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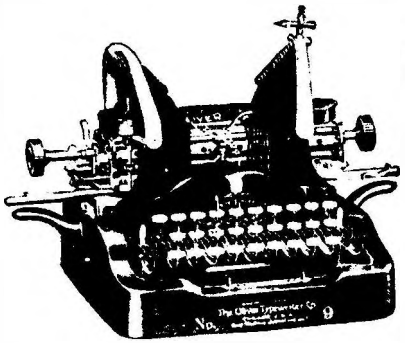

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VOL. XLIX FEBRUARY 1, 1922 NUMBER 1

TOP-NOTCH

TWICE-A-MONTH MAGAZINE

CONTENTS

Twice-a-month publication issued by Street & Smith Corporation, 79-89 Seventh Avenue, New York City. ORMOND G. SMITH, President; GEORGE C. SMITH, Treasurer; GEORGE C. SMITH, JR., Secretary. Entered as Second-class Matter, January 8, 1915, at the Post Office at New York, N. Y., under Act of Congress of March 3, 1879.
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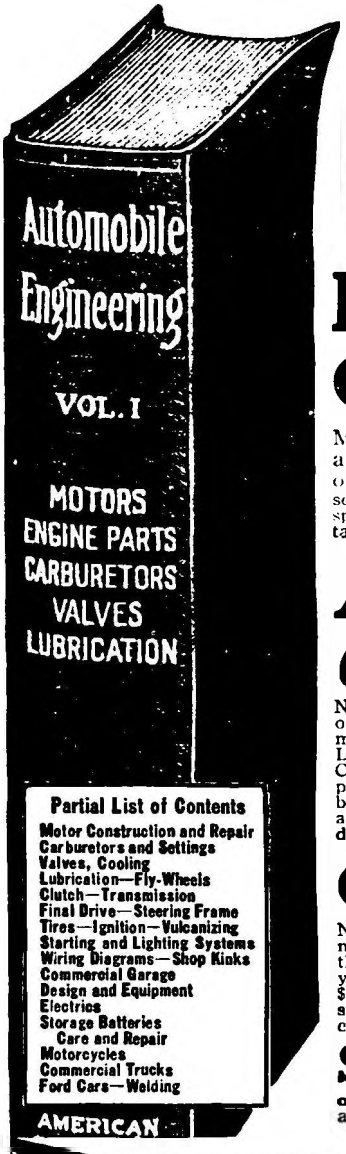

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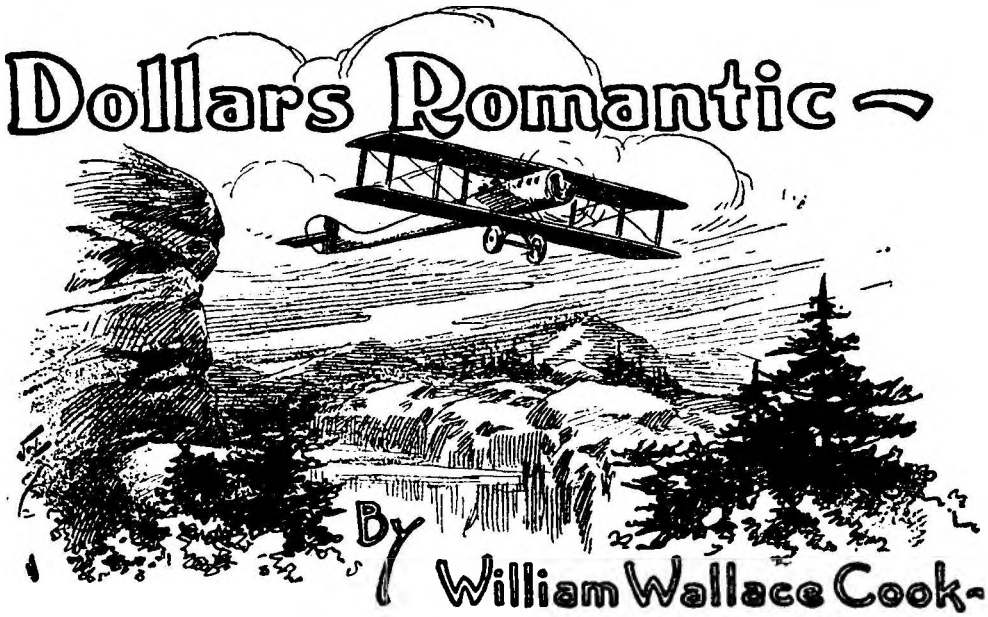
VOL. XLIX Published February 1, 1922 No. 1



(A COMPLETE NOVEL)

CHAPTER I.

COMPLIMENTS OF J. HARDLUCK.

ALONG the Black Cañon Trail Wesley J. Whipple rode singing; and when he turned into Grand Avenue he scattered his husky ballads the full length of it, and on past the Five Points to Doolittle's corral in First Avenue. He was always happy; but he was always twice as happy when he had money to spend as he was when "broke" and with difficult times in prospect. Now he had thirty dollars in his pocket, the old reliable rabbit's foot on his watch chain, and a note from Uncle Wes under the sweatband of his Stetson.

The note was responsible for Whipple's arrival in Phoenix that bright, sunny afternoon, when all the birds were warbling in the tops of the cottonwoods along the town ditch, and chaffering melodiously among the umbrella trees and oleanders of the courthouse plaza. For it was springtime and nesting time, and there is a difference even in sunny southern Arizona at such a season.

Blind Fate, always conjuring with a mortal's affairs, had made of that summons from Uncle Wes merely an excuse for Whipple to spend two days on a trail that had a big town at the end of it. After the monotony of three months spent in "dressing down" plates and "hanging up" stamps in the Three-ply gold mill, the prospect of picture shows enjoyed with Katie or Mamie or Lorena was not without its thrills. And there was all of thirty pesos with which

to finance a period of pleasure in the city.

True, Uncle Wes had said in his letter: "I'm sick; and this time it's so blamed serious I feel like I wanted my only relative handy." But then, Uncle Wes was of the complaining kind and enjoyed his ailments. Six times in three years he had called his nephew to town in the fear that he was already crossing the Great Divide; but the shadow had passed, and the Great Divide had receded from Uncle Wesley's sky line. And during these supposed crises Whipple had acted as nurse, without pay, thereby saving the canny Uncle Wes many dollars which otherwise would have gone to some stranger. Uncle Wesley Plunkett McDougal was a tightwad and knew how to hang on to his money.

Uncle Wes had never lost any sleep worrying about his nephew, so the nephew could hardly be blamed if he had no hard and fast apprehensions regarding Uncle Wes. Nevertheless, Whipple had a warm and sympathetic heart. If he had really thought his uncle was critically ill, he would not have come singing into town that afternoon, and he would not have planned his program of innocent pleasures with such joyous abandon. But when an imaginative relative has cried "Wolf!" half a dozen times and no wolf has materialized, what logical reason is there for thinking that a seventh summons should be taken in any other way than *cum grano salis*—"with a grain of salt," as the saying is?

So, in a pleasant frame of mind, Whipple rode into Doolittle's corral. The bay horse, Baldy, which he had borrowed from the superintendent at the Three-Ply Mine, he turned over to Doolittle in person. The proprietor of the corral did not greet Whipple effusively; in fact, he wore a sour expression and stood watching with knitted brows while the newcomer unhitched a dusty suit case from the saddle cantle.

"What's the matter, Lafe?" inquired Whipple, turning about, satchel in hand, to give the corral man a steady look. "What means that fishy eye and forbidding manner?"

"You owe me six dollars, W. J.," returned Doolittle frankly, "and some of it has been runnin' for two years. This ain't no free corral, and I can't keep things goin' without the dinero. You got to pay up what y'u owe or take your hoss some other place. Sorry a heap I got to talk like this, but business is business, and I ain't here for my health."

"Well, well!" Whipple pulled out his thirty dollars and subtracted six from the roll. "What's a little matter like that between friends? There's your money, Lafe."

Lafe Doolittle thawed immediately. "I wasn't worried a mite, W. J.," he averred brightly, "but you know how it is. Plunk McDougal is down ag'in?"

"He writes me he is."

"The old curmudgeon is full o' funny notions that a way. Reg'lar false alarm. He's too pesky ornery to kick the bucket and leave his boodle to you, or any one else. That's the one thing that keeps him on the turf—can't bear to give up what he's got."

"He's my uncle, Doolittle, and that sort of talk doesn't set well."

"I don't care how it sets, W. J. The truth never hurt nobody yet. This hull town knows that when Plunk McDougal goes up the spout he'll take the spout right with him. Darn little you'll git. Bank on Plunk to fix it somehow."

A feeling of loyalty to his only living relative brought a hot rebuke to Whipple's lips; but he smothered the sharp words, realizing in his heart that there was considerable truth in Doolittle's remarks. Leaving the corral with his suit case, Whipple made his way to the Hotel Fordham.

Felix Vannell, the day clerk, did not display much enthusiasm as he watched Whipple approach the counter and pick up a pen. "Buenos, Felix," said Whipple, in his friendliest manner.

"Howdy."

In that little word "howdy," passed from friend to friend, can be wrapped up all the pleasant reminiscences of the past, a lot of present good cheer, and a cordial wish for future joys. But all

Felix, the day clerk, wrapped up in it was a perfunctory recognition right off the ice.

Whipple hung the inked pen over the register and stared hard at his quondam amigo. "What's wrong?" he inquired. "Is it possible I'm not welcome here, Mr. Vannell? Are you trying to chase me over to The Plaza?"

"I got orders to chase eight dollars out o' your clothes, W. J., before ever allowin' you to register here again." It seemed to hurt Vannell to voice this ultimatum. "We've had you on the slate for those eight plunks ever since last fall. I'm sorry; but you know I'm only a hired man and don't own the place."

"Why, shucks!" exclaimed Whipple. "Everybody knows I pay my honest debts. This is the first time I've been in town since last fall." He took out his twenty-four dollars and passed over eight of them to the clerk. "Now are we all right?"

The eight dollars worked their instant magic. All the frost vanished from the clerk's face and manner. Heartily he gripped the hand holding the pen, placed the register more conveniently, and sounded the alarm for Wing Loo the Chinaman bell hop.

"I'm sure glad to see you, W. J.," babbled Vannell. "Uncle off his feed once more, eh? Well, here's hoping."

"Hoping what?" queried Whipple, after carefully writing his name in the book.

"Why, that when Plunk McDougal does make up his mind to kick off he leaves you all his dough; but everybody says he won't, or any part of it. Still, we're all hoping."

"It's my uncle, my mother's only brother, you're talking about, Vannell," Whipple returned, "so you might use the soft pedal with me. I don't want his money."

"You could use it, couldn't you?" Here was the old siren's song against which Whipple had stopped his ears ever since he had been old enough to realize what money meant in this world.

"Use it?" he echoed. "Say——" He stopped short, however, and did not finish. The enthusiasm that had rushed into his sun-browned face vanished as suddenly as it had appeared. "No chance," he added. "Anyhow, I couldn't be happy if I didn't stand on my own feet. Same old room?"

"Sure!" Vannell handed a key to the Chinaman. "Fifteen, Loo."

"Fifteen," echoed the careful Loo; "awri'."

A little later, in room 15, Whipple shaved himself, took a hot bath, and got into his best clothes, which he had brought along with him in the suit case. All the gold mills in Arizona could not have turned out a finer-looking amalgamator than Wesley J. Whipple as he stood, clad in his best, once more in the Fordham lobby. He stepped into a telephone booth and rang up the home of Mr. Galusha Mingo. The head of the house answered, and his warm voice chilled when he discovered who was at the Fordham end of the wire.

"How's Katie, Mr. Mingo?" queried Whipple, just a little unnerved by an intangible feeling that something more was wrong.

"She's well as usual, W. J.," said Mingo, still distantly. He was only six blocks away, but one might have imagined that he was six miles.

"Uncle Wes is under the weather again," Whipple went on, "and I'm in town for a spell. But this evening is mine, and I'd like to make a date with Katie to——"

"You will make no more dates with Katie, young man," and the receiver fairly snapped. "I thought you had prospects, but I've come to the conclusion you haven't. You are always in debt; you'll never get ahead. Out at the Three-ply Mine you pull down thirty a week, but you never save a cent of it, and you owe everybody in town. Katie can't afford to waste her time. Good-by." Bang! And Mr. Galusha Mingo "hung up."

Whipple was staggered, but only for a moment. His acquaintance among the gentler sex was not limited to Katie Mingo, although his dreams were more about Katie than any other. He called the boarding house of Miss Serena Haskins and asked for Miss Lorena Marlin,

only to learn that Miss Marlin was out of town. Then he had central give him Mr. Anson Philbrick's residence. As luck would have it, Miss Mamie Philbrick answered the phone herself; and, although her voice was courteous in the extreme, there was totally lacking any quality of pleasure. Miss Philbrick was sorry, but she had an engagement for the evening.

"Compliments of J. Hardluck," muttered Whipple as he replaced the receiver on the hooks and left the booth.

A man was waiting for him—one Hathaway, a custom tailor. He approached Whipple in the cautious manner of a hunter stalking an antelope.

"Hello, Hathaway!" called Whipple.

Hathaway nodded. He was measuring the amalgamator with his eyes, taking in every detail of the nobby suit which had been built in his establishment and for which, as yet, he had received only a fifty-per-cent payment on account.

"There's a balance of thirty dollars on your bill, W. J.," Hathaway said, "and you told me you would settle next time you were in town."

"Well, here I am," Whipple answered. "This is the first time I've been in town since I got these clothes. I'll be here probably for two or three days—maybe longer. Before I leave, Hathaway, I'll——"

But no, that would not do for Hathaway. He believed a bird in the hand worth a whole flock in the bush. Whipple was a fine chap, but his money had a way of getting away from him. He would like a little something on account. How about fifteen dollars, just half of what Whipple owed him? Expenses were heavy and collections hard. Hathaway would be very grateful to Whipple if he could pay something. Whipple was touched with remorse and gave Hathaway all he had left—sixteen dollars. Then Hathaway, cheered and grateful, shook hands with Whipple and asked him to drop around and look at some new suitings which had just arrived. After this he blithely left the hotel.

"Strapped!" murmured Whipple, sinking into a chair. "'All dressed up and no place to go.' But I've got to go some place, or there'll be more creditors here, and I'll have to stand 'em off; and I certainly hate to sidestep a man to whom I owe an honest debt. By George," he told himself, jumping up, "I'll go and see Uncle Wes. He's not expecting me till late this evening, but I'll give him a surprise. I'll be safe with Uncle Wes. Nobody with a bill ever calls on him."

He left the hotel humming a song. His mood was not so exalted as it had been while he was riding into town, but he was still happy in a subdued, irresponsible sort of way. If he had to have more money, Uncle Wes might lend him some and take his watch for security.

CHAPTER II.

CATCHING HIS BREATH.

FOR ten years—ever since he had sold the Letty Lee Mine for three hundred and five thousand dollars—Wesley Plunkett McDougal had tried with considerable success to convince himself that he was a confirmed invalid. He was sixty years old, and stood six feet three in his stockings, running mostly to length and very little to breadth. Some said he was "narrow," others said he was "near," but the majority said he was "close." All these colloquial phrases hit the one mark—"tightfisted." His acquaintances referred to him among themselves as "Old Plunks." This sobriquet, harking back to the colloquial once more, was derived from the word "plunk," meaning dollar, and also from McDougal's middle name, Plunkett.

For ten years the old man had lived in Josh Hopper's boarding house on Fourth Avenue, beating Hopper down in his rates a little with each succeeding year on the score of being a steady boarder. So well did McDougal manage that his living had not cost him two hundred and fifty dollars a year; nor had his "amusements" cost him any more. His only amusement consisted in patronizing quack doctors and in buying advertised tonics and nostrums.

Whenever he emptied a bottle he treasured it, finally selling the bottles in dozen lots at five cents a lot. This bottle money kept him in smoking tobacco.

Among McDougal's many queer ideas was his hatred of paying taxes. He would have had a small house of his own, but that would have meant dealing with the assessor. He had chances galore to invest his money safely at a good rate of interest, but the income tax would have caught him. His funds were on deposit, subject to check, but just where they were, or how much they totaled, no supervisor had ever been able to discover. The tax-exempt feature of municipal bonds had appealed to him once, but he had withstood the temptation to buy such bonds; for he feared that the government would pass a law putting a tax upon them as soon as it was known that he had loaded up with the securities.

It was five o'clock in the afternoon when Whipple made his call upon his uncle. The old man was reclining in a lazy-back, canvas chair on Hopper's second-story porch. On a table at his elbow were various panaceas in bottles, an empty glass, and a pitcher of water. The invalid was smoking a corncob pipe and looking very pale and feeble. He was too long for the chair, and his feet, in old carpet slippers, stuck out into space from beneath the Navajo blanket that sought to cover him.

"Well, W. J.," said Uncle Wes, extending his hand with a painful effort, "I reckon this is the last time I'll ever call you in from the Three-ply. Pull a chair up close. I've got to talk to you for a spell, and my voice is so weak it won't carry far."

"Oh, I guess you're not so bad off, Uncle Wes," returned Whipple cheerily, placing a chair within confidential distance and seating himself. "What seems to be the matter now?"

"Everything," answered Uncle Wes gloomily; "but the last thing to put a crimp into me is my heart. Doc Flickinger says I'll last three months. He's been right on the job, watching me every minute. Why, I've paid him eleven dollars in the last two weeks! Three months, W. J.! After that, I'll stop being an expense to myself, and everybody else. First I want to tell you I've bought a place for myself out to the cem'tery. It's on Ham Biffle's plot, and I got just room enough for one for five dollars. Ham was needing money, so I picked it up at a bargain."

Being young, and more or less in love with life, these particulars gave Whipple a gruesome feeling. "I wouldn't talk about it, Uncle Wes," he admonished.

"Got to," insisted the other. "I've reached a p'int where you've got to be in the know about every blamed thing, W. J. I want everything plain and simple; no fuss, feathers or trimmings. Understand? Prices are scandalous for things like that, and I want you to keep down the cost. Promise!"

Whipple promised hastily, eager for his uncle to shift the subject. McDougal, having received the promise, drew a long breath of satisfaction, then refilled his pipe and lighted it.

"Your heart would be all right," averred Whipple, "if you stopped smoking so much, and if you cut out all that patent dope."

Uncle Wes frowned. "You've got the darnedest notions," he grunted. "Tobacco, and the stuff in them bottles, is all that's keeping me alive. I'll be around for three months; Doc Flickinger promises me three months."

"Maybe Doc Flickinger is wrong," Whipple suggested. "Why don't you get a specialist from out of town?"

"And throw away good money, huh?" came scathingly from Uncle Wes. "I wrote Doc Mixinger, of Prescott, and asked what he'd charge to come down for a consultation. And what do you think he wrote back? Five hundred dollars! Robber! I offered him fifty, and he sent back a postal card sayin' 'Die in peace.' And, by gorry, that's what I'm going to do. I won't be trimmed in my last days; never have been trimmed, and I won't let any specialist begin it now. Three months, W. J.! That'll bring it July fifteenth. I'll miss the real hot weather, anyway."

"Flickinger seems to have it figured out pretty fine," Whipple commented.

"He figgered it out for Dan Jipley jest like that, W. J. He gave Dan nineteen days and a half, and Dan kept the appointment on the dot. Same with Steve Suffern. Doc gave him five months, and Steve didn't disapp'int him. So I know I've got to hike on July fifteenth. But that don't worry me. I'll be cuttin' off a bill of expense, and I've always found that cheerin'. Hopper will take it hard, I expect. I've been a pretty steady boarder here.

"You know how it was with me, W. J. All the time I was prospectin' in the hills I had to live on cottonwood bark and niggerhead cactus, mostly. They was tough times. I had to skimp and save, and I sorto got into the habit; then, when I struck the Letty Lee, and sold out for a fortune, I didn't know how to spend what I had. And that's kind of worried me. But the publicans! By gorry," and here Uncle Wes chuckled, "I've kept away from the publicans. No tax collector ever got me, and no tax collector is ever goin' to.

"W. J., I've got three hundred thousand dollars. It's all in the banks, and not in the savings departments, either. You're my only heir. If I pass out and leave the three hundred thousand to you by will, there'll be an inheritance tax to be paid. But if I give you the money outright, as a free gift, there won't be no tax—inheritance, income, or otherwise."

Whipple caught his breath. "You—you wouldn't do that, Uncle Wes!" he exclaimed.

"I'm figgerin' on it. It's the only way to beat the tax collectors, W. J. I'd strain myself a lot to do that. But I don't allow to give it to you all in a bunch. I'm aimin' to scatter it over three months, making the last and final donation on the evenin' of July fourteenth."

This was overwhelming. Uncle Wes had never given Whipple so much as a plugged nickel before. And now he was going to present him with three hundred thousand dollars.

"I call that mighty generous of you, Uncle Wes," said the nephew, with feeling. "Only uncle I ever had! And I've always thought a lot of you. I won't squander the money; I'll—I'll invest it and make it grow!"

"No; you don't!" Uncle Wes barked at him fiercely. "If you invest it, and it grows, you'll be payin' taxes. I won't have that! I won't have a cent of my money invested and growin' into taxes. Get that straight, W. J. That's one reason I'm going to hand the dinero to you in installments. I want to watch you squander it, and have the good time with it that I ought to have had and didn't know how. You needn't squander the last installment, because I won't be here to watch. The final donation I want you to put in a bank in a checking account, and jest draw on it for livin' expenses. Get the idea? Here, look at this."

He drew an old wallet from his pocket and removed an oblong slip of paper. Holding the slip for a moment, he looked at it with fond, greedy eyes; then, with an effort, he passed the slip to Whipple. The latter's fingers trembled, and his eyes dimmed somewhat. It was a check, payable to his order, for one hundred thousand dollars.

"That's certified, W. J.," said Uncle Wes, "and you can cash it at any bank in town. Spend it. I want it all used up in thirty days, so you can come back to me, broke, and get another check like it on June fourteenth. Then, on July fourteenth, you get the last one. But remember, don't you lay out even a two-bit piece in hope of gain. Those are my orders. If you don't live up to instructions, W. J., that first check will be the last one. I'll leave the rest of my money to charity—some home for superannuated miners and prospectors, if there is any such thing. You'll have thirty days to spend a hundred thousand dollars. Show me how you do it. Everybody says you're a great spender, but I never learned the knack. I'm stakin' you to a round of pleasure; now go out and make a business of bein' happy.

"I want you to be a gentleman about it, W. J. I know you are an honest

soul, and that you have a lot of fine sensibilities inherited from your mother. Your pa was short of ability as a money-maker, and some other things, but you got an A 1 inheritance of character from the McDougals. Squander that money in a genteel way, but don't let one sou of it make anything through investments. Report to me often in person or by letter; you see, I'm aimin' to spend my last days enjoyin' your experiences. I never was able to get any fun out of the money myself, so I'm plannin' to take my fun secondhand. Make it snappy, W. J. And if you can throw in a few thrills, you'll oblige. When a man is packin' for his trip across the Great Divide, same as me, a leetle excitement will make him forget the trip ahead of him and be, as you might say, soothin'.

"As I'm preparing to lay down life, I want you to pick it up—real life, mind—the kind I've missed. I——"

Faintly, somewhere within the confines of the boarding house, there sounded the musical notes of a triangle. Uncle Wes stirred restlessly.

"There goes the supper call, W. J.," he said. "Hopper charges four bits a meal for transients. I'd like right well to have you stay and eat with me, but I'm short four bits in change. If you happen to have it——"

"I haven't a red, Uncle Wes," put in Whipple, "but my credit is good at the Fordham."

"Your credit ought to be good anywhere, with that paper I just gave you; but the banks are closed, and Hopper wants cash on the nail. Maybe you'd better go to the Fordham. To-morrow, when the banks open, you can begin to step high, wide, and handsome. I only wished I was able to trot along with you, W. J., but it's all I can do to walk from this porch to the dinin' room. This heart of mine won't let me exercise. Help me downstairs, and then you can go to your hotel and plan your campaign. If you put away a dollar of that money where it brings any interest, remember, you're done."

Whipple caught his breath once more. He was hardly able to realize his good fortune. As one in a waking dream he helped Uncle Wes out of the canvas chair, into the boarding house, and down the stairs to the door of the dining room. There he thanked him mechanically, left him, and drifted out into the bright, beautiful afternoon. One hundred thousand dollars, all his own! Whipple was so dazed by it all that he barely missed being run down by a street car in Washington Street.

CHAPTER III.

OH, WHAT A DIFFERENCE!

WHEN Whipple came into the lobby of the Hotel Fordham, five men arose from their chairs and advanced upon him. They had learned he was in town, and each had a bill. One hundred dollars would pay every cent that Whipple owed; and while that was a large amount to an amalgamator earning thirty a week, and with a thousand ways in which to lay out that meager stipend, it was a mere bagatelle to a young Croesus upon whom had devolved the pleasant duty of spending more than three thousand dollars a day for thirty days. Whipple dropped into a chair while his creditors surrounded him and held out their statements of account. Swayed by a spirit of mischief, Whipple mutely pulled his pockets inside out.

"Gentlemen," he said, "I came into town with thirty dollars, and it is all gone."

Five faces grew very long, and then came some peppery comments. Whipple allowed this to continue until it got on his nerves; then, with a flourish, he brought out his certified check and held it under five pairs of popping eyes.

"However," he went on, "to-morrow, as soon as the banks open, I shall have the money. Spread the good news that Monte Cristo, junior, will be at Hotel Fordham at eleven o'clock to-morrow morning, loaded to the guards with mazuma and ready to meet all comers with a claim on him."

Money has a magic touch. Long faces broadened and sour looks faded into genial smiles. The boot-and-shoe man, the haberdasher, the jeweler who

had overhauled Whipple's watch, Coffee Al of the short-order café, and the garage proprietor with a bill for taxis, all these nearly smothered Whipple with their kindly attentions. One hundred thousand dollars! The good will, mounting in a direct ratio with the size of the check, reached heights that Whipple found rather annoying.

He was known to be a good spender, whenever he had the cash, or if he did not have the ready money, wherever his credit was good. But the limit of cash and credit, for a thirty-dollar-a-week amalgamator, was modest. The wealthy Wesley Plunkett McDougal, because of his known character as a tightwad, never had influenced the merchants in putting Whipple on their books. Now that McDougal had "loosened" in such a royal manner, however, every tradesman had cheerful glimpses of the nephew in the rôle of a princely spendthrift, and they began laying their plans accordingly. Wrenching himself clear of the enthusiastic group, Whipple went in to dinner.

Every one, even the waiters, had a smile and a nod for him. News of the hundred-thousand-dollar check was traveling like wildfire. It hardly seemed possible that Old Plunks had reversed himself so magnificently, but every one who smiled and nodded had seen some one who had seen somebody else who had feasted his eyes on that oblong square of negotiable, certified paper. So the check was a fact; and the quickest way to get a little of McDougal's money was to be on a friendly footing with McDougal's lucky nephew.

Later in the evening, Whipple found time to do a little sober thinking. In order to be completely strapped by next May fourteenth, it would be necessary for him to spend three thousand three hundred and thirty-three dollars every day. And he could make no investments; all the money would have to go for a good time—a period of pleasure, snappy and full of thrills, if the approval of Uncle Wes was to be won. The problem, when considered at some length, gave Whipple a sinking sensation.

On one never-to-be-forgotten evening, the previous fall, he had spent fifteen dollars and forty cents. This maddening round of pleasure had included taxicab hire, a picture show, a dance, and then a little supper; and Katie Mingo had been his companion. He had given that jamboree all the trimmings he could imagine, even buying Katie a bunch of flowers and a box of chocolates. He had considered it a wonderful plunge; and he recalled how Katie had gently reproved him for his extravagance. But that fifteen forty wasn't a circumstance to the obligations that faced him now. How in Sam Hill was he going to spend more than three thousand dollars a day for the next thirty days?

"It can't be done!" he told himself gloomily. "All the pleasures I know anything about wouldn't cost me three thousand a month in this man's town."

Like many another man, Whipple had often dreamed of the fun he would have if some kind-hearted genie would toss a million dollars into his lap. Now, faced with cold fact, he couldn't devise ways and means for getting rid of one tenth of a million. He needed help. In a flash of inspiration he thought of "Concho" Charley Vandeever. By George, that was an idea!

Vandeever was an old-time friend of Whipple's, and his proud boast was that he never had anything more than a Stetson on his mind. Charley Van was a cowboy. An aunt in the East had died and left him four thousand dollars. The moment he got the money, Charley Van had excused himself from the ranch; and in just ten days he was back at the Tumbling H punching cows again, flat broke. That feat of Concho Charley's had gone down in the history of the cattle country as a performance never before equaled; it had even been perpetuated in a song entitled, "Charley and the Wad that Wilted," and so had been embalmed for all time as a lesson to spendthrifts. As soon as he could get to a telegraph office, Whipple sent the following message, marking it "Rush:"

CHARLEY VANDEEVER,
Tumbling H Ranch, Prescott, Arizona.
Got to get rid of one hundred thousand dollars in thirty days. Come on and help.
W. J.

At the rate of four thousand dollars in ten days, Charley's supreme effort would have amounted to only twelve thousand dollars in a month. If that was the best he could do, then Whipple was leaning on a broken reed. Nevertheless, he had confidence in Charley Van. His experience would be valuable, and there was no telling what prodigal heights he might not attain if backed with unlimited funds. The nimble fancies of a free range would suggest ways and means for pleasuring not to be found within the four walls of a gold mill. Two heads were better than one in the emergency, anyhow, and there was nothing in Uncle Wesley's instructions barring an assistant spender. Whipple went to bed that night in a fairly comfortable frame of mind.

Next morning at ten o'clock he deposited his check in a checking account and drew three thousand three hundred and thirty-three dollars and thirty-four cents. He would try his prentice hand at getting rid of it before midnight. Charley Van could not possibly connect with the telegram and reach the side of his hard-pressed friend before some time the following day; meanwhile, Whipple could experiment unaided with his latent powers as a spendthrift. He had a chance to begin just as he turned from the paying teller's window.

"Hello, W. J.!" called a voice. "Put 'er there, son! I've been trailing around for two hours trying to find you. Congratulations!"

A chunky man in a shiny Prince Albert coat, a slouch hat, and trousers bagged at the knees, stood in front of Whipple and held out his hand. He was middle-aged, had gray chin whiskers, and wore a pair of large, tortoise-shell glasses. This person had the look of an amiable owl, and his advances were more than friendly.

"Doc Flickinger!" exclaimed Whipple, taking the hand.

"Erasmus T. Flickinger, M. D., by special appointment at cut rates physician in ordinary to that doomed and unhappy man, your uncle." Still clinging to Whipple's hand, Flickinger pulled him close and whispered in his ear: "Nobody'll miss him but Hopper, eh? Well, such is life, W. J., and we never know what minute is going to be the next. Auricles and ventricles all shot to pieces, and now there's a valvular lesion. July fifteenth, along about three in the afternoon, I should say, will tell the story. How about a commission?"

"Commission?" echoed Whipple, freeing himself and drawing back to look full at the M. D.

"Sure," went on Flickinger; "always customary. If I hadn't given him three months you wouldn't be pulling down a hundred thousand a month. I'm the source of your good luck. Ten per cent, all right?"

"You are barking up the wrong tree, Flickinger," replied Whipple coldly; "I'm not handing anybody an honorarium for giving my uncle bad news."

"Make it one per cent then," begged Flickinger. "All I can pry out of Old Plunks is fifty cents a call. Even it up for me. Just a measly thousand for shaking this plum tree for you."

"Fifty cents a call is about half a dollar more than your calls are worth. Not a cent, Flickinger! This demand of yours is worse than unprofessional; it's an attempted holdup."

With that, Whipple pushed on out of the bank. He had no confidence in Erasmus T. Flickinger, even though he had developed some success as a prognosticator in a patient's length of days. His gorge rose at the brazen demand for a commission on the misfortunes of Uncle Wes; but out of his indignation there came an idea.

Making his way to the telegraph office, he proceeded to wire five hundred dollars to Doctor Mixinger, of Prescott, and request his immediate attention in the matter of Wesley Plunkett McDougal. Five hundred dollars, plus telegraph tolls, made cheering inroads upon the necessary disbursements of the day; and Whipple could not have

spent the money for anything that would have contributed more to his personal pleasure.

On his way back to the hotel, Whipple's attention was arrested by the fact that all Phoenix seemed to know of his good fortune. Somehow, it had got into the morning papers. He bought one, crossed over to the courthouse plaza, seated himself on a bench, and read the racy account of what must have struck the townspeople as a seven-days' wonder.

The heading ran:

W. J. Whipple, from Three-Ply, Strikes it Rich. Young Amalgamator at Dowsett's Mine Rides into Phoenix and Drops into a Fortune. Easy Come, Easy Go, is the String to it. And Uncle Wes McDougal Holds the End of the String.

There, on his bench in the plaza, Whipple leaned back in the shade of an oleander and smiled a little. Was he becoming famous or notorious? He wondered, and then continued to read:

Wesley J. Whipple, more power to his open hand, is said to be a spender. Well, W. J. has now the chance of a lifetime to prove it. He must spend one hundred thousand dollars a month for the next two months, solely for his own pleasure and without making any investments that might bring money returns; and then, if he measures up to expectations, there will be another hundred thousand dollars for him to put in the bank, and draw on only as he needs it for living expenses. Query:

Will he develop such prodigal habits during the two months that his third hundred thousand will take wings and, finally, leave him stranded in Dowsett's mill with only his salary as amalgamator for a stake in life? The experiment will be watched with interest by the many friends of W. J. in this town.

It appears that our wealthy townsman, W. P. McDougal, has discovered that he has only three months to live. Mr. McDougal, as all know, is an old prospector of frugal habits, who turned up a fortune when he discovered and sold the famous Letty Lee Mine in the Harqua Halas. Ever since that time, ten years ago, he has been in failing health. He declares that he knows how to save money, but has never acquired the knack of spending it for his own comfort and pleasure. So, as his days draw toward a close, he turns his wealth over to his nephew in liberal monthly installments, to be spent at the rate of more than three thousand dollars a day in the quest of joy and happiness. And Mr. McDougal, whose eccentricity is well known, asserts that by this method he will be securing thrills and excitement by watching his nephew riot away a fortune.

W. J. must be flat "broke" at the end of his thirty days; if he is not, the deal is off, and he will not receive the second stake for another jamboree of thirty days. And he cannot invest in anything that will bring monetary returns; every red cent he disburses must go for comfort and pleasure; and the question naturally arises, how may a man of ingrained habits, based upon the spending of a hundred or so a month, blossom out as the regal spender of a hundred thousand a month? It looks easy, but is it as easy as it looks?

We extend our condolences to Mr. W. P. McDougal; and to his nephew, Mr. W. J. Whipple, also, unless he can prove, as the spendthrift days go on, that he is entitled to congratulations.

Whipple was laughing at this story in the paper when he looked up to see a young man standing in front of him.

"Mr. Wesley J. Whipple?" inquired the stranger.

"You've nicked it."

"I am Carter Wainwright, of the Ne Plus Ultra Sales Company, Mr. Whipple. You've got a lot of money to spend, and the right way to begin is by buying a Ne Plus Ultra automobile. It will set you back twenty-five hundred dollars, but will give you twenty-five thousand dollars' worth of pleasure. Six other automobile salesmen are waiting for you at the hotel, but I have stolen a march on them by overhauling you in the plaza. Now, the Ne Plus Ultra is the classiest car on the market to-day. It comes equipped with cord tires, has——"

"All right, Mr. Wainwright," cut in Whipple; "I'll take one. Couldn't you charge me more by throwing in a few extras?"

"Possibly. Come over to the salesroom and we'll fix you up. By George," enthused Mr. Wainwright, "this is the easiest and quickest sale I've made since I've been in the business!"

"You caught me at what they call the psychological moment," was Whipple's comment.

He arose from the bench, the salesman hooked an arm through his, and they started for the place where the Ne Plus Ultras were to be had.

CHAPTER IV.

MAKING IT FLY.

THE superintendent at the mine had a Ne Plus Ultra car; and Whipple, having a "turn" for mechanics, had repaired it, and tinkered with it, and driven it, until there was nothing about the Ne Plus Ultra with which he was not thoroughly familiar. So he drove his shiny new machine back to the Fordham, and left it out in front while he went into the hotel and became involved in the designs of a greedy mob that filled the lobby and had been waiting for him.

He singled out his creditors and paid them off. Three gamblers, led by Montgomery King LaDue, otherwise "Three-card Monte," he summarily dismissed with the emphatic declaration that he was "out to get a run for his money" and not to enrich the card sharps. "Mogollon" Mike Moloney, a poverty-stricken prospector whom he had known for years and who, at that moment, was particularly down on his luck, he presented with fifty dollars. Four mining brokers, with "good things," in which they wanted to interest him, had their ardor dampened by the statement that he wasn't allowed to invest—a point they would not have missed if they had read the morning papers carefully.

At noon he went into the dining room for luncheon, thrilled and cheered by the fact that, in two hours, he had spent more than thirty-two hundred dollars and had only a trifle of eighty-eight dollars and some cents left. He was making good, by George! He hadn't found it difficult at all.

By the time he had finished his noon meal another crowd had gathered in the lobby, each member of it primed with suggestions for helping him get rid of his hundred thousand. Evading these callers, he dodged out at a side door, reached his waiting automobile with a rush and a jump, kicked at the self-starter, let in the clutch, and was off for a ride through the countryside.

The car worked like a charm; and just to handle the controls, and realize that everything from the headlights forward to the tail light aft was his very own, caused him the most delightful sensations. His afternoon spin carried him out along the Cave Creek Road, around by the Indian School, and then back to town again. If only Katie, or Mamie, or Lorena had been with him his enjoyment would have been complete. But which one of the three would he have enjoyed most to have along?

Ordinarily his answer would have been Katie, but Pa Mingo's hard jolt over the phone had rather dazed and discouraged him so far as Katie was concerned. And Mamie Philbrick had turned him down, courteously but not with any regret that he had been able to discover. Miss Lorena Marlin had been out of town. In the absence of any disconcerting word from Miss Marlin, he rather guessed that he would have enjoyed most her company on the little afternoon spin.

In the lobby of the Fordham the ranks of those with designs on his money had been reënforced by several newspaper men who were looking for a "story." He refused himself to all of them after Felix Vannell had caught his ear and poured into it the information that three ladies were in the parlor, upstairs, waiting to see him.

The wide doors of the parlor, hung with portières, opened at the head of the first flight. As Whipple came close to one of the swinging curtains, a voice that was very familiar struck on his ear:

"I knew him first, and he's mine by the right of discovery. You two may as well be on your way."

That was Lorena Marlin speaking. Her gurgling, musical voice, which had always seemed so cute and childlike to Whipple, had lost some of its rich cadence and was tinged with temper. He stopped to debate with himself, and more conversation drifted out to him.

"You may have known him first, Miss Marlin, but when he called up last night and you had Serena Haskins tell him you were out of town, I guess that let you out. Oh, I got wise to that! Wesley will feel fine when he hears you

were in the boarding house all the time and didn't want to see him."

"Well, Miss Smarty, since you know so much I'll tell *you* something that *I* am wise to. He phoned to you yesterday, didn't he? And you told him you had another engagement, but you never had any callers and weren't out of the house all evening. So I guess we're even."

Whipple was terribly shaken by this cross fire between Lorena Marlin and Miss Mamie Philbrick. He had no business standing there and listening to it, but he could hardly have avoided hearing disclosures. Were these girls like all the others? Had Wesley J. Whipple become popular with them merely because of the hundred thousand dollars? He drew out his handkerchief and passed it over his moist brows.

"I think you are just horrid, both of you!"

Here came a third voice, equally familiar to Whipple, but vastly more pleasing. Katie Mingo was speaking. Her tones expressed indignation, and there was nothing in them of a spiteful quality. Whipple clutched at them as at a straw of hope.

A mocking laugh greeted Katie's words. "We're horrid, are we?" returned Lorena Marlin. "Well, how has your father been talking about Wes Whipple these last few weeks? Nothing but an amalgamator, and never will be anything but an amalgamator! Just a spendthrift with no eye on his future at all! A good-enough fellow, but lacks stability! He's called on my Katie for the last time, if I've got anything to say about it! That's how your father feels about Wes Whipple, Miss Mingo, and he has published his opinions all over town. Step lightly, my dear; step lightly!"

Whipple thought it was high time to appear on the scene. He coughed, flung back his shoulders, and showed himself between the portières. A cry of delight welcomed him, and Lorena and Mamie sprang up from their chairs and hurried forward. Katie remained seated by a window and did not join in the demonstration.

Lorena had black hair and black eyes, and Katie had flaxen hair and blue eyes, while Mamie was neither a brunette nor a blonde. All were lovely of feature and form, but a flash of revelation had shown Whipple that the characters of at least two of them were not so lovely. He bowed in his best manner.

"Congrats, Wes!" cried Lorena, putting out her hand.

"I always thought your uncle would do something for you, Wes," Mamie remarked; "and isn't it fine? How are you making it?"

"I'm making it fly," Whipple answered.

"Oh, we knew you would!" exclaimed Lorena in her most bewitching manner. "You were always so generous, Wes, and such a decided contrast to Mr. McDougal. I've come to invite you over to Miss Haskins' to dinner this evening."

"And I'm here to ask you to our house to dinner," spoke up Mamie. "And I was here first, waiting for you, Wes."

"But I have known you longer than any of the others!" said Lorena.

"You weren't out of town last night, Miss Marlin, and Miss Philbrick had no engagement." Whipple could have made these statements of fact very cutting, but it was not in him to be disagreeable to the ladies. He smiled as he spoke. "So," he went on, "I am sure you will not be very much disappointed if I tell you that I have other plans for this evening." He walked over to Katie. "Miss Mingo," he inquired, "why aren't you congratulating me?"

"I thought I'd wait," answered Katie. "The truth is, I don't know whether you are to be congratulated or not. Time will tell about that, Wes. If the papers are to be believed, the conditions under which your uncle is giving you the money may prove a handicap in the long run. Father wants you to come to dinner at our house this evening."

"Then he has reversed himself? His opinions about me have undergone a change—since Uncle Wes proved so liberal?"

Mamie and Lorena tittered. Katie's fair face flushed painfully. Whipple was sorry at once that he had spoken in just that way. Before Katie could answer, he went on:

"Suppose we take a ride in my new car and talk it over? Just out around Camelback Mountain. I'll get you home in time for supper."

He offered his arm. Katie arose, put her hand through the arm and crossed with Whipple to the wide doorway.

Mamie had lost the power of speech and had dropped into a chair. Not so Lorena; she seated herself quickly at a piano, thrummed a few notes, and began to sing. Her voice followed Katie and Whipple as they descended the stairs:

"Be-yu-ti-ful Katie,
I'll be waiting at the k-k-kitchen door."

"Oh, dear!" gasped Katie, in charming confusion.

"Never mind," said Whipple cheerily. "It is a little hard to find out who our real friends are, sometimes; especially," he added, "when one happens to have a hundred thousand dollars to spend. That money of Uncle Wesley's is going to prove a great education to me."

They had a wonderful ride; and not the least wonderful part of it was Katie's explanation of the way her father had reversed himself.

"Father's sentiments were never mine," she told Whipple earnestly. "I know he has always thought well of you, but he has had such hard luck all his life that he can't bear to see any one squandering money. And he has been in debt so much himself, that it fills him with horror to see a young man starting life—as he says—completely surrounded with bills. He has watched you carefully for the last three years, ever since you began calling at our house. You—you didn't seem to improve, Wes, and so he took the stand he did. After he talked with you, I tried hard to get you at the hotel myself, but couldn't. Now I'm worried for fear you'll think I'm like Lorena and Mamie—inviting you to dinner because you have suddenly come into a lot of money."

"No, Katie; I'd never think that of you," Whipple averred. "I'll never forget how I spent fifteen dollars and forty cents, once, and you called me down for being so extravagant. Mamie and Lorena were always urging me to go the limit. You're different."

"Well," Katie continued, "I don't want you to come to our house to dinner to-night, Wes. Father is desperately in need of ten thousand dollars, and I know he's planning to ask you for it. If you come——"

"Bless your heart, I'll not come," cut in Whipple. "Your wish is enough for me, Katie. But I'd like to lavish some of this money on you, if I can. I'm to buy happiness with it; and I can't think of any happier way to spend it than to spend it with you."

"I do wish you could save it, Wes; save it, and use it in getting ahead. It isn't right to throw away so much money."

It was almost six o'clock when Whipple halted the car in front of Mingo's door, let Katie out, and then drove on toward the hotel. Galusha Mingo met his daughter as she entered the house.

"He wouldn't come to dinner?" he asked.

"No, father," answered Katie brightly.

"You told him what I wanted?"

"Yes," she answered dutifully.

Galusha Mingo rubbed his hands. "Then you have planted the seed, and it will grow and bear flower and fruit, my dear. We shall see what we shall see."

While he was uttering this oracular comment, Whipple was just crossing the street car track to drive into a garage. His work of driving was purely mechanical, for his thoughts were all about Katie and the delightful two hours he had just spent with her. He did not hear the jangled warning of an approaching street car; and the first he knew of his danger was a tremendous crash. One side of the Ne Plus Ultra doubled up and, wrecked and broken, it was rolled and pushed along the track.

Whipple himself had been thrown through the wind shield by the impact, and was lying crumpled and unconscious in the street in front of the garage. It had all happened so quickly that even the crowds on the sidewalks were slow in realizing that there had been an accident.

CHAPTER V.

A DAY OFF.

WHIPPLE awoke to find himself lying on three chairs in a drug store. Doc Flickinger was bending over him. Both arms and one foot had been bandaged, and Flickinger was now decorating his face with court-plaster.

"Get out!" he said to Flickinger. "I'm all right."

"Light-headed," remarked Flickinger to the druggist and the druggist's two clerks. "As near as I can make out he's got a compound fracture of the tibia, lacerated ligaments of both arms, and very grave internal injuries. Call the ambulance and we'll send him to a hospital."

"No; you don't!" cried Whipple. "I'm staying at the Fordham, and that's where I'm going, right now."

With that, he got off the three chairs and started for the door. Although he limped, Wesley J. Whipple walked remarkably well for a man with a compound fracture of the tibia. Flickinger chased after him wildly, but he braced himself in the doorway, turned and shook a bandaged fist under Flickinger's nose.

"You'll have some internal and external injuries yourself if you try to trail after me," he threatened.

Flickinger was intimidated and fell back. Hatless, coatless, bandaged, and wearing only one shoe, Whipple turned a corner and walked half a block to the Hotel Fordham. The usual crowd of schemers was lying in wait for him, but the sight of Whipple in this gruesome condition was discouraging, and only Felix Vannell and the Chinese bell hop accosted him.

"For the love o' Pete," exclaimed the clerk; "what's the matter, W. J.?"

"Accident," said Whipple, "but it isn't as bad as it looks."

"Want a doctor?"

"No; all I want is to get up to my room."

The Chinaman helped him, got him to his room on the second floor, and would have continued his ministrations had Whipple not ordered him out. Then Whipple locked the door and proceeded to remove the bandages. There was absolutely no need of them, so far as Whipple could discover. The compound fracture and the lacerated ligaments, so feelingly mentioned by Doc Flickinger, were wholly imaginary. Whipple kicked the bandages into one corner of the room and aired his opinion of Flickinger in burning words.

He realized that he was shaken and bruised, and that the glass of the broken wind shield made necessary the three bits of court-plaster that decorated his face. Aside from this, however, he had suffered no injuries. Being an athletic person, and hard as nails, as the saying is, he had come through that accident remarkably well. A hand tried the knob of his door, then the same hand drummed a summons on the panel.

It was Vannell, and he brought a coat, hat, and the missing shoe. "These were just brought to the office, W. J.," he explained.

"I'm shy fifty-eight dollars and a quarter, Felix," said Whipple. "See if it's in the coat."

It was not in the coat, and Whipple was forced to the conclusion that when he was thrown from the car he must have emptied his pockets into the street. He still had his watch and chain and the rabbit's foot charm; and for these, and for his wonderful good luck, he was very thankful.

Vannell reported that the car was a total wreck, that brand-new Ne Plus Ultra which Whipple had owned and enjoyed for only a few fleeting hours. But the situation had its amenities. Whipple was cleaned out of every cent of the money which he had drawn for the day's spending. He laughed jubilantly, while the clerk looked on and wondered if he was right in his mind.

"In half an hour, Felix," Whipple instructed, "send my dinner up to my room."

The clerk retired and Whipple locked himself in again; then he took a hot bath and, greatly refreshed, crawled into bed. When his dinner came, he ate with a heartiness that in no way suggested the invalid. About eight o'clock Vannell brought him an evening paper and two telegrams. The clerk was off duty and would have liked to sit down and talk, but Whipple made it plain that he was in no mood for company.

"A lot of people have called up and asked about you," said Vannell, "Galusha Mingo among others. Mingo gave orders that you were not to be disturbed, and informed us that he is in charge of your case. That all right, W. J.?"

It was pleasant to know that Katie's father was taking such an interest in him. Whipple informed the clerk that it was all right, and was once more left to himself.

One telegram was from Doctor Mixinger: "Will run down Friday and give your uncle my best attention." The other message was from Charley Van, had been sent "collect" and was charged against Whipple on the books of the hotel: "Got you, pard. We'll go out and take a bird's-eye view of the universe. Don't spend a red till I get there and show you how. Will arrive Thursday a. m."

Whipple went to sleep that night feeling splendidly; but he awoke next morning, lame and sore and with an ache in all his joints. He tried to get up and dress, but toppled back into bed again. It was borne in on him that he was doomed to take a day off, and that his riotous spending would have to be broken for a twenty-four-hour interval. At the end of that time, however, Charley Van would be with him in person, and there would be two heads to plan and four hands to scatter the largess of Uncle Wes. It was a quieting thought.

Whipple's reflections had mostly to do with Katie Mingo during that inactive day. And he happened to remember that her father was in need of ten thousand dollars. It occurred to him that, unknown to Katie, he might bestow that amount upon Galusha Mingo, win his abiding friendship, and get rid of more than a three days' allowance of Uncle Wesley's money.

Galusha Mingo had studied for the law, only to find that he could not earn his salt as a lawyer. He had then given his attention to assaying, and now had a little shop about six doors from Doolittle's corral. The business was not prosperous, and Mingo had a hard time to get along. He was a psychologist, and he brought so much of the shadowy science into his business affairs that possibly the fact accounted for his failures. He had the faculty, nevertheless, of seeing good things in a business way, and if he had had the funds with which to back up his analysis of opportunities he might have been a rich man. At the present moment he was very busy with Whipple's affairs; and on Wednesday afternoon, about three o'clock, the angle of his activities was brought very forcibly and not very pleasantly home to the young man in room 15.

Mr. Mingo called; and with him there came a little, sharp-visaged man who seemed deeply interested in the state of Whipple's health. Mingo introduced his companion as Jules A. Forthering-ham, a claim agent. The lawyer-assayer-psychologist plunged at once into the business of the interview.

Whipple's brand-new automobile was a total wreck. It had cost him, just a few hours before the accident, something like twenty-six hundred dollars. It was a miracle, as you might say, that Whipple himself had not been killed outright. Seemingly, he had come off extraordinarily well. He was feeling fairly well at the moment, and yet who knew what might not develop in the days or weeks to come? Mingo had visions of Whipple walking with a cane or a crutch for the rest of his life. That was a possibility. The claim agent recognized the possibility; and he was ready to give a check for five thousand dollars, part to reimburse Whipple for the loss of the car, and the rest to in-

sure the company against any further claims.

"But I am all right," asserted Whipple, "and I don't want to gold-brick anybody."

Galusha Mingo put up a restraining hand. Whipple thought he was all right, but time alone could tell whether he was or was not. Disease, resulting from the accident, might creep into his system in course of time and put him completely out of the running.

"Then, again," Whipple continued to protest, "I'm not so sure that the street car was at fault. I——"

Galusha Mingo interrupted hastily to state that there were six eyewitnesses who would all swear that the street car was at fault.

It is probable that heredity has less to do with this matter of "being square" than environment. The child of the most honest parents in the world will be marred for life if abandoned, in the tender years, to evil surroundings; but he will grow up a credit to those who bore him if right teachings are sifted into his environment with discrimination and care. Whipple, in his extreme youth, had been well grounded in proper principles, and he now rebelled against the course along which Mingo was hurrying him.

"I don't care about your eyewitnesses," he said; "I know that what happened was due entirely to my own carelessness."

That settled it. Jules A. Forthering-ham pushed a bundle of papers, with which he had been busy, back into his pocket.

"This frankness is—er—most unusual where a soulless corporation and easy money are concerned," he remarked. "Who was the old chap who went hunting with a lantern for an honest man? He could have found his prize right here in room 15, the Fordham." He shook hands with Whipple. "Son," he went on, as he moved to the door and paused there, "let me tell you something: You can't spend or throw away a red cent without making an investment; and the returns are bound to be made manifest in spite of yourself. Just remember that. Good-by."

Galusha Mingo, to all appearances, was bitterly disappointed. He turned on Whipple, the moment they were alone together, and vented his feelings.

"Young man," he said angrily, "you haven't an idea of the value of money. If you ever expect to get married, what business have you got turning down a chance like that? Less to yourself than to the lady who will some day be Mrs. Whipple you are under an obligation to get ahead. On the chance that my little girl might somehow be concerned in your future plans, I was trying to help you. Flickinger made out as good a case for you as he could—he was to receive ten per cent of the gross—and I certainly pulled the wires for you in masterful fashion. Now you have knocked everything into a cocked hat!"

He started for the door. "Katie is grieved over this orgy of fool spending," Mingo went on. "She is a woman, and takes to heart more than she ought to the deliberate manner in which you are shattering your future. I'm going to send her to an aunt in Los Angeles, so she won't be anywhere near this scene of criminal extravagance. I feel that it will be best."

He jerked the door open; but, before he could leave, Whipple stayed him with a word.

"I am trying to give my uncle a little excitement and a few thrills in his last days, Mr. Mingo," he explained, as the other turned back. "In that desk, over in the corner, is a check book and pen and ink. May I trouble you to bring them to me?"

Mingo obeyed orders; and Whipple wrote out a check to him for ten thousand dollars.

"Katie told me yesterday that you are desperately in need of this amount of money," Whipple went on, as he passed over the check, "and I am glad to oblige an old friend. I would suggest, however, that you do not tell Katie anything about it. She might not approve."

Mingo was touched almost to tears.

"I'll—I'll give you my note, W. J.," he said huskily.

"If you do, I'll tear it up. That is a free gift. I am empowered to spend the hundred thousand in ways that will bring me the most pleasure. Looked at in such a way, if the donation means anything to you it means infinitely more to me."

"My whole life turns right at this point," continued Mingo feelingly; "on behalf of my family and myself, W. J., I thank you from my heart."

"Are you still of a mind to send Katie to Los Angeles?"

"On second thoughts," returned Mingo, "I believe I'll leave that move to Katie herself."

CHAPTER VI.

STEPPING SOME.

ON Thursday morning Whipple was feeling much better. He was out of bed by seven and torturing his weary muscles with setting-up exercises. The cold bath and brisk rub down that followed brought a warm glow and a feeling of exhilaration. The complaints of his dependable nerves and sinews were very mild indeed, and only just enough to remind him that he had been in a collision. The patches of court-plaster, of course, still remained as souvenirs. He was busily shaving when something like an avalanche bumped against his locked door. He opened it and fell into the fond embrace of Charley Van.

"Here's me, you old seed," whooped the cowboy, "ready to take your little hand in mine and go out and put some fancy crimps in the big wad. Youpy-yi! Things was gettin' so monotonous down at the ranch that life wasn't popular at all. Your call reached me at the physicogical moment, as the man says. Say, honest, W. J., I wasn't never in better trim to ramble around and scatter simoleons than I am this minute. But you ain't stringin' me, are you? If that roundelay you're singin' is the goods, why are you holed up in a Jim Crow room like this when you ort to be in the bridal suite? What you shavin' yourself for when you ort to have a barber in chief, a hot-towel holder, and a bootblack on your pay roll? Seems like there's somethin' wrong here."

Charley Van was twenty-seven. His eyes were brown, and his hair was an auburn shade and had a tendency to curl. He wore a wide-brimmed hat, a gray flannel shirt and a pair of corduroy trousers; and all these various articles of wear, it was painfully evident, had seen better days. If the clothes had fitted him they would have improved his appearance, but the hat was at least two sizes too small, while shirt and trousers were several sizes too large.

Whipple pushed his friend into a chair, gave him a package of cigarettes and, while the shaving proceeded, explained about Uncle Wes and the money. He finished with an account of his first two days' exploits as a spendthrift, and Charley almost wept over the good money gone with such a miserly return in personal enjoyment.

"Gettin' solid with the father of the girl you're aimin' to marry by coughin' up ten thousand perfectly good dollars," Charley wailed, "was about as locoed a play as any human ever put over. W. J., dads-in-law ain't quoted at much more than a hundred a throw, if they're in the market at all. You been worked; and I don't want you to get mad if I allow that more'n likely the girl helped. But that pufformance, star of its kind as it is, ain't much behind your fool refusal to accept five thousand dollars from the claim agent."

"I'm not at the receiving end, Charley," said Whipple apologetically; "I'm a disbursing agent."

"And all thumb-hand-side as a disburser, I'll tell a man. Uncle Wes will prob'ly get excited over the way that ten thousand went, but I'll gamble a blue stack he won't be real thrilled. As I figger it, you've only got about eighty-six thousand left. Now I got to revise my plans, and sort o' cut 'em down. How soon before you can stake me to a thousand and turn me loose for a few gay hours? You see, I got into a game o' draw, comin' down from Prescott, and a tinhorn I played with corralled sixteen dollars that was in my clothes,

in a faint voice. "Don't waste all that good water, Charley; give me a drink."

Vandeever limped away, bent down over a small stream, refilled his Stetson, and came back.

"Ain't this fierce?" he commented gloomily, as Whipple gulped the water over the hat's brim. "I reckon this flyin'-machine deal was a mistake, W. J."

"Where's Simmons?" asked Whipple.

"Who cares a hoot about Sim?" snapped Vandeever. "He sold us a sky boat with a bum engine, and now see what's happened. I allow if he broke his neck we wouldn't be much more'n even."

"No such luck," came the melancholy voice of the pilot.

He was sitting on a bowlder, minus his helmet and leather jacket, and was knotting a handkerchief around his left forearm, using his right hand and his teeth.

Whipple had been dragged clear of the rock pile, and he now sat up and took a look around. He was at the edge of a flat, and the flat was at the bend of the cañon. The walls of the defile were high and straight up and down—merely smooth precipices. A small stream babbled over the rocks of its narrow course, and in the sandy stretches were rank growths of mesquite. The *Ace High* had run head on into the cañon's east wall. The left-hand planes had been crumpled up by a big cottonwood tree, and the front end of the machine had been crushed as far back as the pilot's cockpit. Simmons surely had been lucky to escape alive.

"Think you can fix up the old catamaran, Sim?" inquired Vandeever.

"Not hardly," was the sarcastic response; "she's a total wreck. Landing gear all smashed, propeller all in pieces, port planes in smithereens, and engine knocked into a cocked hat. When we get away from here we'll have to walk."

"Walk!" yelled the exasperated Vandeever. "Do you know what sort of country lies between us and civilization? 'Bout 'steen hundred miles of desolation, with nothin' to feed on but chuckwallas and nothin' to drink but the juice of niggerhead cactus. Walk! Man, we never could make it. If your old pop bottle had to give out, why didn't it pull the play within hailin' distance of Phoenix? Here's an elegant mess o' fish!"

Whipple got up and balanced himself dizzily on his legs. "Let's look around and get our bearings," he suggested.

"That's somethin' to do, anyways," Vandeever assented.

They moved northward toward the upper end of the cañon. Simmons did not go with them, but sat disconsolately on his bowlder and began spiritlessly to manufacture a cigarette.

"He don't need to worry a hull lot," remarked Vandeever; "he's got his sixteen thousand, so bustin' up the *Ace High* don't mean a thing in his young life. It didn't take us long to get rid o' that bunch o' money, anyways. Plumb wasted, and nothin' to show for it. W. J., this is a right discouragin' cañon, if anybody asks you. Look at them walls! A hundred feet straight up, and even a squirrel couldn't get from here to the rim rock. And there's the north end—it is just like the side walls. I move we take a look over south."

The north end of the cañon was closed by a sheer precipice. The little stream, hitting the wall, sank out of sight under it, flowing through a subterranean channel.

"Wait a minute," called Whipple, halting his companion who was about to turn back. "What's this?"

On the smooth surface of the end wall some hand had rudely inscribed with red pigment: "Lost Creek Cañon. No chance to get out. Bottled up.—Johnson Blue."

Vandeever read the inscription, gave a howl of despair, and threw up his hands. "Lost Creek Cañon! By glory, that does settle it! W. J., we're planted for keeps."

"What do you mean, Charley?" Whipple asked.

"Ain't you never heard tell of Johnson Blue over to the Three-ply? Ain't no one ever mentioned Lost Creek Cañon around Dowsett's mine?"

that much in my hull life. How'd you do it?"

The old man filled and lighted his pipe and composed himself for a period of enjoyment. But he was disappointed. The thrills he was expecting did not appear. Whipple said nothing about Charley Vandeever, and dwelt only lightly on the amount expended for clothes. For reasons of a different nature he failed to mention the money given to Mingo and the five hundred sent to Doctor Mixinger. His story had mainly to do with the new automobile and the way it had been wrecked.

"I never took no stock in them go-devils, anyways," commented Uncle Wes. "I ain't enjoyed your experiences any yet. What else you done, W. J.? Can't you amuse me at all? There's a lot more that hasn't been accounted for."

Whipple grew uneasy. "My other expenditures, for the present, must remain a secret," he said. "You'll begin to find out about them to-morrow."

"I've begun to find out about 'em already," was the peppery answer. "Katie Mingo was here to see me, last evening. Give her father ten thousand dollars, didn't you? That ain't playin' the game, W. J. I was right warm about that when Katie told me. The girl's fine, but her dad is no good. What you done worried me last night so I couldn't sleep. If I hear of your givin' another cent away, I'll make you return what's left. That's right. Now you govern yourself according. I expected you to have some fun with that money, and to pass the fun along to me. All I've got out of it, so far, is a bad night; and all you seem to have got out of it was an accident that nigh killed you. If you don't do better, we'll call off this hull arrangement."

