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THE BLUE BOOK MAGAZINE

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YOUTH

Dedicated to the
News Dealers of America

(OVER)

A WORD WITH THE NEWSDEALER
AND WITH THE READER TOO

THE supremest satisfaction it is possible for an individual to experience is that which springs from the knowledge that he has done the right thing, at the right time, and in the right way. The same satisfaction may quite as readily be experienced by a group of persons engaged in the accomplishment of certain ends, as, for instance, the publishing of a magazine. A specific example of this satisfaction permeates, at the present moment, the offices of THE BLUE BOOK Magazine. Since the publication of the April issue scores of letters have come to the editor's desk, in all but one of which he found phrases very much to his liking.

The purpose of this little talk in confidence might perhaps be better achieved were we to publish *all* the letters received, but the space at our disposal forbids. A sentence here, a phrase there, and paragraphs transcribed bodily must suffice; save in a single instance where one letter—a sample of all the rest—is published entire. For instance:

"Two months ago I sold thirty copies of THE BLUE BOOK magazine. Last month I sold seventy. I couldn't get any more. Just thought you'd like to know." That is the way a newsdealer in Kentucky writes, and it is but a sample of the numerous letters newsdealers have sent in complaining because they could not have re-orders filled. It's a straw but it indicates the way of the wind.

"I was surprised when my newsdealer told me THE BLUE BOOK was fifteen cents, but when I read the April issue I was more surprised—that it wasn't a quarter." That's one of the bulliest letters we have ever received. Is it any wonder we should consider it so?

"The 'Stageland' department of your magazine gives one the best idea of the plays current in New York, obtainable anywhere. It alone is worth the price of the magazine." That is the opinion of a real estate man in Fond du Lac, Wisconsin.

"Mr. Darnton's article together with the splendid theatrical department in THE BLUE BOOK constitutes a feature of which any magazine should be proud. I wish I'd thought of it, but as it is I am only an imitator." There's the frank confession from the editor of another magazine. Confession is good for the soul.

"THE BLUE BOOK at fifteen cents is a winner." That's the way a traveling man writing from an obscure Iowa town contributes to our satisfaction.

"'April Fools' is the best novelette I have read in a long time." That's from a woman in New Hampshire.

"Keep up the stories of mystery." So writes a young man employed in an Omaha railway office.

"For transporting entertainment I find myself turning, month after month, to THE BLUE BOOK." A clergyman in Pennsylvania sends in that good word.

"My husband brings home any quantity of magazines each month, but when I want something to read that makes me forget a busy woman's multitude of responsibilities, for the moment at least, I always seek out THE BLUE BOOK." This from the wife of one of the best known advertising men in America.

"'Carlton Clarke' is a corker!" There is no mistaking the note of satisfaction in that phrase lifted from the letter of an Amherst college boy, is there?

"The best thing about your magazine is it doesn't publish serials." So says a business man in Georgia.

"Your new BLUE BOOK covers are winners." A newsdealer in Cleveland writes us that, and we agree with him. We felt reasonably certain they would be.

And this sentence concerning our new covers reminds us that, after all, the cover of a magazine is it's show-window. And if a show-window lacks in beauty, any sane merchant will tell you, no matter how excellent the assortment of goods inside may be, no casual passerby in the street will be tempted to enter. Thus an unattractive cover offers no temptation to investigate the contents of the magazine which bears it. And that the new BLUE BOOK art-covers *are* proving attractive and *are* tempting thousands of people to dip into the contents we have far more proof than the single phrase of a single letter above quoted.

A case in point is that of a girl who wrote us recently. She was one of the thousands whom the April cover tempted and who, on investigation, discovered that the contents lived up to it. She was more than gratified. People are not writing letters of commendation to magazines when they are merely gratified. She was *delighted*, as witness the following:

> Editor, THE BLUE BOOK MAGAZINE,
>
> Dear Sir: It seems to me as if you ought to pay me a salary for what I've done for you. Two weeks ago I bought the April BLUE BOOK without knowing a thing what it was like, on the strength of its stunning cover. The Stageland department is simply fine. The Photographs and Mr. Darnton's article taken together give one just the idea one wants of the new plays and things—lots better than any other magazine I know anything about. The novelette was simply fine, too. I liked most of the short stories but not all of them. I don't suppose any one person *can* like *all* the stories in a magazine—you have to consider ever so many different tastes, don't you? I like mystery stories; the sort that keep you guessing how they're going to come out, I mean. I hope you'll publish a lot of them. I loaned the magazine to two of my friends and told a heap more about it. I guess Mr. Hobart, who keeps the postoffice newsstand here, will have to get more next month. Why don't you use little headings to the stories? They'd look fine, don't you think? I only hope the next number will be as good as April. If it is everybody in town will buy it every month.
>
> Yours gratefully,
>
> _____

And she's right—that girl. Mystery stories *are* good, and we *do* like them and so do thousands of other people and we *are* going to publish *lots*. For instance, the novelette in the next number—June—is a mystery story, one of the weirdest and most original stories we recall having read in a long time. Its mysterious title is "The Odyle" and if you begin it you'll find yourself unable to put it aside until in the last chapter you have read how the "Odyle" was overcome. Begin it and see for yourself. And headings, too! We had thought about those headings a long time. The original idea you know, was to pack THE BLUE BOOK full of fiction—the most fascinating fiction possible to secure—and headings would take up space that might hardly be spared. We wanted headings, though. Well, to make a long story short we decided to have them and here, in part, they are. Several long steps have been taken in the last two months to make THE BLUE BOOK better than ever but no fewer steps are still to be taken and they will be taken—from month to month, till we have produced what, not ourselves alone, but the hundreds of thousands of readers as well, will agree to be the best fiction magazine in the world. Watch THE BLUE BOOK show-window for the next six months. Handsomer covers you will not see on the news stand. And better stories—or more of them you will not find inside any magazine covers.

These letters from our readers—they are the jury—prove to us we are on the right track. And so, small wonder, something of that supreme satisfaction mentioned above is ours to feel. Aren't we justified?

"Mysteries of the Rail:" A New Series Begun in This Issue

THE BLUE BOOK

MAGAZINE

NEXT MONTH

THE BLUE BOOK Magazine for *June* will sound the note of the publication's future, perhaps better than any other issue heretofore presented. The novelette which will serve to open the number is one of the most mysterious stories that has ever come to the Editor's desk. It at once places its author, Charles Edmonds Walk, among the great writers of fantastically imaginative fiction. The title of this astonishing story is "The Odyle," but no clew is given by it of the story's qualities of weirdness and tensity of interest. All we may say further is: Read "The Odyle;" you'll never forget it. Also in the *June* issue will be continued the "Mysteries of the Rail"—every one a tale of the shining rails and each complete in the issue containing it. The last story for a time, in the thrilling "Carlton Clarke" series will also appear in the *June* number. Mr. Altsheler's splendid Judge Braxton will experience another adventure and there will be another mystery tale by Helen Tompkins—"The Courts of Paradise."

CONTENTS FOR MAY, 1907

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IMPORTANT NOTICE: Do not subscribe to THE BLUE BOOK MAGAZINE through agents unknown to you personally, or you may find yourself defrauded. Many complaints are received from people who have paid cash to some swindler, in which event, of course, the subscription never reaches this office.

THE BLUE BOOK MAGAZINE is issued on the first of the month preceding its date, and is for sale by all newsdealers after that time. In the event of failure to obtain copies at newsstands, or on railway trains, a notification to the Publishers will be appreciated.

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Three poses of MISS EDNA GOODRICH, Nat Goodwin's Leading Lady in "THE GENIUS."
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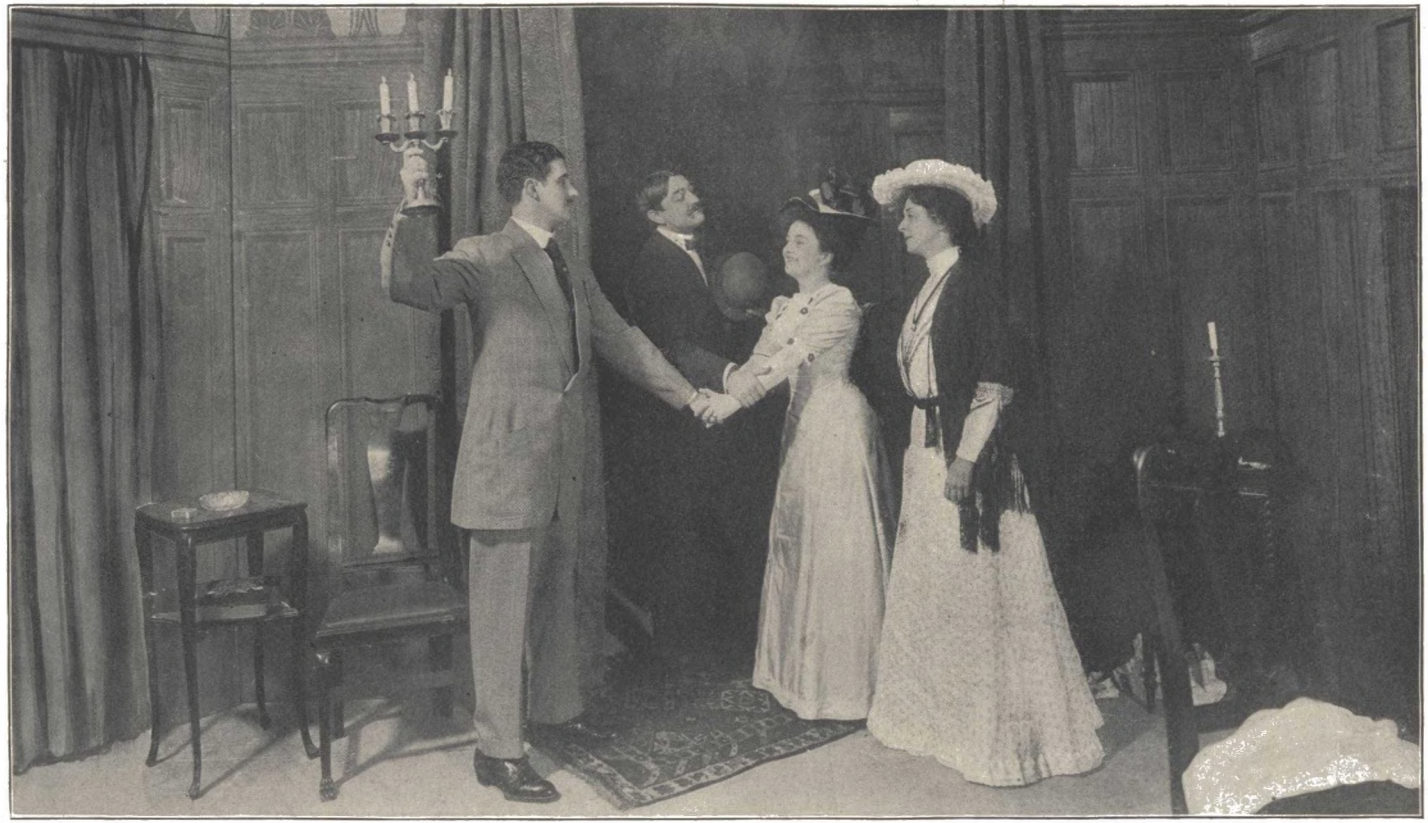

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THE BLUE BOOK
MAGAZINE

Vol. V May, 1907 No. 1

The Testing of Noyes

BY WILLIAM WALLACE COOK

AUTHOR OF "ROGERS OF BUTTE"

EDITOR'S NOTE—*"The Testing of Noyes" is a Western story bustling with adventures breathing the atmosphere of the great outdoors, of mountain and mining life. Under its regenerative influence a typical effete Easterner is made over, who receives some pretty hard knocks while serving the apprenticeship of the tenderfoot. The events of his career, until he finally comes into his own, are fascinatingly told, and the interest is sustained until the last moment. The story is given complete in this number.*

CHAPTER I

ALGY NOYES ARRIVES

BEASTLY bore!"

Mr. J. Algernon Noyes, a picture of ruffled serenity and helpless dejection, stood in the midst of his luggage on the station platform. There was a dismal droop to the otherwise neat *pugree* that circumscribed his solar hat; and between the hat and the big, hob-nailed shoes and buff-gaiters were some six feet of a man in checked knickerbockers, fairly radiating disgust.

In spite of temperamental leanings, the little makeshifts of wardrobe, and a counterfeit manner, the melancholy fact remained that Algernon Noyes was not English. He had been born on the wrong side of the Atlantic. A native of Broadway rather than of Piccadilly, he was trying bravely to live it down.

No personal desire had dropped him, bag and baggage, on the dusty planks laid in front of the railroad-station at Phœnix, Arizona. Providence, working through the medium of an astute gentleman legally qualified as a trustee, was solely responsible. So far from being consulted, the wishes of Algernon Noyes had been literally trampled upon.

His "man," who had been wont to look after the purchase of tickets, transport of impedimenta, and other necessary details of traveling, had been left in New York. The aforesaid trustee had insisted on this; and since he was Lord of the Exchequer his word had considerable weight.

The trustee had also objected to the hat-box, the gun-case, the angling outfit, the steamer-rugs, the dressing-case, the binoculars, the folding bathtub, and the two leather trunks plastered with foreign labels. In deferring to this objection, Algernon had bidden the trustee farewell in the waiting-room of the Grand Central, and had drifted through the gate to his train with nothing but the dressing-case; once aboard the sleeper he had tipped a colored person liberally and had entered a section that looked like one corner of a warehouse. The colored person had been subsidized and the traps borne into the car ten minutes before.

Algernon had surveyed the indis-

pensable gear complacently through his monocle. That was in New York. Now, in Phœnix, he regarded the assortment with less satisfaction.

Other arriving travelers had gone their way in cabs. Assured that he was to be met and welcomed the moment he stepped from the train, Algernon had resisted the importunities of cab-drivers only to find himself stranded among his chattels, waiting for some one who did not seem to come.

Algernon sat down on his folding bathtub, rolled a cigaret, and tried to be patient. The station was deserted by all except three or four frowsy looking men, who lounged upon a truck some yards away, and winked at a grinning face in the telegraph operator's window.

Algernon tucked his glass in his eye and stared at them. The frowsy men returned the stare with interest and suddenly put their heads together.

"I'll bet ye can't," Algernon heard one of them say.

"Jest wait till I git a good chance and I'll show ye," another answered.

Algernon had not the remotest idea of what these men were talking. He did not greatly care, in fact, although his attitude would have been different had he known.

Rudeness was to be expected in such primitive surroundings. After that one long stare at the men on the truck, the muscles of his right eye relaxed, the monocle dropped to the end of its cord, and he calmly ignored everybody and everything except himself and his unhappy situation.

At the end of half an hour, while he was busy with his third cigaret, a long, rangy looking wagon, drawn by a pair of equally long and rangy looking horses, clattered around the corner of the railroad station. A red-faced man in a blue-flannel shirt and a broad-brimmed hat sat on the wagon's single seat and attempted to halt at the end of the platform.

In this the red-faced man was not completely successful. He shouted a husky, "Whoa, there!" and fell back on the lines. One of the horses promptly reared while the other seemed to concentrate its efforts on an attempt to climb a telegraph-pole.

The red-faced man expressed his feelings freely and fluently. When the horse that had reared finally regained a horizontal position, one of its front legs was over the pole, and forthwith it began to plunge and kick.

The other horse, excited by the actions of its mate, gave up the telegraph-pole as impossible and endeavored to mount the platform. A man on the truck rallied to the rescue and his efforts, united with those of the driver, finally placed the team in a normal condition and averted disaster.

"What's the matter with the bronks, Skeeters?" inquired the individual who had hastened to the rescue.

"Plenty of feed and a whole night in a livery-barn was too much for 'em, I reckon," answered Skeeters. "There's twenty pounds of giant-powder on behind, and if the nags get to cutting any more didoes, my trip back to the mine is liable to become what the insurance companies call 'extra-hazardous.' Just hold 'em, will you, Cronk? I'm billed to pick up a tenderfoot here and am a little behind schedule."

Cronk held the bits and turned his head to look at his friends on the truck.

"I guess your tenderfoot's waitin' all right," said Cronk, swerving his eyes from his friends to the stalwart figure among the luggage.

Springing from the wagon Skeeters followed the general trend of observation with his own keen eyes. The man with the *pugree* arose in the midst of his belongings and beckoned.

"This way, my man!" he called. "I fancy that I am the one you were sent to meet."

Skeeters did not move at once, nor even return an answer. A flash of wonder overspread his bronzed face, dying away in a flicker of ill-concealed mirth.

"Go on, Skeeters," urged Cronk. "He'll be whistlin' for ye next."

Algernon raised his monocle calmly and, in his eastern way, tried to get at the true inwardness of a situation peculiarly western.

"He's got 'is mikerscope focused on ye," continued Cronk. "Better hurry, my man, better hurry."

Skeeters crossed the platform slowly, halted at the bundle of steamer-rugs and gazed across it at Algernon Noyes.

"Well!" exclaimed Skeeters. "Are you the gent they're expecting at the Big Pima mine?"

"I am Algernon Noyes," was the dignified response, "and the mine you mention, I believe, is my destination. It was understood that Mr. Rutherford was to send some one to meet me."

"I'm the one selected for the job," returned Skeeters. "Do you want to stop in town before we hike for the mine?"

"There is nothing in the town, I fancy, that would warrant the delay. If you are quite ready for the drive, I am—after this luggage and my trunks are stowed."

Algernon Noyes stepped over the dressing-case and started for the wagon. Pausing abruptly he faced about.

"Here are the brasses," he went on, extending the trunk-checks.

"I'm not the baggageman," replied Skeeters. "Step around to the end of the depot and you'll find him there."

Algernon Noyes meant well, but he had been for so long the object of his valet's solicitude that a dictatorial manner had grown upon him. He stood for a space, looking inquiringly at Skeeters and dangling his monocle by about six inches of black cord.

The momentary embarrassment was relieved in rather a startling manner. A sharp report awoke the slumbering echoes about the station and the black cord was violently agitated.

Noyes showed no symptom of perturbation. He dropped his eyes to the end of the cord and saw that the bit of glass was gone.

Skeeters was watching him with a half smile, while Cronk was tugging at the bits restraining the abruptly aroused ardor of the bronchos.

Noyes looked at the men on the truck, but they were very much interested in the water-tank, a hundred yards down the track. The butt of an incriminating revolver, however, could be seen protruding from the breast of a coat.

"Your name is—?" inquired Noyes.

"Henry Dimmock," replied the other. "Cronk and a few more have a habit of referring to me as 'Skeeters,' but you needn't pay any attention to that."

"Can you tell me, Mr. Dimmock, the name of that man yonder in the leather jacket? The one who is so profoundly interested in the water-tank."

"Oh, he's Hiram Bisbee, a freighter from up Castle Creek way. He used to work on the section and that's the reason he's so greatly interested in the tank."

"I am in debt to Mr. Bisbee," went on Noyes, "and I make it a point, sooner or later, to meet my honest obligations. If you will please put this luggage in the wagon, Mr. Dimmock, I'll look after the trunks."

Noyes started for the other end of the station and Dimmock, Cronk, Bisbee, and the others watched him with a humor tempered by a certain amount of wonder.

"He didn't get very much excited," observed Dimmock, loading up with bundles.

"I don't know jest what to make o' him," muttered Bisbee. "I told Travis here I could do the trick an' I been waitin' for a chance for quite a spell. Made a bull's eye first crack out o' the box."

"An' he owes ye somethin', don't forget that," laughed Cronk. "He's a cool un', in spite o' his dude fixin's."

Noyes brought out his own trunks on a hand-truck. He was awkward about it, but nevertheless he brought them.

While the paraphernalia was being loaded, a man hurried up to the station on horseback.

"Say, Skeeters," he called, "that there dynamite is some we've had on hand for a long while and it's crystallized. You know about crystallized giant-powder. If you look at it crossways it's liable to go off."

"You can't tell me anything about the stuff," replied Dimmock, pausing in his work of making a "squaw-hitch" over the plunder heaped in the back of the wagon. "We're short at the mine and we've got to have it."

"From the way those bronks snaked you past the store we had an idea you was headed for the stars instead of the depot. The old man made me jump on a horse that was hitched out in front and hurry over here to warn you to be careful."

Dimmock finished his squaw-hitch and turned to Noyes.

"Have you got any objection to riding twenty miles over a blast that's bound to let go if the bronchos act up and we collide with anything?"

Force of habit impelled Noyes to reach for the black cord; but suddenly realizing that his aid to vision was gone he dropped his hand.

"You're going along, aren't you, Mr. Dimmock?" he inquired.

"Sure! That's what I'm here for."

"Then I don't see how I can possibly have any objections. Mr. Rutherford is expecting me."

He climbed to the front seat. Dimmock mounted beside him, grasped the reins, and told Cronk to let go the bits.

The bronchos started off at a run, the buckboard bounding into the air as it shot across the railroad-tracks, and Noyes hanging onto his solar hat with one hand and to the seat with the other.

"I wouldn't take that ride with Skeeters for a thousand dollars," said the man on horseback with an ominous shake of the head.

CHAPTER II

THE STRANGER IS TAKEN IN

"Your friends in the East, Mr. Rutherford, seem to have the idea that you're running a reform school, or a home for the rehabilitation of the unfortunate and incompetent."

Rutherford whistled. Then he laughed softly and began filling his pipe. Once the tobacco was going, he leaned comfortably back in his chair.

The shady side of the office was a soothing place on a warm day. From this elevated spot Rutherford could look off toward the shaft-house and the ore-dumps, watch the wagons loading and follow them in their creaking trek to the mill.

He surveyed the scene now. It had always a fascination for him but somehow his interest in the operations was redoubled that afternoon.

"It's all right, Duryea," said he, finally, removing his old slouch-hat and dropping it on the gravel beside him. "My friends in the East don't know what life is; they live with a rush, move about in warrens of brick and stone, and their being is branded with an S crossed with two bars. A starched-bosom fraternity, Duryea, worshiping Mammon and deferring to convention."

The old man was wandering, after a fashion he had. He plucked at the faded blue-flannel covering his breast and dropped his eyes complacently to the corduroys tucked in his boot-tops.

"Pots are not always marred in the making out there," he went on, nodding his grizzled head toward the place where the sun rose. "Some of 'em are so fine-grained the very atmosphere causes 'em to crumble in places and get a bit unsightly. And do you know, Duryea, I might do worse than make the Big Pima a clearing house for promising and unfortunate receptacles."

The superintendent shifted uneasily. His responsibilities were onerous but he found that the hardest part of his work was to sit attentively while his employer was philosophizing.

"There's good ore in the East, Duryea," proceeded Rutherford, "but the East isn't always able to mill it. Sometimes it takes the pounding of a western environment to get at the yellow metal. Now, if those eastern friends of mine realize this important—"

A low rumble came out of the southern hills. Rutherford broke off his remarks, dropped forward in his chair, and turned inquiring eyes on the superintendent's face.

"A blast," said Duryea, thankful for anything in the shape of an interruption.

"It was a big one, then," returned Rutherford. "Sounded like an earthquake to me."

"Some new hands have taken hold at the Coronado, near Squaw Mountain, and are opening it up. They must have loaded enough holes to blow off one side of the hill. What is the name of this man Skeeters is to bring out, Mr. Rutherford?"

Rutherford cleared his throat and the crow's feet around his eyes wrinkled humorously. "J. Algernon Noyes," he answered.

"Mercy!" exclaimed Duryea. "I wonder if he'll come in patent leathers."

"If he does," was the decided response, "my first step will be to put him in brogans. Inasmuch as you are to be an indirect factor in the young

man's destiny, Duryea, I shall take you into my confidence to the extent of reading Ryckman's letter. It is in answer to the one I wrote saying that Mr. Noyes could come."

Rutherford got it from the office, and as he seated himself again, with the open sheet in his hand, he remarked:

"The communication may strike you as a—er—trifle brutal, but it is a case where Ryckman has to be brutal in order to be kind."

"Which, I suppose," said Duryea tentatively, "is the line of action we are to follow here at the Big Pima."

Rutherford surveyed his burly right-hand man with some apprehension.

"The boys must not be allowed to carry things to extremes," said he, cautiously. "You have sufficient discernment, I believe, to understand what I mean."

The superintendent nodded, and Rutherford read the letter.

DEAR RUTHERFORD:

The young man is twenty-five. I'm only the trustee, you know, and when Noyes is thirty he comes into a hundred thousand, providing he has heaped up a little matter of some ten thousand dollars in the bank, by exercise of his own business sagacity. His uncle drew the will, and I think Noyes' uncle knew the young man pretty well. In case Noyes has not the requisite bank account the hundred thousand goes to charity.

Noyes was to have twenty-five hundred a year. If he had gone to keeping books, or writing shorthand or something, he could have laid aside his allowance and, in four years, would have been sure of a competence at thirty. But that isn't J. Algernon Noyes. In the four years since he attained his majority he has not only drawn all that was coming to him, but has hypothecated the remainder. There is enough left to pay his passage to Arizona and to meet a moderate board-bill for a few weeks, but it is now up to Algernon to buckle in unless he wants to be on the town in his maturer years.

In a burst of financial enthusiasm he tried the stock market, but was on the wrong side. That accounts for some of the twenty-two thousand five hundred. The rest of it was frittered away in London and Paris, some of his little dinners standing him in five hundred a plate. Oh, he was a noble spender—while he had the funds.

This sounds unpromising, I know, yet I am convinced, Rutherford, that there is something to build on somewhere in the depths of this young man's character. The problem is to find it and to make him the architect of his fortune, at least to the extent of $10,000, while he is still this side of thirty. At present he is un-American and the "thoroughbreds" of his distinguished acquaintance, on both sides of the pond, have impressed him with the idea that work is not his natural element. Out there, perhaps, he will be taught to see things differently. Hope so, at all events.

These are the plans and specifications, not only of what we have but of what we are to hope for.

The one woman who could have made something of him has recently turned him down. I refer to Miss Ethel Roberts, with whose father, Judge Roberts, I believe you are acquainted.

I shall hope to be kept informed, from time to time, of our pilgrim's progress, or retrogression. Certainly it is not in him to remain stationary, and he will go either one way or the other.

"That is about all," said Rutherford, folding the letter.

What Duryea had at his tongue's end did not appear. At that moment a horse, with a bridle and some other scraps of harness, came charging along the road from the direction of the Phœnix trail

"Jupiter!" cried the startled Duryea, as he and Rutherford leaped to their feet. "That's one of the bronks Skeeters was driving!"

"And Dimmock was to get some giant-powder!" came almost in a whisper from Rutherford's lips.

Instinctively the two formed a connection between the rumble of that supposed blast and the frightened runaway horse. Between these known facts lay a horrible possibility which neither dared put in words.

A slow pallor had crept into the ruddy face of Rutherford. "Get my saddle-horse at once," said he, turning aside to pick up his hat.

While teamsters over by the ore-dumps were catching the broncho, Duryea bounded off toward the corral to catch up the old man's saddler. The horse was made ready in record time, but just as the mine-owner was vaulting to its back, the mate of the runaway galloped into sight with Dimmock astride.

Dimmock's hat was gone, his body bare to the waist, and his face begrimed with dust. His flannel shirt—what was left of it—was bound about his left hand and arm. The broncho had only a bridle—all the other trappings were missing.

Sitting erect in his saddle, his mind heavy with apprehension, Rutherford waited.

"What happened?" he asked curtly as the melancholy Skeeters drew to a halt in front of him.

"That high explosive let go, Mr. Rutherford, in the ravine this side of Squaw Mountain."

"Did you meet Mr. Noyes?"

"Yes, sir."

"And was he—er—was he—" Rutherford's voice trailed off into silence.

"No, sir, he wasn't, but we both came within a hair's breadth of it. He's coming in afoot."

"Why didn't you let him ride and come in afoot yourself?"

"I wanted him to, sir, but he said he wouldn't disgrace himself by backing a horse without a McClellan saddle." Dimmock shifted his glance to the rear. "There he comes, now," he added.

A six-foot figure topped the "rise" west of the camp. It was a bare-headed figure draped in the remains of a red-and-blue steamer-rug; a shoe was gone from one foot and a torn buff-gaiter trailed from the ankle; in one hand was the ruin of a dressing-case and in the other hand a sterling-silver hair-brush.

With head up and shoulders back, the figure strode down the hill and up to the office.

CHAPTER III

CLEARED FOR ACTION

Rutherford turned sidewise, crooking one knee about the saddlehorn Three teamsters had wandered over from the ore-dumps, two men in leather aprons were standing in the door of the blacksmith-shop, and Ah Loo, the cook, was out in front of the chuck-shanty. Dimmock, of course, was also in evidence, but the man in the frayed steamer-rug was the center of attraction.

Algernon Noyes allowed his eyes to wander about the scene; finally they rested on Rutherford. A flush of embarrassment overspread the stranger's face.

He deposited the wrecked dressing-case on the ground, laid the hair-brush upon it, and pulled a bit of black cord from somewhere under the rug. He dropped the cord almost as soon as his fingers had touched it, frowning with annoyance.

"Mr. Rutherford?" he inquired.

Rutherford nodded. "Mr. Noyes?" he returned.

"What is left of him. I presume Mr. Dimmock has informed you of the disaster which overtook us?"

"I have none of the details yet," answered Rutherford, grasping Noyes' hand commiseratingly. "Are you hurt, my lad?"

"We were both severely shaken up, but I fancy there is nothing serious in the line of injuries. The worst injury, to me, results from the total loss of all my luggage; even the clothes on my back were included in this comprehensive catastrophe. Have you—er—anything I could wear, Mr. Rutherford?"

"Certainly, sir!" returned Rutherford. He introduced Duryea. "Take him to the bunk-house, Duryea, and fit him out from the slop-chest."

As Noyes solicitously picked up the hair-brush and what was left of the dressing-case, the ludicrous side of the situation appealed to the superintendent and he wanted to laugh. But he did not.

He had needed the powder to help in his search for a lost vein, and the thought that work must lag until their freighter arrived with a fresh store of explosives stemmed the tide of his mirth.

When the superintendent had disappeared in the direction of the bunk-house with his demoralized charge, Rutherford turned to Dimmock and caught him winking at the teamsters.

"Take the bronchos to the corral," said Rutherford to the ore-haulers. "Come into the office, Dimmock," he added, passing into the small building which served as general headquarters.

"What's the matter with your hand?" Rutherford inquired as soon as his employé had joined him.

"It was struck by a piece of the buckboard," was the answer. "The air was full of things for a while, Mr. Rutherford."

"What was the matter with the giant-powder—anything?"

"Crystallized. There wasn't another pound in Phœnix, but I knew Duryea was anxious for the stuff, so I thought I'd chance it. We'd have pulled through all right if those confounded bronks

hadn't had on one of their flighty streaks."

"You two men must have escaped by a miracle. How did it happen?"

"Noyes was showing me a new-fangled shotgun that he brought from New York with the rest of his plunder. He had some loaded shells and hadn't any more than slipped a couple into the barrels before we stirred up a coyote. He banged away with both triggers, never giving me a chance to brace myself and take an extra twist on the lines.

"The bronks were off like all-possessed in a holy minute. I couldn't keep them in the road, and the front wheel struck a boulder it couldn't climb. The team went on with the whiffletrees and I shot over the dashboard, still hanging to the lines.

"About twenty seconds later I thought Squaw Mountain had turned into an active volcano and was throwing stones at me. I didn't lose my senses but thought I was off somewhere and trying to get back where I belonged."

"Where was Noyes all this time?"

"Well, when I finally rubbed the dirt out of my eyes and looked around, he was thrashing through the greasewood trying to find the coyote. When he quit looking for the coyote he began rummaging about looking for his gear. But, lor'! the stuff must be scattered all over the county. All he could find was the remains of that satchel, the hair-brush, and that section of a bed-quilt.

"There's a hole as big as this shack where the buckboard stood, and for half a mile this side of it I could see little scraps of things, but not a piece was big enough to identify. One of the bronks got tangled up in the neck-yoke and the tugs, and was thrown. The other was out of sight.

"I got the bronk up and told Noyes to ride it in. He said he couldn't think of it, and that if I'd tell how to go he'd walk. You see, Mr. Rutherford, when I went over the dashboard he went over the side, and laid kind of under the boulder we'd collided with. If either of us had been in the wagon—" Dimmock finished with a wry face and a look at the ceiling.

Rutherford stroked his chin reflectively.

"Did Noyes bring a trunk?" he asked.

"A trunk?" Dimmock gave a throaty laugh. "Why, sir, he had two trunks and more grips than a drummer. There was a portable bathtub—"

"What?"

"Honest! And an angling outfit—"

"Why, there isn't a fish within a hundred miles of us."

"And the gun I was telling you of, that made all the trouble; besides a big roll of bedding, a pair of field-glasses, and I don't know what all truck. The way I size it up, Mr. Rutherford, he's landed in camp with a hair-brush, and that's every last thing."

Rutherford whistled; then he laughed.

"Now, sir, as to that buckboard," went on Dimmock, "if you think that I was at all—"

"Oh, bother the buckboard!" interrupted Rutherford. "You fellows were lucky to come out of that as well as you did. All I'm worrying about is that hand of yours. Take good care of it, Dimmock. And, by the way, I guess you'd better go and get into some clothes yourself."

Dimmock got up and started for the door. Pausing there for a moment, he wheeled and came back.

"Mr. Rutherford," he went on solemnly, "I don't know but it's a good thing."

"What's a good thing?"

"That blow-up. Noyes had on one of those round hats with a veil over 'em, and short pants, and things that looked like leggings only they weren't high enough, and—and—Well, sir, he was a holy show, and if he'd ever hit this *rodeo* in all those fixings I don't see how he could have lived. No, sir, I don't. The boys here would have been just about crazy. If he'll only keep quiet about the rest of the plunder I reckon they'll swallow the hair-brush without any misgivings.

"And he isn't a bad sort, sir—Noyes, I mean. He's a cool hand, but he's got a lot of queer ideas."

Dimmock, having thus eased his mind, turned and left the office.

Algernon Noyes lay in his bunk for the rest of that eventful day, and refused nourishment. That gave Ah Loo

a grievance, for he had attempted something extra on the Easterner's account.

About 7 P. M. a request came to the office for tobacco and rice-paper. The Chinaman had the rice-paper and Duryea the tobacco, so the request was complied with.

Before he went to bed that night Rutherford wrote the following letter:

DEAR RYCKMAN:

Our *protégé* blew into camp this afternoon and seems to be doing as well as could be expected. He was not in the best of form when he arrived, but, on the whole, stacked up much better than I had dared to hope. I think we have promising material to work on, and undoubtedly this bracing Western atmosphere will prove a factor in the right direction. If he lives until he is thirty, I think he will achieve that hundred thousand without much trouble. Will keep you informed, from time to time, as you request.

CHAPTER IV

HOW "ALGERNON" BECAME "JIM"

Algernon Noyes was the possessor of an apathetic face and a languid manner. It was difficult, therefore, to arrive at an understanding of his state of mind.

For a week following his arrival at the Big Pima mine a close observer might have hazarded the assertion that Algernon Noyes was mildly depressed.

Duryea had fitted him out with a blue shirt, gray corduroy trousers, a pair of cowhide boots two sizes too large, a wide-brimmed hat, and a leather strap for a belt.

For one who would have preferred in that climate a costume of white duck, this cheap and humble attire must have proved a source of great annoyance.

Also, for one who had given little dinners at $500 a cover, bacon, beans, "spuds," and coffee with condensed milk could only have been accepted under mental protest.

The young man looked into the mill, made a cursory examination of the shaft house, and took a brief flyer underground; but most of the week was spent amid the cactus on a hilltop overlooking the camp.

There he would sit for hours on a boulder, smoking cigarets compounded of Duryea's tobacco and Ah Loo's rice-paper, taking a bird's eye view of the dismal prospect below.

The monotony of the week was relieved by only one incident—an incident which brought Algernon's blacklist into further requisition.

Sargent, the blacksmith, was busy pointing drills when Algernon stopped in the doorway one morning. The smith was growling because Getty, the day-amalgamator at the mill, had borrowed his round square the previous day and had not returned it.

"That's like them there millmen," fretted Sargent; "allers borryin' things an' never bringin' of 'em back. Here I am, so busy I can't see straight, an' got to leave p'intin' drills an' go for that round square."

Algernon, seeing where he might prove useful, offered to go and get the missing implement.

"I hate to ask ye, Mr. Noyes," returned Sargent obsequiously, "but if you aint got nothin' partic'ler on hand I'd be obliged."

Algernon strode over to the mill and asked for the round square.

"Now, don't that beat all?" cried Getty. "Why, I let Cisco, the mine-foreman, take that round square yesterday noon. He had mislaid his own and wanted to level up the main shaft for the noon firing. He said he'd take it right back to Sargent as soon as he got through with it. Now, then, I've got to leave these two batteries and chase down into the mine!"

"I'll go, Mr. Getty," said Algernon; "don't trouble yourself, sir."

And Algernon proceeded to the shaft-house, got into the cage, and went down seven hundred feet to the level where Cisco's force was working.

"Great Scott!" cried Cisco. "Hasn't Sargent got that round square yet? This comes," he added bitterly, "o' havin' only two round squares in a mine the size o' the Big Pima. I let Forshee, up in the shaft-house, take it to get the altitude of the drum. He said he'd see the blacksmith got it afore he needed it. I'll go up and—"

"Allow me, Mr. Cisco," interposed Algernon.

"It's mighty good o' you, Mr. Noyes," said Cisco.

So Algernon got into the cage and was hauled back into the shaft-house. But here he was disappointed again.

Hicks, one of the ore-haulers, had a wagon that didn't tread just right and he had borrowed the round square to remedy the defect.

Algernon went out to the ore-dump, where Hicks was loading, only to find that he had let Ah Loo take it for temporary use in some extraordinary culinary operations.

Ah Loo had handed it over to Tom Killen to take to Sargent. Killen was on the night shift in the mill and was, at that moment, in the bunk-house.

Algernon, by that time, had all his fighting blood aroused. He would run down that round square if he died for it.

Killen averred, with some trepidation, that he had stumbled while carrying the round square to the blacksmith shop and had fallen on the thing and broken it. Disliking to return it to Sargent in an impaired condition, he had sent it over to the Hamiltons, on the other side of the mountain, to have it put in shape.

Algernon was trying to catch up a horse in the corral when Duryea, who had noticed his erratic movements about the camp, drew near and asked why he wanted the horse.

When informed, the superintendent turned his back, leaned against one of the corral posts, and allowed his eyes to seek the sky-line over toward Squaw Mountain.

Noyes was twenty-five years old! And the old man thought there was promising material in him! Duryea swore under his breath.

"Leave the horse alone, Mr. Noyes," he called, "and come here. Did you ever," he added, when the Easterner had come close, "hear of a round square? Think a moment."

"By Jove!" exclaimed Algernon. The muscles of his lower jaw flexed perceptibly and he strode off up the cactus-covered hillside.

That evening he dropped in to see Rutherford.

"I don't like it here, Mr. Rutherford," he admitted frankly, "but I'm going to stay. I suppose," he added, "I shall have to do something."

Rutherford had been waiting for this. The young man had now idled away a week's time and every morning the mine-owner had hoped he would approach the subject of work. Had he delayed much longer Rutherford himself would have brought up the matter.

"Drones are a dead weight on the wheel of progress, Mr. Noyes," said the mine-owner. "The leisure class is a mistake."

Algernon looked earnestly at Rutherford.

"The leisure class is the salt of the earth," he answered, "but it costs money. I had a small amount with me at the time of that—er—mishap, but somehow it got away from me. I should like some respectable wearing apparel, Mr. Rutherford—"

"What's the matter with the apparel you have on?"

Again the young man's eyes dwelt earnestly on the mine-owner's face.

"Why," he answered, "if any of my friends should see me in this—er—disguise, it would be positively humiliating."

"None of them are going to see you."

"For which fact I can never be sufficiently grateful. But, really, you know, my own feelings are entitled to some consideration."

"Give your feelings a little time and they'll change."

A slight shiver convulsed the young man. It was his only comment upon the suggestion.

"I'm going to work," said he, "and if you would make me a small advance, Mr. Rutherford, I could go to Phœnix and—"

"That is something I never do, Mr. Noyes. Pay-day at the Big Pima falls on the first of every month. The only way a man can get money before pay-day is by drawing his time."

If Algernon felt any resentment he did not show it.

"What sort of work would you prefer, Mr. Noyes?" asked Rutherford. "Mine mill, or cyanide plant?"

"I have been wondering," answered Algernon, "if you couldn't use an overseer, some one who could take your place whenever you happen to be away."

Algernon was in sober earnest. Rutherford regarded him gravely for a moment, and answered:

"Mr. Duryea has been a miner and a millman for more than thirty years;

even when I leave him in charge I am always glad to get back and take the reins in my own hands. How would you like to help Sargent?"

"In the blacksmith-shop?"

"Yes."

Algernon shook his head. "I don't believe I could get along with Sargent."

"Well, Cisco might give you a chance in the mine—"

"If you please, we will not consider Cisco, or Getty, or Forshee, or Hicks, or Ah Loo, or Killen."

Rutherford was a patient man. Besides, he knew the sort of misdirected effort with which he was dealing.

"You practically have run the gamut of the openings I have to offer, Mr. Noyes," he remarked. "There is just one chance left."

"What is the salary?"

"Fifty a month, and found."

"I'll take it," said Algernon.

"But I haven't told you what the work is."

"Anything that does not bring me in contact with the persons I have named is acceptable, Mr. Sargent."

"Can you ride?"

"Yes, if I am properly equipped."

"Our pipe line is five miles long and is a tempting proposition for Mexicans and others who want water and are unscrupulous enough to sink a pick into a pipe and draw off what they need. When they leave they are never thoughtful enough to plug up the hole they have made, and hence we have often a shortage at the mill or the cyanide tanks. Your work will be to patrol the line and see that it is not tampered with. I will have you appointed a deputy sheriff with power to make arrests. It will not be necessary to wait for this authority, however, and you can begin your work in the morning."

"You will furnish me with a horse?"

"Certainly."

"And a revolver?"

Rutherford hesitated. Finally he opened a drawer in his desk and took out a six-shooter and a box of cartridges.

"There are desperate rascals in this part of the country, Mr. Noyes," said he, "and this is entrusted to you for defensive purposes only. I will have no promiscuous shooting, for it would only result in getting you into trouble."

"I understand, sir."

Noyes got up, slipped the revolver into one hip-pocket and the box of cartridges into the other, and started for the door. Halting on the threshold he turned to add:

"I hope you will not think, Mr. Rutherford, that I do not appreciate what you are trying to do for me. If I have any fault to find it is with Mr. Ryckman, and not with you. I shall try to perform my duties to your satisfaction."

"Ryckman is all right, Mr. Noyes," answered Rutherford; "he's the best friend you ever had. By the way, what is your full name?"

Algernon betrayed as much surprise as he was capable of doing. "Why," he returned, "J. Algernon—"

"Pardon me, but we don't part our hair in the middle, out here, or our names either." Rutherford's engaging smile drew any sting his words might have carried. "By the same token," he went on, "we are not over-formal in other matters. I am proud to be plain 'Rutherford' or even 'the old man.' What is your first name, my lad?"

"James. It sounds a bit plebeian, you know, and hasn't much character."

Noyes meant every word of it. There was a twinkle in Rutherford's eyes as he arose slowly from his chair.

"It is apostolic and highly respectable," said he, "and 'Algernon' doesn't begin to have the same amount of good red blood. Let me caution you once more to be circumspect in your display of that revolver. I am expecting great things of you, Jim."

A barely perceptible shudder convulsed the Easterner. After a further pause, fraught with most ominous silence, he turned away mutely and left the office.

CHAPTER V

TIT FOR TAT

"How's his highness?"

Hiram Bisbee drew up his tired horse in the vicinity of the bunk-house, restrained the over-heated animal's attempt to get at the water-trough,

and threw this question at Dimmock, Quinn, and "Chesty" Burke.

Dimmock belonged with the day-shift, but Rutherford had insisted that he keep away from work until he could take his injured hand out of a sling. Quinn and Burke were night-men. They had just had breakfast and had joined Dimmock for a smoke before they turned in.

Bisbee, in spite of a long and dusty ride, was overflowing with humor. He had a pay-streak of fun which he never tired of developing.

"Howdy, Hi?" returned the miners in chorus.

"His highness, eh?" added Chesty Burke. "Meanin' which, you knock-kneed old sphinx?"

"Shucks!" exclaimed Quinn. "Hi's got his kiddin' clothes on, as us'al. He's referrin' to little Algy. Tell him about the round square, Skeeters."

The miners snickered at the mere thought.

"Put me next, can't ye?" Bisbee asked after hitching his broncho to a post and taking a seat with the rest on the edge of the water-trough.

"The Duke is more fun than a box of monkeys," confided Burke. "This here camp's a show since he blew in."

"His pufformance at the Phœnix deepo' was real amusin'," said Bisbee, dragging a black clay pipe from one pocket and a pouch of tobacco from another. "'Member how I shot his glass-eye off'n the string?" Bisbee halted his pipe-filling to lean back and enjoy the recollection.

Every man in camp had heard about that, but the incident had been somewhat overshadowed by the mishap near Squaw Mountain. Of the quartet, Dimmock alone was at all reserved in giving expression to his mirth.

Quinn told of the tenderfoot's pursuit of the "round square," and Bisbee abandoned himself to a perfect spasm of enjoyment.

"I jest about figgered it out there wasn't no brains under that tourist hat," he chuckled, as he recovered a little and finished filling his pipe-bowl.

"Don't make any snap judgments, Hi," cautioned Dimmock. "I've seen more of Noyes than any other man in camp, and I'm telling you there's good stuff in him."

"Sort of a di'mun' in the rough, eh?" returned Bisbee, priding himself on the turning of a neat figure as he reached for a match.

Dimmock laughed at that.

"Why, you big, overgrown grizzly," said he, "I suppose you think you're a ground and polished specimen, dazzling everybody with your remarkable humor and gold-filled intellect. Don't you, now? You've aired your estimate of Noyes, and I'd like mighty well to get his estimate of you".

"Talks like the old man, don't he?" Bisbee remarked to Quinn and Burke. "He must have been readin' some book."

"Well, Noyes isn't as big a fool as he looks, by a long chalk."

"He couldn't be," scored Hi Bisbee, and rose a little in his own estimation. However, with Dimmock posing as Noyes' champion, the subject was treacherous ground and Bisbee shifted it. "Any o' you diggers caught sight o' Bill Yerrington lately?" he asked, straightening his face and puffing ominously.

Mention of Bill Yerrington aroused instant and consuming interest among Bisbee's listeners.

"What has that compound of deviltry and lawlessness been up to now?" asked Dimmock.

"Haven't ye heerd about it? Train on the north an' south road held up two days ago, over by Tennyville. Yerrington was seen in Tennyville in the mornin', an' the robbery was pulled off in the afternoon. What's the inference?"

"Yerrington's a bad egg," commented Burke. "I s'pose they tacked it onto him, eh?"

"That's what they done; an' betwixt you an' me an' the derrick yander, I don't think the express people are far wide o' the trail."

"Since Yerrington killed ol' Peleg Stafford," put in Quinn, "I'd believe him ekal to anythin'."

"The jury acquitted Yerrington of that Stafford affair," said Dimmock.

"What sort of a jury was it?" bristled Bisbee. "Some o' Yerrington's old gang, that's what they was—every man o' 'em a cut-throat an' a murderer. Sure they acquitted 'im! But ol'

Peleg's blood is on his hand, fer all that. Anyways, the express people have offered five thousand fer Yerrington, dead or alive. Great guns!" and Bisbee laughed softly after the expletive. "The sheriff has had his hands full swearin' in deputies. Everybody in the country, that happens to be out of a job, seems to have an eye on that there reward."

"Is that your lay, Hi?" asked Quinn.

"Well, I wouldn't mind turnin' the trick, but it aint goin' to be no child's play. I been hangin' around Yerrington's shack, up to'rds Monniment Creek, thinkin' mebby he'd drop in there to see his wife an' daughter. But I guess he's too foxy; leastways, I haven't been able to spot him, so fur."

"It's a lucky thing for you, Hi, that you haven't," Dimmock suggested. "You'd better hunt in couples when you go after a man like Yerrington."

This was a point beyond Bisbee's facetiousness. That man-hunt was a serious matter, and he showed that he so regarded it.

"How much of a robbery was it?" asked Quinn.

"The express people aint sayin' a word," was Bisbee's response.

"Them's the us'al tactics. Jest as if the lettin' the gin'ral public inter the secret was goin' to hamper the officers! But they're offerin' five thousand in gold as a reward. That means, accordin' to my notion, that Bill Yerrington wasn't cold-decked."

"He had help, o' course?" said Burke tentatively.

"Not much he didn't. 'Twas a lone-hand job. A purty sizeable box, waybilled as 'mineral specimens,' was shipped out o' Phœnix by express. In the same car was a lot o' bullion which was bein' forwarded to a smeltin' an' refinin' company in 'Frisco by one o' the local banks.

"Out o' Tennyville a-ways Yerrington clim' out o' the box o' mineral specimens, a gun in each hand, and a-lookin' over em at Mister Messenger. Where Yerrington got off nobody seems to know. The expressman didn't open up his door at Tennyville, so the train-crew o' course investigated, findin' him tied hand-an'-foot with a piece o' bell-cord an' gagged with a handkercher. One of the strong-boxes was open; what was in it was gone—an' so was Yerrington."

"Well, I'll be dashed!" exclaimed the wondering Burke. Quinn gave a long whistle. Dimmock held his peace but looked the amazement he felt. Deeds of reckless lawlessness were not uncommon in those parts, but none of the miners had ever heard of anything to match this.

"I never seen Yerrington," said Burke. "What fer lookin' chap is he?"

"Hi, here," smiled Dimmock, "would probably call him a diamond in the rough. He's a big, spare man with gimlet eyes and half of his right ear missing; quick as a cat on his feet, a hard hitter, and as for shooting—well, I've seen him split a pistol bullet on a knife blade at twenty yards. He worked here, Burke, but that was before your time."

"I remember 'im," said Quinn. "He talks like a schoolmaster, an' uster to play chess with the old man, an' argy with him about the Mistakes o' Moses, an' these here prehistoric men, an' Labor an' Capital, an' whether Shakespeare or that other feller What's-his-Name was bogus or the real thing."

"I ain't got no use fer fellers that wraps up their talk in so many frills, common, every-day folks can't understand 'em," said Bisbee. "That high-toned Easterner you got here, it strikes me—"

Just what Bisbee had on his mind was not expressed. Something else struck him, at that moment—or, rather, struck the bowl of his pipe.

There was a report, a little flutter of debris, and all Bisbee had left between his teeth was about an inch of pipestem. With a howl of dismay he fell backward into the trough, floundered out of it the next moment, and stood dazed and dripping in front of Dimmock, Burke, and Quinn.

"Wh-wh-what in Sam Hill—" he began, and then caught sight of Noyes, leaning carelessly out of one of the bunk-house windows and gazing at his favorite hillside. With a splutter of wrath, Bisbee jerked a six-shooter from his hip-pocket.

"None of that!" said Dimmock, wrenching the revolver away.

"I say, Mr. Dimmock!" called Noyes.

"Sir, to you," responded Dimmock.

"That boulder on the slope, over there, looks very much like a water-tank, don't you think?"

Then a light dawned on Dimmock, Burke, and Quinn. A roar of appreciation burst from them, and Bisbee, bolting for his horse, jerked the reins from the post, vaulted into the saddle, and spurred away.

Noyes withdrew from the bunk-house window to face Rutherford, who came hurrying in at the door.

CHAPTER VI

ALONG THE PIPE-LINE

Yes, Noyes knew how to shoot. His bullet had fanned past Dimmock's face, dodged Quinn's shoulder by a fraction of an inch, and hit the pipe-bowl as if it had been the bull's-eye of a target.

While the miners made the most of the situation, Rutherford, his face slightly pale under its coat of tan, confronted his *protégé*. The report had reached the office, and the mine-owner, who had been a prey to doubts ever since he had intrusted the revolver to Noyes, instantly connected the sound with some tenderfoot indiscretion.

"What was that?" he demanded, his fears evaporating as the hilarity reached him from without.

"I was trying the revolver you gave me, Mr. Rutherford," Noyes answered.

"Trying it?" echoed the mine-owner. "At a mark?"

"Yes. I have often shot at pipes in a gallery, but they were on a moving wheel. Mr. Bisbee happened to be holding this one."

"In his teeth, Mr. Rutherford," spoke up Dimmock from the doorway, his voice vibrating with suppressed mirth.

"Was Bisbee hurt?"

"I reckon his feelings are considerably damaged. And he'll need another pipe. 'Twas as neat a shot as I ever saw."

"Bisbee was the man who—"

"Who gave me a sample of western impudence and marksmanship at the Phœnix station," finished Noyes, calmly.

"Where were you, Jim?" asked Rutherford, after a pause.

"At the window," answered Noyes, nodding toward the opening.

"And where was Bisbee? Show me, Dimmock."

As Rutherford turned to follow Dimmock out of the house, his struggling feelings found vent in a humorous wink. For the mine-owner's benefit, the situation at the time of the shooting was demonstrated in detail. While this was going forward, Noyes remained in the bunk-house, adjusting a pair of Duryea's spurs to the heels of his cowhide boots.

"I haven't any fault to find with you, Jim," said Rutherford, reappearing presently, "although the quiver of a finger would have turned your brilliant *coup* into a problem for the coroner's jury. I don't like such doings, either for fun or reprisal. I guess you had better give that revolver back to me."

A trace of red surged into Noyes' face, but he yielded the weapon quickly and without comment.

"Your horse is waiting for you at the corral," went on Rutherford, in a kindly tone, "and Ah Loo has a lunch ready. You might call at the chuck-shanty for it on your way to the corral. You will be gone well into the edge of the evening, for most of the trouble with our pipe line is made by campers. Beginning at Monument Creek about seven-thirty, trail the pipe back to the Big Pima. If you find all clear, the chances are that everything will be ship-shape until to-morrow. You will need a hammer and some wooden plugs—"

"I have them, sir."

"Very well, then." Rutherford went back to his office, Noyes accompanying him that far on the way to the chuck-shanty.

On arriving at the barbed-wire corral, Noyes found Dimmock, Burke, and Quinn waiting for him. Pedro, a Mexican, who cared for the live stock and did the freighting, had made ready a Roman-nosed buckskin and was holding the animal by the bits.

Noyes looked the scraggly broncho over with an ill-favoring eye.

"He's better'n what he stacks up," volunteered Burke, quick to interpret the Easterner's feelings.

"I hope so," answered Noyes briefly.

"Beauty, you know, Jim," observed Dimmock, "is only skin deep. What we want in a western horse is not looks but bottom. Taranch will carry you from sunup till dewfall, and be nearly as fresh when you turn him into the corral as he was when you took him out.

"The saddle," Dimmock continued, noting how the Easterner's gaze was dwelling on that cumbersome object, "is far and away better than any riding gear without a well-defined horn and pommel. You won't be in it long, I reckon, before you appreciate the steady seat it gives you."

Taranch looked to be entirely spiritless. His head drooped, his limbs were lax, and he seemed the meekest of brutes.

Hammer and wooden pegs were already swinging at the cantle in a canvas bag. Noyes stepped forward to hang the string loop of his lunch-roll over the pommel.

Instinct taught Taranch that a stranger to broncho-ways was approaching. His head lifted defiantly, his leg-muscles tightened, and he spun his angular body about his Mexican pivot. Noyes leaped back just in time to avoid his heels.

"Better let me," said Dimmock, stretching out his hand for the roll of lunch. "After a while, when you get used to this sort of horse-flesh, you can—"

"Thank you, Dimmock," answered Noyes, his eye brightening perceptibly at this unlooked-for opposition, "I might as well begin getting acquainted with Taranch right here."

Stepping around back of Pedro, Noyes ran in, gained the saddle side and, while the horse crowded him around in a circle, succeeded in getting the small parcel in place. Then he sprang to the broncho's back without making use of the dangling stirrup.

"Let go, Pedro!" he called.

Pedro jumped back, and as Taranch rose into the air as if propelled by four stout springs, the miners shouted:

"Git yer feet in the stirrups! Git 'em in or he'll throw ye!"

The stirrups were flying and the broncho pitching and plunging. Noyes was jolted forward, backward, and sideways, but he hung on. By good luck he got his toes in place within the *tapideros*, the spurs rattled, the quirt snapped, and Taranch laid himself out full kelter toward the pipe-line. When the horse vanished over the hill, Noyes was sitting him like a centaur.

"I reckon we'll have to tally another one for Jim," remarked Dimmock.

"He kin shoot, an' he kin ride," said Quinn. "I wonder what else he's got up his sleeve?"

"*Muy bono*," said Pedro, with an expansive smile. "Taranch no throw 'um you bet. *Caballero*, ah, ha; *mucho* fine!"

Oblivious of all this praise, and, in fact, not thinking he had done anything commendable, Noyes gained the thin black streak crawling serpent-like over the sand and held Taranch to a steady course along it.

In less than a mile, the broncho became convinced that his master was in the saddle. After that the rider was able to give attention to his surroundings.

The scenery was drear enough, at best. Never did hot sunshine, brown sand, creeping cactus, and frazzled greasewood combine in greater desolation. Noyes summed it up in the one word, "God-forsaken!"

There were hills to the north, whither he was riding, and hills at the south, whence he came. Between lay a blistering flat relieved by stunted brush and gnarled *palo-verde* and ironwood that had struggled for five hundred years, perhaps, to win a dozen feet of existence.

Nature had grudged the country little. Used as he was to the haunts of men, and to the superfluities of life, Noyes was appalled by the naked solitude. Alone, his feelings found expression as they never did when he stood face to face with his fellows.

A protest against this unhallowed order of things went up from his soul; a voice within him cried out like a voice from the wilderness. He felt as if every refining influence must be lost in such an environment.

In the bunk-house, he had overheard, through the open window, all that had been said about Bill Yerrington. No wonder a man who could play chess and talk like a schoolmaster

had been transformed into a thief and a murderer. When did a human being ever rub elbows with savagery and fail to catch the infection?

To Noyes' thinking, his own downfall had commenced. Civilization was no more than a veneer; scratch it, and the rough fiber of the elemental lies exposed.

The incidents of a few days had shuffled Noyes into the garb of a hoodlum, had made him the butt of rough ridicule, had involved him in an explosion and a shooting-scrape. These stood out as so many milestones along the course of his rapid retrogression.

Yet the young man was not to be blamed for his reasoning. An oversupply of money and an effete environment had set up false standards that influenced his judgment.

He tightened a couple of pegs in the round pipe, whose looseness had caused a seepage of water. This comprised the whole of his morning's work, and at noon he flung himself from the saddle under a cottonwood's shade at the head of the line on Monument Creek.

The broncho was picketed with a *riata*, within reach of water and *mesquit* bushes. After drinking his fill, Taranch gave eager attention to the long *mesquit* pods.

Throwing aside his hat, Noyes stretched himself at ease and fell upon his lunch with a voracity that astonished him. It was rough fare, but he enjoyed it as he had never enjoyed a meal before.

The cottonwood was his camp for the entire afternoon. He smoked innumerable cigarets, and reflected on various matters until thought concentrated in one supreme vision of a fair face which he had left behind, in far-away New York.

This fair face took the shape in which he had seen it last—a little sad, a little vexed, a little reproachful, but withal firmly determined. From out of the void a suppressed voice uttered the Great Refusal.

Something of bitterness was creeping into his heart, when a stir among the brush to the right drew his eyes. Another fair face met his startled glance—a face framed in yellowish hair tangled about wide and apprehensive blue eyes.

He leaped to his feet, and the face vanished like a phantom. "By Jove!" he muttered, brushing a hand across his forehead and staring into the thicket.

Presently the face appeared again, to be followed by a thin little body in an old, calico gown. The owner of the face was a girl of nineteen or twenty, and she stepped toward him resolutely.

"Father is not around here anywhere," said the girl, defiantly, "so you might as well go away."

She was studying him queerly as she spoke.

"Your father?" he answered vaguely.

"Yes; he is not here and you can't get him."

"I haven't come here to get anybody," said Noyes, in a kindly tone.

"I can't understand it," murmured the girl. "You haven't any guns—that I can see."

"No, miss, I haven't any weapons of any sort whatever."

"But you are a deputy sheriff, aren't you? It seems to me that every one who comes to Monument Creek now is a deputy sheriff."

"I am not an officer, although I may be, before long. I am in the employ of Mr. Rutherford, and am patrolling the pipe-line."

"Oh!" breathed the girl, and incontinently vanished; this time not to reappear.

Not a little diverted, Noyes sank down at the foot of the cottonwood again and resumed his cigarets and his reflections. When the sun set, and shadows began to fly, he tightened the saddle-cinches, wound up the picket-rope, and, after a brief struggle with Taranch, succeeded in mounting.

Slowly he retraced his way toward Big Pima camp, wondering how he should feel if he were the son of a man who was being hounded by the law.

Half the journey was covered before anything remotely approaching trouble had claimed his notice. At the midway point he caught a flicker of firelight well to the left, amid the greasewood. A figure passed and re-passed before the blaze.

A gurgle of water reached Noyes' ears. He knew in an instant that the pipe had been pierced, and spurred rapidly toward the camp-fire.

The figure he had seen in blurred outline stood facing him, arms folded, one hand clutching the butt of a revolver. Noyes drew to a halt within a dozen feet of the man, who seemed to be alone.

He was big and spare of frame, his strong face emphasized starkly by the shadows cast over it by the fire. His eyes were two points of light, steady and wolfish. His head, slightly turned to the left, enabled Noyes to see that the lower half of his right ear was missing.

For a full minute the two men mutely regarded each other.

"When you have looked your fill," said the camper tersely, "ride on."

Instead of riding on, Noyes dismounted, hooked his elbow through the loop of the reins, and advanced closer. The other fell back a step, his right hand with its gleaming weapon slowly falling to his side.

CHAPTER VII

THE CONCEIT OF COURAGE

"That weapon is out of place," said Noyes, very much as if he were reproving a breach of etiquette. "You are threatening an unarmed man."

"How am I to know what you have upon your person?" flashed the camper.

Noyes stiffened perceptibly. "My word—" he began.

"Ah, yes," broke in the other dryly, "a word between gentlemen ought to be sufficient, but circumstances alter cases. For instance, you might give me your word that you are not a deputy sheriff. In that event my sagacity, moving in the line of least resistance, would compel me to take issue with you."

"I am not a deputy sheriff."

"Then why are you here?"

"I am patrolling the pipe-line for Mr. Rutherford, of the Big Pima mine."

Noyes began slowly rolling a cigaret; not for any show of *bravado*—he was above things of that sort—but for the reason that tobacco stimulated his thoughts.

That reward of $5,000 was flirting with his prudence. He knew that discretion demanded he should admonish the camper, plug the hole in the pipe, and ride on. If he wished, he could ride at a walk until out of sight of the gimlet eyes, then use his spurs, dash into camp, and arouse the men.

There was nothing in such a course, however, that appealed to Noyes. Here was an opportunity to pit his eastern resources against those of the west as exemplified in the person of this train-robber. True, the train-robber was armed and Noyes was not; but this fact would make a successful demonstration all the more convincing.

The camper, even to Noyes' untrained eye, was but poorly equipped for a meal and a night in the open. A little fire made of a few dry sticks was all he had—no blankets, no camp-equipment, nothing in the way of food. What use could the fire possibly serve? was the question that flashed through the Easterner's brain.

Noyes finished the manufacture of his cigaret. The other man watched him narrowly while he lighted it.

"You have been tampering with the pipe," proceeded Noyes, as the other showed no inclination to break the silence.

"There is no water within three miles of me and I wanted a drink," said the train-robber.

"That is no reason you should not respect Mr. Rutherford's property."

"Rutherford's pipe-line crosses the public domain. If Rutherford owned the desert he might enjoin campers from taking toll out of his water supply. As it is, I believe I have a perfect right to help myself."

Noyes was not prepared to combat this reasoning, so he took another tack.

"At least," said he, "you might have stopped the waste as soon as you had supplied your wants. If you will hold my horse for a moment, I will attend to it."

Possibly the train-robber saw in this a plot for his own undoing. He reached his left hand forward to grasp the reins, then drew back.

"No," said he. "If the broncho is ranch-bred he will stand like a rock if you allow the lines to hang from the bits."

"Taranch is not to be depended on," Noyes answered, "and I shall take no chances with him."

Leading Taranch to a stunted ironwood he hitched him; then, removing the canvas bag from the saddle, he made his way toward the pipe-line. During these maneuvers, his back was toward the robber almost the entire time.

It was not a pleasant reflection that a bullet might wander in his direction at any moment. What Noyes was seeking was to impress the train-robber with a sense of fancied security.

A wooden plug lay beside the pipe close to the jet of water, proving that no fresh opening had been made but an old one opened. After hammering the plug securely back into place, Noyes returned to the fire.

The train-robber was sitting before the blaze, his hands clasped about his knees which were hunched up to his chin. The revolver lay on the ground at his side.

Noyes fancied that his time had come for a swift stroke. He dropped the bag carelessly and threw the remains of his cigaret into the fire.

"The East is written all over you," quietly observed the train-robber. "New Yorker?"

The young man nodded.

"Have you been working for Rutherford long?"

"I have been at the mine for about a week." Noyes was standing close to the man, and on the side where the weapon lay.

"Have you been in Phœnix since you came to the mine?"

The train-robber was fishing for information. He wanted to learn, no doubt, whether Noyes had heard of the hold-up on the north and south road.

The young man's answer was a quick leap—a downward plunge in which he brought both hands in a fierce pressure about the train-robber's throat.

"You are my prisoner, Bill Yerrington!" he muttered.

Another moment and he was dazed by a blow. He felt himself lifted as if he were a mere stripling, rolled to his back, and held there with a doubled knee on his chest.

The beady eyes that glared into his were fairly flaming.

"You fool!" whispered the man, his voice hoarse with passion. "I was ready for you, only tempting you to play your hand."

A gleaming object rose and fell, and the firelight, the dusky face of Yerrington, the clear-cut stars overhead were blotted from Noyes' sight as by an inky curtain.

When he opened his eyes again, cool water was being dashed in his face. His hands were lashed at his back and his feet were bound. Over him stood Yerrington, holding Taranch by the bridle with one hand and clutching a tin canteen in the other.

"I am a desperate man," said Yerrington, "and I presume you appreciate my forbearance in using the butt of the revolver instead of the business end of it.

"I wanted a horse. That fire was kindled in the hope that some of the officers who are looking for me might be coaxed into the vicinity so that I could secure the means to take me across the Mexican border. But, believe me, I had no idea that a tenderfoot, with more courage than discretion, was to rise to the bait.

"Your inexperience has saved you. I regret the necessity of leaving you bound with your own picket-rope, but, if free, you would walk to the mine and give an alarm. Before you can tell what has happened, I shall hope to be so far away that pursuit will be fruitless.

"I do not think, moreover, that you will have to remain here many hours. Your failure to return to the camp will be noted and some one will come in search of you."

Yerrington turned, thrust his foot into the stirrup and rose lightly to Taranch's back. There was a roaring in Noyes' ears, a sharp pain at his temple and he felt a warm trickling across his cheek.

Nevertheless he heard and understood. Yerrington held the restive Taranch with a firm hand, and added a parting admonition.

"Young man, you are altogether too impulsive. Had you been thoroughly seasoned, your tactics might have met with some measure of success."

"We may meet again," mumbled Noyes significantly.

"Anything is possible in a little world like this."

Thereupon Yerrington put Taranch to the gallop and faded into the night.

About the last thing Noyes noticed was that Duryea's spurs were rattling at Yerrington's heels.

CHAPTER VIII

THE TURNING POINT

As there are certain events in life particularly conducive to earnest reflection, so there are moments especially set apart for the lucubrations of those reflectively disposed. Noyes had experienced such an event and the moments for considering it were at hand.

Bruised, helpless, and in considerable pain, it might be supposed that bodily ills would exert a depressing influence on his faculties. So far from this being the case, his mind was never brighter nor more keenly alive to lucid inferences or clear deductions.

There was a serenity about the stars that calmed his tingling nerves; a refreshing coolness in the night air that added materially to the comfort of an otherwise intolerable situation; and all about him reigned a tomb-like silence, with not a sound to disturb or distract him.

He saw very plainly that he had misjudged his abilities. An alien had no chance with a determined Westerner on his own grounds.

Noyes was not given to overrating himself. He felt that mentally he was Yerrington's equal. It was his physical powers that had not rallied to his assistance as they should in order to make his *coup* effective.

He had frittered away $22,500 in four years. About the only athletic training he had got out of it was a limited amount of work with a pair of foils and a season's experience at the steering wheel of his motor car.

The first doubts of the policy of his course during the preceding four years were born of that bit of rowdyism with Yerrington. As the night wore on without bringing relief, the doubts grew into a conviction that swept him irresistibly toward a turning point of his life.

How long he lay there on the desert he had no means of knowing. The novel course his thoughts were taking beguiled the time. The fire died into coals and smouldered into ashes; and then, from far off in the night, he heard a voice calling his name.

He answered, and presently three horsemen could be dimly seen trailing slowly northward along the pipe-line.

"This way!" called Noyes. "Be careful you don't ride over me—I'm tied hand and foot and lying on the ground."

"Tied!" cried a voice, now recognized as Dimmock's. "Are you hurt?"

"Nothing to speak of, Dimmock."

Two riders dismounted, leaving their horses with the third member of the party, and coming close to Noyes' side.

Burke was with Dimmock. He scratched a match and eased his feelings with a muttered oath. "Who done it?" he demanded, while Dimmock was giving his attention to the picket-rope.

"Bill Yerrington."

"No!" shouted Burke.

"Yes; a big, raw-boned man—"

"Gimlet eyes an' half his right ear missin'?" finished the excited Burke.

"That is the way I identified him—by his mutilated ear."

"Quinn!" roared Burke. "Jim, here, met up with Bill Yerrington! Now, what d'ye think 'o that?"

Quinn gave vent to a few words that were ample proof of his state of mind.

"Keep on with those matches, Burke," growled Dimmock. "Time enough for remarks when we get Jim on his feet. There's blood on your face," he added to Noyes. "Thought you said you wasn't hurt."

"The blood comes from a blow on the head with a pistol-butt, that's all," Noyes answered.

"That's enough, I should think. How did you come to know anything about Yerrington?"

"I overheard Bisbee telling you boys about him, this morning."

"You mean yisterday mornin'," put in Burke. "There's another day purty near here."

"How'd Yerrington come to hit you?" queried Dimmock.

"I thought I'd bring him into camp," said Noyes wearily, "but it proved too large an order for a man less than two weeks out of New York"

"Hear 'im, will ye?" cried the irrepressible Burke. "He tried to lug the worst man in Arizony into—"

"Oh, hush!" interrupted Dimmock. "You can do more cackling for fewer eggs than any hen I ever saw."

"Lor'!" muttered Burke. "It's enough to set a feller cacklin'. He didn't have no gun—"

"No," spoke up Noyes; "if I had been armed, perhaps I'd have met you with another story."

"The old man made a misplay," volunteered Dimmock, "when he took the gun away from you."

"Yerrington took Taranch," went on Noyes, "and Duryea's spurs, and—well, he added grewsomely, "about all he left me is that picket-rope."

"You're lucky to get out of the scrape with your life," said Dimmock tersely. "When did this happen?"

"Must have been nearly eight o'clock."

"Which way did he head when he left ye?" queried Burke.

"Toward the Mexican border."

Dimmock helped Noyes to his feet. "Quinn," he called out, "you give those horses to Burke and then hit only the high places between here and camp. Rout out Hayes and Griffith and tell them what's happened. Burke and I will follow along with Noyes."

"If Yerrington left here at eight o'clock," said Burke as he ran to take the horses, "I'll bet ten to one Hayes an' Griffith 'll never git clost enough to him to see his smoke."

"Never mind that," returned Dimmock. "It's the first level the boys have had and they'll want to follow it. Hayes and Griffith," he added to Noyes, "are officers, like Bisbee, only they show their sense by going in pairs. They dropped in to spend the night at the bunk-house."

A swift fall of hoofs, diminishing to southward, signaled the departure of Quinn.

"You take my horse," said Dimmock when the three of them had reached the bronchos, "and I'll ride with Burke."

"I can walk," protested Noyes. "It can't be more than—"

"No, you don't!" flung back Dimmock. "You're entitled to consideration, Jim, and you're going to get it."

Noyes was in no condition to insist. His limbs were stiff and aching, his head throbbed painfully, and his whole body felt feverish. He held his seat fairly well, however, until the bunk-house was reached and then he pitched forward into the arms of Getty and Forshee.

Aroused by Quinn's story, and the departure post-haste of Hayes and Griffith, every man off duty was clustered about the bunk-house door.

Rutherford and Duryea were both there and assisted in carrying Noyes to his cot. A stiff drink of brandy helped Noyes to take fresh grip of his fleeting senses, and Duryea, who had been a half-way doctor before he turned miner, took him in hand.

For six days Noyes was on the sick list. "It's his onreliable eastern anatermy," Burke confidently explained to Quinn, "which can't resist nothin' on account o' its being pampered-like. Us Hassayambers, that's been knocked about in the sand and cactus ever since we was knee-high, an' brought up on bacon, beans, an' climate, we wouldn't 'a' thought no more o' that crack on the head than we would o' the sting o' a scorpion."

Burke was probably correct. During his six days of enforced idleness, Noyes was not too ill to balance his joint account with Sargent, Getty, Cisco, Forshee, and the rest who had been concerned in that little matter of the "round square."

Every man at the Big Pima was in a rattling good humor on account of Duryea's picking up the "lost lead," and the way Noyes squared accounts kept the whole camp laughing for a week—excepting, of course, the practical jokers who had been repaid in their own coin.

CHAPTER IX

REPRISAL

For more than a year that lost lead had been as a thorn in Duryea's side. He knew it was somewhere on the Rutherford property, for a superintendent who had preceded him had "tapped it," drawn off several thousand dollars' worth of amalgam in a twenty-four-hour run of the mill,

cleaned it up by lantern-light, and fled for Mexico between two days.

Several profitable leads were being worked at the Big Pima, but in point of value that lost lead was known to be worth them all. Duryea passed sleepless nights and fretful days worrying over his inability to pick up the vein.

Rutherford laughed at him, declaring his belief that the supposed vein was nothing more than a "pocket" which the other superintendent had exhausted before taking his flight. But Duryea would not accept this theory, and wasted more powder "gophering" and in "open cuts" than the old man thought compatible with judicious mining.

There was an abandoned twenty-foot shaft, half a mile from camp. Just how long it had been there no one seemed to know. As a last resort, Duryea sent Cisco and Killen into the shaft to set off a few holes and see what they could discover.

Just previous to this, the entire camp was in a twitter over a general invitation to attend a "shindig" which was to be given by the Hamiltons, on the other side of Squaw Mountain. A Phœnix orchestra of five pieces had been engaged to furnish music, and every one of the gentler sex within five miles, would be sure to favor the function with her presence.

There was intense rivalry between the Cinche Club and the Seven-Up Gang to secure the shiny new mountain-wagon which Rutherford had just bought to replace the wrecked buckboard.

The Cinche Club was composed of miners with whom the game of double pedro—masquerading under the name "cinche"—was a favorite pastime. Dimmock had organized the club, and Burke, Quinn, and three others were active members.

Likewise, the Seven-Up Gang, embraced a membership of six, headed by Getty and including Cisco, Forshee, Hicks, Killen, and Sargent. Both organizations had voted to attend the dance. As the mountain-wagon was equipped with three seats and would carry six with comfort, it was conceded that a certain amount of style and prestige would attend the organization fortunate enough to secure it.

Recognizing this fact the moment the invitation of the Hamiltons was delivered, both Getty and Dimmock rushed for the office to request the use of the only vehicle in camp, aside from Pedro's big freighting-wagon.

Rutherford could not show favoritism. As a result, Dimmock and Getty drew straws, the former securing the coveted prize.

For a time, gloom rested heavily upon the Seven-Up Gang, and six starched blue shirts with real collars, which were to make the Seven-Uppers *en regle* for the Hamiltons' function, were neglected and allowed to remain in the original package, just as purchased and brought out from Phœnix by the freighter.

Then, most unexpectedly, the gloom lifted, and Getty and his five companions went about their work with smiling faces and with an exchange of knowing winks whenever they ran counter to each other.

The "lost lead" was discovered in the bottom of the old shaft on the afternoon of the day which was to close with the hegira to the other side of Squaw Mountain. Cisco brought a piece of ore to Rutherford and Duryea that sent the old man up into the air with a yell. Later, he grabbed the superintendent's hand, congratulated him, and raised his pay $50 a month.

At six o'clock, the Seven-Up Gang appeared at their evening meal, freshly groomed and radiant in starched bosoms and collars. The dining-room was buzzing with the great discovery and the six Seven-Uppers did not receive the attention their immaculate appearance would otherwise have drawn upon them.

At 6:30, Dimmock carried Noyes' supper to the bunk-house.

"Getty's trying to play it low-down on our crowd," he remarked, after placing the tray on a table convenient to the easterner's hand and seating himself in a chair, "but I've found out what the game is and I'm going to copper it."

"What is the game?" asked Noyes. He was familiar with all proceedings up to that moment, both in connection with the lost lead and with the doings

of Getty's crowd, so his interest was at once aroused.

"Well," went on Dimmock, "you know, Jim, I told you that when I drew the long straw and got the mountain-wagon, Getty went over and hired Pedro's freighting-outfit; but freighting-wagons and starched gingham don't jibe on such an occasion as the one the Hamiltons are going to put up to-night."

"Hardly," admitted Noyes.

"Consequently," proceeded Dimmock, "the Seven-Up fellows have been about as blue as their shirt-bosoms for a day or two back. Last evening the cloud lifted, and Chesty Burke got suspicious and went on a trail for information.

"Just before supper he heard Getty and Forshee talking in the shaft-house, and the whole low-down scheme was made plain. Ah Loo wasn't officiating at the chuck-shanty to-night. Pedro was taking his place, and he told us the Chink had gone over to the Coronado to visit the Celestial that gets the meals for that outfit. But that isn't where the Chink went."

"Where did he go?"

"That's hard to tell. He slipped out of camp with the team and the mountain-wagon, while the rest of us were at work, and the play is for him to lay low in the hills and about eight o'clock to appear at the old shaft where the strike was made. Getty and the rest of his gang will be waiting in the shaft and, when Ah Loo comes along, they'll take possession of the rig and drive to the Hamiltons' by a cut-off that won't bring them anywhere near the camp.

"That will leave the rest of us to load ourselves into Pedro's wagon and be carried to the other side of Squaw Mountain like so much freight. There'll be only two horses in the corral, so we can't ride; and as for walking, it's six miles to the dance if it's a foot. Low-down? Well, that's hardly the name for it."

"So that is the game, is it?"

"Sure, if what Burke overheard is true."

"Will you allow me to copper it, Dimmock?" asked Noyes.

"You!"

"Yes. You know, I owe the Seven-Up crowd something on account of that round square deal."

"Do you think you're equal to it, Jim? There mustn't be any bobble, you know. I was planning to waylay that pesky Chinaman and take the rig away from him. Then Getty and the rest could follow in the lumber-wagon, according to original plans."

"Your course in the matter is altogether too mild," said Noyes.

"I don't see what else could be done" Dimmock responded.

"I do—providing you are willing to intrust the matter to me. I went over to the old shaft, during the afternoon, and I think I see a way to get even with Getty and his crowd."

"You won't fail?" inquired Dimmock apprehensively. "If you did, Burke and the others would never forgive either of us."

"I won't fail," returned Noyes, "if Burke has the matter right."

"Then go ahead," said Dimmock.

Fifteen minutes later Noyes departed stealthily from the bunk-house and made his way to the old shaft. Taking up his position in a thicket of greasewood, he waited.

Just as he was on the point of thinking that Burke was wrong, and that Ah Loo's intentions had been misconstrued, a creak of wheels and a fall of hoofs broke on his ear. The team and mountain-wagon were advancing slowly from the east, in the opposite direction of the camp.

Ah Loo appeared to be somewhat out of his bearings, or else trepidation had seized upon his oriental nerves. He drove a zig-zag course, halted and hitched the team at a large *mesquit*, and then advanced to the shaft.

He did not call to the men below. No doubt he had been cautioned by the plotters against making any undue noise. Lowering himself over the rim, he vanished from sight in the blackness of the pit.

Leaving his concealment, Noyes hastened forward. A light ladder provided means for entering and leaving the shaft. Noyes' scheme of reprisal centered about the ladder.

The moment the woodwork ceased to vibrate under the Chinaman's weight, Noyes laid hold of the top rung and began drawing the ladder upward. He found it rather more of a task than

he had thought it would be, but persisted in the work until the twenty-foot frame-work lay on the ground at the surface. The disappearing ladder had claimed the attention of the men below before half its length had traveled up the side of the steep shaft.

