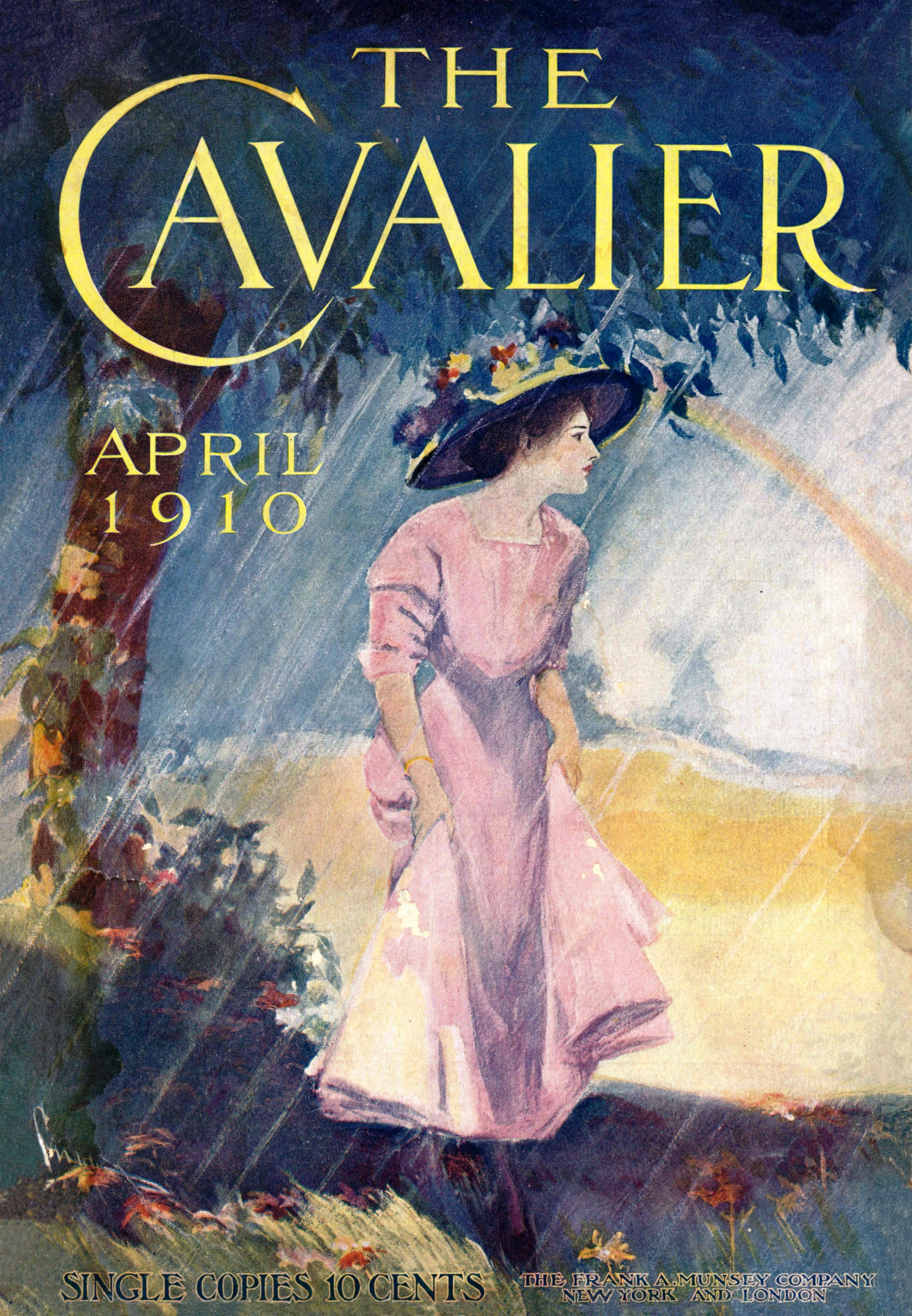
THE CAVALIER

APRIL
1910



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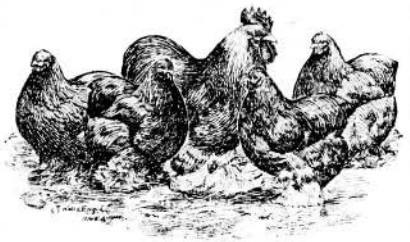

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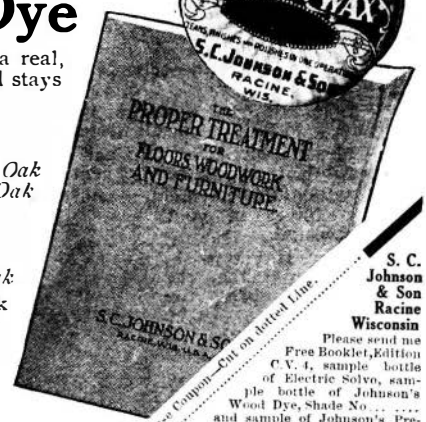

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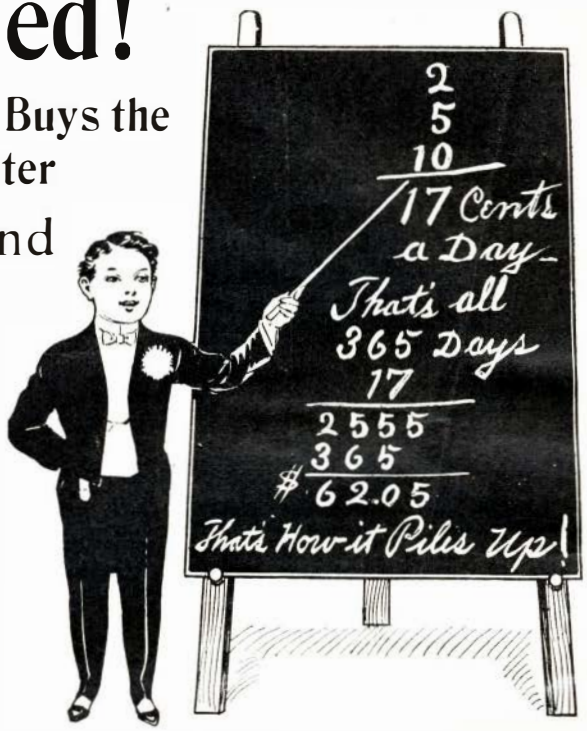

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CONTENTS FOR APRIL

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THE COMEDY-MYSTERY STORY.

TEN OTHER SHORT STORIES

THE COMEDY-MYSTERY SERIES,

the latest novelty in fiction, has made a big hit. Three of these stories have already been published in THE CAVALIER, starting with February, and the fourth will appear in the May issue. This one deals with automobiles, and is a gem, called

"THE SPEED LIMIT."

There will be another yarn about the goings on in the Scales family, and Henry Gallup Paine will have a capital story with a fantastic tinge:

"HER ARABIAN NIGHT IN WASHINGTON."

More of the incorrigible doings of Jim Wiley and Push Evans will be recounted under the title: "THE BLOOM OF YOUTH," while the awful thing that befell a man when he took a young lady to the theater will be told under the heading: "THE BOUQUET HE BORROWED." And we haven't mentioned yet the two May Complete Novels:

"A MIDSEA MISFIRE." By Edgar Franklin. "THE STRENGTH OF SUSPICION." By Fred V. Greene, Jr.

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THE CAVALIER

Vol. V. APRIL, 1910. No. 3.

No Doubt About It.

BY ROBERT CARLTON BROWN,

Author of "Honors Heaped High," "The Burden of Proof," "Just for Spite," etc.

Being the Story of a Good Thing That Came Out of the Atlantic Ocean and Kept Both Sides of It Guessing.

(Complete in This Number.)

CHAPTER I.

DR. DROOK'S DISCOVERY.

THE fact that the cannibals didn't consider me good fodder was the only reason that I was allowed to leave Africa alive.

I went over there with the bee in my bonnet that I was a great trader and ought to be able to take away gold from the Africans as easy as a dentist picks it from a dead man's teeth.

It looked easy to me; and I figured it'd be a cinch to waltz up to an African chief and give him seventeen marbles, a glass hat-pin, two baby-rattles, and a hair ribbon in exchange for an ounce chunk of gold, or maybe a pair of three-carat diamonds.

But it didn't work out that way. That's the reason I shipped on board the Tuskegee as soon as I could break away from the cannibals, leaving all my goods behind me in my hurry.

It was with no little surprise that I found the Tuskegee was headed for the North Sea, fitted out to go whaling. I'd rather have taken a whaling than gone along; but there was nothing else to do.

I had to get away from the cannibals, and the captain wouldn't let me get away from him, being short on men—and long on whiskers.

So I was between two fires — all of which made me very glad that I was on water. I wanted to get back to the good old U. S. A., but I didn't have a penny to my back or a shirt in my pocket. So I had to put up with our pirate-captain's rollicking ways—he killed one man because his whiskers were pink—and go along just as though I were willing.

Well, lots happened on that trip; but I'll skip over to the really important part.

We were coming back from the whaling trip with a good load of blubber and ambergris aboard, when, one day, we ran down a small island. It didn't look much larger than a floating-island pudding, and the captain mistook it for a stunted iceberg in the fog.

Well, finding our nose stuck in the middle of the island, the captain called all hands to the decks and sent down a boat to explore.

I was sent with the exploration party, because the captain never did care what might happen to me. It was only a two-

by-four island, and hardly worth raising the Argentine Republic flag on; but, just as we were going back to the boat to report "Nothing doing," I spotted something that looked like an igloo.

Not knowing exactly what that looked like, but having read of it, I stepped over two polar bears and a crop of last year's ice that had been stacked up by the water, and found it was a sure enough hut on the edge of the island.

An old fossil-looking person, with hair in his eyes and a Shetland-pony coat on, came to the door of the hut and fell on my neck. He didn't break it, so I disengaged myself slowly but firmly, and took a good look at him between the eyes.

The rest of the bunch came up at that minute, and he fell on the neck of every man present. After that, he naturally handed us the deserted-mariner story, and we swallowed it, but it stuck in our windpipes.

"Tell us another," said the matey with the bunch.

"I was shipwrecked here with a boat carrying electrical supplies to the uneducated Eskimo," he replied sternly. "My mates were all drowned, and I was left alone on this desert island. Well, naturally, I cast round for food and shelter.

"I built the hut you see here, and brought in all the electrical supplies as they were floated ashore by the waves. I fitted up the hut with electric lights, and have used electric current ever since to shock the fishes to death in the water for food, when the water is charged with electricity—"

The old man's voice was growing fainter, and his eyes began to swim about lonesomely.

"Put another penny in—it's running down," said the kitchen-boy.

The old fellow fixed the youngster with a baleful eye, and went right on:

"When the water is charged with electricity, the fishes die and float to the top. Then I eat them?"

"Do you eat everything that floats to the top?" asked the kitchen-boy.

"Yes, even little boys who have been thrown overboard for talking too much," replied the old fellow.

That shut him up, and I turned to the queer codger with the question:

"What's your name?"

"Dr. Drook," he replied in a very self-respecting manner; "and I will soon be known throughout the world as the discoverer of perpetual motion."

"The deuce you say!" cried I, whistling like a surprised army bugler.

"Step in and I will show you," he replied solemnly, throwing back the walrus skin to his doorway, and standing beside it so that we could hardly tell which was which.

We crossed his "Welcome" mat. He had spelled out the letters by sticking condensed-milk tins in the ground, bottom side up.

There, in a corner, was a very complicated apparatus.

"It looks like the insides of a piano grafted on a harp," volunteered the kitchen-boy.

"I wonder if it's tame?" queried the matey, walking up to the machine, which was on a table and had a most forbidding appearance.

"This," said Dr. Drook, waving his hand as though he were addressing a big audience in the Carnegie Lyceum—"this is my perpetual-motion machine."

"Oh!" we all gasped, trying to look intelligent.

"What can it do?" asked the matey, sticking his finger in the works to see if they were real.

"It can do anything," replied Dr. Drook sternly.

"Can it do a sum in arithmetic?" asked the cook's helper.

"It can do more than that." Dr. Drook blew his whiskers out of his mouth to reply. "It can cut up sassy little boys into mince-meat."

"Go ahead, doc," urged the matey. "We're run short of mince-meat for this voyage."

I took no part in this foolishness. I was critically examining the machine. It looked good to me. I never saw anything which seemed a more plausible solution of perpetual motion. I was interested.

"Is the machine moving now?" asked the matey.

"Surest thing you know," replied Dr. Drook; "it's always moving. It never stops for anything. See!"

He opened the lid to the thing, and

we all peered in, as though there were a Thanksgiving turkey or a bag of gold at the bottom.

Sure enough! There was a shuttle, threading back and forth without losing a stroke. It went like lightning—I don't know how many strokes to the minute, but it was even faster than Jack Johnson's right arm.

"What can you do with this power, doctor?" I asked, becoming very much interested, for a man is impressed by seeing the real thing in perpetual motion.

"Oh, I can do anything," replied Dr. Drook, touching a button under the lid.

At that moment a saw in the corner got busy chewing through a two-cord stack of frozen fish; a dishpan clattered down from the shelf, scooped up the doctor's breakfast-dishes, and began washing them; a broom bounced out from the corner and began sweeping the room, and the whole place suddenly blazed with light; while a box in the corner began grinding out a tune, and a bathtub full of steaming water opened the door and slid in very silently, caught the kitchen-boy unawares, tipped him over, and a big scrub-brush descended from the middle of the ceiling and began giving him his first bath.

Amid the yells of the kitchen-boy, the clatter of the dishes in the pan, and the music from the box in the corner, there came a shriek like an engine on a spree, and I saw the matey go over on his back, while a bed suddenly appeared from the floor and lifted him up; steel hands reached out and took off his clothes.

In two minutes he was bundled up in a suit of polar-bearskin pajamas, and the music-box played a lullaby.

My hair began to stand on end, and a brush darted suddenly from the side wall and smoothed it down.

"For Heaven's sake, turn it off, doc!" I screamed.

"Then you admit I've discovered perpetual motion, the jewel sought for centuries by the greatest scientists in *Who's Who?*"

"I do, I do! I will, doc! Oh, anything! Turn it off!" I yelled as a steel arm shot out toward me with a shaving-brush in it and began making my face look like a freshly whitewashed chicken-coop.

Doc looked at me and laughed.

I would have given both legs, two arms, my nose, and one eye to have been back on Broadway that minute.

"You realize and admit that this is all being done by my perpetual-motion machine?" demanded the doctor.

"Till death us do part," I replied solemnly, dodging back as a ten-inch razor made out of a shark's fin rushed out from a hole in the wall and began chopping off my whiskers as though they were naught but common alfalfa.

"You admit that I've discovered perpetual motion and put it to use?" demanded Dr. Drook.

"The truth and nothing but the truth, so help me—" I raised my right hand at this juncture and finished with a scream, for a pair of scissors, rudely fashioned from walrus teeth, flew out from behind me and began clipping my nails.

The kitchen-boy was yowling in the tub, matey was beginning to come to, and Drook stood there with a fiendish grin on his face, looking with pride on his little perpetual-motion box.

I got down on my knees and started to wiggle toward him, when suddenly something came along and began taking my shoes off. That was the limit. I never allow anything or anybody to remove—in other words, I never take off my shoes in public.

"Oh, doc!" I moaned. "On behalf of the citizens' ticket. In the memory of 'Auld Lang Syne'; oh, I'll sign the pledge; yes, there's no place like home. The army and navy forever! Oh, anything, doc! Only for the love of— Oh, please turn off that machine!"

Another torturous question:

"You realize that this is the first perpetual-motion machine that has ever been perfected? You realize the greatness of my discovery?"

"I realize everything. Remember, she is still your mother." There were tears in my eyes, and an automatic handkerchief, made of fish-bladder, was beginning to wipe them off. "To have and to hold, doc! I solemnly swear. You wouldn't do this to your poor old father! Have mercy! Have a little mercy, Jack Dempsey. Stand back! Give him air!"

I fear I would have begun to wander

in my mind if, at that moment, Doc Drook hadn't touched another button and everything subsided in a second; the bed went down through the floor, matey bumped his head and woke up; the different apparatuses crawled back into their holes, the dish-pan hung itself up, and the bathtub went sailing out of the room, leaving the kitchen-boy in it, stranded high on a bar of home-made soap.

CHAPTER II.

I GET A NOTION.

BEFORE he could turn on anything else, matey and I seized him amidships and made for the rolling, roaring deep.

We introduced him to the captain, and they eyed each other's whiskers for a full green minute.

Then the captain said solemnly:

"Glad to meet you, Dr. Cook!"

"Dr. Drook," said the other in tones of authority, finding he had longer whiskers than the captain, and thereby becoming sure of his footing.

We told Captain Swashbuck the sad, sweet story of the doctor's life. He fell for it, and asked Drook if he'd like to go back to America with us.

He said he'd run home for his perpetual-motion machine and come along. Matey and I looked at him sternly and tried to hypnotize him into leaving the thing home alone, but there was nothing doing. He was like a spoiled kid with a new air-gun—had to take it everywhere.

So Dr. Drook's machine was taken aboard, the kitchen-boy was pried loose from the cake of soap, and we shook the little floating island and doc's igloo.

"We'll open a barrel in honor of the doctor," ordered Captain Swashbuck, and the doctor licked his lips.

The only barrel left contained hard tack, so we opened that. Doc turned up his nose in disgust, and started for the perpetual-motion machine. We knew he was going to get even, so matey and I tackled him between the binnacle and the mizzen-mast. It proved to be doc's delicate spot, and he went to the deck like a ton of hawser.

Then things were quiet for a time.

The next day we ran down an iceberg. Captain Swashbuck swore it was doc's fault, and called him a "Jonah." But he couldn't convince the doctor that it would be best for his soul to be thrown overboard.

Matey and I suggested that the perpetual-motion machine might be thrown over and never be missed; but there was nothing doing on that score—doc clung to it like a chicken to a china egg. We couldn't pry him loose from the box. He slept on it nights, and didn't go farther than two leaps from it all day long.

It took some time before I recovered from the demonstration of perpetual motion; but when I did, I began to think things over, and came to the conclusion that doc had a sure-enough money-maker.

I'd spent most of my life boosting the nearest thing at hand and trying to make a whole lot out of a very little.

In my early days I had once taken a "find" of mine on a lecture tour, and made a good stake out of him. As we were nearing land, I began to cast about for something on which to use my forty-horse-power intelligence.

I took another look over doc's machine, and tried to think that I might hook up with him and use the machine to demonstrate a patent medicine with, or something like that.

But I couldn't exactly lead myself up to the thought. I wasn't very keen to mix it with the doc. To tell the truth, I was a bit afraid of the perpetual-motion box. I didn't know what it might do if it got well started once.

There was absolutely no doubt in my mind but that the eccentric old gent had discovered perpetual motion.

I had several peeks at the box during the trip, and that shuttle was threading back and forth all the time without a single hitch. It certainly was a marvel.

When we were about two days from land, one of the engines quit working all of a sudden. As there were only two of them, both second-hand donkey engines, it handicapped us a good deal; and there's no telling what might have happened if Dr. Drook hadn't gone below with his perpetual-motion machine and started the thing going.

The captain bowed down and proclaimed Dr. Drook a marvel. It was the

first official recognition he had received on the ship, and it set me to thinking. If he received that sort of an ovation from the captain, what would he get when we reached shore?

The question was answered very shortly. We were soon to land at Copenhagen, and, before we got into the port, old doc was standing way up in the bow with a red handkerchief, wigwagging signals to shore. I didn't know what they meant. But evidently they caught somebody's eye, and before long a press boat came steaming out to us.

Several reporters climbed aboard the Tuskegee, and doc took them down to his cabin and gave them a little perpetual-motion show. I peeked in at the door, and heard them all marveling in that foolish tongue they talk over there; they call it Scandinavian, but it sounds a great deal more like Hungarian-Spitz.

I don't know how doc ever learned the language; maybe he invented it; but, anyway, he was getting the goods over to them in large bunches, and they were taking side and front views of the machine and pictures of doc in every possible pose except standing on his head.

Then a notion struck me. The perpetual-motion machine was the real thing. Doc was the goods, and he was sure to receive a great ovation on shore. I ought to be able to make money out of him. If I could fix up a nice little lecture tour in the United States for him, I'd have a cinch.

So I went into the cabin, grappled doc around the waist, tore him away from the reporters, and dragged him to my bunk.

There I shoved him into a corner, and, feeling safe because the perpetual-motion machine was elsewhere, I glared at him and asked:

"You discovered perpetual motion, didn't you, doc?"

He stuck his thumb in the armhole of his vest and tried to look like a prosperous financier.

"Yes," he said simply.

"Well," I went on without a pause, "I discovered you? Didn't I, doc?"

"Oh, well, have it your own way," he replied, not being over interested in me.

"Can't you see the point, doc?" I went on quickly.

"Not at all," was his obtuse answer.

"Well," I explained carefully, "that makes me indirectly the discoverer of perpetual motion."

"I beg to disagree with you," he said firmly.

"Never mind that," I replied. "If I hadn't discovered you in your igloo, you'd never have had a chance to let the world know all about this perpetual motion, would you?"

"No," he admitted grudgingly.

"That's the way to talk, doc," I enthused. "Then you admit that you owe me a great fund of gratitude?"

"Oh, have it your own way!" I saw he was getting uneasy to get back to his perpetual-motion machine.

"Well, there's something you can do for me in return. I can be of great service to you. After you reach Copenhagen, the university there will doubtless take you up and make a great deal of you. They are long on that kind of thing.

"Now, while you are eating ice-cream and accepting titles for having discovered perpetual motion, I will take the first fast boat out of Copenhagen and hie me back to the States, where I will immediately start a lecture tour for you. You can get five hundred dollars a night, doc. Think of that, five hundred a night!"

"It isn't a bad idea," he remarked thoughtfully.

"Then you'll do it?" I cried happily.

"Have you had any experience at getting up lecture tours?" he asked.

"Yes; I took Hobson out on his first kissing tour."

"I refuse to be kissed," answered Dr. Drook firmly.

"Wait till you're asked," I reproved him.

"Well, I'll think over your lecture proposition," he said, starting to go.

"Nix on that, doc. The minute the University of Copenhagen sees you're in town, they won't let you alone for a minute. I'll hike back to America and start the lecture tour at once. I've enough money saved to pay my passage."

"Well, have your own way about it. I consent," he said grandly.

I wrung his hand and called him my best friend. He bowed for the applause

and hastened back to the fish-eating reporters, who began asking him foolish questions, and kept it up till we reached shore.

One of them had been up in the bow most of the time wigwagging the story to those on shore; so we weren't at all surprised when we landed to find a million more reporters and seventeen grandees from the University of Copenhagen to greet us.

They carried doc off on their shoulders without loss of time, and presented him with a hand-illumined degree at the university, bearing eighteen seals and a walrus.

I followed the procession and watched the enthusiasm of the mob. It was great. It was one of the happiest moments in my life. For I had discovered Dr. Drook.

Then he was officially interviewed.

The first question was:

"What food did you live upon all this time while you were discovering perpetual motion in the Far North?"

"Gum-drops," answered Dr. Drook.

Then they knew for sure he was the real thing, and fell down at his feet again.

When they got up they presented him with another degree, containing one more letter.

Somebody came along and handed him the freedom of the city next. He didn't know exactly what to do with it, so he gave it back to the mayor, and said he'd call for it when he needed it more.

They asked him what he'd have in place of it. Doc told them the one thing he'd been pining for ever since he'd been rescued from the island was a pair of suspenders.

The mayor took off his own pair and presented them, among thunderous applause.

I realized they'd keep up this sort of thing for a week or more, and that I wouldn't have a chance to speak to doc about his lecture tour again. Knowing that when he needed money he'd have to come to the United States for it, and I'd be there with the lecture tour all planned, I took the next boat and started for home.

Oh, I certainly felt fine as we went bounding toward New York. I knew they'd be glad to see me and fall all over themselves to hear about doc, and buy seats at five dollars per for his lecture.

I swiped the pants doc had been wearing when captured, and took them along, feeling sure they would make a hit, being made of walrus skin, and looking fiercer than that.

I could count the coin we'd corral. It was too good to be true. I couldn't wait to get back to little old New York and tell them the news that Dr. Drook had consented to come back and be the prophet in his own country.

I could just see the reflected glory I'd get. I felt almost certain that one of the leading suffragettes would meet me at the pier with a garland of white roses on behalf of the society. I began to look forward to pink teas and yellow spats.

My outlook was getting good.

I had always hoped to run for President some day, and this was certainly a start.

CHAPTER III.

BUSINESS IS BUSINESS.

EVEN the Statue of Liberty held out her hand to me in welcome as we steamed into New York Harbor. I didn't take her hand, because it was a little out of reach, but I smiled back at her, and tried to break away from the crush of reporters who had come out on the revenue cutter to get the ship's news.

It had been cabled ahead from Copenhagen that I was on my way, that I represented Dr. Drook, and had full authority to make engagements and lecture dates for him.

Maybe I wasn't the kid with the happy eyes. Everything shone before me. I felt proud and successful, almost as though I'd discovered perpetual motion all by myself.

The reporters wanted to know all about Doc Drook, so I gave them a fine story, with frilled edges, delicately tinted in water color, and assured them that the doctor was the real, "name-blown-in-the-bottle" inventor of perpetual motion. I recited to them how he had turned on the machine, and what had happened.

That day the papers were full of the story. I was the biggest news sensation that had struck New York in a month of Sundays. They assured me that nothing was too good for me, and I admitted it.

I dined with the mayor, breakfasted with the President, and wiped my feet on three aldermen who wanted favors. Oh, it was the greatest moment of my life!

Then I awakened to the fact one morning that business is business. While it was all very nice to be dined and wined round, I wanted to get out and get busy dating up the doctor for his lecture tour. I had received several good offers already; so I rushed round town for a day or two, sent a score of telegrams, and finally succeeded in making up a very pretty little book on old Doc Drook.

I had him booked from New York to San Francisco, and then I planned to take him over to London and organize an English tour.

I completed my arrangements none too soon, for I received a cable from Dr. Drook that he was on the way, and would arrive shortly.

All New York and I went down the harbor to meet him. His little Swedish vessel came in flying every flag aboard, and a few of the stokers' red shirts.

It was a very big party. I was on one of the press boats that came in first over the wire. We all got aboard, and began struggling for different members of the now famous Dr. Drook, some even being contented with a handful of hair from the worthy personage.

Doc had become very civilized during the time at Copenhagen. Somebody had fitted him out with a suit of Swedish clothes, and he looked like a beefy butcher out for a Sunday stroll with his girl. They had induced him to part with some of his whiskers, but he still clung to a yard of them.

The boat looked as though an earthquake had struck it when it was finally docked.

One delegation leaped aboard from a worn-out ferry-boat that had been pressed into service and threw a wreath of white roses around doc's neck. He looked like a human funeral, but the photographers snapped him just the same.

A delegation of boarding-school girls met us on the dock and insisted upon kissing the inventor of perpetual motion separately and individually.

When I finally dragged doc away from the Roman mob, and got him sheltered in a corner drug-store, the druggist and I found that he'd received seventeen scratches, four bruises and a contusion, in the turmoil.

We got a taxi and rushed to the mayor's house. He gave us the glad hand, and repeated that old chestnut of giving doc the freedom of the city. Drook had become so used to this formality that he just laid the thing aside, as though it would never be of any use to him at all.

There was a big banquet planned for doc that night, and I managed to see him a few minutes alone before the thing was pulled off.

"Well," I said, "is the perpetual-motion machine all right?"

"Yes, they kept it in cold storage for me while I was in Copenhagen."

"Didn't the university authorities want to see it work—didn't they want you to show them, like they do down in Missouri?" I asked anxiously.

"No"—doc waved his hand in a very superior manner—"they didn't care to see the proofs at all. Said I could send them back to the perpetual-motion society whenever I got round to it, and they'd pass on them without fail."

"Good. That saves us a lot of trouble. You've got the box with you then?"

"Oh, yes."

"You didn't leave any of it cached on the little floating island?" I queried.

"Oh, no, nothing like that. It's all here in the little wooden box. I had it insured for a hundred thousand, and, as bad luck would have it, the thing came through all right."

"But, surely, you didn't want it smashed?"

"Oh, no," doc admitted reluctantly. "But I could build another for a dollar and thirty-five cents."

"You mustn't ever let that get into print," I urged. "Even if the materials of which you made your perpetual-motion machine were inexpensive, you must make the public think they cost you thousands."

I was rapidly developing press-agent possibilities, and doc looked at me shrewdly, wiping away his overhanging eyebrows, so I could get the meaning of his glance.

"Well, on with the merry-merry; let joy and laughter be unconfined," said doc. "We must get in to that banquet. Have you got my speech written for me?"

"No," I answered, being conscience-stricken for the moment, because I had neglected this detail, which every worthy press-agent must consider.

"What do you expect me to say, then?"

"Oh, say anything, doc," I urged; "only use pretty words, and point to yourself with a bow every time you say 'I.' They'll take anything from you now, doc, and call it wit and wisdom."

"I see. But how does it happen you haven't prepared this for me?" he asked critically.

"Well, to tell the truth, doc"—I fished for an excuse—"I was so blooming busy booking you for this cross-continent run of yours on the lecture tour that I overlooked the detail."

"Don't ever let it happen again," he censured me severely, and then asked: "Did the booking come off all right?"

"Oh, yes. I've got you slated from here to San Francisco. You stop nearly everywhere. Even in Montana."

"Montana!" cried Dr. Drook, and I saw a neat little shiver run right through him.

"Yes."

"Cancel that date," he ordered magnificently.

"But I can't. The advance money has already been sent in. They're very anxious to see you there, doc."

"I know it. That's why I don't want to go," he answered quickly.

I didn't quite understand, but I assured him he'd have to keep the engagement.

"Oh, all right," he said, but I noticed there was a very worried frown between his eyes.

I wondered at it, but said nothing. He got back to his normal self almost immediately, and I thoughtfully switched the subject.

"Of course you have lantern-slides for your lecture?" I suggested.

"Lantern-slides of what?" he queried.

"Oh, anything," I replied. "But the people must really have lantern-slides with a lecture nowadays. You can't expect to convince without them. It would be better if you had moving pictures, but you must have lantern-slides."

"Of what?" he asked again, in a very blank manner.

"Well, of the igloo in which you discovered perpetual motion. Of the polar bears you killed to make the strings for your complicated instrument, of the wreckage floating in from the ship and all that."

"It is a very serious oversight," he admitted. "Will you please go out and start a wreck and have this detail attended to?"

I made a jotting in my note-book, and said it should be as he wished, but he'd have to keep it pretty quiet.

He brushed the eyebrow away from his left eye and winked at me solemnly. In that moment I understood. No discoverer is a hero to his secretary.

The mayor came at that moment and ushered us into the dining-room. I had a place at doc's side, and we all fell on the soup together. Doc picked up his plate and drank from it, explaining to the mayor that he'd been used to condensed-milk cans for so long he couldn't break himself of the habit.

The mayor was very polite, and said he should think doc would run a risk of cutting his mouth on the tins.

"Practise makes perfect," said doc, and they all applauded, thinking he referred to his perpetual-motion machine.

I kept doc from bolting his food, and we had a very merry little dinner. After it was all over there was a painful silence, and everybody sat watching Dr. Drook puff on his cigar, holding it as though it were a pipe, and explaining that he'd been away from civilization so long he couldn't tell a blonde from a brunette, and wasn't even sure what the style was.

Everything doc said got over. He was fast becoming a spoiled child. I could see it all out of the tail of my eye, and was becoming anxious to get him out on that lecture tour.

Well, after the pause, the chairman arose and said:

"We have with us to-night—"

He never got any farther. That is all the chairman is ever expected to say, anyway.

Great applause split the ceiling, and the waiters clustered in the doorway to listen.

"Drook, Drook, Drook!" everybody shouted.

"A tiger for Drook!"

They gave it.

Then somebody suggested that a polar

bear for Drook would be more appropriate.

They gave that, too.

Doc reached over and kicked me under the table. I turned and looked at him. He was trembling frightfully.

"What is it?" I asked.

"I forgot my notes," he said.

"Oh, go ahead and sing, anyway," I encouraged. "They won't know whether you're on the key or not."

CHAPTER IV.

A HORRIBLE RUMOR.

"GENTLEMEN and ladies," began doc, clearing his throat and toying playfully with his whiskers. Then he realized there were no ladies present, cleared his throat again, jerked his mustache like *Lord Dundreary,* and foozled his approach once more.

"Gents—" he began.

I kicked him under the table, and he turned around and looked squarely at me. Evidently he read in my eyes that something was wrong. So he cleared his throat again, brushed the hair on the back of his left hand thoughtfully, and said:

"Mates!"

That got them. They gave another polar bear for doc, and he found his tongue while they were shouting.

"It gives me pain—" he began to go on. Then, finding it was the wrong tack, he changed quickly:

"It gives me pleasure to be in your midst to-night."

Three cheers and a tiger, which somebody changed to a sea-lion.

"In discovering perpetual motion—"

"Hear—hear!" clamored the audience.

Doc went right on talking, and they continued to shout. When there was a lull again his voice could be heard mumbling through his mustache. It was evident he had cut out the preamble and got down to business, for these were his words:

"I have myself to thank for your thanks. I am very glad to be here with you this evening. The glory I have achieved in achieving is nothing as compared to that which has been thrust upon the American flag."

This patriotic appeal got them all. The banqueters, a thousand strong, rose to their feet and had a little lung contest. When they had finished they found to their surprise that Dr. Drook had done the same.

"Thanking you one and all for your soup and favors, I remain, very truly yours, Ferdinand Drook," were his last words, printed in extra heavy type in the papers next morning.

The mayor slapped him on the back till he choked and coughed up a fish-bone surreptitiously swallowed earlier in the meal.

The speech was a grand success. The applause lasted for forty-two minutes, then the wine gave out, and everybody went home to mark that day apart in their private calendars.

"How was it?" asked Dr. Drook, when we were alone again late that night.

"Oh, fine!" I enthused. "You made as good a speech as Demosthenes ever pulled off in his balmiest days."

"That was a pretty neat touch about the American flag, wasn't it?" chuckled Dr. Drook.

"Oh, yes; that kind of thing always gets them. Appeal to their patriotism, you know, and you've got them where they live."

"That's the way I figured it," he admitted modestly.

I tucked doc in bed that night, and hired a bell-boy to sit by the door till morning to see that he didn't escape. I didn't want anything to happen to that lecture tour. It looked like easy pickings to me, and I was anxious to get out with my gathering-basket.

When the first dim rays of dawn were peeking over the sooty roofs of little old New York—as they say in story books—I got up and stole silently to doc's chamber.

By the snores, I knew he was there all right. I went into his boudoir and coaxed him from sleep with a pitcher of ice-water in his face. Doc spluttered, threw out his arms in sailor fashion, as though he were swimming, spluttered again, and then came to.

"Oh!" he said. "I thought it was a tidal-wave rushing over my floating island, and I was just going to rush to save the machine."

I accepted his apologies and hustled him into his clothes. Then I sent the

bell-boy down, and we read an unexpurgated edition of his speech. It went fine. The reporter hadn't heard much of it on account of the applause, and his imagination filled in the gaps to perfection.

"We're made, doc!" I cried. "That speech was a winner."

"Who's speech was it?" he reminded me coldly.

I understood, and groveled at his feet, telling him he was the greatest man alive. Meantime, he was calmly perusing the rest of the paper.

Suddenly he stopped and pointed a dramatic finger at a scare-head.

I looked. Oh, it was too horrible for words! There was the thing staring us in the face:

A SERIOUS CHARGE

Two Young Scientists in Montana Claim that Dr. Drook Never Discovered Radium-Mine.

Will Meet Him on the Platform in Montana When the Doctor Lectures There. They Have Inside Information that Dr. Drook Palmed Off a Fake on the Public in Connection With the Discovery of a Radium-Mine, and Therefore Discredit His Having Discovered Perpetual Motion.

I turned to doc in speechless agony, and finally requested an explanation in a gurgle.

"What's this all about, doc?" said I. "Did you once claim that you discovered a radium-mine?"

Dr. Drook drew himself up proudly and glared at me. He had recovered from the shock.

"If you had followed the papers, young man, you would have learned that I discovered the radium-mine some ten years ago while a struggling scientist in Montana. My discovery of perpetual motion put that in the shade, and now that I am in the public eye two of my rivals are trying to discount my stock."

"But you must deny this charge, doc," I cried.

"Oh, I will—I will!" he said vaguely.

"You can't ever meet them on the platform, you know. It will spoil business."

"I know it—I know. He shook his head ruefully, like *Father William* in the nonsense verse.

"What did you do with the radium-mine?" I asked.

"Why—why," he stammered, "you see, it was like this. I was a struggling scientist in Montana, and I had a notion that Alaska was the land of promise. I went there and found a radium-mine on top of Mount McKinley."

"Then you climbed Mount McKinley?"

"Oh, yes. Every morning after breakfast, while I was working the mine at the top," he went on calmly.

"This will never do!" I cried.

"Well, it's a fact," he went on abruptly. "I discovered this radium-mine, and have been looking for funds to develop it. These men in Montana who charge me with never having discovered it are trying to deceive the public and get into the lime-light by a crafty trick."

"But can you prove that you discovered the mine up there?" I asked anxiously.

"Oh, yes," he answered thoughtfully, "I left all the data on top of the mountain in a tin tube. I'll find it one of these days."

"But, in the meantime, what will you do with these scientists who accuse you?" I asked.

"Well, I've got to lecture, so I suppose I'll have to meet them face to face and just deny everything they say."

"That's the best course," I agreed.

It was a horrible rumor to hear at just such a time, and I was afraid it might shake the faith of the public a little; for if Dr. Drook were discredited in any one respect it would surely have an effect on the popularity of his lecture tour.

We started out that very day and he lectured in Brooklyn, his home town, that night.

The thing went big. The citizens and old neighbors of Dr. Drook got together and started a fund to build a soda-water fountain in his honor.

They treated us so royally, I was afraid I'd never get doc away to make his next lecture date at Hackensack, N. J.

But we arrived there safely the next night and everything went off all right. I found that many of the papers underrated the charge made by the Montana scientists, but I was still a little bit

afraid of the reception we would get in the West.

There was one thing sure. Doc was the real thing on the perpetual-motion stunt. He had it all bottled up, and got out a fine line of talk on the subject.

It was very convincing, and, besides, the old fellow looked so honest and used such big words that the people didn't care or know what he was talking about.

We zigzagged through the country until we reached Chicago. The profits were coming in in great shape. Doc had left the perpetual-motion machine in New York, with an insurance company. But when we reached the "show-me" territory out West we telegraphed for it, and the thing was brought on at once by a special train and a delegation from Brooklyn.

The doctor's reception in Chicago was great; everybody left their pork-packing and jammed into the biggest theater in town to have a look at the great professor.

It seemed very funny to doc, but he was beginning to get used to it. They presented him with another degree or two there, and I had to have fifty special policeman make an aisle for the doctor before I could get him aboard the limited special train for St. Louis.

Dr. Drook took the thing rather well. It is hard to hold your head when you were an unknown nobody from Brooklyn originally, and had fame thrust upon you and breakfast-foods named after you.

But doc did the thing well. He kissed babies and allowed everybody to shake his hand.

They began to call him the "grand old man" and he was fast becoming an institution; but I was a little worried all the time for fear something would butt in and spoil our party.

If we got the frosty mitt in Montana from the scientists who knew all about that radium-mine on Mount McKinley it might hurt our social prestige; old friends might meet us on the street and never recognize us.

I began to think that maybe it would be better, after all, if we didn't take the chance. But then I looked in the doctor's honest eyes, counted the gate receipts, and decided that the best thing to do was fight it out, for the American public has to be shown, and it hates a coward.

I began to get a little more nervous the farther we got into the West. Papers were all taking up that radium-mine story, and I began to worry for fear they'd lynch us if we didn't show up in Montana and put up some kind of a bluff.

Of course, I didn't know for sure that doc hadn't discovered the radium-mine, but it didn't sound plausible. However, I was positively certain of the authenticity of his perpetual-motion claim; for even the University of Copenhagen had backed him up in that.

The uneasiness of the newspapers began to get a hold on doc, too. He didn't eat his grapefruit with as much relish as usual in the morning. I noticed that he suddenly switched from his favorite brand of coffee to a very heavy mocha.

It began to get on my nerves and my daily prayer was that we'd come out safe and sound after the conflict with the Montana scientists.

My chief reason was that we needed the money and wanted to play a return tour; the other reason was that I had great faith in Dr. Drook and had witnessed the marvels of his machine.

CHAPTER V.

THINGS BREAK LOOSE.

WITH the suddenness of a break in the stock market the news came. It caught us before we had left Missouri and the papers broke out with big streamers bearing the news; the sad, sickening news:

NEW CLAIMANT.

Prof. Bonner Discovers Perpetual Motion.

Says Dr. Drook is an Impostor.

Professor Bonner, who for forty years has endeavored to solve the problem of perpetual motion, has at last achieved success.

The professor calls Dr. Drook an impostor, saying that he has thoroughly investigated Dr. Drook's machine, and is

certain that he has not discovered perpetual motion.

Coming from a man who has spent his life in search of this great achievement this story has great weight.

In view of the fact that Dr. Drook is charged by the Montana scientists with never having discovered the radium mine on top of Mount McKinley, there is much doubt expressed in many quarters to-day as to whether he has really discovered perpetual motion.

Professor Bonner's integrity cannot be questioned, and he will soon be awarded full honor for his discovery.

I could read no further. It was easy to see just what the report would mean to us; yet I was positively sure that Dr. Drook had first discovered perpetual motion. I had seen a demonstration of his machine, and that was quite sufficient to convince me.

The doctor seemed worried over the report, for Bonner had an international reputation, and it was well known that he had spent his whole life in trying to solve this great problem which doc had stumbled onto while living on an unknown island.

The papers contained nothing else for a week. Every day a new scare-head came out and the attendance at the lectures began falling off.

It wasn't long before the doctor was scheduled to deliver the goods before the two scientists in Montana. They had been crowing pretty hard and I retained a lawyer to represent Dr. Drook, if they brought suit of any kind.

Most delicately, I had refrained from asking Dr. Drook pointblank what he thought of all the charges against him. But while we were on the train bound for Montana, things being very serious, I put the question gingerly:

"Doc, what do you think about Bonner's having discovered perpetual motion?"

"I suppose he did. I suppose he did," the doctor answered generously.

"But aren't you a bit sore about it?" I asked. "Here he's copping off honors that ought to have been yours by rights."

The doc uttered the sentence that made him famous. I gave it to all the newspapers next day.

"*There's honor enough for two,*" he said simply.

"But what if he starts lecturing?" I queried.

"There's talk enough for two," he answered magnanimously.

"Well, have it your own way. But what are you going to say to those Montana scientists to-night?"

"Oh, I shall have plenty to say," answered Dr. Drook, clenching his fist and looking very fierce.

I respected him mightily at such times.

"Don't you think you had better do something spectacular to get your standing with the public back again?" I asked anxiously, for he seemed to be forgetting a great many of the little things which might count later.

"Oh, yes, I suppose so."

"What are you going to do?"

"What can you suggest?"

"Why don't you send those proofs to Copenhagen and have them pass on the machine?" I asked.

"Good idea. Good idea," he said vaguely. "I will some day."

"But things can't go on forever this way doc," I remonstrated.

"So they can't, so they can't," he answered directly, repeating the phrase with evident relish.

Well, Drook met his Waterloo that night. After his lecture the two Montana scientists rose from their seats in the audience and bawled him out.

Doc threw the bluff that he had paid for the platform and he wouldn't let them present their sides of the case. I saw he was scared and whispered to him that he'd simply have to let them say what they wanted to.

So the scientists took the platform one after the other and charged Drook with never having discovered a radium mine at the top of Mount McKinley. They even went so far as to say that he'd never even been able to climb Mount McKinley.

Of course, that was foolish on the face of it.

But the doctor never said a word. The cat had his tongue and he couldn't make even the most feeble remonstrance.

After the whole sad affair was over doc and I went to the hotel.

"How was it? How did it come off?" he asked tremulously.

"Rotten!" I answered.

"Didn't I say enough?" he asked.

"Why, you didn't say anything," I growled. "I'll bet the lecture tour will be cut down and the magazine who bought your story for ten dollars a word will cancel the order."

"Never that!" cried Drook, "that would be too great an insult. Besides I need the money."

"Then why didn't you answer back when they said you didn't discover the radium mine?"

"Well, you see. It puts me in a rather awkward position," he said thoughtfully.

"But your position is even more awkward now."

"Be that as it may, I refuse to fight. It is the sign of a very small intellect."

"But you are losing prestige, doctor. You must do something to get back with the public. Bonner is copping all the plums. You must do something."

"What would you suggest?"

"Send those proofs of your machine to Copenhagen and have them finally passed upon. That will establish you all right."

"A good idea. Maybe I will; yes, I think I will."

"If you have any fondness for your skin you had better," I urged.

Not liking my line of talk, he went to bed.

Next morning the papers made a big holler. I didn't see a single sheet that supported Drook, they all turned to boosting Bonner, and Bonner continued to assure everybody that Drook was a prize faker.

