violence. But Wickersham was not even looking at him. He was looking at the empty chair beside him.

"What's the matter with you, Phil?" demanded Dane, placing his hand roughly on Wickersham's shoulder.

Wickersham crumpled into his seat and attempted a weak laugh.

"My bad luck isn't buried yet," he cried. "Move that chair, will you, Kent?" His voice was pleading.

"Great Scott! Are you getting the jimmies, too, Wickersham?" exclaimed Kent. "Don't let Gibson get on your nerves. If it will make you feel any better, I'll move the chair; but, in Heaven's name, I wish you'd tell me how a chair can influence your luck?"

"We are all extremely overwrought," piped Keeton. "Perhaps it would be best for all of us if the chair were removed. It is natural that we should feel a little worked up the first time we played without Standish."

Still grumbling, Kent pushed the chair over against the wall near the buffet. Wickersham sighed audibly with relief.

"You fellows need something to drink," Kent said, ringing a servant's bell. A grizzled-haired negro, swathed in a huge white apron, appeared almost before he removed his hand from the bell.

"Bring in some of that old Bordeaux wine, Josh," he ordered. "Six small bottles and six glasses."

"Yassah, six," repeated the negro, holding up six bony fingers.

"Do you boys want to go on with the game?" Kent inquired.

"Sure," we agreed.

The negro butler soon reappeared with a tray loaded with moist bottles of wine and thin-stemmed glasses. He served each man with the deftness born of his slave days. When he got to Wickersham he stopped short and stared in amazement at his empty tray.

"Gawd A'mighty!" he cried. "Whar dat bottle er wine gone?"

"You never could count, Josh," chided Kent good-humoredly. "You brought five bottles instead of six."

"No, sah! I know I brung in six bottles. I done count 'em on my five fingers and de thumb ob my odder han'. Las' week when Mistah Standish been heah I brung in seben bottles an' dey jes' did fit 'roun' de tray, wid de glasses settin' in de middle. To-night when I sot de six bottles on de tray I notice de one em'ty spot, an' I say to Mom Maria, 'Mistah Standish ain't nevah gwine git no mo' er dis heah wine.'"

"Well, if you brought it in, where is it now? Don't be a fool, Josh," came the stern answer.

Josh's eyes were mostly white as he rolled them around the room.

"Name er de Lawd, Mistah Kent, dars ghos's in dis heah house. A ghos' done gone and took dat bottle offen dis heah tray."

"Get out of here, Josh!" commanded Kent. "Don't blame your mistakes on ghosts. Bring in another bottle of wine, and be sure that a ghost doesn't steal it on the way, or I'll take it out of your black hide."

Josh shambled away, shaking his head, his heavy lips moving with low muttering.

"It's damn' queer, boys," offered Parker. "Some one or something seems to be taking spite against poor Wickersham."

"Shut up, for God's sake!" panted Wickersham. "You fellows give me the creeps."

"We are acting like a gang of scared schoolboys going through a cemetery at night," said Dane. "It was merely coincidence that Wickersham was the victim of the misdeal and Josh's stupidity."

Wickersham was visibly relieved.

"Coincidence—that's it," he agreed. "Let's forget it and start the game again."

Josh reappeared with another bottle of wine.

"The ghost didn't hold you up this time, eh, Josh?" asked Kent dryly.

"No, sah, t'ank Gawd!"

Wickersham reached for the wine eagerly and gulped it down as though he were parched with burning thirst.

"Your deal, Gibson," he said, drawing his chair closer to the table.

We played until Wickersham had won all of the money we had between us. It was nearly two o'clock when he raked in the last pot. He fingered the stacks

of silver and counted the bank notes as though he could never weary of doing it.

"My bum luck is buried," he sighed, patting the money.

"I never knew you loved money so much, Phil," said Dane.

A chuckle rattled in Wickersham's throat.

"The money is nothing," he declared. "It is only a symbol of success. This pile of money is a visible sign that I have achieved my great desire." He hesitated and shivered a little. "I've buried my bum luck, boys." He cast a swift glance at the empty chair against the wall. "I buried it in the grave of poor Standish."

Wickersham started violently at this moment, and turned upon Kent with a scowl.

"Cut it out!" he cried.

Kent looked surprised.

"What in thunder do you mean?" he demanded.

Wickersham rubbed his neck with an injured air.

"Don't play innocent," he advised. "You nearly broke my windpipe when you did it."

"You're crazy. I didn't touch you. What the dickens are you driving at?"

Wickersham's eyes darted from one face to another.

"Well, damn it! If you didn't grab me around the throat, some one else did. Darn poor time for such jokes."

"You're nervous, Wickersham," said Kent. "I've noticed it all evening. You're all unstrung, old man."

"That's a lie!" he swore. "I was never more self-possessed in my life. Of course I am cut up over poor Standish, like the rest of you, but I am not nervous."

Kent smiled quietly. He laid his hand firmly on Wickersham's shoulder and looked at him intently.

"You can't fool me, old man," he said. "There is something on your mind. You're not yourself to-night. What is it?"

Wickersham laughed weakly and wrenched himself away from Kent.

"You're trying to make a fool of me, aren't you?" he sneered. "I'm going to leave you idiots——"

A sudden crash ended his speech. As one man we leaped to our feet, overturning several chairs. A thin, red stream slipped snakelike over the carpet from some spot between the buffet and the outcast chair. There was a soft thud as of some light body falling to the floor. Some one gave a hysterical gasp.

A moment of terrified suspense followed. Then a long-drawn cry broke from our midst. Wickersham was staring in horror at the red stream on the floor. He put his hand before his eyes as though to shut out some hideous sight.

"Standish!" he screamed. "Leave me alone, for God's sake! Boys—I—killed him—my luck——"

He suddenly pitched forward, and his head lay in the ruddy stream. A small, dark shadow that crouched near the chair scampered across the floor with frightened squeals, and disappeared beneath the Buddha. Kent knelt by the prostrate man and lifted his head. A sharp, jagged piece of glass from the carafe stuck straight out from his temples. The red stream on the carpet was no longer just claret wine.

# Strasbourg Rose

By  
John R.  
Coryell

## SYNOPSIS OF PRECEDING CHAPTERS.

Doctor Merrill, a brilliant American physician, is held in Germany at the outbreak of hostilities, but finally secures permission to return to America through Belgium. He is well liked by the Germans, but secretly hates them for ravishing little nations. In Brussels he meets a mysterious and beautiful girl being pursued by the German secret service. She is a spy. He saves her at great risk to his own safety by calling her his wife. He is summoned away to operate upon the Kaiser, and he takes her with him to protect her. After the operation they learn that the authorities are still looking for her, and, in order to escape, he drugs a German general and his chauffeur. Disguising her as the chauffeur and himself as the general, they take the automobile and start their perilous journey.

## CHAPTER VI.

IT was perfectly evident at once that Rose d'Almeyrac knew how to drive a car. She was less reckless of the few pedestrians they came upon, but equally skillful in every way as the *gefrente* who had driven for Von Schilling. She stopped once to ask a lone soldier what way to take for Dixmude, and the soldier, coming to stiff attention at sight of Merrill's uniform, gave careful directions.

They had no difficulty in getting out of the city. They were stopped at the barrier, but a glance at the rigid figure in the tonneau seemed quite enough even without the chauffeur's curt statement that he carried General von Schilling.

The road in the main was a good one and not crowded, though well guarded. In about three-quarters of an hour they came upon a village where a great number of troops were quartered, judging by the activity there. This they discovered to be Thourout by questioning a soldier they met on the road.

If they could have avoided Thourout they would have done so, for, although Merrill had every confidence in his papers and in his ability to carry off his impersonation under ordinary circumstances, he had a sinking of the heart when he considered the possibility of having to face officers of high rank. There was no road around it that they could find, however, so they entered the place.

Merrill was subjected to a very close scrutiny, and his papers examined. It was done with the utmost politeness and even apologetically, and Merrill com-



ported himself with a proper arrogance, though, as he later told Rose, his inclination was to be especially polite and was only deterred by his consciousness that no Prussian high official was ever kindly.

Rose was not spoken to or even looked at by the officer of the guard, and when the ordeal was over Merrill ventured to ask the best way of reaching Dixmude, explaining that it was his first visit to the section they were in. He was directed to a road almost at right angles to the one they had come on; he was to go on about five miles, when he would come to a road which turned sharp to the south. From there it was about ten miles to Beerst, and from Beerst only two or three miles to headquarters, which any one would point out to him.

When they were once more on their way, Merrill leaned over the back of the seat, wiping the perspiration from his forehead. "I'm glad we got through that," he said in her ear. "I suppose Beerst will be the next place for an examination, but I don't feel like tempting fate again. Have you any suggestions?"

"Alas, no! You have done so splendidly that I have selfishly left everything to you. Of course we

mustn't go into Dixmude. We would hardly dare to do that."

"No, indeed. This last was unbelievably easy, but to try it again would be madness. I wasn't sure that an alarm hadn't already been sent out. We ought to be safe till morning, but we must discount accidents. My suggestion is that when we come in sight of this Beerst we hide the car, if we can find any place to hide it in, and then take off due west on foot. Then is when our real danger begins."

They talked more in low tones until they came upon a body of marching troops, evidently men who had been in battle and were going back to rest. Merrill sat back then in stiff grandeur. They passed lines of heavy motors loaded with wounded, and here and there slow-moving, limping stragglers. The sky in the west was lit up by colored lights and by the bursting shells that kept up a constant roar. Nothing fell near them, however. Merrill felt a chill creep down his spine as he thought of making his way with the girl through that zone of death and terror.

The farther they went the more fully he realized the madness of which he had been guilty in venturing this way. Even now he was unable to see how he could have done differently. To go this way was their only hope, however impossible it seemed.

There were times when there appeared to be no one on the road with them, but the whole country was flat, and nowhere by the roadside did he see trees or even bushes where a car could be hidden; and to leave the car in plain sight was to court curiosity. And then to be in such utter ignorance of the country!

They made the turn toward Beerst, and after a while came upon indications of its nearness. Still there was no sign of any place in which they might hope to hide their car.

"It isn't safe to go farther," he said to Rose. "If we get into Beerst we can hardly escape going to Dixmude; and I don't believe I could carry it through once I was in the midst of the staff, even though no one knows the real Von Schilling. We must take our chance here. Isn't that a barn ahead at our right?"

"I think so, but it is so near the lines that it is sure to be occupied by soldiers. Why not run into the ditch and cripple the car? We are alone now, and can get into the fields before any one comes up."

"Do it," he said after a moment's thought. "We'll puncture two of the tires and let out the gasoline."

There was no one to be seen, and Rose at once turned the car, and in a few seconds it lay almost on its side in the deep ditch that ran by the side of the road. Merrill quickly thrust the point of his sword through two of the tires and then started the gasoline running out of the tank.

"Come!" he said. "We have no time to lose."

Indeed they could hear the rumbling of a line of heavy motor trucks coming toward them, and other sounds from behind. He took her hand and ran with her across the road. He lifted her across the ditch, which was running full of water, and helped her up into the field beyond. There was no fence to climb, and they started on a run across the field in a direction at right angles to the road.

There were no stars to guide them, the sky being overcast, but they knew they were moving in the right

direction. The intermittent firing from both sides made it impossible for them to make any mistake about direction. Occasionally a ball of lurid light would break in the sky over No Man's Land and hover there, illuminating even where they were. At such times they would drop on the muddy earth and remain perfectly quiet, trying to see objects about them.

Merrill was taking complete charge now. He felt that all the responsibility was his and that it rested with him to get his companion through the lines. Every minute it seemed more desperate and nearly impossible. He knew that presently they must come upon the Germans, who would be patrolling the country even if they were not intrenched there. He meant to avoid them if possible, or, at the worst, to try to impose on them with his general's uniform.

One thing he was sure of was that whatever they did must be accomplished that night, since discovery in that flat country, where there seemed to be no cover, would be inevitable by daylight.

The earth was deep in mud now, as if it had been churned up by thousands of feet tramping over it. Sometimes they went to their knees in mud so sticky that he was obliged to lift her out and carry her for a distance.

Most of the time he held her hand, and it seemed to him that it rested in his confidently, as if she had absolute trust in him. His heart was in his throat lest he should fail her. They seldom spoke. Now and then he would whisper an encouraging word, and her usual answer was a pressure of her little hand in his.

They had listened at first for some sound to indicate that the car in the ditch had been found, and then they had gone so far from it that they could not have heard. After they had gone for what he estimated about three miles, they came upon a raised road that was almost dry and hard, but they had no sooner stopped to rest than they were compelled to leap down on the other side and lie in the mud to hide while a body of soldiers tramped past.

They were not noticed, but when they stood up again they were mud from head to foot, and he knew that now he had lost all chance of passing himself as a German general. Besides, he could feel that Rose shivered with cold, and, now that he thought of it, he knew he was cold, too. The air was damp and cold, as if it blew to them from the sea, as indeed it did.

"This is terrible for you," he whispered. "Perhaps I was wrong to have tried this."

"You were absolutely right," she answered almost vehemently. "It was the only way. And don't worry about me; I'm a little cold, but I'm strong and can stand anything."

"How brave you are!" he murmured, and took her hand again to go on.

After that it seemed as if they spent half the time lying in the mud, for they came upon bodies of soldiers everywhere. He wondered that they escaped notice.

After a while, perhaps they had been walking and lying in the mud for four hours, they came upon a path raised some height above the plain where they were, and as they silently approached it they became aware of the fact that it was regularly patrolled.

They waited, shivering, so that they thought the



chattering of their teeth must be heard, and after a while they noticed that an interval of five minutes passed before the sentry—if that was what he was—came by again.

The next time he passed Merrill whispered, "Now creep up and slip over the other side. I'll follow the next time."

She pressed his hand and leaned up against him for a moment, and then, without a word of remonstrance or objection, left him, and he saw her clamber up and disappear over the raised path.

He followed her over when the sentry passed again, and found her crouching on the other side. "There is a canal here," she whispered. "I know now where we are. This is the Yser Canal."

"We must cross it."

"I can't swim," she answered.

"Any bridge will surely be guarded," he said. "We must cross it. I am a good swimmer; will you trust me to get you over? We must cross, little girl."

"Yes, I trust you," she whispered. "I will do whatever you tell me to. Won't it be very hard to take me over when you have all those heavy clothes on?"

"I shall take my boots off and my cloak."

"And after you get over?" she asked anxiously.

"I'll have to do without them. It will be all right. There is no other way. You take your coat off and we will fasten it on my head somehow so that it won't get wet."

"You need not think of me. I can do without the coat."

He laughed softly. She certainly was the pluckiest girl he had ever met. "No," he said, "take it off and give it to me."

He had already long since removed his casque lest a glint of light on it should betray him, so now he fastened her bundled coat to his head by means of a strip torn from the cloak he was casting aside. They waited, prone in the mud, until the sentry had passed again.

"You are to do nothing but put one hand on my shoulder and cling there when we are in the water. I have done this many times, and can take you across easily," he whispered, and crept to the water and slid over the bank into its icy depths, for it was over his head even by the bank. "Now!" he whispered.

It was a marvel to him to see how instantly she obeyed his word, for he knew what a terror the water held to one who could not swim. He put her hand on his shoulder and pushed off from the bank, and with silent but vigorous strokes made for the other side.

While they were in the water one of those lurid flares suddenly lit up the sky. He was afraid they would be seen in the bright light, but apparently they were not, while, on the other hand, he was able to make out the other bank only a few yards away.

It was well for him that it was no farther, for his clothes were becoming heavier and heavier with every moment, and the chill of the water seemed to penetrate to his very bones. Moreover, although not a murmur came from the girl by his side, her hand slipped from his shoulder twice, and she would have gone down if he had not caught her by the arm and replaced her hand.

When they reached the other bank it was all he could do to drag himself and her up it. He did accomplish it, however, and when they were safely on the other side first forced the shivering, exhausted girl into her coat, and then took her hand and bade her run.

"I don't believe I can," she sighed.

"You must," he said curtly, for he knew it was the only way by which he could hope to restore her circulation.

"I'll try."

He started off at once, reckless of the consequences, intent only on bringing back some degree of warmth to his companion. Of himself he thought nothing, for he knew he could endure much more than he had done yet; nevertheless he was the better for the exercise.

He reasoned from the fact of the occasional flares breaking out almost overhead that they must now be in terrible No Man's Land, where they were likely to be shot from either side. To avoid this he fell prone in the mud and dragged his companion down with him each time a flare broke.

At first no notice had been taken of them, but at the second flare bullets whined over their heads or spat into the mud near them. After that he dragged Rose on for a while, and then fell with her and for the remainder of the time crawled along on their bellies until she gave out completely, when he made her climb to his back while he crawled desperately on.

It was a long and hard journey, but he was buoyed up by the thought that they were through the German lines and on their way to friends. And at last, when it seemed as if he could not drag himself a yard farther, he found himself in the midst of a group of soldiers.

They said something in French, and he gasped out, "Friends. This is a lady. Warm her; she is perishing with cold."

## CHAPTER VII.

HAYDEN MERRILL presented a sorry and doubtful figure as he stood in front of a colonel in Belgian uniform, who was seated at a table in a room in a small cottage. He was covered with mud from head to foot; he was in his stocking feet, and his teeth chattered in spite of all his efforts to control them.

Mademoiselle d'Almeyrac had been carried, almost unconscious, to a base hospital, and he, after being given a glass of brandy, had been brought here. His weapons had been taken from him, but otherwise he had been left as he was.

"Well, monsieur," said the colonel sharply, "it seems you have come through the lines. He studied the shivering man closely, and added quickly: "You wear a uniform. Are you a deserter?"

Merrill looked around for a chair, but, seeing none, answered: "Yes, I wear a uniform—a general's uniform—but I am not a deserter. I am an American. Pardon me, but I am exhausted; I am wet through and very cold. If I might have a chair, so that I might sit by your warm fire, I have much to tell you and something to give you."

At the colonel's command an orderly brought a chair for Merrill, who took it and sank down in it before the fire, his feet held out toward it. Then, without a word, for he knew he was looked upon with sus-

picion, and justifiably so, he took from his inner pocket the package of papers belonging to Von Schilling and his own passport and a letter of credit, and handed them across the table to the colonel.

The latter took them and looked first at Merrill's papers. "You are Doctor Hayden Merrill?" he questioned.

"Yes; on my way home after two and a half years in Germany."

"You can establish that?"

"In Paris, undoubtedly. I think you will find the other papers of interest, though I don't know, for I am not a military man."

"They are addressed to Prince Ruprecht."

"I think he is now in Dixmude."

The colonel tore open the packet and ran through the papers. It was evident at once that the papers were of very great interest to him. He went through them all, now and again glancing up curiously at Merrill, who, though he still shivered occasionally in a sudden, convulsive way, was already feeling more comfortable.

"How did you come by these papers and by that uniform?"

Merrill shifted his chair so as to face the colonel and briefly told his story; and the colonel listened with outward composure, but with inward amazement, mingled with no little incredulity.

"You came through with very little difficulty, monsieur," he said when Merrill ceased to speak.

"Do you think so?" Merrill first stared and then laughed shortly. "I feel as if I had been through a great deal. Perhaps, if I had as dry clothes as you, my colonel, I might feel as you do about it."

"You shall have dry clothes presently. I must tell you, however, monsieur that two persons do not slip through the lines as easily as you and Mademoiselle — What did you say her name was?"

"Mademoiselle d'Almeyrac."

"Do you not think you came through very easily, monsieur?"

"Well, we came through, at any rate, and what I told you is true. Surely you don't suspect us of being German spies? Would German spies present themselves in this way? It seems a little unreasonable, if you will permit me to say so."

"The unreasonable is the speciality of the German, monsieur."

"Well, at any rate," and this time Merrill laughed gayly, for the fire was doing its comforting work well, "don't shoot me for a spy until you have given me some dry clothes and a little sleep. I was so sure those papers would make me welcome. Are they not of value?"

"Of great value if authentic. You say mademoiselle has important information, too?"

"So she told me."

"You don't know what it is?"

"I was trying to rescue Mademoiselle d'Almeyrac; I made no effort to interrogate her. When she is recovered no doubt that will be your privilege." He spoke testily.

The officer studied him for a few moments in silence; then said in a quiet tone: "Monsieur, I think

I would be able to judge better of the matter if I could see your face."

"My photograph is on my passport, but I suppose there is not much resemblance now. Anyhow I shall be very glad to wash my face and to get into those dry clothes we were speaking of."

The colonel pressed a button, and to the orderly who came said: "Ask Lieutenant Durail to come here." And when an alert young officer entered a minute later he gave the curt order: "Take this man, undress him, bathe him, give him dry clothes, and bring him back. Under strict guard every moment."

"Come!" said the lieutenant to Merrill, who gladly rose to follow him. The colonel began to write quickly without paying further attention to either of them. What he wrote he sealed and gave to a sub-lieutenant, whom he had summoned.

"Take this with all speed to his majesty. If he is asleep, say that it is of great importance that he be awakened at once. Return with the answer."

So it happened that when Merrill was brought back in less than half an hour, feeling quite himself, even if he looked odd in his ill-fitting clothes, he was escorted under guard to an automobile and carried with the colonel to a considerable distance and taken into a house of no great size.

A tall, fine-looking officer in the uniform of a general sat at the head of a table, with several other officers. The colonel saluted respectfully. "This is the man, your majesty," he said. Then Merrill knew he was in the presence of King Albert of Belgium.

"And here," went on the colonel, "are the papers found on him, and the clothes he wore." The papers were handed to the king, and the uniform, which had been cleaned after a fashion, was laid on the table.

Merrill, who had had time to think the matter over, realized the necessity for their making sure that he was not an impostor. He stood there quite at ease, a faint smile on his face as he studied the fine face of the heroic king. The group of officers, meanwhile, examined the papers, with occasional glances at Merrill and now and then a glance at the uniform, while the colonel explained how he had come into their lines and what his story had been. As he reached the end of his account the door opened to admit several persons.

Merrill turned indifferently, and then cried eagerly: "Rose! Mademoiselle d'Almeyrac!"

"No communication with each other!" snapped the colonel.

Merrill smiled and shrugged his shoulders as he looked at King Albert and caught his eye. "Your majesty," he said, his smile broadening, "if I may not communicate with Mademoiselle d'Almeyrac, will you kindly request some one to ask her if she feels quite recovered? She was utterly exhausted when I last saw her."