The wily Ah Loo had been exultantly welcomed; but exultation quickly gave way to dismay and consternation. Threats were hurled at the unknown at the rim of the shaft, for every man in the Seven-Up contingent felt in his bones that they were being undone by their rivals.

"Look here, Dimmock," roared the voice of Getty, "if that's you—"

"It isn't Dimmock, gentlemen," Noyes called down. "Perhaps, if you take a careful look around, you'll find that round square. I will send some one over here, in the morning, to discover whether your search has been successful, or not. Meanwhile, goodnight to you. The Cinche Club are waiting for the mountain-wagon and I must make haste to get back with it so they won't be late for the dance."

A brief silence followed; and then the general chagrin found vent in a wild pandemonium of voices. In the midst, of it, Noyes took his departure.

Dimmock and his friends were waiting in considerable apprehension. As Noyes jumped down from the front seat and placed the reins in Dimmock's hands, he whispered to him,

"What!" shouted Dimmock. "You did?"

He fairly roared with delight.

"Put us next, can't ye?" asked Burke as he clambered into the vehicle.

"I'll save it till we get out of camp," guffawed Dimmock. "Jim, you old maverick," he added, thumping Noyes on the back. "I reckon that outfit won't ever send you after any more round squares or left-handed monkey-wrenches."

"All aboard, boys!"

The wagon, with its load, was snaked rapidly out of camp, and Noyes retired complacently to his cot in the bunk-house. He had settled all but one of his Western scores. The heaviest, however, still remained. It was the one run up by Bill Yerrington.

CHAPTER X

NOYES COMES TO A DECISION

The Cinche Club rolled hilariously into camp about four o'clock in the morning. After turning out the bronchos and pushing the wagon into its accustomed place, they proceeded in a body to the old shaft and released the demoralized and disappointed Seven-Up Gang.

What passed between the rivals it is unnecessary to mention. Suffice to state that the glorying of Dimmock and his friends resulted in a depth of feeling that would have had an outcome in blows had not the Cinche Club suddenly developed an unexpected amount of self-restraint.

Ah Loo regained the chuck-shanty in time to begin preparations for breakfast, and the rest faded into the bunk-house to drown their mortification and ill-temper in a brief period of sleep.

Morning brought a return of good-nature, and badinage was endured with patient resignation. Noyes, still new to the ways of the camp in that respect, was half-expecting a personal retaliation. But it did not develop.

On the contrary, Getty and his five companions waited upon him in detachments, commended his ingenuity, touched lightly upon their own inconvenience, and asked him to let by-gones be by-gones. After expressing a hope that he preferred seven-up to cinche, and would ultimately join the Gang, each took him by the hand cordially and went his way. With this same morning, too, came Hayes and Griffith, jaded and saddle-weary. They had followed Yerrington to the international boundary, obtaining many stray clues to mark his flight but never drawing close enough to attempt his capture.

He would stay with the greasers for a while, Griffith remarked, but not forever. It was not in an American to hive himself up in Sonora or Chihuahua and remain there till the end of his days.

Yerrington had a wife and daughter this side the line. They might go to him, but the officers thought this would hardly prove the case.

Instead of asking them to join him in his wild wanderings, he would prob-

ably leave them in Arizona, amply provided for, and their presence in the United States would lure him back.

It might be a month, a year, or ten years before Yerrington drifted back to his native country. Sometime he would come, and when he did—the deputies clenched their teeth and looked the things they would do to him.

All this was intensely satisfactory to Noyes. When Yerrington returned, it was his private conviction that Fate would give the man to him.

At the termination of his six-day term in the bunk-house, Noyes continued patrolling the pipe line. Before riding out with his roll of lunch and the bag containing his hammer and pegs, Rutherford came down to the corral and returned the revolver.

"There is such a thing, Jim," he smiled, "as having too much discretion. If I had not requested you to return the revolver, after that Bisbee incident, Yerrington might now be behind the bars of the Phœnix jail."

"Yes," laughed Noyes, "or the New York papers might be publishing a two-line obituary notice, with another line requesting, London papers 'please copy.'"

"I don't know about that. I choose to think that if you had had the gun you would not have lost Taranch, whatever else might have happened. So the broncho and his trappings, together with Duryea's spurs, are charged up to me."

"It is good of you to look at it in that light."

"Not at all; it is only just and fair. Here's the gun, now, at all events, and a written commission from the sheriff authorizing you to act as his deputy."

And so Noyes rode away, with his gun and his commission in his pockets. He proved his efficiency for two weeks, and so overawed the Mexicans accustomed to prey upon the water supply that no trouble resulted from any lawless tampering.

Pay-day came at the end of the fortnight, and Noyes received his wages, which not only covered his actual working days but also the period of his confinement in the bunk-house. After Duryea had given him his pay envelope Noyes went up to the office.

"He's got his money," thought Rutherford, who saw him coming, "and now he's off for Phœnix for a little purple and fine linen."

But Rutherford was mistaken. "What can I do for you, Jim?" he asked.

"I think, Mr. Rutherford," Noyes answered, "that a six-year-old boy is now qualified for this pipe-line work. I am not overly pleased with the several hours of loafing I have to do up on Monument Creek."

Rutherford was pleased and surprised. "You want something else to do. Is that it?"

The young man nodded. "What is the hardest work about the mine or the mill?" he inquired.

"Well," smiled Rutherford, "opinions differ. But I should think the ore-haulers do as much, or more, to earn their money than any one else on the work."

"Please give me a team and let me go at it."

Rutherford looked at the young man's hands. They were burned a deep brown, but as yet had come in contact with nothing harder than a bridle-rein.

"Oh, I'll make out," laughed Noyes. "Besides," he added, a strange gleam coming into his eyes, "I want to get thoroughly seasoned."

"Very well," answered Rutherford, "I'll have some one else ride the pipe-line, and you shall have a team and wagon in the morning. Your pay will be $75 a month."

"That is perfectly satisfactory to me. Thank you, sir."

Noyes got up to leave.

"By the way," said Rutherford, "Pedro goes to town to-day for supplies. Is there anything you would like him to get for you?"

"I'll make out a list," the young man answered, and seated himself in the vacant chair in front of Rutherford's desk. He wrote for several minutes. "I think that will do," he went on, laying down his pen and rising. He dropped a ten dollar bill on the list. "Will you see that Pedro gets these, Mr. Rutherford?"

The mine-owner nodded, and his new teamster went out. In some curiosity, Rutherford picked up the list and ran it over.

TO BE PURCHASED FOR JIM NOYES:
One pair cowhide boots, size number nine.
Two pairs yarn socks; one slouch-hat, black, number seven and a quarter.
One blue flannel shirt, collar sixteen, sleeve thirty-three.
One pair gray corduroy trousers.
One straight stemmed briar-pipe (nothing fancy).
One pound Miners' Pride tobacco.

Rutherford dropped the list, lay back in his chair, and shook with quiet enjoyment. Then he called in Duryea, and Duryea, having found the lost vein, was as genial a person as could be found in the whole mining district.

He, also, had his laugh. "Jim is a comer," he declared. "He has been a different man ever since Yerrington pounded him on the head."

"I don't know but I'm beginning to feel a little bit proud of Jim," admitted Rutherford. "Hand that ten dollars and the list to Pedro, will you?"

CHAPTER XI

THE PAY-STREAK

"Let's see, Rutherford, Algernon has been out here about a year now, hasn't he?"

"Fourteen months, Ryckman. And for heaven's sake don't go back to calling him 'Algernon.' Didn't I write you that we've weaned him away from that?"

"You're an odd genius!" laughed Ryckman, tilting his chair back against the office wall and blowing rings of cigar-smoke toward the ceiling. "When we were at Yale the boys used to call you the Beau Brummel of the upper-class. Yet here you are, buried in this God-forsaken corner of the West, your tomb a hovel, the wilderness your winding-sheet, your *requiem* the din of that ramshackle stamp-mill."Ryckman shook his head hopelessly. "Darned if I can understand it!" he added.

Rutherford might have smiled at his friend's perplexity. The subject, however, was a hobby of the mine-owner's and he considered it altogether too serious for levity.

"You are mistaken, Ryckman," said he; "the West is God's country and the people God's own. I wouldn't trade this narrow valley with its sand and cactus for the whole of New York; and by the same token I wouldn't barter that ramshackle stamp-mill for the entire length and breadth of that avenue of misery you call Wall Street."

"Wall Street took a fall out of you," chuckled Ryckman.

"For which I can never be sufficiently grateful," added Rutherford. "Wall Street spared me enough to buy this valley and build an *arrastra.* With that primitive contrivance I pounded out enough gold to develop the property, build my mill and pipe-line, and put the whole proposition on a paying basis. That hovel," Rutherford pointed from the window to the little shack above the chuck-shanty, "is home, this wilderness is my country, and that '*requeim,*'" he smiled now, "is putting more honest dollars into my pocket than I know how to spend."

Ryckman laughed indulgently. Rutherford went on:

"Every man has a pay-streak somewhere in his nature. The West has developed mine—and Jim's, too."

"What is Jim doing at the present time?"

"He's in the mill; boss-amalgamator for battery No. 1. He was capable and I have pushed him ahead. I think I told you that he began by patrolling the pipe-line?"

Ryckman nodded.

"From that he took to teaming ore between the dumps and the mill; then he went into the mine; after six months after that he was batteryman, and now has it easier as amalgamator. He can get away occasionally when he wants to, and I have given him *carte blanche* to run his battery to suit himself."

"Does he ever pine for Eastern scenes and associations?"

"If he does he keeps it to himself."

"I shouldn't have thought he would forget Ethel Roberts so soon. For my part, I am very certain the girl hasn't forgotten him."

Rutherford looked troubled. "Hard work is a panacea for ills of that kind, Ryckman. Why did Ethel Roberts refuse him?"

"Mainly because she has her own idea of what a man should be. Noyes, at the time he preferred his suit, wasn't up to the standard. The Judge and his

daughter are West, now—Albuquerque. I shall stop off there on my way back."

"Rather odd, Ryckman, that you should come out here without letting a soul know of your intentions. When that Phœnix rig set you down at the office an hour ago, you were the very last person in the world I was expecting to see. I suppose," Rutherford added slyly, "my glowing reports were discredited and you came to see for yourself?"

"Not at all, Rutherford," returned Ryckman hastily. "As a matter of fact, business brought me. I have come to take Jim back to New York."

Rutherford was startled.

"What! Take him back now?" he demanded.

"It's this way," explained Ryckman. "Hasselburg's lawyer—Hasselburg was Noyes' uncle—has dug up a codicil which had been pigeon-holed and forgotten. The codicil revokes that part of the will which stipulates that Jim shall not come into his fortune until he is thirty and has ten thousand in the bank. It gives the money to him outright, and should have become immediately operative on the day of Hasselburg's death. Naturally, this country is no place for a young man of twenty-six, with a competence."

"Naturally," returned Rutherford dryly, "according to your Eastern logic."

"Well, according to any school of logic, then."

"You leave out of your account the logic of circumstances. Suppose I have Jim come here and let you put the matter to him?"

"Wait till he comes from his work—"

"He is at leisure now," said Rutherford, glancing at a clock on the wall. "The six o'clock whistle will blow in an hour and Jim has to dress down his plates between six and seven, while the stamps are hung up. The night-shift takes hold at seven. If you had rather walk down there—"

An excited figure appeared in the door. "Hey, Mr. Rutherford! Jim's gittin' ready to bust the man-killer! Duryea sent me over to tell ye."

"All right, Burke!" The figure disappeared and Rutherford jumped to his feet and grabbed his hat. There was an unwonted gleam in the mine-owner's eyes as he turned to his visitor.

"What in the world is going to happen?" inquired the puzzled Ryckman.

"It's a contest between brute force and human endurance," answered Rutherford hastily. "The man-killer is a broncho. The Hamiltons, on the other side of Squaw Mountain, bought him out of a herd and hired a 'buster' to break him to saddle. The 'buster' was thrown and the horse jumped on him and killed him. Another cowboy tried the job and got off with a broken leg.

"The Hamiltons were going to shoot the horse, when Jim heard about it and interfered. It took three men and a whole day to get the man-killer to the Big Pima."

"And Jim's going to ride the brute?" cried Ryckman in consternation.

"Of course he is! Didn't you hear what Burke said? Come on, or we'll be late for the performance. I wouldn't miss it for a hundred dollars!"

"I object to this, Rutherford!" exclaimed Ryckman, getting up from his chair.

"Object and be hanged! I beg your pardon, Ryckman, but you don't understand. Jim has sworn to ride the brute or break its neck."

"But Jim might be killed!"

"He might, but he won't."

"He always had more recklessness than discretion," breathed Ryckman.

Rutherford calmed himself with an effort.

"You're speaking of one J. Algernon Noyes, the man you used to know," said he slowly. "I'm talking about Jim Noyes, of the Big Pima, and I'd bank every dollar I own on the result."

"Nevertheless, if I can keep him from attempting this foolish thing," returned Ryckman, "I'm going to do it."

"You're not even his trustee, now, Ryckman. Jim has one trait that he impressed on all of us: he has a mind of his own. Calm your troubled spirit and come on down to the corral."

With not a little trepidation, Ryckman followed Rutherford through the door and hurried along at his side toward the scene of the broncho-breaking.

CHAPTER XII

A MAN TO BE RECKONED WITH

"I guess I didn't write you about the way Jim tamed the 'bad' man at Tennyville," said Rutherford, as they hastened onward. "Jim was rather modest about it and wanted me to keep it quiet. I had to go over to the town and, as it is a long ride, I took Jim along for company.

"The man I wanted to talk with happened to be in a saloon. Just as we got to the place, a revolver started to crack inside and a lot of terrified men began to crowd out of the doors and jump through the windows. Old Luke Kipper, a man with a record, was shooting up the place and allowing that he not only owned the saloon, but the town as well, and part of the surrounding country. He dared any one to dispute him.

"Well, Jim disputed him. He went into that tough resort with only his bare hands and not only relieved the desperado of his guns but drove him out of the place at the points of them and made him dance a Highland fling in front. That was where Luke Kipper's star suffered an occultation, and from that time there was one bad man the—Ah!" and Rutherford suddenly broke away from the Tennyville incident; "we've missed part of the fun. Jim has already got his saddle and bridle on the man-killer and is getting ready to mount."

By that time, Rutherford and Ryckman were close to the corral. Ever since leaving the office sporadic yells had been wafted to their ears, growing in volume and lending a fitting background to the bit of rowdyism the mine-owner had been relating—for rowdyism, pure and simple, is what his friend considered it.

Every man who could find an excuse for being in the vicinity of the corral, was there. The top of each fence-post, on that side of the inclosure, held its spectator; and there was an irregular cordon of onlookers drawn in crescent formation about the corral-gate.

As Rutherford and Ryckman drew near, the men separated to give them an unrestricted view.

"That bronk is so blame full o' pizen ye can scrape strychnine off'n his neck!" Quinn declared.

Rutherford had no time for words. His face flushed, his eye brightened, and he seemed lost to everything except the struggle that was taking place under his eyes.

Ryckman was likewise lost—lost in a maze of unreality, his puzzled mind dealing entirely, as it seemed to him, with figments of the imagination. That tanned, sinewy, energetic man, bareheaded, his brown arms bare to the elbow, his every move swift as lightning and sure as fate, that certainly could not be Noyes.

Passively yielding to the illusion, he raised no voice in protest. He stood and stared, expecting presently to be awakened and to have the scene snuffed out like an exciting dream.

The man-killer was in every way worthy of his antagonist. He was a sorrel, "rangy" like all true fighters of the broncho kind, three parts whalebone and the rest pure deviltry. There were about eleven hundred pounds of him, and in his wicked head was a supreme confidence born of his unconquered past.

The mounting, preliminary to the real struggle, gave an opportunity for the opening skirmish. With one hand gripping the bridle and the other the stirrup, Noyes was being flung about the open space by powerful sidewise leaps of the man-killer.

Confident of their comrade's ability to win out and preserve himself from harm, the miners allowed a little fun to mix with their excitement.

"Walk up, straddle 'im, an' set down!" whooped Chesty Burke. "Jim, I'm shore s'prised at ye."

"Mebby he's a left-handed bronk," cried Getty; "try him on the other side, Jim."

"Look out! look out!" shouted Rutherford.

The broncho had suddenly risen on his hind feet, turned slightly in that position and come down in the hope that he could get Noyes under his forward hoofs. The watchful Noyes, however, was clear of the hoofs when they fell, and the broncho gave a disappointed squeal and grabbed at his shoulder with snapping teeth.

Noyes evaded the teeth as he had the hoofs; then, in the momentary pause following the horse's maneuver, he grabbed the stirrup once more and gained the saddle with a flying leap.

"Bravo!" shouted Rutherford, clapping his hands.

"The fun's only commenced," spoke up Dimmock. "The man-killer hasn't hardly begun to play his hand yet."

The broncho made one desperate buck that let daylight in between Noyes and the saddle, but after that Noyes got his head up so he could not have free action for such tactics. This was not strictly according to the rules of the game, but Noyes wanted to try the broncho's mettle from all sides.

The man-killer doubled around and once more tried to bite. A quirt fell in stinging coils about his nose. He snorted with the pain and essayed a nip on the other side, but with a like result.

These initial failures sent the brute into a whale-like flurry. He arose in the air as if he were propelled by powerful springs, his entire body undulating with the most weird contortions, but still his antagonist held steadfastly to his seat.

A fall was the equivalent of death, for once Noyes was prostrate on the ground the man-killer would crush him under his hoofs. Failing to unseat his rider, the broncho reared erect and toppled over backward.

A cry of dismay flickered through Ryckman's tense lips, followed almost immediately by a laugh of derision from the miners. The broncho had dropped on an empty saddle. As soon as he had floundered to his feet his rider was in place again.

Noyes then gave the man-killer his head, dropping the reins on the pommel and raking him from tail to ears with the sharp rowels. It was wonderful work, for while Noyes' feet traveled back and forth from flank to neck, the man-killer was pitching and plunging in a perfect frenzy of rage. To keep the saddle, under such circumstances, could only be accomplished by consummate skill.

Finally, tiring of his vain efforts, the broncho sailed away like a streak, Noyes keeping him to a circle around the corral. A dozen times, or more, they raced around the inclosure, and then, apparently without difficulty, Noyes drew the panting and lathered brute to a halt. The mill-whistle was just sounding its six o'clock alarm.

"That'll do for to-day," said Noyes. "The worst of it's over. We're acquainted, now, and one more lesson will make us friends."

The broncho's spirit was gone. He stood quietly while Noyes unrove the cinches and removed saddle and blanket; then followed meekly into the corral while the bridle was slipped off. Noyes then gave the brute a pat on the neck, came out, closed the gate, and took the saddle over his shoulder.

Ryckman was still in a daze. He was finding it hard to credit the evidence of his senses. When, however, he realized where he was, Rutherford had taken him by the arm and had led him to the perspiring and triumphant Noyes.

"Here's someone you know, Jim," Rutherford was saying.

A look of blank amaze overspread Noyes' face.

"What!" he cried. "Ryckman? Well by Jove!" The saddle dropped one way and the bridle another, and Ryckman's hand was caught in a clasp whose cordiality pained him. "This is great weather for trustees and bronks; it's hard guessing what either of 'em will do, or when. How are you anyway, old man? And what under the canopy brings you 'way out here?"

Ryckman was unprepared for this boisterous welcome; yet there was no doubt of its heartiness and sincerity.

"You're looking well, Jim," Ryckman finally managed to remark, his admiring glance roving over the lithe figure in front of him.

"I'm feeling ace-high, all right," laughed Noyes. "But I haven't got that ten thousand, yet."

"Oh, bother the ten thousand. I want to see you on business."

Noyes looked at him quickly. "Is that what you came West for?"

"Yes."

"Well," and Noyes recovered the saddle and bridle, "I'm mighty glad to see you, Ryckman, but if your business won't keep until after supper you'll have to come down to the mill with me.

The stamps are hung up and I've got to look after the plates."

"I'll have Getty take care of your battery, Jim," struck in Rutherford. "Put away your riding-gear and come along up to the office."

"There isn't a better millman in camp than Getty," returned Noyes, "but I prefer to look after my own plates. It won't take over half an hour."

"We'll go with you," said Ryckman. "Come on, Rutherford," he added, to the mine owner; "the business is nothing of the star-chamber order."

Noyes halted at the bunk-house to drop his riding equipment.

"Why didn't you let a fellow know you were coming?" he asked as he rejoined Ryckman and Rutherford and they proceeded on to the mill.

"Fact is, Jim, I left New York in such a hurry, a letter, if I had sent one, would only have kept pace with me." Ryckman was beginning to understand the change in Noyes and to feel more at his ease. "You're quite a horseman," he added, his mind full of the spectacle he had recently witnessed.

"That's one of the things a man picks up out here," answered Noyes diffidently.

They entered the mill at the ore-loft, passed the crusher and the groups of stamp-stems and descended to the main floor. Noyes stepped into the laboratory to get a piece of flat rubber, a stubby whisk-broom, and a bottle of quicksilver. While he was doing this, Rutherford led Ryckman to Noyes' battery and brought a chair from the engine-room for him to sit on.

The mine-owner deposited himself on an empty box, lighted his pipe, pushed his hat on the back of his head, hooked up one knee between his hands, and looked serious. He wondered if he were going to lose Jim, now, after his "pay-streak" had been so thoroughly developed.

For some time Rutherford and Ryckman watched Noyes as he scraped the plates, wadded up a ball of amalgam in his hands, and laid it on a piece of chamois skin.

"What's that?" inquired Ryckman.

"Gold, mostly," answered Noyes. "It has to be retorted to free it of the quicksilver, and then refined and run into bars."

Thereupon the boss-amalgamator fell to work with the whisk-broom and the bottle of "quick."

"You see," he went on, "that new lead is so rich we have to make a partial clean-up every time we dress the plates. Otherwise some of the gold would run off in the tailings." Rutherford nodded his head with a complacent smile, but quickly became serious again as Noyes went on: "Well, what about that business, Ryckman?"

"Mr. Hasselburg's lawyer has just found a codicil to that will," said Ryckman.

"And I'm knocked out, eh?" laughed Noyes. "What sort of a lawyer is that fellow to misplace such an important document as a codicil?"

"It wasn't really the lawyer's fault. Your uncle wrote the codicil himself and left it with a clerk in the lawyer's office a few days before heart-disease carried him off. The clerk filed the document in a pigeonhole and forgot about it."

"And you came 'way out here to tell me that I owe my uncle's estate something like $22,500?"

"No, Jim, that isn't the way it stands. You have made a poor guess. Instead of revoking the bequest, your uncle waived all conditions and gave you the money outright."

Noyes went on sprinkling his quicksilver and brushing the plate. His action was a straw in the wind. Rutherford, quick to catch the drift of the young man's sentiment, expressed his growing relief by a wink at Ryckman.

"You understand what this means to you, don't you, Jim?" pursued Ryckman.

"Well, no, I can't say I do," answered Noyes, keeping his head bowed. "Just what does it mean, sir?"

"It means that you have a hundred thousand to your credit, plus interest at six per cent, over and above the amount you have already drawn as an allowance. You are fairly well off."

"Somehow," said Noyes slowly, straightening up from his work, "I am not so elated by this piece of news as I might have been a year ago. After all, that clerk who mislaid the codicil, or forgot about it, has proved a pretty good friend of mine. If you hadn't

tried to hammer into my head the necessity of making $10,000 before I was thirty, and headed me this way and told me I had to go, I'd have missed the best part of my life."

"The experience has been a good thing for you," commented Ryckman. "I felt that it was what you needed or I shouldn't have insisted on your coming here. I believe," Ryckman added, after a pause, "that you are now in an attitude of mind to appreciate your uncle's beneficence and to make the most of it. There is no further need for you to do this sort of work, or any work, for that matter. I have come personally to acquaint you with the fact of the codicil, Jim, and—and—well, to take you back East with me."

"Back East?" repeated Noyes. "What am I to go back East for?"

"You don't want to bury yourself in this out-of-the-way corner of the country, do you?"

"Why not—if I like it? I have friends here"—Noyes' eyes passed gratefully to Rutherford—"one friend, in particular, who has done more for me than I deserved—"

Rutherford fluttered his hand. "That's all right, Jim. It has been a great pleasure for me to see you expand, and come into your own. I should feel badly to find myself standing in your way, now that the East is calling you and coaxing you back with a wad of money."

"You will widen your scope, you know," added Ryckman, "and by a discreet use of your funds continue to add to them."

"I remember once," said Noyes, leaning against the battery-post, and folding his arms, "that I happened to be in Chamounix, and made up my mind to climb Mt. Blanc. I did it, with a couple of guides. There was a lot of hard climbing and we were almost swept away by an avalanche. It took me two days, but they were red-letter days. I had an idea that I'd like to camp down in Chamounix and make the ascent about twice a week.

"It may seem like a foolish notion to you, perhaps, but life at the Big Pima is that Mt. Blanc experience drawn out into weeks and months. There is the same exhilaration, the same freedom, the same feeling that existence hangs by the twin threads of courage and work. I don't want to go back to the old useless round, and I'm not going to."

He rolled down his sleeves, buttoned his shirt at the throat, and picked up his bit of rubber, his whisk-broom, and the bottle. "Come on, gentlemen," he added, throwing off the seriousness that had taken hold of him. "You have missed the first table and now you'll have to eat at the second, with me."

As he stepped into the laboratory to leave his working materials, Rutherford gave Ryckman a nudge with his elbow. "The West keeps him," he said, in a chuckling whisper.

"The East has another card to play," Ryckman returned calmly. "Wait!"

CHAPTER XIII

THE CARD IS PLAYED

Ryckman left the next morning. The continuous roar of twenty stamps, each falling at the rate of ninety-two times a minute, played havoc with his high-strung nerves.

He was not able to think during the day, nor to sleep at night. Then, too, the absence of a sky-line unbroken by twenty-story buildings filled his metropolitan soul with loneliness. An horizon of greasewood, sand-hills, and Sahara cactus impressed him with the idea of the "jumping-off place" and aroused an almost unresistible desire to jump.

And it was to this that he had condemned Noyes! He shuddered and yearned to have some one forgive him. Noyes was certainly not in a forgiving mood; if anything, he was grateful.

Here was a point the New Yorker could not comprehend. Nature lay all about him, stripped to the bones, hideous, repulsive. From whence came the spell powerful enough to turn such heads as Rutherford's and Noyes'?

Ryckman's world was "the Street," his life a round of puts-and-calls, his music the ticker. To go to the wall and to go West were almost synonymous terms. Beyond the Missouri lay the limbo of broken hopes. Why a man should want to stay West, when he had the means to reappear among his

kind and to "hold up his end," was something he could not understand.

So he bade Noyes good-by, commended him to the gloomy regions that had won his regard, and was driven back to the railroad by Rutherford. What they talked on the way need not be mentioned here; results were soon to show themselves.

"When that last card is played," said Rutherford, "I'll lay you a hundred even that the West wins."

"A foregone conclusion," laughed Ryckman. "I'm ready to wager that the East takes the trick."

"Done," said Rutherford, "but play fair."

Four days later, as Noyes had finished his supper and started for the bunk-house, he passed Pedro, working on the mountain-wagon with a bucket of water and a sponge. Earlier in the day Mrs. Pedro and daughter Ynez had fallen upon the old man's shack, beyond the chuck-shanty, and there had followed such an airing of rooms, washing of windows, and beating of rugs as had made the whole camp rub its eyes and stare.

All these preparations had an ominous look.

"*Buenos!*" said Noyes.

Pedro looked sour, refused to reply, and slapped on the water. He was not in a "*buenos*" mood.

"Dance somewhere?" asked Noyes. "Why all ths style?" Up to now the mountain-wagon had gathered to itself the color of the desert unhindered.

"No *sabe* style," growled Pedro. "*Mucho* work, no good, all damn time!" and Pedro tossed the sponge in the air and kicked over the bucket. His unnecessary post-prandial labor was finished. Noyes continued on with a laugh at the little man's temper.

The Cinche Club was busy in the bunk-house. Nick Stafford, girded with belt and guns, his dark face inscrutable as ever, had dropped in to spend the night. He, and Dimmock, and Burke were having a round.

Noyes sat in, pairing with Stafford. Stafford was full of blunders; his bidding was reckless, and half the time he forgot trumps of his own making. The game was a rout for him and Noyes.

"Oh, the devil!" Stafford exclaimed, getting up, "I can't play to-night. Take my place," he added to Quinn, who was looking over his shoulder. "Heard the news?" Stafford went on, unbuckling his belt and hanging it on a peg in the wall.

"What's wrong?" returned Dimmock, shuffling the cards.

"Who said anything was wrong?" retorted Stafford.

"Well," drawled Dimmock, "when a player as good as yourself bids eight on the duece and ten, I naturally infer that something has gone crossways."

Stafford sat down and began pulling off his boots.

"Yerrington's captured," he said, his head down.

Dimmock stopped shuffling. Quinn stared and Burke swore. Noyes dropped his elbows on the table and rested his chin in his hands, his eyes steadily regarding the top of Stafford's head.

"When was this?" asked Dimmock.

"Yesterday, up Cave Creek way," was the response.

"Who did it?" inquired Noyes.

"Hayes and Griffith. Ever since the woman and the girl went to Phœnix to live, the deputies have been watching them. A week ago the girl went to Cave Creek by stage. Hayes and Griffith suspected something, and followed. The girl met her father and the deputies nabbed him.

"I thought"—Stafford still kept his face averted, setting his boots neatly heel to heel against the wall—"I thought Yerrington would be taken in along this trail, but Hayes and Griffith must have been too foxy."

Without another word Stafford went to his bunk and turned in. While the men at the card table were exchanging significant glances, Getty stepped through the bunk-house door.

"I say, Jim," said he, "the old man wants you at the office."

Noyes heeded the summons forthwith. He walked slowly, his mind full of the news Stafford had brought.

"Jim," said Rutherford, a few moments later, "I have special work for you tomorrow, and someone else will take your battery. You see, it's a particular job, and I have selected the best looking man in camp to do it."

"What's the matter with Dimmock?" asked Noyes.

Rutherford laughed in the hearty way that was a part of him.

"You've got to do this for me, Jim. We're to have visitors here, for a while, and the camp must be on its good behavior. Take an early start for Phœnix, in the morning, put up at the corral, and at two o'clock see that the rig is dusted and looking its best. Drive to the Ford, hitch, and go in, and tell the man in the office I sent you. Get the visitors out here safely, that's all I ask of you. Of course, if you can be entertaining and beguile the tedium of the trip, I'll appreciate it."

"All right," said Noyes, and at last understood the meaning of those labors on the part of Pedro and his family.

When he left the Big Pima next morning, he wore his new slouch-hat in honor of the occasion; also a freshly laundered blue flannel shirt and a superlative article in the shape of a flowing blue tie. But throughout the ride he thought less about the visitors than about Yerrington.

He did not go to the Ford for his dinner but patronized a restaurant known as "Coffee Bill's." For twenty-five cents Coffee Bill guaranteed to give a hungry miner or cattleman all he could eat. There may have been a margin of profit in the two-bits Noyes turned over for his meal, but he was rather pessimistic on that score.

For an hour Noyes sat on a bench in the court-house *plaza*, smoking his briar. When the court-house bell boomed its double note, he knocked the ashes from his pipe, put it away, and got up.

Obedient to instructions, a man from the corral had driven the team and mountain-wagon, as well furnished as circumstances would permit, to a hitching-post in front of the Ford.

"Now for it," Noyes muttered, striding across the street and entering the hotel-office.

A year of occasional coming and going between the Big Pima and Phœnix had made Noyes fairly well known at the corral, the stores, and the hotels. He preferred humbler quarters than the Ford, when he came to Phœnix alone; but he had been there several times with Rutherford. A glimpse of his stalwart, broad shouldered figure brought a hearty greeting from the clerk.

"I know what you're down for, Jim," smiled the clerk. "They're up-stairs in the parlor, waiting for you."

Half-way up the stairs the notes of a piano met him. "Bonnie Doon!" No voice accompanied the air; it was the melody only, coming like a whisper through the silken hangings of the parlor door and along the hall. He stopped and his hard brown hand gripped the railing.

He had heard that one night, long ago—the night he had been given his *congé*. The sadness, the vexation, the reproach of the face he had known and loved swept before his mental vision like so many embodied specters.

With a shake of the shoulders he threw off the spell that had enthralled him. "Odd," he thought, "that I should hear that now!"

He passed on to the room, swept the hangings aside, and stepped in, hat in hand. A slender figure in hat and linen dust-coat sat at the keys, back toward him, head erect, and eyes gazing into vacancy as the ballad crept out from under the slim white fingers.

His face went pale and he took a step forward, hand outstretched, his lips framing a word his voice failed to utter. Some one stirred at his right.

"Ah!" came a voice. "If I am not mistaken, my man, you are the one we are looking for. Are you from Rutherford's place?"

Noyes recovered himself on the instant. A portly gentleman of medium stature, with a gray, closely-cropped beard was studying him through gold-rimmed glasses. Noyes saw that he was not recognized.

"My man!"

He felt, perhaps, as Dimmock had felt on another occasion.

"Mr. Rutherford sent me to bring you out to the mine," Noyes answered. "The rig is at the door. and if you are ready we will hit the trail."

At the piano, "Bonnie Doon" had been suddenly discontinued. A pair of wide blue eyes were surveying Noyes in wonder and astonishment. The girl arose and started toward him.

"Why, Algy! Can it be possible—"

"Jim," he returned, "Jim Noyes, Miss Roberts. Pray introduce me to the Judge. Evidently I have outgrown his recollection."

CHAPTER XIV

NIGHT ON THE HILLSIDE

The return ride was not one of unalloyed enjoyment. Miss Roberts sat ahead with the driver. The judge had the rear seat to his portly self, and consumed cigars and marveled.

What a change in Algy Noyes. It was a change for the better if he had not—er—become a rowdy.

"You are greatly changed, Mr. Noyes."

The ten miles to the Arizona canal had passed with desultory remarks and considerable embarrassment. As they clattered over the bridge, however, Miss Roberts aroused and gave utterance to her father's unspoken thoughts.

There was a vast amount of formality between this girl and this young man who had known each other for years. Noyes had repelled Miss Roberts' friendly advances in the hotel, renouncing the name she had always used in addressing him. Apparently he had renounced the old associations as well. His manner indicated that such was the case; and hence the embarrassment and formality.

"I suppose I have changed, Miss Roberts," Noyes observed. "When a man has pecked at a conventional existence on an allowance, he becomes an altogether different bird when the allowance is knocked from under him and he finds himself standing on his own feet and with his wings clipped."

A moment of silence followed this burst. Then—

"You seem to soar very well for a bird with clipped wings," observed Miss Roberts.

She had couched her lance at the barrier of restraint, only to have its point turned with the reply:

"I have been twelve months repairing my wings. I think I have earned the right to soar."

Was he harking back to that evening in the drawing-room? By reference to clipped wings, was he disguising the smart of vanity, the repulse of what may have been an honest passion which she had resolutely put upon him?

She wondered if he were so dense as not to understand the sacrifice had been hers, as well, and made for his own ultimate good. He had hurt her with his dealing in figures. But she tossed her head and seemed untouched and unconcerned.

"She never cared a rap for me," thought Noyes, noting her passive features out of the tails of his eyes.

He touched the bronchos with the whip. There followed a jump, which unsettled the comfortable attitude of the Judge and threw the young lady's hat awry and caused her to gasp out a frightened "Oh!"

"Beg pardon!" exclaimed Noyes hastily, as he sawed on the bits. "A broncho never appreciates your consideration when you use the lash to relieve him of a horse-fly."

The Judge had been judiciously silent for ten miles. Now, having been jolted out of his repose, he began a cross-examination, choosing the temper of bronchos for a subject.

From bronchos he passed to mines, from mines to climate, from climate to the country itself, and was just at a point of query concerning the Big Pima when they topped the rise and looked down on the camp. Without making an attempt to note the effect of the scene upon his companions, Noyes clattered past the bunk-house, the office, and the chuck-shanty, and drew up before the old man's quarters.

Rutherford, decked out for the occasion in a white negligee-shirt and brand new corduroys, was on the diminutive porch. He ran down the steps like a boy, his face beaming with happiness.

"Well, Judge! This is a pleasure, indeed. How are you? And Miss Roberts! I hope the long ride did not tire you? I sent the best man I had"—with a quizzical side-glance at Noyes—"and felt very certain he would look after your comfort."

The Judge was glad to meet his old friend; glad the ride was over, although he had not minded it particularly; glad he had made up his mind to come on from Albuquerque; and glad for a dozen other things as he volubly descended from the mountain-wagon

and limped to a chair on the porch. Rutherford assisted Miss Roberts to alight, and turned her over to the smirking *señora*.

As Noyes started to turn and drive to the corral, Rutherford called after him:

"I want you up here this evening, Jim."

Noyes nodded. He was beginning to scent conspiracy in all this, but deep down in his heart rather enjoyed being the object of it.

"Jim," said Dimmock, coming into the bunk-house after supper and finding Noyes at work with the silver-back hair-brush in front of a three-cornered scrap of looking-glass, "I reckon you and I will have to take the kinks out of Burke and Quinn to-night. Those fellows are beginning to think they can play some."

"Get Stafford, Hank," Noyes answered.

"Stafford took the trail a little while after you did. Besides, he's not in a mood for the right kind of playing. What's the matter with you?"

"Old man wants me at the house, this evening."

Dimmock whistled, looked blank, and then wise.

"Say, who's the girl?" he asked.

"Don't bother me! What's the girl got to do with it?"

"I pass. There are six blue shirts with real collars in camp, you know, held over from that dance at Hamilton's last year. One of 'em might fit."

"How you go on. Say, who pulled the bristles out of this brush? I haven't seen it for six months and it looks as if the rats had been at it."

"Getty was short a whisk-broom one night and used it to rub down the plates. Thought you knew about it."

"Getty hasn't any more idea of property rights than a Hottentot," growled Noyes.

When he had finished with his toilet he sat down and smoked a pipe with Dimmock and the rest of the boys. Their good-natured raillery on the subject of his call at the old man's "hang-out" was accepted in kindred spirit. When he left a storm of badinage followed him through the bunk-house door.

Rutherford and the Judge were smoking cigars and chatting about bygone days. Miss Roberts was taking lessons in drawn-work from the *señorita*. Leaving the ladies to themselves, Noyes joined the men.

Rutherford had been enlightening the Judge concerning Noyes. Owing to this, or something else, the Judge's affability toward the young man was most marked.

"Rutherford intimates, Jim," observed the Judge, after Noyes had accepted a cigar, "that you like this Western country rather better than you do the East."

"The West has done for me what the East never could do," Noyes responded. Indirectly the Judge had his answer.

"Don't you ever feel a desire for the old life?"

"The only sentiment that stirs me is a desire to forget it."

Miss Roberts lifted her head and shot a glance at him. He saw the involuntary movement in a mirror. The girl's eyes passed to the mirror, met his, and fell.

"Personally," said the Judge, "I should think a taste for this bleak region would have to be acquired."

"It would kill a man," went on Noyes, "if he were set down here with nothing to do. To appreciate his surroundings he must work; when he does that the fascination begins."

"A thinking mind, Judge," put in Rutherford, "will draw contrasts. When an Easterner with some brains has been here long enough to get his contrasts well defined, you might as well try to coax him out of the Garden of Eden as to get him back where he came from."

"I can't recall," said the Judge with a twinkle, "that there was much work going on in the Garden of Eden."

"It wasn't necessary, at the start-off," answered Rutherford with a look toward the ladies. "They raise oranges over in the Salt River Valley; they haven't gone into apples."

The discussion proceeded for some time, the ladies busy with their work and affecting to take no interest in it. At last *Señorita* Ynez averred that she must be going. As she lived some little distance away, Noyes offered to accompany her.

"We'll both go!" exclaimed Miss Roberts. "I am eager for a glimpse of this wonderful wilderness by moonlight."

The *señorita* had her *mantilla* and Miss Roberts hurried to get a shawl. Their course to Pedro's took them past the office, but they were able to avoid the bunk-house with its roystering inmates.

Señorita Ynez was a pretty girl and had imbibed a little learning in a convent school. Her English was excellent and she made a most agreeable companion for the Eastern girl.

Perhaps Miss Roberts had not yet been informed that the *señorita* had a *caballero* at the Coronado mine; one of her own race who called Sunday evenings and played the guitar and pushed his suit. It may not have been lack of knowledge on this point that impelled Miss Roberts to accompany her and Noyes. Noyes, at least, was not conceited enough to have any pronounced ideas on the subject.

The *señorita* was left at the door of her father's adobe dwelling. Let us take our time returning," said Miss Roberts. "It is such a grand night I should like to stay out a little while and enjoy it."

"Suppose," returned Noyes, "we visit the Hill of Reflection and the Boulder of Discontent?"

"That sounds like a piece of Chinatown," she laughed. "I did not suppose there was any poetry in a desert like this."

"Neither did I, at first. Before I adapted myself the boulder was nameless and the elevation was Snake Hill."

"Mercy! If there are snakes—"

"Is not Jim the Broncho-Buster beside you? Perhaps you will consider him more dependable than Algy Noyes."

"You have been Jim ever since you —ah—adapted yourself?"

"Ever since I came to my senses and made the crushing discovery that life did not mean twenty-five hundred a year and beer and skittles."

She was silent for a while as they climbed the hill, he clasping her arm and guiding her through the labyrinth of crawling cactus.

"Just where, and when, and how," she asked finally, "did this metamorphosis, which you call adapting yourself, occur? A friend of long standing may be pardoned a little curiosity, it seems to me."

"Here is the place," said he, halting beside a gray stone. "At first it was the mourner's-bench, then the anxious-seat, and now it's—well, let us call it the amen-corner." He deposited her on the stone. "You may refer to it, Miss Roberts, in any way that hits off your present mood."

"In that event I shall call it the anxious-seat. There is room for you," she added, moving over a little, "even though your mental attitude is different."

"Thank you," he said, seating himself. "Never, in my wildest dreams did I imagine that you would one day be sitting here beside me."

Below them the mill was wrestling with the flinty ore, roaring resistlessly and gleaming at every opening and crevice with yellow light. The dingy old building was almost beautiful; night hid its ugliness, and the throb of its tireless stamps and the glow that pierced its walls seemed to lay bare its very soul.

"I suppose," said the girl, "that the merciless one you left behind was not often in your thoughts?"

"Not often," he answered, with a slight smile, which, of course, she could not see. "I came to adapt myself to the Great Refusal just as I adapted myself to the other necessary conditions of my new life."

"Have you no desire to—to return East?"

"Not the slighest. My work is here and it is a joy to feel that at last I am of some use in the world. The East is a memory, and not a very pleasant one."

"It must be rather a comprehensive memory, I think. Are there not a few details of the retrospect which you would like to transplant to this arid environment?"

"The details you mention are like plants which would not thrive in desert soil. I would not have the heart to transplant them."

Perhaps he did not grasp the hidden meaning of her words, for the cry of her heart was back of them. That cry was for him, now that he had proved himself to be all and more than she had hoped.

Whatever else Algy Noyes had been, his wit had been sharp enough. Had the process of adaptation changed him in this respect? She got up from the boulder.

"There is a chill to the night air," she said in a stifled voice, "and I believe I will go back."

He did not question her resolve but conducted her down the hill as carefully as he had led her up the slope. For her, at that moment, it was a veritable Hill of Discontent.

CHAPTER XV

THE SENORITA TELLS SOMETHING

Perhaps the novelty of the surroundings interfered with Miss Ethel's slumbers that night. She rested ill, and what sleep she had was broken with interruptions. The call of the coyotes aroused her once, and again it was a lull in the murmur of the mill. As soon as she had become a little accustomed to the "requiem" of the stamps, she was like the miller who wakes with the stopping of the wheel. The silence of the stamps was but temporary, and when they resumed work she dozed off again.

Another time she started into wakefulness at a sound of voices on the porch, beneath her window. The voices were indistinct and she could hear them but faintly, yet she recognized Rutherford's deep tones and then the quick, excited voice of Noyes.

"I'm the one to go!"

It was Noyes said that, and the murmur that followed was like a protest from the mine-owner.

"Keep it from the Judge and his daughter—it's a bad business!"

That was Rutherford.

The girl arose softly and stood by the open window. Two forms strode side by side off into the gloom. She continued to listen and wonder, and finally heard galloping hoofs fading into the low chant of the mill.

At breakfast, next morning, she expected some comment on the doings of the night, but none was made. Although eager to be informed, she did not broach the subject.

Noyes, she knew, worked in the mill. Toward the middle of the forenoon she expressed a desire to see the stamps beating out gold from the ore, and Rutherford conducted her and her father among the batteries and explained operations.

"This is Jim's battery," Rutherford said, halting between two of the plates over which thin sheets of muddy water were flowing. "Jim is away on important business today, but I expect him back to-morrow."

She did not ask where Jim had gone, or what his important business was, although she burned to know. "Keep it from the Judge and his daughter" were the words that ran constantly through her mind. She professed to be greatly interested in the mill; but when they left it declined to go with Rutherford and her father into the mine. When they started for the shaft-house, she started for the porch of the dwelling and found the *señorita* there waiting for her.

The *señorita* had her drawn-work, but Miss Ethel was not in a mood for drawn-work. She was pleased to have the *Mexicana* come, for her visit might serve to distract her thoughts from the problem of Jim and the "bad business" which it had been decided to keep from her and her father.

Noteworthy happenings in the camp were rare, and the few that transpired were made the most of. The *señorita*, who had received a full account from her father, was not long in adverting to the occurrences of the night.

"I suppose you have heard, Miss Roberts, of the awful thing that happened in the hills yesterday afternoon?"

Miss Ethel was no longer apathetic. Interest developed in a flash, and she turned her bright eyes inquiringly on the *señorita*.

"No, Ynez," "I have not heard.

"Perhaps you would not like to hear? You are not used to such things and it might shock you."

"My nerves are quite strong, I think. What happened?"

"Have you heard of Yerrington, the *Americano* who robs and kills and was made a prisoner, a day or two ago, at Cave Creek?"

A flutter of apprehension swept through Miss Ethel. "No," she answered. "I suppose there are many des-

peradoes in the West; at least, so I have been told."

"But Yerrington is the only one we have ever had about here, Miss Roberts. I thought you might have heard how, a year ago, Mr. Noyes tried to capture him."

"Did Mr. Noyes try to capture such a man?" Miss Ethel asked, her eyes widening.

"Yes," answered the *señorita* vivaciously. She had all a woman's delight for imparting important news at first hand. "That was when Mr. Noyes was patrolling the pipe-line—the *padre* has told me of it a dozen times. Yerrington had killed a man named Peleg Stafford, and he had robbed a train—robbed it alone, with no one to help him, and had got away.

"Mr. Noyes found him camped along the pipe-line between here and Monument Creek. Mr. Noyes was unarmed and he tried to capture Yerrington with his bare hands."

"It—it is a wonder he was not killed!" breathed Miss Ethel.

"So everyone said, Miss Roberts. He was badly hurt—perhaps you noticed the scar on his forehead, last night? No? Well, that is where Yerrington struck him with the butt of his pistol. Some men from the mine found Mr. Noyes bound and helpless. The *padre* says that ever since that night Mr. Noyes has been anxious to meet Yerrington again. Now he has the chance."

Miss Ethel's face was white and she leaned forward and clasped the *señorita's* hand convulsively.

"Go on," she whispered. "Tell me all, everything."

"Ah, I fear you cannot stand it!" answered the *señorita* contritely. "You are not used to such things, and—"

"You must tell me!" declared Miss Ethel. "You say that Mr. Noyes has a chance to meet this Yerrington again. How has it come about?"

"It was like this, Miss Roberts," proceeded the *señorita*, her face troubled: "Yerrington was captured by two officers at Cave Creek, and last night one of the officers rode to the bunk-house yonder leading the other horse with—with the other officer across the saddle. Yerrington had escaped, but had been obliged to kill one of the men to do it."

Miss Ethel fell back in her chair with her hands listless in her lap. So this was the "bad business" referred to by Rutherford.

"Dimmock, one of the men," continued the *señorita*, "took the man who had been killed to Phœnix in the mountain-wagon—starting from camp before daylight—"

"But what about Mr. Noyes?" asked Miss Ethel, a clammy hand clutching at her heart.

"Three of them went back toward Cave Creek to capture Yerrington before he could leave the country. The officer was one, young Mr. Stafford was the other, and Mr. Noyes was the third."

Miss Ethel got up from her chair and stood leaning against one of the porch-posts. Jim was gone, gone perhaps to his death, and at the very last he had not understood her.

Her eyes wandered up the slope to the left of the porch. It was his "Hill of Discontent." Her gaze sought out the gray boulder.

The *señorita* came and put an arm about her companion's slender waist.

"Ah, I fear—I fear I should not have told you!" she murmured.

"I am very glad you did tell me, Ynez," was Miss Ethel's answer.

"I am not feeling very well this morning and the news was something of a shock; but it was good of you to tell me, and it was right I should know. Let us go into the house."

CHAPTER XVI

THE PURSUIT OF YERRINGTON

The *señorita's* account of the night's occurrences was substantially correct. Nick Stafford had ridden into camp late, solitary, and inscrutable as before.

When Griffith rode up to the bunk-house door with the still form of Hayes across the led horse, the men were quickly aroused. Stafford's movements were suggestive of feverish energy, and a smouldering gleam was in his eyes.

Yerrington had slipped his handcuffs in the vicinity of Monument Creek. Hayes was riding ahead and Griffith behind. The prisoner was between them, bound to the saddle.

Snatching a revolver from Hayes' belt, Yerrington had shot him in the back. As the deputy fell, Yerrington goaded his horse to a gallop with one of the dangling cuffs. A fusillade followed between him and Griffith, rendered ineffectual on both sides by the growing darkness.

The escaped prisoner vanished in the timber of Monument Creek. Griffith had tried to overhaul him, but without effect; then had returned, caught Hayes' horse, laid the dead man across the saddle and spurred on to the Big Pima.

"Get Blitzen ready for me, Dimmock," Noyes had said to his friend; "I must see the old man and tell him what has happened. Are you for the trail, Stafford?" he added, looking into the young man's lowering face.

"Fate has kept that murdering scoundrel for me," answered Stafford. "Of course I'm for the trail."

"And so am I," muttered Griffith. "But we don't want too many."

"I'm with you, too, don't forget that," flung back Noyes as he ran from the bunk-house.

Rutherford had sought to persuade Noyes from taking part in the pursuit, but the young man firmly turned aside every protest. The mine-owner knew well what was calling him; it was the same determination that had manifested itself on several lesser occasions since he had been at the mine.

Rutherford walked back to the bunk-house with Noyes, arranged to have Dimmock start for Phœnix with the body of Hayes, and then witnessed the departure of the three men.

"I'll match Jim ag'in a dozen like Griffith an' Stafford," said Burke. "Yerrington'll find he's up ag'in a different proposition than he was a year ago."

"Yerrington'll never be toted in alive," spoke up Quinn; "if he's caught on his feet, Stafford'll see to it that he's lugged in with his boots on. Lord! Nick Stafford is crazy about that there Yerrington. I s'pose he has a right to his feelin's, though. Don't know but I'd be o' the same way o' thinkin' if I was in his shoes."

"The law made a misplay in the case o' Peleg Stafford," said Getty. "We all know that."

The pursuers, meanwhile, were racing along the pipe-line. Noyes had the half-tamed man-killer under him, for the broncho had mettle and speed far beyond the ordinary. Griffith had a fresh horse, and Stafford his own.

There was small hope of encountering Yerrington at the house on Monument Creek, but it was decided to call there. "His horse aint none too fresh," remarked Griffith. "His old game to work for a fresh mount will be played—he'll reach out for the nearest point where he can pull it off."

"What point will that be?" asked Noyes. "There are horses with the Whipsaw outfit."

"The Glencoe mine is nigher than the Whipsaw. He'll hike for there, if I am any prophet. Once he straddles another bronk he'll be for the border ag'in."

Yerrington's old home on Monument Creek had been looted by vagrant Mexicans. While searching the dark interior Griffith stirred up a rattlesnake.

"We're lookin' for a more venomous critter than what you be!" muttered the deputy, setting his foot on the rattler's head. "He's not here, boys," he added, as he flung himself into the saddle once more. "We'll chance it at the Glencoe"

They reached the Glencoe mine in time to snatch a hurried breakfast and breathe and bait their horses. The men at that camp were thrown into an uproar by the news. The live stock was all present or accounted for, so it was plain that the Glencoe had been left out of Yerrington's plans.

Griffith was calm, cool, but inexorable. The killing of his companion had brought to the surface of his hardy nature every particle of will, determination, and resource that he possessed. He had been long in the hills on Yerrington's trail, and had passed days and nights of sleepless vigilance in the saddle; but his endurance was of iron and never once did he flag.

Stafford spoke not at all, save when directly addressed, and then his speech was monosyllabic and curt. His grim features unbent to express the purpose that lay nearest his heart. The rôle of avenger was his and very early in the pursuit both Griffith and Noyes realized that it had been a mistake to bring him

along. Stafford's hate was implacable; nothing would satisfy it but Yerrington's death at his hands.

The rest at the Glencoe was followed by a wild ride in the direction of the Whipsaw. Less than half the eight miles separating the two mines had been covered when a dust flurry, hovering on the south-western horizon, claimed the attention of the pursuers.

"Somethin' doin'," said Griffith, drawing rein. "The dust's comin' this way so we better wait an' see what's up. Looks as if it might be a bunch from the Whipsaw deestrict."

As the wind whipped the cloud aside several riders could be seen, approaching at a stiff gallop. Griffith, Noyes, and Stafford, rigidly erect in their saddles, continued to watch.

"That's Sam Thayer in the lead," remarked Griffith. "He's a freighter for the Whipsaw outfit."

"I know him," returned Noyes.

"Looks interestin', the way they ride. Shouldn't wonder if we was goin' to hear somethin' bearin' on this business of ours."

Thayer, leading the others by a hundred yards, did not slacken pace but flew on like the wind. "Fall in," he cried to the three who were watching him. "Mebby we'll need you, Griffith."

Spurs and quirts brought Noyes, Griffith, and Stafford neck and neck with the freighter.

"Who you after?" asked Griffith.

"Hoss-thief. Took a bronk away from Casey, one of the Whipsaw men, at the point of a gun."

"What fer lookin' man was he?"

"Casey didn't see much 'cept he had a bloodstained handkercher tied around his head."

"I must 'a' pinked him last night," remarked Griffith with a look at Noyes.

"Pinked who?" demanded Thayer, keeping his eyes on the ground ahead.

"Does Casey know Yerrington?" queried Griffith, ignoring the freighter's question for the moment.

"I pass. Why? Got any idee the hoss-thief's Bill Yerrington?"

"It's a cinche. Hayes and me had Bill last night, over on Monument Creek; but he slipped one of his cuffs, killed Hayes, and got away."

Thayer eased his feelings with a startled oath. "Where'd you pick up Noyes and Stafford?"

"At the place I left Hayes—the Big Pima."

"It's Yerrington, all right," growled Thayer. "He was afoot when he jumped out of the greasewood ahead o' Casey and looked over a gun at him. Casey was too s'prised to shoot. He opened up later, when Yerrington was lopin' off, but only managed to wound the bronk. The bullet that touched up the bronk is what's giving us our trail. Look!"

A fleck of red lay on the sand ahead of Thayer's pointing finger.

"How badly was the bronk hurt?" asked Griffith, his thoughts speeding ahead toward eventualities.

"That's more'n Casey knew."

"How much of a start had Yerrington?"

"Less'n an hour."

"Jupiter!" exclaimed the exultant Griffith. "We'll nail him."

"He's makin' for Apache Cañon, looks like. Mebby he's thinkin' o' makin' a last stand behind the rocks."

"How many shots did Yerrington fire at you, last night, Griffith?" Noyes asked.

"Not more than two. They came so close I couldn't help noticin' 'em."

"Did he shoot at Casey, Thayer?" Noyes was still doing the questioning.

"Nary a time," replied the freighter.

"Do you know, Griffith," Noyes pursued, "whether Hayes' revolver—the one Yerrington took—had a full cylinder?"

"With Hayes an' me totin' a feller of Yerrington's stripe?" cried the deputy. "Sure the cylinder was full—six ca't-ridges."

"Then, so far as we know, and counting the shot that did the work for poor Hayes, Yerrington, if he hasn't been wasting his ammunition, has only three bullets left between him and capture."

"That looks reasonable," said Griffith, "providin' he hasn't been able to pick up some guns or ammunition some'rs. But in broad day and at easy range, three bullets with Yerrington behind 'em mean three lives."

This exchange of ideas took place with the horses at a steady, swinging gallop. The mounts of Thayer, Staf-

ford, and Griffith seemed of about equal speed and endurance, keeping well together. Noyes, on the other hand, was compelled to check the man-killer in order to remain with the others.

Blitzen—for thus Noyes had named him—had hardly turned a hair. The other three horses were lathered and gasping, constantly demanding the spur and the quirt; but so far as appearances went there might still be a hundred miles in Blitzen.

The rest of the Whipsaw contingent had fallen hopelessly in the rear. A backward glance showed two horses down and out, and three more making but sorry work of it.

"Us fellers for it," remarked Thayer, "and maybe, at the last"—with an envious glance at the man-killer—"Noyes alone."

Was it a deep sense of satisfaction that sped through Noyes' tingling nerves? He had hoped—nay he had had the conviction, born he knew not how—that Fate would yield him another chance to try conclusions with Yerrington.

He looked around to find Stafford's glowing eyes, fierce with desire, resting upon Blitzen.

"We'll have to check up, for a few minutes," said Thayer, "unless we want to be out of the game, for good an' all, within a mile. You might as well stay with us, Noyes—for a while, anyhow," he ffnished.

The party halted, every horse but Blitzen humped under the saddle and wheezing painfully. Thayer and Griffith got off to loosen cinches. It was hardly necessary for Noyes to do so, but he felt as if Blitzen should have the same consideration, so he slid from the saddle.

As he threw up the stirrup-leather and bent his head under it, a flying foot struck him and hurled him back. At the same instant his astounded gaze rested on Stafford, who had made a flying jump from his own saddle to Noyes'.

"Don't hinder me!" yelled Stafford; "it's my right!"

Blitzen leaped ahead with the usurper; and Noyes, a fierce frown on his face, half dropped his hand toward his revolver.

CHAPTER XVII

TWO AT THE TRAIL'S END.

Noyes recollected himself in time. Resentment fled when he sought to imagine himself in Stafford's place.

Stafford, however, did not proceed far. An alien hand was on the rein, a strange spur at Blitzen's flank. Instinct told the horse that his master was not in the saddle.

Halting with an abruptness that nearly threw Stafford over his head, Blitzen went up into the air. Noyes whirled on Griffith.

"Quick!" he cried. "Into your saddle, Griffith, and stand by with your rope or Stafford will be killed."

A hasty pull readjusted one of the half-loosened cinches. Coiling his rope in his right hand, ready for a throw, Griffith urged his mount forward.

Stafford was not even a tolerable horseman. At Blitzen's third buck he tumbled to the ground and the man-killer ended about like a flash to make use of his hoofs.

Griffith's noose flew forward and settled about Blitzen's neck, the rope tightening and holding the furious horse in leash until Stafford could scramble clear. Running forward, Noyes caught the plunging broncho by the bits.

There was a brief struggle until he got in the saddle, and a briefer struggle afterward. A moment of superiority had given the man-killer a taste of his unconquered past. But the spirit of resistance flickered out under the masterful hand of Noyes.

When Blitzen had become quiet and orderly once more, Noyes leaned forward and released Griffith's rope. No word of indignation or reproof was thrown at Stafford, and he sulkily remounted his own horse.

"I reckon we'll ride ag'in," said Thayer, and the bronchos were once more put to the gallop.

It was a heart-breaking pace. The wonder of all was how Yerrington, on a wounded horse, could continue to hold the advantage of his hour's grace.

The desert ran into rocky hills. Still guided by the red trail, the pursuers broke through a gap in the rugged uplifts and found themselves in Apache Cañon.

The cañon bottom was dry, for Apache Creek, like so many streams in the arid country, flowed beneath the surface, appearing at wide intervals in sluggish pools.

At one of the pools they watered the horses. After drinking, Thayer's horse lay down and would not rise.

"This cuts me out, boys," said the freighter, his voice heavy with disappointment. "Hike along, an' good luck to you."

A mile farther, Griffith's mount staggered and dropped under him, falling on the deputy's foot and spraining his ankle. Stafford loped doggedly on, but Noyes pulled up and waited while Griffith pulled himself out from under the horse.

"I'll have to camp here, Noyes," said he, "till I can git the bronk up. You'll have to keep with Stafford. Rutherford had you app'inted a deputy some time ago, didn't he?"

"Yes."

"Then, lis'en: the law's with you. Uphold it—keep Stafford from doin' that thing he's got in his heart. That's all. Don't waste any more time here."

Noyes' face set sternly and he let Blitzen out to the best speed that was in him. Stafford was still in sight, his horse galloping feebly and mechanically.

Before Noyes caught up with him he had turned a bend in the gulch. Noyes had not yet rounded the angle when the spiteful echoes of a shot clattered back and forth from wall to wall.

Drawing his own weapon as he raced, he came presently upon a singular stage of this wild drama of which Yerrington was the central figure.

A horse lay on the rocks, but it was not Stafford's. This horse had a wound in the thigh.

Stafford had dismounted and, revolver in hand, was peering at the left wall, which was little less than a sheer precipice. A few boulders projected, here and there, and a few stunted trees clung to flinty crevices.

"He's up there," said Stafford. "I don't know whether I got him or not."

A shelf-like fissure angled across the face of the cliff. Even as Stafford spoke a figure emerged from behind a shrub, crawling on hands and knees up the slanting shelf.

It was Yerrington. He was bareheaded, and the bandage spoken of by Thayer was bound about his temples.

The upper part of his kneeling body could be seen, but the sharp angle of the shelf prevented Noyes and Stafford from seeing more than a moiety of the creeping form.

Stafford continued his shooting. At the first bark of the revolver Yerrington crouched down, leaving the marksman no target worth while. Stafford cursed the man loud and long.

While his companion was engaged in vituperation, Noyes began an ascent of the wall. For several minutes he had been studying the configuration of the cliff, and at last believed he had discovered the course taken by the fugitive.

Projecting stones and scraggly bushes gave hand- and foot-holds and Noyes toiled steadily upward. Seeing that he had taken the only course at all likely to meet with success, Stafford followed.

At that point the wall of Apache Cañon was perhaps a hundred feet high. If Yerrington should get over the rim unhindered he would have a chance.

Either he could lie in wait and pick off Noyes and Stafford as they surmounted the cliff's brink, or he could take to his heels. Knowing the man's record, Noyes thought the first alternative would be the one he would choose.

Only the labored breathing of the three men as they toiled upward could be heard above the grinding and fall of dislodged stones. Noyes gained on Yerrington, and once the fugitive peered down at him over a boulder.

Just an instant Yerrington looked, but his eyes and Noyes' met. Yerrington's gave a dare, Noyes accepted the challenge.

When the fugitive gained the brink, Noyes was not far behind. As the long, scrambling legs vanished overhead, Noyes redoubled his efforts, knowing that every second that now held him to the face of the cliff was fraught with imminent danger. Although he worked fast, Noyes shielded himself from the rim as well as he could.

Contrary to expectation, no bullet was launched at him from above.

Could it be that Yerrington had no more loaded shells in that revolver taken from Hayes?

This was the only explanation Noyes could think of at the moment. In the circumstances it seemed folly for Yerrington to husband his ammunition. He would not have such another chance for the effective use of it.

Reaching upward Noyes caught a granite projection on the brink of the cliff; a flexing of the arms, a bound, and he was over, with the rough country bordering the desert before his eyes.

His sight was a few moments in picking up Yerrington. Finally the man was seen, dodging among the hillocks and racing like an antelope for the sandy plain.

Noyes resumed pursuit without loss of an instant. For a man harrassed as he had been Yerrington's energy was most remarkable.

Flight and pursuit had now degenerated into a foot-race, with Noyes —yes, and Stafford, for he could be seen just leaving the cañon's rim—alone left to bring the matter to an issue.

CHAPTER XVIII

RUN TO EARTH

A mile, or a mile and a quarter maybe—who could pay attention to distance at such a time?—Yerrington flung out upon the desert and rushed at a mound of stones upon which a windlass was perched. A blue shirted man stood on the ore-dump, near the windlass, watching in consternation the flight and pursuit. He had just emptied an oxhide-bucket sent up from below.

"Stop him!" roared Noyes. Then he heard the crafty words by which Yerrington sought to gain his end—what end, at that instant, the pursuer could not know.

"A couple of horse-thieves are after me! Are you armed? Give me a gun if you are!"

The man on the ore-dump shook his head and backed away, perplexed and apprehensive. Yerrington bounded up the side of the mound, struck the miner with his clenched fist, and threw himself recklessly into the oxhide-bucket.

The windlass shrieked under the pull of the cable and the crank thrashed the air like a crazy pinwheel. It seemed as if Yerrington must be killed or wounded by that lightning-like and unchecked descent.

A thump announced the arrival of the bucket at the bottom. The crank continued to whirl for a moment, twisting the cable the other way around the windlass.

"How deep is that shaft?" demanded Noyes of the enraged miner who was just climbing back to the top of the dump from which the impact of the blow had thrown him.

"Twenty-five feet. What in the fiend's name—"

"Is there any one down there—that is, aside from the man who just dropped with the bucket?"

"My pardner. I was just emptying the last bucket. He has a hole ready to fire and was ready to come up."

Noyes grabbed the crank and began turning it with feverish eagerness. While he worked, Stafford rushed panting to the scene.

"Wait!" interposed the miner. "Who is that infernal—"

"Bill Yerrington."

The miner gave a jump and let out an oath at the same time.

"Heard he was captured," the miner finished, with a wild look into the mouth of the pit.

"He was captured but he killed one of the deputies and got away. Has your partner a weapon?"

"A sledge and a drill," muttered the other.

"Yerrington'll kill him," growled Stafford, peering intently into the pit.

The end of the rope came up, but there was no bucket. The hempen strands had been severed clean with the slash of a knife. While Noyes was examining the rope a spiteful "crack" echoed out of the nether gloom.

Stafford's hat was turned half around on his head and he stepped back. If he was startled his face gave no hint of it. Pulling off his hat he looked for an instant at the hole in the brim and then put the hat back on his head.

"He has two more shots in his locker," said he. "But if they fly as wide as this one they'll do him little good."

"If you'd jest sit down an' wait," said the miner, "you could starve the villain out."

"What about your partner?"

The miner's wits must have been clouded somewhat by the blow he had received. His face went blank at Noyes' suggestion.

"That's so. We can't starve out Yerrington without putting Jerry in the same hole."

"What claim is this?" queried Noyes, his brain busy with the problem thus unexpectedly presented.

"Barker's Strike."

"You're Barker, are you?"

" 'Rastus Barker. If I'd had somethin' to shoot with when that confounded whelp handed—"

"The shaft is twenty-five feet deep, you say. Have you started to run a level?"

"There's twenty feet of a level at the bottom of the shaft, and a bit of a gouge for ventilation, over there."

Barker indicated another small mound some twenty feet from the ore-dump.

"Is the ventilator-shaft large enough for a man to crawl through?"

"Just about; but it's straight up and down and no ladder. There's a ladder, here—"

Barker gave a yell and pointed to the mouth of the shaft. Stafford's hat was just vanishing from sight. Noyes leaped to restrain the man, but he was out of reach and descending with frantic haste.

"Come back here, Stafford!" Noyes shouted angrily. "Do you want to be killed?"

"It's Yerrington or me for it," the grim answer came back. "One or other of us will never come out of this hole alive."

Quick as a flash, Noyes grabbed the end of the rope and leaped away with it in the direction of the air-shaft. Once more the windlass creaked and the crank beat the air.

"What are you about?" demanded Barker.

"Cut the rope when it is all payed out. I am going down that ventilator-hole."

As Barker cut the rope free from the windlass, a rumbling roar was heard and smoke rushed from the shaft.

"Some one touched off that hole Jerry had loaded!" cried Barker, facing Noyes in consternation. "Didn't the fool know any better? If the lot of 'em aint killed by flying rocks they'll be suffocated by powder-fumes."

"I think not," returned Noyes. "Your forethought in sinking that air-shaft will cause the mine to clear quickly. But the results of the blast will certainly not be pleasant. Come here and help me, Barker."

With swift hands Noyes and Barker secured one end of the rope at the surface and allowed the other to drop into the depths of the ventilator-hole.

"You're goin' down, are you?" inquired Barker.

"Of course."

"Reckon I'd better go along?"

"You stay here and stand ready to give me help from above."

Noyes was already starting down, finding hardly room enough in the narrow opening for the free use of his arms.

'Rastus Barker stared at him until he was out of sight.

CHAPTER XIX

COURAGE THAT WON

To the impatient Noyes it seemed as if he should never reach the end of that stuffy shaft. The opening was a mere hole, gouged in the earth—pierced hurriedly and roughly for the sole purpose of admitting air to the level. It was lined with sharp points and corners and Noyes was lacerated and bruised as he descended.

He was not ten feet below the mouth of the hole before he smelled the stifling fumes of the blast. As he continued on, the odor increased to a sickening degree.

Presently a glow of light penetrated the shaft, and a moment later his feet touched bottom. He landed with his revolver in his hand and his every faculty on the alert.

The breast of the short level was at his back; before him the open level itself, hazy with smoke through which came the blur of candle-light.

Advancing cautiously he reached a little ledge on which the candle had been planted in its own drippings. Back to the wall and weapon in hand, he waited for the draft from the air-shaft to still further dispel the smoke. Every moment his eyes were busy trying to grasp the details of the situation.

A tomb-like stillness reigned. Slowly the retreating vapor brought out a form on the floor of the level, a shambling, sprawled-out form with a red bandage about the forehead.

A weird sensation sped along Noyes' nerves. Had the blast, fired no doubt by Yerrington, taken the life of the man who had set match to it? Or was the lawless scoundrel merely overcome by the foul air?

He advanced quickly to Yerrington's side, knelt down, and bent over to investigate. In a flash the inanimate form became imbued with life.

Two arms shot upward and encircled Noyes' throat and he was drawn down, strangling and held as by hands of steel. One thought raced through Noyes' mind: He might have known!

No candle-light could have endured the rush of air caused by the blast. The candle had been extinguished and relighted. If Yerrington had weathered the blast and set the candle to going, it was but a simple inference that he was shamming.

"Once more, my New York lad!" hissed Yerrington. "You are as easily trapped now as you were a year ago. This time you'll not get off so easily!"

For a little, the advantage was all with the fugitive. Noyes had no opportunity to exert his strength. He felt himself whirled to his back as easily as the maneuver had been accomplished months before, along the pipe-line.

Yerrington rose to his breast and a hand with a dangling steel-cuff was raised. The dull light glimmered on a bit of steel—not the cuff but a thin, venomous blade, poised to strike.

A demand on all his latent strength enabled Noyes to shift, so that the point intended for his breast pierced the flesh of his shoulder.

Death was looking down at him from the fierce, gimlet eyes; murder was written grewsomely in every contorted line of the fugitive's face.

But the seasoning of Noyes had been wrought. He was no longer the helpless Easterner with courage outspanning his strength. He was fit in every way for this occasion which he had hoped and believed would come.

Before Yerrington could strike another blow, a gripping hand was at his throat and another hand had closed on his wrist about the manacle that yet remained in place; then, slowly but resistlessly, the form beneath him arose.

Both men were finally erect, Yerrington gasping for breath and his eyes starting from his head. Noyes pushed him against the curving wall. For half a minute, perhaps, they remained thus.

The baneful shadow of the gallows hovered over Yerrington. If ever a man had the incentive to fight for all that was in him, the fugitive had that incentive now. He rallied for a last effort.

A lurch carried him from the wall of the level. Noyes lowered his hand from the thin sinewy neck; they clinched and struggled back and forth while the fugitive made desperate efforts to use the knife.

Noyes, however, was successful now as before. He threw Yerrington, the man's overstrained muscles collapsing in a breath so that both of them pitched headlong to the rocky floor.

It was a terrific fall, and it chanced that Yerrington's head struck on Noyes' revolver, dropped at the time the fugitive had surprised his assailant. The effect was magical in its suddenness.

Yerrington's arms fell limply and the knife dropped from his nerveless fingers. Springing up with the knife in his own hand, Noyes raced for the shaft, evading one prostrate form and another that had risen to its knees in blank bewilderment.

Two cuts of the knife severed the bail of small ropes attached to the oxhide-bucket. He was back in a flash and had twisted Yerrington's hands to his back and bound them securely.

Hurrying to the air-shaft he jerked the cable.

"Barker!" he called breathlessly.

"Yes?" came fluttering back. "How is everything?"

"All right. Get this rope on the windlass again. There's a man to be hoisted."

The rope flickered aloft. Noyes went back, caught the still unconscious Yerrington by the arms, and dragged him to the main-shaft. The form that had been on its knees had changed its position and was bending over the other prostrate figure.

"What in Sam Hill does all this mean?"

"Are you Jerry, Barker's partner?" asked Noyes, sinking down at the foot of the shaft and waiting for the rope.

"Sure," was the answer.

"What's the matter with that man on the floor in front of you?"

"A broken arm. We was both pretty close to that hole when that other chap fired it. Who is he?"

The candle was too far away to light that part of the level. The only light was daylight which was very faint at that depth. Jerry, on this account, could not see distinctly.

"This man is Bill Yerrington—"

As the announcement had been received by Barker, it was now accepted by Jerry. He swore. Perhaps he had more warrant for his startled profanity than even Barker had had.

"I was gettin' ready to touch off that hole," said Jerry, "when he tumbled down on me. Thunder! It's a wonder the fall didn't put him out o' business; but I reckon the only drop that'll ever fix him is the drop at the gallows.

"He pulled a gun on me and ordered me to get back. Not havin' anythin' in my hands more'n a drill, I thought proper to do like he said. Then he p'inted the gun up the shaft an' let go with a shot; after that, he whirled on me an' give me his attention till the noise of this feller comin' down"—Jerry indicated Stafford—"sent him back to the shaft ag'in.

"Next I knew he was touchin' the candle-flame to the fuse. I yelled at him an' jumped to put the thing out, but he flew past me to the breast of the level. Then the blast went off an' I don't know what-all happened."

At this point the rope came down and Noyes took a twist with it under Yerrington's arms. "All ready!" Noyes shouted to Barker. "Look out for this man when you get him up there."

In view of the expected strain on the windlass, Barker had greased its bearings afresh. Yerrington was drawn up slowly, his bandaged head drooping forward and his body twisting and turning. When he had reached the surface, Barker applied the brake, caught the dangling form and pulled it upon the platform.

Noyes went back for his revolver and the candle. On his return he stooped to take account of Stafford's injury.

Although the young man's wits had not returned, yet the only injury that could be found was the fractured arm.

"Keep him here, Jerry, until Barker sends you word to bring him up," said Noyes, rising and stepping into the shaft to lay hold of the rope, which had been sent down again.

"Why?" demanded Jerry.

"I'll explain to your partner."

When Barker had hoisted him aloft, Noyes found Thayer on the ore-dump. He had ridden to the spot on Stafford's horse, with Blitzen in tow.

CHAPTER XX

AFTERMATH

"Well," exclaimed Thayer, staring at the form of Yerrington. "Who did this?"

"I had a hand in it," answered Noyes.

"He was the whole thing," averred Barker, and sketched events as he had found them at the surface. Noyes contributed a brief explanation of what had happened below.

"I reckon you've evened up with Yerrington for what he did to you a year ago," said Thayer. "What Yerrington had done to Noyes a year ago" had been a stock theme throughout that section.

That was Thayer's only comment on the life-and-death battle Noyes had waged in the depths of Barker's Strike. On such occasions an out-and-out Westerner will do a great deal of thinking but keep the most of it to himself.

"I wasn't expecting you, Thayer," said Noyes.

"It's a happen-chance that I'm here," returned the freighter. "When the rest of you left me I footed up the gulch until I found Griffith. He was balancing himself on one foot holding this hoss of Stafford's an' trying to head off yours.

"I helped him. Then he told me about hearin' shots up the cañon and I rode that way, expectin' to find that two of Yerrington's remainin' bullets had taken effect. But I was s'prised to see Stafford jest crawlin' over the edge of the cañon's rim.

"I couldn't go that way, myself, not bein' a climber, so I headed about and returned to Griffith, telling him what I thought had happened. His game ankle prevented him from doin' much, so he told me to find a way out o' the cañon an' chase in this direction to see if I couldn't help. Stafford's down in the mine, you say, with a broken arm?"

Noyes nodded.

"Hadn't we better get him out?" queried Thayer.

"We had better leave him where he is until Yerrington is out of the way. He would only make a scene if we got him up here now."

"That's wise. Barker and Jerry can take care o' him. We'll stop at the Glencoe and send Dickinson back here. Dickinson is a sort of a doctor."

"We'll take care of him," said Barker.

During this talk Yerrington had recovered. Thayer dismounted and the prisoner was placed astride Stafford's horse, his feet bound under the cinches. He said nothing, but followed Noyes with his keen eyes.

"You can ride my bronk, Thayer, and lead Stafford's," suggested Noyes.

"No, thank ye," was the hasty response. "Life is hard enough sleddin' without riskin' it on a man-killer. You ride and I'll walk."

In this manner they left Barker's Strike and made their way into the cañon by the same route Thayer had taken in coming out of it. Two of the Whipsaw men had followed at a slow pace and were with Griffith. The deputy's horse was on its feet, and so was Thayer's. Casey's wounded bronk had just been shot.

Griffith was suffering a good deal of pain on account of his twisted ankle, but listened with rapt attention to the account Noyes gave him. He was as reticent as Thayer, but caught Noyes' hand and wrung it warmly.

Night found the party at the Glencoe. Dickinson was started post-haste for Barker's with instructions to keep Stafford there until the following morning.

With the coming of daylight, the camp buckboard started for Phœnix. Griffith, redolent of arnica and with one foot in bandages, sat on the rear seat with the bound and manacled Yerrington. On the seat in front were two of the best men in the Glencoe camp.

"There's a reward, you know, Noyes," said Griffith, just prior to the buckboard's start. "I can't lay any claim to it."

"Merciful powers!" exclaimed Noyes. "An uncle of mine died and left me more money than I can spend. What do I want of the reward?"

"Somethin' will have to be done with it."

"Divide it into three parts," suggested Noyes, "and give a third to Hayes' widow, a third to Nick Stafford, and keep a third for yourself."

"Do you mean that?"

"Try to do anything else with that money, Griff, and you'll hear from me."

The whip cracked and the buckboard swung out of camp. Yerrington's head was turned up to the last moment, and his keen eyes rested on Jim Noyes as long as the latter was in sight.

An hour afterward Noyes was jogging slowly toward the Big Pima. There was a bandage about his left shoulder and his left arm hung in a sling. He had paid the debt he owed Yerrington, but there was not the satisfaction in it he had imagined there would be.

Somehow his mind leaped over the man's misdeeds and centered about a face—a slender face framed in a tangle of yellowish hair and set with two wide and apprehensive blue eyes. Yerrington would drink to the last bitter drop this cup of his own brewing; but the lasting disgrace and shame were left for his daughter and his wife.

CHAPTER XXI

CONCLUSION

Rutherford and the Judge were on the porch, making farther inroads on the Judge's box of cigars. They were not in a particularly jubilant mood.

Miss Ethel was indisposed, and was keeping to her room. The *señora* was doing things in the kitchen. The *señorita* had her drawn-work at an open window and was thinking of the man at the Coronado.

Rutherford and the Judge were conversing in low voices. Their discourse had to do with the subject of "Ideals."

"When a young woman gets an Ideal firmly fixed in her mind," said the Judge, judicially, "she'll jump many an ordinary checker until she lands in the king-row."

"Meaning, I suppose," observed Rutherford, "that Ethel had an Ideal and refused to be content with anything that fell short of it."

"I wonder what the *señora* did with at brandy and soda?" asked the Judge plaintively.

Rutherford asked the *señorita* and the *señorita* went to ask the *madre*. Presently the Judge's longing was satisfied.

"Of course," resumed the Judge, his philosophy fortified with his libation, "this Ideal business is all rank nonsense. No man ever lived that could measure up to a girl's standard."

"Well, it's this way," said Rutherford: "when a young woman finds some one whom she thinks would, with a few alterations, make the Ideal she has in mind, and the person in question goes about the changes with a laudable determination to make good, the question is, will the illusion hold until the Ideal is annexed?"

"There are contingencies," argued the Judge. "In seeking to exemplify the desires of the young woman, the Ideal may undergo certain changes of—er—heart, let us say, so that he expands out of the young woman's perspective."

"I do not think that is so in this particular case," said Rutherford.

"Then, too," persisted the Judge, "a mine-owner, with doubtful wisdom, might allow the Ideal to proceed on a dangerous mission from which he never returned."

"You're wrong there, too, Judge," answered Rutherford. "The mine-owner you're referring to, knows his man from the ground up. He'll come back."