I wouldn't believe it. My faith was still firm in the doctor, but I was sure that the lecture business would fall down if he didn't do something to regain his standing, and do it quick.

The easiest thing seemed to be for him to be recognized by the Copenhagen University.

So I got hold of the doctor and told him what was what and who was who.

He admitted that the lectures were going on the blink and agreed to go back to New York, fix up his machine, give demonstrations, and send proofs of these to Copenhagen. It was the surest way to get immediate recognition.

So we took a special train back to New York and stopped at a big downtown hotel. There the doctor received so many visitors that I decided it would be better for him, if he went to a little hotel up-town.

So we picked a place in Washington Heights and took everything up there.

Doc got right to work on his data, rigged his machine up, performed some marvelous feats with the thing and wrote reams of stuff about it for the scientists in Copenhagen.

Meantime the papers were dragging up his past and trying to hand him a lemon in a velvet bag. They didn't come out openly against him, but waited; held their breath, as it were, for the actual proofs which doc had promised to deliver.

Well, a week flew by in this manner and I didn't have anything to do but steer people and reporters away from doc. Of course, that was plenty.

One Saturday night I was very tired. My rooms were right next to the doctor's, as he demanded almost my constant attention.

So this night I excused myself from him and went to my own rooms, where I threw myself on the bed, tired out, and almost immediately fell asleep.

I had lovely dreams that night. I remember them all vividly.

I dreamed that doc and I went back to Copenhagen in a golden air-ship; presented the data and proofs and they were not only accepted entire by the University, but the nation saw fit to take over doc's island and create him king of it.

That was a silver-lined dream of mine, all right. I remember drinking some kind of nectar at two thousand a pint out of a champagne cooler.

I've often wished that I'd saved that dream and had it framed. It would have looked like a masterpiece—a Turner—over the mantelpiece.

But dreams are made of filmy stuff, and it's not every day that they come true.

Oh, I had lots of these visions that night.

I remember picking up with another dream after we'd been honored in Copenhagen. I saw us flying through the clouds together back to the U. S. We

tied up our little golden air-ship to the top of the Metropolitan tower and then started off on the lecture tour again. Tickets were selling at a thousand dollars apiece, and the papers were all denouncing Bonner.

Oh, I wish I had never waked up.

But I did, and found it was morning.

As this was the day the doctor had promised to get the rest of his proofs off to Copenhagen I decided to awaken him early and get busy at once.

It was a beautiful morning and I took a turn on the piazza, smoked a cigarette and redreamed those visions of the night before I went to doc's room to awaken him.

I had a pass-key to his door and went in softly. I started at once for the water-pitcher, that being the only means I had found really effective in awakening the doctor.

Seizing the pitcher I walked over to his bed and was just about to throw the water into his face when I found that *his face wasn't there.*

His body wasn't either.

I looked round the room and found that his clothes had disappeared also.

Dr. Drook had flown the coop.

There wasn't a remnant of him, not a vestige, no souvenir of any sort—not even a whisker.

I held my throbbing head between my hands and moaned.

Dr. Drook had deserted at the critical moment.

I glanced round the room again.

He had taken his perpetual motion machine with him.

CHAPTER VI.

UP AGAINST IT.

THE world looked pretty sad and dyspeptic to me that day. I sneaked about the place looking for doc. He was nowhere to be found. There wasn't a note or anything from him.

I read the papers carefully, thinking he might have met with foul play. But there wasn't anything which offered a clue of any sort.

Meanwhile I had to steer the reporters away, assuring them that doc was sick and could not be seen.

In the afternoon I began to entertain the suicide theory. Doc had seemed quite despondent of late and I worried for fear he had done himself harm.

Quietly, I hired several detectives and had them search everywhere for him, but they found no clues. Doc had disappeared as though the earth had opened and swallowed him up.

I questioned all the attendants at the hotel, but no one had seen him depart. Of course I did not let them know that I was worried or that Dr. Drook would not return to the hotel.

In this way the story was kept out of the papers for several days. Each day I inserted advertisements in the "Personal" column, carefully worded, so if the doctor saw them he would know they were intended for his eyes only.

But no answer came.

Four days after Drook's disappearance the story came out.

A curious newspaper man ferreted the thing out and wormed his way into the doctor's room to find that it was empty and there was no sign of occupation.

Dr. Drook's disappearance even had its effect upon the stock market. Everything was thrown into turmoil.

For the first time he was openly called a faker, but it was done by a sensational paper that needed advertising, and the world didn't take much note of it; they were a bit too timorous to come out openly and deny that he had discovered perpetual motion, after they had heard him lecture and seen his machine.

Of course, I knew absolutely that he was the real article, and I would have backed him with every cent I had. I had been intimately connected with him and he had told me positively that he had discovered perpetual motion. Besides, I always remembered that test of the machine he had made on the little floating island. It had been very convincing.

I had made a good deal of money out of the lecture tour, and I suppose I could have withdrawn at that moment with perfect satisfaction. But my expenses had been high, and doc still owed me some money.

All I had really saved and invested from my commission was about four thousand dollars.

It didn't seem right to me that the thing should stop. The graft was good, and I wanted to clean up another five thousand, anyway. That would give me a start in life, and I'd never hoped for anything more.

So I stayed at the little up-town hotel and waited, thinking I would get some sort of news before long from the doctor.

The papers came out shortly with the story that proofs from Dr. Drook had been received at Copenhagen and were being considered.

That made Drook's stock go up a little. The people couldn't very well condemn him for faking until they heard what the University of Copenhagen had to say.

I knew that these proofs were incomplete. Dr. Drook had agreed to send off the final complete batch the day he disappeared. Those he had not sent—there was no doubt of that, as the proofs received at Copenhagen had been mailed from our hotel before doc's disappearance.

Bonner, the rival discoverer, in whom the people had more faith, was being well received everywhere, and the people cried for him. Only a few still supported Drook.

A week passed, and I heard nothing from the doctor.

Then a report came out in the papers that he had been seen in Philadelphia.

Anxious to get hold of him, I took the train to Philadelphia. It was a very hard proposition to search the city for him, but I took along two of my detectives, and we spent a week there without unearthing a single clue.

It was about this time that I became very popular with all the newspaper men. Everybody was looking for Drook, and they all came to me, looking for first-hand information.

I gave them the true story of his disappearance, and agreed to help anybody in finding him.

The newspaper boys kept me pretty busy, chasing around from one town to the other, trying to locate doc. But it all came to nothing.

It was one of the most remarkable disappearances in history. To think that a man whose picture had been printed from one end of the globe to the other, and who had been seen face to face by a million people, should have been able to disappear so utterly.

Of course, if doc had shaved his whiskers he might have looked like a different man. One of the papers suggested this; but I felt pretty sure that doc would never mutilate himself in such a way. He was more fond of those whiskers than he was of his reputation.

Many of the papers came out with stories that he was in Copenhagen, waiting to be called before the examining committee. Others said that he had eloped with his lecture money, and was spending it in the Latin Quarter of Paris.

A thousand different stories came out, but nobody came anywhere near the mark; for every story was investigated, and found to be without foundation.

The disappearance was complete, and there was so much mystery surrounding it that the betting began to run high as to whether Dr. Drook would ever be discovered or not.

The papers advertised small rewards for his discovery. A score of reporters came to me, urging that I take up the pursuit as the business of my life, and promising me good prices from their papers if I would write the exclusive story.

Dr. Drook never made half the impression when he was right on the job that he did after he had disappeared. The world was waiting for the decision of the Copenhagen committee. It was holding its breath and wondering.

Bonner's proofs of having discovered perpetual motion had been passed upon in America without the slightest question. It was popular sentiment that if Drook received the same recognition at Copenhagen he would be worthy of a place beside Bonner. If he did not receive this sanction, there was no telling what the world might feel inclined to do.

That's why I was so anxious to find Drook at once, and get him to prove the thing absolutely and resume his lecture tour. I wanted to make a little more money.

The Copenhagen committee seemed to take a long time considering the facts, and it made lots of newspaper material.

In those days, if you picked up a newspaper or magazine, all you could see was about Drook and Bonner.

They were the popular notes in the public eye.

Through me Drook had sold a dozen testimonials for advertising use in magazines. That graft went pretty good.

I remember one that we got a hundred dollars for. It made a special hit.

NORTH STAR TOBACCO COMPANY,
OSHKOSH, WISC.

GENTLEMEN:

Your North Star smoking tobacco was used by me on my floating island for three years. A case of it floated ashore from the wreck.

Your No. 2 Fine Cut was great to throw in the eyes of an enraged polar bear.

Your No. 6 Long Cut was greatly relished by the Eskimos. They swallowed it in three-inch chunks.

Yours truly,
DR. DROOK.

That's why I missed Drook so much. I was getting offers occasionally for just such testimonials, and I had no way to use them, for Drook had gone. I wrote a few myself, as his secretary, but the people began to prefer Bonner's advertising testimonials, so we were left out in the cold.

It was during the days when the world was awaiting the decision of the Copenhagen University that a star reporter was sent to me by a big New York paper.

I had been receiving reporters right along. It was nothing unusual for me, so I just took the cigar and put it with the collection I had made of those given me by newspaper men.

Then I looked at him inquisitively and asked:

"What can I do for you?"

"A great deal," he replied solemnly.

I was impressed by his bearing, and noticed that he was a little different from the usual run of newspaper men who had been to see me in regard to Drook.

"How much is there in it for me?" was my next question.

"Five thousand dollars!"

"Whewww!" I whistled.

"It is a good deal."

"Yes—you could get thirty murders done for that price," I replied thoughtfully.

"It isn't a murder I want," he replied.

"What, then?"

"I want a man brought back to life."

"Indeed," I smiled.

"Can't you do that?" he asked.

"My price for materializations is more than that," I replied like a professional medium.

"I'm sorry, but that's all we can pay."

"Who's the man you want me to restore to the world?"

"You know!" he said sharply.

"Adam?" I ventured.

"No; we couldn't do anything with Adam these days."

"Well—who, then?"

"Dr. Drook."

"Oh," I gasped.

"You see, it's like this," he went on hurriedly. "We believe that you must have some information as to his whereabouts. Inside information is what we want."

"I see," was my reply. "But I can't deliver the goods on this point."

"You had better think it over pretty well before you refuse. There is a big newspaper story coming out about Drook which will surely discount him a good deal and make the people almost sure he is a faker. If that story is followed up by a refusal on the part of the Copenhagen committee to accept the proofs Drook sent in, it will be worth a good deal for any newspaper to discover Drook and get from him a complete confession."

"A confession of what?" I asked innocently.

"We want him to confess that he was faking in regard to discovering perpetual motion."

"But he did discover it. It would take a pretty stiff third degree or a big bunch of money to make him say he did not," I said firmly.

"Well, our offer stands," he replied.

"I wish I could do something for you. Far be it from me not to be interested in the five thousand; but it would be worth almost that much to me to find Dr. Drook and make him prove his stand to the world."

"But there's so much against him. Bonner's reputation is better than his. The two scientists in Montana have undermined his reputation. His own disappearance has proved to be almost the last straw with the public, and now this new sensational news story I spoke of will

almost put him out of business. If the Copenhagen committee comes along and refuses his proofs, he'll be elected president of the Down and Outer's Club."

"I see," I warbled weakly.

Things certainly did look bad for Dr. Drook; and they sure did look luminous to me, if I could stumble onto him anywhere.

CHAPTER VII.

A SUDDEN RESOLVE.

THE next morning I picked up my paper.

There it was in head-lines—the story to which the reporter had referred:

DROOK'S PROOFS FAKED.

Mr. Tight Hired to Fake Pictures Used in Lecture.

It is only once in a century that a really big fake is pulled off on the American people.

Evidence has been produced that Dr. Drook is the greatest faker of this present century.

Mr. T. E. Tight, a photographer at 24 Quick Avenue, this city, has finally given out his story of work he did for Dr. Drook.

Tight says that Drook came to him on October 14th and asked him if he thought it would be possible to fake pictures of a wreck such as Dr. Drook had been the victim of.

Mr. Tight said he could do it, and Drook gave him the order at once. Mr. Tight at present has the photograph plates used in this work, and has written to the Copenhagen committee, expressing his willingness to send them on to be considered alongside of Dr. Drook's.

It is evident from this that if Drook faked in one thing he doubtless did in another.

It is believed everywhere to-day that Mr. Tight's story will prove to the American public that they have been duped by an artful faker.

It is hard for us to admit such a fact, but it seems to be the case—

I stopped reading there to express my feelings concerning this Mr. Tight, of 24 Quick Avenue. We had hired him to make the picture-films. He had done the work the same as any photographer, and promised to keep it absolutely secret.

I remembered suggesting myself that the lecture would fall flat without pictures to throw on the screen. I felt sorry about the whole thing, as though I had been guilty myself.

There was nothing in that which proved Drook a faker. His wreck on the island had nothing to do with his having been the first man to achieve perpetual motion.

The whole thought disgusted me. I could see plainly that the newspapers had got hold of this Mr. Tight and influenced him to give up his story, hoping that it would have the effect of prejudicing the great American public.

It seemed to do that all right, for the afternoon editions all came out calling Drook a faker, and some modifying it by suggesting that possibly Drook thought he discovered perpetual motion.

Tight sent his photograph plates to the Copenhagen committee, and the whole story made quite a furor. It went even bigger than the Montana charge. Everybody was talking about it; and one newspaper, which had bought Drook's story of inventing the machine, announced that they would not publish it until Dr. Drook appeared, or until the people settled down and realized the true state of affairs.

I became even more popular among the newspaper men. They camped on my trail everywhere I went. I couldn't get away from them for the shadow of a second.

A decision by the Copenhagen committee was imminent. The funny papers began making charges against Drook, and he was lampooned all over town. It was rather hard for me, being sure of the old man's sincerity.

A dozen times I thought of that newspaper man's offer of five thousand dollars if I could obtain a complete confession from Dr. Drook.

I suddenly conceived a scheme in that connection. I would accept the offer, get a thousand dollars in advance, and go out to scour the world for Drook. When I found him—if I did—I would work with him on his proofs, bring him back to America, and prove it to their faces.

Surely that would make his lectures go, and the future would be very rosy for both of us. I felt perfectly sure that doc

had disappeared because he was afraid his proofs would not be accepted at Copenhagen.

He had not had time to prepare them properly, and having thought too much about the thing, evidently, he had decided to leave the country as long as there were so many charges against him, and go into seclusion until he could work out his problem so the proofs could be presented in a satisfactory manner. It would be a great coup if I could pull it off.

Meantime, a million guesses at Dr. Drook's whereabouts were being made.

One funny paper said he was down in Florida, and that very soon we'd hear that he had discovered the Fountain of Youth.

It isn't hard to imagine how all this affected me. I was even more confirmed in my faith, and resolved to go out and hunt up Dr. Drook.

Then came the long-waited-for cable from Copenhagen, announcing the decision of the committee.

It read as follows; each word is seared into my memory as a horrible injustice to Drook:

> The data in the documents submitted to us are of such an unsatisfactory character that it is not possible to declare with certainty that even the photographs of the machine referred to were actually made from an authentic apparatus.
>
> There is likewise lacking details in practical matters—such as positive tests—which could furnish some proof.
>
> The committee is therefore of the opinion that the material transmitted for examination contains no proof whatsoever that Dr. Drook has succeeded in discovering perpetual motion.
>
> (Signed)
>
> ELLIS-ISLAND STROEMGREENHOUSE,
> Chairman.
>
> PETER PENOCHLE,
> FOLKSTONE BOULOGNE,
> KNUT KNUTSON,
> P. H. G. SWENSON,
> KARL ROUGHONRATSSON.

That was the climax. Dr. Drook could never more lift up his head in polite society and say: "I done it."

The goods were against him. He was down and out—a pitcher without a handle—a catcher without a mitt—an umpire with a glass eye—a widow without a mite. In other words, he was up the flue.

Yet I did not desert him. Very much like Napoleon, I took the bull by the horns, and said: "This isn't Waterloo yet."

It would have been heartless, cruel, thankless, ungrateful, ingrate, ill requited—and all that—of me to have deserted the cause at that moment.

Rome rang of him but a month before; now it was willing to wring his neck.

I would find him, get his proofs together, and right him before the world. It was my duty. I could not leave him at the church.

Besides, there would be good iron-dollars in the job if I could pull it off.

Rushing to a telephone, I called up the reporter who had made me the offer on behalf of his paper.

"Do you still want me to find Drook and get his confession?" I asked.

"Do I want you to? Say that again."

I repeated it in Danish, and his ear, open to anything from Copenhagen, registered the remark with greater care.

"Why, man, we'd give five thousand to find Dr. Drook, dead or alive."

"Will there be more money in it if I find him soon?" I asked, with my right eye always on the main chance.

"The sooner the quicker," he replied.

"Will you advance me anything to aid me in the search?"

"Yes, if you leave your watch."

"I don't want any offers with a string to them," I replied, "or a chain, either. I want more money, too, than I could get on my watch."

"Is it one of the kind they sell for a hundred dollars—a gross?" he asked.

That made me mad.

I called up the rival paper and put my proposition. They sent their business manager right over to see me.

We talked the thing all over, and he finally agreed to advance the thousand dollars if I would begin the search for Drook at once.

I played my cards well, and at length we settled on the following scale of prices for my ultimate reward:

For finding Drook, dead or alive	$5,000.00
For finding Drook, with his whiskers intact	6,000.00
For finding Drook and getting his picture in his famous walrus suit	7,000.00

For finding Drook, with above requirements included, and obtaining a complete confession from him	$8,000.00
For finding Drook, getting complete confession, and bringing him back to America	9,000.00
For finding Drook, getting confession, bringing him back to America, taking his picture with complete paraphernalia, including whiskers, walrus-skin suit, and posed with a gum-drop in his hand	10,000.00
For finding Drook, dead or alive and obtaining a complete *denial* from him	5,000.30

The last item was the only one I objected to, as I wanted to get Drook to deny the stories in the press; but the newspaper man assured me that while it would be worth five thousand dollars for me to discover Dr. Drook, they could not possibly allow me more than thirty cents for his denial of the stories about him.

Well, I accepted the offer and the thousand dollars. Then I went round to several advertisers, and secured a few good propositions for pictures of Drook, if I discovered him, and little testimonials from him if he denied the stories. They all rubbed it in that, if he confessed, his testimonials wouldn't be worth a seat in a theater behind a woman who insisted on keeping her spring hat on all through the performance.

That tickled me, because I was sure I would get a denial from Drook, and that we could prove his position without much trouble as the first to discover perpetual motion.

So, having made my sudden resolve, I took my trusty camera, put on my gum-shoes, took along a handful of gum-drops for bait, and went out to locate Dr. Drook.

CHAPTER VIII.

DISCOVERING A DISCOVERER.

I DIDN'T have the remotest idea of where to begin my hunt for Dr. Drook. All I knew was that I wanted to find him and get him to deny everything.

Having no better place to begin, I started in New York. Of course, it didn't seem at all probable that the doctor would stay so near home; and yet, New York is an endless jungle in which anybody might lose himself without great trouble.

Knowing there was no use to watch the dock for Dr. Drook to set sail, as the reporters covered that field rather well, I turned my attention to the East Side.

There a man could easily get a room in an obscure tenement, and stay in it for any length of time without being discovered.

It was an aimless kind of a search; I reminded myself at times of a small boy with a handful of salt trying to put it on a squirrel's tail.

But everything must have a beginning, and I had decided to start there.

Well, inside of two weeks I had become rather disgusted with myself. I had extended my search to Boston, Philadelphia, and Chicago; but the task seemed hopeless.

Then it occurred to me to look through Dr. Drook's diary. I had had it in my pocket the night he disappeared, planning to work up for publication some of the details it contained.

I made a very systematic search of the diary, and stumbled upon several things which were highly interesting. I had known all along that doc was of English parentage, and that many of his warm friends lived in the East End of London. But I had never had their addresses before.

Of course, everywhere they were looking for Drook; and he would not be safe even in such a large city as London. His pictures had been scattered broadcast, and many people realized the possibilities which would be open to them if they should discover him.

I sat down and figured the whole thing out with every ounce of logic I possess. I tried to put myself in his position. It wasn't hard for me to imagine myself the inventor of perpetual motion, having discovered Dr. Drook. So I went a step farther, and supposed that the world had not credited my invention.

Where would I hie myself to hide from public scrutiny while I could get my proofs and data in shape?

The question immediately answered itself. I would naturally go among

friends who believed in me and would shield me.

Then I looked in the doctor's note-book once more, and found that his oldest, dearest friends lived in the poor part of London.

Englishmen are loyal. I felt that if I were in Drook's shoes I would have struck out for London.

Of course, the docks had been watched closely by reporters; but it seemed to me that if he had run up to Boston, and taken some cheap, small line from there, he would never have been discovered.

I suddenly became possessed with the notion to follow out my idea. I would go at once to Boston, sail for Liverpool, and then run up to London and call at the addresses given in doc's diary.

The thing looked pretty good; so I bought a steamer rug, a pair of rubber-soled shoes, and a book which told all about the East End of London.

To carry out my plan in every detail, I took a train for Boston and set sail there on the first small boat headed for Liverpool.

I spent much of my time in the smoking-room, reading my book on London and poring over Dr. Drook's diary.

The third day out, I became acquainted with the ship's doctor. He was a peculiar young fellow, with a halting lisp and a dandified appearance which made many of the people on the boat think he was built for a ribbon clerk instead of a surgeon.

But I grew to like him. He got to telling me about experiences he had had in the north, and as I had just come from there, and been interested in Drook, I was quite anxious to hear all he had to say.

"Do you know," he remarked one day, "I believe I once saw that island where Dr. Drook claimed he discovered perpetual motion."

"You did?" I queried.

It seemed strange to me that he had made such a remark, for I was very careful not to let anybody know that I had any particular interest in Dr. Drook.

"Yes, sir. I saw just an island as he describes, and there was a sort of igloo on it, like the one he lived in."

"How long ago was this?"

"Oh, about five years," he replied.

"But there are so many little floating islands of that kind," I told him. "They all look about the same."

"Yes; but there's something else makes me think this was the real one where Drook was found."

"What?" I asked.

"Well, I was talking with a man coming over on the last voyage, and I made the remark which I repeated just now, and he asked me to describe the island. I did, and he reached out a long, hairy hand and shook mine. 'That's the island,' he said."

"But how did this man with the hairy hand know?" I asked the ship's doctor.

"Well, that's what I got to wondering about. You see, I thought at first he was just some old mariner, but after a while it occurred to me that it might be Dr. Drook himself."

"Dr. Drook himself!" I cried.

"Yes."

"But why didn't you tell the newspapers about this? Everybody is looking for Drook. Don't you know that?"

"Yes, but I didn't at the time. You see, we sailed from Boston before the story was out that Dr. Drook had disappeared," he explained.

"But didn't you get the news soon?"

"Not till we reached Liverpool," was his reply. "You see, this line is so small that we are not fitted with wireless; so we don't get any news for ten days."

"But when you heard the news in Liverpool, why didn't you tell what you suspected?"

"Because he was gone, and I wasn't sure. I spoke to some of the officers about it, and they didn't think it at all probable that the old, whiskered fellow was Dr. Drook. They said he wouldn't sail on such a small line, and if he was doing a disappearing act, he would have cut his whiskers off for disguise."

"You have no further trace of him? You didn't see him after he left the boat?" I asked.

"No; he disappeared as completely as though a cannibal had eaten him up," was the reply.

I thought for a few moments; then asked:

"Did you have much conversation with this man?"

"Oh, yes; we talked a good deal."

"Did you mention the Drook case to him?"

"Yes, but he refused to talk about it. Said he had met Drook and believed in him. That was all."

"What other things did you talk about?" I asked, becoming very much interested.

He looked at me peculiarly, and I felt that I was showing too great a curiosity in the matter.

"I'm just interested," I explained. "Because you say you have a notion it was Dr. Drook, and I have heard so much about the case that I'd like to know all I can."

"Oh, that's all right." He accepted my explanation. "I'd just as lief tell you all about it. I have a notion myself that the long, hairy fellow might have been Drook. He certainly bore a striking resemblance to the pictures in the papers."

"Did he have long whiskers?" I asked.

"Yes; and when he wanted to wink at you, he had to brush an eyebrow away in order to show his eye."

"That's the man!" I cried.

"I'm sorry now I didn't realize it more fully at the time. I notice the papers are offering rewards for his discovery."

"Yes, a man could make a couple of thousand rather easily right now if he knew where Dr. Drook is."

"I certainly wish I had the time. I think maybe I could find him."

"Where do you think he is?"

"In London."

I gave a start. It was strange that he should have hit on the same spot that had suggested itself to me.

"What makes you think he is there?" I could not help but ask wonderingly.

"Because we got to talking about London, and he knows the city very well. It seems that he spent some time there, and has a great many friends among the poor down in Shoreditch."

"That's interesting," I said, remembering that several of the addresses which I possessed read "Shoreditch."

After that, whenever I had a chance, I talked with the ship's doctor. He had paid great attention to the hairy passenger, and was willing to gossip about him.

"Did the old fellow you think was Dr. Drook have much luggage?" I asked.

"Well, he invited me down to his stateroom one day, and there wasn't much in it. Just two suit-cases and a big box, over which he had thrown an overcoat. He sat on it while I talked with him."

"You don't know what the box contained?" I asked, thinking at once of the perpetual-motion machine.

"No; but it had a curious look, and one of the stewards told me it was heavy."

"Did he have any baggage in the hold?" I asked.

"I don't believe he had."

I tried a new tack. The old box which the ship's doctor had mentioned made me very curious. I seemed to feel that it contained the perpetual-motion machine.

"Did you happen to discuss perpetual motion with the old fellow?" I asked.

"No; but one night I came into the smoker here, and somebody was talking about radium. I noticed that the old fellow was very much interested, and he was soon in a very heated argument."

"Was any mention made of the radium mine Dr. Drook said he discovered on top of Mount McKinley?"

"No; but somebody said it would never be possible to find radium in large enough quantities to make it a commercial factor," he replied.

"What did the hairy man say?"

"He replied that he knew a man who had discovered a radium mine on a mountain. But when asked for particulars he flushed up curiously and wouldn't go into the thing further."

"Good!" I cried; for I was almost convinced that Dr. Drook had crossed on this very boat, and that he was in London at that very moment.

"You seem to take a great interest in Dr. Drook," remarked the boat's doctor.

"Well, a man must keep abreast of the times, and know what's doing in the world," I replied.

CHAPTER IX.

FIRST UNDER THE WIRE.

LONDON looked funny to me. My roving career had led me almost all over the world, but I had never been in the foggy city before.

There were many things for which I could not account. As soon as I got off the train, I asked a man how many blocks it was to the Queen's Hotel, where I had decided to stop.

"Blocks! Blocks!" he repeated wonderingly. "Oh, I say now, it's just at the top of the street."

I didn't understand the dope, but tried to look intelligent, and replied: "Thank you."

I went to the end of the street and found the hotel all right; it wasn't at the top of anything, and I'd been in London several days before I found that the place is so winding and cut up that they don't know what a "block" is.

The very first thing I did was to take a bus for Shoreditch. I found it a very strange district, full of coster's wagons and two-wheeled carts along the sidewalk, where they sold everything from carrots to pianos.

I picked out one of the addresses in Dr. Drook's diary and stopped at the place.

It was a very queer-looking public-house, divided into fifteen different little compartments and all facing on the bar, so a man could have a drink without being seen.

"What'll you 'ave, sir?" asked the man behind the bar.

"Is Dr. Drook here?" I asked.

"Dr. Drook!" he cried, looking at me shrewdly. "The American! The man wot discovered perpetual motion?"

"That's it," I replied.

He looked at me blankly, and replied that he had never heard of the man.

I tried another address, and found a belligerent woman, who assured me that she had never heard the name.

Before bedtime I tried half the addresses in the book, but nobody seemed to know of him, except from the newspaper reports. I went back to the hotel in a rather discouraged frame of mind.

The next day I tried a new tack. I went to the other places, and pretended that I came on confidential business; but nobody knew Drook.

On the third day I began to get discouraged. Luck was against me. I realized how foolish I had been to center all my energies on one little spot like Shoreditch, London.

Drook might be anywhere. He might be in Chinatown, New York. Or in the American quarter at Peking. He might be down hobnobbing with Zelaya in South America. There was no telling where he was.

Well, I hung round Shoreditch for about a week; occasionally I ran into somebody who knew Drook, but they wouldn't give me any information; all of which led me to believe that he was not in London.

I put advertisements in the paper, nevertheless, requesting him to communicate with me if he was there. But nothing came of it.

I was about to give up the search and go back to New York when, one day as I was walking down Shoreditch, a little group round a fish-man's cart attracted my attention.

I stopped with them, and watched the poor of the neighborhood going up to buy their "kippers" for three cents a pair, in American money.

They were a disreputable-looking lot. Old men with long hair, scraggly women with no hair; everybody in tags and tatters. It was a most interesting accumulation of human driftwood.

I was just about to turn away and go back to the hotel to pack up for America when a slim, bent old figure pushed through the crowd, laid down three half-pennies, and picked up a pair of the oily smoked fish.

Something about the bend to his back interested me. I turned and watched him. He faced about a moment later and started to slink off with his fish, when I caught a glimpse of his beard.

I would have known that beard among a million. It was as distinctive as Blue Beard's.

I followed the man, breathing in short gasps, like a young man in love.

The old fellow seemed like a scared rat. He no sooner had his fish than he turned, darted up the street for a short distance, ran into an alley, and climbed some rickety stairs to a little dilapidated house.

I was at his heels when he turned to close the door.

At that instant he recognized me and threw up his hands; one of the "kippers" hit me on the ear and the other

fish landed in my eye. He didn't care what became of his marketing in the excitement of the moment.

He tried to slam the door in my face. I leaped forward and wedged my foot into the crack. Strong as he was, I managed to force the door open, burst into his little room and slam the door shut behind me.

"Hallo, doc," I said, picking up one of the "kippers" from where it had fallen on the floor. "Been fishin'?"

"No," he gurgled deep, "an' I ain't been huntin' either. I ain't been houndin' a poor mortal to his lair."

"By his hair," I suggested.

"Well, you've caught me, what do you want?" said Dr. Drook. "I haven't any money. That was my last three cents you saw me spend just now."

"Here's a dime, doc," I said, reaching into my pocket.

He took the coin and a happy smile spread over his face.

"Gee, I wish I was back in America," he said.

"Come on back with me, doc," I offered generously, "they're waiting for you over there."

"I know it," he warbled. "That's just it."

"Oh, come on back. Be a sport. Bring the machine back and tell them all about it."

"I refuse to confess," said doc solemnly.

That was the first time I thought he was really guilty, I began to see by his attitude that he really was a faker.

Looking round the room, I noticed in one corner his perpetual motion machine. It was the best piece of furniture in the place. He had taken out part of the works to make a "larder" out of it and it contained a bag of salt and three crusts of bread at that moment.

"You mean you have something to confess then, doc?" I asked anxiously, seeing that he wanted to tell me something.

"I refuse to speak without advice of counsel," he said in his firmest tone.

I decided to try him out at that moment and find whether he had really been faking all the way through or not.

"Doc," I said sternly, "you didn't solve perpetual motion, did you?"

He doubled up and looked very fierce, as he shot murderous glances at me from beneath the whiskers he wore for eyebrows.

"You only faked this machine here, didn't you? And you thought people wouldn't discover it."

Doc jumped to his feet, doubled his fist, and lunged around the room trying to hit his shadow.

"Who said that! Let me at him! Let me at him!" he hollered as though some one were holding him.

I knew from the way he did it that he'd been faking all along. Then the scales fell from the snake's back, or is it, "the scales fell from my eyes?"

I looked at him as solemnly as an undertaker.

"Doc, sit down," I said.

He squatted on his haunches like a polar bear and looked up at me through the alfalfa.

"You're busted, aren't you, doc?" I asked.

"I am," he said sadly.

"You'd like to connect with a little coin, wouldn't you?"

"I most certainly would. I'm tired of this hiding business," he said truthfully.

"I'll tell you how you can make some money, doc. If you'll agree to confess that you didn't solve perpetual motion, that your machine is only a fake."

He winced, then nodded for me to go on.

"Will you confess?" I asked.

"Yes, I didn't solve perpetual motion," he said with a gulp.

"How did you fake this machine," I went over and kicked the perpetual motion machine.

"I ran it with electricity," he admitted slowly.

My eyes began to pop out. I was getting the confession I wanted. It sounded interesting. I could see that ten thousand dollars I'd get for the story.

"How do you mean you ran it with electricity, doc?" I queried.

"Well," he said, stepping over to the machine and demonstrating, "you see, it has a false bottom. In that false bottom I have an electric storage battery. That runs the machine. It's very simple. I could do marvelous things with it, as

you remember. But when it came to sitting down and doping out the principle on which it worked, I couldn't figure it out without saying that I used electricity for the motive power.

"That's why my proofs fell down at Copenhagen. I could demonstrate the machine all right, but I couldn't show any data to prove the principle."

It was the halting confession of a broken man. I felt sorry for him, and yet, I had to probe the thing cruelly to the bottom.

"So it's all faked. You discovered nothing, doc? You just put the machine together so it would look like something and then concealed the electric apparatus that worked it?"

"That's it," he admitted.

"And that's why you disappeared when you saw you couldn't prove the thing at Copenhagen?"

"Exactly. I took a night train out, and a cheap line to Liverpool, from thence to London. I came here and have lived alone till my money has given out. I didn't look up my friends because I knew there were rewards out for finding me, and somebody might give me away. I'm busted now, and I'll do anything for money."

"You'll even admit you never discovered a radium mine on top of Mount McKinley?" I asked.

"I never even climbed Mount McKinley," he confessed.

I was happy. While I had expected to receive a denial from doc I had been prepared in the emergency of a confession.

"Well, doc, I made you famous and now I am going to make you a by-word in the mouths of all people. I'll make you rich yet, doc?"

"How?" he queried in the simple voice of a child.

"Before leaving New York a dime museum manager came to see me and offered five hundred a week for you to appear on his platform if you confessed that you were a faker. He just wants you to sit under a little sign saying, 'The Greatest Faker in the World—Dr. Drook.' It will be very easy, doc? Do you accept?"

He gurgled and swallowed a few hasty words. Then, his pride utterly broken, he replied:

"I need the money. Yes, thank you for your kindness. I will appear in that part if you will have a row of police round to protect me."

"Oh, I'll tend to that all right, doc," I replied. "Come on, we're going back to America."

I shouldered the fake perpetual motion machine and started out; doc followed meekly along, chewing on one of the herrings he had picked up from the floor, like an Eskimo gnawing at a snack of frozen fish.

I got doc to New York in good shape and did the thing quietly.

On the dock I posed him with his complete paraphernalia, including whiskers, walrus-skin suit and eyebrows, nicely braided, and I didn't overlook the matter of placing a gum-drop in his hand, according to the orders of the newspaper.

Then I sent my bill in for ten thousand dollars and turned doc over to the dime museum manager.

It wasn't a bad day's work.

(The end.)

THE DANUBE RIVER.

Do you recall that night in June,
  Upon the Danube River?
We listened to a peasant tune,
  We watched the moonbeams quiver.
I often since have watched the moon,
  But never, love, oh! never,
Can I forget that night in June,
  Adown the Danube River.

Hamilton Aïdé.

A Passion for Venison.

BY GARRET SMITH.

In Which the Smartest Gambler and the Nerviest Player Rakes In the Biggest Jack-Pot.

"I'VE simply got to shoot, law or no law," I declared.

I threw my rifle to position and pulled the trigger. At the same instant the guide's big hand struck the barrel and the bullet plowed harmlessly into the trail a few feet ahead of me.

There was a crash of shrubbery at the end of a forest vista.

Two tiny antlers reared for a moment in plain sight. Then a lithe brown body bounded to cover over the deep mat of underbrush, where a man, attempting to follow, would have broken his leg in the first ten rods.

I was mad for a moment, though I knew I had no right to be.

"Look here, Merton," I demanded, "what hurt would it do if I did kill one? It's only one.

"Nobody'd be the wiser. We two are alone here. Let me get a deer, or get one for me, and I'll take all the blame and pay for any consequences that may follow from being caught — and a good bonus besides, whether you are caught or not," I wound up in a more conciliatory tone.

"You wouldn't hit it, in the first place, if I let you shoot," he replied, frankly skeptical of my ability as a marksman. "Ain't often a new sport has any luck the first season."

They always call any male tourist a "sport" in the Maine woods.

"Anyhow," he went on, "how'd it look fer me to be watchin' you shoot a deer out o' season when I'm a deputy game-warden. Ain't I sworn to protect the critters? If I got caught, it would cost me two hundred and fifty dollars fine.

"You might pay that, all right; but they'd take my guide's license away, and nothin' you did would get that back. It ain't so easy to pick up other jobs at three dollars a day and expenses. That's the trouble with you new sports. You can't see any live critter 'thout you go crazy to shoot it. Ye don't even wait to see it half the time. Jest let a bush wiggle a little, and bang ye go. Next minute, ye find ye've shot a man."

Merton took especial delight in reminding me of my newness to the woods, inasmuch as he was a new guide himself only three seasons and was still suffering a little from beginner's big head. Therein I saw a chance to appeal to his vanity, and perhaps gain my end.

We were out on what Charlie Ball, my partner in the expedition, called a "shotless" hunt. We had our rifles along to use in target practise, or on such animals as were not enjoying legal immunity at the time. But, inasmuch as we couldn't get away during the hunting season, we found it our chief joy to stalk the deer with the guides, going through all the motions of hunting, but stopping when it came time for firing the shot.

Moreover, we were allowed by law to shoot a deer in the event of running out of provisions. That emergency had not yet risen, however. Back in my head I had a plan to stay in the woods till that contingency did come upon us, or, at least, near enough for technical purposes. Alas, my impatience spoiled the scheme, and we paid for our little deer hunt several separate times.

But I'm getting ahead of my story.

"Merton," I said a few minutes after my little outbreak, as we stopped to rest, "you haven't been in the woods many years, have you?"

"Born in 'em," he resented quickly.

"Yes, I know," I answered. "But I understood French to say you'd only been guiding three seasons."

"He's only been at it himself for four," returned the guide tartly.

I had scored.

French was the other guide, who attended to Ball's wants. No matter how many you have in a party, or how few, each separate member has to have a guide of his own. That's the unwritten law of the woods, and wo to those who break it.

These two boys were rivals. By playing them off against each other, I hoped to accomplish things with these independent Yankees that would otherwise have been difficult.

"Do you know, Merton," I went on, "I don't believe you ever shot a deer yourself? I have my doubts about your being able to get a bit of venison. That's why you're so keen on enforcing the law. I've been suspecting for some time that you weren't the real thing in the woods' line."

The fellow was speechless with indignation for at least three minutes. Your Maine woodsman is not fluent at best.

"Guess I'll touch up French a little," I went on. "I've an idea that boy could get a deer for me, and that he's got the nerve to take a chance on the law."

"Why, consarn ye," Merton burst out, "I've shot more deer than you be years old! French!" Here he choked up, and for the rest of the afternoon had nothing to say. I knew that I had sown some promising seed.

"I wish we had some venison," remarked Ball that evening, apropos of nothing, as we lay on the shore smoking after supper, while the guides cleaned up camp.

"By Jove! old man," I replied, "you have my thoughts. I've never been so tempted in my life as I was this afternoon, while you and French were fishing. Merton showed me some dandy shots. I could have had one just as well as not."

Ball looked at me in a humorous way he had.

"Crippin," he remarked in a tone that made me want to throttle him, "you couldn't hit a deer, if they were thick as sparrows."

"Look here!" I rejoined, grinning insincerely at his gibe, "I've made up my mind to take a chance at a deer, law or no law. We can hide our provisions and claim we're out, if a warden catches us with venison on hand. I'll go out alone, and I think these boys can be fixed if they don't actually see the shooting."

He laughed long and maddeningly.

"Why, Crippy," he said at last, "I'll bet you a straight one hundred dollars you don't get any deer."

"I'll take you," I snapped back with some warmth; "and, moreover, I'll bet you another hundred you haven't the sand to even try to get one."

"Well," he replied, "I'm a good sport. We'll give you a run for your money. Each will bet the other he doesn't shoot a deer on this trip."

"You're on," I agreed.

That evening, I got Merton one side.

"I think French is going to get a deer for Mr. Ball," I said, inventing that suspicion to rouse his pride. "Now, let's get ahead of them. If you get me a deer, I'll say I shot it, so French can't inform on you, and I'll pay you one hundred dollars for the job. I don't care if he does arrest me, you know. The fine cuts no figure with me, and I've no license to lose."

He hesitated a while.

"Of course," I went on, "I'm not asking the impossible. As I said, I don't know as you can get a deer."

He turned on his heel without a word, but I saw that I had accomplished my purpose.

Hitherto our quartet of two guides and two "sports" had kept very closely together. That is the rule of a party in the virgin forest. I had not felt like tempting the wilderness alone, and Ball had no more desire to be lost than I.

Moreover, as we were shooting up a little small game, for the fun of slaughter—I blush now to confess—we did not care to risk shooting each other, so preferred to keep in a group. But during the week following, the members of our party avoided one another, as though repelled by some strong centripetal force.

If Ball suggested fishing, I would be strong for shooting, and we'd readily agree to separate. Once, though, I noticed that when Ball and his guide started for a fishing excursion they took their rifles and forgot their fishing tackle. They were after that deer, all right.

Each time as soon as Merton and I had gotten rid of the other two my guide would say: "Now, Mr. Crippin, keep in some safe place, where I won't be shooting you for a deer, and I'll get you that venison to-day, sure. Only don't you do no shootin' yourself. I don't want to be shot yet."

Thus admonished, I would hunt out a secluded nook and spend the time reading or dozing.

Each night Ball and I'd jolly each other about our hunting deer and how near we'd come to hitting one during the day. All the while I was secretly rather ashamed of the trick I was planning to play on my old chum and resolved, after I got my venison and antlers, if I did, and had my fun, I'd tell him all about it and give him his money back.

At length came a moment of guilty triumph.

It was Friday evening when Merton met me at the agreed place, so we could go back into camp together and not arouse the suspicions of his fellow guide and officer of the law.

"I got it all right this time, Mr. Crippin," announced Merton triumphantly. "It's one o' the finest bucks I ever see, too. Now, let me tell you how I shot it, so ye can tell a real soundin' story to Mr. Ball. An' don't ye fer the world let on I knew anything about it, will ye? Just let French think ye sneaked away from me and got it ag'in' my wishes.

"I got this fellow a mile down the shore, past that rocky point. He was just takin' a drink an' turned as I fired. I caught him right in the breast. We'll have to let him hang fer a week so he'll be tender enough fer a meal. I'll show him to ye to-morrow. Better make sure French is all right and won't make ye any trouble."

That night I told the story of my fabricated prowess to Ball. He was at first incredulous; but, on my expressing the utmost willingness to show him the carcass, he apologized for appearing to doubt me, and, to my secret shame, insisted on peeling off five yellow twenties from the roll in his belt and paying me on the spot.

"I'll have them back in a day or so, old boy," he said good-naturedly enough, but he was rather glum the rest of the evening, and, with my guilty knowledge locked in my breast, I had not the courage to rally him on my victory.

The next morning I managed to put off showing my carcass on the plea that French would be suspicious, and had Merton take me over and show it to me. It was, indeed, a splendid specimen. I regretted that I had not been the real slayer, gave Merton unstinted praise and gladly paid him the hundred dollars I'd won from Ball.

"Yes, sir," he admitted, "I'd 'a' given a hundred dollars if it was in season, so I could claim that animal myself."

I could see that his boyish pride was touched, and feared that even his native caution might lead him to boast on the side to French. I resolved to settle with the other guide at once. I figured he'd be a good fellow, as long as I was of the party, and waive his duty as deputy warden.

Not so. There wasn't anything raw about it, mind you, but it was effective.

"Sorry ye told me about it, Mr. Crippin," he said, "'cause I might get into trouble an' lose my license for not arrestin' ye. Not that I will, ye understand, if I kin help it. It's jest what might happen, and I'd be helpless, ye know.

"I'd jest have to go through the motions of arrestin' ye if the warden happened this way and found a carcass 'round. I've known them fellers to keep mum, though, fer a hundred dollars er so. I'd pay that much to one of 'em rather than have any trouble in an outfit I was with."

The wily Yankee looked disinterestedly off among the tree-tops.

"I suppose ye slipped Merton a little something," he added, as the idea slowly seeped into my brain. "I jest suggest it like, if ye didn't, 'cause that cuss might make ye trouble."

I was doing some figuring. This fel-

low would certainly make trouble if I didn't pay him to keep still. He'd learn soon that Merton had an extra hundred dollars with him, and if I paid him any less it would be useless.

I had been willing all along to pay the amount of the fine—two hundred and fifty dollars. I could now get off for two hundred dollars by paying each guide his asking price, and perhaps for half that, if Ball shouldn't strike luck and kill his deer, for he had lost a hundred dollars to me.

"See here, French," I said, wishing to put the matter as delicately as possible, "if you think there's danger of the warden being around I'd better let you hold a hundred dollars to use at once, if needed. You can carry it over to next season for use then, if it isn't called for now."

So I handed the money over, and French went on his way rejoicing.

That night, after an afternoon's absence from camp without me, Ball returned exultant.