The grave face of the king lightened up with a slow smile. "She may tell you that herself," he said.

"I am quite myself, thank you," Rose said, smiling brightly at Merrill and then turning and bowing to the king.

Merrill gave her an answering smile. He saw that she was wearing her own clothes, which had been

dried, and that she really did look none the worse for what she had gone through.

The king ordered a chair to be brought for Rose, and then turned to the officers seated with him and conversed with them in low tones, evidently referring to the papers before them. Presently he looked up and addressed Merrill.

"You say you are an American?"

"I am an American, your majesty, and I feel quite confident that there are Americans in Paris who will know me or of me; but I would like to say something in relation to those papers you have."

"Yes."

"I do not know what they are, for I didn't look at them. I knew General von Schilling, whose uniform that is, was taking them to Prince Ruprecht, and I supposed they might be of value to his enemies. Of how much importance they may be I can't guess, but I do know this—that by seven o'clock this morning General von Schilling is sure to be found tied and gagged, and that then it will be known that I took his papers. Perhaps then it will be too late to make any use of whatever information they contain. You will know that better than I."

"But," answered the king, "if you are not what you pretend to be, then these papers have not the same value."

"That is true," murmured Merrill. "I hadn't thought of that."

"Perhaps you are an American—you look like one—but there are unfortunately many Americans who are pro-German. There are, in fact, many who are acting as spies for the Germans. How are we to know? By your own story you had a singularly easy time passing through the German lines; you seem to have known just where to go to avoid guards and sentries after you left your automobile."

"I was surprised myself that we saw no more than we did," Merrill admitted. "Perhaps Mademoiselle d'Almeyrac can help solve your difficulties." He turned to her.

She sprang eagerly to her feet. "Your majesty," she cried, "I have information for General Joffre which will establish me with him."

"Why will I not serve as well?" he asked dryly.

"I promised to deliver it to him and him alone. It will be of value to him only. Besides, he will understand it, and you will not."

"You must know that General Joffre is not here. If you had information for him what were you doing in Brussels? I understand that you started from Strasbourg. It is a very roundabout way to get to him, mademoiselle."

"There was no help for it. I was suspected and had to go where I could. I found I could make my way into Belgium when I could not get through the lines farther south. Surely you can get into communication with General Joffre. Take us to him and I promise you there will be no difficulty in clearing up everything."

"Is this information to be given him by word of mouth, mademoiselle, may I ask?" the king asked.

"No, your majesty."

"A document?"

"Ye-es," she answered hesitatingly. Merrill looked

at her uneasily, wondering why she seemed so disturbed.

"You have been searched, mademoiselle," the king said sternly. "Your clothing has been put through the closest examination, and nothing has been found. Where is this document? If you will put it in my hands I give you my word as a gentleman that I will go with you instantly to General Joffre without looking at the paper."

With every eye fixed on her, Rose d'Almeyrac stood there biting her lip in manifest distress. She shook her head slowly and in despair; then suddenly she straightened up and looked firmly into the eyes of the king. "Your majesty," she said, "I cannot put this document into your hands, but I swear to you by everything I hold sacred that I have it and that it is of vast importance to General Joffre. I can see that you feel that I have justified you in believing me a spy, of believing that loyal gentleman a spy. I am not a spy; I am a loyal patriot, a French girl who would gladly give her life for France. I may not give you this paper, nor can you find it on me, but I assure you that if you do not believe me and take me to General Joffre you will have cause to regret it all your life."

There was something so fine and splendid in the way she spoke, so much of truth and the passion of loyalty that all were affected. The king turned and whispered to the officers near him, and presently came to a conclusion.

"Mademoiselle, and you, sir," he said with curt sternness, "I am going to take you to General Joffre. It happens that he is not far distant at this moment. I hope for your sakes that you are speaking the truth, for if you do not satisfy General Joffre I shall have you shot within five minutes of that moment."

"I ask no better, your majesty," she answered with a sigh of relief.

"And you, sir?" snapped the king.

"I know nothing of the young lady's affairs, your majesty," Merrill answered with equal curtness; "but I will stake my life on the issue."

Much to Merrill's discomfort, he was not allowed to talk with Rose after that, but was kept apart from her, and even when, fifteen minutes later, they were put in a big automobile they were not only kept apart, but were blindfolded as well.

There followed a terrifically swift ride of about half an hour before they came to a stop. Merrill was taken into a house of manifestly large size and put into a room, where the bandage was taken from his eyes by the colonel with whom he had first been confronted.

"You will remain here with me until you are wanted," the colonel said briefly.

Merrill smiled and nodded as he looked about the room. Now that Rose was to see Joffre, he felt that their troubles would be soon over, and the situation amused him. "I believe," he said genially, "that you still half believe that I am General von Schilling. A mere surgeon would hardly be honored by being guarded by a colonel." He sat down in a comfortable chair and smiled at the officer.

The colonel lighted a cigarette and sat down also. He gave no answering smile, but looked grimly at

the other. "I hope for your sake," he said, "that you are what and who you say you are."

Merrill chuckled, then shrugged his shoulders. "Some day," he said, "I hope we shall meet under pleasanter conditions; in the meanwhile, if not contrary to orders, I will take a nap. Of course you will not hesitate to waken me when I am wanted." He smiled once more at the grim officer and took as comfortable a position as possible for as much sleep as he might be permitted to have. And in a few moments he was sound asleep.

How long he slept he could not have told, for he waked suddenly, as if startled by something. He looked around and saw that he was alone in the room; then the sound of voices, speaking in tones of repressed horror, fell on his ear, and he noticed that the door of the room was open and that the speakers were on the other side of it.

At first he caught no word, but presently the voices were raised and he could hear what was said. "It is certain that the general was not injured?" It was the colonel who spoke.

"Joffre? Not at all. It was a miracle, however. A sub-lieutenant in the adjoining room had his hand torn off."

"And you say the girl got away? It seems incredible."

"It is incredible, but it is true. She will be caught, however. It is impossible that she should escape."

"But how could she get the bomb? She was searched carefully."

"That is another mystery."

"*Mon Dieu!*" gasped the colonel suddenly. "And his majesty?"

"He was not there, luckily."

"*Dieu merci!*" There was a brief silence, and then the colonel rasped out: "Ah, but we have that scoundrel in there! He is to be shot at once; is it not so? And he sleeps like a child! Name of a name!"

It came over Merrill then with stupefying horror that they had been speaking of Rose. Rose try to assassinate General Joffre? The thing was monstrous, impossible. He listened mechanically now.

"It seems not," was the answer to the colonel's remark. "His majesty seems to think he may have been a victim of this Rose of Strasbourg, and has been an innocent accomplice."

"I would shoot him," snapped the colonel.

"I think he is to be sent to Paris for identification. Now I will take charge of your prisoner, my dear colonel. His majesty is waiting for you to return with him."

## CHAPTER VIII.

**T**HE French officer who came into the room found Merrill standing staring at him with horror and unbelief written on his face.

"I heard what you said out there," he cried hoarsely. "It is not true, it is impossible, preposterous. You spoke of Mademoiselle d'Almeyrac, did you not?"

The officer who was in the uniform of a captain of chasseurs, studied Merrill for a moment. "But, yes," he answered after a moment of hesitation, "I spoke of Mademoiselle d'Almeyrac, as you call her. To us she is known as Rose of Strasbourg, one of the cleverest spies and one of the most daring in the

German service. You, sir, are to go to Paris with me for identification."

"But, Monsieur le Capitaine," urged Merrill desperately, "there is some terrible mistake. This that you say could not be. Mademoiselle d'Almeyrac is a brave, loyal girl. She asked only to serve France. She risked her life to bring information to General Joffre. More than once she almost perished. I know her; I know that she could not have done such a thing as you say. Assassination! Oh, no, no!"

His distress, his anguish were so genuine that the young captain looked at him pityingly. "I am grieved, monsieur," he said gravely, "to be in the position where I must disturb your confidence in the young woman. I must, however, bring to your notice the fact of the bomb, and then the fact of her escape. And it seems she claimed to carry a document. She was searched and it was not found. Did you ever see it? Where was it?"

Merrill clenched his hands and set his jaw. "What does it matter to me about this document? If she said she had it, it is enough for me—she had it. And this bomb you tell of; where did she carry that if she was searched so carefully. Can't you see that it is impossible? Never, never will I believe it."

"You do not know the infernal cunning of these Boches, monsieur. I suppose she had an accomplice near. Anyhow, there is the fact. Do you think General Joffre imagined it? Do you think the officer whose hand was blown off imagined that?"

"There is some explanation," Merrill groaned doggedly. "She is not guilty of such a crime; she could not be. Do you think I could have been with her so intimately and not know her?"

"She is a wonderful actress, monsieur. Her mother was an actress." Merrill started as if stung. He knew that was true. "And, monsieur," went on the officer gently, "do you believe you could get through the German lines with a girl so easily? If it could be done like that we would have a stream of spies reporting to us every night. It was intended that you should get through."

Merrill smiled scornfully. "Do you mean to tell me that it was planned that I should tie and gag a Prussian general and roll him under a bed like a bale of goods? Was it planned for me that I should operate on the Kaiser, that he should fall ill conveniently so that I might be taken to Bruges? Was it planned that I should steal the automobile, impersonate my stupefied general, pass the guards with his papers, and then drag their assassin through mud and mire, across the icy Yser and again through the mud and mire of No Man's Land? You ask too much of my credulity, Monsieur le Capitaine."

The officer shrugged his shoulders. "Again, monsieur, I tell you you do not know the Boche; again I ask you to explain the bomb and the flight of this young woman. I could tell you of more incredible things than you have related to me that the German spies have done.

"But, monsieur, we are to go to Paris, and may I remind you that you are not yet free from suspicion, you who so vehemently defend this young woman who is well known to our secret service."

"You are quite right to suspect me since you are

capable of suspecting her," Merrill answered, straightening up and eying the officer with cold defiance.

The captain smiled. "I did not say that I suspected you, monsieur, for I do not. I am a soldier, not one of the secret service, and I take my own measure of a man. I have no doubt you will somehow prove your innocence, and I shall be glad to give you every assistance to that end. In the meantime we must start toward Paris. May I first present myself: I am Captain Gaston Dufraine of the Chasseurs."

There was something so engaging in the young man's manner that Merrill bowed in acknowledgment and then went on pleadingly: "May I not be confronted with General Joffre and tell him what I know?"

"You can tell nothing that is not known, monsieur, and I am instructed to take you to Paris. The best that I can do is to tell you that if you will give me your word of honor to accompany me without resistance or effort to escape I will treat you as one gentleman should treat another. Believe me, it is useless to protest; there is but the one thing to do—go with me to Paris."

"At least give me this assurance," begged Merrill, "that if Mademoiselle d'Almeyrac is found I may be permitted to appear and testify in her behalf."

"Alas, monsieur, I can give no such assurance; I am only Captain Dufraine, with hardly more influence than you. Have I your promise?"

"Yes," he answered hopelessly, "I will go with you without resistance, without trying to escape. There is no merit in giving the promise, knowing that I am powerless to do anything. And pardon me! Accept my thanks for your courtesy."

They went to Paris in a powerful car. The captain evidently commiserating his companion, tried to engage him in conversation. At each attempt Merrill answered briefly, and then relapsed into silence. "Forgive me," he said at last; "you are very kind to me, but indeed I can think of but one thing. I am like a man struggling futilely in a hideous nightmare."

"I understand," the young officer said gently; "I will leave you to your thoughts."

So Merrill, left to himself, tried to adjust himself to his situation. That Rose was guilty of the awful thing charged to her he utterly refused to believe, and yet he went over everything that had passed between them since the moment she had asked his help. There were some things difficult to adjust—that of the document which she claimed to have, but which she could not have had, since the most careful search had not revealed it. He remembered, too, how confident she had been that the Germans would not find it when it was suggested that she be searched in Brussels. And she had acted marvelously for a girl of eighteen, taking up her part instantly and playing it to perfection under all conditions. Her terror when she was alone with him and her wonderful courage at every test.

Yes, there were some things that might seem suspicious to one who sought for them, but, above and beyond everything, there was the girl herself, with her pure soul shining out of her gray eyes. He would not doubt her; he could not, if he would, believe her guilty of the attempted assassination.

Disturbed as he was, shocked beyond anything he had ever conceived possible, he was able to see the truth as to his attitude toward her. He loved her. He admitted to himself that it was absurd that while he could count the few hours he had known her that he should yet love her. And he knew he did love her with a desperate, absorbing passion.

He had been immune to the charms of innocent beauty and to the seductions of sophisticated and far from innocent beauty. Women had never been more than a passing episode in his life, and now he was wholly absorbed in a passion for a girl he had not known for twenty-four hours; a girl whose past was a blank to him; a girl who was solemnly charged with being a German spy and a would-be assassin; a girl who was being hunted that she might be caught only that she might be shot to death.

But he loved her, he loved her, he loved her. He would believe nothing against her, and let them do what they would, he would find her some day and help her establish her innocence.

How he could do anything was not clear to him. He understood now how war had changed the world. In place of the easy methods of the courts there had come the cold, implacable, merciless methods of the military machine. He, a man of assured position in the world, possessed of wealth and social standing, could be taken out and shot. Rose, a girl of eighteen, pure and beautiful and innocent, who would have been sheltered and protected at every turn in the old world, was now only a person to be judged by the new, ruthless, merciless machine, her age, her sex not even considered. She would be shot as any wild beast is shot.

He told himself that he had lived his life aloof until now, and that the time had come to recognize the new conditions and to adjust himself to them. The world was topsy-turvy, and in that topsy-turvy world was a girl fleeing for her life, a girl who meant the best and the most of life to him.

He knew that he was pitting himself against a machine as effective and as powerful as it was ruthless when he entered on a struggle to save Rose d'Almeyrac in the face of the charges against her; but he set his firm jaw and straightened his broad shoulders as he recalled how he had pitted himself against the brutal German machine and beaten it. He might not be able to beat the French machine, but at least he would try.

This resolve was mad and quixotic enough to have been abandoned on reflection, but Merrill was only the more firmly resolved as he reflected on ways and means. The more difficult the task, the more settled he was in his determination, and that was characteristic of him.

And it was characteristic of him, too, that however furious he was over what he deemed a frightful injustice, he yet set about considering how he should set about his self-imposed task with a brain as clear and cold as his heart was hot.

Day was breaking when they reached Paris. Captain Dufraine started up from a heavy sleep when they came to the first barrier. He had no difficulty in getting through there, nor at subsequent barriers,

and the automobile tore along until the heart of Paris was reached.

"You would like something to eat, is it not, monsieur?" he asked in his kindly way as the car drew up in front of a doorway. "Here are my quarters, my apartment, and I am permitted to make you my guest."

Merrill looked into the alert, cheerful face of the young officer, and for the first time smiled. "You return my sullenness with too much kindness," he answered. "I ask your pardon for the surly response I have made to your overtures, and I thank you for your hospitality."

"It is nothing, monsieur; you make me happy. Jean," he said to the uniformed chauffeur, "you may go get the sleep you need. This evening you will report at the barracks."

The young officer was so determined to be the charming, helpful host that if Merrill had been still in his sullen mood of half-stupefied horror he could not have resisted him. But he had come out of that now, and was all alive and alert, keyed up to the task he had set himself. He had much to learn, and he meant to learn it. He had no definite notion of what it was he had to know to help him, so he was determined to absorb every bit of information that came to him.

The captain had charming bachelor quarters on the first floor, and he ushered Merrill into them with a hospitality that seemed to put everything there at his disposal. Indeed it was not only seeming, but fact, as Merrill discovered when he was shown to the captain's bedroom and shown the materials for shaving and for cleaning up.

"This is a singular way of treating a prisoner who is suspected of assassination," he said wonderingly.

"*La-la, mon vieux!*" was the gay response; "you are not my prisoner just now, but my guest. Later, perhaps. In the meantime permit me the privilege of a friend, if only a very new one, and let me tell you that your Belgian uniform of a private fits you abominably. *Ecoutez!* You are several sizes larger than I, but I had once the vanity to have some clothes made in London. I sent my measurements, but do you think that availed me anything? No, I see now that that tailor was prophetic; he made those garments for you. You shall judge. *Voilà!*"

From a clothes press he snatched a suit of tweed and spread the garments out with a gesture of gayety that was also comic. Merrill this time laughed; and the captain flashed a pleased look at him, as if well satisfied to have drawn it from him.

"Do you think they will fit?" demanded the captain, holding the trousers against Merrill. "A little short maybe, but, after all, that is the mode in America, I am told. *N'est-ce pas?* As for the coat—yes, it will fit also; like a glove perhaps, but after all—" He shrugged his shoulders. "Tell me you like my clothes."

"But," objected Merrill, "how can I permit—"

"*Oh, la-la!*" the captain interrupted. "Could I wear them? You should see me in them. *Mon ami*, you will do me a kindness. Alas, I have no shirt for you; a collar, yes, for I have also a prophetic laundress. I understand now why she sent me collars

which do not belong to me. As for your shirt, I have here some magnificent scarfs which you can tie in a knot so magnificent that the spots of Belgian mud will not be seen. Your shoes can be polished, and you will be superbly dressed, *n'est-ce pas?*"

Merrill laughed again, his seriousness not proof against the gayety of the young Frenchman. "Thank you, then," he said; "yes, I will wear them, but you must permit me to replace them when I have the opportunity. What I do not comprehend is why you are so kind to me."

The captain shrugged. "Why should I not be? I know you are guilty of no wrong. If I believed you were, no one would more gladly run his sword through your heart. Besides"—he hesitated a moment and then impulsively put out his hand—"monsieur, I, too, am a lover. Forgive me, but I could not help seeing."

Merrill flushed and then took the hand held out to him and pressed it. "Thank you, captain! You see, then, how impossible it is that she could have done this thing."

"Ah, monsieur," the captain said, shaking his head slowly, "all I can see is that you suffer. As for mademoiselle, I know nothing but what I was told. She had done this and that, she was the famous Rose of Strasbourg, she had escaped. As for you, in some way they were sure you were innocent. As for me; I know you are a true man. That is the whole story."

"I do not understand it," Merrill said gloomily, "but I know she is guiltless of this horrible crime. If some one were to tell you that the one you love had done such a thing, you would know it could not be true, would you not?"

"*Parbleu!*"

"Just so I know."

"*Eh, bien! mon ami,*" and the young soldier made a gesture of combined pity and hopelessness. "I sympathize, but I know nothing. But now I go to beg the *patronne* to send us up some coffee and bread and butter. Not very good coffee, very good bread, very little butter. It is not such a breakfast as you Americans eat, but it will keep you alive until ten o'clock."

When he returned Merrill had finished shaving, and, stripped to his waist, was washing. The captain stared at him in admiration and cried out: "*Ou, la-la!* What a torso! You Americans are wonderful. You are an athlete, a Hercules; no, you are a gladiator. Ah, but the *Legion Etrangere* would like to get hold of you!"

Merrill turned quickly, his face hidden by the towel he was using. "The Foreign Legion! I have heard of it. What is it?"

"What is it? *Monsieur*, it is a body of dare-devils. When you ask to join they do not ask who you are, where you come from, or what you have done that is wicked; they demand only courage and physical perfection. Ah, you would surely qualify on both counts. There are some Americans already in it."

Merrill laughed. "Are you suggesting that I join it?" he asked.

"Ah, no; I do not think you would be permitted."

While they made their toilets Merrill asked many questions about the interesting Foreign Legion, and about many other things, too, but all in such a detached way as to arouse no thought that he had a

specific object in doing so. In fact, he was not sure that he had a purpose beyond acquiring as much information as possible.

The London-made clothes fitted him well enough. At any rate, as Dufraine said, one need not look twice at him now to be sure that he was a gentleman. The *petit déjeuner*, with its hot coffee and delicious bread, and the cigarettes afterward, had the effect of steady-ing Merrill's outlook; so that when, at ten o'clock, the captain told him it was time to go, he was quite ready, understanding that he was to be taken to some higher authority for final disposition.

"You speak French so well that I am sure you know Paris," said Dufraine as they prepared to go out.

"Perfectly well."

"Then you know it is not far to the Cité, and I hope you will not object to walking, for there are no longer autos to take us. The taxi autos have all been commandeered."

"I shall be glad to walk."

It was a different Paris from the one Merrill remembered—desolate and quiet and sad. He was to see it again after the war was over, when it was filled with soldiers of all nations, with its own old men, women, and children merry and happy in the supreme victory that had been won, but always this Paris came back to him, this Paris which was as sad and desolate as his own heart.

Not only did Captain Dufraine know exactly where to take him, but when he was ushered past waiting, quiet throngs into a large room where a tall, rugged, stern-faced man of about fifty sat behind a large desk, he was certain that he had been expected at just that hour.

"Monsieur le Docteur Merrill," the young officer announced, saluting.

"You will wait, captain, until I communicate with you," the man at the desk said in a tone of dismissal.

This man was not in uniform, but it was manifest that he was a person of importance. The officer bowed and left. Merrill stood looking into a pair of steely gray eyes that seemed to plunge into the depths of his being; but his own eyes, blue and cold, did not waver in the least.

"Sit down, monsieur." Merrill took the chair indicated by the wave of a hand. "Here are your passport and other papers, monsieur." He pushed toward Merrill a bundle of papers. "It is fortunate for you that we have been able to verify you and your statements."

"How could you do that?" snapped Merrill.

The faintest of smiles flitted over the stern face. "It was not easy, perhaps, but it has been done. I have a report here of all your movements up to the time you abandoned your automobile—General von Schilling's automobile. It may interest you to know that Von Schilling is furious; also that he is now the laughingstock of his fellow officers. You are not interested?"

Merrill maintained an unsmiling face. "I am not greatly interested in Von Schilling, monsieur, but what does interest me is this—that I performed a service for your armies in bringing over certain documents and that for thanks I have been made a prisoner and have been kept from seeing my companion,

who has been unjustly charged with an attempt at assassination. To me it seems that an explanation and even an apology are due me."

There was an exchange of cold glances, and then the man behind the desk leaned back in his chair. "Well, perhaps. Yes, the papers you brought were valuable, but the young woman you brought, monsieur, was a spy. One moment!" as Merrill started to interrupt. "I know what I am saying, and you know nothing of Rose d'Almeyrac, excepting that she begged you to help her and that you did help her bravely and cleverly and was in her company several hours. To be in her company under the circumstances for a few hours did not enable you to know her as we know her, but it did serve to justly bring you under suspicion. I ask of your sense of fairness, am I right or wrong?"