Whipple placated his uncle as best he could, but when he left the old fellow was still garrulous and peppery. At half-past twelve, when he got back to Fordham, he found a gloomy gentleman in a Panama hat, a loud and expensive suit of clothes, and tan oxfords waiting for him. The gentleman was Concho Charley Vandeever.

"Had some hard luck, Charley?" Whipple asked.

"Worst ever!" the other muttered, and began to pull money from every pocket of his clothes. "Ain't it plumb queer how, whenever you want to lose, you're bound to win? A gang, headed by Three-card Monte, was aimin' to trim you at one-call-two. I told 'em you wasn't built for buckin' the tiger, but that I was your next friend with a first lien on your bank account and that they could lead me to the slaughter. Well, there was a killin', believe me, but the inquest is now bein' held on Three-card and his crowd. I went in with a thousand dollars and come out with six thousand in cash and I O U's for three thousand more. Toughest run o' luck I ever had. Say, amigo, I jest couldn't lose. Ever' time there was a jack pot I'd draw five and have a straight flush; ever' time I held up a pair, I'd get the two that went with it; and if I made a four-card draw, like enough I'd find myself with a full house! Gosh!" Charley Van drew a pink silk handkerchief across his moist and wrinkled brow. "Hanged if I understand it!" he mumbled.

"Serves you right for gambling," said Whipple severely. "If you expect to clean me out with the cards, Charley, you'll find it isn't possible. Now we've got just that much more to spend."

"Well, don't throw it into me, pard," begged Charley. "Them I O U's ain't worth a whoop, and I've got a way to get rid of my winnin's and to make a fair-sized raid on your pile at the same time. There'll be a man here in a leather coat at two o'clock. We'll talk business with him."

"Who is he, and what has he got?"

"He's a bird, and his name is Simmons, Percival Simmons; Perce Simmons, jest like that, or Persimmons for short. He's a flyer, and out at the park he's got a three-seater aëroplane. He come here to start a passenger-carryin' service to Maricopa, or San Diego, or any old place, but no one seems fool enough to pay him a dollar a minute to get to somewhere they want to go. He's pretty near broke, and all he's got is

the machine. How about travelin' to Los Angeles in style? Don't you reckon that would thrill Uncle Wes?"

"How much will it cost to travel by aëroplane to Los Angeles?" inquired Whipple.

"Well, I reckoned we'd buy the machine, and then give Simmons a hundred a day to run it for us. He'll sell for sixteen thousand, spot cash. Here's my six, and you'll have to put up only what you was fool enough to hand over to Mingo. How does it strike you, W. J., More fun than a barrel o' monkeys to be had out of an aëroplane. Always wanted to own one, but it didn't seem possible on forty a month and a dozen ways for even that. What's the matter with you? Feelin' faint?"

Yes; Whipple was feeling very faint. Buying an aëroplane had never occurred to him, possibly because the chance had not offered itself before. But high places always made him dizzy. Even when he climbed the gold mill to put a few shingles on the roof he became light-headed. But he had his heart set on Los Angeles—if Katie was going to be there—and he and Charley might as well fly as travel in the steam cars.

"All right, Charley," he said; "we'll buy it."

Charley Van let out a subdued whoop of joy. "In this day of science and invention," he remarked, "spendin' does come easy. We'll be stepping some, as the man says."

"Stepping from cloud to cloud," added Whipple; "I wish to thunder, Charley, we had the hard ground under us."

"Oh, it'll be under us, W. J.," returned the delighted cowboy; "about two thousand feet down."

CHAPTER VII.

THE DOCTOR TAKES A HAND.

ON Friday forenoon Wesley Plunkett McDougal was in a most unhappy frame of mind. Dyspepsia was now added to his other troubles, and he was trying a new medicine for it that cost him one dollar and fifty cents a bottle. In addition to this cost for the medicine, he had been stung for some revenue stamps pasted on the carton which contained the bottle. He could not get over those stamps; they struck at his heart and sent the bad-temper poison pulsing through his whole body. He was in a mood to have a row with somebody, just on general principles. At nine o'clock fate sent him a visitor and gave him his chance.

"Mr. Wesley Plunkett McDougal?"

A voice with a rising inflection was wafted to him from the doorway leading out upon the second-story veranda. It was a sharp, businesslike voice, but Uncle Wes did not look around.

"What's it to you?" he snapped. "Clear out and leave me alone. I'm a sick man and don't want to be bothered."

He poured himself a teaspoonful of the new dyspepsia medicine and carefully lifted the spoon toward his lips. The next moment the spoon was snatched out of his hand, and its valuable contents were scattered and lost on the Navajo blanket and the veranda floor. Uncle Wes fell back in the canvas chair and glared. He tried to say something particularly fierce, but his words hung in his throat.

A woman stood at his elbow. She was a middle-aged woman, tall and muscular and mightily determined. She wore tortoise-shell spectacles, and behind them her eyes seemed to glimmer balefully. Her hat was a derby; and she had on a collar, necktie, and coat like a man's. There was even something masculine about her skirt, and the common-sense shoes just below the hem of it. She carried a small, square satchel, and her hands were large, and strong, seemingly very capable.

Now the only female who ever called on Uncle Wes was Katie Mingo. Women, Uncle Wes had discovered early in life, were a source of extravagance and trouble. So he had denied himself to them. Even Katie Mingo's calls were few and far between. In his wrath and indignation he had been going to swear, but he held back the unseemly language.

"Now you've done it!" he rasped.

"All of a dime's worth of my new dyspepsy dope gone to blazes. Lady, you'd better hike, or maybe something'll be said that won't sound well. I've got to be ca'm and quiet in order to last three months. Another shock like that you just gave me, and I'm liable to flicker out and not go the limit. You heard me; I said good morning."

"Good morning, Mr. McDougal," said the other easily, and put her satchel in a chair and opened it.

Uncle Wes saw that the interior of the satchel bore a faint resemblance to a bit of impedimenta Doc Flickinger carried, only this outfit was more extensive and in better condition. Uncle Wes leaned forward restlessly. His visitor was not leaving, but was making preparations to stay.

"Darn it," he whooped, "what I meant was good-by!" The strength of his voice rather surprised him, that morning; it was not as feeble as usual. "What's the idee of your stickin' around like this?"

The woman had been bending over the case. She straightened erect with an object in her hand that had two rubber tubes hanging from it and writhing like a pair of black snakes.

"I'm Doctor Mixinger, of Prescott," she replied calmly, "and I'm here to find out what's the matter with you."

This was another shock to Uncle Wes. He gasped and gripped the arms of his chair. "You can't run in no rhinecaboo like this!" he cried wildly. "I know what's the matter with me, and I won't even pay you fifty dollars to make a guess."

"Don't let that trouble you, Mr. McDougal," said Doctor Mixinger. "I've already been paid the full fee; if I hadn't been, I shouldn't be here. Now that I am here, I intend to do my professional duty. I shall be pleasant about it, unless you make yourself disagreeable; in that event," and here her features sharpened and her eyes gleamed, "I am going to be firm and transact our business just the same."

She picked up the dangling tubes and pushed one into each of her ears.

"Who paid you? Who sent you?" Uncle Wes cringed as he demanded the information.

"Mr. Wesley J. Whipple."

Uncle Wes went into a tantrum. So that's how Whipple was spending his money! He would tell him things, next time he came to report.

"Say 'ah-h-h,'" said Doctor Mixinger quietly, bending over him and pushing something against his heaving chest.

"I won't say a blamed thing but what's on my mind!" barked Uncle Wes, rolling his eyes. "I don't want no lady doc fussin' around me! I won't have any——"

Doctor Mixinger straightened erect and fire flashed in her eyes. "Don't you call me a 'lady doc,'" she admonished; "I'm a lady, and I'm a doctor, but I draw the line at 'doc.' Now calm yourself and say 'ah-h-h!'"

Here was a command, and it was spoken in such a tone that Uncle Wes said "ah-h-h" again and again, while all the time Doctor Mixinger pushed something over his chest, and half closed her eyes and listened; but, while he was saying "ah-h-h," Uncle Wes was thinking in terms that were not pretty. Finally the doctor smiled a quiet smile, pulled the rubber tubes out of her ears, and carefully replaced the stethoscope in the case.

"That's all, ain't it?" queried Uncle Wes eagerly.

"Not quite," was the answer.

Doctor Mixinger pulled up a chair, seated herself, leaned forward, and looked him full in the eyes. It was a probing look, and Uncle Wes felt a shiver going through him.

"Give me your left hand," said the doctor.

"You ain't goin' to hold my hand! I never yit——"

Uncle Wes yielded his left hand, and cringed again as the lady doctor's soft, firm fingers caressed his bony wrist. "H'm," mused the doctor, sitting back a moment later and studying the patient with a speculative stare.

Uncle Wes grabbed at his pipe and tobacco. Savagely he filled the bowl and struck a match. "How much longer

you goin' to stay?" he asked, as he surrounded himself with a fog of vapor.

"Just long enough to get you on your feet, so be patient. Who has been looking after you?"

"Doc Flickinger."

A faint smile showed at the corners of Doctor Mixinger's lips. "What does he say?" she inquired.

"He gives me three months. Next July fifteenth, sometime along in the afternoon, I'm a goner."

"What are those bottles on the table?"

"All that keeps me alive," returned Uncle Wes sharply.

"Does Doctor Flickinger prescribe that stuff for you?"

"Well, he says it's helpin'."

"Helping to kill you." Doctor Mixinger got up, stepped to the table, and lifted the bottle containing the dyspepsia medicine. She looked at the label, removed the cork, and smelled the contents; then coolly, deliberately, she threw the bottle over the veranda rail, and it smashed to fragments on the ground below. "That's the best place for that," she observed calmly.

Uncle Wes went into a flurry. He raged about the dollar and a half and the extra few cents for the stamps. While he was raving, three other bottles went over the rail. He grabbed for the last one, but was not quick enough. Utterly beside himself with rage, the old prospector jumped out of his chair and began prancing up and down the veranda; now and then he would pause and look over the railing and moan at the sight of the broken glass and wasted medicine.

"Say," he quavered, "if I had a gun I surely would——"

Doctor Mixinger drew a small, gleaming automatic pistol from one of her pockets. "You haven't one handy?" she said. "Well, I always make a practice of carrying one. You see, I have to travel a good deal and meet all kinds of people. Sit down, Mr. McDougal."

The automatic was pointed carelessly in the general direction of Uncle Wes. He grew quiet instantly and slumped into his chair again.

"How long have you been like this?" went on the doctor.

Uncle Wes moistened his lips with his tongue and tried twice before he could answer; then he managed to say: "Ten years."

"Ten years lost," murmured Doctor Mixinger, "and just when you ought to be in your prime. Any appetite?"

"Not a particle," returned Uncle Wes, his fascinated eyes on the automatic which the doctor continued to hold in her hand. "All I can eat for breakfast is about six slices o' bacon, a couple o' slabs of bread, three or four eggs, and two cups o' coffee. That's every last thing my stomach'll take in the morning. Can't eat enough to keep life in a chipmunk."

"How about dinner and supper?" the doctor went on.

"I do better at dinner, quite a little better. Supper's only jest a snack—mebby a hunk o' cold roast, and a pot o' tea, and two or three pieces o' pie. Last night I had cakes and sirup, and I never slept a wink. I'm turrible bad off to-day, and now you're makin' me a lot worse. W. J. has sent you up to kill me," he added accusingly.

"How much exercise do you take, Mr. McDougal?"

"I don't dast exert myself too much, Doc Flickinger says. If I was to try to walk around the block, I'd drop in my tracks before I got halfway. 'Bout all I navigate is to the dinin' room for breakfast, out here till dinner, then to the dinin' room ag'in, then back here till supper, then the dinin' room, then along about nine I totter off to bed. All I can do to make it, sometimes. Plumb shot to pieces, that's the trouble with me. I reckon you can see it, can't you?"

"Get up, Mr. McDougal," ordered Doctor Mixinger. "You and I are going to take a walk around the block. Never mind your shoes; those slippers will do. You don't need a hat, either. Come on."

"No!" shouted Uncle Wes, horrified. "You're aimin' to lay me out cold. Don't p'int that gun at me! Go 'way, or I'll call the police. I can't——"

"Come on!"

Doctor Mixinger's eyes flashed, and she leveled the automatic. Uncle Wes staggered to his feet. With the doctor right behind him he reeled across the veranda and through the doorway into the hall.

"Brace up!" ordered the doctor. "Throw your shoulders back, breathe deep. Don't hang on to the banister as you go downstairs. There, that's right. Now, then, keep step with me."

Down on the sidewalk, the neighbors had a glimpse of Uncle Wes, hatless and in his old slippers, moving along at the side of Doctor Mixinger. Josh Hopper stared after the two from his front steps. He wagged his head forebodingly.

"She's killin' him!" he said to himself; "I reckon I might as well call the undertaker. This is awful!"

As Doctor Mixinger and Uncle Wes rounded the block, the doctor steadily increased the pace. When they got back to Hopper's front door Uncle Wes had to gallop to keep up; but he noticed, as he climbed the stairs and returned to the second-story veranda, that he was not breathing much faster than usual. He was astounded.

"Well," remarked the doctor, with a laugh, "you didn't drop, did you? Mr. McDougal, either Flickinger has scared you or you have scared yourself. You haven't any more heart trouble than I have. What you need, and all you need, is exercise—physical and mental. That is your proper tonic. Forget your health, take on a hobby, or find some compelling purpose, and follow it with all the enthusiasm you can muster. You must have an object in life that will make you think and stir around."

"Then—then I ain't goin' to die in three months?" asked Uncle Wes, faint with wonder.

"You are going to die in about thirty years, providing you smoke less and stop dosing yourself with those patent nostrums. You are perfectly sound; and that is quite remarkable, considering the way you have coddled yourself for ten years. I never saw a man of your age who was potentially more capable of getting the utmost out of life. But cut loose and be active. This is a bright and happy world, and you are perfectly competent to get your full share of the brightness and happiness."

While talking, the doctor had been closing the little square case. Straightening, she turned and held out her hand in a friendly way.

"I was paid five hundred dollars to come here and tell you this," she continued, "and you ought to be grateful to your nephew, for it is the best advice you have ever had. I beg your pardon for displaying the pistol, but I think you'll admit that you were a difficult case and hard to handle. I trust there are no hard feelings. Good-by."

Uncle Wes took the offered hand; then, startled by the great truth that had suddenly dawned upon him, he watched wide-eyed while Doctor Mixinger vanished through the doorway.

"Ten o' my best years plumb wasted!" he muttered, kicking over the canvas chair. "Run around that block without so much as ketchin' my breath! Nothin' the matter, not a thing, except the want of exercise! I——"

He broke off abruptly as his eyes, happening to cross the veranda railing, encountered Doc Flickinger moving on the boarding house from up the street. Flickinger was coming to make his customary morning call on Uncle Wes. The eyes of the old prospector narrowed, and his face grew hard.

"There's the cimiroon that done more to make me waste them ten years than any one else on earth!" he growled. "I reckon I'm due for a little more exercise," he finished, and crouched beside the door leading to the second-story veranda.

CHAPTER VIII.

A COMPELLING PURPOSE.

A SERIES of shocks that jarred the boarding house from underpinning to roof lifted Josh Hopper out of his chair and carried him at a double quick to the second floor of his establishment. Mrs. Hopper, and Pedro, the man of all work, joined him as he raced. When the three of them arrived

on the upper veranda, what they saw made them almost doubt the evidence of their senses.

Uncle Wes, the confirmed invalid, had Doc Flickinger flat on the porch floor, and was pinning him there with two knees on his chest. In a fury, Uncle Wes was bumping Flickinger's head on the hard boards while Flickinger begged for mercy.

"Yes," roared Uncle Wes; "I'm feelin' quite well this morning, doc. No; this exercise ain't hurtin' my heart a particle, but seems to be right soothin'. I reckon you needn't call any more. You see, I've made up my mind to live thirty years instead of jest three months. I'm convalescin' fast. Ain't you glad to see how I'm recuperatin' under your treatment? Ain't you?"

Mr. and Mrs. Hopper and Pedro flung at him and, with their united efforts, managed to heave him clear of the prostrate Flickinger. The latter, bounding to his feet, fled for the stairs, the street, and safety. He left his hat, spectacles, and his medicine case behind. Uncle Wes flung them after him over the railing, and the medicine case jingled merrily as it struck the ground.

"What on earth is the matter?" wailed Mrs. Hopper hysterically.

Uncle Wes leaped into the air and let off a whoop. "I'm a well man, that's what's the matter!" he declared. "I've come to, and got wise to how Flickinger was stringin' me along. That lady doc—doctor—sort of opened my eyes. She made me do things that Flickinger said I couldn't do without passin' out. Oh, my gorry, what a fool I've been! You can have your second-story porch, Hopper; I'm done with it."

He ran to his room, kicked off his slippers, and began putting on a pair of shoes. Then he got into clothes which he had made it a practice to wear only on Sundays. He had a compelling object in mind. Now that he was a healthy man with thirty good years ahead of him, he realized his mistake in giving the hundred thousand dollars to his nephew. His business was to overhaul W. J. and recover as much of the money as possible. Dinner was ready by the time Uncle Wes was ready for the street, but delaying to eat while W. J. was spending with an open hand was out of the question. Uncle Wes reasoned that the faster he hurried the more of his good money he would recover.

The sight of Wesley Plunkett McDougal, traveling at speed along the streets of Phoenix, caused the old-timers to rub their eyes and wonder if they were "seeing things." It was ten years since anything like that had happened before. It was an incredible performance for one whose days were said to be numbered. "Must be flighty," was the general comment; "he ought to be captured and taken back to Hopper's." But no one tried to capture him. There was a look in the old prospector's face that warned against interference.

He came to the Hotel Fordham, dashed through the street entrance, and ran to the counter behind which Felix Vannell stood and blinked.

"Where's my nephew, W. J.?" demanded Uncle Wes. "Tell him I'm here and want him pronto. Get a move on, young feller, because this is mighty important."

"W. J. left here bright and early this morning, Mr. McDougal," replied the clerk.

Uncle Wes dropped his elbows on the desk and bowed his tall form across it. "Where'd he go?" he barked.

"Him and Charley Vandeever started for Los Angeles, where the chances for spending money in a big way are a lot better than they are here."

This was a terrible wrench for Uncle Wes. He stifled a groan. Physically there had been a change in him, a complete transformation, but mentally he was the same old tightwad. The thought that W. J. had already escaped and was on his way to a big and extravagant city, where the rest of the hundred thousand would melt away like dew in the morning sun, was a blow between the eyes. Uncle Wes came out of his daze to inquire:

"Wh—what train did he take? I can overhaul him with a telegram. Hurry What train did he leave on? And

what's he doing with Charley Vandeever?"

"I think he called in Vandeever to help him get rid of his money; and they didn't leave by train. They bought one of these aëroplanes for sixteen thousand dollars and hired the chap that owned it to take them to Los Angeles. They're paying that pilot a hundred dollars a day. Didn't you see the papers this morning? They're full of it."

Uncle Wes groaned again. He staggered. Then he thought of the bank in which W. J. had deposited the money. On a forlorn chance he went there and instituted inquiries. He was informed by the cashier that Whipple had drawn out all the money in his account, taking it in thousand-dollar bills.

When he left the bank, Uncle Wes felt like a beaten man. He had his health, and he had a lot of money left, but it hurt him to the soul to see the remains of that hundred thousand dollars getting away from him. Back at Hopper's he made his plans to go to Los Angeles by train, and be there to meet W. J. and Vandeever when they arrived. Hopper, however, explained to him that the aëroplane traveled so fast that it would probably be in Los Angeles before Uncle Wes could get a train out of Phoenix. Uncle Wes suddenly had an idea.

"I'll send a telegram to the chief of police in Los Angeles," he said, "and have W. J. and Vandeever arrested the minute they come down. That'll stop 'em. They won't be able to spend any money if they're in jail. Jest as soon as I learn they've been arrested, I'll go to Los Angeles myself, get back what's left of my money, and tell the police to turn 'em loose."

He went to the courthouse and talked with the sheriff; then the sheriff got busy and wired the Los Angeles police department. Following this there was a period of waiting. Feeling that he had made an excellent move, Uncle Wes grew calm. He read the papers, and learned how W. J., accompanied by the irrepressible Charley Vandeever, had bought the aëroplane, hired the pilot, and taken flight from the city park.

This sensation divided honors, in the daily press, with a big bank robbery at Eudora, Arizona, in which three bandits had made a daylight raid and escaped with sixty thousand dollars in cash and Liberty Bonds. The bank was offering five thousand dollars for the capture of the robbers, and ten per cent of all cash and bonds recovered. This affair interested Uncle Wes only because it claimed the attention of the local sheriff, and gave him less time to devote to W. J. and Vandeever. Uncle Wes haunted the sheriff's office, waiting for news of the arrest of his nephew and Vandeever, and made himself a nuisance.

One day, two days, passed and still the aëroplane had not reached Los Angeles; nor had it reached any other known port of call, east or west, north or south. A deep, dark mystery had suddenly fallen over that aëroplane. After leaving Phoenix it had neither been sighted nor heard of. Probably, the opinion ran, it had been wrecked somewhere on the deserts or in the mountains and would never be heard of again.

Then, on the third day after the flying machine had left Phoenix, among the suspicious characters brought in by the sheriff and his posse to be questioned regarding the Eudora robbery, was a weazel-faced ne'er-do-well known to be a side partner of the gambler, Three-card Monte. He told a story, after a session of the third degree, that let in a flood of light on the spenders bound for Los Angeles.

Three-card Monte, it seemed, had subsidized the pilot of the aëroplane and won his consent to land his passengers on Saddleback Flats at the edge of the Estrella Mountains. This was a lonely hole in the hills, inhabited solely by scorpions, tarantulas, and sidewinders. But the gambler and some of his friends would be at Saddleback Flats, if not when the aëroplane arrived at least shortly thereafter, and their plans were to annex every dollar carried by W. J. and Vandeever by fair means or foul. The discovery that Three-card Monte and his confederates had left by fast

automobile in the general direction of Saddleback Flats, the very morning the aëroplane had hopped off, corroborated the story told by the informer.

Deputy sheriffs started at once for Saddleback Flats. They refused to let Uncle Wes ride in their car, but his enthusiasm for an active rôle in recovering his money spurred him to hire a flivver and follow on to the Flats. Galusha Mingo went with him; and, although it was manifestly no work for a woman, Katie Mingo insisted on going with her father. Katie was wild with apprehension over W. J., and Uncle Wes had not the heart to insist that she stay at home, especially since Mingo was bearing rather more than his share of the flivver's hire.

This second party got away three hours after the deputy sheriffs had started.

"We'll all be too late," hazarded Galusha Mingo gloomily. "More than likely, Three-card Monte and his gang have got the money and are in parts unknown by this time."

"I've had a lesson," mourned Uncle Wes; "I'll hang on to my money, after this, and not fool it away on a spendthrift nephew."

"But, oh, what do you suppose has happened to W. J.?" wailed Katie.

"Don't fret about him, Katie," said Uncle Wes, with whom Mingo's girl was a prime favorite; "he'll be back in Dowsett's gold mill, before many days, working for thirty a week, as usual. He's a McDougal, after all's said and done, and nobody ever yet made him hard to find."

CHAPTER IX.

NO CHANCE TO GET OUT.

THE aëroplane had been named by Percival Simmons the *Ace High;* and since a hand in a poker game with nothing but ace high seldom wins, Simmons' name for his flyer was not much of a recommendation. Neither Whipple nor Vandeever, however, drew their speculations out so fine. The former paid ten thousand, and the latter six thousand, and when the *Ace High* hopped off at Phoenix that bright Friday morning it was their property; and the former owner was on their pay roll at one hundred dollars a day.

Whipple had turned the balance of his bank account into cash, and he had with him, on taking the air in his flying start for Los Angeles, seventy-five one-thousand-dollar bills and a hundred plus in small change. It was enough, certainly, to finance a tolerable round of pleasure for two wandering spendthrifts.

The three passengers were distributed in separate cockpits along the backbone of the *Ace High*—Simmons in front, just back of the propeller, then Whipple, and then Vandeever. Just before the take-off, Whipple had overheard Simmons making inquiries about the Estrella Mountains and Saddleback Flats. This struck him as queer, and he had asked the pilot why he was so interested in that particular part of the country. Simmons answered that he merely wanted to use the mountains and the flats as a landmark while conning his course.

Whipple was surprised to discover, as soon as they were in the air, that he was not in the least dizzy. There was a deafening clamor in his ears. This was continuous and made conversation impossible. And when he got out from behind his wind shield to look overside, a frightful rush of wind tore the breath out of his lungs. But there were no unpleasant sensations, and all his doubts about the aëroplane being a good "buy" were dissipated.

Thirty minutes after the start, a sun-baked wilderness, destitute of human life, was unrolling beneath the *Ace High* at the rate of a hundred miles an hour. Whipple knew that a mountainous country lay below, but viewed from overhead it seemed flat, and every high-flung butte and peak had no more visible elevation than a cactus clump.

Simmons kept constant watch, presumably looking for landmarks. Why this was necessary, at that stage of the journey, was incomprehensible to Whipple. A compass course due west was all that was needed. The pilot, never-

theless, seemed anxious and worried, and at last confused. He dipped lower, in order to get a clearer view of the country; and then he lifted higher, circled, and cut figure eights miles long, twisting and turning and falling and rising until Whipple lost all sense of direction and could only judge the way they were traveling by taking a slant at the sun.

Charley Van was likewise puzzled by these maneuvers. He leaned over to yell something in Whipple's ear. After several attempts he made it manifest to Whipple that he did not like the proceedings, and that they were losing time with all those curlicues when they ought to be whooping it up on a straightaway course; and wouldn't W. J. just yell that into Simmons' ear, order him to point for Los Angeles, keep going, and oblige.

Whipple leaned over his wind shield and shouted at the aviator's helmeted head the joint objections of the two owners of the machine to the man they had hired to run it. Simmons answered something, but Whipple could not understand what it was. With one hand on Simmons' leather-clad shoulder, with the other Whipple indicated a westerly direction. The pilot nodded, nosed the machine skyward, and started again on the proper course.

For ten minutes everything went beautifully; and then, all at once, the terrific din of the propeller failed in a swift diminuendo. Presently, only the screech of the wind could be heard among the taut wires and stays. There could be talk now that was clearly heard.

"What's the idee, Simmons?" demanded Charley Van.

"Engine trouble of some kind," answered the pilot, his hands passing swiftly over the controls; "motor's dead, and I can't get a kick out of it."

"Then what?" inquired Whipple, with a sinking sensation.

"We've got to volplane down. Look for a place to land, both of you. If we can't find the right kind of a place, we're all done for."

This was pleasant news! The *Ace High* was corkscrewing downward in wide circles, and the ground below seemed to be jumping up at it, greedy for a collision. With wide, fearful eyes Whipple and Vandeever were trying to discover a level stretch of ground among the tumbled mountain peaks.

"Can you see anything of Saddleback Flats?" yelled Simmons wildly.

"We're miles to the west of them flats!" Charley Van roared at him. "The country down there looks to me a heap more like the Gila Bend Divide than the Estrellas. Oh, by glory! Sim, you've sure got me all mixed up. Hit the flat desert, can't you?"

"We can't hit anything but those peaks," was the pilot's answer; "can't you see anything that looks level and smooth, down there? Use your eyes!"

With sickening rapidity the saw-tooth crests of the hills leaped at the *Ace High*.

"There's a cañon!" cried Whipple, as the flying machine cut across the yawning mountain chasm at perhaps five hundred feet.

"And a flat at the bottom of it!" added Vandeever. "Can you drop into that gash and 'light on the flat?"

"I got to," answered Simmons, between his set teeth; "if I don't it's all over but payin' the bets."

He manipulated the falling machine in such fashion that the nose of it was brought in line with the north and south trend of the cañon; then, straightening out, the plane rushed downward. They cleared the two steep walls of the gash and, by a turn to the left, hit the flat with a shock that almost threw Whipple and Vandeever out of their cockpits. The flyer lurched and wabbled over the rough ground, finally halting with a crash. Whipple took a header into the air, landed on one of the wings, rolled down the steep slope of it, and off the end in a six-foot fall on a nest of bowlders. There he curled up quietly and went to sleep.

He awoke to find Charley Van throwing water in his face. "How you feelin', W. J.?" inquired the cowboy anxiously.

"A good deal like I did when the street car hit me," answered Whipple

in a faint voice. "Don't waste all that good water, Charley; give me a drink."

Vandeever limped away, bent down over a small stream, refilled his Stetson, and came back.

"Ain't this fierce?" he commented gloomily, as Whipple gulped the water over the hat's brim. "I reckon this flyin'-machine deal was a mistake, W. J."

"Where's Simmons?" asked Whipple.

"Who cares a hoot about Sim?" snapped Vandeever. "He sold us a sky boat with a bum engine, and now see what's happened. I allow if he broke his neck we wouldn't be much more'n even."

"No such luck," came the melancholy voice of the pilot.

He was sitting on a bowlder, minus his helmet and leather jacket, and was knotting a handkerchief around his left forearm, using his right hand and his teeth.

Whipple had been dragged clear of the rock pile, and he now sat up and took a look around. He was at the edge of a flat, and the flat was at the bend of the cañon. The walls of the defile were high and straight up and down—merely smooth precipices. A small stream babbled over the rocks of its narrow course, and in the sandy stretches were rank growths of mesquite. The *Ace High* had run head on into the cañon's east wall. The left-hand planes had been crumpled up by a big cottonwood tree, and the front end of the machine had been crushed as far back as the pilot's cockpit. Simmons surely had been lucky to escape alive.

"Think you can fix up the old catamaran, Sim?" inquired Vandeever.

"Not hardly," was the sarcastic response; "she's a total wreck. Landing gear all smashed, propeller all in pieces, port planes in smithereens, and engine knocked into a cocked hat. When we get away from here we'll have to walk."

"Walk!" yelled the exasperated Vandeever. "Do you know what sort of country lies between us and civilization? 'Bout 'steen hundred miles of desolation, with nothin' to feed on but chuckwallas and nothin' to drink but the juice of niggerhead cactus. Walk! Man, we never could make it. If your old pop bottle had to give out, why didn't it pull the play within hailin' distance of Phoenix? Here's an elegant mess o' fish!"

Whipple got up and balanced himself dizzily on his legs. "Let's look around and get our bearings," he suggested.

"That's somethin' to do, anyways," Vandeever assented.

They moved northward toward the upper end of the cañon. Simmons did not go with them, but sat disconsolately on his bowlder and began spiritlessly to manufacture a cigarette.

"He don't need to worry a hull lot," remarked Vandeever; "he's got his sixteen thousand, so bustin' up the *Ace High* don't mean a thing in his young life. It didn't take us long to get rid o' that bunch o' money, anyways. Plumb wasted, and nothin' to show for it. W. J., this is a right discouragin' cañon, if anybody asks you. Look at them walls! A hundred feet straight up, and even a squirrel couldn't get from here to the rim rock. And there's the north end—it is just like the side walls. I move we take a look over south."

The north end of the cañon was closed by a sheer precipice. The little stream, hitting the wall, sank out of sight under it, flowing through a subterranean channel.

"Wait a minute," called Whipple, halting his companion who was about to turn back. "What's this?"

On the smooth surface of the end wall some hand had rudely inscribed with red pigment: "Lost Creek Cañon. No chance to get out. Bottled up.—Johnson Blue."

Vandeever read the inscription, gave a howl of despair, and threw up his hands. "Lost Creek Cañon! By glory, that does settle it! W. J., we're planted for keeps."

"What do you mean, Charley?" Whipple asked.

"Ain't you never heard tell of Johnson Blue over to the Three-ply? Ain't no one ever mentioned Lost Creek Cañon around Dowsett's mine?"

"Not that I remember."

"Say, listen. This here is a pocket there ain't no gettin' out of. Once here you're here to stay. Only it's as hard to get into as it is to get out of, mostly. Johnson Blue got into it with ropes, explorin' like, and the ropes got loose and come down on him. A carrier pigeon he had with him got back to Prescott with the news, but the message was weather-beaten and dim in spots. The location of Lost Creek Cañon wasn't readable, and people hunted for it for months, hopin' to save Blue. But he wasn't never saved. I reckon, if we look, we'll find what's left o' him around here some'rs."

Vandeever took off his hat and slammed it down on the rocks; then he leaned against the sheer wall and laughed huskily and mirthlessly.

"And here's you and me," he went on, "loaded to the brim with dinero and aimin' to cut loose with it in Los Angeles, bottled up in Lost Creek Cañon, without no carrier pigeon or ropes or nothin'. We're jest plumb cast away, that's all; and when we're laid out cold, the birds'll get them thousand-dollar bills and line their nests with 'em."

He laughed again, and the walls of the cañon gave back the nerve-wracking echoes.

CHAPTER X.

A MESSAGE FROM THE PAST.

THE north end of Lost Creek Cañon was cheerless, forlorn, and offered a despairing prospect; but a "find" was made around the bend in the south end that put heart in the three castaways.

The walls here were steep and unscalable, and a lofty barrier thrown across the defile made of it a complete cul-de-sac. Here Lost Creek found itself, bubbling up from beneath the foot of the barrier, flowing the length of the cañon, and losing itself again at the other end of that tremendous blind alley.

The surroundings south of the bend were not so depressing. The walls were hung with trailing vines, which gave a bowerlike aspect to that part of the mountain prison; and there was a flat covered with a thick growth of oaks and piñons; and in the heart of this grove Whipple and Vandeever stumbled upon their big surprise—a small but comfortable log cabin.

That cabin could not have been built by Johnson Blue, discoverer and original castaway of Lost Creek Cañon. It was seven years, according to Vandeever, since Blue's homing pigeon had fluttered into Prescott, and the cabin was plainly of very recent construction. It stood empty and deserted, and there was no path leading to its door. The door was not secured in any way, but opened readily to Whipple's hand.

The single room within was marvelously equipped for comfort. Three bunks furnished with blankets and pillows were built against the walls. Three chairs stood around a small table; and in a cupboard, plates, cups and saucers, knives, forks, and spoons continued to carry out this remarkable grouping of threes.

Charley Van pulled off his hat and ran his fingers through his hair. "Looks like somebody had been gettin' ready for our party," was his comment. "Wouldn't this jest nacherly rattle your spurs, W. J.?"

In a second cupboard was found a bag of flour, strips of bacon, a box of potatoes, and a generous supply of canned goods. There was a stove, too, in one corner of the room, with pots and pans hanging all around it, and even a supply of firewood piled beside it.

Charley Van collapsed into one of the chairs. "Here's once, I'll say, that our cup was right-side-up and caught a little good luck when it rained trouble. W. J., we didn't outfit ourselves with so much as a ham sandwich when makin' that start for Los Angeles in the sky-hooter; so if Mrs. Class A. Luck hadn't dropped this cabin and contents down in the cañon for us, we'd sure have starved plumb to death. Everything's so new the worms haven't even got in the prunes. We can draw out the agony for quite a spell, I'm figgerin'."

"Charley," returned Whipple, "this

pocket in the hills isn't so blamed inaccessible as you have been trying to make me believe. Somebody came here and fixed up this place, calculating to make a home out of it."

"You've seen for yourself, W. J.," Vandeever returned, "that there ain't no gettin' out of here unless we sprout wings. I'll admit that hombres could come down on a rope, same as Johnson Blue done, but without that same rope gettin' out is goin' to bother a heap."

"Three men built this cabin and got it ready to live in," Whipple went on; "and that wasn't so long ago, because everything is fresh and new. They must be planning to come back here very soon. Well, Charley, when they come, we'll use their means for getting into the cañon to get out of it. All we have to do is to wait."

"Cheer-o!" exclaimed Vandeever. "Here's hoping we get our chance to pull out before your thirty days are up and you are left stranded with that bundle of kale. We'll have to spend faster than I reckoned on when we do hit Los Angeles. Now, bein' hungry and the like o' that, how about gettin' Simmons over here? He was braggin' about how he can cook. Suppose we start him in?"

"All right; go get him."

Vandeever found Simmons still sitting on his bowlder, very much cast down. "Don't you forget," were his first words to Vandeever, "that I'm still drawing my hundred a day."

"That's a mere baggytelle, Perce," returned the cowboy; "was you stringin' us when you said you could cook?"

"I'm a regular chef," boasted Simmons; "and I was sitting here thinking how I could eat if there was only anything eatable in sight."

"Well, chirk up; we're goin' to feed. Come on and I'll show you."

When the cabin and its supplies burst on his vision the aviator was astounded. Whipple was building a fire in the stove, but Vandeever pulled him away from the work.

"Sim tells me that he expects us to pay him the hundred a day, whether we're flyin' or laid up in this cañon," said Vandeever. "By doin' the cookin' and taking care of the ranch I calculate that he'll make all of five dollars a day, anyways, so I move we let him do it. You and me, W. J., will jest sit around and fret because the spendin' is so poor. Get busy, Sim!"

Among the supplies were two or three dozen packages of cigarettes, several pounds of smoking tobacco, and half a dozen decks of cards. Vandeever made these discoveries and announced them joyfully.

"W. J.," he whispered to his friend, "with my luck at the pasteboards, it'll be blamed little of that hundred a day Sim'll ever see."

Simmons proved that he was really a capable cook by preparing an excellent meal. All were in better spirits after they had eaten their dinner. While Simmons was clearing away the empty dishes, Vandeever tumbled into one of the bunks for a nap, and Whipple roamed around the flat.

It seemed to Whipple as though there must be some way into that cañon and out of it. The stories about Johnson Blue's imprisonment in that mountain pocket might be far-fetched. Whipple was not so credulous as Vandeever seemed to be, so he went hunting for a possible avenue of escape.

He failed to find it. The walls, masked with trailing vines, were as precipitous as the bare rock faces in other parts of the cañon. Whipple wondered if the vines were strong enough to bear his weight. He learned that they were not; for, essaying a climb by means of the festooned creepers, he sustained a fall of a dozen feet and gave up his attempts.

As he moved around the edge of the flat his foot kicked against something, and he stooped and picked up a small tin box. The box was scarred and worn, and locked. He broke it open. Inside of it was an open-face silver watch, with a leather fob and an elk's tooth charm attached to it, eighteen cents in change, a comb and brush, a pocket knife, and a memorandum book. Sitting down at the foot of an oak he fell to examining the various objects.

On the back of the watch was the monogram, "J. B." The same initials were engraved on the handle of the knife.

"Relics of Johnson Blue," thought Whipple, and picked up the little book.

On the flyleaf he read this, written in a firm, businesslike hand:

Johnson Blue, late of New York City, now of Nowhere in Particular: His impressions of life, based on the way in which he lived it, and written for his own amusement while he slowly starved to death.

This was gruesome, but it held a fascination for Whipple. Blue really had been bottled up in that cañon. He had sent out his carrier pigeon, hoping for rescue. Rescue had not come, and famine had claimed him for a victim.

"What you got, W. J.?"

This was Vandeever. Having finished his nap he had gone searching for Whipple. The latter told him what he had found, and how he had chanced upon it.

"By glory!" the cowboy exclaimed, sitting down at his friend's side and looking with deep interest at the watch, the knife, the military hair brush, and the comb. "Eighteen cents! He was mighty nigh busted flat, wasn't he?"

Whipple read from the flyleaf of the book.

"Purty tough!" commented Vandeever, with feeling. "And we might have starved allee same as Blue if somebody hadn't built that cabin for us and filled it with supplies. Poor old Blue! He must 'a' been blue them last days. I can't imagine nothin' worse than havin' hunger get you. Read about them impressions of his, W. J."

Whipple began to read:

"No help has arrived, and I have come to the conviction that the carrier pigeon failed to reach Prescott. That means that my days are numbered. The chuckwallas are not very plenty, and not very appetizing. In the heyday of my wastrel year, I remember how squab on toast, chicken a la Maryland, and roast canvasback duck palled on my jaded appetite. If I had my million back, I would give all of it for one dinner at Shanley's! I have kept pulling up my belt a notch until it makes a circle no bigger than a dog's collar—and not a very large dog's collar at that.

"But why repine? I have had my fling, and here I am holed away among the bleak mountains with my large fortune dwindled to a pitiful eighteen cents! I'm a good exhibit in the case of Gal Life versus A Sensible Existence; I am a horrible example in the matter of what not to do with a million dollars; and I feel the urge to put some of my philosophy down with pen and ink. No one will ever see it, but the mere writing will be a relief to my mind, and will serve to beguile this period of waiting for the end. And I have an idea that I can make my finish the finest things I have done in all my riotous year."

"Gosh!" exclaimed Vandeever, as Whipple paused reflectively. "Now whyever do you suppose he was writin' like that, W. J.?"

"I'll read on," answered Whipple, "and see if we can find out."

"I was a happy man before my Uncle Ezra died and left me that million dollars in hard cash. Kept books for Halloran & Beezley, and received a hundred dollars a month for it. Got along beautifully; put aside a little every week for a rainy day, and had enough left to ride over to Coney of a Saturday afternoon and take some real enjoyment. And I'd get away to the Polo Grounds occasionally, and yell myself hoarse over a good ball game.

"And there was Ethel! There are fine girls in this land, but none finer than Ethel. I wish she might know what has finally happened to me, but that is hardly possible. If I had taken her advice—— But I'm not sobbing about that, or anything else. I mixed this dose of medicine for myself, and I'm going to swallow it with a smile.

"Back in the old days, though, I was happy. And I didn't know it! I lived in a little paradise all my own, and I was getting ahead at the rate of about three hundred a year. Then a snake crawled into my paradise, a snake with glittering golden scales and diamond eyes—Uncle Ezra's million dollars.

"I didn't have to work any more. That's what I told Halloran & Beezley. Work was for those poor fish who had no uncle to die and leave them a million. I started out to put some new brightness in the Gay White Way. They said I made good. I had friends everywhere, and they did their best to make me forget I had ever been a hundred-dollar-a-month bookkeeper.

"Is it much of a trick to run through a million in a year? Not in a town like New York, wet or dry. When a man who, now and then, has to walk to save car fare, wakes up with a million in his mitt, maybe he'll still walk to save car fare—but I doubt it. If he is young, as I was, and if he has abilities as a spender, as I had, he'll probably buy himself a flock of automobiles and never walk any more than he just has to.

"I scattered the million in twelve months; and now here am I, I, far from the bright lights, a prisoner in these hills and with only eighteen cents in my pocket. I've a fine case of dyspepsia—and roasted chuckwallah doesn't agree with a finicky stomach. I'm all rusty from lack of exercise—and I came to Arizona for the mountain cure everlastingly too late. It's time I died, and——"

Vandeever reached over, jerked the book from Whipple's hands and threw it angrily out across the flat.

"I reckon that'll be all of that!" he growled. "Now that we got our pockets full o' money, I ain't in any mood to listen to such stuff. Gol-ding-it, I hadn't a notion Blue was that kind of a cimiroon."

"Looks like he was hitting at us, eh, Charley?" queried Whipple.

"I'll tell a man! And it ain't a fair go, either. Why in blazes did you have to kick that tin box out o' the brush, W. J.? But Blue wasn't the same as you. It's in your uncle's contract that you *got* to spend. Blue wasn't obliged to do what he done. He was goin' on his own when he got down to them eighteen cents. Ain't some people plumb foolish?"

Whipple and Vandeever, at the foot of the oak in Lost Creek Cañon, sat brooding in deep thought over the foolishness of Johnson Blue. What angle was taken by their vagrant thoughts is no matter; but presently the cowboy got up, walked sheepishly over to the little book, and picked it up and dusted it off.

"Take care of it, W. J.," he said, handing the melancholy record to his friend. "Like enough, after all, you and me will get eighteen cents' worth o' fun out o' readin' it. If he goes into his spendin' habits, maybe there'll be a tip for us when we get to Los. We'll have to work fast if we're held up here for much of a spell."

CHAPTER XI.

A CHANGE OF PLANS.

THAT little book of Johnson Blue's wielded an uncanny influence. Two days after it had been found all three young men in the cañon had come under its mystic spell. When Whipple was not reading it aloud to his companions, either Vandeever or Simmons was sure to have it and to be deeply immersed in its contents.

The sorry chronicle was less than five thousand words in length. In giving so much time to it, therefore, the castaways were continually rereading parts of the manuscript. Each had his favorite passages; and Whipple, curious to know just what appealed most to Vandeever and Simmons, took up the little book as each laid it down. In Vandeever's case, his clews were various leaves bent at the corners; and, in Simmons', a pencil checking of sundry paragraphs.

It developed that the cowboy's interest was held by Blue's ingenious methods of extravagance. He would charter a sumptuous private train, for instance, and take a large party of friends to some prize fight in the Middle West; or he would buy a private yacht, spend a riotous month in the West Indies, and then sell the yacht for less than half what he had paid for it. He would give dinners to boon companions, at which diamond and platinum stick pins were passed around as favors. Once, in Florida, he had rented an entire hotel for a week, living in it in lonely grandeur with every employee at his beck and nod. An extravagant eccentricity was never to wear the same suit of clothes twice, but give away each suit when it was taken off.

Simmons' marked passages consisted largely of philosophical deductions. "A false friend is one who shares your bounty, battens on your favors, and then fails to recognize you when your money is gone. He is a deceiver and a thief." And this: "A crook is the physical manifestation of a crooked soul, warped by greed and a hunger for easy money. Better that a man should have a millstone hung about his neck and be flung into the sea than to profit in such a way." And again: "Not money, but the love of money, is the root of all evil. Because of this we betray a trust and land in jail, or we commit murder and hang. One who loves money for itself is capable of any atrocity."

Whipple, on his own part, was entranced with the whole tragic story, but his pet paragraphs were some of Blue's platitudes, such as: "Waste not, want not," and "Be careful with what you earn, and doubly careful with what is given you;" and "Stand on your own feet; be beholden to no man for so much as a nickel;" and "Spend wisely, but save with even more wisdom; for a tightwad is anathema and a wastrel is a lost soul;" and, lastly, this priceless ruby in the casket of diamonds: "Be not lured by relatives or friends or strangers into ways of wasteful extravagance; for an act repeated becomes habit, and habit becomes second nature, and second nature becomes character, and character makes us what we are for better or for worse."

All this, to some minds, would have been a mere collection of rubbish. It is quite possible to understand why the last writings of Johnson Blue might appeal to Whipple, and why a cowboy, eager to master all the fine arts of getting rid of money, might be interested in them, but that Percival Simmons should ponder such passages as he had marked was an incomprehensible mystery.

Johnson Blue, with just money enough left to get him to some out-of-the-way corner of the country, had come to Prescott. Like Timon of Athens he yearned for some desert place where he could forget the ingratitude of those whom he had believed to be friends and kill all thoughts of the girl Ethel who had married a better man. So he bought a burro, a grub stake, several hundred feet of rope, a homing pigeon in a wicker cage, and set out for the heart of the hills. His idea was to immure himself on an island in the air, a supposedly unscalable mesa called *Encantada* that had come to be a legend in the Southwest. His purpose was to get away by himself, burn all his bridges, and even cast off the ropes by which he had hoped to gain the mesa's top. Then, if he tired of his hermitlike existence, he would send word back to Prescott by means of the carrier pigeon, and some one would come and effect his rescue.

It was a wild fancy. He failed to find *Mesa Encantada,* but he did happen upon a pocket in the ground as difficult of access as any island in the air. With his ropes he managed to get into it, but the ropes loosened and came down on him before he had lowered the remainder of his supplies into the cañon. Weeks later, his half-starved burro wandered into Wickenburg; this, however, was long after the carrier pigeon had made its home port with a damaged message that told of Blue's plight, but failed to define his exact whereabouts.

So, from Blue's last writings and information given by Vandeever, Whipple pieced the story together. Somehow, the thrill of it grew on him as the days passed. It seemed to grow on the cowboy and the aviator as well. Knotty problems offered themselves to the castaways.

Were they destined to reach the end of their provisions and come to a wretched end, there in Lost Creek Cañon, as Blue had done? Who had built and furnished that cabin on the flat with supplies for three? On the answer to this second question hung their hopes of deliverance. A week passed, however, without bringing the owners of the cabin. Vandeever, for once in his life at least, had something more than his Stetson on his mind.

"By glory," he complained, "we've lost a hull week, here in this hole in the hills, waitin' for some one to come. We've got to stop coolin' our heels, W. J., and try to find a way out. Grub is goin' fast, and I move we meander around and try to find them ropes of Blue's. Maybe they haven't rotted clean to pieces, and we can use 'em in gettin' clear o' this blamed pocket."

So they went hunting for the ropes. But they had vanished completely. When absolutely certain that they were not to be found, further attempts were made to climb the wall by means of the hanging vines. The vines were fragile, and after Vandeever had taken a bad tumble the maneuver was given up as hopeless.

Simmons raided the wreck of the *Ace High* and removed and spliced to-

gether a number of guy wires. The resulting cable proved too stiff and unwieldy and nothing could be done with it. In desperation, another forlorn search for the ropes was begun. It was while this was going on that Simmons, creeping along at the edge of the flat under a festoon of trailing vines, found a small wicker cage with its door unlatched.

This recalled Blue to the minds of the castaways. Here, undoubtedly, was the very cage in which he had kept his carrier pigeon. Vandeever, fired with a sudden thought, dropped to his knees and continued investigations at that part of the foot of the cliff. He crept through the vines, was lost to sight for five minutes, and at last emerged into view with a white face and wild eyes.

"I touched 'em," he gasped, drawing his sleeve across his wet forehead, "and they—they rattled. Oh, my glory!"

"What rattled?" demanded Whipple.

"Bones! He's in there—Blue, what's left o' him. Never had such a start in my hull life, W. J. He's layin' under a bit of an overhang, and he grinned up at me all white and—and—well," he finished, "I jest had to have air. Million-dollar Blue is jest a pile o' bones in a khaki suit. Say," muttered Vandeever, "don't it give you a start, W. J.?"

"Sure," answered Whipple, "but we've got a duty to do, Charley. That's a great little book he wrote, and the least we can do is to bury these bones away in the pleasantest part of the flat. Look! Here's his fountain pen. I want it for my own, this and the eighteen cents. You can take the watch and knife, and Simmons can have the fob and the elk-tooth charm."

"Who gets the book?"

"We'll draw cuts for that. Get Simmons now. We've got to do the best we can, Charley."

The three men got to work, and in a short time all that remained of Johnson Blue had been decently interred, to the best of their ability.

Poor Johnson Blue! For one brief year everything he had wanted had been his. Now there he lay, and of what use to him were all the millions in the world?

Whipple sat down. "Everything has been said that can be said, I take it," he remarked, "about a fool and his money. Now and then, at the bitter end, a fool wakes up and says, or writes, a number of wise things. And we three would be fools if we did not profit by them. If we ever get out of this cañon, Charley, I make a solemn vow to give back to Uncle Wes the rest of his money. I'm going to tell him that I'm not fitted for the job he set for me."

"Then—then you ain't goin' to Los Angeles at all?" inquired Vandeever plaintively.

"I'm going back to the Three-ply Mine to work in the gold mill."

"Then me for the ranch, if that's how you stack up," said Vandeever. "I've got mucho plenty of this cañon and that book of Blue's. His writing's have plumb robbed me of all the pleasure I might have had helpin' you spend your uncle's money. I reckon the boys will gi'me the laugh, but they can't sing that old chantey about the Wad that Wilted—because it won't stick."

Simmons was having a struggle with himself. At last he managed to get the better of his feelings and observed, in a strained, unnatural voice: "I got something to say, men. Three-card Monte LaDue hired me to drop you on Saddleback Flats. He and two of his pals were to be waiting there and corral the kale you two had with you. I was to have a share in it. But I missed Saddleback Flats, somehow——"

In two jumps Vandeever was in front of Simmons. "I had a notion more'n once you was playin' crooked!" he yelled. "Now, then, you two-faced sidewinder, right here's where I beat you up!"

Whipple hastened to step between them. "No," he said sternly; "hands off of Simmons, Charley. He didn't make anything by his treachery; and here, where we've put away Johnson Blue, let's bury our animosity along with some of our fool ideas."

Vandeever was red and wrathful. Not ordinarily could he have been

halted, in such a manner, by the restraining hand of a friend; but there was a spirit of peace abroad in the cañon at that moment—the spirit of Johnson Blue.

"All right, Simmons," said Vandeever to the aviator, "you ain't the only one in this bunch that made a stumble. You must not——"

At that instant, Whipple leaped at Vandeever and Simmons and pulled them down. He was excited, and a wild light gleamed in his eyes.

"Look!" he whispered, pointing toward the vine-clad wall. "They're coming! The men who built and stocked that cabin are here! Watch!"

CHAPTER XII.

THE PART OF WISDOM.

THE descending sun, slanting over the western rim of the cañon, brightened the eastern wall. The brightness was rising toward the top of the wall, leaving the foot of the cliff in shadowy twilight. Some thirty or forty feet up the face of the precipice, full in the sun's rays, the mask of greenery had been opened and men could be seen working through the gap.

Evidently these men had found foothold on a shelf concealed by the hanging vines. At the distance from which they were viewed by Whipple and his companions the forms were indistinct, although it could clearly be seen that there were three of them.

"Say, this is bully!" exclaimed Vandeever, all the joy of a prospective deliverance rising in his soul. "As they climb in, we'll climb out. Like enough, horses brought them through the hills to the cañon; well, we'll arrange to use them *caballos* for the trip back to Phoenix. Here's luck!"

He started across the flat in the direction of the cliff where the newcomers were at work, but Whipple caught his arm.

"Not so fast, Charley. Let's wait here and watch for a while. There's something about that cabin that never looked just right to me. It will be better, I think, to let those fellows get down into the cañon before we show ourselves to them. They might decide not to come on if they found strangers here."

Vandeever looked thoughtful. "Strikes me you're too blame cautious. W. J.," he said, "but mebby it's jest as well to play safe." He drew back into the tree shadows and continued to fix his gaze on the wall. "There's a path down that cliffside, back o' them vines, right to the p'int where them hombres are workin'," ran his comment, "and mebby that's the way Johnson Blue got in. But how do you reckon they found it? We never guessed there was a shelf part way up the wall, did we?"

"It wouldn't have done us any good if we had," put in Simmons. "That shelf is all of thirty-five feet straight up, and we had no way of getting to it. By Jupiter, look at that!"

Something was tossed out through the gap in the vines. It twisted, writhed, unfolded, and dropped downward, resolving itself into a long rope ladder. As soon as it was in place, the three men descended from the shelf, one by one, and landed on the flat. By that time the whole cañon was plunged in gloom, although the eastern rim rock still glimmered under the sun's rays.

"Wait till they get to the cabin," Whipple suggested, "and then we'll walk in on them. They'll light up, and we'll be able to give each other a good sizing."

"We'll give 'em a big surprise," chuckled Vandeever, "if I know anything about it."

The newcomers trailed like shadows across the flat, making straight for the cabin. Whipple, Vandeever, and Simmons followed them at a distance.

"I'll bet a blue stack," the cowboy hazarded, "that they've got a mine down here; placerings, like as not."

"There's no gold in Lost Creek Cañon," averred Whipple; "I've been keeping an eye out for that ever since we got here, and the formations aren't right."

"What's their idee in comin' here, then?"

"That's what I'd like to know. Men

aren't going to all this trouble in Lost Creek Cañon unless they have something up their sleeves. It doesn't look right, Charley."

The newcomers had reached the cabin, and lamplight suddenly glowed in the cabin windows. Whipple and his two companions pushed on hurriedly and stepped in through the open door. They were greeted by a yell that indicated surprise and anything but friendliness.

"I'm a Digger if it ain't Concho Charley, the cattle-puncher gent as got to us for all that dough in the back room at Hennessy's!" whooped a voice.

"Sure it's him!" cried some one else. "And he's bringin' his pard, Monte Cristo, junior! Surprisin' luck, if anybody asks you."

"Simmons," a third person demanded, "how did you happen to miss the flats, the other morning? And how did you happen to know about this cañon, and get here and be waiting for us with these lambs of the golden fleece? You seem to have played your cards pretty well, but I'll be hanged if I can understand it."

Whipple was amazed. The last speaker was Three-card Monte LaDue, a trim-looking blackleg in fancy mountaineer clothes. The two with him were his roughneck pals, "Pecos" Pete Geohegan and "Silver" Sam Hornaday. All in all, they were about as hard an outfit as ever drifted through the Arizona hills. Each of the three was well armed and, at the moment, had a vicious six-gun on display.

What weird turn of fate had brought these men into that lonely cañon? Whipple wished, then, that he had been even more cautious. Bound for Los Angeles on a quest for spendthrift pleasures, neither he nor his companions had carried anything in the way of firearms. Three-card and his partners were holding all the trumps, that hand. The surprises were mutual, but every advantage lay with the newcomers.

"You're a fine lot of coyotes, ain't you now?" Vandeever remarked with fine sarcasm. "You planned to trim me, there in the back room at Hennessy's, but I galloped off with every sou you three had in your clothes—matchin' my run o' luck ag'inst every nickel-plated holdout in your tinhorn crowd. Then you schemed to get it all back, by one way or another, and missed the bet. Oh, you're a fine outfit of sobbers!"

Three-card Monte smiled in the oily way characteristic of him. "We're not missing any bets here in Lost Creek Cañon, Concho," he purred. "Why didn't you come down at Saddleback Flats according to agreement, Simmons?" he demanded, whirling on the aviator.

"They got wise to me"—here Simmons nodded toward Whipple and Vandeever—"and it wasn't safe. Then the engine of the old boat went back on me, and we just happened to land in this cañon. I'm glad you got here, Three-card. It's the best piece of luck that ever came my way. Whipple and his pard would have killed me, I guess, if I hadn't had help."

Cold rage rose in Vandeever's heart. "Ain't you sorry now, W. J.," he asked, "that you didn't let me beat him up? Sim has been playin' off on us."

Whipple was nonplused. At the grave of Johnson Blue, such a short time before, he had felt that Simmons' confession and regrets were sincere; but now he had executed a direct about-face, and was one of Three-card Monte's crowd. He made this certain by stepping to the other side of the cabin and joining the ranks of the gamblers.

"How much have they got with them, Simmons?" queried LaDue.

"Seventy-five thousand in cash," was the prompt reply.

"Good! I didn't know but they might have hidden it away somewhere. Put it on the table, Whipple, every last stiver of it."

"Don't you never, W. J.!" roared Vandeever. "Let's show 'em our teeth. If they get that dinero, make 'em fight for it!"

He picked up a chair and backed into a corner.

"Concho," remarked LaDue calmly, "when you and your outfit dropped into this cañon, you came within one of putting a crimp into the smoothest cam-

paign I ever planned. You found a neat little cabin here, well stocked with supplies. You and your friends jumped right in and took possession of it. I'm not finding any fault with that; but I want to assure you that while we're here you and Whipple are going to stay here. I expect to make this place my headquarters for the next six months. Show fight, Concho, and we'll drop you in your tracks. Put down that chair."

"Don't be foolish, Charley," said Whipple; "all the odds are against us."

This easy yielding wasn't at all like Whipple, as Vandeever knew him; so the latter reasoned that his friend had something at the back of his head in the way of a ruse. Strategy, that was what it must be. Building his hopes on that, Vandeever lowered the chair, sat down in it gloomily, and watched while Whipple put all of Uncle Wesley's money on the table.

"That's the part of wisdom, Whipple," observed Three-card Monte with unctuous approval. "You might also sit down, for the moment. Pecos," he went on, "you go back to the shelf and pull up the ladder. You'll have an uncomfortable night, up there, but we've got to make sure that Whipple and Concho don't clear out and tip off this new roost of ours to the sheriff. We can't let that happen, you understand, until we're through with the cañon. Silver will relieve you in the morning, and to-morrow night Simmons or I will pull up the ladder and sleep on the shelf. Don't forget, Pecos," LaDue finished, "that there's a bundle of money in this for all hands."

The mention of money stifled the grumbling of Pecos. He put away his gun, pulled up his belt, and left the cabin. Three-card Monte approached the table and coolly appropriated the crisp bank notes that lay there.

"This should mean little to you, Whipple," said he easily. "You're getting rid of it quickly, and with a few thrills that ought to interest Old Plunks. Sorry to dispossess you, but we've got to have the cabin. You and Concho can bunk down on the flat. We'll see that you don't starve; at least, while we're here in the cañon with you. When we leave for good—well, that will be another matter."

"Got a mine here, Three-card?" inquired Vandeever.

Hornaday laughed hoarsely.

"Well, you might call it that," returned LaDue with a twisted smile. "Pecos must be on the shelf by now," he added, "so you two can clear out. Don't try any foolishness, either of you." His voice sharpened as he launched the warning. "I'm playing for a big stake, and won't stand for any nonsense on your part. Good night. I'll send you something to eat in the morning."

Whipple and Vandeever walked out of the cabin, followed by the jeers of Silver Sam Hornaday and Percival Simmons. As they moved away across the flat, leaving behind them the cabin and its comforts, the cowboy complained bitterly about the aviator.

"He ort to be killed! W. J., I'd have evened up our score with him if you'd only have let me alone a while back. Now see how he has turned on us. Johnson Blue's book never got to him the same as it did to you and me."

Whipple drew closer to his irate friend. "Charley," he whispered, "I believe Simmons is still on our side, and that he's pretending to stand in with LaDue in order to be of help to us."

"Never in this world!" declared Vandeever emphatically. "Was that the reason you was so pesky meek in shellin' out them thousand-dollar bills? If I'd 'a' thought you was bankin' on that, I'd 'a' fought till I dropped. Simmons is a two-faced, measly coyote. It's all off with that noble idee o' yours to give back the dinero to your uncle. But that ain't worryin' me so much as gettin' clear o' this tough outfit and takin' a slant for Phoenix."

"We'll get back the money before we leave the cañon," asserted Whipple.

"How?"

Whipple did not know how, but he believed there would be opportunities and they would be able to manage it. He led the way through the gloom to

the overhang where Johnson Blue had pitched his dismal camp.

"Aimin' to sleep in there, W. J.?" demanded Vandeever.

"Why not? It gets pretty cold at night, and we must have some kind of shelter. What was good enough for Blue ought to be good enough for us."

Whipple went down on all fours and crawled through the swinging vines. The cowboy followed him, finally, but not without many protests.

"I'll bet the place is ha'nted," he muttered.

"Well, it couldn't be haunted by a kindlier spirit than Blue's. I'm greatly obliged to Johnson Blue, Charley. He has shown me how to look wisely at some of the problems of life."