"I got it, too, old man!" he exclaimed. "One of the finest bucks you ever laid eyes on. We break even."

I was chagrined at first. That made me two hundred dollars out. I was beginning to think I'd not give my trick away after all. A man may be the soul of honor in business and most sport, but no man is squeamish when it comes to a lie about fishing. Why, then, split hairs over deer-shooting?

We spent the evening boasting over our respective deer and wound up by laying a bet of another hundred dollars each as to which had shot the biggest one.

"Oh, by the way," I said as we were rolling in and I noted that the guides were already both sound asleep, "you'll find it a good plan to oil the palms of those two boys, so they won't squeal on you. I did. Maybe you've fixed your guide. I handed some coin to both."

"I'd been thinking of that," he admitted thoughtfully. "How much did they stick you for?"

"Two hundred between them," I said, and Ball gave a comically dismal whistle.

"Well," he said, "that's getting off easier than paying a fine, and it's worth it to get some real venison and some antlers to show to the stay-at-home boys this winter."

So, in the morning a second hundred dollars found its way into the yawning pocket of each guide as a balm to his official conscience, and Ball and I began our wait for a venison supper.

It was a rainy day, so we put off the inspection of our respective game. The rain proved to be one of those interminable week-long storms, and during it we stayed about a soggy camp and hated each other and everything in sight. We ate salt meat and canned stuff till our appetites failed.

Finally, on the seventh day, I put on some rubber boots and a rain-coat and sallied forth for venison. Ball refused to accompany me, but said if the rain stopped he'd furnish the meat for the following day. I found the deer, all right, and cut some generous slices as Merton had instructed me.

Late that afternoon the rain stopped and we prepared to have a venison supper in the open.

No man who has never loafed round a rain-soaked camp for a week and eaten salt meat for days has any idea of the glee with which Ball and I sat and sniffed the delicious odor that emanated from the frying-pan while the guides cooked that venison. French was bending over the fire, fork in hand, to turn the delicacy over for a final touch, and Ball and I were scouring our tin plates in anticipation, when suddenly the guide grabbed the frying-pan by the handle and swept it back over his head.

The steaming venison disappeared into the forest; at the same instant he gave a grunt of warning, and Merton grabbed up the remaining raw meat from a tin platter beside the fire and tossed that away into the underbrush. I jumped up to protest, and was met with a look from Merton so full of warning that I desisted at once.

Ball did not see it.

"What in blazes—" he began.

"Sh!" I whispered. "Something's wrong."

In the meantime French had thrust into the blaze a handful of green reeds from the shore, and in an instant the delicious odor of venison gave way to rank pungency, anything but pleasant.

"What'll we have for supper to-night?" asked Merton in a matter-of-fact way. "There's a little of that ham left, and we might scare up some ham and eggs."

"I vote for ham and eggs," I replied, taking my cue, but not understanding it.

Then there came to our ears for the first time what the guides' trained senses had already noted, the dipping of paddles, and a moment later two canoes full of men appeared round a bend near the camp and pulled up.

The man who was apparently the leader approached our suspicious and guilty group. He was a big, husky, underbred-looking chap, and with him were two companions, who, we learned, were his sons, and three guides. I saw at once that our men suspected him of being one of the secret emissaries of the game-warden out on a still-hunt for violators of the game laws.

"How are ye, strangers?" he said by way of greeting. "Our party have been intending to make camp at the lower end of the lake by night, but the rain has hindered us. We saw your smoke and thought maybe you could put us up for the night and give us a little feed. We're pretty near all in, ain't we, boys?" he added, turning to his companions.

It was plain that the rest of our camp liked the strangers no better than I did, but there was nothing to do but comply with their request, especially as they looked to be of the type who might help themselves to what they wanted if it was not forthcoming for the asking.

The man's next remark tended to increase our suspicions, though for an officer of the law it showed little delicacy. He looked our camp over and said, as his eye fell on the fire and the waiting frying-pan:

"I'd give quite a bunch of money, if I had it, for some venison. We boys have been living on salt stuff and fish for three weeks and are hungry for fresh meat. They tell me, though, that it's two hundred and fifty dollars fine for shooting the beasts, and I can't afford that. I'm a stranger in the woods, and you can't believe what these guides say."

"Yes," I said, following his vein of talk, "we didn't dare take any chances. We're about out of provisions now, and have been thinking of taking advantage of the clause of the law that allows shooting deer under those conditions."

"Them fellers are green, all right," said Merton to me on the side a little later. "Ye kin tell the way their layout is put together they've never been in the woods before. Don't let on to the venison, though."

So we set about getting a plain supper. As the evening went on our dislike for the strangers wore off. They seemed to be good fellows. We indulged in a little friendly game of poker and they lost a little to us like good sports, which added to our friendly feeling.

I went to bed convinced that the men were all right, and made up my mind that we'd have venison in the morning at any risk. In fact, I confided as much to our chief guest, Mr. Stillman the elder.

So I arose early and sliced some more meat off my deer. When I got back to camp Merton nearly had a fit.

"It's all right, old man," I assured him; "I'm convinced Mr. Stillman is all right. You see," I went on to our guest, "we fed you our last provisions last night, and the law allowed us this deer."

So we had our venison breakfast. The strangers proved more entertaining than ever. By the time breakfast was over even Ball was getting confidential. I heard him explain in a loud aside to one of our guests that he, too, had shot a deer and could show them the carcass, all right. I had already told in detail where I had done the shooting and where my deer hung.

While the guides were doing up the dishes Ball called Stillman out into the woods, and I knew he had taken him to see his deer.

Stillman and his party prepared to go about noon, and I noted with some uneasiness that he held several rather intimate chats with our two guides. Finally he asked if he could see me alone a few minutes.

"I'm sorry, Mr. Crippin," he said, "but I happen to be a friend of the game-warden, and I need the reward money they offer for informing. I don't want to do it, but I'm forced to take this trip for my health; came up from Pittsburgh, and I'm broke. Now, I don't want you to think this is any hint at blackmail, you under-

stand. It's just that the warden might drop in on me and some of my boys here might mention having venison at your camp."

I was enraged. "You dirty scoundrel!" I roared. "Get out of this camp in five minutes, or—"

"Or what?" he smiled sweetly. "Think your outfit can handle mine? Four against six, you know. Now, I was merely going to say, if you could lend me a hundred dollars or so till I get back to Pittsburgh, I'd do my worst to keep your little indiscretion from the warden. Your guides assure me you have plenty of provisions left, so that hoax won't go."

Speechless with anger and chagrin, I paid the man his money and turned away from him without further comment.

I couldn't let the rest of the camp know what had happened, as it would be too good a joke at my expense, but I was sore within.

That afternoon Ball proposed that we go out and compare our deer and settle our bet as to size. So, taking a string as a measure, we started. First we drew lots to see who should show first, and Ball got it.

We started out in the direction of the little cut in the thicket where my deer hung. He hadn't told me where he had left his game. What was my surprise in a few moments to come upon my own deer and have Ball stop and proudly point it out as his.

Even as I stood and stared at him in speechless amazement, he discovered the place where I had sliced off the venison, and broke out in a towering rage.

"Somebody else has been at this deer!" he roared. "I didn't look it all over this morning, and didn't see it, but it's a cut a day old or so."

"Yes, it is," I replied coldly. "I cut that slice off yesterday. Do you mean to tell me you have the nerve to claim this deer as the one you shot?"

Suddenly Ball began to laugh.

"Look here, Crippy, tell me the truth, and there'll be no hard feeling. How much did you pay Merton to kill a deer for you, agreeing to claim it yourself?"

I looked him in the eye and blushed, which was as good as a confession. Then I saw a light and laughed too.

"And how much did you pay French to kill a deer for you? I paid Merton a hundred for mine."

"I paid French a hundred for mine," he laughed back, "and these two beggars have killed one between them and charged us each for it."

The joke on ourselves was too good. We rolled together on the ground, and shouted in glee till the woods rang. Suddenly Ball burst forth in a fresh gust of mirth. He at last had breath to explain.

"In addition," he gasped, "I paid your man Merton a hundred not to squeal on me. How much did you pay my man French not to squeal on you."

"One hundred dollars," I shrieked, and we rolled helpless again. Then I remembered our friend Stillman and stopped laughing.

"Ball," I said, "you told Stillman that you shot a deer also. How much did he borrow from you to make sure he wouldn't tell his friend, the game-warden, about your escapade?"

Ball stopped laughing and ground his teeth.

"I paid that scoundrel one hundred, too."

"So did I," I admitted. Then we laughed again.

"Anyhow," I said at last, "we'll make those guides cough up the two hundred apiece we gave them. We'll find out just who shot the deer and allow him an even hundred for the job."

We found two sore-looking guides in camp. They were perfectly sober now and looked ready for murder, though why, with all that extra money, they should be out of sorts, we could not see.

The moment we told them we had seen the deer together they both threw up their hands, and instead of each claiming he shot the animal, both denied it, saying he'd found the deer hanging there and claimed it as a joke, intending to have some fun with the rest of the camp. A little third-degree work showed they had not been working together, but that each had been boasting privately to the other that he had really shot a deer, not knowing they were talking about the same one.

Of course, we took no stock in their claim that they intended to give back any money to us, and told them so.

"I can't do it now, anyhow," said Merton. "I was fool enough to brag to your

friend Stillman this morning, and he made me give him the two hundred dollars, or take the decidedly unpleasant alternative of losing my license."

"Did you do that?" roared French. "So did I!"

"Look here," exclaimed Ball, "let's figure this out. Do I understand that each one of us four fools bragged that he shot that confounded deer, and then paid that blackguard Stillman to keep still about it just six hundred dollars altogether, after variously bribing, buying, and paying bets to each other? That's too much. Who did shoot the little beast, anyhow?"

"Here's your proof and your answer," I exclaimed.

I had just found a paper tucked under the edge of a cot in the main tent. This was the comforting information written on it:

GENTLEMEN:

I didn't mean to seem ungrateful, but I needed the money. I've been doing too much poaching this summer, and they're on my trail, so I'm going to take a vacation. I killed the deer myself that you fellows all claimed.

When I found out the facts, I thought I might as well collect, which I likewise done to the tune of six hundred dollars.

Some of it I put in the form of a loan, but please don't collect too soon. It's dangerous.

In the interim, believe me,

THOMAS MCCANN,
Alias Stillman, of Pittsburgh.

The breath escaped from our bodies in four awestruck whistles.

We had entertained overnight the most desperate outlaw in the Maine woods, and sent him on his way with a sum of our money almost as big as the reward the State had placed on his head.

His Risen Past.

BY GEORGE M. A. CAIN,

Author of "Ways to Wealth," "Over the Partition," "His Stolen Fortune," etc.

The Shadow That Fell Athwart a Man's Career as It Was About to Reach Its Zenith on Election-Night.

CHAPTER I.

THE GIRL AND THE CANDIDATE.

"GOOD afternoon — Beckwith's next Mayor."

The girl held out her hand warmly. She smiled happily. There was just a trace of a flush upon her young and handsome face.

"S-sh;" he held up a finger to his lips, smiling in answer. "Wait till the returns are in."

"Pshaw! It's all over but the shouting, Bert says. But it's awfully good of you to come round to-day," Elsie Beckwith laughed back.

"Well, I suppose I ought to hope that Bert knows what he's talking about. Sometimes, though, I wonder if I'm not throwing away a good deal for a rather slim honor."

"Shame on you, Wilbur Johnson. Where's your public spirit? Don't you know this town needs you?"

The young man smiled a little deprecatingly.

"I wish all the town of Beckwith was as sure of that as Elsie Beckwith is," he said.

"You'll know how much of the town is sure of it to-night," she spoke enthusiastically.

They were silent for a few moments. Perhaps their minds were running in parallel lines. When she spoke again he seemed to be in the spirit of her words.

"You know," she said, "I can't seem

to get used to these city elections. The whole thing seems like a dream. It's all so new—so positively absurd to think of a city of Beckwith with a mayor and aldermen, and all these other things."

"I know," he answered. "When I came here there were just three houses—yours and Mr. Hill's and Totten's shanty on the ridge."

"And when I came here," she said merrily—she had been born in the valley where Beckwith now lay—"there were only two houses—Mr. Hill hadn't moved in yet."

"And now—look at it!"

Unconsciously they had drawn toward the window. The new home of the Beckwith's stood well up on a high terrace, from which could be had a view of the entire city which had taken the name of the family.

On the other side of the street they saw the lawns and the sides of two other fine residences, hardly less pretentious than the one in which they were standing. Just below were rows of neat cottages, whose owners vied with each other in the up-keep of their little lawns. Then came the vast area of cheaper apartment houses.

And beyond this area rose the lofty smoke-stacks of the great factories and foundries, irregularly built, some towering high into the air, some hardly above the corrugated iron roofs, some spouting flame and black smoke, some giving off only a tremulous vapor of hot gas.

Through the middle of this cut the wide yards of the railroad. Hundreds of freight-cars and tank-cars stood on the tracks, or moved leisurely up and down in sluggish obedience to the movements of the nervous, panting, shifting engines.

On the other side of the town, scattered along the edge of the valley and up the opposite slope, extending for miles in all directions, lay the net-work of towers, and the rough pumping-shanties, which were the secret of Beckwith's sudden growth and present size.

There was a certain fond proprietorship in Johnson's smile as his eyes swept over the scene. Perhaps he could not be blamed for an occasional thought of the fact that he had been the one to start all this into motion and being. But the next words he uttered hardly carried the suspicion of his pride.

"I guess I have grown accustomed to this," he said, waving his hand in a sweeping gesture that pointed out the whole city at once. "The thing I can't get used to is myself. You know, I was reading to-day an article on 'watered stocks.' And I couldn't help thinking maybe water does very well for inflating stocks, but for blowing up a man and making him sail like a balloon—why, think of it. Look at me.

"Eight years ago I stood and looked at Mr. Hill's house and yours. His was nearer to me. I offered him the first chance at the valuable services of my untrained muscles.

"But I made up my mind that if he didn't give me some breakfast before he set me to work I would sneak up and see what your father would do. Mr. Hill gave me breakfast—and got my services.

"And now—"

He stuck out his chest and struck it with a burlesque gesture.

"See what natural gas can do."

She laughed at his estimate of himself.

"What I'm always afraid of," he went on, "is that somebody will come along with a right sharp pin and stick it into me somewhere, and I'll collapse and come down to earth so hard they won't be able to collect the fragments."

His tone was still the mock-serious one with which he had begun his little speech. But now, as she looked merrily into his eyes, she saw the fun die out of them. A shadow passed over his face and left it a trifle pale and seemingly drawn and tired.

She had seen that look several times lately. It had grown more frequent during the campaign for the mayoralty.

She had noticed it when he had come to her home after the nomination had been made that placed him at the head of his party ticket. Once she had shown him a highly laudatory account of his life in one of the papers. That same expression, half of pain, half of fear, had crossed his face.

Her brother, Bert, a young lawyer, had managed the campaign. He had had a great struggle to get Johnson to sit for a picture to be used on handbills and banners. Wilbur had pleaded distaste for such methods, hatred of cameras, pretended ugliness of countenance.

"What's the matter with you? You aren't an escaped convict, who needs to fear having his face published," Bert had said half angrily at last.

"Oh, if you're going to put it that way, I suppose I'll have to," Wilbur had smiled. But the smile had been unreal, and had failed to hide that fearful pallor.

"You're not well," she exclaimed now solicitously.

"Oh, yes I am," he contradicted with nervous haste. "This campaign business has rather got on my nerves, I think."

"You ought to see a doctor," she counseled.

"Bosh!" he laughed, pulling himself together.

Almost instantly he changed the subject.

"Have you made any arrangements about hearing the returns?" he asked. "I supposed you would want to hear how the party makes out," he added lamely, to save her from making a seeming acknowledgment of interest in his fate.

"Why, I guess we can get them here over the phone," she spoke in a tone of ill-concealed disappointment and pretended indifference about the matter of where she should learn of the results of the election.

"I was going to headquarters," he replied, "but I thought it might be more fun for you to watch the crowds round the stereopticon bulletin. I have an option on the second-story balcony of the Beckwith House. Would you like that better?"

The girl's eyes sparkled with that enthusiasm which was one of her chief charms.

"Would I?" she cried. "Why, that will be lovely."

"All right—you'd better have dinner a little early, and get there as soon after half past six as you can. I'll have them give us a little supper after we see how things have gone. I must hurry off now—haven't voted myself yet."

But he did not hurry off as fast as he might have done. He stood for a moment, holding the hand she offered. He could hardly resist the impulse to tell her then and there that he could be happy only when she had promised to be his forever.

He went out, however, without saying the words. He thought he would be a little more certain of success when the election returns were all in.

CHAPTER II.

AN UNEXPECTED INTERVIEW.

FOR he was pretty sure as to the results of the election. He believed he had the support of all the decent people in town.

The other element had not become particularly strong as yet. He himself had too nearly controlled the immigration into Beckwith which had followed the discovery of gas and oil.

As he had mentioned in his talk with Elsie Beckwith, Wilbur Johnson had arrived in the then quiet valley eight years before. No one had ever asked him closely where he had come from.

Mr. Hill had been in need of a hand. Johnson's face had appeared sufficiently trustworthy.

He had seemed industrious and unusually saving. At the middle of harvest, in the second summer, the farm-hand had learned that his employer was seriously embarrassed for a little cash.

He offered a loan of what he had saved, but expressed a preference for buying a strip of the uncultivated land which increased Hill's taxes without helping his income.

He had mortgaged this to buy more the third year. The Beckwiths laughed at him. Mr. Hill endeavored to dissuade him, though the farmer was profiting by the deals.

But the valley had been kind to the penniless boy, and he had made up his mind to stay. Perhaps Elsie Beckwith, not half-way through the 'teens he was just leaving, had something to do with it.

Anyhow, he managed to sell the timber for almost as much as the ground had cost him. Then he bought still more. It was when he determined to build a house on some of his land and start the cultivation of it for himself that the sinking of a well had resulted in his discovery of the natural gas.

He made no secret of his discovery. He let his three neighbors get as much benefit from it as he himself got. Mr. Hill and Mr. Beckwith became rich.

The Tottens got considerable money for what land they owned, but they were not the kind of people who get rich.

But Johnson made it his special business to secure the land in the neighborhood where there was no gas. The companies that first came wanted gas, and only gas. As soon as they had found that an acreage was unproductive, that acreage was on the market at a low price. And, by building a city on this rejected ground, he had gained more than his gas and oil lands had brought him.

He was still at it. Practically all his money was being spent upon the erection of houses for the ever-increasing throng of laborers and business men attracted hither by the natural wealth and power.

He was paying taxes on nearly a million dollars. He could not have drawn his check for fifteen thousand.

His position as a sort of real-estate king in the city had given him a power in keeping out some elements of society, which he had used faithfully.

If Beckwith was one of the most decent cities in the world, it had him to thank for the fact. Nor the town was not slow to acknowledge it. Therefore, Wilbur Johnson justifiably had felt fairly sure of his election to the mayor's office when he had been asked to run for it.

Yet, it had been hard to persuade him to accept the nomination. He had expressed himself as more than satisfied with his position on the board of aldermen; as quite unwilling to be a candidate for the higher office.

He had given every excuse but the true one. The true excuse was a fear of publicity.

There was nothing in his life in Beckwith of which he need be ashamed. In private life, as in business, he had maintained a standard of integrity which, in the light of ordinary ideals, seemed to belong rather to the counsels of perfection than the commandments. There was not a man in Beckwith who would have dared insinuate that Wilbur Johnson had gained any of his money dishonorably.

But his life began apparently *at eighteen years of age.* Nobody knew anything about it till the time of his coming to Beckwith. And he did not want any one to know.

It was this that caused the sudden pallor and the dread when Dick Beckwith had urged him to accept the first place on the city ticket. It was this that made him shiver when the newspapers published laudatory accounts of his life.

He felt that every one who read must ask, where did this young man come from? And it seemed to him that each would answer for himself, arriving at conclusions uncomfortably close to the truth.

The demand for his picture to help in advertising the campaign had frightened him more than all else. It was only now, when those pictures had been posted for six weeks without any disastrous results, when he knew they would all be taken down in a day or two, that he was able to pass one of them in a window without shuddering.

Now he began to feel that he need not fear the questions about his early years. No such questions had been asked. Beckwith knew him well enough to trust him.

And it was evident that whatever reputation belonged to the boy, no one had recognized the pictures of the man to bring that ill report against him. The youth was buried in oblivion; there was no danger of its rising from the dead; he was safe.

He turned from the Beckwith house toward the center of the town with a view to arranging for the hotel balcony and the supper. He might have done this by telephone from his office, which he must pass on his way; but he had also to vote, and the boundaries of the voting districts caught his hotel into one whose polling place was in the heart of the city.

It was as he went past his own office that he was suddenly greeted by a heavy-built young man in somewhat overvivid garb.

"Hallo, Bill," said the young man.

"Why, how do you do, Mr. Totten," Wilbur said a little stiffly.

He did not like Jim Totten. He knew that whatever scum and slum there was in Beckwith was there largely because Jim and his father had let it in.

He knew that young Totten was striving to make himself a petty political leader of the undesirable element.

"I've been waiting to see you." Jim spoke with a tone that indicated he thought he had a right to see Wilbur

Johnson. It made the young candidate for mayor a little angry.

"I'm sorry—I haven't time to go into the office just now," he answered.

He did not get rid of Jim's presence by his words, however.

"All right; I'll walk on down-town with you," Totten replied.

"What was it you wanted to see me about?" Wilbur asked when he had sufficiently stifled his wrath at the tout's impertinent persistence.

"About five hundred votes," Jim answered with a sneering grin.

"Well, what about them?" Johnson snapped.

"You'd better come back into the office," Jim advised. "It might be as well to talk this over private."

For a moment Wilbur Johnson was too indignant to reply. Then—

"I'm perfectly willing to discuss anything you have to say to me before the whole town, Mr. Totten." He spoke in quiet tones of suppressed wrath.

"Well, mebbe you are, and mebbe you ain't," Jim half leered. "I kind o' thought you'd rather talk this over in the office."

Johnson looked for a moment into Totten's face. Then he deliberately turned around and felt in his pocket for the key to the office door.

"Come on in, then," he said with less security in his indignation.

"I've got five hundred votes in the second ward," Jim said impressively when the door had been closed again. "They're yours on certain conditions."

Wilbur refrained from telling Totten to take the votes where he pleased. He said only: "Well?"

"You've been standing out against the franchise for the West Ohio Traction Company." Totten seemed to change the subject.

"What if I have?" Johnson asked.

"There's a meeting of the board of aldermen day after to-morrow," Jim went on, ignoring the query.

"Yes."

"The matter of the franchise is coming up again."

"I suppose so."

"Well, them five hundred votes is yours if you'll agree to vote for that franchise."

No one had ever thought it worth while to try to bribe Johnson before. For a moment he contemplated picking Totten up and throwing him out of the window.

"You tell your five hundred men to vote as they please," he roared. "And I'll vote as I please."

"Oh, I don't know about that," Totten sneered again. But he changed his tone to that of mere argument. "What have you got against that franchise, anyhow?"

"Nothing, personally. It would be worth about three hundred thousand to me to have that line go through. But the franchise the West Ohio people want is not fair to the town."

If he imagined this statement would call forth any admiration from Jim Totten, Johnson was mistaken.

"Pretty good boy—you've grown to be," Totten drawled contemptuously. "But don't you think you're pretty much of a darned fool?"

"I mentioned to you that I am in a hurry," Wilbur managed to say steadily. "If you have no further business to communicate—"

"I have," Jim broke in. "We'll drop the five hundred votes. I couldn't influence fifty of them, anyhow. Mebbe the West Ohio people could, and mebbe they couldn't. But I can influence you, Bill Johnson; and you'll vote for that franchise."

Johnson could stand no more.

"I'll give you thirty seconds to walk out that door," he said. "If you aren't out by that time I'll put you out."

"Don't get sassy," Jim drawled, reaching a hand behind him. "I told you you were going to vote for that franchise. Now, I'll tell you why. You're going to vote for it because, if you don't, I'll send this telegram."

He did not draw a pistol from his hip-pocket. With his left hand he drew from his coat-pocket a yellow slip of paper and handed it to the candidate for mayor of Beckwith.

Johnson took one glance at the irregular writing on the "send" form. The color left his cheeks. The strength seemed to be leaving his body. He sat down heavily upon the chair nearest him.

His jaw dropped and he breathed rapidly through his parted lips. The room seemed to sway about him, and for a

moment he thought he was going to faint or die—he was not quite sure which.

Jim Totten stood smiling at his discomfiture.

CHAPTER III.

SOLD.

THEN came a reaction. He seemed fairly bursting with rage. He clenched his hands till the nails brought blood from the palms of them. He bit his lip till he spat blood.

But it was the rage of impotence. There are some men who never lose control of themselves as long as there is a possibility of controlling their surroundings. Johnson's very fury was a sign that he was trapped.

Yet, in a half subconscious manner, his brain still worked—worked to tell him that he would only make things worse for himself by inflicting bodily injury upon his assailant, worked to prevent his crying out for aid or hurling epithets at Totten.

And at last it worked to show him that his one forlorn hope lay in a blustering bluff.

"So you thought you could blackmail me, eh?" He spoke with forced calmness. "Do you know what the penalties would be if you sent that telegram?"

"Anywhere from six to fifteen years"—Jim grinned—"for you."

Wilbur had held his gaze true upon the leering eyes of his accuser while he spoke. Now they shifted uneasily; but he compelled them to go back with a mighty effort of will.

"It would, would it?" he roared. "You think it would? You think you can come into my office and show me a lying piece of yellow paper and make me do about what you want me to.

"You think, if I don't happen to do it, you can send off that yellow paper and have me arrested and locked up for a long term in prison. Did it ever occur to you that you might be called upon to show some proof of the truth of such a statement as you make there?"

"Oh, I guess there won't be much trouble about proving all I've said in that telegram," Totten drawled. "I guess the New York police have all the proofs they want, if they ever get you. But, up to date, I seem to be the only man that knows how to help them get you."

"They'd undoubtedly be mightily thankful to you for calling them out here to arrest the mayor of this town because you happen to imagine you could connect me with some crime committed years ago," Johnson sneered back.

"I don't know but what they would." Jim kept up his exasperating drawl. "You see, I was to New York a couple of weeks ago. Got pretty chummy with a detective or two. They was showing me over some unsolved mysteries. I'll admit I was a little surprised to see your picture and record there."

"You saw nothing of the sort. What are you talking about?"

"Well, I saw this much: a picture that looked like you when you come here. It said that your name was Wilbur Daworth, eighteen years old, etcetery.

"It said you was employed as messenger for the Howardson National Bank, and disappeared with forty thousand of the bank's money on June 15, 1899. I happened to remember that you showed up here on June 17. It was my twenty-first birthday when you come. About all the proof I needed, wasn't it?"

Wilbur Johnson had lost his defiance. He knew now that it would be of no use to bluster more. The face that an hour ago had looked ridiculously boyish for the position he held in the community, now seemed almost old. A long illness could hardly have effected a greater change.

"But you needn't worry about my giving the thing away. I ain't said nothing about it to no one, and I won't—if you'll agree to vote for the West Ohio Company's franchise Thursday night." Totten spoke in an entirely different manner—the manner of one offering to do another a great kindness.

"I ain't saying that I think you ought to be punished for what you done as far back as that. No one can say you ain't been square here. You could have bought us out for a song when you first discovered the gas and oil. I haven't forgot that you let us in."

His tone had become absolutely friendly. It gave Johnson a ray of hope that there might be some good in Totten to which he could yet appeal.

"Then, what in Heaven's name do you want to come around with such threats as this for?" he asked.

"Because I've got to have your vote for that franchise," Jim said frankly. "I need the money."

It was a sufficient explanation. Johnson knew enough of the traction company's methods to understand that they would pay well any one who could deliver the deciding vote in the matter of the franchise.

For five minutes no word was spoken in the real-estate office. Wilbur Johnson was battling with his conscience. Jim Totten knew that, and was content to await the results.

Johnson did not doubt that if he refused to vote for the company Totten would send the telegram to the New York police. And that, he considered, would end his usefulness to the community.

There were other things to be done for Beckwith besides preventing the giving of a franchise which was not nearly as bad as were granted every day in other cities. Some of those other things needed him to do them.

His conscience reminded him that one may not do evil that good may come. It reminded him of his oath of office. It held up to his eyes the way he would have to feel toward himself, should he yield to Totten's demand.

For years he had paid good heed to that conscience. That was why it could speak so loudly now. He had been square with Beckwith. He could look the whole town in the face now. There was no spot on his record here.

And he would not put one there. He would tell Totten to do his worst. He would face it all out. Totten could send his telegram if he would. And he—

Would have to go to prison!

Instantly his mind revolted. He did not need to work his imagination to conjure up a picture of himself in a cell behind bars. That picture had been the persistent nightmare of almost a third of his life.

Few men care to contemplate prison life as a possibility for themselves. But there are few men to whom it could be as physically terrifying as it was to Johnson.

As a child he had been driven into spasms by an uncle who had grasped his hand and refused to let go. He had read an account of a person being buried alive, and had lain awake for a month in an agony of fear.

Once he had found himself locked inside a big room up-stairs in his home, and had risked his life in a leap from the window. The bare thought of being bound, of being rendered helpless, of enduring the loss of physical freedom to move where and as he would, was sufficient to frighten him into a state bordering upon insanity.

His lips and the corners of his eyes twitched nervously. His face became the color of paste. His hands clasped and unclasped swiftly. He rose from his chair and sat down again four or five times.

Then he gave in. He had barely enough self-control left to make a feeble imitation of a smile as he said:

"I guess I think it will be a good thing for Beckwith to give the franchise to the West Ohio company."

"And you'll vote for it?" Jim Totten cried eagerly.

"I'll vote for it Thursday night," Wilbur Johnson promised.

"It's a pity you took so long deciding," Totten grunted, as he glanced at his watch. "I can't get my men together in time to vote before the polls close."

"Deuce take the votes!" Johnson fairly shouted.

It was no expression of contempt for the suffrage. It did not proceed from any feeling that the election was secure without those votes Totten had said he could secure. It was rather the wail of a man who knew no number of votes that could elect him again to his lost self-respect.

CHAPTER IV.

THE RETURNS.

HE was sold!

He, whom every one regarded as the soul of almost Quixotic honor; who had felt a conscious pride in the fact that no one even thought of trying to buy him; who knew that no band of men in the world had money enough to make the purchase—he had learned what was his price.

Once, as a boy, the fear of imprison-

ment had driven him to run away from the possibility of arrest. But he alone had been a loser there. His running had been of no cost to others.

Over and over again he had made up his mind that, if the old charge were ever brought up against him, he would meet it boldly and fight it to the end, taking the consequences, if he had to.

He had thought he would be able to do that for himself. It had not occurred to his mind that it might become a question of doing it to keep his trust for others.

He had known that, under the circumstances, his almost abnormal dread of prison was a weakness. Because of it he had been guilty of one act of cowardice. But he had betrayed no trust. No one else had suffered.

Now he had weakened where the exercise of full strength was due to the office he held, to the public he had sworn to serve. That public had entrusted to him its preservation from just such attempts at exploitation as the West Ohio Traction Company was making.

And, to preserve his own skin, he had joined the enemies of his trusting employers, the people.

He spent a long time pacing to and fro across the narrow length of his little office. He knew a good deal more about himself than he had ever known before.

A dozen times he had walked to the door and taken hold of its knob with the intention of going out after Totten and telling him to send his telegram. And each time the dread of iron bars and stone walls overcame his resolution. In the end he had learned that it was of no use to make such a resolution.

Coward, traitor, sneak-thief!

He called himself all these things in an agony of self-abasement, in a half hope that he could goad himself to the action necessary for the undoing of the evil he had done. It was of no use. The thought of imprisonment proved a terror which it seemed physically impossible for him to face.

At last he glanced at his watch. It was twenty minutes after six. He had reserved the hotel room and balcony only till six. He seized the telephone and called up the clerk.

The second-floor balcony had been sold. One of his own closest friends had waited till the hour to secure it when his option expired.

"Yes," the clerk replied to another question, "you can have the third-floor front. There's a good view from its windows. You can see the bulletins just the same."

It was, however, a second choice—something less than he had intended to offer the girl he wanted to marry. With a sinking heart, he felt the force of the thought that he himself was now something vastly less than he had thought he could offer her. He engaged the third-floor front.

He glanced again at his watch, and remembered that he had told Elsie Beckwith to be at the hotel as soon as possible after half past six. It was that already.

He hurried out upon the street. Already night had settled upon the early November day. He felt an uneasy relief at the darkness. He caught himself involuntarily shrinking from the street-lamps.

He halted for an instant as he approached the edge of the throng before the hotel in the brilliantly lighted main street. It required an effort of will to bring him up to the facing of those who must be passed to gain the entrance.

Elsie was waiting for him in the big hall.

"You're late, sir," she spoke with mock severity. "We've been waiting fifteen minutes."

"And all these men have been staring at us most horribly," her mother put in. "You must give an account of yourself."

For an instant he was at a loss to reply. Hitherto there had been only one thing in his life which he must hide. And that one thing had arisen but rarely.

"I—I was stopped at the office by a man who wanted to see me on business," he said with some haste.

"And," demanded Elsie, "what business, pray tell, was of such importance as to make you forget your engagement with us?"

Once more he hesitated. Then: "It was about the trolley franchise the West Ohio Traction Company wants," he said.

After all, they would know he had changed his attitude on the subject by Thursday night.

"I hope he persuaded you to vote for

it," Elsie replied. "Father says it is the one thing this place lacks, and that you've been blocking it for six months."

Johnson's heart suddenly began to beat with renewed force. It was a vast relief to feel that those he cared most for would not condemn his change of face in the franchise matter.

"He did?" Wilbur said with a laugh which was almost cheerful. "I think the franchise will be granted at the meeting Thursday night."

"Good—good!" Elsie cried. "Now, mother, we can get home even if the auto does break down. And we can get down-town without all the formality of waking up that lazy chauffeur."

"Well, come on up-stairs," he advised. "They're beginning to throw figures across yonder already. You've had your dinner, haven't you?"

"Haven't you?" Elsie asked in turn.

"I'll tell them to send something up. I can eat while we watch the bulletin."

He went to the desk and secured his key, also ordering some sandwiches and a cup of coffee for his lunch.

"But I thought we were going onto the balcony!" Elsie exclaimed as they passed the second floor in the elevator.

"I was so absorbed in the franchise matter that I forgot to call up the hotel until my option on the room had expired. It will have to be your little sacrifice for the sake of the trolley-rides," he said with a smile.

He was breathing more easily now. Dissimulation he was not finding as hard as he had expected. And Elsie's attitude toward his change of front had relieved him mightily.

"Oh, we can see beautifully here! Why—we can get out on the fire-escape, can't we?" Elsie spoke with restored enthusiasm when they had got into the room.

"And look!" she cried again gleefully. "'Fourth district will give two hundred plurality to Johnson!'" she read from the sheet on the opposite building.

Her cry was echoed by loud shouts from the throng below. The girl looked over the rail upon the sea of dark hats.

"They like you, Wilbur," she said softly. She was probably quite unconscious that she reached out her hand to his.

There was something more in the acclamation of the multitude than the usual party enthusiasm, which never fails to awaken applause from some part of the crowd around an election bulletin. This was a mighty chorus of individual voices, who cheered as for the success of a personal friend.

Elsie Beckwith was right. They liked Wilbur Johnson.

Down in that throng were hundreds of men wise enough to know that they were better housed because Johnson kept watch over the houses he built for them; that they were paying less rent than might easily have been demanded; that good, wholesome food was sold them everywhere in town at unusually low prices because Johnson, seeing the attempts made to overcharge them, had started up stores of his own where only a reasonable profit was required; that the taxes on the little properties he enabled them to buy were light because he gave to municipal business the same attention he would have given to business of his own.

They liked Wilbur Johnson—much better than he knew. There were a thousand of them who would have made heavy personal sacrifices to furnish bail had he actually been arrested. A hundred out of that throng would have staked their last dollar on his innocence of any crime.

He did not know all that. But he knew enough of their regard for him so that their shout at a detail of his apparent victory caused him renewed pangs of conscience.

"Here comes another bulletin," Elsie said, as the writing was withdrawn from the white curtain stretched temporarily across the opposite building.

"Oh, pshaw," she exclaimed a moment later in disgust, "it's a moving picture!"

At this moment Johnson's sandwiches and coffee were brought in. He stood beside her at the window while he ate. He had little appetite for food, but he drank the black coffee eagerly. He tried to pay enough attention to the talk of Elsie and her mother to be able to make intelligent replies, but it was a difficult task.

"There, that's over with," Elsie said when the vitascope was done. "Now—'Johnson, 548; Bethune, 490, in the

Eighth district,'" she read. "Why, it's funny it should be so close."

"I didn't suppose the Eighth would give me a majority at all," Johnson replied.

"Why not?"

"They're mostly mechanics and tradespeople over there."

"Well, who has done more for the laboring men than you have, I'd like to know?" Elsie fumed. She was quite angry with the four hundred and ninety who had voted for the opposing candidate.

"The better class of laborers are intensely conservative," Wilbur explained. "They think I am too young for the job."

"Humph!" Elsie grunted expressively.

"Fifteenth district gives Johnson 345, Bethune 338," she read as the slides were shifted.

She was evidently too indignant for words. Her face spoke volumes.

It was well that there was another report of a large plurality for the young candidate at her side before another series of motion pictures were put out for the amusement of the crowd. It saved a rather strong minority in the Fifteenth district from having a rather bad opinion of them expressed.

At any other time, under different circumstances, he would have noted with pleasure her enthusiastic interest in his campaign. He would have taken it for the sign it was that all he needed to do to claim her as his affianced future wife was to give her a chance. But now her interest, like the approval of the crowd, only cost him pain. He was not the man they thought he was.

He grew more and more listless toward the conversation. His part in the talk dwindled constantly toward the monosyllabic. He hardly glanced at the next set of figures, or listened to Elsie's rejoicing over them.

For the battle he had lost in his office was being fought over and over again within him. And each time it was resulting as it had resulted before—he lost his courage at the thought of a stone wall and iron bars.

It is a terrible thing to acknowledge moral defeat. No honor that others can give is big enough to compare with one's own self-esteem.

And again and again Wilbur Johnson was admitting to himself the humiliating, numbing, weakening fact that he could not face the test to which he had been put.

Often a man, under sudden stress, may lose his courage. That is not so bad. But it quickly wrecks a man to face the fact that he is afraid to go back and try again.

"Wilbur Johnson, I don't believe you care a cent whether you are elected or not."

Elsie recalled him sharply from his unhappy reveries. A new bulletin, prophesying his election by two thousand plurality, had just been put up. It had been made by a quick reporter, calculating from the third of the city that had sent in its count.

"I beg your pardon," he said, by way of asking her to repeat the words he had not heard.

"I'm positively disgusted with you." She spoke in a tone of real vexation that bordered upon tears.

"I'll be good," he promised.

But he did not keep the promise. He had suddenly thought of a plan by which he could keep his freedom without betraying his official trust.

CHAPTER V.

THE BLACKMAILER.

AND, just as the inspiration which solved his predicament outlined itself in his mind, Providence seemed to intervene to make the scheme feasible. He glanced down from the fire-escape and saw the man he wanted to see. Jim Totten was just entering the café of the hotel.

Offering the first excuse that entered his mind, he dashed out of the room and was quickly lowered in the elevator. He started to make his way through the throng of men to find Totten.

But he had not figured upon one thing. His appearance in the midst of the crowd was a signal for a demonstration.

"Johnson—Johnson," rose from the lips of almost every man there.

They all turned about and faced him, their pleasure in seeing him manifested in every smiling countenance. He was

chagrined at not having reached his man unobserved, but he looked at his admirers with a smile.

"Speech—speech!" they cried in chorus.

Did you ever wonder whether there is another people on earth who care as much for oratory as our own seems to care? It is to wonder.

There are signs that we are improving, but we have not entirely recovered from the thraldom of speechmakers. Sometimes, in these days, a man can make a fair showing at the polls who has not charming manners upon the platform.

But, as a general rule, it is no go. A man may be unimpeachably honest, of strong character, naturally fitted, and by training equipped to attend to the business for which we need mayors and governors and presidents. But, if he halts and stammers and gets confused when he tries to make a public address — don't bet on him.

Put your money on the fellow who has sold us out again and again, who has taken pay for half the votes he ever cast in a legislative body, but who can make us laugh and cry a little bit, and shoot off verbal firecrackers about our land of liberty, and wave Old Glory with his jaw. He's the one best bet for election-day.

If the real secrets of the voters' hearts were known, it would probably be easy to demonstrate that Wilbur Johnson would have come as near to getting an unanimous election in Beckwith as is possible in a city of that size, but for one fact: He was not a public speaker; while Bethune was possessed of a ready and fiery, if not perfectly grammatical, oratory.

Johnson had made some speeches. He had told the people what he thought he ought to do as mayor, if elected. He had spoken in exactly the manner in which he would have advised a man to choose one of his properties rather than another.

They liked Johnson. They knew he would be a good mayor. But—Bethune could give them the talk.

"Gentlemen," Wilbur began, when silence had fallen upon the crowd, "you know I can't make a speech, if I try. I want to thank you for your kindness here this evening. I want to thank those of you who have voted for me because you did so. But—

"I don't drink myself. However, Mr. Bartender, please give everybody any drink he chooses, and charge it on my bill."

There was loud applause at this, and the men turned about to enjoy the bit of hospitality. The one man who had not smiled at Johnson's entrance, and who had not joined in the applause of the speech, seemed quite willing to accept Johnson's treat.

That man was already the worse for previous drinks. But he still had sense enough to feel out of place in the throng of Wilbur's admirers. He drank his whisky at a gulp and turned to the street door. It was Jim Totten, and Wilbur Johnson followed him unostentatiously onto the sidewalk.

"Jim," he whispered, tapping Totten on the shoulder.

"Oh—hallo, Bill!" Jim spoke a bit unsteadily.

"Meet me at my office in ten minutes," Wilbur said in an undertone.

"What for?" Jim asked suspiciously.

"It will be to your advantage—I won't hurt you. Just hurry up and get there."

Totten still seemed to suspect something. But he yielded to the compelling force of Johnson's eyes.

"All ri'," he replied.

Wilbur hastened on ahead. He drew the green shades over the windows of the office before he turned on the light. Then he worked quickly to open the combination lock of his safe.

He drew out several bills, all the cash he had at hand, and counted them rapidly. Then he wrote certain words upon a blank sheet of paper. He had just finished when Jim Totten began to fumble at the door in an effort to locate the knob.

"Sit down, Jim," he said with a smile which did not cover the fact that Totten was expected to obey.

"What d'yer want?" Jim asked as he settled heavily into a big chair.

"I want to know how much the West Ohio Traction Company is paying you for my vote on the franchise."

"Who said they was paying me anything?" Jim parried.

"You spoke of having to get my vote because you needed the money. I understood where you were expecting to get it."

Wilbur did not allow his eyes to leave the other's face for an instant. Under the spell of that gaze, Jim vouchsafed the information desired.

"They promised to gimme five hundred dollars."

"Five hundred, eh?" Wilbur repeated musingly. "My vote is worth five hundred dollars to them. Well, Jim, my vote is worth six hundred dollars to me."

"What d'you mean?" Totten spoke in a puzzled voice.

"I mean that you are to tell the men you have been dickering with that you can't get my vote."

"But I can," Jim laughed hoarsely.

"You'd rather have six hundred than five, wouldn't you?" Johnson put the thing more forcefully.

"Sure I would. Why wouldn't I?"

"Exactly. And I am going to give you six hundred dollars to let me alone, so that I can vote as I please."

CHAPTER VI.

A COMPARISON OF PHOTOGRAPHS.

SLOWLY a cunning smile broke over Totten's coarse features as the nature of the proposition forced its meaning into his rather foggy brain.

"I'll take you," he grinned.

"I have only about two hundred on hand to-night, Jim. I'll give you the rest if you'll come around to-morrow at half past twelve, when I'm alone here."

Jim considered a moment before he said: "I guess that'll be all right."

"Then you'll please sign this receipt for the money." Wilbur spoke in a matter-of-business tone. He shoved the paper toward Totten with a pile of bills upon it.

Jim counted the bills carefully before he read the paper. Then he stumbled slowly over the words.

> In consideration of the sum of six hundred dollars ($600.00), paid me by Wilbur Johnson, I do hereby agree to maintain strict silence concerning facts which I believe connect him with the robbery of the Howardson National Bank on June 15, 1899.
>
> Nov. 5, 1907. Received on account, two hundred dollars ($200.00).

"That's all right," he concluded after a little reflection, and reached for the pen Wilbur held out toward him.

"Have a cigar to smoke on your way back?" Johnson said, pushing an open box toward Totten, while he carefully folded the signed receipt and placed it in a wallet in his inside vest-pocket.

In a few moments he was back with Elsie and her mother. He had allowed himself to be blackmailed. But he was happy once more in the thought that he had saved himself from becoming a traitor to the city.

"Where have you been all this time?" Elsie demanded. "We thought they must have spirited you away."