"If she be a spy, you are right. I do not believe she is one. I do not believe she ever sought the life of any human being, not to speak of that of your great general."

"You speak as you wish to believe, monsieur; I speak as I know. I am sorry you have been put to inconvenience, and I regret that proper acknowledgment has not been made of the service you did us, but while I think all we have done was justified by the circumstances I am happy to assure you that France is grateful to you and grieved over what she has been obliged to do."

Merrill bowed, but his face remained unmoved. "It is only fair to say that no gratitude is really due me. I brought the papers because I found them in the coat I meant to wear. We may dismiss that then. Will you tell me what has become of Mademoiselle d'Almeyrac?"

"I do not know where she is, monsieur. That is I do not know definitely. I know that she has not been captured; I know that she is still free to go on with her work of spying. And I may add this, monsieur: Rose d'Almeyrac is one of the cleverest and most dangerous spies of whom we have any knowledge."

Merrill could not help but be shaken by the cold, emotionless way in which this man delivered himself, but he stiffened in his chair and answered: "It may be that you speak from knowledge, monsieur, and that I only speak as I wish to believe, but I am ready now, as before, to stake my life on her loyalty to France. What terrible mistake has been made I do not know, nor how it came to be made, but I do know that a mistake has been made. Am I free now, monsieur?" He started to rise.

"Pardon me, monsieur," the other replied suavely; "in a sense you are free. That is you are no longer under any suspicion; but it has been decided that while you remain in France you must be under surveillance and that you must leave France to-night."

A cry of rage rose to Merrill's lips, but he suppressed it, though the cold gleam in his eyes betrayed his feelings. "Of course, monsieur," he said in even, measured tones, "I do not need to tell you that what you are doing is infamous. I am guilty of nothing but serving France and yet I am kept a prisoner; I am sent out of the country."

"Why would you remain, monsieur?"

"Because I would find Mademoiselle d'Almeyrac and prove that she is not guilty."

"And if she has slipped back into Germany, as may be, would you follow her there?"

"There or anywhere; to the bottomless pit if need be."

"Of monsieur's courage there can be no question, since it is proven, but of his judgment there is much question. Monsieur, we are fighting a cruel, rapacious enemy, and we must fight every minute and in every possible way. France is organized almost to the last child; every inch of her soil is watched; every stranger within her borders is a suspect. If I were to set you free, do you think you could leave Paris? No. Or if by some miracle you could fly over her fortifications, do you think you could take a step unchallenged? No, monsieur. Some day I hope you will understand what it is that France is doing, what she is suffering. Now we have but one purpose and that is to defeat and drive back the Huns, who are striving to overwhelm us with a wave of blood and brutality. I am nothing; you are nothing. If it seems best that you should leave France to-night, then leave you *must*. Some day you will understand. When this war is over you may come to me and demand to know why I compel you to go to England when you would prefer to remain, and I promise to tell you. Now I can only repeat that you must remain under surveillance while you are here and that you must leave for England to-night. Arrangements have been made for your passage. Even if you were to offer to put your skill, which, I am told, is superlatively great, at our service I should refuse to accept it. There are reasons of state why you should go."

He touched a button twice as he spoke, and Captain Dufraine entered the room. "I was told the summons was for me, monsieur."

"Yes. You will take monsieur in your keeping again and have him at the Gare St. Lazare at ten to-night. You will deliver him over to the officer who will present himself with proper credentials. It is just that I should tell you that monsieur is free of guilt or of blame, that he has done France a great service. Nevertheless you must not permit him out of your sight, nor must he communicate with any person whomsoever."

## CHAPTER IX.

**M**ONSIEUR," said the captain when they were in the street outside the great building, "you heard my orders. Have I your word, *foi de gentilhomme?*"

"Yes, you have my word. Who is that man?"

"If he did not tell you, I may not. He is a great personage, and I am under his orders temporarily. May we not dismiss the disagreeable features of the affair? Come! It is time for something substantial to eat, and I know a place where the food is of the best. You must be hungry as I am. Shall we eat?"

"Whatever you wish. Tell me this—"

"Monsieur, do not ask me anything in connection with this affair. If I knew anything I could not speak, but I know no more than you. I am your companion, that is all."

"Nevertheless I find it very strange, very mysterious."

"So it is, monsieur. I am happy to agree with you, and desolated that I can clear up nothing; but one thing I can assure you of—the food I shall procure for you, and incidentally for myself, shall be of the best."

Merrill was exasperated; he felt himself the victim of a mysterious intrigue of which he could make nothing. Why was he kept under such strict surveillance when it was so freely admitted that he was guilty of no wrong? Why were they so anxious to get him out of France? Why must he have communication with no one? Even supposing that Rose d'Almeyrac were guilty, which he refused to admit, why treat him in this singular fashion?

He turned on the young officer. "All this is an outrage. I know you are not to blame; I know you are doing your best to be agreeable to me. What would your feelings be if you were in my place? Oh, why do I protest?"

"*Mon ami,*" answered Dufraine deprecatingly, "what do you think my feelings are now? I sympathize with you, I grieve with you, but what does it avail you or me? I serve France and I serve her blindly. I am but a tiny cog in the great machine. Come, then! Let us eat, since to eat is necessary even if the heart be heavy. Some day, no doubt, the mystery will be cleared up."

"But to treat me like a child! Oh, well, let us eat then."

He made no further protest after that. He could not enter into the gayety of his companion, but he yielded freely to his every effort to entertain him. They ate and they walked, they smoked and they even slept a little, and somehow the time passed until it was time for dinner, when the captain took him to a wonderful place over near the Luxembourg Gardens, for, as Dufraine naïvely said: "Since others pay, let us have the best. You see, monsieur, there may not be many more dinners in this world for me."

"You deserve better company than I can be," Merrill said, and then, in recognition of the unwearied patience and uniform cheerfulness of the brave soldier, tried all during the dinner to respond to his gayety, and succeeded so well that at the end, as they sat smoking their cigarettes, the captain exclaimed: "Ah, monsieur, I hope we shall meet again. You have all the qualities. Shall we make a toast with our liqueurs? That we may meet again after we have driven the Huns out!"

Merrill smiled and lifted his glass to his lips. He took a sip, and then stared incredulously. They were sitting in one of several small rooms each connecting with the other. A party of three ladies and three officers entered by the further door, laughing and talking gayly, looking about for an unoccupied table.

They were coming toward him, intent on passing into the room beyond. One of the ladies was Rose d'Almeyrac; there could be no doubt about it; the same great gray eyes and red-lipped mouth, about which the dimples were playing now as he had seen them play. There was but one such face in the world, but one such lithe and rounded figure.

His heart exulted. She had done nothing wrong; she was here in Paris, going about openly. She did



not see him because her head was partly turned as she talked to one of the officers.

Captain Dufraine turned his head to see at what his companion was staring so eagerly and intently. The party was near them when the gray eyes fell suddenly on Merrill's face. He started to his feet, a smile on his lips.

"Mademoiselle!" he cried, making a step toward her.

He saw her turn pale and make as if to escape; then conquer herself and look him full in the eyes, her own cold and inquiring.

"Monsieur is making a mistake, I think," she said haughtily.

"But—but," he faltered, "I am Doctor Merrill."

"That tells me nothing; I do not know you, monsieur. Pardon me!" She turned to her friends, who were staring in surprise. "Shall we go on? Monsieur evidently mistakes me for some one he knows." She laughed as he had heard her laugh before, and the party passed on, the women laughing and the officers scowling.

Until then he had not been aware of the hand of Captain Dufraine on his arm trying to pull him into his seat. "You gave me your word, monsieur," he heard uttered reproachfully.

He turned savagely, as if he would tear himself loose and strike away the detaining hand. Then he dropped into his seat, and sat staring miserably at the doorway through which the party had come, although he saw no doorway nor anything else excepting the beautiful face that had so suddenly masked its terror and denied him with almost insolent coldness.

His companion watched him. He understood that under the stress of sudden emotion Merrill had forgotten that he had promised not to communicate with any one, for his given word had covered that, too. And suddenly a thought came to him, and he half rose from his chair and leaned over the table.

"Tell me, monsieur," he demanded eagerly, "was that Rose d'Almeyrac to whom you spoke?"

Merrill started from his somber reverie, all his wits suddenly alert. Why should he betray her because she had denied him? Was he to punish her because she did not feel toward him as he did toward her? Let them fight their own battles.

He slowly turned his eyes, now cold and hard, and looked into the eager face of his companion. "Rose d'Almeyrac!" he repeated in a tone of surprise. "I wish it was. No, that was a lady I thought I had known. I was so rejoiced to see her that I forgot my promise. Forgive me. I had forgotten that there were persons in Paris I knew. I think you would better take me to your rooms and let me stay there until it is time for me to go, or I may forget myself again. Shall we go, then?"

"Will you assure me, monsieur," persisted the captain, his face very grave, "that that was not Rose d'Almeyrac?"

"Certainly I will assure you of that. If you knew Mademoiselle d'Almeyrac you would know that she would not refuse to recognize me."

"Will you not tell me who she is?"

"It seems I don't know, that I was mistaken. You are annoyed because I broke my promise, and you are quite right; only I quite forgot that I was to com-

municate with no one. However, no harm has been done, since you can hardly call a rebuff a communication."

The young officer looked at him doubtfully for a moment, then sank back in his chair and smiled. "No, you are right," he said; "no harm has been done, though for a little while I was beside myself. Yes, let us go now. We can have a smoke in my rooms, and soon it will be time to start for St. Lazare."

"When you are ready, monsieur."

"At once then. But stop! I saw a member of my regiment in one of the other rooms. Will you excuse me while I speak to him? I shall be but a few minutes."

"Certainly. Take as long as you like."

The young officer rose, a smile on his lips. "And—and, monsieur, you will not forget again?"

"I shall not forget again."

Merrill watched him as he went down the room and passed through the doorway. "Ah, yes!" he said to himself. "You think you have found Mademoiselle d'Almeyrac, and you are going to send word of it. Well, she may have done all with which she is charged, but if I can help it she shall not be caught, and yet I must not speak to her. Good! I will not."

Even to himself he spoke lightly enough, but he was in a mood of savage bitterness. He felt like a man who has been robbed of his most beautiful illusions and of his faith in his kind; as if he had been made a plaything of fate. And yet underlying all was a truly ferocious determination to go down into the depths of despair, into the very abyss of shattered hopes, fighting to the last.

He got up and walked deliberately into the next room and looked coolly around. At the table next the door the party he sought sat. His cold blue eyes met the desperate gray ones. He saw the girl shrink and then recover herself and turn away from his glance.

The officer nearest Merrill saw, and thought he understood. He got up fiercely. "Monsieur," he said sharply, "do you not see that you annoy this lady?"

Merrill had not seen his way clear until then. He had determined to warn her in some way, but had gone no further than that. Now he looked coldly at the officer and said in English: "My French will not serve me, sir. I am looking for my companion, who has gone to telephone to headquarters that I have recognized some one who is wanted. Pardon me!" He bowed and turned and left without another look at the girl he believed was Rose d'Almeyrac.

He heard a burst of laughter from the group at the table, and he was even sure he distinguished the silvery tones he had learned to enjoy so much during the hours of danger in Belgium. He clenched his hands and sat down in his place again, rigid with suppressed fury.

But at least, he thought to himself, that was the end. What a fool he had been! How easily he had been duped! Well, he was ready to go away from France now, and he hoped he would never set foot on its shores again.

Dufraine returned after a little while, and Merrill, made keen by his cold rage, read in his face that he had successfully accomplished what he had gone for.

"*Mon ami*," said the young officer with an air of great satisfaction, "I am ready now if you are. Shall we go?"

"Yes." Then Merrill smiled in a grim way quite new to him, and added: "I should tell you that I have spoken to some one in your absence."

Dufraine started and drew himself up with an angry expression. "But your word, monsieur!"

"I will explain." And Merrill looked steadily at the other, the grim smile turning into something like a sneer. "A gentleman spoke to me in French, and I answered him in English. I don't think he understood what I said. At any rate, he said nothing more."

Dufraine laughed with evident relief. "If that is all, I think no harm has been done."

The remainder of the evening was spent in Dufraine's apartment, and as Merrill was in no mood for conversation there was mostly silence between them.

This gave Merrill time for the consideration of the things that had befallen him. He had a keen, incisive, logical mind, and by degrees the humiliation and despair he had felt over Mademoiselle d'Almeyrac's treatment of him were sufficiently softened to enable him to try to find the reason, if not the excuse, for what she had done.

It was difficult to do. He was not dealing with hearsay this time, but with the cold fact; but he loved her, loved her whether he found either reason or excuse, and that colored all his analysis. He loved her, and was determined to cling to what was most precious to him in the world until there was no longer any hope.

He went back to the beginning, when she came to him for help in Belgium. If she had been acting then, there was nothing more to be said or done; she was false and unworthy. But as he went over their companionship together, from the first moment to the last, he could see nothing that showed her to be anything but the sweet, pure, high-minded girl he had so quickly learned to love.

Then came the terrible charge against her and her disappearance. If she were not guilty why should she be charged with attempted assassination and with being a German spy? On the other hand, why had he been so strangely treated? Why had he not suffered odium with her, since he had been her companion? Why had he been thanked for the service he had done France, and at the same time kept under close surveillance and driven from France?

What was the mystery? What could explain the charge against her, the kindness to him? How could she have escaped after trying to kill the great general? How could she be dining in Paris with French officers after such a daring and frightful attempt? And, above all, why had she denied him? Why had she joined in the laugh at him when he had made the desperate effort to warn her?

But suppose—just suppose, for the sake of argument—that she really was a German spy. It would have been difficult for her to escape into Germany, but comparatively easy for her to get to Paris. If she had been honest and true when she appealed to him for help in Belgium then there would have been no reason why she should deny him in Paris. But

if she had been a German spy, intriguing to make her way into France with murder in her heart, and if she had escaped to Paris after the failure of her attempt, what else would she do but deny him?

When he reached that point it seemed as if he had come to an *impasse*, but, instead of accepting the situation as solved by that method of reasoning, he broke into an incredulous laugh that made Dufraine stare at him and shrug his shoulders.

Rose d'Almeyrac was a wonderful actress, it was true; he had seen more than one exhibition of her art; but she had not acted with him. She had not gone through the perils of that night playing a part. It had not been acting when her hand slipped from his shoulder in the icy Yser and when death might have resulted. She had not pretended the numbness and mortal exhaustion of the trip across No Man's Land.

But why had she denied knowing him? Why had she looked so terrified at sight of him in the restaurant? And finally he asked himself why he had warned her of her danger if he had not believed her a German spy?

Many men, perhaps most men, would have turned away from the whole affair at this point, but Merrill was not fashioned that way. When his one fascination was surgery he had given his whole life to its study and practice, thrusting every extraneous thing aside; now that his one fascination was Rose d'Almeyrac he was equally single-minded.

He neither could nor would put her aside. She was the one important thing in his life, and until he knew better than he knew now from the evidence before him that she was not the girl he had conceived her to be she would remain in his heart, and he would not let her slip out of his life. The truth was that he not only knew he loved her, but that he dared to believe that she loved him.

Before he left the little apartment to go with Dufraine to the Gare St. Lazare there was forming in his brain the resolution to return to France at the earliest possible moment, and by the time he had reached the port where he was to embark, the name of which he was not permitted to know, he had determined to seek such disguise as was to be found in a beard or in a shaven mustache and so return to France if it involved joining one of the foreign legions.

The thought of the foreign legion had come to him when Dufraine had first spoken of it; now it grew into a fixed resolve, since he could see no other way. He had no doubt that there would be recruiting officers in London. Yes, he would get back to France in spite of them all, and it would go hard, but he would discover some way of uncovering the mystery in which Rose and he were involved.

He had hardly spoken to the officer who had accompanied him from Paris, but when the latter stopped at the foot of the gangway and held out his hand he said to him: "You are not coming aboard?"

"No, monsieur; my duty ends here."

"But suppose I choose to come ashore again?" Merrill queried.

The officer laughed frankly. "You may choose to do that, monsieur, but you will find that no one will be permitted to leave the ship. She carries returning

troops on furlough, some German prisoners, some lightly wounded, some civilians. When you go aboard you remain there until England is reached. You will find guards on board to see that these orders are carried out."

And so Merrill did find it. There were guards at the top of the gangway who told him to go to the dining saloon. There the ticket that had been given him was inspected, and a steward called to show him to his stateroom.

"We don't know when we shall leave," the ship's officer told him, "so you may as well make yourself comfortable. You may be sure you won't land till late to-morrow morning."

"But if I don't wish to sleep yet?"

"There is the smoking room. No one is allowed on deck."

Merrill shrugged his shoulders and followed the steward. As long as the restriction applied to every one alike he did not care; it did make him furious to be discriminated against.

## CHAPTER X.

HE found he was to share the stateroom with another passenger, who was already installed and who had filled the little room with cigarette smoke. He was, in fact, smoking and already in his pajamas when Merrill was ushered in.

"Oh, I say!" this passenger protested, addressing the steward.

"Orders, sir," the steward answered. "Full up." He left them without more words.

"I don't like it any better than you do, if that makes it any easier for you," Merrill said with a curtness quite unlike him in ordinary times.

The other looked him over, and decided from what he saw in the set face that he would not be an agreeable person to have a serious difference with. "Oh, that's all right," he said. "I wasn't objecting to you, you know, but to anybody. What a darned nuisance this war is anyhow; somebody's always interfering with you. You're an American, aren't you?"

"Yes," Merrill answered shortly, hesitating whether or not to turn and go out and up to the smoking room.

"So'm I," said the other in the manner of one glad to have some one to talk with; "and getting back to good old U. S. as fast as I can streak it. Been here long?"

"I've been in Germany a couple of years." Merrill leaned against the door and studied the other idly. He was a man of about his own age and of about the same size, but soft and rather dissipated-looking. His luggage was scattered about the stateroom, his clothes that he had taken off hung over the side of the upper berth.

"Gee, how did you get here? By the way of Italy, I suppose. I've just come from Italy." He laughed fatuously. "I came over when the war broke out; supposed to be a correspondent."

"Oh, you're a newspaper man?"

"Na-ah! Nothing like it. I was living in Chi and had a lot of money left me. I thought it would be fun to come over, so I got a letter from an editor I knew in my home town saying I was a correspondent. That was so I could get a passport, you know. I

never wrote a line in my life. I was scared out of Paris when the Germans were coming, and lit out for Italy. Didn't know a word of French, and knew less Italian. Now I'm sick and tired of it. I'm going to London, and if there's no fun there—and I don't believe there is—I'm off for little old New York; there's always something doing there, I'll bet. My name's Lowell, Dick Lowell."

"Mine is Merrill." He wondered why he stayed to talk with the empty-headed fellow.

"Have a cigarette? They're rotten, but the best I could get."

"No, thank you; I can get all the smoke I want without it."

"That's right, too; but they won't let a fellow open the port. They got it fastened; painted over, too. Afraid of the German submarines, I guess. Gee, they're fierce! I'll be glad when I get across."

Merrill eyed him sardonically. He wondered how a man could live with so little interest in the terribly vital things that were happening all around him. "No doubt your folks will be anxious about you. If I were you I wouldn't stop in London."

"Now you've said something, Mr.—oh, yes—Merrill. Only I haven't any folks; plenty of friends, though, back in the home town. But it's too slow for me there. New York for mine. New York's the place when you have the mazuma, hey?"

"Yes, you can spend money in New York, but so you can in Chicago, can't you?"

"I guess so. Chi isn't my home town, though. I was clerking there when the shower broke. Say, it took my breath away to have that lump of money coming to me out of the air. An uncle I never knew I had out in California. Say, when I got that money I didn't know what to do with it! That's why I came over here. Well, I know what to do with it now, all right, all right." He chuckled gleefully, and to Merrill's ears unpleasantly, suggesting all the forbidden pleasures.

"I'm sleepy," Merrill said, the fellow's vapid talk making him conscious of his need for sleep. "Which berth do you want? I don't care which I have."

"Honest? Well, if it's all the same to you I'll take the lower. I'll get my duds out of your berth."

He began to pull his clothes out of the upper berth, hanging them on the hooks at the end of the stateroom. As he took his coat out a big envelope fell on the floor. He picked it up, looked at it, and broke into a laugh. "Say, that's my passport! It's got my picture on it. Let me show it to you; it's a joke."

He opened it, laughing, and held it out to Merrill, who was minded to push it back unlooked at. He wondered at himself that he didn't. The photograph was that of a smooth-shaven young man, and, like most such aids to identification, bore only a general resemblance to the subject.

"Not a very good likeness," he said indifferently.

"Not even when it was taken, and now, with this mustache, might be anybody. Say, wouldn't you think they'd kick at the mustache when they look at the photo? Not a peep out of 'em. I grew it for a joke. Thought I'd get the laugh on 'em when they noticed it and made me shave. No, sir! They look at the description—blue eyes, dark hair, and so on. Then

they look at the picture, and, by ginger, it gets by every time. Joke, hey?" He laughed with cheerful inanity.

Merrill twisted his face into something like a smile and undressed partially. "My luggage is in Belgium," he said by way of explaining why he went around in that costume.

"Gee! Is that so?"

"That's so. Good night!" And Merrill climbed into the upper berth, loathing the smoke and hoping his roommate would take the hint and also go to sleep.

"Say!" said the genial Dick Lowell. "Mind if I leave the light on?"

"No, I don't mind the light, but there's a lot of smoke up here, and those cigarettes are not of the best."

"That's right. I'm a fiend at it. I won't smoke any more. Good night. Sleep tight." He laughed at what he evidently considered a bit of agreeable pleasantry, and was silent.

Merrill lay on his back, thinking instead of sleeping. His mind had gone back to his own affairs. He went over and over all that had happened, and the more he thought the more determined he was to get back to France, even if it involved joining the foreign legion.

Once the thought flashed into his brain that if only he had this man's passport and credentials he would have no difficulty in going back to France and going back free and untrammelled, at liberty to devote all his time to solving the infernal mystery.

He dwelt on the idea eagerly. He felt sure he would have little difficulty in persuading his irresponsible roommate to exchange passports with him. Then he dismissed the thought. There was the problem of money and the risk of being caught at the transfer, with the probability that he would then be worse off than at present. And finally he went to sleep.