"Huh!" grunted Vandeever; "he was only a spender that got cold feet when his money was gone. Mebby you'll sleep, but I'll be hanged if I think I'm goin' to. 'Night, pard."

CHAPTER XIII.

A BIT OF ACTING.

A FLAT rock was all that Whipple and Vandeever had to sleep on, there under the overhang. But they were men of hard fiber and used to the hardships of the hills. The chastened spirit of Johnson Blue seemed to fill the place. To Whipple this unseen presence was as a benediction; nor was it as disturbing to Vandeever as he had fancied it might be, for when morning came he was sleeping so soundly that his friend had to shake him into wakefulness.

"See anything last night, W. J.?" inquired the cowboy, as he sat up and rubbed his eyes.

"Not a thing."

"Same here. Glory! I never reckoned I'd sleep like that. Let's crawl out o' this hole in the wall and find the sun."

A morning in Southern Arizona is one of the most cheering wonders of the country. The mounting sun has a glory all its own, and the air has a tonic warranted to put to flight all the blue devils that lurk in a human heart. Vandeever was in a more hopeful mood than on the preceding evening.

"If we could get hold of a couple o' them six-guns," he remarked, while he and Whipple were dipping their heads in the creek, "we needn't ask no odds of anybody, W. J."

Whipple shook the water out of his hair and dried his face on his handkerchief. "We'll play a waiting game, Charley," he said, "and see what turns up. They're busy getting breakfast over there at the cabin," he added, his speculative gaze on the smoke that was rising from the chimney.

"I could mow away a man's size share o' grub if I had the chance. Seems like LaDue might invite us in for the morning's snack."

"He won't do that; he's planning to keep us at a distance from the money and the guns, and will send breakfast out to us. There comes Sam Hornaday, now," Whipple added.

"And he ain't totin' any chow," grumbled Vandeever disappointedly.

Hornaday, however, was not coming in the direction of the two at the foot of the vine-clad cliff. He looked in their direction, grinned unpleasantly, and kept on toward the eastern wall. There he halted and yelled for Pecos. The latter looked out from the opening among the vines, answered the hail, and then threw down the rope ladder.

"We could capture the ladder from them two if we had any kind o' luck," Vandeever suggested.

Whipple shook his head. While Pecos was descending the ladder, Hornaday stood at the foot of it, on guard with a gun in each hand.

"You're having a dream, Charley," said Whipple. "LaDue would be glad to have us try something like that. After the dust settled, there would be one amalgamator and one cow-puncher to keep Johnson Blue company on this flat. And what good would the ladder be to us if we had to use it and leave the money behind?"

"I got to have action," Vandeever fretted. "Walkin' lame and jumpin' through the hoop at LaDue's orders is a heap more than I can stand."

"Take it easy; there'll be plenty of action when the right time comes."

Pecos, stepping from the rope ladder to the ground, did a brief round of sentry go while Hornaday climbed to the shelf and hoisted the trailing ropes; then Pecos made his way to the cabin. Everything, so far as LaDue's cleverness could devise it, had been made secure.

Presently Simmons appeared at the cabin door carrying a basket. He struck out briskly across the flat, moving in the direction of Whipple and Vandeever. The latter, breathing hard, jumped to his feet.

Whipple caught him and pulled him back. "Hang on to yourself, Charley," he admonished. "You don't want to spoil our breakfast, do you?"

"I can't begin to tell you how the sight o' that traitor grinds me," muttered Vandeever. "I'll see that he gets his if it's the last thing I ever do."

Simmons halted a few feet away and set down the basket, warily eying the cowboy as he did so. "Charley is getting me wrong," he said, pitching his voice low. "I'm with you two, but I can be of more help by pretending to stand in with LaDue. That's straight. Kick up some kind of a row so I can have an excuse to stand here and talk for a minute. LaDue is watching from the cabin, and Hornaday from the shelf. At the first suspicion that I'm not really throwing in with them, I'll be as helpless as you two are—maybe worse off."

Whipple jumped to his feet and advanced a step. "You're worse than a sidewinder to turn us down like this!" he shouted, apparently in great anger.

"All I want is a club!" roared Vandeever.

Simmons jerked a revolver from his pocket; seemingly, he was holding the two wrathful men at bay. What he said, still in an undertone, was this:

"LaDue, Hornaday, and Geohegan robbed the bank at Eudora, and they are hiding out here with sixty thousand dollars in cash and Liberty Bonds. They have fixed up this cañon for a hang-out, and have some more robberies they are aiming to pull off. When they found us here it sort of spilled the beans. Go easy, you two. And be watchful. Bullets are apt to come your way at any time. I'm not done yet. Do something; make it look as though there is bad blood between us and you are trying to 'get' me. I was told to shoot at the first sign of trouble."

Vandeever started to make a rush. *Crack!* went Simmons' revolver. The bullet flew wide, but Vandeever clutched at his left arm and reeled back.

"I'm to be on the shelf to-night, guarding the ladder," Simmons went on, speaking hurriedly. "It's our chance to do something. I'll come down around midnight, and we'll see what we can do at the cabin. It will be desperate, though; make up your minds to that."

Simmons whirled on his heel and started back across the flat, turning again and again to flourish the revolver and shout wild threats.

"I reckon that play looked like the real thing," said Vandeever; "and I'm sure surprised at that Sim! At that, mebby he's only stringin' us along."

"Give him the benefit of the doubt, Charley," urged Whipple. "He'll prove to your satisfaction whether or not we can rely on him—to-night."

"It don't seem right sensible that LaDue would send him here with that grub, unless there was some kind of a hen on," mused the cowboy darkly.

He was rolling up his sleeve and binding a handkerchief about his arm, a red silk handkerchief with which he had supplied himself in Phoenix. Having pretended to be wounded, it was important to keep the deception alive. While eating breakfast, he did not use his left hand, but kept it tucked away between the buttons of his coat.

The meal was a generous one, consisting of coffee, crackers, bacon, and fried potatoes. As the two friends ate, they considered this new turn of events.

Three-card Monte, widely known as a crooked gambler, had blossomed into an out-and-out robber and holdup man. A safe retreat from the law was that hidden and inaccessible cañon. How LaDue had found it was a mystery; but, having found it, he was not slow to

recognize its value from a lawless viewpoint. If pressed by officers of the law, he could come down his rope ladder; and, if the cañon were found, he could pull down the ladder as a last resort. From that out-of-the-way spot he and his confederates could make their raids and then return to a rendezvous that was almost one-hundred-per-cent proof against discovery.

Naturally, finding Whipple and his companions in the cañon was a disagreeable surprise to LaDue. The unpleasantness, however, was tempered by the seventy-five thousand dollars which Whipple had been forced to give up. For a little while, and because of Uncle Wesley's money, the gambler might bear with the castaways; but, in due course, as Whipple knew, Three-card Monte would tire of the trouble Whipple and Vandeever made him and would seek to eliminate them. Before this tragic move was deliberately attempted, the amalgamator and the cowboy would have to strike and strike hard, with Simmons' help.

"To-night is the time," averred Whipple, "for we are taking grave chances if we wait longer than that." Having finished his breakfast, he lighted a pipe and arose to his feet. "Let's go over to the bend and see if the wreck of the *Ace High* has anything to offer us in the way of a makeshift weapon. If we come to close quarters with the gang to-night, Charley, we ought to have something besides our fists to fight with."

"Good idee, W. J.," assented Vandeever.

As they started north along the creek, LaDue suddenly appeared from the cabin. He carried a rifle. "Where have you started for?" he shouted.

"Jest takin' a little amble to stretch our legs," Vandeever answered, with a scowl.

"Well, amble around the flat, but keep clear of the cabin. Try to leave the flat, Concho, and we'll open up on you. That goes as it lays."

Vandeever hesitated, clenching his fist and grinding his teeth. "Fust time on record I ever took orders from a tinhorn!" he growled. "But I reckon there ain't anything else to be done."

He turned and began following Whipple back toward the vine-clad cliff.

"And here's something else," LaDue yelled. "You two have got to cut out the rough stuff when I send some one over with your meals. Simmons ought to have laid you out, Concho. Just for what you did this morning you men will get no dinner. If you prove to be peaceable, and obey orders about staying on the flat, I'll take some supper over to you myself."

Vandeever was furious, but he had sense enough to smother his feelings. Most certainly he and Whipple were under the thumb of this smooth, tricky card sharp; and, hard though it was, the situation would have to be borne for the present.

The morning passed with another reading of Johnson Blue's book, and the discussions to which the various philosophical gems gave rise. In view of the melancholy circumstances that prevailed in the cañon, the last words of the wastrel castaway were more impressive than ever.

Noon passed, and LaDue was as good as his word about withholding dinner. At one o'clock, Pecos relieved Silver as guardian of the ladder, and both ruffians, in going and coming, jeered the two hungry men as they passed them.

"This is fierce, I'll tell a man!" grunted Vandeever. "Hit me anywhere but where I live; I can stand anything but that."

"We ought to be able to miss a meal with good grace, Charley," said Whipple. "Think what Blue had to put up with."

"Oh, I'll stand it," returned the cowboy hastily, "but I'd like to eat a hundred dollars wuth o' ham and eggs in front of Three-card LaDue, and him famishin' and laced to a post with a reata."

The afternoon dragged horribly. LaDue and Hornaday and Simmons played cards in the shade of the cabin, guns close at hand. They were careful to take up a position from which they could watch Whipple and Van-

deever every minute. As the sun dropped low over the rim of the cañon, the card playing ceased, and Hornaday and Simmons went into the house to get supper. When LaDue was called by Hornaday to "Come in an' eat," he stood up and looked in the direction of the amalgamator and the cowboy.

"I've changed my mind, Conho," he called. "You and your pard stood it so well without dinner that I'm going to hold back your supper."

Vandeever gave an ugly laugh as LaDue vanished inside the cabin. "Even a smooth tinhorn like him can play the fool now and then, W. J.," he remarked to his friend. "The worst fighter I ever seen was a guy just hungry enough to be mad and not starved sufficient to be any ways weak. Because of losin' them two meals, I'd walk in on the hull gang this minute, alone and with my bare hands. It's going to be some fight when we pull it off."

CHAPTER XIV.

TURNING THE TABLES.

SIMMONS had played well a very difficult rôle. It was no easy maneuver to deceive Three-card Monte LaDue, and yet this is precisely what Simmons had done. The gambler was convinced that the aviator was faithful to him and his lawless plottings, and believed fully that no love was lost between the aviator and Whipple and Vandeever. So Simmons was trusted with the work of guarding the rope ladder.

He relieved Pecos and went on duty while the sun was still flashing brightly on the vine-clad wall; but he had not been fifteen minutes on the shelf before LaDue and Hornaday ran swiftly across the flat and took up their positions at the foot of the cliff.

"Hey, Simmons!" shouted LaDue. "What are you doing with two extra six-guns? You've got a brace of revolvers more than you need or are entitled to. Drop them into the blanket."

As he finished speaking, he and Hornaday stretched a blanket between them and waited for the weapons to be thrown into it. But they waited in vain.

Whipple and Vandeever guessed what had happened. In his zeal to help them, Simmons had appropriated the extra revolvers and taken them with him when he climbed to the shelf. He was not minded to give them up and so yield an advantage gained by his cleverness. Besides, Ladue's faith in him was shaken, and temporizing with a man like this gambler when he was in such a state of mind would have been suicidal. Simmons kept well back on the shelf and hung on to the guns.

Hornaday lost patience and swore heartily. LaDue had better command of himself.

"Put over the ladder, Percy, and come down," requested the gambler, his tone and manner not at all suggestive of the emotions that filled him.

Simmons, however, was too knowing to let down the ladder and descend and place himself at the mercy of Three-card Monte.

"Come down!" the gambler ordered at last, dropping his mask of friendliness and proceeding to threats. "I'll give you two minutes, and if you're not down by that time Silver and I will riddle the face of the cliff with bullets."

No word or sign came from Simmons; then, promptly when the two minutes were up, a merry fusillade stirred wild echoes in the cañon. Pecos, a cup of coffee in one hand and a sour-dough biscuit in the other, came to a corner of the cabin to watch the excitement.

Whipple was not slow to see that a situation had developed which, if quickly and properly used, would be highly advantageous to himself and Vandeever.

"Charley," he whispered, "while LaDue and Hornaday are busy with Simmons, and while Geohegan is giving all his attention to that side of the cañon, no one seems to take any interest in you and me. Come on! We'll detour to the west and reach the cabin door while Geohegan is facing the other way."

"That scheme is a lulu, W. J.!" muttered the cowboy, with enthusiasm.

A quick run to the left brought the two around the western side of the cabin. Whipple was almost at the open door when Pecos awoke to what was going on behind him. The coffee cup went one way and what was left of the biscuit went another.

"No; y'u don't!" he roared, dashing for the open door and juggling with a revolver as he came on. "Back up, or I'll drop y'u where y'u stand!"

Whipple shifted his line of advance, and instead of entering the cabin he plunged straight at Pecos. The latter halted, planted himself firmly and lifted the revolver. Whipple was desperate, and Geohegan equally determined. A distant report shattered the still air, breaking a lull in the target practice of LaDue and Hornaday. Geohegan gave vent to a hoarse yell of pain, and the revolver fell from his fist.

"Score one for Sim!" shouted Vandeever jubilantly. "That was as neat a bit of drop firin' as I ever seen."

Simmons had come into action, and at the very instant his services could best serve his friends. Whipple reached Geohegan's side at a jump, and in a flash had gathered up the fallen weapon.

"Into the cabin with you!" he ordered, prodding Pecos with the muzzle of the gun.

"Monte!" yelled Pecos, as he gripped his injured right arm with his left hand; "Sam! Thar's trouble at the ca——"

Whipple gave Pecos a push that sent him through the open door headlong.

"I've got him, W. J.!" cried Vandeever, from inside the cabin. "Get in here, quick! Once the door is closed we can hold this shack ag'inst all comers."

That move, however, effective though it might be, was not for Whipple. LaDue and Hornaday had lost all interest in Simmons, for the moment, and were racing back toward the cabin. A revolver cracked, and a bullet buzzed angrily past Whipple's cheek. He found himself looking into the gambler's cool, murderous eyes.

"I told you what to expect if you cut any capers," snapped LaDue, "and now here's where you get yours."

His first shot had missed because he was in too much of a hurry. Now he was more deliberate, and laughed jeeringly when Whipple, flexing his finger, brought down the hammer of Geohegan's gun on an empty shell. LaDue, no doubt, felt that he could afford to take his time and make sure. Whipple was nearer the Great Divide, at that moment, than Uncle Wes had ever been in his life. But LaDue wasted three seconds; and, while his weapon hung fire, a cabin window on his left crashed outward and, in the midst of the flying glass came Vandeever over the sill, falling on the gambler and bearing him down.

"That's the best ever, Charley!" exclaimed Whipple, and immediately gave his full attention to Hornaday.

LaDue selected his lawless aids with care and discrimination, and Geohegan and Hornaday were the pick of those men who regarded the law lightly and were of proved ability and courage. The tide was setting against LaDue, but Hornaday ran true to his traditions and, while possibly dismayed, he was ready for a last-ditch fight. Flinging himself down behind a small heap of firewood a few yards from the corner of the cabin, he began taking pot shots at Whipple from cover.

Indian fashion, Whipple took to a tree; thus screened, he "broke" the weapon that had failed him in the contest with LaDue and examined the shells in the cylinder. All were empty and useless—a piece of carelessness on Geohegan's part which, in other circumstances, would have won a rebuke from LaDue.

Vandeever had dragged LaDue into the cabin; and there, judging by the sounds that came through the open door, he was fairly busy. With a useless gun, and no cartridges at hand with which to replenish the cylinder, Whipple was at an impasse. Hornaday, watching weasel-eyed, was waiting for him to show enough of himself to make a target worth while.

This blockade was lifted by Simmons, as unexpectedly as Vandeever had crashed through the window and inter-

fered with LaDue. Watching from the shelf in the gathering half gloom, the aviator had realized how badly he was needed by his friends; so he had lowered the ladder, crossed the flat, and come up noiselessly on Hornaday's side of the woodpile. The first Whipple knew of this was by a startled yell from Hornaday. The yell was followed by sounds of a furious struggle, and Whipple left the oak tree and ran swiftly to give Simmons a hand. From that point on the struggle was as brief as it was decisive.

When Hornaday, at the revolver's point, was marched into the cabin, LaDue was discovered flat on his back on the floor, Vandeever's two knees on his chest, one hand compressing his throat, and the other hand, gripping LaDue's revolver, threatening and holding Geohegan at bay. A little work on the part of Whipple and Simmons made the victory complete.

Ropes were found, and the gambler and his confederates were firmly lashed and rendered helpless. Geohegan's hands were left free, because of his wounded arm, but his feet were bound, and it was clear that he had lost all relish for further combat.

"That was short and snappy, I'll tell a man!" Vandeever exulted. "About twice as short and snappy, Three-card, as if you had treated me and W. J. white and given us our grub. If you want to make a reg'lar panther out of a man, jest give him a touch o' famine. Didn't that never occur to you?"

"If you fellows want your seventy-five thousand dollars," said LaDue, "take it and get out of here."

"We want more than that, LaDue," spoke up Whipple. "There's the loot from the Eudora bank. You don't think for a minute that we'll leave that behind?"

The gambler scowled. "Simmons told you about that, I reckon. And Concho wasn't nicked at all, this morning?"

Vandeever laughed as he held up both hands. "That was jest a possum play, LaDue," he answered. "How does it feel, havin' the boot on t'other leg? Sim," he added turning and giving his hand to the aviator, "you are the clear quill."

"Thank Johnson Blue for that," said Simmons humbly, as he shook the cowboy's hand; "the writings in that little book have given me a brand-new outlook upon life. I'm glad we fell into this cañon."

"Same here," supplemented Vandeever. His glance roved reflectively over the supper table, and the remains of the meal left by LaDue and his men. "You strike a light, W. J.," he went on, "and I'll stir up the fire and rustle some hot chow. Honest, I was never so hungry in all my born days. Poor old Blue! For half a day we've been under his pack o' trouble here in starvation Gulch. It brought us right close to him, don't you think?"

CHAPTER XV.

THE LAST ORDEAL.

THE supplies in the cabin were raided for a bountiful meal, and it was served piping hot. When Vandeever at last pushed back from the table and lighted a cigarette, he was in a genial and happy mood.

"There's a satchel under that east bunk, Whipple," remarked Simmons, "and you will find your money and the bank loot inside. LaDue was cashier and took charge of all the boodle."

Whipple found the small satchel, cleared a space on the table, and began checking over the contents of the satchel. All his thousand-dollar bills were, of course, intact; in addition to these, he found twenty thousand dollars in bank notes of twenty, fifty, and one-hundred-dollar denominations, all banded in packets. Also, there were Liberty Bonds to the amount of forty thousand dollars more.

"This is fine!" exclaimed Whipple happily. "Now I can give my uncle's money—the most of it—back to him, and we can turn over the stolen loot to the bank."

"You're a pinhead, Whipple, if you do anything like that," spoke up LaDue. "Why don't you three men divide it up among you and take a trip abroad?"

Whipple laughed, Vandeever glared, and Simmons looked uncomfortable.

"What you need, you thievin' tinhorn," said Vandeever, "is a course of study in Johnson Blue's book. Forty a month and found is all I'm lookin' for'ard to; and I'll tell a man that the prospect is more pleasin' to me than ever it was in my old careless days. Funny how a batch of writin's like Blue's gets under a feller's hide, ain't it?"

Whipple, Vandeever, and Simmons passed their last night in the cañon cabin. While two of them slept, one was always on guard. The prisoners were resourceful and desperate men, and no chances were to be taken with them. Next morning there was an early breakfast, and the three friends made their preparations for leaving the cabin and getting out of the hills.

Three canteens were filled with cool, clear water from the creek, and three packs of supplies were made ready. Three revolvers belonging to LaDue and his partners were appropriated, and their cylinders replenished with fresh ammunition.

Whipple had tried hard to learn something about the situation of the cañon, the route to be followed in getting back to Phoenix, and the method by which LaDue and those with him had reached that part of the rough country. The gambler had nothing to tell him, and neither had Hornaday nor Geohegan.

"You'll never make it on foot," LaDue had said; "your grub and water will be gone before you are halfway out. A stray prospector may find your bones, some time in the future, but even that is a hundred-to-one bet."

"Then," returned Whipple coolly, "it will be as hard on you as it is on us; for when we leave here, LaDue, we'll haul up the rope ladder. If we get out, we'll send a sheriff and posse back after you. That's better, isn't it, than starving to death in this cañon?"

A gloomy expression crossed the faces of Hornaday and Geohegan, but the gambler seemed utterly unmoved.

"Not according to my way of thinking," said LaDue.

All the firearms in the cabin were carried away by Whipple and his friends. Geohegan was left with his hands free, and it would be only a short time before he released LaDue and Hornaday of their bonds. Carrying off the guns was to prevent further trouble while the homeward-bound party climbed to the rim rock and set out on the eastern trail.

Whipple, who was the last man to reach the shelf, found himself on a broad, smooth ledge which had a downward pitch to the place where it joined the cliff. Simmons explained how easy it had been to keep clear of bullets launched from the flat merely by hugging the rear wall.

"And there's the way up," he finished, indicating the lip of a fissure that angled steeply toward the top of the wall, back of the swinging vines. "I had a mind to explore that, only LaDue didn't give me time."

The rope ladder was drawn up and piled on the shelf, and all the extra firearms were laid beside it; then, Whipple leading, the climb for the top was begun. Steady nerves were demanded for this, and the amalgamator was glad that the festooned vines hid from his eyes the dizzy depths of the cañon. In due course he came out on the crest of the bank, and paused to let his gaze rove over the flat.

All the prisoners were free of their ropes and standing in a forlorn group by the cabin, their faces no more than white patches against the greenery below. Hornaday and Geohegan shook their fists; LaDue coolly lighted a cigarette.

Whipple's gaze moved toward the left, where a sandy mound lifted itself among the trees. All that was mortal of Johnson Blue was there—a misguided man who found wisdom in the spot where death overtook him.

"Kind o' rough on Blue," remarked Vandeever, halting at Whipple's side, "leavin' him with that bunch of tough customers. You got his book, W. J.? And his eighteen cents?"

"I have, Charley," replied Whipple, "and let us hope that the spirit of his

last writings will be with us and nerve us for our fight in getting out of these hills."

He turned to look eastward. It was a discouraging vista, for all that could be seen in that direction was peak after peak. Whipple descended an easy slope on his way to a seam that opened between two of the hills. He stopped suddenly, his eyes on the sand in front of him.

"One secret is out, anyway!" he exclaimed. "LaDue got here in an automobile. Here's where the machine stopped to let him and his two partners off; and there's where it turned to take the back track." A note of cheer crept into his voice. If an automobile could get here," he went on, "I don't see how we're going to run into any very hard traveling. All we've got to do is to follow the tracks."

The tracks were easily traced, and led into the seam, wound tortuously about the bases of the hills, and then climbed a ridge and descended into a wide, shallow valley.

The sun was mounting toward the zenith, a brazen, fiery shield whose rays grew hotter as the day wore on. Heat waves, rising from the baked earth, quivered in the furnacelike air. Clumps of cholla cactus and greasewood danced grotesquely when viewed through the wavering, transparent veil. Simmons was first to give out. He staggered to his knees with a groan.

"I'm no good at this kind of travel," he complained. "This pack on my shoulders weighs a ton."

For the dozenth time he uncapped his canteen and put it to his lips. Vandeever snatched it away from him.

"You're waterlogged, Sim," said the cowboy. "We got to be careful o' the stuff in the canteens. And, anyways, you could drink like a fish and it wouldn't help none. Get up and try ag'in; I'll help you."

With Vandeever on one side and Whipple on the other, lending him their support, the aviator reeled on. Over his head the amalgamator and the cowboy exchanged significant glances. Simmons was not toughened to the deserts, as they were, and they realized that he was going to be a tremendous handicap. But he had played a man's part in the cañon. Whipple's face set hard, and Vandeever's lips tightened. What one thought was at that moment in the mind of the other: They would all win clear of those scorched, waterless hills, or they would all stay in them to the end of time.

When Simmons' feet refused to move another step, Whipple found a great, bare pinnacle of rock, and in its shadow all three sat down for a rest. They ate some of their food, washing it down with a few sips from the canteens. When the time came for them to start on again, Whipple and Vandeever scanned the sky with ominous eyes and decided to remain where they were.

The hilltops to the north were blurred with a haze of ghastly yellow. The haze thickened into an opaque curtain and drew onward with a rush. A puff of wind, blistering hot, stirred the sand of the valley until the ground seemed to be smoking.

"Here's an elegant row of stumps. W. J.," growled Vandeever; "a thing like this couldn't happen only right now, could it?"

"What's the matter?" queried Simmons.

"Sand storm," answered Whipple briefly. "Hug the lee of that rock, Simmons; and pull off your coat and have it ready to put over your head."

They all knelt and pushed close to the rock pinnacle. The flying sand whispered against its worn sides; then, as the wind increased in fury, gusty blasts eddied around the huge bowlder and drove the sand stingingly against their faces. The yellow fog was all around them, and the smothering heat made breathing almost impossible. With heads muffled in their coats they gasped and choked and almost stifled.

The physical torment brought by the storm gave the impression that it was hours in passing, but its duration could have been measured in minutes. After reaching its height it breathed itself out, leaving three mounds of sand from

which the travelers extricated themselves.

"That was shorter than usual, W. J.," remarked Vandeever, shaking the sand out of his sleeves and wiping it from his grimy face.

"The worst thing it did to us was to blot out the tracks of that automobile," said Whipple; "now we've got to head east, and go it blind."

When their packs were disinterred, it was discovered that Simmons' canteen was missing. He could remember nothing about it. All three spent an hour kicking around in the loose sand, and were compelled at last to give up the search.

Losing the canteen was a calamity, but nothing was said by Whipple or Vandeever to make Simmons feel worse about his carelessness than he did. They struggled on down that interminable valley, their only blessing the lessening heat of the sun as it dropped toward its setting.

Another halt was made at sundown. The aviator, by that time, was in a sorry state. His eyes were puffed, his tongue and lips were swollen, and the last particle of energy had been sapped from his body. But there was a growing coolness in the air that was most refreshing, and Simmons slumped to the ground, closed his eyes and slept. Whipple aroused him, after a while, and gave him his rations from the packs. He ate, gulped down the little water he was allowed to have, then went to sleep again. An hour later his two companions got him to his feet once more, and they continued their weary plodding onward under the brilliant Arizona night sky. Whipple conned their course by the stars and pressed the pace.

There was now a very decided chill in the air which would have been most uncomfortable had the three travelers not been constantly moving. Simmons bore up better than he had done during the day, but his strength was flagging even while Whipple and Vandeever were going at their best.

"I'm no good at this," he panted; "you fellows go on and leave me here. When you get out, send somebody back to pick me up."

"Not on your tintype, Sim!" returned the cowboy with emphasis. "We all go or we all stay, and that's flat. Buck up! We can make five miles at night a heap easier than we can do one by day. Here, we'll help you."

Whipple and Vandeever took turns carrying Simmons' pack and helping to support him. They managed to keep him on his feet until after midnight, and then found further attempts useless. Dropping to the ground on the very spot where Simmons gave out, all of them slept, dog weary and worn to the point of exhaustion.

They awoke with the blazing sun once more in their eyes, and the blistering heat growing as the sun mounted toward the higher heavens. Then began such a struggle as neither Whipple nor Vandeever had ever known in all their Arizona years.

Simmons grew light-headed and became hard to manage. He fought to get hold of the canteens and the few drops of water that remained in them; he discarded his pack; he sat down obstinately and refused to move; in short, he did everything his irrational mind suggested to delay the journey.

The amalgamator and the cowboy grappled with him, dragged him, carried him, their one consuming desire to get onward at any cost. Simmons began to see visions of flowing water and green trees. He babbled about them, and tried to crawl to the shelter of the groves and reach the streams.

Vandeever, sprawled in the hot sand, gave vent to a croaking laugh. He reached out gropingly with his hands. "Where's my canteen, W. J.?" he asked faintly.

"Right in front of you there!" exclaimed the startled Whipple. "Can't you see it, Charley?"

"See nothin'; I've been sun blind for an hour. Poor old Blue never went through anything like this, old-timer; he had Lost Creek with him all the way. Jest uncap one o' the canteens, will you, W. J.?"

Whipple uncapped both canteens.

One was dry and in the other there remained no more than a swallow of water. He pressed the canteen to Vandeever's lips.

"Now you better take a swig," suggested Vandeever.

"Sure," said Whipple, and tossed the canteen away.

Once more Vandeever laughed. "Ain't we the gay spenders for you?" he croaked. "A hundred and thirty-five thousand dollars in our jeans—and we couldn't buy a glass o' water with it. All gone, you old seed; you can't fool me. Made me take the last drop, didn't you? Well, that's about like you is all I can say, W. J.!"

There was no answer. With an effort, Vandeever got to his knees and crawled over the hot sand, groping with his hands. He found what he was hunting for, at last: a still form, crumpled and motionless. He felt the face, and with his hand he patted one of the shoulders.

"Best pard a man ever had!" he muttered. "If here's where we take the Long Trail, W. J., I couldn't ask for no better company."

CHAPTER XVI.

HARD TO BELIEVE.

WHIPPLE rode back to consciousness on a sea of troubled dreams; and a voice, which had an oddly familiar sound, caused him to sit up quickly and take notice.

It was night, one of those splendid nights for which the desert country is noted. The stars were so big and bright that it seemed as though one had only to reach out a hand in order to get hold of Orion's Belt, or of the Big or Little Bear. There was a lush smell of standing water, and Whipple lowered his eyes and saw a good-sized water hole, surrounded by a dusky chaparral of mesquite. How the moonbeams played and danced over that stretch of water! In the nearer distance was a glowing camp fire. A very tall man in sharp silhouette was jerking a bag from the teeth of a scrawny, crop-eared burro. Tossing the bag on a heap of camp plunder, the man hauled the burro away on a picket rope.

"I'll picket you where you won't be so handy to the grub, Handsome," said the boss of the camp, and he and the burro lost themselves temporarily in the chaparral shadows.

Whipple's wandering glances took in his closer vicinity. Vandeever lay on one side of him, his eyes bandaged with a white cloth. On the other side lay Simmons.

"Hey, Charley!" called Whipple softly.

"On deck, sport," answered the cowboy promptly. "How you stackin' up?"

"All right. Feel so comfortable I've a notion I've been watered and fed."

"Plumb comfortable myself, except my eyes. The old geezer put somethin' on 'em and tied 'em up; he says it's a sure cure, and that I'll be able to see things by sunrise."

Whipple turned to the aviator. "How are you, Simmons?" he queried.

"Sort of hazy," Simmons told him. "I've had a particularly bad dream and can't remember a thing since the sand storm till I woke up here."

"This prospector must have found us and brought us to the water hole," Whipple went on.

"That's what he done," said Vandeever; "he told me about that while he was bandagin' my lamps. He allows we was all three purty badly done up when he happened upon us."

"Who is he? I've heard that voice of his before somewhere."

Here the tall man himself drew near and stood at Whipple's side. "You've heard this bazoo of mine many a time, W. J.," he put in. "Give me a good look, boy."

Whipple turned his head and stared. Then he rubbed his eyes and gave a gasp. "Uncle Wes?" he said incredulously. "Well, it can't be Uncle Wes! Can it?"

The tall man laughed. "It's me, all right. That doctor you sent down from Prescott found out that my heart was as good as anybody's, and that all I needed was exercise. Her preescription was to stir around and be active. That's

what I've been doin', W. J., ever since you sailed away in a flyin' machine and dropped plumb off the earth. I'm not feelin' more than thirty years old, this minute. This spell of desert ramblin' has chirked me up wonderful. That lady doc—doctor—sure knows her business."

For a minute or two Whipple was so overwhelmed that he lost the power of speech. At last he found his tongue.

"Lady doctor!" he echoed. "Is that Doctor Mixinger a lady?"

"In every sense o' the word, W. J.," declared Uncle Wes; "and she's a right competent lady, if anybody wants to ask you. As soon as I found I had thirty years to live instead of only six months, of course my deal with you was off. I had to get back my money before you had spent it all. Believe me, I did stir around! I figgered that every day I lost while lookin' for you cost me more than three thousand dollars. And I lost a lot of 'em, mainly because you and your party had climbed into the sky and nobody had any idee where you had come down. The guess was pretty general that you were all killed by an accident to your machine and were lyin' in the mountains somewhere. Naturally, I wanted to beat the coyotes to my money. Three-card Monte LaDue had put up a job on you, W. J., and——"

"We know about that, Uncle Wes," cut in Whipple.

"So Charley Vandeever was tellin' me. Well, the sheriff and a posse started for Saddleback Flats," Uncle Wes continued; "and Galusha Mingo and Katie and me, we got an automobile and followed 'em up, but——"

"Katie!" murmured Whipple. "Did she try to find me, too?"

"I never saw a girl feel so bad over anything as she did over the way you disappeared. She and Galusha are still looking for you, but they are staying at Jimmie Haight's cabin in Apache Draw, and doin' their searchin' from there. You see, there was no sign of you at Saddleback Flats, and no sign of LaDue and his crowd; but we all had a notion you had been wrecked in the mountains, so we began to hunt, each in our different ways. I borrowed Jimmie Haight's burro, Handsome, and got a grub stake off of Jimmie, and put off into the hills on my own. The sheriff and his bunch are usin' an automobile, and Galusha and daughter Katie are ridin' hossback.

"Day before yesterday I hit some automobile tracks. I could tell by the treads of the tires that them tracks wasn't made by the sheriff's machine, so I follered 'em straight into the heart of the rough country. I reckoned I was getting purty warm just when that blamed sand storm hit the hills and wiped out the automobile tracks. I made for this water hole, as soon as I dug Handsome and myself out of the drifted sand, and pitched camp here; then I strolled up that wide valley and fairly stumbled over you and your two pards. It looked for a spell as though you lay right where the flyin' machine had dropped you, and that about all that was left of you was ree-mains. But I was wrong, for all three of you were alive. Two swallows of water made Vandeever sit up and talk; then I began to get the hang o' things. I was playin' in great luck, W. J., and you and your friends were doing the same."

The suddenness with which his uncle had stepped out of the rôle of a confirmed invalid, and spread himself over the country in active pursuit of what was left of his hundred thousand dollars, was a matter of consuming wonder to Whipple. Now that Uncle Wes had a long life ahead of him, nothing was more natural than that he should want his money back again.

"I should say we were in luck!" declared Whipple.

"You understand I've got a right to take back what's left of my money?"

"Of course! Why, Uncle Wes, I was planning to return it to you."

"You're shy something like twenty-five thousand, W. J.," said the old tightwad. "Are you willin' to make it up to me?"

"You're a nice kind of an uncle, you old skinflint!" yelped Vandeever. "After tellin' W. J. to go out and spend

reply which Cady could not hear. An instant later he lengthened his stride slightly. Though the coach expected to see Tibbetts gradually lose ground, he was amazed to see the man he had trained turn and deliberately wink at Warren and him.

Then, to Cady's further wonder, Tibbetts suddenly appeared to take on a new lease of life, reaching and then keeping abreast the Maxwell runner, so he could not cut in ahead of him, the Kenyon representative began his old trick of tongue wagging—much to the other's obvious discomfort.

"Can it be possible," Cady asked, with a gasp, turning to Warren, "that Talking Tibbetts isn't so all in as he looked?"

"Anything seems possible with Tib!" was the captain's reply.

Through the balance of that lap and all of the next, Tibbetts caused the Maxwell runner almost continual discomfort. Strive as he did to circle the Kenyonite, Tibbetts succeeded in frustrating every attempt. And through it all he kept up a running fire of chatter whose effect on his rival seemed anything but beneficial.

CHAPTER VI.

THE LAST WORD.

THE gun spoke at the start of the last lap, and Cady pivoted on his heels as they rounded the upper curve. They entered the long straightaway leading south, and Miller, outwitted, began to sprint. But to every one's dumfoundment, Talking Tibbetts, apparently absolutely out of it less than two minutes before, sprinted, too. What was more, he beat Miller to the south-banked turn. He skimmed around into the last straightaway for home; then, turning back for an instant, laughed something back at his glowering pursuer.

The rest is Kenyon history. Some even go so far as to say that Tibbetts turned a handspring while waiting for the redoubtable Miller to come abreast again. At any rate, he did kill time enough to enable the black-clad athlete to come within hearing distance. For every one within earshot heard Talking Tibbetts take leave of the Maxwell phenom in these words: "So long, old scout! See you this evening."

And with that Tibbetts romped in to victory, and a bewildered coach's arms.

"Oh, that lurchy stuff?" he began laughingly when, a moment later, Cady asked him a question. "I was telling the other Miller—the pacemaker—a story about an intoxicated man, and was giving him an imitation of how he walked. Then an inspiration seized me, and I finished by shouting to him that I was all in. I wasn't, but I would have been if I had stuck to him another lap.

"You see, Cady," Tibbetts went on, "I kept with him that far to make sure he didn't intend to finish. I had a hunch the other Miller was the dangerous one. But I had to be sure. From the way the leading one breathed when I left him I knew I was safe. All the rest of it was just make-believe. I tried to kid the hard man into thinking I couldn't hold out. And I guess I got his goat, all right."

"I guess you did," chimed in Cady. "But how the deuce did you spot him for the real phenom? His time was good, all right; for you both beat four minutes and twenty-one seconds."

"That good? Whew! Oh, as for the really good Miller. You see, Cady, I have run against him before. He beat me the last time, at that Fourth of July picnic I told you about. But to-day, I guess I——"

"You got in the last word, Tibbetts!" Cady slapped him loudly on the back. "You talked him out of it—and by doing so you saved the day for Kenyon!"

Just then, perhaps for the first time in his life—at least, when he was awake—Talking Tibbetts, emulating the well-known clam, said nothing. But there was a smile on his ruddy face.

And Then Some

CISSIE: "Miss Oldbird keeps me guessing. I never know what she is about."

Doris: "Oh, she's about forty-five."

into this particular angle of the affair was wrapped up in the fact that McDougal himself was the one who had found and rescued his nephew, Vandeever, and Simmons; not only getting back what remained of his money, but also—and this was the big, the marvelous thing as it turned out—finding the book of Johnson Blue and developing an absorbed interest in the wastrel's sound philosophy.

The whole Southwest learned how the sheriff and posse in their flivver caught smoke signals from the camp at the water hole, made for it, and learned about the bank looters trapped and held in Lost Creek Cañon. Vandeever, his sight restored, but with eyes protected by smoked glasses, furnished by Uncle Wes, piloted the law officers along the shallow valley, over the ridge, through the seam, and so to the cañon. There the wily LaDue and his two roughneck confederates were captured with very little trouble, and landed behind the bars of the building in the courthouse plaza in Phoenix. After the courts had dealt with them, they were taken to another place of stone walls and bars for an extended stay.

Bad news, however, was current regarding Mogollon Mike Moloney and the fifty-dollar grubstake furnished by Whipple. Originally it had been bestowed as a free gift to an old friend, but so "white" was Moloney in his intentions that, in secret, he drew up a grubstake agreement and deposited it with Felix Vannell in trust for Whipple. The mine was sold ultimately for fifty thousand dollars. Of this amount, however, Whipple received nothing, as Moloney lost the entire amount in settling gambling debts, which he incurred on the strength of his find. Whipple's fifty dollars, cast as bread upon the waters, therefore never returned to him, and the incident could not be included among the dazzling romances of the mining country. But, as Whipple remarked, he had expected nothing and therefore could not be disappointed.

The bank reward went share and share alike to Whipple, Vandeever, and Simmons. And Vandeever and Simmons were not forgotten by Whipple; for when the latter bought a ranch near Prescott, Charley Van had an interest in it and acted as foreman; and Simmons, who started wrong, but caught himself up through the writings of the late Johnson Blue, was also given a position.

The right kind of prosperity dawned for everybody; and, seemingly, it had root in that little book of Johnson Blue's. Strangest of all, perhaps, was the effect the book had on Wesley Plunkett McDougal. So fascinated was he with the weird record and its gems of wisdom, that he borrowed the book and kept it for two weeks. When he returned it to his nephew he was a changed man. As Doctor Alfred Mixinger had undeceived him regarding his health, so Johnson Blue's posthumous influence altered his whole conception of life.

Uncle Wes wanted to return the seventy-five thousand dollars to Whipple, declaring that he had given it in good faith and should not take it back. But Whipple insisted that he had no right to the money, quoted Blue to support his argument, and refused flatly to accept it.

Although overruled on this point, Uncle Wes was like the Rock of Gibraltar in refusing to let his nephew make up any of the amount he had spent.

"I wasn't to invest any of the hundred thousand, Uncle Wes," argued Whipple, "but it seems that I did that unwittingly. If Charley and I hadn't bought the aëroplane we should not have been cast away in Lost Creek Cañon and should not have been able to recover the bank's money or get the reward for capturing LaDue and his two pals."

"I'm standing pat," growled Uncle Wes obstinately. "Blue's book is a lesson for tightwads as well as for spendthrifts, and I'm taking my lesson to heart. From now on, by gorry, I'm going to pay taxes, and every cent I've got goes into taxable bonds. I owe that to a land that can produce a man like Johnson Blue. Hereafter, W. J., I'm going to live like a white man. Get me? I've got my health, and I'm going

after some of the brightness and happiness Doctor Mixinger mentioned. And there's that Galusha Mingo investment, my boy; and then, the rest of it. When's the wedding? I'm going to buy a present for that affair that will cost a wad of money. When's it to be?"

Here was something else again. Uncle Wes referred to an event that happened when Whipple, coming out of the hills, stopped for a night at Jimmie Haight's cabin in Apache Draw. Uncle Wes had to return the burro he had borrowed, a long-eared, camp-raiding pack animal who was called Handsome because he was so ugly. Galusha Mingo and Katie were there, it will be remembered, and hence Whipple was very anxious to stop.

He was welcomed with open arms by Mingo, and with much happiness by Katie. To both of them he recited the adventures that had followed his attempt to get to Los Angeles by aëroplane so that, aided and abetted by Concho Charley Vandeever, he could spend largely and acquire most for his money.

"What a blessing you were wrecked in a cañon," commented Galusha Mingo, "where you couldn't spend a cent!"

"No; you are wrong, Mr. Mingo," corrected Whipple; "the blessing came to me in the form of a book written by the late Johnson Blue. But we'll not discuss that."

He finished his recital, Katie listening breathlessly.

"All very good," approved Galusha Mingo. "Capturing the robbers and recovering the money has caused you to get ahead in spite of yourself. No doubt you have wondered about the ten thousand dollars which I pried out of you. Well, I'll tell about that. Katie and I were worried to see you spending your money so foolishly, so we laid our plans to save some of it for you. With the money you let me have, W. J., I bought an option on Holdover's big brick block. He was hard up and eager to sell, and my option called for a bargain and gave me thirty days for a turnover.

"I didn't need the thirty days," he continued. "In just a week I disposed of the option for twenty thousand dollars, and I am holding the profit for you. It would be a start, you see.

"I want you to know, W. J.," added Mingo earnestly, "that I didn't take that money for myself. It was a plot of Katie's and mine to help you; and I had to draw on my psychology and proceed by indirection in order to be of any assistance to you. Katie has worried about that, and the false position in which she has apparently placed herself."

"We'll talk that over," said Whipple to Mingo. "Suppose we take a walk down the draw, Katie?" he asked.

They took their walk; and by a spring under a cottonwood tree they sat down, and Katie began to speak of Mamie and Lorena.

"I want to tell you about Mamie and Lorena, Katie," Whipple interrupted. "If you will remember, I met those two girls at a party at your house. You introduced me to them. Whenever I came into town with a little money to spend, Mamie and Lorena were all for helping me get rid of it, while you were always asking me to put it in the bank—or pay my debts.

"Well, you know, debts never bothered me much. I was always for letting the other fellow worry. Too free and easy, you understand, but with not a desire to beat anybody out of what was his just due. I just couldn't seem to get the hang of that. I wanted a lot, and thirty a week won't go very far. Your constant talk of saving rather jarred on me, so I turned to Mamie and Lorena. There I made my big mistake. That night I plunged with you to the extent of fifteen dollars and forty cents, and you called me down —oh, very nicely!—for doing it; I felt as though all the fun had been taken out of the evening. But always, I want you to know, I had a thousand thoughts of Katie Mingo where I had one of Mamie or Lorena. That's how I felt, deep down in my heart."

There was that in his eyes, at this moment, which brought a vivid flush to Katie's cheeks. And when he took her hand she did not withdraw it.

"I was worried, over there in Lost Creek Cañon, Katie," Whipple went on. "You see, Johnson Blue, when he was a bookkeeper at a hundred a month, lost his heart to a girl named Ethel. That's the only part of her name that appears in his book. Just 'Ethel.' If I had the full name and address, I'd go personally to tell Ethel what happened to Johnson Blue. Well, when Blue got his million dollars from his uncle, and began having high jinks with it, it appears that Ethel reproved him for his spendthrift habits—just as you reproved me, I imagine. And Blue felt annoyed, and went his own way, and finally found himself a prisoner in Lost Creek Cañon, with only eighteen cents in his pocket and the girl whom he loved married to a better man.

"That's what worried me, there in the cañon, Katie. What if you married a better man while I was reading Johnson Blue and seeing the error of my ways and making a firm resolution to be different—if I ever got out of that pocket? What if——"

"Wesley," said Katie softly, "it wasn't possible."

"What wasn't possible?" demanded Whipple, a wild suspicion stabbing at his heart.

"Why," answered Katie, her eyes lowered, "that I could marry a better man than—than you!"

The wild suspicion that Katie might be pledged to another at once took wings.

"And will you marry me, Katie?" asked Whipple. "I have prospects now; and, thanks to Johnson Blue, I can be all that your father would have me. Katie, look up! Tell me if I am going to be the happiest man that ever lived?"

What Katie said it is not necessary to put down here; for her answer stood revealed in that question of Uncle Wesley's: "When's the wedding?" Whipple, very joyfully, told him "when was" the wedding, and Uncle Wes shook his hand hard.

"Katie's the girl I had picked for you all along," he averred. "She hasn't been proud of Old Plunks in the past, I reckon, but that's all going to be changed from now on. And some day, W. J.," he added earnestly, "I want you to take me to Lost Creek Cañon."

"What for?" asked Whipple curiously.

"I want to put a ten-dollar wreath on the grave of Johnson Blue," was the answer.

And that, to any one who had known the old Uncle Wes, was something for him to say.

LURE OF THE SEA

By Francis Warren

THE blue waters dance to the song of the breeze,
And the incoming waves break and feather;
There is sparkle and snap in the quick-running seas,
And the signs that proclaim sailing weather.

The boats in the offing all tug at their chains,
From the dainty white yacht to the liner,
And the battered old tramp wallows deep and complains
As she chafes at the bonds that confine her.

The east wind is ruffling the water in glee,
Till the tossing tops chuckle together;
And the wanderlust's call from the sun-dappled sea
Holds the sailorman's heart in a tether.

(COMPLETE IN THIS ISSUE)

CHAPTER I.

CADY TAKES NOTICE.

IT was warm for November. Sheltered by an oak near the south end of the oval, Coach Cady sighed in relief and started his watch, as Warren at last got the nondescript line of entrants away to a fairly even break.

The pistol and his duty discharged, Warren sauntered down to the place where the coach stood, reaching the giant oak as the leaders of the free-for-all four-mile cross-country gallop rounded the south turn of the first of the two laps they must cover before leaving the oval and taking to the hills. "Some turnout!" he said, and laughed.

Cady's countenance faintly reflected the captain's expression. "I doubt if there's a distance runner among the newcomers," he remarked, eying them critically. "Look at 'em! Run like a pack of goats—except Keeler."

Keeler, though not a wonder, was the most dependable of the previous season's milers.

"Who is that gawky hoosier running at Keeler's side?" Cady added, as the leaders turned into the second lap. He referred to a chap well over six feet tall, in striped trousers and tennis slippers, with a pair of legs that would have made a giraffe jealous.

"Hanged if I know," Captain Warren replied. "I've seen him around the campus the last couple of years, but I'm sure he hasn't been out for athletics before. Runs like a camel," he added, laughing.

"You said it! But what does all the lip movement mean? The darned fool is talking to Keeler, or my eyes are fooling me!"

"He sure is! But he won't keep that up long. Once they get out into the hilly country he'll wish he'd saved his breath."

The second lap completed, Keeler and his awkwardly built companion still leading, the runners left the cindered oval and disappeared through the wide north gateway.

"Pretty fair clip, at that," mumbled Cady, consulting his watch. "Two-twenty is strong for the first half mile of a long go."

Warren agreed. "But they'll slow down soon. The first quarter mile of

grade climbing will take the sap out of most of them."

For a time they discussed the discouraging prospects for the coming track season. Then Cady, glancing toward the north gate, stiffened in surprise. "The mischief, Warren! They're back!"

The amazed track captain verified the coach's statement. "And the bird with the camel stride! He's still at Keeler's side!"

"And he's still talking!" Cady gulped. "Why, they haven't been gone fifteen minutes!"

Almost stupefied, the two men watched the runners reënter the oval, where the last mile was to be run, and start down the long straightaway. None of the other contenders appeared until the leaders had circuited the first lap. Then a weary trio struggled in, and took to the path, a lap and twenty yards behind the pace setters.

Keeler seemed far from fresh. His breathing was obviously labored, and occasionally he faltered in his stride. But the other man amazed the watchers most. His stride was ungainly—almost impossible—but seemingly he experienced no difficulty in the task of filling and emptying his lungs.

The most surprising thing about the lofty young speed burner, though, was his mouth. He was keeping up a running fire of talk every step of the way. Warren and Cady did not rely on their eyes alone to verify this, for each time the runners passed near enough they could hear the fellow's voice!

"Why, it's impossible!" exclaimed the coach. "Who ever heard of a distance runner with wind to spare for conversation?"

When three laps had been covered, Keeler's companion turned to question him. The nod of the well-known runner evidently satisfied the other, for he turned straight ahead and increased his speed.

"I'm blamed if he isn't going to sprint the rest of the way!" exclaimed Cady, and started for the north end of the oval, Warren keeping step with him with difficulty.

Cady was right. Perhaps the weird gallop into which the tall runner broke could not properly be called a sprint, but it certainly was a distance consumer.

The coach and captain reached the finish line as, with a wild swinging of his long arms, and an irregular but unbelievably rapid placing of one foot before the other, this well-nigh indescribable runner plunged toward the string they held breast-high between them.

Cady caught the time as the tall one's wide chest broke the cotton strand, and hand outstretched, hastened toward the strange runner. But Cady was not quick enough. For some reason this modern marathoner did not pause at the finish, but charged on through the open gateway and disappeared from sight.

CHAPTER II.

"TALKING" TIBBETTS.

TEN seconds later Keeler stumbled in. When the star runner had recovered his wind somewhat, Cady questioned him eagerly. "Who was your tall friend?"

The miler smiled feebly. "A bear, eh? Never met him before. Tibbets, he said his name was—Tarkington Tibbetts. Should have been 'Talking' Tibbetts, believe me!"

"I could see he wagged his tongue a good bit," put in Cady. "Guess he didn't keep it up while you were climbing hills, though?"

"On the contrary, he talked every step of the way! Man, he——"

"Which reminds me," interrupted the coach, glancing at his stop watch. "Did you fellows cover the entire course?"

"I'll say we did! If you felt like I do now, you'd know you'd gone four miles, and then some. Why? Was the time fair?"

"Fair!" Cady cleared his throat. "That human giraffe made it in just three seconds under twenty-one minutes!"

Keeler's lips puckered, but he was too tired to force a whistle through them. "Why," he said falteringly, "that's almost two minutes better than

ever has been made over this particular course!"

"I'm aware of that," agreed Cady. He turned to the track captain. "You say Tibbetts has been at Kenyon two years?"

Warren nodded.

"And never reported for track! That's the limit—with our shortage of long-distance material. Wonder why he hustled out so soon? Didn't even pause to say hello. Any idea, Keeler?"

"He told me he was in a hurry," the miler replied. "Said he had to catch a train for San Francisco as soon as possible after the race was over. Going to spend the week-end there."

"I see. Wonder where he's from? I've never heard of a prep-school athlete in these parts named Tibbetts."

"Up country somewhere," volunteered Keeler. "Said he ran at a picnic once, but outside of that was inexperienced."

"We'll see that he gets plenty of experience," promised Cady. "The idea of his sitting idle—despite his crude style—while Kenyon's up in the air for lack of a miler! Know where he's staying?"

"That I can't say," spoke Keeler, by now breathing more easily. "I didn't ask many questions. I needed all my wind. I contented myself with listening to whatever Tibbetts had to say."

"Don't blame you!" commented Warren. "Tibbetts must be a funny duck. What did he talk about, anyway?"

"What didn't he talk about!" Keeler laughed. "He started out with a bit of autobiography almost before we'd covered fifty yards. The second lap he became eloquent on the decadence of the theater. As we left the field he mentioned that he had to catch the earliest train possible for San Francisco, and from then on he hit on high, touching on everything from cabarets to the Einstein theory!"

"The deuce!" said Cady. "Tibbetts must be a prodigious reader."

"I'll bet! But he was a scream when we got back to the oval. He has a stock of yarns that would make a monologist jealous. But he got in a hurry when he learned there only remained one lap to go, said good-by, and lit out."

"Too bad some of the sporting scribes weren't on hand," Cady mused aloud. "They sure would have had material for a write-up. But, Warren," he addressed the captain, "do you realize what this means to us? Once educate Tibbetts in the fine points of running, and little old Kenyon will have a world beater on her hands!"

Warren nodded. "If he can perform as he did to-day, needlessly wasting his wind gabbing, what won't he be able to do gagged?"

Cady made inquiry, and Monday evening found Tibbetts in his room at Mrs. Wheeler's boarding house. Inside of five minutes he secured his promise to report for track in the spring. He asked the six-foot junior why he had not tried for something earlier.

"I never thought I could run to amount to anything," was Tibbetts' reply. "I imagined it would be wasting my time and the college's. I entered the cross-country just for the fun of it. You more than surprise me! I had no idea we were making fast time."

"Keeler said you hadn't done much running," put in the coach.

"Oh, I've run plenty, chasing jack rabbits and squirrels over the farm," the big fellow enlightened the amused Cady. "But as for racing, once at a Fourth of July picnic was the only time. I entered the mile, and got badly beaten by a shrimp who hardly came up to my shoulder. But I think I beat myself at that. I let him set the pace, and he set it slow. We were both fresh as new-laid eggs the last hundred yards, but he was a better sprinter than I. If we'd traveled faster at the start I might have won."

Cady understood. "Wait till we get you in track togs, Tibbetts! A little better form, no gas wasted on conversation, and——"

"I don't waste wind when I talk," the young giant protested. "I think that's how I keep myself from getting tired. It keeps my mind off the running, and makes things sociable."

Cady nodded dubiously, but let it go at that for the present.

CHAPTER III.

MARVEL IN SPIKES.

EARLY in March the Kenyon track squad was summoned by Cady to active duty. True to his word, Tarkington Tibbetts, resplendent in a purple upper and pink silk trunks, appeared on the oval the first day of outdoor training. Cady laughed up his sleeve at the big man's get-up, and many others laughed openly.

Tibbetts, however, didn't seem to mind their bantering. "You just tell me what you want," he confidentially informed the trainer, "and I'll do the rest."

Cady had him jog a few laps with Keeler, who with the greatest patience endeavored to teach him how better to control his stride, which was a thing of surprising irregularity. But somehow Tibbetts couldn't make his nether limbs behave.

Cady watched them in silence until Tibbetts recalled a story he simply had to tell. Obviously it was a funny one, for Keeler's sides began to quake. The coach, unable to control himself longer, burst out, addressing no one in particular:

"Track is no place for an elocutionist! Tibbetts simply has got to learn to hold his tongue! He—why, look at Keeler. He's shaking like a jellyfish."

And Keeler was. The point of Tibbetts' yarn no doubt was a rib tickler. Unable to listen longer and continue to run, the well-known miler stumbled from the track, dropped to the short-cut grass of the inner field, and laughed long and heartily. Tibbetts continued placidly on his way.

At last Keeler got to his feet and walked to the place where the coach was standing. "Cady," the runner protested, "I can't train with that fellow around. He's the limit—saps your endurance. If you want me to accomplish anything, you'd better let me train by myself."

"Just what I've been thinking, Keeler. And vice versa, I'll have Tibbetts do his running solo fashion. It is the only thing that will teach him to keep his mind on the race. To-morrow that will be the schedule. I've been wondering," Cady added, looking the other slowly over, "how you'd like to tackle the two-mile run this year?"

"Do you think I'd stand a show?"

"More so than in the mile. Last fall's cross-country showed me that you had more endurance than I'd counted on. I'm confident that Tibbetts, properly trained, will make a much better miler than you, and it will be some satisfaction to have a capable runner in both events. It will let you train apart from Tibbetts without hurting his feelings." And so it was settled.

March passed, and early April wore on. But somehow the course of solitary training Cady outlined for the awkward junior was not turning out as well as expected. True, running alone, Tibbetts had no inclination to talk; but just as truly he seemed to have less inclination to cover territory at the necessary rate of speed.

After mature thought Cady decided to make a right-about-face in his training tactics. "I guess Tibbetts was right that night in his room," he mused. "The less he thinks about his running, the better he runs; the more he talks, the less he thinks about his running. Tibbetts shall talk to his heart's content!"

The following afternoon four aspirants who stood no show to make the team were delegated to fraternize with the strange phenomenon with the vocal slant; and so well did the plan work after a week's trial that Tibbetts, running against time, but with a congenial and appreciative listener for each lap of the journey, talking to his utmost desire, literally burned up the path.

CHAPTER IV.

MILLER OF MAXWELL.

MEN like "Talking" Tibbetts are distinct rarities. Though his prowess as a miler was kept fairly well under cover, his skill as a running comedian could not long be held secret. The

sporting writers soon appreciated the novelty of his peculiar manner of running, and in the press there appeared many stories, true and imagined, of the newly discovered phenomenon.

But Tibbetts did not monopolize the sporting columns long. Soon an awe-inspiring tale from Maxwell College, Kenyon's strongest rival for athletic supremacy, saw print—a glowing story about a Maxwell discovery named Miller, who was reputed to have run the mile, unpaced, in four minutes and nineteen seconds. Coach Cady felt anxious after he had read the newspaper article.

Toward the end of April there appeared in Heywood, the little town where Kenyon was located, a man with a pocketful of money. "Perhaps I'll scare you folks off when I tell you that Maxwell has a wonderful miler in Miller," he addressed a crowd in one of the local poolrooms. "But he's such a wiz that I've simply got to talk about him. Boys, he's a natural runner, and it is my candid opinion that he can beat any mile runner in the United States at the present time. I'll back Miller and his college with my roll in the Maxwell-Kenyon dual meet."

Though it had not got into the papers, it had leaked locally that Talking Tibbetts' abilities had been greatly underrated. Some even went so far as to say that, paced in secret by four men, each running a quarter of the distance, Tibbetts had, early one morning, covered a mile at a greater rate of speed than that distance ever had been traveled by a human being on foot—at least that he had beaten every mark on record.

It was perfectly true that Cady had put the talkative runner through his paces in the cool of dawn; but as to whether Tibbetts had really performed as some of the wise ones whispered was an open question. Cady, though obviously elated, had positively refused to allow any one to glimpse the dial of his split-second watch. Naturally the stranger didn't experience much difficulty in finding covering for his money.

With Tibbetts alone a big drawing card, it seemed certain that the Kenyon stadium would hold a bigger crowd than ever before in its history, considering the added attraction, Miller of Maxwell.

At ten o'clock on the morning of May fourth, the Maxwell track squad, and a rooting contingent of three times its normal size, arrived in Heywood by a special train. Enthusiasm was at fever heat.

The visiting athletes lunched at the Kenyon training table, and Talking Tibbetts was introduced to a rosy-cheeked, light-haired chap of splendid physique. "Meet Miller of Maxwell, Tibbetts," a Maxwell man, who had struck up an acquaintance with the latter during the forenoon, said cordially.

Tibbetts shook hands with Miller, moved over near him, and inside a few seconds was off on a conversation fest at the rate of a hundred and twenty-six words a minute.

Cady silently watched his charge, and noted that, though he seemed absorbed in his own talk, Tibbetts shot occasional and hasty glances at a short, dark Maxwell man sitting at one end of the long table. Cady almost thought that he could detect a hint of recognition in the six-footer's eyes.

CHAPTER V.

WITH THE GUN.

IN the Kenyon stadium the atmosphere was tense with uncertainty as the milers were summoned to their marks. Kenyon led by five points, and there remained only the mile and the relay, the five points of which were unanimously conceded to the visitors, and would offset Kenyon's lead, and make it imperative that she place first in the mile if victory were to be hers. Only first places were counted.

The warmth reminded Cady, nervously pacing up and down near the starting post, of that November day when first he had seen Tibbetts run. Though certain that his charge was in perfect condition, the possibility of Miller's setting too stiff a pace worried him.

The runners lined up, and Cady no-

ticed among them the short, dark chap at whom Tibbetts had glanced several times at lunch. The superbly built Miller drew the pole, and Tibbetts fell in beside him, the dark-haired fellow drawing fifth in the line made up of three wearers of the Maxwell black, and two Kenyon representatives.

The starter uttered two terse commands, then the gun barked. They were off!

Cady glued his eyes to the inside man, and true to his expectations, he darted away at a quarter-mile gait, Talking Tibbetts, a smile on his boyish face, gaining his side within the first twenty yards. The pace was utterly impossible to keep up for a mile, Cady realized instantly, but he could not repress a grin as the runners rounded the first turn, for already Tibbetts was up to his usual tactics. Cady could not comprehend how the junior could possibly talk while moving his legs so rapidly; but talking he was, beyond a doubt. Already a smile was engulfing Miller's face.

They tore along the back stretch, and at the lower curve Cady saw Tibbetts cast a brief glance backward to where the others, fifty yards behind, were running. The dark-faced Maxwell man led the trio bringing up the rear, and Cady observed that he ran easily, apparently unhurried and unworried. Something about him seemed to suggest latent power, and sent a feeling of uncertainty through the coach's body. He turned to watch the leaders.

They were coming up the home stretch of the first lap, Tibbetts still talking, and his running mate obviously interested. But there was something in Tibbetts' face that Cady did not like, and it became more pronounced as they drew nearer.