"On his shield," qualified the Judge. "Now a dead hero is of no earthly use to anybody, is he? I'll believe Noyes survives and returns with credit when I see him riding into camp, and when I hear his report."

"Then you might as well get ready to be convinced," said Rutherford, with a smile, "for here comes Noyes now."

The Judge whirled in his chair and followed the direction of Rutherford's pointing finger. Noyes, he saw, was just passing around the corner of the bunk-house.

"Well!" exclaimed the Judge. "What's the matter with his arm, I wonder? He isn't coming this way!"

"On my soul," muttered Rutherford, "if he isn't heading for the mill." He got up and stepped to the edge of the porch.

"Jim!" he called, beckoning.

Noyes swerved and started toward them. A fluttering sound might have been heard at the window over the porch, had Rutherford and the Judge been listening. But their attention was now wrapped up in Noyes.

"Good-morning," greeted Noyes, genially.

"What did you do with Yerrington," queried Rutherford, with most sublime confidence.

"He must be in the Phœnix jail, by now," answered Noyes.

"Who captured him?"

"We all had a hand in it."

"What's the matter with your arm?"

"A scratch, sir. It doesn't amount to anything."

At that instant Miss Ethel appeared in the door. Her face showed that she had been suffering, and Noyes was touched.

"Jim," she cried, stepping toward him.

He paused an instant, then ran up the steps, threw an arm about her waist, and kissed her on the lips. The Judge floundered to his feet. Rutherford was already on the ground and headed for the office.

"Hold up!" called the Judge. "I'm going with you."

"What do you think about that Ideal business, now?" asked Rutherford as they went inside the office and shut the door.

"Let's smoke," said the Judge, complaisantly.

The Hill of Discontent was climbed again, that evening, and the Boulder of Reflection was the scene of an animated conversation.

"Then you did not really forget me, Jim?" asked the girl.

"Not for one moment," he answered, "but I thought you had gone out of my life entirely. When I came to think it all over, I could not blame you, Ethel."

"You see, dear," she said, snuggling close to him, "I knew you had it in you to be different. It was harder for me than it was for you. I thought—I thought—"

"You thought—what?"

"Why, that you did not care for me any longer."

"Oh, if you could have known! I'm under many obligations to Ryckman for sending you out here."

"He didn't really send us, Jim. When he told us where you were we wanted to come. And then, Mr. Rutherford and father are old friends, you know, and that had a lot to do with it. You understand, don't you, what Mr. Ryckman hoped would happen?"

"Why, what else besides what has happened?"

"Mr. Ryckman wanted you to come East."

"When love comes into its own what difference does it make whether it stays East or West? I love this God-forsaken country; as Ryckman calls it, second only to you."

"I love it, too, Jim; if not for itself, then for what it has brought me."

"Mr. Rutherford has offered to sell me an interest in the mine. He wants me to take charge here, part of the time. He has been one of the best friends I ever had, and—"

"Buy the interest, Jim. You're a Westerner, aren't you? I want to be one, too!"

He drew back to look at her through the golden moonlight. Then he clasped her to him.

"Now, darling," he whispered, "my happiness is complete!"

From which it would appear that Ryckman had lost, after all.

Tedcastle, Artist

BY RAYMOND LEE HARRIMAN

TEDCASTLE sank lower in his chair and stretched his thin legs farther out on the window-sill. Listless and fantastic little smoke-etchings from his pipe floated out and died in the hot June air. Below, in the alley, a sad-demeanored horse wearily dragged the stock-in-trade of a fruit-vendor, who extended his wares to the rows of wide-opened but dispassionate windows.

"Stra'-bay-rees!" bawled the man

Tedcastle heard not.

Up from the bin-like backyards rose the rear walls of the brick-tenements in red-brown, soot-smudged sameness, parched in the hot sun, unshaded, unbeautiful.

Tedcastle saw not.

But up above this hectic pent was the sky, broad, pure, and clean, a deep breath for the eyes.

And Tedcastle gazed in silence.

Across the delectable blue drifted little downy wads of clouds in ever-changing design, dainty and free.

"Ah!" murmured Tedcastle in sincere, though indolent ecstacy, "if I only could paint those clouds—if I only could."

Grant, his room-mate, big-bodied, loud-footed, came noisily in.

"Hello!" he greeted.

"Hello!" was the echo from over by the window.

In the silence that followed, he stood in a vague sort of survey of the small, square room. The pathetic disintegration brought a deep realization to him. It looked for all the world like the downfall of Art still clinging desperately to her picturesqueness. Landscapes and Japanese pottery in one corner; frames with their surprised emptiness in another; brushes, odd vases, compositions piled precariously on the chiffonier; portraits, torn away from their stretchers, drooping limply from the edge of the table; palettes, a paint-box, casts, more portraits, and a half-packed suit-case on the couch—the whole besprinkled with pipes, loose sketches, books, cigaret-butts, color-tubes, economy squeezed—upon all this the many tack-holes in the bare, stripped walls looked in unemotional calm.

Grant brushed a pile of sketches from a chair and the way he dropped into it indicated the state of his feelings.

"Well," he sighed, "I suppose school's done. It—it just about near breaks my heart."

Tedcastle gulped and still gazed over the glaring slate roofs to the blue beyond.

"I wish you were coming back next year," continued Grant. "Aint there any way—any possible way?"

"Not unless I go out and choke somebody and take the money away from 'em," was the reply.

"Might go to the Symphonies when they begin again and pick a few pockets," suggested Grant.

"Yes," agreed Tedcastle colorlessly, and dropped once more into wrapt contemplation.

The little wads of clouds had huddled together piteously now, like a flock of frightened sheep.

"Where's your soap, Teddy?" broke in his room-mate. "Aint anything but some laundry-soap in the bathroom and —All right, I've got it," and Tedcastle was alone once more.

Fretful lines began to creep over his face, betraying some inward trouble. He took a letter from his pocket and, foregoing the delights of the little clouds re-read:

MY DEAR SON:

It pleases me to write you that through Mr. Carey, the president of some big food concern has become interested in you and is desirous for some work in your line for his advertising. He is to be in Boston about the time of your receipt of this letter and has told Mr. Carey that he will call upon you personally, which is quite courteous. This appears to be a genuine opportunity for you immediately to turn your education into money and I hope you will realize it and use your best efforts to secure the position. It has come at just the right time, as you know our circumstances will not allow you to study any longer. I write no home news as we shall all see you in a few days. I am,

Affectionately,
YOUR FATHER.

Mingled in the stale tobacco-smoke of the room were ideals woven of the noblest and bravest stuff in a man's soul. Mutable they were, it was true, and intangible, elusive things; but still they were everything that Tedcastle had. They had come of years of boyhood's dreams, grown from crude longings, into hopeful, courageful passions that buoyed the labor of his student days. During this last year had come fleeting glimpses of a grand fulfillment, promiseful that his untiring endeavor should come to its right reward and acclaim. Into these came his father's letter; he felt the paternal kindness and anxiety and yet—and yet—

There was a knock on the half-opened door.

"Come in," he called.

A man entered, affluent of physique, florid of face, filling the whole room with a prosperous presence. There was an austerity in the graying hair and compact head and features, and not so much of arrogance of dollars as Tedcastle had expected.

"Take a chair," offered he, still keeping his old position and waving a hand about the room as if there were hundreds of that useful furniture available.

The one just vacated by Grant did not look particularly tempting in its hard straightness to the caller's comfort-accustomed flesh; so he took a shallow edge on the couch afforded by its miscellaneous heap.

"I am Mr. Chalmers, of the Continental Cereal Company," he began as soon as he was seated. "As my time is very limited, I wish to present my business in as few moments as possible."

"Dad has written to me about you, but I don't quite understand what you desire—"

"Yes. I am about to start a campaign of magazine advertising," he explained. "Not this cheap, flagrant kind, but something finer grained, that will—er—display our products, in a most artistic manner—er—something distinctive and individual—'æsthetic publicity,' I call it."

He paused to commend the last phrase to himself, with the delight of one who has originated something.

"But this we may discuss more fully later. I have seen some of your work at the Students' Exhibition and it pleased me immensely—in fact is just what I want."

There was a delicious, gold-tinted flash across Tedcastle's vanity. Mr. Chalmers continued.

"It has that decorative quality which will combine perfectly with a presentation of our products. A great deal of the space has been engaged and—it's up

to you. I'll give you $1,000 a year to start," he concluded, with a sonorous roll on the pecuniary climax, "and want your answer now—this minute."

One thousand dollars! The magic words opened up a vista of joy to Tedcastle. And that was only to start. His gray-blue eyes shone with a keener interest; he elated in the inner picture of the gladness and pride that would come to his mother and father—and Molly. There was a girl in his town in western Massachusetts that sympathized with his struggle—and more than that—loved him. Why, with this income he could marry her; have for always her deep, brown eyes, her sweet lips, the inspiration of every look and caress. Every nerve within him was leaping to the answer.

"I guess I'll ta—" He caught himself with a sudden thump of a new, strange fear. "think it over a few minutes more," he finished.

"You must admit," said Mr. Chalmers, "that I've offered you an unusual salary for a student; but I've acknowledged your talent and expect to pay you a good price."

The little clouds claimed Tedcastle once more by a new grouping, stately and with a lyric movement, as if ready for a graceful minuet. For the moment he had actually forgotten Mr. Thomas F. Chalmers.

"Of course," that gentleman was saying, in tones that seemed to come from far away, "you must realize that not a little prestige will come from this if you do your best work. We do things lavishly. The constant display of your work every month cannot but attract notice. In the holiday and special numbers, your drawings will be reproduced in color regardless of every expense. So you see your artistic aspirations will not be checked. You may even sign your work, thus giving it the stamp of quality. I will give you some assistance and criticism being—er—ahem—somewhat of an art-appreciator myself. Our Department of Publicity receives a great deal of my personal attention outside my duties as president—it is quite a hobby with me; and the training you will receive—"

He stopped suddenly. Here he was rambling on to this mere boy with an enthusiasm that was an unusual descent from his dignity. And here was this thin, undersized, penniless student, hands clasped in oblivious contentment, sucking a gone-out pipe, cloud-gazing, and uttering no response. It was a reversal of custom to Mr. Thomas F. Chalmers, President of the Continental Cereal Company.

"I really must have your answer now," he said loudly, even a trifle irritably.

"One thousand dollars!" was singing in Tedcastle's brain, "one thousand dollars—and Molly."

And for that he would give—his own will, his own thoughts, his freedom, his right to create his own conception of every beautiful thing. For one thousand dollars he would sell his years of cherished delight, the one thing God had given him—his Art, whose strivings were a joy even in bodily weariness. And yet—and yet to have Molly for his wife, was that not enough? It might be years before this struggle was over—and perhaps lost in the despair of age and waning strength; then he would have lost both his Love and his Art. Her face, smiling before him was alluring him on to the barter; the warm passion of his youthful blood was conquering.

Mr. Chalmers was speaking and Tedcastle roused himself to some semblance of attention.

"This thing is different from extolling mattresses, you know," he said, getting an inkling of what was going on in Tedcastle's mind, and seeking to head it off. "Cereal products combine with the utmost felicity in any conception; and there will be no need—"

Again the president's voice had dwindled to a mere, inconsequential sound; Tedcastle was in the land of memories.

He was in the Public Library. By his side was Molly, happy, adoring him with her pure heart. Slowly and with growing solemnity they followed the Holy Grail around the walls, absorbed in its vast emotions. At last the youth had achieved it—ah! the glory! They stood in silence, their two souls borne out of themselves in reverent awe.

"Some day," said Tedcastle, trembling with the burst of earnest rapture

within him, redolent with the opening buds of half-felt genius that was no self-delusion, "some day I'll do something just as massive, just as noble as that."

"I know you will, Bob," she said, and right there among all the people her soft, warm hand crept into his with a message of confidence. Ah! that was the kind of a girl to have; a girl who loved you and wasn't ashamed even in the public—

"So you see, you won't sacrifice your art one bit," Mr. Chalmers was finishing.

Many, many times had that scene returned to him, like a reminder of the task he had set for himself—this great thing he was to achieve for Molly's eyes to see; but more than that for its own sake, for his own self to watch with a new delight the colors and symmetries within his soul leap to the canvas in one grand, wonderful form.

Mr. Chalmers was nervously fingering his watch with rising indignation. Who the devil was this imbecile who sat staring out of the window unheeding this golden opportunity? The discourtesy stung him to reach for his hat.

"I see that you don't appreciate this superb chance," he said in aggrieved and pitying tones. He was moving toward the door.

Tedcastle jumped to his feet in determined emphasis; a love-light from thinking of Molly still flickered in his eyes; he felt soft arms about him, a kiss; the battling words in his heart sprang to his lips.

"I'll take it. Thank you," he added, recalling some manners.

"Very well," was the answer. "I'll write you some details from New York. You've detained me," rather testily, "delayed me most inconsiderately. Good-day."

"Good-day," repeated Tedcastle.

He stood alone among the dear debris of the room—a sweet litter of past joys and aspirations. He had sold himself meanly, sold his privilege to paint that great work that was to bring him fame—but what did it matter? He couldn't return to study any more, anyway.

Grant re-entered, refreshed from his bath with Tedcastle's soap.

"Who's the big-bug—"

Unanswering, Tedcastle plunged by him to the stairs—three at a time—a leap—three more stairs—one flight gone; a leap—four more stairs—a stumble, a clutch at the wall, and he was on his feet again at the head of the hallway. A broad, frock-coated back was half way out the door. A lunge, a jumble of feet, and Tedcastle swooped down upon the disappearing shoulder with a frenzy.

"I can't take the job," he was crying. "I won't take the job; don't expect me, don't write, I aint going to take it!"

"Glad of it," snapped Mr. Chalmers, relieved in his returning composure.

The door slammed; the prosperous presence of Mr. Thomas F. Chalmers, President of the Continental Cereal Company, was gone.

Trembling, supporting himself on the railing, Tedcastle retraced his way upstairs. He was glad—almost, yes! really, truly glad! He had reclaimed his right to labor forever for his master-work, his Holy Grail.

Grant's bulging eyes, full of puzzled questionings, greeted his reappearance; but his room-mate restrained his curiosity—something remarkable for Grant.

"Let's go eat," he suggested. "We'll get first grab if we go now."

"Guess you'll have to lend me your meal-ticket" said Tedcastle, fingering the coins in his pocket. "I'm 'most broke."

"Sure," agreed Grant, "come on."

When they returned, Grant resumed his eternal packing of the suit-case; Tedcastle dropped down by the window and filled his pipe. For a long time Grant's reflective sort of whistling was the only sound.

"Say, Grannie," Tedcastle called.

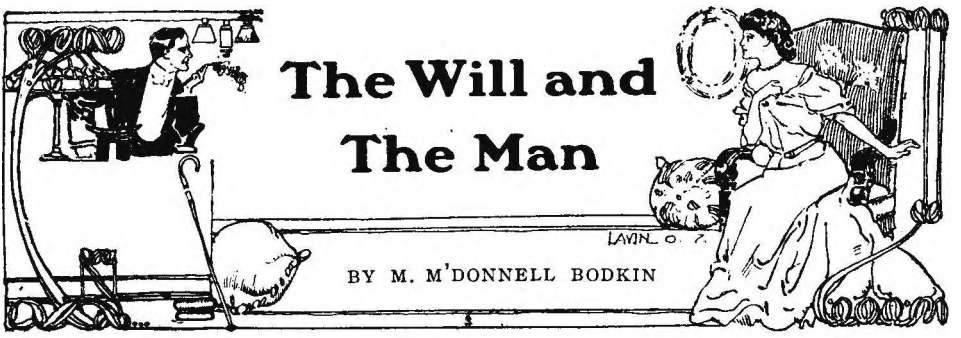
Grant, who was trailing a shirt by the sleeve, stopped half-way on its destination.

"I shall be back next year—honest. This summer I'll work like hell at—oh, any old thing. Then, perhaps I can get a job ushering at some of the theaters this winter, you know, and that'll help."

"That's good talk," applauded Grant.

Tedcastle's gaze wandered once more out of the window. The little clouds were gone; but in their stead the twilight sky was frescoed with tiny flecks, lit by the waning sun into subdued old rose, gray and lilac—a sad, delicate beauty.

"Ah!" murmured Tedcastle, "If I could only paint that—if I only could."



The Will and The Man

BY M. M'DONNELL BODKIN

MR. CARVAL, I want you to be quite frank with me."

"I could not be otherwise if I tried, Miss Wingfield."

"We'll see. To begin with, you may put aside your airs and graces. You're not in love with me, nor I with you, nor likely to be. This is a business talk for our mutual advantage."

She drew a cosy armchair to the fire and dropped down luxuriously amongst its velvet cushions.

It chanced that his face was in the light and hers in the shade. Mabel Wingfield, in the glory of her stately loveliness, need not fear the most searching sunlight that ever shone out of the heavens. Still, possibly she had her own reasons for the arrangement. With her bright brown eyes fixed on Adrian Carval's face she went on:

"You are rich, Mr. Carval?"

"Moderately, Miss Wingfield."

"Yet you would like to marry money?"

"Naturally, Miss Wingfield."

"That's straight. Well, I can help you, and I will, if you will help me. You are very fond of Connie Burke?"

"Is this a confessional, Miss Wingfield?"

"If you wish to call it so. I'll take my turn in a moment. You promised to be quite frank, you know."

"And I will. Miss Burke is a charming girl, pretty, clever, vivacious, but—"

"She has no fortune?"

"Precisely."

"That's your mistake; that's where my information comes in. This is a very handsome place, Mr. Carval, this Forland Chace, where we are fortunate enough to be guests."

"Very, Miss Wingfield, and very handsome of Sir William Hood to ask me down to his party and to give me the opportunity to meet so many pleasant friends."

He bowed gracefully in her direction, but she took no heed of the challenge.

With her eyes still fixed on his face she went on slowly:

"Forland Chace, with its priceless pictures and art treasures and its broad acres, is the sole property of Miss Constance Burke—one of the wealthiest heiresses in England."

"You're chaffing!" he answered lightly, but he was quivering with excitement.

"I'm in sober earnest. You know, I presume, how the place and estate came —or was supposed to have come to Sir William Hood. No? Then I must tell you in as few words as I can.

"Old Nathaniel Burke, who died a year ago, was an eccentric bachelor—all old bachelors are more or less; he was more. His favorite cousin, Miss Constance Burke, lived with him at Forland Chace. It was generally taken for granted that she was to be his heiress. Indeed, the old man himself made no secret of the fact that he had signed a will in her favor.

"But during the last year of his life he grew to be a confirmed invalid, and a hospital nurse, Miss Honor Murphy, had to be got to help Miss Burke to look after him."

"Miss Honor Murphy! Not the good-looking, lively, red-headed girl that is staying here now?"

"The same. She is a lady by birth, you see, and Sir William owes her a kindness, as you shall hear. Old Nathaniel fell desperately in love with his nurse."

"I'm not surprised. I've a kind of fancy for the girl myself."

"His was more than fancy. He was mad about her, wanted to marry her right away; to leave her every rood of land and every farthing of money he had in the world."

"And she?"

"Laughed at him good-humoredly, told him she would have to leave the place if he went on talking such nonsense, and she would be sorry to go. Then he begged she wouldn't leave him, and promised good behavior, and cried like a child, I'm told.

"From that time forward he sank rapidly. The eccentric old bachelor, Nathaniel Burke, died, I do believe, of that rare complaint—a broken heart.

"He may possibly have suspected that Miss Connie Burke influenced the nurse, with whom she was very intimate, to refuse him. Anyhow, when he died no will was found. Miss Connie was left comparatively penniless, and Forland Chace, with its heirlooms and acres went to his heir-at-law, Sir William Hood, who had already, as you know, a magnificent house and property of his own at Sherwood."

"So much I knew already." Adrian Carval answered carelessly, when she paused for an instant. "The worse luck for Miss Burke and her future husband, whoever he may chance to be."

"That is only the first chapter of my story, the prologue, to make what follows plain. Now I am coming to the exciting part." Her eyes were intent on his face. "This morning I had a letter from Mr. Weatherwise, who was Nathaniel Burke's solicitor and is mine, and my very good friend as well. He tells me—Are you listening, Mr. Carval?"

"With both ears, Miss Wingfield."

"He tells me that the missing will has been found amongst the documents in Mr. Burke's box in the office. He sent me a copy. It is very short—a mere scrap of paper. 'I will and bequeath all I die possessed of to my beloved cousin and adopted daughter, Miss Constance Burke.'"

"Why did he write to you, Miss Wingfield?" There was no mistaking Mr. Carval's interest now.

"My story provokes that question. He wished to get Miss Burke's address to communicate with her direct—wants her for a client, I dare say—and knows she is my very dear friend." There was a mocking emphasis on the word "friend." "He suggests that meantime I might break the matter gently to Sir William, to whom no doubt it will be a disappointment."

"What do you mean to do about it?"

"Nothing for the present. I will give you four days' law."

"Me!"

"Yes, you, to pay your disinterested court to the unconscious heiress."

"It's no use, Miss Wingfield. Sir William's son and heir, the eminent King's Counsel, is in love with Miss Connie and she with him, if I'm any judge of such matters. I'm too late in the field."

"A mere passing fancy," she answered so hotly that Carval started with a sudden inkling of the truth. "I have made up my mind," she went on with quiet determination, "that Mr. Robyn Hood, K. C., shall not marry Connie Burke."

"May I ask why?"

"Certainly, but I needn't tell you. Think what you like—I don't care what you think. Isn't it enough for you that our interests are the same—that I can help you while you help me? Listen, I've spoiled their love-making up to this, and I'll spoil it to the end.

"One day nearly a week ago I watched them spooning in the garden. She was shy and distant. Oh, I know that sort of shyness! But I saw her pluck a little monthly rose—the only blossom on the bush—shake the snow from its petals, and after a moment drop it quite carelessly on the path. He picked it up, of course. He thought she didn't see him, but I knew she did. So I stole the rose from his room—he must have thought she reclaimed it—and dropped the poor little bud beside a half-smoked cigar in a passage where she could not help seeing it as she passed.

"Since then they have been cold and distant, a very pretty lover's quarrel as it stands, and I don't want it made up."

There was a moment's pause. Her cheek flushed, she hesitated as if there were something she wanted yet did not like to say. Then she went on in a hard voice:

"I'd better tell you everything, Mr. Carval, that you may understand. Since

then some foolish little notes have passed between them, or rather, tried to pass. But they never reached, you understand. I needn't go into details. Miss Connie fancies herself slighted; she is hurt and haughty. This is your chance; now is the acceptable hour. You have only to speak and conquer."

"You flatter me, Miss Wingfield."

"No mock modesty, if you please. You are good-looking—oh, you know that better than I can tell you; you men are vainer than women—and you have a plausible tongue of your own. You are a most admirable love-maker. I have had experience, you know."

There was a note of mocking raillery in her voice and smile.

He answered as lightly:

"It is not kind to recall defeat on the brink of—"

"Of victory? I have said it. 'Faint heart never won fair lady.' Yours is not faint, and the lady is—some people think—fair. 'Little hand hath muckle gold,' as the song goes. It is a stake worth playing for. When I next visit Forland Chace, Adrian Carval shall welcome me as host."

"There shall be no other guest so welcome," he answered, and so the bargain was made between them.

"Pardon me, Miss Burke, if I seem obtrusive; I cannot bear to see you weep!"

By careful watching, Adrian Carval had managed to come upon Miss Connie Burke "accidently" as she lay bundled up in a great leathern chair in a corner of the huge, unfrequented library sobbing as if her heart would break.

"I don't want your sympathy, Mr. Carval," she snapped out, "and I'm not crying." It was a bold statement with the tears still wet on the flushed cheeks, but she made it defiantly, with the blue eyes kindling behind the tears.

"I am glad I was mistaken," he answered softly; "I thought I heard you sobbing as I came in for a book. Once again I humbly ask your forgiveness."

He looked so shy, so abashed, so sad for her sake that she took pity on him. She was a mere child in the frank, impetuous truthfulness of her nature.

"I beg your pardon, Mr. Carval," she said meekly; "I was very rude to you just now, and it was a fib to say I was not crying. Oh, I'm very miserable."

The tears gushed again to her eyes. With soft brown hair disheveled, with cheeks flushed and tear-stained, and eyelids red with weeping she looked a very picture of misery. A very pretty picture all the same, as Adrian Carval thought complacently. But in his eyes and voice there was only the deepest sympathy.

"I would give the world that I could comfort you," he said tenderly.

"But you cannot! you cannot! no one can. Oh, go away, please, and leave me to myself."

But he only came a step closer and took the little hand that hung by her side very gently in his own. It was soft, cold, and limp as a dead bird.

"Forgive me," he whispered again, with the light of passion in his deep blue eyes, with the thrill of passion in his low, rich voice. "I feel it is mean, unmanly, to speak at such a time, but I am not master of myself. I love you, Miss Burke; surely you must have seen that I love you with every fiber of my body—with every thought of my soul. Give me the right to comfort you."

She snatched her hand away and stood at gaze like a startled fawn.

"Oh! don't speak to me like that! You don't mean it, and it hurts me to hear it!"

"With all my heart I mean it."

"But I am as poor as a church mouse—do you know that, Mr. Carval? I have not a farthing of my own in the world, and they say that you—"

"That I love money? Say it out, Miss Burke; I can never be angry with you." His voice was that of a man deeply wounded. "I love money, it is true, that I may lavish it on those I love. Without you all the wealth in the world were mere dross to me."

"But I don't love you, Mr. Carval; I can never love you!"

"I will not ask your love; I only ask the right to keep on loving you. Your love may come in time; if not, your friendship is more to me than the love of all the women in the world besides."

"But it is impossible—cannot you see it is impossible?"

He grew grave of a sudden. "Miss Burke," he said slowly, "if you tell me

you love another I will trouble you no more. I will not even ask his name. Indeed, I need not ask his name. Pardon me; I should have guessed before. How could I have hoped against—"

Slighted love and maiden pride stung her to sudden revolt.

"Stop! stop!" she cried, before he could speak the name she saw forming itself on his lips. "It is not that! it is not that! indeed, you are wholly wrong. Mr. Carval," she went on desperately, before he could speak again, "I will marry you on your own terms if you will have me."

"Have you!" he cried in ecstasy, "you are welcome to me as sight to the blind; as new life to the dying; as Heaven to the saint! My whole life is too short to show my love and gratitude." He raised the little cold hand and kissed it passionately. If he had claimed her lips reaction and revulsion would have ruined his hopes, but Adrian Carval knew the game and forbore.

That evening in the drawing-room he whispered in Mabel Wingfield's ear:

"You may send your letter; the sooner the better." She understood and that night wrote Mr. Weatherwise.

The conspirators were only just in time. Next day it chanced that the same moody restlessness had sent Connie Burke and the son of the house, Mr. Robyn Hood, K. C., along the same lonely walk by the edge of the running stream the frost had chained. They met in the white silent woods through which the winter sun with its red edge on the horizon sent a rosy glow.

She would have passed him with a word and nod, but he blocked the way.

"Miss Burke," he asked abruptly, "why are you angry with me? What have I done?"

"Nothing, nothing," she answered hastily. "Do let me pass."

"First you will forgive me?" he pleaded. "I cannot tell you how I grieve to have even unconsciously offended."

He looked so handsome and so honest, pleading humbly to her, with the glow of the setting sun on his manly figure and frank, young face, that there came a gush of sudden tenderness that frightened her. Her heart beat hard and fast; her lips trembled.

"Indeed, indeed, I am not angry!" she faltered. "I am sorry if I have made you think so. You are right, Mr. Hood. Let us both forgive and forget, and part friends."

She held her hand out timidly.

He caught and held it.

"Forgive, but not forget," he cried. "I could never forget you, Connie, if I lived for a thousand years. Don't say the word 'part;' we must not part! Oh, Connie, you can have no notion how much I love you! All the world is nothing to me in comparison. I hoped—forgive me, darling—I hoped you cared for me a little. Tell me I may keep that hope, that I may keep this hand forever as my very own?"

He fondled it softly in both of his, but with heightened color she snatched it from his clasp.

"Mr. Hood," she began.

"Call me Robyn for this once," he pleaded.

"I cannot, I dare not!" she cried desperately; I'm engaged to be married to Mr. Carval!"

She hid her face in her hands and burst into a passion of weeping, swaying as if she would fall.

For a moment he stood like one stunned, and the color left his cheeks.

"Carval!" he gasped out. "It is not true—it cannot be true! And you love him, Connie—you love Adrian Carval and not me?"

Only her sobs answered.

"Do you love him, Connie?" he insisted. "Say that you love him and I will go away and trouble you no more."

Her silence emboldened him. He slipped his arm about her trembling form and drew her hands softly from her blushing face. Half unconsciously she nestled closer in his arms; their eyes met and he kissed her.

The next moment she tore herself from his clasp.

"Oh! how could you!" she wailed. "Do you want to kill me with shame. I have promised him—I have promised him, and as Heaven is above me I swear I will keep my word. Let me go for God's sake! let me go!"

With that she slipped past him and fled lightly, swiftly as a bird down the walk, leaving him standing alone in the gray gloaming.

All night Connie Burke lay awake, weeping and planning. A thousand thoughts chased each other through her restless brain. But she was not wholly without hope. She would throw herself, she resolved, on the generosity of Adrian Carval, and implore her release. She even formed beforehand the words of her appeal. As they passed before her mind in confused procession, ever shifting and changing, she slowly fell away from all conscious thoughts in a peaceful sleep.

But the morning dawning bright and clear to others, brought new complications to trouble her, riveting her chains.

"Any letters, Maria?" she said sleepily from her pillows to the maid who came in with the hot water.

"One, miss," Maria answered, and handed her an official blue envelope addressed in formal hand to "Miss Constance Burke."

Miss Constance Burke—it may be noted in passing—always read her letters in bed.

Having sufficiently tantalized her curiosity with the address and seal and postmark, she tore open the envelope.

DEAR MADAM:

We beg to inform you that we have just discovered the last will and testament of your cousin and our client, the late Mr. Nathaniel Burke, of Forland Chace, duly signed and attested. By this will he bequeaths to you all his real and personal property of which he dies possessed, including the family seat and lands of Forland Chace. We beg to enclose copy of the will, and remain, madam,

Your obedient servants,
J. W. WEATHERWISE & SON.

For a moment after she had dropped the letter on the quilt all other thoughts in her mind were submerged in blank surprise. Then, after a little, various conflicting feelings began to struggle through.

The first she recognized was keen regret. It would have been so pleasant to have given back the inheritance to Robyn Hood—herself with it. But now she realized that this sudden wealth stood between her and her heart's desire. She could not beg release from Carval. The wealthy heiress could not—for very shame and honor's sake—desert the man who had loved, wooed, and won her as a pauper. She was little more than a child. Let that be the excuse that the new-made mistress of Forland Chace buried her face in the pillows and bewept her good fortune.

Sir William Hood took the news like a gentleman, and congratulated his cousin on her splendid inheritance, and offered her cousinly and kindly counsel as to the management of her business.

The Christmas guests at Forland Chace, as the tidings were buzzed about amongst them, contrasted his courteous serenity under this sudden stroke of ill-fortune with the sulkiness of a son. But there was at least one person amongst them who guessed what Robyn Hood's real feelings were and how little in his present mood the loss of the estate had troubled him. She had guessed his real grief the moment the engagement had—as the phrase goes—been "given out."

"Mr. Hood," cried Nurse Murphy suddenly one morning, when by chance she came upon him moping over a book in the library, "are you going to let Connie Burke marry that mercenary cad, Adrian Carval?"

A fine looking young woman was Nurse Murphy—tall, strong, and graceful, with a wealth of glossy, dark-red hair coiled in thick ropes at the back of her shapely head, and the dazzling complexion that so often goes with dark-red hair.

He looked at her for a moment in silence, bewildered at the abrupt question.

"What can I do about it, Miss Murphy?"

"What can you do about it! I like that!" She did not look as if she liked it. "Do something—do anything you like: but don't let the sweetest girl in the world marry that handsome cur. You're fond of her and she's fond of you and there you sit and sulk, instead of doing something to stop it. He only cares for her fortune."

"You're not quite fair to him, Miss Murphy. He didn't know of her fortune when he asked her."

"Not know!" she answered scornfully; "you bet he did, or he would not have asked her. I know him. Not fair to him, indeed! Fair to the man who is going to steal your girl from you? Oh, I'm ashamed of you! All's fair in love and war, Mr. Hood."

"You think so? Then there is a plan we might try! Will you help me?"

"With all my heart; for Connie's sake mind you, not yours. I could have had this fortune myself. I suppose you have heard that? I'm as poor as a church mouse, but I refused for her sake. I got him—old Nat Burke, I mean—to make the will in her favor. Now what do you want me to do?"

"I want you to help me to commit forgery."

He said it slowly, with his eyes fixed on her face. But she never hesitated for a moment.

"Forgery!" she cried impetuously, "manslaughter, if you like; I'd drown him in the lake with my own hands. Oh, how I hate a mean man! Go on with your plan."

"You know old Nathaniel's handwriting?"

She nodded.

"I have heaps and heaps of love-letters of his."

"Could you imitate his signature?"

"Like my own."

"All right then. We must between us forge a new will for him dated later than the other, wholly in your favor. I know the book Connie is reading in the library—a big Shakespeare, a great favorite of old Nat's. We'll stick the forged will between the leaves where she must find it. Of course Connie—Miss Burke, I mean—"

"Stick to Connie."

"Of course Connie will tell every one at once of her great discovery—Adrian Carval first of all. If he is what you take him to be, he'll back out of the engagement, and then—"

Her Irish blue eyes danced with delight and devilment.

"Oh, we'll take the 'then' for granted!" she cried impetuously. "The plan is first-rate, and it's bound to come off all right. There's more fun in it than you can guess; but you'll find out later on. Now I'll run and fetch the letters and we'll go to work at once. There will be no one here for two hours at least."

All that afternoon Miss Murphy was specially civil to Mr. Carval, and lured him out for a long skate alone on the lake.

"What a bright, jolly girl she is!" he thought as he went to bed that night, and deuced fond of me, too! I can see that with half an eye. It's a shame she's a pauper."

The next morning he had a note—his first from Miss Burke—a very strange kind of little love-letter.

DEAR MR. CARVAL:

I would be very grateful if you could meet me this morning in the library before breakfast. Yours, ever faithfully,

C. BURKE.

He found her waiting for him in the library, holding an official-looking paper. She was strangely excited—he could see that at a glance—though she strove hard to conceal her excitement. Her bosom rose and fell quickly; her color came and went.

"My dear Miss Burke!" he began soothingly.

But she broke in on his smooth speech with sharp impatience.

"Read this!" she cried, "before you speak. I found it last night in the book that I was reading, and I thought it right to send for you and show it to you at once."

She gave him the paper with a hand that trembled, and he took it and read it silently twice over before he mastered its contents, yet it was very simple. This new will was almost in terms the same as the other; the name Honoria Murphy was substituted for Constance Burke, and the date was six months later. That was all. For a long minute there was dead silence between them.

"So it is the other girl after all," his angry thoughts ran. "What a fool that witch Mabel Wingfield has made of me Is there no way out of this hole, no way out?"

But his nimble wits rallied to meet the emergency. When he spoke again it was as master of himself and of the situation.

"Miss Burke," he said very courteously, but there was now no trace of fervor in his voice, "I am deeply grieved at this for your sake, and, if I may say so, for my own. It makes something I had to say to you more difficult. It renders me liable to misconstruction by any one less generous than yourself."

"Go on! say it, say it!" she cried impatiently, for she guessed what was coming.

"Miss Burke, when I had the honor

to ask your hand in marriage you may remember you told me that you could never love me."

"I remember it well, and I meant it," she answered, the light of hope kindling in her eyes. "Go on!"

"Those words of yours have troubled me ever since. I felt it was cruel and selfish to press my claims upon your pity, for your happiness, believe me, is dearer to me than my own. I felt I had a duty to discharge, no matter at what cost to my own feelings. I had determined when I got your note this morning to discharge it. The paper that I have just read makes my task unfortunately harder, but the duty remains the same. You, at least, I know will not misunderstand me. Miss Burke, I will not claim you as a loveless bride. I release you from your generous promise."

She threw up her hands with a sudden gesture of joy and freedom. Then she dropped him a long, sweeping, mocking curtsey.

"Mr. Carval, I thank you!"

"I trust you understand my motives?" he said.

"Oh, quite! quite! Now you may go."

The careless scorn in her voice stung through his self-control as he slunk from the room.

An hour later Robyn honestly confessed the trick they had played, and confessed that it was an heiress that he wooed before he claimed her love and had his claim allowed.

"I wonder what further mischief Honor has in her head?" Connie said when they settled down at last to coherent conversation.

They soon learned that.

As they strolled down a remote walk by the lake's edge, they came suddenly on another couple to all appearance similarly circumstanced. Adrian Carval would have slunk quietly by, but Honor Murphy left his arm and ran to her friend and clasped Connie's hand in both her own.

"Congratulate me, my dear!" she cried unblushingly, "I am engaged to be married to Mr. Carval. It's a secret, but I couldn't keep it from you, of course. Oh, he wrote me such a lovely, lovely letter! I shall always treasure it, saying he was glad I was poor; that he loved me, and had always loved me for myself alone!"

"But you told him about the will, Honor, of course?"

"You mean the second will, dearest, the bogus will, leaving me everything, which Mr. Hood and I concocted and put in the book for you to find? Oh, no, of course not. Where was the use? He never heard of any will, you know. He thought that you were the heiress all the time, and he gave you up and your fortune, he swore, for love of poor little me. He does not care in the least for money, do you Adrian, darling?"

But Adrian had heard enough. The whole horrid plot broke on him like a thunderbolt. He turned at once and fled down the walk, pursued by a peal of mocking laughter, in which Honor's voice rang clear above the rest.

The damages in the great breach of promise case, "Murphy *v.* Carval," were laid at £12,000; but the case was settled out of court for £1,000, which Nurse Murphy handed over to her hospital.

A Self-Inflicted Vengeance

BY GILBERT P. COLEMAN

TO THINK that, with a few trifling scratches of the pen, I could bestow upon the world the greatest boon that it could hope to possess, or—the greatest curse! A few words, and I could reveal to mankind the secret for which it has been vainly searching for years. And yet—I hesitate. The consequences of the application of this remarkable power in the one case that has come under my observation have been so fearful, so hideously distressing, the vengeance that I was unwittingly the instrument of compassing has been so overwhelmingly complete and crushing, that I pause, even with my pen in hand, and my nerve fails me at the last moment—aye, the last moment, for, thanks to an all merciful God, I have but a short time left to live.

No, I will not betray my secret, and in justification of my resolve, I must relate briefly, but as clearly and succinctly as my waning strength will permit, the peculiar circumstances that have placed in my possession a power which, exercised by a man less scrupulous, could have gained for him riches that would cause the untold wealth of Monte Cristo to seem like a paltry nothing in comparison.

It was thirty years ago to-day, almost to an hour, that I sat idly at a table in the laboratory where my father had devoted the last years of his troubled career to patient, self-denying investigation.

Looking hopelessly into the future, I could see nothing but the dreary life of a clerk in my uncle's counting-house, or perhaps that of a common laborer in the streets. And, indeed, of the two occupations, the latter seemed by far the preferable, for my soul revolted at the thought of a mean dependence upon the bounty, or even upon the good-will of a man who, through base machinations, carried on under the plausible guise of speculation and investment, had virtually stolen every cent of my father's inheritance. These speculations were, in truth, legally unassailable, but before God they were morally unjust and iniquitous. My uncle was a man of business, a man of the world; my father was a student, a *savant*, with no capacity for the practical affairs of life, and in the innocence of his trusting heart he had confided all the care of his ample estate to his brother. The result was that my dear father, by a series of ingenious and unscrupulous manipulations, was speedily reduced to a condition almost of penury, and it was fortunate indeed that, owing to the retired and studious life he led, his needs were extremely few, though even these few he had the greatest difficulty to supply.

He died some ten years after the wreck of his fortune, almost without a cent in the world. In fact, of all the considerable property which he had inherited on equal terms with my uncle, almost the only thing that was left me was the meager apparatus of this old laboratory.

How vividly I remember now all the circumstances of that fateful day! I was sitting, as I have explained, in the laboratory, moodily scratching with the point of my pen-knife what appeared to be a chemical stain—presumably that of some acid—on the table, as one will mechanically pursue any trifling occupation when one's mind is absorbed in thought.

And, strange as it may appear, I have my uncle's very meanness of soul to thank for the extraordinary discovery that was revealed to me at that moment almost as if by the hand of Fate. For, as I brooded over the wrongs that had been inflicted on my father, and through him upon me, I dug viciously into the stain—or what I had supposed to be a stain—and was surprised to note that the point of the knife, after penetrating the outer crust, seemed to enter some softer, yielding substance, much different from the harder texture of the rest of the surface.

In some curiosity I scraped away the outer layer, and laid bare a piece of cork circular in form. This bit of cork had evidently been thrust through a hole bored into the top of the table.

My interest aroused, I knelt on the floor and examined the table underneath.

There, cunningly concealed in a corner where the supporting boards of the table met at right angles, I detected a small glass-vial. It projected beneath the under-surface of the table a distance of, perhaps, two inches, and was hardly a half an inch in diameter. The cork that I had unwittingly discovered was evidently the stopper of the vial.

Consumed now with curiosity, I removed the vial by pressing it up through the tiny hole that I had excavated with my pen-knife. Inside the vial was a liquid of absolute, of peculiar transparency, like water from a pellucid mountain-spring, except that—though of course I may have been mistaken in my excitement—it seemed to irradiate, to possess some mysterious, unearthly, illuminating power of its own.

Pasted on the vial lengthwise was a label, smudged and discolored with age, and written on in ink. The writing was scarcely legible, yet, by bringing the inscription close to the rays of a lamp, I was at length able to decipher it, as follows:

"*Aqua Vitae Perpetuae.*"

What could it mean? "*Aqua Vitae Perpetuae*"—the Water of Eternal Life! The vial had, without doubt, been placed in its bizarre hiding-place by my father; no one else had access to the room, or, indeed, even cared to enter it. Had he been of unbalanced mind during the latter years of his life?

I disabused myself of the suspicion in an instant. Of course it could not be true. I knew my father too well. He was odd, peculiar—eccentric, if you will, as everybody is eccentric who does not conform to the settled conventions of the poor, commonplace world. But that he was really of unsound mind, I could not for a moment believe. No, some other, some more reasonable hypothesis must be adopted.

I looked again at the label. Underneath the Latin legend were the words, "One, twenty; two, one hundred; ten forever."

For several minutes I stood there, rooted to the spot, puzzling over this strange inscription, and racking my brains in the vain effort to find some clue to what was now assuming the proportions of a fascinating mystery. Could it be possible that some one else, after all, had placed the vial in this out-of-the-way nook with the object, possibly, of playing a practical joke? "*Aqua Vitae Perpetuae.*" The Water of Eternal Life! It seemed absurd—preposterous, and yet, on studying the inscription again closely, I was convinced that the handwriting was my father's.

It was while scrutinizing the label thus for the third time that I made out several additional letters, almost obscured by the yellow discoloration of the paper, and by a film of dust and moisture that had been accumulating for years. Hastily preparing a cleansing mixture of hot water, soap, and ammonia, and saturating a bit of absorbent-cotton in the liquid, with infinite care I removed the coating of grime from the label. To my intense satisfaction my pains were rewarded; for, at the bottom of the narrow strip of paper I was now easily able to make out this direction:

"My son, if you find this, look inside the leather of my old pocket-book."

The old pocket-book! It seemed almost a miracle that this, of all my dear father's possessions, was one of the few that I had succeeded in preserving. In fact, I still carried it, though heaven knows I had little enough use for it. But the contents were already so lamentably familiar that I failed to see what information I could gain by obeying my father's injunction.

However, drawing the ancient wallet from my pocket, I opened it, and turning it upside down, shook it thoroughly.

There fell out a two-dollar bill and a ten-cent piece—all the money I had in the world. I then minutely examined each compartment of the pocket-book separately, thinking that possibly, there might still be something that I had overlooked, something that might afford a clue to the mystery. There was nothing, absolutely nothing.

Again I studied the label, more puzzled and chagrined than ever, for I had apparently come to a blind alley in a search which at first had seemed so promising. For several moments I stared at the inscription blankly:

"Look inside the leather of my old pocket-book."

Then suddenly the truth flashed upon me. "Look inside the leather of my old pocket-book." True! In my haste I had assumed that I was to look merely into the pocket-book. Obviously this could not have been the meaning. My father would not have been at such cunning pains to instruct me to do a thing which, in the natural course of events, I must have done repeatedly. The mystery lay, literally, deeper, as the words of the direction indicated:

"Look inside the leather."

In considerable agitation I seized my pen-knife and ripped the leather from the back. In the crevice thus exposed was a small sheet of paper such as physicians use in writing prescriptions. Removing it with nervous eagerness, I read the following memorandum:

"*Aqua Vitae Perpetuae.* Discovered 1871 by Dr. Richard Ellerby. Made from the following ingredients in the proportions named. (Here followed a list which, from motives that I have indicated at the outset of this memoir, I must suppress.) One drop of the liquid will assure the continuance of the vital principle for twenty years; two drops

about one hundred years; ten drops, forever."

Then I understood. Though my uncle had deprived me of every cent of a fortune that should rightfully have been my own, yet right here in his own house, almost under his very eyes, had lain for years, while he was plotting and scheming to defraud others even as he had defrauded my father—right here had lain a secret of more value than all the thousands, nay, millions, that he could ever hope to win—the secret of life eternal: no mere imaginary fountain of youth such as we read about in the romances of the Spanish explorers, but a scientific, practicable discovery, made by a scientific man.

And yet, after all, I could scarcely bring my mind to believe the stupendous significance of this discovery. In spite of my father's well known accuracy and conservatism in scientific matters, there might be some error. He might have been mistaken. In the zeal of his researches there might have been some flaw. "*Aqua Vitae Perpetuae*!" On the face of it, it seemed preposterous. Under any other circumstances I should have treated the whole matter as the futile dreaming of a visionary.

But I would soon see. Drop by drop I poured out the contents of the vial into a tumbler. There were just fifteen drops in all—not sufficient to cover the bottom of the glass. I then poured five drops back into the vial, covering the tumbler with the slip of paper taken from the pocket-book. I then securely corked the vial, and placing it carefully in my waistcoat pocket, went to look for a suitable subject upon which to experiment.

Fortunately, a short distance from my uncle's residence, there chanced to be a large hospital, with a considerable department devoted to empirical surgery, involving, of course, the practice of vivisection. From one of the young physicians, an intimate friend of mine, I obtained a cat that had been operated upon to test the practicability of taking stitches in the heart. The poor creature was badly cut up, and apparently on the point of death from the loss of blood. The incision in its breast having been sewed up by my friend the physician, I forced a single drop of my precious liquid into the animal's mouth.

And then a strange, a weird, an unbelievable thing happened. From the state of lethargy, of stupefaction that often mercifully precedes death, the creature was instantly aroused. Springing upon all fours, she glanced furtively about the room, and then with a "meow" of alarm, fairly scampered through the doorway.

It is needless to say that I was elated by the success of my experiment. My father had not, then, been mistaken. He knew whereof he spoke when he indited that message on the label. Pondering thus, I had arrived at my uncle's residence, and opened the door of the laboratory, a large, secluded chamber in the rear of the house. My approach had evidently been noiseless, for, as I stepped into the room, I was stupefied to behold, standing at the table where I had recently made my remarkable "find," the figure of my uncle, fairly devouring with his keen, greedy eyes the contents of the paper that I had laid across the tumbler. How he came to be there I have never been able to fathom. His presence seemed, especially in its consequences, another intervention of Providence, fully as remarkable and as significant as the discovery of the vial itself.

As I entered, he looked up with an expression of surprised guilt, and then, with a gesture of sudden resolve, seized the glass and raised it to his lips.

With a cry of rage I sprang forward, my soul fairly boiling with the thought that this despicable creature was about to steal from me the fruits of my father's years of toil; nay, was about to obtain the boon of immortality before my very eyes.

He had the glass already tilted, on the point of swallowing the precious liquid, when I seized him savagely by the arm.

Then followed a bitter, a fierce, a heart-breaking struggle—one that I have never forgotten to this, my dying day. And even now I shudder when I think that several times during that fearful contest, I was on the very point of snatching the glass from his lips and of defeating my uncle in his design. But a merciful, a just Providence again intervened.

For my opponent, though a slender man, possessed muscles of steel. As for myself, I was somewhat of an athlete and had invariably kept myself in excellent condition. But this availed nothing against the Titanic strength with which my uncle seemed marvelously gifted; and fought I never so desperately, I was wholly unable to wrench that fateful glass from his lips. It seemed held there in a grasp superhuman; and though, for a time, I was able to prevent him from raising his arm farther, at length, by the exercise of a terrific nervous energy, he spurned me from him, threw back his head, and drained the glass to the very last drop!

No one can picture my agony at this moment. It seemed to me as if this base creature were drinking up the very blood of my heart. So enraged, so overwhelmed with mortification and the intense humiliation of defeat was I, that I could merely stand there where he had thrust me and glare at him as he coolly set the glass down on the table, and then with a glance full of exultation, of taunting insult, of malicious triumph, walked deliberately out of the room.

For months after this my spirit was crushed. I seemed to be laboring under a grievous, unyielding burden that weighed down my very soul and refused to be shaken off. True, I still had the prescription left by my father. I was able to prepare the *Aqua Vitae Perpetuae* in quantities to suit myself, and by confiding with my friend of the hospital, who was a man of sterling integrity, and who acted as my agent among members of the medical profession, I easily earned sufficient money to supply my worldly wants, even to placing me on a footing of independence, though I was careful never to dispense with more than one drop of the marvelous fluid at one time.

Yet I could not recover from the ignominy occasioned by the reflection that, of all men in the world, my uncle should have reaped the rewards of my father's ingenuity, and, through the life-long industry and researches of a man whom he had defrauded, had himself gained the long-sought boon of life eternal! The thought nearly drove me frantic with rage.

But one day, while I was moodily rehearsing my wrongs, I suddenly found myself inquiring:

"Why is it, if this mysterious compound is able to prolong life indefinitely my father did not take advantage of it?

"His life was useful; he might have continued to live as long as he wished by swallowing one drop of the liquid at a time. He had died at the age of eighty. Surely, nad he so desired, he could have lived to a hundred.

"Was there," I asked myself, "some doubt as to the virtues of his *Aqua Vitae Perpetuae?* Was it, after all, and despite the evidence of my experiment, what he claimed and thought it to be? Or did my father think it best to—"

And when I reached this stage of my reflections, suddenly a great light broke in upon me. For was it not possible that, instead of regarding perpetual life as a boon, it should be esteemed the greatest affliction that could fall to the lot of humanity? And then I realized that, for exactly the same reason, I had never swallowed a drop of the liquid myself. On what other hypothesis could my father's secretiveness be explained? On what other theory could his failure to avail himself of the remarkable discovery be accounted for? Yes, surely, this was the truth. He actually dreaded life eternal!

And perhaps, after all, he was not so utterly ignorant of his brother's treachery. Perhaps the note in the pocketbook was an injunction to me—coming, after all these years, as if from the shadowy world beyond the grave—that I was to act as his instrument and wreak vengeance on my uncle by conferring upon him the curse of everlasting life!

It was not long before this newly formed suspicion received a most significant confirmation. For one day, while my uncle was riding in a cab in the city, he was painfully injured by the premature discharge of some blasting-powder used by workmen in removing rock from an up-town building-lot. The accident affected his sight, and seriously lacerated his forearm. In any ordinary case, considering my uncle's advanced age (he was then in his ninetieth year), the injury would have resulted in death. But to the intense surprise of the physicians, he recovered rapidly and was soon

able to be about, though his eyesight was permanently impaired, and he had probably lost the use of his right arm.

Some years afterward, during which time my uncle lived a miserable, useless life, he was again the victim of an accident caused by the collision of a carriage in which he was riding, with a trolley-car. He sustained a number of grave internal injuries, and his health was badly shattered. Still, however, he recovered, though he was merely the wreck and shadow of a man, scarcely able to hobble about, and old—so old that he seemed hardly human, but rather like some strange, outlandish species of bird—lean-necked, gaunt, peering, scarce conscious of the world about him.

Thus he lived for ten years, an object half of pity, half of loathing—a mere animate Thing, growing daily older and more feeble. It was while in this state that he fell victim to a noxious fever that left his face pitted and scarred, and almost completely paralyzed his senses. He was unable, after the attack, even to stand on his feet, but had to be carried from his bed, where he passed restless nights, to a couch in his library, and then back again at night time—a mere helpless, human derelict, with no function save that of life; a creature of less value in the world's great scheme than the most insignificant molecule of protoplasm.

I trust that I am not a hard man. Though both my father and myself had been grievously wronged, yet there should be a limit to any vengeance that one man may find it within his power to inflict upon another; and gladly would I have released my uncle from his suffering if I could have brought myself to commit murder.

For, understand me, the *Aqua Vitae Perpetuae* was not a magic concoction that could restore a shattered member or cause life to exist where the organs necessary to perform the functions of living were absent. It could not, for example, cause a heart to beat that had, virtually, ceased to be a heart. It could not, as was proved in the case of my uncle's arm, restore what was practically a lost member, as is done by the power of the relics of the saints, through Faith.

And here, lest my story should seem too preposterous, even to the most credulous, let me say that my father was the last man in the world to believe in miracles. He had proceeded strictly on scientific lines, very evidently having in mind originally the fact of the great disparity in what I may term initial vital velocities. Thus, for instance, two persons, born on the same day, and living healthy lives, taking every due precaution to guard against the attacks of disease, should be expected to live to about the same age. Yet what happens? One will mature quickly and die comparatively young. The other will develop slowly and die at an extreme age, aye, even though he may not have lived as careful a life as the other. It is all, as I have said, a question of the "initial velocity," which, of course, resolves itself into a question of heredity. I am confident that my father's aim was to neutralize, to overcome the deleterious effects of heredity, and to fortify man against every enemy from within. He placed man in a fortified city with unlimited provisions, but he did not pretend to protect him from the guns of the besiegers without. The *Aqua Vitae* simply prolonged the vital principle. If the organs remained physically intact the liquid would preserve them from ultimate decay, no matter how feeble and useless they might become from old age.

In a moment of contrition I had explained this to my uncle. I had told him that, if he wished to rid himself of the agony of living, he had but to shoot himself through some vital spot. I had even procured a revolver and given it to him, indicating with my finger the exact point on the chest where he could direct the fatal bullet.

But here my father's vengeance attained its very highest point, its culmination, its climax. For, despite my uncle's suffering—his feebleness, and all the lamentable misery of his life, he did not have the nerve to kill himself.

That was revenge, indeed. I had placed the matter entirely in his own hands, and was able to live out my own life with a clear conscience. Truly, it was a wonderful instance of retribution inflicted by a divine Providence. My uncle had defrauded us; he had stolen

the elixir in the vial; he had drunk it without my consent and in spite of my most desperate physical protest. I had deliberately placed in his hands the instrument of release—and, poor, pitiable, miserable wretch that he was, he had not the courage to avail himself of it. He had literally condemned himself to a living hell!

Thus the *Aqua Vitae Perpetuae* still does its duty as my father's instrument of vengeance; still my uncle suffers from pain and decrepitude, and the reproaches of such a conscience as he may possess; while he cannot enjoy that greatest of all blessings, that blessing which, at the outset of this memoir I indicated was shortly to be mine; aye, that blessing which even now I feel brooding over my senses and lulling me to a blissful repose, as with a comforting benediction—the blessing of Death!

The Call of the Bugle

BY MARIAN WARNER WILDMAN

ACROSS the clear, starlit silence of the night, breathed the soft notes of a bugle—long-drawn-out, mournful, sweet.

Standish looked down at the girlish figure beside him.

"Lights out! That's it, Miss Leighton—to-morrow you go away!"

"And next week you will be on your way to Manila, to forget—all this, in the glory of war!"

"Shall you forget?"

"I cannot promise to remember—for very long."

He turned away to stare with somber eyes at the huge shoulders of the desert buttes behind the garrison. Her gaze followed his, and, for a little, each was in fancy scaling again those dusky heights, exploring the wild depths of the cañons that cleft them, galloping in breezy freedom across the endless miles of painted desert that lay beyond. And in these common memories they were ever side by side.

Miss Leighton recalled herself. She did not love him; she had told herself so a hundred times. In a few weeks it would have quite vanished from her life, this glamor born of martial-music and uniforms, of youth and adventure and romance. She had been the only girl in the garrison all summer, and they had been thrown together constantly and unconventionally. It was but natural that he should have learned to imagine he cared for her; and as for herself, she had felt the charm of his strength and physical perfection, the boyish gayety of his manner, his courtesy, his good-comradeship. But this was not love! Love was a solemn, holy thing, and her shrine to its worship should never be builded on so flimsy a foundation of summer-sentiment. Love, as she had dreamed of it all her life, must be a marriage of soul, no less. Because she was quite sure that her feeling for Standish and his for her fell far short of this high standard, Georgia Leighton had made up her mind that she would not let him speak; and Standish, because she had all the things that go with wealth and talent and social power, while he was only a poor lieutenant with a widowed mother to support and with two years of foreign service looming large before him, Standish accepted her unspoken bidding and let her go untold.

"Good-by!" he said, holding out his hand. "May everything good go with you. I—"

His voice broke. Dropping her hand, he left her abruptly and strode down the gravel-walk without once looking back.

Georgia stood under the shadow of the porch-awnings, watching with wistful eyes the tall figure that swung away into the darkness.

Far across the parade-ground a voice broke the stillness. Another and another answered it, calling the hour from sentry-box to sentry-box around the post. As a last long, musical, baritone "And—all's—well!" died away, the girl turned slowly and went into the house.

The military-band at the National Soldiers' Home was just finishing its

open-air afternoon-concert with the usual patriotic number. As the familiar strains of the national anthem swelled on the breeze, a silence fell on many chatting groups. Those who were sitting on the clover-sprinkled turf or on the green-painted iron-benches got to their feet, and the old soldiers took off their caps and stood at attention till the last inspiring notes thrilled away into silence. Afterward the crowd began to scatter, seeking carriages or street-car, hospital, mess-hall, or barracks.

Well outside the paved-circle that surrounded the band-stand, sat a man in the blue uniform of the institution. He was holding his cap across the breast of his blouse, but he had not risen with the rest. He waited till nearly every one had gone. Then he rose painfully, reached for a pair of crutches that were leaning against a near-by tree, and started slowly alone down the hot asphalt-drive past the hospital. The pitying eyes of a girl who was lingering near the band-stand followed him.

"Uncle Andrew, who is the old soldier who is so tall and walks with crutches?"

She had been joined by a gray-haired gentleman in colonel's uniform, and the two were strolling leisurely across the grass to the commandant's-residence. "I know there are many that might answer to the description," she went on, "but this one went over to 'F' Barrack, I think. I was too far away to see his face."

"Tall—walks on crutches—'F' Barrack! Let me see, Georgie! Yes, I guess I know whom you mean. His name's Sanders, I believe, or else it's Stannard. He's almost paralyzed from the waist down by a gun-shot wound, poor chap, and he's got a scar across his face made by a Filipino bolo that's as long as—"

"Filipino, Uncle Andrew! Why, I thought—"

"Thought we had only old civil war fellows here? Well, you were practically right. Sanders is the only regular army man here, and he's here as an exception to the rule. All the rest of our members are civil war volunteers, with a half-dozen, possibly, that fought in the Mexican war. There's one old gentleman here, Georgie—"

But Georgia did not hear the story that followed. All day the uniforms, the bugle-calls, the martial-music of this bivouac of peace had been carrying her back. She had been living over the memories of a summer visit, two years before. She had been dreaming, and in her dreams there had been one figure ever by her side—a brave figure, handsome and stalwart and tall; in her ears a voice had been ringing—a boyish voice, blithe and tender and laughing.

"What was his regiment—the young soldier's, Uncle Andrew?" She did not know that she had interrupted his tale.

"Whose regiment? Oh, Sanders', you mean! I think it was the 11th Cavalry. Yes, I'm quite sure it was. Captain Sanders of the 11th Cavalry."

Georgia started. "A captain—of the 11th?"

"Yes, that's what I said. Dallas, our head-surgeon, told me about him. Ambitious boy, without money or influence but had always been crazy to get into the service. So he enlisted and worked up from the ranks to his commission. Got his promotion in Luzon, with special commendation for gallantry, and just on top of that was wounded and crippled for life."

"How cruel—cruel!" cried the girl.

"Hard luck, but it's the fortune of war, my dear! Of course he was sent home to the States. His mother, who had been his only living relative, died just before he got there, so the poor fellow was brought out to us to be cared for. His career is over, of course, but Dallas says he's making the best of it. He's starting in to learn stenography and bookkeeping, and he hopes to be able to take a position by fall. He's studying with a correspondence school, Dallas says, and works early and late. The only recreation he allows himself is these band-concerts. He even gets up long before breakfast and goes out into the grove to study, where he can be quiet and undistracted. He's been given special permission to come and go just as he likes. That's Dallas' doing. The old doctor is soft-hearted, anyway, and he's taken a great fancy to young Sanders."

"Uncle Andrew!" Georgia's voice rang strange to her ears as she spoke. They had reached the porch long since and Col. Harris was resting in his

steamer-chair, while his guest stood with her face turned away from him, looking out over acres of rolling-lawn and shrubbery and garden.

"Well?" asked the commandant.

"You said his name was—Sanders, didn't you?"

"Why, yes. Sanders or—"

"Not Standish?" almost pleadingly.

"Standish—that's it! Why, of course it's Standish!" said the colonel. "Philip Standish, of the Eleventh Cavalry Isn't that what I said in the first place, Georgia?"

It was still very early in the morning. The grove behind the great red brick barrack-buildings was fresh with the dewy memory of the night just passed. A wood-thrush was fluting leisurely his morning-song among the boughs. Squirrels and chipmunks whisked about, peeping and prying into crevice and hollow. Through the trees, the first long red rays of sunlight crossed the wet grass.

In the edge of the wood stood Georgia Leighton. Her face was pale and there were dark circles under her eyes, as if she had not slept. With one hand on the trunk of an old beech, she leaned forward eagerly and peered into the woods.

Yes, he was there—the tall cripple with the crutches. He was sitting on one of the green-painted seats with a book in his lap and with papers strewn around him, reading and taking notes with a fountain-pen. So absorbed was he that he did not feel the presence of the eyes that were fixed upon him from so near.

With hands pressed tight to her beating heart, Georgia watched him. Was this indeed Phil Standish—Phil Standish stripped of all his youthful strength and beauty and charm—Phil Standish with the glamor gone? She tried to recall his voice, the old ring of his laughter, the boyish gayety of spirit that had made him the life of a frontier-garrison, two years ago; but she found it impossible to associate them with the crippled body, the pale, sad profile, the look of premature age of the man before her. So she watched him, half-frightened, half-fascinated, while he read steadily on, turning a leaf now and then or stopping to write in his note-book.

Suddenly he turned half-toward her and looked up, smiling. Yes, it was the old smile, but even as she recognized it she shivered at the hideous scar that the turn of his head had revealed. A romping red-squirrel had come half-way down the trunk of a tree, and hung there, head downward, flirting its plumy tail and barking suggestively. Standish reached quietly into his pocket and held out a nut to the little creature. Bunny scrambled cautiously down the tree, ran quickly along the back of the iron-bench, took the nut from the outstretched hand of his friend, and scurried away. Standish turned back to his book with a little sigh, then looked up again, this time in surprise, for some one was standing before him.

"Mr. Standish!" she faltered, holding out two shaking hands.

The man looked at her as if dazed, and for a minute did not answer.

"Don't you know me? Haven't you remembered me?"

But already her hands were gripped hard in his.

"I've done more than remember you —Miss Georgia!" Ah, the voice was his, though the old, boyish ring was gone.

"Then why—" she began and stopped.

"Why did I drop so completely out of your life? The reason isn't far to seek! When I said good-by to you two years ago, I still hoped—I still dreamed —Oh what do they matter now, those hopes and dreams of mine? You remember, don't you, a little German song you used to sing? It expresses the situation exactly. *Es hat nicht sollen sein!* The fates decreed otherwise, that was all.

"Please don't go to pitying me!" he protested, as he saw her eyes fill with tears. She was sitting beside him now and books and papers had fallen unnoticed to the grass. "I'm not complaining. Why, I hadn't dared to hope that I should ever see you again; and now—"

"And now?" she prompted him.

"And now I shall have another memory to add to the ones that my heart is keeping. I shall do my work better for it. It will make life a little easier to bear."

Impulsively she leaned toward him, her hand on his arm.

"Let me help you bear it! Let me

share the awful disappointment of it all! O Phil, forgive me, but I know you wanted once to ask me to marry you—ask me now!"

There was nothing boyish in the smile he turned upon her, but there was a depth of sweetness and sadness and strength that she had never seen in it before.

"My dear—my—dear! Do you think I'm such a coward as that—to saddle your sweet life with the burden that's been given me to bear? If you had loved me, Georgia, if you had let me speak and had listened to me two years ago, I'm afraid—I can't be certain, but I'm afraid I shouldn't have been brave enough to give back your love when all this came upon me."

"Do you think I would have taken it back?" she cried hotly.

"What is the use?" he asked, smiling a little wearily. "You didn't care—that fact remains. And now—now I thank God with all my heart that you didn't. Forgive me, dear, but I can't let you give now for pity what you couldn't give me then for love."

Her eyes were on the ground.

"But if it were not for pity? If I cared—"

"Look at me, Georgia! No, don't try to avoid that scar—the effort was too obvious, dear! Now, with your eyes in mine, tell me if you dare that you love me! Tell me the truth!"

The truth! Her courage rose at the word. All her uncertainty and tremulousness vanished.

"You will believe me if I do?"

"Yes."

Her eyes never wavered or dropped from his. She had even forgotten the livid fascination of the long knife-mark on his cheek. Her voice was low and steady.

"When we said good-by, two years ago, I did care for you—a little. But I was afraid to yield to the feeling. I knew, even then, that it wouldn't last. I wonder if you realize, you army-people, what romance and charm there is about things military to one who meets with them for the first time! And you, to me at that time, typified it all—patriotism, chivalry, courage, adventure—they were all personified for me in you. And yet, even while feeling the glamor of it all, I realized how evanescent a thing it was. I told myself always that if we were to meet again, under different circumstances, if I were to see you in the same every-day, commonplace surroundings in which I had seen and known other men, I should find you only an ordinary man like the others. I should find the glamor gone."

"And—you have?"

At last she looked away from him.

"Don't let me hurt you! Yes—I have found the glamor gone."

"It's well you hadn't trusted it, dear! Thank you for telling me the truth."

"Wait!" she cried. "I haven't told you the whole truth yet. Yes, I found the glamor gone—so much is true. It is gone and it will never come back. But this is the truth, too. It had faded as a candle fades before the rising sun. Don't you understand me now? Don't you see that it is not pity I am offering you—but—love?"

He gazed at her, speechless.

"And now—" she prompted softly.

"Georgia!" he cried, and his voice was wrung with pain, "don't tempt me to be a coward! How can I—"

"Why now? Say I have things you lack—health and strength and fortune! Haven't you everything—everything that I lack—that I shall lack always if you refuse them to me now?"

As they talked, the long, level rays of sunlight had been creeping nearer, lighting each dew-drop on the grass into glory as they passed. The squirrels and chipmunks were playing fearlessly about, and all the thrushes in the grove were awake, fluting and answering each other in liquid syllables. The morning seemed drenched in purity and freshness, even as the grass was drenched with dew.

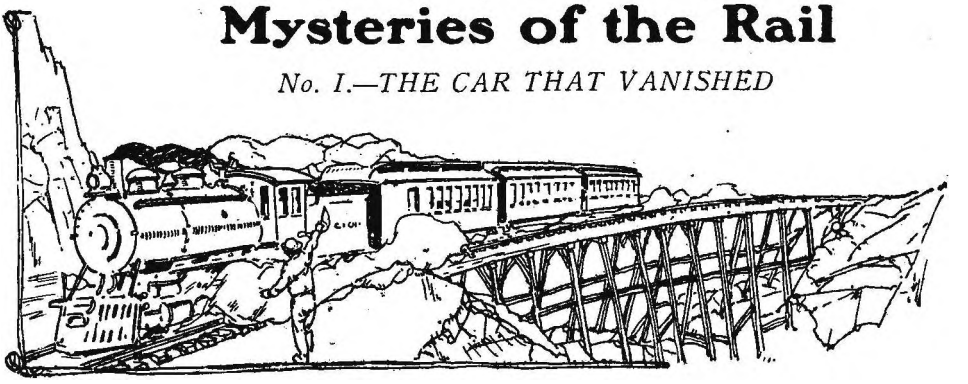
Suddenly, from somewhere behind the trees, rang the blithe call of a bugle, clear, sweet, joyous, repeated again and yet again.

"Listen!" she whispered, leaning forward and laying her hand quite lightly on his.

"Let the bugle plead with you, for me, for both of us! It was 'Lights out' when we last listened to it together; but now—it's 'Reveille!' "

Mysteries of the Rail

No. I.—THE CAR THAT VANISHED



EDITOR'S NOTE.—*With this story* THE BLUE BOOK *begins the publication of a series of railroad tales, edited by Marvin Dana, unique in plot and brimming with new and interesting features. They will appeal especially to the traveling public. The incidents revolve about a faddist in physical culture and rare book-bindings, with an added penchant for delving into mysteries of railroading. The series will run through several issues of this magazine, each number offering a complete tale.*

THORPE HAZELL was a crank and a genius. He was a faddist on food and physical culture. He carried vegetarianism to the extreme, and was continually practicing strange and astonishing "exercises," to the bewilderment of those who knew him not. On the other hand he possessed a mind nimble, accurate, ingenious, which he applied in solving the various puzzles that arise from time to time in the history of all railways. For his recreation, Hazell collected rare books, and was an acknowledged authority on bindings and editions. In appearance, he was a slight, delicate-looking man, with pale face and refined features, light red hair, and dreamy blue eyes.

Hazell was staying with a friend at Newbury, and had taken his camera with him, for he was something of an amateur photographer, though he usually limited his attention to trains and engines. He had just come into the house from a morning ramble with his camera slung over his shoulder and was preparing to partake of two soda biscuits, when his friend met him in the hall.

"Hello, Hazell," he said, "you're just the fellow they want here."

"What's up?" asked Hazell, taking off his camera, and making ready to begin some exercises.

"I've just been down to the station," his friend explained. "I know the station-master very well, and he told me of an awfully queer thing that happened on the line last night."

"Where?"

"On the Orwell branch. That's a single line, you know, that runs from Shoreham Junction to Salisbury."

Hazell smiled, and began to whirl his arms about his head.

"Kind of you to give me the information," he said; "but I happen to know the line"—as he did every railroad in the country. "But what's occurred?"

"Well, it seems that a freight-train left Shoreham Junction last night bound through to Salisbury."

"What happened?"

"One of the freight cars failed to reach Salisbury."

"Not very much in that," Hazell said changing the rotation of his arms, "unless that particular car happened to be behind the caboose, and the couplings snapped, in which case the next train along might have run into it."

"Oh, no; the car was in the middle of the train."

"Probably left on a sidetrack somewhere by mistake."

"But the station-master says that all the stations along the line have been wired to, and the car isn't at any one of them."

"Very likely it never left Shoreham,"

"He declares there can be no doubt about that."

"Well, you begin to interest me," Hazell admitted, ceasing his whirligigs

and beginning to eat the crackers. "There may be something in it, though very often a car goes astray in what seems a puzzling way. I'll go down to the station."

"I'll go with you, Hazell, and introduce you to the station-master. Of course he has heard of you."

Ten minutes later they were in the office at the station, Hazell having re-slung his camera.

"I am very glad to meet you," said the local representative of the company to the expert. "This thing looks mighty mysterious. I can't make head or tail of it."

"Do you know what the car contained?" Hazell asked.

"That's where the trouble comes in," was the answer. "It was valuable property. There's to be a loan exhibition of pictures for charity at Buffalo next week, and this car was bringing some of them down from Shoreham. They belong to Senator Folsom—three of those he has at his country-place in Shoreham. They say the pictures are very valuable. Each was in a separate packing-case."

"H'm—this does sound odd. And you are sure the car was on the train?"

"Simpson, the conductor on the freight is here now—this is his home. I'll send for him. Then you can hear the story in his own words."

When, in due time, the conductor of the freight appeared on the scene, Hazell regarded the man narrowly, but there was nothing suspicious about him.

"I know that car was on the train when we pulled out of the Junction," he declared in answer to Hazell's inquiries, "and I noticed it at Upton, the next station, where we left a couple of cars. It was the fifth or sixth car in front of the caboose. I'm certain of that. We stopped at Compton to take on a cattle car, but I didn't get out there myself, and so didn't see the car. After that we ran straight through to Salisbury without making another stop, and then I discovered that the car was gone. I supposed of course we must have left it at Compton or Upton by mistake, but I was wrong, for they say there's no such car at either place. That's all I know about the affair. It beats the devil, don't it?"

"Extraordinary!" Hazell exclaimed. "You must have made a mistake."

"No, I'm sure I haven't."

"Did the engineer notice anything?"

"No."

"But the thing is impossible," Hazell cried in exasperation. "A loaded freight-car couldn't have been spirited away. What time was it when you left the Junction?"

"About eight o'clock in the evening."

"Ah, quite dark. You didn't notice anything unusual along the line?"

"Not a thing."

"You were in the caboose all the time, I suppose?"

"While we were running, yes."

The office-door opened and a trainman entered.

"A passenger who got on at the Junction," he explained, "says that there is a freight-car at Grove."

"Well, I'll be dinged," exclaimed the conductor of the freight. "There never is any car at Grove—it must be—and yet it can't be. Why, we ran through Grove without stopping—trains never do stop there except in camp time."

"Where is Grove?" Hazell asked.

"Oh, it's only a bit of sidetrack and a platform between Compton and Upton," the station-master explained. "It's for the convenience of the troops and is only used in summer. The militia camps there."

"I should very much like to see the place as soon as possible," Hazell declared, with animation.

"The next train connects with a passenger at the Junction," the station-master said. "You can get there in an hour. You'd better go with him, Simpson."

An hour later, Hazell and the conductor of the freight alighted at Grove. It is a place singularly lonely, situated in a vast flat basin, scarcely relieved by a solitary tree, and far from all human habitation with the exception of one tumble-down cottage half a mile away.

The "station" itself is only a single platform, with a shelter, and a short stretch of sidetrack terminating in a "dead end," that is, in this case, wooden buffers to stop the cars from running on to the ground. This side track runs off the single line of track at points from the Junction direction of the line.

And on this bit of side track was the lost freight-car, right up against the dead end, and in it were the three packing-cases containing the three pictures sent by Senator Folsom to the loan exhibition. There could be no doubt about it at all. But how that car had got there from the middle of a train running through without a stop was a mystery even to the acute mind of Thorpe Hazell.

"Well," said the conductor, when they had gazed long enough at the freight-car, "we'd better have a look at the switch. Come along."

There is no such thing as a signal-box at this primitive "station." The switch is operated by two levers in a ground frame, standing close by the side of the line, one lever unlocking and the other shifting the points of the rails of the siding.

"How about this switch?" asked Hazell as they drew near. You use it only so occasionally that they are kept out of action, I suppose."

"Certainly," the conductor said. "A block of wood is bolted down between the end of the siding rail point and the main line rail, fixed as a wedge. Ah, there it is, you see, quite untouched; and the levers themselves are locked—here's a keyhole in the ground frame. This is the strangest thing I've ever come across, Mr. Hazell."

Thorpe Hazell stood looking at the switch, sorely puzzled. They must have been worked in order to get that freight-car on the siding. He was certain of the fact. But how?

Suddenly, his face lighted up. Oil evidently had been used to loosen the bolt of the nut that made fast the block of wood. Then his eyes fell on the handle of one of the two levers, and a slight exclamation of joy escaped him.

"Look," said the conductor at that moment, "it's impossible to move the levers." He put out his hand toward the handles.

To his astonishment, Hazell seized him by the collar and dragged him back.

"I beg your pardon," Hazell explained. "Hope I haven't hurt you. But I want to photograph those levers first—before you touch them—if you don't mind."

Simpson watched the expert rather sullenly, as he fixed his camera on a folding tripod he carried with him, and placed it only a few inches from the handle of one of the levers, and afterward took two very careful photographs of it.

"I can't see the use of that," the conductor growled. But Hazell vouchsafed no explanation.

"Let him find it out for himself," was his thought.

Then he said aloud:

"I think they must have taken that block out, conductor. And it's evident that the switch must have been turned, in order to get that freight-car where it is. How it was done is a problem, but, if the man that did it was anything of a regular criminal, I have an idea that we might find him."

"How?" the conductor demanded, vastly puzzled.

"Ah," was the unsatisfactory response, "I'd rather not say at present. Now, I should very much like to know whether those pictures of Senator Folsom's are all safe."

"We'll soon find out," the conductor answered. "You can have the freight-car taken back to the Junction by the train we return on, and there the car can be opened."

"That will do nicely," Hazell agreed.

Forthwith, the conductor set himself to undoing the bolt that held the block, with a spanner, after which he unlocked the levers.

"H'm—they work pretty freely," he remarked as he pulled one.

"Certainly," Hazell agreed; "they've been oiled recently."

There was an hour or so to spare before the return train would pass, and Hazell occupied it by walking over to the tumble-down cottage.

"I am hungry," he explained to the woman whom he found there, "and hunger is Nature's dictate for food. Can you oblige me with a couple of onions and a broomstick?"

And that woman talks still of the strange man who "kept a-swinging o' that there broomstick round 'is 'ead, and then eat them onions solemn as a jedge."

The first thing Hazell did on returning to Newbury was to develop his photographs. By evening the plates

were dry enough to print one or two copies on gas-light paper. The clearest of these he inclosed with a letter to a police headquarters' detective whom he knew in New York. He said in his note that he would call on the detective in New York within a few days for such information as might be forthcoming concerning the photograph.

The following evening he received a communication from the station-master, which read:

DEAR SIR:

I promised to let you know if the pictures in the cases in the freight-car were in any way tampered with. I have just received word from Buffalo which states that they have been unpacked and carefully examined by the committee of the Loan Exhibition. The committee is perfectly satisfied that they have not been damaged or interfered with in any way, and that they have been received just as they left the owner's hands.

We are still at a loss to account for the running of that freight-car on to the siding at Grove—why it was done or how. An official of the company is investigating, and at his direction we are keeping the affair quiet. There seems to be no need for publicity as long as the goods are safe.

"This is more mysterious than ever," said Hazell to himself. "I can't understand it at all."

The next morning, in New York, he called on his friend, the detective at police headquarters, and was at once shown in.

"You'll be glad to hear that I had no difficulty with your little matter," the detective said at once, after greetings had been exchanged. "We looked up our records and very soon succeeded in spotting your man."

"Who is he?" Hazell demanded, with much interest.

"His real name is Edgar Jeffreys, but we know him under several *aliases*. He's served four sentences for burglary and robbery—the latter a daring theft from a train, so he's in your line, Mr. Hazell. What's he been up to, and how did you get that print?"

"Well," Hazell replied, "I don't quite know yet what he has been doing. But I should like to be able to find him if anything turns up. Never mind how I got the print—the affair is a private one at present, and nothing may come of it."

The detective wrote an address on a piece of paper, and handed it to Hazell.

"He's living there just now, under the name of Allen. We keep such men in sight. I'll let you know if he moves."

When Hazell opened his paper the following morning, he uttered a cry of pleasure. And no wonder, for this is what he saw:

MYSTERY OF A PICTURE

SENATOR FOLSOM AND LOAN EXHIBITION—EXTRAORDINARY CHARGE

The committee of the Loan Exhibition of pictures to be opened next week at Buffalo is in a state of very natural excitement brought about by a strange charge that has been made against it by Senator Folsom.

The senator, who has his country-house in Shoreham, has in his mansion there several very valuable pictures, among them being the celebrated "Holy Family," by Velasquez. This picture, with two others, was dispatched by him from Shoreham to be exhibited at Buffalo, and yesterday he himself went to the city in order to satisfy himself as to the hanging arrangements, as he had particularly stipulated that the "Holy Family" was to be placed in a prominent position.

The picture in question was standing on the floor of the gallery, leaning against a pillar, when Senator Folsom arrived with some representatives of the committee.

Nothing occurred until he happened to walk behind the canvas when he astounded those present by saying that the picture was not his at all, declaring that a copy had been substituted, and stating that he was absolutely certain on account of various private marks of his at the back of the canvas which were quite indecipherable, and which were now missing. He admitted that the painting itself in every way resembled his picture, and that it was the cleverest forgery he had ever seen; but a very painful scene took place, the hanging committee stating that the picture had been received by them from the railroad company just as it stood.

At present the whole affair is a mystery, but Senator Folsom insisted most emphatically to our correspondent, who was able to interview him, that the picture most assuredly was not his. He said further that, as the painting is extremely valuable, he intends to hold the committee responsible for the substitution which, he says, has taken place.