He was roused later by the motion of the vessel and the throbbing of the engine, and knew they were on their way across the channel. He sighed and went to sleep again.

How long after that it was he didn't know, but he was startled wide awake by a terrific shock, followed by the sound of rending iron. He listened and heard the sound of hurrying feet and the noise of many voices. They had been struck by a torpedo probably.

He climbed out of his berth, expecting to hear some outcry from his roommate, but when he turned to look into the lower berth he saw a horrid sight; the poor wretch who lay there had strangely been one of the victims. The side of the vessel by his berth had been crushed in and his head had been horribly mangled.

His first instinct was one of helpfulness. He bent over the poor fellow, only to discover at once that life was extinct. Not only his head was crushed, but his neck was broken. He turned away, sorry for the man who was never to enjoy the empty pleasure of spending his money. No doubt he had been getting as much out of life, after all, as he was capable of.

Then the thought of his own possible danger came to him and he turned to his clothes. They hung by the side of Lowell's. Who can explain the work-

ings of the human mind? Lowell was dead, his passport was useless to him. Merrill came to an instant decision.

He tore off his underclothes and got into those of Lowell. He dressed himself in the dead man's garments. He looked at himself in the mirror. He doubted if he would deceive any one who had known him in Paris—Dufraigne, the great man who had sent him out of France, and Rose d'Almeyrac, of course.

Without hesitation he looked about. He opened an unlocked suit case and came upon shaving materials. He worked with all the speed possible, and with his practiced hands that was very great. He applied soap and rubbed it in; then he used the safety razor. He didn't make a good job of it, but at least he got rid of the mustache, and even to himself he looked unlike Doctor Merrill.

He pulled the traveling cap—in itself a disguise for him—over his face and pulled up his coat collar and ran out of the stateroom. He had taken a great chance in delaying so long, but he was in a mood to take any chance.

He ran out into the corridor, which he found deserted, and along it to the main stairway. He could hear the trampling of many feet on the deck overhead, and crowds of frightened men thronged at the foot of the stairway and on it. At the top was a British officer talking as calmly as if in his own house.

"There is no danger, my men," he was saying over and over. "We were struck, but we are afloat and help is coming."

One of the doorways at the top of the stairway was opened and a ship's officer came through it. "The ship won't sink and there are two destroyers alongside. They'll tow us back to port," he said. "Let them into the dining saloon if they want to get there, sir."

"You hear?" the officer said. "Thank you for keeping order, my men. Now, come up quietly and go into the dining saloon. If any of you men are wounded and need help stay where you are."

Merrill noticed a soldier clinging to the newel post, and pushed his way to him. "I'll take care of you," he said. "What is it? Your leg? I thought so. Keep still and lean on me till most of them are up. Leg gone?"

"Yes, sir. It were at Mons. I been in 'orspital an' were goin' 'ome to mend hup. Thank 'ee, sir. Just a bit o' help will do me."

But Merrill, seeing how pale and weak the man was, picked him up and carried him up the stairs and into the dining saloon, where he put him down on one of the side cushions.

He was very glad to have this to do. It helped him to fit into his new character to be doing something at which he felt so competent. "Don't worry, lad," he said; "we're quite safe here, or they wouldn't have said so."

"Right-o!" the man answered pluckily. "I was a bit shook up, an' wot with feelin' so helpless with the leg gone, an' me not used to it yet, I didn't know wot was wot. I don't rightly know how I got to them stairs, but I'll be all right now. My word, you're strong! You handled me like a biby."

Merrill would have been glad to have something to do, but there was nothing; the officers were numerous and competent, and soon had perfect order established. He had time to consider what he had done, and he began to have qualms.

He was not troubled on the score of the dead man, for he knew he was doing him no harm, but what if the steward or some one else recognized him as an impostor? There would surely be complications then. However, he had taken the step and there was no easy way of undoing it. Besides, he didn't wish to undo it.

They were told they might return to their staterooms if they wished. He hesitated hardly a second. He could have said then that he had made a mistake in clothing, but he clamped his firm jaws together and stepped up to the officer who seemed in command of the situation.

"My roommate was killed," he said. "He was killed as he lay in his berth. It must have been instantaneous."

A sergeant was told off to accompany him to his stateroom, and they went to the room, which was just as it had been when he left it, showing that the steward had not been there. The sergeant looked at the gory figure in the berth and turned away.

"My word!" he said. "He never knew what happened to him. No torpedo did that. Must have been from a deck gun. A narrow squeak for you, sir. My word? Who was he?"

"I never saw him till he came in. The steward showed him in; he may know."

"Which was his luggage?"

"He had none. He had nothing but what he stood in. I let him have a set of my pajamas."

"He'll have some papers in his clothes," said the sergeant, and felt in the coat pockets.

The passport and letter of credit were found. "A doctor," said the sergeant; "Doctor Hayden Merrill, an American. Must have been rich from this letter of credit. Somebody'll know about him. You say he had no luggage? Not a hand bag?"

"Nothing at all. Said he'd been in Germany for a couple of years and was on his way home."

"Better leave all the stuff here," said the sergeant doubtfully. "I'll find somebody who knows about him."

"I'll lock up the suit case," Merrill said coolly. "I'll go to the smoking room and wait there. I couldn't sleep any more."

"Well, it's most daylight, anyhow. What's your name, sir?"

"Richard Lowell."

"An American, too?"

"Yes, a newspaper correspondent. I was making a trip to London, but I don't think I care to go now. Paris is good enough for me."

"Oh, don't be scared off, sir; this may never happen again."

"It won't to me, anyhow," Merrill said positively. "When I leave France it will be for home, and I'll go by way of Spain. You'll find me in the smoking room if they won't let me on deck."

Merrill went up to the smoking room, which he found about half filled. He had taken the plunge

and there was nothing for him to do now but await the consequences. One important thing was troubling him greatly. In his haste he had forgotten all about money.

He found some cigarettes in the side pocket of the coat of the atrocious kind Lowell had been smoking. He lighted one, and after waiting until he felt he was not being observed began to feel in his various pockets. In the inside pocket of the sack coat he wore he found Lowell's passport and a wallet. He didn't dare take the wallet out, but as he felt of it, it seemed full, and he hoped it would turn out to be money that was in it. In the pockets of his trousers was some silver, and more in the change pocket of the overcoat.

If it turned out that Lowell had carried very little money, it would be a serious matter; for he wouldn't dare to use his letter of credit or bankers' checks if he were supplied with either.

He had no compunction about appropriating any money he might find, since he could easily make it good later; nor had he any discomfort on the score of the shock to his own friends when his death was reported, for he had no near relatives and no friends so close as to make his death a matter of consequence.

Some time later he saw the sergeant come into the smoking room, and he stood up to call his attention. "It's all right about that Doctor Merrill, sir," the sergeant said when he came up to him. "I don't understand it, but he hadn't a bit of luggage; not so much as a string. Funny! An American, too."

"I knew he didn't bring any into the stateroom. I spoke to him about it, and he said his luggage was in Belgium."

"Belgium!" The sergeant opened his eyes. "I suppose he sent it on that way and then had to leave Germany through Switzerland. Well, it won't make any difference to him, will it?"

TO BE CONTINUED.



### THE BIBULOUS BABY.

Even in a magazine that deals almost entirely with the unusual, the adventurous, the mysterious, there will appear now and again a tale that is even more extraordinary than all the rest. To our minds "The Bibulous Baby," by Tod Robbins, is without doubt the most curiously humorous story that we have read in a long while. The wonderful part about it is that the author has made no attempt to startle the reader by ancient tricks. All he had to do was to let the idea stand up on its own feet. Who ever heard of philosophic babies born at the age of eighty-two? Read this story in the July 1st issue, and let us know what you think about it.



### PRAYER.

HERE, as joyously I stand,  
Plunge your spear, Life, through my hand,  
That only in that living pain  
May it ever write again.

MARY CAROLYN DAVIES.

# This Way Out

By  
Will Gage Carey



**Y**OUNG George Rigdon was a sharp enough lad in most respects, and, for his nineteen years, worldly wise to a sufficient degree; but when, on a moment's impulse, he joined the U. S. navy he assuredly "pulled a boner."

First of all, understand these two things: George Rigdon was by no means the name under which he had been duly christened, and the time of his enlistment was not the present, but at a period back in the early nineties; yet, for that matter, he doubtless would have found present conditions in the navy, superior and advantageous as they are now, equally as irksome, tedious, and wholly unbearable as he found them at that earlier time, this solely because of certain inherent qualities which he himself possessed—or lacked.

At the age of sixteen he had run away from a good home. He had rubbed elbows with the world, traveled extensively, free to go and come very much as he chose. No youth in the land, perhaps, really needed so much the character-forming effect of discipline, and none chafed under such restrictive discipline as did he, when, inadvertently, he joined the navy and learned the true meaning of the word.

He came of good parentage—of a stock more accustomed to give orders than to receive them. He was high-strung, impetuous, quick of perception, and given to taking instant and intense fancies and dislikes. It was, perhaps, this very sensitiveness to impressions which made the fact of his enlistment in the navy so much a failure from the immediate standpoint of all concerned. It began the day he set foot aboard the stanch old training ship *Mohican*, off San Diego Bay.

In simple justice to the youth it should be stated that at the time of his enlistment he had no real conception of what he was going up against—of the things he was so soon to learn to detest with all the fervor and ardor of his being. His mistake was not wholly an unusual one. Countless multitudes before him, even in the choosing of a life vocation, have taken up work for which they were utterly unfitted and which they grew to hate; but his own particular case ran into the extreme. Even the slight roll of the old *Mohican* obsessed him with a giddiness and feeling of abject misery he found impossible either to shake off or to become accustomed. His nostrils

seemed capable only of detecting the smell of bilge water and to find no exhilarating delight in the fresh, salt sea breeze; his stomach refused to get on anything like

chummy terms with the plain, substantial food served him; his nature rebelled at the tasks assigned him and the endless discipline. Also, the first day aboard, he had—on the side—a spirited mix with a young midshipman named Mallory that imbued each with intense hatred and promised certain and more serious trouble between them at no distant time. All things considered, then, young Rigdon—entered as "landsman for training"—was assuredly in bad.

Captain Ackley, retired and later restored to active duty on the training ship *Mohican*, entered the navy on a sailing vessel. He had lived to see wonderful changes since then—the development of steam and the reciprocating engine; these he deemed the pinnacle of final achievement. The present gigantic oil-burning boilers and turbines of the mighty modern flagship *Pennsylvania* would have filled him with amazement, but could have by no means dulled the memories of those earlier days of "wooden ships and iron men," and in his cabin the most cherished of his possessions was a huge photograph of the old *Tennessee*—his first ship—with all sails set. He was a gruff, blunt old sea dog, considerably more human than he made out to be, and while undoubtedly living much in the past, and of the past, he nevertheless contrived to keep the young landsmen for training under him pretty much on the jump and toeing the mark at all times. His first lieutenant—known as the "First Luff"—was a trim, serious-minded young man named Blake. He was wholly absorbed, body and mind, in the service; his primer was the Blue Book. He possessed a sincere admiration for the Old Man—Captain Ackley—and seemed to live in an abiding fear and terror of all those in authority above the gruff but well-meaning old captain. The ship's master-at-arms was a man huge of bulk, red-faced, and with small,

shifty eyes which seemed ever on the watch to catch some infringement of ship regulations. Also, he nursed a continual grouch, and appeared to hold a poorly concealed resentment against the entire world at large. His name was A. Grinder—and he looked it. These superiors young George Rigdon viewed with passive unconcern; but his pent-up wrath against and hatred for the midshipman, Mallory, grew and flourished, and each day became more difficult to keep under restraint. Down in his soul he seemed to sense that some day he would take a poke at the smirking, sneering face of that midshipman, let the consequences be what they might. Mallory was aiding and abetting all this. A storm was brewing; when would it break?

## II.

CAME then a day when young Rigdon—landsman for training—was given shore leave.

All too quickly the day passed. The pain produced in him at the thought of returning again to the ship was as poignant as had been the pleasure at parting; still, it had to be done. In sullen mood and with an ever-increasing resentment he was rowed back to the training ship with the others with whose resultant merriment from the day ashore he could find no share.

He climbed up the ladder and over the rail. The first face into which he looked was that of Midshipman Mallory. Rigdon, already in wrathful frame of mind, detected—or at least imagined—a sort of taunting leer on the countenance of the young officer he hated. Yes, he was sure that it was a taunt; but it was more than that. Rigdon felt that the expression was meant both for an insult and a dare. The hot blood rushed to his head. He struck. The midshipman went down in a heap. He was up again in an instant, astonished beyond measure at the sudden onslaught, but frantically eager to fight it out there and then to a finish. They rushed at each other, unmindful of all save only their mad mania to maul and batter; but before they were well into the battle they were torn apart and borne off in different directions. Charged with the serious offense of striking a superior officer, Rigdon was thrown into the brig, there to await general court-martial; a very severe and exacting "general" to meet and an exceedingly drab ending to a perfect day.

A prisoner in the brig is watched over night and day by a marine who strides back and forth during a watch of four hours. At the end of the third day Rigdon aroused from his state of sullen and morose lethargy long enough to request the marine guarding him to send for the master-at-arms—referring to that petty officer by the customary sea name, "Jimmy Legs." When Grinder arrived on the scene, puffing and blowing and looking inordinately suspicious of the prisoner's probable intentions, Rigdon greeted him with humility and respect.

"Sir, I have a request to make of you," he began.

Jimmy Legs grunted; then he asked in surly manner: "Well—what is it?"

"I want some paper—and pen and ink."

"What for?"

"To write a letter, sir."

"Huh—who to?"

The prisoner hesitated. "To—to an official," he answered presently.

Jimmy Legs turned on his heel. Whatever he thought, he made no further remark other than to call back over his shoulder: "I'll send you paper and pen and ink."

An hour later Rigdon finished writing his letter, and placed it in an envelope, which he addressed and sealed.

Calling the marine over, he requested him to hand the letter to Jimmy Legs to be posted. On receiving the missive, the master-at-arms scrutinized it carefully, turned it over a number of times, and noted again the clear, bold inscription: "*Secretary of Navy, Washington, D. C.*" Finally he took it direct to the first lieutenant, leaving it with him without comment.

Now, in that precious primer of the first luff's—the Blue Book—there was one certain section which stated, in substance, that while a person occupying the somewhat undesirable position in which Rigdon now found himself might write, if he chose, to the department in Washington, said communication must be handed in due course to the ship's captain—unsealed—to be forwarded by him, either with or without comment, as he deemed fit and proper. Mindful of all this, the first lieutenant carried the letter at once to the cabin of Captain Ackley.

"Sir, here is a letter," he began, "addressed to the secretary of navy—and sealed—"

"Who wrote it?" broke in the Old Man, reaching for the missive.

"Rigdon—a prisoner in the brig."

The captain frowned. "Leave it with me. You may go, Mr. Bake."

Left alone with the mysterious missive. Captain Ackley promptly opened it without more ado. With rather passive interest he began reading. Suddenly he straightened up with a jerk.

The letter began:

"Secretary of Navy, Washington, D. C.

"Dear papa:—"

—which, under existing circumstances, and all things duly considered, was enough to make any old sea captain straighten up with a sudden jerk.

## III.

THE Old Man smoothed out the letter before him on the table, and bent closer to be assured that he read aright. The letter continued:

. . . This is the first I've written you since running away from home. You'll be surprised to hear from me; surprised to know I've joined the navy—but *not* surprised, perhaps, to learn that I am in trouble. No one is to blame but myself in this matter, dad. Captain Ackley, of this training ship, is a square guy—he's treated me all right, and so have the other officers of the *Mohican*. I got myself into this, and from what I hear I'm in bad. Understand, I'm not asking any favors from you or any one; but I thought you should know what's what, when you learn of a guy named "Rigdon" being court-martialed; I don't think mother should hear about this. Your son,

HERBERT.

Captain Ackley, having read the communication through, paused long enough to remove his cap and stroke in dubious manner the bald spot on the top of his head; then he began reading the letter a second time. Finally he sent for Jimmy Legs, who, though but an enlisted man, held the confidence of the captain

because of his innate ability in handling the youngsters.

When Blake, the first lieutenant, left the cabin he went at once to the brig.

"Rigdon," he said, "you gave a letter to the master-at-arms just now—a letter to be mailed?"

The prisoner arose and came toward him. "Yes, sir."

"It was addressed to the secretary of navy."

"Yes, sir."

The tone of the first luff became one of asperity.

"You should know, it seems to me, that such procedure is irregular——"

"Why——"

"A letter from one in your position to the department in Washington must be handed to the captain, unsealed; he will read it, and, if he thinks proper——"

"Give the letter back to me, sir," broke in the prisoner anxiously. "I'll promise to destroy it; I'll tear it up before your eyes. Will you give it back to me, sir?"

"No."

"Why——"

"It's too late; Captain Ackley already has it." He turned abruptly and walked away. The prisoner sank down again upon his bench and buried his face in his hands. At that moment the first luff received a summons: the Old Man desired to speak with him at once.

Now Grinder, ever conscious of the wide gap existing between a mere enlisted man and a commissioned officer, was feeling a smug satisfaction that he had been called along with First Lieutenant Blake in consultation. It convinced him of what he had long suspected—that he really belonged in a higher sphere of duty and that there were others who felt the same way about it, and he asked somewhat sententiously: "You want my opinion?"

"In this case, yes," replied the captain. "That's why I sent for you."

Grinder spoke promptly and to the point:

"The prisoner struck an officer. He's no good; he should be court-martialed same's any one else!"

The captain bowed, and remained in silent contemplation. "That's all, Grinder," he said presently. "You may go."

With the departure of Jimmy Legs, the first luff was given an opportunity to peruse the troublesome epistle. He got as far as the "Dear papa," stopped short, looked over anxiously, and with a startled expression at the Old Man, then resumed reading.

Reference has been made as to how the young first lieutenant stood in regard to the higher-ups—to the powers that be in Washington, and, unlike the master-at-arms, he was tremendously affected by the communication. While the present secretary of navy was a comparatively new proposition to them, having accepted the place but a few months previous to this time, enough was already known, through his crisp orders and communications, to convince them that he was an individual of force and action, prompt to act upon his convictions. True, the Old Man had made no direct reference to all this; still Blake felt that his superior must be turning it all over carefully in his mind.

"Captain Ackley," he began, laying the letter down before him upon the table, "I singled this young Rigdon out from all the others the first day he set foot aboard the *Mohican*. He's different somehow; holds his head high and has a bearing and personality. He comes of good stock, no doubt of that. His trouble with Mr. Mallory is unfortunate, but I fully believe the midshipman nagged him into it. I would like to have a talk with the boy; I think I could help him."

"You think so?"

"I certainly do. What he needs is advice—not punishment." The captain smiled grimly, thinking of the first luff's sudden flop, perchance. Blake resumed: "If I may suggest, I think you should write a letter to the secretary of navy, stating fully all the circumstances——"

"I'll do nothing of the kind," Captain Ackley broke in; "nothing of the kind!"

The first luff paled slightly. There was anxiety in his tone as he queried: "Then—then you intend——"

"To wire the secretary of navy," interrupted the captain, "requesting authority to discharge George Rigdon—landsman for training—from the service because of undesirability. To my mind, that's the best way out of the whole affair."

Two days later the authority requested by Captain Ackley, of the training ship *Mohican*, arrived from Washington. The prisoner was removed from the brig. An hour later he walked briskly down the gangway into a boat, and was rowed ashore, there to disappear as suddenly and effectively as though the earth had opened and swallowed him.

It was about a week later that A. Grinder, master-at-arms, found an article in a newspaper which interested him very much. It pertained to a grand ball given at the White House in Washington. As a purely social function the ball itself held no interest for Jimmy Legs. What caught his eye was a single sentence relative to a certain distinguished personage present. It read: "The Secretary of the Navy, though a confirmed bachelor, was surrounded by a group of fair young debutantes during the evening."

For the nonce, Jimmy Legs' well-nigh perpetual grouch left him. He chuckled till his huge frame shook, and he blinked his little eyes in ecstatic satisfaction. With his knife he cut out the article and went to hunt up the first luff. He met him coming along the companionway. "Here's something may interest you, sir," he said, handing over the clipping; then he turned and walked away.

Captain Ackley was on the bridge at the time. The first luff read the clipping, rubbed his chin, and then slowly started with the paper up the ladder to the bridge.

Halfway up, he paused. He looked around over his shoulder; the master-at-arms was nowhere in sight. The semblance of a smile began playing over his thin countenance.

"The Old Man's satisfied," he mused, "why hand him a wallop?"

He tore the clipping into tiny bits and tossed them out into the breeze; down over the rail they fluttered and sailed, far down to the water below.



# The Sargasso Sea

By

Chester L.  
Saxby ~

YOU will not believe the tale. I myself find it difficult to credit; and I saw him, heard him—heard his maudlin lips spill the whole grotesque account. Yet the world is large and filled with all manner of unbelievable things. I would remind you, too, as I remind myself, that truth is stranger than fiction.