As they arrived at the north turn for the second time, Cady felt a lump rise in his throat. Awkward and uneven Tibbetts' stride always had been; but never before had the trainer seen him lean from side to side as he ran. Undoubtedly something was wrong.

Even as he watched, Talking Tibbetts, an odd look in his eyes, lurched and almost fell. Gradually Miller pulled ahead. Running crazily, much slower now, Kenyon's mainstay seemed about to drop out. As he turned into the back stretch, though still wabbling, Tibbetts seemed to have gained some control over himself, but his cheeks were pallid, and he appeared to be gasping for wind.

A hand touched Cady's shoulder. It was Warren, the track captain. "Tough luck!" he mumbled. "The pace was too darned stiff!"

Cady did not reply. Instead a puzzled look came into his eyes as he watched Miller. The leader had turned, and lessened his pace on beholding Tibbetts' apparent predicament. Then, a grin stretching nearly from ear to ear, he threw up his hands, and stepped from the track, dropping, obviously amused, to the grass-covered ground of the inner field.

Cady winced, and, seizing a program Warren held, turned hurriedly to the mile event. "I should have looked before!" he exclaimed, glancing up to verify the number pinned to the back of the dark-faced runner, now within fifteen yards of Tibbetts. "Warren, we've been miserably fooled—Tibbetts has been tricked out of victory!"

Warren's face showed his surprise. "What's wrong?"

"Everything! It's plain as day now. All the talk about Miller being so speedy at the start was camouflage! Maxwell has two Millers running, and the wonder miler is that fellow with the almost black hair!"

Warren understood instantly. "And the other only entered as a pace maker, to draw Tibbetts out early, and kill his chances."

"Precisely! I hardly expected to see Tibbetts blow up that soon, though. Look! The real Miller, the dangerous one, is abreast him now!"

It was as the coach pointed out. But the dark lagger's arrival seemed to revive Tibbetts somewhat. A smile crossed his face, and Cady and Warren distinctly heard the conversationalist say gaspingly: "How do you do?"

Almost a sneer was observable in the other runner's face, as he ventured a

reply which Cady could not hear. An instant later he lengthened his stride slightly. Though the coach expected to see Tibbetts gradually lose ground, he was amazed to see the man he had trained turn and deliberately wink at Warren and him.

Then, to Cady's further wonder, Tibbetts suddenly appeared to take on a new lease of life, reaching and then keeping abreast the Maxwell runner, so he could not cut in ahead of him, the Kenyon representative began his old trick of tongue wagging—much to the other's obvious discomfort.

"Can it be possible," Cady asked, with a gasp, turning to Warren, "that Talking Tibbetts isn't so all in as he looked?"

"Anything seems possible with Tib!" was the captain's reply.

Through the balance of that lap and all of the next, Tibbetts caused the Maxwell runner almost continual discomfort. Strive as he did to circle the Kenyonite, Tibbetts succeeded in frustrating every attempt. And through it all he kept up a running fire of chatter whose effect on his rival seemed anything but beneficial.

CHAPTER VI.

THE LAST WORD.

THE gun spoke at the start of the last lap, and Cady pivoted on his heels as they rounded the upper curve. They entered the long straightaway leading south, and Miller, outwitted, began to sprint. But to every one's dumfoundment, Talking Tibbetts, apparently absolutely out of it less than two minutes before, sprinted, too. What was more, he beat Miller to the south-banked turn. He skimmed around into the last straightaway for home; then, turning back for an instant, laughed something back at his glowering pursuer.

The rest is Kenyon history. Some even go so far as to say that Tibbetts turned a handspring while waiting for the redoubtable Miller to come abreast again. At any rate, he did kill time enough to enable the black-clad athlete to come within hearing distance. For every one within earshot heard Talking Tibbetts take leave of the Maxwell phenom in these words: "So long, old scout! See you this evening."

And with that Tibbetts romped in to victory, and a bewildered coach's arms.

"Oh, that lurchy stuff?" he began laughingly when, a moment later, Cady asked him a question. "I was telling the other Miller—the pacemaker—a story about an intoxicated man, and was giving him an imitation of how he walked. Then an inspiration seized me, and I finished by shouting to him that I was all in. I wasn't, but I would have been if I had stuck to him another lap.

"You see, Cady," Tibbetts went on, "I kept with him that far to make sure he didn't intend to finish. I had a hunch the other Miller was the dangerous one. But I had to be sure. From the way the leading one breathed when I left him I knew I was safe. All the rest of it was just make-believe. I tried to kid the hard man into thinking I couldn't hold out. And I guess I got his goat, all right."

"I guess you did," chimed in Cady. "But how the deuce did you spot him for the real phenom? His time was good, all right; for you both beat four minutes and twenty-one seconds."

"That good? Whew! Oh, as for the really good Miller. You see, Cady, I have run against him before. He beat me the last time, at that Fourth of July picnic I told you about. But to-day, I guess I——"

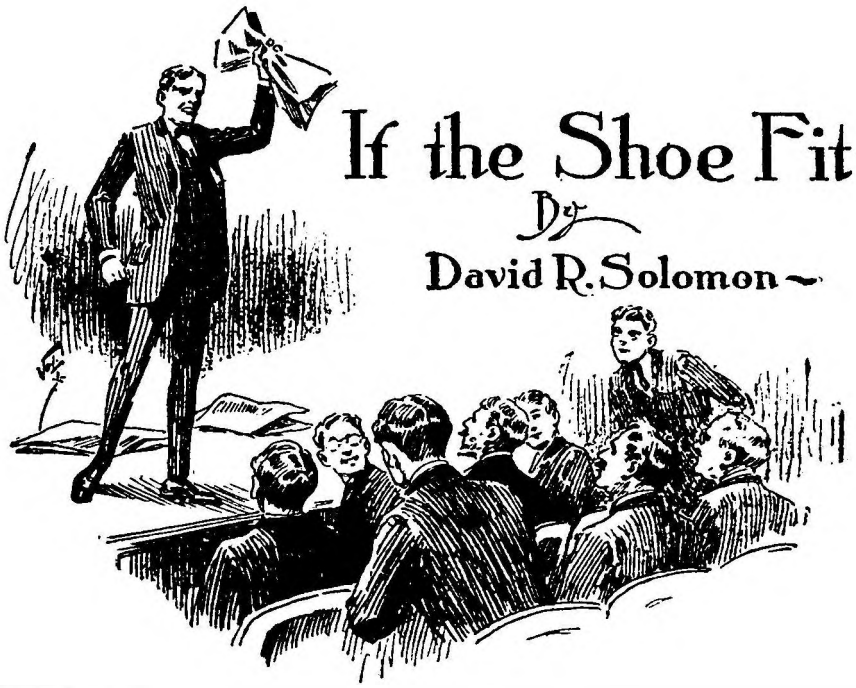
"You got in the last word, Tibbetts!" Cady slapped him loudly on the back. "You talked him out of it—and by doing so you saved the day for Kenyon!"

Just then, perhaps for the first time in his life—at least, when he was awake—Talking Tibbetts, emulating the well-known clam, said nothing. But there was a smile on his ruddy face.

And Then Some

CISSIE: "Miss Oldbird keeps me guessing. I never know what she is about."

Doris: "Oh, she's about forty-five."



If the Shoe Fits—

By

David R. Solomon—

THE ex-governor had been set down on the program for a speech. That was nothing. Ten or twelve others were selected for the same thing—were each year. There had been no foreboding when he, ordinarily the soul of punctuality, kept the meeting waiting half an hour. The chairman had simply extended the time for after-speech discussion of the preceding address.

Uncle Bob, colored janitor of the courthouse these twenty years, seemed to be far more worried about the delay than any one else. Uncle Bob considered himself the corner stone of all activity, and he was on terms of speaking familiarity with the ex-governor. When, at last, the belated one swung down the hallway, he pushed the door open with a flourish.

"'Evenin', Gov'n'r Merritt. Gemmens waitin' f'r you."

Contrary to his custom, Merritt made no reply. Uncle Bob looked up in surprise.

The chairman glanced up casually as Governor Merritt came down the aisle. Then he looked again, more sharply, at the hat tilted aside when it usually sat precisely in the center; at the slightly tousled coat; at the clutched manuscript in one hand and the clenched newspaper in the other. Governor Merritt showed signs of agitation.

The usual preliminaries of speech were completed in short order. Governor Merritt stepped to the front of the platform. His voice shook with an undercurrent of strong feeling.

"Gentlemen of the State Bar Association," he began slowly, "the speech I am to make to you is not the speech I had prepared. Within the last half hour I have changed my subject and my address. One headline in this newspaper," holding aloft the crushed handful, "has changed the speech I am to make."

The convention showed no signs of unusual interest. But at his next words it came sharply to attention.

"I don't suppose there is a man in this auditorium who fails to remember the case of Grant Weeks."

The reaction of his audience, as one man, was startling. The effect reached even old Uncle Bob, seated in his cane-bottomed chair, by the door.

"That case," the ex-governor contin-

ued, "it is an open secret, was the cause of my retirement from public life. So much criticism was heaped upon me, so much invective and abuse from every rank and walk of life, that I voluntarily resigned and retired. Yet I did what I did because I believed, before God, it was the right thing to do." The old man's voice trembled with earnestness. His figure was bent forward, as if he would, by the very intensity of his desire, force understanding and belief.

"My friends, able politicians," he went on, "warned me that I was committing political suicide. You know the truth of their predictions. But here, right now, before you, I shall make my first explanation to the public. I expect it, and this," indicating the crushed newspaper, "to vindicate me."

II.

GOVERNOR MERRITT paused to draw breath. His audience was rigidly attentive.

"It is a peculiar coincidence," he resumed, "that the trials of Grant Weeks were held not only in this very county, but in this very room. The facts, you will remember, were simple. A storekeeper was found murdered in his store. A stained ax lay beside him. Circumstances pointed to the guilt of Grant Weeks. He was arrested and put on trial.

"Four times he was tried for murder. Four times the jury brought in a verdict that called for the death penalty. Four times the case was appealed to a higher court. The first three times that court found fault with the trial in the lower court, and sent the case back for Weeks to be given another chance. The fourth time the sentence of the lower court was affirmed, and a date set for the infliction of the death penalty.

"An appeal was made to me to commute the death sentence to life imprisonment. Immediately the deluge began. Every mail brought me letters, importuning me to refuse to intercede. Petitions poured in upon me, signed by hundreds of the most influential citizens, requesting that I keep my hands off and let the law take its course. Delegations crowded my office, arguing, appealing, threatening. Now and then there would come an unsigned communication, warning me that if I saved the neck of Grant Weeks I would be shot from ambush. Nothing during my entire administration aroused as much interest."

All over the auditorium there was silence. Whether Governor Merritt had the sympathies of his hearers, he certainly had their undivided and absorbed attention.

"And yet," he continued, "I made up my mind to decide this case upon its merits, purely and simply. It was my custom to secure the court record of the trial, exactly as taken down by the stenographers in the words of the witnesses, and to read it as a prelude to making up my mind. In this case there were, you will remember, four trials. There were, therefore, four records which had gone to a higher court.

"I took them home with me, where I could be entirely alone. I read them —each of them—carefully. Parts I read over and over again. The demands of the public for the execution of Grant Weeks, as interpreted to me by my political advisers, made me want to be very sure before I acted.

"The evidence against Grant Weeks was convincing, very convincing. It was almost overwhelming. But it was wholly circumstantial. I could not blame the juries that had sentenced him to death. In their places I should probably have done the same thing. But mine was a different office.

"As I read the record of the first trial, something occurred to me. I thought of a simple test which should have been tried. If it worked, well and good; the man must be guilty. But if it failed, he could hardly be. I read the record more closely to the end. Nowhere had the experiment been tried.

"The record of the second trial, I thought, as I slowly picked it up and began to examine it, would surely show that the test had been tried, and had demonstrated the guilt of Grant Weeks.

Of course, that having been done, I could do nothing but let the law take its course, and the public would be appeased. But the record of the second trial was silent on the subject.

"I began to grow uneasy. In haste I scanned the record of the third trial. It, likewise, was silent. Hopefully, as a last resort, I raced through the pages of the last record. I could find nothing of what I looked for."

III.

THE governor paused for a moment and then continued: "To make certain, I went again through each of the four records, slowly, carefully, painstakingly. I had not been mistaken. The idea had not seemed to occur to any one connected with any of the four trials.

"The test was simple. You will remember that one of the strongest pieces of evidence against Grant Weeks was that a pair of shoes had been found under his barn. There were spots of crimson upon them. Across one of them was the tense print of a stained hand.

"The whole case against Grant Weeks hinged upon those shoes. If he was the man who wore them, the rest of the evidence against him might be true. In other words, it was the contention of the State that the murderer wore those shoes.

"I wanted to know whether those shoes fitted Grant Weeks. Apparently it had not occurred to any one to try them upon him. That was my test. If they fitted him, well and good—the rest of the evidence was enough to hang him. But if they did not fit, then that fact, alone, was enough to cast a doubt upon the rest of the evidence. The decision had to be made at once. The execution was only a day or so off.

"Some of you know old Fletcher Geisner, the bootmaker, at the capital. He has been making shoes there for nearly half a century. He knows shoes and feet, if any man in this State does. I told him what I wanted. He consented to come with me. With him and my secretary, I secretly took the train. This town was our destination. We arrived after dark and went without notice to the hotel. I sent for the sheriff.

"At midnight we four came to this courthouse. Sheriff James got the shoes from the clerk's safe. They were marked with the tag that the court stenographer had fastened to them on the first trial. Of course the stains and other signs had been worn off in the handling and examination of four trials. But, because so much depended upon the test, I made sure.

"In the dim light of the night lamps we walked to the death cell. Sheriff James let us in, and remained outside. We woke Grant Weeks. He had not even known that a test was to be made.

"And then we tried the shoes. I had no need for Fletcher Geisner. The veriest child could have seen, once we endeavored to put them on his feet, that they would not fit him. They were three or four full sizes too small. He could not begin to get them on. Besides, there was a large protuberance on the left shoe, such as would be caused by a bunion, yet obviously one which would be caused only by weeks or months of wear of the shoe. There was nothing of the sort upon the prisoner's foot.

"That, gentlemen of the Bar Association, is why, against the storm of public protest, I commuted Grant Weeks' death sentence to life imprisonment. You remember the thousand accusations that were made against me at the time. Bribery was the least of them. I resigned. To-day, for the first time, I can tell the truth.

"In this paper is the news that the real murderer has been found, and has confessed. Grant Weeks was an innocent man. If those shoes had fitted him, he would be a dead man to-day. Instead, Governor Hilcox has pardoned him."

Governor Merritt's figure straightened. He looked straight into the eyes of the men he was addressing.

"You can see now the reasons for my action," he continued. "You can see, too,

what truth there was in the dirty tales that were circulated.

"To you, then, gentlemen of the State Bar Association, comes the first public announcement. I knew I was right in my course. But you are the first to know that the only basis I had was that those shoes would not fit the condemned man's feet."

Governor Merritt began gathering his papers. There was a moment of silence. No one moved or spoke. Then, abruptly, all over the hall, broke out the hubbub of excited conversation. Here and there came a gesture of emphasis. From all around came the crescendo of voices in heated discussion.

IV.

"MR. CHAIRMAN." The words were unheard in the furor. At one side a tall, slender young man was rising. "Mr. Chairman!" More loudly his voice called for attention.

The chairman rapped for order. The confusion gave way slightly, grudgingly. "Mr. Herndon." The chairman recognized the speaker.

He stood erect for a moment, then began casually: "I have been extremely interested, Mr. Chairman, in the remarks of Governor Merritt. They have been all the more interesting to me, Mr. Chairman, because I was—as very many of the men in this audience will remember—the lawyer who defended Grant Weeks."

There was a slight stir that indicated an increase of interest. The remnant of hubbub dwindled away. Faces here, there, all around, were turned upon this new center of attention.

"I was appointed by the court to defend Grant Weeks. I served, therefore, without compensation or fee. As Governor Merritt has stated, we tried that case four times. I appealed from a death sentence four times; and three of them were reversed by the supreme court; twice on rehearing.

"As lawyers, all of you know that when the supreme court has made its decision, an application for rehearing is almost futile. Statistics show that in only two or three out of a thousand appealed cases are the decisions of the supreme court changed. Yet I succeeded twice in getting a new trial on rehearing."

Governor Merritt had paused upon the platform. Again the attention of the whole meeting was fixed. Herndon went on:

"All of you know that not all that happens during the trial of a case gets into the record of it which the stenographers and clerks make and certify up to the supreme court. You remember, also, that we never did, in any one of the four trials, put Grant Weeks upon the witness stand to testify. We relied and most strenuously insisted upon his constitutional right against having to testify at all.

"During the progress of the first trial against Grant Weeks, I obtained those shoes from the prosecuting attorney. I took the prisoner into an anteroom of this courthouse—through that very door yonder. I made all of the deputy sheriffs get out of the room, so that, in case the test went against us, the only witness would be the defendant's lawyer, who could not be forced to testify against him. I hung my coat over the transom, pulled down the window shades, and stuffed the keyhole with paper. Then we tried the test.

"Judge Mason, the presiding judge, will bear me out that there was quite a bit of those trials which never got into the records. He will remember that the prosecutors threatened to try those shoes upon Grant Weeks by force. I argued and insisted that if they did anything of the sort it would violate his constitutional rights and entitle us, of itself, to another trial. I succeeded in convincing Judge Mason. He gave the prosecution very thoroughly to understand that they must not comment in any way, during the progress of the trial, upon the fact that the prisoner refused to allow the shoes to be tried upon his feet.

"That is why no mention of the simple test got into any one of the four records. For over there behind that door, gentlemen, those shoes fitted the

feet of Grant Weeks. Curve for curve, crease for crease, line for line, the shape of his feet was the shape of those shoes. I am making no effort to explain. I am simply relating, without coloring it, the truth as I found it. So you see, sir, that——"

Herndon's voice faltered. He stopped short in the swift course of his speech. He had turned to Governor Merritt.

V.

THE older man was still upon the platform. But he had changed. His face, that had shone with eagerness and with the zeal of vindicating himself, had lost the sparkle of hope. Upon it had grown anxious lines; it had turned gray.

Herndon made an effort to continue. Then he gave up. "I—I'm sorry I—did—this—Governor Merritt. I rose on impulse—without thinking. Had I thought at all, sir—I should have kept my seat.

"I know, sir, what vindication of your course means to you. I know that it is not at all a question of the guilt or innocence of Grant Weeks, but of the good faith of your action. I am sorry, sir, more than I can tell you, that I did not remain silent. I did not think. But having spoken, sir, I can only repeat the truth: that, crease for crease, curve for curve, those shoes fitted the feet of Grant Weeks."

Herndon sat down. There followed a silence that grew and grew. Apparently no one could think of anything to do or say. At last the chairman came to himself, trying to pass on to other work.

The specter, however, dwelt at the elbow of each of them. They had seen a man's naked soul.

Very quietly, too quietly, obviously trying to avoid further attention, the old man sought a seat. He was making a brave effort to seem at ease. But he fumbled as he placed his chair, and his hands trembled as he arranged his papers. He waited till the meeting seemed to be getting under way again; then, as unobtrusively as possible, he made his way from the room.

VI.

IN the hallway outside, old Uncle Bob twitched sympathetically at Governor Merritt's elbow.

Slowly he turned.

"Gov'nor Merritt, I wants you to know dat I—I—I——"

"Thank you, Uncle Bob. Thank you," and Governor Merritt turned away. The old negro's sympathy at this precise moment affected him more than he cared to reveal.

"No, sir; Gov'nor Merritt, I means somep'n else. You see, I was here when dey was a-tryin' dat Mr. Weeks. An'—an' atter dey got all thu'u, an' de case was all done wid in co't, I—I—I didn' s'pose it'd be wrong. I—I knowed you-all wouldn' be needin' those shoes no longer. An dat boy o' mine, Gov'nor Merritt, dat boy had such growin' feet! An' dat was such a extra good pair o' shoes you-all was a-usin' for evi-dence. So I—I took de pair he done outgrowed an' swapped 'em wid dat bigger pair you-all was finished wid in co't——"

Uncle Bob managed to get this far. A reincarnated Governor Merritt interrupted him, questioned him, smote him between the shoulder blades. His ears hummed with the joyous note in the ex-governor's voice.

He was staring, popeyed, at a ten-dollar bill in his hand, and at the retreating back of Governor Merritt. In his ears was ringing the command: "Come with me, Uncle Bob; quick!"

Governor Merritt was returning, to finish his address to the convention.

Did you enjoy reading this story, or did you not? A word of criticism, favorable or unfavorable, is of value to those who have to get up this magazine. It turns out to be of value usually to the readers as well. Will you tell us briefly what you think of the foregoing story, and in the same letter, please give us your opinion of TOP-NOTCH as a whole?

WHEN George Murthwaite, mysterious tenant of a Long Island estate, promised a bank teller named Ryce the chance to share a fortune, the latter agreed to Murthwaite's conditions. Murthwaite said that a friend by the name of Berrold, who fought with the British in Asia Minor, saw a Turkish officer compel two soldiers to bury a vast treasure in gold. The Turk then killed the subordinates, and, surprised by Berrold, was himself killed in the struggle that followed. Hoping later to get the gold for himself, Berrold removed all traces of the burying of the fortune. But when the war ceased he was an invalid, Murthwaite said. Before Berrold's death in a Canadian hospital, he told the American his strange story.

Murthwaite explained to Ryce, who according to agreement had come to live at the estate, that Berrold had fixed upon a map the location of the gold; this map, with sketches, had been stolen from Murthwaite by a notorious Philip Harraway, who, with confederates, demanded a share of the treasure. Later Harraway and the others seized Murthwaite and forcibly took him from his estate.

This left Ryce alone; except for Nora Lerwick, ostensibly a servant, but whom he soon suspected to be other than reputed and mysteriously connected with the buried fortune. One day a young Canadian officer, a stranger to Ryce, came to the estate; at once he asked for Miss Lerwick.

CHAPTER XVII.

EXPLANATIONS IN ORDER.

IT seemed a month or two that we stood there waiting; in reality about three minutes had passed, I should say, when light footsteps sounded in the hall; there was a knock upon the door, and Nora joined us. I was no longer left in doubt as to the friendliness of the newcomer, for with a simultaneous cry of "Dick—Nora!" they were wrapped in one another's arms.

I turned to the window and stared out upon the darkening landscape. The bottom had fallen out of my world. It was plain that my services as protector were no longer necessary, and that I might go from the room and disappear without ever a thought being wasted upon me. I was on the point of acting on this impulse when Nora's voice arrested me.

"Oh, Dick," she said, and it astonished me to discover a tremor of fear in her voice when I had convinced myself that her troubles were at an end. "How can you take such a risk? Why have you come home? Suppose you were caught!"

"Don't you worry, dear," the newcomer said affectionately. "The risk is very small, and I had to come home to be demobilized." Then he held her from him at arm's length and a puzzled look spread upon his face.

"But what is the meaning of this get-up, Nora, and who is this man who opened the door to me and who seems to be so much at home in your house?"

She drew apart, a faint flush upon her face. She glanced quickly at me,

and then down at her white strip of apron, as though suddenly conscious of both and in a difficulty to explain either.

The newcomer was quick to notice her confusion; his brows drew down sternly, and he looked at me with anger in his eyes. "Come, sir," he said harshly, "it is time that we had an explanation."

Before I could answer Nora stepped forward, apparently recovered from the confusion that she had shown. I caught one swift, warning glance from her, but could not guess at its significance. "I should have introduced you," she said easily, "but I was so delighted to see you, Dick, that I forgot. This is Mr. Ryce; my brother, Major Lerwick."

The blood rushed through my veins as though, before, it had been standing still. What a fool I had been! I should have guessed the relationship, had I not been so eager to throw myself into despair. I could have laughed with the relief of the discovery, and as it was, I smiled broadly as I bowed and put out my hand.

There was, however, no answering smile upon the face of Nora's brother, and he ignored my outstretched hand completely. "And who may Mr. Ryce be?" he demanded sternly and suspiciously.

"Mr. Ryce," said Nora—and again I caught her warning eye—"is a boarder. You see, Dick," she went on hesitatingly, "I have a sort of boarding house. That accounts for my costume, you see."

"How many boarders have you got?" asked Major Lerwick suspiciously.

"Mr. Ryce is the only one at present," replied Nora. "I had another gentleman until recently, but he—he left. You see, it is an awkwardly situated house—so out of the way."

Obviously her brother was skeptical. As for me, I was more puzzled than ever with the mystery of her. Whatever trouble, difficulty, danger she might be in, one would have thought she would turn to her brother for advice and assistance. To me he looked the kind of man whom one could trust with any secret and upon whose help one could rely to the last. He had listened to his sister's story with a puzzled frown. "There's something queer about this," he said, looking at her intently. "You are keeping something back, Nora. What is it?"

She shook her head helplessly, as though she felt incapable of adding anything to her story.

The major turned abruptly upon me. "What have you to say, sir?" he demanded sternly.

I glanced at Nora, but her eyes were turned upon the floor. "Perhaps," I returned, "Miss Lerwick would like to have an explanation with you in private. Shall I leave you together?"

"That is not necessary," said Nora, hurriedly and fearfully. "I have explained. If my brother is not satisfied, I can't help it. I have told him all I can."

"Then there is more—that you can't tell me?" exclaimed Lerwick.

Her lips trembled, tears flooded her eyes, and she hurried from the room.

Major Lerwick did not attempt to follow her. He turned all his attention on me. "Now, Mr. Ryce, what is the meaning of it all?" he demanded, in a determined tone.

I was seized with a sudden impulse. One had only to look at Dick Lerwick's face to know that he was straightforward and honest as the day. Why not, then, tell him the truth as I knew it, and let him see the danger in which his sister was involved? Would it be fair to Nora? He would know no more than I, a stranger, knew, and much less than the scoundrel Murthwaite. Surely her brother had a right to that.

I let my impulse have its head. "Take your coat off and sit down," I said, pushing him an armchair toward the fire. "I shall have a lot to say if I am to tell you all I know."

He took me at my word, and as he seated himself opposite me by the fire I saw upon the breast of his tunic the ribbon of the Distinguished Service Order and the Military Cross. He looked the kind of man who would earn distinction in any service.

I had begun to tell him of my first meeting with Murthwaite in the bank, when Nora entered the room. She stopped just within the door, surprised to see her brother seated with me by the fire in apparent amity.

"Miss Lerwick," I said, rising and drawing in another chair, "join us and listen to my story. I have made up my mind to tell your brother how I met you, and why I am here now."

"You musn't—oh, you mustn't!" she cried, consternation in her face and in her voice.

"Why not?" asked Lerwick. "Is there anything in the story that you need be ashamed of?"

She shook her head, pale and silent; then, as if with a sudden determination, came forward and threw herself into the chair I had placed for her. "Go on with your story," she said weakly. "I have done my best to hide it, but I see that it is no longer possible."

CHAPTER XVIII.

CLEARING THE SKY.

I TOLD my story from the beginning, omitting nothing of the mysterious relations that existed between Murthwaite and Nora. I told of Harraway and his gang. Lerwick listened to me in silence, save that occasionally he interjected a question when I had not made myself sufficiently clear. So far I had told my story without an omission, but a difficulty arose when I came to Murthwaite's disclosure of his treasure secret. That, I felt, was not mine to tell. I hesitated.

"Go on," said Lerwick, looking up at me sharply.

"I made a bargain with Murthwaite," I said. "He owns the secret of a hidden treasure and I went into partnership with him in the search, on the clear understanding that I would back out should I discover anything dishonest about the scheme."

"In Asia Minor?" Lerwick's eyes were fixed upon me with an intensity that made them seem afire.

"How did you guess that?" I blurted out in my astonishment, before I realized that I was admitting more than I meant to do.

Lerwick laughed harshly. "Never mind," he said. "Perhaps I am a mind reader! At least, I am beginning to see a glimmer of light." He glanced bitterly, as he spoke, at Nora.

"I couldn't help it, Dick," she said. "It was for your sake."

"Go ahead," Lerwick said to me.

I went on to tell of the coming of the caravan and the kidnaping of Murthwaite, and from that to my reasons for remaining alone with Nora at The Pines.

Lerwick heard me right to the end without comment. When I had finished, he rose and held out his hand. "I have nothing but thanks for you, Mr. Ryce," he said, as he gripped mine and pressed it. "You have acted in good faith throughout, and Nora has every reason to be grateful to you. You need not worry about having given away Murthwaite's secret, because it isn't his; it's mine, and it must have been given away to him by the only person in the world barring myself who knew it—my sister Nora!"

The last words were uttered with a bitterness that was matched by the look he cast upon the unhappy girl. "But tell me, Nora," he added, "tell me what you mean by saying that it was for my sake."

"He forced me to ask you for it, just as he forced me to give him all my money and to leave my apartment in New York and take this terrible house. I dared not refuse, Dick, because he knew all about you and threatened to tell all he knew."

"So that was why you wrote asking for copies of my plans and sketches! To give them to this man Murthwaite. Good Lord, girl, all the harm he could do me is not worth a cent's worth of tin tacks."

I saw Nora glance furtively at me as if fearful of speaking in my presence. I rose at once, intending to leave them together, when Lerwick prevented me.

"Sit down, Ryce," he said, "and let me tell you *my* story. Then, perhaps, Nora may tell us hers. To begin with,

you must know that I am an escaped convict. No, it is not a joke, I really am," he added, seeing a smile of incredulity on my face.

"I was tried and convicted of manslaughter in 1913, and if ever a scoundrel deserved slaughtering it was the brute that I did for that night, though, mind you, I did not mean to kill him. I meant only to give him a good thrashing. All of the facts did not come out at the trial, or I would have got off, I feel sure; but that would have brought the name of a lady—a lady whom I—for whom I have a great admiration—into the case, and that I would not do.

"I got two years, but I didn't stop to work them out. The war came along, and we poor jailbirds were as excited about it as the folks outside. As an old member of the militia I was on tenterhooks to be out and on the drill ground, and before August was over I had escaped and become Private John Wilkins in a reserve battalion of a Canadian regiment. I'm Major Wilkins now—*not* Lerwick, as my sister introduced me," he added, with a cheery grin.

"They can't do much to me even if they catch me," he went on. "In fact, I mean to give myself away at the Canadian war office and try for a free pardon. I don't think there's a doubt that I shall get it."

Nora looked at him in wide-eyed horror. Her face was paper white as she sat up rigid in her chair, and, holding by the arms, continued to gaze at him.

When she spoke, it was in a tense whisper.

"But—the man—the keeper you killed when you escaped!"

Lerwick looked at her in astonishment. "What d'you mean?" he said blankly. "I killed no keeper or any one else when I escaped. I slipped away into a wood when we were tramping back under guard from our work on a road."

"I believe you, Dick," said Nora quietly after a pause. "But a keeper was found dead in the wood where you hid. His neck was broken and—well, it looked black for you."

"Good Lord!" exclaimed Lerwick. "And I knew nothing of it until now."

"It was in the newspapers at the time," Nora went on. "Your previous conviction was brought up, and the death of the keeper was charged to you. It seemed that you must be guilty. Oh, it was terrible!"

"I did not see a paper for weeks after I escaped," said Lerwick. "I lay hidden for two days, and as soon as I had got rid of my prison suit I managed to get to Canada. There I buried myself in the army. We were in a huge training camp, and things hadn't even begun to be organized. We were short of food, clothing and accommodation, and newspapers were as scarce as most other things. But this makes a terrible difference. I can't get a pardon with this new charge hanging over me, and if I give myself up I shall have to stand a trial for murder with the presumption strongly in favor of my guilt. Why, even you believed me guilty, Nora!"

"Yes; but even had I known that you were innocent, as I do now, I should still have been in Murthwaite's power. Everything was so black against you that I would not have dared to let him give you away to the police."

"I am only beginning to see the truth, Nora," said Lerwick, leaning forward and taking his sister's hand in his. "This scoundrel Murthwaite has been blackmailing you through his knowledge of my supposed guilt, and you've been bled rather than give me away! You're a real good sport, Nora."

"No, no, don't say that," cried the girl bitterly. "Wait until you have heard the whole truth. I have tried to hide it because I am ashamed—because I have told you lies. I could not help it, Dick, and it was for your good."

"Tell us about it, dear," said her brother kindly.

CHAPTER XIX.

FOR THE TREASURE HUNT.

"ALL through the war I was in an agony about you, Dick," Nora began. "Except for you I was absolutely alone, with nobody to care for or to care for me. My case was so much

worse than other sisters and wives and mothers who had their men at the front because I had a double fear—the dread that you might be killed, but far worse—the dread that you might be discovered and convicted of murder."

"Poor old girl!" murmured her brother.

"Even when the war was over this second fear remained, and however hard I worked I could never shake it off even for a moment. About four months ago my apartment was broken into while I was out at work. The only thing stolen was the bundle of letters you had written to me under the name of John Wilkins. I was terribly frightened, though I did not think that any one would connect John Wilkins with you, for you had always been so careful to write as though you were a friend.

"My fear was quite justified, however, for on the next evening I had my first visit from Murthwaite," she went on. "I do not know how he got on your track, but he knew all about you, and threatened to give the police full particulars of your whereabouts unless I paid over six thousand dollars."

"So *you* were the source of all the sums he paid into the bank!" I exclaimed.

"Yes," replied Nora brokenly. "He has had all my little fortune. I had to realize on all the bonds that brought in the money I lived on. But that was not the worst part of it. He had found the letter in which you told me the story of your escape from Asia Minor, Dick, and nothing would content him but that I should get him copies of your sketches and the map showing where the treasure was hidden. What could I do? It was your life—or so I thought—that was at stake, so I wrote what he told me to write."

"Believing what you did, you could not have acted otherwise, Nora. I wondered, though. You see, Ryce," Lerwick continued, turning to me, "it seemed funny that my sister should be so calculating as to ask me to send her copies of the documents in case I should die and the treasure be lost. It was a sensible enough idea, and I ought to have thought of it myself, but coming from her—well, it wasn't like her, as I knew her."

"So you never sent them?" I asked.

"Only because I hoped to get home so soon," he replied.

"Then Murthwaite's tale of the dead friend who had bequeathed him the treasure with his last breath was all bunko."

"Is that the story he told you? How did it go?"

I told him as shortly as possible the story that Murthwaite had told me.

"Except for the dead friend, the whole thing is true from beginning to end," said Lerwick. "Your friend Murthwaite must have studied my letter to Nora very thoroughly. Well, fortunately I did not send on the papers, so except for Nora's little fortune, which won't matter a scrap when we get hold of the treasure, he is none the better off. But we haven't yet heard what brought you to this forsaken spot, Nora."

"I couldn't understand why he insisted upon my taking this house and coming away secretly from New York," she answered. "Because he knew that I would not dare to escape from him. He had sworn that if I did he would at once denounce you to the police."

"I think I can explain that," I broke in. "Murthwaite wanted to do his partner Harraway. Probably he was under Harraway's thumb in some way, but apart from that, Harraway was to have a half share. Consequently, Murthwaite disappeared, taking with him the only link with the treasure. Then he brought me into the scheme to pull the chestnuts from the fire for him. Knowing him as we now do, it is clear that he never meant me to see a cent of the treasure. It was mainly his fear of Harraway that made him call in my assistance."

"A very nice little plot," said Lerwick, "except that friend Murthwaite seems to have rather overreached himself. The other scoundrel, Harraway, appears to be the stronger man, if not the bigger villain, of the two. If only this murder charge were not hanging

over me—but there's no getting away from the seriousness of that. I shall have to lie low until I can find out more about it, and, if possible, collect evidence that will clear me. In the meantime, what's to be done?"

He had risen from his seat, and stood with his back to the fire, with the light from the lamp—for it was now quite dark and we had lighted up some time before—shining full on his strong, manly face.

"I should say the first thing to do is to get your discharge," I advised. "Then you will be free to act as you think best. Until that is done Murthwaite and Harraway must not know that you are home. If they guessed that you knew of their plot and that you did not mean to give them what they want—for I presume you have no intention of being blackmailed—they might put the police on your track right away."

"They probably would," Lerwick agreed. "You are right. I shall get my discharge very soon. Then we can disappear, leaving Murthwaite, Harraway and company to play gypsies until they tire of it. I can then get this murder business cleared up and apply for a pardon for my prison breaking. That would be easy but for the other charge. Then for the Taurus and the treasure! I want you for that, Ryce."

"Me!" I exclaimed, and my heart jumped with pleasure at the proposal.

"Yes," he said. "It isn't a one-man job, this expedition. I should have to find some one to help me, and who better than yourself? You know all about the affair already; you have proved yourself a true and trustworthy friend by your attitude to my sister, and you have already given up your job with a view to this very expedition. Come in with me and you shall have the share that Murthwaite offered you; only this time you will get it."

"It's splendid of you," I said, delighted that he should have chosen me on such a short acquaintance. "I'd love to go if you think me fit for it."

"You're the very man I want," he said earnestly. "I know I can rely on you, and I know you are keen. But I should warn you that the trip may be dangerous. It's a rough country, and if any one got the slightest hint of what we are after our chances of getting the treasure, or even of getting out alive, wouldn't be worth much."

"I'm willing to take any risk if only you'll take me," I said.

Lerwick held out his hand, and we sealed the compact with a silent grip.

"Of course I am coming with you," said Nora, so unexpectedly that we both started. She had been so quiet, and we had been so wrapped up in our talk, that we had almost forgotten her presence.

Lerwick shook his head emphatically. "Impossible, Nora," he said. "We shall have to take our lives in our hands. The hardship would be too much for you."

"But you can't leave me here alone. You wouldn't agree to it, would you, Mr. Ryce?"

She turned her eyes on me beseechingly, as though she thought me more vulnerable than her sterner brother.

"We must do what your brother thinks best," I answered diplomatically. "Perhaps we might take you part of the way, and you could wait for us—say in Egypt. How would that do, Lerwick?"

"Not a bad idea," he agreed. "But there is plenty of time to think of that later. For the present, you two must continue here as you are. I shall go off early in the morning and not be back until I have my discharge. I can get it through the Canadian government's representatives in New York. Then I'll come back for you, and we shall all disappear together—and there will be an end of Messrs. Murthwaite and Harraway so far as we are concerned. They are helpless once I am out of their reach."

CHAPTER XX.

OLD ACQUAINTANCES MEET.

THE subject of past difficulties and dangers was brushed aside, and Lerwick gave us a vivid narrative of his escape from the Turkish prison and his wanderings through Asia Minor.

To make his tale clearer, he produced from his pocketbook a soiled and frayed map which he spread upon the table.

"Our friends in the caravan would give their ears to get hold of this tattered old thing," he said. "Look at the back of it."

He turned the map over carefully; it required gentle handling, for it was all but falling apart at the folds. On the back we saw several rough pencil sketches and some hastily scribbled lines of writing.

"Directions for finding the treasure," explained Lerwick. "See, there is a picture of the group of bowlders where I was in hiding. Here is another, showing the arrangement of the rocks round the spot where the treasure is buried. There are two views of that one from the north, the other from the south. Here is an attempt to give a rough idea of the general lay of the valley. The treasure is marked with a cross, like the celebrities in the picture papers. There's nothing artistic about the drawings, but any one who had found the right valley should have no difficulty in finding the treasure with their assistance. The difficulty is to find the right valley, for there are hundreds of them running in all directions. I did my best to mark the right one on the map, but I am afraid it is only an approximation."

He turned the ragged paper over again, and pointed to a small penciled cross, occurring upon an irregular penciled line that ran from far in the interior to the coast. "My line of march," he said, tracing it lovingly with his finger. "The treasure lies there, or somewhere near there," he added as his finger paused at the cross.

I was leaning over the table, intent upon the map, while Lerwick stood with his back to the fire, facing the door.

A sharp cry, almost a scream, from Nora made me look up sharply. Lerwick was staring across the lamp at the door, while Nora clung to his arm, her eyes, wild with fear, fixed on the same direction.

I looked. The great scarred face of Harraway with its fixed sneer appeared in the partially open doorway, its bulging eyes fixed gloatingly upon the map that lay before us.

Lerwick shook his arm free from his sister's hand and had rushed round the table and thrown his weight upon the door before I had pulled myself together sufficiently to help him. Harraway drew back his head just in time to escape having it crushed as the door slammed. The key was on our side, and Lerwick turned it in the lock.

He did not realize the capabilities of the man on the other side. We heard his piping, feeble voice:

"Stand clear, Murthwaite!"

Then a rush, and a terrific crash, and the whole door fell forward upon us, with the full weight of Harraway's enormous bulk behind it. We had barely time to spring clear as it fell, and Harraway, who had crashed to the ground with the door, was on his feet before we had recovered ourselves. He was wonderfully agile for a man of his size.

"Come on, Murthwaite!" he shrieked in a voice more like that of a vexed woman than a desperate man.

Lerwick tackled him boldly. I saw his fist fly out at Harraway's jaw, and then I gave my attention to the part of the affray that fell to me. Murthwaite entered at his leader's heels. Fear was written all over his face. It was evident that the practical side of villainy had no charm for him, yet that he dared not but follow when Harraway led the way. It was no trouble at all for me to put him out of business. When he lay half senseless in a corner I turned to see how Lerwick was holding up against Harraway. Evidently he had some science behind his fists, for Harraway was pretty well bruised, and one of his bulging eyes was all but hidden in the swelling flesh around it.

Even as I turned to look, however, I saw Harraway make a bull-like rush forward, throw his whole bulk upon his opponent, and crush him to the floor. There was no standing up against the weight and impetus of the man.

I could not believe that Lerwick was conscious after the weight that had

fallen upon him, I rushed forward and tackled Harraway from behind. I seized him by the collar and tried to drag him off, half strangling him as I did so. He tried to wriggle free and get to his feet, but I had no intention of letting him up if I could avoid it.

Suddenly the whole window behind me crashed in, and, even in the midst of the excitement of the fight I was conscious of the rush of raw night air. A long shrill scream from Nora warned me of a danger behind, but I had no time to save myself, for a heavy thud upon the back of my head sent me forward, half senseless, upon Harraway.

"An' that's *that*," I heard through the buzzing and throbbing in my head, and vaguely identified the voice as that of Percy, my broken-nosed friend of the caravan.

"Hit him again, Percy—harder! Bash his head in!"

I winced in expectancy of another sledge-hammer blow which assuredly would have finished me, but I was saved by Harraway, who chose that moment to heave up beneath me in an effort to get to his feet. I slipped off him helplessly to the floor, and he rose from the body of Lerwick, which had been crushed beneath our united weight.

My mind was growing clearer each moment, though my head throbbed atrociously. I saw Percy poised over me with a bar of iron raised above his head in the act of fulfilling his friend Harold's murderous desire. Then the arm of Harraway shot across and snatched the weapon from his hands.

"No murder!" he cried. "We're out for business, not pleasure!"

Except for the awful pain in my head, I had already recovered from the blow that had struck me down, but for the present I thought it best to keep up the appearance of helplessness. I lay in a collapsed heap close by the wall; through my half-closed eyes I could see all that was going on.

Nora remained in her corner, her hands clasped together, her face white and anxious. Lerwick was alive, to my astonishment. He sat up and looked about him, and I saw his expression change from its first dazed bewilderment to a realization of his surroundings. He tried to rise, only to be pushed back to the floor by Harraway.

"Take down that bell rope and tie him up," he ordered. "Ryce seems safe enough, isn't he?"

Percy leaned over me and then gave me a vicious kick in the stomach. I was able to endure it without a movement.

"He's all right," said Percy, turning away from me callously. "I laid him out proper. If you hadn't chipped in I'd have laid him out for keeps, hang him! He tried to take a rise outer me once, he did."

They tore down the old-fashioned bell rope to a wild, jangling accompaniment from the bell in the kitchen, and then, under the watchful eye of Harraway, the two minor villains proceeded to tie Lerwick hand and foot.

Murthwaite, like myself, until now had lain apparently helpless upon the floor; but now, while the attention of the others was taken up with Lerwick, he rose and edged unostentatiously across the room to the table.

He gave a cunning and fearful glance from his puffed and suffused eyes in the direction of Harraway, whose back was to the table, and then quickly and with trembling fingers began to fold up Lerwick's map. His terror was plain upon his distorted face, yet his meanness and cupidity were strong enough to overcome even that.

The map was folded, and he made to slip it into an inner pocket of his coat when Harraway, whether by chance or instinct, turned quickly, and caught him in the act.

Neither spoke. Harraway merely looked at his unwilling partner—looked without a vestige of expression on his great fleshy face, and Murthwaite replaced the map upon the table with a hand that shook like a drunkard's.

Then Harraway smiled bitterly. "It isn't done among the best burglars," he said cuttingly. "Let it be the last time you try to get the better of me, George. Next time will be the third, and I shall strangle you with my own hands."

He spoke quietly, in that piping voice

of his, but there was an air of sincerity about the words that convinced me—as I am sure it convinced Murthwaite—that they were not a mere threat, but a plain statement of intention.

He did not even trouble to pick up the map from where it lay on the table, but turned away to superintend the binding of Lerwick, confident that Murthwaite would not again dare to touch it.

"Lean him up against the wall," he directed, and Lerwick was dragged, tied hand and foot, across the intervening floor and propped up uncomfortably.

"Like old times, Lerwick, eh?" said Harraway, to my surprise. "Quite a meeting of long-parted friends!"

"Hardly friends, I think," replied Lerwick, who, to my relief, seemed little the worse for his treatment. "Companions in affliction, rather. I should have guessed, from the description that Ryce gave me, that we had to do with Philip Smyles, who got ten years for robbery with violence. Your forger friend, Latimer or Murthwaite, I don't blame myself for not recognizing, but you are too distinctive to be overlooked. I should have guessed how the two of you, knowing of my escape, would hunt out my sister and blackmail her. It was the obvious thing to do."

"That was Murthwaite's idea," said Harraway hastily, almost apologetically. "I only came in when he found out about the treasure. He came to me to help him carry the thing through because he hasn't the pluck of a fly, and then afterward he tried to bilk me because I insisted on share and share alike. He's a nice little fellow, is George."

"Both of you are nice little fellows," said Lerwick. "Your past records vouch for it. Well, I suppose Ryce and I deserve this. We should have been on our guard."

"We saw you arrive, and knew you even in your officer's uniform, though we'd never seen you except in the prison uniform," said Harraway, with his silly high giggle. "Knowing that things had come to a head and that Ryce and you would probably have general explanations, we thought it well to be on the spot. Imagine none of you realizing that Murthwaite had the keys of the house!"

"Yes. I admit we were fools. What are you going to do now?"

"I rather think it's none of your business," replied Harraway. "But, merely for your amusement, I don't mind telling you that we are shifting the scene of our activity to Asia Minor, where, with the aid of your map, we are going on a treasure hunt. You, if you are wise, will stay at home. If we see the merest sign of you we shall put the police on your track."

While this talk was going on I had continued to simulate unconsciousness, and, as there was nothing to do but listen, I had closed my eyes, so that I almost cried out in my surprise when a soft hand pressed upon my forehead. It was Nora. She had crossed the room to me without being interfered with. Harraway, I suppose, looked upon her as harmless, and the others dared not interfere when he was satisfied.

I opened my eyes wide in my astonishment and found her face bent close to mine. There were tears in her eyes and her lips trembled, but when she realized that I was conscious her face lighted up with relief.

"I thought you must be dead!" she whispered.

"Shamming!" I murmured below my breath. "I am fit for anything, really, and I have a plan if you will help me."

"Tell me what to do," she whispered bravely.

"Pretend you are caring for me. Loosen my collar—mop my brow—and then drag me along by the shoulders and prop me against the wall—as close to the door as you can without making them suspicious."

By a stroke of luck Harraway chose this moment to open out Dick Lerwick's map and examine the sketches. His companions gathered round greedily to gloat over their find, and Nora's movements passed unquestioned. Harraway threw a careless glance at her as she dragged me along the wall and propped me in the corner by the door, but he made no comment.

"If we can get out of the house they will never find us in the dark," I whispered.

"But my brother," murmured Nora, bending over me and pretending to listen for my breathing.

"We cannot get him away, but he will come to no harm. They have got all they want from him. If we can get out I hope to get back the map."

"Very well," agreed Nora. "Let's dash for it."

"Front door—go now."

I sprang to my feet and we were out over the smashed-in door before our intention had been realized. Nora was in front and had the outside door open when I reached it. I slammed it in Harraway's face, and we were hidden in the darkness of the shrubbery before our enemies had a chance to see us take cover.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE RACE BEGINS.

AS Nora ran before me into the darkness I could see her vaguely in the light that diffused from the house. The white cap and the broad bands of her ridiculous apron showed up strongly against the night, and I called to her to take them off. She obeyed me quickly, with the result that I saw her no more and could only follow by the sound of her footsteps.

Fortunately the pair who came in search of us were at fault. Nora, once safely hidden by the blackness of the night, stopped behind the shelter of a cluster of shrubs and drew me to her as I blundered past. We stood together, hand in hand, in silence but for our heavy breathing, and listened to the stumbling and growling of Harold and Percy. Then the voice of Harraway spoke from the doorway.

"Come back, you fools. Let them go. They can do us no harm."

"If you'd let me bash him proper, this wouldn't have happened," grumbled my implacable foe.

I had made a dangerous enemy when I had dared to trifle with Percy.

"Come back and don't argue," retorted Harraway.

We heard the pair retreat from our neighborhood and saw through the bushes that they actually returned to the house. Harraway stood in the doorway still, however, and when the others had gone inside he spoke.

"I know you can hear me, Ryce, though it's a dead certainty that you won't answer. You were a fool to bolt, for we'd have been gone in ten minutes. We'd got all we want. Still you've spoiled the little flirtation I meant to have with the girl when business was over—confound you."

I think he knew how I would feel, and taunted me in the hope that I would discover myself. Nora, too, guessed it, for she pressed a warning hand upon my arm.

After a moment's pause, Harraway reëntered the house, slamming the door behind him.

"And now?" whispered Nora.

"Let us wait a while, where we are. I think they will all go back to the caravan soon. They have the map; that's what they came for."

And so it turned out. In about a quarter of an hour we saw the four scoundrels leave the house and make their way off in the darkness toward the road that led to their caravan.

Then Miss Lerwick and I went to the house. We found Dick Lerwick tied up in the corner. We cut him loose.

"What happened after we got out?" I asked.

"Nothing much. After they had got over the excitement caused by your escape they came back and had a good look at the map and drawings. By the way, they did not forget to crow over me at their success."

"That means they are going to start for the treasure just as soon as the devil will let them," I said.

"Surest thing you know," agreed Lerwick. "But the first thing they will do is to give me away to the authorities. Confound it! And just at a time when it is absolutely necessary that I should be free to move. Harraway knows I may get to the treasure before him if he doesn't do something to hold me back. Probably by to-morrow morning

the police will have the information in their hands."

"There is hardly a doubt of it, I'm afraid," I said gloomily.

"You mustn't be caught with all that evidence against you, Dick," cried Nora.

"I don't care a hang about the evidence one way or the other," replied her brother, who was pacing the floor, his brows knit with thought. "The truth would come out all right if we only had time to see the case through. The confounded thing is, we haven't! We must get away at once if we are to have the least sporting chance of getting first to the valley, and we'll be hung up for months if once the police get hold of me. We must get away at once."

Nora and I agreed that a quick departure was the proper course. Lerwick continued to pace the floor, deep in thought. As I looked at him, it struck me, as it had done before, that his appearance was the only evidence that told in his favor. Even in the shabby clothes in which he had disguised himself, he looked a man in whom one could trust blindly, and I had a feeling of exultation at the thought that our fortunes were now bound together irrevocably.

"Yes, it's now or never," he declared at last, pausing in his tramp and facing us. His face was set and determined, and I felt before he spoke that he had found a solution of our difficulties. "But it's not so easy to get out of the country in a hurry. There are such things as passports nowadays, and as soon as a breath of suspicion gets about I shall be done."

"What are you going to do then?" I asked. "I am sure you have a plan of some sort."

"I have," he admitted, "and if it fails we are done, for I shall have given myself away completely. I told you that I have some influence at headquarters, I think? I don't want to mention names, but I have made a friend who is a very big bird indeed. I propose to go to him now—if I can find him—and tell him the whole story from beginning to end. I know that he likes me, and he has trusted me with matters of the utmost importance and secrecy several times. If I can make him believe in my innocence and get him to see the urgency of the whole affair, he'll do what he can, and he is in a position to make things hum once he starts."

"Well," said I, "the first move is to get out of this house and to some railroad station where we can get a train for New York. My car is here. We can take the road that branches off to the south, and thus avoid going over the bridge near where the caravan is. Thus we can give Harraway and his gang the slip. We can reach Manorville and wait there for a train."

It took us a very short time to get our things together, tumble them into the car, and get under way.

Luckily our plan for reaching New York went through without a hitch and the next day found us all in a hotel, not far from Broadway and Forty-second Street.

Dick lay down for an hour or two, then started off on his errand. Nora went to bed and had a good sleep, and I did the same.

In the evening she and I dined together in the hotel restaurant. Not a word of love had been spoken by either of us, yet love occupied our minds, overwhelming our interest in the treasure. Somehow I did not want to speak. I hugged to my heart the thought that mere words were unnecessary between us—that everything essential had been understood and accepted.

I was able, therefore, to sit and delight silently in Nora's presence, to watch the play of expression upon her charming face. Murthwaite, Harraway, the caravan were all forgotten in the rapture of the moment.

Lerwick did not return until late that night, but his face alone was sufficient evidence of his success.

"The whole thing is fixed up," he cried as soon as we met. "If only we had been prepared we might even have gotten away all together to-night. We need money and clothes, and you people must see to all that. I'm off to-morrow."

"To-morrow!" I exclaimed.

"It is then or never, in all probability. I'm on a special mission, my boy, and nobody can stop me."

He smiled as he spoke in a manner that showed plainly the meaning of his special mission.

"Your friend at court is a thorough good sportsman," said I.

"He's more than that—he's a dear!" asserted Nora. "But what about us poor things?"

"Nobody wants to arrest either of you on a murder charge," said Lerwick. "You have to get the money for the journey and lay in all the baggage necessary for the three of us. I'll give you a check before I go. Then you will follow on, pick me up in Paris at an address I shall give you, and we'll go ahead together. As for you, Nora, we must decide later on where you are to be left behind."

"If I am to be left behind," said Nora.

"You certainly will be," said her brother grimly. "The Taurus is no place for you."

"What about our passports?" I asked. "*We* are not on a special mission of extreme urgency."

"Nevertheless all the necessary papers will be brought here to-morrow," he replied.

We saw Lerwick off the next day at noon. As the ship moved away Nora and I stood on the wharf and waved him adieu.

CHAPTER XXII.

A NOTE FROM HARRAWAY.

IT was a week before Nora and I were ready to follow Dick Lerwick across the Atlantic. There were many things to arrange. We made a trip in my little car to the fateful Pines. We found the old house just as we had left it. Harraway and his gang had gone from their camp near the bridge, and taken their caravan with them. This told us that he, too, had made a start for the treasure.

At The Pines we had to pack the clothing we intended to take with us, and it was with difficulty that we managed to stow our baggage and ourselves in the small car. But we got back to the hotel in New York without mishap. Then followed a lot of shopping, and Nora was perfectly happy. They were days of perfect happiness for me as well.

Nora was a different girl now that the blight of Murthwaite had been lifted from her. The novelty of seeing her without her badges of servitude did not quickly wear off. It was a real pleasure to see her clothed in a manner that showed off her rare beauty to advantage. I had imagined that the severity of the black dress and white bands suited her to perfection, and I was astonished and charmed to find that in each fresh costume in which I saw her, her beauty was enhanced.

Just a week following the departure of Lerwick, then, we set out to rejoin him. After a voyage that was rather stormy we arrived in Paris and found him at the address he had given us.

"I haven't been idle while you have been loafing around New York and enjoying yourselves on the ship," he said, when we had finished congratulating each other on our reunion. "I've been looking into the matter of our quickest route, and I find that the difficulty is to book by any route at all. Boats are generally full up long before they sail, and our only chance appears to be to make for the most likely port and chance getting a passage that some one has failed to take up at the last moment. I wonder where the other party have got to, and how they propose to travel."

"They may not have got out of America yet," I said hopefully. "Harraway, you know, is wanted by the police. He might have a great deal of difficulty in getting out of the country."

"Don't you believe it, my boy," replied Lerwick with a laugh. "It is only peaceful citizens who have trouble about customs and passports and other red-tape restrictions. Your professional rogue knows how to evade trouble. You may rest assured they got across, and are probably well ahead of us now."

"Do be cheerful, Dick," said Nora. "We have been so lucky already that

I feel sure it is going to last. What port are we to make for?"

"I believe Genoa will be best nowadays, from all I can hear. We must leave the planning of our campaign until we reach Alexandria and see what chance there is of getting a boat up the Levant."

"Meanwhile there is more than an even chance that Harraway and his gang are ahead of us, and that when we reach the valley in the Taurus we shall find nothing but any empty hole in the ground," I said gloomily.

Our converseation took place in the lounge of the little hotel in which Dick Lerwick had been stopping. When I made this gloomy forecast of events, he looked at me curiously, and then smiled in a meaning way that I could not fathom. Next he rose and crossed the room to a wide settee and beckoned us both to join him.

"Come, you two innocents, and let me a tale unfold," he said, with a twinkle in his eye. "Sit close to me, for this must not be overheard." Then, in a low voice, he explained the cause of his amusement. "I understand that Murthwaite has the letter I wrote you, telling in detail my adventures in Asia Minor?" he asked Nora, who sadly nodded her confirmation.

"And he's well up in its contents, judging by the way he told me the story," I added.

"I dare say," said Lerwick. "He'd have gloated over it so often that he'd have it practically by heart. But you must remember the circumstances in which I wrote the letter. I wanted to give Nora an account of my escape, and at the same time I was describing an incident that meant hundreds of thousands of dollars to me. Remember also, that all letters from the theaters of war—even officers' letters—were liable to be opened by censors. I didn't forget it, I need hardly say, so I gave Nora as graphic an account of the facts as I could, taking care to alter everything that would give a clew to the particular valley in which the treasure lay."

"But the story of the Turks?" said Nora.

"Was all perfectly true," answered Lerwick, pressing his sister's arm affectionately.

"Still, I don't see that it helps us much, now that they have your map with the directions and the sketches," I remarked.

"No, it wouldn't, if it hadn't been that the very fact of thinking of the danger from writing the letter led me further. I often used to pore over my map, looking forward to the time when I should be able to retrace my steps through the Taurus range, and I was always desperately afraid that some one might get on the track of my treasure. Then, while thinking of how I had hidden things up in my letter to Nora, it suddenly occurred to me that I could follow the same plan with my sketches. You will remember that I gave the compass points from which each drawing was made."

"Yes, the whole thing seemed very clear," I agreed.

"Well, I carefully erased these, one by one, and replaced each by its exact opposite, so that now, for S. W. one must read N. E., for N. N. E. read S. S. W. and so on. You get the idea?"

"Splendid!" I exclaimed. "Then Harraway will not be able to identify anything from your drawings?"

"It will be very difficult, because he will always be looking for them in the wrong direction."

"Dick, you are a wonder—a regular infant phenom. I can almost forgive you for writing me whoppers," said Nora.

"Wait until I finish," said Dick, who was enjoying our surprise enormously. "Having started this method of camouflaging my data, the habit grew on me, and I gradually altered the drawings themselves. I would study some particularly prominent feature which I had chosen as a landmark, until I felt that I could never forget it, and then I would rub it out and draw it in quite differently. In this way I made several important alterations in each sketch, so that now no one but myself can tell their significance. To me, however, they

would still serve as reminders if I were in a difficulty."

"So our friends the enemy have got nothing for all their trouble except a delusion?" I said.

"Things are not quite as good as that," said Lerwick, shaking his head and growing more serious. "They have my map with the route traced on it, and the cross showing approximately where the valley lies. That I did not alter. I did not trust myself to find the right valley again, for, as I told you, they run in every direction over hundreds of square miles."

"You have lifted a great weight from our minds," said Nora. "I can almost feel sorry for these poor wretches—bad as they are—roaming about the valley, stumbling over bowlders while their eyes are intent on your drawings, and staring south when they ought to look north. How they will swear!"

The knowledge that our enemies had not got every clew to the treasure cheered me immensely, and I set out on the next stage of the journey confident that we should win through in the end. We were fortunate in getting a boat from Genoa within three days of our arrival in the port, and when we landed in Alexandria, Egypt, six days later I could not believe that Harraway and his gang could be ahead of us. Yet almost the first person on whom my eyes rested after we had landed was my old friend Percy. I could not be mistaken in that broken nose and extreme squint, even though the man was dressed so differently from when I had last seen him. He now wore a suit of light tweed and a straw hat, and looked grotesquely out of place in such respectable attire.

As our eyes met—or, at least, as mine met him—for it was never possible to say that *his* met anything—he slunk back through the crowd of idlers who watched the arrival of our ship, and hurried away.

Neither of my companions had observed him, and I said nothing until we had reached our hotel and were alone together in the private sitting room that we had engaged. Nora was worried by my discovery, but Lerwick took it with calm unconcern.

"It is only what we had to expect," he said. "We knew that if they were not ahead, they could not be very far behind. Indeed, we are rather better off than before, for we have definite news of their whereabouts."

"And so have they of ours," added Nora, whose spirits were dashed by the proximity of her old enemies.

We had a further proof of Harraway's activities before the day was out. Our native attendant entered our room with a letter.

"Mister Ler-wick?" he inquired, the whites of his eyes flickering as his glance darted from one to the other of us.

Lerwick held out his hand. "Who brought it?" he demanded.

"Porter give it me—I know no more, sar."

Lerwick tore open the envelope. "I thought so," he said grimly, after a glance down the page. Then he read aloud:

"My Dear Lerwick: I am delighted to hear of your arrival, and of that of your charming sister, and of my old friend Ryce. I should have been charmed to meet you, but I am leaving the neighborhood at once on important business, so must regretfully postpone the pleasure. If I may advise, I would suggest that you prolong your stay in Alexandria until my return, when we could have a happy reunion. If you have any idea of proceeding farther in the immediate future—say, exploring the wilds of Asia Minor—take my advice, don't. The climate is very uncertain, the country rough, and the inhabitants unsettled. It is doubtful—very doubtful, in fact—if you would return alive.
Yours, Harraway."