It was evident to Hazell that the newspapers as yet had not got hold of the mysterious incident at Grove. As a matter of fact, the railroad company had kept the affair strictly to itself, and the committee of the Loan Exhibition knew nothing of the extraordinary adventure of the freight-car.

But Hazell saw that inquiries would now be made, and he determined to probe the mystery without delay. He saw at once that, if there was any truth in the senator's story, the substitution had taken place on the lonely siding at Grove. Five minutes after he had read the article in the paper, he was in a hansom, being rapidly driven to the apartment of a friend who was well known in art-circles as a critic and historian.

"I can tell you exactly what you want to know," this man said, in answer to Hazell's question, "for I have just been looking it up, to refresh my memory, so as to do an article on it for the evening papers. There was a famous copy of the Velasquez picture, said to have been painted by a pupil of his, and for some years there was quite a controversy among the respective owners as to which was the genuine one, just as there is to-day about a Madonna belonging to a gentleman at St. Moritz, but which a Vienna gallery also claims to possess.

"However, in the case of the 'Holy Family' the dispute was ultimately settled, once and for all, years ago, and undoubtedly Senator Folsom possesses the genuine picture. What became of the copy, no one knows. For twenty years all trace of it has been lost. There, that's all I can tell you. I shall pad it out a bit in my article, and I must get to work on it at once. Good-by."

"One moment. Where was the copy last seen?"

"Oh, old Norton, the collector, had it last, but when he learned that it was a forgery, he is said to have sold it for a song, all interest in it being lost, you know."

"Let's see—he's a pretty old man, isn't he?"

"Yes, nearly eighty—a perfect enthusiast on pictures still, though."

"Only said to have sold it," Hazell muttered to himself as he went out into the street. "That's very vague, and there's no knowing what these enthusiasts will do when they're really set on a thing. Sometimes they lose all sense of honesty. I've known fellows actually to rob a friend's collection of stamps or butterflies. What if there's something in it? By George, what a scandal there would be. It seems to me that, if such a scandal were prevented, I'd be thanked all round. Anyhow, I'll have a shot at it on spec. And I must find out how that freight-car was run on to the siding at Grove."

When once Hazell was in pursuit of a railroad mystery, he never wasted a moment. In an hour's time he was at the address given him by the headquarters' detective. On his way there, he took a card from his case—a blank one—and wrote on it, "From J. Rogers Norton." This he put in an envelope.

"It's a bold stroke," he said to himself, "but, if there's anything in it, it's worth trying."

At the designated house, he asked for Allen. The woman who had opened the door looked at him suspiciously, and said that she didn't think Mr. Allen was in.

"Give him this envelope," Hazell replied.

In a couple of minutes the woman returned, and bade him follow her.

A short, wiry-looking man, with sharp, evil-eyes, stood in the room waiting for him, and regarded him distrustfully.

"Well," he snapped, "what is it? What do you want?"

"I come on behalf of Mr. Norton. You will know that when I mention Grove," Hazell replied, playing his doubtful trump-card boldly.

"Well," went on the man surlily, "what about that?"

Hazell wheeled, locked the door, put the key in his pocket, and then faced his man. The latter darted forward, but Hazell had a revolver pointing at him.

"You damned detective!"

"No, I'm not a detective; I told you I came on Norton's behalf."

"What does the old fool mean?" demanded Jeffreys, *alias* Allen.

"Oh, I see you know all about it. Now listen to me quietly, and you may come to have some sense. You changed that picture at Grove the other night."

"You seem to know a lot about it," sneered the other, but less defiantly.

"Well, I do—but not quite all. You were foolish to leave your traces on that lever, eh?"

"How did I do that?" Jeffrey queried, unguardedly betraying himself.

"You'd been dabbling about with oil, and you left your thumb-print on the handle. I photographed it, and they identified it at police headquarters. Quite simple."

Jeffreys swore furiously beneath his breath.

"I wish you'd tell me what you mean," he said at length.

"Certainly. I expect you've been well paid for this little job?"

"If I have, I'm not going to take any risks. I told the old man so. He's worse than I am—he put me up to getting the picture. Let him take his chance when it comes out. I suppose he wants to keep his name out of it; that's why you're here."

"You're not quite right. Now just listen. You're a villain, and you deserve to suffer. But I'm acting in a purely private capacity, and I believe that, if I can get back the original picture for its owner, it will be better for all parties to hush this affair up. Has Norton got the painting yet?"

"No, not yet," the other admitted. "He was too artful. But he knows where it is, and so do I."

"Ah, now you are talking sense. Look here! You make a clean breast of it, and I'll take it down on paper. You shall swear to the truth of your statement in due form; nobody else needs to see the confession, though. I shall hold this in case it is necessary, but if you help me to get the picture back to Senator Folsom, I don't think it will be."

After a little more conversation, Jeffreys explained. Before he did so, however, Hazell had taken a bottle of milk and a hunch of whole meal bread from his pocket, and calmly proceeded to perform exercises and then to eat and drink, while Jeffreys told the following story.

"It was old Norton who did it. How he got hold of me doesn't matter; perhaps I got hold of him—maybe I put him up to it. But that's not the question. He'd kept that forged picture of his in a storeroom for years, but he always had his eye on the genuine one. He paid a long price for the forgery and he got to think he ought to have the original—that he had a sort of moral right to it. But then he's mad about pictures, anyhow.

"Well, as I say, he kept the forgery out of sight and let folks think he'd sold it, but all the time he was in hopes that, somehow he'd get it changed for the original.

"Then I came along, and I undertook the job for him. There were three of us in it, for it was a ticklish business. We found out by what train the picture was to travel; that was easy enough. I got hold of a key to the switch at Grove, and of course screwing off the bolt that held the block of wood was a mere nothing. I oiled the switch well, so that it would work without a hitch as I wanted it to.

"One pal was with me at the sidetrack at Grove, ready to clap the brakes on the freight-car when we got it. I was to work the switch myself. My other pal, who had the most ticklish job of all, was on the freight, hidden under a tarpaulin on an open car. He had along with him two lengths of very stout rope, with a hook at each end of them.

"When the train left Upton, he started in on his job. The freight ran slowly and he had plenty of time. Counting from the caboose, the car we wanted to cut out was the fifth. So first he hooked the fourth car to the sixth with one of his pieces of rope, fixing the hook at the side of the nearest ends of both cars, and keeping the slack in his hand, coiled up.

"Then, when the train ran down a bit of a decline, so that the cars crowded on one another, he uncoupled the fifth from the fourth, standing on the fifth to do it. Then he paid out the slack on the up grade till it was tight. Next he hooked his second rope from the fifth car to the sixth, uncoupled the fifth from the sixth, and paid out the slack of the second rope.

"Now you can see what happened. The last few cars of the train were being drawn by a long rope reaching from the fourth car to the sixth and leaving a space in between. In the middle of the space the fifth car ran, drawn by a short rope from the sixth. My pal stood on the sixth, with a sharp knife in his hand.

"The rest was easy. I held the lever, close by the side of the line, coming forward to it as soon as the engine had passed. The moment the gap in the

train after the sixth car appeared, I pulled over the switch, and the fifth car rolled on to the sidetrack. At the same moment, my pal on the sixth car cut the rope that had pulled the fifth.

"The instant the fifth car had passed me on the siding, I pulled the switch again, so that the rest of the train would keep running on the main line. There's another decline before you get to Compton, so that the last four cars ran down toward the main body of the train, and crowded together. When that happened, my pal hauled in his rope and unhooked it from the two cars and finally coupled the fourth car and the sixth together. Then he jumped off as they were pulling into Compton. That's how it was done."

Hazell's eyes sparkled.

"It's the cleverest thing I've heard of on the line," he said.

"Think so? Well, it wanted some handling. The next thing was to unscrew the packing-case, take the picture out of the frame, and put the forgery we'd brought with us in its place. That took us some time, but there was no fear of interruption in such a lonely place. Then I took the picture off, rolling it up first, and hid it. The old man insisted on this. I was to tell him where it was and he was to wait a few weeks and then get it himself."

"Where did you hide it?"

"You're sure you're going to hush this up?"

"If I were not, you'd have been in charge long ago."

"Well, there's a path from Grove to the place where the troops camp, and on the right side of the path is an old well, quite dry. It's down there. You can easily find the string fastened to it if you search. The end of it is near the top of the well."

Hazell wrote out the confession, and had it duly attested.

"I told you I was merely a private individual," Hazell said to Senator Folsom. "I have acted in a purely private capacity in bringing you your picture."

The senator looked from the canvas to the calm face of Hazell.

"Who are you, sir?" he asked.

"Well, I rather aspire to be a book-collector; you may have read my little monograph on 'Jacobean Bindings?'"

"No," said the senator, "I have not had that pleasure. But I must inquire further into this. How did you get this picture? Where was it? Who—"

"Senator," Hazell broke in, "I could, of course, tell you the whole truth. I am not in any way to blame myself. By chance, as much as anything else, I discovered how your picture had been stolen and where it was."

"But I want to know all about it. I shall prosecute, I—"

"I think not. Now, do you remember where the forged picture was seen last?"

"Yes. Norton had it—he sold it."

"Did he?"

"Eh?"

"What if he kept it all this time?" said Hazell with a peculiar look.

There was a long silence.

"Good heavens," exclaimed the senator, at length, "you don't mean that. Why, he has one foot in the grave—a very old man. I was dining with him a fortnight ago."

"Ah, well, I think you are content now, Senator."

"It is terrible—terrible. I have the picture back, but I wouldn't have the scandal known for the world."

"It need never be," replied Hazell. "You will make it all right with the people at Buffalo?"

"Yes, yes, even if I have to admit that I was mistaken and let the forgery stay through the exhibition."

"I think that would be the best way," Hazell declared.

"May I offer you some luncheon?" the senator asked.

"Thank you, but I am a vegetarian, and—"

"I think my cook could arrange something. Let me ring."

"It is very good of you, but I ordered some lettuce at the station restaurant. But if you will allow me just to go through my physical-training-before-luncheon exercises here, it would save me the trouble of a more or less public display at the station."

"Why, certainly," agreed the rather bewildered senator; whereupon Hazell threw off his coat and commenced whirling his arms like a windmill in a gale.

"Digestion should be considered before a meal," he explained affably.

Jojo's Bout With Justice

BY HUGH KENNEDY

QUARRYTOWN—and if any one is curious as to the exact location of that interesting hamlet, let him consult some very detail map of the limestone belt in the Province of Ontario—was athrill. She was at a feast of news, her highest conceivable bliss, and was smacking an epicure's lips over many a choice morsel, served in the appetizing style of her most experienced caterers of gossip. That, in the cause of her excitement was involved the possible death of one of her sons, took nothing from the keenness of her appetite.

Her animation, in truth, was not unwarranted. The larger world had felt a ripple of the wave that tossed her so mightily, and *The Bulletin*, biggest daily in the county, had sent its representative to take down the whole story from the willing lips of Jack Reeves, her bailiff, constable, stone-mason, and auctioneer—a circumstance resulting in so much lionizing of that man of offices, and furnishing excuse for so many flattering "have somethin's," that already, at three in the afternoon, the majesty of the law was much more worthily represented by the gravity of his countenance than by the trustworthiness of his legs. As to his conversation, it had grown in impressiveness as the flush on his cheek had deepened.

Quarrytown, at any rate, felt the eyes of the world upon her. Possibly from an ambition to appear in the world's eyes as a people of leisure; more probably as a result of her Athenian characteristic of loving to hear and discuss some new thing—from whatever cause, the number of idlers at the postoffice, the two blacksmith-shops, and the two bar-rooms, had been for two days far above the average—and the average number of drones in that small hive was never, even in the busiest times, a low one.

A stranger, curious as to the cause of so unusual a flutter of excitement, would have found willing instruction in any of the knots of gossipers. Naturally, the most authentic information was to be gleaned in the group of which Jack was the admired center. This group had gathered in the blacksmith-shop of big Jo, where the condition of the constable's legs, already hinted at, had induced him to avoid all risk of humiliation by settling down for the afternoon on Jo's work-bench.

"I don't care that shoe-parin' what they say." Dick Gamble, better known as Spuds, was the speaker, "They may call it fair, or they may call it foul, but you needn't tell me that an under-sized chap like Jojo could ever lay out big Wally with one clip of his fist, not unless he had a shot up his sleeve, or somethin' on his knuckles. Steel-knuckles, I say, is what done for Wally. This here Jojo has lived in my house ever since he come to town, an' I know—well, I know what I know."

Jack was inscrutably punching his name into the top of Jo's bench with a horseshoe-nail. All eyes turned to him, as if a deliverance on the question of knuckles, or no knuckles, was expected of him. The silence remained unbroken, however, until big Jo, wiping the dust from his anvil with a puzzled air, spoke out appealingly.

"Well, now, it might be steel-knuckles, an' yet again it mightn't. Some says one thing, an' some another, an' how's a man goin' to tell. Mebbe Jack, now," insinuatingly, "that made the arrest, knows more about that than we do."

Jack, thus called upon, put in the finishing punches of a capital R before replying.

"I don't see no call for me to give no opinion. Dick there," indicating the first speaker with a careless jerk of the nail, "he seems to know most all there is to know. Of course, he's been talkin' with the prisoner since the arrest; an of course, I aint. He's seen Wally lyin' there in bed, an' of course, I aint had no such chances, bein' only a constable, an' not a private citizen. No, I don't see no call for me to give no opinion, after Dick's give his. If you want to know anythin' else, ask Dick. He knows it all, an' he's willin' to tell."

The severity of this sarcastic rejoinder made its impression, and Dick's regret at having committed himself too hastily to the knuckles-theory was evident.

"I just spoke my mind," was his rather weak retort. "Every man's got a right to do that. If Jack, here, knows all he lets on to know, why don't he out with it?"

Jack's severe expression had melted into one of absolute compassion for so weak an antagonist. "If it's my opinions you want, you can find 'em in the columns of *The Bulletin* to-morrow morning. *The Bulletin* asked my opinions before it offered any of its own, an' I gave 'em. Them as wants to know 'em can go to *The Bulletin* for 'em; but if it's steel-knuckles you're talking about—faugh! steel-knuckles cut, an' there aint a cut on Wally's face nowhere. One eye is painted a bit, an' his upper lip is a trifle swelled, but he never got them marks from no steel-knuckles."

"They do say," said another inquiringly, "that Wally aint knowed anythin' since."

"Knowed anythin'?" repeated Jo. "It's all they can do to say whether he's drawin' his breath, let alone knowin' anythin'. Aint that right, Jack?"

Jack rose to the bait of Jo's conciliatory manner. "For me, I couldn't see nothing like life about him, nowhere. Doc. Richardson says he's livin' yet; but if he can see any life about a man that's been lyin' like Wally for two days without movin' hand or foot, or so much as winkin' an eyelash, why, his eyesight's a durn sight better'n mine—as it ought to be, considerin' the charge he makes for lookin' at a man. It's my belief, an' so I told *The Bulletin* man this morning, that Wally's cashed in already, an' there's nothin' left but to go right on with the inquest."

A chorus of "Well-well-well's," and "You-don't-tell-me's," showed the effect of this grave statement on the hearers.

"Sure, it's killed he'll be, if he's dead intoirely," bulled Tom, the hostler of the upper hotel.

Even the gravity of the subject could not restrain the laughter that Tom's discovery provoked. Big Jo, as usual, came in with his tremendous and startling guffaw, when the mirth of the other had already begun to subside. Jo had laughs in him like his own sledge-hammer blows.

"It looks as if this weren't going to be any laughing matter, before long," corrected a grave-faced man who had not spoken before. "If Wally should die, it won't be murder, will it?"

A thoughtful silence followed this startling question. This time, as if from a sense of his official responsibilities, Jack was the first to speak. "There can't be no murder," was his verdict, "without malice prepense. If the crown can prove malice prepense, it'll be murder, sure enough; but, if malice prepense," as if loth to drop so telling a phrase, "if malice prepense can't be proved, it won't be nuthin' more than manslaughter."

A legal opinion of such moment, and so convincingly delivered, called for an interval of reflection, broken only by "m-h-ms," indicative, in their varying inflections, of the several states of uncertainty in the minds of the hearers. Jack was undoubtedly carrying himself with credit. Even Dick forgot the sulkiness of defeat, and did his vanquisher homage in the question.

"This here malice prepense, now, that you talk about—what might it be?"

"Malice prepense," explained Jack, forgivingly, "is Latin for bad blood."

"M-h-m! I see," replied Dick, with a rather puzzled expression, for one whose difficulties have been cleared away at a word. "But supposin' the verdict's manslaughter, what's Jojo liable to get?"

"That's as the case may be," returned Jack, straightening himself on his seat, with an air of authority worthy of a different variety of bench. "It depends on circumstances. In law, cases go by circumstances. Now, if the defense can set up extenuatin' circumstances, the sentence'll be—er—middlin' light. But if the circumstances turn out to be not extenuatin', it's a sure case of the rock-pile for life."

"Sure," commented Tom, "it's a strong case Wally'll be after havin' ag'in Jojo if he dies, but what about it if he lives?"

The question was surrounding itself

with unexpected legal complications, but Jack's subtlety was equal to the emergency.

"That's a horse of another color," was his solution. "The circumstances bein' altered, the case is altered. If Wally gets on his feet again, Jojo'll have a case ag'in him for assault an' battery, Wally bein' the aggravater. Unless the circumstances is mighty extenuatin', Wally's liable to get the stone-breakin' job himself."

"It do seem queer," reflected Jo, wrestling with the problem, "but I suppose it's law. It might save Wally a heap of trouble if he should be a goner, eh?"

The subtleties of the question as to whether it were better for Wally to die a victim, or live a convict, were not further discussed. Dick Gamble, piqued by the degree to which Jack was dominating the conversation, and willing to try another fall with him, raised a new issue.

"There's one p'int that mebbe Jack's overlookin'. If Wally dies, Jojo's bound to come up for trial before the Squire. Now, everybody knows the Squire likes a good handy fightin' man, if he's a clean fighter. If Jojo won this fight fair, it stands to reason he's likely to get any chances that's goin'."

Assenting murmurs followed Dick's suggestion.

"There's somethin' in that," said Jo. "I've heard the Squire say that goin' to law's often a worse way of settlin' a row than a good stand-up fight. I can remember the time when he was considered a pretty handy man with the gloves himself."

"An' then," added another, "he takes *The Sporting Weekly*, regular, an' keeps posted on the prize-fighters. Dick may be right. The Squire might be inclined to let Jojo down easy, after all."

Jack could contain his wrath no longer. He went straight at his adversary, ignoring the other speakers.

"Dick Gamble, look a here! Law is one thing, an' potatoes is another. You mebbe can raise a crop of spuds, but when it comes to a p'int of law, you don't know no more than a spring-rabbit does about snipe-shootin'. What's private feelin's got to do with public duties? When I'm makin' an arrest in the king's name, d'ye think my feelin's is the feelin's of an auctioneer? Huh! No more has the Squire got the feelin's of a private citizen when he's on the bench. He's the representative of His Gracious Majesty, an' a pillar of the law. He's there to see justice between man and man, an' if one man's his brother and the other his father, it's all the same. Supposin' the Squire does read about fighters, an' keep up on the boxin'-game, is he goin' ag'in the law on that account? Bosh! I can mind well a case I was on about ten years ago—"

Jack got no further in his reminiscences, for at this moment a newcomer entered the shop. It was Dicky Gamble, a lad who inherited all his father's distaste for useful work; and came, by more artificial, but equally operative laws of heredity, into early possession of the nickname, Spudlets. Dicky joined the group with badly feigned nonchalance, as if he had dropped in quite by accident; but his flushed face and glowing eyes betrayed excitement, and his heaving chest justified the suspicion that he had approached the shop at his best speed. That he was brimming with news was evident, but for a time the expectant looks of the men were rewarded only with an obstinate and triumphant silence, while Dicky continued to enjoy to the full the advantage any one, with even an apparent monopoly of news, was sure to possess in Quarrytown.

"Well?" queried the group.

"Well nuthin'!" was the portentous, if somewhat breathless, retort.

"Come now, what's up? Uncork yourself," came the parental command.

"Haint you heard?" said Dicky, in no mind to hurry his exit while he could still hold the center of the stage. "You don't tell me you haven't heard?"

There is no knowing how long the men would have been kept on the rack of curiosity, had not lame Dick Overton, better known as Wolf, been seen approaching in unusual haste. Reluctantly then, not to risk dividing honors with Wolf, Dicky gave up his news. It was startling enough. Wally was dead.

Swelling with the greatness he had achieved, Dicky submitted to cross-examination. He had seen Doctor Richardson coming out of the Thomp-

sons' house, and had overheard him telling Miss Reeves that Wally had died at half-past three. Here the recital was abruptly cut off. Dicky's roving eye suddenly missed the figure of his father, who had quietly left the shop, and turned in the direction of his home. Not quicker was the flash of this perception in Dicky's consciousness, than the dart he made after his retreating parent. Deaf to his baffled elder's angry commands, he sped past him, to be beforehand in the breaking of news at his own home, as he had been at the blacksmith-shop.

In the kitchen of the Gamble house a girl of eighteen was at the wash-tub. Weariness and resignation were in her thin features. Across the room her mother rocked an infant in its cradle. In her still thinner features was all her daughter's weariness, with none of her resignation; and while, with a caressing hand she was soothing her youngest-born to slumber, with her rasping tongue she was goading her eldest to desperation.

To be scolding was characteristic of Mrs. Gamble. Usually, it was her lord and master who was the subject of, and, so long as he could be kept within hearing, the sufferer by, her lamentations. His shiftlessness, his laziness, his shortcomings as a provider, were her never-failing themes. Dick's sole useful occupation was the raising yearly on his half-acre lot of a crop of the tubers, from which he took his sobriquet of Spuds, and nothing but dread of his wife's railings prevented his chronic backache from reaching so acute a stage as to render impossible even this amount of work. Susan's labors at the wash-tub, and the small sum paid by Jojo for board and lodging, were all that kept the family from actual want. Both these bread-winners were at this moment the objects of Mrs. Gamble's displeasure.

"I always said he'd come to no good. Where did he come from, and what was he before he came here? Answer me that. Them that have no business, and are ashamed of their past, aint for respectable folk to take up with. If your lazy father would work, and provide for his family, we wouldn't have to take vagabonds to live with us. You hear me? 'Vagabonds,' I said, a tramp, a common tramp, that's what he is."

A firmer setting of the lips, and a more vigorous rubbing of the wash-board, were the only signs of hearing the younger woman gave. Exasperated by her daughter's silence, the mother railed on.

"Eh? Stubborn, are you? You dare to believe in him still, do you? I tell you, he'll go to jail for this, and that's where tramps, and vagabonds, and bullies, ought to go. Maybe, if he gets his deserts, he'll hang. You hear that? Hang! A fine 'beau' you'd have had, if you had no mother to take care of you, letting the likes of him set up to be good enough to set eyes on a daughter of mine. Huh!"

It was at this moment Dicky burst into the room, gurgling his news forth, breathlessly, like water escaping from an upturned bottle.

"Mother, mother!" he shouted. "What d'ye think? Wally's dead. I heard Doc. Richardson say so. He was talkin' to old Sal Reeves, just after he came out of Thompsons'. M'hum! Nn' they's going to hang Jojo, f'r killin' him. Gee! It's so. You can ask—"

Mrs. Gamble sprang from her chair.

"There you are now! There you are! What did I tell you? A murderer, a—"

The straightened figure and blazing eyes of the girl silenced her.

"It's a lie. He's no murderer. He's an honest, civil, steady, hard-working man. If father was only one tenth as good a man, we wouldn't be starving, as we are now. So there!"

Her anger could surmount her despair no longer. She threw herself into a chair, and a passion of sobbing seized her.

"I wish I was dead. Oh! I wish I was dead!" she wailed.

The paralysis of Mrs. Gamble's unruly member was but momentary. Burying her face in her hands, she rocked back and forth.

"Oh! Oh! Oh!" she moaned. "Hear the girl. Her own father isn't as good as a murderer. Oh, thankless child! Her own father, the poor dear man that's too ill to work! This is the sympathy he gets from his own child. Oh! sharper than a serpent's tooth! Oh! Oh! Oh!"

The infant in the cradle soon added a third and more piercing voice to the chorus of wailing. The bewildered Dicky gaped awhile, now at his mother, now at Sue. To maternal and infantile wailings he was callous by use, but his sister's outburst had staggered his apprehension, and the dashing of his high spirits by the unexpected effect of his news, left him disposed to melancholy. Portentous wrinkles overspread his face. Stopping up each eye with a twisting knuckle, and opening wide his mouth, he lent the aid of his lustiest roar to the family lamentations.

Dick, sr., had by this time reached the portal of his castle. Listening there, according to his custom, to ascertain whether his wife's humor made it the part of wisdom to enter, his ears were greeted by a blast from the storm within. With the wisdom born of experience, he quickly decided that he was not at that moment required in the bosom of his family, and quietly retraced his steps to the blacksmith-shop, there to enjoy for another hour its less tempestuous atmosphere.

Near the center of Quarrytown—if such a rambling, planless village could be said to have a center—stood its Town Hall. A long, dingy, clapboarded building it was, that did various duty as court-room, polling-booth, concert-hall, or lodge-room for any of the three fraternal societies supported by the village, as occasion required. Its exterior, dingy though it was, had at least the advantage of frequent exposure to the cleansing action of rain. The interior, having probably never been exposed to the cleansing action of anything, was as gloomy as the combined effects of time, smoke, and cobwebs could make it. In this place the inquest on the body of Wally, otherwise William Thompson, had already been held, and the preliminary trial of Jojo was in progress.

Primitive and odd though its court-house was, Quarrytown's local magistrate was decidedly less modern and much more eccentric; while, in a comparison as to tidiness, the advantage would have rested probably with the building. The Squire, however, as he was always called, was as unbending in his magisterial impartiality as he was neglectful of his personal appearance. The story ran, or rather, the many stories agreed in this, that he had once been an undergraduate of Oxford, and had been sent to Canada in consequence of some mad, youthful prank. Our present concern with the Squire, however, is not with the private citizen, but with the "pillar of the law" described by Jack.

It was the second and final evening of the trial. The light of the oil-lamps glimmered feebly down, through a veil of tobacco-smoke, upon the Squire, showing him gray, shaggy, and severe, behind his table on the platform—himself not only permitting smoking in court but frequently setting a vigorous example; upon the clerk, busy with his notes at one end of the Squire's table; upon the prosecuting-attorney, a stranger from the county town, at his table below the platform; upon the witnesses, ranged on the front-bench; upon the upturned faces and straining eyes of the crowd of men and boys who filled the rows of backless wooden benches, and upon the rude, pen-like dock (improvised by completing with two benches a square, of which the wall and the platform formed the other two sides) where in charge of constable Jack, sat the accused.

He was as Dick had described him in Jo's shop, a rather undersized man; but the heavy shoulders and deep chest, the thick, wiry hair covering the roundness of the small head, set firmly on its short, full neck—all gave an instant impression of strength and inexhaustible vitality; while the close-fitting lips and square jaw told of courage and determination in no ordinary measure—an impression that held, in spite of the uneasy and shifting movements, like those of a captive lynx, which were not unnatural in his situation, and which were the more noticeable in their contrast to the unruffled calm of Jack's official demeanor.

Quarrytown knew little of Jojo's past—sufficient proof that his past was most difficult of ferreting out. Several highly circumstantial biographies had, indeed, been invented for him, but as he neither admitted, nor denied, the truth of any of them, and as each was mutually destructive of the others, he

had acquired the distinction of being a mystery Quarrytown had been unable to solve to its own satisfaction. He had drifted into the place—from where, no one knew—six months previously, and had immediately found work in the lime-kiln quarries, where there was a scarcity of hands, although there were a full dozen idle men in the village. Since then he had been quiet, steady, and hard-working, but had become the object of no inconsiderable degree of suspicion and resentment among the gossips, through his imperturbable baffling of all investigation concerning his past. Of this, only, his inquisitors were certain, that his habits of speech, uncouth with slang expressions strange to their ears, and his evident want of familiarity with their pursuits and mode of life, could have been the result only of early years entirely devoid of the advantages upon which they prided themselves. He had been heard to speak with a local knowledge of several large cities of the United States, but inquiries as to his business there had never been fruitful of more definite information than that he had "been a hobo."

The efforts, therefore, of the crown's attorney to present evidence as to Jojo's past life and record had been followed with strained interest by every auditor in court; for not a man was there but was commissioned, under the unspoken penalty of a month's domestic unquiet, to bring home a detailed account of the proceedings. The cross-questioning of the attorney, then, but thinly disguising his belief that the prisoner was in reality a worthless vagabond, a former jail-bird, and present menace to society, was punctured by subdued but approving "m—hum's," and "m—haw's," from the benches. The more judicial minds, however, were forced to admit that the lawyer had made little more of Jojo's mystery than they had themselves.

The evidence for the prosecution was all in. The lawyer, in his devotion to the sacred interests of truth, had bullied and terrified and confused the witnesses according to time-honored custom; while the Squire, according to his custom, had savagely bullied and brow-beaten the lawyer. The well known clay was already emptied of ashes, and thrust into the magisterial vest-pocket, a signal that the end of the proceedings was near. Soon would be pronounced the decision which would either set Jojo free or commit him to the county gaol to await his trial at the next assizes.

Turning to the prisoner, "Have you anything to say?" asked the Squire.

Jojo stood up.

Immediately there was a shuffling in court as each auditor shifted to a position more favorable to hearing. At length, in a silence broken only by the last of Jack's stentorian calls for order, the accused began to speak. It was in a hesitating, uncertain way he commenced, the unsteady voice and nervous manner contrasting oddly with the heavy throat and sturdy figure of the speaker.

"I aint no spieler, y'r worship. I dun'no' 'at I c'n make any kind o' showin' ag'in de tall guy in de glad rags. He's wise to de rules, to start wid, an' it's a new un' on me, dis jawin' game. He's been tryin' to show me up f'r a stiff wid a bad record, dat's been jugged an' done time 'fore now. Dat's w'ere he's hittin' wild, y'r worship. I never done no time, an' I aint got nuttin' ag'in me on no books, now'ere. I don't see w'at it's all got to do wid dis business about Wally, but den I'm shy on de rules, an' if gettin' next to me record's goin' to help ye find out w'o hit Wally—w'y it's dead easy. I'll put ye next meself."

Here another involuntary shuffling movement from the benches betrayed the keen interest of the listeners, and drew from Jack another officious and long-drawn cry of "Order!"

"W'en I blew in here, I was a hobo, 'cause I didn't know nuttin' about work, an' couldn't get a job now'ere. 'Fore I started to hit de ties, I was a scrapper, an'," with something more of confidence, even of defiance, in his tone, "no man c'n say I wasn't as white an' on-de-level a fighter as ever wore a mit. I shook de business, 'cause it was crooked, an' w'en I struck a job at last, I didn't see no use o' blabbin' about it. It wouldn't 'a' done me no good, an' I wasn't stuck on de game no more. So I kep' it dark. I knew a t'ing or two more about de game 'an Wally did—dere aint no credit in dat—but dat's how I come to be swingin' me jaw here,

'stead o' doin' time in de last long jug, same as Wally is now. I aint stuck on de fightin'-game, not on yer life, but I didn't know nuttin' about nuttin' else, 'cept sellin' papers, 'cause dey never give me no show to learn nuttin' else. I don't want de people here to git down on me, 'cause I bin in de ring. I couldn't help it. It started dis way."

Here the prosecuting-attorney rose to object to the prisoner's statement, as being entirely irrelevant, and "Merely designed to catch the sympathy of—"

"Sit down. Sit down!" roared the irascible Squire, "and put your objections in your pocket. You're glad enough to catch at a little sympathy yourself, when you have a chance. Sit down, I say. I was just going to make the objection myself."

The counsel subsided with a shrug. Then the magistrate turned to the puzzled Jojo.

"You needn't tell us your whole history, my man. You say you've been a prize-fighter. It's a poor business, poor business—not what it used to be in my day. You did well to quit it. Perhaps, though, you've been in a good stand-up fight to a finish. If you have, let us hear about it. Cut yourself loose. There's nobody here going to interfere with you," and the Squire glared fiercely at the attorney.

Jojo grinned

"Finish-fights don't come often, dese days, y'r worship. I never had more'n one, an' dat wasn't in no ring. It was wid de raw un's."

The Squire commenced refilling his clay.

"De scrap come off in a back-lane in —well, in de big city I was born in. De newsies allus pulled dere mills off dere. Spike Regan was layin' f'r me, 'cause I soured on payin' him f'r de right to sell papers on his corner. It wasn't no more his corner an' mine, but he was de bigges' newsy in de bunch, an' he took a rake-off f'r lettin' t'ree of us kids stan' at de udder corners. I dunno how old I was, I never had no birt'day, but Bill was bigger an' older'n me, or he'd never got me to stand f'r de rake-off. I kicked at last, an' Spike he caught me in de back-lane, w'ere we was shootin' craps, an' started to give me a dustin'. I hit back, an' kind of jarred him, but he had de weight an' de reach, an' he was too strong f'r me. He got me down an' planted his beef on me wish-bone, an' started yellin' f'r me to dig up, an' wid every yell, he'd land a wallop or a jab. I guess I wasn't built f'r diggin' up, an' he could 'a' walloped me till dey was nuttin' left to wallop, but just den a stout guy comes out of de back door of a saloon, an' when he sees what was up, he grabs Spike like dis"—here, for a moment, Jack was made to do duty as Spike, to the sad upsetting of his official dignity, but to the evident amusement of the court. " 'Get up,' he sings out. 'Get up, and give de kid a show, you big bully!' So Spike had to let me up, an' we mixed again."

"Well," interrupted the Squire, "how did it end? You whipped him, I suppose. They always do, when they tell about it."

"No, Squire, he was too big for me. He had de reach an' de beef, an' I wasn't in it. I guess I got de best lickin' a kiddy ever got, an' lived to tell it. Tom—dat was de big guy—he stops de scrap at last, an' gives me a nickel, an' takes me into de saloon. Spike went back to his corner; but I shook de newsy-lay, right dere. Tom was de main guy of de saloon. He sees I had de grit, an' he gives me a job moppin' floors, an' shinin' brass. It was dead easy. He gives me de best of grub, an' makes me use de mits wid a sparrin' trainer every day. 'Fore long I was comin' to put up a handy pair of dooks, an—"

"Just so, just so," put in the Squire. "He put you in training as a prize-fighter, and a poor business he set you up in. But what I asked you was this: "Did you ever have a stand-up battle in the ring?"

"Twenty-two of 'em, y'r worship—twenty wins, an' one draw. I never lost a decision but once, an' dat was de last time I ever stood inside de ropes."

"Humph!" said the Squire, "we'll hear about that one," and he glared fiercely round, as if to forestall any possible inference that the story of a prize-fight could have for him any interest other than as evidence.

"Dey was tootin' de Alleghany Kid, y'r worship, f'r somethin' warm in de light-weight class, an' a sure comer. He

got de decision over Spider Brodie, an' den it was up to me to give him a show, so Tom matched us, an' we signed f'r a twenty-round go. I was in de shape of me life, fit to go all day at any pace, an' de sports was so struck on me form dey had to take de long end of de bettin'. Five to t'ree was de best goin', wid de Kid's backers holdin' out f'r two to one. De night before de mill big Tom calls me into de office, back of de bar. 'Jojo,' says he, lookin' straight into me lamps —I wasn't called Jojo in dem days, but dat cuts no ice—'Jojo,' he says, 'how d'ye feel? On de level, now, put me wise. Can ye best him? De Kid's backers is showin' lots of dough.' "

"Says I, 'When you see Kid money, Tom, you cover it, an' blow de odds. Dat decision's comin' my way, and it aint goin' no limit, neider.' "

"'Now you're talkin', says he, an' he kept foolin' wid de cigar-ashes on de table. 'De Brodie bunch, now,' says he, 'dey've been sayin' you could be fixed to t'row de fight, see, an' I just thought I'd give you de tip. See?' "

"'Trow de fight?' says I. 'Me trow de fight? Well, I guess nit!' "

"'I'm only givin' ye de tip,' says he, ''cause de Kid might get to you wid a chance socdolager. Dat's liable to happen to de best man any time, an' if you did get yer goose cooked dat way, de man wid de hunch, now, he'd be liable to turn over a neat pile. See? Two to one on a dead sure t'ing looks like easy money. Eh? An' de rake-off f'r yerself, now, it 'ud be consid'able, see?' "

"'Tom,' says I, 'w'en I'm put to sleep, it'll be on de square. I don't touch no dough dat's got by no quittin' game. Dat's flat.' "

"'Dat's de patter. Dat's de patter,' says he. An' den he gets up. 'You land de purse, an' I'll do de square t'ing by you.' Den he told me to go to bed, an' off he went into de bar. I never got wise to his game till after de fight.

"Dat fight was mine, y'r worship. It was, by all rights. I had it cinched, if everyt'ing had been on de level. We went nine rounds, an' I had de Kid goin'. I did, sure. De nint' was all mine. De bell was all dat saved him. Tom was holdin' de bottle in my corner, an' I seen he looked queer, w'en I come back after de nint'.

"'You got him goin',' says he, 'but don't take no chances. De Kid's shifty, an' dat left's dangerous all de time. He's mebbe foxin'. Don't give him no openin'. Jab an' get away, till you wear him down. Better take a pull at dis,' an' he hands me de bottle.

"I takes a swig, an' jumps up at de gong. De Kid comes up groggy, an' de crowd yells f'r me to go in an' finish him; but I keeps in mind Tom's tip, an' spars f'r an openin'. I sees me chance, an' sends in a light jab f'r de jaw. De Kid never ducks, but I fall short, an' it rattles me. Me knees gits in me way, an' de Kid begins to look a mile away. He gits to me head wid a groggy swing, an' I clinches. De crowd hisses an' yells, an' dat's all I know about dat fight, 'cept dat de Kid got de decision. Tom had t'run me down, hisself. He doped me, after de nint'. De crowd wanted me scalp, an' de papers, next day, called me 'quitter.' Dey said I t'rew de fight, w'en I had it cinched. Dat was w'at I got f'r bein' on de level. It's a crooked business, y'r worship, an' I cut it. I asked Tom f'r my end of de purse, next day, meanin' to cut.

"'Purse, nuttin',' says he. 'W'ere's yer trainin' expenses comin' from? I lost more of me good mazuma on you last night,' says he, 'dan I've made on ye in six years. See here,' says he, gettin' mad, 'you're a rank quitter. I'm done wid ye. You light right out. You owe me,' says he, 'f'r expenses, if I had me rights. You're no more use to no sportin' man, in dis town. Now git!'

"I seen he was right. He'd made his pile, but I'd been t'run down. I was a back number. Dat's how I turned hobo an' hit de rods, an' counted ties, till I struck a job here."

The Squire struck a match, and gazed absently at the flame. Suddenly he faced Jojo, and shot the question at him:

"Are you Teddy Cobb?"

Jojo stammered confusedly, but the gray eyes under the shaggy eyebrows held him.

"I—I—you see—" he began. Then, with a grin of defeat, "Yes, dat was me," he said.

"M-h-m," commented the Squire, "so you are Teddy Cobb, eh?"

And he looked the prisoner over. Jojo stood, his identity revealed at last.

All Quarrytown had heard of the famous light-weight, and remembered well the fight he had just described—not so much from any interest in the prize-ring, as from the memorable wager between Doctor Richardson and the Squire, in consequence of which the Squire had been compelled to wear starched collars for a whole month. He had backed Teddy Cobb.

"Well, Cobb," proceeded the Squire, "you did well to leave the ring. You had just one fight too many, like the most of them. Now, give us your own story of this row with Thompson."

"He'd been knockin' me, y'r worship, had Wally, ever since I struck de quarries. He got a down on me from de foist. He made game of me talk, an' tried to start a scrap every day. I wasn't in de scrappin'-business. I'd cut it f'r keeps. More'n dat, I didn't see I stood no kind of chance ag'in Wally. He had me in de weight, by fifty pounds, an' he could lift a block of stone dat I couldn't turn over. Big or little, I wouldn't scrap wid no man, an' I just let dem call me 'quitter,' an' stood de bullyin' best I could. A good wallopin' every day 'u'd a'-been a sight easier to stand."

"Get along to the fight," interrupted the Squire. "We've had all this in the evidence."

"We was all comin' home along de mill-road, after quittin'. Wally was ahead, an' I was next. Some of de jokers behind me, dat was spoilin' to see a row, tripped me, an' I pitched ahead an' caught Wally in de small of de back wid me nut.

"'I didn't mean it, Wally,' says I, 'dey tripped me.'

"'Tripped you, you clumsy whelp,' says Wally. 'Trip again, will you?'

"I was stoopin' —so—pickin' up me chuck-basket, an' he caught me in de back of de cocoanut, hard enough to send me to grass. I didn't pick up no basket. 'Wally,' says I, quiet like, 'I'll scrap now,' an' we put up our hands.

"Wally leads wid a right-swing. Dat swing 'ud a put a stone wall out of business, but you could see it comin' 'fore it started. I side-steps, an' comes in light wid me left on de snuff-box, so."

Jojo took a side-step in the dock, and after a lightning-jab, that stopped short only a half inch from Jack's nose, shifted swiftly out of reach of a return. So, with the disconcerted constable for a dummy, Jojo fought the fight over again.

"Wally feels de claret comin', an' he gits mad. He rushes me ag'in, wid dat awful right-swing. If one of dem ever landed, even wid de pillows, it ud 'a' put a man on queer street in no time. Wid de raw uns, one of dem swings was good f'r a mont' in de hospital, or a t'ousand years in de grave. I ducks dis time, an' wid his swing goin' over me head, I catches him, so, in de ribs, a stiff jolt, an' gits away. De foot-work kind of puzzles Wally, an' it gits on his nerves. He stands glarin' at me a second.

"'Damn you,' says he. 'Damn you, f'r a whelp an' a cur. Can't you stand up, like a man? Just let me git one dash at ye, an' I'll kill ye.'

"He was mad—blind, chokin' mad. Y'r worship, dem was Wally's last words. He rushes me like a wild bull, an' gives me me openin'. I steps in, stiffens a bit all over, wid me left straight out, an' meets him square on de point of de jaw. It was a stiff un', y'r worship. All me beef was behind it, an' Wally was comin' to meet it. When I heard his nut hit de gravel, I knowed he was hurt, an' hurt bad. I had to do it, yer worship. I had to get him, or he'd 'a' got me."

It was daybreak, the morning after the trial. A half-mile from Quarrytown, a man was walking steadily westward, along the railway-track. It was Jojo, a free man. He looked neither to the right, nor to the left, till he reached the cut where the railroad runs through Stevens' Hill. There he climbed the embankment, and looked for the last time on Quarrytown. His gaze moved slowly from the upper hotel, and the few houses near the railway-station, to the point where the smoke of the kilns marked the southern limits of the village. Most of the houses were lost to view in the hollow, but Jojo knew well where lay each well-remembered place. Over one spot, where a wreath of smoke rose from a newly lighted fire, his eye rested long. He thought of the overworked girl who was lighting that fire, and his simple heart was heavy.

"I did t'ink," he said, huskily, "I could settle in dat little town f'r de rest of me life. De Squire told me to stay right wid it, like I'd been doin', but I couldn't do it. I couldn't stay here, an' Wally always lyin' on dat hill. I had to cut."

He took a bit of ribbon from his pocket and smoothed it awkwardly.

"An' I did t'ink dat she—dat mebbe—Well, I guess nit. Dat was too much luck f'r Teddy Cobb."

He put the ribbon gently on the ground, and faced again that point where the two long lines of steel merged into one; and towards that distant and ever-receding goal, resumed his disconsolate way.

The Apotheosis of "The Yellow Dog"

BY MAITLAND LEROY OSBORNE

THE doctor, looking professionally grave, had removed his eye-glasses and carefully polished them, talking monotonously the while of "hereditary consumptive tendencies—left lung badly affected—warmer climate essential to relief—outdoor life—plenty of exercise—entire recovery possible in a few years."

That was why Markham had come to California. Chance—and the Mariposa stage—brought him to Fresno Flats. He wanted to get close to the health-giving earth, to bask in the warm sunshine that flooded the hills, and breathe the odorous breezes of the Sierras—for that way lay life; and he wanted to live—illogically—just as intensely as might any strong, healthy, active, useful man—which he was not.

The first month of almost resultless labor that elapsed after his purchase of "The Yellow Dog" went far to convince him that the claim's name was not a misnomer. Half of his little capital had gone for the purchase of the yawning, irregular hole in the hillside that bid fair shortly to swallow up the other half. Already he was seriously considering the advisability of abandoning his first venture, while a few dollars yet remained to him, and joining the roaming army of prospectors of whose phenomenal "strikes" he heard on his periodical visits to Fresno Flats for supplies.

For a month he had labored to the extent of his strength in the tunnel, and to a man so illy equipped, physically, as he, it was slow, discouraging work—burrowing into the heart of the hill like a human mole. The tunnel had grown to something like fifty feet in length. Day after day he pecked away monotonously at the solid ledge with hand drill and hammer, charging the holes with blasting-powder, tamping it firmly with damp earth, lighting the sputtering fuse—then scrambling to the mouth of the tunnel to await the explosion. After the blast came the back-breaking work of loading a barrow with the fragments of ore and wheeling it to the dump.

His solitude was rarely broken. An occasional prospector drifted that way and stopped for a half-hour's chat, and once a week he took the long tramp down the mountain-side in the cool of the morning to the town for supplies, and the wearisome climb upward through the towering pines in the afternoon.

At first the utter loneliness of his situation oppressed him, and the lack of human companionship, which he had never before experienced, bred an almost irresistible longing to drop his hammer and drill and hurry away to the haunts of men where he might touch elbows with his kind. But as the days grew into weeks his sense of solitude was gradually supplanted with a feeling of companionship with Nature in her grandest moods. Day by day also he felt his strength and youthful buoyancy returning under the gentle ministrations of the earth and air and sunshine.

Noon, and from the cloudless blue dome of the Californian sky the sun

beat down with fierce intensity on San Ardo spur. Far up amid the fringe of sugar-pines encircling its summit a tiny log cabin, thatched with bark, clung precariously to the mountain-side. From the door of the cabin a well-worn trail zig-zagged downward a few dozen yards to the heaps of quartz, gravel, and tailings scattered about the mouth of the tunnel of "The Yellow Dog."

In the friendly shadow of a nearby tree, prone upon the ground, soft carpeted with the fragrant needles of the pines, lay Markham, his midday *siesta* undisturbed by the impudent chatter of an inquisitive squirrel, the rasping song of the cicadas in the manzanita bushes, or the slumberous droning of the bees. Far below, in the dim shadow of the cañon, a narrow thread of dusty red traced the stage-road's winding past the cluster of toy-houses that marked the site of Fresno Flats.

But presently the consciousness of some unwonted presence intruded on his slumber, for he awoke, lay quietly for a moment staring up into the blue sky through the interlacing limbs that shadowed him with grateful coolness, then with a yawn half rose to a sitting posture, and remained, supported on one elbow, struck dumb and motionless with astonishment. Then he rubbed his eyes and looked again, believing that he must be still asleep and dreaming. But no—it was reality. Seated on a stump directly in his line of vision, scarcely a dozen feet away, was a baby—a distinctly attractive baby, moreover, who returned his astonished gaze with a curiously complacent air of self-possession.

"I finked you was never goin' to wake up," was her aggrieved greeting. "I fink I'se been waitin' most an hour," sliding down from her perch and toddling toward him.

"How do you do," he answered, bewildered, "are you lost?"

She shook her curls vigorously. "Nope. I'se visitin' you. Isn't you glad to see me?" reproachfully.

"Of course," asserted Markham hastily. "But—you see, I wasn't expecting you. And I don't know your name?" insinuatingly.

"My name's Tootums," she announced, with much importance.

"Yes?" said Markham vaguely, "and do you live near here?"

"Over there," she informed him, waving a tiny brown hand and dimpled fist toward the state of California at large.

At this stage of the acquaintanceship he gathered his visitor up in his arms, where she cuddled down quite contentedly, and proceeded feminine-wise to exert her small wiles of voice and manner for his enslavement.

Presently a rustling in the bushes became audible, and footsteps turning into the narrow trail caused the baby evident trepidation.

"I fink 'at's sister Agnes," she whispered in Markham's ear, "an' I fink she's goin' to scold," a premonition, happily, that failed of fulfillment, for the girl who came stepping lissomely into the open gave only a look of great relief when she perceived the small figure enthroned in Markham's arms, followed by a slight flush of embarrassment at sight of Markham himself, which faded as quickly when she frankly met his glance.

She pointed a reproving finger at the baby. "Tootums," she said, "you've been running away again. I've hunted for you a long time."

"I'se didn't run away," protested the culprit indignantly. "I'se been visitin' this nice man," hugging him with much abandon.

The "nice man" blushed at this open flattery, and set the small diplomat down from his arms, whereat she promptly toddled over to her sister to be kissed and forgiven.

An unbiased critic of feminine beauty would, I fear, have declared that Agnes Bainbridge's mouth was too large, her nose too much tilted, her forehead too low, and her face too bountifully freckled to conform to any standard of perfection, but the effect of the general *ensemble* upon the uncritical masculine consciousness was distinctly pleasing—and Markham, meeting the frank, friendly glance of her clear eyes and responding to the smile that revealed her even white teeth, mentally decided that she was the prettiest girl he had ever seen.

Under the influence of her frank un-

conventionality his natural shyness quickly vanished, and they were soon chatting unrestrainedly like old acquaintances. Presently he found himself telling her of his lack of success, and his suspicion that he had been badly duped by Stillings, from whom he had bought the claim."

"Stillings is an old pirate," she declared indignantly. "He thinks he's beat you out of your money, and that he'll get the claim back again after you are starved out, and rope in some other tenderfoot as he did you."

Markham winced a little at being designated a "tenderfoot," then laughed frankly. "It's true—I am a tenderfoot," he acknowledged "and I was finely plucked, but I hate to own up to it, and I'm going to hang on here as long as I can. There may be something in it after all."

"That's right—stick to it, and perhaps you'll strike it rich yet," said Agnes. "Now we must be going. When you get lonesome, drop over and see us. Father's claim is just over the summit, not more than a mile from here. You'll find an old trail back there in the trees that runs right by it."

A few moments after she and "Tootums" were lost to sight among the trees, Markham attacked the ledge with renewed vigor. "I'll drive this confounded tunnel clear through the hill, if the powder holds out," he said to himself, and whistled a fragment of a half forgotten tune as he worked.

The days slipped past in monotonous procession, and the somber cloud of discouragement loomed closer over Markham as he burrowed deeper and deeper into the mountain. With his money nearly exhausted, and only a few tiny nuggets and flakes of dull yellow metal to show as the result of his labor, he could not but feel that money and labor were alike wasted.

He had taken early advantage of the invitation extended by his newly discovered neighbor, and so cordial was his welcome at the Bainbridge cabin that he soon fell into the habit of going over nearly every evening for a neighborly chat with Bainbridge *pere*, who was an experienced miner, and could give him invaluable information anent leads and dips and spurs and angles, and the best method of reducing ores.

Quite naturally Agnes was always present, and an interested listener to her father's dissertations; and gradually it became understood that when the visitor rose to return to his lonely cabin she should walk just a little way along the trail with him, and they would stop presently and find a seat upon a fallen tree and look off down the valley lying pale and still in the moonlight, and talk low-voiced of—reducing ores, for instance—which is a vastly interesting subject to discuss on still moonlight nights if you happen to be sitting on a fallen tree in the vast solitude of the mighty hills with a pretty and sympathetic girl by your side. After awhile Markham would suddenly recollect the hour, and would say "Good-night."

When he had reached his cabin he would sit in the doorway for hours, sometimes, solemnly smoking and thinking very intently of—reducing ores, perhaps. The consideration of this technical subject had such a strange effect upon him that I fear his heart gave him more trouble at such times than did his lung. Indeed, the latter organ, thanks to his outdoor life, had ceased to cause him any concern, and he was growing brown and muscular and developing quite a remarkable appetite, which, on the whole, was rather awkward, when every day his means of satisfying its demands were growing less.

He had by this time worked clear through the ledge and opened up a streak of soft, peculiar-looking blue stone into which his pick sunk with little effort. Through this substance he made rapid progress, so that one afternoon, when a passing prospector stopped for a few minutes' chat, he had quite a mound of it dumped at the mouth of the tunnel.

"What luck?" queried the miner.

"Pretty poor," Markham responded. "This streak of soft stone that I've struck is easier to work than the ledge was, but it doesn't show any more color."

The miner stooped and picked up a fragment of the soft stone, and crumbled it carelessly between his fingers. Then, from force of habit, examined some of the fragments closely through a magnifying glass,

"Have you tested it?" he presently asked.

"No," acknowledged Markham. "I didn't see any sign of gold, so I haven't bothered with it."

"Guess you'd better roast a little of it," said the miner. "Shouldn't wonder if you found a trace of color if you looked sharp."

Whereupon Markham gathered a small pile of dry pine-bark, lighted it, and held his shovel over the flames with some of the stone upon it. When it had crumbled with the heat, he spread it upon a rock and reduced the fragments to powder with a few taps of a hammer. Scattered through the mass and gleaming in the sunlight, were unmistakable flakes of gold.

"It's pay dirt, sure enough," commented the miner, "mebby fifty dollars to the ton, and when you strike the rock again it'll likely run heavier," he added professionally. Then he shouldered his pick and shovel and departed, leaving Markham gazing wonderingly and a little incredulously at his find.

That evening he went over to the Bainbridge cabin a little earlier than usual, to impart the news of his good fortune, and the subject was so engrossing that he and Agnes required two full hours in the moonlight with the soft stillness of the odorous night about them to discuss it in all its technical bearings. And he sat an unusually long time that night in the doorway of his cabin, smoking and thinking of—reducing ores.

True to the miner's prediction, when he had worked through the vein of soft stone and struck the solid ledge again, Markham found that it showed increased richness, and a little buckskin bag, that had hitherto been scarcely more than an ornament, now began to serve its intended useful purpose. On his next trip to Fresno Flats for supplies he paid for them in gold dust.

As it chanced, almost the first man he met on entering the t[illegible] was Stillings. Hitherto he had avoided that worthy, feeling that he had been tricked into buying a worthless claim, but to-day all was changed. The sun was shining riotously, and he felt at peace with all the world. Also he was inclined to exult a little over his good fortune.

"Good-morning, Stillings," he cried gayly, stopping that gentleman in the street. "I suppose you'll be glad to hear that 'The Yellow Dog' has wagged its tail."

"Eh—what?" queried Stillings, bewildered.

"I've struck pay-ore at last," explained Markham, exhibiting the contents of the buckskin-bag in proof.

"Glad to hear it; I knew you would," said Stillings, trying to infuse heartiness into his tone, and failing lamentably. "Knew you'd strike it all right if you kept at it long enough."

Then each went his way: Markham to purchase his supplies, and Stillings to the Green Lights saloon, where, after certain preliminaries connected with a tall black bottle and a trio of glasses, he was presently engaged in a low-voiced and earnest conversation with two villainous-looking individuals who were leaning against the bar when he entered. At its conclusion one of the men, whose left cheek was decorated with a livid scar extending from chin to eyebrow laughed loudly. A laugh, however, that lacked mirthfulness.

"It's a go, Stillings," said he. "And if the little game don't work we get half that, eh?"

"Yes," assented Stillings, "but if you're any good you'll make it work. Understand?"

The one addressed shifted his glance uneasily. "Oh, the devil, not that," he protested, "it's too risky."

"If you're afraid—" suggested Stillings softly, looking into his glass.

The other dashed his fist on the bar with an oath. "Afraid—well, you wait and see! Come, Bill," to his companion "we'd better be going."

Late that afternoon Markham, with a sack of supplies balanced on his shoulder, tramping steadily along the narrow trail that wound up the mountainside, chuckled to himself at recollection of Stilling's lukewarm congratulations.

From a certain point in the trail, where it ran over a bare rock outcrop that formed a shoulder of the mountain he could look upward and across an intervening *arroyo* to where, nearly a mile distant, the tunnel of "The Yellow Dog" opened in the hillside.

When he had reached this point, he stopped for a moment's breathing-spell and lowered the sack of supplies to a convenient rock. From force of habit his gaze wandered upward to where he could see one corner of his cabin revealed through the encompassing trees, and below that in the little clearing the heaps of quartz and tailings that represented so many days of weary toil.

In the clear atmosphere every detail stood out distinctly. But there was one alien feature in the scene. Even as he looked a man stepped into the open from the shelter of the trees, and for a moment Markham caught the glint of sunlight on a gun barrel. Then he shouldered his load again and started onward, speculating as to the identity of his visitor. The circumstance of the gun struck him as unusual, but he explained it under the probable hypothesis that his visitor might be a hunter. At any rate he would soon know. But as he toiled upward along the trail an indefinable sense of uneasiness stole over him, and even while half-smiling at his own sudden access of caution, he resolved to reconnoiter the situation before boldly setting foot on his own domain.

In accordance with this idea he left the trail while still some hundred yards distant from the cabin and made a slight detour, approaching the clearing from one side, rather than below. Gaining the vantage point of a clump of bushes from whence unseen he could observe all that transpired, he discovered his visitor seated upon a log in the attitude of one on guard against intrusion. A shot-gun lay across the stranger's knees, and from time to time he glanced sharply toward where the trail entered the clearing. A long scar disfigured his left cheek, and his whole aspect was so forbidding that Markham hesitated to make his presence known.

While he watched, himself unobserved, another man emerged hurriedly from the tunnel, and a moment later a muffled report gave evidence that a blast had been set off. In a flash Markham understood the situation. His claim had been "jumped," and he was face to face with a phase of mining life that he had hitherto only heard vaguely mentioned as of rare occurrence in that section. These interlopers meant to rob him—had robbed him—and doubtless would not hesitate to shoot him down in cold blood if he protested.

As the realization of the full import of the outrage dawned upon him, a sudden fierce rush of anger fired his brain, then receded, leaving him cool and calm—the calmness of desperate resolve. With every muscle tense, every faculty at highest tension, he considered what was to be done. They were two to one, physically his superiors, well armed, and for the moment in complete control of the situation.

His shot-gun, intended, not for a weapon of defense, but to provide game for his larder, was in the cabin, if the intruders had not already discovered and concealed it. If he could reach the cabin unobserved and secure possession of the gun the odds would not be so uneven. Curiously enough the thought of seeking assistance did not occur to him for a moment.

Quickly and silently retreating from his hiding-place, Markham moved about through the trees till he had reached a point in the rear of the cabin. Then he crossed the narrow open space and crouched against the wall. After assuring himself that the man on guard was looking in the opposite direction, and the other had re-entered the tunnel, he darted around the corner of the cabin, and a second later was inside. Apparently nothing had been disturbed. The gun stood in the corner where he had last placed it. With that in his possession he felt in a sense master of the situation.

Slipping a couple of shells into the gun, he cocked both hammers, and with his fingers on the triggers stepped cautiously from the cabin and advanced noiselessly along the path toward the unconscious figure seated on the log.

Step by step he stole along, carefully avoiding every twig and dried leaf that lay in his path, till scarcely a dozen feet separated him from the intruder. Then bringing the gun to his shoulder, in quick, sharp tones he commanded "Hands up!"

In instant obedience the man on the log raised both hands above his head without glancing behind him, and remained immovable.

"Stand up and walk straight ahead till I tell you to stop," ordered Markham.

The man rose, still without looking round, the gun slipping from his knees to the ground as he did so, and advanced some fifteen paces—halting promptly at the word of command.

Markham, having possessed himself of the other's gun, leaned it against a tree. "Now you may turn round," said he, and the man obeyed.

For a moment they eyed each other in silence—Markham pale faced but determined, with a dangerous glitter in his eyes; the other sullen, defeated.

"Well, I reckon you've called th' turn, stranger," admitted the man with the scar, and as he spoke his companion made his appearance at the mouth of the tunnel, to be greeted in turn with the command "Hands up!"

He obeyed with alacrity, grumbling, however, "This is sure a nice mess—two grown men stuck-up by a tenderfoot. But I reckon it's all th' same," he continued, "seein' as that last blast opened up a vein of water an' flooded th' tunnel."

The truth of his statement was attested by a slow trickling of water from the mouth of the tunnel, momentarily increasing in volume.

The man with the scar laughed. "You can put up your weapon, stranger," said he. "I reckon we ain't lookin' to jump no artesian well."

Markham lowered his gun, and all three stood silently watching the little stream.

"Well, I reckon we'd better move along, Bill," said the man with the scar presently. Then, "Any objection to my havin' my gun again?"

"No," answered Markham, too much disturbed by the calamity of the flooded tunnel to think of smaller matters.

"Thanks," said the man with the scar, "you're sure a white man, an' you've got nerve, if you are a tenderfoot, an' blamed if I aint sorry we tried to do you up," after which panegyric he picked up his gun and the two claim-jumpers disappeared down the trail, leaving Markham staring moodily at the water that gurgled and splashed in the sunlight as if glad to be free at last from its prison in the ledge.

That evening he did not make his customary call at the Bainbridge cabin. Instead, he sat in his own doorway, gazing off into the moonlit valley with unseeing eyes, thinking of—reducing ores, perhaps. Sat there so long that the moon slowly sank to rest, leaving the whispering pines wrapped in darkness, and the sun, driving away the morning mist, found him in the same position—haggard, wan,. and hollow-eyed.

Noon again on San Ardo spur. A stillness like that of the hour before the dawn was over everything. An intangible haze curiously distorted familiar objects, lending to trees and shrubs and rocks at a little distance the phantasmal seeming of a mirage. The myriad small voices of Nature were curiously hushed. No hum of insects, no song of bird—even the slow, soft whispering of the pines had ceased. Close by the tunnel of "The Yellow Dog" Markham and Agnes, seated upon a log, had also fallen silent. He had been telling her of the happenings of the day before—of the "jumping" of the claim, his outwitting of the interlopers, and the disastrous flooding of the tunnel, that rendered all his labor of no avail at the moment when success seemed within his grasp.

An indefinable influence had awed them into silence—the premonition of some unknown force about to be made manifest.

A strange thrill beneath them, as if the hill itself were stirring in its age-long slumber, startled them to their feet—silent, tense—menaced by some unseen terror. And as they gazed questioningly in each other's eyes, the solid earth on which they stood, responsive to a mighty tremor, heaved like a long, slow ocean swell; the towering pines bowed their heads as if swept by the breath of a hurricane, their branches crashing in one long roar; and before their very eyes the face of the cliff, scarce a hundred yards away, swayed slowly, steadily outward—crumpled like paper upon the coals—and was gone.

Faint and dizzy, they clung to each other. Another slight tremor passed, the crashing of the pines died away, a squirrel ran out upon a limb and chat-

tered at them saucily, the rasping song of the cicadas began again, the bees were humming, and Nature had resumed her wonted aspect.

A little later, when they had regained their composure, Agnes made a startling discovery. The water had stopped flowing from the tunnel. To this fact she called Markham's attention, and hurriedly lighting a candle, he disappeared underground to investigate the reason.

Five, ten minutes dragged slowly by ere he emerged from the tunnel—covered with mud, breathless, excited.

"The earthquake has opened some other outlet for the water," he announced, "and tumbled down a lot of rock at the end of the tunnel, where I found this," displaying a large, irregular fragment of rock, curiously specked with grayish spots.

Hastily gathering a pile of dry bark together, he lighted it, smashed the rock into small fragments with a hammer, placed them upon a shovel and held it over the blaze till the whole mass glowed with the heat and began to crumble. Then from the cabin he brought a strong vial encased in wood, a couple of shallow glass-dishes and his tin drinking-cup. Into one of the dishes he poured a portion of the smoking contents of the vial and into it crumbled some of the calcined fragments of ore, closely watching the resulting ebullition. When it had almost ceased he drained off the contents into the other dish. In his drinking-cup, which he had partly filled with water, he put a few pinches of salt, then allowed a drop of the salted water to fall into the glass-dish. A white cloud instantly gathered, and fell in a fine film to the bottom. This process he repeated until the bottom was gray with the fallen precipitate. Carefully pouring off the solution, he scraped up some of the precipitate with the point of his knife, and inverting the tin cup, spread it on the bottom.

The first stroke of the knife showed a luminous streak of burnished silver.

How, not long afterward, its owner changed the name of one of the richest silver mines of California from "The Yellow Dog" to "The Silver King," and also changed Agnes Bainbridge's name to Mrs. Markham are mere details—interesting in themselves, perhaps—but not essential to the story.

Like Cures Like

BY C. M. LORING.

JACK had slipped down from his chair and left the breakfast-table.

"Will you please tell me," asked Mr. Peyton, as he folded his napkin, "what objection you have to Renold being elected superintendent of the city schools? Have you ever heard that he was not satisfactory?"

"No," replied Mrs. Peyton, "but, you see, I don't know him at all, while I do know Mr. Langer."

Mr. Peyton suppressed a smile. "Certainly a great disadvantage to Mr. Renold, my dear."

"Mr. Langer is so good to his mother, and besides he has four little children."

Mr. Peyton laughed outright. "Have you other reasons?"

"Are they not enough?"

"Enough in number, yes. But I can't see how these characteristics, estimable as they are, especially qualify him for school-work."

"Oh, he is clever enough for that. I shall vote for him anyway. All the ladies are going to. I hope it wont rain."

"It'll certainly rain," said Mr. Peyton. "Since we are voting for opposite candidates, I don't see the use of our voting at all. Why not pair off and neither of us go to the polls? It's not a very agreeable place for ladies at best."

"All right. Only you must promise upon your honor that you won't go and vote. Hold up your hands and swear."

"I swear," said he, solemnly lifting his hand. Then turning to Bertha White, his wife's guest and bosom friend, and pointing his index-finger: "I'll hold you responsible. You are to see that Lucy doesn't go out to-day. The weather is too bad.

"I'll look after Lucy, but I would like to know who's going to be responsible for you."

"For me? Oh! I don't need any one. I've given you my word of honor, haven't I?"

"You didn't forget to mail the letter I gave you last evening, did you?" asked Mrs. Peyton.

"No, I put it in the Twenty-third street letter-box as I got off the car. That's where I generally mail my letters. There's a big box at the crossing; I can't get past it without feeling in my pocket for a letter."

"I am glad you didn't forget," said his wife, "for the party's a week earlier, and Betty will have to rush her seamstress to get her dress done in time."

"She'll have the letter all right this morning. That'll be time enough, won't it?"

"Yes, if she surely gets it."

"Don't worry about that," said Mr. Peyton, as he passed out of the dining-room.

The eyes of the wife followed her husband as he left the room.

"Do you know he didn't mail that letter." She had turned to her guest.

"He said he did," replied Bertha.

"Yes, but I know he didn't. He was fibbing. It's a little trick of his. And if you want proof, just run quick while he's up-stairs and look in the lower right-hand pocket of his overcoat."

Bertha returned flourishing the letter.

"There! What did I tell you?"

"I would never have thought it."

"Put it back quick. He'll attend to it all right now. I know what he'll do. He'll send it out by a delivery boy."

"Oh dear!" sighed Bertha, as she returned to the breakfast-table. "Another idol fallen. To think that Robert would tell a lie and his mother such a devoted church-member. I wonder if all men lie?"

"I think they do to their wives. It saves them trouble, but it's very inconvenient. One never knows what to believe. However, after eight years I have developed a sort of sixth sense. You noticed how promptly he replied when I asked him about the letter?"

"Yes."

"A bad sign; and then all those particulars about the street and the letter-box, and telling me not to worry, and all that. It's too amusing."

"I would never have mistrusted; he took such pains to be explicit."

"That's just what makes me mistrust. When people think their statements will be doubted they reiterate and go into all sorts of details. There's a force about truth that doesn't need fortifying."

"Strange," mused Bertha, "he's considered such an honorable man in business. Only the other day papa said he would be president of the bank in five years."

"Oh! I am quite sure he isn't untruthful in business. Perhaps I am too strict with him and he is afraid of me."

"Nonsense! A mouse wouldn't be afraid of you. You're too easy with him. Just call him down once in a while and you'll see he'll have more respect for you. It's an insult for a man to lie to his wife all the time. I wouldn't stand it. I'd just have it out with him the first time I caught him.

"Don't you see that you are encouraging him? He has no fear of being exposed. You're too good to him."

"Yes, I've often thought so, but what can I do? I couldn't accuse him; that would be too disagreeable. Besides, I always find some way to slide things over. It's strange how truth bobs up. Robert always manages to blunder on to something that gives me a clew. I wouldn't have him know that I know for anything."

"He does know that you know."

"Do you think so?"

"He must if he isn't an imbecile; but he's got the habit, and seeing it works so well he just keeps on. He thinks that is the finest way in the world to manage a wife, I suppose. I'll tell you what you must do: just cure him. Give him a dose of his own medicine; tell him as many lies as he tells you. Tell him so many that he won't believe you when you tell the truth."

"Oh! I never could. Would you believe it, I don't even know what his salary is? He told me four hundred dollars a month, then afterward I heard him tell Mr. Peters five hundred. He probably spoke the truth one of those times, but I have no idea which. It

interests me; I should like to know. I couldn't ask him, though."

"I wouldn't waste my breath asking him. I'd just go down to the bank and look at the books. Perhaps he is going to put the extra hundred dollars aside to give you a trip abroad."

"More likely he wants a little surplus to splurge around with and cover his losses at bridge and poker. I have more fun over his poker game. You know he plays every Saturday night with the Humphrey boys and Mr. Smith, and every Sunday morning he tells me what his losses and gains are just as if it were my own money. But he never tells right; his losses are always small and his gains large. Then Mrs. Smith and I get together and compare notes. It seems that he has a regular system by which he multiplies his gains and divides his losses by ten. Now about his voting, I am perfectly sure he will go to the polls."

"He wouldn't dare, the wretch, after promising."

"Yes, he'll go and run the risk of my finding it out; which I would be sure to do."

"Then go and vote yourself."

"After promising? He would be sure to hear of it."

"Oh! certainly! It wouldn't be worth while if he didn't. That's part of the treatment."

"Then there's Jack," demurred Lucy, "he has such ears for hearing things and a way of putting them together. One day he said to me: 'Mamma, does my papa tell lies?' "

"Well, send Jack to the country—mamma will be glad to have him for a time—then we'll put Mr. Robert through a course of discipline that his mother wouldn't approve of. Let me see—I must think up some good ones. Tell me some of his fabrications."

"Well, for instance, he told me that Jack's hunting-suit cost ten dollars. Then when it came home there was the bill receipted for twenty dollars."

"That might have been a mistake, you know."

"No, he never makes mistakes about dates nor figures. Men don't, who work habitually in them. I was with him one day when he bought tips on Claude Dearborne. The next morning he took up the paper and read 'Dearborne ahead.' Then with a big flourish he cried, 'That's two hundred dollars for me. Not bad is it, little girl?' Of course I had to enthuse, but as soon as he was gone, I looked in the paper and found that Dearborne was behind."

"You see, he is so fond of you that he can't bear to have you know that he is not always successful. But it's a bad habit and he must be broken of it. To start with, we'll go down to vote."

"I'm afraid I can't carry it out," protested Mrs. Peyton.

It was only after long and thoughtful deliberation that Robert Peyton concluded to consult his family physician concerning certain eccentricities that had recently developed in his wife.

"Glad to see you," said Dr. Hughes, "but I hope there is nothing wrong. Anybody ill?"

"No," replied Mr. Peyton, with a little hesitation, "not exactly ill, but there is a family matter that I would like to talk with you about."

"Ah! I saw Lucy driving in the park to-day with her friend Bertha White. I thought she looked unusually fine."

"Yes, she is apparently well. That's just what I want to speak to you about. Physically she is well, but of late she has developed certain mental peculiarities that alarm me. It's a delicate matter and I hate to speak of it even to you, but I must do something. I understand that these tendencies lead sometimes to mental derangements."

"Certainly, my boy, you do right. What is the trouble?"

"Well, to come to the point, she doesn't tell the truth."

"Lucy?"

"Yes, Lucy."

"That is surprising. I don't wonder you're alarmed. She's the last person I would accuse of prevaricating. She has always been such an open-hearted person."

"Yes, it's taken a great deal to convince me of it, but it's a fact. I can't believe anything she says."

"What kind of falsehoods does she tell?"

"The first I noticed was about election. She wanted to vote for Langer and I for Renold. Since we were vot-

ing for opposite parties and it was a bad day, I proposed to pair off, and neither of us go to the polls. She promised solemnly, but would you believe it, she went and voted just the same."

"How did you find it out?"

"I saw her. Now what do you think of that?"

The doctor laughed. "I think she got the best of you for once."

"Oh! not a bit."

"You don't mean to say that you voted?"

"Certainly. Do you think I'd lose my vote? I expected to vote all the time. It was only a scheme to keep her from going out in the rain. She gets sore throat so easily."

The doctor abandoned himself to a long laugh. "You are a nice pair. I can't see that you have much occasion to reproach your wife. It looks to me as if she lacked confidence in you."

"Oh, no, she believes everything I tell her. She told me so only the other day. I've been laid up the last week with a sprained ankle, and, you see, I have been observing her rather closely.

"If she has told me one falsehood, she has told me forty.

"For instance, about the cook's wages. She said the cook had demanded an increase of a dollar a week. I said 'All right, we'll have to pay it.' That was a month ago. To-day I chanced to look in Lucy's expense-book, which is, by the way, very systematically kept for a woman, and very convenient for a memorandum. There I find, according to her own statement, she is still paying the old wages."

"Didn't you ask her to explain?"

"No, I couldn't. It would be too embarrassing."

"You are more considerate than I should be. I suppose she wants to save up some Christmas money. You have, perhaps, been too close with her."

"She has an allowance on which she saves about eight hundred dollars a year. I can't ask questions, so I shall never know whether we pay our cook five or six dollars a week. It's not of much consequence, but a man likes to have faith in his wife."

"Quite essential. What else has she been telling you?"

"She told me she paid ten dollars for a hat, and when I took it up and turned it over, there was the price mark, 'Twenty dollars.'

"What alarms me is that she doesn't seem to care if she is detected. She doesn't cover up her tracks. There is a moral obtuseness. The other day there came a letter from Mrs. Newton. She handed it to me to read, but I noticed that she reserved a slip of paper. I found it afterwards thrown on the table. It was a note from poor little Jack. All it said was, 'Dear mamma, I want to come home.' I waited several days to see what she would do but as she paid no attention to it, I went out and brought him home. To my surprise she seemed as glad as ever to see him. Then she told me Henry had mailed an important letter which I found on the sideboard the next morning."

The doctor laughed. "So you don't enjoy being lied to."

"It's insupportable. I've been wondering if I am in some way to blame. Perhaps I have been too strict with her You don't suppose she is developing some sort of mania?"

"No danger of it."

And again the old doctor laughed loud and long.

It annoyed the young man and there was a silence.

"There is no occasion for alarm. These untruths are not of the kind that indicate an unbalanced mind. They are too much studied. The falsehoods of a monomaniacal liar center about himself. They consist of self-praise, self-depreciation, exaggerations, and the like. Now I want to ask you, how many lies do you tell your wife a week?"

"That has nothing to do with the case that I can see. A man must conceal certain things from his wife, otherwise she would be worried to death "

"You think it has nothing to do with the case; now I mistrust it has everything to do with it."

"How so?"

"You think she doesn't know. But in all probability she does. It didn't take you long to find out that she was lying to you."

"That's different. Lucy is very unsophisticated."

"It's not very safe for a man to lie to his wife. They may pretend, but they

are hard to fool. My diagnosis of the case is simply this. Lucy is playing with you; she's playing at your own game. She's giving you a dose of your own medicine. Now I advise you to go home and make a compact with her. She'll stick to it as long as you do."

Bertha and Jack had gone up-stairs; Robert and Lucy Peyton stood before the grate-fire.

"What have you been doing all day, little wife," asked Robert.

"I've been cleaning house, mending curtains, and all sorts of things. See how my fingers are pricked with the needle."

Robert took the shapely hand in his own and examined sympathetically the punctured cuticle.

"What a massacre! Have you not been out to-day?

"No."

"Not at all?"

"No. I've been too busy."

"Strange," said he looking straight in her face, "some one told me you were driving in the park."

"Some one was mistaken," she replied carelessly.

"Come now, don't you think we have played at this game long enough?"

"What game?" she asked with an innocent air.

"This game of fibbing. Own up now that you have been giving me a dose of my own medicine. It was a much needed lesson and you have administered it very gracefully, but I don't want you to spoil yourself in reforming your husband. I'll agree never to tell another lie if you won't."

Then Lucy's arms found their way about her husband's neck and they sat down to laugh over the farce and have an adjustment of old scores.

The Captain of the Host

BY DENISON HALLEY CLIFT

"DANNY," called the old Captain from the low wicker-chair. "Danny!"

The kindly voice echoed along the veranda that fronted the Old Soldiers' Home, a large, four-story wooden-building that lay among the sand-hills, shaded from the blaze of the July sun by clusters of poplar-trees.

It was mid-afternoon, with scarcely a breath of wind stirring in the tall trees, and the only sound that came to the ears of the old soldiers upon the veranda was the lazy tinkle of the water in the garden falling from the warrior-fountain into the big basin.

"Danny!" the old man's voice repeated pleadingly.

A dozen old men turned their gaze slowly toward the old Captain, and instinctively expected the answering cry of the Captain's companion.

There was a long unbroken silence, through which arose the murmur of dropping-water from the garden. The old Captain arose from the wicker-chair and shuffled down the flight of stairs to the gravel-path, looking for the lad he knew had wandered away to some shady spot upon the green lawns. About the fountain's edge the sparrows were twittering, undisturbed in their mid-summer revels.

The settled hush, listless and half oppressive, of July had come down upon the city, and in its sweltering clasp the multitudes were longing for the hours of the summer dusk. Against the front of the old Home, the tattered flag, a relic of a battlefield of the Civil War, unfurled languidly with every whisper of wind that blew in through the Golden Gate.

In the shade of the fountain the old Captain hesitated a moment, and looked out across the dunes. He saw the same scene he had seen for years, but of which he never tired. Far out in the dim distance shimmered the blue floor of the Pacific, afire with a giant bar of sunlight; beyond, to the right, the faint tracery of the Berkeley hills loomed shadowy and vague through the July haze, giving the impression of a half-finished canvas.

From the Home the sand-hills dipped away, like the waves of the ocean, until

they rolled out into the smooth, white stretch of beach where the younger element of old San Francisco's varied population dabbled in the frothing breakers and laughed and called to their fellows to marvel at the shells caught in the shallows.

It was where he commanded this outlook that the old Captain passed many an hour with the lad who came often to see him from the lower part of the city. The boy's name was Daniel Filbering, and his father had been dead six years, so the old solider took a sort of paternal interest in him. He was always known as "Danny" to the Captain; to the other soldiers of the Home he was referred to as "Diccory's Kid." But Captain Diccory never knew this, and the old men were always careful not to let the name come to his ears, for they all liked the old Captain.

Whenever Danny came to visit the Captain the two were together all day. The Captain seemed to take on a new life: his bent figure seemed straighter to his comrades, his voice appeared to become firmer and stronger. By the hour the old man would talk to the boy, telling him stories of battles of the dim past, while his eyes would shine with some strange, bright fire, and his shaking fingers would point nervously to the great scars upon his wrist and neck.

As the Captain stood in the shade of the fountain he suddenly heard the pattering of feet, and from around the house came the figure of Danny. The old soldier's eyes kindled with delight.

"Hello, Captain," came a cheery voice and the boy bounded toward the old man. "I thought I would know when you woke up," went on Danny, taking the old man by the hand.

"You always seem to know," smiled the Captain. "I have been calling you."

"I thought I heard you," answered the boy. "Let's sit down here by the stone-soldier. I want to tell you about the Encampment."

They sat down on the stone-bench by the sparkling-pool. Above them towered the figure of a warrior, with uplifted sword, from whose point leaped the jet of water. On each side of the path smilax and wisteria vines were dry and scorched, and lay back as if human, gasping for breath.

The Captain placed his cane across his knees and took the boy's hand.

"The soldiers are coming, Captain," the boy began, his words full of life. "They are coming from everywhere, thousands and thousands of them!" The youthful mind pictured the martial picture in vivid colors, and transported it in glowing terms.

"And when they get here you will come with me, won't you, Captain? We will watch them go by, with all their guns and flags and swords. Just like you, Captain! And there will be music and cannons. We'll watch them on Market street, won't we, Captain? And you will tell me all about them."

The Captain's face went white under the tanned skin. "The soldiers?" he repeated after Danny, as if dazed. "And we'll stand by and see them pass—and I'll tell you—about them?"

"Yes, and after it's all over you're coming home with me, Captain. Mother said so, and we're going to have the house fixed up with flags and things all for you. And after dinner Sophia is going to play some soldier-songs for you."

Captain Diccory sank unheeding against the stone back of the granite-bench. The boy's voice still lingered in his ear.