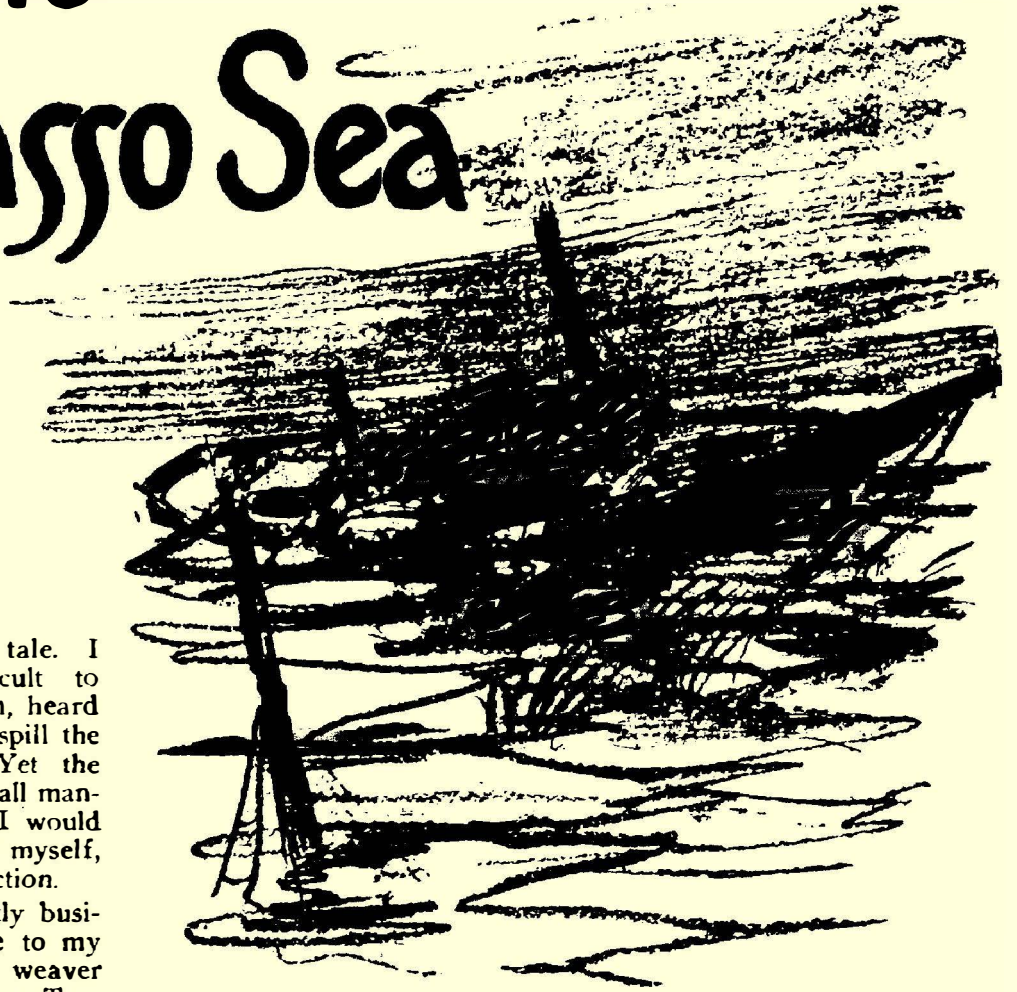
Truth or fiction, the ghastly business would never have come to my ears had not that intangible weaver called Fate brought us—Elfers, Turguin, and me—to those driftwood shores where enlightenment and civilization come daily and yet are strangers. It was on the east coast of what may to-day be Costa Rica and to-morrow Nicaragua or perhaps Honduras, but which is always Central America—rocky, sand-strewn, sown with the wasted shells of dead but moving men, eerie with the derelict voices of lost fortunes and myth-twined history—that we found him, and left him as we found him. There was no choice in the matter. He laughed at us and told us to mind our business, and no doubt he was right; it was better mercy and infinitely sounder justice.

A forlorn mission had brought us hither in the first place. A ship had been lost somewhere in the South Seas. The vessel had foundered, presumably, and nothing was ever heard of it in shipping circles. On the ship had sailed Elfers' only living relative, an uncle of eccentric habits and a propensity for wandering. What that unanchored man sought in those desolate waters we none of us quite understood, Elfers least of all, though he pieced out for us a patchwork résumé of the old fellow's previous nosings about the world—in Alaskan mining camps, in South African diamond fields, in the pearl-containing attols of the

Pacific and elsewhere. A restless, discontented old bachelor, chock-full of impossible idiosyncrasies, we came to regard him; but he was not old in the narrow sense, Elfers told us; forty-five or thereabout and rugged as a wolf with his exposure to every clime. The stories lacked nothing in romance and adventure. He had been wrecked on the Horn and captured by Chinese pirates and tattooed in India—a great serpent head glaring on his chest. And so on and so on through countless recitals that Elfers had got from his mother and that smacked just a trifle of embellishments that time had added to brighten up the more faded portions.

Turg and I would have let it go with the fine old yarns, but not Elfers. He is of that imaginative type that falls victim to speculation on the merest fragment of reason. He just naturally worked *himself* up over that last voyage. He could not be satisfied that the ship was lost; told us so, and moped and fretted so constantly over the contingency that Turguin, who had money beyond his use and knew no better purpose in life than to spend it, suggested an extended cruise to the waters in question. By close association I was included.

Our destination was variable and dependent wholly



upon one independable fancy. And the fancy was termed the Sargasso Sea. When last sighted, the lost ship was to windward or larboard or abaft or in some other nautical direction from the Sargasso Sea. To be sure, it was a mirage we followed. We were not deceived in that. None of us had ever heard of the Sargasso Sea except in purely unreal narrative.

We consulted encyclopedias and gleaned the indefinite fact that the Sargasso Sea—so-called—is a more or less stationary area of floating sargasso weed extending for miles over the face of the ocean in or round about the Gulf, with a constantly changing outline subservient to winds. The compendiums added that the substance of the growth was irregular and expansive, and choked with all sorts of organic matter apart from its own. An apparently reluctant amendment stated that legend had produced weird tales of its actions.

Robed in the vestment of this knowledge, we laid a course for the longitudes and latitudes indicated, making in reality for Cajaho, the coastal town named in the clearance papers of that other ship, and we put our trust, after the manner of Columbus, in God and fair weather, both of which amply justified our faith.

We had seen no sargasso seas, although off the coast of Florida the captain pointed out to us some stray weed as floating sargasso. He had heard the main structure of our story, and was inclined to be quite genial and tolerant. *Interesting*, I think he dubbed it. I sought him out alone and put a straight question to him, whereupon he good-humoredly shook his head.

"I'm afraid not," he answered. "The sea is full of natural and unnatural and—ahem!—supernatural agencies and elements, I may say. But this sargasso weed—you can squeeze many square yards of it into a pint jar and—no, it could have no real effect on a ship's progress. A sailor's yarn, in all probability."

My question had been the outgrowth of Elfers' rather fantastic idea that his uncle's ship might still be afloat, hopelessly enmeshed in this Sargasso Sea and impossible of rescue. The captain must have had a good laugh after I left him.

Rather disgusted with ourselves, we had wandered down the coast, finding the mosquitoes insatiable and the topography dull—like the inhabitants. I think even Elfers was prepared to call the trip a distasteful mistake when we came into Cajaho, to moon about the rickety hotel, appalling with horrible odors. In a swelter of sunshine we haunted the wharves, awaiting our vessel and a swift passage back north. I noted that Elfers provided no more talk about deserting him. We were of one mind at last; the imaginative had given place to the practical.

And then appeared that strange impersonation of a dead past, and the matter was haled into vividness once more.

He might have been a native, with his dark skin and sullen eyes. I was for cataloging him in this general heterogeneity and passing on, when Turguin caught my arm and Elfers halted stock-still on that baking beach and stared, attracted in spite of himself. Perforce, I halted and likewise stared.

A fine figure he must have been in an earlier day.

Rangy he was from naked heels to exposed shoulders which thrust up from a tattered remnant of dirty shirt as if they had sawed their way through to the air. A rugose face, like a railway chart, returned our stare out of eyes sunken and depressed but burning with a feverish glow. His mouth drooped; his shoulders drooped; belike, his spirit drooped beneath that wasted chest. I saw nothing of momentous interest in a figure of slattern dejection; nothing but a rather repulsive wreck of a man. Indeed, I said as much.

"Drop it, Turg!" I growled at him disgustedly, for I was in no mood to study outlandish specimens of the land's decay. "Come along, Elf! What in thunder is the matter with you fellows? They can tell us at the dock how soon to expect—"

"Wait! Look at him, Win!" Turg hung on and cocked his head with the air of a connoisseur. Types spoke strong to Turguin. "His arms—gad! A gorilla! A regular gorilla! And leg muscles—Lord! Squint at them! Of course they're flabby now, I suppose; but what a hulk! That's power for you—some time or other!"

I grunted. Elfers had not opened his mouth. A little way off he stood, in the path of the human incongruity, and his face—as much of it as I could see—devoured the gaunt specter with all his might. He looked hypnotized.

"Turn around here!" I called to him in a low tone. "You can be decent, anyway. Don't let him catch you gaping like that!" And to Turguin: "He's a tramp, a beach comber. You've seen plenty like him. Gets that fanatical look from dope."

"Not like *him*," said Turguin, and laughed.

As he strode, dragging one foot after the other, the fellow was gloomily contemplating the surf beating in a steady, nerve-racking monotony. But in a moment he turned his far-away gaze and leveled it on us, on each of us in succession. Elfers, the nearest, shook himself as if recovering a lost balance and jerked his head in partial greeting. Turguin did not change face, but continued to stare impersonally. I know I shrugged beneath his burning survey only for want of something better to do, and vented my irritation in a mumble. There *was* a hypnotic influence about that pair of eyes. Moreover, I noticed for the first time consciously that the fellow wore no hat. After days spent in that accursed heat I could admire a man—or only the husk of a man—who walked that beach without a hat. Then, as we made no move, he reached us and brought up with a lurch and a wry expression.

"Americans," he said, looking us over again. I confess I was surprised at that English accent. "Here, too," he added, pointing to himself with his thumb and evidently reading our thoughts; not a difficult task, inasmuch as they were in our eyes. "I'm American." There was no melodrama in the statement as he spoke it. I found myself wishing there were, wishing that the brooding clamminess of his level scrutiny might be relieved by a greater show of life. But his arms still hung drooping from his shoulders, and his unkempt, matted hair, black as jet, strayed over his eyes with the fitful breath of superheated wind coming out from the land.

Elfers started forward in his impulsive way, hand

outstretched. "An American! Shake! How on earth——" But he got no further. Those long arms made no pretense of rising, and something in the hollow setness of the man's features caused Elfers to stop foolishly. He dropped his hand, but still waited.

"Not your kind; not your kind," came the uninflected explanation. "Seven—eight—ten years; two of 'em on water that wasn't water and land that wasn't land!" His lifeless eyes swept the sea at the reef where the combers smashed into froth and followed the beating surf almost to his feet.

Turguin conned this enigmatical statement with a puzzled frown and looked round at me to see how I took it. Then he scratched his head uncertainly.

"That's funny," he granted. "Where was that water that was not water and the land that was not land? Is it near this hole?" It was lightly offered, but the lightness deceived nobody. In a dreamy manner the man's lips moved:

"In the Sargasso Sea."

I suppose we all started at sound of that name uttered in that gloomy voice from its sepulchral housing. Elfers widened his eyes and gaped. Turguin, more cautious, essayed to test the fellow's sincerity by a show of disbelief.

"The Sargasso Sea, eh?" he repeated indulgently. "What a good one! Remember, Win, we saw some of that weed off Key West; strings of it as light as down. A whole lot of nothing, the captain said. You've had a nightmare, my 'friend."

I looked for a sign from the strange presence at this insulting comment; a hint of anger or at least a smile of superiority. There was neither. He seemed too deadened with some absorbing reflection that riveted his gaunt attention upon the foam-tipped surf rolling constantly up and back with its soughing hiss.

"No sargasso!" he echoed dully. "No green—no yellow!" His right hand was jerked up in stages to be drawn across his forehead, to blot out, one might think, a peculiarly vivid memory. Then he came fiercely to himself, making a little sound in his throat. I felt suddenly sorry for him. It struck me that he had experienced some abnormally distorted fortune. But his quick subsidence, the immediate resumption of his drooping posture of indifference—— "A whole lot of nothing," I could just make out his mutter. He shook his head listlessly, and without more ado turned and scuffed off up the beach.

But Elfers was after him, and with a "Hmph!" Turguin strode in the same direction, leaving me no alternative but to follow. Elfers had the fellow by the arm and was attempting to draw more from him.

"Don't take offense, please!" he urged, and I could observe that the words of the dragged lips had moved him to excitement. "What was the ship?"

The long arms flung outward like those of a scarecrow, thrust apart in a gesture of repudiation. "I got to forget the ship," he said harshly. "My throat goes dry when I remember. Thirsty—thirsty—for two years! Nothing but rain water with scum on it—and whisky." He turned with a snarl. "What's it to you?"

"It's a good deal to me," Elfers said. "Peace of mind, for one thing."

A satiric snort, and, "Peace of mind; that's whisky!

Nothing else does it but whisky. I was mad at the end. I'll be mad to bring it back."

I drew Elfers to one side and whispered in his ear: "A beach comber, you chump! They live on this poisoned rum that kind-hearted and curious tourists buy to hear their stories. He's trimming you. There's no Sargasso Sea."

As recompense for my skepticism Elfers gave me one glance of pure disgust.

"A beach comber who talks good English!" he scoffed and rejoined Turguin. "There's a hotel down the street," he ventured to the fellow. "We'll buy whisky for you in exchange for what you know of the Sargasso Sea. Is it a go?"

A skeleton hand reached for the bronzed, shrunken throat. The uncanny eyes broke away from the spell of the surf. He nodded without enthusiasm.

I felt clownish and conspicuous to be parading in such company, even here in Cahajo; but there was no help for it. We entered the ramshackle hostelry and were out of the glare of the sun. The fellow sank into a chair with superlative lassitude, and we sat down about the table and ordered light drinks for ourselves, rum—a quart of it—for him. The little shriveled waiter went out with a broad grin on his face and came back with a knowing air. There ensued a silence during which our derelict guest consumed great gulps of the deadly liquor. As I watched his seamed, parchment visage, there appeared to come a gradual transformation; the veil of apathy fell from the hopeless eyes to give place to a gleam of vengeful light, as if he were awakening. Yet for some time he did not speak. We toyed with our glasses in a self-conscious abashment that left us swiftly with his first word.

"Treasure," he said in a sinister tone. "Fortunes of gold and silver and precious stones—all there ready to be taken out of the hulls—if you could get 'em." He laughed. "No guards there but skeletons, dead men bleaching on the decks." He took a gulp and set the glass down. He was getting back his strength; we could see the color returning. Presently, "I'll tell you the whole thing," he said.

"I was up there in—in New York when I met up with him. He looked like he knew good times and he got to talking about Mexico and Guatemala, the gold country. Said the mines down there were picked clean, but a good deal of the pay stuff had never reached the market, but was floating on the ocean for anybody who'd take it. Only they couldn't reach it. I asked him where that was. He says the Sargasso Sea. He had a map and located it—latitude seventeen north and a notch west of longitude forty-five west. Had to have two thousand dollars to throw in with his pile to fit out a ship.

"We went up to his room. He had charts and things and some invention to overcome that hell grass that winds around ships and hol's 'em fast. It was a steel-wire box to fit on the propeller so's the water'd be let through and the seaweed'd be kept out." The burning eyes wrinkled up, and the big hulk shivered—with the sourness of the rum, I concluded. He spat into a corner. "Damn the thing!" he burst out. "A wire box for that hell weed!" A long gulp and another shudder.

"Well, I stayed with him all night, going over the plans and figuring; figuring on beating the water devils with a little box." The man was morose now, morbid with the sensitiveness that the rum brought back in him. "Costs and profits up and down, up and down. The gold was there, untouched in the rotting bottoms. He'd seen 'em from a distance, but vessels laid wide-open water from that carpet of sargasso. He had the names of some of the ships. A million dollars, American dollars—maybe more—and we could go take it, shunt right through and take it aboard. Well, he was right; he was right in everything but one thing, but that wasn't his fault. I didn't see it any more than he did. We signed articles, the two of us—up there in his room. Next day we set about finding a ship and getting the damn' box made up."

His left hand closed round the rum jug, throttling it. A queer smile settled in the corners of his mouth, erasing the sulkiness. I had never seen the awful power of this bitter stuff, but I saw it then. It was pumping the blood through this husk of a man, recharging him with every minute. Already he looked somehow different. A year or two had fallen from him, quickening his puffy lips.

"On a day we sailed." The sentence vacantly bespoke an epitaph, his own. "For two weeks it was the same thing—sky and water, blue and green, sometimes both above us and sometimes both below. The crew—they were rough, all right. Most of 'em ought 'a' been in prison, and some of 'em had been. That wasn't anything. The only kind of crew we could sign for our business was them. Dead men we went to rob; it took thieves and murderers to do it. We didn't mind that.

"Along of the Windward Passage we sheered the course two points. High wind up to then; after that it fell off so's the ocean was as smooth as a floor." He lifted his eyes suddenly and narrowed them as if he would share a grim secret. "I know now what made that sun pour on us. It was the spirits of the dead men fighting us. The vapor—we called it the vapor—it rose in sheets. The paint began to blister and smell. The crew stood to the buckets and doused the decks from morning to night, fore and aft and inside the hold. It was slave driving to keep 'em at it with guns."

Turguin put both elbows onto the table and leaned his chin in his palms. Elfers was drawn back into his chair, nervous and watching. It was midday, and the open windows sucked in the heavy heat and stillness of Cajaho.

"We got there finally," went on the even tones, gaining a little impetus and a something else I could not define which went from him in every motion. "The lookout shouted out, 'Land!' and we clustered on the bow till we saw it—one flat stretch of olive green, spotted with burned yellow and a dirty white. We couldn't see the end of it either way—just miles and miles. And it wasn't land at all." The light in his smoldering eyes burst into flame and dilated with a look of wildness. His voice sank to a husky whisper. "Sargasso—a continent of it—the Sargasso Sea!"

"The Sargasso Sea!" repeated Elfers from deep down in his chair, and I vow he did not know he had

said it. Turguin altered his position, shifting forward and letting his arms drop and fold upon the table, his fingers gripping his sleeves.

"By eight o'clock," continued the man, waxing more animated, "the ship was only a mile from it. Morning it was, and not a breath. By quarter after we hit it, and the prow plowed it up like grass in a field. The crew set up a yell and forgot to be scared. I watched it push up onto the sides, and I watched something else—a battered old bottom two miles in front of us steaming with rot and the masts sticking over the sides where they'd snapped off at the steps, making the peeled old hulk list to starboard. I watched some other things on it, too. You could see 'em with the glasses, scattered all over, some of 'em hanging together and some of 'em piled up in a corner. I got enough of that in a while and made back to the stern. I hung over the stern and looked back. I got enough of that, too.

"Maybe a hundred yards back, the weeds were closing in again, drawing up together and filling in and twining thicker than they had been. I got sick seeing it come closer. I guess I went into the cabin and laid on the bunk. My stomach went back on me; it couldn't stand what it can now."

Observing the man swilling that fiery stuff, I wondered a little what had transpired—what *could* have transpired—to turn a human stomach into some sort of a mechanical receptacle for poison, a quart of unadulterated poison. And it did not appear to hurt him; rather it worked a reincarnation.

"And then—and then the whole frame of the ship began to jerk, jerk and tremble. That drove the sickness away. I stumbled out on deck, and noticed the crew standing in different places as if they couldn't move. They were scared. They looked as gray as the mist. Some of 'em had their mouths half open and couldn't shut 'em. The ship was still going on; I saw that first of all; but it jerked and shook, and a snapping, grinding sound came up." The long, bony index finger of the man's left hand shot out at Turguin. The haggard face became contorted. "Your captain—he can go to hell!" came a rasped expostulation. "He knows it all, does he? And they all do. But I'm telling you there was something down there getting hold of the ship's keel—dead men, maybe, gripping her with their fingers—and that wouldn't be the first time.

"It was all right again in a minute. We got up some speed, and the gang of cutthroats got back their nerve. All hands collected in the forecabin with mouths watering for that old wreck dead ahead, but I leaned over and looked at the water. Those weeds acted queer. The prow'd cut 'em, and then their weight and the thickness of 'em'd force 'em high up the side. And there they'd stick like barnacles. They were slowing us up. The vessel gritted and groaned and like to stop.

"I must 'ave hollered as I ran back. Anyway, something got into those devils again, and their teeth clattered; I could hear 'em as I passed. Aye, thieves or murderers—whatever they were—and not knowing a fear of man or God, they shook in every limb. With some at my heels I was down the ladder to the engine room, pulling a gun and standing over the sweating

stokers. The steam was high—way at the top. Power—no end of it! It wasn't that. It was the *propeller*."

The rum jug rang as it hit the table. Elfers jumped like a skittish horse.

"When I saw what that jerking meant I knew we were doomed men. The sweat poured off me, but I was chilled through. Every clank of that engine spelled a lie. Up on deck it was plain. We weren't making two miles, and back at the stern the sargasso was bunching up under us. I guess I went sort of "loco" watching it and counting the seconds. I knew what was happening. I knew that the invention was more than doing its work; it was queering us for good and all. What was meant to keep out the weeds *was keeping out the water*. And then the groaning sang up high like a tornado and quit in a crash. The boilers had burst.

"The poor fools down there were rats in a trap. The steam came pouring up through every crack, and once in a while a head lifted out of it, making noises like a lost soul. Eight of 'em down there, and three got out. But that was over after a few hours, and better luck for them. It was different with us.

"It was hell's noon when the fires went out. You think it's hot to-day—" He broke off with a laugh, a laugh such as I have never heard anywhere. "Who's hot when he can breathe? The rotting weeds and the paint and the deck sizzling—that's *heat*. Some went around sucking wet cloths, and one—he was dousing the deck—went berserk and jumped over the side. He never came up."

The last drop left the jug. With a muttered curse the fellow thrust it away. He looked round at each of us. His eyes were gleaming. He had grown actually malignant. It was only out of the corner of my eye that I saw the jug carom onto its side, for I was held to his feverish face inexorably. Turguin was worse off than I was, totally unconscious of a gorilla arm almost shoving him.

"The look in that crew's eyes followed me everywhere," resumed the puffed lips. "They condemned me if ever man was condemned. But I was safe so long as I was trying to do something. We tried to back out of that network, rigging up the oil motor and shaking out the sails. Sails—bah! And the propeller had snapped clean off. We tried to lower a boat and find a path through the water. When we did, three men went down into it and worked at the oars like mad. They got twenty yards astern and dropped down into the bottom, too weak to sit up. It was dark, and they couldn't get back. We threw 'em food, and in the morning they made twenty yards more and were too far off for help. Nobody'd go into a second boat, and on the fourth day the three died right there, hanging over the gunwale with their tongues out.

"After that I didn't sleep. I knew they wanted to do for me. They weren't for hiding it. They got my partner one day when he was walking aft; a knife in his back! God! He was fortunate to go. But, like a fool, I barred the cabin door and kept the guns loaded and ready. From then on it was a dream of the devil's making. The water ran low, and when they couldn't get me they went after each other. From the cabin I watched, and saw what men can do with

their naked hands. It was the casks they fought for—two of 'em. They tipped over one, and all the water seeped out. There was more murder, and the moon didn't cover it up much. When it got quiet I stole out to wet my throat, and a deck hand jumped at me from a galley. I had no choice; I shot him, and felt no worse for it. I reached the cask, but it was empty."