A moment we sat, looking in silence, from one to the other, disposed to smile at Harraway's breezy audacity, but realizing that our adventure had taken rather a serious turn.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE GUILE OF NORA.

IT was on the day following the receipt of Harraway's letter that Nora surprised me by the display of a Machiavellian diplomacy which I had not suspected her to possess. Dick Ler-

wick had gone out to discover what vessels were sailing from Alexandria up the Levant in the near future, also to look for a quiet *pension* where Nora could stay in safety during our absence. To me he left the care of his sister, a division of labor against which I, needless to say, made no protest.

We sat together upon a window seat and watched, with the interest of novelty, the jostling Alexandrian crowd in the streets below with its gay colors, its picturesque garments and innumerable nationalities. I thought that Nora's whole attention was absorbed by the moving scene below, and was therefore surprised when she turned to me suddenly with a question on quite a different subject.

"Don't you think Dick is just an ideal brother?" she asked me.

"I admire him immensely," I agreed. "But which of his many virtues have you in mind at the moment?"

"I was thinking of the poor boy tramping round in the hot sun trying to find a home for me."

I laughed. "Well, we've just *got* to find a home for you before we go."

"Yes, I suppose so; but it will be so difficult." She paused, and looked thoughtfully out of the window.

"Difficult!" I said, progressing blindly in the direction in which she led. "I don't see that at all. There must be plenty of quiet boarding-house places where you can be comfortable until we return."

"Comfortable. Oh, yes; I wasn't thinking of comfort exactly."

"Of what were you thinking then, Nora? Of course you may be a bit lonely while we are away, but——"

"I was thinking more of *safety*," Nora interrupted. "You see—well—when you go of course you won't know if Harraway and Murthwaite are ahead of you or still here. I should hate to fall into their hands again."

"That's so; I never thought of them!" I exclaimed. "But after all, why should they want to interfere with you now? They can't blackmail you any more."

"They might think that if they captured me they could force me to tell them your latest plans, or they might hold me as a hostage until you had got the treasure and then hand me back in return for it."

"Why did neither Dick nor I think of these possibilities?" I said, deeply impressed by her words.

"Perhaps I should not have spoken," said Nora. "It means that both of you will be worrying about me, when you have plenty of other things to worry you, and all the time it may be quite unnecessary. Perhaps Harraway will not think of using me as a means of scoring off you, after all. In fact, it will be best to say nothing at all to Dick about it, especially if he has found a nice quiet home for me."

"Not mention it to Dick!" I exclaimed. "Why do you think I am going to have you left here if there is the faintest chance that you may fall into the hands of Harraway? I shall tackle Dick about it the moment he gets back."

"Why worry him, poor fellow?" Nora went on. "After all, what good can it do? You know that he is convinced that he must leave me here. What else could he do?"

"Rather than that you should run the slightest risk of falling into the hands of these scoundrels we should drop the treasure hunt altogether," I said earnestly. My mind was filled with pictures of Nora struggling in the clutch of that villain Percy, or undergoing cross-examination assisted by the methods of Harraway.

Nora shook her head. "You know that Dick would never consent to give up the treasure. He would be very foolish if he did. No, we shall just have to take whatever risk there is, so why worry?"

"Worry! I should be in misery all the time we were gone. Why, it would be better to take you with us than to leave you here in such uncertainty."

"Dick would never consent to that," said Nora, watching me very closely, I noticed.

"But hang it, he must consent," I replied hotly. "There are only three courses—to leave you here with the pos-

sibility of falling into Harraway's hands —to give up the treasure hunt, which you say, and I quite agree, that Dick will never do—and to take you with us. That means that there is only *one* possible course, and Dick must be made to see it."

"I've tried to get round him before, Bob, but he won't hear of it."

"*I've* got to convince him, not you, dear girl. He must be made to see reason."

"Oh, Bob Ryce, do you really mean it?" cried Nora, taking my two hands in hers.

"Of course I do, Nora," I answered. "You dear!"

She pressed my hands, then put both her arms round my neck and laid her soft warm cheek on mine. "You dear!" she repeated. "I've been longing to go all the time, but I could not see how it was to be managed. I didn't dream that I could persuade you into helping me until this morning, and even then I was very doubtful if it would come off. But you won't go back on your word now that you know how you have been done?"

"How can I?" I said helplessly.

"But you've got to convince Dick, and that won't be easy."

"He can't go alone; that's certain; and I shan't move a step without you," I answered.

Nora laughed gayly. "This is better than I had dared to hope," she said. "At the best I expected to get you as a half-hearted supporter of my cause, instead of which you are a regular fire-eater!"

Dick returned in time for lunch. He had been successful in finding a tramp steamer that would sail for Cyprus in about a week's time, and he was strongly of opinion that we should take the opportunity rather than wait for a regular steamer to Alexandretta.

"We can get our equipment together quietly and hire or buy some sort of fishing craft," he explained. "It is a matter of not much more than fifty miles across to the mainland, and we shall land unostentatiously on an uninhabited part of the coast. We don't want to create any local excitement, and we certainly don't want Harraway and his gang following our track. They will probably go by Alexandretta, and I hope that we shall clear the boodle and get safely away before they reach the valley."

"How do you propose to get the gold away?" I asked. "If it took ten mules to bring it——"

"It will take ten mules to remove it; certainly, my mathematician," said Lerwick. "We shall buy these from the local tribes as we go through the mountains, I hope. That matter we must leave until the need arises."

"And what have you done about poor me?" asked Nora. "Have you found me a home?"

"I can't say I've seen a place that I care for," replied her brother. "Alexandria is pretty full up, and the best *pensions* are packed to the last bedroom. Where there *is* room, it is mostly because the place is badly run."

"All the more reason for adopting the plan I am about to propose," I said nervously, for I expected strong opposition, and Dick Lerwick was not a man whom it was easy to turn from his purpose.

"Out with your plan," he said, looking at me with a natural surprise at my portentous opening.

Then, with all the eloquence that I had at my command, I pled Nora's cause, while she, who had jockeyed me into the position of advocate, sat modestly by, apparently indifferent to the result.

Dick Lerwick listened to me in silence and with a smile that I was at a loss to account for, until, when I paused to search my mind for further arguments, he laughed outright. "My dear chap, you needn't pile on the agony any more," he said. "I'm perfectly content that Nora should go with us; in fact, I should prefer it. If I have given you the impression that I wanted to leave her behind, it is because I thought you were keen on it. I thought you would look on me as a cold-blooded brute if I suggested taking my own sister on an expedition like ours; so, of

course, I always choked her off. Personally, I think there is very little danger, and probably not much hardship even. With luck, we shall lift the treasure and be back to the coast before Harraway finds the valley."

Nora rose, with a sigh of relief, and kissed her brother gratefully. "So *that's* settled," she said gleefully. "And I have given myself quite a lot of trouble needlessly, filling poor Bob's head with wild imaginings of the dangers and horrors of life in Alexandria."

"So you were at the root of it all," said her brother, laughing. "I might have guessed it. You've had—or taken—your own way since you were all black stockings and pigtail. Ryce, my lad, you have a desperate future to look forward to!"

CHAPTER XXIV.

DIFFICULTIES MULTIPLY.

THE remainder of our stay in Alexandria was occupied in laying in such of the necessary equipment of our expedition as we did not think we could buy in Kyrenia, the port in Cyprus for which we were bound. Lerwick and I kept together as much as possible, and one or the other of us was always on guard over Nora, for we had plentiful evidence that our enemies were still in the city.

We were watched in turn by the two underlings—Percy and Harold—but of Murthwaite or Harraway we saw no sign. The principal problem that occupied our minds was how to get aboard our ship and leave the port unobserved by the spies. When making his arrangements with the Greek skipper of the tramp, Lerwick had exercised great care and taken precautions against being followed, and we were pretty confident that our intentions were unsuspected.

During the last two days of our stay we came to the conclusion that Harraway had ceased to take an interest in our movements, or that he and his friends had got away ahead of us, for the spying ceased so far as we could ascertain.

Nevertheless, we took the precaution to have our baggage conveyed aboard piecemeal and at night, and we ourselves left the hotel under cover of darkness and made our way to the vessel by circuitous paths.

The voyage to Cyprus was without incident, and my main recollections of it are the happy hours spent on the sunlit deck with Nora, and the endless delays at our ports of call on the Levantine coast, for it turned out that our captain, with whom the contract had been made, and for whose pocket our passage-money was destined, had grossly underestimated the duration of the voyage.

It was fully a fortnight after our departure from Egypt before we landed at Kyrenia, worried and anxious with the long delay, and full of speculation as to the probable whereabouts of our enemies.

Our stay on the coast of Cyprus was made up of a series of irritating delays, due, largely, to the necessity for a certain amount of secrecy in our preparations. We had to acquire a boat that would carry us to the mainland without our motive for the purchase leaking out. We had to load her with stores enough for our journey in the same unostentatious fashion. We disarmed suspicion and acquired the reputation of being sporting tourists by making a number of sailing trips along the coast of the island, and finally, when all the preparatory difficulties had been overcome, we slipped off to the mainland under cover of one of these coasting excursions. We had lost several weeks of valuable time, however, and that was to mean much to us in the end.

It was late in the afternoon that Lerwick, after tacking up and down the barren coast in search of a cove suitable for our purpose, ran our little craft into a rocky inlet that looked as secure from observation as anything that we were likely to find. It was very small and almost landlocked, so that there seemed a fair chance that our boat would remain secure and unobserved until our return.

We had long since made up our minds that we must chance the disaster of los-

ing our boat, for we could see no way out of it, and our hopes of success rose considerably as we discovered this deserted little harbor.

The coast on either side of it was high and rocky, and the bare, almost precipitous hills immediately inland showed no sign either of habitation or cultivation.

"We could leave her here for months with hardly a chance of her being discovered," said Lerwick. "And I hope that two weeks at most will see us back."

He ran our little vessel aground on a small patch of sandy beach at the farthest extremity of the cove, and I had the pleasure of lifting Nora over the gunwale and carrying her ashore.

After the decision had been taken that she should accompany us, Nora had equipped herself thoroughly for the expedition before we left Alexandria. She was dressed now in a costume not unlike that worn by some of the American women war workers in France, and it suited her to perfection. Her belted coat and short skirt were of stout khaki, and she had strong brown boots that laced up to the knee. A rakish khaki peaked cap gave her a saucy air well in keeping with the light badinage with which latterly she had become so free.

For it was a very different Nora from the pale, terror-haunted maid of The Pines whom we had with us. The free life, the sea air, and the absence of all anxiety had changed her completely. Her cheeks had now a healthy glow of color, her eyes sparkled with life and with mischief.

We unshipped all our cargo and carried it, load by load, to a sheltered spot under an overhanging cliff. Lerwick discovered a perfect little basin amid a cluster of rocks, and there we anchored our craft in greater security than we could have hoped to find.

We waded ashore and started up the sandy strip of beach to rejoin Nora, whom we had left with our baggage under the cliff, when to our unbounded astonishment we saw, standing halfway between us and our destination, a human figure quietly surveying our movements.

"Confound it!" said Dick Lerwick simply.

The words expressed all our chagrin at finding our hopes blasted. The one thing we wanted above all others was to get away from the coast unobserved.

"We may as well go forward and talk to it," went on Lerwick after a pause. "I shall have to explain ourselves somehow."

During the time that he had spent in a Turkish prison camp, Dick had occupied himself, with a view to his ultimate escape, by learning as much of the language as possible, and had reached a fair proficiency.

"Shall we let him see that we are armed?" I asked, ready to slip a hand to the pocket in which I carried the automatic with which I had provided myself.

"No. Peaceful penetration is our line; but be on the alert in case a demonstration in force should be wanted."

As we drew nearer to the immobile figure we had a chance to examine him at our leisure. Lerwick, who had some experience of the inhabitants of the district, suddenly gave an exclamation of surprise.

"Look here, Ryce," he said, with a hint of excitement in his lowered voice, "this is as suspicious a characer as we are ourselves. He certainly doesn't belong hereabouts."

I looked at the figure that stood awaiting us. It was that of a man, little more than a youth indeed, wearing a fez, an old black frock coat, black trousers, and very down-at-heel brown boots. He had, around his neck, a frayed and grimy starched collar with butterfly wings held together by a stud; but he wore no tie or any trace of a shirt, for the V of his waistcoat was filled in by nothing more than light-brown skin.

As we approached he smiled a welcome to us, displaying an expanse of dazzling white teeth, enhanced by the small dead-black mustache which graced his upper lip. His eyes were coal black and penetrating and given to cunning, sidelong glances that did not add to one's confidence in him. I had seen

many of the type in Alexandria, though not in the state of dilapidation which a closer inspection showed our new acquaintance to be suffering from. His coat was out at elbows, his trousers frayed into fringes, and his whole general appearance that of one who had seen better days, but in a very distant past.

As we approached he bowed low and smiled ingratiatingly. Lerwick made some remark in Turkish, which was, of course, unintelligible to me.

"Good afternoon, gentlemen," replied the stranger, in perfectly good English, but with the harsh tone in which all Easterners speak our language.

His big black eyes wandered over us inquisitively as he waited in silence for us to make the next move.

The next section of this novel will appear in the number of TOP-NOTCH that follows this—the one dated and out February 15th. Back numbers may be obtained from news dealers or the publishers.

A Busy Job

IT is only in Albuquerque, the metropolis of New Mexico, that street cars, each operated by one woman, may be seen. During the war, when men were scarce, women were put on the cars, and as they have proved very satisfactory, they have been allowed to remain, even though there is now no scarcity in the supply of male labor available.

However, it is a busy job. The woman acts as "motorman" and conductor—she runs the car, opens and closes the doors, turns switches, issues transfers, and makes change for the passengers to drop a six-cent fare in the box. Then, many of the cars have only hand brakes, so that it is no easy task stopping to let passengers on and off. The cars are double-enders and the fare box has to be moved from one end to the other at the termination of each trip. The switching of the trolley is generally attended to by the boys who happen to be around.

The women drivers call off the names of the streets after dark. In the daytime passengers look out for their own destinations.

Baseball's Winter League

BASEBALL'S winter league was the term commonly applied to the groups of fans throughout the country who passed their winter months fighting verbal battles over the games of the preceding season. This league now takes a minor place, as a four-club circuit has been organized in California to play a season of ten weeks, with double-headers every Sunday.

Ty Cobb, the wonder player-manager of the Detroit Tigers, paid a visit to the coast last winter, and the new league was the result. He was the pilot of the San Francisco team for its first season. Roger Hornsby, the Cardinals' star, headed the Los Angeles troup; George Sisler, the marvelous player of the Browns, was in command of the Vernon club, while Harry Heilman, of the Detroit Tigers, whose extraordinary batting created such a sensation last season, guided the destinies of the Missions.

A Famous Model

IN Madonna Lisa, a Neapolitan, and wife of Zanobi del Giocondo of Florence, the great Italian painter, sculptor, architect, and engineer, Leonardo da Vinci, found the model for his famous painting "Mona Lisa." Her haunting, enigmatic smile delighted his soul, and the story is told that the artist kept the beautiful Neapolitan surrounded with singers and other entertainers in order that her smile might be forever on her lips. Ten years elapsed before the painting was finished. It was bought by Francis I. of France for four thousand golden florins, and is now in the Louvre at Paris.

In 1911 the world was startled by the news that the famous painting had disappeared from the Salon Carre of the Louvre. Not until December, 1913, was it found in Florence, having been stolen by Cincenzo Perugia, an Italian house painter who worked in Paris. The painting was returned to its place of honor in the Louvre.

The Midnight Diamond

By Frank Richardson Pierce

(COMPLETE IN THIS ISSUE)

CHAPTER I.

ONE STRING TO THE BARGAIN.

EVERY ball team in Alaska had begun practicing the minute they heard that my team of barnstormers was coming North. They treated us like a million dollars, gave us the freedom of the different towns we hit, showed us some of the greatest trout fishing in the world, and taught us what hospitality really is; then they ended up by doing their darnedest to lick us on the ball field.

We pulled into a little mining town one day, with a band, most of the town, and all of the dogs down at the river landing to meet the boat. The manager of the local team took me in hand, and the first thing I said was:

"What kind of a ball game are you planning to pull off here?"

"What's the matter?" he came back.

"Why, according to the time we start, we'll be lucky if we finish at midnight," I said, pointing to the schedule.

He gave me the laugh. "Oh, that's an annual affair with us. To-morrow is the longest day of the year, and we can have a game just as well at midnight as we can at noon. Don't make much difference."

A mosquito passed him up and landed on me. I paused long enough to send the pest to the bosom of his fathers, thereby starting a feud that at least three hundred of his sons must have taken up; then I told the manager I guessed it was all right.

"I suppose," I said pleasantly, "that when the time comes some ex-Cub will wash the gold off his hands and take his place on the mound, an ex-Pirate will hold down the first sack, and maybe a former Dodger will occupy second or third. I've just found out where all the big leaguers go when they don't go to the minors."

He laughed. "Nope; we haven't got any big leaguers in camp, but we have got a kid named Revere who is a comer if he ever gets a chance in the States."

"Ah, ha!" said I to myself. "This bird has heard that I'm a scout. In a couple of minutes he'll be telling me about the greatest pitcher in the world, and will I take him with me and pay a thousand or so, mostly so, in getting him back to the States and keeping him all

Glendale told himself. "If he can't no one else on earth can!"

He discarded his cigarette and considered what his friend had told him regarding Hugo March. March was a person who dwelt behind a curtain of mystery. Little or nothing was known about him save that his activities ranged the globe. The New York police department boasted neither his photograph nor finger prints, though some of his largest raids had been made on the island between the two rivers.

March's expeditions were carried out in bold, sweeping strokes that rendered pursuit futile and arrest ludicrous. Success after success was written in golden ink in the diary of Hugo March's life. The raillery of the newspapers, because of the failure of headquarters to trap the man, was a rankling thorn in the side of police dignity.

Glendale smothered a yawn and looked at his watch. The hour was well after four o'clock. He turned on the lounge so that his gaze might move through the open doorway and focus on the dusty green of Central Park, a grateful oasis in a bleached desert of steel and stone.

The lobby of the Hotel King William, for all of the heat, was fairly well filled. Out-of-town merchants, who were visiting the metropolis for a usual summertime holiday with their families, rested in the swathed chairs, awaiting wives on shopping pilgrimages.

North and south along the avenue, crowded surface cars, controlled by coatless motormen, clanged heavily past. Taxicabs and motors in a never-ending stream kept pace with them. No matter what the weather, the surge and turmoil of the great city never seemed to lessen.

Glendale's gaze, idle and retrospective, came to fogus on a man in green flannels who occupied a chair to the left of the entryway. The man was tall, sinewy, and darkly tanned. There was something about him, some alert and pantherlike quality, that held Glendale's attention. He was at a loss to discover what this was until the other lowered the copy of an afternoon newspaper he had been reading and looked at his watch.

It was then that Glendale saw his eyes—eyes that were like swords of polished steel, gray and deadly—eyes that were merciless and without pity.

"Old Hawk Eye, the curse of the crooks!" Glendale thought. "He looks like a tough customer. Not the kind of a person you'd like to meet alone on a dark and stormy night."

The man examined his watch again and peered across the lobby. Presently he stood with what might have been a shrug and fitted his straw hat to his head. He walked leisurely toward the switchboard and public telephone booths of the hotel. Here he gave the girl on duty a number and after a short wait was assigned to the end booth in line, one that was only a few feet distant from Glendale's lounge. "Green Flannels" held the door of the booth an inch or two ajar so that he might not entirely bake in the little tin-lined compartment.

The first part of his conversation escaped the man on the lounge. It was only when he let his voice rise sharply that Glendale listened.

"She hasn't shown up yet," the stranger said. "You say there has been no word since her first message? That is strange. It is just possible he found her trail and headed her off. She's not the kind of person to be tardy."

There was a pause. Then the man in the booth went on: "I'm at the King William. I've been waiting here for some time. The appointment was for four o'clock precisely. It's well past that now. I won't delay longer—something's happened. Look for me in twenty minutes."

He hung up the receiver, paid the girl at the switchboard, and left the hotel without a backward glance.

Speculating absently on the fragments of the conversation and wondering a little what they might concern, Glendale decided to seek his suite on the fifth floor of the building and use the shower. That, at least, was a temporary means of keeping cool. Accord-

don't feel half as peeved at you as I did a few minutes ago. A fellow that don't like baseball is like a fellow that don't like kids—he's missing one of the biggest kicks in life and don't know it. But what's all this got to do with this yellow stuff that looks as if it might have been wrested from nature's bosom a few minutes ago?"

"You baseball fellows are hard-hearted cusses," he said, getting off on the wrong foot again, "but maybe you'll see what I'm getting at. I love that boy of mine! All my life I've done my best to shield him from disappointments when it was possible. A young fellow bumps up against enough hard luck in this world as it is. Some hard luck is good for him, but too much isn't. So I figure to head off whatever isn't exactly necessary.

"The only trouble that's ever come between us," he went on, "is this baseball thing. He has made a good reputation among the boys in the camp, and they've told him he ought to go outside and play in the leagues. They've told him that so many times that he is beginning to believe it. You're an old hand at the game, I take it. You know what that will mean. He'll leave here tickled to death, figuring his big chance has come. He'll go down there and try until his heart breaks, only to find out that a good man in a small mining camp is better than a poor one in a big city. I see it and you see it, and that's what I want to prevent—the bitter disappointment that will come to him when he learns that the thing he's set his heart on isn't for him."

Maybe old man Revere didn't like baseball, but just the same I was strong for him from that minute. I'd seen too many kids come from the sticks and go back again with heartaches not to know just how he felt about it.

He shoved the pile of nuggets toward me. "I want you to use your best pitcher, and I want your men to play their best to show this boy of mine that he can't hit the ball when professionals are throwing it; that he is not another Mr. Ruth as the men in camp tell him; that he can't steal bases when real ball players are guarding them. Show him all these things and the gold is yours, and more, too, if it will cost that."

I split the pile in two and shoved one half back at him. "For myself I want nothing," I told him, "but I'll call in my best pitcher, a boy that is as good as the average in the big leagues right now, and I'll tell him that if he holds that son of yours the nuggets are his. If your boy gets one hit off of Hale I'll return them."

"Thank you, sir!" he said. "Thank you!"

"There's just one string to this, Mr. Revere, and that is this: so long as we are doing our utmost to defeat your son for the good of his soul, you've got to be present and see it done."

Maybe that was rather mean of me, but I wondered if he was willing to watch his boy, who was the local pride, humbled even in a good cause. It did me good when he hesitated, then he sighed and said, "I'll be there!"

CHAPTER II.

SO FULL OF FIGHT.

HALE had been surprised so many times on this trip that he took the rumors he heard about this Revere boy seriously.

"Yes," he told me, when I called him into the room and outlined what had been arranged; "everybody in camp is talking about this boy. I'm taking it for granted that his local rep is all there is to it, but I'm not taking it for granted that he can't knock me out of the box. After one or two other places we've played I take nothing for granted. I'll be loaded for Revere when he faces me just on general principles, and, besides, I'd like to take these nuggets back with me and have 'em made into stick pins for my friends."

Exit Mr. Hale.

Enter Paul Revere.

He was a big, rangy chap, with a winning smile that made you like him the instant you saw him. Right away I got his father's viewpoint; he sure was too nice a kid to send outside full of con-

fidence and hope and to bring back disappointed. Baseball wasn't his game, and mining was. "As a miner he was undoubtedly a whiz, as a baseball player he was one fine miner," was my decision.

After he had closed the door behind him and took the only chair in my room, me sitting on the bed, he pulls out a poke and pours out a fistful of nuggets. Well, I knew he wasn't going to try to bribe me to throw the game his way. He wasn't that sort, so I waited for him to talk.

"You're a big-league scout?" he began.

"Some of the time!" I told him.

"I want to commission you, or whatever you call it, to get me a try-out with Chicago, New York, or some of those big fellows. I know pull counts for nothing, and so all I want is the chance."

"You'll find that slamming the old pill up here is one thing and slamming it down there is another," I replied.

"Yeah; I've thought of all that!"

"Have you thought that the best pitchers in the world are earning their cakes in the crowd you want to travel with?"

"How am I going to know whether I am any good or not if I don't get a try-out. If I can go down there and stand on my own legs, why shouldn't I do it. Believe me, sir, if I can't stand on my own legs you won't find me looking around for a pair of crutches. I'll know that my line isn't baseball, and I'll come back to the creeks where I belong."

There was determination and independence and just enough what you might call modest self-confidence to get under my skin. I ask you what you would have done if you had been me?

That's just what I did—hemmed and hawed and tried to let him down easy because I liked him, and at last I told him that if he'd get three hits off Hale during the game, I'd hold the paper while he signed on the dotted line and ship him straight to Mack at Mack's expense. You can figure it out for yourself whether I meant "Connie" or "Graw." "And that settles your hash!" I whispered to myself.

"You're putting me up against an impossible proposition," he replied, giving me a look that was full of fight, "but I'll tackle it."

Say, but I do love a kid who will fight for what he wants.

After James Revere, Paul for short, had gone I hooked up with the manager again and found out the big idea of holding a ball game at midnight.

"Just the novelty of the thing," he explained; "we pull it off annually!"

By this time I'd quit being surprised over baseball as she is played in Alaska. They might call a game on account of high tide, but they'd never call it on account of darkness. A hundred-inning game could be played up there if the players would only hold out.

CHAPTER III.

A BIT OF ADVICE.

ABOUT the time most people in the States were crawling into the feathers we wandered out to the ball park. The game was yet in the future, but the small grand stand was already filled, and the rest of the town was gathering along the side lines. They had tied most of the Malemutes up, and those that weren't had been chased away.

I got a glimpse of old Revere gazing like a man who had been dragged to a show by his wife, and about that time the sour-dough manager came hopping across the field.

"Got to thank you for enabling the camp to break another record!" he shouted. "I don't know how you did it, but something you said brought old man Revere out. He hates baseball like some Irish hate orange. With him here it makes a hundred-per-cent attendance."

I had already noticed a fellow bundled up in blankets and sitting in a rocking-chair. There was a baby in arms as well.

The umpire was a novelty, too. The crowd understood every word he said. Our team was introduced one by one, and every one of them with any kind

of a record was recognized; then my team listened to the same speech that I'd made all over Alaska, and the festivities were ready to begin.

I cocked my eye at the sun. It was dipping toward the distant mountains; then I got my first slant at Revere's bat. He was fondling it like a kid with a new toy. I walked over and picked it up. It was a war club for fair. I hefted it. It was every bit as heavy as "Babe" Ruth's.

"How much does this old willow scale?" I asked.

"An even sixty ounces!" he replied. "I've tried 'em at different weights and lengths, and this old peg is just right."

I gave an inward giggle as I thought of the razzing the well-known fans would give a bird from the sticks walking up to bat with a telephone pole in his hands.

When he stepped up to the plate for the first time there was a yell of delight from that crowd that started the Malemutes howling.

I had a hard time trying to watch Revere, senior, and the kid at the same time. The old man seemed to hold his breath and show the first interest during the game, but I knew the sort of interest it was. Then Hale put one over, and Revere just looked at it.

"Strike one!" announced the ump.

"Take your time, Paul," said the manager; "it takes only one, you know."

"Strike two!" yelled the umpire.

The kid never made a move, but just stood there, with those appraising eyes of his watching the man on the mound.

"Do something, you boob!" I grumbled. "If you can't swing at it with the bases empty, what'd you do with 'em full and the game at stake?"

Hale wound up and let fly.

And then that old war club swished through the air. No; you're wrong. Instead of the crack that everybody expected, there was a thud as the ball landed in the catcher's glove.

There was no cussing or evidences of impatience and rage as he turned away; just calm seriousness on his face. He put the bat down carefully and took a seat on the bench. I glanced at his father. The old boy had settled back again grinning. Things were going along to his satisfaction. As for the home team, they didn't seem particularly upset because their star slugger and clean-up man had flivvered. And thus ended the first inning.

We got a run in the second, and believe me we earned it. They had a well-oiled machine that was out to win, and it kept my barnstormers right on their toes to hold the lid down.

The crowd was in the usual uproar from that time on. They begged, pleaded, and implored, as crowds do, but it was when Revere stepped up to the plate for the second time that they stood up and yelled. Old man Revere, who had been yawning since his boy was last up, once more showed signs of being alive. He hunched forward as Paul picked up his club and made one or two easy swings before stepping to the plate.

Hale was full of confidence as he sent over his famous fast one, but a second later he was wondering if the center fielder would ever overtake the ball. While he was still looking Revere crossed his range of vision at second, and when the fielder at last caught up with the ball, the kid was sitting on the bench having made his round trip. Old man Revere was gazing at him and the cheering sour doughs with a queer expression of bewilderment on his face.

"Huh!" grunted Hale. "There goes the nugget stick pins for my friends, and he earned that hit, too. It wasn't an accident! I saw the expression on his face when he swung on it."

"You tell 'em!" said I for want of something better to say. I was doing some thinking myself. I was thankful the bags were empty when it happened, otherwise I'd have kissed the game good-by right there, because it didn't look as if we were going to get any more hits off their pitcher.

We did, though, and when Revere picked up his old willow again and stepped forward the score stood three to one in our favor. What is more, Hale had let a couple of men reach first and second. I wasn't blaming him for

that, because he had been thinking more about the battle that was due to come off between him and Revere than he was about the man then at the plate. That was something I'd have to correct before the next game.

Revere favored the pitcher with an impudent, kidding sort of a grin as he waited for Hale's first offering, and Hale grinned back again. Both men were opponents in every sense of the word at that minute, but both were good clean sports just the same. Then I quit watching Hale and began to study Revere. He missed the first ball, when by all rights he should have hit it. Ditto the second. A sudden hush had come over the crowd, and I guess every man there must have heard what I barked at Revere. I knew what the matter was, and I couldn't stand there and keep silent.

"Hey you!" I yelled. "Just forget you've got a chance at a big-league contract if you get three hits off'n Hale! You won't get to bat four times, anyway, so that chance is gone. Think about bringing in those two teammates of yours warming first and second!"

Without taking his eyes off of Hale, Revere replied out of the corner of his mouth: "Thanks! This game may go extra innings."

He was as cool as a cucumber and as optimistic as a woodpecker at work on an iron telephone pole.

Well, Hale hurled the ball, and a minute later my barnstormers were on the short end of a four to three score.

"Fat chance we got of winning with our own manager giving advice to the other team!" snorted one of my veterans in disgust.

"That'll be about all from you!" I hurled back at him. "You know why I did it."

"Sure!" was the response. "He was too eager to hit the ball. Too much depended on it. You wanted to steady him. Oh, well, if you hadn't hollered when you did, I was just getting ready to."

And now and then somebody says baseball players are a hard-hearted bunch!

We had to scratch gravel to even up that score before the game was over, but we got it by one of those queer accidents known as a "break."

I glanced toward the sun as we came to bat in the ninth and figured it was close to midnight. One of our men got to first base, but that was the limit of our work that inning.

CHAPTER IV.

THE MIDNIGHT SLIDE.

"WELL," said Hale, as he left the bench, "I'd like to bet that friend Revere gets his third hit when he comes up to bat and the free trip to big time at Mack's expense."

"Oh, you would, eh?" I shot at him. "Well, he'll get that hit if that's the way you feel about it!"

"Don't worry; I'll do my best to fan him!" he replied. "But I've done my best the last two times, and it wasn't good enough, so the chances are even that he'll repeat."

"He has got his last hit to-day!" I told Hale in a low voice. "You go out there and walk him. That's one way of keeping him from getting three hits during this game."

"And one way of keeping a good man from getting a trip to fast company as per promise," he retorted, with the hint of a snarl in his tone.

Right there Hale was off me for a few minutes, but, like the good player that he is, he took orders.

As luck or the breaks would have it, Revere was the first man up. The midnight sun was just dipping below the distant hills, but I guess I was the only man who noticed it. I've seen some wild sights in world's series, but nothing to equal the excitement of that gathering of sour doughs. The healthy ones were yelling; the sick man was yelling, and the baby that had arrived in his mother's arms was yelling, and then as Revere set himself they got their stride and went plumb crazy.

Suddenly I wondered how all this baseball enthusiasm was affecting old man Revere. I took a slant at him, and suffering cats!

The man yelling the loudest was old Revere. That old boy didn't know a word of baseball lingo when he arrived, but he was an apt pupil or else a great old mimic, because he was going through all the motions and saying all the things that a rabid bleacherite does on a hot summer day.

The ump had shouted, "Ball one!" "Ball two!" when the crowd got wise to what was up.

"That's it! Walk him, you big nut!" bellowed Revere, senior.

Paul's face had set in a grim, fighting expression that means a lot when you know the signs, and he waited for a hit.

It never came. His blue eyes pierced me like a steel drill as he trotted to first. He was fighting mad, but wasn't showing any signs of blowing up.

He trotted to first as I said and hit the bag on a run; then those long legs of his did not stop, and before any of us knew what was up, he was roosting on second. As Hale wound up to pitch the second ball, I saw the catcher signal to peg Revere at second. Hale almost caught him, but a miss is as good as a mile. The man at bat went down with Revere still on second.

With two strikes on the next man up, Revere took a long chance and made it to third. There was a considerable mix-up, and it looked to me as if Revere was out fair enough, but the umpire said he wasn't, and my third baseman admitted the ump knew his business that night, or rather morning.

Revere danced back and forth on third, keeping the pitcher and catcher worried and the crowd on edge. At such times the wear and tear on the human system is something terrible. One minute you are holding your breath, and the next minute you are yelling. Old man Revere was telling his offspring just how it ought to be done; the rest of the gang was seconding the motion; and I was keeping my mouth shut so that Hale, his catcher, and Revere could work out their own salvation.

The sour doughs' weak sister came to bat with two out, when if ever a team needed a real hitter they did. The breaks were pulling for us once more.

"Strike one!"

One of those sudden silences that comes over a ball game made the umpire's voice heard all over the field.

"Now watch your chance, son! Run like thunder! Then slide!" ordered a voice which I recognized as that of a man who had violently opposed baseball a few short hours before.

For the first time young Paul Revere realized that his own dad was pulling for him. The expression that suddenly came over the kid's face brought a lump to my throat, and I had to brush my hand across my eyes; there was so much in that look, if you know what I mean. Just as if he didn't care what happened so long as the old man was with him; and yet I could see he was going to justify his dad's confidence. Too bad he wasn't at bat; he probably would have busted his old willow and knocked the ball over the mountains and into the Gulf of Alaska.

"Strike two!"

Well, I could see the tenth inning looming up. The catcher cast a cold, fishy eye at Revere, then heaved the ball back to Hale.

Then it happened. I've seen base stealing in my time, but for pure audacity this was the limit. The ball hadn't left the catcher's hand before Revere was off like the well-known streak of lightning. I never saw a ball travel so slowly in my life. It appeared to take fully a week for it to reach Hale; then it required another week to get back again.

Ball or Revere? It was neck and neck with the crowd of fans trying to pull Revere home by heavy mental waves and loud yells. He went into a slide that stirred up the dust, and his feet hit the old plate a split-second before the ball plunked into the catcher's glove.

I didn't know I was yelling until Hale came up and said with amazement written all over his face: "How come?"

The fans had Revere on their shoulders. He was covered with dust from his slide, and his old dad was in the

front of the procession telling everybody what a wonderful ball player his son was.

The sun had dipped down a few seconds and was now rolling into view again.

"Some base stealer, and you might call that slide, the midnight slide of Paul Revere!" said Hale, as he watched the crowd move away.

"Let that be a lesson to you, young man," I said; "you never can tell when or where a good hitter is going to pop up."

"And you ordered me to pass him!" charged Hale.

"And you obeyed orders!" I replied and walked away.

CHAPTER V.

NOT TOO MUCH OF IT.

I WAS expecting callers, and I was all primed when they came. I was sure old man Revere would want his nuggets now that Hale hadn't earned them. As it turned out the nuggets were only incidental. He came into my room without knocking.

"Listen here, you crook!" he roared, shaking a fist in my face. "You deliberately ordered Hale to pass my boy so he wouldn't get those three hits and so you wouldn't have to keep your promise to take him outside with you."

"Well, that was what you wanted me to do!" I replied. "A short while ago you hated baseball and now——"

"That was before I knew I was the father of one of the best ball players in the country," the old man interrupted. "I'll tell you right now," he continued, getting warmer and shaking his fist in my face, "you don't have to take him back with you. I'm going to send him out myself, and he's going to play with one of the big teams if I have to buy the team myself in order to get him on it. I'll show you you can't make sport of any of the Revere family; I'll show you——"

Just about the time I was braced for warfare, our hero came in.

"Now, dad," he said, "just keep your shirt on! There is no need of getting excited; this man is not worth it."

Wow!

Then he turned to me. "I know you ordered me passed," he said, in a cold, quiet voice, "and I might have expected it, but not from you. I've read about all of the old-timers, and you've always been touted as a real sportsman who was always pulling for the kind of a boy who tries whether he is a world beater or not. I don't care so much about not getting those three hits and thus missing the chance you promised me in big time as I do about the method you employed. It is disappointing, coming as it does from one whom I've always regarded as a sort of ideal."

"Now that the applause has subsided," I said. "I'll make a few remarks. I was for you the minute you came to me with your manly proposition for a big chance. I made you an impossible proposition just to see if you would take it. You did! You waited to size up Hale before swinging wildly at him. It didn't matter much to me if you did miss. I wasn't thinking so much of what you were as of what you might be developed into.

"Then the next two times," I went on, "you slammed out the ball. Hale was trying, but you were hitting him just the same. That settled the batting question; but there were a couple of others. Would you get sore and blow up if you got what seemed a rotten deal? Also, could you really steal bases the way they said you could. There was one way of finding the answers and that was to order Hale to pass you. I did, and he obeyed.

"Now," I said, delivering a knockout blow to the two Reveres, "if you'll just sign on that dotted line, you'll be on your way to Mack via the first steamer."

"Mack?" he gasped.

I moved away so that he wouldn't fall on my neck.

"Yes, Mack!" I replied, maneuvering so that the grateful Reveres wouldn't team up on me, "and if he kicks about the salary I've named in this here contract, you just tell him I know a flock

of clubs that will take you at that figure—and that's no pipe dream, either."

"I was prepared to give you a handful of nuggets in payment for a service of this sort," said the younger man, "but I have a feeling you would be insulted if I did!"

"Correct!" I said. "Give them to Hale instead; he wants to have a bunch made up into stick pins for his friends."

"By gosh," he replied, "I'll do it! I like that fellow; he tried so dog-goned hard to fan me."

"Yes; and you'll live to see him do it, too," I said, "if you should ever happen to be on opposing teams again."

"I know that, sir!" replied young Revere, and I knew then that he was headed for big time in the right frame of mind—confidence, but not too much of it.

How did this story strike you? A few words about it, if you will be good enough to write them and send them to the editor. We ask you to say, without reserve, just what you think of it. And in the same letter, please give us your opinion of TOP-NOTCH in general.

How Grasshoppers Sing

THE trill of the grasshopper is not emitted from the mouth, and in fact has no connection with that part of its anatomy. One rib of each wing is roughened like a file, and another portion of the wing is stretched tight like the head of a drum. The grasshopper draws one file over the other, thus causing the drum to vibrate and give forth the familiar note.

The apparatus which enables this insect to make its long jump is also remarkable. In its body are numerous air bladders and hollow tubes which tend to make it buoyant. The ends of the long hind legs, which act as the propellers, are supplied with gripping attachments, enabling the grasshopper to take a firm hold before leaping, thus adding to the force of the jump. The ends of the forelegs, on which the insect lands, are provided with cushions that reduce the shock.

The ears of the long-horned grasshoppers are in the forelegs, just below the joint that corresponds to the knee of a human being. The form of the ear varies. In some species it is merely a slit in the legs, while in others the opening is broader and is covered by a filmy membrane.

The short-horned varieties have the ears at the base of the wings, in the back.

King of the Forest

ACCORDING to the American Forestry Association, America's largest oak tree is situated in historic surroundings at Wye Mills, Maryland, on the splendid motor road which leads from the summer resort at Ocean City, and which is traveled daily by innumerable automobiles en route for Washington, Baltimore, Philadelphia, or New York.

Wye Mills is on the line between Queen Ann and Talbot Counties, about equally distant from Centerville and Easton, the respective county seats. The old colonial home of William Paca, one of the signers of the Declaration of Independence, is near by, and Kent Island is a little farther away, where there was a traders' settlement before Lord Baltimore founded the colony of Maryland at St. Mary's. Many buildings of the Revolutionary period are still to be seen in the locality.

Authorities place the age of the Wye oak at about three hundred and eighty years. One foot from the ground, its circumference is fifty-one and a half feet, and its diameter eighteen feet and three inches; five feet from the ground, the circumference is twenty feet, and the diameter six feet and five inches. The branches spread over a distance of one hundred and forty feet.

Perhaps a Stockholder

IS this my station?" asked a woman of the guard.

"No, madam," was the reply. "This station belongs to the railroad company."

(A NOVELETTE)

CHAPTER I.

THE KATUPUR RUBY.

WHEN Archer Glendale shook hands with Fosdick, promising that he would dine with his friend before the week was out, he went as far as the curb and saw the other off in one of the taxicabs that invariably fronted the façade of the vast hotel. Then, conscious of having nothing particularly inspiring to accomplish, Glendale made his way back into the ornate lobby of the King William and helped himself to a seat on one of the slip-covered lounges.

New York in August is anything but a prepossessing or desirable spot, especially for one who has left the cool greenery and the deep blue of the Sound off Connecticut shores. The metropolis, since Glendale's arrival three days previous, had scorched in what was unpopularly known as a "heat wave."

By day the city lay breathless and panting under a relentless sun; the nights brought but little relief. Thunderstorms, lurking over the Palisades, had failed to make good reluctant promises, and what faint, fitful breezes wandered through the wilderness of the side streets were humid and unwelcomed.

Glendale lighted a cigarette and reflected. He knew that unless Martin Fosdick had some sort of definite good news on the morrow, his stay on the island metropolis might prove to be of some duration. Fosdick was the head and shoulders of the Bryant Agency, a private-detective bureau celebrated throughout the country. Because of their long friendship, Glendale had scorned using the metropolitan police as an instrument to help him recover the family heirlooms stolen from Port Royal, his country estate at Sogesitt.

Fosdick was positive that his operatives were on a hot trail and that before another forty-eight hours should elapse a dénouement and climax must impend. So positive was he that he had wired to Port Royal, bringing Glendale to the city where his presence would be necessary when the trap should be sprung and the plunder recovered and made ready for identification.

Glendale tapped the long ash from his cigarette and crossed his legs. He began to allow his mind to roam back over the affair at Sogesitt. It had been a high-handed and bold venture on the

part of the miscreants. The Glendale heirlooms, jewelry that was prized more for its sentimental associations than for its actual value, had been kept for years in an antiquated safe at Port Royal.

No one had thought very much about taking the jewels down to the city and locking them up in a vault. Indeed, the heirlooms had not even been insured. It seemed incredible that any marauder should make the safe a target of his operations, for, with the solitary exception of the Katupur Ruby, all the heirlooms sold together would not bring more than a few thousand dollars.

The ruby was different. The stone, large and fiery, polished but not faceted, had been the former property of an Indian rajah. The potentate, for one reason or another, had seen fit to dispose of it to a dealer in Holland who, in turn, had sold it to a Bond Street firm of London jewelers. It was from this concern that old Peter Glendale, grandfather of the present owner of Port Royal, had purchased it more than three decades before.

The stone always had been looked upon as a curiosity rather than a jewel to wear as an article of personal adornment. It was unset and about the size of a pigeon's egg. That its intrinsic value was large had been evident to all Glendales, past and present. None of them ever had thought of either having it mounted or selling it.

Grandfather Peter, somewhat of a lapidary, had brought the ruby home to please his own and the eyes of his friends. So it had remained for thirty-odd years, displayed only when there were guests at Port Royal who wished to view it and who enjoyed the sensation of cupping the stone in a hand where it glittered, glowed, and sparkled like a thing of live, crimson flame.

The robbery at Sogesitt was scarce a week old. At the time of its occurrence, Archer Glendale had been motoring through the Berkshires. The house proper, save for an elderly caretaker and a trio of doddering servants, had been untenanted. The crooks, supposed by Fosdick to have been headed by an archrogue known internationally as Hugo March, had gained entry in the small hours of the morning.

The ancient safe had melted before their attack like snow beneath fire. The first servant down in the morning had discovered the outrage and had immediately telegraphed his master.

Thereafter, Martin Fosdick had been summoned from New York by telephone. Glendale had firm faith in the powers of his friend. Fosdick had been a classmate at college. He had founded and become the head of the Bryant Agency more to gratify a keen desire to match his wits against those of crookdom than for any financial reason. Fosdick came of a family of wealth and position which was properly horrified that one of its blood should become what they fondly believed was little better than an ordinary policeman.

A year had changed their viewpoint considerably. It was the long arm of Martin Fosdick that had reached across the ocean adroitly to pluck a celebrated American bank thief from the Limehouse district of London. It was Fosdick who had turned a white light upon the Wall Street "conspiracy" and the group of crooks who had for so long plundered messengers and runners of valuable bonds and securities. And it was Fosdick who had solved in a day an atrocious Philadelphia murder, bringing the criminal summarily before the bench of justice.

He had built up a smooth-functioning organization that was second to none in the country. His employees and agents were the cleverest and most intelligent to be obtained. A large measure of his success was due to the extreme care with which he handled each case. If there were gifts to be guarded at a society wedding, it was some man who looked the part who mingled with the guests and not an unintelligent, cigar-chewing, fat individual whose position was recognized at a glance. If gangsterland was to be invaded, Fosdick sent a slinking roughneck into its jungle and not a flat-footed detective who would have been recognized for what he was before he had gone a pace.

"Martin will recover the heirlooms,"

Glendale told himself. "If he can't no one else on earth can!"

He discarded his cigarette and considered what his friend had told him regarding Hugo March. March was a person who dwelt behind a curtain of mystery. Little or nothing was known about him save that his activities ranged the globe. The New York police department boasted neither his photograph nor finger prints, though some of his largest raids had been made on the island between the two rivers.

March's expeditions were carried out in bold, sweeping strokes that rendered pursuit futile and arrest ludicrous. Success after success was written in golden ink in the diary of Hugo March's life. The raillery of the newspapers, because of the failure of headquarters to trap the man, was a rankling thorn in the side of police dignity.

Glendale smothered a yawn and looked at his watch. The hour was well after four o'clock. He turned on the lounge so that his gaze might move through the open doorway and focus on the dusty green of Central Park, a grateful oasis in a bleached desert of steel and stone.

The lobby of the Hotel King William, for all of the heat, was fairly well filled. Out-of-town merchants, who were visiting the metropolis for a usual summertime holiday with their families, rested in the swathed chairs, awaiting wives on shopping pilgrimages.

North and south along the avenue, crowded surface cars, controlled by coatless motormen, clanged heavily past. Taxicabs and motors in a never-ending stream kept pace with them. No matter what the weather, the surge and turmoil of the great city never seemed to lessen.

Glendale's gaze, idle and retrospective, came to fogus on a man in green flannels who occupied a chair to the left of the entryway. The man was tall, sinewy, and darkly tanned. There was something about him, some alert and pantherlike quality, that held Glendale's attention. He was at a loss to discover what this was until the other lowered the copy of an afternoon newspaper he had been reading and looked at his watch.

It was then that Glendale saw his eyes—eyes that were like swords of polished steel, gray and deadly—eyes that were merciless and without pity.

"Old Hawk Eye, the curse of the crooks!" Glendale thought. "He looks like a tough customer. Not the kind of a person you'd like to meet alone on a dark and stormy night."

The man examined his watch again and peered across the lobby. Presently he stood with what might have been a shrug and fitted his straw hat to his head. He walked leisurely toward the switchboard and public telephone booths of the hotel. Here he gave the girl on duty a number and after a short wait was assigned to the end booth in line, one that was only a few feet distant from Glendale's lounge. "Green Flannels" held the door of the booth an inch or two ajar so that he might not entirely bake in the little tin-lined compartment.

The first part of his conversation escaped the man on the lounge. It was only when he let his voice rise sharply that Glendale listened.

"She hasn't shown up yet," the stranger said. "You say there has been no word since her first message? That is strange. It is just possible he found her trail and headed her off. She's not the kind of person to be tardy."

There was a pause. Then the man in the booth went on: "I'm at the King William. I've been waiting here for some time. The appointment was for four o'clock precisely. It's well past that now. I won't delay longer—something's happened. Look for me in twenty minutes."

He hung up the receiver, paid the girl at the switchboard, and left the hotel without a backward glance.

Speculating absently on the fragments of the conversation and wondering a little what they might concern, Glendale decided to seek his suite on the fifth floor of the building and use the shower. That, at least, was a temporary means of keeping cool. Accord-

ingly he walked toward the elevator shafts.

But before he had reached them, he caught sight of a girl coming into the lobby from the hot street outside, and, standing, Glendale remained motionless.

CHAPTER II.

A MARKED MAN.

WITHOUT question, the girl who had just entered the lobby was one of the most attractive young women Glendale ever had beheld; so much so, in fact, that he stared with kindling eyes, aware of his rudeness, but untroubled because of it.

The girl was neither short nor tall, a brown-hair-and-eyed divinity in whose piquant face bloomed a youthful beauty, a face shadowed by some fugitive distress. She wore a cool, summery frock and a black straw sailor, under the brim of which her lustrous hair was like shining autumn leaves, a light that illumined as well eyes that were twin pools of limpid darkness.

There was about her, Glendale was quick to observe, some sort of harried haste. She clutched a beaded hand bag, and, immediately upon entering, shot a glance first at the watch on her white wrist and then about the lobby. This glance was followed by patent disappointment—something not unlike fear. She took a dozen steps forward, swept the place with still another glance that included Glendale, and made her way directly to him.

It was when she had almost reached his side Glendale seemed to imagine that somewhere, some time, he had seen her before.

"I beg your pardon," the girl said nervously, "but can you tell me if you happened to notice a tall man in green flannels in the lobby here? I mean," she added, with a trace of confusion, "if you have been here any length of time. You see——"

Before Glendale could frame a reply the girl broke off, stiffened, and stifled a gasp, looking transfixed at the open doors of the hotel.

Following her gaze with his own, Glendale saw that a taxicab had stopped directly in front of the King William and that from it had alighted a small, round-shouldered little man who carried a Malacca stick.

Before Glendale could link the obvious connection between this individual and the girl at his side, she had snapped open her beaded bag and was delving in its depths. In an instant she had produced a small, square package which she pressed hastily into Glendale's hands with hurried instructions:

"Keep this safe! Guard it well until you hear from me."

Before he could understand the significance of her request she had left his side and had slipped into a corridor that led to a side entrance. Glendale pocketed the package, astonished at the rapidity of it all, turned to consider the small, round-shouldered man, and then looked back for the girl, to find she had vanished.

Then an elevator descended, and there was nothing to do but enter it. The episode had flared up like a flash of lighted powder and was over. As the cage began an ascension, looking down Glendale saw the little man standing before the desk of the clerk on duty, engaged in earnest conversation.

Glendale's suite on the fifth floor consisted of parlor, bedroom, and bath—comfortable rooms that overlooked Central Park. Still a little dazed by the affair in the lobby, he entered his parlor and closed and locked the door behind him.

What mishap of fate was responsible for the occurrence? What was its signification? He crossed to the windows, drew the package from his pocket, and eyed it. It was small and square, possibly eight inches in length, six in width, and five in height. The paper used was stout and ornamented with a number of thick splashes of black sealing wax. Though it was devoid of any markings, it seemed to have been prepared for mailing. From its size and shape it was entirely evident that the paper masked a box beneath it. It was rather heavy.

Glendale finished an intent inspec-

tion, as much puzzled as he had been upon receiving the package. He turned away from the window as the telephone on a table beside him rang shrilly; he picked it up, half inclined to believe that it was the girl herself until he heard the telephone operator below say in her drawling voice:

"A Mr. Winter calling to see you, sir. Shall I send him up?"

Glendale drew his brows together. Memory conjured up no recollection of any acquaintance bearing that seasonable name. "Inquire the gentleman's business, if you please," he said.

There followed a short interlude in which he heard far-away voices blending.

"Mr. Winter says his business is private and very important," the operator stated.

Glendale shrugged. "Ask him to come up."

He rehooked the receiver on its metal arm, dropped the mysterious package in his pocket, and waited.

Some minutes elapsed before he heard an elevator stop down the corridor. More time passed before a brisk knock sounded on the door. Glendale opened it, not greatly surprised to find that the Mr. Winter on his threshold was the same small, round-shouldered man whose appearance had so startled the pretty girl in the lobby.

"Mr. Glendale?"

The other bowed, ushered in his caller, and closed the door behind him. "Mr. Winter?"

The little man nodded jerkily. Viewed at close range he resembled nothing so much as a work-worn bookkeeper or office drudge. In addition to his meager height, he was thin and angular. His scanty hair was in a fringe about a bald pate, his face was gray and wrinkled, his eyes of infantile blue looked out from a guileless face beneath scraggly brows.

His nose had a crook to it, and his upper lip was long and pendulous. He wore a shabby serge suit that apparently had seen better days and of late had known the application of many tailor's irons. Even his low shoes, highly polished though they were, were well worn.

"I ascertained your name from the desk clerk," he said, in a mild, almost apologetic voice. "Only a few minutes ago, as I arrived you were conversing with my daughter. I happened to notice that she handed you a small package. She did, did she not?"

Harmless though the blue eyes were, Glendale knew that before their level stare there could be no subterfuge or deception.

"Yes," he answered frankly; "the young lady did give me a package."

At once the face of the little man brightened. He jerked his head again in a nod. "Exactly! You will oblige me by turning it over to me immediately."

Glendale let his face fall into thoughtful lines. Again the words of the girl came back to him. Was it possible the little man was really her father and had a rightful claim upon what had been given him to guard?

"I'm sorry," Glendale said at last; "I'm afraid I cannot do what you ask. At least, not without some better proof."

The other's face darkened. He drew his scraggly brows together in what was intended for an ominous scowl. "Proof be hanged!" he exclaimed. "The package belongs to me. If you insist on the truth I'll tell it to you. My daughter is little better than a common, ordinary thief. What the box contains is mine and mine only. She deliberately sneaked it from its hiding place. Hand it over and be sure that you're doing the right thing. Come, my time is limited!"

Some of Grandfather Peter's stubbornness had been the inheritance of the present Glendale. Once filled with a resolve to do a certain something, persuasion and argument only made him hold the more steadfastly to it.

"I regret it," he said; "but I can't do what you request. The matter concerns me not at all, but I was instructed to care for and guard the package, and I won't betray my trust. Bring your daughter here, let her tell me to turn

the package over to you, and I'll be only too happy to do so."

Mr. Winter fingered his pendulous upper lip. "Impossible! I'm leaving at seven for the Pacific coast. Once more I ask you to restore what is rightfully mine. Will you or won't you?"

"Won't you!" Glendale answered cheerfully.

The teeth of the little man closed firmly. His childlike blue eyes, filling with venom, narrowed to slits. He appeared to quake from some inner storm that rendered him speechless for a long minute.

"Very well, then," he said at length; "I have asked you as one gentleman might ask another. Mr. Glendale. I'm not a pleasant person when aroused. Possession of the package makes you a marked man. You have utterly no conception of the danger that hems you in while you retain it. Smile if you wish, but what I say is the gospel truth. For the last time, will you return what I'm asking for?"

There was something distinctly amusing in the little man's bluster. It was like that of a school bully threatening his entire class; the snapping bark of a Pekingese, straining to attack a bloodhound.

"No," Glendale answered. "The package stays where it is."

With a sigh the self-styled Mr. Winter turned to the door without further comment. Glendale's last impression before the man departed was of the blue eyes filled with frustrated rage.

He shut the door after him, turned the key in the lock, and went back into the room. What, he wondered, was the meaning of it all? What deep, sinister game was being played? What were the contents of the package that made it wanted so badly? It seemed impossible to Glendale that the pretty, brown-haired girl could be either the little man's daughter or the thief he had termed her.

Yet, the episode reversed, it was just as possible that Winter had spoken the truth. He had no way of telling, of knowing. Still warm within recollection was the face of the young lady of the lobby. Something told him that she was not dishonest, that she was brave and courageous and was playing a lone hand against overwhelming forces

"I'll stake everything on her honesty," Glendale assured himself.

He contemplated the package once more and dropped it into a drawer in his bureau. It was the solving of tangles of this kind in which Martin Fosdick excelled. Should he call up his friend and ask advice? Glendale shook his head. Fosdick had his hands full with the Port Royal affair; and his friend would think him a spineless sort of being, unable to care or look out for himself in any sort of predicament.

It would be better, Glendale decided, to let events shape their own course. Patience always had its own reward. If the package was so badly wanted, it was possible to believe that something would turn up before the evening merged with midnight.

He seemed to know that what had happened was only a prelude to the drama itself, and that there lay in store for him a rush of happenings that would solve to his complete satisfaction the identity of the rightful owner of the box, who the girl was, what part Winter played, and in what manner Green Flannels of the sharp eyes fitted into the picture.

Glendale tubbed, changed to summer tweeds, and at seven sought the grill, pleasantly swept by a battery of electric fans. Almost the minute he sat down at his table he grew aware of the open regard of a dapper youth at a table across the aisle from him.

The young man was blond and immaculate, dressed in fashionable garments. Yet there was a certain set to his jaw and a hardness of expression that were at obvious odds with the impression of refinement and breeding he endeavored to give.

Once or twice he caught the youth's full stare, but, engrossed with his summary of the afternoon's incidents, Glendale paid no particular attention. His demi-tasse consumed, he initialed the bill and sought the lobby. He reached it,

to hear his name being stridently bawled by a bell hop who was industriously paging him.

"Telephone call for you, sir," the boy said, when he overtook him and checked the public use of his name.

With an anticipative pulse stirring, Glendale hurried to the switchboard. The operator assigned him to the end booth in line, the same booth occupied earlier in the day by Green Flannels.

With the pulse still stirring, Glendale spoke and waited. For a minute he heard nothing except the buzz and sing of the wires, fairy cracklings and elfin echoes. Then some one asked:

"Is this Mr. Glendale?"

He knew a pleasant exhilaration. Even across the wires, the voice of the girl with the brown hair, low and sweet, was recognizable.

"This is Mr. Glendale speaking," he said.

"Listen carefully, please," she continued. "Would it be possible for you to do me a favor? Would it be convenient for you to bring the package I gave you this afternoon to Au Printemps in a half hour? If so, I will be waiting for you in the foyer on the main floor just beyond the entrance."

The place she named was a popular Broadway café situated in the early Fifties. Its fame was known even to transient members of the seven million. It was noted for its expensiveness, its dance floor, and its celebrated orchestra.

"It is entirely convenient," he answered promptly. "Au Printemps in a half hour. Please expect me."

She thanked him and rang off.

When Glendale opened the door of the booth and stepped out it was to find the blond youth of the grill circling the telephone switchboard like a wolf, drawing closer to bend a head in conference with the operator.

With a shrug Glendale sought his room. He collected hat and stick and wondered if it would be wise to arm himself. His shoulders moved once more. This was New York in an age of enlightenment, not some Western mining camp where it was dangerous to prowl at night without a weapon. He recalled the threats of the stoop-shouldered Winter and suppressed a laugh. Evidently the little man delighted in melodrama.

With his watch showing that five of the thirty minutes had been consumed, Glendale dropped the mysterious package into his pocket, extinguished the light, and let himself out.

The August twilight, thick, humid, and oppressive, had lowered itself over Manhattan's thirteen miles of table-land. Stars were beginning to swim mistily in the blue-black sea of the heavens; the moon crept up over the eastern rim of the world, hanging like a crystal lamp. Distantly, heat lightning glimmered like the swing of a saber in the hands of a whirling dervish.

On Central Park West, Glendale decided that the best way to reach his destination would be to walk to Broadway and take a surface car. Au Printemps was not more than a journey of ten minutes or less. Accordingly he rounded the corner the hotel was set upon and started west.

The block was old-fashioned and tawdry. Several dingy tenements, a building that had once been a skating rink, a silent armory, and, farther on, a popular night restaurant occupied it. Save for the glimmer of street lamps set at infrequent intervals, the block was dark and untenanted.

It was when he had passed the first tenement that Glendale realized he was being followed. This impression, hazy and vague at first, became a certainty almost at once. He traced the feeling from effect to cause and over his shoulder saw, some distance behind, an idly sauntering figure that slowed when he slowed and went forward rapidly when he quickened his pace.

Glendale considered the problem. Not alone was he weaponless, but no minion of the law was visible. He recalled vividly the threat of the round-shouldered Winter, but this time he found no mirth in it. He had been intrusted with the package and must fight to the last breath to retain it.

As his shadow came abreast of a

street lamp and he turned for another backward glance, Glendale recognized the debonair figure of the blond youth of the King William grill. At the same minute a taxicab turned into the block from Columbus Avenue, and, on the wrong side of the street, began to edge toward the curb.

Back of him some one whistled three times. Glendale knew a quick, stabbing thrill of excitement. The appearance of the taxicab and the whistle of the blond youth had a meaning all their own. What in the patois of the underworld was termed a "stick-up" impended.

He realized only too well that if he was to save the package it was up to himself to do something. And, as he groped blindly for ways and means, he saw just a few feet distant the mouth of a small, black alley, made by the last two of the tenements joining.

Quickening his gait not at all, Glendale cut sharply into the alley. His first glance discovered a refuse can filled to overflowing with old papers and trash. In one watch tick he had dragged out the small square package and had buried in the can—in another second a cigarette was between his lips, and he was lighting it, his back to the street.

The match he struck had hardly ignited the tobacco and spluttered out before a footfall sounded behind him, something hard and cold bored into his side, and a suave voice spoke in his ear:

"Put your dukes up! Open your face and I'll scatter you!"

CHAPTER III.

THE GIRL OF MYSTERY.

OBEDIENTLY Glendale lifted his arms. A swift, deft, and delicate hand explored his person. It dipped into each pocket, padding him while the gun continued to remain fixed at his side.

"Where's the box?" the blond youth demanded sibilantly.

Glendale endeavored to give every appearance of one badly frightened. "The —the package?" he stammered witlessly.

"Yes, the package!" the other snapped. "Come to life! Where is it?"

"I—I haven't got it with me," Glendale replied shakily.