"Wont it be fine, Captain! We will see all the veterans, and the old battle-flags. Some of them must be pretty old now. Did you belong to the Grand Army, Captain?"

The Captain's eyes were closed in a dream.

"Captain, how long ago was the war?"

The old man woke with a start. "How long ago?" he said dreamily. "It was years and years ago, Danny. Years and years ago," he said, half to himself, "when I was much younger. That seems so far away now."

"And did you fight like the other soldiers?"

"Yes, Danny, I tried to be brave like the others. Sometimes I'd fall behind, and then I'd have to run on again, with the bullets falling all around me."

As he spoke his voice became lower and lower. His words sounded like some words come out of a dream. The boy beside him had recalled days that set his imagination rampant, and he saw dim visions of conflict, and his mind

answered to the call of bugles and he hurried once more down the red valley of battles, through pale vistas of smoke, into the whirlwind of the fight.

"Lieutenant!" he called aloud, clutching Danny's hand tighter. "Lieutenant!" His old face became whiter. "There goes that dreadful 'spit' again; they must have opened fire on us. Load the old muskets, boys, we'll let 'em have it good this time. * * * Over the hill I rushed with the regiment, the long line of blue falling in behind. I was proud of the boys in my company, every one of them. * * *"

Danny listened, his eyes wide, while the old soldier talked on of the red-scarred past.

"And you must remember, Danny, it was twenty miles to the Ford, and the day was the hottest day that fate could have set for it. Not a man but was white about the lips, and many saw the black swirl of the stroke before night.

"Like the muffled beat of a death-drum the musketry awoke upon the near-by hills, and the long columns were hurled into a pit of flame. When the flame went out there was smoke, great clouds of it, hanging low like some sinister death mantle.

"My head was reeling then, Danny, and my legs were tottering under me. I was afraid I would go down every moment, but somehow we got out of a cornfield, all that was left of us. My lieutenant lay dead in the path behind. Oh, it was awful to leave him there, but what were we going to do, boy? Tell me that?

"All day we heard the far-off roll of guns, and all day we hurried on. No one that was there will ever forget that march to Kelley's Ford. The guns sang us songs of whining fear, like the far whisper of the Rappahannock. All united in a clash of worlds: the fury of flying shells, the sharp cry of the guns, the thunder of cannon.

"The host swung on behind me, the blue host of a hundred, of a thousand, of tens of thousands of comrades, and we all felt in that march that the nation was behind us. I told myself, 'Those are my men, every one of them, and I am the captain of this blue host!' That was what did it, the knowledge that I was their captain!

"I told myself that if Washington ever heard of me it should be that I had been true to my host. That was why we kept on when others fell, because we knew the nation was back of us. You can't understand that yet, Danny, but sometime you will. And then you will know what a terrible feeling it is, just to know that the nation is behind you.

"That was why the long, quivering columns of men reached Kelley's Ford, when the heat was beating our poor tired lives out, leaving only corpses for any bullets that might reach us. Above us the glaring sun shone through the clouds like a bloody wafer; and far off we saw sometimes the glitter of the Rappahannock, indifferent, serene."

The old soldier's hand still held tightly to the lad's. As he talked his mind drifted on until, leaving behind the bloody sky of his dreams, he saw again a blue stratum above him, across which floated whisps of white clouds. A voice called softly to him.

"Captain!" The word sounded faint, but sweet; vague, yet so near.

"Yes, Danny."

"I wish I had been with you, Captain. I would have stayed close to you and helped you fight. Where are the other soldiers now, Captain?"

The old soldier brushed aside a tear that trickled down his cheek. "I don't know, boy. I have never found them. The company could not have been destroyed, but after my wounds healed and I left the hospital at Canaan Hill I lost track of the regiment and never did find it again. I would give anything to see those boys again; I think I could then die happy. They must be scattered all over New York state."

Suddenly the sunset-gun by the Golden Gate boomed its salute to the vanished sun, and a man on the veranda let the old flag in front of the Home drop from the pole. Twilight was coming on—a cool, sweet twilight after the heat of the day, and one by one the old soldiers filed in to supper.

Captain Diccory bid the boy good-by and turned to go into the great building. Above him towered the warrior on the fountain, and he raised his hand in salute as he passed.

What Danny had told him of the G. A. R. encampment stirred the blood

within him, and day after day he sat in the little garden and thought over and over again of the part he had played in the great struggle. Danny often came to see him, and each time he would learn more of the approaching great day and the accounts would send a thrill through him. Why, he was going to stand with the boy and watch the veterans of the Civil War file past! He longed for the day to come.

And at last it did come, with a flourish that stirred the whole West. Danny brought the first news to the old Captain.

"The parade is going to be in the morning," he told the old soldier. "And you are coming with me, Captain. You were as brave as the others, and you must wear your uniform, too."

The Captain smiled, and the next morning, very early, he led the boy up the long stairs into his room. The two opened a big trunk, musty with the years, and there in the bottom lay the old blue uniform that had seen the bloodiest fields of the War.

"That's the suit, Danny, the same suit!" cried the Captain. He lifted the faded blue uniform aloft. "And there's the old campaign-hat, and the sword."

Danny's eyes were filled with a great wonder.

"Oh, I'm so glad you are my old Captain," he said, clutching the old man's hand.

Captain Diccory brushed off the suit, and before long he put it on, and placed the hat upon his gray head. Then, buckling the sword to his belt, he straightened up, straight as a young man, a great light in his eyes. His hair and his seamed face, together with the grizzly beard, gave him a look of majesty.

"Now, Danny," he said, and his voice shook, "we can go and watch the comrades march past."

Danny led the old man away from the Soldier's Home that overlooked the Pacific and the Golden Gate and the Berkeley hills, into the tumult of the city. Through the maze of the streets they went, hand in hand, while the day grew hotter and hotter. They reached the corner on Market street where the Flood building towered high above them, wrapped in the nation's colors.

The eyes of the Captain wandered up and down the wide street, ablaze with the stars and stripes, and hung with banners and giant flags. Close to them a great white Arch arose in beautiful proportions, brilliant in the sunshine, and beneath it the gay throngs waved flags and cheered. Mounted police with white gloves held the crowds back to the ropes. It was all a world of restraint, of expectation, looking forward to a great happening.

And that event came at last. From afar down the long street Danny and the old Captain heard the music of a band, playing "Yankee Doodle." It quickened the old soldier's pulse, and sent the blood to his face like the frenzied sting of old wine. The crowds became alert, and cheer upon cheer rent the heavy air.

An advance guard of policemen, mounted on glistening black horses, passed by, followed by a veteran-band, the drum-corps keeping time to the fifes. A double line of buglers swung into view, men who had played the last taps at Bull Run and Gettysburg.

"Who are those men, Captain?" asked Danny suddenly.

"Those, Danny? They are the buglers of the Thirty-fourth Infantry."

A long, unbroken cheer broke forth from street and housetop. The men were old now, sitting erect upon white horses, glaring under the noonday sun. Captain Diccory felt the heat, sultry and suffocating, that had come down upon the city. He pulled the old campaign-hat down over his eyes to shield them from the glare hurled back from the soft asphalt.

Danny caught at the Captain's sleeve. "Captain," he exclaimed, breathlessly, "look at those flags! Aint they funny old flags?"

The Captain watched the line of color-bearers sweep by, bearing the honored colors of the North, tattered remnants now. They told him better than words the great crisis of the nation and he lived during those few hours in the days when he had led his host to Kelley's Ford. His dim eyes sought to distinguish the emblems.

Then came the veterans of the infantry, treading with the feet of young

men, erect under the stress of the moment; and the Captain's hand trembled on Danny's shoulder. There, before the old Captain's eyes, the blue host was marching, of which he had once been one. They were old now, like himself, heads bowed by the years.

The platoons of the Fifty-third Illinois whirled by in a grim column of old and faded faces. Like someone in a strange dream the Captain watched them; some were bent, some were yet middle-aged men. And as he watched the tears welled up in his misty eyes, and his heart went out to these men who had won for the North the victory that had saved the country. "They were his comrades!" he told himself so, over and over again.

And were these all? Where were the thousands who had once marched to that same tune from these old fifes, the strains of "The Star Spangled Banner?" Where was his own company? He longed with all his heart that he might be among these marching veterans.

"Captain!" He had forgotten the boy. "Captain, who are those soldiers?"

"I don't know—Danny—except that they are all—brothers. I guess we all feel that way."

The music had got into his veins, and he thrilled to the quickstep. A fresh regiment swung into the line of vision, a mere handful of men now.

"The boys of the Second Massachusetts," said the old soldier, tremulously. Behind them came the artillery, the old gun carriages rattling over the stones. And close upon them fresh horses bore the men of the cavalry.

"Who are those soldiers, on the horses?"

"Those, Danny, are the men of the Twentieth cavalry. They are the men who saved the day. * * * I wonder if Tim Gregory is there. Poor Tim! He was with the regiment."

The old Captain, eyes wide and staring, was talking excitedly to himself. Danny seemed far away. It was hot, stifling hot, and every moment the heat seemed to become more cruel in its relentlessness. The flags on the Flood building over his head fluttered limply against their ropes. The Captain leaned, weak and faint, upon Danny's shoulder.

Then suddenly he started, and his heart beat faster. To his ears came the strains of "The Girl I Left Behind Me." The tune sounded strangely familiar, strangely like music he had heard before. But where? he asked himself. His brain seemed to become dizzy; he could scarcely think properly.

A thousand hearts beat faster as the music came nearer; ten thousand feet beat in unison with the tune. The old Captain saw that the regiments were from New York. He saw the tattered colors of the Fifth regiment move past.

Suddenly he became excited, for that regiment was his own. His face went white, and his thin lips became colorless. Was his own company here, the men he had braved death with forty years before at Rappahannock? The files swept by, grim, old, marked by battle, heads erect and weary shoulders squared once more.

"Who are those soldiers, Captain?"

"Those soldiers? Those are my soldiers, Danny!" The voice was the whisper of an old, old man.

"Your soldiers, Captain?"

But the old Captain heard not. His own company was marching by with no one at its head. His own lost company! His own blue host! The company of one hundred brave souls had thinned to a mere sergeant's-squad.

Captain Diccory arose to his full height and started forward under the rope toward the marching men. There was something determined in his face, something visionary and far-off. And behind him hurried Danny. A moment later he had fallen in line at the head of the company, and his feet had caught the step.

There was a mad burst of cheers from the throngs, who did not understand. But the old men of the company recognized in the firm step and straight shoulders and the kindly but weazened face their old Captain, and a cry went up from the twenty throats such as filled the Captain's soul with a mighty joy.

"Captain Diccory!" shouted one of the old men, "Hurrah!"

The confusion lasted but a moment, and then the company moved on again, the old Captain and Danny at its head.

Block after block they marched on, feet tuned with the beat of the drum. Then the long, tired columns wheeled

into the avenue, and the countermarch began. The sun beat down from its zenith unmercifully. But the Captain did not notice it in his happiness until a black mist began to hover before his eyes. It was the black swirl that had killed the host at Rappahannock. Now it was getting him. But he would remain with the company now; nothing should stop him!

He clutched Danny's hand tighter. He was getting weaker. But he would fight it off! He told himself this as he marched on, but the heat beat down and he could see nothing but a heavy black mist! He tried to cry out but he could not utter a word. Then suddenly he went down.

Danny leaned over the limp figure of the old Captain. A policeman bustled up and demanded harshly who the veteran was. The men of the company gathered around and helped to lift the prostrate form to the sidewalk. Danny sought to follow, but the policeman caught him tightly by the arm.

"What are you doing here?" he demanded sharply.

Danny struggled to free himself. His eyes filled with tears. "He said they were his soldiers," he told the policeman, "and he was marching with them. Will he be better soon? He's my old Captain," he exclaimed fiercely.

The soldiers of the company bared their heads upon the sidewalk. Danny wormed his way into the group and caught up the weazened hand of the old soldier.

"Captain!" he called pleadingly.

But the Captain had already joined the Host.

The Greater Blessing

BY JOHN BARTON OXFORD

IT WAS glaringly evident that it was but a matter of a few days at the most with old Mrs. Bassett, and the doctor, sitting by her bedside in the bare, dingy room at the County Farm, was trying his best to tell her this as gently as possible; but Mrs. Bassett interrupted him with a sniff of impatience. She turned her face slowly toward him —a face whose wrinkled, yellow skin reminded him of musty parchment—and fixed on him a pair of glittering eyes.

"I aint afraid," she said slowly, "not a mite. I've been through too much in my day to be scairt by anything you can tell me. When you've had your husband run off with another woman, an' a mortgage foreclosed on ye, an' then lose your one chance of earnin' a livin' by bein' all drawed up with rheumatiz so's you have to go on the town an' land up here to the poor-house, your feelin's git pretty fairly well paralyzed. If you're tryin' to tell me that I'm goin' to die, out with it, 'twon't make no great difference which way you put it."

"Well then, Mrs. Bassett," he returned gravely, "since you force me to it, I'm afraid the end isn't far distant."

Mrs. Bassett drew up the bed-clothes with a thin, misshapen hand and smiled grimly.

"How long do you cal'late to give me?" she inquired with no show of emotion.

"A week—ten days, perhaps. Two weeks at the most," said he.

"I shan't make no fuss about goin'," she said wearily. "When you go out, ask the overseer's-wife to step up here a minute, won't you?"

The doctor picked up his hat and his medicine case and went creaking down the stairs. A moment later the door opened softly and the overseer's-wife came in. She plumped down into the chair where the doctor had sat, wiping her hands on her long apron. Plainly she was ill at ease. Here in the presence of the approaching Mystery she seemed a trifle uncertain as to her own outward bearing. She started in by furtively wiping her eyes with a corner of her apron.

From her prop of pillows Mrs. Bassett eyed her coldly and with considerable disapproval.

"I s'pose the doctor's told ye?" she began.

The overseer's-wife nodded.

"Well," she went on, " 'twon't be very long—two weeks at the most." She fixed her bead-like eyes on the other's face. They seemed to be taking her measure mercilessly, and not entirely without suspicion. "I want you to do somethin' for me. Think you can?"

"I'll try my best, Mrs. Bassett," the overseer's-wife assured her.

"S'pose I should say," said Mrs. Bassett, speaking very slowly, "that I had fifty dollars hid somewheres. D'ye s'pose you'd do jest as I tell you with it—every cent of it—if I was to tell you where 'tis? Mind, I aint goin' to tell you where 'tis till you've promised to do as I say with it," she added cautiously.

"What do you want me to do with it?" asked the overseer's-wife.

"I want you to see that I have somethin' besides a pauper fun'ral," Mrs. Bassett declared. "I don't want to be shoved into no pine-box an' dumped into the town-lot. What I want is a decent burial. I wisht you'd git me a casket—a plain one'll do well enough, an' a small lot somewheres in the cemetery, I don't much care where. I guess my black alpaca dress'll do to be laid out in, an' if there's anything left over after you've done what I ask, you're welcome to it. Will you do it?" Her tones were tremulous with eagerness. Her eyes were burning unnaturally.

"Course I will, if you want me to," the other promised.

"You've got to swear it before I tell you where the money is," the sick woman insisted. "Git a Bible an' swear."

The overseer's-wife shuffled out and presently returned with a Bible which she laid on the torn patchwork-coverlet of the bed. It was a strange oath, strangely administered, but it very evidently satisfied Mrs. Bassett, for after one last piercing scrutiny of the other's face, she settled back on her pillows and closed her eyes with a sigh of relief.

"Now git the scissors and fetch my black alpaca skirt," she commanded, and, when the overseer's-wife had done her bidding, "Rip out the lining of the back-breadth," she said.

There was a clicking of the scissors, the sound of a riven seam. "Find a linen-bag near the hem, don't ye?" came from the bed. "Pass it to me. Yes, that's it. Now the scissors."

Her claw-like fingers were so bent and twisted that she could scarcely hold the scissors, but finally she managed to clip off one end of the bag. She shook it gently and out tumbled the yellowed bills—two ten's, five five's, a two and three one's. She counted them over.

"I hid 'em there years ago," she croaked hoarsely, "against jest sech a fix as this. I must have suspicioned even then that 'twas comin'. Now take 'em an' see that you do as you've swore you would."

She thrust the money into the other's hands. The overseer's-wife mechanically began counting it.

"There's jest fifty," said Mrs. Bassett sharply. "I've counted it five times. You see that the casket is a decent one an' that the lot aint too near the town lot. That's all I ask."

Then she deliberately turned her face to the wall and closed her eyes.

Mrs. Bassett took her time about dying. The week slipped past and the ten days, but still she lingered, a trifle weaker, a trifle more sallow, yet, to all appearances, prepared to cling to life for another tenacious month.

The two weeks allotted by the doctor were well past, when one afternoon the overseer's-wife came shuffling into the dingy room, nervously rubbing her hands on her apron and glancing furtively toward the bed, where Mrs. Bassett lay very quietly with half-closed eyes.

"I dun'no' as I ought to tell you," began the overseer's-wife, sinking into the chair by the bed, "an' I dun'no', too, but what I had ought to."

"Tell what?" said Mrs. Bassett.

The overseer's-wife rolled down her sleeves and then rolled them up again. She coughed uneasily.

"There was a man killed down to the siding at Ridgeville last night," she said.

"There's been men killed there before," was Mrs. Bassett's grim response.

"Fell off a freight-train—he was ridin' on a bumper between the cars," went on the overseer's-wife, "an' the wheels went over him an' cut off both legs."

Mrs. Bassett displayed no special interest in the matter.

"He warn't dead when they found him, 'tho' he died soon after. But before he died he talked some."

The woman on the bed made no comment. She had closed her eyes.

"They say he asked for you."

Mrs. Bassett's eyes came open. "For me?" she said, bewildered.

"An'—an' told 'em what his name was," faltered the narrator.

Mrs. Bassett was striving vainly to lift herself on an elbow. "What was it?" she demanded hoarsely.

"Ezry Bassett," said the overseer's wife with a gulp.

"'Taint so," cried the invalid fiercely. "'Twarn't him."

"There was some marks on him that might identify him," the other continued. The middle finger of the left hand was gone at the second joint, an' there was an eagle tattooed in red on his breast, an' two crossed cannons an' an anchor on his right forearm with 'E. B.' under 'em."

Mrs. Bassett was breathing with difficulty. Her eyes burned like live coals.

"He had all them things on him," she gasped. "You said he talked some before he died. What'd he say. Go on, quick!"

"They say he told 'em he was beatin' his way east from Ohio; that he was comin' to East Ridgeville to try to find you. He said he hadn't used you right."

"Is that all?" cried Mrs. Bassett.

"I guess so. 'Twarn't much anyway. He died while he was telling it," said the woman by the bed.

Slowly, painfully, Mrs. Bassett propped herself up with an elbow. Her yellow, wrinkled face was working grotesquely; her free hand clutched the edge of the coverlet in the crooked fingers. There was something in her eyes that made the other woman shrink from her.

"He aint nothin' to me," she cried, "nothin'-nothin'! He run off with another woman an' left me without a cent an' a mortgage on the place that I grubbed my life out tryin' to pay. He let me come here—here to the poorhouse. It's too late to come sneakin' back sayin' he never used me right."

Her breath seemed to fail her. She was trembling violently from head to foot.

"Why hadn't he stayed out there where he was!" she went on thickly. "I never asked him to come back lookin' for me. I kept my mouth shut through it all—even when I had to come here!"

She sank back on the pillows a huddled heap, the poor, crooked fingers working incessantly and her head moving from side to side as if in a paroxysm of pain.

"Oh God," she burst out, "why can't I never have anything I want. Why can't I? Why can't I?"

Her voice had risen to hysterical pitch. It was almost a shriek. Then suddenly she covered her face with both crippled hands and her wasted frame was shaken by a tempest of sobs.

The overseer's wife had risen. Her own knees were trembling beneath her weakly. She stood helplessly by the bed trying vainly to comfort the woman before her, but Mrs. Bassett heard no word of it all. At last the overseer's-wife tiptoed noiselessly to the door, but as she reached it and put her hand on the knob, there was a sharp cry from the bed.

"Wait!" Mrs. Bassett had struggled up again, and sat there with wild staring eyes. "That—fifty—dollars," she panted. "I want you—to take it—down to—Ridgeville—an' give—Ezry—a decent burial. The town lot'll have to—do for me—after all."

An Adventure of Carlton Clarke

No. V—THE SQUARED TRIANGLE

BY FRANK LOVELL NELSON

EDITOR'S NOTE.—*Carlton Clarke, who in detecting crime makes use of telepathic suggestion and hypnotism, in this story brings to bar a man connected with an automobile murder-mystery. An insignificant personal trait is the thread that leads to the unravelment of a tangle of family relationship and duplicity, and a woman's unwavering devotion. This series of stories, each complete in itself, began in the January, 1907,* BLUE BOOK MAGAZINE.

IT CERTAINLY looked black for Arthur Edgerton. Even Clarke, who usually, I find, is inclined to let his sympathies rest with the accused until all shadow of doubt is dispelled, was hard put to find excuses for him. We discussed the case, recorded in glaring headlines, over our morning meal.

"It's incomprehensible," he said, as he read for the third time the damning details. "His whole life, his success, his approaching marriage, everything cries out against this crime."

"So they did in the case of Eugene Aram," I replied, "and yet Aram protested his innocence. If Edgerton is not guilty, it should be a simple matter for him to account for his whereabouts from 7:30 to 10 last night, but this he refuses to do. I am of the opinion that for once the police have shown commendable energy and nabbed the right man. Can you imagine a more convincing chain of circumstantial evidence?"

"I don't have to imagine. The history of circumstantial evidence contains many a more perfect chain which was only broken after the wrong man had been hanged."

"Then, again," he continued, "what do you make of the robbery? If through jealousy Edgerton killed Garner, why should he rifle his pockets, tear out a diamond-stud, and wrench the ring off his finger like a common freebooter?"

"That might have been the work of someone else who arrived on the scene after the murderer had fled," I suggested.

"A stronger argument on your side would be that it was done to throw the police off the track. But we argue to no purpose, and I, for one, propose to await the sequel."

It was the old, old story, the fatal triangle, in the demonstration of which the corollary has been tragedy since the world began—two men and one woman.

Arthur Edgerton possessed the three almost priceless talismen to the gates of modern society: youth, good looks, and wealth; and these had won for him the master-key: social position, despite the handicap of antecedents unknown, some said, even doubtful.

Harrison Garner put into the balance against these: wealth, a family name honored for generations, and an unblemished character. Edgerton's brilliancy he offset by unfailing good humor and wholesomeness.

Mazie Morrison, secure in her own little social realm and with no lack of suitors for the hand of its queen, had played one against the other. She had finally silenced the gossips by accepting Edgerton, and then set their tongues wagging faster than ever by receiving both on equal terms, despite the cards and the ring and all the delightful,

bothersome preliminaries to matrimony.

And then the sequel: Garner found shot through the heart in Edgerton's automobile on a lonely spot on the Lake Shore Drive; Edgerton, blood bespattered, behind prison-bars, and Mazie Morrison, weeping, inconsolable, distraught, in her pretty boudoir, stunned at the havoc her little hands had wrought in three lives. This was the picture I painted that summer morning at the breakfast-table. Later I found the canvas wanted retouching sadly.

Ignoring the futility of the argument, Clarke and I prolonged our discussion of the case in the library over our cigars where we were interrupted by the sound of carriage-wheels. Clarke's dark features lighted with expectancy. I wondered if his remarkable prescience told him that the vehicle stopping at our entrance held any connection for us with the tragedy of the night before. Or was I absorbing a portion of his sensitive intelligence?

Yes, the call was for us. The bell rang and we heard our servant, who at this period chanced to be a Jap boy, blandly answering a feminine voice which inquired for Mr. Carlton Clarke.

Our visitor was heavily veiled, and as Clarke stepped forward to offer her a chair, I was able to judge nothing of her personality beyond that she was young and owned a figure, *svelte*, but suggesting through her dark costume, animal-like lines and curves. Or was it the art of the dressmaker exemplified in a perfectly gowned woman?

"I am Miss Mazie Morrison, Mr. Clarke," she said sadly, lifting her veil from a face, the beauty of which even the evident traces of tears could not mar, and brushing back her dark, rebellious hair with a dainty little hand on which sparkled an engagement-ring.

"Yes, Miss Morrison, I am glad you have called on me. It is about the Edgerton case, I suppose," replied Clarke, while I discreetly retired behind the *portière* of my bedroom door.

"O, yes, Mr. Clarke. You have seen the papers. You know the terrible trouble I am in. It seems that no one can help me, but I heard papa and Brother Joe talking about what you did for Richard Carr and I have come to you. I had a perfectly dreadful time slipping away from home. I am watched by the police and even by my own family, but I know Arthur did not do that dreadful thing and I simply had to talk with someone who would believe me. You don't think he did it, do you?"

"Miss Morrison, I do not know, but, for your sake, I propose to find out if there is any hope."

"Oh, do, Mr. Clarke, and I will pay you anything. I am wealthy in my own right and they cannot prevent me from giving it all to save Arthur."

"The question of payment, Miss Morrison, is of the smallest consequence. Services such as mine cannot be ticketed with a price and sold as commodities. I will serve you just as willingly if nothing is said on the financial side. Now, if we are to fight this battle against circumstances, first let us take an account of our resources. I will repeat to you the evidence contained in the newspaper reports, and you are to tell me wherein it tallies with the facts and to give me any further information you can. Are you strong enough for the ordeal?"

"O, yes, Mr. Clarke. I am strong enough for anything if it will prove Arthur innocent. "

"Then I will call my *confrère*, Mr. Sexton, to take notes and we will go over the case in detail."

I was easily found, for though pretending to read, I admit I was taking in the conversation from my position behind the *portière*.

"Now then," continued Clarke, "the papers say that Mr. Edgerton called at your apartment building, the Patio, at 7:30 o'clock last night. That he found Garner there and stayed only about ten minutes. That he and Garner left together, entered Edgerton's automobile, and started north. Now what occurred during those ten minutes?"

"Oh, Mr. Clarke, it happened just as the papers say, only they have added so many horrible things that are not so. They say Arthur was insanely jealous of Harrison and that he left me in a rage. He wasn't a bit jealous. He knew Harrison still called on me as an old friend of our family, and he often said he thoroughly approved of it, and that he knew he had all my love. He was acting

strangely last night, but he remarked that he was worrying over some business troubles. He scarcely spoke ten words to me, and when I asked him about an engagement we had for next Thursday evening he could not remember what it was and claimed he had forgotten all about it. I thought this strange, for he never forgets anything. When Mr. Garner rose to go Arthur said he was on his way to see a man on an important business matter in Edgewater, and offered to take Mr. Garner in his machine to his home on Wilson avenue. I remember thinking this was odd, for he never before mentioned business in the evening."

"Had Mr. Edgerton any business troubles?"

"None that I know of. Papa said just the other evening that his factory had orders enough ahead to run it a year."

"Now, Miss Morrison, did you notice anything else strange in his actions?"

"Well, there was one thing, but it can't be of any importance. When he was leaving he rolled a cigaret and I noticed that he rolled it inward. When he makes his own cigarets he always rolls them outward and he told me once that was the proper way. This was why I noticed it, but I suppose it was nervousness that caused him to change."

"Um—" ejaculated Clarke, meditatively. "Have you seen Mr. Edgerton this morning?"

"No, I was going there after seeing you, but I dread the crowds and the notoriety."

"I think I can give you a card which will secure you from annoyance."

"Oh, thank you. Is there anything else?"

"No, Miss Morrison. Tell Mr. Edgerton for me that we may clear him in spite of himself."

"Then you will help?"

"Madam, I have already taken the case."

When she left, Clarke's eyes danced with excitement.

"What do you think of it now?" he asked.

"I can't see a ray of light, can you?" I replied.

"Isn't she a wonderful woman to think of a little thing like that cigaret? You and I, Sexton, know something of the obsessions of a cigaret-smoker, and that his prejudices are as inflexible as the laws of the Medes and Persians. I don't know what it means now, but I will. But let's go. I'm anxious to have a look at that auto before it is removed. I suppose the police have pawed over it now until there'll be no finding out anything from it."

When we reached the scene of the tragedy we found the machine standing apparently just as the murderer had left it, the front wheels in the ditch and the hind wheels elevated by the grade of the roadway. A dark pool of blood in the tonneau told it's own story. The motor was guarded by a solitary policeman, who kept at bay a gaping-crowd of curiosity-seekers.

Clarke and I had some difficulty with the majesty of the law, but an air of authority and a cigar finally won the day.

"Is the machine just as it was when the body was removed?" queried Clarke.

"Yes, sir. It's not to be touched till the coroner has a look at it." (I would like to give him a dialect, but truth demands that he speak remarkably good English.)

Clarke gave the machine a most critical examination, promising the officer he would leave it just as he found it. He peeped under the hood, tested the spark, noted the supply of gasoline, and marked the course of a bullet along the leather of the rear seat.

"An automatic," he quietly remarked. "Nothing but a steel-jacketed bullet could go clear through the body of a man and then cut so clean a furrow. There are no signs of a struggle. The polish of that woodwork hasn't a scratch on it, which wouldn't be likely if there had been a fight. Officer, are you sure these levers haven't been touched since the body was found?"

"Yes, sir. I came with the wagon last night and they were just that way. The lieutenant left Clancy to guard it and I relieved him at 8. Neither of us has touched them."

"Well, then, Sexton, we might as well go back to town; we can't learn anything more here."

On the return Clarke was immersed in his own thoughts and I did not inter-

rupt him; but as we neared our corner he turned to me and said: "So you still think Arthur Edgerton committed that murder?"

"I have learned nothing to change my opinion," I replied.

"Well, I have. Sexton, it is my solemn judgment that Edgerton was not in that automobile when the killing was done. It's a simple little thing, but to me it's conclusive.

"The machine was set on the secondary speed. The gasoline-tank was almost empty and the oil-cups dry as a bone. Whoever ran that car was afraid of the high speed, and he had been burning up the engine and squandering the gasoline to make time. When he stopped he left the throttle on the second speed, threw off the gear-clutch, applied the emergency-brake, and skidded into the ditch on his tires. They are cut through. The engine was not burned out from being left running, for the machine is of a type which disconnects the batteries when the gear-clutch is thrown. No expert motorist ever did such a bungling job."

"But in the stress of excitement—" I suggested.

"I never saw excitement cause one of them to forget the high speed, and besides, all this, except the stopping, occurred before the shooting."

"Perhaps Edgerton was a new hand at the game."

"No. On our way back I have been trying to think where I had heard his name before. I just recalled it. He drove his own car in the races at Washington Park last year. I must pay more attention to sports. Really, in our line of business one can't afford to neglect any branch of information. No, we're not going to get off. I want to go down to Central Station. It may be best to have an interview with Edgerton."

"Now," continued Clarke, as we settled back in our seats, "assuming that you have come over from the camp of the enemy, let us count our forces and see wherein our little army of facts is superior to that of the police. First the motive. Jealousy and robbery, say the police, but I never knew these two impulses to work together. Their case would be stronger with either of these motives alone. Robbery is out of the question, and we have Miss Morrison's word that he was not jealous, and the testimony of the levers that he was not in the car."

"And against this," I said, "the police are holding a man who started in the car with Garner, who, when arrested in his apartments after a lapse af ample time for him to have returned by cars from the scene of the crime, has blood spots on his coat and is laboring under stress of great excitement. Moreover, he has tacitly admitted the act, and makes no effort at an *alibi*. Our friends, the enemy, will call it a perfect chain of evidence."

"Yes, but perfect chains of evidence sometimes have weak links and then the whole chain is worthless. We have found two weak links; the motives and the levers. I might add a third, the cigaret; but here we are out of the tunnel and at the city hall."

When we entered the gloomy corridors of Central Station, Clarke at once sought out Inspector Ship, who happened to be in charge, and begged for an interview with Edgerton.

"I'd like to favor you, Mr. Clarke," said the inspector, "although it's very irregular. "I can't refer to you as his lawyer, as he has refused to employ one; still I can't forget several little turns you have done for me, and so I'll see if he wants to talk to you."

Here we met a stumbling-block of formidable proportions. Inspector Ship returned with the word that the prisoner absolutely refused to see anyone.

"Then, inspector, I wish you would lock me up in the cage next to Edgerton, and preferably on the side his bunk is on, if that one is empty. You can do that, can't you, and leave me there for an hour? I may be able to interest him through the grating."

"Well, I guess I can, but it isn't often they come here asking to be locked up. Come on down-stairs."

"Better go out and have your luncheon in the meantime, Sexton," said Clarke, as he and the inspector disappeared down the iron stairway.

At the restaurant to which I went for luncheon I met some friends, jovial good fellows, and we tarried long over the coffee and cigars. When I finally

broke away, I realized in dismay that fully two hours had elapsed since I parted from Clarke. I hurried at once to the station, and there found a laconic note from him.

Can't wait any longer. Come at once to 435 Fourth avenue.

"They've only been gone about ten minutes," said the captain who handed me Clarke's note. "The inspector is with him. Don't know what they're up to."

I lost no time getting to the address named, which proved to be a low resort I knew well as the harboring place of thieves, and a breeding spot for the worst forms of vice and crime. The gaudy front opened into a rather innocent-looking bar and that on smaller rooms beyond.

I went in boldly, and at a venture, said authoritatively to the barkeeper, who was serving a solitary customer:

"The inspector just came in with a plain-clothes man. Where are they now?"

He, taking me as I expected him to, for a "fly cop," said nothing but jerked his thumb expressively in the direction of the depths beyond.

Just as I was about to enter the swinging-doors an awful hubbub arose from within, the sound of chairs hurled violently to the floor, the crash of breaking glass and overturning tables, curses, and the deep breathing of men in deadly battle. The one customer, who had pricked up his ears at the mention of the inspector, fled incontinently. The barkeeper, schooled by long experience to no interference with the law other than to break it where safe, wiped glasses as if nothing was happening. I pushed the doors aside and rushed in.

The scene that met my eyes was over in less than the time necessary to describe it, but it was thrilling while it lasted. Two men were locked in deadly embrace, reeling about the room, overturning tables and chairs, while a third circled around them watching for a chance to administer the quietus with the butt of a pistol. The man in the embrace of the stranger was Clarke. The one with the pistol the inspector. The stranger had a long knife in his right hand which he was trying to bring to bear on Clarke's anatomy, but I was pleased to note that the wrist of the hand that held the blade was encircled with four fingers and a thumb that I knew possessed a grip like a pipe-wrench.

The affair could have but one ending, and I did not see that I could be of any use. With one powerful effort Clarke brought his opponent's head within range of the butt of the inspector's revolver, there was a quick thud, and a limp form slipped out of his arms to the floor.

Despite the blood which ran down his face from the cut in his forehead, the grime, and the torn clothing and disheveled hair, I knew him from the pictures that filled that day's papers. It was Arthur Edgerton.

"What devil's trick is this you're playing on me, Mr. Clarke?" roared the inspector. "We left this man at the station not half an hour ago. How comes it that you lead me here on a false scent and then drag my own prisoner out of that room and force me to slug him?"

"I didn't lead you on a false scent, inspector," returned Clarke with a grim smile. "I gave you my word of honor that if you would come with we I would give you the privilege of arresting the real murderer of Harrison Garner. There he is, and all you have to do is to handcuff him. He'll be coming around in a minute, though I don't think there's much fight left in him. The police certainly deserve great credit for this. I imagine the morning papers will have a good deal to say about the wonderful piece of work accomplished by Inspector Ship. It isn't too late for an extra, even."

"That's all very well, Mr. Clarke, but what does it mean?"

"I'll tell you—ah, he's coming back to earth. That was a scientific crack you gave him, just hard enough but not likely to interfere with the later duties of the hangman. Inspector and Mr. Sexton, I have the pleasure of introducing to you Mr. Arnold Edgerton, the twin brother of a most estimable man, who has risked his own neck to save one that is absolutely worthless. Now, inspector, you may take the case and Mr. Sexton and I will retire again to private life."

It was many months after these

events that I first heard the connected story from Arthur Edgerton's own lips. Nothing came out at the trial; as Arnold was induced to plead guilty and accept a term of life imprisonment, there being little doubt that he was insane. Edgerton, the virtuous, lived in retirement until he could wind up his business affairs, when he and Miss Morrison were quietly married and departed to make their residence in Europe. The evening before they left they called at our apartments to express again their gratitude to Clarke for making their great happiness possible.

"I was born in Rio Janeiro," began Edgerton after, with some reluctance, he had consented tc tell his story. "My brother followed me into the world a few hours later and our mother died at his birth. My father was the younger son of a titled English line and had settled in Brazil to make his fortune, which he did most successfully, acquiring, in the course of time, an extensive ranch and large holdings of city property.

"We were the only children, and after our mother's death he devoted himself to our care, with the assistance of a French governess and a Spanish housekeeper who presided over the large retinue of servants in our villa at beautiful Petropolus. Thus we acquired from infancy three languages. These have been a great help to Arnold in his villainy, though in the matter of education requiring application he is deficient.

"He early developed the very worst traits. At the age of five years he cut off the legs of the family cat with a hatchet just to see her hop, he said. By the time he was fifteen he was utterly beyond restraint. Our father repeatedly settled his gambling debts, paid forged bills, and spent large sums keeping him clear of the law. I am sure Arnold's escapades hastened his death, which occurred about five years ago. Everything was left to me with the admonition that I was to take up the burden for which our parents had both given their lives.

"I have performed this duty to the best of my ability. I closed up my father's affairs, sold off everything, and came here, thinking it might save Arnold to get him away from his evil associations, but wherever he is he consorts only with the lowest. I have made him a liberal allowance—too liberal, I fear—which he has squandered in debauchery in various cities, always returning to me when in need of money. In these moments he is master of all the arts of fawning.

"In his heart I knew he hated me because our father had not seen fit to divide his property between us, and he has repeatedly threatened my life.

"One of his choice methods of worrying me has been to impersonate me and call upon my friends, usually doing some act to disgrace me. You have seen the resemblance between us, and as I never mentioned to my friends that I had a brother, it was easy for him to impose on them. I have repaid many a loan that I never borrowed, knowing it to be his work.

"Finally I met Miss Morrison, and I felt it was an epoch in my career. As I became better acquainted and the truth dawned on me that all my hopes of happiness were wrapped up in her, I realized, as never before, what a cruel burden my father had bequeathed me.

"I hesitated to tell Mazie of my family skeleton. I had no intention of deceiving her, and would have told her all before our marriage, but I sought to put off the evil day."

"It wouldn't have made the least bit of difference, dear," said Mrs. Edgerton, with an affectionate pressure of her husband's arm. "I would have married you if you had had a whole penitentiary full of wicked brothers."

"Before I asked Mazie to be my wife," Edgerton continued, "I called my brother into my office and made a compact with him. In consideration of a material increase in his allowance he was to leave Chicago and not return for five years. I almost hoped that before this time was up he would either drink himself to death or be killed in some brawl.

"He has always shown himself incapable of keeping his word, and I was scarcely surprised, when, on the day of the tragedy, he walked into my office. I was angry and lost my temper. I told him he never would get another cent out of me. At first he whined and

begged, but when he saw I was firm he became furious and opened upon me a torrent of vile abuse. I ordered him to leave or I would kick him out.

"He went, vowing the most terrible vengeance against me. When I cooled down I was filled with remorse and felt that I had been untrue to my father's trust. But I reasoned that his desire for money would bring him back.

"When I got to my apartments that evening the janitor looked at me in surprise. "Why, Mr. Edgerton," he said, "you're back early. I saw you leaving in the automobile not fifteen minutes ago. Did you find your keys inside?"

"I knew at once what had happened. My brother had gone to the garage and taken out my car and made the excuse of losing his keys to get the janitor to let him into my rooms. I went upstairs and found my worst fears realized. His own clothes were there and a black suit, the mate to the one I was wearing, was missing. He was out to make trouble for me.

"I had no thought of his calling on Miss Morrison, although I knew he knew of her and had seen her with me at a distance. I think now that she was included in his first scheme of vengeance, and that had the presence of Garner not offered richer prey he would have enticed her out in the automobile and dealt violently with her."

Mrs. Edgerton shuddered and drew up closer to her husband.

"It was a hopeless task to attempt to track him, so I went to the resort in Fourth avenue, where you found him, and where I knew he would turn up some time during the night.

"Sure enough he came about 10 o'clock. He tried to pass it all off as a joke, and said the machine had broken down and he had left it at a garage near Lincoln Park. He said he was sorry for the scene he had made in my office and that if I would give him money he would leave town that night and never bother me again. I was so anxious to get rid of him that I was willing to agree to anything.

"At his request I changed coats with him as he showed me that he had grease from the auto all over the one of mine he had on. I did not guess that it was blood.

"I had scarcely returned to my apartments before I was arrested and charged with the murder. Then the whole, horrible truth flashed upon me. I thought of my brother speeding away from the city and I registered an instant resolve to take his place."

"It occurred to me later that his first impulse, on finding himself in possession of his ill-gotten booty and the money I had given him, would be a debauch, and then, hearing of my arrest and that I was disposed to shield him, he would lie low in his thieves' retreat until a safe opportunity presented to get away. So I felt pretty safe in telling Mr. Clarke where to find him."

"And just think, dear, you might have been convicted in his place if I hadn't come to Mr. Clarke," said Mrs. Edgerton, while her husband stopped to roll a cigaret in preference to those Clarke offered him. I noticed that he rolled it outward.

"I shouldn't have been convicted, dearest, as I could have established a good *alibi*, but the mystery would have been unsolved, I would have been ruined, and I doubt if you would have been willing to take my name. Mr. Clarke's way was by far the best. By the way, Clarke, I didn't want to tell you at all, at first, but when I looked into your eyes I knew I had to. Still you seemed to know it all, anyway. May I ask how you found out I had a brother?"

"You may thank Mrs. Edgerton's keenness of observation in noting your method of rolling a cigaret for the first tip. Then your brother's bungling work with the auto seemed to make it as clear as a printed page. It only remained to persuade you to verify my theory."

"I think you could have done that anyway. You have a remarkable power over men."

"And over women, too," said Mrs. Edgerton. "I wonder you have never married. It's lucky for Arthur that I met him first."

Which shows that the best of women are at heart coquettes.

The Encounter

BY ALMA MARTIN ESTABROOK

IN "*Les Petite Dalles*" even one's thoughts seem fragrant: roses blush daintily over ragged garden walls, shake fragrant petals from crumbling trellises, bud in window-ledges, and bend heavy-headedly in the shadows of the thatched *chaumières;* then there are other blossoms and the pines and the salt smell of the sea.

"Can *monsieur* have heard in America of 'Petite Dalles?' " the gull-plump *concierge* had asked when Craycroft had been a fortnight at the *pension.*

"Petite Dalles is one of the very few really good things I have ever stumbled onto in all my life," he had replied with his whimsical smile.

He had come for *fête* day and had stayed on, bringing his luggage from the "Grand Hotel des Bains" to the charming little white and green pension with its steeply pitched roof, drowsing at the edge of the forest, seaward. He liked to think that one must journey four hours to reach Dieppe, that Cany and the railway were seven miles away, and that "*Les Petite Dalles*" was not "*Veules les Roses,*" with its flock of gay villas and its bevy of summer folk.

"If anything can mean renaissance this should," he said to himself one mellow afternoon as he lounged on the sun-sprinkled porch, the old restlessness in him curiously stilled by the charm of the place.

Down the twisting white roadway there approached at the moment a lady, who seeing him there, hesitated, looked questioningly along the farther stretch of road, then took a step toward him. But in his pleasant abstraction he did not observe her until the *pension* dog, stretched at his feet, lifted his venerable head and growled alarmingly—he was neither so amiable nor so well-mannered as he had once been—when he came quickly to his feet.

"Did you wish to address me, *madame,* he politely inquired. He looked a military figure as he stood there in his stiff white duck, his gray mustache bristling like an admiral's.

The lady, he amusedly thought, might have been merely a large, many petaled chrysanthemum, whisked along from somewhere by the wind which careened foolishly down the roadway, so small and so fluffy and so lavender and white was she.

"Can you direct me to Badanella's?" she asked, her parasol like the fleeciest of clouds back of her.

"'Badanella's?'," he repeated staring. "Badanella in *Petite Dalles!* Impossible."

"You had not heard? At the 'Hotel des Bains' they told me I should find him at the 'Cliff' *pension.*"

"That is a mile farther on, just where the cliff begins to rise," he directed perfunctorily.

"So far!" murmured she, and smiled depreciatingly, "Even '*Petite Dalles*' makes one feel one's years."

"*Madame* is tired. A mile is a mile in France, as otherwhere, and she has come two."

She took the chair he hastened to place for her, dropping as she did so a mollifying hand to the dog's head.

"Living so near, it is strange that you have not heard of his arrival," she observed in a troubled tone. "I hope I was not misinformed as to his destination. I have come from Dieppe to see him."

"Many people go farther, I have no doubt," he somewhat coldly remarked

Into her cheeks a soft color crept like the hint of the rose in the cheeks of the chrysanthemum.

"Oh, but I do not come upon a pilgrimage," she hastened to explain. "I am an American, and we do not make them, even to such celebrities as Badanella."

"That we do not," he heartily agreed. "But Badanella is, no doubt, the wayside shrine to many."

"He has had his bay-leaves," she admitted.

"And his flesh-pots."

"But," reflected she, studying the Pompadour figures on her fan, which poised for the instant like a Bayadere butterfly, "one ought not blame him too severely for that, ought one? He is, nevertheless, the artist—the word

painter. Besides, do we not all sit by the flesh-pots?"

"The blame is not for that," Craycroft said quietly, "although one could wish him less of a fleshling, perhaps; but that he so deliberately piles the altar of his genius with the sacrifices he should scruple to offer there—"

She looked up at him quickly. "You mean—"

He hesitated only a moment before he replied, with a smile which took from the censure of his words: "His talents must play, no matter if friendship and truth and candor are sacrificed to make them do it."

"I wonder," mused the lady, her eyes very grave, "if you are right. It would mean a great deal to me to know."

Glancing at her serious face Craycroft wisely drew back from further committal.

A peddler with *gaufrettes* moved spider-like down the dappled roadway, passing slowly out of sight. In the *pension* garden the *concierge* gathered her roses, and the dog, watching her for awhile, got up presently, stretched himself, stood a moment at the head of the steps yawning, then went down into the garden with her; while the little lavender and white lady in the chair at Craycroft's side studied him furtively and eagerly.

Presently she ventured:

"We are both Americans; there is no other appeal I can make, no claim I can urge. But if you felt you could be frank with me about Badanella, if you could tell me whether all his life he has sacrificed truth to effect, and friendship to laurel-wreaths, I should be under deeper obligation than you can know."

Not a little disturbed by the sudden request Craycroft hesitated uncomfortably.

"Can you not be quite honest with me?" she urged gently.

"I might be," he answered slowly, "if you were equally so with me. Certainly, before I tell you what you wish me to, I must understand something of your relation to Badanella. Why did you come to '*Petite Dalles*?' Believe me, the question is merely cautious, not curious."

"It is only natural that you should ask it, and I think I'll answer it frankly, although," with a smile, "I am unaccustomed to make explanation to strangers."

"Perhaps we are not such strangers as we appear," he suggested. "Your face has tantalized me ever since you have been sitting there."

"How very curious!" she cried. "Will you believe, that when I first saw you here I felt the impulse to hasten my steps to greet a friend. Yet, with my genius for conjuring people out of the past, I do not seem to be able to place you."

"It may have been in a previous existence that we knew each other," he said, his whimsical smile flashing out. "Who knows but eons have gone toward the exchange of these confidences?"

Her answering smile was absent, so gravely intent was she upon what she was about to hear and tell.

"Badanella wrote a story a long time ago called 'The Encounter'," she began. "Perhaps you recall it. It was the recital of 'The Encounter'—'*Petite Dalles*' would call it the duel—between a young medical student and a literary dilettante, who was plainly Badanella. They fought over a girl. And when she heard of it, so shamed was she, and so hurt and angry that her name had been dragged into a hateful publicity, that she went away at once, and saw neither of them again. In the story Badanella makes the other man appear despicable—a coward. There is a shot fired in the dark, and one carries still the other's bullet in his forehead. Which one, Badanella does not tell, but he leads one to believe that it is he, himself. You have read the story? Didn't you think so?"

"Undoubtedly he meant it to appear so," Craycroft answered.

"At the time, the girl believed—"

"What! You knew her?"

"Oh, yes, I knew her. She was very young and tempestuous and foolishly intolerant. She would hear no explanation from either. She wanted, she wrote them, to see neither of them again. She despised the student for his cowardice—you see, she never doubted Badanella's version of it then—and Badanella for turning the affair into 'material.' But—she is older now, and she has changed.

She is wiser and more experienced and less harsh in her judgments. And also, she fears that she has discovered in his writings this same unscrupulousness of which you have just spoken. She wonders if Badanella has been quite fair and truthful, and if she has been just. Perhaps it is not the writer who bears the bullet after all. She wants to find out. If she has done the other man wrong, there may yet be time left, perhaps, for at least partial amends."

She paused, but Craycroft made no comment, and she continued:

"When, by chance, in Dieppe, she learned that Badanella was here, only four hours away, it seemed a very Heaven-sent chance to find out the truth. So—she sent me."

"I see," said he, "It is a most interesting story. But did she care for either of them?"

"Yes," she replied softly, "she cared for one of them."

He turned to her with a smile. "But not enough to forgive him. Are you women all like that?"

Her gentle eyes flashed.

"Have you ever tried to forgive cowardice in one you love?" she demanded justifyingly.

Craycroft regarded her curiously.

"Then it was not Badanella she loved," he asked.

"No, it was not Badanella."

A sudden shower followed the wind down the twisting roadway at the moment. It pattered on the steeply pitched roof, on the rose garden, on the *concierge* as she caught up her basket and fled to shelter, on a pony cart filled with children hurrying up from the beach, and, softly, on the steps at the lady's feet.

"If she cared for him why didn't she give him his chance?" Craycroft asked presently.

The pink in her cheeks deepened, spreading to the roots of her soft brown hair.

"She wanted him to—to take it," she admitted.

"But hadn't she forbidden him to do it?" he exclaimed.

A smile touched her lips and rippled over her face to her eyes where it lingered. She made a charming movement with her hands.

"Good Lord, what a fool he was!" he breathed.

She sighed very softly.

"Now," said she settling again into her chair, "tell me about Badanella."

"There is something I want to know about the girl first," he urged.

She laughed rather dismally.

"The girl! She is a woman—an old woman."

"I don't believe it. Such a girl could never grow old. But what if she has? So has he, hasn't he—the fellow who didn't know enough to take his chance. He doesn't deserve it, but what do you suppose she'd do if he asked for the chance now? Perhaps he wasn't quite the coward she has thought him. And, if he wasn't, don't you think she owes him something? Think of all his barren years."

"She owes him a great deal," she said slowly, "I think she doesn't attempt to to deny that—provided of course, he is not the coward—but she cannot pay him in that way now, nor would he ask it. You don't seem to understand that they are old."

"How old?" asked he impatiently. "Old enough to treasure their happiness and not squander it, after the manner of idiotic young spendthrifts?"

She shook her head.

"At forty—"

"You do everything else so much better than you ever did before in your life, why shouldn't you love better? Tell me that."

"But at their age—"

"At any age a man has a right to his chance, and a woman to find happiness in giving it."

She smoothed the white and lavender frills she had drawn back out of the gentle touch of the rain, and stood up. She took a step toward the edge of the porch, shaking out the folds of her parasol.

"I must go on to Badanella's," she said.

"After all, it may be better for me to see with my own eyes. She will be happier to have it so."

"Wouldn't the other man do just as well?" he asked in a voice that trembled.

"Elizabeth, it wasn't eons ago that we knew each other; it was only twenty years."

Bending to her he swept aside the disordered gray hair from his forehead.

"I'd have carried a dozen bullets for the chance you won't deny me now, will you?"

Limply she sank into a chair, her startled eyes lifted to him.

"Larry!" she murmured, "I would have said that never, never in the world could such a strange meeting ever have happened."

"It isn't in the world, dear," he laughed buoyantly. "It's in '*Les Petite Dalles*,' you know."

Uncle Johnny's Flyer in Beans

BY ARTHUR T. HUGG

THE *Birmingham Herald* was on its last legs. It had wobbled through seven years of a jaundiced existence, fraught with tribulations of which the unconsoling public knew little, and from its lack of patronage evidently cared less. It had reached the summit of its sulphuric career; had realized that trumped-up sensations, rabid political principles, and overdrawn society locals are not meat and drink to the news-ravenous public, and now with a stoicism, known only in newspaperdom, it was awaiting its death-knell.

During the months when the *Herald's* headlines first racked the tingling nerves of staid old Birmingham, the very audacity of the venture had aroused the two hundred and fifty thousand inhabitants, and every morning they purchased the sheet, shame-faced and horror-stricken, merely to discover what new outbreak had occurred in the editorial mind over-night.

The *Journal* and the *Times* were "passable," was the verdict, but that *Herald*: "My, wasn't it awful?" And consequently, every new arrival hearing the above epithets immediately purchased a *Herald*. The circulation grew and the managers multiplied it fourfold in their reports to the public. The *Herald* had 800,000 readers they declared, allowing magnanimously for a family of eight to every paper sold. The editorial and business staffs were doubled, and the Sunday comic supplement was the eighth wonder. To all appearances, the *Herald* was Birmingham's leading daily.

But it couldn't last long. Early one Fall came rumors of deficiencies. The editors winked at them; the reporters and compositors counted their pay each week and went about their work as usual. As long as the job "paid" they were satisfied, and consequently the hollowness of the whole undertaking did not get outside the general manager's office.

It was not until a certain gloomy Saturday in December that the crash came. At noon, the cashier's office was locked and on the glass window was the laconic message:

NO PAY TO-DAY.

It did not take long for the anxious groups about the little window to reach a conclusion.

"Dead!" was the word that traveled from pressroom to office. "The paper's gone up!"

It went like the wind. The employees all stopped their work and gathered in little knots to discuss it. In half an hour every one in the office had heard it—that is, all but one. "Uncle Johnny Blenner" worked on.

"Uncle Johnny," 68 years old, ruddy of face, and guileless as a child, was one of those hangers-on found in every newspaper-office. He had practically outlived his usefulness in the journalistic field, but was retained as "commercial editor" by the *Herald* syndicate more out of sympathy than anything else. By careful editing, his copy was still clear enough to get into print, and the old man was too absorbed in his own position to question slight changes. His faith in the paper was absolute.

"We have a great sheet," he was accustomed to declare grandly, always making use of the plural pronoun, "We have made it one of the best papers in Pennsylvania, but we must make it better yet. That commercial depart-

ment has great possibilities. I am getting them out, but it takes time, yes, it takes time." And then Uncle Johnny would sink his chubby red hand deep into his pocket and branch off into a rambling discussion of editorial policy.

It was his very guilelessness and his confident belief in the paper's glowing future that kept from him many an unpleasant rumor which was told without reserve among the younger men on the staff. Hardened as they were by long contact with delicate situations, they would not willingly bring sorrow and disappointment to one of their own number, and, consequently, even when matters had reached a crisis, the unsuspecting old man had no inkling of the threatened crash.

"Beans are up three cents to-day," he murmured, gazing unseeingly over his spectacle rims as he sought for a phrase capable of expressing this astonishing news.

"It is really most peculiar. The greatest change in the produce market this month. It certainly is the feature of the commercial page this evening."

Uncle Johnny hung the green shaded electric-light closer to his desk and rubbed his shining bald spot meditatively.

"Beans jump three cents in an hour," he murmured, counting the letters in the headline. "No, that's too long. Beans—"

"What's the matter, Uncle John, you aren't working to-night are you?"

Tom Jordon, the *Herald's* state-editor stopped in his shirt-sleeves on his way to a hastily called editorial conference, which was to decide whether the paper should live or die with the morning's issue.

"Tough enough, isn't it," he asked, leaning his elbows on the desk and looking over the old man's shoulder. "'Beans' as sure as I'm living and on a night like this. If the *Herald* should go up, you and your farm-yard column would be in a pretty pickle. What would you do?"

The old man smiled.

"That's the feature of the day," he declared. "Beans have jumped three cents, and as for the *Herald's* going up, there's no chance for that now. When I first came on the paper, those were hard times, it might have failed then, but we have made it the best paper in the state and it has so many undeveloped possibilities. Look at that commercial column now, and there's the new religious department that I have been trying to get them to adopt."

"But haven't you heard—"

"Oh, I know, of course, some of the directors are opposed, but religion is all right in a general way. No need of taking up doctrine. It's a feature every large paper should have and the *Herald* is getting to be a paper that sets the pace these days. We are making it the best paper out, there's no getting around that."

Gradually it dawned upon Jordon. Uncle Johnny didn't know. The doddering old man was building air-castles, even on the brink of the precipice. When he awoke in the morning, his dream of a glittering future would be vanished. Even his livelihood would be gone. He would be a pauper, and his doting old wife with him. And yet, how could he be told? Jordon could imagine how the light of pride and enthusiasm would fade from the old eyes and leave them lack-luster and sunken, how the fine old face would grow pale and wrinkled and the body weaken and collapse under the breaking of old age's last stay.

"Higher than ever—Beans—Three cents—No, it won't do."

Uncle Johnny was shaking his head earnestly over his work again, and as Jordon watched him he realized that it was not for him, strong man that he was, to break the news which would mean poverty and ruin to two trusting old people. With a violent blowing of the nose he went on through the big glass-doors to the managing-editor's office, where his brother editors were already in conference.

It was not a sentimental gathering. The men who took part in the discussion were there to meet the matter squarely as a business proposition. In the past three years the paper had lost $15,000 and there was no immediate prospect of a change in the amount of income. Other papers were competing strongly. A continuance, even under the most encouraging circumstances, would mean years during which the stockholders would not realize a cent.

It was an outlook poor enough.

One by one the directors addressed the meeting, expressing their views with a curt candor that showed the tensity of their feelings. Their voices were low, almost husky, but their advice was the same:

"Drop it."

Major Carrington, millionaire politician, heaviest stockholder, and chairman of the board of directors, was the last to speak. As he rose, his face was drawn and his gray hair was awry where the delicate white fingers had rumpled it sorrowfully.

"I think we have no need to consider this matter further," he said. "It is with a feeling of the deepest sorrow and infinite regret that I see this paper suspend publication. It has been my personal hobby, and I have spent time and money to make it a success. Possibly we might save it even yet. I am almost ready to try at times, and yet, the real question is, 'Would it pay?' I think we agree that it would not—at least for the present. Business is business and, therefore, while personally I might be tempted to continue the venture, still, for the sake of those who are not so able to keep up the fight as I am, I advise a discontinuance with to-morrow morning's edition."

As the chairman resumed his seat a short silence fell. Then Tom Jordon arose.

"Gentlemen," he said simply, "before this vote is taken, there is another side of this question that I wish to present to you. I, myself, am a stockholder, though a small one, and from that standpoint I am heartily in favor of the sentiments already expressed. But," turning to the big glass-doors, Jordon pointed through to the editorial-room where Uncle Johnny's bent head still bobbed up and down as he worked, "there, gentlemen, is an old man. He does not know that this crisis is at hand. When I passed him a few moments ago he was writing an article on beans—an article for which he hopes to get money for his wife at home. I asked him why he was working to-night, and he had not an inkling of what we are about to do. He smiled at me when I hinted it to him and said: 'We have a better paper to-day than ever, and it has greater possibilities.' Gentlemen, he is not the only one dependent upon us. There are seven hundred employes; many of them have wives and children. How will the suspension strike them as a business proposition. I tell you, gentlemen, there is another view than that of the business side. Will not you consider it?

"When I passed that old man I tried to tell him the uselessness of his effort, for I had no doubt of the sentiment of this meeting. I tried to tell him that he was penniless, homeless, a pauper, and I failed. That man has more faith in this paper to-day than any one of its managers and I ask you, before you vote, which one of you, when the paper is dead, will go to him, and break the news?"

It was a simple plea, unbusiness-like and unexcused, but it sank home. In the silence that followed every eye was tear-dimmed and noses were blown violently. Suddenly Chairman Carrington rose. His voice was suspiciously uncertain, but in his eye was the light of a new determination.

"I agree with Mr. Jordon," he said huskily. "I have been trying to reconcile myself to this, but I don't believe we have considered all sides of this case. I believe the rights of the employed should be considered equally with those of the employers, and with the consent of the other members of this board I want to donate personally, the sum of $25,000, to float this paper through one more trial. I also suggest that Uncle John's article on beans be given position in the first column of the front page as a celebration of the averted catastrophe. Are you agreed?"

"There," declared Uncle Johnny next morning. "I told you that rise in beans was the feature of the edition. We have a great paper and it is getting better and better every day."

The Silent Letter

BY HARRY B. ALLYN

"MALACHI DORGAN 's dead," said Harrigan, straightening up on his hoe, to his friend and neighbor Murtaugh, who shifted the short clay-pipe from his mouth, and leaned gracefully over on the fence which divided their two properties, before he acknowledged the receipt of the information.

"No! Is he so?"

"He is indeed!"

"Did he leave anything?" inquired the inquisitive Mr. Murtaugh.

"He did that; the wife, Cornelia, and one boy and two girls."

"Oh! I expected that; a man don't generally like to take his family amongst strangers anyway. But did he leave any-anything else?"

"Divil the thing! What wid the drink, labor-unions, and strikes he's done little else but go knockin' around for the past year or two back; and, if it were not for the bit of washin' by the old woman, and the oldest girl, Katie, workin' in the mill'ner-shop, they'd be hard put to it for a bit of shelter and food for the other two. That Katie's gettin' to be a fine slip of a girl."

"She is that," agreed the equally observant Mr. Murtaugh.

"I saw her the other day down on Maple street with that young Oliver Stibbs, the blacksimth."

"Oh! yes," responded Harrigan, "that's been goin' on for some time. The young folks is all for gettin' married but Dorgan was ag'in it strong, on account of Stibbs bein' a Protestant, and I guess that Mrs. Dorgan thinks the same as the old man. So Katie's chances of bein' locked up in the holy barns of wedlock with Stibbs are far enough off, unless she wants to go against the mother, which same she's not likely to do, for she's a good girl, so she is."

"I don't believe in them mixed religions either," asserted Murtaugh. They're not conducive to pleasant recollections; there's too much shifting of the portable-furniture. And when the young ones get big enough to realize what the old ones are scrapping about, they takes neither the church of their father's, nor the one of their mother's, but goes to the divil in their own way. Ye'll be steppin' in to the wake, the night, I suppose?"

"Sure. I've always made it a point that, no matter how unsteady a man has been in his church affairs—and Dorgan has been all that—to give him all the send-off possible, when he's dead, for he's reached his steady point at last, and you can always gamble on knowin' where he stands, or rather lays, for ever after."

Mr. Harrigan resumed his labors with the hoe, and Mr. Murtaugh, in answer to the vociferous calls of Mrs. Murtaugh, strolled leisurely across the littered yard to his kitchen-door.

The affairs of Miss Kathleen Dorgan and Mr. Oliver Stibbs had long been a matter of gossip for the residents of the village of Backwater. Their attachment for each other had begun in the days of short dresses and knee-pants at the public school, and growing stronger and deeper from year to year, had culminated in an engagement which had been promptly fractured by Dorgan *père*, who had proclaimed, in stentorian tones, after numerous rejuvenators at the bar of the Phœnix saloon, that "No Protestant parer of horses'-hoofs could tear the flower of the flock from the bosom of her loving family."

Mr. Stibbs had, therefore, ceased to be an evening ornament to the Dorgan front-porch, or festoon his six-foot-one of young manhood over the front-gate of the Dorgan fence. The couple chose rather the open privacy of the public park, or streets, for their meetings, which invariably ended in arguments from Oliver, mingled with protests, tears, and wait-awhiles from Katie.

A religious obstruction is one of the most difficult ones to remove, as Mr. Stibbs found to his great sorrow. So the matter rested: Katie opposed to marriage without the parental consent, and Oliver, equally unwilling to renounce the faith of his forefathers.

The social pool of Backwater had long been roiled by the aggressive attitude

of the American Protective Association upon the one hand, and the hustling after an increase of membership by the Knights of Columbus on the other. Having about as much in common as a bulldog and a tramp, there had been several open violations of the peace between the individual members of these rival societies, which had only been quelled by the timely intervention of the Rev. Father Darcy, and three policemen.

Some time had elapsed since the last outbreak, and the white-robed bearer of olive-branches now stood ready to change her clothing to garments of a darker hue at a moment's notice.

The waking of Dorgan the deceased had been, to mildly characterize it, a howling success. In the kitchen of the Dorgan domicile there had been a considerable consumption of strong tobacco and stronger waters. His earlier goodly traits had been highly extolled; his later ones being so hard to find that they had been ignored entirely. The cost of the casket and furnishings, the superiority of silver-plate as compared with nickel, the number of candles, the cost of Dorgan's best and last suit of clothes, and the condition of the family's financial resources, had been thoroughly speculated upon. The young wakers of both sexes had paired off, as usual at such events, and in dusky corners of the house of mourning exemplified the scriptural passage, "Love one another."

The countenance of the man responsible for all these festivities appeared, according to Mr. Murtaugh, to reflect great satisfaction at this successful termination of his earthly career, Mrs. Murtaugh remarking in an undertone to her husband that "Dorgan could well be proud of his own wake."

The morning of the day set for the funeral dawned clear and crisp, and Mrs. Dorgan arose betimes and tapped upon Katie's chamber-door, arousing her with the remark.

"I'm glad it's fine, for we've a good day's work before us."

Early in the morning, McQuade, the undertaker, and his assistant arrived, full of bustling enthusiasm, and there was much moving of furniture to make room for "the friends;" the half-burned candles in the sconces were replaced with fresh ones; the housework was hastily done or shoved into closets to be brought to light at a more convenient time. Riley, the local florist, appeared upon the festive scene from time to time with floral offerings. There was an appropriate "Gates Ajar" from the proprietor of the Phœnix saloon, a floral-hod partially filled with bricks made of red immortelles from the bricklayer's union (from which Mr. Dorgan had been suspended from time to time for non-payment of dues); a broken column from the stone-cutters' organization; a floral-harp from the "A. O. H.," and numerous bouquets and wreaths donated by "friends," who reaped enjoyment from seeing their names in print as donors of flowery tributes.

Mr. Stibbs' offering of a floral-horseshoe, minus the usual inscription of "Good-luck," occupied a table at the head of the casket, in close proximity to a pillow from "the children," bearing its customary claim to kinship in immortelles, and representing a week of Katie's labor at the milliner-shop. This exaggerated floral pin-cushion occupied the post of honor, second to Dorgan, so that all who ran might read.

Mrs. Dorgan, who for once during her married life occupied, as the widow, the same high plane as her late husband, was in a pleasurable state of excitement at the way, she whispered to Katie, "things was goin' off," and from under the heavy veil, borrowed for the occasion, took mental notes of who came, who stayed away, who sent flowers, and who forgot that most important detail, until Mr. McQuade announced in his trained professional voice, that all who desired might refresh their memories by a last look at the remains of the deceased.

As he stepped aside, after this lugubrious information, the sleeve of his ministerial black coat brushed lightly over the surface of the before-mentioned pillow, thereby unconsciously smoothing the hitherto rough path of true love and adding another dark stain to the already mottled escutcheon of the house of Dorgan.

Mr. Harrigan, elbow to elbow with Mr. Murtaugh, crowded slowly along to the head of the casket, muttering with

downcast eyes, prayers for the dead, as they advanced.

At the conclusion of his devotions Harrigan crossed himself, and as he glanced up, was confronted by one of the most, to him, damnable combinations of letters the alphabet contains.

As he afterward described it: "A small haycock of flowers th' size of a bag of cemint, wid three big purple letters in th' cinter of it, 'A. P. A.'"

He gave Murtaugh a violent nudge, and in a boiler-maker's whisper ejaculated.

"Great Heads of th' Church! Mike! look at the likes o' that! Th' blatherin' ol' vagabond, t'hell wid 'im."

Michael looked, and as the significance of the letters dawned upon him, became equally indignant.

Mr. Harrigan's stage-aside had attracted the attention of "the friends" in the rear of the line, who also finished or omitted their supplications for Dorgan's relief, gasped at the enormity of the offense, and following the leadership of the highly incensed Messrs. Harrigan and Murtaugh, turned upon their heels, and with uplifted heads and scornful glances, marched from the house of mourning.

The scathing news was quickly disseminated among the late arrivals, who had gathered in the yard, and caused a quicker dispersal of the throng than the sheriff of the county could by the reading of the Riot Act. It created such a dearth of able-bodied men, that Mr. McQuade was placed in the very embarrassing position of being obliged to go forth into the byways and hedges in search of pall-bearers.

Mrs. Dorgan, upon Katie's arm, followed by the other members of her family strung out like the short tail of a kite, emerged from her chamber, where she was supposed to have been mourning in private, much elated at the prospect of a fine large turnout, only to be confronted by an empty parlor from which the cause of all the trouble had been removed.

Outside, the hitherto large attendance had dwindled to a baker's dozen of Katie's Protestant friends, huddled around the gate in astonished indignation at the unexplained desertion of the obsequies by the heretofore enthusiastic sympathizers.

As the dumbfounded Mrs. Dorgan glanced around the yard, which bore a resemblance to the playground of a country-schoolhouse in vacation time, her heart sank within her. Was this the scene which she had pictured in her mind since Malachi had breathed his last, and if the truth were whispered, since she had been informed by the doctor, that he, Dorgan, was soon going to perform that interesting event?

Was this handful of people of an opposite faith, "the fine large funeral" which she had promised herself, and which would furnish so much comfort to her widowed soul, and fruit for discussion at many a fireside-gossip? Was it for these that those six battered and dingy hacks, as carriages are called in the country, had been drawn up alongside the curb?

Her vision of future glory, shorn of all that goes to make a funeral worth having, the hypocritical sympathy of her associates, the enjoyable suppressed bustling, the mournful magnificence of her walk in state down through the assembled throng, had dwindled down to this.

"Fer th' love o' Gawd," she gasped, clutching Katie by the arm in an attempt to appear undisturbed, "where's th' fun'ral?"

Mr. Stibbs, from his position in the throng at the gate, secure in the knowledge that his chief objector lay at full length behind the glass-doors of the vehicle ahead, sprang valiantly forward to partially fill the breach made by the retreat of the recreant Dorgan funeralites.

With his sweetheart clinging to one muscular arm, and the mentally benumbed widow upon the other, he sedately escorted them to the foremost of the waiting hacks, into which, oblivious of the hatless, puzzled McQuade, he assisted the widow and her two smaller offspring.

Oh! crafty, unscrupulous, masterful Stibbs. He slammed the door, and the carriage drew out into the road behind the be-plumed and gorgeous hearse, leaving Katie and himself stranded upon the curb or forced to occupy the carriage behind.

Katie gasped a remonstrance, which

had no effect upon her strategical lover, and meekly allowed herself to be lifted into the crazy old conveyance now lined up behind its leader.

A slamming of doors behind told Oliver that the procession was ready to move, and he trembled at his own audacity, wondering if he possessed the nerve and eloquence to play the game to a successful finish.

The service at St. Bridget's was as curt as it was possible for a service to be, Stibbs sitting in the pew with the chief mourners, and at the conclusion the nervy blacksmith repeated his carriage act as successfully as before, but with no remonstrances from his unsuspecting victim.

The wiley Stibbs maintained a discreet silence upon the subject which was uppermost in his mind, believing that an open assault was more apt to cause victory to perch upon his banner, than the steady siege which he had maintained for so many months, and the dismal crawl to the cemetery was fraught with no sensational incidents.

The remains of Malachi Dorgan, in his seventy-five dollar casket, were safely deposited in the bosom of Old Mother Earth without delay, and the small *cortége*, leaving the village of the dead, drove gayly back toward the village of the living.

As Mr. Stibbs entered the carriage, he handed the driver, with whom he had had many amicable business-dealings, a card upon which he had hurriedly scribbled a few lines. The Jehu responded with a portentious lowering of the left eyelid.

At the junction of the two streets which led to the deserted Dorgan domicile, or elsewhere, the five rear carriages of the procession broke from the leader, and following the one now in advance, drove rapidly in the direction of the Town Hall.

Then, indeed, did Mr. Stibbs bring forth his hidden qualities of statesmanship and diplomacy. Taking both of Katie's hands in his, he pictured the dismal outlook before her: a headless, manless house; days of unremitting toil and nights of worry; social ostracism, such as had just shown itself at her father's funeral, from some unknown cause or other; hard times and distress. In place of this stormy outlook were his unbounded love for her, her love for him, his rapidly increasing business with its accompanying easy money, and the fatherly care which he would exercise over the younger members of the family, together with a son-in-law's devotion to her mother.

By these specious arguments he built up such an impregnable case, that the flustered and more than half-persuaded Katie, gave up in tears and sighs at this gilt-edged picture of love, peace, and plenty, and at the arrival of the carriage at its destination allowed herself to be led before the Justice of the Peace. There, surrounded by the meager squad of funeral-goers, she discarded forever the Irish name of Dorgan, and, amidst the congratulations of Stibbs' accessories after the fact, assumed the plebeian but more desirable one of Mrs. Oliver Stibbs.

"Mike, it's truly remarkable," said Mr. Harrigan thoughtfully, from his side of the fence, "how thrifles alters public opinions."

"It is indeed."

"McQuade was tellin' me th't whin he unrolled thim black dog-skin rugs th't he puts under th' coffins at funerals, yisterday, there was a big letter P made o' purple posies fell out?

His features brightened up.

"Did it so? Well! th't explains a heap," but it looked mighty dark fur Dorgan fur a bit."

The Lennox Gold

BY HELEN TOMPKINS

THE SKY had been overcast all day but no rain had fallen. The wind had blown now and then in spiteful little gusts and more than once there had been an ominous roar that the weather-wise pronounced distant thunder. But as Pike City had never been visited by a heavy storm, very little attention had been paid to the weather indications except by Harvey Bender whose windrows of alfalfa were still drying in the south field.

A little before sunset, however, things changed rapidly for the worse. The ominous muttering deepened to a sullen roar and a tossing line of emerald flecked with distracted bits of flying foam crept up from the west. The barometer dropped with warning suddenness and the little murmur with which the silver-poplars condole with each other when they are frightened sounded a feeble undertone to the rising wind. The short southern twilight dropped plummet-like into the velvet darkness of a storm-ridden, starless night and Nature held her breath in a frightened hush of expectation.

For a time, however, it seemed that nothing else would happen. It was too dark to see the progress of the storm and there was little wind and no lightning. And then, just at ten o'clock, a clash came—so sudden—so terrible—so awe-inspiring—that people, even those who were professedly fearless, lost their heads utterly for the moment. Evidently something most terrible had happened. There had been a blinding flash—a terrific, thunderous roar—and afterwards a deluge of rain in which every other sound was literally blotted out.

Harvey Bender and Hannah, his wife, had gone to bed when the crash came. They were both sober, practical, unimaginative people and they had paid but little heed to the storm. As a matter of fact both of them were roused from a sound sleep by the crash.

"It is the judgment, Harvey!" said Hannah in a loud voice. "We heard the trump of the archangel!"

"Nonsense!" said her husband testily, "More likely the lightning has struck the big barn, Hannah. Don't hold me, woman! The dumb brutes may be burning up—"

His voice was drowned instantly in the torrent of water that hissed against the shingled roof. So sudden was the downpour, so deafening the clamor, that the two looked at each other in bewilderment.

"It's not the barn," said the woman, when a few moments had passed. "I could see the flare of the fire from the window, if there was anything wrong with that! I shouldn't wonder if it was the Presbyterian church, Harvey. I thought it was a plain tempting of Providence when they made the steeple so high."

"Somebody is knocking at the door," said her husband hastily. "Somebody—"

"Do you suppose, Hannah, that there can be any poor critter out in this storm? We'll have to open the door, ma—that's all there is to it. And it's fit to drown us when it is opened—there's no denying that."

His wife looked at him a little fearfully. "I would rather—" she began weakly.

But Bender was no coward. He pressed past her a little rudely and unlatched the door. Although the first violence of the storm was over by this time, such a whirlpool of water came in at the opening door that the candle was

extinguished in a moment; a little hurricane of ashes from the deadened fire upon the hearth gyrated through the room like a pale and distracted ghost, and in the first gust Bender himself was almost swept off his feet.

"Quick, Hannah!" he shouted. "Help me latch the door again!"

His wife hurried to his side and between them they threw their whole weight against the storm. The door closed slowly. Before it quite did so, however, there blew across the threshhold a little figure, thin and shaking like a drenched maple-leaf. It stumbled and fell helplessly in a little sodden heap just across the drenched rug inside the door. And as it did so, the stubborn door yielding sulkily to the pressure brought against it, closed reluctantly, and the heavy latch clanged into place. Harvey Bender drew a long breath of relief.

The figure of the little old woman lay quite still on the floor where the violence of the storm had thrust her. Hannah knelt beside her and shook her roughly enough.

"What in the world is the matter, Melinda?" she kept saying over and over. A high, peevish note made itself heard suddenly in her usually low, monotonous voice.

"What on earth has brought you out on such a night?"

Bender glanced curiously from his kneeling wife to the woman lying at her feet.

"She didn't have a mite of trouble getting here—so far as that is concerned," he said slowly. "The wind fairly carried her, I guess, once she was well clear of the house. I wonder though how she was ever able to keep her feet."

"I want you to see about Godfrey, Harvey," said the fallen woman agitatedly. She had a tiny little thin voice that seemed to suit oddly with her frail body and colorless face. "I think he's dead! I don't know why I ever left him—"

The first violence of the storm had lessened now to a sullen roar, the sound of the ebbing and flowing rising and swelling now and then like the carelessly touched notes of a giant-harp. On the shingled-roof the rain still fell soddenly, and little drifts of foaming water smoked against the window-panes.

"What's the matter, Melinda?" asked Bender harshly. "Don't be a fool—at least any bigger one than you can help. What in the world ails you—and what ails him?"

The woman on the floor drew herself slowly to a sitting posture. Her wet frock became draped ungracefully across her bony knees and little streams of muddy water dripped from her loosened hair and collected in little pools on the sodden rag-carpet. She still spoke with difficulty and with odd little catches of the breath between some of the longest words.

"The lightning struck the house—" she began.

"Yes, we knew that it struck something," commented Hannah Bender weakly. Her husband, who had already plunged into his clothes, was trying a little stiffly to tie his shoe-strings, but his fingers were chilled and clumsy and he was making but poor headway with the job.

"Godfrey thought that he heard the cat crying and he had just got out of bed," said the woman still agitatedly. "He was groping about in the dark. I don't know where he was. And then all of a sudden there came a roar and something big and bright and awful like a ball of fire struck the end of the house where the chimney stood. I heard the bricks falling and I thought sure that the whole house was going. And I screamed over and over to Godfrey and he did not answer—"

Hannah Bender was staring through the uncurtained-window again.

"I guess that the heavy rain must have put the fire out by this time," she said. "I don't see any sign of a blaze anywhere in that direction."

"There was an awful smell of burning, though, for a minute," said the woman in a quiver of excitement. Strangely enough, her voice had not settled to the old monotonous level. It lifted now and then to a dreadful shriek, then fell again to a sort of helpless, dazed whimper. The others, however, were as unconscious as she was for the moment that there was anything peculiar in her actions.

"We thought that we heard the cat," she repeated again, helplessly. "We

have spoiled her a lot, you know, since there's been nobody but me and him on the place. And I said to him,Godfrey—"

"I guess that maybe I had better go and see about him," said Bender roughly, but not unkindly. "He may have just got the breath jarred out of him. Then I have heard of people being fairly—" He looked at his sister suspiciously. "We never had anything of the kind to happen in our family before," he complained. "There was a horse-thief struck by lightning over in Sevier county once I remember—"

"I heard him call 'Kitty! kitty' "—whimpered the woman with increasing agitation. "And after that I couldn't get him to answer, although I called and called—! Don't talk to me about horse-thieves, Harvey Bender! I warn you now I won't stand it!"

"Well, I am going over there," said her brother calmly. "You women can come along if you like."

The thunder had quite ceased by now and the wind had almost grown quiet. The rain still fell, however, and the heavy drops were a decided bar to sustained conversation. So they trudged across the water-soaked fields single file, with the lantern bobbing ahead like an agitated, gigantic firefly. They had quite reached the crooked, scanty fringe of poplar-trees in front of the house when a voice came out of the stillness so suddenly and unexpectedly that Bender dropped the lantern. It fell with a noisy little clatter, and the smoky light suffered an instant and total eclipse.

"Is that you, Melinda?"

The woman trudging along behind gave a little hysterical shriek. "Yes, it is me, Godfrey Lennox!" she said with unwonted and ungrammatical asperity which the occasion perhaps justified. "I'd like to know what in the world you mean by trying to frighten me out of my senses?"

"The lightning struck the house," said her husband guardedly, but a little confusedly. "I guess that I was just about stunned myself for as much as a minute. But I'm all right now, or will be when I can get a good night's rest."