"I happened to catch sight of the man who was discussing the franchise with me this afternoon. I have decided not to vote for it after all," he said with a ring of gladness in his voice. "How are the returns coming?"

"They're coming badly," Elsie grumbled. "And it serves you right, if you aren't going to let us have the trolleys."

"Oh, we'll get the trolleys yet, and on more favorable terms," Wilbur comforted her. "But what's the matter with the returns?"

For answer, she waved her hand toward the sheet across the way. Her gesture indicated complete disgust with the bulletin. He read the rough lettering the stereoptican threw upon the screen.

There was quite a column of rather indistinct figuring, giving the results for all the districts but four. At the bottom was the summing up:

Johnson, 9,896; Bethune, 10,035.

"By George!" he exclaimed. "It does look as though we were gone."

Swiftly his eye ran over the figures for the individual districts. Instantly he knew the ones which had not yet reported.

"The First, Third, and Eleventh yet to hear from," he snapped. "There's a chance yet."

Elsie looked at him in surprise. There was a gleam of intense interest in his eyes, astonishingly different from the

apathy which had wrapped him up earlier in the evening.

"You're a better statesman than I thought you were, Wilbur," she said. "All you need is a little opposition—a doubt as to the issue—to wake you up."

As she spoke, her hand went out once more instinctively toward his. She, too, liked the sense of some chance as to the issue, and was glad to find the same feeling in him. And she was very young and unsophisticated—and very much in love with Wilbur Johnson.

She was right in judging that the closeness of the contest had helped to arouse his interest in the election. But he knew that he would have been glad to see himself swept into office by a huge majority, now that he felt personally secure. With the terror of imprisonment once more banished, he was keenly alive to the things that had held his attention before.

Again the figures on the sheet were changed.

"Eleventh District — Johnson, 438; Bethune, 390," he read aloud before Elsie could glance at the bulletin. "Two more like that will do the trick," he added happily.

Neither of them spoke until another pair of figures was substituted for the ones showing. Then both of them gasped with disappointment as they saw a statement of the election in Chicago.

"Thirteenth District—Johnson, 391; Bethune, 393—" was suddenly thrown upon the screen.

"I had forgotten that one," was all he said, and the girl made no reply.

"Only twenty-four in the Third," he spoke solemnly as another report was shown. "It's all over, little girl. I can never get seventy-seven in the First."

Her hand was laid consolingly upon his, resting on the rail of the fire-escape. The next words slipped from him almost involuntarily. He did not even think to notice whether Mrs. Beckwith was in hearing till after he had spoken them:

"I was hoping to ask you to be the wife of the next mayor of Beckwith—but now—"

"I would rather be the wife of Wilbur Johnson in prison than the wife of the President of the United States," she whispered impulsively.

"My darling," he murmured, gazing into her moist eyes and crushing her little hand in his own big one. It was too public a place for other demonstration of affection.

Then, as the possible import of her words of love forced themselves upon him, and he thought how near she had come to being the lover of Wilbur Johnson in prison, he shivered.

"It's chilly out here," she said, looking at him with a new sense of protecting proprietorship.

"We might as well go in," he answered. The disappointment that sounded in his voice was more for her than for himself.

They clambered over the low seat, and both of them turned about as he reached up to close the window.

"Oh, look—look!" she suddenly exclaimed with a glad little cry.

Johnson's eyes turned toward the screen on which one more set of figures were displayed.

"First District—Johnson, 490; Bethune, 354."

The writer of the glass slides had hastily scrawled beneath, so that the words showed backward upon the sheet:

"Johnson Elected!"

The mayor-elect of Beckwith gave a quick glance in the direction of the elderly lady, who was peacefully dozing in a comfortable chair. Then he clasped his sweetheart in his arms.

The cheering down below had become slight and perfunctory during the return of the reports unfavorable to Johnson's election. Many of those men had voted against him, because they could not quite bring themselves to the point of voting for a man of his years. But, in their hearts, they wanted to see him elected.

And now, as a photograph of the successful candidate was suddenly thrown upon the screen, pandemonium broke loose. The horns and cow-bells and rattles, which had sounded spasmodically all through the evening, seemed suddenly united in a common ambition to burst themselves with noise.

"What's the matter with Johnson?" some one bawled loudly enough to make himself heard above the din.

"He's all right!" roared five thousand voices.

Then, in mighty, measured volume, rose nine long 'rahs with his name thrice repeated at the end. Mrs. Beckwith heaved a deep sigh that was half a cough and awoke with a start. The young lovers were barely in time to assume postures of suspiciously stiff dignity.

"Mother," cried Elsie, "let me introduce Beckwith's next mayor!"

"So—you're elected. Why—I thought—well, I congratulate you," the old lady spoke still sleepily. "Isn't it about time we all went home to our beds?"

"Come on up to the house for our little lunch—where there won't be so many people," Elsie whispered. "That is, if you want anything. I'm so happy I can't think of eating."

"I'm as hungry as a bear," he laughed back. "I guess you had a better dinner than I did."

A moment later he led them from the side door of the hotel, in order to avoid the crowd in front. They boarded his automobile, which he had ordered there.

"Johnson," a voice suddenly spoke from the shadow of a big copper leader on the side of the hotel, just as the chauffeur climbed into the car.

Wilbur turned and saw the indistinct figure, which he recognized as that of Jim Totten.

"I'd better see what he wants," he said to Elsie as he noted that she, too, had heard the calling of his name.

Jim had sobered considerably. Evidently he had come to the conclusion that more money could be wrung from Johnson as easily as not.

"Come back here a ways," Totten cautioned, motioning toward the deserted street farther down.

Johnson walked with him, watching every move of the tout, half suspicious that an attempt would be made to rob him of the piece of paper Jim had given him earlier.

"This is far enough," he said, when they were well out of ear-shot of the ladies in the automobile.

"I just seen the man from the West Ohio people," Jim came directly to the point. "They raised the ante to a thousand."

Johnson grinned. This was very much what he had expected.

"Jim," he said, "you'd better hurry back to your friend, and tell him you've got cold feet and can't stay in the game any longer. Then you show up at my office to-morrow when I told you, and get your four hundred dollars."

"I'll send that telegram," Totten snarled; "that's what I'll do, if you can't promise me your vote or raise on the West Ohio's thousand."

Wilbur Johnson laughed aloud.

"Jim Totten," he snapped, when he had enjoyed his laugh, "You've reached the end of your rope. Your little telegram might get me into some trouble, and it might not.

"But I've got a piece of paper in my pocket that would give you a long time to work out a sentence for blackmail, if I showed it. And if you ever breathe a word about my being wanted in New York again, even in your sleep, I'll turn that paper over to the police as sure as little fishes."

Jim Totten muttered an oath, and sprang toward Wilbur with a threatening motion toward his hip-pocket. Then that discretion which is much the better part of valor in some cases caused him to turn and slink off into the darkness.

"Who was he?" Elsie asked as Johnson climbed back into his car and it started to make its way around the corner into Main Street behind the edge of the crowd who still shouted before the picture of Beckwith's mayor-elect.

"A poor wreck who wanted—" Wilbur began, then stopped short with a quick intake of his breath.

Under the arc-light on the corner stood a stout man whom Johnson had never seen before. Wilbur caught the reflected gleam of a silver badge, different from that of the Beckwith police, as the man opened his coat to extract a small photograph from his vest-pocket.

As the car crept past, Johnson saw the man look carefully at the picture in his hand, then turn his eyes quickly to the big one on the screen.

The unknown officer nodded his head, as though in satisfaction.

"Hurry up, Tom," Wilbur spoke hoarsely to the chauffeur, who turned on full speed as they approached the foot of the grade up to Elsie Beckwith's home.

(To be continued.)

Potted Soldiers.

BY NEVIL G. HENSHAW.

From Hens to Helmets Is a Big Jump; but Fear Lends Wings, To Say Nothing of Threatening Tar and Feathers.

LAST summer my friend Jim Wiley came to the city, seeking rest and recreation after a busy season of grafting. We met on the street; the day was warm, and we adjourned to a convenient rathskeller. It was an ornate place, speaking loudly from every stein and oaken beam of the tireless efforts of the decorator, who had sought to transform a twentieth-century basement into a hall of feudal banquets. To heighten the illusion, there was placed upon a pedestal against the wall a complete suit of shining armor.

As we passed this empty shell of a bygone age, Wiley stopped and thrust out a hand.

"Hallo, Bill," said he, and a mailed glove fell upon the herring-bone bricks with a resounding clatter.

In the lull that followed the scrambling of waiters and the restoration of the gauntlet I took occasion to reprove my friend. I did so hotly, as the eyes of all had been fastened curiously upon us and we had been referred to audibly as "muckers."

"Why did you do it, Jim?" I asked. "You know you're not tight, and you're always bragging about the inconspicuousness of one of your profession. Any one would think you were a college boy just back from the big game."

Wiley grinned.

"Easy, easy," said he. "Gently over the stones. I was just giving Brother Bock-in-stein the grip. I belong to his lodge. How'd I know he wore reversible hands?"

I scented the story before he was half through, but I gave no sign.

"Jim," said I, "it won't do. You'll have to think up a better one. I know that you have sat at a good many round tables, but you can't tell me that Sir Arthur or any of his knights were ever in the game."

Wiley was indignant.

"You don't know," he retorted. "I'm a full-fledged member of the Ancient Order of Potted Soldiers; I've been a walking delegate for the United Hardware Jabbers Association; I've been initiated, and I've taken every degree in the thermometer. It happened last spring, and it come about something like this:

"Me and Push Evans had been down in Virginia in the interests of the Honduras Poultry Company. The graft was the invention of a man in Chicago, and it was so simple it had taken him his whole life to discover it.

"We drove round the country with a double team and something like a cross between a house-boat and a Pullman car. I wish you could have seen the pictures that was painted on the canvas sides.

"There was roosters four feet high, and hens with broods that you couldn't have covered with a circus-tent. Likewise there was piles of eggs that would have made them Egyptian pyramids look like the First National Bank at Koosa, Indian Territory.

"We started out one morning with one dozen eggs of the common or neighbor's garden variety and a twenty-five-cent rubber stamp. That was all there was to the lay-out, deducting such trifles as a country gentleman's outfit for me and one of them minstrel parade make-ups for Push. We booked straight through on the home and fireside circuit, cutting out anything that even looked like a melancholy hamlet.

"We'd just drive up to a farmhouse, and in less than a minute we'd have the inmates flocking out, asking us where we was going to show and looking round for the man with the shells.

"It's a curious thing how every time one of these rural citizens sees a piece of painted canvas he begins to hunt for some one to relieve the congestion of his pocketbook. That's where the grafter comes in. He keeps off meningitis from the backbone of the country.

"After we'd got our audience in harmony with the production, I'd ring up the curtain, and Push would start the show, addressing his remarks more or less to Mrs. Farmer.

"It was a beautiful spiel that had been written especially for the occasion, and, to hear Push give it, you'd have thought that at last you'd discovered the man who could give you the answer to that old riddle about 'Which comes first, the hen or the egg?'

"What made it all the more wonderful was the fact that the closest Push had ever come to knowing anything about the great African bird was when they give him a coat of tar and feathers once in Sweet Springs, Missouri. He'd never even had the chicken-pox.

"He did know something about eggs, though, having had some pretty close relations with 'em when he was on tour with the Shakespeare Scholars. But even then I don't think they was the kind of eggs any refined person would associate with.

"Push's spiel was all about our poultry-farm in Honduras, where we was raising the largest chickens in the world on account of some peculiarity of the climate. According to him, you could take one of our fowls and butcher it like a steer—they was so large and fine.

"Likewise, for the benefit of the human race—and the U. S. A. in particular—we was selling a limited number of the eggs—one set to each family. The price was only five dollars per set, but the company didn't get all of it. No, sir. Half of it went to make up the three-thousand-dollar prize that was offered for the finest brood, and the extra prize for the finest rooster. The company was chiefly interested in advertising itself at present, and was therefore willing to make its sales on this profit-sharing plan.

"'You see that magnificent bird on the canvas there, madam?' Push'd say in conclusion. 'That's General Jackson. He was raised by a little lady in Griffin, Georgia, and he brought her just five hundred dollars. You couldn't buy him from her for twice that much.'

"Then Push would show a picture of the lady to prove what he'd said. By the time Mrs. Farmer got a good look at General Jackson she'd be ready to do business. As Push had said, he was a magnificent bird. They'd painted him from one of them Roosevelt giraffes and then put on the feathers.

"Next to that peculiar something which makes every rural female think she knows more about raising chickens than any other woman in the world, General Jackson was our best drawing-card. We was figuring on rechristening him and naming him General Grant when we got farther north.

"'Father,' Mrs. Farmer'd say, 'I've just got to have a set of them eggs. I reckon I'll call my rooster General Lee.'

"Then Mr. Farmer'd prove his claim to the All-American Tightwad.

"'I reckon you won't,' he'd say. 'I ain't got no five dollars to squander on such foolishness.'

"It was right here our graft come in. It was the price that done it. After Push had argued a while he'd turn it loose.

"'Madam,' he'd say, 'I don't generally spend as much time as this in advertising my business. I don't have to. But I want you to have a set of these eggs because I think you deserve 'em. Why, every place I went to yesterday they told me the same thing.

"'"Call on Mrs. Brown," they all said. "She's the best chicken-raiser in the county. If she gets a chance at some of them eggs, she'll raise a rooster that'll make General Jackson look like a humming-bird."

"'So I feel I can relax my rules a little, and offer a special inducement in your case. Now, if you won't say anything about it to the neighbors, I tell you what I'll do. I'll exchange a set of these wonderful eggs for two sets of the ordinary kind. I'll lose money by it, but you're just the sort of person that'll help our business.'

"And she always was.

"After we'd got the eggs, Push would stamp a fresh set, while I done the driving. That was my job. Also, laying out our route and getting the eggs off by express whenever we'd acquired enough of 'em to make a shipment. It was a cinch.

"One morning, near the State line, I took the wrong turn, and we come back into Virginia again. We likewise done 'The Prodigal's Return,' putting it on in style with two fatted calves.

"The farmhouse looked familiar, and I don't believe they'd have deceived me if they'd had the decency to have left the 'Fresh Paint' sign up. They'd likewise fallen into the clutches of one of these here modern Ajaxes, who go round denying the lightning and running it into the ground.

"The family come rushing out as soon as we hove in sight, and they was certainly glad to see us. They invited us into the barn-yard and let Push get most through his spiel, while the children rounded up the neighbors. And I'm here to remark that had the neighbors arrived I believe there'd have been a lynching. As it was, we was saved by the impatience of our hostess.

"Just as Push was saying, 'I'll tell you what I'll do,' her temper give way, and she let drive at him with the set he'd handed her for inspection. It took him just about where he'd have worn his diamond stud if he'd had one.

"As Shakespeare says: 'A woman scorned is hell.'

"'Lock the gate, boys, and join in,' says our host to the darkies who was looking on.

"I was in the wagon, making room for the two new sets, when the denudement come. I give one look at Push, and went through the canvas like a bullet tearing a ten-inch hole in one of the piles of painted eggs. Before I hit the ground you'd have swore they was real ones.

"'Beat it,' I yells to Push, and we went circling round that barn-yard like two squirrels in a cage, while them farmers dug in the wagon and pelted us with eggs.

"There was plenty of 'em, and most of 'em went home, which speaks well for the aim of our assailants, our movements at the time being so energetic they'd have made the average electric fan look like a dead snail.

"After a while we found an opening and dug out across the fields, with the enemy strung out behind us firing as they ran. How long they chased us I don't know. We just kept on moving.

"I caught my first and second wind, and tried for my third, and muffed it.

"Then I hung my foot in something and done the human plow.

"'It's all over,' says I to myself, and lay still, awaiting capture.

"After a while, as nothing happened, I raised up and looked round. I was lying on a railroad track, and my pursuers was nowhere in sight. Push was about ten yards below me, picking gravel out of his face and swearing something terrible.

"'Well,' says I, 'it looks like we've won the Marathon.'

"'Any one who couldn't win it with the send-off we had is a candidate for locomotive-traxia,' says he.

"This set me to thinking about my personal appearance, so I took a look at myself and then one at Push. You ought to have seen us.

"We was omelets, we was soufflés, and we had as many shells scattered about us as Manhattan Beach or the grounds of a wagon-show. Push was the worst of the two, as there was more of him. He looked like the butter statuary at the county fair on a hot day.

"'Push,' says I, 'I'm surprised that a man who's had your theatrical training should come out so badly in the late unpleasantness.'

"'When I was on the stage,' says he with dignity, 'the scenery wasn't so far apart.'

"'Well,' says I, 'what next?'

"'Water,' says Push. 'If we don't wash our clothes, some one'll catch us and put us in an incubator.'

"We didn't give the wagon and horses a thought, to say nothing of our box of spare clothes. It's through just such little unintentional gifts as these that the world breaks even with the grafter.

"After we'd walked up the track for about four miles we come to a bridge. Under it was a nice little stream, with the bushes growing right down to the edge of its banks, and rocks all around as big

as houses. We crawled down and washed our clothes.

"It wasn't much of a job, but they was clean, and they still looked almost like clothes—all except Push's plug hat. It looked like a black kitten that had committed suicide by drowning. When we was through, we spread 'em out to dry on a big, flat rock that hung over the water like the first balcony in a theater.

"Then, having nothing to do, and being attired only in our *lingerings,* as the French say, we spread ourselves out by the clothes and took a nap.

"I've had bad dreams in my life, but the one I had then was the double dam of all the nightmares in the world. It was all about me and Push being stuck up by a lot of things that was half farmers and half General Jacksons, each of 'em with a Gatling gun loaded with eggs.

"They chased us round for about a million years, and then we come to a big well, and they caught up with us, and the guns went off all together, and me and Push jumped in. We went down about a thousand miles, and then we hit the water, and I woke up and found myself in the middle of the stream, with Push underneath me, half drowned.

"I got him on his feet, and he was pretty near scared to death.

"'What is it?' he asks. 'The end of the world?'

"'No,' says I. 'It's a bank failure.' And it was.

"The rock we'd been lying on had just pulled itself out like a tooth, and had cut out the moss-growing habit. Why we wasn't killed, I don't know.

"I got Push ashore, and we sat on the bank and cussed and shivered and wished we'd picked out some other rock. I reckon when they first ordered them mountain rills, they made a mistake and rung for ice-water.

"After we'd got a little warm from the sun, I thought about our clothes, and I come near fainting. I give one look at the stream, and seen it was no use. They had departed from us, and was buried under the biggest granite monument I've ever seen.

"'Push,' says I, 'we're in a position to make Adam look like a man on a polar expedition.'

"'We are,' says he. 'As the lady says, we've nothing to wear. I'd be satisfied with one of them athletic shirts which are made out of three holes and a letter.'

"'You're avaricious,' says I. 'I now could get along with a pair of earrings.'

"It's funny to talk about now, but we couldn't have seen the joke then if Marshall P. Wilder had told it to us. We was doing a 'Babes in the Wood,' with the robin season over, and not even a buzzard to help us. Push began to tell me about a man he'd heard of who built himself a suit out of newspapers.

"I made him cut it out, as it wouldn't have helped us if he'd done it with a visiting-card. After that he started to explain how people got fiber from bark and wove it into cloth, and I begun to get interested.

"Just as I was figuring on a likely looking tree, he told me they done this in Africa. I knew he was lying then, as they don't wear as much clothes there as we had on.

"About the middle of the afternoon we heard a whistle and took to the bushes. The train come along about ten minutes after. It was one of these jerk-water locals, and it was running so slow you couldn't have told which way it was going if it hadn't been for the engine.

"The baggage department was in the upper half of the colored car, and both doors was wide open. The baggage-master was asleep on a box of express. He had his coat and collar off, and I don't think I've ever seen a man who looked more dressed up than he was.

"I was just wishing I had his necktie when the train hit a loose rail, and the miracle come. There was a trunk standing near the door on our side, and the jar toppled it over, and sent it rolling down almost on top of us.

"'Jim,' says Push, after the train was gone, 'Elijah's got nothing on us. If he was fed by ravens, we've been clothed by the Jim Crow.'

"'Don't be too sure,' says I. 'Ten to one this trunk belongs to a lady.'

"We got a rock and busted her open, and then I seen things was even worse than I'd predicted. There wasn't anything inside but a lot of tin pots and kettles, and a few sections of stovepipe.

"'Stung,' says I. 'We've drawn a kitchen-cabinet.'

"But Push wasn't so downcast.

"'Things might be worse,' says he. 'This is armor.'

"'Armour?' says I. 'What's the difference? We ain't even got a can-opener.'

"'You don't understand,' says Push. 'It's what they call mail.'

"'If it hadn't come out of the express-car, I'd call it freight,' says I.

"Then Push got mad and begun to explain.

"'This is a theatrical trunk,' says he; 'and, from the looks of it, it's full of costumes for the supers. Soldiers used to wear things like this a-while ago. I guess the company must be doing "Richard III." I wish they'd been doing "Julius Cæsar." Then we'd have got some togas.'

"'Which is the first time I've ever heard that Julius was a Jap,' says I. 'If this is all, they've done the other gentleman, for he must be a hardware drummer.'

"After Push got the junk sorted out, he begun to dress me up in it. How he done it I don't know, but he got through at last, and even handed me a sword he'd dug up from the bottom of the trunk.

"'Now,' says he, 'you're a knight.'

"'I feel more like the morning after,' says I.

"Push leaned me up against a tree while he dressed himself. After he was through he got another sword, and a couple of things that looked like firemen's helmets before they put the paint on.

"'We'd better wear 'em,' says he, 'to keep the sun off.'

"When I got mine on I felt like the human oyster.

"'Now,' says Push, 'where to?'

"'To the blacksmith's,' says I. 'I need a handkerchief.'

"We started off through the bushes, meaning to strike the track on a level; but it wasn't much use. Every second or two one of us would trip and fall, and when we was down we couldn't get up again. I don't reckon they ever had to hold the watch on one of them old-time scrappers such as we was representing. When they was down they was out.

"The swords come in mighty handy. Push knew his business when he brought 'em 'long. Every time one of us went down, the other would hobble over to him and pull him up with a scabbard. If we'd both fell down at the same time, I believe we'd be there yet.

"'Push,' says I, when we got to the edge of the bushes, 'I reckon we'd better cut out the track and hunt a road. If a train was to come 'long, we'd never get out the way.'

"'Right,' says he. 'I don't want to cause any wreck. There might be some poor widow on board.'

"We hunted round for about an hour before we found the road. It was only a couple of ruts that had started some place and got lost, and just about the time we thought we was getting somewheres it give out entirely. At sunset we was stumbling round loose in a country that looked like the roller-coasters you see at the amusement parks.

"It was just one hill after another, with nothing on either side of 'em except another hill. We hadn't seen a house or a person all day, and I reckon if any one from that county was to break into the Garden of Eden he'd think he'd struck a congress of nations.

"At eight-thirty the moon rose, and we come to the biggest hill we'd seen yet. It was all full of bushes, and it took up so much room we come to the conclusion we could make better time going over it than round it. We was both of us dog-tired, and we hadn't had a thing to eat since breakfast. Likewise the armor had rubbed the skin off me all over in spots the size of a butter-plate.

"'Push,' says I, when we got to the top, 'I'm through. There's no sense in wearing tin clothes out of respect for a community that isn't present. If you'll lend a hand, I'll return these habiliments to Mr. Shakespeare and call it an even break. If he hasn't had his pound of flesh, he's got enough of my skin to cover a complete set of his works.'

"'One moment,' says Push. 'Do my eyes deceive me, or is that a light?'

"I looked at the valley, and, sure enough, there was a deep glow just underneath us.

"'I'll bet a thousand the only house in the county is on fire,' says I.

"'I won't take you,' says Push. 'You're playing your luck.'

"We went down the hill hand over hand, holding on to the bushes. The glow kept getting brighter and brighter until, when we was half-way down, we seen it come from a big bonfire.

"Then we got a little closer, and seen a big bunch of people sitting round the fire, with a man standing up talking to 'em.

"Back of 'em the woods was full of carts and wagons, and other such means of rural transportation.

"We stopped about fifty feet from the bottom to see what was doing. Push was just ahead of me, and the drop was so straight we had to hold ourselves on by the bushes.

"The people was just underneath us with their backs to the lee of the hill.

"The party who was standing up was shouting like a man calling sheep, and his remarks was chiefly about an angel with a flaming sword, who he said was going to light on his audience some day, like a bee on a flower. As soon as we heard him we guessed the cause of the disturbance.

"'Jim,' says Push, 'we're saved. It's an old-fashioned camp-meeting. Where better could we find aid and suckers?'

"'Let us descend,' says I, and just then my bush pulled out, and, as the writers say, I suited the action to the word.

"I hit Push somewheres below the knees, and after that we didn't either of us hit anything.

"We just bounced off the hill, and come down on the camp-meeting like a ton of brick.

"You ought to have seen that meeting adjourn. They just give us one look and vanished into thin air. The preacher set the pace; and if any of 'em passed him, they was going some. For a minute or two we could hear 'em bumping round among the trees, and then we was once more alone in the wilds of Virginia.

"Luckily, Push had fallen near a tree, which he embraced, and got to his feet. Then he pulled me up, and we took a look round. The field was ours, and it consisted of the fire, some hymn-books, and enough live-stock to start a dozen livery-stables.

"'Well,' says Push, 'we have at least discovered a swifter means of transit.'

"'We have,' says I. 'Without exaggeration you could call it breakneck speed.'

"'I'm speaking of the vehicles,' says Push. 'If we pick out a good team, we may be able to overtake some of these *al fresco* enthusiasts and explain matters.'

"'Not them,' says I. 'I really felt ashamed of our feeble efforts when I seen 'em move. I reckon the next time that preacher calls for an angel with a flaming sword he'll make it his business to find out first the angel isn't in.'

"We hunted round among the teams until we found a good pair of mules hitched to a spring-wagon.

"'And now,' says I, 'how are we going to get in without a derrick?'

"We figured about ten minutes, and Push had an idea.

"'The hair of the dog's good for the bite,' says he. 'If we back the wagon to the edge of the hill, we can then ascend a short way and roll down into it.'

"'We can,' says I, 'if we roll straight, and the mules are willing. I'll take one chance.'

"After we'd got the wagon as close to the hill as we could get it, we opened the back and began to pull ourselves up by the bushes. We went about ten feet and stopped.

"'And now,' says I, 'how are you going to lay down to roll? From what I've learned from this armor your knight friends must have been a race of strap-hangers.'

"'There's only one way,' says Push. 'I'll hold on while you catch me round the waist and topple me over very gently. Then I'll get you round the ankles and do the same for you.'

"'And what do I hold while you're performing this service for me?' I asks.

"'I don't know,' says Push. 'Your breath, I suppose. Let's hurry, before my hand gets tired.'

"I let go my bush and grabbed Push round the waist.

"'Gently—gently,' says he, while we was steadying ourselves.

"'Gently it is,' says I, and I give a little shove, and we went down the hill like a shot out of a gun—locked in each other's arms.

"We hit the wagon fair and square and

rolled clear under the front seat, making a noise like the wrecking of a milk-train.

"The mules just give one snort before they started off, and then they had to run sideways to keep from flying.

"Of the journey that followed I will say nothing, except to remark that Push had sure found a more rapid means of transit. We just bumped round inside the wagon like a loose load of pig iron, and the more noise we made the faster the mules would go.

"Whether we was *en route* ten minutes or a week I've never been able to exactly state.

"After a while we heard a crash, and the mules stopped short, and we tumbled out the back end. Just as we hit the ground a bunch of hounds come running up and begun to chew on us.

"We let 'em chew, and I reckon they lost enough ivory to make a set of billiard-balls.

"'Jim,' says Push, 'we must be back in civilization again, unless these dogs are wild.'

"'If they ain't, they will be when they try to eat again,' says I.

"I got hold of one of the wagon wheels and pulled myself up. Push done the same. We was in a farmyard, and the mules was standing in front of the barn, with the stable-gate draped round their necks.

"A couple of hands come running up to see what was the matter, but they didn't stay long. When they seen us, they just thumped the ground once—like a rabbit—and disappeared.

"I felt something cracking under my feet and looked down. It was egg-shells, and the whole ground was covered with 'em. Then I looked toward the house, and seen by the moonlight that it was newly painted and had a lightning-rod on each end.

"'Push,' says I, 'we've boxed both Fate and the compass, and we've won in the last round. We're the human boomerangs. We've come home.'

"'If we have, let's make it a flying visit,' says he. 'With the start they had when we last seen 'em, our friends are about due here now.'

"We went in the stable, and there was our team and wagon. Everything was just like we'd left it, even down to our box of clothes under the front seat. We found an old hatchet and broke the lock, and the way Push got me into my spare suit would have made one of them quick-change artists look like a woman dressing for a ball.

"I hooked up the horses while Push made his toilet, and in five minutes more we was beating it for the State line as fast as we could go.

"About seven-thirty the next morning we hit a little burg in Carolina, and we stopped and put up at the hotel.

"It was three days before we could move round at all, and for a month we looked like the leopard boy.

"And now if you don't think I've got a right to shake hands with one of them scrap-iron boys, you ought to read up on the grand lodge rules."

"Jim," said I, "you have a right to pull his head off if you want to. But tell me one thing more. What did you do with the armor? Did you keep it as a souvenir?"

"Not us," said Wiley. "We had what you might call a plethora of souvenirs. We sold the armor to pay a doctor for getting rid of some of 'em."

"And what could any one in Carolina want with a couple of suits of armor?" I asked in surprise.

Wiley smiled.

"They wasn't armor when we sold 'em," said he. "They was patent stoves."

THE EMPRESS.

WHO is it rules so regally the land,
In purple clad than Tyrian richer far?
It is the Empress Twilight, in her hand
The vesper glory of one violet star!

Clinton Scollard.

The Man In the Shadow.

BY DOUGLAS PIERCE,

Author of "The Impostor," "Two Tickets to Tuckerton," "The Shaft of Light," etc.

How a Young Fellow Employed His Own Downfall as a Weapon Against His Enemies.

(Complete in This Number.)

CHAPTER I.

THROUGH THE MEGAPHONE.

"H, come on," coaxed the girl in the light summer frock, seeking to draw her companion toward the big sight-seeing automobile which stood beside the curb awaiting its quota of passengers. "I have always pined for a chance to ride in a 'rubberneck-wagon,' but never could get any one to go with me. Do come; it will be such a lark."

Her escort—a rather imposing-looking fellow, distinctly swagger in attire—protested. He hated to render himself conspicuous by trundling round in so plebeian a vehicle.

Still, he reflected, it is considered smart nowadays to be a trifle unconventional; and, since the young lady redoubled her persuasions on seeing him waver, he yielded in the end, and somewhat patronizingly purchased a couple of tickets from the hovering agent.

As they climbed up and took their seats in the unwieldy car, however, he gave an uncomfortable start and glanced sharply round, the laugh in which he had been indulging dying on his lips. Nothing unusual met his searching gaze. The sight-seers on the car — for the most part, gray-bearded farmers with their wives, or young couples from the rural districts on an evident honeymoon-trip—were all seemingly engrossed in their own affairs, and returned his questioning scrutiny with blank unconcern.

The chauffeur leaned idly against the front wheel, and the announcer, his megaphone held loosely in his hand, was looking up the street. The little group of bystanders on the sidewalk waiting to watch the start betrayed no especial interest in him.

Yet he would have sworn that from some one in that company had come a signal concerning which he could not be mistaken.

A soft whistle, low but distinct, given in two ascending notes, one long and one short!

He was too familiar with the mysterious call to credit that he had heard amiss; but when he had once more swept his eyes round and discovered no one whom he knew, he was forced to conclude that his imagination must be playing him tricks.

So he settled himself back on the cushions, and turned to address some jocular remark to the young lady at his side: but, lo! the signal sounded again, furtive as before, but clear and penetrating—two ascending notes, one long and one short.

Angrily he straightened up, a quick flush of vexation rising to his cheek. He cast his glance along the row of second-story windows above him, studied suspiciously the tranquil faces of his fellow passengers, peered anxiously back into the hotel entrance before which they stood. and even made an excuse to lean across two of his neighbors to see if perchance the disturbing whistler might not be lurking on the off side of the car.

But, as before, no one met his gaze to whom he could reasonably ascribe the call; and he was once more about to argue to himself that he had been deceived, when the signal was repeated for the third time.

He had been trying to tell himself that the whistle, peculiar though it was, had been a mere coincidence; for surely if any one were seeking to attract his attention by means of it, he would make himself known.

But at this third repetition he became convinced that it contained a more sinister meaning, and a vague glint of fear crept into the exasperated glare with which he was surveying the other members of the party.

Twisting about as uneasily on his seat as though he were enthroned upon nettles, he was at a loss to know what to do. If he left the car now, he would not only have to render his companion some kind of reasonable excuse, but might also invite an encounter with his unknown tormentor—the thing he was, for the present, most anxious to avoid. On the other hand, if the object of his misgivings was aboard, to remain seemed equally fraught with disaster.

He had scant time, however, to debate the point; for while he was still distressfully weighing the pros and cons, some one shouted "All aboard!" and the chauffeur, mounting to his seat, started the machine.

Washington is a city well adapted to sight-seeing. The many beautiful parks and squares, together with the width of the streets, tends to create charming vistas along which one may glance to see some white public building gleaming like a Greek temple through the green of the trees, thus affording the observer a view of the noted edifices from many different points and angles.

Even the jarring grind of the "rubber-neck-wagon" and the raucous comments of the leather-lunged announcer cannot wholly destroy the soothing, restful effect produced by the sight of so much stately beauty.

Consequently, as the car proceeded on its lumbering progress toward the Capitol, and there came no further recurrence of that portentous whistle, Mosby's agitation subsided and he even began to point out to his companion some of the objects of interest along their route.

He must have been deceived, he reasoned plausibly, drawn by his own fears into construing a street urchin's whistle into the old-time signal; and he smiled a bit contemptuously as he thought of the old saw anent a guilty conscience.

Round through the Capitol grounds swept the big automobile with its load of gaping tourists, past the Congressional Library, and then down by the east front of the Capitol to afford a glimpse of the House and Senate offices, the Union Depot, and the Government Printing Office off toward the north; and with every passing moment Mosby grew more at ease, more positive that his alarm had been caused by a needless apprehension.

And now the chauffeur threw on an extra burst of speed, and the announcer rested from his labors; for they were traveling through a section where there was nothing to see.

Down the hill they rolled at accelerated pace, through the "hollow," with its slumlike environs, slowed up a moment before the statue of General Albert Pike, and finally came to a full stop in front of Judiciary Square.

Mosby turned to the young lady to pass some comment on the old-fashioned courthouse, with its Doric portico fronting on the lawn; but the words were never uttered, for as the car came to a pause and the tourists craned forward their necks to see, faint but clear there fell again upon his ears the sound of the fateful whistle.

As before, he straightened up and glared challengingly about him—like some bull roused from peaceful grazing by the scent of sudden danger; but again he had to sink back, confused and mystified.

Was he losing his mind, he questioned?

He had heard that sometimes men who, like himself, were laboring under a heavy strain, imagined themselves to see and hear things which had no real existence, and he knew that in all such cases the inevitable end was a gradual lapse into more pronounced hallucinations, and then insanity and death.

Was this, too, to be the finish? Must all his ambitious planning and scheming come to naught.

Under this stress of horror, Mosby's

florid face grew gray, and the cold sweat broke out in beads underneath his hatband. As though in a dream, he watched the announcer lift the wide-mouthed phone to his lips and commence his harangue.

"To your right, ladies and gentlemen," bawled the man, "you will observe the old District of Columbia Court-house, now superseded by a more modern structure at Fourteenth and E Streets, which we will show you later. The statue directly before you is that of Abraham Lincoln, and is said to be an excellent likeness of the martyred President.

"Turning to the building itself now, you will note the somewhat antiquated style of architecture—a mixture of the Colonial and pure Greek. It is constructed of Virginia sandstone, painted white, and was in its time deemed a notable addition to the capital's monumental edifices, although now utterly inadequate to the purpose for which it was designed.

"Within its halls the great legal giants of the past have met in forensic combat, and its bench has been graced by the presence of some of the most distinguished jurists in our history.

"Here, too, have been held many famous trials, attracting attention throughout the length and breadth of the country—such as that of Mrs. Surratt, Charles J. Guiteau, the Breckenridge-Pollard case, and a number of others which you will readily recall.

"But not always has justice been done underneath this roof." The speaker's tone changed, and a less perfunctory note appeared in his voice. "Some years ago a young man, just starting out in life, was convicted in this building and sentenced to prison for a crime of which he was no more guilty than are any of you.

"Charged with divulging the secrets of the government's carefully guarded wheat-crop report to a band of unscrupulous Chicago speculators, he found the net of evidence so tightly wound round his feet that he could not escape. The world believes him guilty—you no doubt will say he was, too, if you remember the case when I mention his name. But I knew the man and all the circumstances, and I declare to you that Garfield Doyle was innocent!"

The color surged back in a wave to Mosby's pallid face. The grim apprehensions in which he had been indulging vanished as though at the touch of a magician's wand, and in their place came only a feeling that he must get himself and his companion off that car as soon as possible.

For he knew at last whence had come the mystic signal.

He turned to the girl with a well-simulated air of boredom, and proposed that they should alight.

"If you really care for any more sightseeing," he urged, "let me get a taxicab, and we can do it in more comfortable fashion."

His tone was so imperative that she could not well disagree; so, gathering up her parasol and one or two other feminine belongings, she prepared to follow his lead.

But her foot slipped upon the step, and she might have sustained an ugly tumble had not the announcer, with a display of considerable agility, swung himself along the side of the car and caught her in his arms.

In doing so, however, he had to throw his full weight on the iron railing surrounding the front seat, with the result that the treacherous rod broke off, bent under him, and in some way got its sharp, jagged points inserted between his collar and his throat.

As a consequence, although he saved the girl from falling, he came down pretty heavily himself, and was a second or two in extricating himself from his awkward entanglement.

Meanwhile, the cause of his accident—blushing prettily as she regained her footing—had started to thank him; but she halted, with a little cry of solicitude, as she noticed a scarlet stain spreading across the bosom of his shirt.

"Oh," she exclaimed, "you have hurt yourself in saving me! The sharp end of that rod has cut you. You are hurt," she repeated wildly, noting his sudden pallor and an involuntary compression of his lips—"badly hurt!"

"It is nothing," the man insisted, hurriedly turning up his coat to hide the telltale crimson; and Mosby, interposing under pretense of making an examination, verified his statement.

While the two heads were bent together there had been a brief interchange of words.

"Get her away quick," whispered the injured man. "I've got to beat it to a doctor. But, first," he added in somewhat peremptory fashion, "tell me where I can see you—later."

Mosby hesitated a moment, then muttered sullenly:

"At the Brinkhaven to-night at eight. Call for John P. Braden."

"Are you sure he was not badly hurt?" asked the girl again, as Mosby deftly steered her up a by-street and out of sight.

"Certainly," a bit testily. "As I told you, it is only a mere scratch."

"Not much more, anyway, worse luck!" he was growling to himself. "I wish to Heaven he had broken his confounded neck!"

CHAPTER II.

TOLD TO A "FRIEND."

A HEAVY scowl rested on Mosby's dark features as he sat in his luxurious suite of rooms at the fashionable Brinkhaven and puffed furiously at the long, black cigar between his lips.

Why had this fellow come into his life again whom he had believed dead, or gone to the dogs years ago?

What reason could he have for so insistently demanding an interview?

Above all, what effect was the incident going to have upon a certain ticklish enterprise in prospect?

These were Mosby's thoughts; and, as several untoward contingencies presented themselves to his mind which might result from the encounter of the afternoon, his scowl grew darker, and he vented his feelings in muttered curses against his ill-luck.

His principal concern at the moment, however, was how best to comport himself during the approaching conference; and, after some reflection, he decided that his attitude would most suitably be one of friendly indifference, courteous but businesslike.

He might appear interested in the affairs of his old acquaintance, might even offer him advice regarding his plans and purposes; but he must on no account betray that he felt the slightest personal solicitude as to anything the other might be intending to do.

He hastened, therefore, to smooth the frown from his brows and adopt a more tranquil expression, as the boy knocked at the door to announce the presence of Mr. Garfield Doyle; and a moment later, with a fair simulation of heartiness, he was greeting his visitor, who, although pale and carrying his left side a little stiffly, showed otherwise no especial bad effects from the casualty of the afternoon.

He brushed aside, too, Mosby's rather overdone inquiries as to the damage inflicted, and with a slightly ironic smile let his eyes rove over the handsomely furnished apartment.

"A bit different," he commented, "from the quarters in which I last saw you. Cell No. 216, with its iron bedstead and tin wash-basin, didn't have quite so many modern conveniences, eh, Mosby?"

"Sh-h!" with quick irritation. "Let us omit any references to the past; one never knows who may be within hearing in a place like this. And, above all, don't use that name. I am known now as Braden—John P. Braden.

"By the way," he went on, with a disapproving shake of the head, "I see you still cling to Garfield Doyle. Bad policy, my lad; bad policy. A name is like a suit of clothes; when it becomes soiled, the sooner one changes it the better."

"Not for me," retorted the other. "There's no dirt on my name which belongs there, and I propose to stick by it until I get off what has been put there by other people. I remember that you gave me the same advice about changing my name when we were at Moundsville together; but I never could see the question in quite the same light as you did. At any rate, I've stuck by Garfield Doyle so far, and I guess I'll keep on for a while longer."

"With what success?" There was scarcely an attempt to conceal the sneer in the question.

"Well, not the best, I'll have to confess. In fact, the name has proven a heavy handicap to me in everything I have attempted. No sooner would I land

in a decent berth than some one would happen along who remembered the old scandal.

"Then it would simply be a matter of handing me my walking papers. As you probably know, there are very few places open to a man who has worn the stripes."

Mosby, or Braden, nodded comprehendingly, and after a pause the other went on.

"I knocked around the West for a long time after getting out," he said, "roving about from place to place with the idea of earning enough money to reopen my case; but finally I saw that I was tackling the wrong end of the proposition. If I was ever to hold a decent job again, I had first to prove my innocence of the old charge and clear my name.

"It meant lots of work, I knew, for I would have to dig out the truth alone and unaided But I reasoned that, since it had to be done, the sooner I got at it the better; so I came back here, and have put in about six months now, trying to unravel the tangled snarl. My job," with a smile, "gives me a living, and I have plenty of time on the outside to devote to my purpose."

"And have you discovered anything?"

Had Doyle been in the slightest degree suspicious, he could hardly have failed to note the tremble of eagerness in the question.

"Yes; I believe I have. In fact, unless I am wofully mistaken, the same game by which I was trapped is being worked again, and by the same old gang. I got my first clue to what was going on by reading of the renewed activity of those people in the market reports from Chicago, and since then I have noted many indications here which strongly tend to confirm my suspicions."

"But, even supposing this to be true, how will that help you?"

"Why, don't you see? When the explosion comes, and all the rascals scamper to cover, leaving some poor innocent scapegoat of a clerk to bear the blame, just as was done with me, I will be on hand to disclose the falsity of their charges. By watching secretly now, I can hardly fail to discover who is the real informant of these sharks, and who it is they are preparing to sacrifice.

"Then I will put a flea in the prospective victim's ear which will enable him to protect himself, and at the crucial moment turn the tables upon his accusers, proving at the same time that my downfall was due to a similar conspiracy."

"You have as yet, though, no evidence pointing to any particular person?" asked Mosby hastily.

Doyle hesitated a moment, and, stepping to the door, glanced up and down the corridor to make sure that no one could possibly be within hearing.

"Yes," he confided upon his return, "I have. Unless I have misread every sign in the workings of the department, the man responsible for the leaks is no one less than Assistant Secretary James Reed, and the chap they have picked out to ruin is a young fellow in the chief statistician's office, named Roland Morgan."

Mosby gave a start at the mention of these names, and hurriedly shifted his position, so as to prevent the light from falling on his face.

Unnoticing his agitation, however, the other went on: "It is because of my certainty that I am on the right track that I have come to you."

"To me?" hoarsely. "What the dickens do I know about such matters?"

"Nothing, of course; yet you can be of very material help to me. You are acquainted with Reed, I know, for I saw you dining with him here at the Brinkhaven last night. Then, you are in the brokerage business. You see, I am quite wise to your movements, Mr. John P. Braden," he broke off with a light laugh.

"I have been seeing you round town for several days past; but I didn't intend to bother you with my affairs until I saw you with Reed last night, and then I decided to seek your aid, though I was at a bit of a loss how best to approach you. A good many people round here still remember me, and I didn't want to compromise you in any way.

"Your getting on the car to-day, however, gave me my opportunity, and I tried to make myself known to you through the old prison whistle. You stared about in every direction but the right one, though; so finally I was forced to make a little addition to my regular lecture, and practically tell you who I was."

"Well, you can hardly blame me for not recognizing you at once," said Mosby,

fencing a little in order to give himself time to reflect. "You have grown older and more settled-looking; and then, too, the mustache makes quite a change in your appearance."

He was thinking also, although he did not say so, that there had come a far more resolute and purposeful expression to the other's face. If he was any judge of physiognomy, this was not a man to be readily dissuaded or turned aside from any object he had in view; and Doyle confirmed this diagnosis by immediately returning to the question at issue.