His hand flew to his scrawny throat. "Rum!" he said hoarsely. "Rum!"

The waiter came running. We sent him for another jug. The insatiable thirst stupefied all of us. Those eyes, glazed and bloodshot; those immense hands clawing and shaking as if with ague—he was mad! How could he be else with a quart of Jamaica rum burning his vitals and such a memory clamoring in his brain? That he could go on talking, and talking coherently, though thickly, was the greatest wonder. He coughed with every few words, but the fact basis never was lost. It seemed a thing carved and seared into his consciousness—or his subconsciousness.

"After five days it rained, and the casks filled again. I had been living on rum and holding to the cabin, trying to catch a little sleep when it looked safe. But you can't live without water. In the night I got one of the casks into the cabin and felt rich. When the other was empty, this was half full.

"I saw 'em plotting to get it. I heard every word. What was the difference to them? They had nothing but knives, though. To keep 'em off I fired a gun over their heads at odd hours. The last time I found out something; *I hadn't any more bullets*. And when I didn't fire they guessed the truth. I knew it by the way they stared in at me and grinned. We were on even terms, they figured.

"It wasn't two hours after that when they rushed me. Seven of 'em left—and all of 'em on that door! It gave way with the third rush. I stood against the wall and let 'em come with feet and hands and teeth—the whole greedy pack.

"I fought 'em with my bare hands, fought 'em knives and all. I beat the reach of every man there. I killed the first one; broke his neck maybe. The second jumped me, and I grabbed him around the middle and slung him into the crowd. God knows why I didn't let 'em end it! I lashed out with the whole of my strength that I wanted to loose. They reached me more than once. My knuckles were ripped open—and my arms. But four of 'em couldn't get up when it was over, and when I shoved 'em out only one crawled away."

He paused. His head jerked lower toward his waiting arms, those merciless arms of death. The muscles in them still stood out, bunched and significant. I forced myself by sheer will to look at Elfers. He was hunched in his chair with the most astonishing expression on his face. Turguin, with arms folded on the table, might have been an image of stone. Not the flicker of an eyelash betrayed life. I wanted to call out to this terrible man that we had had enough, but my lips were dry and my tongue tied. And still that voice went on:

"For twelve days it didn't rain. I kept in the cabin, hardly tasting food, and watched 'em die one by one. They cursed me all the time. Their tongues got so

swollen they couldn't use 'em, and then they cursed me with their eyes. The last one dragged himself to the door on his hands and cried out in the name of God. I answered, and in the name of God sent him to hell without a drop to ease him. He died in convulsions, and I was left alone.

"Two years of sky and sargasso, sargasso and sky, both changing all the time and bringing nothing! The sky that was most times blue turned gray or black or yellow, and that meant rain for the casks. The food gave out. I was starving—and glad of it. But the sargasso turned speckled with yellow, and showed me the fish that were hidden before. They were olive green, like the sargasso had been. I fished and ate and went on living.

"Hour by hour I sat on the deck. And one day a strange thing happened. The weeds opened in a lane, a lane of pure water. I rushed over to the davits, thinking I was addled. The ropes caught and knotted in the rusty pulleys, and when I looked again—he grinned balefully—"the water was gone. But I kept the boat ready, and slushed it down so the seams wouldn't spread. The weeds opened a good many times, but they always closed again. Two years! All the time the ship was shifting as the sargasso shifted. Through the glasses I could make out a rim of shore.

"Even two years have to end. Even two years are only two years. I ought to know; I've stood eight since then." The fellow was mumbling now; we could catch less and less of what he said. "Two years—and the weeds open! And me tugging at the damn' boat and laughing and shaking my fist and watching for it to close! But I got down in the boat on a rope and rowed—and rowed—and rowed—and the sargasso came in once more and shut out the lane, but I wasn't in the sargasso!" His lolling head jerked up as he gave this last in a fierce tone of triumph. Clinging to the table, he swayed dizzily. "It killed all the rest, but it couldn't kill me. Nothing can kill me. One more ship—ship lost in the Sargasso Sea. And all—the treasure—treasure! Alive to tell the—the tale; that's me. Alive to—drink all the whisky!" He lurched sidewise, reached for the jug—and missed it. He glared at it. His eyes, their spell lost utterly, fell upon Turguin, immobile and frowning. "No Sargasso Sea—that's what he said."

The strength seemed to have gone out of the fellow all in a moment. During the recounting his vigor certainly grew from sullen apathy to feverish intensity and the madness of the liquor. And then—in a puff, it was gone; and he was only a very drunken lout, mouthing nothings in his chair, brooding out of bleary eyes.

He pawed at the jug, and, seizing it, tried to fill the glass. The reeking stuff spilled over the table, so that Turguin pushed back; but some of it went into the glass. He made a weak attempt at grinning.

"No Sargasso Sea's what he says. Maybe—maybe. Don't know—don't know 'bout 't 'tall. I give you a toast—hell of a toast—Sargasso Sea—whatever it is!" He swung an aboriginal arm wildly, heedlessly. The glass smashed itself in a far corner. Thereupon, his befuddled head dropped onto his arms.

None of us moved for just an instant. We had our thoughts. I looked at Turguin. He was scowling and

biting his lip. I turned to Elfers. On his face the pallor still stood. I tapped him on the knee, feeling oppressed by the stillness.

"You heard that last?" Turguin jarred us both by suddenly speaking. "He said maybe—oh, hang it! What did he mean? All this account—the sargasso—the ship and— Why, you don't suppose—"

I got up stiffly. "Come on!" I tried to rouse Elfers. But he shoved me off. He was breathing hard and not quite himself. I thought the half hour had done him no good certainly, with his preying imagination.

And evidently that was the point, for rather tremblingly he reached out a hand that sought for the limp shoulder of the derelict. Somewhat fearfully, and then with a desperate vehemence, he shook it, until the man lifted his head, cursing. At that he pulled open the fellow's shirt at the chest—and went whiter than ever.

And no wonder, indeed! For the next minute I saw it, too—a hideous picture tattooed in the skin, a repellent serpent head, fangs protruding.



### SHAFTS OF LIGHT.

By Roy le Moynes.

YOUR hair fell tumbling all around your face  
 Like darkness in a myriad slender strands;  
 And there within this splendor moved your hands  
 Like shafts of light that move with infinite grace.  
 We sat and talked around the fireplace  
 And roamed with poetry to unknown lands. . . .  
 Ah! now this wakened spirit understands  
 How stars fall bleeding into vacant space.

Love has his subtleties of flesh and form,  
 His own dim secrets and his sudden spells,  
 And out of nothing he can build a storm  
 To shake down all the mightiest citadels . . .  
 Or light a fire to keep a dead heart warm. . . .  
 Love has his own way and he never tells.



### A NEW SERIAL BY H. BEDFORD-JONES.

Do you like to read stories of such amazing adventures and curious surprises that you never know what the next line is going to bring forth? If you do get the next number of THE THRILL BOOK, on the news stands July 1st, and start reading this serial by H. Bedford-Jones, called "The Opium Ship." We are a trifle cynical about fiction ourselves, and we apply an acid test to every bit of writing that squeezes into THE THRILL BOOK, but even we had to sit up and take notice when we read "The Opium Ship." Don't miss it. The first installment comes out in our enlarged number—three times the present amount of reading matter for fifteen cents!

# The Borderland Bridge

By

Charles T. Jordan

## CHAPTER I. MINDS ATTUNED.

AT five in the afternoon of an August Friday, Professor Addison Maboon, sprawled in the morris chair on the veranda of his summer home in Berkeley, lifted his little eyes from the periodical spread open across his thick legs, and peered through half-closed lids down into the narrow, dry expanse of front yard, at the leafless, wasted limbs of what had been an apple tree.

"Dead—dead as a door nail!" he murmured. "And the last growing thing on the place! The summer has been too much for it."

The gate latch clicked. The towering figure of Ward Satchley strode up the baked gravel path and mounted the steps three at a time. He passed the chair without greeting its occupant, an inscrutably sinister look on his long, dark face, and entered the house.

"Ward's features are becoming positively—repulsive!" realized Maboon, allowing his eyes to return to the ridiculous article he had been reading. "But there will be a change before long," he muttered, thinking significantly of the shriveled apple tree.

The "Professor" was not university nomenclature, for Addison Maboon's scholarly attainments were limited by a common-school education; it was merely what the Calcium Vaudeville Circuit considered appropriate billing.

Maboon and Satchley, in a mind-reading turn, recently had completed forty weeks of Calcium "time," and now were resting up for a return tour in the fall. At least they were ostensibly doing that. But this vacation was destined to differ from previous ones.

Telepathy was an established fact. To Maboon it was as demonstrable as mathematics. Hadn't he and Satchley proved it night after night during the seven years of their vaudeville partnership?

Had they not risen to the very top? Each day had endowed their apparently uncanny performance with greater strength. And the nearer attuned their minds became the more startling did the change in Ward



Satchley's formerly open features appear to Maboon, this in spite of the Professor's almost utter absorption in his plan. It was as though his partner were gradually losing his own personality, and as gradually partaking of that of another. But who could that other be?

The metamorphosis occasioned Maboon many strenuous hours of weird conjecture. With dissatisfaction he had followed line after line of reasoning. It couldn't be possible that Satchley suspected? he got to wondering.

Imitators sprang up by the dozen, but they failed to duplicate the feats of the psychic duo. So long as the harmony of his and Satchley's mentalities endured, reasoned Maboon, the beliefs of all the rest of the world could be damned.

Annually a summer of leisure was afforded by their considerable earnings, and leisure for the working out of his plan was what Maboon most desired.

The death of Dora Conger, nearly thirty years ago, had almost bereft him of his reason. No woman on earth ever could mean what she had to him. But she had meant much to another also, a physician without a practice, only a few months her senior. Dora's passing on affected Maboon's rival, Franklin Ellis, in much the same manner as it did himself; but, in addition, it effected an apparently sincere reconciliation of the two young men.

Their small earnings had permitted Maboon to pursue a purposeless existence until, by accident, he discovered his possession of a most peculiar sense or faculty. He found himself quite unconsciously describing in part articles handed by the audience to Ellis, who

promenaded the theater aisles—before *Ellis could transmit to him the complete code signals.*

A new horizon spread before him. A fresh ambition kindled animation in his aging frame. If he could do that—read the very thoughts of another—confer mentally with a living being—what was to prevent communication with one who had left this life?

For prolonged periods he conducted telepathic experiments with Franklin Ellis. But the results were discouraging. At times the phenomenon was not manifested at all.

Three years later, during the course of one of their performances, Maboon discovered his thoughts for some reason dwelling on an odd-shaped coin of ancient date. Immediately he began describing its marked peculiarities aloud.

Franklin Ellis strove to correct him by repeatedly signaling that he should be describing a cardcase—not a coin. But to Franklin Ellis' amazement, the aisle-seat occupant who had handed him the leather case suddenly leaped to his feet, utter bewilderment in his every feature.

He was a toweringly tall man, with a rather narrow face. Obviously he was excited. "That very coin," he cried, "is in my case at this moment! I didn't believe a soul in Kansas City knew I owned it. This is—this is witchcraft!" And, seizing the cardcase from Ellis, he turned and hastened from the theater.

But he did not proceed far. At the risk of cancellation of their contract—for halting in the midst of one's act is a serious matter in vaudeville—Addison Maboon cleared the footlights and orchestra pit with a running jump and sped up the aisle after him. For to Maboon, in a flash, had come the truth.

No one in Kansas City, save its owner, had been cognizant of that particular coin's existence. Ellis had not suspected its presence in the leather case he held, else why his warning signals?

They met outside the theater. Two hours of earnest persuasion with the stranger, Satchley, convinced him of the truth Maboon saw so clearly. And, once assured of the future that lay ahead of him—Satchley was a man without family ties—it took but a moment for the pair to reach an agreement.

Franklin Ellis took his usurpation with outward calm; perhaps he had foreseen the eventuality. But inwardly he was undoubtedly embittered. He returned to the practice of medicine, and so assiduously did he apply himself that shortly his discoveries were world known.

Almost immediately the new team of vaudeville telepathists prospered. Their bookings were arranged for seasons in advance. Maboon bought a summer home in Berkeley—where Dora Conger had lived her short span and where Franklin Ellis now practiced—and shared it, vacations, with Ward Satchley, during the years their partnership had endured. A Japanese kept house for them.

The Professor's ultimate object in closely associating himself with a man whose thought channels he could unerringly navigate had been the development of a suitable subject for the great experiment. And now the time was almost ripe. But Ward Satchley must not be allowed to suspect!

Maboon had considered the project from every view-

point. He was thoroughly convinced of its infallibility. Already he had purchased the necessary drug and concealed it in his bedroom.

The house was piped with gas for cooking and illumination, and gas was an essential in his plan, for later the lungs could be emptied of their poisonous contents.

To-day was Friday—August 18th. To-morrow morning, in Satchley's coffee, the administering of the asphyxiating gas would then be a simple matter. It wouldn't be murder, for before a soul could become aware of the curious goings-on in the Berkeley summer home Satchley would have been restored to life, and in the possession of Professor Addison Maboon would be a priceless secret—if the experiment were successful.

After initial success, Satchley might be willing to allow a repetition of the experiment, possibly several, until they had successfully plumbed the uttermost riddle of the Beyond.

Maboon's little eyes glowed with satisfaction as he prepared to rise from his chair. "Yes," he told himself with profound conviction, "it is certain of success. But what's that?"

It was merely the rustling of a dead twig of the apple tree.

Reassured, he reasoned on, his lips tight closed. "Everything is prepared, and to-morrow will witness the fruition of—"

"To-morrow? Why not to-night?"

Even before the words were uttered their import had penetrated Maboon's alert consciousness.

In stark terror he turned in his chair, for the door behind had creaked; he had sensed it rather than heard it. Framed in the doorway stood Satchley, his expression incredibly weird, in one hand the vial contain the drug Maboon had secreted in his bedroom.

## CHAPTER II.

### THE PACT.

**T**WINE beads of clammy perspiration glistened at Addison Maboon's gray temples as Satchley walked around the morris chair and seated himself on the veranda rail, face to face with the professor. "You—you did suspect, Satchley!" With difficulty he forced the words out of his parched throat.

Ward Satchley laughed—a lurid, uncanny laugh, it struck Maboon; a laugh that seemed to reek of evil. But perhaps it was only Maboon's imagination. "No, I haven't suspected," corrected the dark, towering man. "I've known."

"Known! How long?"

"As long as you have. But why the surprise? You didn't think you could know my thoughts without my knowing yours? Thoughts flowing in the same channels necessarily are evident to both thinkers." A puzzling smile fluttered at Satchley's wide lips. He toyed with the drug vial. "How about it?"

Maboon relaxed. "I didn't realize. But it must be so!"

"Of course. And you'd have known it long before this if I had allowed myself to think your thoughts at any time except when you were absorbed in them yourself. If I had allowed myself for an instant to



dwell on your plan while your mind was diverted from it——”

“That explains the change in your face, Satchley. I’ve wondered lately——”

“I know you have. Your features have changed, too, Maboon. Your eyes have grown more cunning; your whole face has gradually assumed an expression of—well, it’s been maddening.”

“But why haven’t you spoken before, Satchley? Why didn’t you let me know——”

“What use, until now, when your scheme is ready for consummation? I was in no danger. You chose to keep your plan secret. At least, you tried to. Why should I have spoken? But now that we understand each other better, Maboon, there’s no longer any use of keeping this—is there?”

He held up the vial of the drug, tossed it from the veranda. It was shattered to fragments against a limb of the decayed apple tree.

Dusk was falling. Somehow, as Maboon stared past Satchley at the tree, it seemed to assume a sinister, ghostly aspect. “It’s dead—dead——” the Professor muttered.

“——as a doornail,” finished Satchley.

Maboon gazed fascinatedly into the odd, deep-seeing eyes of his associate. “When you came outside you interrupted my train of thought, Satchley, by intimating that to-night would be as good a time as any for the experiment. Am I to infer——”

“Oh, the experiment’s all right,” muttered Satchley. “Gas is the ideal method. But the drug is superfluous now.”

For once Maboon experienced difficulty in following Satchley’s road of reasoning. No doubt the blow of sudden surprise had temporarily disturbed the harmony of his consciousness. “You mean you are willing to go through with it?”

“Assuredly,” responded the tall man, his big figure a little less distinctly outlined in the poorer light of evening.

“You are perfectly willing to inhale the gas without being drugged first? You are as certain as I am that the experiment will be a success?”

Satchley’s eyes—they looked like black pits now—bored into the little ones of the white-haired man in the morris chair. “Of course we’ll go through with it, Maboon. It cannot fail, unless——”

“Unless——” The Professor leaned forward, for Satchley’s voice had sunk lower.

“Unless,” said Satchley slowly, “there is no hereafter.”

The simple words struck Maboon dumb. “But there is, Satchley; there is!”

“I believe so, too. And if there is, the experiment can’t help being a partial success.”

“Partial?”

“Partial, in case the mind that remains behind cannot coax the mind that has flown back into the flesh.”

“Oh!” And the thirty seconds of ensuing silence were impressive. “There is that risk,” Maboon conceded. “But, of course, there can be communication—mental communication—even though the mind of the subject remained—just across the border.”

He could barely detect Satchley’s affirmative nod in the failing light. “But I believe, as you do, that

it’s a groundless fear,” the bigger man said. “However, it’s a risk that must be provided for. If the unforeseen should occur—some little detail fail to work out in practice—it would look better if the experimenter, the man who is left, could truthfully point out that the subject of the experiment had committed suicide—inhaled asphyxiating gas behind a locked door. Don’t you think so, Maboon?” His laugh partook of an unnaturally harsh quality.

Addison Maboon was conscious of an involuntary shiver running through his frame. Was he, or was he not, reading Satchley aright? “You are willing to do that,” he faltered, “to make it appear as though you had committed suicide?” He leaned forward in awkward anticipation, then recoiled as he followed the current of the mind process which gave utterance to Satchley’s reply.

“I am perfectly willing,” were the tall man’s words, “if it falls my lot to be the subject of the experiment. Aren’t you?”

“No,” faltered Maboon, “but——”

“Buts are out of season. I’m in love with the scheme you’ve webbed, Maboon. We’ve got to go through with it. That’s final. We’ll decide as to who plays subject by lot. If you’re not willing to do it that way——”

“If I’m not willing——” repeated the fleshy little Professor.

“I’ll make you—if I have to ram the gas hose down your throat with my own hands.” And from his tone, Maboon believed he meant it.

A look of cunning came into the Professor’s eyes—a look it was too dark for Satchley to detect. “If you’re intent on it, Satchley,” he seemed to give in, “I’m game. We’ll toss up a coin. Heads you’re the suicide; tails I am.” But Maboon overlooked that thought had prompted his guile and that Satchley had already proved his ability to sail the Professor’s mental channels.

“I said we’d leave it to chance,” said Satchley coldly. “We’ll toss no trick half dollar—heads on both sides. We’ll let the cards decide for us. I’ll play square. The man who draws the first jack is the man who’ll cross the borderland bridge. And if that man happens to object to making the crossing, I’ll help him over myself. But it’s dark out here. Let’s go in and eat. Then we’ll ask the pasteboards for a fair decision.”

They ate their late supper in silence, and Ishi, the Japanese, was granted twenty four hours’ leave. When he had gone Satchley got out an unopened pack of cards.

He broke the seal. “Shuffle them,” he said to Maboon, emptying the carton into his hand.

“This is dead square?” the Professor questioned. “If you draw the first jack you will——”

“I will,” Satchley assured him solemnly. “And you? You won’t compel me to——”

Slowly Maboon nodded. His hands trembled as he mixed the cards. “Cut them,” he directed, placing the pack on the table.

Carefully Satchley did so. “You draw first,” he said quietly.

Gradually fear was leaving Maboon. After all, wasn’t it fair that they leave it to chance? If there were a hereafter, what difference which of them made

the pilgrimage? Wouldn't it be even better if he went himself—to collect knowledge at firsthand? Maboon stretched forth a hand that did not tremble. Casually he turned over the first card. It was the ace of hearts.

"That's more like it," applauded Satchley. "Now, if ever, we need be at perfect harmony."

Maboon nodded as the towering man turned the second card face up. It was a nine-spot.

They focused their attention less and less on the cards. Eventually a jack would show up, and then they would know their relative status. Maboon made mention of Dora Conger, his sweetheart of nearly thirty years ago. In silent sympathy Satchley listened to his account of her untimely taking off.

"I want to know what it's really like—the life there," the Professor faltered. "I want to know if it wouldn't be better to live there than here. If I only could be certain that Dora and I would meet there——"

Ward Satchley nodded his understanding and—turned up the jack of diamonds.

### CHAPTER III.

#### THE TRANSITION.

AT ten o'clock that Friday night Ward Satchley and Addison Maboon retired to their respective rooms—Ward to work, Maboon to wait. The last hour and a half had been spent in earnest discussion of the details of their project.

Satchley had accepted the verdict of the cards without a murmur. He believed, with Maboon, that there wasn't one chance in a hundred of failure, and he was perfectly satisfied with the odds.

Maboon turned the porcelain knob as he closed his door. The light switched on, he dropped to the edge of his bed, eyes focused on the knob he had just turned.

Though a wall of studding, lath, and plaster separated their bodies, nothing whatever interfered with their mental contact. Maboon was as cognizant of every move his associate made as if he had been watching him through a microscope.

Satchley deliberately had thrown himself on his back on the bed. His dark eyes ceilingward, he inserted the end of the rubber tubing between his big lips, and at the same instant removed his thumb. Instinctively his tongue stopped the fatal opening of the hose.

Maboon sensed it. But Maboon also sensed the superb power of will by which, three seconds later, Satchley drew his tongue aside and allowed the asphyxiating fumes to seek whatever channel they might.

Ward Satchley inhaled deeply of the poison draft, and Maboon was conscious of a "Good-by, old man!"—a mental leave-taking. He shrank back in the clutches of a new sensation. It was as though the fumes were coursing down his own throat!

With powerful determination he strove to draw back his wandering ideas, to retire into his own personality, to sever the velvet-strong, invisible chain, to set his thoughts on topics foreign.

Cold sweat broke from his every pore. A chill seized him; then the burning throbs of fever. He found himself staring at something glistening white and circular. It seemed to be an immense sun of

indescribable whiteness—an icy sun, big as the room, and revolving at terrific speed.