"Was there very much damage done?" asked his brother-in-law interestedly. "I was just telling Hannah that I was sure that the lightning struck somewhere. She thought—"

The man advanced a trifle toward them, although still but little more than the vaguest outline of his figure was visible.

"I'll take it very kindly of you people if you won't say anything about this until to-morrow," he said, speaking with a perceptible effort. "You know how inquisitive people are. The shock dazed me a bit at first, but now I am getting all right again. The chimney was a good deal torn up and there is a big hole where the lightning went into the ground. I'd rather not talk about it any more to-night!" he added wearily. "It'll just get me all wrought up—"

His brother-in-law, slightly offended, drew back a little.

"Oh, all right!" he said shortly. "If you feel like you'd rather not have any company—"

"I don't feel that way!" said the other with prompt and suspicious alacrity. "I don't feel any way—that anybody could object to. But I'm all wrought up, I tell you. And a good night's rest—"

Harvey Bender turned so sharply that the lantern which he still held jangled with a little crash of broken glass against a tree. "All right!" he said again crossly, in a tone that implied that on the contrary everything was quite as wrong as it could well be. "I am not so proud of a brother-in-law that has been struck by lightning that I need to be running about and telling everybody about it. I guess that we'll be getting along back home now, Hannah, and I don't know that there's any especial need of thanking us for coming, since it seems that we weren't wanted."

But Godfrey Lennox was plucking at his sleeve. "They'll all be here by daylight," he said nervously, "swarming like a lot of—" His voice rose a little. "What about them pigs, Bender?" he said, a queer anxiety making itself heard in his strained voice. "Are you going to let me have them?"

His brother-in-law tried to peer at him through the rainy darkness. He shook aside the hand which the other laid upon his shoulder, but there was no unkindness in the gesture.

"The lightning has touched your brain, I guess, Godfrey," he said soothingly. "I'll be over early in the morning and we can talk about it. You go to bed now and get Melinda to give you a dose of bromide," but Lennox only frenziedly dragged at his sleeve more desperately.

"I want to close the trade now!" he screamed, then tried with all his might to steady his shaking voice. "I want you to promise me now that you will let me have them. I'll pay the first price you asked."

Bender's covetous heart thrilled. Even if Lennox's brain was a bit touched by the lightning now, he saw no reason why he should give up so lightly the chance to make a good trade.

"How much?" he asked greedily.

But Lennox was too much in earnest evidently to hesitate. "Ten dollars each," he said eagerly. "Come, you know that's a fair price, Bender, and more than you could possibly get for them anywhere else. I'll likely be up and stirring early in the morning before you are awake. Come, where are your wits? What do you say to my offer?"

Again the other tried to stare at him through the darkness. He had heard of the lightning playing all sorts of mad pranks—

"All right!" he said, at last, with an effort to appear indifferent. "It's a strange time, though, I must say, to close a trade. You'll have to pay me the first price, too, Lennox, as you say. I aint overly and above anxious to sell even at that. I aint caring so much about it, you know, as I was at first. They're a fine breed, you know."

He hesitated. "Joe Garley over at the Cross-Road's taken some and he talked a little like he might want the rest of them—at an advanced price." Lennox made a gesture of impatience and he went on a little hastily. "But I mean to let you have them, of course, if you want them. You have two already, haven't you—that you bought from Garley?"

The rain had almost ceased. The two women, still a little confused and bewildered by the turn which affairs had taken, were for the moment silent. A little spasm of belated lightning fluttered across the thinning clouds, and for one moment the older man's face showed plainly. In the dim light it seemed ghastly and drawn. "I bought—three," he stammered hurriedly.

"You'd better go to bed now, Godfrey," said his brother-in-law again gently. "And before you lie down you'd better take that bromide. You can have the pigs, of course, if you want them. I'll take your word for the trade standing," he added cautiously, as a possible precaution in case the morning should bring wiser counsel to the shock-dazed man who was usually so shrewd. "I thought, though, that you only bought two pigs from Garley, Lennox. I remember that he told me—"

"I bought three!" said Lennox again violently. "Three, I tell you, all nearly one size—"

"All right," said Bender pacifically again. "All right, Lennox. Just as you say, of course."

"The man is clean-dazed, Hannah," he said to his wife a little later as the two trailed back home over the flooded fields. "You'd better get up early in the morning and go over and see about him."

His words followed his wife into agitated dreams, hag-ridden and dreary, of tempest and earthquake, of narrow escapes by flood and field. Her anxiety however, for her brother made her wake unreasonably early, in spite of her unrestful night.

"Are you going over to Godfrey's now, Harvey?" she asked her husband, when she had poured out his third cup of strong coffee and he had finished it noisily.

"Yes, I'm going over there now. And remember, Hannah, you know you heard him offer me the ten dollars for the pigs. It was his own suggestion, not mine."

"Yes, I heard him," she said cautiously. "He acted a bit looney though, Harvey, last night. I wouldn't be a mite surprised if he had forgotten all about the whole thing this morning."

"It don't matter a straw to me whether he has or not—it don't matter whether he has or not!" said her husband with some spirit. "He's got them on his hands now and he's got to take them, whether he wants them or not.

He was the anxious one for the trade," he added virtuously. "I'll trouble you to remember that, Hannah, if he makes any kick about it."

"Very well," she said submissively, and yet with a slight touch of admiration in her tones, that was justifiable perhaps in the wife of a man who had been shrewd enough to get the better of hard-fisted old Godfrey Lennox. "I'll leave Becky to do the dishes and go right over there with you now, Harvey."

The sun was just rising over the clean washed, water-soaked fields as they hurried across them. It promised to be a beautiful day and the night and the storm seemed ages away.

Bender, looking a little ruefully at h windrows of half-cured hay ruined by the heavy rain, started a little at his wife's sudden exclamation.

"Oh, Harvey, do look at the house!" she cried.

For the first time Bender became conscious that, early as it was, he and his wife were not the only ones attracted by the ruin wrought by the tempest of the night before. A little group of men and women had already gathered about the Lennox gate, and behind him, as he stared, he heard a shrill feminine voice imploring some one to hurry.

"Quick!"

The Lennox homestead was an old house, a little on the rambling order, and standing quite by itself. There were no out-houses near it and no trees closer to it than the row of straggling poplars just outside the fence and almost or quite two hundred yards away. Under the circumstances the lightning presumably had found it legitimate prey. One entire end of the building had been torn away and the huge chimney left an overturned mass of ruins. At the foot of it gaped a huge hole half-filled with yellow clay and the debris of plaster and shattered brick. Godfrey Lennox was standing a little apart from it, talking to two men who looked at him from time to time curiously, and then stared away from him in a confused fashion, while seated on a bench near by, his wife, her head averted and covered with a faded sun-bonnet rocked to and fro nervously. A long spray of yellow jasmine, carried downward in the fall of the chimney, lay now a ragged strand of green and yellow against the greasy, sodden-clay. The petals shone to Harvey Bender's avaricious eyes like tiny gold-pieces.

"Did you get the pigs?" he asked Lennox as he approached him, with a fine air of indifference.

"Yes, I got them." Lennox jerked his thumb backward over his shoulder toward a pig-pen not so very far away. "I've got them in the pen there with the others, the three I got from Joe Garley. One of the pigs is sick."

"One of mine?" Bender started forward a little suspiciously. "Not much, Godfrey. You can't come that game on me, you know. I was just wondering—"

"I didn't say that it was one of the pigs that I got from you that was sick, did I?" Lennox glared at him vindictively. His lean jaws were working tremulously. "It's not one of your's, it's another one—that I got from Garley."

He had resolutely barred Bender's further progress toward the pig-pen. "Here's your money, Harvey," he said nervously, as he extracted some coins from a tightly tied tobacco-bag in his pocket. "I'm ready to pay you now. And I want you to stay away from the pigs. I won't have them disturbed."

Bender's confidence in the impaired state of his brother-in-law's mind was strengthened by this remarkable outburst.

"I don't want to meddle with your old pigs, gol-darn ye!" he said, but not particularly unkindly. "It's too bad, though, about the house, Lennox, unless you carried insurance."

"I didn't!" said Lennox shortly. He wiped the heavy drops of moisture from his wrinkled brow with his faded, cotton-checked sleeve. "For the Lord's sake quit snivelling and go in the house, Melinda!" he cried in an outburst of exasperation. "A body would think that you had lost the last friend—"

A clever-looking little man with spectacles pressed his way forward and stared down into the rudely-excavated pit dug by the swift fingers of the storm. He stared so long and so queerly that Bender began to gaze at him half-fascinated.

"Odd things the lightning can do

sometimes, professor," he said respectfully.

"Odd, indeed," said the spectacled man in a dazed fashion. "I should never have taken this hole now, for the work of the lightning. It looks more to me as if it had first been excavated and then partly filled—"

"I reckon that you have an idea that I got up in the night in all that storm and dug it myself," snarled Lennox. His wiry whiskers were bristling like those of an angry cat, and the flame in his eyes fairly scorched the mild little man before him. "I reckon, maybe, you think I went to all that trouble to ruin my house and all just for fun—and me with not a cent of insurance in the world! Go in the house, Melinda, and stop that whimpering, darn ye!" he shouted again to the little woman in the faded sunbonnet.

She started, as if galvanized by an electric-shock, but without returning a word, crept meekly into the house and closed the door behind her.

"The Lord knows nobody can blame you for the lightning's doings, Godfrey," said Bender speaking in the interests of peace. "You are too sensitive, you see; that's what ails you."

Behind his brother-in-law's back he tapped his own forehead significantly for the benefit of the bewildered professor.

"I guess that you're still a bit jarred up or you'd never have thought that the professor meant anything wrong by what he said."

"I guess maybe so," assented Lennox wearily. He seemed to regret his outburst. "But there has been so many blamed idiots around pestering the life out of me and so many damned-fool questions asked. It'll cost me every cent of two hundred and fifty dollars, too, to get my place fixed up like I had it before the storm."

"I wouldn't think about it any more if I were you. Godfrey," said Bender again soothingly. "You are not exactly yourself, you know, and neither of you meant anything. I'd like to talk to you a little about the pigs, too. You see, if Garley—"

Lennox hesitated—flushed—then he seemed to make a sudden resolution.

"You can come and take a look at them," he said ungraciously. "I don't give a rap. But they are mine now, you know. I won't allow you to meddle with them."

Bender's none too-patient temper flared up a little under this outburst.

"What is the matter with you, Lennox?" he stormed out. "You are either a fit candidate for the asylum or a blamed fool—one of the two! I can't make out what in the world is the matter with you, to save my life."

The altercation, the slight ring of anger in his voice as well as in that of Lennox, had drawn a little fringe of curious people about the two. To avoid their glances as well as those of his wife, for Hannah seemed to be looking at him reproachfully, Bender walked a little hurriedly and in advance of the others,and was leaning over the pig-pen-rail when Lennox and one or two of the other men reached him. He wondered a little that Godfrey should have shown so much solicitude about the pigs. They were of ordinary breed, of medium size, and yet he had paid an extraordinary price for them, and as Bender could not but be aware, was taking extraordinary precautions to keep people away from them.

A single glance at the fence that surrounded them was enough to assure Bender of that. Lennox had evidently worked very hard during the night, for the rails about the pen were substantial and strong. In the center of the enclosure the yellow clay and coarse, wiry Bermuda grass had been trampled into a pudding by the sharp hoofs of the restless brutes.

They were six in number, all of the same size, and nearly the same color. They were all so thickly encrusted with mud that they were almost indistinguishable from the clay in which they had wallowed since daybreak. Four of them ran from the people who were pressing so closely about the pen, with grunting "woofs! woofs," of indignation. Two of them did not move. One of the two last, sprawled in the yellow clay and blinked at the intruders with greedy little eyes, the other, quite in the farthest corner of the pen, was so plastered with mud that only the tips of his ears and his back were visible.

"I'll be dog-goned if you can tell mine from Garley's," remarked Bender reflectively. "Only mine wasn't sick, neither one of them. I don't know that that one is, Godfrey. Maybe it's only that the storm has affected him a little, too. If I could get a little closer to him I could tell."

He threw a clod of earth at the melancholy swine without effect. It did not stir.

"Look here!" The fury in Lennox's face made his brother-in-law start back a little affrightedly. "Them pigs are mine, aint they? I paid a good, fair price for them. Don't you think I did?"

"I suppose that you did," said Bender somewhat crestfallen.

"Then you let them be. Do you hear? I told you just now that I was not going to have you meddling! I'm not! You let them pigs alone! Do you understand?"

Bender's hand slipped suddenly from the top rail of the fence as if the thing had been red-hot. He was sensibly awed; not so much by the old man's words as by the fleeting glimpse which he fancied that he caught of a pistol in the old man's pocket.

"I tell you the old fool is crazy!" he said to the mild little professor a little later as the two, followed by the submissive Hannah, went away together. "I wasn't meaning to poison his dratted pigs! As sure as you live, professor, the old man has lost his mind."

"It may have been the lightning," said the little man slowly. "Mind you, I am not saying that it wasn't. I know that they tell all sorts of extraordinary stories—" He turned sharply. "He had been digging during the night," he half-whispered. "There was clay everywhere —where it had no business to be. He is hiding something. He has been digging up something or burying something, one or the other. Which is it?"

"Oh, he's crazy; he's been crazy a long time," repeated Bender helplessly. "That's all that ails him. Maybe the storm and the lightning was the last straw—I don't know."

But with the door of his own house safely closed between him and the inquisitive little professor Bender's mood altered slightly. 'This may mean a whole lot to you and me, Hannah," he said eagerly. "If Godfrey's mind is unbalanced—"

"I believe that it is," said Godfrey's sister jerkily. She looked at her husband as if she had seen a ghost. "I'd rather never have a cent of the money, Harvey than—"

Her husband's brow darkened ominously. "You don't want to act the fool," he said roughly. "It wasn't any of your doings, I guess, or mine either—the storm. I told your father, when he cut you out of his will and left all his money to Godfrey, that he'd end his days in an asylum. Ever since the horse kicked him that time he's been just a little off. But you see your father wouldn't listen to a word I said—"

"Why, yes he did, Harvey," said the woman soothingly. Resentment for the old wrong which he had suffered at his father-in-law's hands jarred in her husband's voice. "He told you, you know, that he'd give Godfrey a trial, and if there was anything wrong with his mind, why then the money was to come to me. And you remember he fixed it that way in the will."

"Yes, and it's a blamed good thing that he did, too," said Bender unappeased. "His mind has been going for a year, ever since your father's death, in fact. I noticed it first the time—" He changed his mind hastily and did not finish the sentence. There were some things that he never discussed with his wife.

"I'm going to speak to Dr. Morgan about it, Hannah," he continued. "Maybe he will walk over to Lennox's house with me now. He'll be quick enough to catch on if there is anything wrong."

"Maybe you had better," said his wife quietly.

Her sympathies in the matter were all with her husband. Harvey Bender had not been treated right by either her father or her brother. Now if there was any loophole by which the law could force Godfrey to disgorge that part of the estate which she had always thought belonged rightfully to her, even if that loophole led to the unlocked door of a lunatic-asylum for her brother, she had nothing to say.

Meanwhile, John Morgan, a shrewd, keen-eyed medical man, of doubtful attainments and uncertain standing in his profession, conversed with Bender for a long time in lowered tones.

"I don't know about it," he said uncertainly. "I don't mind doing any thing that I can do for you, Bender. I don't even mind stretching a point for you, if necessary. It's not that. But then you see there's Cicely—"

Bender snorted contemptuously.

"Pshaw!" he said scornfully. "Who cares for her? She's nothing but a child. Morgan, I think that I can prove that the old man is dangerous. If I can—"

"If you can, I'll sign whatever you want me to sign and swear whatever you want me to swear," said Morgan promptly. "And, you see, it wasn't so much Cicely Lennox that I was thinking of as Henry Oldham. They tell me that the old man says that they are engaged. And, you see, Oldham don't like me—not a little bit."

"He's not here now," interrupted his companion. "I don't know just where he is. I haven't seen him about town now for over a month. And I've heard that the doors of the asylum are a whole lot easier to open from the outside than from the inside."

"Well, maybe they are," admitted Morgan. "I'll see what I can do, Bender. And as I said before, I don't mind stretching a point for you, if it will do you any good."

He lowered his voice a little more with the last words. Frankly he had his own private opinions with regard both to Lennox's sanity and Bender's solicitude. He was telling himself that it was a matter in which it stood him in hand to go slowly when they reached Lennox's house again.

Although it was now fast nearing noon Lennox still hovered distractedly about the pig-pen. The faintly-stirring poplar-leaves spattered the thin, parched grass with shadow, but the pen itself was in the blazing sunshine and Lennox was bare-headed. There was a dull, reddish, unhealthy stain in his thin cheeks, and he looked at Morgan and Bender suspiciously as the two men approached him. A half-dozen other people loitered about. It was easy to see that the old man was chafing under the restraint of their presence.

"Well, what do you want now?" he snarled viciously as his brother-in-law approached him. "I thought that I had shown you about all there was to see and told you about all there was to tell when you were here before. What do you want now?"

Bender's policy was for the moment one of conciliation. He saw young Randolph, a lad who was studying medicine in old Dr. Merkle's office, standing a little distance away, and noticed that he seemed to be listening intently to the conversation. He would be a valuable witness in case he were needed. So for the moment Bender ignored Godfrey's evident nervousness and ill-temper because it suited him to do so.

"Hannah asked me to come over again and see if there was anything that I could do," he said calmly. "She thought that you seemed a bit out of sorts."

"It's small wonder if I am!" snapped the older man testily. "I'd thank you to mind your own business, Bender—you and Hannah, both."

"Besides, I was worried some, to tell the truth, about the pigs I sold you," admitted Bender smoothly. He flashed a quick glance at young Randolph and assured himself that he had drifted near enough to be within ear-shot. "I want to see whether it is one of my pigs or one of the two that you bought from Garley that is sick. You see, if it is one of mine—"

He laid his hand upon the top-rail of the pig-pen then stopped short, dismayed by something sinister, threatening, in the old man's attitude. "I am not going to hurt your pigs, you know, Godfrey," he urged. "There's no need for you to act the fool."

His face changed a trifle. "I tell you, I am not going to allow you or anyone else to interfere with my business," said Lennox agitatedly. "It's not so much—" His color, too, had faded and there was an ugly spark in his gray eyes. "I bought the pigs and paid you more than a fair price for them. It's none of your business now whether they are sick or not. I am not making any complaint. And I warn you now—"

Bender's glance shifted for the barest

fraction of a second. Randolph and one or two of the other men were quite near enough now to notice Godfrey's threatening gestures and hear the tones that at least had more than a hint of menace in them. Bender leaned heavily against the rails for a moment and then, for he was still spry and active, in spite of his years, he vaulted lightly over into the pen.

The next moment he heard an enraged exclamation from Lennox that was echoed a moment later by a horror-stricken cry from one of the others. He turned quickly just in time to confuse Lennox's aim. Something bright flashed in the noon sunlight and a pistol-ball singing past his head buried itself in a rotten-rail and spattered his face with splinters.

"For God's sake, Lennox, have you taken leave of your senses entirely?" Morgan and one of the others had seized the old man not over-gently. "What is the matter with you?"

Lennox, still glaring at Bender, did not answer. His eyes were blazing and there was a thin line of foam about the lips that were drawn so tightly down over his toothless-gums. His glance wavered a little then shifted to the smoking pistol which he still held in his shaking hand. "I call you all to witness that I was acting strictly within my rights," he muttered and there was neither remorse nor faltering in his voice, "I warned him more than once—"

He tried feebly to free himself, but the men who held him did not loosen their grasp. The flare of rage did not die out of his eyes until he saw Bender considerably shaken and subdued, climb back over the fence.

"I ought to have remembered what a fool you were, Harve," Godfrey then said grimly, the barest flicker of a smile about his lips. "And you ought to have known me better than to have tried me so far. You will know better another time," he added pointedly.

"My God—yes," said Morgan in answer to a whispered question from Bender. "There can be no doubt of it. A reasonable amount of restraint for instance until steps can be taken—certainly, Mr. Bender. It will be a very easy matter, I assure you."

Something in the words which he only partly caught rendered Lennox vaguely uneasy. He looked from one to another of the faces about him in a sort of childish terror, then laughed nervously.

"Well, I guess that it won't be necessary to swear out a warrant, boys," he said with an air of *bravado* that sat upon him but illy, and in a voice that sounded hollow enough. "If you'll come along we'll go over to the mayor's office and have the thing over. I am ready and willing to pay my fine."

Morgan looked at Bender gravely and Bender looked back at him. "I hardly think that that is necessary, Mr. Lennox," said Morgan evasively. It is simply a little matter between friends, you know, and there was no malice—"

"He can attend to his own business then," persisted Lennox sulkily. "I won't have my pigs—"

"You'd better go in the house now and get out of the hot sunshine," said the doctor persuasively, with a fine professional air. "We'll see that the pigs are not interfered with."

"What in the world is the matter, Mr. Lennox?"

The angry flush faded out of the old man's face and he dropped the pistol which he still unostentatiously held. "Thank the Lord that you got my message, Oldham," he said with something that was almost like a sob. "I—don't know what was the matter. I don't know exactly what I have done. You're my friend, Oldham, and I know that you'll stand bv me, lad—for Cissy's sake."

"A word with you, Mr. Oldham, if you please," said the doctor imperiously and the two walked away out of earshot together. "Mr. Lennox has undoubtedly lost his mind, sir," said the medical man importantly. "Some of us think—but I would rather not express an opinion professionally as to whether the storm of last night had anything to do—"

"I don't think that it did—much," said Bender, who had followed them suspiciously. "Lennox has been a little more than slightly off for five years. It runs in the family. His grandfather—"

Oldham looked at him coolly.

"Oh you may not know it, Oldham, but it is a fact! Old Lawrence Lennox

was as mad as a March hare when he died. He had lots of property and he converted it all into money the week before he died and did something with the money. He may have buried it, but if he did, he forgot where. He declared on his death-bed that he had left it all to the devil to pay off a mortgage on Hell."

"I have heard all about that," said young Oldham gravely. "I fail to see, however—"

"What it has to do with Godfrey?"

Bender frowned. "Why he has been a little queer all his life. His father came within one of cutting him out of the property entirely. As it was he made a provision—"

"At your suggestion?" hinted Oldham.

"At my suggestion and his daughter's —yes. He made a provision that if his son ever displayed signs of insanity the property should go to Hannah. I leave it to Dr. Morgan—"

"Mr. Lennox's mind is undoubtedly unsettled," said the doctor cautiously. "He has just been guilty of the most unprovoked, aggravated assault upon Mr. Bender here. Steps will have to be taken—"

"Come here just a minute, Oldham," begged the old man piteously. "I want to have just a dozen words with you, lad."

The others waited more or less impatiently while Lennox talked eagerly to the young man and in carefully-lowered tones. They saw an expression of bewilderment, of doubt, darken Oldham's face. It changed, however, after a few more words from Lennox, to a look of humorous intelligence. He left the old man presently and leaned over the rail-fence that surrounded the pig-pen and stared at the pigs. A little later he in his turn climbed lightly over the rails and approached the pig which Lennox had declared was sick. For some little time he apparently surveyed it curiously. Then he climbed out again. The old man's eyes had followed him steadily all the time, but he did not speak.

"You may be right about Mr. Lennox, Dr. Morgan," said the young man then very courteously. "For the present, however, I think that it would be wise to leave him alone pending an examination by the proper authorities to determine his sanity. He has consented to be governed entirely by my advice. If there is any doubt in your mind about the wisdom of leaving him unconfined—"

"There most decidedly is," said Bender hastily. "If I had been one minute slower in turning my head a little while ago he would have blown the top of it off. I tell you, it runs in the family. His grandfather—"

"I have heard all that rubbish before," said Oldham wearily. "Personally, I, for one, do not believe that old Lawrence Lennox at the time of his death had any money.

"I can show you the will," said Bender eagerly. "I've got a copy of it at home now. 'I hereby give, grant, and bequeath all the property, real, personal, and mixed, of which I die possessed, to the person or persons who succeed in finding it. Possession is nine points of the law.' It was after that that he went all over that stuff aboot the devil."

"Mr. Randolph and I will stay with Mr. Lennox until you and Dr. Morgan take whatever steps you may consider necessary in the matter," said Oldham, who had been whispering to Randolph. "I am sure that quiet will do more for him than anything else. He tells me that he has already sent for his daughter."

"All the same, they are carrying out some scheme of Oldham's," said Bender to Morgan as the two walked away together. "Much good may it do them —that is all I have to say."

"I certainly think that you stand a splendid change of getting the property now," admitted Morgan. "I, too, think there is more in the thing, however, than appears on the surface. It seems to me, though, that the way is clear for you."

There was more in it than appeared on the surface. Pretty Cicely Lennox came home early in the afternoon from the school which she had been teaching, and she stayed with her father while Oldham and Randolph carried what was apparently the body of the now defunct swine away in a stout box. After it was safely out of the way, Oldham wrote a letter, which was delivered

to Bender while he and the doctor were preparing to submit Lennox's case to the judge. We quote only a part of the letter.

"Of course, Mr. Lennox was familiar, as were the others who might be supposed to have an interest in the matter, with the old story of the wealth which old Lawrence Lennox was credited with having hidden so securely before his death. He had long given up, however, any hope that he may at first have entertained of ever being able to fall upon any clue to the hiding-place of the treasure.

"He was standing near the chimney during the storm. He had fancied that the whining of the cat sounded as if she were just outside the door that opened near it, when the blinding flash of lightning came that was really the first indication he had that anything except a very heavy rain was in progress. The chimney rocked for a moment on its solid foundations and then toppled to the ground in a mass of ruins. He called to his wife, but she did not answer, and he was persuaded that she had been instantly killed. In the terror of the moment he lighted a match and the momentary flare assured him of two things. One was that his wife was presumably unhurt, since she had fled from the house, and the other was that the awful hand of the storm had unlocked the Lennox treasure-house. The spoils lay before him.

"A dozen rotting bags over-flowing with gold pieces lay tucked away in a little hollow among the bricks. Perhaps the storm and the sight of the gold set Lennox's wits to wool-gathering for the moment. He remembered that there were other people who had a claim to the Lennox treasure and he dared not trust even his wife. The rain poured in through the wrecked roof and hissed upon the burning bags as if the yellow gold was still hot from the fingers of the infernal legatee to whom the elder Lennox had, verbally at least, bequeathed it.

"Before you made your appearance the thought of hiding it until I or someone else, whom he felt that he could trust, could be reached, occurred to him. His first thought was to conciliate you, by appealing to your avarice with regard to the pigs, and the thought of the pigs reminded him that he could hardly find a safer temporary hiding-place for the Lennox gold. He knew that the house itself would soon be overrun by curious neighbors. When his wife was safe in bed he dragged the bags into the pen and covered them with the clay. He could not bury them very deep, and he was conscious all the time that his mind was off at all sorts of mad tangents. He knew that he lied when he told you that he had purchased three pigs from Garley, but he did not know why he lied. And sunrise came before he was sensible enough to dispose of the money safely.

"All the precautions he took may or may not have been necessary. Knowing the other claimants of the Lennox treasure as he did, he thought they were. Meanwhile, the treasure itself has been securely locked away in a safety-vault and old Lawrence Lennox's will is a matter of public-record. And you are at liberty to take whatever steps may occur to you—now—to determine Godfrey Lennox's sanity. He is ready to fight you now, in any proceedings you may bring, thanks to the lightning, with the Lennox gold."

The Aunt Patience Column

BY RICHARD BARKER SHELTON

FROM the basement far below the street came the rumble and jar of the heavy presses running off the first edition of the evening paper. Bryant gathered up the last of the letters scattered over his desk, snapped an elastic band about them, stamped them "Answered" (with the date) and thrust them into a pigeon-hole. All the other pigeonholes were filled with similar bundles of letters, blue letters, pink letters, mauve letters, white letters. Bryant, tilted back in his swivel-chair, regarded them thoughtfully; then his eye ran around the little room, spick and span as it never before had been during his twenty years' occupancy. Its orderliness gave him an odd pang of momentary homesickness. He almost wished he had left everything at sixes and sevens for his successor to straighten out for himself.

The door opened noisily and an office-boy entered to dump the afternoon mail on his desk: the usual quota of scented feminine notes. Bryant arranged them in a neat pile on one corner of the blotter, marked them "Unopened," and smiled grimly. He was thinking of that first pile of such letters he had received twenty years ago. They had inspired in him a strange mixture of curiosity and disgust. He had solemnly sworn then, the handicap of his smashed hip notwithstanding, that he would starve sooner than earn his daily bread by answering these idiotic questions.

Yet for twenty years he had done it, grimly, sardonically, but withal faithfully. He had untangled complicated love affairs; he had settled mooted points of etiquette; he had hunted up recipes for curing freckles and chapped hands and sallow complexions and heaven only knew what not. He had done all this, he told himself, because it meant bread and butter to him, and because the hip that had been smashed when he fell four stories while he was covering a fire, prohibited his doing anything else more suited to his taste. That he ever felt an interest, even passing, in his work he would not have admitted even to himself.

Now it was all over at last. Bit by bit, by the most rigid economy, he had managed to save enough to put all this behind him; to go away somewhere and work out those dreams which had been his before a smashed hip had forced him into this effeminate drudgery — those dreams which were somehow impossible when one's days were spent in perusing (and answering) such intellectual missives as,

DEAR AUNT PATIENCE:
Is it proper for a girl of nineteen to go unchaperoned to a *matinée* with a gentleman friend?

Or,

DEAR AUNT PATIENCE:
I am twenty-two years old, tall, blonde, and by my friends said to be prepossessing. I have, however, two unsightly moles on my left cheek. Can you tell me how these can be removed without leaving scars?

After to-day he would be free; free from those haunting, many colored, many scented notes; free to go away, and, please God, to do a man's work. The presses far below him were rumbling away full blast; a shaft of golden sunlight, stealing down between the high granite-walls, crept in at his window. That meant it must be nearing three o'clock. Where was that boy with the papers? Bryant did not relish this sitting idly in a cleaned-up room before an oppressively orderly desk. The very orderliness of the place filled him with a feeling of unfamiliarity. He had been a fool to clean things up in this fashion. He was aware of a strange feeling, something amounting almost to depression. It would be rather queer, he reflected, if, after all, he had grown a trifle fond of this ridiculous column he edited. Then he laughed aloud. The thought was too absurd, too puerile.

Again the door flew open noisily, and this time a paper, still damp from the press, was tossed upon his desk. Bryant picked it up and turned, from long force of habit, to the sixth page. There was something almost appealing in the familiar wood-cut heading: the ancient spinster in the rocking-chair, knitting stolidly before the huge fire-place, the crane with the kettle swinging on it,

the cat (woefully out of perspective) slumbering peacefully near it, and beneath this domestic picture the open invitation to all the paper's subscribers, "Ask Aunt Patience." Something suspiciously like a lump rose in Bryant's throat, but since confessedly he detested all sentiment, he merely grunted and hurriedly ran his eye down the column:

P. S. E.: It is sufficient to leave your visiting-card with "Congratulations" written in the lower left-hand corner.

Madge: Your mother is quite right. You are too young to think of going on the stage. I have no knowledge of the school of acting you mention.

Questioner: The recipé you mention was published in this column July 16. A copy will be sent you upon receipt of two cents.

He read the column through, tossed the paper into the waste-basket and drew on his overcoat. For him it was all over, this reading silly notes and answering silly questions. This was the moment he had been looking forward to for twenty years; and yet, strangely enough, the elation he had anticipated was conspicuous by its absence. He picked up his crutches and hobbled up the hall to say his round of *adieux;* but later he stole back to his own little room, reverently closed the desk, and hobbled out with his head bent, for the routine of twenty years had left its imprint upon him, whether he would or no.

For years Bryant had had in his mind's eye a certain obscure little hotel in Southern California where the cooking was good and the prices reasonable. Thither he repaired to work out those dreams of the long, long past, to make his name an honored one in the list of American letters. But somehow the great and enduring novel, which he had fancied would almost build itself in these environments, was very, very backward in its progress. As the days went by he grew more restless and uneasy. The vistas of orange and plum orchards, the ragged line of hills to the west were all very beautiful, but most unsatisfying. He longed—with such a longing as he never dreamed could have been bred within him—for his cluttered desk, for the rumble of the presses, for even those silly little parti-colored notes that had been his heritage from every mail.

The paper was five days old when it reached him, but he always turned feverishly to the "Ask Aunt Patience" column. A young upstart, named Shannon, from the city staff, was running it, and running it badly, too. The random answers to some of the correspondents sent cold shivers up and down Bryant's spine and left him nervous and irritable for days at a time. Imagine advising "Anxious" to put some kind of alcohol-cure tablets in her husband's coffee! Or of telling "Gertrude" (whoever she might be) that it was perfectly good form to begin a letter "Dear Friend."

Bryant stood it for two months. At the end of that time Southern California had lost all its charms for him. The novel, that is, the few completed chapters, was consigned to the flames, and the following morning he was speeding eastward as fast as the "limited" could take him.

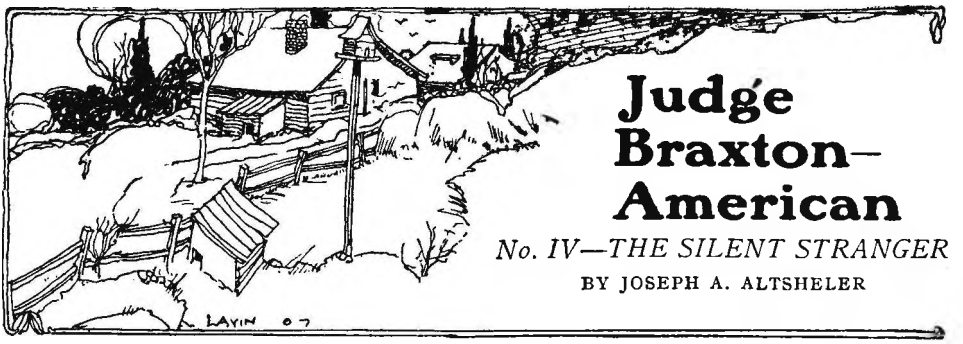
It was a gray February twilight when Bryant hobbled up the stairs to his former room and pushed open the door. Young Shannon sat before the desk smoking innumerable cigarets and looking worried. He was trying to compose some vaguely ingenuous directions for the treatment of a teething baby. He looked up as the door opened. Before him stood Bryant, shaking with wrath.

"You're a nice one to give people information," Bryant blurted out, "a nice one! What do you know of etiquette or ethics or anything else for that matter? Where d'ye think you'd land this column in another month, hey?"

The younger man arose with a sardonic smile. "You're welcome to your blamed old column whenever you want it," he said disgustedly.

"Well, that's right now," said Bryant crustily. He threw off his coat, leaned his crutches in the corner, and attacked a pile of unopened letters. In a moment the dreams of the long, long past had faded into insignificance; the novel was forgotten. The present alone was sufficient.

"Aunt Patience" had returned to his own.



Judge Braxton—American

No. IV—THE SILENT STRANGER

BY JOSEPH A. ALTSHELER

EDITOR'S NOTE.—*In this story of the series concerning the life-incidents of Judge Braxton, the lovable Southern gentleman and lawyer, the climax of intensity is reached. The Judge himself is put on the defensive, and he not only succeeds in saving his own honor but the life of his client. This tale is complete in this issue.*

JUDGE BRAXTON was a brave man, but Gilman, the wildest county in the circuit that he habitually rode, lay on the slopes of the mountains, a broken region of uneasy summits and narrow valleys, and none knew better than he the doubtful character of many of its inhabitants. In the little court-house at Westfield he had defended more than one whom he did not believe to be at fault, because his bullet had sped too true, somewhere in that quarrelsome region. He would have abandoned the county long ago, but he had practised there in his youth, and the sentimental tie was strengthened by the urgent calls which old acquaintances often made for his services. The Judge was like the Texan's pistol; when he was needed he was needed badly.

Judge Braxton, as he rode on, was troubled more and more by the aspect of the country, which was without the grandeur of high mountains or the mild beauty of low rolling-hills, just a succession of steep bleak ridges, with narrow rocky valleys between. Westfield, too, was yet a good ten miles away, and already in the East, the dwarf-forest and the low crests were beginning to show somber tints. Night was not far off and it would come with a moonless dusk and a chill wind. Judge Braxton liked the prospect but little. Hardened as he was by years of lonely riding, habitual exposure, and now and then danger, the landscape seemed weird and forbidding to him, as if it contained the portent of trouble.

He whipped up his horse, and, when he reached the crest of the ridge, he saw another man and horse, at the summit of the next slope, outlined against the blood-red setting sun. They were so sharply defined that the judge could trace almost every detail of a powerful figure sitting easily in the saddle, and he felt a distinct thrill of gladness, because he could now have companionship on a rough and dark ride. Judge Braxton was of an eminently sociable nature, and it seldom took him more than five minutes to become acquainted with anybody.

He urged his horse to greater speed, and the distance between him and the stranger narrowed so rapidly that he would overtake him about the bottom of the next slope. But he was surprised that the man did not slow up and look back. Travelers were all too few on the mountain-roads for one, with the horse-hoofs of another ringing in his ears, to ride steadily on, and never once turn his face to see who came.

Judge Braxton's curiosity was now aroused, but as he came nearer the manner and figure of the stranger did not cause any increase of confidence. Obviously, he was of stalwart build, and the hair under the broad brim of his soft hat was dark, long, and slightly curling. He looked around, at last, but not until the second horse was almost beside him, and then he disclosed a strong, powerful face, almost covered by thick dark

beard, through which two burning eyes shone like lights in the dusk. Their gaze, too, was so distinctly hostile that Judge Braxton, the friendliest of men, felt repelled, and the last thought of companionship on the ride disappeared from his mind. He saw clearly that here was one who neither wanted nor would have a comrade.

"Good-evening," said Judge Braxton politely.

"Good-evening," responded the stranger in a surly tone. His left hand held the reins, and, as he spoke, his right hand dropped toward his hip. Judge Braxton, always a keen observer, noticed the movement, one full of significance in the mountains, the act of a man who intends to be ready at an instant's notice for any danger, and he did not check the speed of his horse, intending to ride on now and leave the stranger behind. He wanted companionship but not the companionship of this man.

Judge Braxton's ready mind had jumped to a conclusion. The celebrated outlaw, Tom Bose, who ranged over a wide circuit in the southwest had appeared lately in these hills, and two or three tales of his robberies had come out of them to the lowlands and to the ears of the Judge. This was Tom Bose! His surly manner, his obvious desire to be let alone, the quick movement of his hand toward his hip and his resemblance to the floating descriptions of him that the Judge had heard were sure indications of it. Yes,this was Tom Bose! He could not doubt it! The Judge looked back once, and the man was still slowly riding on, his set, grim face looking straight ahead, and his right hand still lying on his hip. At the next crest the Judge looked back again but the stranger was lost in the valley below.

Judge Braxton did not reach Westfield that evening. The night suddenly came down over the hills so dark, and so grim, and the wind rose suddenly, so sharp and so chill, that he turned into a side-road, sought the two-roomed log cabin of a humble farmer whom he knew, and slept peacefully on a pallet by a hospitable fireside.

Judge Braxton had not realized the night before how tired and worn he was, but the good people of the cabin let him sleep late, gave him a good breakfast, over which he lingered long, and it was full noon the next day before he rode into Westfield, to find the little town in a state of excitement, the like of which it had not known since the days of the civil war, when Bragg marched through its single street with an army of forty thousand men. Two hours before the arrival of Judge Braxton the Westfield stage-coach had been held up and robbed by a single horseman, a powerfully built man, with thick, dark hair, who had got clean away with considerable money taken from the mail and the passengers. He had secured a long start before the news reached the town, and, with a good mount and confederates somewhere, it was more than probable he would not be caught.

Judge Braxton felt a pang of conscience. He had seen Tom Bose in the road at the coming of the twilight the day before, and he should have ridden on to Westfield, despite the dark and the cold, to give warning. It was his first impulse to tell of the brief meeting by the wayside, but a tinge of shame over his dereliction—Judge Braxton's heart never beat with a dishonest impulse—and a feeling that, after all, it could neither help nor harm caused him to keep silent. So he listened without comment, while several of the passengers who had been robbed told how the man looked, and the description answered in every detail to the one whom he had seen.

"Tom Bose! Tom Bose did it!" was repeated throughout the hamlet—all leaping to the inevitable conclusion—and to most minds the name conveyed a certain feeling of awe, mingled with horror. Feuds they knew, and to violent quarrels of men in drink they were accustomed; but here was a crime done for gain, and that to them was the worst of all crimes.

The sheriff and a dozen deputies, all armed and all fearless, rode away among the hills, and meanwhile the term of the Gilman circuit-court, with its usual calendar, opened—it could not be postponed even for a stage-robbery by Tom Bose—and Judge Braxton was counsel in a half a dozen cases which would keep him in Westfield a week or

more. Two of these cases would require all of Judge Braxton's skill, penetration, and dexterity, but, despite them, his mind reverted to the stage-robbery and the dark man by the roadside. If he had only ridden on and given warning! The Judge's conscience was a very tender one, despite forty years of the law.

The first day of the circuit-court was completed and, as usual, the lawyers gathered in the public-room of the little hotel. It was a frame-structure, rude in many respects, but this room, on occasion, could wear a cheerful aspect, and good company was gathered there. The lawyers, who moved with the court from county-seat to county-seat, represented most of the intellect and culture of the region, and all had known one another for years. Now they were sitting around a great wood fire, which crackled and blazed and threw pleasant ruddy gleams across the floor, and, after the custom, they were telling good stories picked up in many years on the circuit. Judge Braxton sat at one corner, a place of honor always accorded to him, and, at the other corner sat Circuit Judge Talbot, whom he did not like. Talbot had an oblique glance, and Judge Braxton held that a man who is always honest will always look you squarely in the eyes.

The commonwealth's-attorney had just finished a story on himself, telling how he had been cleverly defeated once by Judge Braxton, just as he thought he was tying the noose around the accused man's neck, when some one knocked heavily on the door. Landlord Shippen promptly opened it and disclosed a group of men on horseback, all armed and stern of face, and, sitting on his horse in the center of the group, another man with his hands tied behind him.

There was for a moment a deep silence, and even to the experienced eyes of Judge Braxton it was a grim scene: the sheriff and his deputies, wordless and motionless, and the captured man, the highwayman, sitting there among them, he too without word or motion. The Judge recognized at once the stranger whom he had met by the roadside. There was the stalwart figure, the same thick dark beard, and the eyes shining through the tangle like fire in the dark. But these eyes did not seem to the Judge to express fear or any other emotion that he could read.

"Well, we've got him," said the sheriff, at last breaking the silence and showing pride. "It's Tom Bose, right enough! He answers every description. We overtook him in the mountains, ambushed him, and nabbed him without firing a shot."

"Did you recover the money?" asked the circuit-judge.

"No, we didn't," replied the sheriff, and his tone showed disappointment. "Of course he hid it somewhere, expecting to come back, and get it, when the county had grown quiet."

"Very likely," said the circuit-judge. "It is the trick a clever man would have played. You have done well, Mr. Camp, and in Tom Bose you have made a most important capture."

The sheriff bowed and did not try to conceal his pride. A crowd was gathered already; the news that Bose had been taken spreading fast. But the prisoner still said nothing, and seemed to regard the people with an incurious eye. Once his glance met Judge Braxton's and the Judge thought he saw in it a faint gleam of recognition, even a touch of appeal, but he was not sure. The next moment the man's glance passed on, and did not meet his again.

Judge Braxton was on the point of telling of his meeting in the road with the stranger but he checked himself, he had a feeling that it was irrelevant; but deep down in his heart he knew that it was because of that faint and perhaps imaginary touch of appeal in the prisoner's eyes. Judge Braxton could never resist the cry of help and he suddenly remembered that Tom Bose, after all, had his good qualities. He was said to be a generous bandit, and circumstances, rather than innate disposition, might have made him the outlaw that he was.

"Come, boys," said the sheriff to his men, and they rode away toward the jail, the prisoner, his hands bound behind him, still in the center of the group but riding firmly, his head erect, and saying not a word.

The lawyers turned back to the warm, light room and the circuit-judge said:

"I scarcely expected the good fortune to try Tom Bose, but he's bound to come before me now, and it will be a noted case."

His tone was so hard and callous; he seemed to think so much of the reputation to be gained from the case and so little of the accused man's fate that Judge Braxton, back in his old corner by the fire, frowned. The circuit-judge saw the frown and said nothing, but a little later his gaze rested a moment on Judge Braxton and the look was not wholly that of a friend.

The prisoner was indicted by the grand jury on the following day, and the day thereafter he was to appear for trial. The witnesses were close at hand and the circuit-judge was heard to remark that he intended making short work of the trial.

"Bose is sulking," said Harry Carver, a young lawyer just admitted to the bar, to Judge Braxton. "He denies, of course, that he is Bose, but he refuses to tell his name, where he came from, and what he was doing in this county. But he is Bose, all right; he answers to the descriptions exactly, and his inability to give a good account of himself, as shown by his silence, condemns him. Moreover, three men who were on the stage-coach have seen him, and swear that he is the man. He's as good as convicted now."

"I suppose he is," said Judge Braxton. "Who's his lawyer?"

"He hasn't any," replied Carver. "No money; besides he doesn't seem to want any lawyer."

"Of course Judge Talbot will have to appoint somebody," said Judge Braxton. "Every man is entitled to counsel. Why don't you push for it, Harry? You might make a reputation out of it?"

"Too much of a forlorn hope," said young Carver with a shake of the head.

But it was in Judge Braxton's mind to suggest him for the place.

The prisoner was brought into court the following afternoon, heavily guarded, and with arms bound again. The sheriff intended to take no chances with the famous Tom Bose. But the condemned man made no effort to escape, and preserved the same obstinate silence about himself; he would do no more than say he was not Tom Bose; beyond that he would neither affirm nor deny anything.

"Have you a lawyer?" asked the circuit-judge sharply.

"What do I want with a lawyer," replied the prisoner sullenly.

The spectators laughed and Judge Talbot frowning, rapped for order.

"We must comply with the forms of the law," he said in acid tones. "The State says that every man brought to the bar shall have the service of counsel, and, since you are not able to provide a lawyer, it becomes my duty to appoint one for you."

The circuit-judge paused, and glanced over the array of lawyers within the bar. Judge Braxton caught his eye and looked suggestively at young Harry Carver, but the eye of the circuit-judge passed on, and then came back again, with a malicious gleam in it.

"Prisoner at the bar," he said in thin, dry tones, "you are without money and without friends, accused of a very grave crime. You need all the help you can get, hence I appoint as your counsel Judge William Braxton, who men say is the best criminal lawyer on this circuit."

A murmur of amazement and protest ran through the court-room. Young lawyers, with their reputations yet to make, were invariably appointed for such service, which was, in the nature of it gratuitous, and it was an insult to Judge Braxton's age and eminence to choose him for the defense.

The circuit-judge's eyes dropped to the desk before him, and he busied himself with his papers. A deep flush overspread his smoothly shaven face, but it passed in a moment, and then he took his resolve. Talbot had meant not oniy to insult, but also to injure him, by assigning him to a hopeless case, one that he was bound to lose, and, with it, something of his prestige. But it was like a call of battle to Judge Braxton, and he promptly accepted the gage.

"I take the case, gladly, your honor," he said in a firm, strong voice "because I am convinced not only that this man is innocent, but also that I shall clear him."

Again the murmur of surprise ran

through the court-room, and Talbot lifted his head quickly, gazing at Judge Braxton in astonishment. He recognized the note of defiance in the Judge's voice, and deep down in his malicious heart he was afraid; afraid of some new wonder, of the kind that Judge Braxton more than once had brought to pass. But second thought told him the case was impossible for the defense, and he said in his thinnest and dryest tones:

"How long a postponement do you wish, Judge Braxton, in order to consult with your client?"

The bound prisoner had stirred once in his seat between two deputies, and now his eyes, usually so inexpressive, met those of his counsel, and Judge Braxton read in them wonder, appeal, and perhaps a little faith. Something in the Judge's heart stirred—nature had made him for the defense—and he was not sorry now that a malicious judge had given this desperate case to him. He named a period of postponement that he considered long enough, and the Judge and the commonwealth's attorney agreeing, the case was moved down the docket to the appointed time.

The prisoner was taken from the court-room back to the jail and presently Judge Braxton followed, slowly and absorbed in thought. Talbot's oblique and malicious gaze rested on him more than once, but the Judge did not see, nor seeing would he have cared.

Yet the Judge was deep in doubt. He could see no light ahead. Since the prisoner, through some strange and sudden obstinacy would not speak in the court-room, how was his counsel to make him do so? But he had never known a case he was more anxious to win, and he had several motives. At the jail he was greeted familiarly by the jailer, who said to him, shaking his head:

"I guess you're up against it this time, Judge. It was a mean trick of Talbot to appoint you to such a case. I'd have refused the service."

"But I want to serve," said Judge Braxton. "The man is innocent."

The jailer winked at the wall, but he took care that Judge Braxton did not see him, and then he escorted the lawyer to his client's cell, leaving them there together.

The prisoner was sitting on a stool, his thick, powerful shoulders bent over, and his face resting on his hands. His attitude was that of despondency and sullen resignation.

"Bose," said the Judge meaning to feel his way, "what forced you into this life?"

"My name aint Bose," said the man emphatically.

"Then what is it?"

Silence, and a sullen man sat staring steadily at the opposite wall of the cell!

The Judge talked to him a long time. He did not really expect answers to his questions, but he was a reader of minds, and what he wanted was time for observation. He drew the man's eyes to his with his steady gaze and presently he said:

"If you are not Bose then, why were you running away?"

The stranger's eyes fell, but he raised them again and in a moment he said:

"What makes you think I was running away?"

"You would not ride with me, or even speak to me, when I passed you on the road; in this country no innocent man ever does that."

"You believe I am Tom Bose?"

"No," said the Judge, "and I mean to prove that you are not, with or without your help."

He remained two hours in the cell, but he drew no direct statement from the prisoner save that he was not Tom Bose. Yet it could never be said of Judge Braxton that he wasted two hours on a legal case, and when he came from the cell the jailer noticed a certain change in his appearance.

"Between you and me," said the jailer that night to two of his cronies, "the old Judge has got a scheme in his head, or I'm a poor guesser. Because Talbot appointed him he's goin' to clear that man, or turn the whole county upside-down." But his cronies shook their heads and said it was impossible.

"Tom Bose can't get off," said they.

The Judge endured the good-natured raillery of his fellow lawyers, and a few days later returned to his home in Groveton. An hour after his arrival there, he was in the office of the *Record*,

where he found the editor, Mr. Ryan, with whom he seldom agreed on any topic, but who was perhaps his warmest personal friend. Mr. Ryan sat on the small of his back in a deep armchair before a table, a pot of ink at his right hand, and a pot of mucilage at his left, the two being used in just and equal proportions.

"Do you keep any of your county exchanges, Bob?" asked the Judge.

"I throw 'em all in the corner there," said the editor. "And after a while, when the corner fills up, the scrub-woman cleans 'em all out. The corner is nearly full just now. By the way, I hear over the telephone from Westfield that they've got the notorious Tom Bose, and that you are to defend him."

"Yes, and I'm going to acquit him, too."

The editor laughed.

"If you do that," he said, "it'll be the biggest feather that you ever plucked for your cap, but at the same time you'll be turning an unmitigated scoundrel loose on the state."

The Judge said nothing, but putting on his glasses, went to work on the huge heap of county-weeklies, going with care through every one, no matter how small and insignificant. He didn't cease his task, until dark came, making evasive replies to the editor's polite or flippant inquiries, but, when he finished at last, he said in his most ingratiating tone:

"Now, Bob, I want you to do me a favor."

Mr. Ryan could no more have denied the favor than he could have set fire to his own office, and they talked together earnestly for half an hour.

Judge Braxton went back to Westfield at the appointed time for the trial, and, when he entered the little town, the group of lawyers and old associates greeted him again with incredulous remarks.

"We don't see any evidence piling up in favor of Bose," they said. "He's lying in the jail there, as sulky and silent as ever, and three of the passengers who were robbed are here, ready to swear that he is the man who got their money."

"Men under the influence of great excitement at the time are often mistaken about identity," said the Judge briefly, and passed on.

But his tone expressed so much confidence that a rumor spread through Westfield and grew all the next day. Judge Braxton, stirred perhaps by Talbot's malice, had steeled himself for an unexampled effort, ran the story. He was going to secure the acquittal of a man whom everybody knew to be guilty; he was going to give liberty to the worst criminal in the state, and a growl, low but deep and dangerous, went up from the people of Gilman county, at best a rough-handed class, but the Judge in his room at the hotel, deep in the preparation of his case, knew nothing of it. Once he was called to the telephone, then a novelty in the hills, and he remained there talking a quarter of an hour, but he returned immediately thereafter to his room and his case. He ate supper absently, not noticing the dishes as they were placed before him, and afterward, feeling the need of fresh air, stepped out into the street.

Night had come, but there was a good moon and Judge Braxton instantly came back to earth. His acute senses were conscious of a change. The atmosphere was different; the usual noises of the town had ceased, and to the Judge's mind the silence was full of menace. The town had seemed crowded during the day, why were all these men gone from the street? The answer was at hand.

From the far end of Westfield, toward the jail, suddenly burst a cry that swelled at once into a loud threatening roll, like the roar of an escaped wild beast; and wild beast it was! The Judge knew too well. It was the shout of men, maddened by drink and the lust for blood.

The Judge stood for a moment, quivering, then ran with the speed of a young man directly toward the noise.

"They've broken in the jail and they've got Bose," cried a boy. "They're going to hang him to a tree in the court-house square."

Judge Braxton, in a moment, was in the dense throng of men, who, faces inflamed and cursing, struggled about the prisoner, and hurried him on to the

fatal tree. He had made a good fight, he was very powerful, and more than one man was bruised and bleeding, but they carried him forward nevertheless, and the spirit of mercy was not in them.

Every instinct in Judge Braxton, a man of gentleness and of the law, recoiled at the sight, and he cried to them to stop. He even sought to thrust them back, but they pushed him out of the way, though offering him no violence, and said:

"No, Judge Braxton, you can't cheat the law! Hang he will before he is half an hour older."

Men have often said that Judge Braxton never made a better speech than he did that night to a mob, wild with drink and the spirit of vengeance, while his client stood pinioned among them, one end of a rope around his neck and the other flung over the branch of a tree above his head. He rushed on before them, sprang upon the court-house steps, and his tremendous voice rang out, alternately threatening and pleading for delay. His very earnestness and power compelled them to pause, at least for a moment.

"What are we to wait for?" asked the leader of the mob.

A yell of derision went up from the crowd, but the Judge was undaunted. He looked down at the throng, their eyes bloodshot in the moonlight, and his soul sickened within him at the sight.

"There's a messenger coming," he said. "He ought to be here. He will be here in an hour at the furthest. Wait or you'll have the sin of blood-guiltiness on your souls. I tell you, it's not Bose you have!"

The roar of derision again went up from the crowd and when it died the leader said:

"Bose, you'd better begin to pray."

That instant the clatter of a horse's-hoofs was heard, and Judge Braxton looked up in thankfulness. The prisoner did not move. It may be he thought the world had already passed for him.

"Wait!" cried the Judge again in a voice of thunder. "The messenger is coming. Don't you hear him?"

The crowd suddenly fell silent, and the horse's-hoofs rang loud on the hard road. There was something weird and chilling in the sound made by the unseen messenger, and the men in the crowd began to feel afraid, as they would not have been of a visible presence.

A man and a horse shot out of the darkness, the man leaped to the ground, and ran to the Judge, handing him an open newspaper.

"Thank God!" said the Judge, "I telephoned Mr. Ryan to wire you at the station to hurry, but I didn't think it would be so close a shave as this."

Then he turned to the crowd, and his strong face was full of the authority of a righteous cause.

"Men," he cried in tones that rang out on the night, "this is a copy of the *Groveton Record*, printed this morning. It contains a full account of the capture at Harley, Tennessee, two hundred miles from here, of Tom Bose, the notorious outlaw, of his confession of his indentity, and of many crimes, including the robbing of the stage-coach in Gilman County, Kentucky, two weeks ago. In the name of the law I demand that you release the innocent man whom you have here."

The crowd melted away in the darkness, and the Judge was left alone with the stranger, around whose neck the rope still swung. But the Judge himself cut that rope, and few acts ever gave him greater pleasure.

About midnight, Judge Braxton was talking in his room to a large man who wore a thick, dark beard. He had drawn from his pocket a copy of a little county-newspaper, but it was not the one that had come that night.

"I have here," he said "the picture of a man named Sam Watson, who in a fit of anger struck down his brother in Moss county, in the northeastern part of this state. It would serve very well as a picture of you. The man thought his brother was dead and he fled, but the brother will get well, and I should advise Watson to go back and make his peace, because he has been punished already. He has looked squarely into the face of death."

"He will go," said the stranger in tones of deep gratitude, "but he will always remember who turned death aside from him."

The Washington Medallion

BY ADA C. SWEET

IT was a bleak February night, and Halmer Bjornson sat alone in his room. The young men in the newspaper office where he worked derived great refreshment of spirit by calling the young artist "B. Jornson," but this liberty, of the sort which always gives the Browns, Jones, and Robinsons much content, in no wise disconcerted the Nebraskan of Norwegian name. A momentary smile, a gleam of the deep-set blue eyes; these were the signs he gave that he valued human companionship, and that he was not bothered by chaffing; but he had remained a stranger in the city to which he had come, a stranger, to seek his fortune.

So he sat alone, on this night, as on other nights, and as he listened to the howling of the wind he thought, in a waking dream, of the days that had dawned upon him before he left his home on the plains. Of all things out there, on the great rolling billows of earth, the one most beautiful was the face of a girl, and the next was a tree which stood in view of the Bjornson's sod cabin. This tree grew on the ranch of Henrik Brock, and gave its name, Lone Tree, to both the township, and to the railway station two miles away. Halmer had drawn this tree, with pencil and pen and crayon, until every aspect of it was imprinted upon his memory. He knew it, from its bole, where it sprung from the prairie-sod, to the great, heart-shaped leaves of it on the topmost bough. He knew it in every line, as the lover knows the face of his beloved.

Now he sat in his dingy room and conjured up a vision of the high rolling plains, the sky, and the lone tree. It was cold in his room, for he had only a sulky stove into which fuel was laid as a precious offering reluctantly made to an exacting and unappeasable god. Sitting there in that solitude which looms, nightly, upon unnumbered thousands in the great city, he saw again the graceful form of the hardy cottonwood, there in the gray background of his imagination. Once the face of Leda flitted across the visionary haze, but he roused himself and went into his workroom. He would make an etching of the tree, a new effort, and he was sure he could portray his idol in this fashion with success. Leda had always been baffling. The tree was kinder.

He had the two back rooms of the top floor of the tenement-house, his sleeping-room having originally served as a dining-room, and his workroom still showed the uses for which it had been intended, for it had the running water of a kitchen, a convenience utilized by Bjornson in his photographic work. He lighted the electric light, his one extravagance, and sat down to his table. The litter of drawing, etching, and photography was all over the tiny room; the young man worked with all the zeal of both artist and discoverer. Work and observation, practice and the passion of the eye and the hand, these had been his only instructors. To him every piece of work brought discovery, one moment elation over some success, and the next minute, the downfall of defeat. And so the time passed swiftly as he worked, alternately rejoicing or fretting in the varying fortunes brought about by his mingling of skill and clumsiness.

It was a one-eyed cabinet of a room, this workshop of Bjornson's, its small square window looking straight into its twin window across a narrow, half enclosed porch, from which long, zigzag stairs led down to the alley below. This opposite window was boarded up to within a foot of its top, but Bjornson's window had no screen save an old curtain, which was only drawn when in his photographic work the artist needed a dark room. Unseen by him, now, a face appeared in the window-slit across the way, and a pair of bright eyes watched him, curiously. His hands alone showed plainly in the light of his shaded lamp: he was drawing with the etching needle directly

upon a copper plate, absorbed, aloof, indefatigable. At last his hands were numb with cold. He looked up from his work, looked around his cheerless room, and sighed. Bitter loneliness crowded into his heart.

How came the beautiful to grow, he thought, in such a world as this? What could account for the tree growing alone there on the plains, no other tree in sight? How came Leda, of the blue eyes and fair hair, one of a crowd of weather-beaten women? What about the red-lipped, brown-eyed, and brown-haired creature of grace and life who sometimes met or passed him in the grimy hallways or stairways of this cheap tenement-house? He truly adored beauty. He was of the pagan kind, whose soul responds only to physical perfection. Looking at a book, he saw only the pictures in it, and cared nothing for its written poetry or romance. Yet beauty, he thought, was so rare, so pitifully the exception. But not always, he remonstrated with himself, remembering the boundless Nebraska prairies, rolling skyward, in June, all clad in the pink and green of wild roses and grass. He leaned back in his chair, and straight across from the window opposite streamed a brilliant beam of light. He started to his feet. There in the window top was framed the face of the girl of the brown eyes and warm, brown hair.

She had pushed down her window sash, and quickly, to meet her evident desire to speak to him, Bjornson raised the lower part of his window. The icy wind rushed in, but he did not feel it; he only listened to the rich, contralto voice that was speaking, only gazed, hungrily, at the beaming, friendly face a few feet from his own.

"I envy you your workroom," the voice was saying.

"You would not, if you knew how cold it is," he answered, and turning back, he removed the shade from the light, showing the tiny room in all its bare poverty.

"But I can't see the cold," persisted the girl, "and you seem to have everything ready to your hand, for work. You have a fire in your other room, haven't you?"

"Only a caricature of one."

But he laughed, for her laugh was catching. All at once it seemed funny that his rooms were cold, and that he was half-frozen at his work. So much there is in a pretty face and a musical laugh, when one is twenty.

"I am so glad you have spoken to me," said Bjornson; "I have wanted to know you." He fairly glowed, standing there in the arctic blast, and now came to his nostrils the delicious smell, not of the roses suggested by the lips and cheeks of his fair neighbor, but the homely, comforting aroma of freshly made coffee.

"Won't you come over," said the girl, "we are going to drink our coffee."

Bjornson's face, as he accepted this invitation, and turned away to get ready for his visit, made the brown eyes of his new friend twinkle and shine, and her red lips curved into a merry bow, when he stood in the doorway of her little parlor. For up went her window, and down went his, and not a minute elapsed before he was being presented, with familiar laughter and talk, to an old woman, her mother, whose name was given as Mrs. McCurdle.

The young Nebraskan did not know himself. His reserve had vanished. All of that stiffness which marks people without social experience, all of the somberness that is characteristic of the plainsmen, these melted away with one look from the eyes of the girl who had claimed the recluse as a neighbor and friend. Bjornson had, indeed, learned to laugh since he came to the city; his awakened sense of humor had compelled him to take himself less seriously than he had before; but now, for the first time, he came within the circle of a woman who knew her own charm, and who wielded it with sure effect, and the change in him was marvelous. All of his loneliness, self absorption, and self pity dropped from him like a discarded garment.

The little parlor glowed with color, intensified by the bright light from an old fashioned "morning-glory" stove and a rose shaded lamp. There was a crimson carpet, and the sofa and big easy chair were crimson covered. The

cheap finery suggested luxury to the plainsman, whose bare and unlovely poverty had been lifelong. In the sod-house at home there was a floor of pine, with one of two home-made rugs, and there were wooden chairs, a well scrubbed pine table, and no more. The cubby-holes of bedrooms were as bare as the living-room. All that Bjornson had seen among the plains people had been of like utility, with no thought of ornament in the furnishing of the house. The ugliness of the homes he knew had been a cause for marvel to the boy, but he had never imagined that there might be a house as attractive to the artistic sense as a tree or a wild rose bush. In the city, the incredible luxury of which he had caught glimpses had been so far from his life as to make no impression. His eye had not been debauched, by use, to fashion, and what he saw of the dress of smart women on the streets made no appeal to him.

The old mother brought coffee and set the table, and helped by the daughter, who bustled about, made the room gay with her laughter and chatter. Bjornson felt a slight chill whenever he found the elder woman looking at him. There was curiosity—was it enmity—in her glance? Halmer felt the malice of the old woman's soul before he had been introduced, by name, to her. There was a disturbing likeness, too, between mother and daughter. But a smile from Trude, as her mother called the girl, drove away every feeling but content.

"Come," she said, as they drank their coffee, "let's tell our names."

"Mine is Halmer Bjornson, and I am from Nebraska," said the artist, at once, "and I already know your name," he added, "from the name of your mother. I have so much wanted to know your name, Miss McCurdle."

The mother laughed, somewhat discordantly, and looked at her daughter in an unpleasant manner. Bjornson decided that there was no overlooking the one drawback to the home of the McCurdles. But he reflected that the lives of the young are ever hampered by the old people who have outlived happiness, and let his released heart go singing on its way for all that, as has been the custom of joyous youth from time immemorial.

The young girl saw the young man's soul looking out of his eyes, and she drew him on to talk.

"You have shown your capacity to put two and two together," she said, "and as you tell me where you came from, I must confess to you that London was my home before I came here."

"You don't look English," Bjornson commented, and when he was told that she meant London in Canada, he looked as if he were a dabster in geography; in reality, he had never known there was any but the great London, in the world.

"Neither do you look American," said the girl.

"But I am," said Bjornson, proudly, as if it were a merit of his own to be born in the United States, instead of merely his good fortune. "But my parents were from Norway, as you must have guessed."

"And you are an artist," said Trude. "I have not had to guess at your occupation, for I have been watching you at your work."

The winter wind raved outside, but there, in the warmth and light of feminine sympathy and understanding, above all in the freemasonry of youth, Bjornson felt that expansion, that liberation of the spirit which comes so easily when one is young and solitary, but at last has found some one whose presence unlocks the mysterious reserve which has bound the soul until now. Never before had he opened his lips to anyone, this silent son of the North, as to his life, ambitions, and history. He had always accepted himself, as he had accepted the advice of his people. He had, of late, looked well into his past days, and examined his own character and prospects with the relentless judgment of youth, and now he poured out all of his conclusions and memories.

Not without humor was his rendering of his story, for the young man had some of that quality which is the very salt of human existence, keeping the world sane and in some degree protected from the madness of egotism.

Trude listened with a genial comprehension, and questioned him with such tact that there was a pleasure in telling just his story to her.

In the first place, he gave her to understand, with a laugh which was not entirely merry, the little Halmer of the plains had not been an ordinary boy. This distressing truth was early patent to the whole school-section in which the Widow Bjornson's eighty—drought-dried and unproductive acres, baked in the sun of summer and frozen under the winter's frost—were located. Halmer Bjornson was different from any other boy that the settlement had ever seen. Henrik Brock, the ruler of the region. by natural right, was called in council by the schoolmaster. After looking the boy over and asking him questions that he could not answer, the neighborhood oracle was conducted to the schoolroom blackboard and shown Halmer's pictures. There were horses and cowboys and trees and Indians, and in all the rude drawings was unmistakable life and action. The great man of the township looked, and gave judgment. Halmer was a genius.

There was no appeal from this decree. Brock himself had never before seen a genius, but he considered that he knew one when he saw one, however young and undeveloped the genius might be. The schoolmaster acquiesced, and Halmer's mother was resigned. Her life had been full of toil and trouble, and she had borne her trials with fortitude. And now her son was a genius. God's will be done, but how were they going to live? It turned out to be not so bad, after all. Halmer worked, with much careless abandon, when he was out of school, where the schoolmaster had long practised bribing him to study his lessons, by allowing him to use chalk and blackboard as soon as his readiness to recite was announced. The boy looked after the widow's lean kine, tilled her unwilling and reluctant soil, and as he grew up, at odd times, when he could be spared from home, he hired out to Brock for work on his prosperous ranch.

But the lad was not strong. He grew into a long, thin youth, with too pale a face, in spite of the brown of tan, and no one was surprised. Brock said it was the way of geniuses, to be sickly.

At last, when two stalwart cousins arrived from Norway, all ready to fall to upon any work before them, it became possible for Halmer to leave home and seek his fortune in the great world, according to the accepted habits and customs of genius from time immemorial. Henrik Brock approved and assisted, and so one fine morning Bjornson walked, with his mother and Leda, to the Lone Tree railway station, the first stage of his journey to Chicago.

The mother wept, and so did Leda, the fair daughter of Brock. The two bade the youth "Good by" with sobs and with broken words of loving caution and advice. Bjornson had a warm heart in his breast, but he was aflame with ambition, excitement, and impatience to see the world, and he was glad when the last word had been said, and when he had stepped, for the first time, upon a railway car. Standing upon the last platform of the train, he waved his cap as long as he could see the two figures standing upon the board-walk of the Lone Tree station.

"What about this Leda?"

Here broke in Trude, with the first question that Bjornson did not quite approve.

"Very little you say about her," Trude continued, "and that tells me something."

She laughed, and looked knowingly at Bjornson. She had entered into the spirit of his story, laughing over the humor he put into the descriptions of his life on the plains. She saw that all the rural conceit of him had disappeared, but she knew the deathless conceit of man as it exists in the poorest and humblest, and sought to restore, in some measure, Bjornson's good opinion of himself.

To Bjornson, flattery was unknown. They were plain-spoken people out there in Nebraska, and as for the people of Chicago, honeyed words might be on their lips, on occasion, but Bjornson had never heard them. He had instinctively avoided reference to Leda, until, toward the end of his story about Lone Tree, when he had forgotten the

unconscious guidance of his subjective monitor, which had signaled, "Beware of talking to one pretty girl about another!" This piece of wisdom, which every swain of the cornfield or the ribbon counter appreciates, Bjornson now proceeded to put into practice, to the great amusement of Trude.

"Leda, Oh! she is a girl out there, a neighbor of ours, her father has been elected sheriff of the county since I came away. He is the Henrik Brock I have told you about, a good friend, he is, of mine. His last word to me was to send for him if ever I needed a friend —but I haven't sent, though I have been in want of a friend more than once. What would the big man of Lone Tree do in Chicago? He would get lost between the Northwestern depot and State Street."

"I suppose Leda was crying because she was so fond of your mother."

"Who said Leda was crying?" demanded Bjornson.

"You did," replied his tormentor. "You told how the two women cried when you came away from Lone Tree. Poor Leda, and now you deny that you ever had any interest in her! But never mind, for the present, you are like all the rest of the world: 'Out of sight is out of mind.' Go on with your story. How did you get a start in Chicago?"

And the young man told of the time when the pavements, the brick walls, and the tall buildings shutting out the sky, were new to him. He made light of a bitter experience. It is a wholesome fashion to do so, and Bjornson had long ago resolved that no one should ever hear the entire tale of his hard days in the search for work in the great city. But he told Trude, with wondering humility, of his first chance to earn his bread in the roaring, mind-distracting town. For a newspaper he had drawn some pictures to illustrate a "spread" about an approaching live stock show, and his bronchos and cattle and cattlemen had made a hit. Through this he finally secured work which paid his living expenses, and now he was able even to send a little money home to his mother.

Then he criticized himself unmercifully. He knew his crudeness, and his want of a background. He knew nothing of the life he was called upon to portray, he was uneven in his skill, doing one part of a picture well, and another most lamely. A year of contact with the world had made the genius very humble, but not an iota of his belief in his artistic star had been lost. He knew he had made no mistake in his choice of a career; but he realized his limitations and his need of preparation.

Trude grew a little restless and Bjornson checked himself.

"I am talking about myself, like a greenhorn from Wayback, and all I want is to hear you!"

His face flushed as he realized that he had overstepped all bounds, in his talk, led on by Trude, and her magnetic, feminine sympathy.

Trude reassured him. "I am no end interested, and you see, I am a sort of an artist myself, in a small way, but along the line, anyway."

Bjornson's delight showed in his face.

"Tell me more, and do let me see some of your work, will you not?"

He looked all around the room for any picture in which she might have had a hand.

"Oh," she said, "I am such a little part of the artistic world, only a sort of poor relation. I do a little etching and photography, but there is no real art in me. Now, you are drawing horses, and some day you will make the horses draw you. There is no such future for me." Her conclusion was lost in laughter.

How clever she was, thought Bjornson. And what a good world this was! How much there was to live for! Then, as he looked at Trude, her face seemed to grow old. She looked like her mother. There came into her dewy eyes a cold, sharp light, as she asked him if he drew the faces and heads of men and women with success.

"That is the hardest thing to do, I know," she said, and when she noted Bjornson's attention to her own face, her expression changed as suddenly as it had when she had struck him as old, and like her mother. For this man was

all eyes. Even the glamour of a deep impression, which was growing into love, could not blind the intent, appraising gaze of the artist.

"Above all things I study faces," he said, and as he spoke her face softened and changed so much that he could not believe he had seen aright. "A man's face is the hardest thing to get."

"Harder than that of a woman?"

She was laughing again. How her eyes shone as she asked the question, while Bjornson thought of the old song about the "nut brown maiden."

"I shall never rest until I have made a picture of you," he declared.

"Rash man, beware!" she warned him, and then she told him that she had an invincible dislike to having her portrait made in any form, and the two argued over this absurd notion until Bjornson felt the pressure of Mrs. McCurdle's opinion that it was time for him to go. It was arranged that the two women were to come to Bjornson's rooms the next evening to see his work.

"And mind, I want to see all of Leda's pictures!" was the parting shot of Trude.

Was she a witch, and how did she know about the drawings of Leda, and all of the studies of her which had been so delightful to work at and so disappointing when they were done?

It was past midnight when Bjornson lay down in his bed, but it was morning before he fell asleep.

His whole being was in a turmoil. He was a dreamer, and he had to readjust his waking visions, the only ones that seemed to have relation to reality. In these fancies he had ever seen an orderly home, in which his mother was installed, and here had appeared a second figure, not one old, and worn with toil, but a blue-eyed, flaxen-haired maiden who loved and tended the mother, and who was loved by the son. Never a word or look of love had passed between Leda and Bjornson, but after he came to his new surroundings and life, he had begun to dream of the girl as one who might some time be in his own home. And he was sure that this was one of the dreams which would some time come true.

Now, on this night, Bjornson suddenly realized that in his dream Leda no longer appeared in her old place. Instead there was a creature of bewitching laughter, brown eyes, and rich, dark hair. With her she carried the spirit of the joy of living. How pale grew the shade of Leda before this glowing apparition!

The words of Henrik Brock came back to him: "Don't forget us, Leda and me, and if you ever need a friend, call upon me." How fair and pale Leda had looked, when her father spoke these words to the departing "Genius," and what a grateful glance she had given her rugged father! But the nut brown maiden drove all but a faint, protesting ghost of Leda out of Bjornson's mind and heart. He told himself that he loved, and for the first time: loved with an intensity as deep as was the depth of the nature and heart of Trude.

Yet he could not altogether drive from him the gentle, shadow-like figure of Leda. And so he wore away the night, but he was keyed up beyond all need of long sleep, and rose from one hour of deep slumber as fresh as the morning air. With full day came, and remained, two shapes to haunt his subconsciousness: Leda, colorless, almost ashen, in her blonde prettiness, and with her, in shadow, the sinister form of Trude's mother. The evil-faced old woman resembled Trude in some subtle way; the causes of the resemblance Bjornson could not trace. He could only wish for the presence of Trude, and with it all clouds would surely pass away.

After a never-to-be-forgotten day, Bjornson returned to his rooms to prepare for the promised visit of the evening. He gave the sullen stove the shaking and the filling of its existence, and for these attentions the malign thing brooded and sulked all the evening. He put his workroom in order, hiding the sketches of Leda, feeling as he did so, as if he were denying some good spirit, and he kept out, to be shown, many of his pictures of the lone tree. But Trude only glanced carelessly at these, after all, and demanded to be shown his portrait sketches. His hour of deepest joy was

marred by this freak of Trude's; but the queen could do no wrong, and he put away his studies of nature and landscape—even the water colors that were his pride, his newest work. Although Leda's pictures remained hidden, he managed to find some heads and figures which gave Trude great satisfaction. The girl's mother had not, so far, appeared, and so Bjornson was free, for the time, of the consciousness of the likeness between mother and daughter which had so tormented him during the night and day. As for Leda, she waned into a transparent impression, no more defined than are those faint, only guessed-at stars in the milky way, to eyes dazzled by the full rays of the regnant moon.

It was after Mrs. McCurdle came to join the enthusiasts, that Trude made a sudden divergence into practical affairs. Bjornson was delighted at the turn she took, though to his great discomfiture she looked more than ever like her mother when she said:

"You must help me. I have a contract for some work, and a part of it I am too unskilled to do. You are just the one to take that part off of my shoulders."

"Help you!" Thus the impatient Bjornson. "Tell me all about it. Whatever it is, I will do it, and be glad beyond anything I can say!"

She smiled, and her great eyes looked like a sea in which a happy lover might drown, thought Bjornson.

"It is a medallion that I am trying to make. You know the fashion of wearing buttons and medals: well, I have an idea of one that will catch the fancy of a million men. I need just the work you can do in the design and drawing of the head upon the medal, a head of Washington."

"What a bright idea," said Bjornson.

"I want the thing out early, for it will be a great success just now, because of the formation of the new patriotic society, The Sons of The Republic, and people are so fickle that we must lose no time."

How very clever she was, again thought Bjornson, a Venus and Minerva in one. He said, "of course," and "certainly," as if he knew all about "the fickle public," and the Sons of the Republic which she so glibly talked about.

"I have everything ready," she said. "All I need is your help for the head, and we will be glad to pay you well for your work."

"Pay!" objected Bjornson. "I want no pay. I shall be glad to do my best for you, but you must let me help you as a friend or neighbor."

But she insisted that the matter should rest upon a purely business basis.

"I am not alone in the affair," she told him.

Not alone? That might mean that some other man was interested with her, and the youth turned sick at the mere thought.

"What ails you?" she asked, noting his look.

Then she gave him a curious glance, and watched him narrowly as she went into details over her scheme. Mrs. McCurdle also gave Bjornson the benefit of her undivided attention, and the artist began to have a disturbed impression that he was being closely watched. The girl did look like her mother; her face had lines upon it. She must be five or six years older than himself, the young man decided. But to him this seemed only his own disadvantage. Her eyes had a hard look in them, now; he hoped she would never be angry at him. There, now she was smiling. Heaven had come again to her face, and to him.

It was agreed that she should bring to him an engraving which he might use as the exact foundation for his design. He was to assist, also, in the etching and photographic work, a kind of thing with which he was familiar. It was to be a small medallion, printed upon silver colored paper, she said, and framed in glass at a trifling expense. "We shall make them by the hundred thousand," she further explained. "We must sell a million of them to make money, a million, and more."

"We!"

That little word again went through Bjornson's heart.

"Who is your partner?"

He could no longer hold back that question. His jealousy of the unknown

was too poignant. He asked for his enemy's name "that he might curse it" like the comic opera hero, though Bjornson was in no comic opera mood.

"Mr. Percival is furnishing half of the money," said Trude, calmly. "He will be here, some evening, and he wants to meet you."

"Have I seen him? I mean, how does he look—how old a man is he?" stammered Bjornson, still under the torture of jealousy.

"No, I believe you have not met Mr. Percival," replied Trude. "As for his age, it might be forty, and he is a tall, dark man."

Bjornson breathed freely again. The muscles of his throat relaxed. Forty was to him a tremendous weight of years. In the Lone Tree country marriages were made early, and at thirty any man or woman was supposed to be immune to the attacks of love. A rival of forty, he told himself, was grotesque. No girl could care for a man of that age—unless—unless—he were rich. Even Bjornson had heard and read of matches for money, or for title, but direct questioning elicited the particulars that Mr. Edward Percival was neither a man of wealth nor a noble of high degree, so, gradually, Bjornson returned to the condition of bliss proper to love's young dream at its rosiest hour, its beginning.

Bjornson threw himself into the work of designing the medallion with great fervor. It must be admitted that he, at first, devoted more time to drawing the charming face and figure of one of the daughters of Canada, than to reproducing the august head of the Father of the American Republic, of which the artist was a proud citizen. Stolen portraits, they were, of Trude, for when he showed her the first study of her charming face, she was bitterly angry, and showed her feeling in a manner unmistakable.

"Never draw a picture of me again!" she said, in a voice which trembled with her effort at self control. "I mean what I say. I will never see you again if you persist in drawing my face, or in any way putting me in a picture."

Bjornson was dismayed. He could scarcely believe that the beautiful girl was as opposed as she seemed to any sort of a portrait of herself, but he found that she was in earnest about it. She was not vain of her beauty, at least. But a disturbing feature of this talk with Trude was the likeness to her mother which sprung into her face when she was angry. She looked old, too, but any angry face looks old; Bjornson was too close a student of faces to have missed learning that.

Trude at last seized the drawing and tore it into pieces, and left his workroom that day, and Bjornson resolved never to show her one of her portraits again. He knew he must make studies of her as long as he saw her, and ever after, if they should be parted. No law can keep the water from reflecting the sky. An artist must picture the face he loves.

It came about that Bjornson, growing acquainted with the needs for help, of his lady of dreams, became a very practical and efficient assistant to her in her project. It became his ambition not only to design, but to etch and perfect the medallion, and, some of the work he was permitted to do, while in other parts of it he soon found that he was interfering with Trude's plans.