"Yes," he said impatiently, "I have changed, no doubt; but I haven't forgotten the old friendship any more than I believe you have—Mos—Braden. You will do this thing I want, won't you?"

"For instance?"

"Well, chiefly to find out for certain that Reed is the colored gentleman in the wood-pile.

"And how do you expect me to accomplish it? You don't imagine, do you, that he is giving himself away to every man with whom he happens to take dinner?"

"By no means. Still, it ought to be easy for a man in your line, if at all intimate with him, to find out whether or not he is corrupt. That is all I want you to do, merely sound him, and learn if he is willing to listen to a crooked proposal.

"If he nibbles, I will know that I have made no mistake, and can then proceed to perfect my plans. You'll help me so far, at least, for the sake of old times, won't you, dear chap?"

Mosby squinted down his nose, and pretended to consider. As a matter of fact, he could have given the desired information without the slightest difficulty then and there; for he was a prominent factor in the very deal with Reed which Doyle was trying to nose out.

Indeed, his little dinner with Reed the night before had been for the express purpose of arranging the details for their projected coup.

A confidence man sent up for a short term for petty swindling, Mosby had made the acquaintance of Garfield Doyle at the penitentiary, and by his plausible address and persuasive tongue had small difficulty in convincing the younger prisoner that he, too, had been the victim of a grave injustice.

The two became friends; and on one occasion when Mosby was stricken with a contagious fever, Doyle, volunteering to nurse him, had given such devoted care and untiring ministration that the doctors frankly conceded him the credit of saving the other's life.

Mosby at first was rather inclined to take his comrade's protestations of innocence with a grain of salt—according to his own account, pretty nearly every man in any of our penal institutions is a maligned saint—but as he came to know the lad better, and to gain a fuller understanding of the events which had brought about his downfall, he changed his mind.

Then was born in his scheming brain the suggestion that he himself might profit by a similar undertaking.

Hitherto his talents had been employed chiefly in the commission of lesser rascalities; but he could see no reason, if he had the necessary knowledge to back him, why he might not just as well operate upon a wider scope; and that, too, with far less danger of coming into unpleasant contact with the police.

Therefore, he probed the convicted government clerk diligently, not only as to the methods and practises which had been in vogue in handling the business of his department, but also as to the various crafty moves by which the conspirators had succeeded in shifting the responsibility to his shoulders; and thus, in the end, gained a pretty clear conception of just how the trick had been accomplished.

His confidence-man's mind, working along more devious courses, was able to perceive significance in trifles to which Doyle and his attorneys had been blind; and so, to fill in blanks in the young fellow's story which changed the entire aspect of the case.

He made no mention of these discoveries to his companion, however; but kept them securely locked in his breast for future reference. Then, when his time was up, and the prison pallor had worn off, he took a new name, made changes in his personal appearance, and set about putting his information to use.

It took him a long time; for those with whom he sought to identify himself were men high up in the worlds of politics and finance, not lightly to be accosted on so ticklish a subject.

He could afford to wait, though, and fortune favored him in a way; so at last his day came.

He had to pretend a greater knowledge than he really possessed; but "putting up a bluff," as he often said, was his chief stock in trade, and the deductions he had drawn from poor Doyle's confidences were so accurate, in fact, that he had even less difficulty than he anticipated in imposing upon the bigger scoundrels and bringing them to terms.

He was able, too, to suggest several valuable improvements upon the former scheme of operations; so that when he proposed another campaign of loot along the same lines, his new associates not only acceded to the plan, but entrusted the management of the affair to his hands with a promise of the lion's share of the expected booty.

And was he now to be deprived of this rich haul for which he had been planning and working so hard; to see this stroke of a lifetime fail in the very hour of fruition, simply because an unlucky rat of a government clerk was obsessed with the silly notion of rehabilitating his good name?

"No, by Jove!" he gritted between his teeth. He was sorry for Doyle, of course — the fellow had been a stanch friend to him, all right, in the old prison days—and in a less vital matter he would have been glad to lend a helping hand. But there must be no interference in this affair. No, not even if—

And with the unspoken thought there came into the ex-convict's eye a glint of such sinister and threatening significance that Garfield Doyle might have done well to heed the warning.

CHAPTER III.

A PROPOSITION AND ITS ANSWER.

IT was characteristic of Mosby that, although he did not shrink from the contemplation of a dark alternative, in case Garfield should refuse to be eliminated from the problem, he was disposed first to try tactics of strategy and craft.

Therefore it suited him to assume an expression of skepticism mingled with an air of fatherly good-will, when Doyle, having waited what seemed a reasonable time for him to ponder the question, interjected a somewhat impatient, "Well?"

Mosby affected to come to himself with a slight start.

"Why, certainly, I will do what you wish, dear boy. You should have known that without taking the trouble to ask. But I have been sitting here, wondering if it could possibly be true that your suspicions concerning Secretary Reed are correct?

"I know the man, you see; am perhaps closer to him than any other person engaged in market transactions, and I am sure that if he were at all inclined to deal in the way you suggest, he would approach me first.

"Yet I am frank to tell you that I have never detected even the slightest disposition of such sort on his part. To the contrary, he has always shown himself over-conscientious to my mind; so upright that his tendency, as the saying goes, is 'to lean over backward.'"

"Ah, but that is his cunning," interrupted Garfield ardently. "He realizes that you are too straight to join in his shady maneuvers, and so acts a part when he is with you."

Mosby himself could hardly restrain a smile at so ingenuous a tribute.

"No, I don't think so," he said with a judicial shake of the head. "We brokers cannot afford to be too scrupulous in certain directions, and Reed is familiar with one or two instances where I have —well, stepped over the line, so to speak. Consequently, I am sure he would feel no hesitation in opening up to me, if any idea of the kind was on his mind.

"To be candid, Doyle," leaning back in his chair, and lighting a fresh cigar, "I think you are stirring up a mare's nest.

"Oh, don't misunderstand me," as the other gave a quick gesture of impatience. "I will put your friend Reed through the sifting-machine for you all right, and I'll warrant, too, that if there is a grain of graft in his composition, it will have come to the surface before I get through with him.

"But, if I do, and he comes through immaculate, I want you to promise me in return that you will give up the hopeless task upon which you are engaged."

"Hopeless?" with energy.

"Yes, hopeless; for even though you prove your innocence, what will it profit you? You have been in the penitentiary, and you cannot live it down. There will always be some people who believe you guilty, no matter if the evidence to the contrary is as clear as the Ten Commandments.

"I don't believe from what you have told me of your case, and from what I know of the manner in which such things are covered up, that you will be able to ferret out the real truth; yet you are wasting the best years of your life in the endeavor, and from constant brooding over the subject have got so now that you see bugaboos, and suspect people who are above suspicion.

"I, too, was unjustly convicted and imprisoned," spreading back his big chest, "but I didn't allow a thing like that to feeze me for long. Not much. I let the dead old past bury its dead, and made a fresh start. My old name was irretrievably ruined for my uses, so I took a new one; and if I do say it myself, there are very few names which are more generally respected than that of John P. Braden.

"I have made money, and expect to make a great deal more, I move in the best society, belong to the most exclusive clubs, and enjoy life in the way which suits me best. Don't you really believe I have been wiser than if I had continued on, mussing over soiled linen, and possibly have ended up—no offense—as the shouter on a 'rubberneck-wagon'?"

He had risen to his feet and commenced pacing the floor while he was delivering this exordium; and now as he passed beside Garfield's chair, his big, showy form, towering up to a good six feet two, and his undeniable air of success, seemed to afford a practical demonstration of his claims.

"Think it over, my boy," he said, dropping his hand affectionately to the other's shoulder, "and see if you don't agree with me that you are making a mistake. Eh?"

"What is the matter?" For at this touch, Doyle had drawn back sharply, wincing as though in pain.

"Oh, nothing—or, if you must know the truth, I was worse hurt this afternoon than I have been letting on, or than we imagined at the time. In fact, down underneath the collar that blooming old rod just about ripped my throat open, and I got so weak from loss of blood; just after you left, that they had to rush me to the doctor's on a shutter. It took five stitches to close the thing up.

"Still," he granted, "I guess I'm lucky at that; for the doctor said the swipe I got only missed puncturing the jugular by a hairbreadth.

"He told me, too, that I'd got to be mighty careful how I allowed myself to be bumped or jostled round, as the slightest jar might bring on a really serious hemorrhage and prove my finish. So," smilingly, "please be careful in the future how you brandish that heavy right hand of yours round, when I am in the vicinity."

"Oh, I am sorry you are hurt," exclaimed Mosby with genuine feeling, for except where his own selfish interests were affected, he was by no means devoid of a certain kindness. "Miss Hunter will be all broken up, too, when she learns of it."

"Hunter?" queried Doyle, a quick flicker of interest in his eye as he heard the name.

"Yes, only daughter of Senator Hunter from Idaho. You know her?"

"Oh, no. No, I don't know her."

"I thought perhaps you did from the way you spoke." He hesitated a moment. "Between ourselves, I don't mind telling you that I expect some day to make Miss Hunter my wife."

Doyle seemed anything but elated at this piece of news.

"Ah," he said stiffly, "I suppose, then, congratulations are in order?"

"Well, no; hardly that just yet a while," admitted Mosby. "But," with a wink, "there is an understanding—a very good understanding. Not so bad for a chap who has come up in the world by his own unaided efforts, is it, my boy, to get a girl like that with six millions in money back of her?"

"And is she willing to overlook the fact that you have worn stripes?"

"Willing to overlook— Good Heavens, Garfield, you must be joking. You don't suppose for a minute that I would tell her a thing like that, do you? No,

siree, Bob, not if the court knows itself. I am John P. Braden to her, just as I am to the rest of the world.

"And that reminds me, by the way, that you haven't yet given me an answer to my question," he went on with sudden recollection. "Come, is it a bargain? If I can show you that your suspicions in regard to Reed are unfounded, you will agree to drop this silly quest, and to devote your time and talents to something more worth while?

"I'll tell you: say that you'll drop the thing now, and I'll take you into my office to-morrow. In five years' time, you'll be earning an income which will top that of any government job, from the President's down—"

But Garfield was deaf to his persuasions.

"No," he said slowly, "I realize that there is a good deal in what you say, and I appreciate your kindness, old man, a good deal more than I can tell you; but I guess," and again that gleam of dogged determination came into his eyes, "that since I have stuck to the game this long, I'll play it through to the end."

The baffled schemer concealed his disappointment fairly well.

"Just as you please, of course," he commented indifferently. "I was merely trying to advise you for your own good, and I shall be only too happy to see you succeed in the way you prefer. I will sound Reed for you at my earliest opportunity, and will report to you as soon as I have reached a definite conclusion."

"No," demurred Doyle, rising to his feet. "I don't think I will trouble you to do that after all, seeing that he is such a particular friend of yours. There are other ways in which I can find out about him just as well."

"What other ways?"

Some hovering good angel must have whispered a hint of caution in Garfield's ear.

"I don't think, perhaps, I had better talk of that," he hesitated. "Not that I distrust you at all, you understand; but it sometimes seems to me as though merely giving voice to one's purposes weakens them and makes them of less avail. Perhaps I am silly, but at any rate that is the way I feel about it.

"And now I guess I will be saying good night," extending his hand. "Ouch! be careful of my shoulder." For Mosby had inadvertently jostled against him in seeking to reach his hat.

At that quick exclamation the broker paused suddenly, and stooped hurriedly over as though to pick up something from the floor. When he again raised his head, his features were under perfect control, but there was a faint flush of excitement on his cheek.

"By the way," he asked evenly, "where is it you live, Garfield? I might want to drop in on you some evening."

"Oh, I have a room over in the South East for the present, near the corner of Seventh and G. I am hardly in shape to receive visitors, though, unless I should put you on the fire-escape, for the place is so small that I have to edge in sideways myself."

"Seventh and G—South East, eh? That is quite a distance from here. You will have to take a car to-night of course?"

"No, I think I shall walk it. There are several things I want to turn over in my mind, and a good long stroll will help me to puzzle them out. Good night again, and thank you for all your good advice, even though I can't see my way clear to accepting it."

After the departure of his visitor, Mr. John P. Braden sat for several moments sunk in reverie.

Then he rose with an air of decision, and rummaging through his closet, brought to light a heavy muffler and an old, soft felt hat.

With these stuffed unobtrusively under his coat, he sauntered out to the elevator, and through the crowded hotel office to the main entrance of the Brinkhaven, where he called a cab and directed that he be driven to Pennsylvania Avenue and Seventh Street South East.

Arriving at this destination, he dismissed the cab, watched it until it was out of sight, then depositing his own hat in the fence corner of a neighboring yard, pulled the slouch-hat he had brought with him down over his eyes and wound the muffler up about his chin so as to conceal his features.

Thus accoutered, he walked down Seventh Street—in that section of the city almost as dark and unfrequented as

the street of a country village—and took his stand near the corner of G, well concealed in the shadow of a big elm-tree along the sidewalk.

CHAPTER IV.

A BLOW IN THE DARK.

MEANWHILE Garfield Doyle was stepping briskly along homeward.

Down the brilliantly lighted avenue he swung, and cutting across the Capitol grounds, branched off into the quiet, residential South East.

In this part of town, the inhabitants, being working people for the most part, retire early; and the sight of a light after ten o'clock in any of the houses is almost *prima facie* evidence of sickness or some unusual occurrence within.

The street-lamps, too, are few and far between, with the tree-shaded thoroughfares arching like tunnels of gloom from one to another of the faint oases of illumination.

Moreover, since the district is peaceable and law-abiding, but few policemen are assigned to it; all which circumstances would seem to render it a likely place for hold-ups, and one to be traversed warily by the belated pedestrian.

Doyle, however, experienced no feeling of timidity.

In the first place, he had nothing of which to be robbed; and, secondly, his mind was so full of other thoughts that he never once considered the contingency.

As he had said to Mosby, he had several things upon which he wished to meditate; yet, strange as it may seem, the one topic which kept uppermost in his brain, and which for the time being crowded out even the consideration of plans looking toward his longed-for vindication, was the announcement of matrimonial intentions made by his quondam cell-mate.

The memory of Miss Hunter's exquisite, animated face, as he had seen her sitting on the car, rose before him; the quick light of sympathy which had sprung into her brown eyes when she saw that he was hurt.

He recalled the contrite, pitying cadences of her musical voice, remembered her alert, upright carriage as she had walked away, the nimbus of her golden hair underneath the wide brim of her summer hat.

Could it be, he asked himself petulantly, that a girl like that, delicate, refined, princess-like, according to one's ideal of what a princess should really be, was actually contemplating marriage with such an unmitigated cad as Mosby?

For, be it confessed, that the late interview had served to greatly change Doyle's estimate of his old comrade.

When he had first met the incarcerated confidence man, he had been a lad of twenty-one, impressionable, easily imposed upon by the other's specious pretenses, but now he was seven years older, with an experience of hard knocking up against the world which made him capable of gaging men at pretty nearly their true value.

It had not taken him long to-night to detect the innate coarseness and insincerity of Mosby's nature under the veneer of polish which he wore.

True, he did not suspect for a moment that the fellow was false to him. Loyal as the day himself, he regarded the other's crafty endeavor to wean him from his purpose as honestly given counsel, inspired solely by the desire to benefit an old friend. Yet he could not disguise to himself that he had felt as though he were within tainted and unwholesome atmosphere while he was in Mosby's company.

He breathed more freely now that he was in the open air, and he removed his hat to let the breeze ruffle through his hair, as might one who had come out from the infection of a sick-chamber.

Especially had he been disgusted by the broker's offensive manner in alluding to his prospective bride.

"A girl with six millions in money back of her," he had said; and it was evident that in Mosby's eyes the six millions was not the least of Miss Hunter's charms.

Then, too, there had been that flat and contemptuous refusal to acquaint the girl with the secret of his past.

Was it fair to permit her to go to the altar in ignorance of the fact that the man to whom she gave herself was an ex-convict?

Should she be allowed thus unwittingly to build her life's happiness upon a concealed volcano which might at any moment open to engulf her in its depths?

Garfield realized the utter futility of appealing further to Mosby on the subject. The latter had announced his intentions too stubbornly and emphatically to admit of any hope that he could be swerved from his position.

But there was another way in which the truth could be made known—by a straightforward statement to Miss Hunter's father; and as Doyle pondered the question, he was very strongly persuaded that the exigencies of the case justified such an act of seeming treachery.

Nor did he have any fear that his story would be doubted; for though he had spoken truly when he said that he did not know Miss Hunter, he would have been forced to return a very different answer to a question as to whether or not he was acquainted with the Senator.

Indeed, the latter was Garfield's own mother's cousin, and on first coming to Washington had shown a marked partiality for his promising young kinsman. He was a rather lonely man at that time, for his family was detained in the West through the invalidism of his wife, and often he would drop in of an evening at Doyle's modest lodgings to have the boy go out to dinner or to the theater with him.

When the blow fell, however, which stamped the young government clerk with the brand of obloquy and disgrace, Senator Hunter's feelings had changed.

Afraid that his political prestige would be endangered, furious that scandal should be attached to one so closely connected to himself, his resentment caused him to regard the offender in the most prejudiced light, and to look upon the mere accusation as an absolute proof of guilt.

He declined to take the slightest interest in the defense of his former protégé; and when Doyle in his direst extremity, appealed to him to use his influence toward securing a thorough investigation of the department, and all the circumstances of the case, turned down the plea with almost brutal insensibility.

Then, in his bitterness, Garfield had sworn never to exchange words with his distinguished relative again unless it were to revile him as a coward and sneak, and had cheerfully hoped for him all the misfortunes which Fate might hold in her quiver; yet now he was meditating an amicable call upon the Senator, and a mission of genuine philanthropy.

Strange, the influence that a pair of melting brown eyes will sometimes have!

"I'll do nothing underhanded in the matter, though," he muttered to himself. "I will first give Mosby another chance to do the square thing; but if he refuses, I shall tell him plainly what I propose to do, and then go and do it."

He was now only about half a block from home; and as he reached this decision, he stepped out with accelerated pace, for he realized that it was getting late, and if he would be up betimes on the morrow, he had better be using the night's remaining hours for sleep.

But as he passed along, a muffled, slouch-hatted figure which had been lurking in the shadow of a huge elm, stepped suddenly out behind him, and dealt him a stunning blow along the side of the jaw.

Without a moan, or even a quiver of the limbs, Doyle fell to the sidewalk like a log, while from the reopened wound in his throat gushed out a crimson tide.

His assailant paused merely long enough to bend over his unconscious form and make sure that the work was well done.

Then, straightening up, he stole swiftly away into the darkness.

CHAPTER V.

"IN TRUSTWORTHY HANDS."

IT is a peculiar provision of nature for the safeguarding of the human body, that complete unconsciousness tends to check a flow of blood.

If Doyle had been bumped and battered so as to open his wound, and had yet retained his senses, he might have bled to death before he could have reached assistance.

As it was, however, the "knockout"

blow administered to him materially reduced the drain upon his circulatory system; and though he lost enough of the vital fluid to make the spot where he lay a very fair imitation of a shambles, he was still alive and capable of resuscitation, when a stray policeman passing that way within the half hour found him and had him conveyed to a neighboring hospital.

The manner of "finding" him was by stumbling over his prostrate form, it may be mentioned, and "first aid to the injured" was a period of fervent Hibernian profanity over the damage wrought to the knees of a pair of new trousers. But as no especial harm resulted thereby—except to the trousers—that is manifestly another story.

It is "another story," too, perhaps, though not without a certain direct bearing, that the newspaper men of Washington were that night celebrating one of their famous "Gridiron Club" dinners, and that consequently the reporters assigned to the hospital where Garfield had been taken were not as wide-awake the next morning as on ordinary occasions.

Had they been they could hardly have failed to dig out the fact that the "rubberneck-coach" lecturer brought in bleeding and unconscious the night before was the same "G. Doyle" who had been the central figure in the great wheat-crop leak scandal of seven years before.

That would have been a great story, and in working it up the "boys" must surely have stumbled on the further interesting detail that the initial injury had been caused by his gallant rescue of the daughter of the Senator from Idaho. But alas for the previous evening's wassail and merrymaking—the possible first-column head-liner developed into nothing more startling than a brief paragraph under the head of "City Jottings" on the fourth page.

The afternoon paper to which Senator Hunter subscribed even got the name of the patient wrong, and stated that:

> George Moyle, an employee on one of the "Seeing Washington" automobiles, was brought in to St. Genevieve's Hospital late last night, suffering from collapse and loss of blood, due to an injury which he had received while on duty the day before.
>
> Patrolman O'Flaherty found the man bleeding and unconscious on Seventh Street S. E. But Moyle cannot give any explanation for his condition. It is supposed, however, that he must have stumbled and struck his head against the sidewalk, as there is a distinct bruise along the side of his left jaw.

Brief and inaccurate as was this succinct account, however, Miss Martina Hunter had small difficulty, when her eye chanced to light upon the obscure paragraph, in recognizing therein her chivalric preserver of the day before.

"Oh, papa, listen to this," she cried, reading the item aloud in a trembling voice: "That is undoubtedly the man who saved me from falling. I knew he was hurt worse than he would admit.

"Just think," in awestruck tones, "he might have died from it, and then I would have been a murderer. Oh, the poor fellow! I must go to the hospital the first thing in the morning, to find out how he is getting along, and take him some fruit and flowers."

The Senator, who had glanced up from the perusal of a rather weighty report at his daughter's excited interruption, nodded assent. His chief sentiment was one of profound relief that Martina had not been brought into unpleasant notoriety through the affair.

"Do so, by all means," he said. "The fellow seems to have a head on his shoulders not to let them make a big newspaper yarn out of the story. It will be a very gracious act on your part to show him some attention, and one which he will no doubt appreciate. After his recovery, I will have Hastings look him up, and if he is worth the effort, we will see whether we can't do something for him."

Accordingly, the next morning Miss Hunter, looking like a winsome feminine Santa Claus, so loaded down was she with baskets and boxes of fruit, repaired to St. Genevieve's, and having been conducted to the wounded hero's couch, was surprised to find him quite as personable and well-bred as any of the young men she was accustomed to meet in society.

What was a man of this sort doing in the position where she had first seen him?—she could not help wondering.

A touch of mystery, especially if the

object thereof possesses wistful, dark eyes and a somewhat melancholy expression, is an attraction which no woman can resist; and therefore it is by no means surprising that Martina's penitence for the havoc she had wrought caused her to make more than one visit to the hospital.

Neither can it be asserted with truth that Garfield did anything to discourage these visits. Nay, more than that, he deliberately and shamelessly permitted her to rest under the misapprehension concerning his name into which she had been led by the newspaper article, for he shrewdly suspected that had her father even the remotest suspicion as to his real identity, the showing of "gracious, little attentions" would be very promptly discontinued.

Accordingly, "Mr. Moyle" he was to her during their first interview, and "Mr. Moyle" he remained throughout the period of his convalescence.

Moreover, about the time that he was to be discharged from the hospital, Hastings, the Senator's agent and man of business, called one day to offer him a position. Senator Hunter, it seemed, owned a good deal of real estate, and he wanted some capable young man to look after it. Would "Mr. Moyle" care to consider undertaking a situation of the sort?

"Mr. Moyle" upon reflection decided that he would. He felt less compunction about entering his relative's employ under an assumed name than he would have in case of a stranger.

Besides, he knew that he was competent to handle the business, and he therefore could see no good reason why he should refuse the plum thus unexpectedly dropped in his lap, especially as he would still have ample time aside from his duties to pursue his quest for vindication.

Instructed to make a favorable report, if possible, Hastings asked few questions, none of an embarrassing character, and the arrangement was accordingly soon concluded, with the result that upon leaving the hospital Garfield entered at once upon his new job.

For once the inevitable informant against the man who has worn stripes kept his peace. Those who knew Doyle, seeing him in the Senator's employ, supposed of course that the latter was cognizant of the identity of his agent, and that the new name had been taken at his behest, solely to avoid unpleasant remarks.

Seven years, however, is a long time, bringing with it many changes, so there were not many people after all who connected the rather sober, businesslike young man with the blithe, merry lad who had come such a cropper over half a decade before.

John P. Braden could, of course, have punctured things a bit, and would no doubt have done so, but he had been summoned to Chicago the day after the assault upon Garfield, and consequently did not know what was going on.

In truth, matters with the syndicate of speculators, for all Mosby's assumption of prosperity and well-being, were by no means on a harmonious footing.

His associates considered that he had been spending too much money in wining and dining politicians for the results so far achieved, and for some weeks past had been loudly clamoring for a showing.

Now, at last, they had curtly called him home to give an accounting of his stewardship, and when they got him there flatly told him that no more funds would be forthcoming until he and his Washington friends had made good on their promises.

He strove to explain that he could do nothing while Garfield Doyle was so close upon the trail of his confederate, Reed; for of course he had learned that the treacherous blow had failed to put a quietus upon its recipient, and knew that Doyle must still be pursuing his quest for vindication.

The syndicate, however, wanted results, not excuses, and stood pat upon their previous statement.

Then Mosby tried to threaten and bluster, but he found this of even less avail. They merely laughed at him.

Entreaty, appeal, promises, and asseverations all failed to move them. In a nutshell, their position was that they "were from Missouri," and that a deal would have to be completed before they unbelted to any further extent.

Now this decision placed Mosby in rather an uncomfortable plight.

He had banked everything on this enterprise, even putting into it every cent of his own that he could rake or scrape when

the others first began to draw in their horns, and their desertion of him at this juncture left him practically penniless. Yet he must have money to feed to the Washington harpies and keep them in line, otherwise he realized that the entire project must fall to the ground.

Four weeks he spent in Chicago in a desperate endeavor to raise the necessary funds, but at last, seeing that the attempt was futile, he decided that the only thing left him was to come back to Washington and seek to persuade Reed into making the necessary move, Garfield Doyle or no Garfield Doyle.

The afternoon of his departure, however—indeed, while he was actually on his way to the train—an acquaintance of his from the financial district hailed him.

"Hi, Braden!" he said, a trace of excitement in his voice, "I hear you are headed for Washington. Would you mind doing me a favor?"

"Not at all. What is it?"

"Why, some of us here are in a deal with Senator Hunter of Idaho, and we must have ten thousand dollars in cash in his hands by this time to-morrow—won't accept a draft, check, or any other collateral, but insists upon having the actual currency, and the express company refuses to guarantee a delivery within the specified time. Now, what I want to ask you is, will you act as our messenger and take the bundle on to him?"

"Certainly, if you wish it. Only," with a laugh, "aren't you afraid to trust me? I might vamose, you know."

"Oh, I guess we can afford to risk that," laughing in return. "So, here it is in the envelope, and now if you will count it and sign this receipt, merely as a matter of form, I'll let you go on to your train.

"A thousand thanks, my dear fellow, for you don't know what a weight it takes off my mind to feel that the little package is in really trustworthy hands."

John P. Braden smiled sourly as the other turned his back. How little trustworthy those hands were, he knew only too well, for he was at that very moment trying to scheme out some feasible method of diverting that enticing ten thousand to himself.

True, it seemed almost impossible, for although he might pretend to be robbed or to lose the money while *en route*, still he would be held by the receipt which he had signed, and his business standing would require him to make good.

No, cudgel his brain as he might, he could not seem to hit upon any suitable plan, and yet, how—oh, how he needed that ten thousand in his business!

Then, just as he was about to give up hope, a sudden inspiration flashed upon him!

CHAPTER VI.

BRADEN FULFILS HIS TRUST.

NOTHING could have been more circumspect and businesslike than the conduct of Mr. John P. Braden from that moment forth.

He guarded the luscious package of bills entrusted to his keeping as though it were the apple of his eye. When he retired that night he fastened it by safety-pins to his gorgeous pajamas in such a way that it could not be touched without awaking him, and he took a loaded revolver from his suit-case to place under his pillow within easy reach of his hand.

No effort was made to relieve him of the treasure, however, and he arrived in Washington with it still secure in his inside pocket at two o'clock the following afternoon, delivering it to Senator Hunter as per instructions well within twenty-four hours from the time he had received it.

True he did not go direct from the train to the Senator's, stopping first on his way to partake of a rather protracted and generous luncheon; still, a hungry man could hardly be blamed for that, and so long as the money was paid over before five o'clock he was on the safe side.

The Senator, however, grumbled not a little at the hour of his coming.

"Dash it all, Braden," he explained as he blotted a receipt for the money and handed it over, "why couldn't you have got here before closing time at the bank. Now I shall have to keep it in this old cheese-box of a safe here in the house, and with so many burglaries taking place lately, it makes me feel a trifle nervous."

"Ah, I am sorry," murmured the broker apologetically. "I could have gotten here sooner, too, just as well as

not. Still, I don't suppose you depend entirely upon the safe for protection?"

"No, I have also a very excellent system of burglar alarm. See, here are the wires and connections at the window, and over here a similar contrivance for the door."

"Just so," glancing with seeming indifference at the device. "And where do these wires lead?"

"To a big gong over the doorway leading down into the basement. Oh, the thing will make racket enough if it is touched off. I guess after all I am a bit foolish to cherish any apprehensions. The money is probably as secure here as it would be anywhere in the world."

As he spoke he picked up the envelope from his desk and started to put it away in the small iron safe over in the corner to which he had referred so slightingly.

The other watched the operation interestedly over his shoulder. He was already familiar with the working of the old-fashioned receptacle, for on more than one occasion Senator Hunter had cashed checks and money-orders for him to a small amount.

Still, he reasoned, it would do no harm to have another peep, and he bent forward to gaze between narrowed lids as the combination was whirled round and round in its socket.

There was no trace of any undue alertness in his expression as the Senator straightened up and faced toward him again; only a look of slight relief, as though he were glad to have the transaction over, and his responsibility discharged.

"By the way, Senator," he said affably, "this is my first night back in Washington, and I feel like celebrating a bit. They say that the summer opera company at the 'United States' is really first-class, so I bought a box for to-night on my way up here and was wondering if you and Miss Martina wouldn't help me occupy it? We could invite one or two others and make a sort of a little party of it."

"Why, yes," rejoined Hunter, "nothing would suit me better, so far as I am concerned, and I don't think Martina has anything else on for this evening. Step over and ask her for yourself, though. You will probably find her in the hammock on the side veranda."

The interview had taken place at the Senator's handsome residence on Connecticut Avenue, for it should be explained that he transacted most of his business here, very infrequently visiting his down-town real-estate office, which was in charge of Hastings, and from this circumstance it may be mentioned was due the fact that Garfield Doyle had been able so long to escape an encounter with him.

Consequently, too, when the Senator told Braden that he would find Martina on the side veranda, the latter had but to cross the hall and traverse two or three rooms in order to find her.

As her father had indicated, she readily agreed to the proposal for that evening, and expressed herself as believing that it would prove the "greatest sort of fun."

She was only a girl, it must be remembered, scarcely over eighteen, and it was only natural that she should feel flattered by the attentions of a man so popular and handsome as Mr. John P. Braden.

Her greeting to him was cordial in the extreme, and she held him quite a while, chatting merrily to him and showing him every evidence of her favor. Indeed, when he finally left the place he was veritably walking upon air, for he believed now more strongly than ever that he had but to say the word to have this "Senatorial set" beauty and her six millions jump down his throat.

Then would come an end to all shady schemes and off-color projects, and he could take what he believed to be his proper place in the world, that of a master of finance.

His elation and glowing dreams did not, however, make him forget to drop in at a hardware store on his way back to the hotel and purchase a pair of nippers and one or two other handy tools.

Miss Hunter might be ready and willing to accept him all right, but her father was a very different proposition, and, although he was very agreeable to Braden, the latter did not doubt but that he would scrutinize very carefully the credentials of any suitor to his daughter's hand.

Hence, as the ex-confidence man saw it, it was very necessary for him to pull off his great *coup* before speaking to the young lady, for until that time, as he was well aware, his financial standing and as-

sociates were neither in a position to stand a very rigorous inspection.

In short, to marry the girl he had to pull off his deal with the speculators, and in order to pull off his deal with the speculators he had to get hold of that ten thousand dollars in Senator Hunter's safe.

The other perplexing factor in his equation, Garfield Doyle, he would trust himself to get out of the way, and then there would be nothing to stay his triumphant progress.

"Oh, I shall land on top all right," he said exultantly to himself. "The luck has changed now and things are starting to come my way. With ten thousand in the bank I can push matters to a conclusion with Reed, for," a darker look coming over his face, "I shall hunt up that sneaking cur of a Garfield Doyle to-morrow and draw his teeth in short order. He escaped me by a fluke once, but next time I shall make sure."

But if Braden was laying plans to have an interview with Doyle, the latter was equally anxious for a heart-to-heart talk with the broker.

As soon as he had got out of the hospital, Garfield had gone to the Brinkhaven to tell his old cell-mate in distinct language that he should pay no further addresses to Miss Hunter until he had first explained to her just who and what he was.

Finding his man gone, however, and no address left behind him, for Braden had had a quarrel with the hotel management over the settlement of his account, Doyle had since been searching high and low all over Washington, although naturally without success, since the other was all the time in Chicago.

That night as he was strolling slowly down Connecticut Avenue — Garfield often walked in that vicinity nowadays, perhaps on the chance of receiving quick, smiling recognition from a pair of brown eyes, and a cheery "Why, how do you do, Mr. Moyle"—as he was walking along, he suddenly spied Braden, immaculately attired in evening dress, step from a carriage which had just drawn up to the curb, and hurry into Senator Hunter's residence.

Arguing that he would shortly come out again, since the carriage was evidently waiting, and deeming this an excellent opportunity to nail him and make an engagement for the morrow, Doyle stepped back into the shadow of a tree.

Not long had he to wait, either, for presently the door opened and the broker emerged, but as Garfield started forward, he perceived that Senator Hunter and his daughter were also in the party, and he stopped short. He was not quite ready yet to brave an encounter with his cousin-employer.

He did, however, sound cautiously the old prison signal in the hope that Mosby would recognize it, and making an excuse to his friends, step back to have a word with him, but the other's attention was deeply engrossed, and the call passed unheeded.

In another moment the party had entered the carriage and it was rolling off down the street.

"Gone to an entertainment of some kind, no doubt," commented Garfield, "and since he started out with them, it's ten to one that he'll see them home. In which case it is up to me to hang round till he gets back. They'll be out till all hours, likely, but I guess there's no help for it."

And with that he took up what promised to be a weary and long-protracted vigil.

CHAPTER VII.

A READY-WITTED CROOK.

NO one could have been more debonair and seemingly at his ease than was John P. Braden that night at the play. He laughed and chatted with the others in the box, applauded the performance freely, and to all appearances had not a care on his mind.

Bluff was his long suit, of course, but the exhibition he gave of it on this occasion was nothing less than an artistic masterpiece.

Indeed, the actors on the stage could well have taken points from the thoroughly natural manner in which he frowned and bit his lip, when, during the intermission between the first and second acts, an usher entered the box and presented him with a telegram—a telegram which he had sent to himself.

"Pshaw!" he exclaimed, flipping the

yellow sheet between his thumb and forefinger. This is something which will have to be attended to right away, and as it necessitates the looking up of some papers I have at the hotel, it will take me some little time.

"Don't let my leaving discommode the rest of you, however," as he rose to his feet. "I will be back in time to enjoy the final chorus, at least, and to take you all out to supper afterward."

Then with a bow and wave of the hand, he hurried down the aisle, and leaving the house swung himself aboard a car headed for Dupont Circle.

From this he alighted at a point about a block below the Hunter residence, and boldly marching up to the gate, entered the front door.

He had not thought it prudent to attempt a disguise or seek to mask his movements in any way, for he was well known in that locality as a frequent caller at the Senator's, and to be seen lurking or skulking in any way would be more apt to cause remark than an open advance.

Neither did he fear any interruption from the servants, since he had shrewdly handed a large tip to the butler when there earlier in the evening, and the sounds of revelry now coming from below-stairs indicated that it had been expended to good advantage.

Lastly, he had deftly slipped the latch upon the door when he came out with the Senator and Martina, so now it was without difficulty he found himself standing in the hallway.

For a second he stood listening to assure himself that all was safe, then noiselessly slipping back to the big gong at the head of the basement stairs, drew his nippers from his pocket, and after feeling about a moment for the connection, gave a quick twist of the wrist and effectually put the alarm out of business.

The rest was ridiculously easy, for the lock upon the door to the Senator's private room could almost have been opened with a button-hook, and there were no other defenses to the place. Moreover, the ray of a corner street lamp shining in through the upper half of the tall windows furnished him all the illumination he needed for his purpose, while he had but to draw the blinds across the lower sashes to screen himself thoroughly from detection at the hands of some passing watchman or over-inquisitive neighbor.

When he came at last to the safe, however, he found that he had a considerably harder nut to crack than he had anticipated. While watching the Senator that afternoon he believed that he had gleaned the combination, but now when he came to try it for himself he quickly learned that he had been mistaken.

Desperately he twirled the knob around in its socket, but the bolts held fast and the door remained stubbornly closed.

"Curse the luck!" he exclaimed. "I shall have to drill my way in after all, and there's precious little time to do it, too!"

He had been prepared for this contingency, though, and producing the several parts of a drill from various pockets, lost no time in fitting them together and proceeding to work.

Ssz! ssz! Under his eager manipulation the lubricated point bored rapidly into the solid steel. But even so, his progress seemed painfully slow.

His palms were smarting and tingling from the unaccustomed toil, and the sweat was pouring down his face in streams; yet he dared not stop, except to take an occasional hasty glance at his watch or to apply fresh oil to the buzzing drill.

Meanwhile, in contrast to this display of industry, Garfield Doyle stood outside, idly kicking his heels upon the curb and scanning the darkened front of the house with puzzled, uncertain glances.

Upon first assuming his watch the lad had deemed it wise, lest he should excite comment by remaining too long in one spot, to keep moving, and had consequently engaged in a sort of sentry go-by, strolling first three blocks up the avenue, and then three blocks down. He had been just about at one of these turning points when he saw Mosby alight from the car and start toward Senator Hunter's, and had hurried back at once, but before he could intercept him the broker had disappeared within.

Supposing naturally, however, that Mosby had returned merely to get something required by Miss Hunter and would immediately reappear, Garfield took up a station at the gate and watched for the opening of the front door.

But the moments passed, and still there was no sign of Mosby. What could be keeping the fellow?—wondered the impatient Garfield. Could it be possible that he had already left by another exit?

No, that was out of the question.

Was it, then, that Mosby had entered one of the other houses in the block? But again he had to shake his head; the residences on either side were boarded up, their occupants gone away for the summer, and besides, he was sure his eyes could not have deceived him to any such extent.

Completely nonplused, there yet seemed nothing for him to do but wait and trust that Mosby would ultimately reveal himself and explain the mystery.

Thus a half-hour passed, three-quarters, an hour, and then, just as Doyle, baffled and disappointed, was about to give up and turn away, a flicker of light from within threw the stooping form of the cracksman in momentary but unmistakable silhouette against the drawn shade at the Senator's window.

The brief gleam was but the tiny flare of a match, incautiously struck by Mosby to assist him in recovering a drill point which he had dropped in his haste and which had rolled away under the safe.

Just the flare of a match, but the thousand-candle-power ray of a powerful search-light could have done no more.

In a flash of sudden comprehension the significance of all that was afoot burst upon Garfield.

He had overheard at the office that afternoon part of a telephone conversation between the Senator and Hastings, and was thus aware of the unguarded treasure in the safe, while Mosby's unexplained visit at that hour and the tell-tale shadow-picture on the window-curtain left no doubt in his mind as to the latter's purpose.

For a moment he reeled back, staggered by the surprise, then, never considering the possible consequence to himself, dashed forward. Up the steps he sped, and into the dimly lighted hall.

A hasty glance round showed him the door which had been forced, and a faint sound—the burr of steel working against steel—serving him as a further guide, in he went to face the intruder.

Mosby, however, working feverishly against time, all his faculties engaged upon the task before him, heard not the other's approach till he felt his arms caught from behind in a vise-like grip.

He did not then know who his assailant was, of course; but he was not a man to give up at that stage of the game, and big, powerful fellow that he was, he succeeded in making the next few moments very interesting ones for his lighter opponent.

Indeed, as he heaved and twisted and plunged under the other's hold, the experience forcibly recalled to Garfield a certain episode of his life in the West, when as a green cowboy he had tried to break in a bucking bronco.

Jolted and battered about now, he still held on with bulldog tenacity, but he knew even as he did so that the struggle could not last long.

The odds were too heavy against him, his strength was going fast, and unless some favorable circumstance speedily intervened his mastery of the situation would be gone.

At that moment a particularly furious lunge on the part of his antagonist threw one of his arms loose, and as it trailed along the floor his hand came in contact with the drill the safe-breaker had dropped in his struggles for freedom.

Eagerly he grasped it. Ah, here was a weapon which by a few blows over the head would soon bring his captive into subjection!

But the move was a fatal one, for as he reached to seize the drill he involuntarily relaxed the grip of his other hand, and Mosby, quick to take advantage, gave a sharp twist, jerked Doyle's head into a strangle-hold in the hollow of his elbow, and completely turned the tables.

With a triumphant malediction the big fellow struggled to his feet, and dragging his adversary up with him, pinioned with one hand the arm in which Garfield held the drill, while the other hand caught him by the throat in a choking grasp, and forced him back against the wall.

Then there came the snap of an electric button and the room was flooded with light. In the doorway stood a couple of policemen with the men servants, who had hurriedly summoned them upon hearing the noise of the combat, while behind these were Miss Hunter and her father, craning their necks to see, and

with amazement written large upon their faces.

In their excited wrestling neither Doyle nor Mosby had heard the carriage roll up to the door, but as it happened the broker miscalculated the time at his disposal, and when the end of the play was reached with their host still absent, the Senator and Martina had come directly home, arriving at the front door just as the officers were about to capture their quarry.

Dazed with the terrific struggle in which he had been engaged, overcome with relief at the presence of help at hand just when everything had seemed lost, Garfield could only blink stupidly at the light and the faces in the doorway.

But Mosby, keener-witted for such an emergency, promptly seized upon the opportunity to clear his hands.

"There he is, Senator!" he pointed with a well-feigned satisfaction. "He fought like a wildcat, but I managed to hold on to him! Lucky thing, though, that I happened to pass when I did.

"Seeing the front door open and no one around, I stopped in to call the attention of one of the servants to the oversight, and as I reached the hall heard the sound of this rascal at work. Naturally I thought at once of the safe and of the money I paid you to-day, so I lost no time in tackling him. Not much too soon either, I guess, from the looks of things.

"You can see for yourself how near his job was to completion. Careful there, officer!" he sharply cautioned one of the policemen who was approaching Doyle. "He still has his drill in his hand and is liable to be nasty with it!"

Garfield heard, but never believed that so impudent a ruse could be successful until the minions of the law actually seized him in their grasp. Then he tried to back away from them and break loose.

"What do you mean?" he demanded. "Can't you understand that the other fellow is the man, you fools? It was I who saw him enter this house, and it was I who caught him in the act!"

"A likely story!" jeered one of the big patrolmen. "And you with the goods on you," pointing to the drill in Garfield's hand. "You'll have to spring a better one than that, my man, if you want to get clear of this job."

Unheeding his prisoner's furious protestations and efforts to resist, he slipped a pair of handcuffs over Garfield's wrists.

Then, as they dragged him forward into the light, Miss Hunter, who had been watching the scene with wide-eyed curiosity, suddenly gave a little cry of excited wonderment.

"Why, it is Mr. Moyle!"

"Moyle!" repeated her father, quickly leaning forward and scrutinizing the young man with frowning recognition. "It is no one but that already convicted thief of a Garfield Doyle! Ah, I see the whole thing now.

"He swore long ago that he would get even with me, because I refused to come to his aid when justice overtook him, and this is the manner in which he has attempted to do it. Securing a position in my employ by posing under a false name, he has waited his chance, and this afternoon when he learned through my conversation with Hastings that I had this money and couldn't deposit it, he decided that the time had come for him to strike his blow. Why, his guilt is as plain as day. I will make the charge, officer; take him away!"

"You are wrong," emphatically denied Garfield. "I can explain everything, if you will only give me the chance. This scoundrel—"

"Enough!" thundered the Senator. "I don't want to hear another word from you, and if you are looking for mercy on account of our relationship, I tell you frankly that I repudiate it. As for your ill-judged attempt to accuse Mr. Braden, that of course is farcical. Now, then, for the station-house."

That night Doyle, innocent though he was, tossed about on a hard bench in a narrow cell, while Mosby, after receiving complacently the admiring felicitations of the man he had sought to rob, slumbered between snow-white sheets on a bed that was soft as down.

CHAPTER VIII.

FACING THE JUDGE.

IT would seem an easy thing for Garfield Doyle to prove that John P. Braden was none other than Dave Mosby, ex-confidence man and penitentiary-bird, and

thus in a measure substantiate his claim that the wrong pig had been taken by the ear. And no doubt he could have done so had he possessed sufficient money to expend in lawyer fees and on the collection of evidence.

But when one has to depend on the mercy of an attorney assigned by the court, whose sole interest in your case is to secure his stipend from the public treasury with as little exertion as possible, it is not always so easy to have your defense conducted as you would like.