With an exclamation the other stepped back and away from him. "You stay here!" he ordered curtly. "Stick here for a full five minutes and keep your mouth shut. If you come out before that time I'll blow your head off!"

Menacing Glendale with the gun he backed out of the alley. He had scarcely disappeared before the door of the taxicab on the wrong side of the block slammed, and the motor thrummed. When Glendale reached the street and peered cautiously out, it was to find the cab headed toward Central Park West and the hotel.

Well pleased by the success of his stratagem, Glendale retrieved the package from the rubbish can, pocketed it once more, and, continuing on to Broadway, boarded a southbound car. He had foiled the second attempt to wrest the package from him. Would the third be equally as successful?

Au Printemps, when he left the surface car and approached the restaurant under the sparkling lights of the Great White Way, was in the full plumage of night, gaudily bedecked with a glowing incandescent sign that bore its name in multicolored bulbs. It was a three-story building of white stucco, pseudo-Spanish in architecture, with long open windows draped in pink silk and protected by square, fantastic awnings. Perennial greens in Roman pots flanked a narrow doorway. From its interior drifted the raucous voice of King Jazz —the laughter of saxophones, the beat of eccentric drums, and the trombone's wail of anguish.

Entering, Glendale stepped into a foyer alcove that was a sort of waiting room. It was filled with a scattering of ornate chairs; back and away from it, through hanging tapestries, was the main dining room and dance floor, well populated, despite the heat, by a gyrating throng.

As he went in and looked around, a girl got up from a cushioned nook and

came toward him. Glendale drew a breath. In silhouette against the shaded table lamps of the restaurant and the dim sconces of the alcove, her loveliness was that of a star falling to earth. She wore a little semi-evening frock that was of blue silk and vastly becoming.

Her brown hair had been modishly arranged and jade earrings dangled against the smooth whiteness of her cheeks and rounded neck. Nothing of the trouble shadows of the afternoon marred her piquant face. She seemed animated and vivacious, a trifle excited, as if some unpleasant task was over and done with.

"You have the box?" was the first thing she said.

Glendale, deciding to say nothing of the happening in the alley, inclined his head.

"Quite safe—tucked snugly away in my inner coat pocket."

She looked at him out of clear brown eyes, and he wondered again where it was he had seen her before—why he should imagine that he had seen her.

"Thank you so much for your trouble. I'll take the package if you don't mind."

He gave it to her, waiting while she excused herself to cross to a person who was evidently the manager of the café. He was a paunchy, puffy, florid man with an engaging grin and evening clothes that fitted him so well he might have grown in them.

Glendale saw the girl give him the package and heard her request that he lock it up in his safe. He patted her arm and disappeared into a room the door of which opened out on the alcove.

The girl returned to Glendale, her head high. "There! A load is off my shoulders because the package is safe enough now. You might not think so, but Jimmy Hope is one of the squarest men in the world. If every crook in creation stormed the safe he'd defend my package and guard it!"

A silence fell over them. The girl looked at her wrist watch and then at Glendale. He felt his heart slowly sink. Was this the last of the adventure? Had his services terminated when the restaurateur locked up the mysterious package?

Was he now destined to bid her adieu and step back into Broadway, never knowing the answer to the riddle; never to understand the plot of the drama—never to see her again? It was this last thought that filled him with dismay.

"I am wondering," she said quietly when he looked up, to find her eyes fixed wistfully upon him, "if I might place myself a little further in your debt? You have been so kind that I dislike asking you——"

"Please do!" Glendale entreated.

She gave him a demure smile. "It's nothing arduous this time. I merely have to go uptown to Seventy-fifth Street, stop off and get a valise. The house has been empty for some time and—well, it will be comfortable knowing some one is with me. If I may encroach upon your time that much further, perhaps we had better start directly."

She picked up a light summer wrap and draped it over one arm.

They went out upon light-smitten Broadway and found a taxicab. While the girl addressed the chauffeur, Glendale looked over his shoulder as if to find, lurking close at hand, either the little, round-shouldered man who called himself Winter, or the dapper, blond youth of the alley.

"I suppose," he said, when they were both seated on the worn upholstery of the vehicle, "it is useless to ask an explanation."

She allowed her hand to flutter out and touch his arm, her voice pensive as she said: "Oh, please don't think me ungrateful. I would tell you everything if I were free to. I know you must be dreadfully puzzled and perplexed, but be patient for a little while. The skies seem to be getting brighter. Soon, I have every reason to hope, the last card will be played, and you will be in a position to know everything."

Glendale knew he would have to be content with the statement. "I know I have seen you before," he continued.

"Can you tell me where it was? Can you tell me how it was you knew my name? Can you tell me your own name?"

She leaned a little toward him. "I have seen you before, but I cannot tell you where. Neither can I tell you how I knew your name, for one concerns the other. I am Marion North —if that means anything."

The cab had rounded Columbus Circle and was continuing on up Broadway. Glendale compressed his lips, thinking. Marion North—the name told him nothing, left him as much in the dark as to her identity as he had been before. He debated the idea of inquiring whether she was the daughter of Winter, decided she would evade the question as she had the others, and resigned himself to the best sort of patience he could muster up.

"We're almost there," she declared after a time.

Glendale looked out of the side window. Despite the traffic flood of early evening, the taxicab had made steady progress. They were already in the lower Seventies. Three more streets put behind, the vehicle sheered west and ran into the gully of a quiet side street where the street lamps were tethered moons, strung together.

It crossed the ribbon of an aristocratic avenue and decreased its speed. Below them lay Riverside Drive, full of the staring eyes of passing motors, the broad, level stretch of the North River, flowing down to the open sea, the gaunt pile of the Palisades.

Glendale noticed that the majority of the private houses they passed had drawn shades and were boarded up, showing their occupants were out of town for the heated months. The brownstone residence they stopped before was one that boasted neither the regular neat shield of a burglar protective bureau nor the wooden sheathing worn by most of the other houses. It was lightless, dark, and obviously deserted.

"We get out here," the girl said nervously, when the cab stopped. "Please instruct the chauffeur to wait for us one block around the corner on West End Avenue. I don't imagine we will be long, but I do not wish him standing here. I imagine there is a watchman somewhere on duty."

Obediently Glendale passed the instructions on to the driver of the cab and assisted the girl to alight. They stood together on the pavement until the taxi disappeared; then they mounted the stone steps of the house, Marion North shooting anxious little glances back over her shoulder.

The outer vestibule door was opened without difficulty. She fumbled in the beaded bag she carried and produced a fat bunch of latchkeys. With these in hand and Glendale beside her, she centered her attention on the lock of the inner door, this a stout affair of oak, trying each key in turn.

At her elbow, Glendale caught the fragrance of her hair, heard the soft flutter of her breath, and observed that there was a certain furtiveness to the manner in which she tried the various keys. Could it be, he asked himself, that they were trespassing; that she was attempting unlawful entry; was bound on some nefarious errand?

At length, while he combated doubts, her smothered exclamation of relief sounded together with the harsh click of the lock. The door gave into purple-black darkness. Cool air gushed out, spiced with a musty tang that told of premises long unoccupied.

"So much for that," she said brightly. "Please close the door tight. Our destination is the front room on the floor above. We will," she added, "be only a minute or two longer at best now."

Glendale closed the inner door and struck a match, wishing that he had brought a pocket flash. In the flickering reflection she guided him accurately to an uncarpeted stairway, up which they moved, neither seeing fit to speak until the first landing was reached and the match went out. The hush of the house was disturbed only by those inexplicable sounds of the night, ever to be found where darkness reigns.

Once a board in the floor snapped so

loudly that Glendale turned his head, positive that some one was behind him. Mice scampered through the walls, leaving the rattle of falling plaster pebbles. Then followed a deep, eerie silence in which the encompassing murk seemed alive with crouching, sinister shapes and watching eyes.

"Just a step ahead now," the girl whispered. "Please make another light. I'm afraid that I'm dreadfully frightened."

The second match lasted until they were over the threshold of the room she led the way to. This, so far as Glendale could determine, was a chamber of some dimensions, dusty and devoid of furniture. Drawn shades at double front windows sealed it like a mausoleum. The blackness was absolute; beyond the small yellow ring made by the match, it seemed to roll forward in thick, oily waves.

"The closet!" the girl said breathlessly. "It is a brown leather valise. Let's get it and hurry away from here —as fast as we can!"

The closet was to the left of a passage, connecting the front room with one in the rear. The door of it was half ajar. Glendale handed the box of matches to his companion and swung the door wide. She stepped forward, holding the light so that the interior of the compartment was illumined. In it were merely a broken coat hanger, an empty champagne bottle with an inch of candle stuck in its neck, and a pile of dust.

There was no sign of a valise—brown or of any other color.

"Gone!" the girl cried in a stricken voice. "Too late——"

The next instant her hand was on Glendale's arm, tense as a vise. Even as it moved down and hid itself in his fingers, he detected the reason for the gasp that escaped her lips.

In the street a panting motor had stopped; the outer and inner vestibule doors closed. There followed voices mingling in the lower hallway. Then Glendale and the girl of mystery heard footsteps on the stairs.

CHAPTER IV.

THE FIFTH VISITOR.

IT was Glendale who recovered first from the shock of surprise. With something telling him that the intruders on the stairs were enemies and that observation meant disaster, he quickly drew the girl into the passageway—not an instant too soon. Hardly had they taken up their new stand in the sheltering murk before the mingling footsteps were in the hall, across the threshold of the room they had vacated.

A man's voice, easily recognizable as that belonging to the round-shouldered little Winter, broke out complainingly: "Well, here we are, Pinkie. A minute now and we can shake a farewell day-day to this town. Once we secure the valise, at least half of our task is done. Then for the charming young lady who is responsible for all this trouble! You're positive, are you, that Glendale hasn't the box?"

"I went through his rooms like a cyclone," the tones of the dapper youth with the blond hair said. "There wasn't a sign of it anywhere."

"Then he's given it back to her," the other murmured decidedly. "I thought it was only a bluff when she passed it to him in the lobby. She had put through a phone call. Chick found out she had a date with Ranscome. When she saw me she got rattled and lost her head. Ten to one Glendale handed her the package back fifteen minutes or so after she gave it to him. She's entirely too clever to let a thing like that be out of her sight for more time than she can help."

"I don't think so," the blond one said. "I think Glendale had it, but smuggled it back to her after I frisked him in the alley. I'll tell you why I think so. When he came out of the grill he had a phone call and I was just in time to tip the moll on the board to trace it. It was from Au Printemps. That's where she hangs out, you know, when there's something stirring."

"H'm—maybe," Winter conceded reluctantly.

"Let's get the bag and blow out,"

the dapper youth said. "This house gets on my nerves. I always imagine it's full of dicks waiting to jewel me! Turn on the light, chief."

Footsteps were heavy on the bare floor. The slender beam of an electric torch lanced the gloom like a golden arrow. With the fingers of Marion North tight in his hand, Glendale peered forward, seeking to realize what climax lurked before them, what a whimsical fate had in store, what the secret was of the brown valise that was conspicuous by its absence.

His ruminations were ended by the jar of the closet door opening—the baffled fury of Winter's voice:

"Pinkie, it's gone!"

Whatever answer the man's helpmate might have made, was blotted out by Winter's tense whisper: "Sh! Listen! Some one coming!"

The sun of the torch was plunged out. Silence again was unbroken save for the sound of mice in the walls, something that made Glendale's pulses vibrate. Low, but perfectly distinct, there came to his strained ears the quiet sound of the inner vestibule door closing below, the quick breath of Marion North in his ear, the muted creak of the stairs.

To the quartet in the vacant house was being added a fifth visitor. Who?

The girl released Glendale's hand; in the staring darkness of the outer room the quiet gave no clew to the person who approached it of the two lurking within its confines. Nearer the footsteps in the hall came until Glendale could almost count the number necessary to carry the intruder into the room. He inclined forward, waiting with every nerve on edge for what he knew must occur and what, without subjecting the girl and himself to a greater peril, he was powerless to prevent.

There came without forewarning, like a bolt from the blue, a harsh order: "Let him have it, Pinkie!"

Winter's vicious exclamation was followed by the thud of a blow, a thin moan, the clatter of something falling, and the dull slump of a body sinking to the floor.

"Got him good!" the dapper youth cried. "Come on, let's get out of here!"

"Wait!" Winter said. "Who is it? Make a light. Maybe it's His Royal Highness."

Some one struck a match and laughed. There was a pause.

"Swell chance on the big game!" Pinkie said disgustedly. "It's only Ranscome after the valise! And that means they haven't got it!"

Abruptly the two quit the room. Their steps dwindled on the stairs. The outer and inner vestibule doors closed with a slam; outside in the street the murmur of their voices ceased.

"Oh, they've killed him!" Marion North cried tremulously.

She pressed the box of matches Glendale had given her back into his hands. Acutely realizing the significance of her action, he stole forward, making a light that trembled despite his efforts to keep it steady. Breathlessly dreading what he knew he must behold and striving not to shrink from it, he found the figure of the fifth intruder and knelt over it.

An explanation of the man's downfall lay in the broken torch on the floor beside him. The person addressed as "Pinkie" had used it as a blackjack in the cover of the doorway. Yet his blow had not been fatal, for the man breathed and moved.

Glendale let the glow of the match fall on the upturned face. He was not half as surprised as he felt he should have been when he recognized the cold, dispassionate features of the hawk-eyed man who, wearing green flannels, had, that afternoon, lingered in the lobby of the Hotel King William.

Glendale got up and went back to the girl who was at the end of the passage.

"Is—is he——" Her voice quavered.

Glendale touched her hand reassuringly, understanding what she feared to say. "No. They struck him with the torch—a glancing blow. He'll be around all right in a few minutes."

Her breathing became more regular. "Then let's hurry back to Au Prin-

temps. They know I met you there. I must speak to Jimmy Hope at once."

Side by side they picked a cautious way to the well of the stairs, descended the steps, and passed out between the double doors of the vestibule that had seemed so stanch and adequate, but which had been opened so easily by three different factions.

Out in the street, Marion North sighed. Her vivacity, displayed in the restaurant, was gone; once more dejection seemed to weigh upon her. Was this, Glendale thought, because of the mishap that had overtaken Green Flannels or because of the sought-for but missing valise?

The question started a new train of thought. He had believed it entirely evident that two opposing forces were at work. On one side was an alliance between the round-shouldered Winter and the dapper youth. Opposed to them was the girl herself and the man with the hawk eyes. Still it appeared that neither side had secured the wanted valise. Who, then, had taken it?

Turning into West End Avenue, Glendale discovered their taxicab driver dutifully awaiting them.

"Au Printemps," he said to the chauffeur, helping the girl to enter the cab and seating himself beside her.

They moved off, retracing their way toward the Rialto.

"I had such hopes," she began, "such hopes that everything was moving for the best. But now I am not so sure of it. If the man who calls himself Winter has failed to get the valise, it is not unreasonable to believe it has got into other wrong hands. And if this is so, the tangle is more complicated than ever." She sighed again heavily.

"I don't suppose," Glendale said ruefully, "you can tell me what connection there is between the valise and the package you handed me this afternoon? Yet there must be a connection—I am sure of it."

The girl's brown eyes regarded him lingeringly. "Yes; there is a decided connection between the two. When you learn what I mean you will be astonished, I know. It isn't at all kind to keep you in the dark, but it can't be helped. Another directs my moves and to this person I have pledged my silence. You didn't tell me," she added after a pause, "that you had been held up and searched."

Glendale explained in a few words, and she nodded. Then Miss North went on:

"You have been awfully kind and brave. I'm sure I don't know what I ever could have done without you. First, this afternoon—Winter knew I had the box, because, you see, by a stroke of luck I was able to take it from his apartment. The fact I was in the busy lobby of a hotel meant little to him. He is the most dangerous man in the world; he stops at nothing. I know he would not have hesitated to attack me. Then, to-night, I would have positively expired if you were not with me to go into that house."

The taxicab was passing the Winter Garden. The hour lacked only a few minutes of eleven, and in anticipation of the theaters closing, lines of motors were beginning to thread the aisle of Broadway. Ahead, Glendale glimpsed the sparkle of Au Printemps, the girl stirring on the cushions beside him.

"One last favor. When we reach the café I will wait outside in the taxi. Will you go in and tell Jimmy Hope that I would like to speak to him a minute?"

As Glendale nodded, the cab came to a stop before the dazzling face of the café. He alighted and made his way inside, seeing nothing of the rotund manager—which led him to ask a pompous captain of waiters for information.

"Is Mr. Hope about?"

The head of the serving brigade turned. "No, sir. Mr. Hope left about ten minutes ago. He won't return here until to-morrow morning."

With the syncopated beat of music, following him like a horde of goblins, Glendale picked his way back to Broadway. On the pavement he came to an abrupt halt, something sinking within him that was as heavy as lead. The night life of the White Way flowed from gutter to gutter in a brilliant pag-

eant, but the curb fronting Au Printemps was free from vehicles of any description. The taxicab in which Marion North awaited him had disappeared.

CHAPTER V.

LABYRINTH OF THE UNKNOWN.

GLENDALE was neither enraged nor astounded to find his rooms at the King William in a chaos of disorder. From what he had heard Pinkie saying to Winter, he knew that the search for the mysterious package had penetrated to his suite. The dapper youth had left no stone unturned in seeking it.

The bedchamber had suffered the most. Here the bureau drawers had been yanked open and their contents strewn about. Pictures on the wall were awry, rugs heaped together, the mattress on the bed slashed in four different places. The living room was upset, but by comparison it was more orderly, for the reason that it offered less chances for concealment. Glendale perceived the miscreant had gained entry through a fire-escape window. A circle had been cut in the glass under the latch, large enough to admit a slender hand.

Glendale tidied up the best he could and retired. When he awoke, the hot sun of another day was well up over the city. From early indications it promised to be a torrid record breaker.

Glendale tubbed, shaved, and breakfasted, resolved that, now he had lost all traces of the mystery, it was time to seek the advice of his friend Martin Fosdick. Perhaps, he concluded, after all he had made a mistake in not telephoning him the previous evening.

How was Glendale to know that some malignant fate had not overtaken the girl with the wistful brown eyes and the lustrous brown hair? Try as he might, he could not put from him the recollection of what she had termed Winter. "The most dangerous man in the world," she had called him. And secretly, though he would not admit it, he felt that it was the hand of the round-shouldered man that had drawn the taxicab away from the entrance of Au Printemps.

Breakfast completed and the first cigarette of the day afire, Glendale obtained his hat and stick. He informed the management of the hotel that his suite had been broken into; then he went out. Martin Fosdick's agency occupied two floors in Harpsichord Hall, a modern office building on Forty-second Street, across from Bryant Park and the Public Library.

When Glendale reached it his card was taken in by an office boy who requested that he seat himself in the waiting room. Five minutes elapsed before a blond young woman, whom he recognized from previous visits as his friend's secretary, came in with his card.

"Mr. Fosdick," she said, "will not be in to-day. He is away on a very important case. I don't expect him here much before to-morrow afternoon."

Back on Forty-second street Glendale knit his brows. Fate appeared to be in a jesting humor. He could think of no possible means of finding a way back to the girl through the labyrinth of the unknown. As shadowy as the preceding night itself, the drama with all the characters concerned in it had vanished into thin air. It was as if a curtain had rolled down between a stage and the audience of one. The riddle intricate had got away from Glendale.

It was only when he was crossing Times Square he suddenly remembered that, alone of all things, something still was stationary and permanent, bulking largely through the mists of his perplexities.

This was the empty house on Seventy-fifth Street which he had penetrated with Marion North so recently.

Could he hope to find in the building some tangible something that would reward his labor? Did the hawk-eyed Green Flannels still lie supine on the floor in the front room on the second story? At least, he told himself, he had nothing to lose and everything to gain if he decided upon a pilgrimage to the house. Recrossing the Hub of the Universe, Glendale hailed a surface car and boarded it.

There was no chance of mistaking the house in the vivid shine of the hot August day. The block itself displayed but little activity. A coal truck was running a stream of black diamonds down a hole in the pavement; an express wagon, piled high with trunks, was receiving more from a house nearest the corner of West End Avenue. A maid was lowering the awnings of a place across the street.

Glendale continued until he was abreast of the house in which he had lurked the night before. Viewed by daylight it was a complacent affair of brownstone, different neither in size, shape, nor appearance from those hedging it in. Its windows were fairly clean; save for the fact that every shade was jealously drawn, it appeared inhabited.

Glendale appraised the house quizzically, passing its stoop and trying to decide if it was worth while to test its double doors and seek admittance. He was a pace or two away from it when something shot through him that was like the flash of a spark along a fuse.

This was the closing swing of one of the doors he had been thinking about, and the sudden appearance on the top step of Pinkie, the dapper youth with the blond hair.

Lifting his hands to shield his face, in the attitude of a person trying to light a cigarette, Glendale stopped in his tracks and used his eyes. Without the trouble of a glance about him, the youth ran lightly down the steps and turned in the direction of Broadway. When he had crossed West End Avenue, Glendale leisurely followed.

There was a cigar store on the southwest corner of the street's intersection with the avenue. The blond youth promptly stepped into it. When Glendale reached it and looked cautiously through the open door, it was to find that the person he followed was in the act of entering a telephone booth, four of which were at the rear of the store.

Judging the proximity of the cigar counter to the booths, and deciding to risk it, Glendale entered. Keeping his back to the rear of the shop and his face out of range of the other's vision, through the door of the booth, he edged along the plate-glass case, bending and considering the cigars on display. When he had backed to within earshot of the booth, he heard the blond youth give the central operator a number which was unintelligible. His words, however, which immediately followed, were not.

"This is Pinkie speaking, boss," he said. "I just left the house. Ranscome's gone. I don't know whether he pulled out by himself or if some one helped him. Anyway, he's taken the air. What's the next thing on the books? I'm up here on the corner of Seventy-fifth Street."

Glendale tingled. Without question the youth was conversing with Winter. He had taken the one chance and made good on it. At last he was on a highway that led to something definite. He purchased three cigars and continued to hang upon every word that filtered out from the booth.

"I'll fix that up right away," Pinkie went on. "I'll see Mike Ryan and hire his bus. I'll be up about eleven o'clock unless I get a bad breakdown here in town. You know what I mean. Have Chick meet me at eleven at the float. Tell him to wait if I'm not there on the dot. Right? 'By."

He left both the booth and the store hastily, passing so close to Glendale that his sleeve brushed his arm.

When Glendale followed him out, the dapper one was swinging up on the front of the running board of a southbound open car. For a wild instant it appeared that he must make a clean getaway. Disregarding all traffic laws, Glendale surged forward in a fifty-yard sprint that carried him up to the end platform of the car where he scrambled aboard, turned, and discovered his quarry well forward, still unsuspecting.

Intuition told Glendale that there was still much to learn. Whether he learned it depended upon his ability to stick close to the heels of the aggressive Pinkie. What he had heard in the cigar store seemed to suggest that the last scenes of the drama were shifting to a locale other than the metropolis.

Pinkie had spoken of a "bus" and a "float;" the former seemed to insinuate flight, the latter a rendezvous somewhere upon the water. High hope flooded him. At last, after hours of stress and doubt, the girl with the brown eyes seemed somewhere just beyond, not swallowed up and lost in a muffling desert of darkness.

Keeping a wary eye glued to Winter's accomplice, Glendale allowed his imagination to paint mental pictures of Marion North. Once more she was in the lobby of the Hotel King William, giving him the package. Once more she was radiant and beautiful against the shaded table lights and sconces of Au Printemps. Once more her little white hand rested in his in the blackness of the passage of the empty house. He felt himself strangely drawn to her, with heart and pulses quickening their beat.

He had nothing save his own steadfast confidence and faith to cling to—no logical way of knowing who and what she was; no certain way of proving she was not Winter's daughter, an adventuress, a bird of black plumage, a thief. By her own admission Miss North confessed that she had filched the package she had handed him from the apartment of the round-shouldered little man.

But despite this, his heart told him that she was unsoiled and guiltless; a girl whose feet trod dark ways, but whose eyes were turned always to the light.

Glendale's reflections were ended by the sight of Pinkie arising to give the bell rope a lusty tug. The surface car had delved into the Fifties, and Flash Alley roared just ahead. The dapper youth swung off the car and headed for the pavement. Glendale allowed his conveyance to move on to the next corner before alighting and turning back.

It was now somewhat after the noon hour and the thoroughfare was well populated with pedestrians, clerks, and office hands of the neighborhood bound for luncheons. The throng checked Glendale's advance and it was three minutes before he discovered Pinkie well down a side street, swinging briskly along.

He took up the pursuit again with a breath of relief, taking pains not to press the other too hard, for, despite his haste, the immaculate youth seemed to have an inclination to look back every now and then, a fact that made Glendale dodge behind people in front of him and linger in doorways until the other put more ground between them.

In this fashion they both crossed Eighth Avenue. It was then that Glendale sighted the destination of the one he trailed. Midway down the block was a large garage. It was into this building that the man turned.

With an introspective frown, Glendale halted and narrowed his eyes. So far his good fortune had been phenomenal. His feet were firmly planted on the brink of clear revelations; he must do nothing to jeopardize his luck, lest, when victory confronted him, it be snatched away, its laurels replaced by the sour grapes of humiliation. He decided to maneuver with infinite care and so began to edge closer to the garage.

This, a three-story building, sprawled well along the street. Its fireproof doors were drawn wide. Out of them floated the splash of a hose, the pur of a motor being started and stopped, the cheerful sound of whistling. Because the hour was lunch time, no chauffeurs idled before it.

Prudently Glendale approached the first open door. Though he was favored by no loungers loitering about to speculate upon his presence, this piece of luck was balanced by the fact that some one from within might glimpse him and come out to learn his wishes. But the good fortune that guided him continued to smile, for he had hardly taken up his new stand, before the voice of Pinkie, loudly lifted, sounded.

"Where's Ryan, Eddie?" he called to some one presumably in the rear of the place. "Hey, Eddie, come here a minute, will you?"

The purring of the engine ceased.

"'Lo, Pinkie," some one said cordially. "Looking for Mike? He went

over to see about getting some tires vulcanized. What's on your mind besides your hat?"

"How are the chances for getting the Packard at ten to-night? I got a lot of things to do this afternoon and I can't fool around and wait for Ryan to come back. You know whether the bus is booked or not, don't you? What's the answer?"

"She's booked up to six," said the other. "After that you can have her any time you want. Where are you going and how long do you want to keep her?"

Glendale's lips tightened. On the answer of the blond youth hinged the complete success or failure of the enterprise.

"We're going up to Bailey's place beyond Pelham Bay Park. I'd like to have a clever boy at the wheel. The boss and me might have to get out in a hurry, and I want some one who knows how to drive a few on the job. I'll hire the bus until five or six tomorrow morning. Write me a ticket for it and tell Ryan I will be here at ten o'clock sharp. It's worth a century. Got that all straight, Eddie?"

"Got you!" the second speaker said. "She'll be ready when you want her, and——"

Glendale waited no longer.

Aware that what else he might hear probably would be inconsequential and that Pinkie was likely to come out at any minute, he crossed the street and headed for Broadway. A warm flush of success rioted in his veins. The last link in the chain seemed welded. "Bailey's place beyond Pelham Bay Park!" He had learned the setting for the last act of the mystery, a definite clew to the whereabouts of the picaroons who he was sure had everything to do with Marion North's disappearance.

On Broadway he determined to put into effect a plan he had stored in the back of his mind and walked south, to the outskirts of theater land.

Au Printemps, two streets below, was a different place by day. With its glittering sign extinguished and its pink draperies limply disconsolate in the streaming August sunshine, it was cheap and tawdry. Glendale entered between the Roman pots of plants, stepping into the foyer alcove where, the previous evening, the girl with the brown eyes had arisen to meet him.

The café catered principally to the night crowd of the Rialto. But few of its tables were occupied by diners consuming a midday meal. Tranquillity prevailed; the restaurant was a very different place from what it had been on the occasion of his last visit.

The door of the manager's office was ajar. Within it, Jimmy Hope, in flamboyant black-and-white checks, a pongee shirt with a soft collar speared by a jeweled pin and a knitted cravat, sat before his desk, engaged with a cigar and a heap of bills.

He looked up as Glendale's shadow fell athwart his desk and nodded affably.

"How are you? Not looking for Miss North, are you?"

"I was wondering," Glendale began awkwardly, "whether she had called for the package she gave you last night?"

The restaurateur shook his head. "No; not yet. It is locked up in the safe and it's going to stay locked up until she comes here and asks me for it. Say, what does the darn thing contain, anyway? You're the third person who's been in here this morning trying to get a line on it."

"The third!" Glendale exclaimed.

The manager grinned mirthlessly. "Yes; the third! One—two—three, count 'em. The first was some chap with patent leather, yellow hair, and a pair of shifty eyes. He had the nerve to tell me that Miss North sent him down for the package. I told him I didn't know what he was talking about and sent him on his way. The second was a little better. He just came in a little while ago. His name was Ranscome, and he seemed to be trying to get a line on where Miss North was.

"I gave him all the information I had until he began to chirp about the package," Hope continued. "Then I told him not to slam the front door on his way out. You're the third one. I don't

know what the idea is, but I'll tell you this much. The one who gets that little package out of my safe will have to use either hypnotism or dynamite!"

CHAPTER VI.

WEARING A MASK.

AGAIN on Broadway, Glendale turned in the direction of the Bryant Agency, which he soon reached. Fosdick had returned, it appeared. The office boy once more disappeared with his card, came back, and bade him follow.

With anticipation keen within him, Glendale was ushered into the private office of his friend. Fosdick sat before a glass-covered desk. He was dictating a letter to his blond secretary, but dismissed her and turned to Glendale.

"Hello, Archer! Sorry I wasn't in when you called this morning. I returned about ten minutes ago—didn't expect to, but affairs rather slumped at the last minute. You look worried. Here, sit down and tell me all your troubles."

Glendale seated himself and without prelude plunged into his story. He began with the scene in the lobby of the King William, building the tale step by step until he concluded with his visit to Au Printemps. Fosdick listened without comment, punctuating the narrative once or twice with a nod, but otherwise displaying no particular interest or concern.

"I'm going up to Bailey's place beyond Pelham Bay Park to-night. I'm going to follow the Packard this Pinkie hired," Glendale added after he had finished the narrative of past events.

"If your friend spoke about a float," Fosdick said, "it means his destination is somewhere other than Bailey's. I know that place well. The chances are that the rendezvous is at Cranberry Island, farther out."

For some time the two spoke earnestly; Fosdick became attentive, anxious, displaying a flash of animation which told the other that the detective's indifference had been merely a bland mask which hid a keen interest.

"Another thing," Fosdick said at last. "I'll supply you with a car so you can follow the Packard. I'll send it up to the hotel at half past nine. Drop a gun in your pocket before you start out." He stood and offered his hand.

"Do you believe there's something big in it?" Glendale asked.

The detective donned his mask again and shrugged. "Perhaps. It won't hurt to look into it. It's an interesting story. You can never tell what's going to result until you probe things."

They shook hands, and Glendale departed.

CHAPTER VII.

BIRDS OF PREY.

THE night held the promise of thunderstorms. Far away lightning flickered; thunder was like the echoes of elfin artillery. The metropolis, expectant of cooling showers, lay in a breathless calm. The street noises were hushed. The city seemed to go on tiptoe; a spirit of adventure was abroad, Orientalizing street and avenue that writhed in a welter of their own heat.

In the two-seated racing roadster that Fosdick had sent to the hotel for him, some forty minutes previous, Glendale lurked a hundred yards west of Ryan's garage. The car was drawn toward the curb in such fashion as not only to command a view of the doors of the place, but to be free to spring away in instant chase, once the pirate vehicle chartered by Pinkie made an appearance.

His watch marking the hour of ten precisely, Glendale lifted his gaze to the chauffeur. The man, lank and tall, had introduced himself as Gus Tremaine. Whether he was one of Fosdick's aids or only drove for the Bryant Agency, Glendale had no way of knowing. The man sat moodily taciturn, only the brightness of his eyes betraying his interest in the proceedings.

Glendale turned his gaze from his watch to the open doors of the garage. "We shouldn't have to wait long now," he remarked. "The man we're to follow said ten o'clock. When the Packard appears I don't want you to crowd it too closely; neither do I want you to lose sight of it. A happy medium

between far and near will be the right thing, I think."

"He won't get away," Tremaine promised.

Ten more minutes elapsed without sign of the dapper Pinkie or the hired car. Glendale trained his glance on the garage. A night-hawking taxicab was having its tank filled from the gasoline pump on the sidewalk. A limousine with a chauffeur dozing on its front seat was the only other car before it. Somewhere inside a dim light burned and the splash of the hose sounded again. Fifteen more minutes elapsed. At last half past ten arrived and then twenty-five minutes to eleven.

"Looks like he wasn't coming," the lean Tremaine remarked casually.

Glendale grew restless. Had something unlooked for cropped up to mar what seemed a perfect plot? Had Pinkie been aware that he had been trailed and had he made the arrangements to throw his shadower off the scent?

Mature consideration of the idea made Glendale conscious that his deductions might be correct in every particular. Thinking it useless to sit and speculate idly with the minutes running away, he opened the side door of the car and got out.

"Wait here," he said to Tremaine. "I'll be back directly."

Slipping across the street he found it an easy matter to peer into the garage from the outer gloom. Visible within the place were two men in rubber hip boots who with hose and sponges were industriously cleaning a seven-passenger touring car. Of Winter's partner there was no sign; neither did Glendale see a Packard standing in readiness for use.

With a twitch to the soft cap donned for the occasion, he entered the garage and addressed the mechanic who was using the sponge. "Seen anything of my friend Pinkie? I was to pick him up at ten-fifteen and he hasn't shown himself yet."

The man tossed his sponge into a pail of water and signaled the custodian of the hose. "What time did Pinkie's bus roll out, Eddie?"

The other rubbed a cauliflower ear. "Fifteen after nine. It was to pick him up at Skelley's place in Harlem at quarter of. If you're looking for him you're out of luck, bo. By now he's halfway up to Bailey's place."

"What's the quickest way to get up there?" Glendale inquired.

The man shifted his tobacco from one side of his face to the other. "Straight up to Pelham Parkway. Follow it to the Shore Road. Take the City Island turn to the right, but turn left before you reach the bridge. It's a dirt road all the way out to Bailey's, but it ain't so bad. Stay on it, and it will take you right out at the hotel."

Glendale thanked him and returned to the roadster. He informed Tremaine of the new turn of events and asked an opinion.

"The best thing is to get right out there," the other advised. "If your man hasn't got too much of a start on us we can overtake him on the road. Jump in and let's go!"

Through the lower part of the city and the Bronx Tremaine drove with a vast respect for traffic rules and regulations. But once Bronx Park was passed and the smooth level of Pelham Parkway began, he coaxed the roadster forward, swinging the needle of the speedometer far over.

They rushed through the night like an express train striving to make up lost time. A self-created wind whistled by Glendale's ears; the arc lights dipped past like shooting stars; twice he heard the scream of a patrolman's whistle and once glimpsed a chasing motor cycle which they lost instantly. The boulevard ran straight and true into the Shore Road.

Here Tremaine slowed the roadster to a more decorous rate of speed, snapped back a lever on the dash he had pulled up before their flight, and chuckled.

"A little invention of Mr. Fosdick's. When I open her up wide I pull the switch and a couple of wires turn the license plates over so nobody can read them. Of course the cops will phone ahead, but the description they got of

us when we passed don't cut any ice. I'll put up the top and dim the big front headlights and nobody will as much as speak to us. Wait and see if I'm not right."

Nobody did halt them though they passed a patrol booth at the City Island turn, where two policemen with motor cycles were watching the highway.

"First road to the left before you reach the bridge," Glendale said.

"I know the road," Tremaine answered. "It leads to Bailey's old place. It used to be a hang-out for picnickers, bathers, fishing parties, and soaks in the old days before prohibition came along. Now it's pretty well run down. I'll open her up again as soon as we make the turn."

The dirt road the mechanic in Ryan's garage had spoken of was discovered without trouble. It was perhaps five miles long, narrow, and full of unexpected twists—turns that bothered Tremaine not at all.

Once more he shot the car along like a locomotive, slowing only when the road became full of broken clamshells, and a mile ahead the misty vista of the Sound spread out like a flat, black mirror, hung with filmy curtains.

They turned twice and then struck a down grade that led to some sort of a shelving beach, back from which bulked a huge, ramshackle wooden building, dark except for the shine of a kerosene lamp in one window that overlooked a rickety porch with a sagging railing.

"That's Bailey's," Tremaine announced. "Looks like the Ritz, don't it? Lot of folks mistake it."

The car stopped. Staring, Glendale stroked his chin. To the east, in the night, the north shore of Long Island loomed vaguely, like a low-drifted bank of cloud. Off to the left were the faraway lights of some town that might have been New Rochelle or Larchmont. Between the two, a wall of humidity, dull and lusterless, had taken body since the twilight, masking the skies and shutting down upon the sea like the rim of some great bowl.

Glendale shook himself. This was the setting for the last act of the drama. What would come out of it? What were the true characters and the identity of those who took the leading rôles? He alighted from the roadster and looked at his watch. It was some twenty minutes after eleven—twenty minutes past the time that Pinkie had promised to be present at the "float."

He wheeled and surveyed the night-draped panorama in front of him. Before the dilapidated building was a sort of wooden runway that led across the beach, against which small, puny wavelets flung themselves monotonously, to a landing wharf of some size, close to which a few dingy boats nestled wearily.

As his eyes fell upon the float, Glendale recalled what Fosdick had said concerning Cranberry Island. He knit his brows, wondering if the speculation of his friend were correct—determining to verify it.

Putting his feet in motion he made his way to the empty hotel, mounted the veranda steps, and knocked loudly on the weather-stained door. The summons was such as to bring him face to face with an angular man, whose seamy, tanned face wore a sandy stubble of several days' growth. This individual was attired in a soiled, collarless shirt, a pair of khaki trousers, and apparently not much else.

He favored his caller with a sleepy stare. "What you want?"

"I'm looking for a pal of mine," Glendale replied glibly. "Friend by the name of Pinkie. I was to meet him at Skelley's at a quarter of ten, but I was late and missed him. Do you know if he's got up here yet?"

The man in the doorway hesitated a moment; then he said: "He went out to the island about twenty minutes ago."

Glendale knew the tingle of triumph. Fosdick was right. It was an island!

"You mean Cranberry Island, don't you?" he questioned.

"Sure. What do you think I mean —Blackwell's?" the other answered sarcastically. "If you want to get out there you'll find boats a plenty down at

the float. There's oars in the boathouse. The door of it's open. Bring the boat back and tie it up when you get through with it."

"How do I get out to the island?" Glendale asked dubiously. "Where does it lie?"

The man laughed unpleasantly. "Say, sonny, don't you know nothin'?"

"Pinkie didn't tell me," Glendale replied smoothly. "I was supposed to meet him here and go out with him. I've never been up this way before."

"Well, it's a mile and a half straight out," his informant said sullenly. "Just lay on to the oars and mind the rocks when you get offshore. There's not much current to speak of. Pull straight and you can't miss it."

The door, slamming in Glendale's face, cut short his thanks.

He returned to the roadster and found Tremaine drawing meditatively on a corncob pipe. Glendale's watch showed him that it was half past eleven. He turned to the road and listened.

"Are you one of Mr. Fosdick's assistants?" he asked the silent Tremaine.

The man stirred and looked up.

"No; I only drive for him."

Glendale, after a few more words with Tremaine, located the boathouse the angular gentleman in the khaki trousers had spoken of, helped himself to a pair of oars, and made his way down to the wharf. Here, with the aid of a pocket flash he had brought, he selected a fishing dory that seemed cleaner and lighter than the other boats about it.

With pulses beginning to hammer anew, Glendale, alone, took his bearings, cast off, fitted the oars to rusty locks, seated himself, and pulled lustily toward the open Sound.

The humidity walled him in; the lights of the waiting roadster became firefly specks and then disappeared entirely. Fantastic water sounds floated back to him from the open sea. Once he heard the pant of a ghostly motor boat passing on the starboard beam; once the sucking gurgle of a whirlpool; the unceasing toll of a bell buoy, and, far away, the grind of the propellers of some night-prowling Sound steamer.

Glendale continued to row. He stopped only to consult his watch in the light of the flash, judging his distance by the elapsing minutes more than by anything else. His strenuous efforts at the oars brought no fatigue to weigh heavily upon him.

He seemed as fresh and vigorous as an athlete ready for some grueling, crucial test of strength. His nerves were steady and alert; he believed that he was ready to face what might confront him, resolute, spurred, fired, and inspired by the knowledge that each and every tick of his watch and stroke of the oars brought him closer to information concerning Marion North.

It was almost a half hour later before his quick ears caught the sibilant sigh of the Sound along a sandy shore, the beat of it against rocks. Backing water, he stared narrowly over the bow of the dory, detected the dim outlines of the island, and began sculling cautiously in.

He discovered the rocks spoken of, negotiated a careful passage through and between them, and came upon placid water that flowed up to the edge of a natural beach out from which a dock jutted and two motor boats, a dinghy and a rowboat with an Evinrude motor at its stern, were moored. Glendale shipped his oars quietly, secured the dory to the landing pier with a length of ill-smelling bowline, and climbed out and up on the dock.

A minute later his feet were planted firmly on solid terrain. Through the mist, less than a quarter of a mile away, a light burned steadily. He walked toward it, his right hand dropping to the fully loaded automatic he had stored away in his hip pocket. Come what may, he informed himself grimly, this time he would not be found weaponless and unprotected.

The light grew. Closer to it, Glendale saw that it burned behind the drawn shades in the first-floor window of a building that appeared not a whit different from Bailey's hotel that he had

left on the mainland. Here before him was the same bulk of decaying wood, rickety, weather-beaten porch, tumble-down steps, and broken railing. He stood still and considered it, asking himself if, at last, his journey had ended; if perplexity was over and done with for once and all.

The sand muffled his footsteps effectually. He crept up to the window and listened at its sill. Voices were faint and indistinct within; for all of its antiquity and desuetude, the place had stout and substantial walls. Moving away, Glendale continued on, circling the place and seeking a means of entrance which he presently found in a small, rear door that hung on a single hinge.

He used his flash, entered, and found himself in a small hallway that skirted what, in an earlier and happier day, had been kitchens and serving rooms. The passage ambled complacently around bends and corners, ending at length in a wide, oblong space in the front of the building where Glendale hesitated, a thrill of excitement stabbing him.

Directly opposite from the place where he stood, light stained a grimy transom and gushed out from under the closed door. He was separated only by a few feet from the black birds of prey.

Drawing his automatic he inched his way toward the door, reached it, and crouched beside it. The voices now were perfectly audible. He heard some one giving an order and then a careless answer:

"Sure! I'll fetch her in right away!"

Before Glendale could move, the door he crouched against was yanked open from the inside, and a rush of illumination blinded him.

In a flash savage arms gripped his throat, wrested the weapon from his hand, and dragged him forward while a harsh voice, filled with a jubilant note of surprise, rang in his ears:

"Well, well! Will you look who's here! If it isn't our merry little playmate of the King William with a popgun and everything!"

CHAPTER VIII.

IN THE MURKY LIGHT.

BEFORE he could strike a blow in his own defense or wrench himself free from the clutching fingers of the dapper, blond man, some one in back of Glendale pinned his arms to his sides, holding him with strait-jacket force. Simultaneously another occupant of the room, a burly man with the dark, vice-marked face of an underworld gangster, caught up a coil of tarred rope from one corner and surged forward.

In a trice Glendale was securely trussed up and pushed into a backless chair. The one who had seized his arms stepped around in front of him, looked him over with a half smile, and turned to the man who resembled a gangster.

"Slip out, Chick," the round-shouldered Winter said, "and see if our friend brought any of his pals or relatives with him. Take a good look while you're at it and don't be afraid to use your rod."

The gangster left the room; Winter, as harmless and inoffensive appearing as ever, blinked his mild, blue eyes and turned back to Glendale.

"So it's you," he said unconcernedly. "Frankly, your perseverance and stubbornness astound me. Will you never learn to stop butting in on what does not concern you? You're almost as annoying as some of these stupid detectives I occasionally jest with. What brought you here? What do you want? What's the idea?"

The angry retort on Glendale's lips remained unuttered. After all, words would avail him or aid him but little. He realized that the most important thing was to keep a cool, level head and try to reason a way out of his predicament—which appeared so hopeless as to be ludicrous.

"Pretty foxy," Pinkie chuckled, touching his slightly disarranged cravat. "Trailed us all the way here from the city like a great big man and was planted right at the front door the minute I opened it. What'll we do with him, boss?"

Winter's wrinkled face assumed an

owlish expression. "Do? Leave him to cool his head and heels and to ponder what it means to be rash. Ah, Chick. Coast clear?"

The burky gangster, returning, closed the door behind him. "He's alone, boss. He come out in Bailey's dory. There's no one else around."

Winter nodded. "I thought so. Get the girl, Pinkie. We can't afford to waste all night on this interfering gentleman, as much as we love his company."

As the blond youth left the room, Glendale's heart leaped and hammered. Marion North was a prisoner in the island rookery! Hot blood pounded within him. He strained forward in his chair; but he was forced to content himself with working his bound wrists together behind his back and letting his eyes roam the chamber.

Though the rest of the building was falling down, the room was neatly appointed in somewhat the style of a modern office. A huge steel vault was opposite Glendale. Set between the windows with the drawn shades and a squat, metal filing cabinet, was a large mahogany desk. A fairly presentable rug was on the floor. The bare plaster walls were hung with shotguns and rifles. The light was from a copper ship's lamp suspended from a chain on a bracket.

"Yes," Winter said pleasantly, shrewdly interpreting what the medley of thoughts in Glendale's mind concerned; "your pretty young lady friend is here, safe under lock and key. I might explain that I was standing in the shadows on the north side of Au Printemps when you and she drove up last night. When you got out of the taxi I got in.

"The slight and delicate pressure of a .38 is a remarkable thing for making the feminine sex change their minds," Winter went on. "This is the first opportunity I have had to interview her. Possibly you may be interested in hearing some of my questions and her answers. Do stay a while and make yourself perfectly at home. I might add there is a humorous side to this affair which tickles my risibilities and——" He was interrupted by the opening of the door.

Pinkie entered, a step behind Marion North, who, unbound, crossed the threshold. Her gaze, weary and wistful, darted to Glendale; her pale face mirrored a faint, sensitive flush. He answered the look with a smile that was intended to be brave, reassuring, and free from chagrin, but which he knew was, at best, only a stiff, distorted grin.

She still wore the pretty evening frock of the previous night. Though she had undoubtedly suffered and was at the lowest ebb of her endurance, she held herself proudly erect as Pinkie escorted her to a chair beside the mahogany desk and waved her into it.

"Good evening, my dear Miss North," Winter said, with a bow. "I sincerely trust you have entirely recovered from your indisposition of last evening. Do sit down and compose yourself. There are several matters which I must talk over with you. I presume you can imagine what they are."

Glendale, working at the rope at his wrists, saw Pinkie jauntily light a cigarette and wink at the burly gangster. Both took up a station on either side of the chair that the girl occupied, obviously interested to learn what Winter would say.

The little man dropped into the swivel chair and faced Marion North across the desk. He clipped the end from a symmetrical cigar, lighted it, and sat back with the same languid ease he might have used in a club lounge.

"My dear," he began, with almost parental concern, "surely you are now beginning to realize how extremely silly it is to hope to outwit me. I admit it was very clever of you to learn the location of my apartment in town and to slip in and get the box. But to hope to retain it any length of time is only the fatuous idea of a very unsophisticated young person. By the way, did you happen to tell Mr. Glendale what the box contained?"

"No; I did not," she replied in a low voice.

Winter exchanged a glance with his confederates. They smiled broadly.

"This is deliciously amusing," the little man said cryptically. "But to get down to business, I'm going to ask you a frank question and I want a like answer. Was it your charming employer who removed my brown valise from the house on Seventy-fifth Street last night?"

Marion North moved her shoulders. "I don't know," she answered truthfully. "My instructions were to go there and get it. I was given skeleton keys to open the inner front door. When we—when I opened the closet I found it was empty. I don't know who obtained the valise."

Glendale saw a shadow of worry darken Winter's sallow face.

"The presence of Ranscome," he said, "would seem to indicate that your employer didn't get the grip. Ranscome, I have been told, left the building."

The brown eyes of the girl lighted. "I'm glad!" she said. "It was a dastardly thing to strike him down in the dark!"

"I ought to kick myself in the ribs for not having put more stuff on the torch!" the blond man declared viciously. "I ought to have caved his roof in instead of pulling the soak. That's what I get for being kind-hearted!"

Winter fingered his chin. "Let's return to the box," he said purringly, "for, after all, it is that which concerns us most. I trust the hours you have been held captive have not been spent in vain. I hope, my dear girl, you have at last come to your senses and will try to hoodwink us no longer."

With his docility and apparent gentleness vanishing into thin air, Winter swung forward in his chair and rapped out a quantity of staccato sentences: "Where's the box? What have you done with it? I want it! I must have it! I will tolerate no more delay or subterfuge! Where is it?"

The words cracked like the snap of a whip. In white-lipped desperation, Marion North stared into his wrinkled face, small hands clenched and quivering at her sides, her eyes wide and frightened.

"I shan't tell you!" she whispered.

Straining at his bonds and rewarded by a slight loosening of one rope, Glendale flushed with admiration for her courage. Transfixed, he watched Winter's face turn to brass, impenetrable, inflexible, creased by the gash of a grim smile.

"Is that," he asked suavely, "your final answer?"

"I shan't tell you!" she repeated, closing her lips on a little sob that forced itself between her shut teeth.

Pushing back his chair, Winter got up. He tapped the ash from his cigar and frowned at his watch. "Then, my dear," he said, with perfect urbanity, "you automatically commit a great crime. By refusing and continuing to refuse to tell me what you know, you definitely put a quick end to the existence of the young man seated on your immediate right. Do I make myself clear?"

With a startled gasp Marion North jumped up. All the color drained from the piquant oval of her face, leaving it pallid, drawn with the agony of a fear she flinched before.

"What—what do you mean?"

Winter looked at the glowing tip of his cigar before turning his back on her to address the blond Pinkie: "Slip your gat out. I shall count three. If this distressed young lady refuses to divulge the whereabouts of the package before I end the count, you will let our interfering friend here have the whole clip. Catch the idea?"

The dapper one smiled eagerly. "Got you coming and going, boss!"

He promptly dragged out an automatic revolver with a short, sawed-off muzzle. Cold perspiration sprang to Glendale's brow. There was no mistaking either the meaning of the vibrant undercurrent in Winter's command or the light of unholy satisfaction that fired the shifty eyes of his associate.

Glendale stared straight into the round, black mouth of the weapon that drew a bead on him, while Winter began to count:

"One—two——"

Marion threw herself forward with a strangled cry: "Wait! I will tell you everything!"

The breath that had caught in Glendale's throat left it. He blinked away the perspiration that trickled down into his eyes as Winter laughed with quiet good humor.

"Didn't I tell you there was nothing like a gun to make young ladies change their minds?" the bandits' leader said smoothly. "Come, speak up, my dear. Where's the box?"

Exchanging a look with Glendale that was filled with the dull hope that flickered low within her, Marion North laid her shaking hands on the desk top. "I gave the package to Jimmy Hope last night," she whispered in a lifeless voice. "He locked it up in the safe at Au Printemps."

The faces of the marauders wore smiles of triumph.

"I knew it!" Pinkie cried. "Hope gave me a song and dance and tried to play the dumb Isaac, but I knew it was a stall!"

Winter tugged at his chin, thinking. "Get the young lady's wrap, Chick." He looked keenly at the girl. "My dear, you and I will journey forthwith to Broadway. It's scarcely one o'clock, and we can reach the café in an hour if we hurry. I dislike rushing you, but you must get me that box to-night. Mr. Glendale will remain here as a hostage.

"You, Pinkie, and you, Chick, will endeavor to entertain him to the best of your ability," Winter continued. "If for any reason Miss North should change her mind and refuse to give me what I want, I will telephone old man Bailey and have him row out and tell you. This time we won't bother to do any counting. Just fill Glendale full of lead and let it go at that!"

"Sure thing!" Pinkie said cheerfully, as Chick left the room. "Nothing would give me more pleasure. I owe this lob something on account! I'll croak him the minute I get the word!"

Awaiting the return of the gangster, Winter puffed placidly at his cigar. The girl rested wearily against the desk, head lowered. Perceptible shadows were beneath her eyes and cheek bones, pathetic records of what she had endured, of the stress and tumult within her.

Glendale saw and knew; his throat tightened inexplicably. In a frenzy of desperation he renewed his efforts to free himself, his heart leaping with excitement when one strand of rope dropped over his fingers and his wrists separated, first an inch—more—two inches. The light was dim, and Winter did not see what the captive was doing.

He encountered the brown eyes of Marion North again as Chick returned, bearing her smart, summery cape. She donned it without a word and looked at Winter, who, fitting a cap to his tonsured head, darted another glance at his watch.

"Ready?" he inquired.

Together both moved forward.

"Watch our friend carefully," the little man said over his shoulder.

"Don't worry," Pinkie returned, toying with his automatic. "All the cops in the big burg couldn't spring this baby when I'm on the job!"

Winter reached the door and dropped a hand to the knob.

As he did so, Glendale dropped the bonds that had circled his wrists and leaped for Pinkie.

It was the unexpectedness of the move of one supposed to be securely manacled that crowned the stratagem with success. He knocked aside the arm of the blond youth as the automatic exploded harmlessly, tore it from his hand in a twinkling, hurled him into a corner with a short-arm blow, and swept the room with the captured gun; the smothered cry of the girl was music in his ears.

"Back to the wall and hands up! I'll shoot the first one who makes a false move!"

Glendale's order was complied with at once. The burly gangster placed his shoulders to the wall and lifted grimy hands. Winter, less rapid in his movements, allowed the fingers of his right hand to stray toward his jacket pocket.

Glendale took up a position back of the desk. "Up with your hands, Winter! Don't make the mistake of reach-

ing for a revolver! Miss North will attend to getting the artillery out!"

In a silence profound, the little man stretched for the ceiling. The sleek Pinkie, muttering imprecations, attained his feet and took up a stand beside the gangster.

"What now?" Winter inquired placidly.

Glendale surveyed the room with a stern, relentless gaze, master of the situation at last. "Miss North," he said, disregarding the question of the little man, "you will be good enough to remove the weapons of our friends and place them here on the desk before me. Begin with Mr. Winter, and——"

His words were blotted out by the crash of a revolver—the sudden sweep of blackness as the brass lamp on the bracket plunged out with the silvery tinkle of broken glass.

In a watch tick the stark, awesome darkness was torn with the surge of conflict, the stamp and scuffle of feet, heavy commands, the shrill voice of Pinkie screaming an oath.

Glendale felt the air kicked up by a whistling blow that fanned his face. He rounded the desk, to collide with an invisible body the arms of which promptly twined about him.

"Here's where we even up!" The rasping voice of the burly gangster panted in his ear. "Here's where you get yours!"

Glendale lashed out with both fists. His right crashed to the unseen face of his antagonist with such force as to hurl the gangster away and back from him. The man endeavored to clinch, but Glendale fought him off, finding his jaw with a left hook that had behind it every ounce of power at his command.

The gangster reeled away, toppled, and fell with a crash at the same minute the battle, which had begun so unexpectedly, terminated with disconcerting suddenness.

"Lights!" some one ordered briskly.

The glow of a lamp grew until the room was completely illumined again. Glendale blinked at the shadowy figures filling the room.

Near the door Ranscome, the hawk-eyed man in green flannels, stood guard over the battered Pinkie whose wrists wore steel handcuffs. A pace distant three men with drawn guns hedged in the round-shouldered Winter.

Back and away from them Fosdick stood with an arm about Marion North. "Ah, Archer, safe and sound, I see!" the detective said. "Sorry I was late, and so unable to meet you at Bailey's, as you and I arranged to-day. We had two blow-outs on the way up which delayed us. Tremaine told me where you were, but, to cap the climax, we got lost in the mist and almost rowed to Europe. Excuse us for putting out your light. Ranscome, here, didn't seem to know that you had our friends just where you wanted them!"

Fosdick indicated the silent Winter with an airy gesture; then he went on: "Archer, as a detective you've got me backed off the boards! I had a suspicion who these individuals were, but to you alone must go the credit of bagging your own crook! I didn't tell you to-day. I, too, was after the alleged Winter, because I wanted to give you a little surprise. Let me introduce you to the Port Royal thief—a man I've pursued for many a long day—Mr. Hugo March, alias Winter!"

CHAPTER IX.

DREAMY STARS.

BY dead reckoning the hour was two o'clock in the morning or something later. A thunderstorm had come and gone, and the air was fresher, cooler. Stars, cold and glittering, were white ships in the blue sea of the heavens. Among them the moon hung like a crystal lantern.

In the roadster driven by the taciturn Tremaine, leaving the City Island road, Glendale looked down at the shadowy face of the girl beside him. Since that minute they had left the room in the island rookery, which he had come to understand was Hugo March's treasure chamber, she had said but little, consenting with a nod to his proposal that he take her back to the metropolis, so that she would not be compelled to ride

in Fosdick's machine with the heavily ironed prisoners.

Now, as he bent his gaze upon her, she looked up and smiled faintly.

"I can tell you at last!" she murmured.

"You are one of Martin Fosdick's operatives?" Glendale said.

She inclined her head slowly. "Yes; one of his agents. Don't you understand now where it was you saw me first? It was that afternoon when you came to the office with Mr. Fosdick. You passed me in one of the outer rooms, but you didn't appear to take much notice of me.

"It is not a very long story," she went on. "Our chief knew that it was Hugo March who had broken into your country estate. We found him here in New York and ringed him in. Ranscome, the man in green flannels, who is another of Mr. Fosdick's agents, discovered that March had split the loot in half. The heirlooms they packed away in a brown leather valise which, I just learned, was taken by Mr. Fosdick from the house yesterday afternoon. The Katupur Ruby——"

All at once knowledge swept through Glendale. "And the ruby," he exclaimed, "is in the box that is in the safe at Au Printemps!"

The red lips of the girl parted in a smile. "Yes; yours when Jimmy Hope returns it to me on the morrow! He has often aided me before, because, in the café, I have found the beginnings of many trails. You see, when March knew he was trapped, he wrapped the box up and prepared to mail it to himself at some address out of town. By the barest chance I was able to make it mine before he was able to carry out his plans. He learned that I had taken it and hemmed me in closely.

"Meanwhile," Miss North continued, "I had got a telephone call through to Ranscome and arranged to meet him at the King William so I could give him the box. I'm not certain if March learned of the call or if it was just an accident that brought him to the hotel. Sufficient to say that at the sight of him I completely lost my nerve."

Glendale drew a breath. "And the presence of Ranscome last night in the empty house?"

"He wasn't aware that Mr. Fosdick had already made the brown valise with the heirlooms his," Marion North explained. "He had the same orders I had and a duplicate set of the skeleton keys to get in with."

They were on the Pelham Parkway. To the southwest the island metropolis lay supine, still lifting its garish reflection to the clouds. Glendale glimpsed it before looking down again at the girl whose brown head drooped wearily to his shoulder.

"Is this the end?" Glendale asked in a low voice. "Does the termination of our riddle intricate mean that we are never to see each other again? When may I come for you?"

The brown eyes she gave him were like dreamy stars, confident and trusting. "To-morrow—if you wish," she whispered.

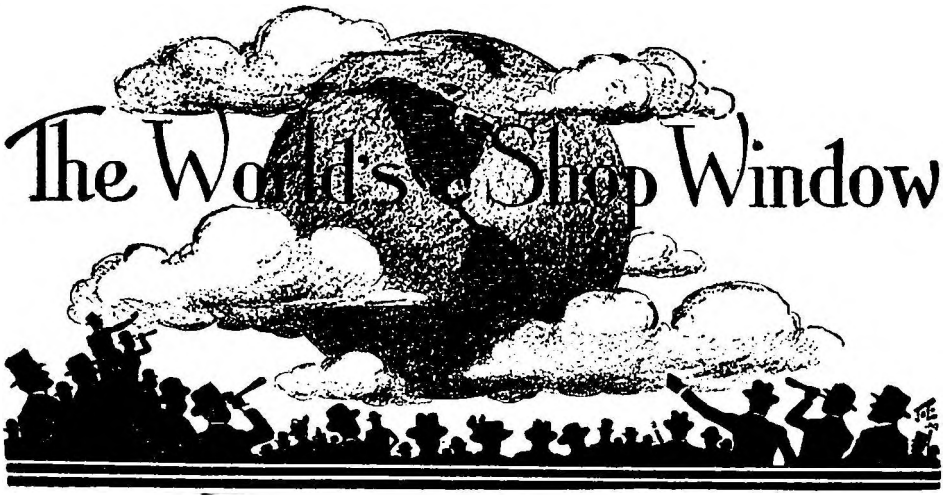
At the wheel, Tremaine moved his long legs. "It looks as if it's going to be cooler," he said succinctly.

Did you like this story, or did you not? If you liked it, please let us know why in a letter, briefly worded. If you did not like it, let us know that and why. And while you are about it, comment on any other story in this number, or give us your opinion of the number as a whole. The editors will appreciate any letter you may send.

THE HOME MAKER

By George J. Southwick

IT'S not the "fine fixings" that make it a home,
Nor is it the good things of life;
It's that dear little woman to all of us known
As mother, or sister, or wife.



By Henry Wilton Thomas

Illustrations by Jo Lemon

A Doctor Needed

THE proposal of Hugo Stinnes, the archcapitalist of Germany, that the railroads there be taken out of government control and placed in his charge, does not seem so undesirable when the facts of the situation are borne in mind. Stinnes is already master of the main artery of transportation in Germany—the River Rhine. His steamboats speed up and down that waterway in large numbers. Cargo-carrying vessels belonging to anybody else are seldom seen. They are the swiftest boats of their kind known on any river in the world.

The company that runs them is the only thing in the transportation line in the country that seems under control of somebody and is well managed. They are boats that actually leave on schedule and arrive on time. The contrast they form in this respect to the government-run railroads is striking. One should always be provided with time-consuming devices when waiting for a train on a German railroad. You have time to study a language, medicine, astronomy, or read the treaty of Versailles.

Your study of science and history is brought to a close by the arrival of the train; you are not likely to continue it after you get in the car. Usually you have need of all your skill and fighting blood to get in the car; the train is quite likely to arrive full, not only as to the seats, but the standing room in the corridors.