The first design he submitted to his fair patroness was summarily rejected. The discomfited artist never again approached this first drawing, in all its delicate detail and finish, but he had to do the whole over again and with strict attention to his orders, too.

When Trude looked at the design she frowned, and said:

"Why have you put that wreath around the edge of it?"

"It is only a suggestion," explained the unhappy Bjornson. "I thought a border of olive and laurel leaves would be a good finish."

"I could cry," said Trude. "I was going to add the details myself, and the lettering—the decorative—is my branch of the work, you know. All I wanted of you was to draw the head, and then I was going on to finish the design."

Bjornson was full of penitence. He promised to make another head at once.

"The head, alone," said the disappointed beauty. "I will do all the rest of the medal."

To Bjornson's request that he might know the motto which was to be engraved on the medal, and the general decorative scheme, in order that he might be better able to allow for these in his part of the design, Trude at first returned an evasive answer, but finally she curtly told him to go on with his work and let her take care of her part, at her own convenience.

Trude certainly did not possess the manner of the Vere de Veres, but that was no disadvantage to her in the eyes of Bjornson. To him it was settled that everything Trude did, or said, was perfect, and that, as compared with her, he was a blundering creature whose mistakes must be allowed for and tolerated only through the kind heart of the star of his existence.

"No frills or furbelows, remember," said Trude, when she saw Bjornson preparing for his second effort.

"No frills of mine, or furbelows, or fildals," assented Bjornson.

Within a day or two he presented to Trude a drawing, an exact copy of the engraved head of Washington which Trude had given him to work from. This time Trude was satisfied. Later, she allowed him to make the etching of the head with his etching and photographic apparatus, on a copper plate, the original from which the medals were to be made, and here too, Bjornson was confined to the head alone, never seeing the plate after the decorations and lettering had been added.

Mr. Percival, in the meantime, had made his appearance, and when he came to see him, Bjornson liked him no better than he had when he had first heard his name as associated with Trude. He was a saturnine, silent man. He treated Trude with a curious indifference, and at the same time, with a certain assumption of authority. As for Trude, she seemed to tolerate Mr. Percival, and no more. This attitude of hers reassured Bjornson. He avoided talking with the man, who spent much time in the rooms of the McCurdles, and Percival took little notice of him. After a time, however, Bjornson came to look upon Percival as a shadow upon the brightness of Trude. The man joined the other dreary shades, which, in the artist's mind, surrounded the bright image of the girl he loved. There were now, of these impalpable, yet immovable mist figures, Leda, Trude's mother, and Percival.

With the acceptance and approval of his work, and the prompt and liberal payment for it—payment was insisted upon by Trude and Percival alike—came an immediate change in the young man's relations with his neighbors. Trude was away all day and until late at night. To his inquiries for her the mother made short answers, and, at the same time, plainly showed her dislike of his interest in her daughter. The natural discord between them was felt on both sides, thought Bjornson, and he sat into the night, working and waiting to hear Trude's home-coming, and as she walked along the hall he knew that Percival was with her.

Inattention and indifference now became his portion when on rare occasions he met Trude. She no longer came to his rooms, nor did she invite him to hers. It was as if she desired to drop his acquaintance. The boy, for he was but a boy, suffered in silent, yet hopeful misery. He could not believe that his dream was over. But more and more he had to live in his dreams, for Trude was almost invisible to him. And in his visions the shadows closed around her.

One evening, determined to make some sort of headway against Edward Percival, even if he could make none in the good graces of Trude, Bjornson knocked at his neighbors' door, and was confronted, in answer, by the mother of Trude. She stood in the doorway, as if barring him out, and told him that Trude had gone.

"Gone? And where has she gone?" asked the dazed Bjornson.

"She has gone to Canada for an indefinite visit," the mother replied. "You know, that is our home."

"London?" persisted Bjornson. "Will a letter addressed to London reach her?"

"She is not in London," said the old woman, with a sardonic smile. "She is visiting friends, and will have no settled address. Good-night." She shut the door in his face.

To wake up some morning and not see the sun is an unpleasant experience, but we know that the sun is where he belongs. If we should hear, from good authority, that our sun had gone on a visit to another system of worlds, we might feel something like the desolation that filled the soul of Halmer Bjornson when he had this intelligence from Mrs. McCurdle. He went, dumb and stupefied, to his rooms, and sat brooding over his dull fire, which smoked, but did not blaze, under the winds of late March. This world was all at once a desert; this world, which, so short a time ago had been revealed to him in its beauty. He would have welcomed back the torments of jealousy if only Trude could have been brought again into his daily sight and hearing.

The next day it was but a dull and listless, and very nearly useless, piece of human machinery which presented itself in the newspaper office where Bjornson worked. When the end of the week came, he was discharged. The manager of his department wanted no moonstruck lads about the place, and he said so with a frankness and decision which left no doubt as to his sentiments or intentions.

This summary action was the salvation of Bjornson. By the time he had again got to work he was somewhat restored to reason and courage. Nothing clears the emotional fogs out of the system so effectually as the stress of immediate bodily need. A meager diet, with the prospect of no bill of fare whatever, stimulates a man to practical efforts and takes his mind off of purely spiritual woes.

Bjornson got upon his feet again, and with his brain cleared of a good deal of misty dreaming, found himself still in love with Trude, but with a new and strong intention to make the most of his time and opportunities when he should see her again. She should be his wife, he decided, or failing that, she should go out of his life forever. The boy was becoming a man.

With the flowers of May she came back again, suddenly, rejoining her mother, who had remained during her absence. Bjornson had not seen Percival since the departure of Trude, and it was to his disquietude that the visits of this man began as soon as Trude was again in her apartments across the way. And it was a different Trude that greeted him, too. She was constrained, listless, absent of mind, and poor Bjornson found himself more than ever quite out of her mind and heart. She did not allude to the medallion, or to any of her work, nor his own. Defiantly, one day when he overtook her in the street—she was on her way down town—the artist spoke warmly and earnestly to her. His love shone in his face, and almost spoke with his tongue, but the girl stopped him with a look. There was a distinction about Trude, and now, even when he knew her to be no lady of romance, but a poor toiler and hard pressed in some way unknown to him, she remained a queen among the women of the earth. This goddess of the top floor of a tumble-down tenement-house had a kind of savage aloofness, a tigress-like impatience of the pitying and stroking hand. She was of the type which draws, yet repels. There was no show of prudishness about her, and no care of conventionalities. She lived her own life unquestioned, and with perfect power of self-protection.

That evening when Bjornson went to see her, he found Percival, sitting as usual, smoking and reading the daily papers. Trude was at the piano, a tin-voiced thing which was a treasure because she sung to it sometimes. She turned, now, to an old, yellowing book of songs, the songs of a bygone time, and turning over its leaves, came to what she wanted. Then her deep voice rose, full of suppressed passion and impatience, and looking straight at Bjornson, she sung the old song, with all its forced sentiment and pathos, sung it from the first to the last line.

"Love not! Love not!" rang out the voice; a message to all who might hear, but addressed to one alone. Bjornson felt it was to him.

There was storm in the air. Percival

took his hat and went out of the house. The old woman with the hard face stooped low over her sewing, and a sigh moved her sunken bosom. Bjornson could not speak. When the song was ended he awkwardly said "Good night," and went to his rooms. His heart died within him.

Percival had treated Bjornson with unvarying indifference, but one morning, not long after the evening of the song, he knocked at the artist's door, and when it was opened to him, confronted Bjornson with a face anything but unmoved. Behind him, at first anxious-faced too, then smiling, stood Trude. Pushing the pale-faced Percival aside, she entered Bjornson's door and walked into his workroom.

"Mr. Bjornson," she said, "we have got to move—now. I am going at once, and mother will follow in a few days. Don't speak, don't ask questions; there is no time; I must be gone. Yes—Yes, of course, I will write to you—or you shall come to see me; only now, you can help me—"

Bjornson assured her that he would do anything she asked, and his heart ached with pity for her. She looked old, haggard, harassed, and—was it fear that distorted her beautiful face?

She forced herself to smile again.

"I want to leave some of my things in your care," she said. "My drawings, my poor little etching outfit, all of my studio belongings, in fact. Can you take care of them until I can send for them?"

"Hurry!" warned Percival, who stood at the door.

"Of course I will take care of your property," Bjornson declared.

Almost before the words were out, Mrs. McCurdle appeared with her arms full of bundles and flat packages of papers and cast the whole armful into the nearest chair. Trude and Percival fell to and brought all the etching and photography materials and machinery, while Bjornson stowed the parcels and general plunder as best he could, in his workroom.

The running to and fro continued for perhaps twenty minutes, and then ceased. Bjornson looked up from the floor, where he was kneeling, after depositing some heavy bundles of paper in a corner of the room. The outer door into the hall was shut. Evidently all of Trude's things had been brought in. It was perfectly still, and Bjornson opened his door and looked out. After all the hurrying and scurrying it seemed appallingly quiet. He remembered how Trude had looked at him, as if she had something to tell him, and how Percival had seemed to stop her. Now she would speak, before she said farewell. He waited.

"They're gone."

It was the voice of Mrs. Dewitt, his landlady.

"It was a quiet flittin'," said the good woman, "and I'm thinkin' the landlord will be in a rage when he comes round. But they've left all of their furniture behind them."

"Mrs. McCurdle is here," said Bjornson, with a sinking heart.

"No, the old lady went with them," Mrs. Dewitt declared. And she tried the door, to find it locked.

To the utterly forlorn there is but one need, solitude. Bjornson went into his room and locked his door. He would never see Trude again. Percival had carried her away, she who had filled his life and made him know what the world might be. He tried to tell himself that there would be a return to the rooms across the way, but his heart had set up for a prophet of evil, and of evil alone. Chill unbelief in all suggested hopes made them as devoid of comfort as are the ashes of a hearth where death has forever extinguished the household fire.

Bjornson pulled himself together. There was good Norse blood in his veins, and the deathless hope of the New World. He would wait for Trude. She would come, or send to him for her property, her little all, and he would follow it to her, wherever it should go. This idea nerved him, and he prepared to go to his work, with a new object in life. He would make every preparation, and go to Trude whenever she sent for him. She had promised to write. And so he calmed his fears and made ready for the day's work.

The day passed like a nightmare, Bjornson working mechanically, down town, and at evening he came to his rooms with the intention to work all night to keep from thoughts of Trude. He went straight to his work room, lighted his lamp, and took up his etching needle and plate.

He worked for an hour, and gained every minute toward control of his nerves, sanity, and self-mastery. Then came a sharp knock at his outer door, and as he lifted his face, a bright light was thrown from the half boarded-up window from which Trude had first looked and spoken to him. The first thought was that Trude had returned; but there was something alarming and sinister in the heavy, hard knocking at his door, and now, too, he heard a rolling sound from the other side of the hall, the noise made by the moving of furniture over the floor.

With hope, mixed with an unaccountable fear, Bjornson ran to his door, opened it, and as he sprang into the hall, he half knocked down a young man, a stranger, of well knit figure, who was just preparing for another grand climax of knuckle exercise upon the door. As the stranger struggled to his feet he gave a cry, and grasped Bjornson by both elbows, in such a manner as to make him, for the moment, quite helpless. From the McCurdle's door another man came, in response to the cry of the one who held Bjornson fast, and the two towed the unresisting form of the artist into his room. The door to his workroom was open, and the eyes of his captors were peering into it, even as they held him tightly in their grip, totally unheeding his confused demands for explanations.

Now came Mrs. Dewitt, the landlady, to join the hubbub, with her two daughters in curl papers and loose wrappers, and Bjornson felt as if he were in the vortex of a whirling dream from which he must awake to find himself again.

"You are under arrest, Percival, or DeLand, whichever your name is," said one of the strangers. "Don't resist. We are officers of the law."

Bjornson's lips moved, but at first no sound came from them. The lack of speech on his part was atoned for by the landlady and her daughters, who shrieked their dismay at hearing the two names given to Bjornson by the officers.

"He seemed all right," wailed Mrs. Dewitt, "and now I hear him called by two names, the double-faced villain!"

"What does he call himself to you?" demanded the athletic young man who had captured Bjornson at his door.

Charmed to be the center of interest, Mrs. Dewitt gave full particulars, not only as to her lodger, but added various data of credit to herself, her antecedents, occupation, possessions, family, character, religion, race, nationality, widowhood, number of children living and dead, all to the immense entertainment of the group of listening neighbors which had gathered in the halls and at the foot of the stairs, attracted by the noise and excitement of the arrest of Bjornson.

The artist was still at sea over the cause of his sudden descent into the arms of the law. His simple nature abhorred the idea of being a prisoner, more than he could have imagined a minute before this experience. His senses, his brain seemed to be benumbed by the blow.

A third man entered the room and made straight for Bjornson's workroom. He took the shade from the electric lamp, and revealed the room, with its piled up litter of packages and paraphernalia. A new sense of misery fell upon the artist as he saw the newcomer begin to tear the wrapping-paper off of Trude's papers and look into the boxes and bundles where she had packed her property.

"This is all right," said the man who was called, by his subordinates, "Major," and he held up a couple of square sheets of pale red paper. Then he opened another of Trude's parcels. He was a slight, wiry man, with a military carriage, a gray mustache, and a pair of keen, kindly eyes.

"I will take the prisoner, Slowboy, and you and Blake can bring the captured stuff in the wagon. Bring everything that has a paper or a picture in it. Bring that trunk, and the chest of drawers there."

The two objects last named were the property of Bjornson, and of his landlady, respectively. In the chest of drawers Bjornson kept his drawings, and in his trunk, also, there were some of his most cherished pieces of work, including many studies of Trude.

"Will you come peacefully with me, Percival?" asked the major, turning to Bjornson.

"My name is Bjornson," said the artist. "Who are you, and why do you arrest me?"

"I am Inspector Graham, of the United Postal Service, and I have arrested you for forgery and fraud. You know very well why you are a prisoner."

"You are mistaken. My name is not Percival," insisted Bjornson.

"That may very likely be, but you will come with me, and we will hear your name and your story later."

They were walking along the stairs, by this time, and Bjornson tried to make some impression as to his real identity, and occupation, upon the inspector, but he was hurried into a cab, and, along with his captor, was whirled along the street in the direction of down-town.

Finally, as they neared the postoffice building, the inspector seemed to listen to Bjornson with more attention than he had given him at first.

He looked at him, and said, "You are younger than I expected to see you, but if you are not Percival, DeLand, or whatever his name is, you are in with him, and it is all the same to me."

Just then the cab stopped and the inspector let down the window, and spoke to a man who had hailed him from the sidewalk.

"They're gone, inspector," said the man, "but we have found their printing-press, and all that in their office in the Beacon Block."

"I've got one of them, but Gertrude McCurdle has got out of town, I suppose, before this," answered the inspector, and the cab drove on.

Bjornson, in spite of the revulsion of feeling brought on by the night's experience, was relieved and delighted to hear this news of the safety of Trude. He decided to keep silent for the present, to give Trude every chance to get away from her pursuers.

He did not know why the officers were seeking her, but he was bound to help and protect her to the last minute. He knew he had been badly used by the girl he loved, and he knew now that she had gone with Percival; but nothing could at once kill his love for the woman who had not scrupled to use him to forward her purposes. His head whirled and his heart beat heavily and slowly, and the lithe hand which lay upon his arm felt like a clutch of hot iron. He thought he would give ten years of his life to get that hand off from him, and be free from the fear of it again. It was the hand of the law, heaviest of all hands, however light be the human instrument of it in its enforcement.

Bjornson was shut into a small room at the top of the postoffice building, and here he was guarded by two stalwart fellows, who regarded him with curiosity, but without enmity. The inspector had informed him that he would see him in the morning and had left him, evidently, for the night. But another officer, a man of sixty years or more, came and looked calmly and searchingly at the prisoner, and as he left the room, he said to one of the guards, "It is not Percival."

Stretched out on a sofa, Bjornson waited for morning, or for the end of the world, or anything that might happen. Once his guards were changed. The men who had arrested him earlier that night came to stay in the room with him until morning. One of them promptly went to sleep, but he of the iron knuckles, who had knocked on the door with such effect, remained wide awake, and kept close watch of Bjornson, who had been searched for weapons when he first arrived in the Postal Agents' quarters.

After some hours of silence, Bjornson spoke.

"What were those red pictures that you found in the packages in my work room?"

"You know well enough," said Slowboy, the special agent.

"What were they?" repeated Bjornson, patiently.

"Bogus postage stamps—you know as well as I do," said Slowboy. Then he added, "I am not here to answer questions. You are."

Bogus postage stamps!

Like lightning the story of the past few months flashed through Bjornson's brain. His whole body tingled and glowed with shame and miserable hatred of life. Cheated, fooled, and used as a tool by the woman he loved! And what a pitiful part she had assigned to him, never trusting him with her secret, never letting him know what he was doing! He acknowledged to himself that, had she told him, he would have readily done all that was possible to help her, even so far as becoming a lawbreaker and a refugee on the face of the earth, but she had not cared to risk taking him into her confidence. He had been used as a tool, and then he had been thrown aside.

Finally he said, very quietly, and his voice had changed, "Do you happen to have a two cent postage stamp, Mr. Slowboy, and may I have it, for a minute?"

Slowboy fumbled in his pockets.

"Here is a canceled one, on an envelope of an old letter," he said. "If you only want to see a stamp, that will do, but if you want one for use, you'll have to wait for morning; you'll need to write some letters, then, I'm thinking." And then, seeing Bjornson looking intently at the stamp, he said, "What nonsense is this? You know the lines and dots on that stamp as well as you know your own face!"

Bjornson said not a word. He only gazed, stricken and speechless, at the square of red paper in the corner of the envelope in his hand.

There was the "Washington Medallion."

There was the revered face, the work of his own hands, and there were the ornamental parts of the design, those that Trude had insisted upon drawing. The stars and the stripes, were there, the two wreaths, and the lettering. Bjornson turned sick as he examined, for the first time in his life, the little article of every day use. Thoroughly shaken at the mean part he had been made to play—Percival standing in the background with a sardonic smile, no doubt—fierce resentment began to stir in the sore heart of the artist. He gave the envelope back to Slowboy without a word.

Inspector Graham sat, the next morning, in a room of his private offices, and with him were two secret service men. Here the entire contents of Bjornson's workroom were in evidence, spread over the chairs, tables, and upon the floor. A litter of wrapping-papers added to the disarray of the place. Sheets of forged postage stamps lay around, "Thick as the leaves of Vallambrosa."

Propped against the walls and upon the sofa-back were Bjornson's studies of Trude, and among them appeared the first, the rejected drawing of Washington, the one which Trude had refused because of the unwelcome zeal of Bjornson in adding the laurel and olive wreath. These pictures were a mystery to the special agents, and the portraits of Trude were being studied, as there must be put forth a mighty effort to catch her, and all Canada was to be ransacked for her. The likeness, under the circumstances, was valuable. Powers, of the secret service, had at once recognized the portraits as those of a dangerous counterfeiter who had been under his surveillance a few years before. Her name she varied. But as Gertrude McCurdle, or McGruder, or McCormack, she was known to the agents of the government who are on the lookout for forgers. To the postal authorities, so far, she had been unknown.

The confiscated stamps gave a red color to the room. Among them lay the gummed paper, the etching plates, and tools; there was a perforating machine, bottles of ink, in short, all the machinery necessary for making postage stamps except the hand presses, which were in the downtown office where the printing had been done.

In Canada, it had been found, Trude worked as "Sarah DeLand," or "Sarah Percival," the last being the name of her supposed husband and confederate.

"They're over the border and far away," said Inspector Graham, quoting

from an old song of his native country.

"Who gave them the tip?" asked Spangler, one of the agents.

"Oh! as usual, the newspapers gave it away," said the secret service man. "They told all about the seizure of the bogus stamps in yesterday morning's papers. Just look at this."

He showed a newspaper clipping, which read:

FORGED POSTAGE STAMPS SEIZED

Postoffice Inspector Graham last night seized a large consignment of U. S. postage stamps which had been received from Canada by Levi Blass, the cigar and stationery dealer in the Blennerhassett Building. Blass bought the bogus stamps at a big discount, and after he received them, he became suspicious, and took them to the postoffice, where they were immediately recognized as clever forgeries. Later in the evening the authorities found and took into their hands two other packages of bogus stamps, and they are on the lookout for others that are reported. The forgers are thought to be in the city, despite the fact that the stamps are advertised and shipped from Windsor, Canada. Arrests are promised to-day.

"Oh! certainly," commented Spangler, "arrests are expected to-day, and that gave the counterfeiters due notice."

"Nothing could have kept the reports of the seizure of the stamps out of the papers," said Inspector Graham, "and we had to wait for Capt. Powers, who happened to be out of town, and who didn't get here until late yesterday. He keeps track of forgers, and he recognized the work of Gertrude McCurdle and her gang, as soon as he saw the stamps. And he told us where to look for her, too, although he thought she was in Canada. She has been there lately, we hear, but she had returned, and was living in the building where we found these contraband goods last night. The morning paper gave her warning, and away she went."

The capture of Bjornson had been a surprise to everybody, including Capt. Powers, of the secret service. He knew the Percivals and their record, but Bjornson was a new man to him, of course. The newspapers gave it out that Percival had been captured in his rooms, with the bogus stamp outfit, but no one at the government headquarters now regarded Bjornson as anyone but a new recruit in the ranks of the law breakers.

One good turn this state of affairs served Bjornson; his arrest by name, was unannounced in the press, and he was so obscure that his neighbors took no pains to inform the public of what had happened to him. No one, outside of the big building where he had spent the night, knew aught of the plight of the newspaper artist.

When Bjornson was brought into the Inspector's room, the first things that struck his eyes, were the portraits of Trude. The shock of seeing her pictures thus exposed, was terrific. All the blood in his body seemed to rush to his head. He turned savagely upon the inspector. The total absence of all consideration for his feelings, the first sign that he is under the ban of the law, which every arrested suspect feels, almost unmanned the young Nebraskan. His look of just pride won the attention of the inspector.

"Sit down," he commanded, and Bjornson obeyed.

The chair was so placed that the prisoner's face was in the strong, morning light, and the inspector studied it while he questioned the artist.

"These pictures, do they belong to you?"

"If anything is mine, they are, for I made them," answered Bjornson. "But I begin to think I own nothing, not even my own body."

"It is certainly in custody, that body of yours," said the inspector, coolly. But he was a shrewd reader of human nature, and he knew that, somehow, he had caught a strange fish in his net. Changing his tone, he soon had the prisoner more at his ease, and gradually he drew from Bjornson the whole story of his affair with Trude. The tale was told with the directness, the simplicity of truth. It carried instant conviction to its hearer. The country boy, in the abstract, was not unknown to Inspector Graham; he had been a raw Scotch pioneer lad himself, in his early days, and he understood, better than did Bjornson himself, all the meaning of the artist's story. The drawing of Washington, the artist's original design

for the "medallion," strongly backed his explanation.

One thing only, Bjornson held back —the home of Trude. This name he avoided, nor would he tell where he imagined the refugees had gone. And Inspector Graham did not question him closely on this point. He already thought he knew where, in Canada, Trude and Percival were to be found. Their stamps had been shipped from Windsor, and doubtless they would go there first, any way, to get what they could of their belongings, which were mostly in that city.

"Have you any friends?" asked the inspector, at the end of the long talk. "In the city, I mean."

"No one I can really call a friend," said the poor fellow. "Down at the paper they may take a little interest in me, but there is no one to go on my bond, if that is what you mean."

"You don't want to ask anyone?"

"No. I'd rather go to jail."

"How is it at home?" asked the inspector.

"Home!" How the word went through him! It is, at last, the folks at home that count, in joy and in sorrow. No one else need be really taken into consideration in this rather hard old world.

"Home! That's what kills me, the thought of the people at Lone Tree!"

"But you have some friend there, surely, who will help you?"

Bjornson was silent. One strong, great figure dominated his imagination. It was the figure of Henrik Brock. He was a man of strength, a man to trust, and he was sheriff of the county now, and in a position to command respect. Out in the Lone Tree country the man was a power, and even here in the great confusion of the City of the West, he could be counted upon by the distressed young Nebraskan. He told Inspector Graham about Henrik Brock, and without delay the sheriff was summoned to the help of his young *protegé*.

Bjornson, in the meantime, was allowed to go free, and he moved his place of residence, but went on with his work, reporting daily to Inspector Graham.

Henrik Brock found his way with no difficulty to the postoffice, and after an interview with the inspector, he went to meet Bjornson at his little room among the West Side tenements. It was only a little more than a week, this long age of trouble to Bjornson, but the experience had made a man out of the boy. The arrest now of Trude and her husband, Percival, by the Canadian authorities, revealed the cause of the recent dejected return of Trude from her visit, and at the same time relieved the fears of Bjornson that he would have to appear against the pair as a witness in the courts of the United States.

"They are done for," said Inspector Graham. "They were caught in time to save us the trouble. They forged Canadian silver quarters last year, according to the reports of our agents. So that ends the matter for a time, at least. You are ready, now, to go home with Brock, aren't you, Bjornson?"

The search of the Americans for the stamp forgers had called the attention of the Canadian government to the two people for whom a warrant had been out for some months, and so Gertrude McCurdle, or Percival, passed out of the life of Halmer Bjornson, but not out of his memory. There was ever a hard place in his heart because of her. And ever, the thought of the bright, beautiful Trude, in a felon's garb, at a felon's toil, was sharp pain to him. That her mother had been a criminal before her was no softener of the hard fate of the woman, in his eyes. He only pitied her the more. There came upon him a gravity, a deep stillness, which remained with him as long as he lived.

It was on the third day after Henrik Brock's arrival that the news came from Canada. The big man of Lone Tree was with Bjornson when he was told. The two remained together, speaking scarcely a word, but the great hearted Norseman divined the sufferings of his young charge.

"It is the way with a genius," said the sheriff, to Inspector Graham. "Geniuses need somebody to take care of 'em. There ought to be asylums for 'em, but we don't have any, so the

friends of geniuses must take care of 'em, that's sure."

"You can take Bjornson back to Nebraska with you," said the inspector. "In my opinion, a genius is only an ordinary human being, with a strong bent in one direction. Such a boy needs education, to give his mind balance, and to enable him to make good use of his talents. He should be trained in mind, and learn something of the world before he goes out into it. Bjornson has had his lesson, the world lesson, I mean, is it too late to give him a little schooling?"

"It is not too late," said Henrik Brock. "He shall go to Lincoln, where the Nebraska boys and girls are given a college education. My Leda is going there. To be sure he is a man, but it is never too late to learn!"

Inspector Graham thought he had heard all there was in the story of Halmer Bjornson, but this was the first time he had ever heard the name of Leda.

To Henrik Brock, his solution of Bjornson's problem seemed perfect, and in his plan lay more than appeared to any creature than himself. Leda was his only child, and the core of his heart. And, untold, he knew what was in the inmost heart of his daughter. Halmer, and all of the Bjornson family, he had known "always," which meant both here, and in the old country, and that was much.

"I'll trust him. I'll bet on him!" decided the sheriff.

The widow's ranch was now well taken care of, and Halmer could work his way through the State University. Then, with what education gives, he reasoned, the young man could again try the world, and if Leda—but here the heart of the father grew tender, and he began to dream of what might be in the years to come. The young people do not have all of life's dreams to themselves.

"I'll bet on him," again he said, "and if he comes out all right Leda shall have her heart's desire!"

And so, one morning, Brock and Bjornson bade Inspector Graham "Good-by" and went on the fast, roaring train out toward the West.

It was on a June morning, when all the rolling plains were covered with blossoming roses, that the travelers left the cars and drove, behind Brock's spirited horses, toward Halmer's home. No one in the Lone Tree country knew of the trouble which had called Brock to the help of Bjornson, and it was long before the story was told, even to Bjornson's mother. Now, as they went along the road through Brock's wide, stretching acres, they came upon Leda, sitting with her school-books, for she was studying for the Lincoln University, and it was in the shade of the tree that she sat. She was as beautiful as the day, and as joyous. She was taken up into the buckboard, to ride with the two, and enjoy the surprise of Bjornson's mother, when she saw him arrive, suddenly, and all unexpected.

And when they came to the mother, in her little sod house, they all cried for joy.

The Skull with the Diamond Crown

BY R. NORMAN SILVER

MR. THADDEUS FIELD, matrimonial agent, was in a restless mood. He was seated at his desk, and the massive, padded swivel-chair that held his gigantic figure creaked now and again beneath his weight as he swung his long limbs thoughtfully through an angle of ninety degrees, that is to say, from the recess between the pedestals to the corner of the black iron curb that guarded the fire-place. His bank-book lay open in front of him. On the blotting-pad beside it was a piece of scrap-paper scored and inter-scored with figures. The panel in the woodwork at the back of the desk stood

open, the glass-stopper of the brandy bottle was standing on end before the aperture, the brandy-bottle itself was at Mr. Field's left elbow, the brimming glass at the right of the blotting-pad.

Thaddeus Field lifted the glass mechanically and emptied it at a gulp. Then he awakened suddenly, as one wakes from a dream.

"That's the third," he said to himself. "Confound it."

He snapped the slender stem between his finger and thumb, and tossed the pieces into the grate. The bowl shivered into fragments. Mr. Field put the stopper into the brandy-bottle, and closed the panel.

A whistle sounded beside him. He raised the tube, drew out the plug, and set it to his lips.

"Well," he growled.

The voice that answered was that of his wife. The language in which she spoke was Spanish. Thaddeus knew by that sign there was a client without.

"A lady to see you," whispered Christiana Field. (It was like her to lower her voice, notwithstanding the fact that she was speaking in a foreign and little-known tongue.) "A real lady," she went on; "young, well-dressed, pretty and very nervous. See her."

"Send her in," answered Thaddeus, and his heart rose. He wanted money badly—in his own words, he was "deucedly short of the dibs"—perhaps this particular visitor might bring him luck; young, pretty, and well-dressed women were by no means frequent callers at the matrimonial agency.

As he meditated the door opened, and Pierre, the tall footman, stepped inside. He had no name to announce, for the caller had given none, but he drew himself up and his lips parted. He seemed to be saying, "A lady—a real lady, young, stylish, and pretty, to see Mr. Thaddeus Field."

Thus introduced in dumb show, the caller crossed the threshold of Mr. Thaddeus Field's private room, and Pierre, stepping outside, shut her in.

Thaddeus Field rose and bowed deeply. Officially his manners were perfect—slightly French. Women like gallantry, and most of Mr. Field's clients were women. Personally, his manners were a microscopic quantity—it is questionable if he possessed any.

"Pray be seated," said Thaddeus Field to his visitor. He placed a comfortable easy chair and arranged the cushions.

The young lady—for she was young, not much more than twenty—sank gracefully into the offered seat with the feminine ease born of coquetry and good breeding.

Mr. Field stood before her, his pulses beating a little more quickly than usual—his keen insight detected a romance.

"May I ask to whom I have the honor of addressing myself?" he asked quietly.

The unknown blushed.

"Miss—Miss Hornby," she replied, "Miss Violet Hornby."

"And in what way may I have the pleasure of serving Miss Hornby?" asked Thaddeus Field.

"Oh," she cried, with a pretty embarrassment, "however shall I tell you?"

Thaddeus smiled.

"These walls," said he, with his official manner, "have listened to many strange stories, Miss Hornby; one more or less can make little difference to them. Yet the telling of it may mean much to you. Until I know your wishes how can I obey them?"

"I know it's very foolish of me," said Miss Violet Hornby, "troubling you at all; but really I was at my wits' end."

"Then I am sure," observed Thaddeus gallantly, "that the problem is a difficult one."

His caller colored charmingly at the compliment.

"I am afraid it is," she said.

Thaddeus sat down in his straight-backed chair, and crossed his legs—as those of Beaconsfield are crossed in the statuette in the National Gallery. The pose suited him—it impressed Miss Hornby.

"Tell me," said Thaddeus, with an air of command, "your story."

His visitor obeyed.

"I am an orphan," began Miss Hornby; "my mother died soon after I was born, and my father went out to Africa, leaving me in the care of an aunt. My father prospered—not that he became

what you could call wealthy; but still he made money. From time to time he sent money to England to be used for me. I grew up, of course, and went to a boarding school, where I stayed until I was seventeen or eighteen. When I was fifteen my father died, and it was found that he had invested his money to produce an income of two or three hundred pounds. This he left absolutely to me."

"The money is in good securities?" inquired Thaddeus.

"The lawyers say," said Miss Hornby, "that the interest will probably grow year by year until my income is five hundred pounds or more."

"I congratulate your father upon his judgment," observed Thaddeus Field; "pray proceed."

"In addition to this money, the interest of which is mine absolutely," went on Miss Hornby, "my father left a mysterious something, which, he said, was of enormous value. This, which was contained in an iron box, locked and sealed, was deposited with his lawyers. Its contents are to remain unknown to me until my twenty-first birthday, when it is to be opened in my presence and in Hector's."

"Hector's?" repeated Thaddeus Field.

"Hector Stanton," explained Miss Hornby. "He is the son of my father's chum, Nigel Stanton. They went out to Africa together, my father and this Nigel Stanton, and were together always until Mr. Stanton died. Hector is four years older than I am, but he was born on the same day. So when I am twenty-one he will be twenty-five. Then, if we are both willing, we are to be married."

"I congratulate Mr. Stanton," observed Thaddeus blandly.

Miss Hornby snapped at him.

"And who is going to congratulate me?" she asked indignantly.

Thaddeus spread out his hands—French fashion.

"I have not the pleasure of Mr. Stanton's acquaintance," he said.

"I should hope you hadn't," retorted Violet Hornby; "he is a horrid little cad of a shipping clerk."

"Is it an unforgivable sin to be a shipping-clerk?" argued Thaddeus.

"Of course not," said Miss Hornby; "but Hector is a cad as well. He is little and bilious and sarcastic and ungentlemanly; I would not marry him if he was the last man on earth, and if I knew the box were worth many millions."

"Is it necessary to marry him to possess the contents of this mysterious box?" asked Thaddeus.

"You see, it's like this," explained Miss Hornby. "I think my father and Hector's father got the thing that's in the box, and they arranged before Mr. Stanton died that we were to marry, and that the thing was to be sold for our dowry, so to speak. But if either of us refused to marry the other, then the one that refused was to lose his or her share. You see, don't you?" ended Miss Hornby breathlessly.

"I think I understand," said the matrimonial agent; "you do not wish to marry Mr. Hector, nor yet to lose your share of the mysterious something in the box."

"Y-e-s," admitted Miss Hornby.

"Am I indiscreet," returned Thaddeus, "in supposing that Mr. Hector has a rival?"

Miss Hornby, blushing like an October sunrise, confessed that such was the fact, that, moreover, the said rival, although honest, was penniless, and that if Mr. Field could help her to keep her share of the mysterious box, she would be ever grateful, etc.

"Is Mr. Hector willing to marry you?" demanded the matrimonial agent.

"Of course," said Miss Hornby, "he professes to be in love with me. But, dear Mr. Field, can't you make him fall in love with someone else—get her to marry him on the sly, and then—then, on my birthday, when the box is opened and we have to say whether we will marry one another—then let me show the lawyers a copy of their marriage certificate."

Thaddeus Field rose and bowed to his client. "May I ask if you thought all that out yourself?" he inquired.

"Certainly," said Miss Hornby. "I have no one to talk to except grumpy old women."

"You would make a fine conspirator," Thaddeus told her. "I admire your re-

source, Miss Hornby; I do, indeed. Permit me to put one question more. Do you think from what you know of this Mr. Hector Stanton that he is the sort of man to be influenced by any other consideration in this matter than that of sharing in the contents of this wonderful box? Again, he may suspect that you have such a disinterested affection for some other than himself, that you would refuse to marry him, and so will abandon the entire treasure —for treasure I suppose it is to him."

Miss Hornby sighed.

"You're right," she said. "Hector's going to have his share if he can, and nothing can turn him from his purpose. He's been slaving like a nigger the last five years to get the two hundred and fifty pounds he has been able to show."

Thaddeus Field started in his chair.

"I do not quite understand you," he remarked. "What two hundred and fifty pounds do you refer to?"

"Oh, I don't think I did mention that," said Miss Hornby. "My father didn't want me to marry a spendthrift, and Mr. Stanton didn't know how his son was going to turn out, so they arranged that Hector must prove that he had saved in five years two hundred and fifty pounds. If he can't prove that, he can't claim any share in the box; and if I marry him I am to lose my share. It's a funny will, my father's, and such a long one; he seems to have thought of everything."

Thaddeus Field rose and leaned upon the mantel.

"You say Mr. Hector has this two hundred and fifty pounds already?" he asked.

"Yes," said Miss Hornby, "and more —three or four hundred pounds. He speculates on the Stock Exchange."

"The deuce he does!" exclaimed Thaddeus, and added, "My dear Miss Hornby, a thousand pardons; a slip of the tongue, I assure you."

"Oh, I don't mind 'deuce.' Jack says 'deuce,' but Hector always says the other word right out—and worse ones, too."

"This box—" observed Thaddeus. "Have you any idea, Miss Hornby, what it contains?"

Miss Hornby leaned forward.

"I oughtn't to say," she answered; "but as you're going to help Jack and me out of this terrible fix I don't mind telling you. Father told me when he was dying—it's a skull made out of gold and set with diamonds; the eyes are diamonds, and the teeth diamonds, and there is a crown on the head all diamonds. Father and Mr. Stanton got it in Africa somewhere. A queer man had had it made—he was mad, really, and all the diamonds he got he had cut and set in a solid block of gold, shaped like a skull. And then he was taken by the blacks, and father and Mr. Stanton rescued him, though not before he was terribly wounded. And when he was dying he told them where the skull was hidden, and gave it to them as a present. So that's what's in the box," said Miss Hornby, "and father told me the skull and the diamonds together were worth over a hundred thousand pounds."

Thaddeus Field went back to his seat, sat down, took a pen, and drew a sheet of paper towards him.

"Answer me some questions very carefully," he said, and with this preface he launched into a cross-examination which did not end until he was master of the principal features of Hector Stanton's life, character, and habits. This achieved, he took another sheet, wrote a brief agreement, and read it to Miss Hornby. It stated in simple enough terms that should the marriage between Hector Stanton and Violet Hornby be rendered impossible by reason of the action of Thaddeus Field, the said Violet Hornby should, within three months after her entry into possession of the security contained in the box left by her father, pay to the said Thaddeus Field a sum equal to 10 per cent upon the gross value of the said security.

Miss Hornby signed this interesting document without demur. Somehow Thaddeus Field had succeeded in inspiring her with a strange confidence in him.

As she laid down the pen Thaddeus rang for the footman.

"How soon will you be twenty-one?" he asked his fair client.

"In six weeks," Miss Hornby told him.

Thaddeus considered.

"Give me a month," he said, and Miss Violet Hornby was bowed out.

Mr. Thaddeus Field had a charming residence in Regent's Park, his wife made a clever and entertaining hostess, and the exquisite little dinners that they gave were much talked about. One of the features of these dinner-parties was a little green table which stood in a corner of the handsomely appointed smoking-room. To mix a metaphor, not a bad way sometimes of expressing one's meaning, that little green table was the trump card of Mr. Thaddeus Field's hand in the game he was to play for Miss Hornby's happiness and his own ten per cent. Yet patience; the game was only just opened—the trump card must be kept in reserve.

No bloodhound on the track of a convict ever hunted down its prey with more unswerving skill than Thaddeus Field hunted down Hector Stanton. He found that young gentleman, as Miss Hornby had prophesied, bilious, sarcastic, and a cad. Nevertheless, Thaddeus cultivated his society. They encountered first at a restaurant in the city where Hector took his modest chop and "half a bitter." Hector, noticing the bulk of the new arrival, christened him "the Claimant." So little did Thaddeus resent this pleasantry that he asked the jester to join him in a bottle of champagne.

In the evening the two met once more at the Palace Music Hall. Hector had announced at the restaurant his intention of visiting the "Palace" the same night, and Thaddeus invited his new acquaintance to dine with him the next day. Hector was willing enough, and the two met a third time at a small house in Regent's Park.

After dinner, Thaddeus had invited two or three men friends to meet his young acquaintance. Some one proposed a game at "nap." Hector was drawn in, reluctantly enough. He did not like cards; there were too many chances. He preferred the Stock Exchange, where skill—at least, skill such as his—counted for something. However, the game was played, and Hector came out on top with a fiver; Thaddeus himself complimented him on his play.

A few days later Hector again dined at the house in Regent's Park, and the green table was brought forth after dinner. This time it was a more enthralling game than nap, and the stakes were higher. But Hector could do nothing wrong. His winnings for the evening were over twenty pounds—his luck was phenomenal. Several of the men advised him to play high while his luck lasted, and told him stories of daring players who had won tens of thousands in a single night.

Hector had been drinking more champagne than was good for him.

"I'll play high," he said a little thickly. "I'll play for what you like. I'll play 'banker' if you'll find someone to make a bank. By Jove, I only wish I could find the Johnny while my luck lasts."

"I know the very man," cried Thaddeus; "he only lives a stone's throw away. We'll rouse him up and bring him in. He's mad on 'banker,' and a millionaire into the bargain. And he has the most awful luck. I won a few hundreds off him myself the other night, and I generally lose at cards. But his luck was worse than mine. I say, Wyatt," he added, "you'll run round to Sinclair's, and tell him we've got a young spark here who'll show him some fun."

Wyatt went, or appeared to go, and in a few minutes re-entered the room with a tall, dark, bearded fellow, in irreproachable evening dress. Hector was introduced to him, the leaves of the card table were opened out, additional chairs brought, and the game began.

For some time the bank lost heavily, and Hector, in common with others, won, celebrating his luck on each occasion with a brandy and soda. Then the luck changed, the bank won, and Hector lost not only his winnings, but the twenty pounds he had previously won, and a fiver of pocket money into the bargain. Thaddeus, always considerate, pressed a loan upon him. Hector accepted it, staked, won heavily, then lost again.

This time Thaddeus did not offer him a loan, instead he offered to cash a check. Hector, half mad with liquor

and the excitement of gaming, wrote a check upon his bank for a hundred pounds. That melted away; he wrote another, which the obliging Thaddeus cashed. That was absorbed in like manner, and again Thaddeus came to the rescue. When this last supply was exhausted, Thaddeus struck: "They had played enough, it was already morning—time all good little boys were in bed," he added banteringly.

They sent for a cab, packed the hapless Hector into it, screaming for his revenge, and sent him home. Before he opened his heavy eyes upon the next day Thaddeus had cashed those checks, and Hector Stanton was a beggar.

Upon the twenty-first birthday of the charming Miss Hornby that young lady put in an appearance at the offices of Messrs. Tankerville and Hardy, solicitors, Lincoln's Inn. But Hector came not, having, indeed, disappeared.

Messrs. Tankerville and Hardy, acting upon the terms of the will, refused to open the mysterious box except in the presence of Hector Stanton and Violet Hornby. The case went into Chancery, and all the Hornbys and Stantons in both hemispheres intervened forthwith. After dragging on for some years the case was finally settled in Miss Violet Hornby's favor. The box was therefore opened, the wonderful skull extracted, and its value realized. As Simon Hornby had prophesied, it brought about a hundred thousand pounds, of which some eighty-five thousand were spent in settlement of costs. The balance of fifteen thousand was paid to the disgusted Miss Hornby, who was compelled to hand to Mr. Thaddeus Field a check for £10,000.

The Valley of Dreams

BY MRS. LUTHER HARRIS

"They who believe that they can speak or keep silence, in a word, act in virtue of a free decision of the soul, dream with their eyes open."—Spinoza.

THE girl had produced a neat drawing-pad and pencil and for some time she had been apparently occupied with the careful outlining of a sketch. She had evidently completed it just as Ellsworth came up. By means of a long hat-pin she was attaching the sketch to the bark of the tree against which she leaned.

Involuntarily he exclaimed: "Shades of Michel Angelo! she has left off the tail!"

She turned at that and their eyes met. She had very large eyes with gray flecks in them like an agate. It was a piquant, vivacious face, far removed from being "faultily faultless." Her nose was delightfully *retroussé* and she had a saucy, dimple-cleft chin.

"It is a *Manx* cow," she said severely, and looked off over the sun-flecked sea. Her voice had a velvety softness with a suggestion, a mere suggestion, of an accent. Ellsworth's favorite belief always had been that the voice is the soul's sounding-board.

"Pardon me, but I fancy you must be thinking of the cats. The Manx cats have no tails."

"Neither have the cows," she said severely.

"I put it up there," she further elucidated, "to see if these gnats and flies wouldn't think it was a real cow and leave me alone for a minute. But perhaps —"

"It does seem expecting a good deal of them. But possibly, if you had not forgotten to attach the tail—"

She turned to him, all the lines of her face breaking into laughter.

"I did forget it," she admitted with delightful candor.

"Will you have a chocolate?" She proffered him a long pink box of that delectable confection.

He had noticed the girl on shipboard, and her careful chaperonage by an extremely plain-featured German *fräulein* afflicted with hay fever. "She is like an Æolian harp on which the winds have not yet played," he had said to

himself, watching the girl's mobile face. She had the look of race, of breeding, and had the rare effect of slenderness without obtrusive angles. "She is like a Saint-Saëns melody," he had said.

And now something had happened to the ship, something about the port shaft breaking off near the truss-block, and they had put in on this little uninhabited island for repairs.

"The captain told me," she said, lifting her disconcerting glance, "of how you got that white scar on your cheek. It was in the war with China against the Japanese. Oh will you please tell me about the battle where you got the cutlass wound?"

Ellsworth laughed, and took one of the proffered chocolates. He was a sun-tanned, lean-featured man nearing forty. Born in a New England village, the son of its favorite pastor, he had been predestined for the ministry. People in old Chelsea were always predestined for something, as if the Lord were under contract to cut them by pre-arranged patterns. They were expected to move in orbits with no deviation from the allotted course. Ellsworth deviated,

He had refused to move in his orbit; and his years of study abroad had gone far toward strengthening his resolve not to be squeezed into a mould in which he did not fit.

Combative, aggressive, fearless, he had held their cabined and circumscribed standards in almost absolute indifference. It had been far from a primrose path. But even his later successes (whose faint echoes had reached Old Chelsea) had failed to atone for his lapse from pre-natal destiny. From the first he had read human nature more and better than he did books. He had achieved success on the principle of the bee, by persistent work.

Yet he had not always garnered honey on purely commercial lines: he had sometimes, indeed often, stopped to wonder at the beauty of the flower, the mystery of its perfume, the miracle of its birth.

With all the cold worldliness, naturally engendered by his hard-fisted encounter with ill-fortune in pursuit of that errant goddess Success, there was in him a subconscious stratum of fine, poetic feeling. He was of the breed of men who, coming against the sharp bayonets of misfortune, bleed easily, but do not die.

He was as much charged with compelling virility as a Leyden jar is with electricity. Men liked him. Women wondered and puzzled over him; no one of them had ever known him.

"Will you please tell me about the cutlass wound?"

Ellsworth laughed, ate the chocolate, and seated himself beside her in obedience to an autocratic motion of her curved wrist. He wondered where she got that *arbiter elegantiarum* air, as if accustomed to "vassals and slaves at her call."

"I like it," she said, "the cutlass wound."

"Yes?" laughed Ellsworth. "I suppose it adds a sinister touch to my beauty; like the last hieroglyphic on a totem pole. I was really never in but one battle and we were so badly thrashed in that one that I do not think that 'these things to hear would Desdemona seriously incline.' I would much rather know, if it is not too seeming an impertinence, where are you going with that funny little *fräulein* who sneezes so constantly and seems to have stepped right from one of Dickens' novels."

"She is Fräulein von Schrader. And she seems to have had an extremely genealogical family. When she says 'we von Schraders,' it is as if she had said 'we Plantagenets,' or 'we Bourbons.' It's perfectly inspiring to hear her talk genealogical flora with its roots firmly imbedded in the Sixteenth Century. The ancestral table must have groaned awfully under its weight of family plate. She perfectly abominates men."

She turned her laughing face to Ellsworth and once more proffered the chocolates. "She says she has never quite worked out the Creator's meaning in afflicting the world with a wholly unnecessary and superfluous sex."

Ellsworth had adjusted his field glasses and was looking off over the sunlit water. He got to his feet and stepped out onto a jutting crag and the limb of a fallen tree which over-

looked the shore. He gave vent to a low whistle.

With a sort of intuitive alarm the girl came and stood beside him.

"It rather looks as if they were pulling out," he said coolly.

"Oh no—" She caught a hurried breath. "They weren't to sail for hours yet. But surely—"

"Yes," ventured Ellsworth, hanging onto the branch and striving to be lightly facetious, "it rather looks 'to a man up a tree' as if we were monarchs of all we survey. It may be, if we scramble down at a great rate, we may be able to attract their attention."

The girl was already gathering her belongings together; her drawing-pad, a pair of long-wristed gloves, and her canvas sea cap. In the hurry of departure she quite forgot the Manx cow and Ellsworth quietly and unobtrusively pocketed this *chef-d'euvre.*

"Dear me," she said breathlessly, as they scampered down the steep declivity, "I—I shouldn't have gone so far. I thought they weren't sailing for hours and hours yet. What will the False Prophet say!"

"Beg pardon?"

"The False Prophet, Fräulein von Schrader, you know. I call her that because she's always prognosticating such perfectly dreadful things about what the weather is going to do and it never does it."

Something in Ellsworth's lean brown face made itself felt in some subtle way as that of a thoroughly well-bred man. With a girlish and unaffected naïveté she gave him her hand over the rough places and her laugh was like the laugh of a fearless boy.

When they reached the beach, consternation wrote itself large in her face. She had a great quantity of coppery hair with bronze lights in it. For a moment she looked about. The island was a tropical tangle of luxuriant growth.

"How long," she asked presently, "do you suppose it will be before they miss us? For of course they will miss us in time and come back. Oh I can just see the False Prophet!" She laughed a smothered gurgle of low laughter. "She will stop tracing the history of the von Schrader family plate from Charlemagne down—and will see visions of cannibals making a nice little meal off me, served up piping hot with red-pepper dressing. And her *toppee—'toppee'* is German for wig, you know—which has a way of getting over her left ear if she even thinks hard, will be ve-very crooked. Poor, dear *fräulein,* I love her, but she does take her *duenna* duties so very seriously, and she is so appallingly intellectual! Sometimes I think she must have boiled down a dictionary and an encyclopedia together and have taken a tablespoonful three times a day after meals. I don't see how she could have assimilated so much knowledge otherwise."

"How Robinson Crusoey it is," said Ellsworth as they calmly seated themselves under a big palm near the shore. "Here we are on an uninhabitated island with nothing to eat but chocolates."

"My name," she said suddenly with engaging candor, "is Suzanne Reichart. And yours, I happen to know, is Emery Steele Ellsworth, because I looked in the ship's what-you-call-it book and saw it. Is this your first trip to Central America?"

Ellsworth admitted it was, and she rattled on:

"Then you don't know how perfectly heavenly it is. Once I spent a year down here. I have an uncle who was then consul but is now living on a big coffee plantation in the interior. Then I went to France for my education. But always I have been looking forward to coming back to this Eldorado of my dreams. I have remembered the long gallops through the beautiful mountain-roads, with the air heavy with perfume from the orange-groves. Of turning a path and coming on to the sudden beauty of a waterfall. Of fording the yellow swollen rivers; of stopping in the shade to scoop up drinks from the cool springs with a *jicara.* We went on long excursions to the banana *fincas* on the coast, and heard the nightingales in the thickets in the long night rides home. Once we spent the night in a bamboo-thatched hut, and the woman made *tortillas* for our breakfast. And

all night long we could hear the fingers of the wind running through the harp-strings of the forest."

Ellsworth looked down at her, noting the delicate tracery of blue veins on her temples, the wavy closeness of her coppery hair. She had lost none of the grace and delicacy that clings to childhood yet he was conscious that her ardent face held the presage of an intense and compelling young womanhood. "There is a garden in her face," kept running through his his head. "What real poets those Sixteenth Century old chaps were; 'there is a garden in her face.' "

Ellsworth drew out his pocket knife and began whittling a stick in renewal of an old boyish habit. "It is a Lotus Land," went on the girl's purling voice; "you wonder, after awhile, if there really is any use in 'ever climbing up the climbing wave,' and conclude you have had enough of striving, 'rolled to starboard rolled to larboard,' and you wish only to live out your allotted days in the joy of calm. Oh I would love to take it in my arms—that over there;" she spread out her arms with a pretty gesture toward the southward. "I would like to take it up and fondle it."

A great flock of blackbirds with crimson slashed shoulders rose on noisy wing and made for the shelter of the deeper wood. It was late afternoon and the sun was hot on the sands. A gray heron, trailing his long legs till they cut a straight swathe through the water, rose with a half human, demoniacal scream and sailed lazily off.

"Me! I loathe cities," she said with her queer little foreign shrug. "New York is like an enormous hive of bees. I want big spaces, the broad sweep of the open sky, the windy hillsides, the silent forest."

She drew him on to talk of himself, his literary ventures. Ellsworth had fought his way through life doggedly, valiantly, and in obedience to a high ideal of conduct. The secret of his literary success, (such as it was,) lay in the fact that he had a way of getting down under the vest of humanity to its heart.

"In my early youth," he admitted with a whimsical laugh, "of course, in common with my kind, I had no doubt that what I called my 'genius' was a real phœnix, hatching out a brood of those fire-proof birds, with a safety clutch on posterity. Now I begin to fear sometimes, indeed to shrewdly suspect, that it is nothing more than a Bantam hen on a porcelain egg. And my hope of young phœnixes grows beautifully less with the years."

She laughed and looked at the little fob watch at her belt. "Mercy!" she said, "it is actually almost two hours since—since the *Alhambra* left us. You see Fräulein had gone in to take her nap, and I only intended going a little way. Sometimes, you know, 'time ambles withal;' again he goeth as a snail taking the "rest cure." Today he ambles."

Presently she yawned, curling up her rosy tongue like a kitten's; then laughed and apologized, her dimples deepening. He felt that she had certain subtle reserves in spite of her candid naïveté. Perhaps, in spite of her apparent simplicity, she was as complex as her sex entitled her to be.

"Yes, you may smoke;" she glanced down at him under the velvet of her lashes as his hand had unconsciously sought his vest-pocket. "I know you've been dying to the last half hour. Perhaps the smoke will keep off these gnats better than my Manx cow did. Do you suppose there are any bread-fruit trees on this island? Aren't you almost famished?"

Ellsworth bit off the end of his cigar, but before lighting it drew off the little emblazoned paper ring which encircled it. Laughingly she held up her little finger and he slipped it on.

"There!" he beamed through the big rim of his glasses, "we are betrothed, with only the paroquettes for witnesses." There was a boyish streak in Ellsworth in spite of his years and his rather unusual abilities.

Toward sunset the big prow of the vessel showed on the horizon. Later, consternation, amusement, curiosity showed in the faces that met them as they climbed from the small boat up the sides of the ship. Questions bombarded them from all sides. Fräulein von Schrader, sneezing patiently,

and with her brown *toppee* very much on one side, leaned over the taffrail.

"*Ach Himmel;* how I have vweept!" she gasped. "I am re-spon-sable to the Herr Colonel that I bring you safe." She had rolled her handkerchief into a little tight wad and dabbled her nose with it tragically, like Bernhardt in *Camille*. "I haf go to sleep; then you go leave yourself on a vild island with boa constrictors and cannibals!"

"This is Mr. Ellsworth, *fräulein,*" laughed Suzanne, "and it's entirely owing to his bravery that I have not been devoured by boa constrictors. And only by superhuman efforts has he been able to hold off the cannibals, else nothing would have remained to tell the tale save my silver belt-buckle and my hairpins. We have eaten all the chocolates and we are simply famished!"

Ellsworth extended a brown hand and Fräulein von Schrader took it as if it were hot and she had carelessly mislaid her asbestos gloves. A man of any sort was the *fräulein's bête noir,* but a man who would get himself left on an uninhabited island! She hurried the girl off to her state-room. At the foot of the companion-stairs she turned, gave him a nod of adieu and her perty, winking smile.

Later, at table, when the ship listed, *fräulein* put a hand to her gray silk bodice and glared at Ellsworth as if she considered him responsible for the rocking of the ship. "We are running into a typhoon," she said with the conclusive tone of a lawyer citing a paragraph from the Revised Statutes "I shall be very ill."

"I have always thought of a modern writer of fiction," she confided later to Suzanne, "as little more than a person with ink-bottle insides and a fountain-pen attachment."

On deck when Ellsworth, who was always gentle and considerate to old ladies, especially those not endowed with the fatal gift of beauty, remarked on the beatific state of the weather, she met his friendly advance with so frigid a response that his innate sensitiveness felt the recoil which he had often experienced when he had inadvertently dipped the mucilage-brush into the ink-bottle.

However, he picked up her tortoise-shell glasses on an average of every fifteen minutes and brought her steamer-rug. As he thoughtfully tucked it about her he could not repress the humorous thought of what a whacking price she would command in an Italian vineyard treading out grapes.

Over the *fräulein's* shoulder he caught the sparkle of Suzanne's eyes, and her face rippled with laughter like a rose in a breeze.

That night the wind freshened and had no longer the balmy softness of the day. Ellsworth put on his old 'varsity sweater, filled a pipe, and went on deck. He was standing aft by the port-rail sheltered by the deck-house from the sweep of the wind when a voice with a laughing lilt in it said:

"Don't speak, please, I've just seen the new moon over my left shoulder. Let's both make a wish." She had a veil about her hair and her hands were deep in the pockets of her long steamer-coat. She looked very young and girlish and somehow suggested to Ellsworth the freshness of a May morning—a May morning deep in the wood, with the dew fresh on every flower.

"I am to be 'barely polite' to you," she dimpled radiantly, with her little winking smile, and pushing back the hair blowing about her face. "only 'barely polite,' and you are not to wish to become any better acquainted."

Ellsworth took off his eyeglasses and ran a thumb and finger down his nose as if to erase the lines of laughter in his face. "So? Then I gather that the good *fräulein* desires us to be 'better strangers,' to quote Orlando?"

"She—er, considers our introduction quite 'irregular.' If I were drowning and you had jumped off a wharf to rescue me, *fräulein* would have considered our introduction 'irregular,' and would have warned me against further acquaintance. She has discovered that you have written some essays which she considers socialistic, and she says a socialist is only the polite name for anarchist. Oh, please, have you any bombs up your sleeve? She says 'maidens like moths are ever caught by glare'—"

"She must be referring to my spectacles," hazarded Ellsworth, blinking

through them. Even when the girl's eyes were serious the *vis comica* disported about the humorous corners of her mouth.

"She says she has never been in love with any man but Oliver Cromwell." At this Ellsworth laughed outright, and they stood a moment in silence, watching the phosphorescent glow on the water.

"Isn't this air divine?" she said, lifting her face to the breeze. "It tastes as Chopin's Third Nocturne sounds."

Presently she turned to him, her face all one sparkle of animation, "Do you know," she ventured naïvely, "when I first saw you I thought you were an Englishman, because you had a blackthorn stick thrust through the straps of your portmanteau. I'm glad you're not; they always talk about pheasants, and foxes, and cabinet ministers, and cricket, and curried kidneys. And the way you scowled through your glasses I thought you'd talk Henry James incomprehensibilities—but you don't! And I thought you smiled like a soul stripped of its illusions—but you don't! Not when I see you close."

She drew from Ellsworth that he was being sent to Costa Rica by a big metropolitan daily to "cover" the revolutionary doings which were making things interesting down there at present.

"I must be going in." The filmy chiffon of her veil was like a soft white halo about her face. "I was to be 'barely polite' to you, you know. How polite can one be without being too polite I wonder? And she says I must remember I am a 'female orphan.' She laughed up into his face, a gleam of raillery in her eyes. "*Misericordia di Diôs.* I will not be called a 'female orphan!' " With that she gave him her hand a moment. "Good-night," she said, and was gone. "Alas! that fleet things are so sweet, and sweet things are so fleet," quoted Ellsworth as he paced the deck.

She came out on deck next morning fresh from her bath and glowing like a pink sea-shell. "We are almost home," she smiled nodding toward the shore, and drawing on her long gloves.

"Home!" echoed Ellsworth with a distinct shock. "You didn't say, last night"—

"See, there is La Libertad on that long, level expanse with its red-roofed houses so bright under the green slope of old San Miguel. See its blue-gray crater yawning like a sleepy monster above them?"

A long iron pier thrust a black arm into the sea. The heavy swell necessitated their anchoring, and immense lighters came out, landing passengers on the iron pier.

"Do you see that big iron crane with a circular seat?" asked the girl excitedly. "It holds four, and we are put into that like prisoners of state, and lifted way up above the yeasty foam of the waves and landed on the pier. It's no end of a lark! Then there are hand-cars run from there to the custom-house—that's jolly, too. Then one takes a big covered stage, only they call it a *diligencia* down here, that is drawn by five horses and looks as if it came right out of Gil Blas. And only think! the mail is carried afoot! Isn't that just too delightfully medieval for anything? Sometimes one has to wait for the stage hours and hours, to come clear from the other end of the route. It takes eight hours to go twenty-five miles—but such heavenly miles!"

"Then you are living at San Salvador? At the capital?" asked Ellsworth, knowing the bad form of prying questions, but unable to resist the compelling insistence of this special thirst for knowledge.

"Oh no!" Her face was at an angle that left him nothing to look at but the outline of her cheek. "On a large coffee-plantation near a small town in the interior. Yes, *fräulein,* I am all ready." Fräulein von Schrader was tightly buttoned up in a long-waisted, close-fitting coat much resembling those worn by the signers of the Declaration of Independence. She vouchsafed Ellsworth a frigid handshake, and her farewell had such a note of finality it sounded almost like cutting him off with a penny. Suzanne gave him her hand and it nestled in his a moment like a fluttering bird. "Good-by, and thank you

so much for keeping off the boa constrictors. I trust the lure of the Lotus Land will get in your blood and you will wish to 'roam no more.' Good by." And with her little winking smile she was gone.

Ellsworth paced the deck long in solitude that night, looking up at the stars. With a laugh he found himself wishing he had not eaten all of the chocolates, but had kept one for a souvenir. "Anyway, I have her Manx cow," he said. "How like a day on the Chilkoot Pass she was—so radiant! There are several small towns 'in the interior.' By Jove, I wonder near which 'small town in the interior.'

More than a year had passed and Ellsworth was sitting one evening in a San Francisco café sipping an ice after the theater. The place was filled with light, music, color, laughter. At a table near him a party of four were making merry, in rather excited voices, when he caught the glimmer of mahogany-red hair under a white velvet toque.

Instantly he was athrill with a palpitating interest and curiosity, and came out of his mood of lazy contemplation with a start.

"If by any marvelous chance it should be the girl of that little island incident." He stole a glance again at the loosely braided hair low on the nape of her pretty neck. Suddenly he realized with what tenacity that memory had always clung to him. Subconsciously it had been always with him. The girl turned her head slowly like a flower on its stem. Her face revealed itself to him as that of an extremely chic and very pretty girl, with a dazzling complexion and Irish blue eyes. He turned away. "Bah!" he growled under his breath, "that was like looking for a forest anemone and finding a forced, hot-house orchid instead!"

But the incident set him thinking. Why, he ruminated, in view of the many crowding events of the past year, did that memory cling to him so persistently? Presently he came out under the stars and as the night was fine walked to his lodgings.

For an hour after reaching there he sat staring into the coals of his smouldering grate-fire. Suddenly he snapped his fingers in a decisive gesture. "Jove! why shouldn't I?" He got to his feet and prowled about the room. "No reason on earth why I shouldn't. There couldn't be a better time, anyway. I'll gather material for that bit of pastoral work I've had in mind so long. It won't be altogether lacking in commercial flavor—my little wild-goose chase. I can hear the drawl of her fluty voice with its rising inflections. How rich she was in the bright repartee which makes the listener wish he had said that himself—and the wide wistfulness of her eyes, innocent as a wood-pigeon's. Of course I know it's a Quixotic thing to do and savors of incipient paresis—but I'm going. And that way she had of shutting her eyes when she laughed—I wonder how about boats."

He began tumbling over papers on his writing table, running over "Arrival and Departure" headings. It was characteristic of Ellsworth to go at a thing hammer-and-tongs. He lost no time in arranging his affairs for several months' absence. Most of his time during the eventless passage he spent in furbishing up his rusty Spanish and studying a map of Central America.

"I'll land at La Libertad where she took that queer old Black Maria," he soliloquized. "On a big coffee plantation in the interior," sang itself through his head like the phrases of a litany.

"I am convinced that this trip is personally conducted by Fate," he said to himself a great many times as he sat in the long twilights making his pipe purr contentedly.

At La Libertad he waited for the ramshackle stage. When it arrived he was found to be the only passenger. The driver demurred till Ellsworth discovered that the click of silver was no less efficacious here than in other climes, and they were soon rattling off over the dust-filled ruts. "All things come round to him who waits—and tips," he ruminated sagely.

"By George, she was right—they are 'heavenly miles,'" he mused as they wound their slow way through lofty palms, still within hearing distance of

the heavy booming of the surf. At the little hillside village of Zaragosa they stopped and drank *"tiste"* at small tables under the trees. It was served in wooden calabashes and was passed about by Indian girls, their bare arms shining like conch-shells.

"Now I wonder what becomes of all the Minnehahas," mused Ellsworth, "I have never yet seen an Indian maiden the sight of whom would not have caused any high-spirited horse to shy."

The perfume from the orange-groves seemed to saturate the air till it was like a delicate taste on the tongue. There was that in the air, which as Leigh Hunt says, "makes one catch his heart up at the feel of June." "It is a land," mused Ellsworth as he stirred his *tiste* and watched the lazy shadows down the one broad, unpaved street of the village, "of sentiment, of romance, of serenades under a big lambent moon, of sun-kissed days, and languorous, tropical nights. I wonder now if it could possibly have been Zaragosa? 'On a big coffee plantation near a small town in the interior.' I don't believe one would be on speaking terms with his alimentary canal if he consumed a great deal of this native drink. She said it was a Lotus Land, and that it would 'get hold of me.' Already I feel that it has, and that I never want it to let go."

He looked about his room in the little Salvadorian hotel the next morning when he wakened with the first glimpse of dawn through the heavy blinds. "Not only the furniture is of mahogany," he yawned, "but I am convinced—so are the mattresses." He punched viciously at the granite-like straw-mat beneath him. The number of his room, he observed with a grin, was indicated by a red chalk mark on the door. He dawdled over a slow breakfast on the wide verandas. It was a *festa* day, the streets were filled with a light-hearted and merrymaking crowd. The hair of every laughing *mestizo* and *senorita* held a red rose tucked coquettishly behind the ear as only a Spanish girl can tuck a rose. Strings of mock pearls and glittering beads hung about their brown throats; on their white satin slippers flashed gay buckles and rosettes. Little spirals of fragrant smoke wreathed upward as they nodded and smiled or took their cigarets from between very red lips to exchange laughing badinage with passers-by.

A double row of mimosa trees round a park looked inviting, and Ellsworth seated himself under an awning-covered kiosk. "On a coffee-plantation near a small town," went on the tireless iteration in his brain. He watched the kaleidoscopic throng weave its web of color through the intersecting paths. He wandered on through the streets past the gayly stuccoed houses. In the market place Indian women with stolid faces exhibited an extraordinary collection of wares.

"I wonder," he cogitated over a cigaret, "I wonder shall it be Zaragosa, Ilopango, or Santa Tecla? Somehow I seem to lean toward Santa Tecla, it is so much more euphonious. We once had a cook named Tecla and I remember she made uncommonly fine waffles. What am I waiting for? Do I expect a star to appear in the East, or the finger of Destiny to point the way? I remember when I was a little shaver—and in doubt—I used to catch a 'granddaddy longlegs' and see which way his leg pointed. I wonder if there might be one about."

At moonrise he mounted a pessimistic mule and rode out toward the broad white strip of road that wound between borders of palms and bananas to a height where he could look down upon Santa Tecla's valley. The air was heavy with the cloying sweetness of dew-wet flowers. Curious, gnarled cacti looked like gnome creatures writhing in torture. Swaying orchids hung from the trees like a hasheesh eater's drowsy hand. Myriads of fire-flies flashed in the cool depths of the valley. Old San Salvador's volcanic peak stood silhouetted with sinister clearness, its sharply outlined crater seeming to yawn with the *ennui* of the ages.

Beyond the hovels, roofed with tile, were other more pretentious *haciendas*. "Here at last is Arcadia," breathed Ellsworth in an ecstasy. "Small wonder nature hedges it in with a jealous rampart of hills—'and they came into

a land where it was always afternoon.' All nature seems yawning and donning her pajamas preparatory to retiring. It is a Valley of Dreams."

When he turned about to retrace his way the pessimistic mule seemed to need considerable prodding to wake him from his mood of melancholy contemplation. After a slow half-mile Ellsworth was conscious of the rumbling of wheels over the rough hillside and the cracking of a whip. Before him in the white moonlight a carriage loomed into crisp relief against the background of the trees. It was a medieval looking affair which to Ellsworth's fancy at once seemed to suggest Dick Turpin adventures and Old World gallantries.

There were three horses harnessed abreast, the middle one, only, in the shafts. As they met in the narrow roadway between the overhanging branches of the trees, Ellsworth drew his mule to one side to let the lumbering vehicle pass. Its occupants were plainly visible in the white wash of the moonlight.

There was the driver, an ebony black negro in a white coat with flashing brass buttons, very erect on a sort of elevated box-seat. Then a military looking gentleman with snow white hair and a little white imperial. He was facing Ellsworth as they passed on the cobble-strewn road and raised his hat with rather a grandiloquent gesture. The two on the opposite seat, and whose backs were toward him, he barely glimpsed in passing. He caught a whiff of cigaret-smoke and saw the vaguely outlined figure of a young man. Then he had a mere dissolving view, nothing more than that, a shadowy silhouette of the girl. She was laughing and was talking in a mingling of liquid Castilian and English. He glimpsed the mere outline of her face turned from him, and bending toward the young man beside her.

But in that fated moment he saw the reddish auburn of her hair through the meshes of a black lace *mantilla* which shrouded it. For just one moment he wondered if it were the mere "visualizing" of what had so filled his thoughts.

He had raised his Panama at the courteous salute of the elder man, and sat now with it held in air as if posing for an equestrian statue for a public park. Too astonished to realize what he was doing, he stared after them as they passed on down the moonlit road, under the great arches of the trees.

Then, as the queer lumbering vehicle creaked into the distance he burst into a high catch of laughter. With a boyish abandon he slung his Panama high in air, catching it again with remembered skill.

"Didn't I know it was Santa Tecla!" he burst out, addressing the ambient air. "Didn't I feel a pricking in my thumbs every time I even thought Santa Tecla! Of course I did! And the gentleman of the white imperial is, of course, 'my uncle who was consul, but is now living on a large coffee plantation in the interior.' Looks as if he might be an ambassador, or a French marquis who had escaped the guillotine. I would know that glorious Roman empress hair if I saw it on the planet Mars. Jove! how it lighted up under this splendid moon! It was made for moonlight like that, and shining through the meshes of a black lace *mantilla*."

Presently he addressed the mule: "Hot Tamales," he said pleasantly, "let me tell you for your own edification, that there are certain basic principles in metaphysics by which one may be reasonably sure of the objective verity of phenomena. We saw that Roman empress hair—we most certainly did not dream it. Come, step along lively, for to-morrow—" he paused suddenly and laughed again.

"Where have I heard that this is called *Manana* (tomorrow) Land?" Only once, at a turn in the road, he paused and looked back over the sleeping valley. He laughed again softly and said aloud:

"And yet men, who are fools, prate that Paradise is lost!"

Upon inquiry the following morning he learned that a tramway, which consisted of a lumbering car drawn by four mules traversed the twelve miles between the capital and Santa Tecla.

A curious, warming glow, a sense of elation deep in his consciousness accompanied him as he passed the

blossoming almond-trees, the scarlet bloom of the pomegranate, and went deep into the violet shadows of the valley. A kind of transparent tissue-of-gold haze enveloped it, and everywhere were bird-songs, continuous and full-throated. It followed the rattling tramway like a running accompaniment; and every where was the bosky, aromatic odor of crushed fern and wild thyme.

The multi-colored stucco houses hobnobbed closer together as he neared the town. Over all loomed the huge grass-grown crater, its yawning mouth seeming to threaten the blossoming fields beneath.

The village seemed built with the single idea of earthquake shocks, the houses squatting as if in fear, but surrounded by gardens of surpassing beauty. After securing his quarters at the little hotel he wandered about the town. Everywhere were bright splotches of brilliant scarlet hibiscus bushes, and soft mosses, and the searching sunlight over all.

Over the door of a rather down-at-the-heel looking building he saw the Stars and Stripes fluttering, and said to himself—"One never appreciates Old Glory so much as when one sees it fluttering from a stick in a foreign land—and lizards crawling up the stick."

In the evening, soft candle-light shone through unglazed windows. "Tomorrow I will purchase a decent mount," he said to himself as he sat with his heels on the veranda rail, sipping *aguardiente* and watching the moon over the crater, "then I shall traverse the entire interior of Salvador till I find that Titian red hair again. Funny how many different kinds of a fool a man can be, isn't it?"

It is recorded that once before a man had offered a kingdom for a horse; it looked to Ellsworth as if nothing short of that would be likely to bring forth one on this occasion. It proved indeed to be a mule-infested land and he was several days in securing even a tolerable mount. The first evening he cantered about over the country-roads trying the paces of his dearly-bought treasure. More and more he was enthralled and fascinated by the drowsy beauty of the scenes about him. "It is like *Paradis sorti de l'onde* of which the tenor warbles," he said. "No one should approach this valley save a poet with laurel-wreathed brows. Only Herodotus or Homer should think of writing here."

He was in this exalted mood of adoration when at a turn in the road he came upon an extremely picturesque *hacienda* set back among the trees. Somewhere he had seen a play with just such a stage-setting. He almost expected the *dramatis personae* to appear and with careful forethought lay bare to the audience their most secret emotions.

He came nearer, his horse at a walk. Among the roses was a girl armed with a huge pair of scissors with which she was snipping off the roses and dropping them into a basket on her arm. She wore a summery, broad-brimmed hat of a Come-into-the-garden-Maud variety, most enticing. She was attended by an ebony satellite in the way of a very small and very black darky boy who lazily picked up the roses she carelessly dropped. A hedge of cactus, waist high, circled the grounds, and behind this prickly rampart the girl moved about among the roses; and as he passed he distinctly heard her humming Chaminade's "*L'anneau d'argent.*"

"*Le cher anneau d'argent que vous m'avez donné.*

"*Garde en son cercle étroit nos promesses encloses.*"

A Saint Bernard puppy, two fox terriers, and a silky collie frisked and snapped about her, making jumps at the roses as she clipped them, and all barking in different keys. On the veranda the distinguished looking gentleman of the white imperial sat sipping an iced drink. On the lower step a blonde chap with a pre-Raphaelite profile and a silky leonine mane of hair tossed back from a very white forehead, was rolling a cigaret in a one-handed Mexican way.

"He looks," mused Ellsworth, "a good deal like my idea of a Latin Quarter student before I had seen the real thing."

A tame flamingo strutted about the

courtyard. The place was an enormous coffee-plantation, not a half hour's canter from the town.

Ellsworth rode slowly on, his head in a whirl. "Well," he laughed presently, "what are you going to do about it, Hawkshaw?" But the laugh held a boyish note of triumphal achievement.

What he really did do about it was to ride out next morning to satisfy himself as to a thing he had barely glimpsed in passing the night before. He wished to verify his impression that the place adjoining was really "For Rent; Furnished," as its placard implied.

It was a wide-roofed bungalow and was set back in a garden which seemed a perfumed tangle of unpruned rose-bushes, and blooming hibiscus, and a multitude of common flowers running riot in an untrampled luxuriance of tropical growth.

He dismounted and looked about the place. A tea-house in the garden particularly appealed to him; it was latticed and literally roofed with a tangle of wisteria and trumpet vine. Rustic seats encircled it and a rough table stood in the centre. He saw in this an ideal place for work. Already he fancied about him here the few books that companioned all his wanderings: Omar, Shakespeare, Horace, Spencer, Whitman, Maeterlinck. Who is it says "If you know a man's favorite books you know the man?"

Though Ellsworth prided himself on being able to turn out copy in the violent ward of an insane asylum or even at a woman's sewing-circle, yet he glowed with anticipatory delight at this isolated and silent retreat. It stood very near an opening in the hedge which stretched its green length between that and the adjoining plantation.

Ellsworth rode back, hunted up the agent, procured the keys, and went through the place. He was enchanted with it. He had become enamored of a scheme which made him smile at its simplicity and chuckle at its completeness.

Then he made his way to the telegraph office in the village, his mind busy with its suddenly concocted plans. Much to his amusement he found that business for the general public was only transacted at noon. "These people have divined the leisure of eternity," he grinned, and calmly waited till the presiding official had returned from breakfast.

Toward dusk he rode out again, lured by the fascination of his new quarters. He wandered through the low-ceiled rooms, made interesting by carefully collected curios of a leisurely and eccentric traveler. He sat down on a rustic bench by the tea-house, his back toward that inviting opening in the hedge. He lingered here a long time, unconscious of the deepening dusk, dimly conscious only of the perfumed warmth, the velvety softness of the air.

Presently he was electrified into an upright position and a gasp of astonishment by the feel of two soft palms over his eyes and a voice with a laughing lilt in it in his ear.

"Open your mouth and shut your eyes. Now don't look,—play fair! It's awfully good; it came in a box from Canton. Now open your mouth."

Which Ellsworth obediently did; the soft palms left his eyes and instantly a bit of spicy ginger was popped into his mouth.

He turned and in the dusky gloom confronted her. Her eyes enlarged and fixed themselves on him in an almost hypnotic stare. Her laughing face blanched to pallor. Her voice ran a tremulous *crescendo* of bewilderment through the gasping "Oh-h-h-h" that came from her lips. "Who—who—" her hand went to her throat a moment with a childish gesture of astonishment. "I—I thought it was Algernon!" Then apparently overcome by embarrassment and terror she caught the white folds of her gown in her hand, turned, and fled, swift as an arrow and as noiseless, through the long lush grass and tangled vines of the garden.

Ellsworth drew in a laughing breath and closed his eyes, feeling the cool palms again over them, the faint suggestion, the mere wraith of a perfume such as one catches in passing through a wood where there are violets hidden in the grass. Hearing the velvety

undertones in her laughing voice, he opened his eyes and turned as if still expecting to see this fleeing Atalanta, fleet-footed as befitted a goddess, soft of tread as a wood-nymph.

Something barely visible on the grass at length caught his eye. He picked it up, held it in the palm of his hand, and laughed softly. How absurdly small it was! how helpless and lost it looked! It proved to be a soft gray suéde slipper, every curve of the wearer's foot, the high arch of the instep, a dozen curves of individuality, impressed on it like a personality. He set it upright on the bridge of his hand, its high French heel coquettishly tilted, and smiled broadly as it seemed to preen itself and smile back at him like a flirtatious court beauty sure of her charm.

"I'll wager Cinderella's was a perfect ferry-boat by comparison," he beamed in silent contemplation. Suddenly his face lost its laughing lines just as one sees the reflection in a mirror-globe, when it swings on its pedestal, change the reflected image from a face of mirth to a mask of tragedy. He thrust the little suéde slipper into his pocket and strode off toward the town.

"Now who the deuce," he soliloquized in glowering perturbation—"now who the deuce is 'Algernon?'"

You would have said her whole attire, with the exception of her short divided skirt, was filched from the chiffonnier of an elder brother. She wore a broad-brimmed sombrero with a tarnished gold cord much the worse for the tooth of time; its pristine glare of garniture was softened by wind and weather. She wore a trim little riding coat, a distinctly masculine stock, loose-fitting dogskin-gloves, and also carried a stout crop. Her ridiculously small feet were encased in stout riding boots that looked as if they might sqush through a great many puddles and yet come out as dry as a thesis on the Immortality of the Soul.

She was off her horse and with excited gesticulation was helping an unfortunate teamster right his cart which had overturned on a side hill. His assorted collection of fruits and vegetables were in obedience to a law of gravitation, fast making their way to the foot of the hill. Ellsworth, who had come out early for a canter over the hills, came suddenly upon this diverting spectacle, and dismounted to lend assistance. The girl turned toward him as he came up, her hands full of mangos which she was tossing back into the cart. A look of utter astonishment swept over her face. Then she dropped the dusty fruit and held out both hands:

"I knew it would get hold of you, —this Lotus Land," she laughed. "I have been looking for you at almost any turning in the road for more than a year. Let's help this poor fellow right his cart, then you can ride back with me to the *hacienda*."

As if it were a perfectly ordinary occurrence, this meeting on the sunny hillside, they fell to work with a vim, their heads very close together over the process, and the righted cart was soon bumping on its way. Then they mounted and rode back toward the village.