Doyle's counsel was conscientious enough, perhaps, but regarding his client's story with open skepticism, and having no desire to offend the powerful interests friendly to Braden, he was hardly what might be called strenuous in probing into that gentleman's past when he had him on the stand.

The broker, too, made apparently the most frank and willing sort of a witness, answering freely every question asked him, and only smiling amusedly at the prisoner's assertion of an alias.

He had not been posing in his new character all these years without building up a very reasonable sort of a pedigree for John P. Braden, Esq.

Of course the calling in of a few officials from Moundsville Penitentiary, and the taking of his Bertillon measurements would have shattered the audacious fabrication in short order; but was this indignity to be put upon the particular friend of Senator Hunter and Assistant Secretary Reed, and that, too, on the mere word of an ex-convict, a burglar caught with the goods?

Judge Purdy would not hear of it.

Consequently, there was nothing left for Garfield's lawyer except to make a plea for mercy, and even here he was handicapped. No wife nor child could be introduced to work upon the jury's sympathy, the prisoner was a second offender, the crime an inexcusable and heinous one.

Under the circumstances the result could be easily foreseen.

The jury returned a verdict of "Guilty" without even leaving the box, and the judge promptly imposed a sentence of ten years.

Ten years?

Why not the rest of his natural life? thought the condemned man bitterly, as he was led back to his cell. What good would he be to himself or to any one else when he came out at the age of thirty-eight, broken in spirit, prematurely grown old, inevitably hardened and brutalized by the degrading influences of the place?

Was it worth while, he asked himself, to have tried to live honestly and uprightly if this was the reward one achieved?

Would it not have been better, instead of trying to vindicate his tarnished name, if he had followed Mosby's successful example, and gone in for a career of fraud and rascality.

But at the thought the old flash came to his eye, and his jaw took on its most dogged, obstinate set.

"No," he declared. "Whatever else they may call me, they shall never say that I am a quitter. I will yet show the world that, though twice on the rolls of the penitentiary, my name is still as clean as the day it was given to me."

The warden at Moundsville met him with a disappointed shake of the head.

"Ah, Garfield," he said, "back again? Well, I ought not to be surprised; almost every one who comes here once returns at some time or another. Yet, I'll confess I had hoped for better things from you."

"Yes, warden, I am back again," rejoined Doyle, holding his head up straight, and meeting the other's disapproving glance full and fair; "but, as before, I am innocent of any crime. Once more, I am a victim of circumstances."

"Oh, yes, of course"—with pardonable cynicism—"but since you are here and likely to stay for some time, I hope you have made up your mind to behave yourself as well as you did before. If you do that I can put you at your same old job in the office; otherwise I shall have to send you to the shops."

Garfield readily promised. He had learned during his previous incarceration that contumacy and insubordination lead to very unpleasant consequences, and he was quite willing to be on his good behavior in order to hold one of the coveted clerical jobs in the office.

Accordingly, the next morning, his hair cropped in regulation style, and clad in the ill-fitting stripes, he repaired to his old desk and resumed the familiar routine.

It was not long before he had slipped back into the old groove, yielding a submissive obedience to the orders of his superiors because he dared not do otherwise, performing his duties like an automaton because he had no interest in them, dragging out his life in dull, spiritless fashion, simply because the healthy human organism shrinks from the thought of suicide, and because far away there loomed the prospect of a day of freedom.

Indeed, for any change in his daily round this might have been merely a prolongation of his former term of imprisonment, and the intervening period of liberty nothing more than a dream, except for one thing.

Then he had looked forward with the firm hope of being able to prove his innocence. Now he only looked back with a sullen determination that in some way he would get even with those responsible for his downfall.

If he still clung to the idea of vindication it was more from pure obstinacy, and because he would not be a quitter, than because he longer cared.

Yet at times he went almost mad with the desire to show that his hands were clean of crime—to show it to the world was the way he put it, though he knew deep down in his heart that the only person he really wanted to convince was Martina Hunter.

He could not forget that sad, regretful look in the girl's brown eyes the night he had been led away from her presence between the two officers, and whenever he thought of it, it hurt him like a fresh stab.

If he had not lost her trust and respect he felt that he could have stood unflinchingly the other blows which misfortune had dealt out to him in such plenteous measure.

Thus a year passed slowly away. In the big world outside a new President had been elected, a foreign war had been fought to its conclusion, one of America's large cities had been almost wiped off the map by a disastrous fire, yet these events, epoch-making though they were, created scarcely a ripple upon the dull monotony of life behind the gray stone walls of the penitentiary.

There one's interest centered chiefly on the menu for the approaching Thanksgiving dinner, or the gaining of some minor privilege. The prison-house cultivates a habit of self-centered, callous unconcern.

Still, news from without has a way of penetrating to such places, and Garfield was not unaware that the projected raid upon the wheat market—the steal which he had planned to expose—had been successfully accomplished, and accomplished, too, this time without a breath of scandal.

Perhaps it was that the public was too much engrossed in other directions to take notice; perhaps that the muck-rakers and graft-hunters were less alertly "on the job" than usual.

Certain it is, however, that Braden, Reed & Co. got away with their booty unsuspected, and that the young government clerk destined for the rôle of scapegoat plodded on at his desk, never dreaming how closely ruin had brushed his elbow.

Indeed, whether or not there be anything in the old adage anent Satan taking care of his own, Mr. John P. Braden was now undoubtedly swimming on the crest of the wave.

His failure to annex Senator Hunter's ten thousand had not embarrassed him for long; since with the elimination of Doyle from the situation, there was no longer any bar to the despatch of those measures which the latter's inconvenient activity had served to hinder and delay.

The syndicate once more came to its agent's support, Reed abandoned his attitude of timorous hesitation, and the deal, as already stated, was put through without a hitch.

Possessed, accordingly, of plenty of money and of a spotless business reputation, for he had always made it a point to be scrupulously exact in those minor details by which a man is judged, the ex-confidence shark saw at last opening before him the career which had been the aim of all his scheming.

His day with shady enterprises and picayune ventures was over, he vowed. Henceforth he would be master of high finance, and with this idea in view he opened offices in New York, sought to ingratiate himself there with men of big affairs, and engaged upon a series of spectacular operations which drew to him the attention of the entire country.

Rumors of his meteoric success and of

the extravagances in which he indulged—for he kept a score of press-agents busy heralding news of him abroad—crept even into the seclusion of Moundsville prison and caused Garfield Doyle to gnash his teeth in savage bitterness.

He well knew how rotten was the foundation upon which all this prosperity and display was built. Yet what could he do? Who would credit the story of a felon, unsupported by any other evidence than his own bare assertion?

Brooding continually upon his impotence in this regard, as well as over the injustice he had suffered, Doyle at this period might readily have lost his reason, had it not been for a faint suggestion of hope unexpectedly furnished him by a fellow convict named Bailey, a short-term man recently added to the office force.

Garfield, moody and self-absorbed, had made no friends among the other prisoners, indeed had rather discouraged any attempts at familiarity; but this youth, breezy and assured as his native Chicago, simply did not know how to take a snub.

Every time the warden turned his back he would start up a conversation, and although the other seldom answered him save in monosyllables, he persisted undeterred at his friendly overtures.

On one such occasion when the two were alone, Bailey, feeling need to consult the calendar, turned from his inspection with a quick exclamation of satisfaction.

"Hy-guy, partner," he observed. "To-day is the fifteenth. Only three more months and your Uncle Dudley will be out on pasture again."

In his envy Garfield could not refrain from a little sarcastic fling.

"For how long?" he sneered. "Three months or six? As the warden says, they all come back."

"Not this child," with emphasis. "It's me for the straight and narrow path from this time on."

"Going to cut out the horses, too, I suppose?" skeptically, for it was owing to his having "borrowed" money from his employers in order to play the races that Bailey was in his present situation.

"We-ell, not exactly that, perhaps, but you can bet your life it'll be my own coin that goes down. Gee, I'll never forget how I felt when the cop nabbed me at my desk!"

"Yes, I know what it is. I was at my desk, too, when they got me."

"At your desk?" repeattd Bailey, glancing up in surprise. "Why, I thought you were nailed in front of a safe you were cracking."

"Oh, you are speaking of my second conviction," explained Garfield. "What I referred to was when I was arrested for the wheat-crop leak eight years ago."

The other gave a quick start.

"By Jove, it's a fact, isn't it, that your name is Garfield Doyle? Strange, that I should never have connected you with the wheat leak before, though, considering all that I know about it."

"All that you know? What did you know in regard to that case?"

"Pretty nearly everything that was to be known." Then, with a sudden excited recollection: "Why, say, man, you oughtn't to have been sent up for that job. You had no more to do with it than this desk here!"

"Don't you think I am aware of that?" asked Garfield bitterly. "But, tell me how you are so sure of the fact, Bailey?"

The boy, realizing that he had been talking rather freely, hemmed and hawed and tried to draw in his horns, but Doyle, with a clue at last in sight, was not to be denied.

"The thing is nothing to me one way or another, only I made some money out of it once, and I don't quite like to give the fellow that paid me the double-cross," the other admitted to him at last.

"It was this way, you see," dropping into a narrative tone, "I was stenographer at that time for Vardaman & Valliford—"

"Ah, the speculating sharks that made the money out of the leak!"

"Yes, they were the boys that made the big killing, all right, and it was always down on the cards that you were to get the hinky-dink if any trouble ever came from the deal. Why, the first letter that Reed ever wrote them showed that he had cast you for the part of the goat."

"Reed?"

"Certainly. Didn't you know before that he was the lad who did the tipping to the Chicago gang? Why, I could have sent him over the road more than once if I'd had a mind to do it."

"How was that?"

"I always made it a practise whenever I worked to take copies of any correspondence which looked interesting to me. A fellow never knows when stuff of that kind may come in handy, you know. And I used to have a full set of that wheat-deal junk—telegrams and all."

"And where is it now?" demanded Garfield.

"Oh, I sold it. That is why I was leary in talking about it to you. I sold it to Billy Persimmons, an old college chum of mine, out in Chicago, who makes a specialty of buying information from secretaries and stenographers. What he done with it, I don't know; but he gave me a couple of hundred on it, and I lost it the next day on the Chicago Derby.

"Later on," he continued, "I tried to buy the letters back from him. I had left Vardaman & Valliford then, and it kind of struck me that I might be able to bleed them for a bit on that bunch of *billets-doux;* but when I tried to make a dicker with Persimmons he grinned and told me that the price had 'riz.' He was only asking six thousand dollars for them, he said; and that was, of course, out of the question for me."

"Do you suppose he has them now?"

"Oh, yes. Trust old Billy for that. He never lets anything get out of his hands, if he knows it. If you went to him quietly, with the price in your hand, he would give up; otherwise, he would be like a human clam."

Garfield only groaned to himself. The proof of his innocence was in existence, yet between him and the chance of obtaining it yawned nearly ten long years, and the raising of six thousand dollars! A very nice task for a poor, broken convict to accomplish.

CHAPTER IX.

THERE'S A LIMIT TO ALL THINGS.

IT is a familiar saying among gamblers, that only a fool will buck another man's game; and John P. Braden, for all the roseate reports sent out by his press-agents, and despite all his spectacular plunges and toadying to big financiers, speedily found that the row he had cut for himself was no easy one to hoe.

The "big financiers" greeted him cordially, watched his flounderings with amusement, and then proceeded to take him skilfully into camp; so, to make a long story short, about the time that Garfield Doyle was rounding out his second year at Moundsville, the broker saw his ill-gotten fortune pretty well dissipated, and himself rapidly heading toward commercial shipwreck.

True, he still swelled magnificently round New York and Washington, abated none of his luxuries, and boasted blatantly of his success in the lobbies of hotels and cafés; but he knew how near his bubble was to collapse, and was pulling every string at his command in a desperate effort to avert the catastrophe.

For a time he had hoped that Martina might yield to his long-protracted suit, and with a covetous eye upon her six millions dower, redoubled his pleadings at her shrine, but she still held him off, declining to give him a definite answer; and though he was confident he would ultimately win her, he realized that he must look elsewhere for the immediate funds he so urgently required.

It was in this evil hour that the temptation came to him to put through another deal in wheat upon the old "sure-thing" basis; and this time, too, not for the benefit of a ring of greedy backers, but solely and simply for his own advantage.

He frowned upon the suggestion when it came, declaring fiercely to himself that he was done with that sort of thing; but as his affairs grew darker the idea recurred again and again, each time presenting more alluring possibilities.

Conditions were ripe, he recognized, for a tremendous "killing," and by pledging his present resources and stretching his credit to the limit, he could finance a movement now upon a scale which might be impossible to him six months or a year later. Success, too, meant this time unshared profits, opulence, riches enough to place him forever beyond the reach of care.

As for the risk? Well, he had escaped with a whole skin before, and was there any reason to believe he could not do so again?

He ended by broaching the matter half jokingly to Reed one day while the two were at dinner, and to his surprise discov-

ered that his old associate had been permitting his thoughts to run along the same line. The assistant secretary had a Western Senatorship in view, it seemed, and was hard pressed for the sinews of war.

Indeed, the support of the other was all that each needed to crystallize his own wavering resolution; and before the pair rose from the table a fresh compact had been formed between them, and a tentative plan of campaign agreed upon.

It was probably a week or so after this interesting meeting that Garfield Doyle, grinding away at his desk, heard a friend of the warden's, who was visiting at the penitentiary for a few days, remark as he glanced up from a perusal of the morning's paper:

"Something doing in wheat, Tom. Have you noticed how it's been going up? I see here, too, that John P. Braden has left for Chicago, to be on the field in person."

"Off to make another million or so, I suppose," returned the warden, pausing a moment in his task of sorting out the mail. "He is certainly a lucky dog, that chap.

"I heard the other day when I was in Washington that he is shortly to be married to Senator Hunter's daughter, and she— What's the matter with you there, Hundred and Sixty-six?" For Garfield had let a heavy ledger he was lifting fall to the floor with a bang. "By the way, here's a letter for you."

"A letter for me?" incredulously.

He had no friends or correspondents upon the outside. Why should any one be writing to him?

"Yes, and from a lady, too. Sure, you haven't got a deserted wife somewhere," banteringly, "that's turning up to haunt you? Trust you'll excuse my opening it —the rules are imperative—I won't read it, however, or do anything more than make sure there's no saws or other contraband concealed."

And having satisfied himself, he tossed a dainty little missive across to the prisoner's desk.

Uncertainly Garfield turned it over three or four times. It was from a lady evidently, but the handwriting on the outside was utterly unfamiliar to him. What could it mean?

At last, though, he drew forth the enclosure and started to read; and if his expression had been one of bewilderment before, it was as nothing to the sheer amazement which now overspread his features.

First, he went red; then he went white. He laid the letter down and rubbed his eyes; then picked it up and rubbed his eyes again. Finally, he fairly threw himself upon it, devouring its contents as though he had been a hungry dog, and it a bone.

"By George," muttered the warden, "from the way he acts, I half believe it is from a deserted wife."

But the warden was wrong; the letter was from Martina Hunter. She wrote:

DEAR COUSIN GARFIELD:

I address you thus, because it is a cousinly office I am asking. If I had a brother, it would not, perhaps, be necessary to trouble you; but you are my nearest male relative outside of my father, and I am therefore constrained to appeal to you.

That you will advise me honestly and fairly, not only on the score of kinship, but also by reason of our old friendly associations, I have no doubt, and I therefore throw myself unreservedly upon your mercy.

To be candid, my situation is this:

My father is very anxious to have me marry Mr. Braden, and as I am attracted to him myself—indeed, like him better than any man who ever wooed me—I would not hesitate a moment, were it not for the terrible charges you made against him that awful evening when you were arrested.

These were not established at your trial, and my father and Mr. Braden only sneered at them; but they have roused a distrust in my mind which I cannot overcome.

Therefore, since it can no longer make any difference to you, I want you to tell me fairly whether or not you spoke the real truth in the whole affair.

Your simple statement will be enough for me, but if you have any proofs of the facts, I wish you would tell me where to lay my hands upon them, so as to convince my father that he is wrong in urging me into this match.

As Garfield laid the letter down, the look which came over his face was not good to see.

So, this beautiful girl, a veritable queen among womankind, was actually contemplating the acceptance of that scoundrel. Oh, was there ever such a case of casting pearls before swine! He

must prevent such sacrifice, prevent it at any cost.

She had said she would abide by his word in the matter—yes, picking up the letter and glancing over it again, she had said that, and he would furnish her with a statement fast enough.

But, when it came to the actual test, would she believe him? Pressed by her father, and urged by the contrary inclinations of her own heart, would she really resign Braden? That was a question!

Oh, if he only had the proofs to give her for which she had asked, and which lay in the possession of that man Bailey had told him of out in Chicago! But what use to think of that?

Between him and those proofs stood the grim walls of the penitentiary, and the six thousand dollars which the man demanded as his price.

Still, if one were free— Much can be done by a man who is free, espécially if he is desperate.

Such a one might clutch a keeper of secrets by the throat, and choke him until he would be glad to give up his hoarded information.

A red mist seemed suddenly to dance before Garfield's eyes, and he turned to gaze out of the open door of the office toward the big stone gate, beyond which lay liberty.

The warden stepped out for half an hour, and the only person in the little room besides Garfield himself—for since Bailey's departure he had handled all the office work alone—was the visitor, who, absorbed in his newspaper, remained all unconscious of the slow project forming in the other's brain.

A model prisoner, a "trusty" of the "trusties," no one at all familiar with the ways of the institution ever took the trouble to keep a watchful eye upon Garfield Doyle.

If the visitor had once raised his head, or chanced to look round, he could scarcely have failed to note the fierce gleam rising to the convict's eye, the tense gathering of the muscles as of a tiger about to spring; but, interested in an article which had caught his attention, he read calmly away and took no heed.

Noiselessly, Doyle slipped out of his rough prison jacket and, removing his shoes, stole over to where the visitor sat.

Quick as a flash, he had his jacket over the man's head, effectually muffling the fellow's startled outcry, while at the same time he tipped back the chair so as to hold its occupant at his mercy. A heavy iron poker lay within his reach, and, snatching it up, he brandished it threateningly before the terrified visitor's eyes.

"A single word out of you, or a false move of any kind, and I'll brain you!" he growled between his close-set teeth. "Now, out of those duds you've got on, and lose no time about it, either, if you know what's good for you!"

The unfortunate visitor hesitated a second, and seemed about to resist; but Garfield repeated his mandate in so menacing a tone, and with so vigorous a lunge of the poker, that he hastily reconsidered and began rapidly divesting himself.

When coat, waistcoat, trousers, shoes, and shirt had been discarded, however, Garfield stopped him.

"Here, that'll do," he ordered. "Now," pausing perplexedly, "what shall I do with you?"

The visitor, shivering in his underclothes, shrank back affrightedly from the intimidating poker; but a quick glance round the room had offered Doyle a better solution. There behind the warden's desk stood a narrow closet, and in it hung, as he well knew, a pair of traces, part of an old set of buggy harness.

"Here," seizing his victim by the shoulders, and dragging him rapidly across to it, "I am afraid you'll have to bide inside for a while. They'll probably find you sooner or later. At any rate, it's the best I can do for you."

While he was speaking, he had been rapidly binding his prisoner with the traces and forcing a gag, which he manufactured from some odds and ends of cloth he found in the closet, between the other's lips; and now, the process completed, he thrust the man into the closet and closed the door.

Two minutes more and he was in the visitor's clothes, the latter's slouch-hat pulled down over his face; but just as he was ready to leave, a sudden suggestion came to him from the sight of the warden's open safe.

"They give every man who leaves here fifty dollars," he muttered. "The Dis-

trict of Columbia certainly owes me that much."

And stuffing a package of bills into his pocket, he sauntered slowly and carelessly down the walk and out past the guard at the gate.

He was at liberty!

CHAPTER X.

ON THE OUTSIDE.

LUCK, so long ruthlessly inimical to Garfield Doyle, certainly smiled upon him in his effort to escape from Moundsville Penitentiary.

As he emerged from the prison-gate and came down to the railroad track, a freight-train was just pulling out for Washington, and he had not the slightest difficulty in boarding it and concealing himself in an empty box car, where he remained secure from observation all the way to the capital.

Moreover, the warden chanced to be delayed on the business which had taken him from the office, so that it was a good hour before he returned to discover that his "model prisoner" had taken French leave.

More time still was consumed, and a number of false clues followed up, ere the actual method of the get-away was disclosed and the warden's unfortunate friend released from his duress; and even then the searchers were thrown off the true scent by the story of an irresponsible countryman, so that the authorities continued hopelessly at sea throughout the entire day.

Perhaps the crowning piece of Garfield's good fortune, though, was in his meeting Bailey, his former office assistant at the prison, immediately upon his arrival in the city.

Indeed, he had just left the railroad yards behind him, where he disembarked from his "side-door Pullman," and was striking out across town to hunt lodgings, when he chanced to espy his quondam comrade lounging in one of the little parks, and engaged upon a study of the "dope" for that afternoon's races.

"Well, in the name of all the old skates that ever walked in backward," he ejaculated, glancing up in startled amazement as Doyle touched him upon the shoulder, "what are you doing here? I thought you had a few more years to serve. Somebody been handing you a pardon, eh?"

"Only the kind of a pardon that a fellow gives himself," rejoined Garfield. "In short, I walked out."

Then he briefly related to Bailey the circumstances of his escape.

The recital seemed to fill the other with gleeful admiration.

"Gee!" he commented with a chuckle, "I would like to have seen that old warden's face when he came in to find that you had gone. I'd almost be willing to go back to 'stir' for six months just for the chance of hearing him swear a little.

"But, say," interrupting himself with sudden recollection, "you can't be showing yourself so openly round here after a job like that. They'll be after you hot-foot in less than no time. Why, it's ten to one that a full description of you has already been wired to the Washington cops, and that they are looking for you now!"

"Yes, and that's just what I want to speak to you about," said Garfield. "Do you know of any safe place in the city where I can lie under cover for a few days until I can get my bearings, and decide upon my future plans? I've got money enough to pay my way, all right," he added proudly.

"We-ell," considered Bailey, "if you don't mind standing for a kind of sporty crowd, you might come up to my hang-out. It's safe enough there, for no questions are asked; and we all know better than to stick our nose into any other guy's business. But you're so kind of stiff and preachery-like, I was wondering a bit how the bunch would take it?

"I'll tell you," he finally decided with an air of solving the problem. "I'll say that you're a cousin of mine up from the country, and you can tie up your head in a bandage and pretend that you have got the mumps. That will serve for a disguise, keep people away from you, and at the same time be a good excuse for your not going out.

"You must have that suit dyed, though," he added; "safer a good deal than selling it, in case any description of you is published, and you can wear some of my duds while it is being done. Pretty

good fit, too, Doyle," with a grin, "even if you did snag it off the bargain-counter."

To all these various suggestions Garfield gratefully assented, and accordingly was duly conducted up to the boarding-house, introduced to the landlady, and after a brief negotiation assigned to a room.

Then he made known his further desires to his companion.

"The first thing I must find out, Bailey," he said, "is how things stand at the Agricultural Department—how near the wheat-crop estimate is to completion who is the clerk engaged upon it, and what kind of a chap he is. Do you think you could hang round down there and find out these details for me?"

"Sure I can," cheerfully; "but not to-day, Garfield. Business before pleasure, you know; and as it is, I shall have to hustle to get out to the track before the first race. By the way, you don't care to chance a piece of that fifty you borrowed from the warden, do you? I've got one tipped off to me this afternoon that's nothing less than a 'pipe.' Don't want any of it, eh? Well, so-long, then."

And grabbing up a pair of field-glasses, he was down the stairs and off, in mortal dread lest he should lose a moment from his favorite sport.

Nor, although the "pipe" failed to materialize, and he was consequently something out of pocket when he returned, was he in any less good-humor as he came airily into the room, puffing away at a cigarette.

"Oh, I've got no kick coming," he rejoined to Garfield's attempts at commiseration. "I got a run for my money, all right, and that is the most that anybody could ask."

Upon such hollow consolation does the race-track follower keep up his spirits.

He had brought the evening papers home with him, and, as he dumped a bundle of them down on the bed, asked Doyle if he did not wish to glance them over.

"Not that you'll find anything about yourself in them, though," he added. "Our foxy friend, the warden, has managed somehow to keep your get-away dark. Not a single line of it in any of the sheets."

True enough; in none of the Washington papers was there the slightest reference to the sensational escape. It was evident, as Bailey had said, that the warden, anxious to avoid criticism, had exerted himself to keep the affair a secret; and Garfield was, of course, just as well satisfied.

It would do no harm to his plans to have his enemies in ignorance of the fact that he was not still behind prison bars.

Neither, as it turned out, were the newspapers without a significant interest to Doyle; for, in looking over the market reports, it did not take him long to discover that the unusual and portentous movement in "wheat," which he had heard mentioned at the penitentiary, was still in progress.

As a result, he grew more than ever solicitous to have Bailey investigate conditions at the department, and accordingly the latter spent the entire next morning nosing round through the dingy old building on the Mall, asking all manner of questions and rendering himself generally a nuisance.

When he returned at noon, however, he was bubbling over with satisfaction.

"I guess I've got the man you want spotted, all right," he informed Garfield gaily. "Chap by the name of Frank Adams in the bureau of statistics. I followed him when he left at noon to the telegraph-office, and, by looking over his shoulder, saw he was sending a message to Chicago. Here is a copy of it, if you can make anything out of it."

Garfield gave one glance at the scrawl handed over to him, and burst into a quick exclamation of excitement.

"Bailey," he cried, "I must have an interview with this Frank Adams at once. Do you suppose you could get him here to see me?"

"Sure, Mike!" with customary alacrity; "but not just now. It's getting along toward business hours, son, and I have to be off.

"Don't fret your head, however; I'll bring him back when I come this evening, for he only lives two or three blocks away from here; and he's down at that temperance pool and billiard room on the corner every night."

"All right, then," assented Garfield, though he could not quite suppress a

frown of impatience. "To-night, so be it. And perhaps you had better not say who it is wishes to talk to him; just say there is a gentleman here whom it will be to his advantage to see."

Bailey, who was on nettles to be off, nodded and started for the door; but before he could get outside the other stayed him for a final injunction.

"You'll not forget," he urged. "More than you dream of depends upon my seeing Adams without delay."

"Never fear. Adams will be here to-night if I have to rough-house him and drag him every foot of the way."

And with that he was gone, leaving Garfield to possess his soul in such patience as he could command for the remainder of the afternoon.

But if Bailey had one virtue, it was unquestioning obedience; and, true to his word, when he returned that night he brought with him the government clerk—a government clerk looking a trifle wary and suspicious, but still indubitably there.

"Ah, Mr. Adams, glad to see you! Sit down, won't you?" said Garfield courteously, pushing forward a chair. "I want to talk to you about some matters at the department, and before I get through I think I can show you that what I have to say will be to your interest."

"Oh, but Mr. Johnson," interrupted the lad, for Doyle had been traveling under this name since leaving the penitentiary, "you must understand that I cannot speak of any private matters connected with my position."

"Exactly. And I don't intend to ask concerning anything except what any member of the public has a right to know. In fact, all I want to learn is whether or not you are not daily sending information concerning the progress of the forthcoming wheat-crop report to Chicago? Nothing wrong in that, is there?"

"No, I suppose not," hesitatingly. "Why, yes, I am sending out such information."

"And who directed you to send it?"

"Why, really I don't remember. I suppose Mr. Jones, or Mr. Reed. One gets so many memoranda-slips in the way of orders that one can't always remember where they come from."

"Just so. And one doesn't usually stop to notice if he be in a hurry, whether an order is signed or not, does he? So, that even if the slip itself were produced, it might not be able to prove anything."

"About right," laughed the young man. "Lots of them have come to me which were never signed. As to this particular order, I simply know that I have been following it for several weeks; and, since my action has never been questioned, I suppose it must be all right."

"Yet," observed Doyle dryly, "if you were asked upon the witness-stand who gave you the order, you could not tell?"

"The witness-stand!" gasped Adams, starting to his feet, his eyes opening wide. "Who are you?"

"We will come to that presently. Enough for you to know just now that I am not a secret-service man, as you suspect, and am disposed to help rather than to harm you. You are treading along dangerous paths, young man; but it is still not too late for you to be saved.

"Tell me now if your orders contemplate the carrying on of this system of reporting to Chicago until the estimate on the wheat crop is finished?"

"Yes, sir. I am directed to send an advance report of the total estimate to our Chicago man at least a week before its publication."

"And the name of this man is—"

"Raden—J. B. Raden."

"Or, in other words, John P. Braden," remarked Garfield with a satiric smile. "It never struck you, I suppose, that you were actually corresponding with John P. Braden, the notorious wheat speculator!"

"Good Heavens!" burst out in exclamation from Adams's pallid lips.

He shrank back appalled, as though he saw the brink of a visible gulf yawning before him.

"Good Heavens," he repeated, "I am ruined!"

"No, you're not," averred the other, striking him a heartening blow upon the shoulder. "And, what's more, you are not going to be. They've got the coils pretty tight about you; but, if you've got the nerve and will follow my advice, we'll turn the tables. I know what I am talking about, you see; because I've been in your unfortunate position myself."

"Then," said Adams, a slow comprehension dawning in his eyes, "you are—"

"Yes. Hadn't you guessed that before? I am Garfield Doyle!"

CHAPTER XI.

THE CHANCE OF A LIFETIME.

"BUT what is your plan? What is it you wish me to do?" questioned Adams, still plainly incredulous that anything could be done to save him from the pit he had digged for himself. "Shall I confess my folly to Mr. Reed?"

Doyle gave a short, derisive laugh.

"As well confess to a hungry wolf that you are about to steal its bone," he observed trenchantly. "Why, Reed is the very one who has gotten you entangled in this snarl.

"No, old man, the way to fight these people is with their own fire. We will meet them on the battle-ground of the market; and not only circumvent them at their villainous game, but also hit them in their tenderest spot, their pocketbooks. You stand by me in this, Adams, and I'll make a fortune for you as well as for myself."

But the government clerk began to look grave, and started to shake his head.

"You mean, then," he said, "that I shall give you the advance information instead of Braden? Where is the difference, so far as I am concerned? I should still be false to my trust in either case."

"Don't jump at conclusions," rasped Garfield impatiently, for his mind was working at full pressure and he hated to be interrupted. "Nobody is asking you to give out government information to me or Braden, or any one else. All I want you to do is to go along apparently unsuspicious of anything, and then on the day that you are to send him the final estimate to give him the exact reverse of what it really is.

"If the estimate should show a million bushels over a normal crop, let him think it is a million bushels under normal, and vice versa. Then notify me that you have reported to him, and I will know from his actions what to do. That is not giving away government secrets, is it?"

"No," admitted Adams readily; "for such a report would not be the truth."

"And you will do as I ask you?"

The young man saw the point at last, and springing to his feet, his eyes shining with exultation, thrust his hand impulsively into Doyle's.

"Do as you say!" he exclaimed. "Mr. Doyle, I am with you until the last blow is struck!"

Garfield turned quickly to Bailey.

"Tell me of a reliable Chicago broker," he demanded, "one who can see a point without having it driven in with a sledge-hammer; who is nervy enough to take a fairly long chance, and who yet has sufficient money to put through a transaction of considerable magnitude. Do you know a fellow of such description?"

"Do I?" rejoined this only original and genuine specimen of a "Johnny on the spot." "Do I? Well, if you'd been painting a life-size portrait of my old boss, William Z. Corwine, with gilt frame to match, you couldn't have hit him off any closer.

"He's the only dead-square guy I ever worked for; he's forged steel and chain-lightning when it comes to nerve; he'll back a hundred-to-one shot, if he likes the look of it, just as quick as glance at it, and he's got the scads for anything he wants anywhere from a million dollars down.

"If you want to hook on to him for this little lay of yours, I'll give you a note of introduction to him. It may do you some good, for he knows that I wouldn't steer him up against a dead one."

"Thanks," said Garfield. "You are certainly a trump, Bailey; and you can rest assured that I'll not forget all that you've done for me, if things turn out as I hope they will in this affair.

"And now there is only one more thing I will ask you. Kindly inform our respected landlady that I have recovered from my recent attack of mumps, and that my room is at her disposal."

"What?" stared Bailey, sitting up. "You're not going to-night?"

"Yes. I have no time to waste. The sooner I get out there and am started upon my campaign, the surer I will be of landing this cutthroat gang."

The prison look had worn off him sufficiently by this time for him to venture

abroad without the liability of causing remark, and so, rigged out in a disguise which Bailey had procured for him, he caught a night-train for the West and got away in safety.

His impression of the broker when they met was much what he had expected it would be from Bailey's vivid description—a little man, but every ounce of him bone and nerve and muscle.

Keen blue eyes that looked straight through you from behind gold-rimmed nose-glasses, a firm, thin-lipped mouth, and a pleasant but decidedly businesslike voice.

"Glad to meet you, Mr. Johnson," he said, skimming rapidly over Bailey's letter of introduction. "What can I do for you?"

Garfield, bound to be no less direct, briefly outlined the information in his possession and the bold scheme he had in view.

"If the report that Adams sends out is 'over normal,' Braden will begin to sell," he said, "and if 'under normal,' to buy. All we have to do is to watch him and play the other end of the string, and we cannot fail to win."

Corwine listened to him through in silence, considered a moment, then said tersely:

"And you expect me to risk my good money for a half of the possible profits on a proposition which has no other support than the word of an entire stranger? Really, Mr. Johnson, this is the most astounding offer which has ever been made to me. I have everything at stake; you nothing. No," rising to his feet as though to terminate the interview, "I guess I don't care to do business in quite that way."

Garfield caught desperately at one last hope.

"Wait just a moment, Mr. Corwine," he said hoarsely. "You are wrong when you say I have nothing at stake. I am fighting to retrieve a damaged reputation and to prove my innocence. At the present moment the police are looking for me. Do you remember the great wheat-report scandal of about nine years ago. Well—I am Garfield Doyle!"

The other sat down again, and for a full minute subjected Doyle to the steady scrutiny of his boring eyes.

"That changes the complexion of things," he said finally in a very different voice. He hesitated a second longer. "Very well, Mr. Doyle," he decided sharply. "We'll whipsaw these thieves as you propose, and we'll divide profits—share and share alike."

Good as his word, he got down to work at once, and by the time that Braden received his expected advance report from Adams he had the crafty schemer so completely under espionage that his every move was known almost as soon as projected.

The morning after the report came in Braden commenced to buy wheat quietly and unostentatiously. He had a whole week in which to effect his coup, and he had no desire to attract attention to his maneuvers.

At the very first bushel that he purchased, the word was telephoned in to Corwine by one of his lieutenants on the floor.

"Ah," commented the little broker, "the crop is long, then!"

And he sent out instructions to his men to sell—sell two bushels for every bushel that Braden bought—to sell, sell, sell until the cows came home.

And so for that entire week the battle raged. Outsiders looked on, and wondered what it was all about; but could not make head or tail of it.

Braden himself was at first amused, congratulating himself on the easy pickings he was going to have, and curious to know who was the simpleton plunging so heedlessly on the wrong side.

Then he grew angry when Corwine's men taunted and badgered him, calling him a coward because he would not buy as freely as they were willing to sell; and sometimes foaming like a mad bull at their insults, and absolutely sure that he was right, he would rush into the pit and buy recklessly, consumingly, until the gong sounded.

Thus six days passed; and, as he footed up the total to which he was involved, there came even to his cock-sure heart a moment of dismay.

What if some mistake had been made? What if anything should eventually go wrong?

But the next instant he smiled contemptuously at such foolish apprehen-

sions. Why, the thing was as certain as the sunrise!

He sauntered debonairly on the floor the next morning and stood nonchalantly about, talking to his friends as he waited for the official report to be made public and the time for the reaping of his harvest.

Then he felt, like a vague electric thrill, rather than saw or heard, a movement among the brokers present. Some one pushed a telegram into his hand, and with staring eyes he read the fateful figures. He had miscalculated the crop by over three million bushels!

For a moment he stood transfixed; then with a roar he leaped into the surging, seething maelstrom of the pit, and sought by voice and gesture and absolute Herculean endeavor to save himself and stay the excited tide.

Stay that tide? As well attempt to hold back the waves of the ocean with a child's rampart of sand!

Braden knew from the beginning that the effort was hopeless, and his act was one of insane desperation rather than of courage or valor.

But even he had to realize at last that the jig was up.

Hatless, disheveled, his coat torn to ribbons, pale and trembling, he staggered from the floor a hopelessly ruined man.

At the door a plain-clothes man stepped forward and tapped him on the shoulder.

"Warrant for your arrest here, my man," he said. "Better come quietly and avoid trouble."

Braden almost collapsed.

"For my arrest?" he quavered. "On what charge?"

"Oh, conspiracy, burglary — almost everything in the criminal code. Enough, at any rate, to send you up for the rest of your natural life."

At that moment there sounded out faint but clear behind him a familiar whistle of two ascending notes, one long and one short.

Braden turned quickly to see Garfield Doyle standing there with the letters in his hands which he had bought from old Persimmons for the sum of ten thousand dollars!

At last the discredited broker knew who had been his mysterious opponent "in the pit."

CHAPTER XII.

AS IT ALL ENDED.

A MONTH or six weeks later Garfield Doyle sat upon the side veranda at Senator Hunter's, and lazily swung the hammock in which reclined the graceful figure of Martina.

The Senator had done the *amende honorable* as soon as he discovered how wofully he had been mistaken in regard to Garfield, who was now a frequent and always welcome visitor at his house.

This afternoon he and Martina had been discussing Mosby, and Doyle was trying to find out from the young lady if she would really have thrown her suitor over on a mere word of condemnation from himself.

"Of course I would," she answered frankly. "I never had the slightest intention of marrying him, anyhow."

"Never had any intention of marrying him?" gasped Garfield. "Why, in the name of common sense then, did you write me that letter?"

She blushed and looked down.

Then Garfield did a marvelous thing for one who was only a mere man. He actually followed for once the logic of the feminine mind.

"Did it mean," he asked in a low voice, scarcely able to believe his own ears, "that you wanted to have me reiterate my own innocence, to spur me up through jealousy into making some effort to clear myself?"

"Why, of course," she said; then paused and blushed deeper as she saw the admission she had been led into making.

"Then you must have believed that I loved you, Martina? And you," his voice ringing with exultation, "you, too, must have cared?"

At last she raised her brown eyes to his.

"I have loved you, Garfield," she said softly, "all the time."

The vines and flowers about the veranda drew closer and screened them from the world as he took her in his arms.

(The end.)

Mr. Scales's Unwelcome Visitor.

BY C. LANGTON CLARKE.

A Gown That Covered a Multitude of Bad Manners as Well as Duplicities Galore.

"FRED is here, George."

Mr. Scales, just home from his office, tired and hungry, almost let the hat, which he was in the act of hanging up, fall to the floor, and turned sharply on his wife.

"Fred?" he echoed angrily. "Fred Pickens, your precious cousin? What does that loafer want now?"

"I really don't see, George," replied Mrs. Scales with spirit, "why you should always be trying to find fault with my relations. I'm sure some of yours are no great credit. There's your Uncle Joseph—"

"Never mind my Uncle Joseph," interrupted Mr. Scales hastily. "It's your Cousin Fred we are discussing. When did he come, and what does he want?"

"He came about an hour ago," replied Mrs. Scales, "with a suit-case. He said he was going to stay a week, or as much longer as we could put up with him. You know Fred's joking way."

"Joke!" cried the husband. "I only hope it is a joke. It's bad enough to have Fred round for an hour or two; but a week—I won't have him. He only wants to borrow money."

"There's just where you're wrong," cried Mrs. Scales triumphantly. "Almost the first thing he said was: 'Tell George not to be alarmed. I'm not going to bleed him this time.'"

"That was probably another of Master Fred's jokes," said Mr. Scales grimly. "However, we'll soon see. Where is he?"

"He's up-stairs in the study," replied Mrs. Scales; "and for Heaven's sake, George, do try and show a little hospitality. Fred's not a bad fellow when you really know him—just a little wild and eccentric."

"It's the kind of eccentricity that sends a lot of people to jail," grumbled Mr. Scales as he ascended the stairs, followed by his wife. "However, I'll put up with him as long as I can."

A small, slender, fair-haired man, with aquiline features and a pair of rather shifty eyes, turned from the window as Mr. Scales entered and held out his hand.

"Hallo, George!" he said airily. "Turned up again like a bad cent, you see."

"So I see," assented Mr. Scales glumly, accepting the hand and letting it drop again, after inflicting the very faintest apology for a squeeze on it. "To what are we indebted for this visit?"

"The fact is," replied Mr. Pickens, ignoring Mr. Scales's unhospitable manner, "that I was beginning to get lonely. Dying for a sight of a blood relation, you know, and all that sort of thing, so I say, to myself: 'Why, there's George and Minnie. What's to prevent my taking a little holiday and paying them a visit? None at all,' say I to myself in reply. 'They'll be delighted to see me.' You don't look as pleased as I expected, George. And here I am."

"Oh!" said Mr. Scales skeptically. "That's it, eh? What's the trouble this time?"

Mr. Pickens looked hurt.

"The trouble?" he repeated.

"Yes," said Mr. Scales. "You didn't come here just to pay us a visit. What scrape have you been getting into now?"

Mr. Pickens hesitated for a moment, and then he burst into a laugh.

"What a detective you would have

made, George!" he said. "No fooling you. The fact is that I am in a bit of a mess."

Mr. Scales turned a triumphant gaze on his wife.

"What did I tell you?" he said.

"I'm sure Fred hasn't done anything bad," replied Mrs. Scales, tossing her head. "I'm sure getting into debt now and then isn't so very awful. George, why can't you be a little more charitable?"

"I suppose you want money again," said Mr. Scales without any abatement of severity. "You always want money."

For reply, Cousin Fred drew from his trousers-pocket a large roll of bills, which he handed to Mr. Scales.

"There's three thousand there," he said. "I wish you would put them in your desk. It's too big a bundle to drag round."

Mr. Scales stared open-mouthed at the money, and then back at Mr. Pickens.

"Is this yours?" he asked.

"It is, unless they manage to take it away from me," was the light reply.

Mr. Scales regarded his relative sternly.

"Who manage to take it away from you?" he demanded.

"The people who owned it before I got it," replied Mr. Pickens. "Don't look so scared, George. I haven't been doing any strong-arm or second-story work; but—well, there's just the least little bit of dispute about the ownership of that roll, and I don't want to have it on me if they—well, if they start asking questions."

"I think," said Mr. Scales scathingly, "that you had better do violence for once to your natural inclinations, and tell me the truth."

"All right," replied the other, in no way offended. "It's somewhat of a wrench, but here goes. I've been in Canada, in one of the leading cities of Ontario—never mind which—and I've been doing a little in the mine-promoting way. They've got a ridiculous law there that you have to stick pretty close to facts in your published statements.

"I and a friend of mine got hold of half a dozen silver claims, and, naturally enough, we did our best to sell the stock. Some of our 'ads' were a little too flowery and imaginative to suit the authorities, and they got after us. I was just a little too quick for them, and lit out ahead of the warrant."

"And I suppose, as a matter of fact," said Mr. Scales with great severity, "there wasn't any silver on your claims."

"Oh — yes, there was!" replied the other with a grin. "I lost a quarter there in pulling out my handkerchief. It's there yet."

"So," said Mr. Scales, frowning darkly on this levity, "you have cheated a lot of people in Canada, and now you come seeking shelter here."

"Honestly, George," replied Mr. Pickens, almost plaintively, "I couldn't help it. They're the worst bunch of suckers up there you ever saw—fairly tumbling over each other to hand you the washers. I'd have hated to hurt their feelings by refusing their money."

"I guess you gave full rein to your kind instincts," said Mr. Scales with bitter sarcasm. "So this three thousand is your ill-gotten gains?"

"Only part of it, George," responded Cousin Fred. "The other fellow got out with the rest. They're after him, too."

"And I suppose they may arrest you at any moment?" said Mr. Scales with an air of finality. "You are a fugitive from justice, sir, and I will have no part in screening you. Pick up your suit-case and go."

But at this point Mrs. Scales, who had sat listening wide-eyed to the conversation, broke in.

"You will do nothing of the kind, Fred," she said with an indignant glance at her husband. "I don't suppose what you've done is strictly honest; I don't know much about it, but it seems to me that the people who forced the money on you are just as much to blame. Anyway, I'm sure it isn't anything so very dreadful, and here you stay."

Mr. Scales choked, and looked helplessly from his wife to her ne'er-do-weel cousin.

"And suppose they find out he is here, and arrest him in this house," he said excitedly. "What about that? A nice thing for us that would be!"

"Don't be alarmed, George," said Mr. Pickens reassuringly. "Trust your Uncle Frederick to cover up his tracks. I went direct from Canada to New

York, and doubled back with a few little twists on the way. I don't suppose any one knows that you and Minnie are my relations. Besides, I had a fine set of whiskers while I was north of the line. You've no idea what a difference it makes."

"Nobody need know he is here," said Mrs. Scales, who seemed to be quite excited at the prospect of cheating justice. "It's quite a providence that Jane left yesterday so suddenly. There will be no servant to tattle."

"I don't suppose Providence had much of a hand in it," growled Mr. Scales, "but if we have to harbor a criminal, it's just as well that as few people should know of his presence as possible."