Nobody kicks any more about trains arriving behind time in Germany. You are so glad that they arrive at all, and you are able to get out of the jam. It is not so bad as the New York subway in regard to the crowding, but that is about the only thing you can think of that they do not equal in disagreeableness.

Thus it occurs that when the traveler hears Stinnes wants to take them over, he does not feel that any calamity has

been proposed. He sees those Rhine steamboats plying their way steadily and swiftly and thinks that a dose of Doctor Stinnes' medicine might make the German railroads well again.

Moving an Army

SPEAKING of the subway, it is quite a little jerkwater railroad that burrows and serpentines its course beneath the tumultuous life of New York. Unlike most of the world's subterranean railways, it shoots above ground now and then, as if coming up for air, then dives back again into the bowels of the earth. And there it stays for the greater part of its 225 miles of single tracks. It is four tracked a good portion of its distance.

What is called the East Side Division is 22 miles in length; the West Side 26 miles long. It is all within the city limits, but in some of its stretches the structure is through fairly open country—the sparsely settled regions included in Greater New York. If you stood at the Times Square station you would see more trains pass in a day than you would see on the greatest and busiest railroad in the world. During the hours of maximum travel alone, from 7 to 9 a. m., you would see pass more than 400 trains carrying 3,270 cars.

If you stood at the Grand Central station, on the other side of town, you would see pass during these two hours 412 trains carrying 3,376 cars. That makes an average of 4 cars a minute passing each station. These figures cover, of course, both the express and the local trains.

The bulk of New York's commercial and industrial army is transported to the front between the hours of 7 and 9 in the morning. In the evening they go back to the rear for refreshment, recreation, sleep. Only in the idea of the movement, however, and not in its manner, is there anything suggestive of an army, unless it might be an army in panic.

Whether it be advancing or retreating, these forces, in the subway, push and pull and jam one another, and what is more interesting, they seem to enjoy it. If they traveled comfortably during the rush hours, each person seated and the aisles unobstructed by strap hangers, it would take 16 cars a minute passing a given point, or a continuous train from one end of the line to the other.

Ex-Kings Their Pie

ENTERPRISING confidence operators do not find it difficult these days to pick some dethroned monarch upon whom to practice their arts. The war and its attendant social and political upheaval left a good many kings out of a job. Naturally they are keen to get back into their soft berths; they want once more to wear royal raiment and sit at a sumptuous board; they long for the good old days when they were fed and clothed by the people who did the work.

It is upon this natural desire that the confidence operator plays. Usually he is some "nobleman" who himself was compelled to work for a living when the king lost his grip. He has the ear of the dethroned monarch and he fills it with the rosiest of dreams.

Take the case of ex-Emperor Charles of Austria-Hungary. The confidence noblemen got around him in Switzerland and told him how easy it would

be for him to go to Hungary and get back his old job and fat salary. They assured him that the people were sick of the republic, that they longed for a king, and that it would be like finding a throne. The republican army, for appearance sake, would make a show of resistance, but quickly his standard would be embraced.

And poor Charles listened and believed; he went, he saw, he was conquered. The republican army made a show of resistance, just as the confidence operators had said, but it was a resistance in which hand grenades were used so effectively that Charles' army lost two hundred killed and a thousand wounded. The rest fled in all directions; some of them are running yet. Charles was taken prisoner. He had a chance then to think the adventure over, and see how he had fallen for a confidence game.

It might be a warning to other jobless royalties not to let noble operators induce them to part with their remaining coin to finance a throne-regaining enterprise. But so long as there are crown jewels to be turned into cash, the titled bunco boys will be on the job, and hold out the lure of alleviating the unemployment situation among ex-kings.

Down with the Kill-joys

WE all know there is something about the seafaring life that makes men stanch and true, and drives out of them a lot of nonsense that is given to staying in the systems of those who live ashore. A seaman is up against the hard fact of Old Neptune and his merciless onslaughts, and the truth becomes his faithful companion.

A good many of the prominent residents met with in Nantucket are men who have served their time on the sea. They love to spin yarns, of course, as all sailormen do, but some of the things they tell you are accepted on the Purple Island as historical data, and who dares to be a doubter?

For example, there is the record of the second Jonah. In 1870, so the truth-loving chroniclers declare, one Marshall Jenkins attacked and struck a sperm whale. The wounded creature turned on the boat, bit it in two and sounded —went beneath the surface—with Mr. Jenkins in its jaws. While the crew was clinging to the pieces of the boat the whale broached and threw the man into the floating fore part of the broken boat.

Another bit of impressive historical data presented to the visitor has to do with Captain Peter Pollock of the bark *Lady Adams.* No time is given to the episode—only a place. The place is the Atlantic Ocean. And there was a whale. So we are told of the place, and the whale, and it was Captain Pollock's opportunity. He killed that whale, and he was mildly surprised, too, when he cut it up to find in it an iron which he had thrown when in command of the ship *Lion,* thirteen years before, and in far-distant waters.

Probably some scoffer will raise his voice and demand proof of these historical data. You can't help that sort of thing. There are kill-joys in every land—and sea.

Noisy Parliaments

IF we feel discouraged now and then by the exhibitions of rough-house given in the lower branch of our national legislature, we have only to look across the water at what goes on in the parliaments of Europe. It occurred in the last session of Congress that Representative Burke, of Pennsylvania, a Republican and member of the Conductors' Brotherhood, called Representative Blanton, of Texas, a liar. Blanton

retorted with "You're a damn liar," and Burke countered with "You're a dirty dog." There was a rush at each other, but the usual thing followed: Friends kept the two apart, and there was no physical encounter. Apologies were offered, the offensive remarks were expunged from the record, and peace reigned once more.

Such occurrences in the House of Representatives are so rare that the newspapers make a story of them. In the Chamber of Deputies of France and Italy the proceedings day after day are so noisy, so disorderly that the situation is accepted as a normal one; nobody but the foreign visitors seem to see anything remarkable about it. With all the shouting, "bahing," "booing," and "hissing" that go on in these so-called deliberative bodies, the stranger wonders how they can discuss any subject and arrive at any sane conclusion. Yet they do, as any one who studies the results of these tumultuous "debates" must admit.

In the Italian chamber there are many party groups, and each one seems unwilling to let the representative of any other group hold the floor in peace. Scarcely is he launched into his speech, when the boisterous interruptions begin, and soon the president is ringing his bell for order and tearing his hair in despair. We might get used to that sort of thing in Washington, perhaps, if it occurred at every session. But until it does, let us cheer up even if a Burke does occasionally call a Blanton an unwashed poodle, or words to that effect.

A WINTER NIGHT

By Jo Lemon

WHEN the red sun drops in the pine treetops,
And the woodland aisles grow dim,
And the shadows creep in the silence deep
Where the trees stand tall and grim—
Then a million eyes from the velvet skies
Are on watch from rim to rim.

All the winter night on a world of white
In a twinkling host they beam,
And the silver rays of their brilliance plays
Over field and hill and stream—
Till they find rebirth on the quiet earth
And as crystal snow gems gleam.

Every high-hung star from its place afar,
Through the night air clear and cold,
Drops a jeweled gift over sweep and drift—
Till the rising sun grown bold,
With the Midas touch of his glowing clutch
Has reset them all in gold.

Pigskin Magic

By Freeman Harrison

THE game had been on for nearly three eventful quarters. In their new stadium the gridiron knights of Thatcher College were entertaining without gloves the red-and-black-clad pigskin experts from Griggs, a rival institution. The visitors were not supposed to win, since they had been invited—as they were for the second Saturday in each November—to provide a merry little work-out for Thatcher's violet-jerseyed varsity. The big game of the season—the annual classic with Henderson—would be played in the same stadium a week later.

However, the athletic collegians from Griggs had forgotten their manners and were giving their heavier opponents the tussle of their lives. It was terribly shocking.

Out of the thousands looking on, no one showed more interest than ruddy, gray-haired Jim Magill, who for almost twenty-five years had been the trainer of Thatcher athletes. The game meant a great deal to him, for his son, a senior, who for two seasons and the one nearly over, had been a member of the battered and unsung scrub team, at last had got on the varsity, and as quarter back, was leading the Thatcher attack against the dogged men from Griggs.

And Thatcher men rejoiced, for they knew how much it meant to the old trainer to see his son on the team. Every one regarded highly the picturesque Magill, who was a college fixture, talked of by Thatcher graduates the country over. With the passing years, as class followed class out into the great world of joys and disappointments, the hair of the faithful trainer had turned from brown to grayish brown and at last to gray, but his cheeks were as red, his eyes as bright, as they were on the October day back in the nineties when he took up his work of keeping the Violet athletes at top condition.

As he watched the game from the side lines, the trainer realized that his son was showing enough ability to cause him to be picked for the eleven that would face Henderson. And if he played in that contest, Raymond Magill would win his letter—the honor that was so prized by Thatcher men.

"Harder, Thatcher, harder!" cried the little, blond-haired quarter as he sent the slippery half backs, or "Tiger" Irwin, the Violet's colossal captain and full back, crashing into the stubborn Red and Black line in an effort to add

to the meager three points Thatcher had to Griggs' nothing. "Get through, men, get through!"

For a time the Thatcher knights gained consistently, and then—fate scowled darkly. The usually alert Irwin, to whom the ball was to be thrown for a fake-punt dash around left end, failed to be in position, and the yellow pigskin struck the ground far to the rear of the Violet team. There was a mad scramble that ended with a flashing Griggs end picking up the ball and running for the touchdown which put his team in the lead. The under dog, like the proverbial worm, had turned with a vengeance.

Soon the third quarter ended. After the teams had changed goals, Griggs kicked off, the ball falling into the waiting arms of Raymond Magill, who was playing deep. Swerving with dazzling speed, the former scrub ran nearly twenty-five yards before he was thrown. "Signals!" he called out. "Get through, Thatcher, get through! Harder, men, harder!"

Mixing old and new football, Magill started an attack the like of which seldom had been seen on the Thatcher field. The versatility of the plays, with the speed at which he called the signals, was baffling; but the Griggs men, with victory within grasp, fought back like tigers.

However, there is an end to human endurance, and the doughty Red and Black footballers at last began to give way before the attack the trainer's son sent against them. The tide turned, and, shortly before the whistle blew, Irwin battered an opening through center, running for the touchdown that changed defeat into victory.

After the game "Tot" Nimick, the Violet's head coach, said to the exuberant trainer: "Jim, Ray will get into the Henderson game. Perhaps not at the start, but he'll get in."

It had been the ambition of Jim Magill's later years to see the son, whom he had trained to play football from boyhood, representing old Thatcher in a Henderson game. And now—well, destiny, or chance, or whatever it was, played the gray-haired trainer an unkind trick. Or maybe it was just the inevitable. Jim Magill had worked hard that fall; he had given the best that he had in him to get "his boys," as he called them, in just the right condition for the big game, and so, after all, perhaps what happened was not strange. On the Tuesday after the Griggs game, the trainer was taken to his home an ill man.

II.

ROBERT PENFIELD, university doctor and friend of the trainer, hastened to the little white frame dwelling that Magill had built on a tree-lined street not far from the stadium. The physician said that his gray-haired friend was the victim of a severe cold. He gave Martha Magill, the trainer's piquant, spectacled wife, who was small of stature, careful directions for her husband's care. To these directions Mrs. Magill, who was a stickler for discipline, added many of her own.

The trainer's wife readily admitted that she could not understand the importance of her son making the football team. What she wanted him to make was the Thatcher chapter of the Phi Beta Kappa, that organization of students who so excel in their studies that if given Mr. Edison's jolly list of questions that have tripped up so many of the common or garden variety of college men, they might manage, with fair breaks in the luck, to escape the cellar grade. On the other hand, Jim Magill somehow did not seem to appreciate all the allurements of making Phi Beta Kappa.

The most important week of the college year wore on, and although the trainer showed improvement, the doctor did not seem optimistic about his seeing the coming game; Mrs. Magill said that there was no chance whatever. The idea was too preposterous for words!

Thursday evening Raymond Magill left with the varsity squad for the country club at which the players would rest until the morning of the big game. The old trainer could hear the din as

fifteen hundred students, headed by a brass band, paraded across the leaf-strewn campus to the station that they might cheer the departing pigskin warriors as their gleaming special train pulled out into the darkness. On all such previous occasions Jim Magill had been with the squad.

On Friday the trainer was improved—so much so that he was able to dress and go downstairs, to sit in a big, comfortable rocking-chair in the cozy living room—and he expressed his hope of getting to the game. But his wife, attired in a homy-looking old blue house dress, had a different opinion.

"Don't be so foolish, Jim," she said. "You're old enough to use some sense. What if Raymond is going to participate in the game to-morrow? You've seen him playing football for ten years, even if it wasn't against this Henderson team you talk so much about. He can tell you all about the game to-morrow night. You're lucky to be downstairs."

The doctor came in the afternoon, and his words to the eager old trainer were not especially encouraging, in so far as they related to Magill's getting to the game on the morrow. Soon after the physician left, some workmen of the local telephone company arrived to unite the house connection with a line that ran directly to the stadium's press stand. The thoughtful manager of the team, realizing how much the game would mean to the trainer, had provided for sending him reports of the contest play by play. Jim Magill was very much in the minds of Thatcher men.

III.

SATURDAY morning was clear and cold—fine football weather. From his sitting-room window the trainer watched the thousands of pigskin enthusiasts flock into the little college town. He had watched crowds like it since he was a boy—Jim Magill always had lived in Thatcher—and he thought that somehow they did not change so much, except that they were larger and that years before there had been no automobiles. The smiling, charmingly costumed girls, radiant in the yellow sunshine of the November morning, were as pretty, though no prettier, than the girls of the early nineties, the mothers now, stately and with graying hair.

Doctor Penfield came at ten o'clock and looked long and hard at his old friend. Martha Magill was in the room, and the physician looked at her, too—quizzically. He started to say something, and then stopped.

"Jim thinks that he is going to the game," Mrs. Magill said to the attentive doctor. "Did you ever hear of such foolishness? He's perfectly absurd, and——"

"Shucks!" the old trainer exclaimed. "I'm feeling fine. What do you think about my going out?" he asked the doctor.

"You're better to-day, Jim, but you are not entirely well, and perhaps the safe thing would be for you to stay in. But—but——" The doctor's eyes met those of Mrs. Magill—and dropped.

"He's going to stay home," the trainer's wife said sharply. "He shouldn't take Ray's playing too seriously. Of course, it's all right to have the boy on the team—if he hasn't neglected his studies. I want to see him make Phi Beta Kappa, doctor."

"Confound Phi Beta Kappa!" said Jim Magill.

The doctor laughed, although he wore a key of the scholarly organization. "I guess you'd better not go to the game, Jim. I'm sorry, for I know how much you want to go." Before long the man of medicine had gone.

As game time approached, Magill, sitting by the telephone in his living room, got the first message. It came from Clyde Foster, the Violet's unconquered long-distance runner, who out of friendship for the trainer had offered to keep Magill informed of the game's progress. Foster gave the Thatcher line-up, and the trainer was not surprised that "Toots" Moffat, veteran quarter back, was starting the game. But Nimick had given his word that Raymond Magill would get into the crucial struggle.

IV.

SOON Foster told Magill of the first play. Thatcher had kicked off, Dudley Olcott, Henderson's phenomenal full back, getting the ball. A Violet player threw him in his tracks, and then Henderson punted.

A strategic Thatcher offense gained some thirty yards, and then the green-clad team from Henderson held. When Irwin punted, Olcott, again getting the ball, dashed thirty yards before "Whitey" Parke, brilliant Violet half back, threw him to the brown turf. But Olcott's gain was merely a start.

Magill turned anxiously to his wife when Foster had told of further plays. "It looks bad, Martha," the trainer said. "I wish I was there to cheer the boys on."

The Green's gains were not long, but they were consistent—and enough. Olcott seemed irresistible, and before the first quarter ended the score was seven to nothing against the men whom Jim Magill had trained. In the second period neither team scored.

After the first half had ended, Magill walked to the window and looked toward the stadium, the concrete back of which he could see through the nearly leafless trees.

"Henderson kicks off," Foster telephoned as the third quarter began.

And then the big Green team started another bewildering offense. They made two successful forward passes, and then, changing to old-fashioned line plunging, the Henderson backs tore great holes in the Violet team. They were halted at times, largely by the terrific tackling of Tiger Irwin, but the halts were only momentary.

As the end of the period approached, Henderson had the ball on the Violet's five-yard line. And then there came one of those remarkable stands for which Thatcher teams had been known since Jim Magill was a boy. Three mighty Henderson rushes netted less than a yard; the fighting spirit of Thatcher was aroused, but perhaps too late. The Violet had the ball directly in front of the goal posts, and Dudley Olcott, going back a safe distance, made the goal from the field that gave his team three more points. Then the quarter ended.

The trainer, a peculiar glint in his blue eyes, went to the windows and opened each a trifle; Martha Magill was out of the room and so she did not see her husband's maneuver—which was an odd one, because the room was cool enough.

Mrs. Magill came into the room as Foster told the trainer that the last quarter had begun. Thatcher kicked off, and Henderson, playing conservatively, punted on second down. Listlessly Jim Magill heard about the plays that followed. How soon, the gray-haired trainer asked himself, would Nimick keep his word?

And then something happened; through the opened windows there came a mighty din, a roar that was raucous and unintelligible. It resolved itself at last, however, into the sweetest music that the old trainer and his wife ever had heard. Some thirty thousand people were shouting the name of their son—"Magill, Magill, Magill!" The cheer came again; then a third time. Magill jumped from the telephone.

"Isn't it wonderful, Jim?" said the gray-haired wife.

"It's fine, Martha."

The trainer's wrinkled hand trembled just a little as he took the receiver off the hook to answer the madly ringing telephone.

"Magill at quarter in place of Moffat," Foster said. "We have the ball—on our thirty-yard line. Parke gets five yards at center; Morse fails at end."

For what seemed long minutes to the eager old trainer, he got no further message. Something had happened.

Then Foster cried ecstatically: "Magill runs forty yards through the whole Henderson team! He's got the ball again; he's going around left end, a clear field ahead—no, a Henderson man has——"

Jim Magill heard no more. Letting forth a wild shout of triumph, he threw down the telephone—with such vehemence that it bounded through a near-by window—and dashed for the clothes

rack in the little hall. Grabbing his overcoat and a battered old soft hat, he ran from the house.

V.

THE veteran trainer reached the side lines just in time to see his son, getting the ball from the center, crash between tackle and end for the touchdown that, with the kicked goal, gave his team seven points. Jim Magill cheered in glee; then, with thousands of other Thatcher adherents, he suddenly remembered that the Violet knights were still behind. And the last quarter was going fast.

When play was resumed, with Henderson kicking off, Magill tried a punting game, hoping for a Green fumble or at least a gain by the exchanges. He got the latter—to a slight extent—and then, from his thirty-yard line, he launched another offensive. "Harder, Thatcher, harder!" the blond-haired little quarter cried. "Get through, Thatcher!"

Parke got the ball, but was thrown in his tracks by a meteorlike Green end. There were three minutes left. Coach Nimick, who had been standing next to the old trainer, and talking with him, looked eagerly toward the field and then toward the blanketed substitutes on the long bench. He beckoned to one, and a lithe, violet-clad youth ran to him.

On the chalk-lined field, Tiger Irwin, playing his last game for Thatcher, plunged desperately off tackle for eleven yards. Magill called the signals with dizzying speed; while seventy thousand watched breathless, Irwin again crashed through the big Green line. He made five yards.

By the series of line plunges, Magill managed to draw in the Henderson defensive backs; suddenly he sent Harold Morse, fleet left half back, whirling around the opposite flank. Morse reached the Green's forty-yard line before he was downed. And then Irwin was notified that only one minute of play was left.

Irwin, running with phenomenal momentum, shot through center like a torpedo and made five yards. Parke, called on, failed to use the precious seconds to advantage; then Magill got around end for a slight gain, but not enough for a first down. A few seconds were left.

The whistle blew, for some one had requested time out. Then the hushed thousands saw a Thatcher substitute run wildly on to the field and to the referee. It was "Never Fail" Carroll, the famous Violet drop kicker, who that fall had made more goals from the field than any other man in the East.

Three points would tie the score—turn defeat into a draw game, and so it was apparent to all what Magill would do with his last play. Carroll spoke hastily with the referee and then took the place of "Whitey" Parke, who walked slowly from the field. Despite his well-known ability as a player, Parke had not stood up too well under the fire of the big game—and he knew it.

The teams lined up, and at once the dependable Carroll ran into the kicker's position. He was able to stand directly in front of the goal posts, and about on the thirty-yard line. As Magill began calling out signals, Carroll held out his hands to receive the ball. "Break it up!" cried the Green hosts, at last realizing that perhaps victory would be snatched from them. "Don't let him kick it." The old trainer, at a point as near as he could get to the players, was motioning wildly toward the little quarter back, who was yelling the signals decisively.

As the ball was passed, the Henderson backs broke through the Violet linemen and rushed upon the defenseless Carroll—but they were too late. The best drop kicker in the East, apparently forgetting his vocation and the chance for glory, had thrown the ball in a beautiful forward pass straight into the arms of the speedy Morse, who had run far to the left.

The demoralized Henderson players hardly realized the extent of the fake drop-kick play, of the pigskin magic the old trainer's son had used, before the lightninglike Morse sped across the last

white chalk line for the touchdown that won the game.

VI.

LATER, Jim Magill, with some thousand other seemingly wild men, shook his son's hand on the field of victory. "Good work, Ray!" was all he could find words to express.

"I'm glad you got here," the thrilled player said, a smile on his ruddy cheeks. "I saw you on the side line as I was calling the signals for the last play, and all at once, as I noticed the beseeching look on your face I knew who really had sent Never Fail Carroll into the game, and why. I knew you wanted me to stake all on a forward pass—to take the long chance for victory, not the easy one for a meaningless draw game, which both sides would hate. You wanted either victory or defeat. And so I took the long chance, and——"

"And won!" exclaimed Jim Magill, a note of triumph in his voice. "I wanted to see you in the game, Ray, playing for Thatcher, but, even more than that, I wanted to do something to help along to victory, and as I listened at home to the report of the first half I thought up the forward-pass play to be used around Carroll as a drop-kicking threat. I knew that your football intuition would tell you what to do if he was sent into the game. So I made up my mind that I'd get to the field no matter what happened, and see that the famous drop kicker went in just——"

"Just in time to make a forward pass," the blond-haired quarter back finished, and smiled. "It was fine." He paused for a moment, then asked laughingly: "But how did you get by mother?"

The trainer's eyes twinkled. "I didn't get by her—she came first. I just opened the windows a little so that she could hear the crowds cheering your name—as I knew they would when you got into the game—and that was enough. I knew from the start it would be." Jim Magill paused as his wife approached through the crowd.

"Did you ever see anything like it?" the fiery Mrs. Magill asked enthusiastically. "To think, Raymond, of your making a touchdown!"

"Almost as good as making Phi Beta Kappa?" The trainer's eyes still had a merry laugh in them.

"He'll make that, too," Mrs. Magill said quickly—and he did.

TALKING AND DOING

By Charles Horace Meiers

THE more you talk the less you do,
For when you talk you lose some "steam,"
Which might be used in putting through
The project outlined in your dream.

When you are silent, and reserve
Your steam for effort grand and new,
You act with greater strength and nerve,
The less you talk the more you do.

The Ways of Traps

By Harold de Polo

THE female fish hawk made her swoop, gallantly struck the silvery trout that weighed a generous three pounds, and industriously started to ascend with the comparatively heavy burden. Flapping her wings awkwardly, she rose from the lake for perhaps a score of feet before she gained her bearings; when she did, she traveled slowly but surely upward, pointing for the craggy rocks on the towering bluff where her young were waiting in the nest.

The fish was a cumbersome and unwieldy load, yet the intrepid mother attained a speed that was truly remarkable. Decidedly she needed it, because the brood that expected her were nearly famished. Fully as important, however, was the fact that she and her mate, already, had made several futile trips of the same kind. The eagle pair, alas, were apparently experiencing one of their most hungry mornings. They had, so far, robbed the two smaller birds of at least four or five speckled beauties. But now, as she increased the swiftness of her flight, the hawk told herself that possibly the lust of her enemies was satiated. They were not, anyway, visible to her sharp and gimletlike eyes.

Suddenly she realized her mistake—or optimism. When she was hardly fifty or sixty feet from her lair, a thunderous whirring in the air, as well as the raucous cry of her mate, caused her to glance above. What she saw sent a surge of rage through her heart. From out of a gnarled old pine, not a hundreds yards away from her own home, the two savage monarchs of the air were coming.

Valiantly, doggedly, the lighter-winged creature essayed her mightiest to increase her speed. It did her no good. Although she accomplished the well-nigh impossible, and got to within a scant thirty feet of her nest, the powerful rulers of their territory were upon her. Even so, she struggled bravely to evade them, but the thing was hopeless. Swerve as she would, zigzagging in her course, she eventually had to relinquish the hold of her talons on the trout.

When she did, the two great birds subsided in their attack and dexterously shot down for the falling quarry. It was the male who salvaged the prey, and the finned denizen of the waters was not more than a dozen feet from the surface of the lake when the claws of the eagle sank in.

From a purely impartial viewpoint, it was perhaps an exceedingly perfect piece of work; but, to the hawks who were vainly endeavoring to calm their offspring, it was undoubtedly as heinous a stroke of villainy as they could imagine. It is true that they were well accustomed to it, that it was literally an age-old story, yet on this particular spring morning it galled more than usual.

Never had their young been more hungry, or more vitally in need of food, and the next action of the fish-killing pair proved this indisputably. About a league away, over the opposite cliff on which the eagles dwelt, was another and smaller lake. The trout, there, were not so plentiful, nor did they run as large on the average, yet the hawks occasionally flew to the spot when hunting became too hampered on their home preserve.

As a rule, during the season when there were fledglings in the nest, one of them stayed to guard the young; now, believing that the appetites of the bigger birds were partly appeased, and that no other marauder was about to molest their offspring, they both cut off, straight and swiftly, for that other body of water that lay beyond the cliff.

II.

AS the fish hawks passed over the nest of the eagles, high in the air, they saw that they had judged correctly. The two great monarchs, gorging themselves and feeding their young, did not deign to cast a single glance upward at the pair that they must have known were traveling above them. The hawks realized, however, that had they remained on the lake, the others, out of sheer gluttony, would have continued their thievery of trout for perhaps an hour longer. As it was, the hawks could be back, each returning with a trout in different directions, in not much more than half that length of time.

This plan, too, was carried out almost to the minute that they had scheduled. They worked deftly, their movements lightninglike. Sensibly, each procured a fish, ate it, and then set about obtaining food for their young. They captured two fat and luscious specimens, and, each taking a route close to the treetops, that would keep them out of sight of the eagles, they sailed off for the home among the high and jagged rocks. Not more than thirty minutes, either, had been consumed in their arduous and valiant task. Certainly they were a brave and hard-working pair, and due credit should be given them.

The Gods of the Wild, however, were against the game little pair; cruelly and almost needlessly against them, it surely seemed. When they arrived at the nest, a panic overtook them. The home of twigs and leaves had been torn to a shambles, and all that remained of the fledgelings was a scattered mass of feathers and bones. Dropping the trout, they circled over and over the devastated ruins of their dwelling, uttering shrill and crazed and heartbroken cries.

After a time, however, a semblance of reason returned to them. Their first thought had been that the eagle pair were to blame; but, on closer inspection, they learned that this was not so. Their keen eyes, after studying the ground, told them that it was an enemy of whose trespassing they had never dreamed. A week or ten days previously, on one of their trips to the pioneer farming country farther east, they had noticed a slim and gaunt gray body—a lone timber wolf who had for some unknown reason worked down from the Northland. And it was the tracks of this alien visitor, beyond the vestige of a doubt, that stamped him as the murderer of the progeny of the intrepid pair.

III.

THE wild creatures, whether they be of the finned or the feathered or the furred tribes, have no time to waste in sorrow and mourning. Their lives are too replete with danger, too taken up with the plain business of obtaining sustenance. This is not to say, however, that they may not luxuriate in the grim yet satisfying emotion of vengeance. The hawk pair, indeed, had instantly

vowed to make the killer of their young pay the full price for his crime. In precisely what manner this was to be accomplished they had not the slightest idea, yet they were almost pathetically certain that the thing would come to pass.

Their fervor in this, their belief, was really praiseworthy. The determination was firmly embedded in their brains, and it never left them. They went about the work of rebuilding their nest; they hunted for their prey as usual; they continued living on in the same spot as before; yet never for an instant did they forget what they now deemed their solemn duty. The gaunt and gray foe from the North, someway, somehow, would undoubtedly be compelled to settle the score. This was as positive, to the winged avengers, as was the daily rising of the sun.

It was not until the beginning of the third day, after their home had once more been put in order, that the fish hawks started out on the track of their enemy. This was in consequence, partly, of the fact that they had expected him to appear in the neighborhood; also, being old campaigners, they were firm exponents of the axiom that it is folly to rush matters when you have time at your disposal. When at last they did set out, they had no definite course of action in view, for they were of the school that believed that you must first do your finding.

Decidedly they were not laggard in the searching. Useless though it was to follow the trail of the wolf when he had come on his murderous errand, they nevertheless did so. As they had thought, it led them to nothing more than thick and almost impenetrable forest. They spent their days, after this, in scouring the land that bordered the habitations of the scattered farmers who were gradually pushing their way deeper into the backwoods. And on the fourth afternoon, when they had almost given up the quest until the next morning, they came upon the vicious alien in another of his depredations.

In among the heavy timber, a young settler had cleared a small patch of land and erected on it a comfortable cabin of rough-hewn logs; to one side, perhaps a hundred feet off, he had built a chicken coop that housed a dozen hens and a rooster; and they were, to him, just about his most-prized possessions. When he left home, either to tramp to the lumber town a dozen miles away, or else to help out a neighbor who was likewise breaking farm ground, he always took particular pains to see that his fowls were carefully locked up.

On this occasion he had exercised his usual caution, but one of the feathered creatures must have evaded him. From their vantage point in the air, anyway, the hawk pair viewed the scene below with eyes that burned a baleful hatred. The wolf had caught the wandering hen as she had been vainly trying to make her way back into the wire-inclosed yard, and, after having greedily devoured her, he himself was now endeavoring to break through the mesh. He had found out that this was impossible, but then he had cunningly given his attention to starting to burrow out a hole beneath it in order that he might so enter. What is more, he was succeeding.

Fascinated, the winged pair balanced high above and watched his every minute movement. Whether he would have gained his point they were not allowed to know. So intent were they on the scene below, that for once they failed to note the approach of a human. Indeed, their first warning was a lively and cheery whistle, made by the young settler as he returned with a heavily laden pack.

At the same time the gray marauder heard the merry tune, and the speed he exhibited, at the merest hint of the presence of an enemy, brought a gasp of surprise from the winged travelers of the skies. With a bound that truly made it seem as if his muscles were fashioned of steel, he sprang back from the wire, whirled madly about, and shot off through the protecting trees like a streak of grayish lightning.

Although, however, he may have managed to keep from the sight of the man

creature he was robbing, he was completely ignorant of the fact that the eyes of the parents whose young he had murdered were fastened scrupulously upon him. This grim and implacably hating pair kept closely and silently to the tips of the trees and followed him to the abandoned bear cave he had taken for his den.

IV.

THE knowledge that they were aware of his permanent headquarters gave the fish hawks immeasurable relief and further hope. Shortly after dawn, the morning after, they were hovering over the tallest pine that grew close to his lair. All that day, religiously staying out of sight of their quarry, the relentless avengers trailed the killer of their offspring. They ate singly, snatching the first trout that came their way and partaking of it in record haste. Not once, from the time the wolf left in the morning, until he made his return at dusk, was he ever away from the supervision of their eyes.

This did not apply, only, to the first day of their indefatigable vigil. In fact, if ever a pair of denizens of the wild, of the land or the water or the air, displayed what might be termed an almost uncanny persistence, surely these two hawks did so. In their hate, in their decision to mete out a just vengeance, there was actually something of the artistic. It was a thing that utterly absorbed them, heart and body and brain, and that thrust aside every other thought. Eating, sleeping, existing, were purely incidental. Vengeance, and rightful vengeance, was all that mattered.

From the standpoint of the human, the question might well be asked for precisely what situation the winged pair were waiting, and in what manner they were hoping to accomplish their revenge. In answer to this, it must be stated that the dwellers of the wild kingdom are of necessity forced to struggle continually for sheer existence. To them, from sunup to sundown, and, in some species, the whole night as well, is simply an offensive or defensive series of hours. During them, all sorts of conditions, of problems, arise, and it is the one who is always ready, who is always keyed up to the point of action, who is best capable to take advantage of any chance opportunity.

Recognizing all this, it must be conceded that the avengers of the air were primed to swoop down on their errand of rightful destruction whenever the slightest opening was given them. How it would come, what it would be, they could not tell; they knew, only, that some day, somehow, they would come upon their detested enemy with the odds all in their favor. And to this end, day after day and night after night, they maintained their guard and waited.

V.

THE rule that patience and perseverance are usually rewarded is especially true when it comes to the denizens of the woods or the air or the waters. Assuredly they are needed, and the lack of them has undeniably accounted for many an unnecessary tragedy, for many a defeat that might and actually should have been a victory.

In the case of the valiant birds, though, no laxity was evidenced. Their hate was too acute, their desire to give payment for the death of their young was too great, to allow them to forget their mission for even a fraction of a second. But it seemed, at times, that their hopes were futile.

During his every waking hour, while he was up and abroad, they trailed the alien stranger from the North. For a week they did this, for two weeks, for a month or more, and still the chance for which they were hoping never came. It would have discouraged many another more sturdy pair, yet the bereaved and determined parents stuck nobly to their task.

And shortly after a clear dawn, in early summer, their dogged persistency bore fruit. They came upon their quarry in the condition in which they had been hoping to discover him since the beginning of their quest.

Shrewd and experienced veterans of

the game that the winged pair were, they knew the probable actions of the wild kindred perhaps as well as any other dwellers of the open spaces. They were aware that nine times out of ten a hunter would return to the spot where he had been foiled in procuring his prey. Every day, therefore—several times during it, in fact—they would make their way to the cabin in the patch of cleared ground. There, in the safe and unseen security of a thickly foliaged old oak, they would perch on the topmost branches and scrutinize the dwelling below.

Luck, for a while, had not been with them, for the young settler in the log home had remained close to the vicinity, doing more work about his small yet beloved habitation. At last, however, the hawk pair saw him depart, one morning, with a pack slung over his shoulder that suggested a trip to the logging camp. It meant that he would be gone, for a certainty, practically until sundown; and it meant, most important of all, that the crafty wolf would make his entrance upon the scene. And with hope in their hearts the avengers of the air had waited.

VI.

AN hour had gone by after the departure of the man creature before the wolf showed on the grimly set stage. He came boldly, confident with the knowledge that his human foe was absent. He went, swiftly and directly, to the wire-inclosed yard that housed the chickens. Here, with the deftness of long practice, he marched to the slight burrow that he had started on his previous visit.

Apparently it had not been noticed by the busy pioneer of the woods, for it was in the same state as that in which he had left it. He was, moreover, well versed in the ways of traps, and he saw that none were placed for him. This assured, he immediately got into action.

Utterly oblivious of the wild clucking and clattering of the fowls inside, he set about the business of digging his tunnel with a swiftness and doggedness that were almost venomous in their intensity. Judging from his aspect, fortune was with him. The young settler, with more than the work of two men on his hands, had of necessity been compelled to hurry in some of his tasks. The coop for his egg purveyors had been one of his hasty jobs, and after twenty minutes or so the gray murderer had made his way inside.

There was a mad noise from the scattering fowls, there was a single shriek of an anticipated feast from the wolf, and there was also a slight sound, unheard by those on the ground, on the highest limb of the ancient oak. It was the intake of breath, and nothing more, of the winged pair that had been keeping their faithful vigil. Instantly, too, they got into action.

Through it all, they retained the coolness of their brains, the perfect control of their bodies. With a sudden dash, in which each acted in exact accord with the other, they flattened their wings and shot downward like proverbial arrows from the bow. They did so noiselessly, and were so successful in their attack that he at whom it was aimed was not aware of it until they had come to rest upon the highest strand of wire.

Even then, indeed, the wolf did not see them. He was too taken up, too wholly engrossed, with the fattest fowl of them all, after which he was leaping with a rage that was well-nigh insane. But then, on one of his bounds, his eye chanced to fall on the pair that were viewing him. And instantly, as if some ghastly premonition had gripped him, he seemed turned to stone.

VII.

FOR one of those fractions of a second that impress the participants as literally being hours, the hawks and the killer of their young stayed glaring. It was the female who broke the tension. With a terrifying shriek, she whirled madly out, straight for the face of her bitter enemy. The latter turned to meet her, even springing up with a vicious snarl, but she somehow switched

in her course, at the last moment, and he was confronted by the male.

Conclusive evidence was given, then, that the whole affair was a prearranged plan. As the wolf whirled to meet the other hawk, something like panic overtook him. He remembered that he was practically a prisoner, with only a small aperture of escape left him. The man creature might return at any moment, and if that happened disaster was certain. Awkward and harmless though he told himself they were, these brainless birds were nevertheless an extreme annoyance. Without waste of time, he must annihilate them.

Before he had completed his spring, however, he learned that he was entering the biggest and most perilous battle of his career. The beak of the female hawk, as the wolf lunged for her mate, penetrated his eye and blinded him hopelessly.

When his eye went, his nerves did the same. Emitting a shriek that could come only from a creature in the throes of madness, he leaped into the air. He did it wildly, spasmodically, without the vestige of a hint of reason. Over him, through it all, hovered the winged pair —waiting, waiting. But whether they would have been able to accomplish their destruction further will never be known. In the grim grip of battle though they were, their every sense was nevertheless under perfect control. They heard, in the distance, the whistling of a man creature—the same merry tune that had warned the wolf that other day. He, this time, was not aware of it; he was too utterly beside himself with pain and despair.

The fish hawks, close though they were to what they deemed supreme vengeance, were too wily and experienced a pair to take chances. And, each emitting a raucous shriek of rage, they made swiftly and surely for the protection of the tallest tree. From there, they at least saw justice done. The human appeared, halted abruptly at the noise made by the shrieking wolf, and suddenly brought a rifle to his shoulder. A boom of red came, and the marauding alien from the Northland went down to the death he had well merited.

Back in their home, the devastated though rebuilt nest, the pair of fish hawks looked forward to another year.

The Passing Months

OFTEN it is not realized that the names of the three autumn months and of December are misnomers, utterly wrong so far as their meaning goes. For instance, September, derived from the Latin *septem,* should be the seventh month instead of the ninth; likewise the three others are each wrong by two months.

The names of the last four months of the year went askew away back in the reign of Augustus Cæsar, Emperor of Rome. The ruler, with the aid of astronomers and other savants, changed the calendar, adding two months—July and August—to the ten months of the old Roman year. At once, of course, those named from the Latin numerals became wrong.

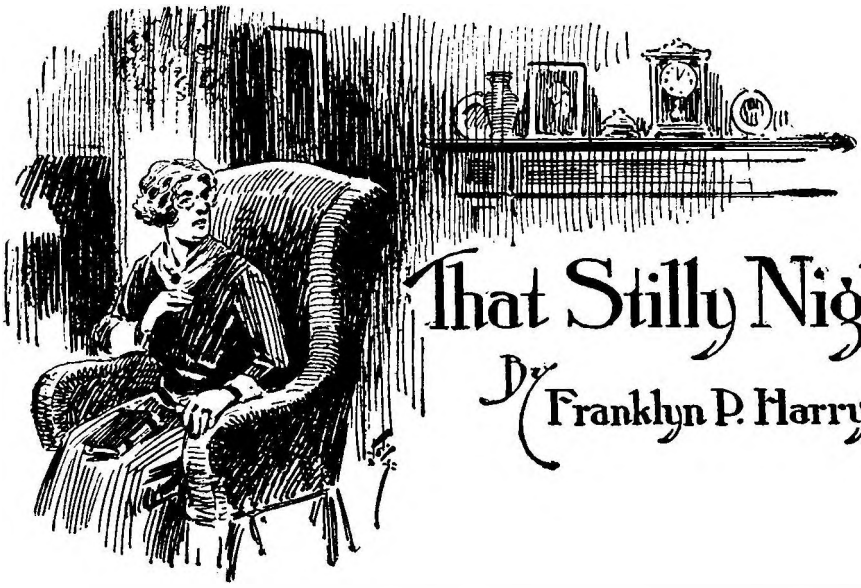
Augustus neglected to change the names, but he did not forget modestly to call one of the new months after himself. The other—July—he named in honor of his well-known uncle, Julius Cæsar.

Long before the reign of Augustus, January had been named in honor of Janus, the Roman god of beginnings. Also February had been named in honor of Februus, a Roman deity in whose honor ceremonies were performed at that period of the year, and April, from the Latin verb *aperio,* meaning to open. May was named to celebrate Maia, goddess of growth, and June from the Roman name Junius. March derived its name from Mars, the god of war.

A Hearty Reception

ORATOR'S wife: "Did the people applaud?"

Orator: "Applaud? They made about as much noise as a rubber heel on a feather mattress!"



That Stilly Night—

By Franklyn P. Harry—

MISS KENYON hung on to the edge of that queer stratum of society known as "nice people" as she hung on to her youth—with a tenacity of purpose and a subtlety of makeshift that fell little short of the marvelous. The loss of either would have been unthinkable.

The tiny apartment which she and Alice occupied was in as fashionable surroundings as the most particular could desire, and at the same time, paradoxically, was just as undesirable, squeezed in as it was, high up in the rear of the big apartment house, its best view the alley beneath. But it was fascinatingly cheap, considering, and the fact that it was in the Lake Court outweighed any disadvantages you might mention.

Their drawing-room-boudoir-reception-hall-dining room became, at night, their one bedroom. Only the kitchenette arose to the dignity of an exclusive personality. Yet, in the face of all this, up until the middle of May, the two lived serenely, not to say monotonously.

After a few restless, uneasy weeks, however, a night came suddenly when the little shell of a home found itself in the path of a storm. And yet, daily expecting it, it was not exactly a storm, but more in the nature of Ajax defying the lightning, with Alice attempting the repetition, giddy headed enough to take the part of Ajax, and escaping the dire consequences only by the meteorlike advent of a certain, blue-flowered water pitcher.

On this night, had the gay little French clock on the mantel been able to tell the time, which it had not done these many years, it would have pointed its spidery little hands to midnight. Over the expensive nook there lay a deeper, more solemn quiet than its four new walls had ever before recorded. It was the quiet of a great, nameless fear, for Alice was gone; the small watcher by the window, where the alley light shone in, knew not where.

II.

CARELESS, flippant, as she had grown of late, before noon Alice had walked sinuously out in that newly adopted manner of hers which poor Miss Kenyon hated, without so much as a word as to her destination. To the good woman's spinsterlike way of thinking, Alice was allowed more freedom, as it was, than was good for one of her age, for she tried not to interfere too much with her pleasure. But to stay out at night—without her!

Into the dusk of the alley poor Miss Kenyon's blue eyes were burning expectantly. To her undying shame she knew that Alice would come that way. She invariably did.

So unlike Miss Kenyon, so utterly bourgeois, as it were—Miss Kenyon always used that word in preference to democratic—Alice never seemed to mind coming that way. For one thing it was closer, and to youth, with so much to do, every minute saved, counts. Any hour of the day she used it, and would run breathlessly up the stairs—the back stairs—quite unconcernedly.

In so many things Alice was unlike her benefactress, in spite of the careful training Miss Kenyon had given her. Probably it was blood telling, though Alice's mother had been the most gentle of souls. She had died when Alice was quite little, and Miss Kenyon, out of sheer goodness of heart, had taken Alice. No legal ties held them, now that Alice was grown, only a certain compatibility of temperament, and perhaps gratitude on Alice's part, kept them together.

Miss Kenyon's heart had never needed a false front, or a lip stick, or the tiniest touch of cosmetic. Gray hairs might hide in her temples, wrinkles—figuratively—tear at her soul, but her heart remained ever young. Warm, impulsive, romantic, she saw in Alice a pinnacle upon which to hang her dreams.

Necessity made her live alone, to look on, save on rare occasions, the passing show about her, and it made her feel younger to have the company of some one young. Alice was undeniably pretty and graceful, carrying with her a certain charm that seemed to attract, and every little triumph brought to Miss Kenyon, like old songs heard again, memories of her own girlhood. But Alice's first suitor had proved a keen disappointment.

III.

EVEN for Alice's sake Miss Kenyon could not find a good point in him. A lazy, worthless, ne'er-do-well; disreputable in appearance and in fact, yet for a short while he seemed to exert a powerful fascination for Alice. Doubtlessly she was at that age when most members of the opposite sex, be they but a trifle daring and impudent, with a studied swagger and an air of general naughtiness about them, can be counted upon to make a tremendous appeal to natures like hers.

His ways were so obviously not Miss Kenyon's ways that he was promptly denied the privilege of calling at the flat. Alice, however, seemed quite content to meet Joe outside.

Miss Kenyon appealed to her once, vainly, and thereafter she let her go her way. Alice, on that occasion, had made not the slightest attempt to answer her. With studied, languid rudeness, right in the midst of Miss Kenyon's halting speech, she had strode out, and a few minutes later, from the window, Miss Kenyon saw the two, heads together, strolling off down the alley.

Thereafter, in the daytime, Alice came and went as she pleased. Only of nights, by sheer force of a firmer will, was she kept safely within, save on those rare occasions when Miss Kenyon accompanied her. And day by day, in manner, at least, she became more insolent and rattle-brained.

Then, quite breath-takingly, the Merril-Keats came to town and took the big house next door. Old Merril-Keats had made a bunch of money somewhere and, though undeniably social "climbers," they belonged to Miss Kenyon's "nice-people" class.

Alice immediately nabbed Bobbie.

IV.

THE speed and coolness with which Alice did it astonished Miss Kenyon. Within a week she had established herself on a more intimate footing, apparently, than she had ever accorded Joe. Joe, as a matter of fact, might just as well not have existed, so completely was he ignored.

Miss Kenyon looked on, aghast. While she outwardly approved of Bobbie, Alice's treatment of Joe made her uneasy. Alice's slights toward her she quickly forgave, as it was her nature to be forgiving, but she knew Joe well enough to know that he would not treat

the slight lightly. In the succeeding days grave fears began to assail her. Several times she had seen Joe following them or glowering at the two when they passed.

As with Joe, Miss Kenyon was firm in not letting Alice go about at night with Bobbie, but on the other hand Bobbie was allowed to spend quite a number of evenings in the flat. On this occasion, having primped more than usual, Miss Kenyon remembered, Alice had gone out before lunch, and now, at midnight, she was still away.

The little old maid sat by the window, her faded, anxious eyes scanning the darkness until the distant single toll of a far-off, downtown clock proclaimed the first hour of the new day. Almost with the sound her vigil was rewarded.

V.

INTO the wide circle of light beneath the alley lamp came Alice and Bobbie, sauntering slowly, obviously so enwrapped in each other that neither the hour, the alley, nor the silent watcher was of the slightest moment to them.

Miss Kenyon leaned far out, hoping that Alice would look up. She could not bring herself to call out to her, to shout, vulgarly, into the night at some one, at Alice, in the back alley! It might sound foolish, but Miss Kenyon had been delicately reared in the old school. Above all things, she was a lady.

A little wooden, cluttered bench sat against the far wall of the alley upon which the janitor's children played, and Alice calmly seated herself thereon and made room for Bobbie. Miss Kenyon, after a moment, did the next thing to calling. She slipped out and went softly down the back stairs.

It was the first time she had ever gone that way; had ever thought, even, to use the servants' entrance, and she went shudderingly. Quite noiselessly she reached the back door. She knew, at this late hour, that all the entrances were locked for the night, and she must let Alice in. Timidly she slid the bolts, the dim hall light aiding her, and opened the door a little way. Her heart suddenly stood still when she looked forth.

VI.

ABOVE the two on the little bench, a shadow, on the wall, moved. It was Joe! Directly over the unsuspecting Bobbie, he leaped.

Miss Kenyon's tiny, suppressed scream was lost in the instant struggle that ensued. Joe's sudden drop had tilted the little bench and the janitor's children's tin playthings added to the din. Alice shrieked once, shrill, terrified, and Bobbie had given a startled, deeper-toned grunt; then Joe and he joined in a guttural, quarreling duet as they fought.

Alice stood by and watched for a helpless, silent moment. It was the age-old, primeval struggle of two determined males for the mate which both fancied; the obvious result of fate's attempting the impossible triangle. Miss Kenyon clutched at the door in terror.

Momentarily the struggle waxed fiercer. Joe, treacherous, cruel, sought to do murder; Bobbie, equally determined, with Alice at stake, meant to slay. Rending, clutching, their breathing hoarse and choked, each strove for a vital spot. Alice, sickened, weak with fright, became aware of the slit of dim light in the partially opened door and, shrieking, ran toward it.

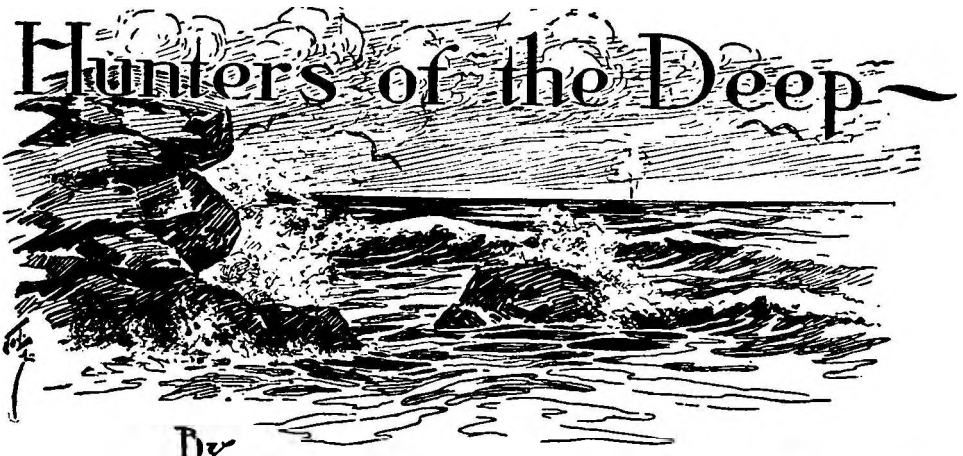
The two, panting, heaving, rolling figures fought on, oblivious to everything but their desire to kill. Death lurked in the shadows where their tumbling bodies, suddenly stilled, held each in the other's taut embrace, lay alert for some sign of weakening.

It was then that a near-by window flew up with a bang, and a blue-flowered china pitcher flashed against the wall above the struggling pair and broke their death grapple by its fragments.

"Gosh darn them cats!" roared the janitor sleepily.

In a flash, save for a scurrying of velvety paws, the night relapsed into its wonted stillness. Poor Miss Kenyon, cautiously climbing the creaking back stairs, held her breath at each overloud footfall. At the top step, impudent, composed, Alice sat, smoothing her toilet, with a languid forepaw.

Hunters of the Deep



By Ethel and James Dorrance

CHAPTER I.

THE WRECK ALARM.

WITHIN the wings of his nearly completed seaplane, Paul Hathaway, pliers in hand, paused in his tuning-up to remark to the machine that had taken form under his workmanship:

"You'd never have the heart to flop on me, friend flying fish? Whither thou goest—well, don't doubt; I'll be along."

An impatient grunt drew his glance across the open-faced workshop, which was on the Nantucket harbor front, to a tool box where sat his favorite air partner, a slim, white, bull terrier.

"The sage who invented that saw about a prophet not being without honor save in his own country said a mouthful, eh, Yutu?"

The dog thus consulted assumed a pleasant look; then it yapped generous and guttural agreement.

"Trouble is folks have such long memories about the fellow next door," declared the young man, removing a cap and brushing back his thick brown hair. "These 'Tucketers never will forget that I once played 'Darius Green and His Flying Machine' to crowded houses. A whole chestful of medals never would convince them that we could fly, buddy ace. They'll believe only when they see us taking off."

The dog, of course, was not of an age to remember his gray-eyed master's early ambitions to emulate the gulls that gathered off Brandt Point with the changing tides. Thrice with improvised wings he had essayed flights out of the loft doors of his uncle's barn on the home farm that clung to the island town's skirts. And thrice he had been borne home broken as to bone if not spirit.

The war had returned the older and wiser Paul Hathaway a lieutenant with spread-wing insignia and two decorations on his breast, while tucked beneath his close-cropped thatch were several incipient inventions which he believed would make oversea flying a safer art—less a gamble with death. At once, however, difficulties had begun to form in phalanx.

The "admiral" of these difficulties, in full uniform and strutting out ahead, was the opposition of the uncle who had assumed the responsibility of the orphan on his mother's death. Hard-fisted Cap'n Absalom proved entirely out of sympathy with the returned fighter's ambition and refused to advance for experiments one penny from his many thousands of dollars amassed while whaling the Seven Seas in those

halcyon Nantucket days of the B. K. Era—meaning before kerosene.

The World War had interfered with the old salt's plans for his only heir, but a spirit of patriotism had enabled him to meet that disappointment without complaint. He did not propose now, though, to aid any peace-time hobby that would further cheat him out of a proper return for time and attention expended upon his nephew. Openly he begrudged Hathaway the toilsome hours spent in the shed workshop and tightened his purse strings into a hard knot.

Cut off from this source of necessary supply and discredited among their neighbors of means, the naval reservist had thrown his last dollar of savings, as well as all his energy and time, into the construction of the passenger plane upon which he now was putting the finishing touches. His plan for further financing himself concerned the summer's swarm of "locusts"—from New York, Boston, and Providence, from the Deep South and the Far and Middle Wests—which soon would descend upon the purple isle, their pockets ajingle with vacation coin. In their craving for new sensations and their willingness to pay for such lay the airman's hope of banking with the Pacific National enough flight fares to see him through later experimentation and patent-office expenses.

"Do I hear you asking, Yutu, why the dickens, if I knew all this about prophets, I ever came back to 'Tucket?" he continued the dog-eared colloquy. "Say, old dear, can't you guess the right reason?"

"Reckon I can!"

Hathaway's muscles stiffened from mental surprise. At the wink of one red-rimmed, black-freckled canine eye, focused not at him but just beyond, he flung himself around on his wing seat to discover Great Joy, a reward sight for any masculine not stone-blind.

Just outside the shadow of the shed's overhang roof stood the girl child of Cap'n Prince Joy, his uncle's implacable enemy from the days gone by—a misnamed native daughter who had grown from little-girl witcheries into the honors of the toast of the island from Great Point to Muskeget. Small as the parent-paid tribute of her first name was large, dark-haired and eyed as her disposition was bright, pale-skinned as the blood of her heart was red, she drew up in her "middy" of white atop a blue skirt, and saluted snappily.

The laugh with which she pulled the absurdly small sailor hat off the mass of black hair at the back of her head and clambered to a seat beside Hathaway must have convinced the most casual observer that the feud of so many years' standing had failed to "take" with the second generation.

"You've been listening to our sacred confab, you big, little rascal?" Hathaway put the question with a sternness discounted by the glad-faced smile due the sight of her.

Quite unblushingly she made the admission.

"You say you can guess the reason I came home to be the town's pet side show?"

"I said I reckoned I could," she corrected him.

"Then do you reckon you can name her—the reason?"

"Reckon I can name a reason, although not necessarily to my mind a right and proper one. Shall I?"

Gray eyes lowered to black with a look of fond expectation.

"Harriet Gardner!"

The flush mounting upward from Paul's open-necked flannel shirt showed surprise and probable confusion. And she clamped her momentary triumph, much as he had been clamping the piano wires, by a laugh thrown over her shoulder toward the cliffs, where a certain pretentious "cottage" called The Suds stood out from among other frame palaces of the summer colony.

"Off the island with Harriet—all Gardners!" His disappointment was real. He hoped that some day Great Joy would forgo teasing him. She might so easily have been frank and named herself as the reason that had brought him back to their native Nantucket, knowing what he did know about prophets and their own country.

"Paul! Your ingratitude shocks me. You should be told, if you haven't already suspected, that the lovely widow-by-law is concentrating her vicarious brains upon a scheme to finance your inventions."

"Suppose you heard that from her charming brother, Rupert, who, I hear, is distinguishing you with his attention." He was irritated, despite his good nature, by her persistent thrumming on this—to him at least—utterly false note.

And she added another discord. "Aided by alimony—isn't that just too alliterative for anything?"

"Too much so for me." Hathaway picked up his pliers and transferred his attention to the seaplane.

For a moment it seemed that Miss Joy meant to leave him to his righteous, indignant gloom. A touch on his arm, however, presaged one of her unaccountable changes of mind and mood.

"Did I ruffle the eagle's feathers? Never mind. Let me smooth 'em down by telling you the latest and best-ever jokelet on my adorably absent-minded Aunt Sally."

"Won't listen to a word of any joke until you admit that you absolutely know I would rather junk all my aviation plans than accept a cent from——"

"Of course," she interrupted. "To be sure. My fault. Now open wide your ears! This morning Aunt Sally went down to the six-thirty boat and waved Uncle Jonathan off on a trip to Bedford. By the time she'd got back home she had forgotten all about that event and proceeded to cook his breakfast with her own, as per usual. When she had it on the table she called him. Failing to get any answer, she rushed over to our house in high dudgeon to fetch him before his coffee got cold. Now, isn't that the limit, Paul?"

"Almost, I should say."

Hathaway chuckled and she joined him with her lilting laugh. The blight of the rich off-islanders was forgotten in amusement over the girl's absent-minded relative. Indeed, so suddenly friendly did the young man grow that his arm demonstrated the fact to the lissom waist within the middy blouse.

"If my father only could see me now!" she whispered.

"And my uncle—me, you big, little Joy!"

"My Paul!"

From the fervor of these murmured utterances, a great deal might have been fixed up then and there except for the shrieks of an excited boy who at the moment spun past on a bicycle.

"Wreck—wreck—wreck!" he cried.

What far-at-sea islander can withstand the magic of that call, with the spell of salvage bred into blood and bone? At once both girl and man were all attention.

"Where away and what?" Hathaway shouted after the boy.

"Cargo boat on the shoals." Reversing his answers, the youngster spun out of sight on his errand of alarm.

His scant information was amplified the next moment, however, by the appearance of one Elihu Shearman, a whaler mate who never had won his ship, but who, despite that failure, was Paul's most trusted confidant.

"Coconut oil!" Elihu exclaimed.

The young pair stared at him, not at once connecting his panted puzzle with the boy's shrieks.

"Wake up, you two!" Elihu urged. "Don't you follow me? It's coconut oil, I'm telling you. Coming in beyond the jetty, just driving ashore thick enough to make the fortune of all of us."

"But how—when——" Hathaway had no need to complete his question.

"Big freighter's run smack on the shoals in the fog. She's pumping her cargo overside and the dry nor'easter's bringing it to port. Come along, and with a flowing sheet!"

Hathaway and Miss Joy did not delay, for both had been born on Nantucket.

CHAPTER II.

SOAP SALVORS.

THE two heirs of an old-time hate separated at the entrance of the improvised seaplane shop. Great Joy and Hathaway never walked together on the streets of Nantucket—at least

not in the daytime. Only a moment did they spare for their parting, for both naturally desired their share of fortune's flow.

"I first must go home," said the girl, "and see that my father has heard the news. The official wreckmaster of the island, he would be terribly put out if he were late in reaching the place of disaster."

Paul Hathaway's smile, as, dog at heels, he strode away, was in part for the mention of her father's office, about which he had knowledge that seemed to have escaped the other villagers. Even to Great, much as she meant to him, he had no wish to explain this bit of ammunition which he was, in fact, holding in reserve. But he heeded her admonition to hurry.

Turning into Harbor Road, he hove in sight of Ed Hayes, the genial boniface of the Point Breeze Hotel. Catching up with him was no sprinting feat, as he walked slowly on account of the large tin utensil which he was dragging behind him.

"Greetings, Sir Edward!" Hathaway saluted him.

"Same to you and many of them, my lord and noble duke!" came the characteristic response from this off-islander who had spent so many winters in town that he almost was considered a native.

"Why the family wash boiler?" Hathaway fell into step with the heavier man's mood as well as his feet. "Are you thinking of paddling out to the wreck like the famous owl and pussycat who put to sea in a beautiful pea-green boat?"

"And why not the family wash boiler?" Hayes countered. "What could be more appropriate, I'm asking you, since it's soap we're setting out to save?"

"Soap? Where do you get that first aid to the next-to-godliness idea? Elihu Shearman was singing a none-too-smooth song of coconut oil."

Hayes shrugged a superior shoulder; two of them, in fact. "Your ignorance astonishes me!" he exclaimed. "In the name of Colgate, that you shouldn't know the oil of the coconut is the heart and soul of the cleanest soap in the world!"

As they hurried along the sanded road, each bang of the tin container at the hotel man's heels announcing them one stride nearer the beach of alleged treasure, Hayes unburdened himself of such news as he knew about the wreck. He had seen and talked with the coast guardsman from the Muskeget Life Saving Station, at the innermost tip of the island, who, the telephone wire being down, had brought in the word on a motor cycle.

Hayes said that no time need be spent on human salvage, since the *Silverton*, a huge English freighter, had piled up the previous morning in a fog thick as the calm of the sea had been "dead." She was resting easy, with every prospect of being safely hauled off by the fleet of tugs that had been wirelessed to her rescue.

"The victim was loaded with oil from Africa or Egypt or wherever it is that coconuts grow," he explained. "In hope of lightening the ship and pulling her off, they've been pumping the liquid cargo overside for the past twenty-four hours. The oil congeals as soon as it strikes cold water and the nor'easter is bringing miles of it down upon us—let us hope to our everlasting welfare and glory. And there you have the whole of it, m'lord and noble duke!"

As they passed the MacDougall bungalow and quartered beachside to the Cliff Baths, they had evidence that they were not the only ones who had "the whole of it." The entire town seemed to be moving en masse and at speed toward the place where the "treasure" was destined to be piled up. And soon they saw with their own eyes that the guardsman had not exaggerated the remarkable facts.

"Looks like field ice to me," commented one.

"Out of season for ice, you gump!" said another. "It's suds of some sort."

"Suds of no sort never came in solid like that. Guess again!"

"No, folks; quit your guessing. It's what the life guard said it was and

nothing else—congealed coconut oil. Give me one moment, dear friends."