"My uncle," she said, giving him the full sweep of her lashes, "will be enchanted to see you; particularly when he knows you are from his native state. He rarely ever goes back to the States, he so dotes on it down here. He says it is the ideal life and I quite agree with him. He says that when he goes back to New York he feels as if he must break into a run as soon as he reaches the dock, and that the only face he ever sees on the street is the hurry-up face. That they make a kinetoscope out of life. He says they have ball-bearings even in their walk, and that they look as if they had swallowed the get-there-quick microbe. He says that they not only 'burn the candle at both ends' but they set it off in the middle, too. And that they want even their drinks fizzy, as if they were in a hurry to get out of the bottle. He says the automobiles make him feel like constantly holding onto something to keep from being blown off the sidewalks. And he says it is joy enough for him just to get back where there are no "Keep off the grass signs."

Ellsworth stole a glance at her face. It was perfectly grave, yet with those sporting elves of laughter in her eyes.

"Do you know," she flashed upon him suddenly, dimpling with disconcerting naïveté and lifting her eyes with their agate flecks direct to his, "that I still have that little tinsel ring?"

"And I must plead guilty of still cherishing the Manx cow."

"Of course, I saw you take it," she beamed with disarming candor, "but I couldn't pretend I did, could I? I wonder you have cared to guard and treasure such a tailless monstrosity."

She rose upright, standing straight in her stirrups, shading her eyes with her hand, and looking about as if in momentary indecision.

It occurred to Ellsworth that he had never seen anything so charming as her face under the softening shadow of the faded sombrero.

"There is a short cut through here," she said, and touched her mare with her spurred heel. She led the way through overhanging vines and low-growing branches, through a winding disused road, sitting straight as a cavalryman in her saddle.

Sometimes she bent to avoid a prickly branch or pushed a limb aside laughing a warning to Ellsworth over her shoulder to avoid its rebound. He followed on in a sort of daze of wonderment. How had it come about? Not many days ago he had been sitting in a San Francisco café and had seen that Titian hair—and the wrong face had turned to him. He had felt a nauseating disappointment. Then he had started out, a kind of modern Sir Galahad after the Holy Grail, and—

He reined in his mount suddenly as they came out onto the main traveled road again. Was he really cantering beside her? By raising his eyes could he really meet her sparkling glance, or was the whole thing a dream and would he wake to find himself on that mahogany mattress again?

"You are coming in," she said as they neared the *hacienda* and with her delightful *de par le roi* air, "There is Uncle Otis with his finger between the pages of his adored Marcus Aurelius or 'The Anatomy of Melancholy.' He is always hobnobbing with those musty old philosophers except when I lure him away from them. He is such a dear! my Uncle Otis. On the great Last Day, when the roll-call of the just is sounded, Uncle Otis, if anybody, will be entitled to rise and with cheerful, uplifted megaphone shout: 'Present!' The way he combs his hair over that dear old bald spot on his head is just too pathetic!"

The old gentleman was approaching them, walking with an erect, military swing, his clean-cut profile suggesting to Ellsworth's fancy the vigor and vitality of an old eagle. His dress was unconventional in the extreme; a soft, India silk shirt with turn-down collar, worn under a loose sack-coat. His gray hair grew rather long and was brushed back from a high, scholarly brow. He had singular eyes of puzzling intensity.

The girl slipped from her saddle, throwing her bridle to the small darky boy by the gate, who stood digging one black toe in the gravel and tossing stones at the lizards by the fountain.

"Mr. Ellsworth, this is Colonel Reichart," she said, taking the elder man's hand and leading him forward with her twinkling smile. "It was Mr. Ellsworth, you know, Uncle Otis, who was so kind as to get left on the island when I did."

"Bless my soul! not one of the Old Chelsea Ellsworths?"

"I guess I must plead guilty," smiled Ellsworth, a swift and electrifying memory flashing through his mind. "I am one of the Old Chelsea Ellsworths."

"Gad! then I knew you when you were in knee trousers. Well, of all the strange happenings! Bless my soul, Suzanne," he turned to the girl, his face a beaming garden of smiles, "why, the Ellsworths and the Reicharts were 'thick as thieves' in Old Chelsea in days gone by. You must be Emery. Come in, we'll have some cool *aguardiente;* it's growing devilishly hot in the sun."

"And I remember you well, Colonel Reichart," beamed Ellsworth, returning the elder man's vice-like grip of the hand, "I knew you came down here a number of years ago as consul, but I didn't know"—

"Oh no, I dropped out entirely. Guess they think I've long been gath-

ered to the bosom of Abraham." He gave a soft guttural laugh like the croaking of small frogs in his throat.

There were wicker seats, big cool Canton chairs, and a small tea-table under the trees. It was like a garden scene *à la Watteau*.

Suzanne threw her sombrero and gloves onto a chair and ran her fingers through the copper-bronze of her hair. Then saying "I will find Linda," she disappeared into the cool shadows of the *patio* beyond.

Ellsworth and the colonel fell into an animated conversation. The St. Bernard puppy brought a small gauntlet-glove and laid it on Ellsworth's knee, looking up at him with soft, humid eyes. Something in the fresh fragrance of the glove seemed intimately personal and appealing.

Presently Suzanne appeared, followed by a white-aproned *mestizo* bearing a tray. There were tall glasses in which the tinkle of ice sounded, a plate of cocoanut-cakes, and the inevitable orange-marmalade. Ellsworth's mind was in a whirl as he realized the net of circumstance and chance. He recalled the telegram he had sent and the reply received that morning. Memories of an old romance went dizzily through his mind; he wondered vaguely, did the wind of Destiny waft him hither? As they chatted over the wine his subconscious mind was in a maze of incoherent thought. The pictures that wrote themselves before his mental vision were like a series in a cinematograph.

A burly overseer appearing presently, hat in hand, the colonel went to superintend the pruning of his orange trees.

"I have taken the house over there," said Ellsworth pointing through the trees, and with his usual abruptness, "for six months."

"The bungalow?" Her straight brows were just faintly elevated. "Oh, that is delightful."

Suddenly her face went pink from her neck to the low-growing hair on her temples. Something atavistic conveyed the thought that flashed through his brain at that moment to hers. He remembered the soft touch of her hair against his cheek, the laughing command, the spicy tang of the ginger.

She set her glass on the table and the agate flecks shone brilliant in her eyes. "Then," she said breathlessly, "it must have been"—

"Yes, it was," laughed Ellsworth, "and it was uncommonly good ginger. I should have known it came from Canton if you hadn't told me."

At that she laughed outright, her cheeks incarnadined, and lowered the velvet fringe of her lashes. "I—I made sure it was Algernon. He so often goes there to compose his sonnets. No one has been living in the bungalow for the past year. I never dreamed"—

"No, I fancied you didn't or else I shouldn't have been the fortunate recipient of the ginger. I gather that some highly blessed individual"—

"Algernon is my cousin, you know, —Uncle Otis' son."

No, Ellsworth did not know; suddenly the world looked supernaturally fresh and new. The tame flamingo strutted about, spreading his iris-hued plumage in the sun.

"Algernon is a poet," she went on with her queer little winking smile; "you see, he simply has to live up to his name. His mother was ridiculously fond of Swinburne and she handicapped him like that. It demands nothing short of 'lisping in numbers' you know, like Pope. He has never had one of his poems published yet, but he says that as soon as the sod is well knit over his obscure grave and he has died from too great activity of the cerebral cells, people will be falling over each other to buy his poems. He says 'seven cities claim a Homer dead, through which when living Homer'—wore out all his sandals chasing down soulless editors. He is engaged now in writing what he calls an Italian *villanelle*. (I believe that the word is derived from villainous.) He says that if there were any appreciation of real poetry left in this pushful age he would be conceded the 'greatest Roman on the asphalt.' I call him the Parnassian Orchid," she laughed delightfully.

"Why not Parnassian Rubberplant?" beamed Ellsworth through the big rims of his glasses.

"I'm very fond of Algernon and I wouldn't mind his poetry at all if

he could only ride." She said this as if it covered every sin in the decalogue. "But he can't even fall off his horse gracefully. He just wabbles off like those funny little manikin things one frequently sees in the shooting-galleries. He has written two epics which have been declined, and now he is writing the third one to complete a Trilogy of Failures. Oh you naughty Nibs! you have eaten my glove!" she said suddenly, addressing the St. Bernard. Then she tossed a handful of cakes high in air and the entire aggregation went into a series of wild yelps and snappings, leaping and catching the cakes with incredible dexterity.

Some impulse made Ellsworth say presently, his eyes on the rim of his wine glass: "Did you ever happen to know of an early romance, an *affaire de coeur* in your uncle's life?"

"The unhappy affair with 'the beautiful Henrietta Wright', who jilted him? I have always wondered how any girl ever could have jilted Uncle Otis. I have always been consumed with curiosity to know what it was about."

"It was about chickens," vouchsafed Ellsworth solemnly.

"Ch-chickens!" she gasped breathlessly.

"Yes; chickens." He laughed softly and she came and sat down and looked at him across the table, her chin propped on her linked fingers.

"Tell me about it, the chickens and everything; I want all the harrowing details."

"It's funny how close bathos treads on the heels of pathos, isn't it? Now you wouldn't think 'to keep chickens or not to keep chickens' was a very broad field for sentiment, would you? Yet it was the rock whereon they split."

"You don't mean Plymouth Rock, do you? There are chickens named something like that."

Ellsworth gave his quiet, self-contained laugh. "You see, my Aunt Henrietta was absurdly fond of chickens."

"Your Aunt Henrietta? Then do you mean"—

"Yes, that 'the beautiful Henrietta Wright' is my aunt. She has snow-white hair now, like the silky floss one finds in wild milk-weed pods. She must be almost fifty years—young. She has never married. She is perfectly adorable, though she is simply blue with Puritanism and has never been able to get it out of her system. And she is coming out here next week. She will be living right over there in that bungalow."

Ellsworth pointed dramatically, feeling this the psychological moment for his *coup*.

For a moment she looked dazed; then she said excitedly:

"But how did you know"—

"I didn't. It was just a queer throwing of Fate's dice. When I sent for Aunt Henrietta I had no idea her one-time lover was within a thousand miles. I—er wanted the bungalow myself, you see."

Suddenly he became absorbed in watching the pompous strutting of the flamingo in the court-yard. All about them the grass was aflame with crimson poppies.

"Please tell me where the chickens come in," she said.

"Well, as I have before remarked, my Aunt Henrietta was absurdly fond of chickens. She was an extremely pretty girl and it goes without saying that there were lovers galore. But she chose your Uncle Otis; the day was set, the wedding invitations out, even the pyramidal wedding-cake was baked with its white icing cupids cavorting in sugary circles round it. In some way it came about that your Uncle Otis declared his antipathy to chickens, and remarked casually that there would be no white Leghorn abominations and Cochin China chanticleers strutting about his property. Then my Aunt Henrietta said icily that she certainly intended keeping hens. Whereupon your Uncle Otis remarked that she was certainly mistaken if she supposed for one moment that there would ever be hens of any variety whatever cackling over their premises. Then my Aunt Henrietta asserted that whithersoever she went there also went hens."

"How ever could she," burst out the girl, her eyes snapping, "weigh my Uncle Otis in the balance against hens!"

"And since he objected to one she said it was therefore necessary to dispense with the other. Then she gave him back the engagement-ring with the magnificent gesture of a Lady Macbeth scorning her lord because of that little affair about the daggers. And when he rode away, with his head very high in air and his lips tight shut, what—" Ellsworth leaned forward holding his peroration for the dramatic moment and watching the agate flecks in the girl's eyes—

"What—oh what did she do?"

"She fed that wonderful wedding cake to the hens."

In spite of this melodramatic *finale* the two looked into each other's eyes and laughed.

"Poor, dear Uncle Otis," she said with a caressing drawl. Though there was only the shrill screeching of the flamingo about them, it seemed to Ellsworth her voice filled the place with nightingales.

"Then my Uncle Otis went abroad," she went on, "and somewhere on the continent he fell in with the Wests; they were old family friends. The daughter Editha was in very delicate health, indeed was thought to be 'going into a decline.' She fell madly in love with Uncle Otis. At any rate he never made love to her, but when he was leaving them to return to America her mother came to him and told him frankly of the girl's infatuation. She said that at best her daughter could live but a few years, and she begged him to make those few years happy ones. And he did. He was all that could be asked in a husband who did not love his wife. And all the time his heart was back in Old Chelsea with 'the beautiful Henrietta Wright' who jilted him because he wouldn't keep hens!"

"It wasn't exactly a 'tempest-in-a-teacup,'" laughed Ellsworth, "it was a tragedy in a hen-coop."

"Here is Algernon," said Suzanne, as the blonde-haired, long-limbed youth of the pre-Raphaelite profile strolled up, carrying a writing-pad under one arm and looking curiously at Ellsworth.

"There are not many cakes left, Algernon," she said easily; "this is Mr. Ellsworth." Algernon extended a very white hand and gave him an absent-minded stare. He was smoothly shaven and thin-lipped like a Jesuit priest. He entered into languid conversation with Ellsworth.

"A painfully apparent case of *mania egotisticalis*," said Ellsworth to himself, "I fancy he is afflicted with what Browning calls 'august anticipations of a dim splendor ever on before.'"

"I've just been reading over the last canto of my *villanelle*," he explained, sipping his glass daintily. Then he set it down and began rolling a cigaret in his one-handed Mexican way. "And I can just hear Byron and Tennyson and Keats splashing through the Styx, coming back to tell me how I make them feel like thirty cents."

He gave a thin cackle of laughter like the sudden downward swish of a violin bow. At that moment the dogs, fighting over one of the wafers, overturned the tray. The remaining contents of the bottle, together with a generous quantity of orange-marmalade, distributed themselves indiscriminately over Algernon's elegantly creased trousers.

"Mercy!" Suzanne flung up her hands with a wild catch of laughter—"your trousers look like a map of Manchuria with the war route marked out in orange-marmalade. Isn't this gay!"

Presently, as Ellsworth rose to make his adieux, a beaming and bearded gentleman of Teutonic type crossed the lawn coming toward them.

"It is Herr von Schrader," said Suzanne, the "dear *fräulein's* brother."

Von Schrader had been in America just long enough to believe himself conversant with English—as she is misspoke; and to thump his collarbone melodramatically when he spoke of liberty, equality, and the pursuit of millions. He paid Suzanne florid compliments, going crimson right up to his white eyebrows. On moonlight-nights he brought his guitar and sat in the *patio* and warbled *"Ich wollt meine Liebe ergösse sich"* in a guttural, Teutonic, throaty bass. And it was really beautiful to hear him mix up indiscriminately Bunker Hill, Christ-

opher Columbus, J. Pierpont Morgan and the Monroe Doctrine.

With the assistance of Frederico, a glossy-skinned native, and Alsace, his stout wife, the domestic machinery of the bungalow was soon in smooth running order. The tea-house in the garden had become Ellsworth's established workroom. Manuscripts, intermingled with pipes and tobacco jars, littered the table.

"Mercy!" said Suzanne coming in one morning and surveying the disorder about her, "I suppose this place is another exemplification of 'genius and the flowing shoe-string.' "

The colonel had fallen into the habit of strolling in often. Even Algernon, between spasms of versification, lounged in, scattering cigaret stubs and *bon mots* indiscriminately about.

Ellsworth entered the place one sunny morning in conversation with a tall, white-haired, very patrician looking woman in whose cheeks was the delicate pink one sometimes sees in the heart of a blush rose. She had reserved gray eyes, singularly white hands and a serene dignity of manner. They had been seated and talking over Ellsworth's work for some time when his keen eyes detected the outline of a military looking figure in the distance across the hedge, evidently about to pay him his morning call. Ellsworth rose hastily and remarking that he must give Frederico some instructions in regard to the vine-trimming, beat a hasty retreat.

The colonel was bareheaded and very good to look at in his immaculately white duck and loose knotted cravat. His high-featured face had the ruddy glow of a man whose conscience and digestion are both normal.

"The new rose has bloomed at last!" he announced delightedly, advancing with his eyes fastened lovingly on the half-opened bud in his hand, "I've been ten years perfecting it. I promised a few slips of it to a horticulturist in New Orleans. It is to be called 'The Henrietta!' "

Then he lifted his eyes and every shred of color left his face. He dropped the rose and for a moment those two faced each other, looking across the chasm of the years. With a backward whirl of memory they stood again in the little New England parlor, with its marble-topped table and its hair-cloth furniture. In her eyes he saw reflected those strong years of his young manhood—a mirage of the soul. It goes without saying that in this crucial moment the woman was first to recover herself. She laughed and extended her white hand under its ruffle of old lace. The color swept her face and neck and went in a pink wave even to the soft gray hair above her forehead.

"You!" she laughed breathlessly, "Otis Reichart! Why, I would have been no whit less surprised at meeting the Wandering Jew!"

"There are chickens absolutely running all over the place!" Suzanne had come into the tea-house a week later and dropped into a chair, limp with laughter. "Cochin China, Black Spanish, bantams, and some yellow-legged what-you-call-ems, every horror of a hen under the sun! This morning they dug up three of his *Gloire de Dijon* roses, and you know there's nothing in the world he prizes like his roses, unless it is his old brown pipe and that copy of Rasselas that once belonged to George Sand."

Ellsworth took off his glasses with a downward swoop of thumb and finger. Always the girl's voice seemed to bring emotion near—within touch.

"Isn't she just like an ivory miniature, your Aunt Henrietta?" she went on with bubbling enthusiasm. "She suggests the heroine of an early Victorian romance, and should be set in a little circlet of diamonds. She is like Olivia of Wakefield, and should always wear a white flower in her hair. It doesn't seem to me any woman could be as angelic as she looks! Her hands are like delicately carved bits of rose-marble. I don't see how a woman who looks like that could ever have thrown that wedding-cake to the hateful old hens! How is your story coming on?" She glanced at the disordered manuscripts.

"It isn't coming on," shrugged Ellsworth with grim humor; "my hero is a Frankenstein monster—a composite monstrosity. He is no more a hero than a *papier maché* palm in a penny-machine parlor is the real thing. The

only question in my mind is as to the proper manner of his taking off."

"You're not going to k-kill him?"

"I am," said Ellsworth with all the bloody relish of a Medici knifing an enemy. "I would enjoy pinning him to the wall with a hat-pin and watching him wriggle. He is too blamed perfect. 'He is but a stranger here, heaven is his home'—and far be it from me to keep him from his rightful inheritance."

"Wouldn't it be lovely," she said with feminine irrelevance, "if it should be an Indian summer romance? I mean Uncle Otis and your Aunt Henrietta. I'm sure he would make love in blank verse and kneel to minuet time. I've noticed that for the past week he hasn't been dallying over Horace's loves in musty old Latin; he has been picking up your Aunt Henrietta's ball of wool when it rolls over the grass, while they sit on that garden seat by the fountain, holding delightful *conversations-à-deux*. Yesterday I saw him take a strand of that fluffy thing she is crocheting in his hand and say sweetly:

" 'This is what, back in Old Chelsea, we used to call a 'kiss-me-quick.' I remember when you wore one, Retta, it was white and had pink tassels on it.' Then he said presently: 'Do you remember when to be able to make a good ricochet shot in croquet made one as popular in society as an expert bridge player is now?' "

" 'Yes,' she said, 'that was just about the time I first began to rub my cheeks with mullein leaves.' Then she laughed softly and the little frogs croaked in Uncle Otis' throat. This morning I heard him singing 'Believe Me If All Those Endearing Young Charms.' I didn't know before that he could sing, and—*Misericordia de Diós!* he can't!"

Ellsworth found himself thinking again of a flower and the dew as he watched her face. Her boyish sailor collar was turned back from a throat as round and white as the breast of a bird.

In the course of weeks it came about that the households of the *hacienda* and the bungalow behind the trees were as one. The old romance, nipped in its bud so many years ago, bourgeoned and bloomed anew.

In the *patio*, which was converted into an out-of-doors living room, the colonel and Ellsworth were communing over a late cigar. Dusk had deepened into the soft glow of a starlit night. Down the long, shadowy paths of the rose garden, Suzanne was strolling, the elder woman's arm about her waist, their voices pitched in low and intimate tones.

"Child," Henrietta Wright was saying, out there in the stillness of the dew-wet rose-garden, "there is nothing in the world worth living for but love."

"Strange history, wasn't it?" said the colonel, presently, flicking the ash from his cigar and looking dreamily off down the garden-path. "That of my young brother Oliver. Poor devil! You know, I suppose, that he went abroad, lived a number of years in France, and married a young girl of distinguished family. In fact, she was the only daughter of old Count Defoe, an eccentric, grouchy, queer old duffer, who never found it in his heart to forgive his daughter for what he considered a disgraceful alliance with an obscure American nobody. Just before her death she wrote, begging the old man's forgiveness for the sake of the child. She died very soon after Suzanne's birth. The letter was returned unopened. He was hard as nails, the old man, and no more 'bowels of compassion' in him than a jelly-fish. Though her own hope of reconciliation had failed, she passed out of life believing that the daughter would sometime come into that of which she had deprived her. Poor Oliver died soon after that—lost his grip on life when she passed out of it. I do not think Suzanne has ever seen her grandfather. She was educated in a remote province in France because her mother wished it. The old man has given no sign of any knowledge of her existence. As far as I am concerned I hope he never will. She is absolutely content with this pastoral life down here. She fancies she is really housekeeping for me." His face broke into its tenderest, most whimsical smile,

"because she carries around a huge bunch of keys that do not unlock anything in particular. She does charitable sewing for the native children—which has to be taken out and sewed over again, bless her heart."

He shook silently and the little frogs croaked in his throat.

As Ellsworth paced the gravel walks that night under the low-hanging stars he communed with his soul in fierce unrest:

"Now what a fool am I! Here have I been letting myself come down with an incurable case of *tormento d'amore*, as the Italians say—the veritable 'sickness of love.' And with a girl who may sometime inherit a title and all that it implies; and who will for the rest of her natural existence dwell in a rarified atmosphere as far removed from my very commonplace, workaday walk in life as the cloud-capped height of a mountain is from the valley dwellers below." He realized how far he had drifted from the things which had hitherto seemed vital in life, and had lost himself in the mere elemental conditions of a simple, sane, right sort of living.

The golden days followed each other. Ellsworth had a queer sort of consciousness that some day he would wake from a dream, and with a start would drop back into a world of unpleasant realities. He wondered vaguely which way he ought to jump when Damocles' pendulum swung.

The suddenness with which it swung left him in little doubt as to which way he ought to jump. It materialized in the form of an extremely swagger, well-groomed individual who exhumed the very atmosphere of Paris, and whose whole attire announced the last word in the world of fashion and the boulevards. He was preternaturally tall and thin, and his bones announced themselves through his well built clothes like the rocks on a beach at low tide. He had presented himself just at twilight one evening when Colonel Reichart sat smoking a solitary cheroot.

With Gallic aplomb he had presented his credentials, had introduced himself with elaborate explanatory preface and many genuflections, and had justified his presence by a clear statement of facts.

After the first shock of the announcement the facts cleared themselves in Colonel Reichart's mind, though he had the look of a man who has been dealt a staggering blow. He remembered his duties as host. He would have remembered that had Beelzebub honored him with an unexpected call. He must find Suzanne. A man, he mused, as he went blindly off to search for the girl, a man who wears violent, waxed *mustachios* like that, is fit only to do the heavy villain rôle when the lights are low and the first violin picks grewsomely on one string. He must find Suzanne.

A day later Ellsworth sat tilted back in a rickety chair in the tea-house, his feet among the discarded manuscripts. He glowered viciously at the ink bottle. "I might have known," he was saying in fierce self-scorn under his breath, "I might have known all the time that those absurdly small feet of hers were made to trip down marble-stairs in a duchess' dainty shoon—with diamond buckles on the toes! There was never anything utilitarian or plebeian about them. She was born to live up to those feet! They are *haute noblesse* in every proud little curve. Whether they are in patent leather Colonials with soles as wide as the piazzas at a summer hotel, or in high-heeled suédes—they were born to the purple! And now, if I would observe the Eternal Verities, is the proper moment to make myself scarce; to take my medicine like a hero and a gentleman and a free born American citizen. And, by the great horned spoon, I will do it gracefully! The Spartan boy with the fox gnawing at his breast will be nothing, to my masterly calm. I have had such hard lines in life I begin to feel I am like that fellow in Tom Moore's poem whose dear gazelle always dies. Here, beyond a doubt, is where my cue says: 'Goes down center right. Exit.'"

"So, after all, little Suzanne has come into her own." The voice had that delightful half-nasal drawl only possible to the *bona fide* down-Easterner. Henrietta Wright had come

n with her hands full of mignonette and rosemary leaves. Ellsworth took a more conventional position, his feet coming with a click to the floor. He still glowered darkly at the ink-bottle. "Yes," he said non-committally.

She began arranging the leaves and flowers in a tall vase on his table, her head critically on one side.

"He looks as if he had just stepped out of a French play," she said slowly —"the gentleman of the waxed *mustachios* and the India-ink eyebrows who came to announce the glad tidings of her inheritance. It seems the grandfather repented on his deathbed, as they always do in three-volume novels."

"It was necessary," and Ellsworth shrugged his one-shouldered shrug— "in order to observe dramatic sequence. She is thus fortunately given the *entrée* into those sacred places of the social hierarchy which it is her right and doubtless her desire to enter." He spoke with the dry conciseness of a lawyer's brief.

Henrietta Wright re-arranged the flowers, eyeing them critically. "It's funny," she said enigmatically in her caressing drawl, "how often a man's own idiotic pride is cap and bells for a fool."

With that she trailed softly out, leaving Ellsworth to transfer his astonished gaze from the ink-bottle to her graceful, retreating back.

But the little love god, who has had things much his own way since the beginning of time, moved a few dice himself in this changing game called life as things were at this particular pass. Ellsworth had announced his intention of returning to the states. The frustrated romance of long ago, in which the prosaic hen had played so prominent and fateful a part, had been resumed, and was now consummated by the quiet reading of the marriage service in the little village church.

It was the evening before Ellsworth's departure. He had fought out some long, hard battles with himself. It is the bloodless battles that try men's souls and test the metal whereof character is molten.

It was over the little latticed gate of the garden they had said their last "Good-by."

In classic tragedy the characters would have made soul-rending speeches at a climax like this, Ellsworth mused sourly, smiling at the prosaic age in which we live. He had measured his platitudes carefully and got them off with painstaking exactness, in a perfectly dull and emotionless voice. And then the horrible thought came to him of how much worse dead lives are than dead bodies. But one could no longer look at life through a Gothic castle window, as when knights went a-tilting at tournament and joust and died for love. Nowadays—the thought of his work which had hitherto been his fetich, nauseated him. It would be a mere stringing together of futile phrases, like sitting at a loom in darkness weaving at random a colorless and meaningless fabric.

Only a few moments before, he had met Suzanne coming, as she explained, from an errand to the village drug-store. She held a small bottle in her hand. He had turned about and walked with her to the gate.

Unconsciously, held by this mood of bitter melancholy and a futile fury against Fate, he had traversed the entire distance between the bungalow and the village. He found himself passing down its one long, unpaved street. Suddenly he was brought out of his mood of abstraction by the sight of a flying figure coming toward him with the speed of a winged Phaeton. He recognized the wild looking figure as that of a dapper little drug-clerk whom he had often seen behind the counter in the one drug-store the village boasted. The man's eyes were goggling, his face had gone the color of putty, and he was sprinting in breathless terror.

"*Diôs mio! señor,*" he panted as he took breath beside Ellsworth— "it is me that am the imbecile beyond words!" His chest was heaving, his lips quivering in uncontrol. "I have done a most terrible thing, *señor!*" he struck his forehead wildly with his clenched fist—"I have given the young *señorita* from the *hacienda*—the Mees Suzanne—I have give the wrong

bottle! I—I have mix the bottles! I—I have give the Mees Suzanne poison"—

But he got no further. Ellsworth said something chokingly under his breath. And for a moment the Recording Angel took rapid dictation.

He turned, and fell into the long loping stride of the practiced runner. Only once he megaphoned back through his closed hands: "Send a doctor—you fool." Then he fell again into his loping stride.

On the big stone seat in the garden, where a smiling Cupid, gray-green with moss and lichens, posed with drawn bow, Suzanne sat suddenly very erect. No, she must not cry here in the garden; her eyes would be red; there were servants about. She got dizzily to her feet. His Nibs, watching her face in the thickening gloom with a dog's intuitive knowledge of something perturbing in the air, gave a low, plaintive whine. She put her hand to her eyes. The pale yellow daffodils in the grass seemed golden bubbles swaying on their long stems, mouthing grotesque grimaces and mocking her with soundless laughter. Her cheeks were still burning. She would wait a moment. She sank again on the seat, shuddering and sobbing. Her thoughts ran together in a hazy blur. Somewhere back of the blur there was a sharp, aching hurt.

Ellsworth was blindly conscious, as he passed through the swinging gate, that a full hour must have passed since he had left the girl standing there under the rose-trellis. The picture stood in his memory as if burned in with lunar caustic: her eyes full of pathetic candor, the cloud of coppery hair about her face. Twilight had deepened into a pallid dusk now; a few stars were out. The nodding yellow daffodils in the grass seemed ghost-like wraiths of dead flowers. The girl had stumbled to her feet, one hand holding the white folds of her gown. The eerie light lent tragic lines to the girlish contour of her face. The air was still and languorous with perfume; nothing was abroad but dull gray shadows.

For an instant they faced each other, tense with feeling, tingling with repression, and between them there was only the primal call of youth and sex. The world swung back through æons of space and for the moment they were the only man and woman in it.

"Suzanne—Good God, child—you have taken it?" Ellsworth's voice seemed coming from a long way off. His features twisted in uncontrol. "The medicine—that fiendish drug-clerk—"

Half blindly she held out her hands and Ellsworth caught them, struggling for control. His voice gathered headway but still seemed coming from a great way off. "Suzanne—dear heart, it—it was poison"—

A singular change swept over the girl's face; a look of ecstasy, of absolute rapture. In her throat she laughed a low, gurgling laugh like the cooing of doves. "Oh," she whispered breathlessly, you care—like that?"

The thrill from their interlocked fingers silenced Ellsworth's lips. All his soul in his eyes he drank in the sweetness of her look.

"Oh, you care like that?" she swayed towards him, the dusky aureola of her hair like a transfiguring cloud about her face. "It—it was for His Nibs, you see—the medicine. I put it on a l-lump of sugar, but he wouldn't take it. He was too foxy. See—he spilled it on my frock." A dull, greenish stain on the filmy lace of her sleeve sent Ellsworth's heart with a sickening leap to his throat. "That blessed little drug-clerk!" she laughed rapturously, "I shall erect a monument to his memory when he dies. He shall be canonized! I should have to have gone back to France, but I would n-never have lived in that hateful old *chateau*. I should have gone into a nunnery and spent my days kneeling on cold bare floors counting my beads. And some frosty morning I should have died of a broken heart and bronchitis. But now"—

Doubtless the little god of love, poised with suspended arrow above the crumbling seat, chortled with joy in his match-making soul. But His Nibs, sitting very severe and erect on his stump of a tail, viewed the proceeding with extreme disfavor.

The Trail of the Grasshopper

BY ROBERT J. BUCKLEY

ANTHONY HALLAM, government spy, always spent his evenings with me. One night he did not appear, and the following morning I received a post-card bearing the Dover post-mark with the words:

"Paris. Can't say."

I interpreted them to mean that he had gone to the French capital, and that he was unable to fix the date of his return.

Ten days elapsed before his familiar tap was again heard at my window. Anthony was in his dressing-gown, and apparently in good spirits and looking for somebody to talk to. It was but a minute before he had fixed his head and his heels at the right angle and having lit his pipe waved the willow spill in the air filling the room with the agreeable odor of burning wood.

"What's doing in Paris?"

I started the conversation as he was too much engrossed in his pipe to be really neighborly. Seemingly he paid no attention to my question.

"You don't like Paris?"

I thought I could get him going with this.

"I detest the Parisians."

Here he stopped again, made a ring or two and let it go out. Then, relighting his pipe, he once more waved the smoking willow wand on high.

There was in his eye something which warned me not to interrupt. I blew my smoke towards the ceiling and looked after it while one might have counted fifty. Then he went on.

"The origin of our likes and dislikes is not always truly known to ourselves. We cannot always diagnose our own diseases, we cannot always analyze our feelings. Perhaps I dislike Paris because I lost a bit of my left ear there!"

"Once upon a time you promised to tell me the story," I remarked.

"Well, the moment is propitious, for last week I went over the scene of my adventure, or misadventure. So here goes for a full and true account.

"It was a case of coining, and coining sovereigns. For months the frauds had spread dismay among all classes, not only of the British community, but also abroad. It was an old affair when it was first laid before me officially—quite hoary-headed, as it were. The detectives had puzzled their heads over it without obtaining the smallest clue that was really workable. Now, detectives are only human; they have not the gift of divination. They must have something to start with. And in this case they could find nothing that was likely to lead to anything.

"Let me tell you exactly how the matter stood when the government decided that the affair demanded the attention of our department.

"The coins were all sovereigns, but not all of the same date. So far, five different dates had been discovered. The work was perfectly done, the difference between the false coins and the true being only discoverable by experts and with a microscope. The utmost skill had been lavished on the dies, and the worn appearance of sovereigns several years old was admirably imitated. In short, the thing was so cleverly done, even to the 'ring,' which was excellent, that ordinary people had no means of detecting the fraud except by weight, and what man of business can stop to weigh every sovereign offered to him? What would you say if when you planked down your sovereign for your tobacco or your railway ticket, the clerk or counterman stopped to weigh it before giving change, while other people shuffled impatiently, and you thought of the policeman round the corner?

"When I took up the matter the earliest fraud reported was about four months old. The place was Leith, of all others. Following up the frauds chronologically, it seemed that the exploiter of the base coin had started in Leith, and after a short spin among the canny Scots of Glasgow and Edinburgh had gone southwards, making a

sort of slow and royal progress through the cities. Liverpool and Manchester had been touched, then Birmingham, with its smaller neighbors of Coventry and Wolverhampton. Proceeding, the devastator had lightly touched Stafford, and then—had apparently suspended operations. It was queer that London had not been honored with a visit. The suspension of operations at Stafford coincided with the general hue and cry of the newspapers. For the moment everybody was on the alert. The operator had evidently thought it best to dissemble for a space. This concluded the first stage of the proceedings.

"One other point may be noted. By degrees the thief had become more daring. Beginning at Leith with single sovereigns he had gradually acquired such confidence that at Stafford he had asked a jeweler, from whom he had made some small purchases, to oblige him with a note for cash, and having obtained a twenty-pounder, had immediately turned it into real sovereigns at a local bank. The most maddening feature of the case was found in the twenty-nine extant descriptions of the supposed perpetrator of the frauds. A sailor, a soldier, an old gentleman of distinguished appearance, a young lady, a smartly dressed young man, an old woman, an American tourist, a Church-of-England clergyman, a wealthy young Australian, a Canadian shipowner—heavens! what impressions the duped persons had! There they were before me, their combined impressions making a perfect patchwork pattern without a vestige of coherence.

"But the matter did not come before me until its third stage had been reached, and so far I have only stated the 'evidence' collected during its first period. Having done the provinces from Leith to Stafford, the artist paused, and the detectives thought they saw in this a very patent fact. The 'mint,' they said, was in Edinburgh or Glasgow—possibly in Leith. But the thief, living in either of the two former cities, would naturally go as far as Leith to make his *début* in a strange place. Succeeding fairly well in Leith he returned to Edinburgh and Glasgow with a good courage, and having done well enough, had in good time, and with good judgment gone south to 'fresh woods and pastures new.' That was the theory, and its result was this:—Edinburgh, Glasgow, and Leith had been ransacked and rummaged to an extent unprecedented in their annals, entirely without result. The police, however, held to their first theory, declaring that the 'mint' was in one of the three places, but—most cleverly hid. Its discovery, they said, was only a question of time. And while the Scotch police failed to find the 'mint' and the English police failed to trace the artistic disseminator, the thing broke out in a fresh place, and more severely than ever.

"This time the artist got a good start, and seemed to have profited by experience, besides having attained a magnificent audacity unknown to his earlier efforts. You know how continental hotel-keepers welcome the English sovereign?"

I had traveled in Belgium, Holland, France, and Germany, and I knew that English sovereigns were gladly accepted anywhere, and by all classes of tradespeople. An English tourist seldom needs incentive to self-esteem; but the way in which his sovereigns are taken, with the exchange in his favor, should make him still prouder of his country.

"Yes," I replied, "I know that with English sovereigns you can travel anywhere in Europe, without troubling to obtain the money of the country."

"The operator knew it too. He commenced at Rotterdam, went on to The Hague, called at Amsterdam; ran thence to Dusseldorf, favored Cologne with his notice, dropped in at happy Mainz, and thence to Wiesbaden, back to Cologne, thence Aix-la-Chapelle, to Verviers, to Brussels, to Antwerp, and thence—nobody knew where."

"He took the regular tourist track," I remarked.

"Yes, and—in the regular tourist season, too. His measures were well-considered; he knew his way about; covered the ground like a flash, by various subtle and plausible pretexts obtaining the notes of the country for gold and then at once changing these for genuine coin. It was a clever ex-

pedient, and one which showed a deep knowledge of mankind. Could the hotel-keeper oblige him with notes for English sovereigns? He had so much British gold, and it was so troublesome. Notes were so much more convenient, were they not? So much more portable, you know! Could he be obliged with fifty pounds' worth? This was the favorite trick. Others were practised, but this was our friend's particular trade-mark. Well, he eluded capture, partly by reason of the rate at which he covered the ground, and partly by reason of his constant change of country. You may be in Holland, Germany, Belgium, and France, all in one day; and international police regulations work slowly.

"Well, he disappeared at Antwerp. Studying his track, this looked as if he had shipped for England once more. There was a quiet period during which people read languidly in the papers of the frauds perpetrated on the Continent by a 'gang of English swindlers,' and then they forgot the thing once more. When that period arrived, the fraud recommenced, this time in London, which seemed to have been reserved for the final series of master coups, after the 'prentice hand had been tried elsewhere.

"The extent of the frauds was alarming, the audacity of the rogue or rogues appalling. Let me recapitulate. First stage, Scotland and England, from Leith to Stafford; second stage, from Rotterdam north to Amsterdam, south to Mainz, back to Cologne, and so to Belgium. Third stage, London, the *bonne bouche*. At this point the matter was considered to possess a sort of political or economic character, which called for the intervention of the government, and the police having entirely failed, and the thing having attained colossal proportions, the business was entrusted to me.

"After an hour's study of the twenty-nine personal descriptions of the swindler or swindlers collected by the police I came to the conclusion that there were two persons, that they were of opposite sexes, and that they were young. Both sexes were named; the rogue was masculine on eighteen occasions, feminine on eleven occasions. Both were adepts at disguise; when they appeared as old folks they were 'made-up.' For the young to 'make-up' old is easy. For the old to 'make-up' young is comparatively hard.

"The London newspapers boomed the frauds so tremendously that you would have thought nobody would have taken a sovereign from a stranger without caution. I say you would have thought so, because you read the papers, and note what you see, and therefore think that all the world does likewise. But let me remind you that though the 'confidence' trick has been boomed for a generation, it is still practiced with success, and every month brings its victim to the trick of snapping a gun at a brother or sister, said gun being 'thought' to be unloaded. When will people stop changing places while boating, and drowning whole cargoes of holiday folks? Never; yet all these things should be familiar to the masses. No, the papers raged and wrote leaders, and—recorded additional frauds, perpetrated, be it noted, by one or other of the twenty-nine characters described in the private police reports handed to me.

"I discarded the police theory as to the *'locale'* of the 'mint,' and the moment I was placed in command ordered that no arrest should be made if it was possible to avoid it. The artist was to be tracked, as only by this means could we be sure of stamping out the fount and origin of the trouble. To arrest a man for passing base coin might avail us nothing so long as the 'mint' survived. To give an individual fourteen years might be poetic justice, but it would not prevent the coiners uttering base coin, nor would it deter others from its distribution. 'One down another up,' would be their motto. No; to be practical, to be thorough, we require to catch, not a single member of the gang, but the whole boiling, with stock, plant, fixtures, and—ahem! good will!

"The young couple, if such they were, had a singularly elusive way. Charles Reade has said, 'It is the elusive woman that attracts,' and I remembered his opinion with respect. The more slippery the lady was, the more charm I felt in the pursuit. For I was sure there was

a lady; I was sure she was young and, ten to one, good-looking; I was sure she had talent, and yet—instinctively felt that in some way not foreseeable she would assist me in the chase. Too often, alas! the lady of the business gives the show away. Allow me to drink to the sex. Woman, lovely woman! 'Let slanderers treat thee as they will, With all thy faults I love thee still.'" And Anthony Hallam took a deep, deep draught of the good cold tea, which, let me observe, was by no means the stuff supposed by the average British reader, who has little idea of what tea can be, when brewed in the true manner and of the best materials, or how deliciously aromatic and gently stimulating the real stingo is.

"At length came the first flash of real light through the murk of vague supposition. Just off Tottenham Court Road is a semi-circle of boarding-houses called 'The Crescent,' and here at No. 10 lived a M. Durose, who was a Frenchman with an English wife. M. Durose was a diamond-setter for a Hatton Garden firm; Mrs. Durose ran the lodgings. The house had a good reputation, and a clientele of regular visitors from the provinces. Sometimes a stranger came, and sometimes a fraud was perpetrated—or it would not have been a London lodging-house. But the Durose establishment usually went on smoothly and comfortably. Mrs. Durose did not expect to be swindled, and consequently was not on her guard. And trouble had come.

"Not a very serious affair, from my point of view, but Mrs. Durose thought otherwise. A delightful young couple had stayed there just one week, and on leaving had paid her with sovereigns; six of them; and five were base—her husband had detected the fact on his return from business in the evening, the delightful young couple having departed in the morning. They left at nine; M. Durose came home at six; nine hours clear start, and—it seemed that they had left London.

"For the 'Boots' had fetched a cab; the luggage had been piled thereon (two large boxes and a bag); and the gentleman had said 'Euston,' as plain as possible; 'Boots' was quite positive of that. 'Euston' was the direction given to the cabman. It was raining and pouring, and the time was about 9:15.

"The gentleman was dressed as a 'gentleman,'" said Mrs. Durose, "with black coat and waistcoat and gray trousers. He might be eight and twenty and was English, she was sure. But the lady was French, she thought. They both spoke French 'like smoke,' and the man had chatted in that language with M. Durose one morning in the hall. The lady was of 'the showy sort,' and went away in a very handsome fawn-colored mackintosh which her husband had bought for her the day before.

"When I heard of that handsome fawn-colored mackintosh—but words fail me. I asked Mrs. Durose to describe it; she became 'mixed' and indefinite. But she agreed to run round the best shops with me, and accompanied by her sister and my humble self, whirled over the district for three-quarters of an hour. Not only did we find the shop, but Mrs. Durose identified the pattern of the waterproof, which was stylish and striking in the extreme. I bought the facsimile of the garment elegantly worn by the late lodger at No. 10, the Crescent, and promising Mrs. Durose to do my best to bring the defaulting pair to condign punishment, took my leave, with the five false coins in my possession.

"There was no need to compare them with the base sovereigns already in hand. The dates were sufficient, once you knew the coins. But why did the man pay one good sovereign? Was it a slip, or—was he running short of stock? If the latter, he would be on the point of returning to the manufactory; to the 'mint' of which the police had talked so much. And the fact of his leaving Euston rather pointed to the North as the right locality after all! The idea that the police might be right was unpleasant. I had pooh-poohed the notion emphatically. Perhaps the distributor was about to give the provinces another turn; we might hear of him again in the Midlands. Meanwhile, I went to Euston with the mackintosh.

"Not a vestige of the happy pair. This was queer; the lady and gentle-

man with two large boxes and a bag and the handsome garment like the one I carried on my arm had not been noticed by anybody! I wired up the main line, and along the branches, and, in short, did all I knew. No result. From Euston to the Crescent is only a hop, step, and jump. I called at No. 10, and borrowed the boy for half an hour. No, the cabman he had fetched was not on the stand. No, he didn't know his name or number. But he would know him when he saw him. We got the cabby next morning. He remembered the mackintosh at once. And—what a lovely bit of news he gave me. I could have danced with delight.

"Said the cabby, 'Yes, he jumps up and he says 'Euston.' But when we'd gone 'alfway he says, 'Driver, he says, take us to 'Victoria' instead.' And I tuk 'em to 'Victoria,' and he give me two 'arf crowns. He were a perfeck gentleman."

"This was enough for me. My waterproof worked like a charm. By it I tracked its predecessor to Paris, and in an incredibly short space of time several thousand pairs of eyes were watching the streets of the French capital for a lady wearing a pattern like that deposited by me with the police authorities. In three days she was found, and I was at liberty to introduce myself to her elegant boudoir in the *boulevard* Malesherbes, had I been so disposed. But that would have spoiled all; and, exercising a strong effort of will, I denied myself the pleasure of presenting my homage.

"Once the pair were traced the rest became mere routine. The French police, excellent in detective work, and born trackers, following the pair of distributors, located the 'mint' in a quiet respectable district on the south side of the Seine, *rue* Pompier. There were six in the gang, five men and the lady who had been 'doing' England and the Continent with her accomplished 'husband.' Two were French, one Leroux, and the lady, whose name was Cecile Ducrot. Three were English, known respectively as 'Big Bill,' Williams, and the 'Grasshopper,' which disrespectful name applied to our touring friend. The remaining ruffian was a Belgian named Schirmer, an expert in revolver-shooting, who kept himself in form by daily practice at one of the shooting galleries so popular in France, even at seaside resorts. All this was discovered bit by bit, the police displaying the greatest tact and skill and watching these worthies with the greatest patience.

"All the men had lady friends, but Cecile was the only woman admitted to the house in the *rue* Pompier, or who knew of it, or of its business. The others knew nothing, and therefore were of no use to us. Our object in waiting and watching was to bide our time, and to nab the whole gang with their stock-in-trade at once. This policy was rendered easier by the fact that for the moment operations were suspended, and that the confederates, with a sound discretion, had never uttered a false coin in Paris. They were now enjoying themselves in perfect security, having probably divided the spoil which the 'Grasshopper' and Cecile had brought over from England. The art would seem to be this—you worked seriously to exchange the false coin for genuine, and having effected this, you lived in virtuous ease, disbursing good money in your chosen area, and basking in the smiles and respect of all sorts and conditions of men.

"At length came the time for the resumption of hostilities. Preparations were made to finish the drama, and a strong force was ordered to act under a distinguished police official named Goriot, who was instructed to carry out my general design under my immediate direction. The interior of the house in the *rue* Pompier had not been examined, one of the gang being always there on guard. The front was on the street; at the back was a large garden with a high wall, in which was a doorway which led into a narrow passage between the garden wall and another garden wall. Before the front door was a small enclosure with a high spiked palisade. As the house was detached there was no taking it by surprise. Even the passage between the garden walls was commanded from the upper windows.

"An open attack seemed the only

method available, and the gang doubtless had firearms and would use them freely. Goriot and I talked the thing over, and finally decided on a night expedition. In order to avoid if possible driving the ruffians to desperation, which meant loss of life on our part, we determined to make our approach by the front, to knock and ring in our official capacity, and—to drive them to flight by the garden, where they would run into the arms of an overwhelming force. At the last moment, and when the whole gang were safely tracked to their lair, we arrested Cecile with the object of obtaining information that might be of use to us that evening. But she only laughed, and said we would be shot down like dogs, and that she would give millions to see the fun. You now the demoniac Frenchwoman of the Commune? The lovely Cecile was of that stamp; smooth and silky in manner, but with the teeth and claws of the tiger.

"Goriot then went to the front to summon the party to surrender. I went with the outflanking column to the back. The night was dark and there was no knowing what would happen. It was hardly likely that if they tried to escape by the garden they would stick to the path and the garden-door. No, they would be more likely to scale the side walls which led into other gardens, than to patronize the end wall at the bottom of the garden, where were the portal and the regular track. Having therefore no guard to a large area, the thought occurred to occupy the garden under cover of the distraction afforded by Goriot in the street. At the signal convened, ten of us scaled the wall, leaving twenty men scattered outside it. I advanced at their head, cautiously, you may be sure. Not a sound here—no doors opening, no sign of the fleeing band. Nearer and nearer and yet no movement. Nor were there any lights. All was still and silent. But we knew the birds were there; the nest had been closely watched. Emboldened by impunity, I ventured by the side of the house to a point where the garden commanded the street, and there I saw that Goriot lingered uncertainly. Nobody had responded to his summons.

I considered the advisability of communicating with Goriot, when there came a declaration of war.

"It came from an upper window, and it was a shot from a revolver. Not a bad shot, in the dark. The bullet took away the lower lobe of my left ear, after passing through the brim of a favorite old felt hat, which it ruined.

"After this there was no more to be said, though much to be done. The thing was plain enough. They had discovered our plan, and seeing no possibility of escape, meant to stand a siege. I ran along in the darkness to a point I thought safe, and, scaling the wall, went round under its cover to Goriot. A hasty conference followed; we decided on instant and violent measures; a double assault on front and rear, a reserve force remaining at both points to cover our advance by firing at the windows whence the desperate men in a corner might have taken cool shots at us. A neighboring lumberyard furnished a couple of battering rams, and while our covering parties fired into the upper windows we simultaneously demolished the doors both back and front, and effected a lodgment on the ground floor.

"Even then life was not all beer and skittles.

"One of our men was shot through the shoulder, and no one knew who would fall in attempting to rush the stairs. Still, the pause was only for a moment. Our blood was up, and with a shout of 'Forward' we went on, firing upward into the darkness. It was a regular storming affair, I can tell you, and but for the shooting, which deterred the neighbors, we should have had a large gallery of spectators. With a last rush we crashed the timber through the last door with its barricades and bore down and mastered the whole gang. 'Big Bill' was killed on the spot; Williams was shot through the lungs and died next day; the 'Grasshopper' and the rest were secured unhurt. We found about 5,000 sovereigns and a complete and scientific plant. It seemed that each of the gang was an expert in a particular department, whether metallurgy, die-sinking, or engraving; and that the 'Grasshopper' and his accomplice were the only distributors.

Stageland

BY CHARLES DARNTON

Ellen Terry in "Captain Brassbound's Conversion," and "The Good Hope;" Eleanor Robson in "Salomy Jane;" Marlowe and Sothern in "John the Baptist," "Jeanne d'Arc," and "The Sunken Bell."

THE return of Ellen Terry to the New York stage after an absence of six years, has brought joy to her many devoted admirers, and something not quite as keen as regret to the no less devoted but more critical few. If the appeal from "Philip drunk to Philip sober" was justifiable, the comparison between Ellen Terry middle-aged and Ellen Terry in the first rapture of youth is at least natural and not too ungracious. Not that this favorite of the fates shows her years like scars, as mere mortals do. Age has not withered her nor tamed her skipping spirits. She is as swift of movement, as laughing of eye, as light-hearted and sprightly as ever; but, none the less, some of us sadly sigh, "*Tempi passati!*"

Like Bernhardt, Miss Terry may defy dates and we may refuse to believe that she is a grandmother who celebrated her stage-jubilee last summer; yet the sparkling brilliancy, the arch allurement, the lovable caprice of the most perfect *Beatrice* of the stage have somehow become a bit dim. The Ellen Terry of years ago smiles a trifle wistfully over the shoulder of this gracious matron with well-rounded curves, slightly silvered-hair, and clear voice a little less richly resonant than that of the *Portia* of old, whose solemn music fell on our ears in "the quality of mercy" speech.

In appearing for the first time without Sir Henry Irving, Miss Terry left behind her old repertory, too, and showed herself in the characters of two women of to-day, both far removed from the romantic Shakesperian heroines. Perhaps she showed a certain conventional wisdom here, for in these frankly middle-aged rôles she courted no invidious comparison with her earlier self. It can hardly be said, however, that her art shone by its own bright luster. Consummate artist that she is, her audiences yielded to the old spell of her radiant personality rather than to her greatness as an artist.

The first play in which she appeared, "Captain Brassbound's Conversion," by Bernard Shaw, gave her little opportunity to be anything but charming; but as there was no other woman in the cast, and *Lady Cecily* has more than a fair share of brains and spirits, Miss Terry made the most of her opportunities and seemed to enjoy herself in the process. She proved that the woman and not the play was the thing, and for once the author took a back-seat. Shaw is said to have written his comedy with Miss Terry in mind, for it has always been his conviction that this great actress of romantic heroines was essentially suited to modern rôles. However that may be, no part ever fell more easily within Miss Terry's range than *Lady Cecily Waynflete*, the delightful Englishwoman of more than thirty-five, who dominates the play and every man in it completely.

There is much more savor than substance in this garrulous extravaganza of the mercurial Irishman. Everyone talks, but there is little doing. Like "Antony and Cleopatra," the play is

half-picturesque realism, half very modern humor, and wholly Shavian in the liberties it takes with forms and conventions. Incidentally, conventional justice is tried at the bar of common-sense with *Lady Cecily* as the mediator.

Sir Howard Hallan, a severe and self-righteous English judge, recently retired, and his sister-in-law, have landed at Mogadore, on sightseeing and adventures bent. When *Lady Cecily* insists on exploring the neighboring country, the judge insists on an escort, and they engage *Captain Brassbound*, a notorious smuggler and leader of as disreputable a band of cut-throats as can be found outside of comic-opera. One of these, *Felix Drinkwater*, is an interesting bit of humanity—"a scum of the submerged tenth," one of the characters calls this sniveling, sneaking gutter-snipe of the Waterloo-road, whom one enjoys so thoroughly that one forgets his undue prominence in the play.

Captain Brassbound warns the judge, in vain, against undertaking the expedition, and when the party is snugly settled in a ruined Moorish castle in the desert, the reason becomes clear, for the captain proves to be the nephew of the judge, son of the judge's younger brother and a Brazilian woman, whom the judge had failed to support in her efforts to recover her estates from a rascally agent. After her death the judge, without knowing of the existence of her son, took possession of the estates by strictly legal if ambiguous means. The son, not unnaturally, has failed to understand his uncle's peculiar course, and has nursed his revenge for many years. Now that he has the judge in his power he informs him that he is going to hand him over to the sheikh of the district as prisoner. Under the soothing influence of *Lady Cecily's* common-sense and her logical humor, he is about to give up his purpose, when he finds that his repentance is too late. The Arab sheikh is at hand to seize his prisoner, and only a fight to the death can save the party, if *Brassbound* fails to give up the judge. The opportune arrival of the Cadi of the province, a more powerful chief than the sheikh, who has been frightened into saving the judge by threats of an attack by an American gunboat, settles the difficulty. Only *Brassbound* and his men are left in hot-water, charged with conspiring with the sheikh against the judge's liberty.

The captain is tried by a board of naval inquiry, conducted by *Captain Hamlin Kearney* of the United States cruiser *Santiago*, whose presence in the harbor caused the rescue of the judge. *Lady Cecily* puts her feminine wits to work. She begins by dressing *Captain Brassbound* in full afternoon-regalia of the most conventional sort, and then proceeds to act as chief witness, counsel, and general manager of the trial. The result is *Captain Brassbound* and all his men are cleared. The captain's proposal of marriage, because he wishes to have a commanding-officer whom he can follow, and *Lady Cecily's* hesitation for the fraction of a second, give a momentary suggestion that there may be a romantic, if improbable, ending, after all. But the booming of the signal-gun of the captain's ship saves the day for common-sense and *Lady Cecily*. "How glorious! How glorious!" she exclaims fervently. "And what an escape!" And you laugh at this cold water douche on the emotions, administered by the intelligence.

Miss Terry, in the flowing white draperies and broad-brimmed hat of *Lady Cecily*, looks as if she were attending a garden-party instead of playing a part, and when in the course of the play she nurses a wounded Italian and does some plain-sewing in behalf of *Captain Brassbound's* coat, she shows the same untheatrical simplicity. Her threading a needle and her crisp utterance of Shaw parodoxes are equally natural, but after all, the part only allows her to be the very charming person she is.

Of the supporting company, only James Carew, who brings a good presence but a monotonous method to the portrayal of the captain, and George Elton, who gives a life-like picture of the cockney, deserve special mention.

Lady Cecily Waynflete is scarcely further removed from the fair ladies of the Shakesperian plays than from the old Dutch fisherwoman of Miss Terry's second play. "The *Good Hope*" is a modern realistic drama of the most uncompromising sort by Herman Heijermans, a Dutch writer with whom the char-

acter-actor Henri De Vries made us familiar last year in the moving little sketch called "A Case of Arson." "The *Good Hope*" is as gloomy, as gray, as hopeless as the sea itself on a foggy day. It suggests the work of that other relentless student of the seamy side of life, the bitter Gorky's "Night Refuge," with its picture of damned souls. You almost hear these moderns crying, in a parody of Patrick Henry's famous words, "If this be realism, make the worst of it!"

Certainly Mr. Heijermans makes life in the Dutch fishing-village sordid and sad enough. His central theme—the heartless sacrifice of the lives of men by the greed of ship-owners—seemed far enough from our daily life, until the newspapers, on the very day after the first production of the play, brought the news of the loss of the *Larchmont*, with more than two hundred lives sacrificed. That brought the story nearer home.

Kniertje, a fisherman's widow, who had lost her husband and two sons twelve years before by the sinking of a rotten ship, sees her two remaining sons, *Geert* and *Barend*, leaving on the *Good Hope*, a floating coffin, whom her owner is sending on her last cruise, knowing her to be unseaworthy. Just as in Ibsen's play, "Pillars of Society," whose theme is strikingly similar, the owner has been warned of the condition of his vessel by one of his workmen; but as the shipwright *Simon* is a drunkard, no one puts much stock in his tale. Only *Barend*, a timid lad who hates the sea, believes him, and though he has signed his sailing-papers and bound himself to go on this last cruise of the *Good Hope*, his superstitious fears overcome him and he tries to desert. *Geert*, the older brother, has just been released from the naval prison, where he has been serving a term of six months for striking a superior officer, who spoke slightingly of his sweetheart. He is naturally glad to get any sort of job, but is hardly filled with the cringing gratitude the ship-owner expects. He has imbibed socialistic doctrines and a realization of the inequality of man's lot, and he tells Clemens Bos that he owes him nothing. They, the common seamen, have bought for the ship-owner his wealth, with their sleepless nights, their cruises in cold and ice—sometimes without changing their clothes for six weeks at a time. Another fisherman, an old pensioner in the almshouse, philosophizes on life and the injustice of the world. When he says "The fishermen pay dearly for the fish," no one can fail to realize that Heijermans is thinking of the laborer everywhere, and not only in the far-away Dutch village.

On the day of the sailing of the *Good Hope*, *Barend* disappears, and when his mother finds him skulking at home, trying to hide in a corner, she turns on him. The wretched boy screams and clings to the door-posts, and the harrowing scene is brought to an end by the arrival of the harbor-police. The old mother loosens the boy's frantic hold with her own hands, and he is borne away, shrieking and struggling, to the doom he dreads. The mother feels so disgraced by his behavior that she does not go down to the harbor to bid *Geert* farewell, and so he sails without her last word to soften his heart.

The story of *Kniertje's* niece, *Joe*, who is driven to hysterics by the gloomy tales of the fishwives when they gather at the cottage on the night of a fearful storm, is an added bit of tragedy. She and *Geert* had expected to marry on his return, and when her old aunt tells her that she cannot feel the cruelty of the sea as a mother does, the girl confesses that she is soon to be a mother. The old woman takes her in her arms and tries to console the wretched creature but the sea is not so kind. The next day news comes that the *Good Hope* has been lost and that *Barend's* body was the first to be washed ashore. The heartrending scenes in the ship-owner's office reach their climax when the old woman hears that her two sons are dead. The smack-owner's wife most magnanimously promises to engage her to do char-work now and then, and the curtain falls while the confidential clerk of Clemens Bos is reading an appeal for charity in behalf of the families of the dead crew.

"The *Good Hope*" is strongly socialistic in its tendency, and those that toil have a brave spokesman in Heijermans. There are none of the empty platitudes that made Mr. Klein's "Daughters of

Men" so tiresome, and the bitter truths that *Geert* flings at the ship-owner are steeped in the wretchedness of those that live and toil under the primal curse. The grim tragedy of the sea, too, is painted relentlessly. There is not a ray of sunshine to relieve the gloom. The clouds over Heijermans' sea have no silver lining. Humor of a sort there is, and the grotesque tales of the fisher-women on the night of the storm are distinctly characteristic of the dull, hard, labor-wracked workers of the North, where even fun has a bitter flavor. But misery and stolid endurance are the key-notes of this companion-piece to Hauptmann's "The Weavers."

Well acted, "The *Good Hope*" would probably prove too harrowing to suit the light-hearted, easy-going playgoers of New York. Even badly acted as it is, its grim truth is felt. The performance of Miss Terry and her company is wholly out of atmosphere; the dull stoicism, the hard endurance of the old woman are barely suggested, and though Miss Terry subdues her vivacious spirits just as she hides her identity in coarse calico-skirts, goggles, and wooden-shoes her natural grace and fineness shine through the disfiguring garb and spoil the realism of the play. Where she should be hard and stolid, she seems calmly resigned. She is not the stern old Dutchwoman, but a great lady masquerading as a fishwife.

Mr. Carew as *Geert* and Mr. Powell as *Barend* are "in the picture," and Mr. George Elton, as the resigned old pensioner, proves himself again a capital character-actor. Miss Suzanne Sheldon, as the sweetheart, exaggerates the rôle absurdly; in fact, Miss Edith Craig (Miss Terry's daughter), as a low comedy-widow, is the only one of the others who even faintly suggests Holland and fish.

The after-play "*Nance Oldfield*," Miss Terry's old standby, shows her in one of her rollicking parts of the past, but in spite of her high spirits and her boundless energy, you cannot but feel that she is too old for the rôle. In fact, ungallant as it may sound, this visit of Ellen Terry seems just a bit like drinking warmed-over coffee. There is the stimulating aroma of warmth and good cheer, and you try to make yourself think "it's just as good" as the first; but after all, it tastes just a bit stale and flat.

By a superficial association of ideas, "the three Salome's," as they have been called, have been placed together in a family group as grotesque as those that used to be made by the village-photographer. With the operatic "Salome," now banished, I have nothing to do; and Sudermann's *Salome* properly stands alone, for there is no possible reason why *Salomy Jane* in Paul Armstrong's play of the same name should be grouped with these other two unconventional ladies.

Bret Harte's "Salomy Jane's kiss" has furnished the foundation of Mr. Armstrong's romance of the California redwoods, but the author has freely used other Bret Harte stories to fill in the slender outlines of his structure. He has caught the spirit of the days of '49, and the scent of out-of-doors and the forest so completely, that you find yourself taking a deep breath and sending a greeting over the footlights to each of these primitive men and women as they appear. *Colonel Starbottle*, the pompous oratorical lawyer of many a tale of the Sierras; Jack Hamlin, the generous, cynical gambler, here under the *alias* of *Jack Marbury*; and *Yuba Bill*, that prince of stage drivers, figure as minor characters.

Salomy Jane Clay, a handsome, slouching daughter of Kentucky transplanted to California, is a very original heroine, who tests her suitors' affections by their willingness to kill *Baldwin*, who has insulted her. When *Rufe Waters* hedges, and unheroically, if reasonably, suggests that he can't shoot his friend on sight, she turns on him with lazy contempt, saying "Don't you never dare to talk to me again, Rufe Waters!" Meanwhile "*The Man*"—he has no other name in the play—who really shot *Baldwin* for another woman, wins the immediate and complete admiration of her barbaric young heart even before she has seen him. Their first meeting shows him under unheroic circumstances when he leaps up from behind a rock and explains that he is accused of robbing *Yuba Bill's* stage-coach with *Red Pete* and of stealing a horse to get away. *Salomy* directs him how to escape, but

he is captured by the Vigilantes and given short shrift to explain his presence. When he fails to satisfy his captors, the swift justice of the West decides on his death. They ask whether he has anything to say or any "Good-bys" to send, and when he impassively shakes his head, the leader of the band, with grim humor, suggests to *Salomy Jane* that she say a farewell word to the lonely man. The girl slouches up to him, puts out her hand, and says simply, "Good-by, Man, I'm sorry." Then something happens. She throws her arm around his neck and gives him a kiss full of pity and her first young passion. *The Man* is shaken out of his stoical calm, and though the *Vigilantes* at once lead him away to be hanged, the desire to live and love this splendid, fiery creature puts new hope into him. He breaks away from his captors and makes straight for the girl's home to thank her. Again she helps him to escape, this time by giving him her father's coat and hat for a disguise. Unfortunately *The Man* meets one *Larrabee*, with whom her father had kept up a Kentucky feud for years. *Larrabee* fires at *The Man*, believing him to be *Salomy's* father, but *The Man's* return shot puts *Larrabee* out of the way forever. Incidentally it causes *Clay* to be suspected of *Larrabee's* murder, and *The Man* returns voluntarily to save him. But when he hears that *Clay* has escaped over the border, he and *Salomy* make ready to flee, only to be thwarted for a moment by *Rufe Waters'* malignant vengeance. *Salomy Jane* makes short work of him, however, by a threat to shoot him, and as he skulks away, she turns to *The Man* with "What's your name, Man? I don't know it." Improbable, *Salomy Jane* may be, but it goes straight to the heart.

Miss Eleanor Robson as *Salomy Jane* wears the gowns, the slouch, and the tan of the West; otherwise she is her own lovable self. Her delicate, passionless personality hardly realizes the combination of indifference, lazy humor, and primitive emotions that Bret Harte describes to his *Salomy Jane*. Mr. H. B. Warner makes *The Man's* swift moods and deeds very real, and Mr. Reuben Fax, as *Colonel Starbottle*, achieves a triumph of character-acting. But the most effective piece of work is that of Miss Ada Dwyer as *Red Pete's* wife. Miss Dwyer looks the poor, toil-worn drudge to the life—down at the heels, bedraggled, discouraged. Her farewell to *Red Pete*, who is to be hanged, breaks into a stormy torrent of abuse of men and the world that fills one with pity and sympathy, and her words to her two little girls, whom she has to send to bed when she washes their one wretched little dress, go straight home. These same two little girls, by the way, and a boy playmate, hold the stage for some seven or eight minutes in one of the best scenes of the play.

Miss Julia Marlowe's *Salome* in Südermann's "John the Baptist," is as far removed from the heroine of the Redwoods in spirit as in time and place. Mr. Sothern and Miss Marlowe are appearing in an extensive repertory of plays, chosen to allow each of the co-stars to shine brightly in turn, and "John The Baptist" was supposed to give Mr. Sothern his opportunity. But Miss Marlowe walked off with the honors in her charming, if not at all remarkable, picture of this biblical heroine. The Bible is followed very closely in that *Herodias, Salome's* mother, suggests the plan that brings about the Baptist's death. *John* has aroused the wrath of *Herodias* by his censure of her marriage with *Herod*, while her first husband is still alive. *Salome*, to be sure, has offered her youthful love to the gaunt and fiery prophet, only to be repelled with words of gloomy warning. When, after her dance of the Seven Veils, *Herod* promises her anything she desires, she follows her mother's injunction and asks for the head of the Baptist, with the idea of showing her power and forcing him to beg for his life. But he turns away into the courtyard, and almost before she knows it, she sees the bloody head held aloft outside. She rushes from the palace, and in hysterical frenzy dances again, holding aloft the head on a charger. Happily Südermann spares his audience this scene, and only the pale horror on Miss Marlowe's face when she returns crying, "Where is the charger, mother? Where is the head?" makes you realize its ghastly purport.

Miss Marlowe makes this Oriental princess as gay and alluring as any

modern coquette, but she fails to suggest the hereditary wanton, trained in the voluptuous life of Eastern courts. When she is on the stage, however, the dull play is vitalized, and her dance of the Seven Veils is full of color, grace, and meaning. The wild beauty of the woman, as she tosses one veil after another to the ground in this most compelling scene of the whole play, almost makes you forget the dreary waste of words that goes before.

Südermann's *John* may be a correct-enough study psychologically, but dramatically he is a failure. This perturbed dreamer, who understands neither love nor humanity, nor himself, is indeed a voice crying in a wilderness of talk, and Mr. Sothern does nothing to vary the monotony, nor illuminate the character. The one effective situation, in which *John* is about to order the mob to stone *Herodias* before the temple, is rendered futile through Mr. Sothern's failure to make the climax strong enough.

For the most part the five acts are made up of dreary commonplaces, and though thirty or more characters walk on and off, one feels that Christian traditions and disguised sermons are not effective on the stage, unless their spirit can be conveyed as movingly as in the old morality play, "Everyman."

"Jeanne d'Arc," by Percy Mackaye, Steele Mackaye's son, gave Miss Marlowe her first real opportunity. Mr. Mackaye has followed the fate of the Maid of Orleans from her happy peasant days at Domremy in 1428 to her gloomy cell in the prison at Rouen in 1431. You see her communing with her voices under the "Ladies' Tree;" singling the king from among his crowd of courtiers at Chinon; attacking Orleans, where, though severely wounded, she rallies her men and leads them to victory; confounding the tricks of her enemies at the court by her simple truth and loyalty; taking part in the coronation pageant of *King Charles VII* at Rheims, and finally confused and tortured by doubts in her prison-cell, until her voices return and restore her inspiration and her belief in them.

Mr. Mackaye follows history very closely. One departure, changing the *Duke d'Alençon* from the staunch friend that he was to the maid's devoted lover, adds to the romantic appeal of the play. *D'Alençon* has doubted *Jeanne's* visions from the first, and when her voices at Orleans order her back into the thick of the battle, he tries to restrain her by proving that she deceives herself. His scepticism later tortures her spirit in prison when she is weakened by doubts and the potent arguments of the inquisition. But the duke has, meanwhile, acquired her simple faith through seeing the *Angel St. Michael* when he himself tried to kiss the hand of the sleeping girl, and after his escape from prison he comes to comfort her as best he can.

Miss Marlowe's portrayal is touching and simple in the extreme. She sacrificed her beauty and her magnetic personality for once, and becomes the poor peasant girl of Domremy. It is not her fault that Mr. Mackaye's saints and stained-glass images, by stalking on the stage too opportunely and too often, render many scenes ridiculous to the doubting-Thomases of to-day. She brings out the compelling sincerity of the girl and the infinite pity of her fate. If she fails to suggest the robust energy and lofty patriotism of *Jeanne*, that, too, is partly the fault of the text.

Mr. Sothern, as the *Duke d'Alençon*, looks romantically melancholy, and plays the part with noble humanity, dignified restraint, and poetic grace.

"The Sunken Bell," by Gerhart Hauptmann, has been in Mr. Sothern's repertory for several years and his *Heinrich*, the bell-founder, who in his soaring ambition to achieve his great work, forgets his wife and children and the humble duties of everyday life, is an interesting and appealing figure. He, however, succeeds better in portraying the weakness, the despondency, and the sense of failure than the fiery ardor and the ruthless energy of the artist in his work.

As Miss Marlowe appeared for the first time as the elfin *Rautendelein*, who learns to love a mortal and acquires a soul through tears and suffering, her performance naturally proved of great interest. Her picture of the free, pagan, forest-spirit, who sacrificed her elusiveness, but not her charm, for a human lover, is beautifully poetic. When *Heinrich*, rendered mad by his reproaching

conscience, drives her from him, the look of horror on the stony-white face shows the quality of her love. It is like watching the burial of a soul when she descends into the depths of the *Nickelmann's* kingdom; but when she returns to give *Heinrich* his last draught, the frozen countenance is once more illumined by love. Altogether, "The Sunken Bell" is so far the most successful, as well as the most poetical, offering of these two artists.

In addition to their modern plays, they have appeared in some of their well-known Shakesperian repertoire: "Hamlet," "Romeo and Juliet," "The Merchant of Venice," and the "Twelfth Night."

Mr. Sydney Rosenfeld's balloon-play, "The Aero Club," is as light as gas. It introduces the explosive Lulu Glaser in the rôle of a young lady "from out of the West," who "sacrifices" herself for her friend *Mrs. Vandewater* in the strange fashion of stage-heroines. Here the sacrifice consists in going up in a balloon with *Jack Chandler*, so that her friend may not compromise herself by so doing. Her night in the balloon with Jack, when they have to throw down their shoes and as many clothes as the law allows in order to escape drowning in the lake under them, proves exciting, and their landing is supposed to be funny. Miss Glaser takes a mustard foot-bath in view of the audience, but her own toes are discreetly hidden in pink stockings with "toes." Balloonists may feel pleased with the prominence given their favorite sport, but the play will not add to the joy of theater-goers generally.

Of the new musical comedies, only one introduces an element of novelty in a comedian, distinguishable from the thousand and one that have gone before.

"The Little Michus," brought from Mr. George Edwardes' London theater, almost died of its own weakness, and not even Andre Messager's charming music could have saved it. But Mr. George Graves, advertised as "London's funniest comedian," proved to be a really unique comedian, whose grotesque make-up and spluttering delivery show that there is something new under the sun. He marches on the scene with a game-leg and a make-up that suggests he is moulting. He doesn't sing a single song but he tells his stories with such droll finish that they seem worth more than a dozen songs. His tale of the gazeeker, an animal with fur on its chest, but otherwise bald, that is hunted on stilts for its valuable patch of fur, is side-splitting. When he adds that in the moonlight it looks like a turnip and that other animals nibble at it, Munchausen seems outdone.

The plot turns on the confusion of the identity of the two little Michus—one of them the daughter of *General Des Ifs* (Mr. Graves), the other the real little *Michu*—who had got mixed in the bath as babies. In the end *Marie Blanche* proves that *Blanche Marie* is the "real lady," by dressing her so as to bring out her unmistakable resemblance to her mother's portrait.

The book by Van Loo and Duval, Englished by Henry Hamilton, has the usual assortment of dreary English jokes; but there are plenty of pretty songs—badly sung by the principals, better by the chorus. Miss Elita Proctor Otis, with no more voice than Mr. Graves, manages to make a song of advice about husbands the most effective of the lot.

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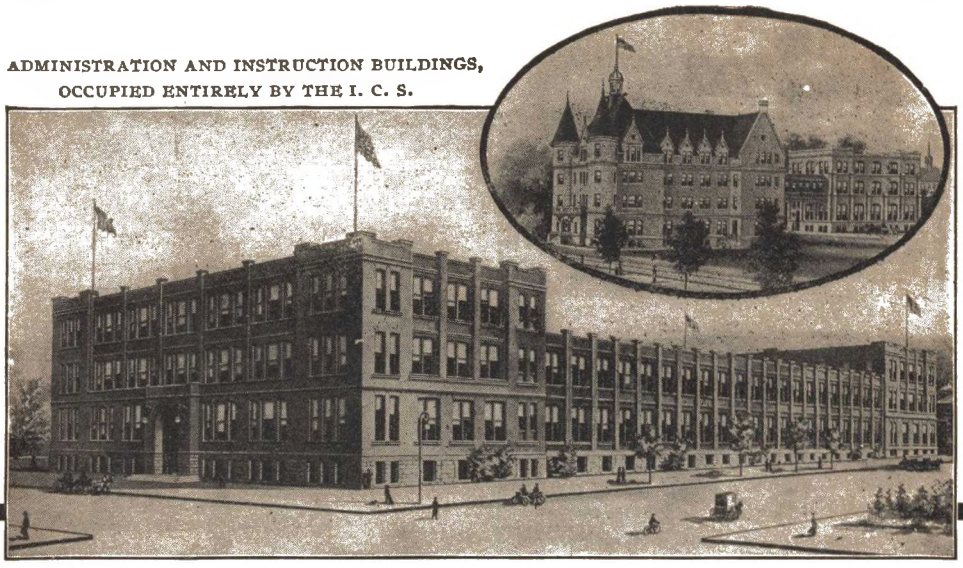

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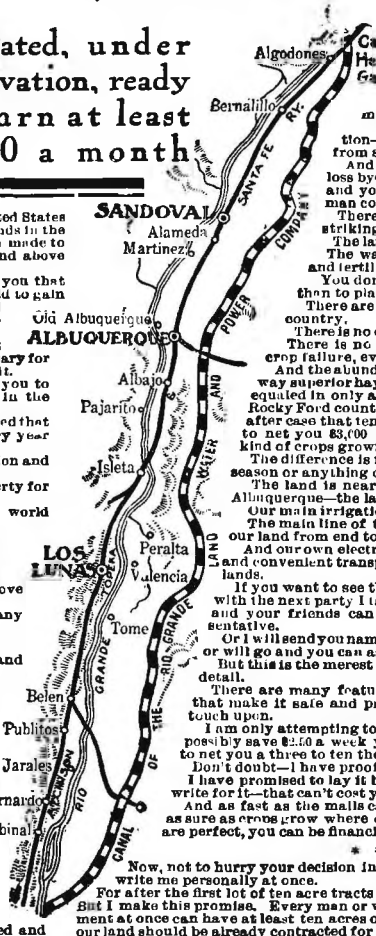

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You can go and live on it—absolutely assured that it can be made to earn $3,000 to $10,000 every year without fail

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And the abundant crops of large and in every other way superior hays, grains, vegetables and fruits are equaled in only a very few favored spots, such as the Rocky Ford country. But I am going to prove by case after case that ten acres of this property can be made to net you $3,000 to $10,000 a year, according to the kind of crops grown.

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Or I will send you names of prominent men who have gone or will go and you can ask them what conditions they find

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* * *

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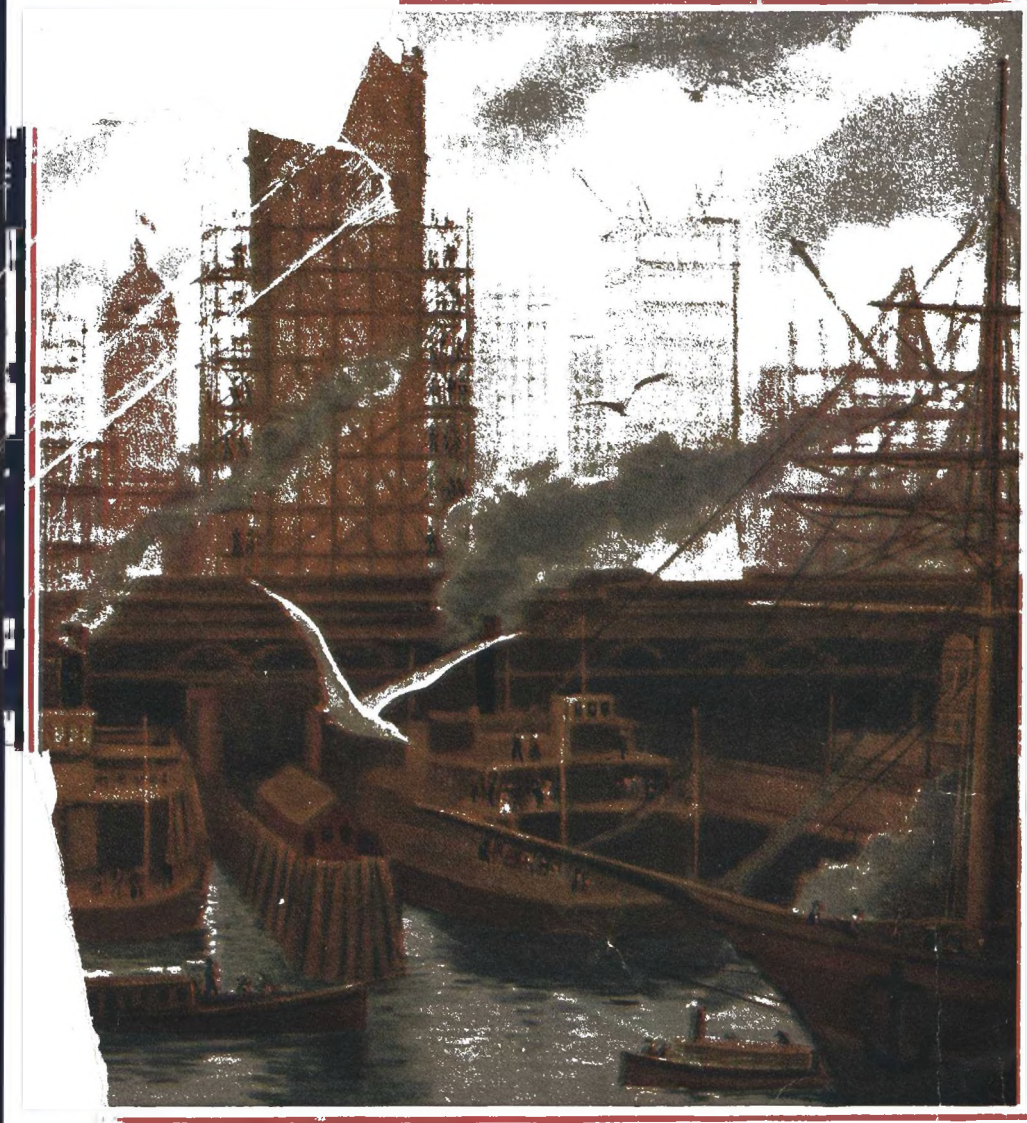

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