He ground a hot fist into his eyes. Gradually the size of the circle grew smaller. But still it glistened, blinded him. He blinked, and tried to turn away, but he could not remove his eyes from it.

A ringing noise was in his ears. It grew more insistent. The air seemed vitiated; breathing was difficult. And then, of a sudden, it all came back to him. He realized that he was gazing at nothing more formidable than the white porcelain knob of his door.

But the air he was breathing; there was no illusion about it! It was beginning to savor of illuminating gas. He'd have to go down into the cellar to the meter and turn off the main supply cock. But first he must telephone a doctor. He and Satchley had decided on that as a necessary precaution.

Again came that ringing sound in his ears; this time it was very real. "It's the front-door bell!" he ejaculated. "Who the devil can be calling at this hour?"

He got to his feet and opened his room door. He'd answer the bell, but first he'd use the telephone. He made his way into the kitchen and fumbled for the push button. He found it, and the hardwood-finished room glowed with light.

Again the doorbell rang, but he paid it no heed. Instead he took the telephone book down from its hook and carried it to the oilcloth-covered table directly under the light. "I wonder who'd be best to call?" he mumbled as he turned the pages idly.

The book seemed to want to remain open at one of the "E" pages, and Maboon allowed his eyes to rove down the list of names. He gave a sudden start as they came to rest on the legend:

"Ellis, Franklin; Lung Specialist, Cloyne Court; A-2323."

He slammed the big directory shut. "The last man on earth I'd care to see to-night!" he exclaimed. "But who——"

He thumbed the leaves again, and for a second time the book flopped open at the same page.

Came three staccato trills of the doorbell.

"Confound it! I suppose I'll have to see who it is!" grumbled the upset Maboon, slamming the directory shut again and turning out the light.

He made his way to the front of the house. In the hall he pressed the button that would flood the veranda with light. He placed his nose against the scrim curtain covering the plate-glass inset of the front door.

But somehow, even before he opened the door, the Professor was conscious of an atmosphere of uncanniness. Perhaps it was engendered by the glimpse he caught, over the shoulder of the man on the veranda, of the swaying limbs of the lifeless apple tree.

In vague apprehension he released the door catch, and opened the portal a few inches. A hot, oppressive gust of wind stung his little eyes.

"Well?" he queried, conscious suddenly of something familiar about the figure facing him.

"Why the devil did you keep me waiting this long, Maboon?" replied the other gruffly, placing one foot

on the threshold. "Open the door. Think I want to stay in this Hades forever?"

Maboon stepped back, aghast, at sound of the voice, and the visitor followed him in and closed the door.

"You, Franklin Ellis!" ejaculated Addison Maboon, an indescribable note in his voice, his brow clammy moist. "What do you want here—to-night?"

Ellis smiled an enigmatical smile as he hung his hat on one of the hooks bordering the many-sided mirror. "What do you suppose I'm here for? I'm needed, am I not?"

"Needed?" The utterance was almost a shriek.

"I've come to watch the experiment," said the doctor simply.

## CHAPTER IV.

### THE BRIDGING.

AS the significance of Franklin Ellis' statement wedged its way into his mentality, Addison Maboon's first impulse was to pinch his ears. Wasn't it all merely some horrid phantasmagoria of his overwrought imagination?

But Ellis looked very real and substantial. He was no dream phantom. There could be but one explanation of his presence. "Satchley—told you, Ellis?" the Professor faltered.

"Told me nothing! No need for him to. I've known about your scheme all along, Maboon. I was well aware of it when first you experimented with me. My lot would have been what Satchley's is if those experiments had been successful."

Maboon was amazed. "You—you, too, could read what was going on in my mind?"

"Of course. More readily than you could follow my thoughts, too, I imagine."

The Professor's little eyes grew smaller and redder. He was speechless in the grip of a nameless fear. What was it all leading to, he wondered apprehensively.

"But, come, Maboon, we're losing time," Ellis spoke crisply. "Let's get the gas turned off and break into Satchley's room. I have a little appliance here in my bag that will clear the poor devil's lungs very nicely, and then——"

"Then?"

"You can make your attempt. I think you'll fail. And if you do—well, it'll be my turn. It's an ideal case for the employment of my discovery, because the tissue of the lungs will not be wasted as it always is in——"

Maboon took courage. "I see you are familiar with it all, Ellis," he said resignedly. "But you can't prove—in case of failure—you can't prove that Satchley didn't commit suicide of his own free will!"

"Perhaps I can't, Maboon, to others. But I don't need to prove it for myself."

They went out the front door, leaving it on the latch, and descended to the cellar, where Maboon, with a wrench, turned the gas cock. Then they hurried around to the west side of the house.

It was only a one-story structure, and, with a saw-horse to stand on, it didn't prove very difficult to wedge open the window of Satchley's bedroom. The doctor climbed through, and Maboon followed as soon as the first rush of the gas made it habitable.

Satchley's light still burned, and every detail of the room's furnishing was distinct and clean cut. Ward lay on his back on the maple bed, in his face an expression minus all the sinister qualities Maboon had discerned of recent months.

The limp end of the flexible tube connected with the gas jet had fallen from between his lips, and, save for the absence of any movement of his chest, he appeared as though he were in peaceful slumber.

The doctor stood cynically aside as Maboon stepped to the bedside and touched Satchley's forehead. "He's dead—dead as the apple tree in the front yard!" the Professor said softly, and stepped as softly back.

Ellis grinned as he leaned over the prone figure for a moment. "Yes, he's dead, Maboon," he said dryly. "He's as dead as—as Dora Conger!"

Maboon cringed.

"Seemingly he's dead by his own hand. In reality his blood lies on——"

"Don't! Don't, Ellis!" cried the man with the little, terrified eyes, the white hair. "I didn't kill him! He——"

Ellis went grimly on. "Appearances are often deceptive. Apparently Dora Conger died a natural death. In reality—what had you to do with it, Maboon?" He turned a pair of blazing, accusing eyes on the trembling Professor.

"I know; I know!" laughed Ellis. And in it Maboon believed he read the triumphant laugh of a fiend. "That's why I'm here, Maboon. I'll learn the truth from Dora—through Satchley."

"Yes, yes; of course you will, Ellis. She'll tell Satchley that I had nothing to——"

"She refused you, didn't she? And accepted me? It'll take a lot, Maboon, to prove that you——"

"But why not attempt the experiment now?" put in the palsied little Professor. "We're wasting precious minutes."

Ellis seemed to suddenly calm down. "You're right, Maboon," he said quietly. "Unlatch the door and I'll get my bag. I'll clear his lungs and then you can try your hand——"

With alacrity Maboon had crossed the room and thrown back the latch of Satchley's door. It opened into the living room, and through the doorway was visible the onyx clock on the rough mantel over the clinker brick fireplace. It was fifteen minutes to eleven as the Professor thrust open the door.

For a second Maboon's only thought was self-safety. He would have dashed from the house by the shortest route had not Ellis spoken at that moment. There was a so much saner note in the doctor's voice that he was reassured.

"Don't take on too much at anything I may have said, Maboon," were Ellis' words. "I was a little flurried. Forget it. I couldn't help speaking of Dora. She's been on my mind for nearly thirty years. My words got beyond my control, that's all. I'm sorry."

He seemed so sincere about it that Maboon was put at his ease at once. "I didn't know," he intimated, "but that you——"

"I'm just as rational as you are," the doctor laughed. "We all have our moments, though. But you have an important task on hand, and I'm here to help you. I wish you every success in your undertaking. But

even if you should fail I have a preparation that— But I suppose you've read about it?"

Maboon nodded, repressing all expression of the opinion he had for theories such as Ellis'. "I don't think my method will fail," he said quietly.

"Think what it will mean if either of us can bring life back to Satchley's lips!" The doctor grew enthusiastic. "Think of what he can tell us—if he will!"

"He will," replied Maboon.

Doctor Ellis went for his bag and carried it into Satchley's room. Out of it he took a small and complicated-looking piece of apparatus which, he explained, was of his own invention.

Ellis carefully adjusted this over the face of the lifeless man, and turned a lever.

The doctor turned and locked the door.

"Why don't you get busy?" he inquired, a surly note in his voice. "I'm only going to give you till eleven o'clock. Get to work. If you really induced Satchley to commit suicide under the belief that you could restore him to life, prove it. If you were tricking him—if you merely wanted to put him out of the way—"

Numbing fear again seized Maboon. He had been deceived! Ellis was stark, raving crazy!

Maboon closed his eyes, concentrated.

At the eleventh chime of the onyx clock he opened his eyes, certain that something on the bed had stirred. In triumph he turned to the door. To his astonishment Ellis' chair was empty. He swung round to the bed again, and lost interest in where Ellis might have gone, for the eyelids of Ward Satchley quivered—opened!

## CHAPTER V.

### SATCHLEY SPEAKS.

**I**T was possible! It's an accomplished fact!" ejaculated the Professor. "Satchley lives!"

And at sound of the Professor's voice, recognition came into Ward Satchley's dark eyes. He turned his head. A smile lighted his countenance. "Ah! You, Maboon! At last!"

"Ward, do you realize—"

But a new light had come into Satchley's eyes—a look of perplexity. He lifted himself to a sitting posture, and looked beyond Maboon, in the direction of the door to the living room. "I—I thought we were alone, Maboon," he said dazedly, rubbing his eyes. "Who is that man?"

In astonishment the chubby little Professor turned in his chair. "I—I—why—" For, sitting where a moment before Maboon had seen no one, was the bearded doctor!

Before Maboon could make a move the fear-stricken doctor had leaped to his feet, unlocked the door and thrust it open.

They heard the key turn, and the hurried footfalls of the doctor as he hastened from the house. He must almost have fallen down the flight of veranda steps. Then followed silence.

Maboon turned back to the equally astounded Satchley. "It was Ellis—Franklin Ellis. You know—my old vaudeville partner. Seeing you breathing again must have startled the wits out of him. He acted strangely this evening, anyway. His mind must be out of balance."

The towering, dark man lowered his feet to the floor, and sat on the edge of the bed. "I thought you never were going to call for me, old man!" he sighed. "Never?"

"For three weeks I've waited here in the room every night. I'd almost given up hope."

Maboon's little eyes betokened his amazement. "You're dreaming, Satchley. Why, it's less than an hour ago that you— You haven't been dead an hour yet!"

Satchley's eyes widened. "An hour! Maboon, if you had ever lived what I have in what you call an hour—if you had met and talked and dined with the folks I have since I took a deep whiff of illuminating gas between ten and eleven o'clock that Friday evening I turned up the jack of—"

"But, Ward! It's that Friday evening right now! It's only a little past eleven at this moment!"

Satchley threw up his arms in puzzled resignation. "It's—it's inexplicable! But then it all is—the life there!" he hastened to add. "It's all so different from anything you and I had surmised, Maboon, that—I can try to describe it, but I'm afraid it will be a sorry attempt."

The Professor's eyes glowed. "Go on, Ward. Tell me your experience—from the very start." He leaned back in his chair in the thrall of their achievement.

Satchley drew a long breath. "Maboon, the most incomprehensible thing about what we of this phase of existence call death, the transition, the great change, is the fact that it isn't a change at all—or, at least, only in a relative sense."

Maboon's little eyes seemed to grow smaller. "Just what do you mean by that, Ward?"

"Just what I say. I died; I committed suicide. And for twenty-four hours, though I was perfectly conscious, I did not know that I was dead!"

"Twenty-four—I just told you—"

"Time there is different from our time; it must be! For I tell you I lived the life for three weeks. Consciousness of time must be one of the few changes we undergo."

"But listen! At the very instant when I seemed to lose all consciousness from the effects of inhaling the gas I suddenly became entirely conscious, and naturally I believed I was still in the land of the living."

"I lay on my back on the bed here, but the tube from the gas jet no longer was in my mouth. It must have fallen out. I decided that the gas supply had failed, and I got up and took the tubing down and put it away in a bureau drawer. Then I called you."

In undisguised amazement Maboon listened. "You thought you did that, Satchley?"

"I *knew* I did it!"

Maboon was inclined to think that Satchley was raving.

"My father passed on fifteen years ago," Satchley explained. "And from his experience he was able to enlighten me to some extent. Maboon, though we don't realize it, there is a dual existence going on right now in this city, every city; this block, every block; this house, every house! There are two sets of inhabitants—maybe more—each unconscious of the other's presence."

"We awake from the sleep called death, and find

we are whole—without disease, and we find ourselves endowed with the same body we have gone through this life with.”

Maboon was silent for a moment. “Satchley,” he then said slowly, “did you— How did you come back?”

Satchley eyed him in bewilderment. “How could I have come back, if our minds had not touched somewhere in mid-gulf and your call had not been the stronger? If you weren’t sitting so near me I wouldn’t even know I was back, there’s so little difference in the sensation of life here and there.

“But I haven’t told you the half of what I’ve learned, Maboon. The beyond isn’t an eternal existence, any more than this one is. It is only one of a series of phases. In it one wakes without a blemish, lives a span, then passes on again. I saw funerals there, Maboon. An old school chum of mine went on to another Beyond during my sojourn.”

Maboon paled. “Dora Conger—were you able to —”

“I was unable to locate her,” said Satchley slowly. “If either of us had suspected what it is like there, you could have directed me where to search. No doubt she still lives where she seemed to live when you knew her.”

Came a piercing shriek. Maboon, startled, turned to the open window. He thought he caught a glimpse of a frightened, bearded face; then it was gone.

## CHAPTER VI.

### THE SHOCK.

“IT’S Franklin Ellis!” exclaimed Maboon. “He’s a raving maniac! He shouldn’t be at large, and, by George, Satchley, I’m not going to let him! You’re all right, aren’t you? Don’t mind staying alone a while? I’m going after him.”

“Go to it, old man. Sure I’m all right. But I feel confounded sleepy. I’ll take a snooze. Be careful he doesn’t harm you.”

Maboon smiled. All fear of the doctor had left him. Somehow he felt more physically capable than he had for years. “Take your nap, Satchley.” He opened the window wider and dropped out.

Hatless, but unconscious of it, he made his way through the dark to the graveled walk. Though he knew he passed close to the apple tree, only a vague outline of it stood out from the lesser black of the night.

He reached the street and could hear footbeats ringing on the cement nearly a block away.

The ring of shoes against the pavement grew less audible, and Addison Maboon broke into a ponderous trot. But when he had reached the second corner below he gave up pursuit. The sound of falling feet had ceased, and it would be folly to wander aimlessly on through the night. He turned about and retraced his steps to the house.

He unlocked the door and peered in. Satchley was fast asleep. He decided not to disturb him, so he closed the door gently and repaired to his own room. Inside of five minutes he had retired.

He judged it to be about five in the morning when he was awakened by the touch of a hand on his arm, for the gray light of dawn was filtering in through

the drawn shade. He sat upright in bed in bewilderment, and at that instant a hand pressed a button and the room was flooded with light.

At first Maboon’s white hair was inclined to stand on end. But in a second he realized that he was in no danger. The haggard face peering into his own wore too senile, too helpless, too hopeless an expression. “You, Ellis! What in the devil!”

To Maboon the words that tumbled from the doctor’s lips sounded like a shapeless collection of gibberish. “Forgive me, Maboon. Forgive me!” Ellis muttered. “I was wrong! I thought I was right, but I was wrong. I—I’ve heard it from her own lips!”

“God, Ellis! Have you utterly lost your senses? What are you getting at?”

“Dora Conger—she has told me all. You had nothing to do with her death. It was only my imagination. And, Maboon, it was you she wanted—not me! It was jealousy that made me do it. Jealousy caused me to follow you. I—”

But Maboon had leaped out of bed. He wasn’t in the least afraid of Doctor Ellis, but he had had enough of him. He’d secure him, then telephone for the proper authorities to take him away.

Terror lurked in the doctor’s eyes as he divined Maboon’s intent, and before the Professor could reach him he leaped back, turned, and fled the room.

His wild scamper through the house must have roused Ward Satchley, for Maboon nearly collided with his associate as he passed his door in pursuit. Maboon stumbled against a chair in the half-dark living room and Satchley helped him to his feet.

Together they stumbled into the hall, the Professor brokenly attempting to explain the doctor’s latest visit.

The front door slammed before they could reach it, and Satchley’s hand was first to grasp the knob. He turned it, pulled the portal open, then fell back, aghast.

“God!” He turned to the white-haired Maboon. “Your being by my bed when I opened my eyes, I thought the experiment had been a success. But, Mab—Maboon! We’ve failed! Look! Instead of my— God, man, don’t you see it? The apple tree! It’s in full bud!”

Ashen-faced, Maboon looked down into the front yard. Ward’s words were true.

It was eleven-five p. m., Friday, August 18th. Policeman Clancy, at the telephone in the Maboon summer home, was communicating with headquarters.

“There’s hell to pay, Mac! I was passing here at eleven o’clock exact when a revolver shot rang out inside. I rushed in, and found the front door on the latch. Just as I yanked at a locked bedroom door a second shot was fired—about a minute and a half after the first one. I beat it outside and around to the window and climbed in. A devilish sight! Dead man on the bed—no wound visible. Fellow with white hair hanging in a chair near him with his heart shot to smithereens; instantaneous, must have been. Another guy humped across a chair near the door with a revolver in one hand and his brains in the other! Jealousy, you think, Mac? A woman concerned? Don’t know. Haven’t seen a sign of one here.”

# Soldiers and Sailors Personal Relief Section

Conducted by a former officer of  
the Adjutant General's department,  
U.S. Army.

## Questions and Answers.

R. N. O.—Question: I have a wife and two children. How much allotment is allowed me when \$15.00 is deducted from my pay?

Answer: For a wife the Government grants \$15.00 in addition to the soldier's \$15.00; \$10.00 more for the first child, \$7.50 for the second, the total being \$32.50, and adding the soldier's \$15.00 to this, you have \$47.50.

INTERESTED.—Question: What has the Government done with reference to the conversion of the Government's insurance?

Answer: The following statement by one of the heads of the department will be of interest in this connection. There seems to be a large number of men who are dropping their policies either through ignorance of the benefits or through lack of funds. As a result would suggest that a careful reading of this statement be given.

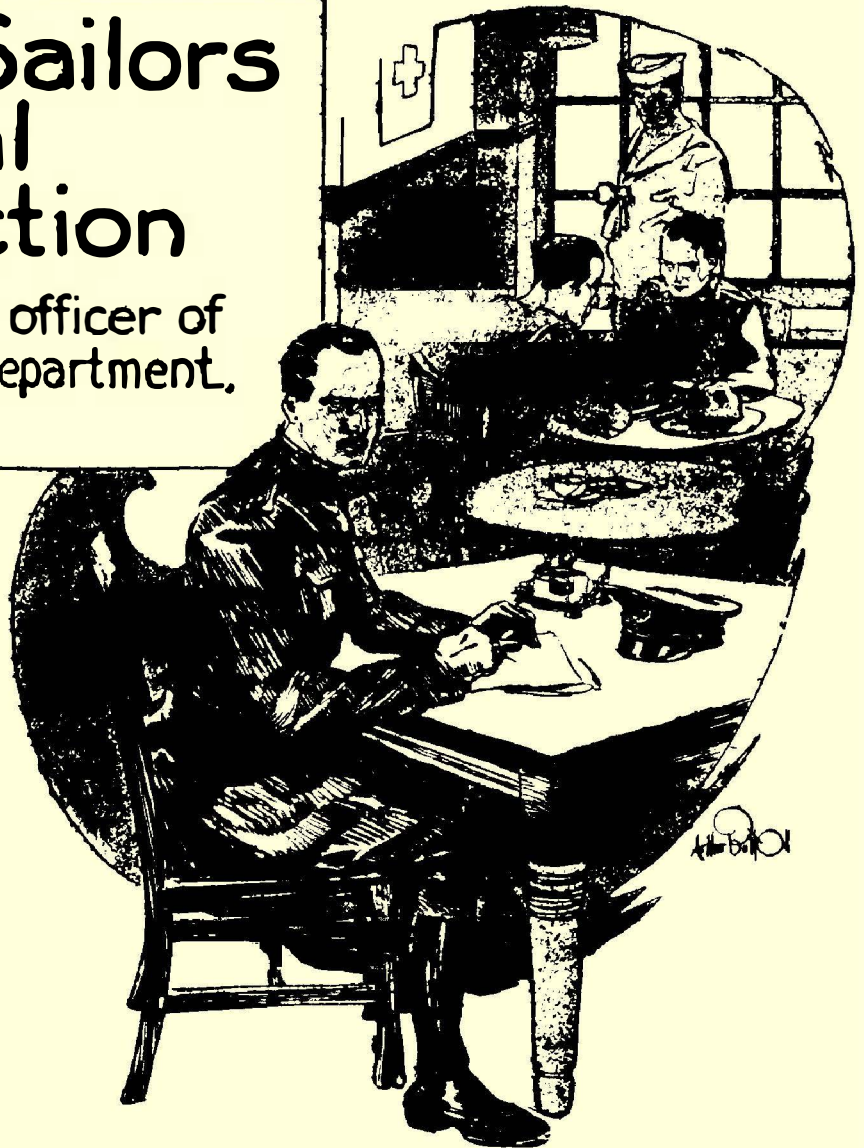
"We are looking not to one year ahead, but to all the future. We want to use the benefit of the experience of years of insurance experts for the benefit of the fighting men.

"We don't want a man to be overloaded and drop his policies. We do want him to make his conversions by degrees. Then he will have several policies. It means work for us, but, if he some day just simply must drop insurance, he may drop only one of his \$500 converted policies and keep the rest, and still will be protected fully.

"At the close of the conversion period, when the time comes that the present kind of insurance must be dropped, we will urge men to convert in small policies to their limit. Then, if they come later to be discouraged, they need to drop only a small policy or at the most two, and they still have a good back log.

"We find our greatest handicap to be the lack of information on the part of the soldiers as to their rights, privileges and duties under the War Risk Insurance act."

A. R.—Question: Do you believe that a noncommissioned officer should observe the same rigorous dis-



cipline as a commissioned officer where the men under him are concerned?

Answer: The noncommissioned officer differs from the commissioned officer in one respect. The dividing line of discipline is not quite so distinct. The noncom is forced to use his personality largely in the handling of his work. In other words, he must gain the respect of the men through faithfulness to duty and just treatment in all cases. If you are a natural leader, this is easy. If not, you must continually be on your guard, have your uniform in the pink of perfection, and use your head when it is needed. It is not necessary to be distant or restrained. A small amount of dignity well placed and a complete knowledge of military customs does a great deal toward making an excellent and efficient noncommissioned officer. Study the Government manuals dealing with this matter and talk with the older men in the service.