The last speaker was Mistress Elinor McDevitt, poetess of local renown. Her request for a moment with her muse was granted and to this result.

"It's a sea of fleeces, in junks and chunks, and big and little pieces!" she cried ecstatically. Shaking her bobbed mane, she seized upon the prosaic wooden washtub which she had brought from her Step Lane "lair" of poesy and dashed toward the shore line that she might be the first to meet and greet the incoming tide.

Not at once did Hathaway join the crowd of beach combers being augmented each minute by fresh arrivals from the village—men, women, children, all drawn by the lure of the islander's hope of receiving something for nothing from the sea. He felt he could well spare a moment to take further stock of the interesting situation, since within him a bifold doubt demanded attention. Was the oil worth saving, and, if so, would it belong to the salvors?

He soon learned that he was not alone in speculation over the value of the jettisoned substance.

"I tell you it must be worth a lot to be cargoed fifteen thousand miles," argued one marine philosopher.

"Three hundred dollars a ton." The coast guardsman who had brought the news spoke authoritatively. "The mate of the *Silverton* told me so. And they're going to pump over nine hundred tons of the stuff."

The problem in mental arithmetic was simple. Hathaway's mind leaped to the answer in the back of the book. A share in two hundred and seventy thousand dollars' worth of anything honest certainly was worth a man's best effort.

Several of the men, older than Hathaway, recalled convincingly the wreck of the Norwegian bark *Mentor*, bound for Boston from Cienfuegos, Cuba, with a cargo of sugar and abandoned by her crew after striking one of the shoals south of Nantucket. Two boat crews from the island had boarded her, salvaging both vessel and cargo, to a value of seventy-three thousand dollars.

The circumstances were different, to be sure, and the salvors' share had been a trifle under fifteen thousand, but even that was a memorable island acquisition. None there could afford to forget that it had meant seven hundred and fifty dollars the man for a few days' work.

In the absence of any constituted authority, general oversight of the salvage operation had been preëmpted by one "Squid" Mahong, a backward-minded citizen whose obsession for years had been that the electors would make him chief of police. Divers acquaintances, in ill-conceived jest, regularly promised him their votes and a triumphant election, but something always happened to deprive him of victory. As weak in mind as he was powerful in body, Squid generally was regarded as just about what his sobriquet implied. To the befuddled aspirant to office here was opportunity to practice "policing," with everybody too busy even to laugh at him.

For housewives, at least, the approaching harvest of wind and wave had especial interest. Jabbering among themselves they remembered the wartime sinking of the *Port Hunter* on Squash Meadow Shoal and the faring forth of their men-folk in "cats" and "chuggers" to snag a cargo consisting of bales of underclothing from wide-open hatches.

For days and weeks afterward the back yards of Nantucket had presented unusual "wash" to the inspection of passers-by during the drying-out process of that gleaning. To the lines of one would be clothespinned dozens of undershirts; to those of another so many pairs of drawers that one not in the know must have thought the family centipedal. The bales, quite naturally, did not come assorted. The wives, however, had traded back and forth, making complete suits in matched sizes, and had folded them away in cedar chests—enough and to spare for generations yet unborn.

Now had hove in prospect soap for a century. And these feminine 'Tucketers knew how to make it. One who knew how particularly well was Aunt

Sally Joy, who had just arrived in the "flivver" with Great and the "official" father.

The combing of the beach already had begun when Hathaway's uncle and nearest of kin had arrived, trundling a barrow which, in turn, trundled a rake and scoop shovel. Although Captain Absalom Hathaway was reputed rich, as island riches go, he was far from above grasping this opportunity of the ocean. At sight of his nephew's inactivity, he stopped for an incredulous stare.

Short and knotted was this last of the whaling skippers, his round, red face embellished by white chin whiskers, fringing below his clean-shaven upper lip. Except that occasionally these whiskers were trimmed he might have been a reprint from Nantucket's golden '30's. "Of the sea salty" was the general air of him, gruff his manner and gnarled his fists from the packet days that had followed those of the whalers.

Domineering from force of habit, powerfully "sot in his ways," he hid a heart beneath his hairy chest whose worth many of the new generation failed to appreciate, although often, as now, that chest was fully exposed to inspection through his hatred of collars and habit of wearing his shirt unbuttoned. Even his nephew found it hard at times to remember that his doughty relative, according to his lights, thought only for the best interests of his natural heir.

"Standin' around; standin' around, and with a tidal wave of money flowing for'ard!"

Cap'n Absalom rumbled his most pacific utterance; now he bellowed with a force and volume that brought an emulative, protestant growl from the white terrier crouched at the younger Hathaway's heels.

"Ain't you never goin' to show no family spirit, Paul?" he demanded. "The sea was mighty good to your ancestors—it's ready to be good to you, too, if you'll only give it a chance. Look to it, you airlubber, for your inheritance!"

Paul Hathaway would have been stupid indeed not to realize that the final disposition of a fortune founded on oil depended on his adoption of some seafaring pursuit. Indeed he clearly saw the misfortune to the tank steamer as his own opportunity for a coup that would work two ways in his favor. His mind upon a wide-decked gasoline boat not at the moment engaged in the digging of clams, he turned on his heels and started back toward the water front.

He was covering the distance at long strides when hailed from a limousine which had been driven as near the scene of salvage activity as the sand would allow a car of such weight to go. He recognized the voice before he saw, framed in an open window, a lady's face. They were, in a way, alike—the face and voice of Harriet Gardner, both sweet, confident, expectant. No young, foot-free man would have thought of disregarding their dual summons. Reward for the most fastidious surely was promised in her delighted smile.

Despite the fact that Hathaway did not share her delight at the meeting, he had no more reason to assume an unpleasant attitude toward the widow than toward any other gracious woman. Disregarding the haste that would be necessary if he meant to go on a salvage hunt, he changed his course and headed toward the widow.

CHAPTER III.

FLASH OF SUSPICION.

"THE Purple Isle" has subtle but insistent voices in its plash of waves and sough of winds that call back sooner or later all who once have listened to its siren songs. Many of its itinerant cottagers have formed the habit of coming early in springtime, weeks ahead of the "season's" resorters, and of lingering on through those vital, colorful weeks that break gloriously after the hard-at-works have returned home.

The Gardner family were enthusiastic members of this leisure contingent and doubtless would have been ferried over from New Bedford with their automobiles and servants, by this time, even had the emotional daughter of the house

not been hurried by her interest in a certain unemotional young islander.

She was a vivid young woman, Harriet, both in looks and nature. Birth had been generous with her in coloring, lines, size, and disposition. She was over the average in height, but symmetrically and smoothly built. She was fair, with a reddish depth to the blond of her hair and the porcelain of her cheeks and the full cut of her lips that gave her a breath-taking brilliance. And her heart was declared by those who knew her best to be as warm as her beauty.

Indeed she gave and took her loves in life with regardless generosity. Born to money, besides this combined power of looks and personality, she had grown into a creature whose wishes were hard to deny.

As she watched Hathaway's approach through the window from beneath the frame of a distractingly becoming sport hat, the assumption of an assured conquest which showed in her smile was something to be feared by one as yet unconquered and determined not to be.

"Hello, you!" she called to Hathaway with easy informality when he had come within range of her voice.

"Ahoy on the weather bow and greetings!" he offered with his right hand. "We must consider the season opened now that you have arrived."

"Now that I've arrived? Just as though you didn't know, Mr. Delinquent, that The Suds and all the house contains have been opened wide for ten days or so! You haven't come near enough to see the color of a bubble." Her reproach was both wistful and stern.

Hathaway was hard put for defense, as she had him on every count. The coming of the Gardners, with an expensive French roadster, a sedan, and a touring car, with a trap and high-stepping team, with a pair of riding horses, and some dozen servants, must have attracted attention even in mid-season.

As early arrivals *The Inquirer and Mirror* had done them front-page honor, and everybody who subscribed or knew anybody who did had no excuse for ignorance of their spectacular return. And truly, the young naval reservist had kept his distance from the palatial "cottage" on the cliffs, although his parting with the family the previous fall had left no room for doubt that he would be welcome there, come another year.

Reason for this restraint already has been broached. In an hour of enthusiasm, a day or so before the Gardners had sailed for their winter home in New York, Hathaway had confided to the inspirational widow his ambitions as an aviation engineer—not so much plans to excel in mere flight as along inventive lines.

He had admitted that, except as a necessity for war, both sea and land planes were as yet the fad of luxury, just as automobiles had been during bygone years. Until the air machines could be made "foolproof" and their traffic planted upon a sound commercial basis, the banks could not be expected to back companies making the planes, Hathaway argued. But because of this very situation he hoped to win success for the devices which had taken form mentally if not materially from his experience.

"Mrs." Harriet of the reassumed maiden name, with a shrewdness probably inherited from a father whose wealth had been amassed by manufacturing, had drawn him out to a greater degree than he had intended to go. Their talk had been climaxed by her offer to finance him through the stages of experimentation.

The proposition had been generous and "without strings." And Great Joy's taunt that he would be "aided by alimony" was unmerited, as Harriet Gardner had means of her own and took nothing from the husband whose behavior had forced her to cast him out of her life. Even her kindly insistence had jarred upon the islander's independence, had wounded the pride of the last of a line who, since the long-ago of Nantucket's whaling glory, had prided themselves as sailing on and by their own.

He had declined the offer with a hint

of the support which he then considered he had reason to expect from Uncle Absalom and had tried to dismiss the unpleasant matter from his mind. In midwinter, however, he had heard in a roundabout way that inquiries were being made as to his progress and could well imagine such answers as had been sent.

"I've been busy as a swordfish at the end of a harpoon line since spring let me out of doors, Mrs. Gardner." He squared his shoulders and spoke with the best grace possible. "I haven't had a single social thought."

"Not even a Joyous one?"

There was point to her question. He wondered whether by chance she had motored past his open-faced workshop that morning during Great's stolen visit. Uneasily conscious of the antipathy which had shown at the first meeting of the two so opposite in type, he determined that if he could prevent it the woman of the world should not score against the island girl. To ignore her lead seemed the most courteous course.

"The winter brought disappointment; in fact, necessitated a complete change in my plans," he said pleasantly enough.

She arched her reddish brows. "Your uncle? Your plans were too advanced for his vision?"

"Uncle Ab captained his own ships so long there's little hope of his ever consenting that any one else chart the course, especially a nephew who he can't realize has grown up."

The smile of her wide red lips relaxed. She looked genuinely regretful. "Why don't you bring the plans you've perfected this winter up to the house and go over them with me? You'd be entertaining me to let me try to help."

Interruption more deplorable than his doubt broke the moment. In her "flivver," otherwise known as the "Joy bus," that little, big person whom he usually was delighted to see more than any one else in the world, but now the least, came rattling toward them, evidently headed back to town.

"Where away?" Paul Hathaway asked, as she was about to pass.

"Telegraph office," she called back. "Wreckmaster's message has got to go without delay."

Harriet's purplish eyes studied with a sympathetic look the reflex of annoyance on the young man's usually carefree countenance. "That's the awfully pretty native with the awfully ugly name, isn't it?" she asked.

"Right both ways," he replied emphatically.

"Why in the world doesn't she change it?"

"Change just what—that rattletrap go-buggy, her mean way of running past her friends, or——"

"Her name, of course. Mary Joy or Alice Joy; with almost any other first name which she could select she'd get along. But Great Joy! Why, it makes her a joke!"

Hathaway looked after the speeding car wistfully. "You see," he explained, "she didn't choose the name herself and old Prince thought he was paying her a compliment. He'd planted it in general usage before she was old enough to spill the christening cup. Her idea, and, for that matter, the idea of most unmarried male islanders, is to take her out of the joke class by changing her last name, not her first."

Harriet nodded, still eying him sympathetically. "Probably she herself thinks that would be the simplest way and the pleasantest. Great Smith or Jones or Brown would be unique, but not so impossible. And, of course, she might do better than that. Great Hathaway, for instance!"

"It does sound better; in fact, it sounds fine to me."

Hathaway nodded back at Harriet; he returned her smile. He did not, however, feel consoled that an all-observing pair of dark eyes should have seen him apparently absorbed at the window of the fair divorcee's car. The brown, strong little hand which had lifted a moment from the flivver's wheel had waved just a bit too jauntily for his peace of mind. The Great girl's smile had been too joyous for sincerity.

"When will you be around, Paul? To-night?"

At the demand of his would-be bene-

factress, he tried to return his full attention to her. "Not to-night, Mrs. Harriet. The truth is this—although you are as full of kind thoughts as usual and ready to back them up——"

"Mrs. Harriet?" she interrupted. "Weren't we further along than that last fall? Anyhow, let's start further along. Leave off that hateful prefix which brought me unhappiness a plenty and to spare. Don't make me begin all over with you after every winter away from our island. And, for your own sake, remember the need of haste. Some one just might anticipate your inventions a season or so. That would disappoint me almost as much as you. Come, Paul, be sensible and—and kind."

For the first time Hathaway was tempted. She seemed to throw out some sort of spell as she leaned toward him. The warm color of her, the invitation of her velvet lips, the wistfulness of her eyes—all urged. Yet he did not need to think of his little, great love to fight, to resist. For his own sake, he must throw out fenders against this fascinating creature and her overtures.

"Mrs. Harriet—just Harriet, if you like—you are too generous," he said. "I could have stood for disappointing my uncle. He's in the family and one's family gets used to being disappointed in one, but there are too many chances against me to risk involving any one outside. I thank you, but I've worked out a way of helping myself across the first expensive air pockets. If my plans go into a tail spin, there'll be nobody hurt but myself."

"I thought it was money you most needed. If your crusty old uncle has refused you, how can you get enough financial backing?"

Briefly he acquainted her with the existence of the plane which he had completed during the winter under expectation of profit from passengers. He disliked to go into such small-sounding details before this woman of large wealth. But he owed her something, and he hoped that his effort would end the interview.

She stared at him. "You mean that you're going to be an—a sort of air hackman?" she asked with trembling voice.

"A taxi bandit of the sky, yes." He laughed. "And if I charge enough fare and get enough passengers——"

"You must charge enough! As for passengers, say, I'll help make sky-riding with you a fad. Book me this very minute for the first flight, will you?"

The suddenness of the tack she had taken—with her quick reversal from contempt to enthusiasm—was so unexpected as almost to take his breath. There was nothing left to do but take her at her word and declare her "booked" for the very first pay flight after Yutu and he had finished testing his homemade flyer.

"I was afraid you had something impractical in mind," the widow continued; "for instance, that you had put your faith in this coconut-oil cargo with the rest of your foolish fellow islanders. I'm going now to fill my boots with sand just to have a close-up of their futile labors."

Unaided, she descended from the car and indicated that the chauffeur was to wait for her.

"Foolish?" Hathaway asked. "Futile labors?" There was deeper concern than he was ready to admit back of his questions.

"I've heard that they believe it worth hundreds of dollars a ton," she explained. "It's really too bad to see them wasting effort, time, and money learning the truth. You, at least, are showing superior common sense in turning your back on the excitement. I'm glad you aren't taken in. When you get around to a social thought, Paul, remember that our latchstring is always out for you."

Halfway up the beach he turned and glanced somewhat guiltily back at her. He had not confessed himself on his way to hire a boat and strike out for a whale of a share of those "tons and tons" of the congealed oil. The house of Gardner had made its fortune out of soap; from that fact they had called their island place The Suds. And the daughter thereof pronounced their flotsam dross!

CHAPTER IV.

PURPLE PARADISE.

FOR a week the salvage of coconut oil continued with no abatement. Safe it is to say that Nantucket had not been so oily since those "good old whaling days." As the wind continued its drive the harvest heightened and thickened. At exposed points, such as Beachside, it became possible to load a wagon in fifteen minutes. The fishing fleet accepted the invitation of what seemed Providence and brought in full cargoes, some of the chunks caught being as large as bureaus.

After the first day or two, the gleanings of household salvors shrank into insignificance. For them the novelty soon wore off. Then, too, the island stores ran out of lye and potash. But at that, every other kitchen or yard had some sort of soap kettle going. Certainly the folks of Nantucket will have no excuse for not keeping as clean as its air and sands for years to come.

The interesting discovery was made that fish or clams which were fried in the oil took on a new and, some thought, superior flavor. The local editor was called upon to settle a dispute over the spelling of the word that temporarily fell most often from village tongues. Should or shouldn't it carry an "a?" The conclusion in time was reached and generally accepted that the cocoa bean of beverage fame came from an entirely different tree. At that, there are stubborn islanders who still think of coconut with that "a" of argument, for they are wondrous debaters on that out-at-sea paradise of purple.

Paul Hathaway did not hire the idle clam digger, as had been his intention before his meeting with Mrs. Harriet Gardner. Acting on her statement, presumedly authoritative, that the congealed white tide was not bumping fortune to the island, he had paused on his return to the harbor at the Athenæum Library and from the tomes shelved there had convinced himself that the tallowlike substance was scarcely worth the saving.

Except for the small quantity of it that could be utilized in Nantucket for soap making, its value was too doubtful to occupy the time of an otherwise busy man. Whatever it might have been worth if pumped clean from the hold of the tanker at the New York soap works to which it was consigned, the oleaginous stuff, after its protracted bath in salt water and its several handlings since, would need expert refinement to be marketable, a costly operation in itself and one that must cause shrinkage in bulk.

Although Hathaway might have been excused for considering that he had a collection of all sorts of laughs coming to him in return for the fun that had been poked at his seaplane project, he was too loyal a Nantucketer to hold back his information. And once again he found himself a prophet without honor. As well might he have tried to stop the rise and fall of the tide swirling in and out through the stone jetty as to control the prevailing salvage obsession.

This he had been made to appreciate rather acutely immediately after his investigation at the Athenæum. As he was descending the steps of the classic white structure—justifiably the town's pride—he saw his Great girl about to whiz around the corner in her remarkably wabbling car.

Hathaway noticed at once that, although she ground down the brakes and brought the "bus" to a quick stop beside the curb, she had no smile for him. He had one for her, however. A dispositional policy of his was to make up for the frowns of others with his own good humor.

"I want to tell you, Joy o' Life, not to bother collecting those chunks of grease on the water front with any hope of trading them for a flock of summer frocks," he began. "By the time we could get it to market it would be worth about as much as seaweed or oyster shells. I looked it up in the library."

"So! You've been looking it up?" The snap of her glance punctuated the pithy comment. "How studious of you to go and read up in books what you could learn so much easier with your eyes!"

"There's more to it than you can learn with your eyes," he protested. "I want to tell you first of all that——"

But his Joy was not minded to be told; she positively would not let him proceed with his discouragement.

"And how popular your discoveries will make you with your fellow cits!" she interrupted. "All right, Paul. Let fortune slip through your grasp after your usual careless way, but don't try to spoil the other fellow's fun."

"It is carefulness that makes me tell you in time," he returned. "The oil is scarcely worth cartage from the beach. I doubt at best if it brings day wages."

"And whom am I to believe?" she asked, with a scorn that left small doubt. "My dad has just received a telegram from Boston—the *Silverton* called in there with other cargo, you know—to the effect that your no-good cargo is valued at something around three hundred thousand dollars."

All to no effect did he explain that this valuation was a potential one—that of oil undefiled. Her intolerant manner, so hard to endure after her gentle palship of that early morning, increased rather than diminished under his efforts to reëstablish himself in her favor.

Miss Joy reached for the gears. "No, Paul," she declared with what he excused as inherited unreasonableness. "You'd better take my tip instead of trying to force yours on me. Keep your gloom to yourself and let others accept the gift of the gods, even if you're too indolent or suspicious or something to do so yourself. I'm just bright enough to guess that you didn't get your information out of books so much as from a certain lady whom you seem to like a whole lot better than you'll admit. The motive of Harriet Gardner wouldn't be so hard for you to see if you weren't just naturally blinded by the sight of her."

"Motive, Great? What motive could she possibly have?"

"Stupid! What motive could any rich vamp have for keeping you from grabbing your share of this free fortune? Maybe it's altogether on account of the family business. And yet, again, maybe it isn't. Far be it from me to enlighten you. Think it over yourself." With these veiled utterances, she stepped on the accelerator and drove on, at her usual mad pace, toward the beach.

After efforts in several less confidential quarters to stem the tide of overconfidence, Hathaway had been made to realize that she was not the only native who had noticed his interview of the morning with the millionaire soap maker's daughter. Perforce, he had returned to his workshop and let the something-for-nothing fever run its course.

And run it did. "Coconut oil" was the one subject of conversation in the "loaf shops," at lodge meetings, in homes, and at church socials. The drug stores were depleted of their stores of essence of lavender and sassafras, with which the oil soap might be given a pleasanter odor than it had brought from the groves of Ceylon. The neighbors were either swapping recipes for its making or testing samples by scrubbing everything in sight with the next-door product.

Crossing Brandt Point Road one afternoon the young reservist had met one of the island clergymen carrying home a sack of grease; behind him was his wife, pushing the sacred baby carriage piled high with the strange "manna" from—not heaven, but the sea. Still the wind prevailed from the northeast and sent surging shoreward the congealed flood.

When Friday evening came, there was a summary of the situation in the local newspaper. It read:

Since our last issue, Nantucket has talked coconut oil, wallowed in coconut oil, almost eaten coconut oil. Never was a place so greased before and probably never will place be again. The old whaling days, with the blubber and sperm, were as nothing compared to the unctiousness of the present. Every wagon one sees has signs of white coconut oil plastered somewhere upon it. Automobiles are well greased exteriorly, as well as within their works. Back yards, streets, and docks reek with the peculiar scent.

Clearly the experience is one that makes Nantucket either fortunate or unfortunate. We pray the sea gods that they have not excited our people in vain over their un-

usual offering. Men have set aside their regular labors in order to go out by team, auto, or boat to glean the fortune floating around their island home. Never was fellowship through a common pursuit more strong.

And now comes Captain Prince Joy, our official wreckmaster, to tilt the flagon of hope at which so many of his townsmen have been sipping. He declares that, in the name of the State, he will take charge of the tons upon tons that have been gathered and hold the same for the original owners.

Just before dinner, Paul Hathaway had read thus far in the most important piece of news of the week, when he tossed the blanket-sized sheet upon the center table and made for his hat. He answered neither his aunt's warning that the biscuits would be done in a jiffy nor his uncle's query about what had excited him. He couldn't wait for food any more than he could with safety explain to Captain Absalom what he felt urged to do. Straight up Main Street he strode to the quaint brick homestead of the family of Joy.

Well he knew that old Prince hated him, because of his close relationship with Absalom Hathaway, as an island farmer hates a fox. Not since boyhood days, when orphanage had forced him to take residence with his uncle and aunt, had the captain so much as noticed him when they chanced to pass, no matter how narrow the street or lane. Never had Hathaway crossed the threshold of the hostile skipper.

However, Prince Joy, at his grumpiest, most unreasonable state, was the little Great girl's parent. At whatever cost to his own pride, he felt that she must be spared the humiliation of having her father take over the oil which the villagers had salvaged and stored.

For once Hathaway approved the penchant of Colonial 'Tucketers for crowding their houses as close to the pavements as possible. There was now no gate to open or front yard to traverse. Up three steps to a small stoop he leaped and faced a brass plate which read: Captain Prince Joy Lives Here.

Above, an eagle—also of brass—spread its wings in readiness to serve as a knocker, in defiance of the old-fashioned bell on the right which jingled cheerfully within when one pulled the handle far out. On a chance that the family were at supper in the rear of the mansion, the unexpected caller pulled this bell. His summons was answered almost at once by the daughter of the house, looking more homy—and far less formidable—in her bib and tucker than this particular one of her hard-tried suitors ever had seen her before.

"Paul—you?" She gasped at sight of him. "What in the world brings you here?"

"I came, your highness, to see the Prince, your father. A matter that could not wait a moment longer."

His effort at cheerful reply served only to increase the astonishment on her flushed face.

"You must be stark mad, Paul Hathaway, if you think you can stampede——" The embarrassment that slowed her wontedly facile tongue must have been due to thoughts which had outrun her words; certainly it was not because of anything either as yet had said.

Since that first day of the wreck, when Harriet Gardner had advised Hathaway of the very negligible value of the coconut-oil harvest, Great neither had seen nor heard from her handicapped friend and admirer. For her to assume now that he still preferred her to the colorful widow of such superior advantages bordered on the humorous.

Her proud little head tossed, and her lips set tight when Paul laughed his lightest.

"Much as I'd enjoy being mad enough to think I could stampede you into receiving me against princely edict, if that's what you were about to say, I'm afraid I'm not up to it—not yet." With the emphasis, Hathaway lowered his voice and head. "And I won't be, Joy o' Life, until I have a snug harbor in which to offer you refuge. It's hard for me to wait, but——" Unfortunately his voice had not been lowered quite low enough.

"Hard for who to wait, eh? Who's cluttering up the doorway now, Great, settin' up to you?" Gruff was the in-

terruption and unceremonious the hand that shoved to one side the slender girl.

Hathaway found himself facing the amazed fury of the hardest-fisted clipper master that ever had hoisted his blue-white-and-blue at the back of the bar.

"You—a Hathaway—on my front stoop?"

"I've come, sir, thinking that you'd rather I'd say what I have to say to you here than down on the square." Hathaway spoke quietly and pleasantly enough, although every pound of the old tar's overweight was quivering from ill-suppressed rage.

A heavy hand reached out and grasped the shoulder of her who was the best-beloved of both. "Back to your ma, you Jezebel!" the retired captain commanded his daughter. "I'll settle with you after I've scuttled this pirate."

As Great backed away, on her pretty face a red mantle of injury, old Prince took a forward lurch.

But Hathaway stood his ground and said with his most agreeable firmness: "I hope you'll hear me out, because you're wrong in assuming that I came here to pay court to the princess of the Isle."

"Ho, you didn't, you say? Why, I'd like to know, didn't you, then?"

"For reasons, sir, that you know far better than I. Not but what I'd like to. But you're a reasonable man—you don't blame me for that."

"Don't know that I am so reasonable where you and your tribe are concerned. What, say, did you come for?"

Apparently it was not going to be easy, this mission on which Hathaway had sent himself. But he had not supposed that it would be. And service may well be measured by the difficulty thereof. He'd lunge into it, assuming that there had been preface enough.

"I came to talk with you about this coconut oil and your supposed job of wreckmaster."

"Supposed job? What do you mean, you barnacle-grown hulk of insolence?" For a moment Prince Joy stared the question with burning eyes. "Of course I ain't been gathering oil. But as an official of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts——"

"That's just what you aren't," Hathaway interrupted. "There's no such office as wreckmaster in this State any longer. It was abolished several years ago, at a time when folks were not paying particular attention to politics because of the war. There's been no wreck here in that time or you'd have known. Excuse me for speaking plainly, but you have no more right or authority to take charge of this shipwrecked oil than I have. For Great's sake I don't intend to see you——" Hathaway might better have let his motive go unmentioned.

"Ho, you don't, you length of kelp? For Great's sake you don't intend—— Say, you think I care what you don't or do? You dare stand on my stoop and defy my authority as an official of the greatest commonwealth in this country!"

He sputtered to a stop through very force of his indignation. To hear from the nephew of his bitterest enemy that the honor from the State of which he was so proud was nonexitent was too much effrontery, without having the name of his daughter offered as an excuse. Pulling his leonine head down between his shoulders, in a fashion now and then used in quelling the mutinies of younger days, the venerable skipper started in earnest for the overbold enemy.

Still, for Great's sake, Hathaway decided that this self-sought interview had better end. That Prince Joy now realized that he knew the emptiness of his claim to authority was threat enough for one night. Hathaway had sounded his warning—had won the evening's battle. There are cases where flight is valor. Surely this—with the fat father of the slim girl one adores on rampage—was one of them!

CHAPTER V.

HIS SEA INHERITANCE.

BY Monday word of the wholesale gleaning of congealed coconut oil had reached the outer world and brought pointed inquiry from the underwriters

and owners of the dumped cargo of the *Silverton*. Whatever the value of it in its salvaged state, they evidently intended to make sure of the half to which they were entitled by law.

Tuesday's steamer brought a pair of cargo surveyors to the greased island—well-groomed New Yorkers who registered at the Roberts House as Arthur Westgate and H. P. Lussiar. Shortly after their arrival the town crier passed the word of a mass meeting for that afternoon on Old North wharf to which all who had gathered and stored any of the oil in quantity were bidden.

Meantime Paul Hathaway had deemed it advisable to justify in the sight of his uncle the inactive part he had taken regarding the salvage. In a night letter to a Brooklyn oil concern he had set forth the facts at issue and asked a wholesale price on the lot. The answer fully had sustained his position, even as it had forecast bitter disappointment for the townsfolk who had labored so strenuously to accept the gift of the sea.

At that, young Hathaway had no intention of wasting an afternoon on the meeting until, quite by chance, he learned the identity of the self-appointed escort of the two surveyors from their hotel to the wharf. Their route led past his arbor-front workshop where he was occupied over his nearly completed seaplane.

At the sound of brisk steps, he glanced up to see Rupert Gardner, the fair Harriet's less fair elder brother, passing in close conversation with the two strangers. At once he decided that, after all, he could and would find time to answer that particular call of the town crier. Laying aside his tools, but making certain that his coat pocket contained the offer, telegraphed from Brooklyn, he followed to the wharf at a pace which he hoped had a casual look.

Toward Rupert Gardner, Hathaway cherished a dislike that was of long standing and had persisted against all efforts of the grass-widowed sister to wipe out. Its start had been a social rebuff several years previous, on an occasion when only Harriet's tact had saved him from downright humiliation. Later growth had come with the florid manufacturer's intolerance of the islanders and their ways—an attitude that usually is confined to "trippers" and from which the cottage element as a class is singularly free.

Hathaway detested the New Yorker for the lengths to which he would go in aiming his rather coarse grade of jokes at the 'Tucketers. This cordial dislike, coupled with the fact that Gardner was in the soap business, at once had aroused in Hathaway the suspicion that some scheme was on foot to deprive the local beach combers even of the small return that was due their time and toil. At any rate, he had decided to take the precaution of being on hand with his legitimate offer in case any "raw deal" showed its blood.

Nearly two hundred men and boys had preceded him, crowding the wharf, and milling restlessly despite Squid Mahong's efforts to police them. Most still were laboring under the excitement caused by the original estimate of the oil's worth. All were suspicious and determined to hold out for their "rights." Among the first whom the reservist naval officer met face to face was Prince Joy. That irascible's scowl did not surprise him, for he had heard through circuitous sources that the family enemy had confirmed his report by a telegram to the statehouse in Boston.

Presently came word from inside the wharf office: "You Nantucketers appoint a committee and come into the office to talk it over."

At once dissension arose among the holders of the oil. "You tell 'em, cap'n, to come outside and talk it over with us," was the crowd's ultimatum.

This the younger Hathaway approved silently and the older out loud, chiefly on the ground that he'd be hanged to a yardarm if he'd talk anything over in the same cabin with Prince Joy.

Of the two visitors who responded, Westgate, the younger, acted as spokesman so soon as the crowd had pressed into close enough formation for all to hear.

"Gentlemen," he began pleasantly, "we are here representing the owners of this cargo and the marine board of underwriters, who have insured it, to see what you intend to do with the coconut oil you have secured. You probably think that you have something which belongs to you because you have found it. It is my painful duty to tell you that you have not. Every lump of that grease can be taken away from you legally."

A volunteer piped up for the Nantucketers: "We've got our eyes open. We have had experience with this sort of thing for many years. We've saved oil before, and sugar, and all kinds of wrecked goods. We happen to know that salvors have some rights just as well as the owners and insurers of cargo. We don't intend to swallow any raw meat 'tween meals, and you can stoke that in your pipe and smoke it until it makes you sick!"

"And I can tell you men another thing." The visitor showed no discomfiture. "Every one of you can be put in jail for ten years."

"Holy mackerel!" bellowed a doughty oysterman. "How come you to say every one of us, when the 'Tucket jail holds only two prisoners to a time?"

The truthful statement of the jail's small capacity scored. There could be no order in the mass meeting after that—not without an interval. Amid shouts of derision and threats, an adjournment was taken until after supper, when all interested were to assemble in the town hall.

That this structure was jammed as an overcrowded sardine box long before the appointed hour ought to go without saying, for coconut oil certainly was a cohesive subject. Again Paul Hathaway accompanied his uncle; he waited and watched, convinced by now that unless some effective plan of shipping the oil to New York could be formed his fellow townsmen would lose their little all.

When the issue is with off-islanders, Nantucket town meetings usually are hard to handle. That night there was considerable preliminary wrangling. Then came the low offer which Hathaway was expecting—two cents a pound. This was made by the spokesman representative of the underwriters. If Rupert Gardner had a hand therein, it was not disclosed.

"Two per? You call that an offer?" came shouted objection from Elihu Shearman, Paul Hathaway's particular friend despite disparity of ages. Shifting his quid of tobacco, the old seafarer added: "I'll leave mine in my barn first—leave her to melt!"

He well might have been expressing the opinion of the entire native contingent.

"You can cook it or swim in it," the second of the strangers found his feet to interpose, "but you must understand that you don't own this oil. All you have is a claim in it. Delivered in good condition, it would be worth seven cents, but now it is only what we know as oil drainage. One half the net proceeds is all you're entitled to. It won't break us if we don't get anything out of it. But if you don't get anything, you're going to be some disappointed. Come, my dear friends, be sensible! Has anybody heard of a better price than the two cents we offer?"

"Somewhat better!" Like detonation of a bomb Paul Hathaway's reply rang out.

A stir went through the hall. His interference was all the more sensational because all knew that he had been off the oil salvage from the first. Striding to the platform, he proceeded to read his Brooklyn telegram, which offered four and a half cents a pound for the grease. He added the explanation that this meant about fourteen dollars a ton as the 'Tucketers' share.

From old Prince Joy the feud spirit flared. "How do we know that offer's any good—that we won't be squeezed out of our oil?"

"How you going to know? Well, I'll tell you!" Not the younger Hathaway answered the challenge, but Captain Absalom. And once on his feet at the call of his enemy, he'd not get off them until he had his say.

"I'll guarantee that there offer's

good," he went on. "And what's more, I'll voyage the oil to Brooklyn in the *Kingfisher*, Capt'n Paul Hathaway, late of the U. S. N., master. If there's any here present says that schooner ain't clean enough to carry feather beds or that her new skipper can be beat, let him up and open the argument with me —just let him up and open!"

The meeting broke up completely as a result of the islanders' triumph. And the nephew of his uncle was perhaps the most excited, if the least vociferous, of the crowd. Such a tail to the kite of his endeavor in behalf of his fellow townsmen had been the last of his expectations. And there was a thrill to the belated reminder that blood ran thicker even than oil in his difficult old relative's veins which lifted him above the fortuitous issue. With the enthusiastic congratulations showered upon him of those who, of late days, had eyed him askance, Hathaway could not help wondering whether the sea, after all his flights into upper air, did hold his inheritance.

At any rate, for one round-trip voyage to the port of New York in the family-owned *Kingfisher*, he promised himself to live up to the precepts of that long line of Hathaway captains who never had understood what the word failure meant.

CHAPTER VI.

MAKING HISTORY.

IT was three o'clock on the afternoon of the third day after that memorable town meeting. Captain Paul Hathaway, newly made master of the merchant marine, had a freshly painted sign hung in the after-rigging, where it might easily be read from the wharf at the end of which he had moored the *Kingfisher*. The letters of black on a strip of white canvas read: No More Oil Accepted. Vessel Full.

Indeed, the trim schooner was loaded to her last hundredweight and in record time. It seemed that the 'Tucketers were as anxious to get rid of their white elephant of the sea as they had been to capture it. Once the Hathaway proposition had been accepted the congealed oil had begun not to pour in, but to be dumped in from most unexpected sources.

The South Wharf had not seen such activity since the times before coal oil, and was even more thoroughly greased. The most patent differences were that instead of sperm this was coconut and instead of being carried on the curiously trundling, old-fashioned oil carts, this was transported largely on motor trucks.

The public nature of this most peculiar enterprise was recognized by more than the two Hathaways who had stepped into the breach to save their fellows from being imposed upon. All oil carriers had to be weighed both ways —when bound down the wharf laden with oil and on returning empty—that individual credit might be given for the supply put aboard. The Island Service Company generously did this weighing and checking, without making the usual scale charge, that local gleanings might not be further diminished.

At the schooner's side barrels and sacks were placed on chutes and slid into the hold through both hatches. There a force of volunteer stevedores stowed it away in the closest possible space. Not until the hold was brimful and the deck, from after-house to foremast, carried as much of a load as the young skipper deemed safe to carry, was the no-more-oil sign put up.

"Mighty nigh four hundred tons aboard," declared Absalom Hathaway, on climbing to the after deck from the waist of the schooner where, in shirt sleeves, he had been ceaselessly active as chief stevedore.

He extended a grimy, congratulatory hand to the young relative who had been climbing so rapidly in his estimation by the ladder of fulfilling the veteran will.

"There's still some oil ashore," said Paul Hathaway regretfully. "But we can't stretch the oak ribs of this craft. It will have to be held for the local soap experts."

"Your crew all signed on?"

The old owner nodded approvingly as

his nephew named those he had chosen, from his friend Elihu Shearman, who had been proud to ship as mate, down to a couple of chaps who had sailed under him in an Eagle boat during the war.

"If you hit it off with them all right," the older tar continued, "and I've a hunch from windward that you will, they'll make a fine start for—for something I've got in mind again' your return."

"Say, Uncle Ab, you're not reverting back to that old idea of my——" Paul Hathaway stopped short, realizing the sudden sharpness in his tone and not wishing to revive the old issue between them at this crucial time.

"There, there, son," his uncle said in an effort to calm. "Let's not get into no arguments until after you've tasted the salt from offen your own decks. If I ain't mistaken the blood that's in you will tell a story of its own. Tell me, who are them ladies hanging out on the wharf near the ladder?"

The younger man turned on the binnacle box upon which he had been resting and glanced in a direction pointed by Captain Absalom's stubby forefinger. There, to his consternation, he recognized Harriet Gardner, her maiden aunt, and Mrs. Allison, a sprightly young matron who occupied the cottage on the cliffs next The Suds. Without making any movement toward the schooner's rail, he identified them for his nearsighted old relative.

"Well, by darn!" chuckled the veteran. "I'm a jellyfish if this ain't just like clipper times. Ladies alongside on the eve of sailing, eh? Us Hathaway captains always was sprucelike. 'Tis a good omen, son, and I trust you know your manners."

The younger man did know the law of ship's hospitality, but he would have been glad to waive it this afternoon on the ground that an oil-laden schooner wasn't any sort of place to entertain the frail and fair. Even so well chaperoned as was the widow on this occasion, he disliked to invite her aboard, foreknowing that the news would flutter like a blackbird up Main Street ahead of her return that she had come to see him off.

Soon Paul Hathaway heard Harriet's call. "Oh, sailorman, can you tell us whether your skipper, Captain Paul Hathaway is aboard?"

The sailor—no other than Captain Absalom, who had ambled over to the rail—chortled audibly over his reply, doubtless at being taken for a hand on his own ship. "He is that, ma'am. I'll have him here on the wings of the wind to show the likes of you up our side steps."

Back he rolled across the deck to his reluctant nephew, dragged him off the binnacle box, and gave him a starting shove toward the ladder head. "Remember, the *Kingfisher's* your first real ship. Do your prettiest by her," was his rasped admonition.

Forced to it, Hathaway conducted himself as gallantly as ever had Hathaway skipper of past generations. The tide being high, the quarter-deck was raised five or six feet above the wharf and reached by a ship's ladder of flat wooden rungs strung together by rope. The positive safety of this he protested overside to his uninvited guests, after an exchange of deck-to-dock greetings.

"If you'll reach down and take a very tight hold on me," suggested Harriet with a brilliant, upthrown smile, "I expect—I hope I can make it."

"I hope—I'm *sure* you can." His return was dubious only through a thought of the agility with which his Joy girl would have scaled that ladder. Why, he wondered, are large women so seldom satisfied with their inheritance? Why do they insist on understudying their lithe little sisters?

Hathaway regretted the insincerity of his seeming pleasure in reaching over the rail with the assistance required. Scarcely could he hide his provocation, when, as Harriet Gardner, a vision in green linen, stepped over the rail—he'd have sworn she did it on purpose—she clutched him in what seemed more an embrace than an attempt to right herself.

Doubtless the moment was shorter than it seemed to him, but long enough

for her cheek to brush his and for the perfume from the reddish curls that blew beneath the rim of the straw turban she was wearing to get into his breath disturbingly. Uncle Absalom's open guffaw at the "accident" added to the victim's embarrassment and won that relative a scowl so fierce that he retreated forward.

Mrs. Allison, who always featured her smallness, suggested that she should be carried aboard pickaback. However, she did not insist upon the operation and in time herself manipulated the ascent. Harriet's aunt, thoroughly competent as old maiden ladies are wont to be, remarked something pertinent about "a bag o' meal" and proceeded to demonstrate the ease with which schooners safely tied to wharves should be boarded.

There ensued a conversation interval punctuated by "oh's" and "ah's," "awfully sweet's" and "perfectly cunning's," as the three women investigated the after deck of the trim packet, peeked into the binnacle box, complained that the compass was round—not square, as they'd always heard—objected to the absence of bread and water in the lifeboat dangling over her stern, and went to the end of the cabin to survey her deck load of coconut oil.

"If I'd thought, Captain Paul, I'd have brought you my pet monkey to act as mascot on this trip," Mrs. Allison said gushingly. "The little dear would be an ideal mascot, don't you know. And he just simply dotes on coconut oil."

"Then think what ravage he'd make on my cargo," protested Paul. "I've given my bond to land every pound of it at the Keep Clean Soap Works."

"I suppose you know that you're making history for Nantucket and your ship this voyage?" Harriet asked.

As there was no imagining to what she might be referring, Paul Hathaway looked expectantly puzzled.

"With your departure ours becomes the first island of the United States ever to ship coconut oil," she explained. "And the *Kingfisher* is the only ship ever to sail from an American port with such a cargo. I admire you for finding a way out for the befuddled natives. As they tell me that dollars come hard here in the winter and spring, I do hope they'll appreciate what you get for them, even if it isn't the fortune they expected."

"They'll take the difference out of us summer folks, never fear," observed the aunt disagreeably, as she turned from a point of hesitation at the head of the cabin companionway. "Young man, do you happen to have facilities for brewing tea aboard a soap boat like this? I'm addicted to my cup and a half, and my niece, for some reason known only to herself—unless, perhaps, to you—wouldn't let me wait to have it at home. I get positively cross if I'm deprived."

Hathaway shuddered as he thought of the result if the aunt should become crosser than she seemed already.

For several minutes Hathaway racked his brain over what he might offer his surprise visitors in the way of refreshment. With the demand upon his ingenuity came remembrance of an old samovar, gathered in by a previous skipper at some foreign port of call, which he had noticed decorating the cabin sideboard.

This he mentioned to the thirsty relative of Harriet, offering to raid the galley for the wherewithal if she would take responsibility for handling the apparatus. Miss Gardner didn't think that she could—she knew she could. And wouldn't he, please, make said raid without delay?

Before the Russian tea urn, souvenir probably of some frozen Baltic port in the days when czars were czars, presided the gray-haired Miss Emeline Gardner; at its side the Titian-tinted Harriet. Across were seated the pretty young matron and the captain host, his face animated from the exertion of accomplishing the small, impromptu entertainment.

Spread lavishly upon the checkers of the red-and-white tablecloth were various brands of crackers and cakes in their original pasteboard containers and several flavors of the freshly opened jam and marmalade in pots, without which

no self-respecting skipper would think of putting afloat, even in a soap boat.

"When do you think of starting on this historic voyage, Mr. Captain?"

Evidently the strong, hot brew—and schooner Oolong is strong, to say the best of it—was beginning to thaw the frigid spinster.

"We go out with the tide in the early morning." He chose her somewhat supercilious glance to the sprightly Mrs. Allison's famed coquetry.

From a radiant smile, Harriet looked suddenly serious and leaned around the corner of the table to invite a serious aside with him. "There's just one thing, Paul, about this seafaring philanthropy that disturbs me."

"Point it out and overboard it goes," Hathaway offered recklessly for one who hadn't had "a social thought" in recent weeks; at least one who wouldn't admit having had any.

"That old turn turtle of an uncle will be so pleased with you that he'll untie the purse strings and I'll never have a chance of lending first aid to aviation."

Although she had spoken in a low, rapid murmur close to his ear, most of her remark had been overheard. At Miss Gardner's slight murmur and the young matron's titter, Hathaway's face flamed. And at evidence that still another had heard Harriet's tactless remark, he sprang to his feet.

It was at this vital moment, with the hand of the overardent Harriet clutching his arm and her appealing blue eyes demanding his, that Fate ushered into the scene great distress in the person of Great Joy.

The succeeding chapters of this novel will appear in the next number of TOP-NOTCH, dated and out February 15th.

A Unique Museum

THE city of Philadelphia boasts a museum unique in the history of such institutions. It was established in 1894, and is called the Philadelphia Commercial Museum. It now comprises three exhibition buildings, each about four hundred feet in length and one hundred feet wide. There is also a convention hall covering two acres, and workshops, besides a large power house.

The aim of the museum is primarily to aid in financial and industrial development, but it has also become a potent factor in educational work.

There are two distinct departments under the auspices of the institution: the museum of exhibits and the bureau of foreign trade. The former contains a collection of specimens representing not only the natural products, but also the chief manufactures of the various countries of the entire civilized world. Oftentimes the methods of workmanship are illustrated, as in the case of life-size figures in the act of weaving matting or feeding mulberry leaves to silkworms, as well as models of machinery used.

From the extensive collection of raw materials, which is constantly being added to, sets of specimens are made up and donated to Pennsylvania schools that desire them. Colored lantern slides and moving-picture films representing innumerable industries may also be borrowed by schools of the State. Special illustrated lectures are held in the museum for school classes, besides those given for the benefit of the general public.

The bureau of foreign trade is the department which devotes its energies to the development of international commerce. It gives individual manufacturers practical information on every phase of export trade.

The bureau issues regularly two journals: *Commercial America*, published in separate English and Spanish editions, for circulation abroad, calling the attention of foreign buyers to advantages of purchase in the United States, and the *Weekly Export Bulletin*, giving home manufacturers information regarding conditions and opportunities in foreign markets.

Not So Cruel, Maude!

GLADYS: "Jack Huggins fell at my feet the moment he saw me."

Maude: "Stumbled over them, I suppose?"

TOP-NOTCH TALK

News and Views by the Editor and Readers.

FEBRUARY 1, 1922.

Just a Man

NOW and then an author writes to us to ask if we would like a story about a self-made man. We are quite sure to answer that we would—that we are always on the lookout for that type of story; but we might add that it will be enough if the story is about just a man. After all, if it is about a man it will be about a self-made one, for how else is one going to be a man?

To say that a man is self-made expresses only half a truth, at the best. Tennyson, the poet, made an interesting emendation of the old Latin proverb, *Poeta nascitur non fit*—a poet is born, not made. The late laureate of England substituted *et* for *non*, thus making the proverb read, in its translation, A poet is born and made.

It cannot be denied that a man owes more than he knows, in his marring as well as his making, to heredity and early training, over neither of which forces he has any control.

But the task of making is not completed when he goes forth to take his part in the conflict of life. Then the self-making or self-marring processes begin, then it is up to him to make good or bad use of the start he got from heredity and early training. It is up to him to complete the task of making the man. If he doesn't make a m n of himself no one else will. All real achievement must come from inside and be the result of individual effort. If a man is not self-made he is not made at all, in the final estimate the world will make of him.

With a Handicap

ANOTHER poet has said, "Sweet are the uses of adversity," and authors make use of the spirit of that proverb to work out their stories about the self-made man. They make him face all sorts of difficulties, and meet them as a man should do. In that way he makes himself a man.

Sometimes the candidate for real manhood is started out with a heavy handicap. Well, it might be a matter worth discussing in your debating society whether a serious handicap in the race of life is good for a chap or the reverse.

You hear it said of some plain man who has attained solid distinction that if only he had received a university education he would have been the equal of this, that, or the other statesman or author. Yet it is doubtful if he himself regrets the fact that he started life with only a fighting chance. He has thrived on the uses of adversity; they have proved sweeter to him than the uses of the university.

Who does not like to follow the fortunes of such a man in a stirring tale constructed by an author who knows how to build a plot and develop it with dramatic force? We have an idea that most readers do, and for that reason we are glad to receive and publish that type of story.

In the Next Issue

ONE of the longest and best novels we have been able to give you in some time will be a feature of the next number. It is a drama strong but not

heavy, with a certain region of Florida as its stage of action. Roland Ashford Phillips, who is the author, does not say that he thinks it is one of the best things he has ever written; he is not that kind of an author; but we say so, and are keen to know what you think about it. The story is called "Right Is Left," and it will run to about sixty-five pages.

Among the sport features, of which there is an attractive spread, is a novelette of baseball and business by C. S. Montanye. That name will tell you it is quite likely to be a story not too weighty in its texture and not lacking in flashes of humor. He calls it "Grip of the Game."

George Purdy, a newcomer in TOP-NOTCH, contributes to the next issue a tale of the logging camp that is imbued with the boxing spirit, titled "The Only Way Out." We think you will find it an interesting yarn.

Basket ball comes in for representation among the sports in a story by Frank T. Blair called "No Milk in the Coconut." This is a rather fantastic affair. We don't know if there ever was such a game of basket ball as the author gives us here, but that doesn't matter, if you are not disposed to take things too seriously.

Besides the serial novels, "Treasure Valley," by Alan Graham, and "Hunters of the Deep," by Ethel and James Dorrance, there will be these shorter stories, some of them in verse:

"His Great Ambition," tale of a Central American shindig, in which men from this part of the world take a hand, by Artemus Calloway; "Jonas Goes to Town," by Ray Cummings, a small-town episode in which that ever-popular indoor sport, checkers, figures; "Lucky Hoodoo," a humorous story of a find in the frozen North, by Frank Richardson Pierce; "Green Magic," romance of a business woman on land and sea, by William H. Wright; "Sailor Song," by Seabury Laurence; "Winter Fandom," by Jo Lemon; "The Luck Hound's Cry," by Chilton Chase.

Makes Himself a Book

Editor of TOP-NOTCH MAGAZINE.

DEAR SIR: I have made a book for myself of the magazine articles that you published under the title of "Paul Revere, Rebel," some time ago. I am surprised that you class them as fiction. To a mere Britisher who has read many of the standard histories of the United States, the historical setting and the characterization appear to justify naming the articles as historical biography rather than as historical romance.

The author does no violence to the facts of history, and presents these with such tolerant, judicial impartiality as is too rare among the writers of history in any country; and by his vivid description and penetrating insight into human motives and emotions, he has given us a charming recreation of the political atmosphere of Revolutionary times that is altogether admirable.

By all means let the author keep up the good work, which to my mind is of more than national importance. WM. H. BLACK.

Hankesbury, Ont., Canada.

Tribute to Dorrances

Editor of TOP-NOTCH MAGAZINE.

DEAR SIR: I had the pleasure of reading a very interesting story by Ethel and James Dorrance entitled "Rim O' The Range."

It held my interest at high tension from beginning to end. I hope to read another one of their stories, just as good, in your magazine. Very truly yours,

(MRS.) ELIZABETH DONNELLY.

Gotham House, 38th St. and Lexington Ave., New York.

Looking Through

Editor of TOP-NOTCH MAGAZINE.

DEAR SIR: As I was looking through some old copies of TOP-NOTCH I found a story I had missed when reading the other stories. It is by my favorite author, Burt L. Standish, entitled "Beautiful Bertie." I believe it is the best story he has ever written, that is, outside of his books. I hope your magazine will continue to publish stories by Mr. Standish. I am always waiting for the next issue of TOP-NOTCH. Yours truly,

CLARENCE K. COOKUS.

Washington, D. C.

Upholding the Standard

Editor of TOP-NOTCH MAGAZINE.

DEAR SIR: I do want you to know just how we prize the TOP-NOTCH MAGAZINE in my family. My husband has not missed a number of it for many years. Our two boys, eighteen and sixteen, love it too. In fact we all like it. My little girls love the animal stories.

We are all very fond of Ethel and James Dorrance's stories. Don't care for the soup king tales so much, but of course it gives us variety. "Colorado Jim" was fine; more stories like that.

Your magazine is a clean, wholesome one. I am always proud to pass the copies along.

I do think you have kept up the standard and good, sound, clean stories much better than some other magazines, and we all wish you the best of success. Sincerely yours,

THE COLE FAMILY.

North Wilbraham, Mass.

Hope for Cook

Editor of TOP-NOTCH MAGAZINE.

DEAR SIR: This is the first time I have read your magazine and regret that I have missed so many numbers.

I hope W. W. Cook will be represented in the next issue, and that he will continue to develop along literary lines, and that at last the bonds of a genius may be broken and his name shall go down in the annals of American literature.

I am a girl who enjoys stories of the West, cowboys, and stories of the Far North.

Just a hint: Your address should be more prominent. Many would doubtless write you if they did not have to hunt for an address.

Chickasha, Oklahoma. J. V. T.

[The postal department people will not be bothered so long as you get TOP-NOTCH MAGAZINE on the envelope. They know where we are.—ED.]

Saved from the Basket

Editor of TOP-NOTCH MAGAZINE.

DEAR SIR: Here is a kick, but I suppose it is no use to send it in; as you will chuck it in the waste basket, and never publish it. I am not the kind of reader to think that every story you print is the best ever. In fact, I find fault with more than one story I have read in your magazine. Some of them are altogether too long, some are too short.

Can't something be done about this? As for the serials, I never read them, although I know people who do. Hoping you will be guided by this letter—I don't expect you to print it, because it's a knock—I am very truly yours, G. F. SANDERSON.

Vine St., Philadelphia.

Besides the Baseball

Editor of TOP-NOTCH MAGAZINE.

DEAR SIR: I think you have one of the best fiction magazines on the market, and I am well satisfied with the baseball stories you publish, especially those by Burt L. Standish. I like Standish's baseball stories not alone for the baseball part, but his stories always seem to have a mystery that will grip one from beginning to end. Very truly yours,

H. S. WHISTLER, JR.

Van Ness Avenue, Fresno, California.

More Power to Treynor

Editor of TOP-NOTCH MAGAZINE.

DEAR SIR: In reference to the story "Room For One More," published some time ago, and read by me in a back number, I would say that it is as neat a story as I have ever read. The plot is very well worked out even to the finest detail, which shows a well-thought-out plan.

The story is interesting from the start, but I think it shows a little weakness where Danny rides on the upper deck of the bus on such a stormy night. How did Jason know he was to ride on the top on such a night, and thus be on hand to sink his knife in him? Why not have it a very cold night so it wouldn't be so ridiculous to have him sit in the rain?

Your magazine is a good one. You publish a good variety of stories that are bound to strike. If one doesn't the other will. They have a clear way about them which every one admires rather than the rubbish put in some others.

More power to Mr. Treynor in his writings, and let's have some more of his class A-1 stories. Very truly yours,

JAMES A. BRENNAN.

Laurel St., Hartford, Conn.

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and tried to ride a bike for the very first time? You thought that you would never learn and then—all of a sudden you knew how, and said in surprise: "Why it's a cinch if you know how." It's that way with most things, and getting a job with big money is no exception to the rule, if you know how.

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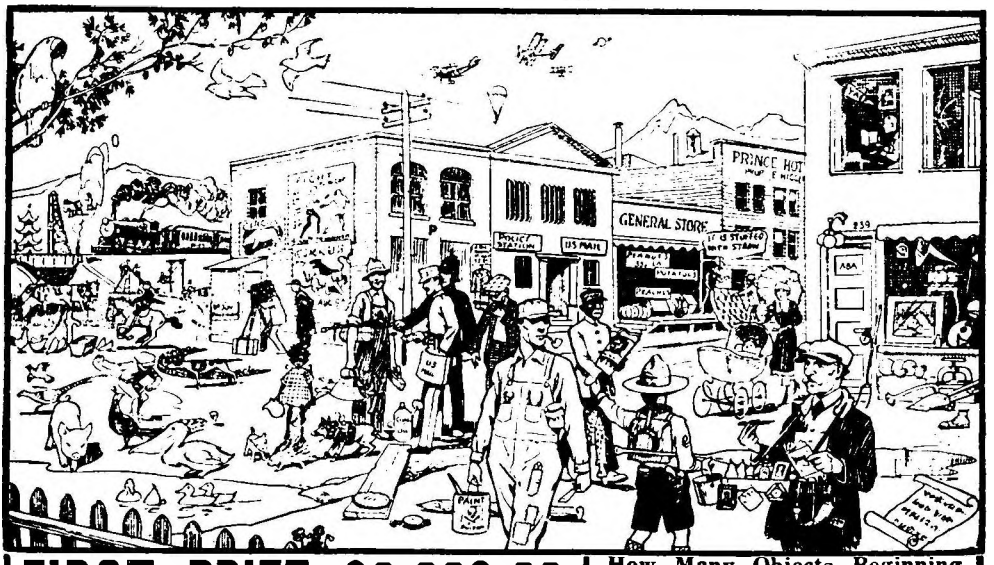

FIRST PRIZE $3,000.00

How Many Objects Beginning With "P" can You Find in This Picture?

COSTS NOTHING TO TRY—YOU CAN WIN $3,000

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It costs nothing to try. In this picture you will find a number of objects and parts of objects whose names begin with the letter "P." Pick out the objects like "Pie" "Plank" etc. It's easy isn't it. Of course it is. The other objects are just as easy to see but the idea is to see who can get the most. This is not a trick. You don't have to turn the picture up side down. Put down each word as you find it and watch your list grow.

Get the family around the table see which one of you can find the most "P" words. You will be surprised to see how fast your list of words will grow in just a few minutes. Try it today, right now as you will never have an easier chance to get a big cash prize.

Send in your list of words and try for the big prizes. This is not a subscription contest—you don't have to do any canvassing. You don't have to send in a subscription to win a prize unless you want to, but our Bonus Rewards for you make the prizes bigger where subscriptions are sent in. For example, if your puzzle answer is awarded first prize by the judges you will win $25.00, but if you would send $3.00 worth of subscriptions for our big monthly magazine you would win $750.00, or if your answer is awarded first prize prize by the judges and you have sent in $5.00 worth of subscriptions you would win $3000.00. See list of prizes above. Nothing more will be asked of you—its easy, isn't it. I don't care how many similiar offers you have seen and read this is the most liberal of them all.

Follow these Simple Easy Rules

1. Any man, woman, boy or girl living in the U. S. but residing outside of Batavia, Ill., who is not an employee of the Household Journal, or a member of the employee's family, may submit an answer. It cost nothing to try.
2. All answers must be mail by May 30, 1922.
3. Answers should be written on one side of the paper only and word is numbered consecutively, 1, 2, 3, etc. Write your full name and address on each page in the upper right-hand corner. Do not write subscribers' names or any thing else on same paper with list of words use separate sheet.
4. Only words found in the English dictionary will be counted. Do not use compound, hyphenated or obsolete words. Use either the singular or plural, but where the plural is used the singular cannot be counted, and vice versa.
5. Words of the same spelling can be used only once, even though used to designate different objects. The same objects can be named only once; however, any part of the object may also be named.
6. The answer having the largest and nearest correct list of words of visible objects shown in the picture that begin with the letter "P" will be awarded First Prize, etc. Neatness, style or handwriting have no bearing upon deciding the winners.
7. Candidates may co-operate in answering the Puzzle, but only one prize will be awarded to any one household; nor will prizes be awarded to more than one of any group outside of the family where two or more have been working together.
8. All answers will receive the same consideration regardless of whether or not subscribtions for the Household Journal are sent in.
9. Three prominent business men, having no connection with the Household Journal, will be selected to act as judges and decide the winners, and participants agree to accept the decision of the judges as final and conclusive.
10. The judges will meet directly following close of the contest and announcement of winners and correct list of words will be published in the Household Journal just as quickly thereafter as possible.

Larger Puzzle Pictures Free on Request.

The Prizes

Winning answers will receive prizes as follows:

		If no subscriptions are sent	If $3.00 worth of subscriptions are sent	If $5.00 worth of subscriptions are sent
1st	Prize	$25.00	$750.00	$3000.00
2nd	Prize	20.00	250.00	1000.00
3rd	Prize	15.00	125.00	500.00
4th	Prize	10.00	75.00	250.00
5th	Prize	5.00	50.00	125.00
6th	Prize	5.00	25.00	50.00
7th	Prize	3.00	15.00	30.00
8th	Prize	3.00	10.00	20.00
9th	Prize	2.00	10.00	15.00
10th	Prize	2.00	10.00	10.00

In the event of ties the full amount of the prizes tried for will be given to each of those so tying.

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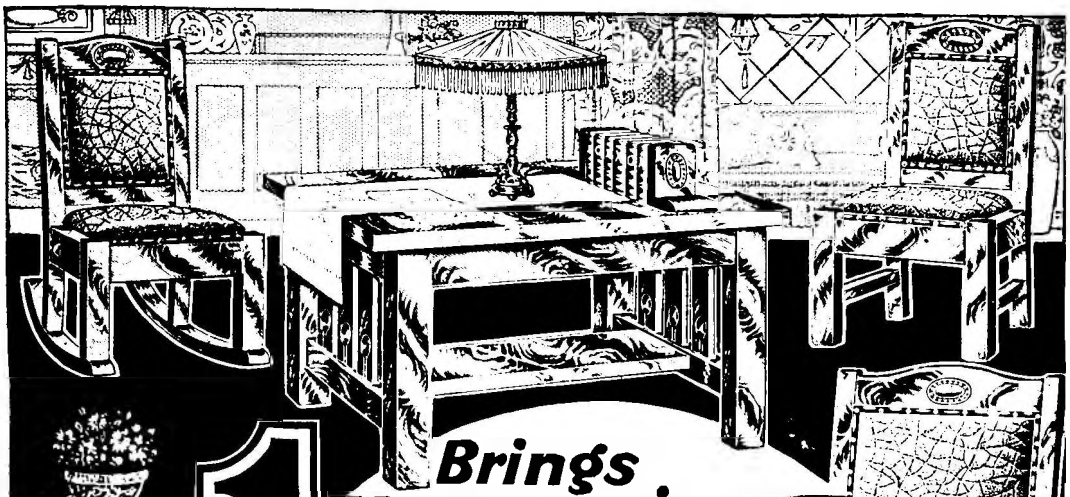

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