"Criminal!" cried Mrs. Scales. "Really, George, you do choose the most odious words. I don't look on Fred as anything of the kind. I'm sure he's more sinned against than sinning. I feel just like a Loyalist wife, giving shelter to a fugitive Cavalier."

Mr. Scales was too disgusted to combat this romantic view of the situation, and went away to dress, leaving his wife and Cousin Fred to discuss the ethics of mine promotion, and means for defeating the ends of justice.

Dinner was not a lively meal.

Mr. Scales ate in almost absolute silence, and even the irrepressible Mr. Pickens and the sympathetic wife felt their spirits dampened by his gloom. An adjournment to the study was not productive of a much more cheerful atmosphere, Mr. Scales, who had a slight knowledge of law, choosing such depressing topics as the varying terms in prison apportioned to certain offenses.

He had just branched off into a description of the disagreeable routine of penitentiary life, when there was a ring at the door-bell, and, in obedience to his wife, he grumblingly rose to answer it.

Mr. Scales had opened the front door barely a foot, when a tall, slim man inserted himself through the narrow opening into the hall with a jack-in-the-box like agility, which considerably discomposed the other's nerves.

"Who are you?" demanded Mr. Scales sharply. "And what the deuce do you mean by coming into a person's house in that manner?"

"Anybody of the name of Pickens here?" the stranger demanded.

"No, there isn't," replied Mr. Scales promptly, and with some indignation. The thought at once flashed across him that this was "the other fellow," who, according to Cousin Fred's story, had also "lit out ahead of the warrant," and he had no intention of giving shelter to two fugitive swindlers.

"My name," said the stranger, fixing Mr. Scales with a searching and suspicious eye, "is Backley—Detective Backley."

"Indeed!" said Mr. Scales. His heart had leaped to his mouth, but he managed to conceal his fright. "May I inquire whether it is your usual habit to enter a house in that fashion?"

"We got a wire from Noo York," continued the detective, ignoring the question, "to be on the lookout for a fellow named Pickens—Frederick Pickens. He's wanted in Canada for some crooked work. He is some relation of yours, we understand, and they think he might come here. Here's his description: Below middle size, thin, fair hair and blue eyes, bushy beard and—"

"You don't need to read all that," interrupted Mr. Scales, who had had time to consider the position. "I know Mr. Pickens. He isn't here."

Mr. Backley's eye, leaving Mr. Scales's countenance, traveled slowly around the hall and rested on the hat-rack.

"Whose is them hats?" he asked.

"They're mine," replied Mr. Scales with well-simulated indignation. "Do you suppose I'm a receiver of stolen goods?"

"Of course," said the detective, with raised finger, like a schoolmaster admonishing a refractory class, "if he should come you know your dooty. To communicate at once with the police. It's a pretty serious business to cheat the law. It's conspiracy—that's what it is."

"Have you anything more to say?" demanded Mr. Scales with a feeling of strong resentment at the officer's somewhat dictatorial manner. "Because if not, I'll bid you good evening."

"Nothing just now," replied the detective. "You mind what I'm telling you, though. I don't think there's any

call for me to search the house—not just yet—"

He looked sternly at Mr. Scales for several seconds, and then, suddenly opening the door, vanished.

"Here's a pretty kettle of fish," stormed Mr. Scales, reentering the study.

"What's the matter, George?" cried Mrs. Scales in alarm. "Who was that man?"

"A detective," replied Mr. Scales.

Mrs. Scales uttered a slight shriek, and Mr. Pickens half rose from his chair.

"A detective?" they cried simultaneously.

"Master Fred," said Mr. Scales bitingly, "wasn't quite as smart as he thought he was. The police here have got word from New York to watch for him. They know he's a relation of ours. What are we going to do now?"

"I hope to goodness, George, you didn't give him any idea that Fred is here," cried Mrs. Scales.

"No, I didn't," replied her husband. "I don't know what I might have done, but I thought at first, when he asked about Fred, that he was that swindling partner of his, so I said I didn't know anything about him. Then, of course, I had to stick to it."

"Well, it's all right," said Mr. Pickens, after a long pause. "You've put them off the scent. As long as I don't show myself there's no danger."

"There isn't, eh?" retorted Mr. Scales. "That's all you know about it. Just as he went away the fellow said it might be necessary to search the house. A nice mess we're in, thanks to you. I'm going out for a while. I want a little opportunity to think it over in quiet."

With more grumbling to the same effect, Mr. Scales left the room, and in a few minutes the banging of the hall door informed his wife and cousin that he had sought the open air for reflection. Mrs. Scales sighed.

"George isn't nearly as rough and unkind as he tries to make out," she said. "And now, Fred, while he's doing his thinking outside, let us try and hit on some plan ourselves."

Mr. Scales was absent for a full hour and a half.

At first he was minded to seek the advice of Mr. Butterworth, an old and tried friend, but he was averse to letting any one, even his closest confidant into the secret, and he sought a certain cozy corner in the smoking-room of his club, where he reviewed the situation and strove to find a satisfactory solution. Finally he decided that the ties of his wife's relationship and the popular conception of man's duty to his neighbor did not call upon him to run the risk of himself appearing in the prisoner's dock, and he came to a very definite resolution that Cousin Fred must go.

"I'll kick him out at once," he said, and with this purpose in view he bent his steps homeward.

Mrs. Scales met him in the hall.

"Mary has come," she said.

Mr. Scales stared at her open-mouthed.

"Mary?" he echoed. "Who the deuce is Mary?"

"My new girl," replied Mrs. Scales brightly. "I engaged her yesterday. Surely I told you."

"You didn't tell me anything about it," replied Mr. Scales grumpily. "I thought you were congratulating yourself on a direct intervention of Providence in sending Jane away. How are you going to keep Mary's mouth shut?"

"Mary won't tattle," replied Mrs. Scales confidently. "She knows better. Here she is now."

A very trim, neat servant, with a massy coiffure, surmounted by an immaculate cap, and wearing a spotless apron over a black silk dress, came out of the kitchen, and, catching sight of Mr. Scales, curtsied low.

Mr. Scales, whose eyesight was not of the best, responded with a slight nod, and was about to go up-stairs, when the new servant spoke.

"I beg your pardon, ma'am," she said in a high, affected voice, "but do you think your good gentleman could give me the loan of a cigar?"

Mr. Scales, wheeling sharply on his heel, stared wide-eyed at the smiling domestic.

"Fred!" he cried.

Mrs. Scales uttered a scream of laughter, and Mr. Pickens was so convulsed with merriment that his elaborate structure of curls and puffs almost fell off.

"Oh, George!" cried Mrs. Scales, "if you could only have seen your own face.

It was too funny. Isn't Fred just splendid?"

"What is the meaning of this monkey business?" Mr. Scales demanded, in nowise softened by the mirth of his wife and cousin.

"It was my idea," replied Mrs. Scales proudly. "After you had gone out Fred and I talked it over. We thought of several plans for Fred to hide himself in case the police should come here, but none of them were any good. Then, all at once I remembered that wig which I got for the Foresters' fancy dress-ball five years ago, and routed it out of an old trunk in the storeroom.

"Fred is just about my size, so I loaned him some of my old clothes and he dressed up. At first we decided that he should be a cousin, come unexpectedly on a visit, but that might be awkward later, so we decided that he should be a new servant. Fortunately, I had an 'ad' in this morning's paper, so I can explain how Mary applied in answer to it, and was at once engaged. It's a splendid idea."

Mr. Scales regarded his wife's animated countenance with lowering brow.

"It seems to me," he said, "that you have developed a very surprising talent for deception. I suppose you don't mind telling all those lies."

"They're not lies, George," replied Mrs. Scales in an offended tone. "You do give things such horrid names. It's only a little make-believe."

Mr. Scales laughed harshly.

"All right," he said. "And now Fred can wind up the play by going and taking those absurd things off. I'm not going to be a party to any such trick."

"He can't, George," replied Mrs. Scales. "It's too late."

"Can't!" cried Mr. Scales. "What do you mean?"

"Because," replied Mrs. Scales, with some trepidation. "Mr. and Mrs. Butterworth called about half an hour ago to return a book, and Fred—Mary, I mean—opened the door for them. We thought it might be the police, and Fred would go. He was afraid I might be nervous and let out the secret."

Mr. Scales threw up his hands in despair.

"Fred was perfectly splendid," continued Mrs. Scales. "You would have thought he had been a house-maid all his life. They never suspected a thing. Mrs. Butterworth said I was uncommonly lucky to get such a smart-looking servant, and Mr. Butterworth kept looking at her out of the corner of his eye. I could see he was greatly impressed."

The idea of Mr. Butterworth, most susceptible of men, casting sheep's-eyes at the bogus servant did more to soften Mr. Scales than any amount of argument. A faint smile relaxed the stern lines of his mouth. Mrs. Scales clapped her hands.

"I knew you'd see it in the right light, George," she cried. "It really is awfully funny when you think of it. And now it doesn't matter if the police do come. Mary can show them all over the house herself."

During the following two days everything ran smoothly. Mr. Pickens, apart from a slight moral twist in his character, was a pleasant enough companion, and did his best to make himself agreeable to his host, who responded by an increased cordiality of manner.

He divided his time between the kitchen, for the sake of appearance, and the study, for solace and mental refreshment, the latter being provided by several racing novels and a volume of past performances, which he had brought with him.

His domestic duties were practically a sinecure, the breaking of several pieces of crockery in an effort to live up to his assumed character having resulted in an interdict by Mrs. Scales against any active participation in the household arrangements.

On the morning of the third day Mr. Scales was busy in his office with some correspondence, when Mr. Butterworth, a plump, middle-aged man, who was remarkable for a faultless habit and an irrepressible tendency toward practical jokes, entered and seated himself in a chair beside the desk. His usually placid features were overcast, and he coughed several times in an embarrassed manner.

"Well," said Mr. Scales, signing his last letter and throwing it into the basket, "what's the matter with you? Baby sick?"

"Nothing the matter with me," re-

sponded Mr. Butterworth. "But—there's something I think you ought to know."

Mr. Scales, laying aside his pen, leaned back in his chair, prepared to listen.

"I'm not a man," began his visitor, "who interferes in other people's domestic arrangements, but there are times when silence is the worst kind of friendship."

"Never mind all that," said Mr. Scales, who was growing uneasy. "What fault have you got to find with my domestic arrangements?"

"No fault, exactly," replied the other, "but—well, here are the facts: This morning, after I had left the house, I found, when I went to light my cigar, that I had come away without any matches. I was just opposite your house and I started up your front steps to ring the bell and borrow some. Then—" Mr. Butterworth looked slightly confused—"I thought that instead of bringing any one to the door it would be better to go round to the back."

"And incidentally," interrupted Mr. Scales with a sarcastic smile, "take another look at our new maid."

"Nothing of the kind," replied Mr. Butterworth, flushing. "Nothing was further from my thoughts. It was simply with a view to saving trouble. I went round, and the kitchen door was open. The girl was there."

"What's all this mystery about?" demanded Mr. Scales testily, as Mr. Butterworth paused impressively. "Where else should she be?"

"She was there," repeated Mr. Butterworth, laying his hand on the other's arms and speaking in awe-struck tones. "And what do you think she was doing?"

"How should I know?" said Mr. Scales impatiently, but with a growing sense of alarm. "Washing up the dishes, probably."

"She was sitting," continued Mr. Butterworth, "in a chair tilted back, with her feet on the range. She was smoking the dirtiest old brier pipe I ever saw, and she was 'doping 'em out.'"

"She was what?" cried Mr. Scales, who was not versed in racing phraseology.

"'Doping 'em out,'" said Mr. Butterworth. "Surely you know what that means. She had the morning paper with the entries and a racing form-book. I watched her for nearly two minutes. She must have gone back three months looking up one horse."

Mr. Scales uttered an exclamation of annoyance.

"I thought you'd feel that way about it," continued Mr. Butterworth complacently. "And that's not all. When I coughed she jumped up, let the book and paper and pipe fall, and swore—atrociously."

Mr. Scales looked duly shocked.

"She pulled herself together in quick time," the other went on, "and was all smiles. She said her father was a trainer at one time, and she had always taken a great interest in horses. Then she saw me looking at the pipe, and she explained that a few years ago she was maid to an officer's wife in the Philippines, and they had all to smoke in order to guard against fever and flies. She had never been able to break herself of the habit."

Mr. Scales, with a grudging admiration for Mr. Pickens's resourcefulness at a critical moment, tried to bolster up the explanation by a little deception on his own part.

"That's so," he said. "She told us when she came that she had been in the Philippines, and asked my wife's permission to smoke an occasional cigarette. I suppose there's nothing wrong in her father having been a trainer, is there?"

"Oh, all right," replied Mr. Butterworth, slightly huffed at his friend's tone. "I didn't say there was anything wrong, did I? Only it is a little unusual for a pretty girl to be smoking a pipe and digging up 'dope.' I confess I was surprised."

"And disappointed, eh?" said Mr. Scales unkindly. "My dear Butterworth, when will you get over this unhappy infatuation for every pretty face you see?"

To this accusation Mr. Butterworth replied with considerable indignation, declaring that next time he thought of doing a friend a good turn, and telling him something he ought to know, he would remember this experience and keep his mouth shut.

"Well, keep it shut about this," said

Mr. Scales, after listening unmoved to this harangue.

"I'm not in the habit of tattling about my friends' affairs," responded the other with dignity.

"Well, don't tattle to your wife, then," said Mr. Scales sharply. "I know she gets everything out of you, but for Heaven's sake keep this to yourself."

To this Mr. Butterworth made no reply.

"Because, if you do," continued Mr. Scales, "I shall make a point of fostering the idea that a match for your cigar was nothing but an excuse for trotting round to have a quiet little chat with our servant."

Mr. Butterworth, finding words inadequate to express his feelings, darted a fiery glance at his friend and retired in silence.

"I do wish, George, that you would be a little more careful," were Mrs. Scales's first words of greeting when her husband returned that evening.

"What's the matter now?" demanded Mr. Scales gruffly.

"You might remember," said Mrs. Scales, "that the blind in the kitchen doesn't work."

Mr. Scales stared at his wife in bewilderment.

"Kitchen-blind?" he cried. "What on earth are you talking about?"

"About an hour after you left this morning," replied Mrs. Scales with great solemnity, "Mrs. Brayley called to see me, Fred opened the door, and he says she looked at him as if she could skin him alive. She fairly insisted on seeing me. She said she had something of the greatest importance to communicate.

"So I asked her to come up. She sat and looked at me for a minute with a pitying expression, till I began to get quite frightened, and then she said: 'My dear, I hope you will bear this cross with Christian fortitude.'

"I thought some accident must have happened to you, and they had asked her to break the news, and I jumped up in a panic.

"'Good gracious,' I said, 'has anything happened to Mr. Scales?'

"'No corporeal injury,' she said—you know what mouthfuls of words she uses—'but I am sadly afraid, my dear, that he is deceiving you.'"

Mrs. Scales paused impressively, and looked searchingly at her husband, who, however, betrayed no signs of an uneasy conscience.

"For Heaven's sake get on," he said.

"She told me," continued Mrs. Scales, "that about nine o'clock she was standing at her side window, which looks right into our kitchen. The blind was up, and she could see plainly into the room.

"'Your new girl,' she said, 'was standing by the table, when your husband came in. She said something to him; of course, I could not hear what it was, and he laughed. Then he took out his cigarette case, and took one out, and offered the case to the girl, who also selected one.

"'They lit them at the same match. Then'—I wish George you could have seen her face when she told me this—'the girl pulled up her skirt a little, and kicked the match out of your husband's hand. Your husband was not in the least bit shocked, and as he turned away the girl hit him a great slap on the back.

"'Then they passed from my vision. I thought it my duty to let you know the sad facts at once!'"

Mr. Scales's face was the picture of consternation.

"Good Lord!" he said. "That woman will tell every one she knows. What did you say?"

"I didn't know what to say at first," replied Mrs. Scales, "and then, on the spur of the moment, I said that Mary was the daughter of a sister of mine, who married a planter in Cuba, where Mary learned to smoke. I had to account in some way for her familiarity, and I couldn't think of anything else. I said her parents had died quite recently and she had come to stay with us for a little while as a sort of lady-help."

Mr. Scales threw up his hands helplessly.

"And I told Butterworth this morning," he said, "that her father was a horse trainer, and she learned to smoke in the Philippines. A nice mix-up there will be if they get together and compare notes."

"And that isn't the worst of it," continued Mrs. Scales. "After lunch I heard voices in the kitchen and went down. The first person I saw was a great big policeman. I thought I should have dropped, but Fred was quite calm.

"'This is my cousin, Mr. Michael Grogan, come to see me, ma'am,' he said as cool as anything. If I hadn't been so startled I could have laughed right out.

"I came away, and the policeman must have stayed an hour. Fred says it is a good thing, because he is a brother of the chief, and he will hear at once if there is anything new in the search for him."

"This is a little too much," said Mr. Scales bitterly. "What next? Look here, Fred"—as Mr. Pickens entered the room—"when is this foolery going to stop?"

Mr. Pickens, drawing back his skirts daintily, executed a neat *pas seul,* twirled round on the tips of his pointed shoes, and fell into an attitude expressive of maiden modesty, with his head slightly on one side and one finger on his cheek.

"If you please, ma'am and sir," he said with an affectation of extreme bashfulness, "I'm engaged to be married."

"What!" cried Mr. and Mrs. Scales together. "Engaged? Whom to?"

"To a policeman," replied Mr. Pickens in a small voice. "To Mr. Michael Grogan."

He stood for a moment contemplating the open mouths and distended eyes which confronted him, and then burst into a roar of laughter.

"I couldn't help it," he said. "The temptation was too strong. Half an hour ago Mr. Grogan came slipping round to the back door again. He said I was the sweetest girl he ever saw.

"He had saved up a bit of money, and he was sure of promotion in a little while. Would I be his steady company? What was a poor girl to say to an offer like that? He's going to buy the ring and bring it round to-night."

Mr. Scales literally ground his teeth.

"This is preposterous," he cried. "Simply outrageous. What do you mean, sir, by this tomfoolery?"

"My dear George," replied Mr. Pickens coolly, helping himself to a cigarette from an open box and lighting it with the utmost nonchalance, "you don't half appreciate my diplomatic talents. Think of the advantage of having daily bulletins of the hunt for Mr. Frederick Pickens from a member of the force which is looking for him.

"Already, by a few questions, most tactful and ladylike, I have broached the subject, and my fiancé, who is a perfect gentleman, has enlisted my services. I am now unofficially attached to the detective force of this city in a hunt for myself. I have instructions to notify Mr. Grogan at once if any suspicious incidents occur.

"I am going to tell him to-morrow that you sent away a letter addressed to Mr. Pickens at the general post-office in New Orleans. Any little help in my power will be most cheerfully given."

"You will do nothing of the kind," shouted Mr. Scales explosively. "First thing I know I will be dragged to the police station and put through the third degree. Haven't you any gratitude?"

"For goodness' sake, Fred," exclaimed Mrs. Scales imploringly, "do be careful. You will get us into a most horrible mess with your jokes."

"Jokes!" snarled Mr. Scales.

"All right," said Mr. Pickens reassuringly. "I won't, if you don't want me to. I only wished to have a little fun. You people are going out to-night to enjoy yourselves, and you grudge me my amusement."

"Much we're likely to enjoy ourselves with you here making trouble for us," grumbled Mr. Scales. "I've a good mind to call Forrester up and say we can't come."

"We can't do that," said Mrs. Scales firmly. "Mrs. Forrester was most insistent, and I promised faithfully we would go. Besides, we couldn't make any excuse. We can hardly say we stayed at home to keep an eye on our new servant. That would be too ridiculous. You will behave, won't you, Fred?"

Mr. Pickens, with somewhat unladylike force of language, called upon Heaven to witness that he would conduct himself in a most ladylike and discreet manner; and with this assurance, much as he distrusted it, Mr. Scales had to be content.

Mr. Scales's perturbation of spirit was not allayed by the discovery on arrival at the Forresters' reception that Mrs. Brayley was among the guests, and to note the forms of Mr. Butterworth and his wife in animated conversation with their host.

"Here's a nice situation," was Mr. Scales's *sotto voce* comment to Mrs. Scales as they advanced to receive a cordial welcome. "Confound that Fred!"

"Why, Mr. Scales," said Mrs. Brayley in tones audible to the whole room. "Where's your niece?"

Mr. Scales, too much taken aback by the suddenness of the query to reply, could only stare helplessly at the questioner.

"Niece?" cried Mr. Forrester. "What's this about a niece?"

Mrs. Scales, with feminine presence of mind, rushed to the rescue.

"We have a niece whom neither of us ever saw before staying with us for a few days," she said carelessly.

"Why didn't you bring her with you?" demanded the hostess. "Surely you did not need a special invitation. I will send one of the servants for her."

"Not on any account," cried Mr. Scales hurriedly. "The—the fact is, she doesn't like society. We never can get her to go anywhere."

"I thought you said you had never seen her before," said Mr. Forrester.

"George means," interposed Mrs. Scales again, with a pitying look at her husband, "that we can't persuade her to go out of the house. She comes from Cuba. She had an idea of being a lady-help, but she is homesick and is going back in a few days. Isn't this perfect weather?"

Mr. Butterworth, laying his hand on Mr. Scales's sleeve, drew him slightly to one side.

"Do you mean to tell me," he said in a low voice, "that that girl whom I saw smoking an old pipe and reading the racing form is your niece?"

Mr. Scales blushed guiltily, but put as good a face as possible on the matter.

"Yes," he said, "but we don't want it generally known. She is the daughter of a sister of my wife who married a Cuban planter. She has never been out of the island in her life."

"I thought she was in the Philippines," said Mr. Butterworth.

Mr. Scales, who had forgotten for the moment his conversation of the morning, coughed confusedly.

"And that her father," continued Mr. Butterworth pitilessly, "was a trainer of race-horses."

"Oh, well," replied Mr. Scales, endeavoring in vain to assume a jocular air, "I was just stringing you."

Mr. Butterworth made no response, but after regarding Mr. Scales's confused countenance for several moments with a cold and searching eye, turned away.

During the remainder of the evening Mr. Scales, ill at ease, moved and conversed with a restraint altogether foreign to his usual behavior at social functions, and his eyes wandered to the clock on the mantelpiece with a frequency not at all complimentary to his host and hostess.

It was with a sigh of relief that he noted the first indications of a breaking up of the party. Mrs. Brayley was the first to make a move, and had just risen to say that really she must be going, when a loud and imperative ring at the door-bell produced a sudden silence.

"I wonder who that can be?" said Mrs. Forrester. "It sounds like some one in a great hurry."

In another minute a trim house-maid presented herself wearing a startled expression.

"Who is that at the door?" asked Mrs. Forrester.

"If you please, ma'am," replied the servant, "it's a policeman."

"A policeman?" cried Mr. and Mrs. Forrester together. "What does he want?"

"He wants Mr. Scales," was the reply.

Mr. Scales, the cynosure of all eyes, turned several different colors in rapid succession, and rose limply from his chair.

"Me?" he said in bewilderment. "Why does he want me?"

"Better go out and see," said Mr. Forrester crisply; and Mr. Scales, followed by his wife, the Forresters, the Butterworths, and several of the other guests, went out into the hall, where a massive constable stood at attention.

"You Mr. Scales?" demanded the officer, fixing the head of the little procession with a stern and magisterial eye.

Mr. Scales admitted his identity.

"What's the matter?" he asked in tones which he vainly attempted to steady.

"Matter enough," said the policeman. "Nice goings on in your house."

"Goings on!" gasped Mr. Scales.

The policeman nodded.

"Half an hour ago," he said, sweeping his eye over the group and including them all in his audience, "Officer Grogan, on the William Street beat, come into the station all dazed like, holding his hand to his head and without a helmet. At first he didn't seem able to tell what had happened, but by and by he got his senses partly back."

He paused with the true dramatic instinct of the story-teller.

"Well," said Mr. Forrester, for Mr. Scales was incapable of speech, "what had happened?"

"It seems," continued the policeman —for Grogan made a clean breast of it— "that he got stuck on a new girl in this Mr. Scales's house. He was stuck so bad that he asked her to marry him, and the girl consented. To-night he went round with a ring and gave it to her."

Again he paused, and Mr. Scales almost collapsed under the shame of it. A niece of his, even if she were a figment of the imagination, so readily yielding to the courtship of a policeman! The idea was overwhelming.

"According to Grogan's story," continued the officer, not insensible to the interest he was exciting, "the girl took the ring and put it on. Then she went out of the room for a while, and when she came back she began to act flighty. She went out several times after that, and Grogan says he could smell liquor on her breath.

"The last time she came back she asked Grogan if he would like to see her do a skirt-dance. Grogan is an upright man, and he was shocked proper. He talked to her quite stern, and said if she acted like that he would take his ring back. Then, what does she do but ups with a broom-handle beside her.

"'I'll learn you to insult a lady,' she says, and with that she fetches Grogan a couple of welts over the head. It's a good job he's got a thick skull, or she would have cracked it for him. Grogan says he must have gone down all of a heap—he's got a couple of lumps on his head as big as hens' eggs—and he lay on that kitchen-floor a good hour and a half.

"When he come to himself partly the girl was gone, and the ring was shoved on his nose—Grogan has a long, thin nose—and stuck fast with candle grease. As soon as he could get his senses partly together he come to the station."

A dreadful silence followed.

Mr. Scales, trying to moisten his parched lips, attempted to articulate a question; Mrs. Scales, overwhelmed, dropped into a chair and covered her face; the others, with eager expectancy, waited for the finish of the story.

"As soon as Grogan had finished his tale," continued the policeman, visibly gratified at the sensation he was producing, "we sent a couple of men to the house to arrest the girl. They searched high and low, but she had gone.

"There was a cap and apron lying on the floor of the room she occupied, and a black silk dress slung over a chair, but everything else had been took. In your libery a drawer of the desk had been busted open; we could tell that by the splinters on the floor, but whether anything has been stolen, of course we don't know till you come."

"There was nothing in that drawer of any consequence," said Mr. Scales in a croaking voice.

"How do you know which drawer was busted?" demanded the officer.

"There was nothing in any of the drawers," said Mr. Scales wearily.

"And where do you suppose she has went?" asked the officer severely.

"I don't know anything about her," was the reply. "I don't know where she came from or where she would be likely to go." Mr. Scales's temper was beginning to rise under this load of affliction. "And if your man Grogan, or whatever his confounded name is, came round to my house during our absence making love to my servant and got a broken head it serves him right."

The policeman was about to dissent strongly from this view, when Mr. Forrester drew his indignant guest aside.

"Look here, Scales," he said, "if this girl is your niece—"

"She isn't my niece," replied the other. "She isn't any relation—at least—oh, hang it, Forrester, I can't explain now, but it's the most infernal complication you ever heard. Just ask the rest of them here to keep their mouths shut for a while. Tell 'em any kind of a yarn you like."

"I am afraid my powers of invention are hardly equal to yours," replied Mr. Forrester. "In the meanwhile our friend, the policeman, appears to be getting impatient."

To Mr. Scales the return to his home under the surveillance of the constable was like a nightmare; and the subsequent interrogation an ordeal which he would have found it almost impossible to support, had it not been that Mrs. Scales took it upon herself to reply to most of the questions with a peculiarly feminine disregard of facts.

Mr. Scales convinced the inquisitors that he had suffered no loss, and as the matter thus dwindled down to a case of common assault, in which a member of the force had figured with little credit to himself, the search for the vanished domestic was not prosecuted with any great rigor.

On the morning of the third day, among the letters in Mr. Scales's box was one addressed in a dashing hand and postmarked from a small town in Virginia.

With a trembling hand Mr. Scales tore it from the envelope:

DEAR GEORGE:

Sorry I had to leave so suddenly, but it is all your fault.

You shouldn't leave whisky on the sideboard. Hope I didn't kill Grogan, but I guess his head is thick enough to stand it. Also sorry I had to smash your desk, but I needed that roll.

After I handed Grogan that wallop I shoved the wig in the stove, ran up-stairs, stripped off the fancy duds, put on my own, jimmied the desk, grabbed my suit-case, and lit out by the front door.

I walked down to the depot and just caught a train for Philadelphia. Give my love to Grogan, if you see him, and tell him he will find his ring on his nose, if he hasn't found it already.

I haven't had so much fun for a long while. Hope you have enjoyed it.

Regards to Minnie. Yours, F.

Mr. Scales read the letter three times, and with a frowning brow handed it to his wife.

"Poor Fred," said Mrs. Scales, returning it with a bright smile. "What a light-hearted fellow he is. I wonder whether anything would make him take life seriously?"

"I think," replied Mr. Scales with grim emphasis, "that a ten-year term in the State penitentiary might have a salutary effect."

Then he tore the letter into a hundred pieces, and went in to breakfast.

IF LOVE ENDURE.

WE sail for the Happy Isles, my dear,
Over the deep-sea ways;
Into the light,
Out of the night,
Out of the bygone days.

We shall reach the Happy Isles, my dear,
Beyond the wrecks of the past,
Side by side,
O'er the waters wide,
If love endure to the last.

Eugene C. Dolson.

The Livery of Guilt.*

BY CHARLES CAREY,

Author of "The Van Suyden Sapphires," "A Woman to Win," etc.

In Which the Finger of Suspicion Points With Deadly Menace at More Than One Member of the House-Party at Blenheim.

SYNOPSIS OF PRECEDING CHAPTERS.

BECAUSE his son Phil insists on marrying Ethel Gordon, daughter of Major Waring's nearest neighbor and best enemy, the major has cast off Phil and seeks to ruin Mr. Gordon by buying up notes, mortgages and liens, which the latter has given. To take up the last outstanding note, Lawyer Cook (the narrator) goes down to Gordon's country-place, "Blenheim," adjacent to Waring's "Deepdene," with ten thousand dollars in cash, only to find himself in the midst of a house-party, and to learn that Gordon's son, Joe, because of speculation, is in need of ten thousand dollars, as is Phil; the latter because, in an architectural contest which he has entered, the judges suddenly, at Major Waring's instigation, demand that each contestant shall deposit that amount with his plans.

Shortly after the major comes to Blenheim to get his money, Cook finds his dead body in the drawing-room, and simultaneously Gordon comes in, crying that the safe, where the ten thousand was placed, has been robbed. While carrying the body up-stairs, Cook fancies he spies a woman's gown disappearing around a corner in the hall, but he is unable to pursue. Suspicion is cast, first on Phil Waring, who obviously is concealing something, then a little on Cook. It is learned that there was a Maxim silencer on Phil's shotgun, with which the major was killed, which accounts for the fact that there was no noise at the time of the murder. Randolph Newman, one of the house-party, explains to Cook a scheme for diverting the attention of the authorities. When questioned by the lawyer, he admits that he is trying to shield Ethel Gordon, and is willing to take the crime upon his own shoulders. Overcome with surprise, Cook argues with him, only to be interrupted by Joe Gordon, who calls him into the library and claims that he killed the major. Joe's father insists that his son is lying to shield him. Cook sends the elder out of the room, and listens to the boy's story. The latter says that he stole the ten thousand dollars from the safe, and, in escaping, saw and shot the major to avoid disclosure. Believing that the boy is lying, Cook asks him where the money is, and Joe extracts the bills from his pocket.

CHAPTER XI.

THE TEN THOUSAND DOLLARS.

I HAVE sustained a good many surprises at one time and another in my career; but I do not think I was ever quite so completely "flabbergasted" as when I saw Joe Gordon coolly draw that ten thousand dollars out of his pocket and lay it down on the table in front of me.

I had been so confident that I had him in a corner, so certain that he had no chance to escape, that, when he actually produced the money, I could only gape and stare in utter discomfiture.

Most decidedly, the tables were reversed; for the chagrin and embarrassment I had expected him to show were all on my side.

Neither could there be any mistake about the money.

The packet of bills was still unbroken, and it required but a glance for me to see that it was the same which I had received from the bank that morning, and brought down to Blenheim in my bag.

"Hum! Ha!" I ejaculated, and, in order to cover my confusion, pretended to count the amount, although I honestly could not have told whether the total I made was ten thousand dollars or ten cents.

*This story began in The Cavalier for February.

However, a court-room training, where one is apt at any moment to be tripped up by the unanticipated disclosure of some witness, or a cunning question from opposing counsel, renders one more or less capable of masking his true feelings; and I felt reasonably certain that Joe detected nothing of my discomposure in my calm and assured bearing.

I took opportunity, too, to go over the whole matter pretty thoroughly in my mind before I spoke again, and I soon realized that, no matter what the production of the ten thousand might tend to show, there were too many other discrepancies in the lad's statement to regard it as anything but a bald fabrication.

"Look here, Joe," I said, touching at once upon what I readily saw was the key-note of his purpose, "whatever put it into your head that your father might be suspected of this crime?"

"Why, wouldn't anybody think so?" he demanded. "That is," hastily correcting himself, "anybody who didn't know I was the one. Didn't he have reason enough to do it?

"He's only flesh and blood; and when he thought of handing over to that old cormorant the money he wanted so much in order to save me from scandal and disgrace, what more likely than that he should let his anger get the better of him, and blaze away without ever counting the cost?

"Of course, he didn't do so," he checked himself once more; "but I am only telling you what anybody who didn't know might think. Why, even dad himself recognized how easily he might be suspected.

"All the time that we were in here together, he didn't say much except about his having to go to prison; and when he heard Jimmie Weeks say the officers were coming, he just fell back in his chair like he was shot, and muttered: 'At last! At last!' That's what made me resolve to up and tell."

I stepped over to him, and laid my hand gently but firmly on his shoulder.

"My boy," I said, "there is no need for you to attempt to play martyr in order to save your father. When all the facts are known, he is in no more danger of falling under suspicion than some person ten thousand miles away."

"Eh?"

He stared at me incredulously.

"I mean just what I say. Neither you nor your father had any hand in Major Waring's death, and it is idle for either of you to attempt to accuse himself of it. I have not time at present to go into the proofs of your father's innocence; but you may take it from me that they are absolute and unassailable. In other words, Joe, generous as was your impulse to play scapegoat for him, it was superfluous and unnecessary."

"You are sure of this?" He studied me warily before committing himself. "You would not deceive me for any reason, Mr. Cook, upon a matter which means so much to all of us?"

"I pledge you my honor that I have told you nothing but the exact truth. You and your father are both my clients, remember, and my first duty is to you."

The boy, convinced at last, leaned back in his chair, and, relaxing the long strain he had imposed upon himself, heaved a deep and heartfelt sigh of relief.

"And now, Joe," I said, "tell me where you got that ten thousand dollars?"

A spice of mischief flashed into his eye, which told me that he had not been wholly unobservant of my flutter of astonishment when he brought forth the money.

"How do you know that I did not take it out of the safe, as I told you a while ago?" he demanded impudently

"Because," I responded, "as soon as I took time to consider, I knew that it was impossible. After your return from the target-practise, you were never in the house at all, except for a moment or two with Phil Waring, but went immediately to the shrubbery path at the rear of the house, where Jimmie Weeks and I held you under observation all the time.

"You were there at the time the safe was robbed, and also, according to Jimmie, who I would believe on an estimate of time sooner than most clocks, at the moment of the murder. Consequently, it was a certainty with me that you were guilty of neither crime, and all your frantic lying did not impose upon me for a single second."

"Say," he grinned, "I did rather crowd the Munchausen thing on you

there for a bit, didn't I? And tell me," struck by a lively recollection, "did the old major come on horseback or not? Gee, but you had me faded there for a minute when you put that question up to me!"

"Yes; and, as with most of your other guesses, you failed to score," I answered trenchantly. "However, I have not the time now to take up all your various perversions of the truth. What I want to know is, where you got the ten thousand dollars?"

"Why, Claridge gave it to me," he confessed.

"Claridge?"

"Yes; he slipped it to me when I came back to the house with Jimmie Weeks after everything was over, at the same time whispering to me that he had found it in the drawing-room when he straightened things out, but that I had better keep dark about it, as it might make things look worse for dad.

"That is where I first got the notion—crazy though it seems to me now in looking back—that dad could possibly have been the murderer.

"Then, when I came in here," he went on, "dad merely said: 'Joe, the safe has been robbed, and Major Waring killed. Have you anything to say to me about it?' He looked sort of queer and sick when he asked it, and I thought he was afraid I was going to turn from him, or rave at him, or something of that kind for having done it.

"So I told him: 'No, I haven't anything to say,' and I started to shake hands with him, and assure him that nothing either of us could ever do would make any difference with me in regard to him, and that I was certain he felt the same way about me, and how we must always stand together no matter what happened.

"I thought it would cheer him up, but it didn't. He waved my hand away, and just crumpled up in his chair more than ever. Then he began to mutter to himself about his being old, and how it didn't make any difference what became of him; and he told me he had fully made up his mind to accept the consequences for what had happened, and that I mustn't attempt to interfere.

"'I shall go through it without faltering, never fear, my boy,' he kept saying over and over to me; but all the time I could see what a terrible thing it was going to be to him.

"So when he gave way at hearing the officers were coming, I just couldn't stand it any longer, and resolved I'd save him at any cost.

"And now you say," he questioned, "that he was simply playing the same game on me, believing that I was to blame? Oh, have the dear, old boy in here at once, and set him straight. He still thinks it is the truth, remember, and I know how he must be suffering. Have him in."

He was half-way across the room as he spoke, and already had his hand on the knob; but I detained him. I knew how he would probably burst out on his father with the news, heedless of who might be standing by; and that did not suit my purposes at all. I, therefore, told him to remain in the room, that I would summon Mr. Gordon without delay.

It proved no difficult task. My old friend was hovering close at hand in a fever of anxiety, and came forward at once at my signal. On the threshold of the room, however, he paused and drew back, as though dreading what he might have to hear, at the same time questioningly searching my face.

I caught him by the arm, though, and, drawing him inside, closed the door.

"Mr. Gordon," I said without preliminary, "Joe here has confessed what I knew all along, that, when he accused himself in this affair, he was uttering an absolute untruth."

The old gentleman gave back a step, his expression a strange mixture of relief, unbelief, and incomprehension.

"What you knew all along?" he stammered. "Do you really mean to tell me—"

"I mean to tell you," I broke in, "that the time has come for you both to drop this silly idea of self-sacrifice in order to cover the other's crime. Neither of you had any part in this thing, and, so far as I can see, nothing remains for the two of you except apologies for the wrong suspicions you have mutually entertained."

Gordon still seemed to find it hard, however, to get the facts through his head.

"You are not deceiving me, Cook?" he challenged as his son had done. "You have proofs of the boy's innocence?"

"Unquestionable ones," I answered. "He had no more to do with it than you had."

And I briefly recounted for his benefit the evidence Jimmie Weeks and I were prepared to give in Joe's behalf.

Convinced at last, the old man turned with a cry of gladness — gladness mingled with contrition.

"Oh, my son, my son," he sobbed joyfully, "forgive me for having doubted you. I should have known better, but in my excited and overwrought state, the circumstances seemed to point straight in your direction. Tell me that you forgive me, Joe—that you do not hold my lack of faith against me?"

Almost equally affected, the other tried to conceal his emotion under a laugh.

"I don't see that I have anything on you in that respect, dad. To me, it looks a good deal like a case of horse and horse."

"That is so." The father's tone grew even more deeply affectionate. "And, believing me guilty, you were willing to take the blame upon your own young shoulders, and suffer in my place. Ah, that was noble of you, Joe; nothing less than heroic!"

I had turned away during this scene, not desiring to intrude upon their transports; but, recognizing that time was passing, and many questions remained to be settled before the arrival of the coroner, I made bold to interrupt.

"Mr. Gordon," I said, "I think you should know without further delay that the money of which you supposed yourself to be robbed has turned up. It was handed to Joe by Claridge, who says that he found it on the floor after the discovery of the murder; and, if his story be true, I can only conclude that it must have been dropped by the murderer either in his encounter with his victim, or at the first moment of his subsequent flight."

"Eh? The money returned?" He was fully as startled as I had expected him to be. "Where is it? Let me see it."

I showed him the unbroken packet of bills upon the table, and assured him that the ten thousand was intact, just as I had handed it to him.

"And you say, Claridge gave you this?" he turned wonderingly to Joe; "and that he found it on the floor in front? Why, perhaps there may be a clue in this to the real perpetrator of the crime. Let us have Claridge up and question him more fully in regard to it. Eh, Cook?"

I interposed no objection, in fact it was just what I was going to suggest myself; so he pressed the bell, and a moment or two later the butler's deferential knock sounded at the door.

"Claridge," Mr. Gordon started to question him almost before he was fairly in the room, "I want you to tell us all about that package of money you found, when you straightened up after the murder?"

"Package of money, sir?" the man backed up against the door, and cast a reproachful eye at Joe.

"Yes," impatiently. "And don't stand there and stare at me as though you didn't know what I was talking about. You found this, didn't you?" He thrust the bundle of bills almost under the butler's nose. "And gave it to Joe?"

Claridge gazed askance at the ten thousand, as if it were a bomb apt to go off at any moment and blow us all sky-high; but made no answer.

"Well?" demanded Mr. Gordon.

"I was a 'oping, sor," he coughed unhappily, "that I might not 'ave to answer any questions in regard to that haffair. I was a 'oping, in short, that it might remain a private transaction between me an' Mister Joe. 'E 'ad need of the money, I knew, and I thought it might come in 'andy to 'im; but if I 'ad knowed 'e was goin' to split on me I'd sooner 'ave chopped off my right 'and than to 'ave used it for sich a purpose.

"'Ow," he shook his head gloomily, "am I goin' to 'elp telling it hall to the cor'ner, when 'e hasks me? And you know what it is, sir, if one gets to telling things to a hofficer. 'Fore 'e thinks, 'e'll 'ave let 'is mouth run away with 'im. Begging your pardon, sir, Mister Joe 'd 'ave better let sleepin' dogs lie. Much better."

He continued to frown so portentously, and shake his head with such solemn

warning, that Gordon, taken aback, could only gaze at the demonstration in bewildered wonderment.

"Bless my soul," the old gentleman finally burst out, turning to me, "what is the fellow trying to get at with all this rigmarole? He seems to be afraid that he'll tell something to the coroner. Well, that is exactly what we want him to do; only we want him to let us know it first."

I was as unable as he to extract any meaning from the butler's oracular utterance; but Joe, nimbler-witted perhaps than either of us, hit upon the explanation without any difficulty.

"Why, can't you understand?" he cried. "Claridge has run aground on the same rock that had me anchored. He don't want to do anything to make the situation blacker for dad than he thinks it already is."

"Ah," I leaned toward the man with a new understanding. "Is that it, Claridge? Believing Mr. Gordon guilty, you are desirous of doing nothing which should add to the suspicion against him?"

"Well, sir," he muttered apologetically. "I ain't sayin' but what, Mr. Gordon 'aving been an huncommon good master to me, if by 'olding my tongue a bit I could 'elp 'im, I wasn't willin' to do it."

"But there is no need for you to hold your tongue, Claridge," I said. "You may tell everything you know as fully and freely as you please."

He scanned my face still doubtfully.

"But, begging your pardon, even you yourself hacted a bit puzzled, Mr. Cook, when I was talking to you habove stairs."

"Possibly," I granted; "but since then, my good fellow, I have come to see things in a clearer light. There are many evidences to prove Mr. Gordon's innocence; but I will offer you the one with which you are most familiar. You remember when you admitted Major Waring to the house?"

"Hoh, yes, sir. 'Tain't likely I'd 'ave so soon forgot it."

"Well, then, figuring the time of the murder as three or four minutes before my entrance, and five or six minutes prior to your having been summoned, tell me whether you think it possible for a man of Mr. Gordon's years to have committed the crime, carried the gun upstairs and put it away, and then return so as to be on the scene almost simultaneously with my own appearance?"

The point struck him. He stood gaping incredulously at me a moment; then almost shouted in his exuberance:

"I see, sir! I see! 'Twasn't the master that done it after all! Begging your pardon, sir, Mr. Gordon," he turned to the smiling old gentleman, "but if I might be so bold, I'd like, sir, to take your 'and."

"And now, Claridge," I said, when he had calmed down to something like his usual demeanor, "suppose you tell us about the finding of this money?"

"Hoh, there hain't nothing much to tell, sir. I 'ad been straightenin' out the droring-room when I come across it, and supposin' the master 'ad flung it there a purpose to carry 'hout 'is game of 'aving been robbed, and was intending to get it later and give it to Mister Joe, I thought if maybe I 'anded it over to 'im, it might save 'im being seen get it, and so causing trouble for 'isself."

"You found it where you supposed I had flung it?" repeated Gordon. "But where was that?"

"Why, be'ind the door of the music-room, sir."

"Behind the door of the music-room? —Did you speak, Cook? No? Then, as I was about to say, since it could hardly have fallen there by accident, it must have been pushed in there unobserved by Claridge while he was cleaning up. Not much of a clue, then, is it, after all?"

But I had a different idea.

CHAPTER XII.

AT THE INQUEST.

THE arrival at the moment of the officers prevented, not at all to my dissatisfaction, further discussion among us for the time being.

Claridge went back to his duties while Mr. Gordon, Joe, and I filed out into the hall to give what assistance might be in our power to the investigation.