P. N.—Question: Does War Risk Insurance interfere with service or retirement pay?

Answer: It does not. It is in addition to the compensation also.

# "Around the World"

## "Count" Trapped by Washerwoman Wife.

"Count Albert du Vivier" was explaining the intricacies of the French language to a class that included some of the most fashionable young women of Chicago, when suddenly two rude men entered the room and halted the class proceeding.

"Is your name Joseph G. Marcotte?" one of the men shouted. "I'm J. J. Devine, deputy sheriff, and I want to know."

The count raised a deprecating hand to soften the loudness of the visitor's tone.

"No, no," he said; "I'm Albert du Vivier."

The other man stepped up. He was L. J. Haigler, attorney. He swept a hand to the doorway, and all the fashionable women followed the gesture with their eyes. A hitherto unnoticed woman entered the room.

"Do you mean to tell us that woman is not your wife?" the lawyer shouted. "That woman whose hands are red from much handling of scrub water? She is the real Mrs. Marcotte, your wife, and she has had to earn her living by scrubbing floors."

Count Marcotte muttered something and hurried into a private office. The French class buzzed with excitement. The lawyer, deputy sheriff, and the woman with "red hands" hurried after him.

"We've got you right," the deputy said. "Now, Marcotte, I have a summons to serve on you in a divorce matter."

The count professor took the summons and the visitors left.

## Noted Canadian Indian Dead.

Jean Baptiste Canadien, Iroquois Indian, who with a party of men in whaleboats tried to traverse the cataracts of the Nile and forward British troops to assist General Gordon in Khartum in 1885, died a day or two ago in his home in Caughnawaga at the age of seventy-eight.

"Big John," as he was familiarly known, was famed throughout Canada for his exploit of shooting the dangerous Lachine Rapids in a large wooden canoe each New Year's Day.

## Blast Bares Snakes' Den.

Two wheelbarrow loads of rattlesnake rattles and bones were taken out of a crevasse in the rock on the Dan O'Reilly farm near McGregor, Iowa, the other day. Quarrymen were at work on the hillside on the farm blasting out rock for a barn for Mr. O'Reilly when they opened up the crevasse and discovered the cache of rattles and bones.

Rattlesnake hunters say that the crevasse must have been a rattlesnake home for hundreds of years and advance the opinion that old and sick snakes had made the place a sort of hospital and home for the aged, crawling in there to die.

The crevasse extends into the bluff, and early morn-

ings a little vapor of steam is seen coming out of it. It is believed that there is an interior chamber in the rock with rattlesnakes in it, the steam coming from their breath. There may be hundreds or even thousands of them hibernating there, say hunters who are acquainted with the gregarious habits of rattlers.

There is a bounty of fifty cents a head on rattlesnakes, and the news of the discovery has aroused many snake hunters to a chance for big money. About the first of April, when the snakes begin to move, will be the time to get them. The usual long pole with hooks on the end will be used. This will be thrust into the crevasse, and the snakes caught and pulled out with it.

Mr. O'Reilly's farm is in a section that has been famous for years for its rattlesnakes. A half mile away is Rattlesnake Peak, where great numbers of snakes have been killed since the earliest days. The region was the favorite hunting ground of Josiah Cleveland, who for many years had a snake-oil-extraction factory here, selling the oil for liniment.

## Railway Men's Luck.

The superstitions of railway men are so numerous that even the sailor, who is generally credited with being the most superstitious man in the world, must needs take second place.

In Russia, when a woman is the first to enter a train, bad luck is sure to come unless the next two persons to enter the same compartment are men.

Friday, the thirteenth day of the month, black cats, cross eyes, mirror breaking, lightning, coach numbers, and their variations, and the weather are a few of the fantastic superstitions of railway workers.

Many drivers will not commence a journey without a flower in the buttonhole, usually a white one, or a white ribbon. Others wear a peculiar button, the insignia of their fraternal orders, and even a piece of red string, often almost invisible.

A left-handed fireman or driver is looked askance at by some railway men and as a lucky companion by others. In some cases transfer to other runs have been asked because such an individual is given a berth, while others request to be given a place by a left-handed or ambidextrous person.

As for travelers, burning coffee after breakfast is better than an accident policy, while winding one's watch on the train means a safe journey. Putting a wisp of straw in one's trunk or bag protects it from injury and insures safety.

If dust blows in one's eyes while in the train it means good health for a year; if it blows while going to the train it is a sign of accident.

A general superstition among railway men is that when one leaves his home to go to work he must not return and go indoors for something he has forgotten.

Should he have to do so, the bad luck to follow will be nullified if he sits for even a second in a chair and lifts his feet from the floor. —*Tit-Bits*.

#### Die to Music.

It is learned from reliable sources that the situation in Petrograd and Moscow some weeks ago was worse than ever. Executions were continued in the prisons, and often were carried out to the lively strains of a regimental band, the victims being lined up at the edge of a long, open grave and shot by Lettish soldiers.

#### Mere Matter of \$646 Per Day.

The salary of the president of the German republic will be limited to one million marks or two hundred and thirty-six thousand dollars a year. A German Socialist should be able to worry along on that, in view of the fact that in our land of high costs and Jeffersonian simplicity we pay our chief magistrate but a third of that amount.

Of course, Herr Ebert will live in a city where centuries of gold-braided flunkysm and glittering pagantry have set up traditions which it will be difficult even for a Socialist to break. Yet it may be that Herr Ebert will want to adopt the severely plain ceremonies which mark state functions in older republics. He certainly will not require the seven hundred and thirty uniforms which comprised the private wardrobe of his heaven-anointed predecessor. Nor, perhaps, will he wish to keep oiled and in good condition the golden chariots of state and the squadrons of automobiles which formerly tooted their arrogant way through Berlin. Herr Ebert, too, may not care to maintain the royal palaces where William enjoyed highly ornate board and lodging at public expense. Economies naturally will be the order of the day.

Yes, Herr Ebert should be able to greet smilingly the first of each month and the postman. Out of the modest little salary which a new and jealous democracy affords him, he should be able to pay rent, heat, gas, and extras, and maybe have something left for a rainy day. It has been done, even in Berlin.—*Cincinnati Times Star*.

#### Disabled Ask Retraining.

Approximately two hundred thousand disabled men are coming home. Many will return to their old vocations, but thousands of others will need reeducation before they can become self-supporting citizens. These disabilities range from amputations to that far larger per cent of internal wounds, tuberculosis, shell shock, and other contracted diseases. That in each case he may overcome his handicaps has been proven by hundreds of those who have already been retrained. Men who have suffered amputation have become successful farmers, beekeepers, tailors, welders, and professional men. The deaf have taken up agricultural and mechanical training and have made good. The blind—and the per cent of the blind is very small—have been taught to work as typists, poultry men, and assemblers in machine shops. Outdoor occupations have opened a path to the tuberculous, and other occupations have been found compatible with other handicaps.

To-day over twelve thousand men are registered

with the Federal board for vocational education at Washington, which is the agent of Congress in this work. A tentative classification of the first one hundred and fifty-seven cases approved for training indicates the wide diversity of vocation for which they are being trained. Sixty-three distinct courses of training are reported, embracing agricultural, commercial, technical, and professional choices, with some cases of specialized work in jewelry and architecture. Forty-four institutions are represented in the schools in which these disabled men have been trained, and over the entire country there has been the most cordial cooperation in the schools in offering their facilities for the use of the Federal board in this work.

The work has enlarged and grown to such an extent that besides the regular fourteen district offices over the country, six branch offices have been opened.

The board does not stop with the retraining of the disabled men, but has interested itself in getting the employers to give their cooperation. That is the keystone of this carefully considered plan of the government—the hearty, intelligent, and untiring cooperation of the employers in giving work to the disabled men, not from charity or patriotic gratitude, but from a just realization that in spite of a handicap a trained worker is of real worth to the business. The re-education of disabled soldiers is free to them, and the Federal board is trying to get in touch with all in need of it.—*Chicago Evening Post*.

#### War Memorials Planned in Many Places.

In all parts of the country efforts to establish fitting memorials to the American heroes in the World War are starting and there is a general tendency to advocate community buildings or bridges and other public improvements that make a town or city a better place to live in. New ideals for the perpetuation of a hero's name and fame have come with the recent victory and these are revealed in letters sent to the United States department of labor in response to suggestions for stimulating building activities.

Kansas City is one of the places in which plans for a memorial have been most seriously discussed. A great museum to be built on a hill near the Union Station has been suggested by Professor John S. Ankeny, of the University of Missouri, who advocates a project that would be really a concentration of a parkway and public-playground scheme, a place of recreation as well as education, in which rainy days could be passed advantageously by patrons of the playgrounds.

"What better memorial of the actual life and warfare of the soldier could be planned than a collection of accouterments of all kinds well installed in the great halls and rooms of the lower floors?" asks Professor Ankeny. "In one wing could be housed the collections bearing upon the spiritual aspects of the war. This might include paintings and statues of patriotic and military subjects, pictures actually made at the front, and collections of war posters."

The immediate planning of these memorials in various cities means that work may be started in time to afford employment for thousands of soldiers still in France. Club women and civic organizations are awake to the possibilities which these memorials rep-



resent, and it is generally realized that the memorials may not only provide for practical needs in a community, while they stand as a lasting reminder of deeds of supreme heroism and patriotism, but that through them the nation may reveal its growth in art knowledge and art expression. The period of hideous portrait statues and badly modeled symbolic figures has passed away with the infancy of the nation, now a full-grown world power.

#### Liquor in Hearse.

State constabulary officers with headquarters in Menominee, Mich., are investigating a case in which it is said an Escanaba liveryman ran the booze blockade in a unique manner.

He was stopped in Menominee in his automobile and warned not to take liquor across the border. It is alleged he hired a hearse in Marinette, Wis., loaded booze into it, and then followed with several carriages, also carrying booze.

This strange procession then wended its way through Marinette to the outskirts of Menominee, where the Escanaba man met it, transferred the liquor, and reached Escanaba with hundreds of dollars' worth of contraband liquor.

#### Block of Nelson's Ship Given Admiral Sims.

Admiral W. S. Sims was the guest of the Pilgrims' Club at a dinner in London recently, and as a souvenir of the occasion was presented a large block of oak from Nelson's flagship *Victory*, with an inscription on a silver plate.

Sir Harry Britain presided and Speaker Lowther of the House of Commons proposed the health of the guest of honor, this being seconded by Admiral Sir Rosslyn Wemyss. Admiral Sims, in a brief address, spoke of the close cooperation which has obtained between the two navies and remarked upon the great hospitality extended American naval men by the British people.

#### Talking in Sleep, He Tips Off Theft.

Frederick Durgwart, of New York, talked in his sleep of strange things to his wife, Anna, who married him December 16th last, four days after he had given ten new one-hundred-dollar bills to her to buy furniture for their flat.

Durgwart told her he was a jewelry salesman, but in his sleep he talked of "stick-ups," of "hauls," "get-aways," "bulls," and of "Dressler."

Mrs. Durgwart's doubts about her husband's business grew to certainties after several weeks, and she went to the office of Assistant District Attorneys Murphy and Lazarus to ask for a separation.

"I am satisfied he is a crook," she said. "He talks in his sleep about affairs of which I know nothing, and the name of George Dressler is always on his lips."

Detective Raynes, in charge of the criminal courts detective bureau, was sent for, and he learned from Mrs. Durgwart that after their marriage, when she had asked Durgwart where he got the thousand dollars in new hundred-dollar bills, he answered: "Oh, me and my partner, George Dressler, stuck up a man and got twenty-one hundred dollars. One thousand dollars was my share."

"I thought then," she added, "he was joking, but since he has been talking so in his sleep I am sure he is a crook."

Investigation of the police records disclosed that on the night of December 11th, John Schefthik, a gardener employed by Charles B. Dillingham, theatrical manager, had been robbed.

George Dressler, it was learned, was serving a five-day sentence in the workhouse for jostling passengers in the subway.

Indictments against each of them have been returned by the grand jury. Dressler was arrested when discharged from the workhouse. Durgwart confessed, the police say, to robbing Schefthik. Both were arraigned, charged with grand larceny in the first degree, and have been committed to the Tombs without bail pending trial.

#### Shell Shock Cured by Hypnotism.

Soldiers suffering from that distressing ailment known as shell shock are very much disturbed, and in many cases their cures have been set back by the suggestion of some medical men that it is simply a glorified form of "cold feet."

It is true that there has been a great deal of humbug, or attempted humbug, about shell shock. Many have claimed to have it when the only malady was really "cold feet," just as gas poisoning has been another favorite excuse of the "skrimshanker" to evade overseas service. But these excuses will never stand the examination of an expert.

"A man may shake and shiver under fire," says an army surgeon who has dealt with many such cases, "but he cannot make his hands and tongue tremble for months and months afterward, nor can he feign stammering or loss of speech or sight. Soldiers of proved courage who have gone through battle after battle have become in the end pitiable nervous wrecks from shell shock.

"There are people in London to-day who evinced calmness and courage under air raids, and who would deny that they felt any fear, whose nerves have not yet recovered from the effects of a bomb falling close by. There was a man of proved nerves, who, hearing bombs falling, went out in the open to give assistance.

"A bomb fell fifty yards off without wounding him, but knocking him senseless with the vibration, which was equal to many tons to the square foot. Three months later that man was still unable to keep his muscles from trembling. You have heard of many cases where loss of sight, loss of hearing, and loss of speech have followed the concussion of an exploding shell, and also of many so-called miraculous cures. In many cases a second shock has brought the lost sense back; in at least one case a third shock has driven it away again.

"In all these cases the special sense, be it sight, hearing, or speech, is uninjured. There is no organic change in the eye, ear, or throat. It is a vital center in the brain that controls these senses that is temporarily thrown out of action. So true is it that we see and hear and speak with our brains. All the events of life really happen in the brain.

"Some of the methods that have been successfully employed to restore lost speech or hearing are equally,

remarkable. The process known as 'suggestion' has been one of the most useful. In fact, it occupies to-day a high place in the treatment of all cases of shell shock, and it will certainly be employed for early mental cases quite unconnected with shell shock as well in the future.

"The patient is lightly hypnotized—that is to say, his active, conscious brain is thrown out of action. 'Suggestion' is then made to his subconscious brain that he can speak, and in many cases he does speak. He is then awakened, and, if necessary, the experiment is repeated.

"Another method that has been employed is to put a man, temporarily dumb, under an anæsthetic, either chloroform or ether. As is well known, during the early, struggling stage of 'going under' the patient shouts and generally uses language of an unprintable character. The dumb man does the same, but the anæsthetic is not pushed, and he is allowed to come around quickly, possibly still swearing. In one case a man who had not been able to speak for two months swore when 'going under.' Tin cans were then banged close to his ears—he was deaf as well—and other hideous sounds produced. In a voice expressive of the keenest appreciation he uttered the words, 'church bells.'"

#### Old Murder is Laid to Bandit Now Dead.

Information given by a stool pigeon, coupled with other evidence, has convinced detectives that Joe Morino, wealthy Kansas City pawnbroker, was murdered by Dale Jones, notorious gang leader, shot recently in California.

The stool pigeon, whose name is withheld, told city detectives that Jones confessed his part in the apartment-hotel murder, when the body of the "diamond king" was found in a kitchenette two days after death, his skull crushed and his fingers and shirt front stripped of diamonds worth two thousand dollars.

"While driving Jones and his wife over the boulevards in my car," the stool pigeon told detectives, "I overheard Jones talking to Mrs. Jones about his part in the Morino killing. I told Jones the next day of what I heard him say, and he got mad and threatened to 'bump me off' if I told any one. I knew he'd keep his word, too. That's why I've kept my mouth shut until he got 'croaked.'"

The stool pigeon in question is an ex-convict, but as far as the police can learn he has reformed. He said "Kansas City Blackie," the nickname for Roscoe Lancaster, another slain member of the Lewis-Jones gang of thieves and murderers, hired his car occasionally when in Kansas City. The stool pigeon avers he thus met Jones and Lewis, admitting he was tempted to enter a life of crime again. Jones and Lewis, however, refused to sanction the addition of the recruit, telling him he "talked too much." After a brief acquaintance with the gangsters, the stool pigeon says he was shunned, after being threatened with death if he attempted to betray the bandits. Fear has kept his lips closed until after the death or arrest of members of the gang.

The detectives also learned they had been near death at the hands of Jones some time ago. After a tip from an underworld source, they were watching a bungalow where lived a woman friend of Mattie

Howard, the woman now awaiting trial for participation in the Morino murder. The detectives had been "trailing" her, as they believed she and Dale Jones were friendly and that the money supplied for her defense was contributed by Jones.

Four city detectives crouched in the darkness near the bungalow. Their vigil was rewarded by the appearance of two figures, a man and a woman, who approached from a near-by street-car line. The features of the pair were not visible.

The man and woman entered the bungalow. A short time later the woman came out. One of the detectives followed her, boarding the same street car, and saw she was Mattie Howard. He watched her until she entered a downtown hotel, her home since her release from the county jail. The other detectives searched the bungalow. No man was found. The detectives returned to police headquarters, puzzled.

The detectives have now learned from the stool pigeon the name of the man. "That was Dale Jones," the stool pigeon explained. "He was stuck on Mattie. That's why he stayed around Kansas City so much. He wanted to be sure she got help. Dale didn't leave the city for his Colorado vacation until Mattie was 'sprung' from jail.

"Dale was with Mattie that night you fellows waited. How do I know? Well, how do I know you were there? You fellows didn't tell me. Well, he was there and he saw two of you hiding. On entering the house he walked out the back door, then crawled through the side yard until he got under a big rosebush near the front porch. There he waited, ready to open fire if you guys started to pinch Mattie when she walked to the car line. Told me so himself."

Other points strengthening the police belief Jones killed Morino is the fact Morino, before he died, was bound with baling wire to a bedpost. The Jones-Lewis gang, previous to their trip to Colorado, stole a motor car from a South Side garage, after binding the negro caretaker with bailing wire. The gang kidnaped George T. Cook, Kansas City manufacturer, while he drove his motor car in a park one night, then took him to near the southern city limits and tied his hands with baling wire, after which Mr. Cook was robbed and his car stolen. The same baling-wire tactics were used in tying victims of the gang in several parts of the West in late years.

Several days before his death Morino was seen with two women, one of whom has been identified as Mattie Howard, the police say. The other woman never has been arrested. Jones afterward wore a woman's cloak, dress, and hat over his clothing and took frequent motor rides over the boulevards garbed in this attire.

The Jones-Lewis gang is no more. And in Kansas City there is a certain stool pigeon who's glad he kept straight.

#### Two Hours at Front, Gets Thirteen Wounds.

Arthur Dahlquist, Minnesota boy, looked up from his cot on the hospital train and lamented the fact that he had been in the war only two hours. He was in the Argonne forest, and it was his first day. In the two hours he was wounded thirteen times and was carried to the emergency hospital in the rear. That is all he saw of the actual fighting in the World War.



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# Changing Clothes

We have reached the eighth number of *THE THRILL BOOK*, and if we were to believe all the letters that we have received, we would say that it has gone across with a wallop. Not only has it lived up to its aspiration to produce the very best fiction that can be procured, no matter what it costs or how much time and trouble it takes to find it, but we feel that some of the stories that have come forth in this magazine could not have been found in any other periodical in the country. This is only natural. We have taken off our coats and waded into the most ominous piles of manuscripts, never giving up hope, and now and then striking something that literally made us sit up in our chair and gape with wonder. You have read stories by Perley Poore Sheehan, Andrew Soutar, Grege La Spina, S. Carleton, Clarence L. Andrews, George C. Hull, Frederick Booth, Seabury Grandin Quinn, Chester L. Saxby, Duffield Osborn, Robert W. Sneddon, P. A. Connolly, John R. Coryell, Anna Alice Chapin, Will Gage Carey, and others. It goes without saying that these writers stand for the best there is in literature. Now we have even greater treats in store for you.

Beginning with the next issue, we shall appear on the news stands in the standardized form, giving you over twice the reading matter that you now get. We want especially to call your attention to the fact that we have obtained some of the work of H. Bedford-Jones and Tod Robbins, two writers whose names stand at the very head of their profession. You will find in the next number the beginning of a serial by H. Bedford-Jones that has without doubt one of the most unusual plots and series of situations that has come to our hand. "The Bibulous Baby" is a short story from the pen of Tod Robbins, and if there is a story that comes up to it in bizarre qualities, we have yet to read it. Likewise, the serial running in this issue, "Strasbourg Rose," by John R. Coryell, continues in its third installment, and we also will publish a novelette by Clarence L. Andrews, called "Vanishing Gold," a straightaway adventure story. In addition to these, there will be eight or ten short stories done

in the extraordinary fashion of the fiction that appears in *THE THRILL BOOK*.

We are greedy for more letters. In the forthcoming issues we are going to print some of them to show you the interest which our readers are taking in this venture. Not only is the wide sale of the magazine a convincing factor in the proposition, but it gives us added stimulus for work to get direct word from our readers that they like the type of story that we are giving them.

The *World Wide Fiction Readers' Club*, of which *THE THRILL BOOK* is the official publication, is an idea that has only been existing for a few months, but already it numbers many, many thousands of devoted members. It is no wonder that such a condition exists. The American public has been waiting for a periodical that would give them the out-of-the-way tale. It was wearied unto death by the drab, dull, and conventional. The old triangle story has played its part. The "new reader" has become disgusted with the lack of interest shown by the magazines in their hands. They have had served to them the time-worn round of plots until they have become threadbare by repeated use. Why is it that the average magazine seems to be afraid of the mysterious and occult story? Why do they run from the aspiring Ambrose Bierce or De Maupassant? These are questions that have lead us to this venture, and the overwhelming success of it convinces us that we should enlarge and come to you twice a month with double the amount of reading matter. We did not expect to achieve this result in so short a time, but the American public is quick to respond to any sincere and high-hearted purpose. Our readers have convinced us that such a course was necessary, and as a result, beginning with the next issue, you will have *THE THRILL BOOK* in a permanent and standardized form, filled from cover to cover with thrilling, readable fiction, and providing the kind of entertainment that you will soon find yourself unable to get along without.

THE EDITOR.

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