The coroner, I noted, was of the ordinary elderly, bewhiskered type of country official, easy-going, I judged, and not

apt to step outside of the perfunctory routine of his province; but the deputy sheriff, who accompanied him, was of different mold—young, alert, intelligent-looking, and doubtless ambitious. He was one, I calculated, that it would be hard to hoodwink, and impossible to suborn.

He shook hands only stiffly with our party, and while Mr. Gordon was exchanging a few courteous platitudes with the coroner, stood to one side, glancing about the hall with keenly observant eyes.

"Wa'al," the coroner finally drawled, turning to him, yet not without a deprecatory glance in the direction of Mr. Gordon. "Wa'al, Jim, I s'pose we might as wa'al go over the ground, an' see what we kin make out of it, though from what the squire here says, I misdoubt if we're goin' to git much results."

The deputy sheriff nodded impatiently. Lean, sharp-eyed, all bone and muscle, he reminded me somehow of a hound eager to be off on the scent, and fretting at the delay in starting.

Their inquiry was necessarily postponed a few minutes longer, however, for just then the automobile party comprising the two "Baltimore belles" and their cavalier returned, and our host had to beg a short indulgence while he explained the situation to them.

"This accounts for all the people stopping in the house, does it?" growled the youthful officer to me, jerking his head in the direction of the awed newcomers listening to Mr. Gordon's story.

"All except two," I informed him; "another motor party, a Mr. Ballard and Mrs. Weeks, who started out for the lake, and who will certainly be back before long. They should have been here sooner than this."

"Mrs. Weeks?" he repeated. "Wife of the fellow yonder who was telephoning us in such a fluster, and said he was sure the job must have been done by one of the hired help?

"Guess I know her," he added, as I gave assent. "Lively little woman, with snapping black eyes, that's always bustin' the speed limit sky-high, ain't she? Well, she didn't go to no lake, I can tell you. Not this afternoon."

"What do you mean?" I asked quickly, struck by something in his tone.

"Just what I say. Her and the chap that was with her coming round the corner up by the depot like they was shot out of a gun smashed into a telegraph-pole, and mussed things up considerable.

"Funny you folks hadn't heard of it," noting my startled expression. "Why, that was early in the afternoon—not long after two o'clock, I should say."

"Was Mrs. Weeks hurt?" I demanded.

"No, not a mite. She landed light as a feather, and was up on her feet in a minute; but the machine was a sight, and the fellow that was with her was in pretty bad shape.

"No bones broke, I believe, but so scratched and bruised up that they loaded him on a train which had just pulled in, and took him over to the hospital at Mineola."

"And what became of Mrs. Weeks then?"

"Oh, she bustled round getting her car took over to the shop, and then George Ely coming along in his runabout took her up, and they started off this way. That's what puzzles me, that you say she ain't showed up yet, unless, indeed, she's run into more mischief."

Unheeding his speculations, however, I hastily called Jimmie over, and recited to him what I had just heard.

"What has become of her, do you suppose?" I questioned anxiously. "Hadn't we better commence to do some telephoning, and see if we can get any trace of her?"

But Jimmie, once assured that his sprightly spouse had sustained no injury in the accident, refused to become excited.

"It would be just like Anna," he observed calmly, "to say nothing about the affair, but sneak quietly home and lie low until dinner-time, then giving some plausible excuse for Ballard's non-appearance.

"She is terribly afraid of my forbidding her motor-trips altogether, you see, and as we were leaving here on Monday morning, she mighty readily hope that I would never learn of this particular smash, or raise any question when she told me she had sent the car to the garage for some necessary repairs.

"Two o'clock, you say, this thing hap-

pened?" he asked the deputy sheriff ruminatively. "That would have brought her home, Cook, just about the time you and I were strolling through the grounds. Yes, I'll bet a thousand dollars to a red apple that she's been hiding from me up-stairs in her room all the time."

As he finished, he turned to the stairway, evidently bent upon affirming his conclusions, and when he reappeared a few moments later his air of conscious triumph showed that he had not been mistaken.

"She was playing 'possum up there all right," he whispered to me with a twinkle in his eye. "Although I guess she had really dropped off to sleep, knocked out by the excitement of the accident and all that sort of thing.

"Anyhow, it took me a precious long time to rout her out, and she knew absolutely nothing of all that has been going on down here. She is naturally considerably shaken now at learning there has been a murder in the house; but she says she'll pull herself together and be down right away."

I merely nodded, and did not pursue the subject; for by this time the officers had commenced upon their inquiry, and I was anxious to watch the trend their questioning might take.

The coroner did most of the interrogating, while his companion stood aloof, only occasionally interjecting some curt suggestion; but I could see he was closely following the information elicited, and his keen gray eyes never ceased from studying each one of us in turn.

Mr. Gordon told his story, but, absolved from the haunting fear that he might be incriminating his own son, with much better effect than when he had recited it to the doctor.

Joe gave a straightforward and convincing account of his movements. I followed with what was really more an argument in favor of the innocence of Mr. Gordon and Joe than a relation of my own experiences, being happily substantiated in most of the points I made by Jimmie Weeks.

Then Claridge was called upon, and no longer apprehensive of "letting his mouth run away with him," proved an excellent witness.

All of it was very satisfactory to us of the household seeking to avoid scandal and notoriety, but hardly so to the officers; since the main points of their inquiry—who had killed Major Waring and why?—were as far from solution as at the beginning.

All that had been established so far was that none of us present could possibly be implicated.

The coroner frowned, and directed that Phil Waring be asked to come in. He, since the somewhat painful scene in the death-chamber above, had kept away from the house, betaking himself to a secluded corner of the garden, and remaining seated there upon a bench, his head bowed moodily between his hands.

He must have been aware of the arrival of the officers at the house and known the purpose of their coming; yet he had betrayed no curiosity or interest in the matter, but apparently indifferent, had continued at his solitary reflections.

Now, at the summons, though, he came without delay or hesitation, and with his frank, straightforward answers to the questions put gave as before an impression of absolute sincerity, which made it impossible to believe him in any way concerned.

I could see, moreover, that despite his apparent guilelessness, he had prepared himself in a measure for the ordeal, and thus without injuring the seeming candor of his story he was able to slide lightly over many of the points at which he had stumbled in his colloquy with the doctor.

In regard to the all-important circumstance of the gun, for instance, he no longer insisted that he had taken it up-stairs, but said that although such had been his first impression, he now remembered the talk with Joe and the fact that they had left it in the hall.

How the weapon had got to his room, he professed himself entirely unable to state, and it was undoubtedly true that the same argument which I had advanced to absolve Mr. Gordon in that respect also largely held good with him. It was possible with his younger and fleeter limbs, but hardly probable that he could have had time to commit the murder, take the gun to his room and then return so as to meet me at the door.

In short, his testimony was decidedly favorable to himself, but certainly threw no added light upon the problem.

The coroner looked frankly bewildered at its conclusion, and I noticed that even the deputy sheriff gave a dubious shake of the head. They drew aside for a moment or two, conversing in whispers, then the elder official, turning to Mr. Gordon, asked if they had examined all who were known to be in close proximity at the time of the murder?

"No," the old gentleman told him, "my daughter was up-stairs in her room, and I believe," he turned to Jimmie, "so also was Mrs. Weeks. I am confident that neither of them have any knowledge which will help you out, but, if you wish it, I will have them called."

The coroner rather hesitatingly opined that perhaps "it might look better"; and accordingly a maid was sent with the message, with the result that a moment or two later the two descended the stairs.

At the sound of their light footsteps, I felt a slight involuntary movement on the part of Phil Waring who was standing next to me, and saw his fingers grip convulsively the back of a chair on which his hands rested; but although I glanced almost instantly at his face, his expression was under perfect control, showing not the slightest trace of emotion.

The next second the women appeared at the door.

They tell me that while Mrs. Jimmie was agitated and clutched nervously at her companion's arm, Ethel showed little of the natural feminine apprehension at any matter of legal procedure.

She was pale, but she held her head up, and showed wavering in her step.

They tell me this, I say. As for myself, I do not know. At the moment I was conscious of but one fact.

Both of them were wearing gowns of *blue linen.*

CHAPTER XIII.

"WE'VE GOT THE MAN!"

"LADIES"—the coroner's manner was fairly Chesterfieldian—"I don't suppose that you'll be able to help us out none in gittin' to the root of this here matter; but, since you was close to hand, I'm obliged, under the requirements of the law, to ask you if you know anything about it, and what the both of you was doin' at or about the time the subject of this here inquest come to his death.

"Now, don't git skeered, gals, whatsoever either of you knows, if anything it is."

Responding to this invitation, Ethel answered very simply that she had been in her room the entire afternoon, except for one brief interval between two and three o'clock.

"At which time, as I understand it, you went walkin' out o' doors with young Mr. Waring here?" interposed the coroner, indicating Phil with a sidewise jerk of the head.

Her glance half followed his motion, but was instantly averted again as she threw up her head with a slight compression of the lips. Nor did she even so much as look again in the direction of her lover all the time that she was in the room.

There was no indication of feeling, however, in the even, level tone with which she answered the question—a tone so extraordinarily even and level that it struck me as seeming almost to have been schooled for the occasion.

"Yes," she said, "it was with Mr. Waring. After that"—did I imagine it, or did she really hurry in her speech, as though fearing she might be stopped and asked what Phil and she were talking about?—"after that I returned to my room and resumed my letter-writing.

"I heard a ring at the bell, which I now suppose to have been Major Waring's, but nothing else to denote that anything unusual was taking place in the house. I did not leave my room again." She repeated this, as though to give it emphasis. "I did not leave my room again, nor did I know anything of what had occurred, until I was informed by the maid just now, when she came to tell me that my presence was desired."

She ceased, and, unless I am mistaken, I heard Phil Waring beside me give a quick sigh of relief, and saw his hand slowly relax the grip it had maintained on the back of the chair.

As for Mrs. Jimmie, who was next

called upon to relate her experiences, she was much less direct and concise, showing a tendency in her agitation to drag in all sorts of extraneous and immaterial matters, and insisting on explaining how it was that she had gone to her room without acquainting any one of her return or of the accident she had sustained.

"Of course, I would have told my husband, if he had been anywhere round," she asserted, while a skeptical smile flickered across Jimmie's lips. "But I didn't see any need for all the rest to know, simply so that they could tease me and call me 'joy-rider' and a slaughterer of infants, on account of that young Ballard.

"So I sneaked in, and it was so lonely and tiresome there all by myself that presently I dropped off to sleep. And that's all I know.

"I didn't see anything, or hear anything, or know anything of all the dreadful, mysterious things going on until Jimmie came up-stairs and told me. And if you were to put me on the rack and torture me with thumb-screws, I couldn't tell you anything more."

Absorbed in my own reflections, I had for the most part paid small heed to Mrs. Jimmie's voluble narrative; but, as she came to her concluding sentences, I suddenly raised my head.

The subtle sixth sense which a lawyer cultivates from dealing with all sorts and conditions of witnesses told me that she was lying.

The rest of her statements had been accurate enough, or at least as accurate as a woman of Mrs. Jimmie's temperament could make any statement; but when she said she knew nothing which could help out this investigation, I felt it in my bones she was lying.

She was wilfully withholding information. For what purpose or reason, of course I could not say; but that she was deliberately not telling all she knew, I was as positive as that I stood there in my shoes.

Neither did I believe that a recourse to the rack and thumb-screws which she had invoked would be necessary to unseal her lips. A good, stiff cross-examination, I had no doubt, would speedily overthrow her already shaking resolution, and my fingers fairly itched to get at her.

But the present was not the time for that. I promised it to myself as a deferred pleasure, to be indulged in when we two were quite alone.

The coroner and his associate, however, evidently detected nothing questionable in her eager protests, and, after a few more unimportant questions, let her go, as they previously had Ethel.

This exhausted the list of persons who might reasonably be supposed to have any direct knowledge of the crime; and the two officers, upon Jimmie Weeks's suggestion, proceeded to take up Randolph Newman's theory with its rather dramatic exemplification.

I watched him for a time at his maneuvers as he darted here and there about the room, playing the part of the murderer; but it was a twice-told tale to me, and, presently growing tired of the spectacle, I strolled out on the lawn in front of the house, and tried to piece together my disjointed impressions, so as to form a distinct and reasonable hypothesis.

I had not proceeded far, however, with the rather difficult task before Joe came out to join me. His eyes were shining, and he was evidently lost in a maze of admiration.

"By Jove, that man Newman is a wonder, ain't he?" he exclaimed. "Makes you see a thing just as though it was really happening.

"Now, I was all at sea about the way Major Waring might have got killed, and I would almost have sworn that none of the servants had a hand in it; but since I've seen Newman show how it could have been done, I am almost convinced he is hitting close to the truth.

"And I am not the only one, either," he went on. "That young sheriff, if I'm not mistaken, is just about of the same opinion. You know how kind of stand-offish he was, not paying any attention to what the rest of us said.

"Well, he's altogether different with Newman; keeps quizzing him, and talking to him, and nodding his head to just about everything Randolph says."

I could not repress a slight exclamation of impatience. It seemed I had been greatly mistaken in the superior intelligence I had ascribed to this young fellow, if he could be taken in by such arrant rodomontade and play-acting.

"Randolph is certainly a dandy, though, when it comes to describing anything. You ought to have been down here night before last, when he had us all simply splitting our sides at a story about a young fellow paying off an old shark of a money-lender who had expected him to default payment.

"The way he pictured the disconcerted surprise on that old shark's face was certainly a scream. Dad made him go over it three times, and I believe laughed harder every time."

"So, Newman told your father a story of that kind, did he?"

"Yes, and do you know I believe that's where dad got his idea of paying off old Major Waring personally and in cash?"

Something of the same idea had already struck me, and with it the unpleasant reflection that a person who wanted to get a large sum within easy reach might well have engaged in such a prompting with ulterior motives; but I hurriedly put the thought from me.

I was getting suspicious of everybody, I told myself. Surely Newman, who had been so open and candid with me, and who had revealed such singular nobility of soul — Newman, if anybody, should be beyond my jaundiced conjectures.

I must say I got a little tired of hearing him extolled as a wonder-worker, though; for presently the coroner came out to me singing Newman's praises as enthusiastically as Joe had done.

"We was pretty well up in the air, I don't mind tellin' you, Mr. Cook," he said. "But, thanks to that there Mr. Newman, we're headed on the right track now, I guess; an' there'll be somethin' doin' afore long."

"Something doing?" I questioned. "You don't really mean to tell me that you have hit upon a solution of this puzzle?"

"Pretty near it, Mr. Cook," he laughed. "Pretty near it. You see, our idees was sot at fust that it must have been Gordon or Phil Waring on account of the bad feelin' existin', an' that kind o' blinded us from seein' the straight of things; but when this here young Newman showed us how easy it could have been one of the help, it didn't take us long to figger out the man."

"The man!" I exclaimed.

"Sure; it was that dough-faced butler, there can't be no manner of doubt about it. Jim is givin' him the third degree now in the hope of makin' him confess; but whether he does or not, we're goin' to take him along. We've got enough to hold him on for the present, and more against him'll be sure to crop up before it comes time for him to stand his trial."

I could only gasp.

Claridge! Claridge, the impeccable! It had never entered my head to suspect him, nor did I believe that he was guilty now; yet I readily saw how the circumstances told against him.

He might have robbed the safe, and afterward have killed Major Waring so as to throw suspicion off his trail. In fact, his insistence upon Mr. Gordon's guilt rather lent color to such a theory.

Certainly, he had had ample opportunity to commit both crimes; and he, too, so far as we knew, was the only one upon the scene who could have had time to carry the gun up-stairs to Phil's room and regain the first floor in the interval before he was summoned to the drawing-room.

"But—but—" I stammered, catching at the one incident in his favor, "he turned over the money."

"Got scared," laconically explained the coroner. "Lots of 'em does that. They're bold enough until the thing's all over, an' then they'll git the shivers and 'll throw away all they went after in the hopes of not gittin' found out. I knowed a chap one time—

"But there," he interrupted himself, as a low, shrill whistle came from around at the rear of the house, "that's Jim a signalin' for me. He's either got what he wanted, or else he thinks there ain't no use in tryin' any more for the present. At any rate, it means we take him to town with us, an' he wants me to bring the bracelets."

So, tugging at a pair of clumsy handcuffs which seemed to have become jammed in his pocket, he broke into a run and passed around the corner of the house.

I stood there quite dumfounded by this sudden turn of events, so absorbed, indeed, that I did not observe Newman had approached and was standing beside

me, until I started at the sight of the butler, heavily ironed, being led out toward their buggy by his captors.

"Look at your work," I said indignantly. "There goes Claridge."

"Yes," he answered lightly, "'he walks between with gyves upon his wrists.'"

I started to reply, but on second thought decided not to, and walked away. He may not have remembered the source of his quotation, but I did. It was from the poem of "Eugene Aram" in the old school-book readers.

He had given me food for thought, and as a result I sent that night a long telegram to a firm of New York detectives with whom I had had previous dealings, and whom I know to be reliable.

CHAPTER XIV.

A MIDNIGHT VISION.

WITH the arrest of Claridge, the tension upon us all somewhat relaxed, and matters at Blenheim assumed something approaching a normal tone.

The butler might or might not be guilty. I do not think in our hearts any of us believed he was.

But at least something definite had been accomplished. We no longer needed to eye each other askance every moment, and constantly hold our breaths in dread of an explosion.

Whatever the future might have to bring forth, there was, for the present at any rate, a sense of relief in the knowledge that the theory of the officers would be generally accepted, and that no skeletons would be dragged out of closets to flaunt their clanking bones in a whirl of rife speculation.

It was rough on Claridge, no doubt, if he were really innocent; but it gave the rest of us a breathing spell for which we could not well help but be thankful.

Our party, in the essentials, remained about as it had been before. The "Baltimore belles," with their escort of the afternoon, took their departure immediately, and Phil Waring returned as master to the home whose dust he had shaken from his feet.

Newman stayed on at the request of the coroner to render further assistance, I at the urgent appeal of Mr. Gordon; and Mrs. Jimmie Weeks was so hysterical and agitated over her experiences that she developed a fever and took to her bed, with Jimmie playing devoted attendance upon her as a sick nurse.

The interview which I had promised myself with her was thus necessarily postponed; but I made up my mind very distinctly that she should not escape from Blenheim without giving me her confidence.

The very first opportunity that I could catch her alone, I would find out what it was she was trying to conceal.

Things returned at Blenheim, I say, to almost their normal tone; and yet the absence of Claridge was easy to be noted. The house no longer ran on greased wheels, as it were, as when under the control of that master hand.

The underling promoted to his place did his best; but dinner was late and poor, the service far from smooth, and I could see that the entire routine of the household, indeed, was upset by countless little flurries and discords.

One of these, for instance, which happened to fall under my notice, was in connection with the packing up of Phil Waring's things.

He had sent a man over from Deepdene to gather together his belongings, and it seemed that a certain gray suit was missing from the list.

If Claridge had been on hand, the matter would have been straightened out without trouble; but, as it was, the loss occasioned such high words and such an amount of shrill recrimination between the representatives of the respective establishments, that the turmoil became audible all over the house.

In fact, I doubt not that the substitute butler, resentful of the aspersions cast upon his honesty, would have promptly proceeded to punch the Deepdene servant's head if Newman had not appeared at that moment with the missing apparel and explained that it had been left in his room by mistake after pressing.

If Waring's messenger brought disorder and tumult to the back of the house, however, it must also be admitted that he bore balm for certain anxieties still troubling those in front; for he was

charged with a note from his master to Mr. Gordon in which Phil begged the latter to keep the ten thousand dollars and use it to relieve Joe's entanglement.

"Any further accommodation which I can show you," the note concluded, "I trust, dear Mr. Gordon, you will not hesitate to ask. It will not only be a pleasure to me personally, but also a redress for the difficulties to which you have been put, which I believe my father himself would have offered had he returned to his real self.

"For, in reviewing the history of the past few months, I cannot account for his unreasonable hostility toward such an old friend as you, or, indeed, his conduct in relation to myself, on any other theory than that he had lost his mind.

"This, I believe, not only because it is a charitable view to take, but also because of the many evidences of an erratic and whimsical disposition which I have discovered in the management of affairs here at Deepdene.

"At any rate, I want you, Mr. Gordon, to regard me in the same light as you did him, prior to your unhappy disagreement, and to avail yourself freely of any assistance which I may be able to offer.

"Do not for a moment be deterred from accepting the ten thousand by reason of a fear that I may have use for it on Monday for the guarantee of which I was speaking to you. I am, of course, in a financial position now to secure any amount that I may need, in case I should still decide to go after the contract."

"Well, that is certainly very handsome of Phil," commented Joe, showing by the long breath he drew what a relief was this final lifting of the burden which had rested on his young shoulders.

"It's good of him not to preach, too, as he might so easily have done, with my foolishness as a text. I guess he knows, though, that I've had my lesson good and strong, and that if I should ever speculate again after this, whatever he might say now would only be a waste of words."

"Yes," his father repeated thoughtfully, "it's very handsome of him, and just what he might have been expected to do with that big heart of his. But does it not strike you as a little strange that, in view of his intimate relations here, he should have made the offer in writing, rather than to have come himself?"

"Oh, I don't know." Joe shook his head. "He's naturally knocked out by what has happened, and no doubt feels a little embarrassment and stiffness over showing up here so soon. On the other hand, he wanted to relieve you at once from any bother or uncertainty over what he intended to do. No, no, dad, I don't see anything remarkable at all in his having written."

"Still," pondered Mr. Gordon, "he might at least have said when he was coming over, or have indicated when it would have been convenient for him to see me at Deepdene. Why, he has not even sent any word here to Ethel, nor has she had any other message from him. I asked the man particularly, and he said he was only charged with the delivery of the one note. That certainly looks a trifle odd."

Joe, however, was inclined to think that, under the circumstances, nothing ought to be considered odd, and I ostensibly agreed with him, although secretly I shared some of Mr. Gordon's feeling that there was something underneath the young man's staying away from Blenheim.

That there was a misunderstanding or coolness of some character between him and Ethel, I could not doubt. The horror, affliction, and tribulation incident to the tragedy would not have sufficed to so estrange them; those were the very circumstances which would draw people in their condition together for mutual solace and sympathy.

Yet she had proudly averted her glance from him at the inquest, nor had he sought her out at any time, or even so much as exchanged a word with her. And he was still maintaining a stubborn silence, not so much as mentioning her in the note he had sent to her father. Was this the action of the lover which Phil Waring had always shown himself?

Yes, there was unquestionably a serious breach between the two. But what was the cause?

That was a point which might mean much, but upon which I was all at sea. Had it arisen at that conference between them out in the garden prior to the mur-

der, or was it of later origin, due to the murder itself — due to some knowledge which one held in regard to the other concerning that gruesome event?

In the latter case, this lovers' quarrel —usually a pretty and diverting circumstance—might come to have a dire and portentous significance.

I had small time to debate the question then, however, or to decide upon any line of action for myself; for just then the bell began to ring, and for an hour or more I was busy in seeing the reporters and giving out the statement which Mr. Gordon had entrusted me to make on behalf of the family.

There was little chance for musing or deliberation, as may well be imagined, while I was dodging the shrewd interrogatories of the "press-gang," and, though really suppressing all that I could, trying to appear perfectly open and candid in my responses; but at last, after an hour or more of it, I got rid of the last of them, and, lighting a cigar, strolled out in the grounds to be alone and draw my scattered wits together.

I smoked and thought, and thought and smoked, until two cigars had been consumed, and still I was no nearer getting light upon the problem which perplexed me than I had been in the beginning.

It was growing late. All the windows of the house had by this time become darkened, and the people within were no doubt already wrapped in sleep.

It was getting damp and chilly out in the grounds, too, with the moon down and a wraithlike mist coming up from the bay.

I felt a twinge of my old enemy, rheumatism; and, throwing away my smoked-out cigar, decided to go in. Perhaps a night's sleep would bring me clearer perceptions, and enable me to read the riddle.

At present, all I could do was go round in a circle like a cat chasing its own tail.

If Phil and Ethel's misunderstanding was a merely trivial one, rising between them previous to the murder, it was very unlike the girl to have stood aloof from him in his trouble.

If I knew her aright, she would have sunk all considerations of pride or offense at such a time, and have stood shoulder to shoulder with him to face whatever might occur.

Yet, if the alienation was a result or consequence of the murder, one of two things seemed certain: either she knew or suspected him of some guilty connection with that fact, or he held the same knowledge or suspicion in regard to her.

Was it she whose blue linen dress I had seen whisk from behind the music-room door? Then she must either know who shot down old Major Waring, or—have done the deed herself!

Had she done it? Had he seen her on his hurried entrance to the house, and fled, stricken with horror, from the place? Was that the reason he now stayed away from her?

Or, had he done it? Had she seen him at the parricidal act and shrunk, cowering, away from the spectacle?

Had it been with inward revolt and shuddering that she turned her eyes from him at the inquest?

Either hypothesis was absolutely untenable to me. I simply could not believe that Ethel Gordon had done this thing, nor doubt the sincerity of Waring's story that his father had already been slain before he reached his side.

Yet I was sure that neither of them had so far divulged all that they knew about the affair. Each was striving to conceal and cover up some damning point. What was it?

So I whipped my weary reasoning powers round and round the stump, and arrived at no place.

There was every indication, I admitted, that either one or the other of the pair was guilty; yet I was positive, with a conviction which could not be shaken, that both were absolutely innocent.

Who, then, is the murderer, I asked myself, trying another tack; Claridge?

No, I was equally certain it was not Claridge. In fact, the only person toward whom I could even raise a suspicion was Randolph Newman; and that was absurd. Not only was I without logical reason for doubting him, but the man had an unassailable alibi. By the testimony of a United States government clock, he was five miles away from the scene at the time the crime had been committed.

As I say, the problem was undecipherable to me, dark and uncertain to my mental vision as the foggy night had be-

come to my physical eyes. I took one more turn as far down as where the woodland commenced, in the hope of clarifying my wits, then gave it up and started for the house.

But at that moment a glimmer of light showed at the front door. It opened cautiously, and was softly closed again; but in the interval I saw that a woman had emerged.

Guided more by the sound of her footsteps than by any sense of sight, I hurried over to a path I realized she was following, and crouched down in the shelter of a big bush.

A moment later she passed, and, glancing out from my concealment, I saw that it was Ethel Gordon.

CHAPTER XV.

ETHEL'S ERRAND.

WITH a lightness and agility which surprised even myself, I darted out from under the bush and followed hard upon the girl's trail.

What she was doing out in the grounds alone at this time of night I could not imagine; but I was certain that her excursion had something to do with the mystery which had so successfully baffled me, and I was determined not to lose this chance of gaining a clue to its solution.

Yet it was, I soon found, no easy task which I had set myself.

I had, of course, the mist and darkness of the night in my favor as a screen to cover me in case she should turn and glance back; still this was equally a disadvantage, for I had to creep so close to keep her in sight that there was constant danger she might hear my movements, and, recognizing that she was under espionage, desist from her purpose.

By keeping to the grass as much as I could, and stepping along on tiptoe when I was compelled to resort to the path, I managed to overcome this hazard to a considerable extent, and at the same time hold within a few feet of her during the entire course of her ramble.

Ramble, though, is hardly the proper word to use, after all; for she walked straight along, swiftly, undeviatingly, and evidently with a direct aim in view.

Manifestly, too, she deemed herself safe from pursuit or watching, both on account of the character of the night and because she had probably assured herself that all within the house were asleep before she ventured out.

At any rate, she showed, as I say, no hesitation or excess of caution in her movements; but proceeded, without faltering or divergence, right along the path leading to the shore.

The way led her close to the edge of the Deepdene boundary-line; and as I realized the direction she was taking, the suspicion woke within me that it might perhaps be a romantic rendezvous she was seeking with her lover.

Had I been merely an old fool, then, poking around into mare's nests, and inventing mysteries where none existed? For a moment I was almost decided to spare myself the attack of rheumatism which I knew this adventure would bring on, and return to the house.

But no, the reflection came immediately. There were too many unexplained circumstances in connection with this pair to permit of it being a simple tryst.

If she were going to meet her fiancé, it was to hear some statement from him, or to give him one on her own behalf; and I must overhear what passed between them.

So I plodded along in her wake more doggedly than ever, giving her no chance to slip out of my sight, but ranging up so close that at times I could almost have touched her with my outstretched hand.

It soon became apparent, moreover, that the conjecture I had made in regard to her destination and purpose was a mistake. She turned where a branching path would have led her over into the Deepdene property, and continued on the straight line to the bay.

Ahead of her now loomed up the combination boat and bathing house and the landing; but she did not stop. Out on the little dock she walked—out to its very end, and stood looking over into the deep, black water underneath.

A sudden, new apprehension seized me as to her intention. To call out to her would, by startling her, probably precipitate the catastrophe I feared. Neither for the same reason could I rush out and

seize her, since she would undoubtedly hear my approaching footsteps on the bare planks.

Spellbound with horror, I stood there unable to decide upon any line of action, almost unable to think.

I was conscious, as one is of minor things at such intense moments, that a gust of wind was blowing across my face. Under its impetus, the fog lifted like a veil, and the girl's slender figure stood there plainly revealed in the clear starlight.

I saw her raise one hand as though in a gesture of farewell, and expected the next instant to behold her fatal plunge, the dark waters closing over her bonny head, while I stood helpless, unable to interfere.

But, just as a shout of desperation was about to burst from my stiff lips, I saw a tall form spring out of the darkness, reach her side in a couple of leaps, clasp her in his arms, and drag her back, struggling and protesting, to the shore. It was Phil Waring.

"You shall not do it, Ethel!" he panted. "I will not let you! No matter what you have done, suicide is not the way to end it!"

"Suicide?" she demanded. "Did you think you had driven me to that? No; I came here merely to destroy the proofs of your guilt—the empty shells I took from your gun!"

"My guilt?" He started back from her.

"Certainly." Her tone thrilled with scorn. "Would you deny to me your responsibility for that old man's death?"

"I see." His head drooped. "You mean, that I put it into your mind with my angry denunciation of him in the garden, when I shook my fist and said I wished he were dead? How I have repented—"

"Oh!" she cried indignantly. "You put it into my mind? What do you mean?"

"I mean," sadly, "that I suppose you got from that wickedly foolish remark the impulse which led you to kill him."

"I kill him!" she flung out amazedly. "I!"

"What else can I believe, Ethel, when I saw you standing above his dead body with the gun in your hand? You may have done it in the belief that you were helping me, or for the sake of your father or Joe; but—"

"Stop!" she commanded imperiously. "Save your pitiful lies for other ears than mine! You dare accuse me? You, whom I *know* to be his father's murderer? You, whom I saw fleeing with guilty fear in his face up the right-hand flight of stairs as I came down the left to be confronted with the body of your victim?

"I did not utterly condemn you," she went on passionately, heedless of his attempted interruptions. "I knew the wrongs you had suffered at that old man's hands. All thought of marriage between us was over; but I was willing to do all in my power to shield you.

"I took away the weapon you had used and drew the shells from it. I concealed the truth. I let an innocent man be arrested for your crime. Whether I would have let him suffer the penalty, and kept silence, I cannot say; at least, I let him be arrested.

"But to think that you should charge me with the crime you yourself committed!" Her voice rang with contemptuous resentment. "That passes the limits of effrontery. Oh, to think that I once should have loved such a thing masquerading in the guise of a man! You coward! You coward! You coward!"

And with that stinging taunt upon her lips, she turned and sped toward the house as fast as her feet could carry her.

Waring, who had winced under the lash of her tongue as though under the blows of a whip, stood as if numbed a moment; then started furiously in pursuit.

"Ethel! Ethel!" he called.

But she only fled the faster along the paths; and when he came to the edge of the woodland, with me pounding hard in his wake, we saw her mounting the steps of the house, and a moment later the front door closed with a bang. She was inside.

What he might have done then, in his impetuous frenzy, I do not know; but, fortunately, the slam of the door brought him to a momentary halt, and enabled me to reach his side.

"Cook!" he exclaimed as I came up and seized him by the arm; then, ex-

citedly: "Go in the house, and tell Ethel to come right out here. I must see her at once."

"Not now, not now," I attempted to calm him. "She is too overwrought now, and she would not listen. You must wait until to-morrow."

"But there has been some hideous mistake," he protested. "She accuses me of things I never did, and claims to have seen me in places I never was. How can she make such statements," he paused darkly, "unless, indeed, it is to clear her own skirts at my expense? Why, I am quite certain she knows that I know she did it."

"Listen to me, Phil Waring." I gripped him sternly by the shoulder. "Ethel Gordon is innocent."

"What!"

"I will pledge my life upon the truth of what I say. But, my boy, allow me to assure you that she honestly believes that you are guilty."

"What?" he cried again.

He seemed too dazed at first fully to take in what I was trying to tell him. He could only shake his head hopelessly and mutter something about "seeing was believing."

"Ah, but that is just the trouble," I insisted. "Seeing is not always believing, as both you and Ethel have got to learn. As you say, there has been a hideous mistake in this matter, my boy; but it is a mistake on your part as much as hers."

"No," he protested, "it is good of you, Cook, to try and deceive me; but I tell you, I saw."

"And does not she say she saw, too?" I demanded impatiently. "Was there not indignant truth in every word she flung at you down there on the shore to-night?

"Is Ethel Gordon the girl to have invented such a fabrication as she describes? I do not believe she would lie like that even to save herself from the stake."

"But it is not so, Cook. I never passed her on the stairs, as she claims. I never saw her until I confronted her rising up from my father's dead body with the gun in her hands. We stared at each other a moment, not exchanging a word; then she backed slowly, her eyes dilating, toward the folding doors behind her, and I fled wildly from the house."

"Exactly," I commented, taking a leaf from Newman's book and hastily "reconstructing the picture" from their joint confessions; "but would not her actions have been just the same—would she not have recoiled in the same way—if she had believed that you were your father's murderer returned to the scene of the crime?

"I tell you, Waring, that girl is not lying. She passed you, or, rather, some one she supposed to be you, on the stairs. When you saw her taking away the gun from beside your father's corpse, she was simply trying to shield you, as she has declared.

"Can you doubt it, man? Can you doubt it, when all her subsequent actions so plainly bear out the truth of her statements? Knowing Ethel Gordon as you do, can you really in your heart believe that she is the one who committed this terrible deed?"

"No," he answered with a sudden glad ring of conviction in his voice. "You are right, Cook. She did not do it.

"But, oh," he dropped his head in his hands with a groan, "she will never forgive me for my lack of faith!"

"Nonsense." I clapped him on the shoulder to hearten him up. "There is a homely old proverb, remember, about the pot not being able to call the kettle black."

He raised his head, seemingly comforted by this bit of philosophy; but even as he did so he was struck by another thought, and clutched me vehemently by the sleeve.

"Who," he questioned sharply, "was the man she passed on the stairs?"

"Ah," I said, "that is what we've got to find out. I'll tell you one thing, though. It certainly wasn't Claridge, or you, or me, or Mr. Gordon, or Joe, or Ballard, or that other young fellow, or Jimmie Weeks."

"But you have left Newman out of your list—have you not?" he exclaimed.

"Yes," I answered dryly, "I have left Newman out."

(To be continued.)

By Way of the Windows.

BY EDWARD FRANK ALLEN.

Wherein the Apparently Humble and Meek are Exalted, and the Mighty Fall—Though They Keep Very Quiet About It.

HER name is Gretchen.

I know, because another girl called from a window adjacent to hers: "How soon are you going, Gretchen?" And she replied: "In about an hour; I have my hat to put on."

Now, if Gretchen had been speaking to a man she would have said, "I'll be ready in a jiffy"; and kept the poor fellow waiting just as long. But in this particular instance there could not have been a man, for Gretchen has a room in the Minnehaha, a hotel for women.

My window and hers face each other, being separated by a court possibly thirty feet wide, and frequently, as I happen to glance in that direction, I see her fussing in one way and another about her room. It is not my intention to give Gretchen away, but I will say that she is an awful fusser.

No other word is quite as descriptive of her feminine ways.

I am not interested in this neighbor of mine, except in a negative way. I am more or less of a student of human nature, and this specimen attracts me. She is rather pretty too, but that is neither here nor there. I have jotted down a few notes about her in my diary.

June 3, Tuesday.

My typewriter was busy all the morning. I have moved my desk over to the window, so any breeze that happens to be stirring will blow over me as well as fan my papers into the four corners of the room, and the change seems to stimulate the flow of ideas.

The story on which I have been working since April is beginning to take form, and I am quite encouraged as to its outcome. I don't know whether to have it brought out in book form first or to sell the serial rights to some magazine. To speculate on how it will be published before it is even finished is a little premature, but it is my way.

I think I could have written an extra thousand words, if I had not been watching Gretchen out of the corner of my eye for the first hour or so.

Wednesday.

The good work goes on. To-day I ground out five thousand words at least. At this rate I should finish the story in a week; and I think I shall, for I feel very fit and in working trim.

This morning I had a surprise.

After breakfast, when I sat down to my typewriter, I glanced at the window across the court and saw Gretchen working diligently at a typewriter that looked suspiciously like mine.

"Well, of all the original ways of flirting," I thought, "that takes the palm." The idea of that girl's getting a typewriter and sitting in front of the window in that brazen manner."

It was preposterous. I would give her no encouragement. I looked over there once or twice to see how much attention she was giving her work, but saw nothing to indicate that her mind was not on what she was doing.

Then I concluded that Gretchen was making her living by typing copies of manuscript at five cents a hundred words, and I pitied her a little, for it was a beastly hot morning.

When I remembered that the Hotel

Minnehaha was reputed to be the most expensive feminine hostelry in the city, my theory exploded. I wonder who Gretchen is.

Thursday.

Another day like this and my story will be well along toward completion. It will be shorter than I expected, but none of its force will be lost thereby.

I think I shall submit it to the *Woman's Home Bazaar,* or some other high-class periodical for women.

Friday.

Being interrupted is the bane of a writer's existence. Personally I would rather wait and submit to tar and feathers, but I never seem to have the luxury of choosing. Interruptions always come when I am hardest at work in the middle of the forenoon or afternoon, as the case may be.

About half past ten I heard a voice call: "Say!" I called back: "Say it!" Then I looked up, and saw—Gretchen. She was leaning out of her window, waving a paper in my direction.

"Well?" I inquired, trying to conceal my impatience and at the same time look dignified. She paused to push back a wisp of curly hair that a puff of wind had blown across her face. She did it very gracefully, and I melted a little.

"I am sorry to interrupt you," she said, "but I just broke the space-bar on my machine—"

"Perhaps I could fix it for you; your machine seems to be the same make as mine, and I am familiar enough with it to—"

"Oh, dear, no; thank you just as much, but I should like you to do the rest of my copying, if you will. What is your price per hundred words?"

I was game. The thing had gone so far that I would see it through. So I said, "I charge five cents a hundred words, including a carbon copy of each sheet."

"All right," she replied, "I'll toss over the manuscript. Can you catch it?"

"You'd better not risk it," I cautioned; "let me get a string." So I weighted a long string with a piece of petrified wood that I had brought from the Yosemite, and tossed it over to Gretchen. She caught it more skilfully than I had expected, took off the weight, and tied on the manuscript, which I then drew back to my window.

"Thank you," she said; "when can you have it done?"

"To-morrow, probably," I replied.

Then Gretchen put on her hat and went out. I looked at the manuscript. There were fifteen or twenty sheets of closely written foolscap, and, as nearly as I could make out, the article was on the subject of the proper feeding of infants.

The grim humor of the situation forced itself upon me. Here was a young mother who wrote magazine articles, and who made the same mistake about me as I made about her. But why should a young mother be living a solitary life at the Hotel Minnehaha, a dismally Adamless Eden, and why this, and why that?

A hundred questions popped into my head.

I fell asleep four times while copying that manuscript, and when at last it was done I was too tired to work on my story, so I went out in the park and fed the squirrels.

Saturday.

I have not seen a sign of Gretchen to-day, and in consequence came within a chapter or two of the end of the story. I shall call it, "Perrugino; a Romance."

Gretchen's type-copy rests on the top of my desk. If she does not ask for it soon, there will be demurrage to pay.

Monday.

At noon I wrote "Finis" on the end of my story. At one o'clock, having lunched, I took it and sallied forth.

(That is what *Perrugino* did when he went to avenge the murder of his uncle; he sallied. I like the word. I once knew a girl named Sally; she was outrageously fat.)

It was not my habit to accompany my work to the editor—I generally mailed it—but to-day was so pleasant that I took it right to the offices of the *Woman's Home Bazaar.* There I was waylaid by the editor's office-boy, a snub-nosed, freckle-faced youth of perhaps twelve years, who took my card to the sanctum.

Evidently the editor had heard of me before, as I was given an audience immediately. Facing the door, at a broad, flat-topped desk littered with papers, was the editor—Gretchen.

I do not know which of us was the more surprised. In my hand was the manuscript of my story.

Before I had time to speak, Gretchen had spied it, and exclaimed: "Oh, my typewriting! I had forgetten it. I am so sorry to keep you waiting for your money. How much is it?"

Now, was it my entire lack of humor or my extreme sensitiveness to it that led me to do what I did. I said:

"I merely came to remind you of it. There were two thousand, six hundred words; at five cents per hundred the price comes to one dollar and thirty cents. This is not your work that I have with me. I shall send it to you when I reach home. You may mail me a check."

Tuesday.

The check came. I shall have it framed.

Wednesday.

Gretchen and I fed the squirrels together to-day.

ROMANCE.

I AM the flame that leaps from every fire
Of youth or skill or genius or of strength,
I am the wind that smote Apollo's lyre
And made sweet music through Eola's length.

I am the sand of ancient Egypt, where
Strange caravans crept through the warm, still gloom;
I am the fantom isles, the mirage fair
That lured forgotten heroes to their doom.

I am the waves that beat upon the shore
Of Camelot, and harked to Merlin's call;
I am the cloak of darkness Siegfried bore,
The talisman that loosed Brunhilda's thrall.

I am the fragrance of the forest trail,
The whispered voices of the trees above;
I am the breath of beauty, and the veil
That hides with tender touch the faults of love.

I steal through cities, and I haunt the moor;
I bear my golden flag through Time, unfurled:
Though rich in gold, who knows me not is poor—
Who knows me, holds in fief the whole, wide world!

Charlotte Becker.

Knights of the Caribbee.*

BY STEPHEN CHALMERS,
Author of "The Vanishing Smuggler," "A Daughter of the Armada."

Fighters, Many and Various, Mix on the Spanish Main, with a Woman as Spoils of the Victor.

SYNOPSIS OF PRECEDING CHAPTERS.

JOHN PIGGOTT, Quaker, is sentenced to prison at Port Royal by the Governor of Jamaica for treasonable conduct. He is freed through the intervention of Katharine Vernon, daughter of Colonel Vernon, commander of the royal forces at Port Royal. Previously, when Katharine was at the mercy of Harry Morgan, the buccaneer, John had protected her. When Colonel Vernon learns Harry Morgan is at hand, he challenges him to a duel for the insult offered his daughter. Tom Lockhart, Katharine's sweetheart, is his second. The colonel is mortally wounded. Dying, he commends Katharine to Lockhart's care. At the Vernon house Lockhart hears the slaves moaning that the buccaneers have carried Katharine away.

Lockhart, returning to the Vernon house, finds Katharine abducted by the buccaneers. He rushes to the harbor, and though, with no formulated plan of rescue, boards Morgan's ship, the Revenge. He finds the governor saying farewell to the pirate, who is about to sail for Panama on a raid wherein the British are at least tacitly interested. Lockhart is wounded by Morgan, but cared for by Piggott, the Quaker, who has hidden himself on the ship after ascertaining that Katharine is aboard. He has so played upon Morgan's superstitions that the pirate allows the three freedom of the ship. Arriving off Santa Catarina, it is determined, with the help of one Davy Brock, a recalcitrant pirate, that Katharine is to go ashore and warn the governor of the island that Morgan is about to attack. Hardly has she been lowered into the longboat, when there come loud shouts for "Davy Brock!"

Arriving off the Spanish fort, Santa Catarina, Katharine, aided by a recalcitrant pirate, named Davy Brock, escapes to the shore, makes her way into the governor's presence, only to find him a traitor to Spain, who has sold himself to Morgan, and who now, after haggling with the buccaneer, redelivers her to him. Back they go to the Revenge, where her two friends, Lockhart and Piggott, again care for her. Brock, fearing for his life at Morgan's hands, hangs himself, and the sight of his swinging body exercises a fearful influence on the superstitions of the pirate. He becomes intoxicated, delivers a fiery speech to his men, and orders all to sail to Chagres, the eastern end of the Isthmian trail leading to Panama. Chagres is found in flames, having fallen into the hands of an advance guard of Morgan's. The buccaneer serves rum all round; a scene of fearful debauchery ensues, during which the Revenge runs on a reef, and Katharine, Lockhart, and Piggott, decide that the moment has come for effecting their escape.

CHAPTER XIII *(Continued).*

MORGAN knew he had only himself to blame for the hideous state of affairs—the blood-chilling orgie that grew madder and madder beneath him in the furiously blazing town.

That yielding to the bowl of oblivion, after the moments spent in the cabin with Davy Brock, was at the root of it all.

Davy Brock — that worthless, weak-kneed white-liver! To think that a fool like him should have been the cause of—this! For a moment Morgan thought of the man as he had last seen him, dingling and dangling on nothing, with a mocking tongue stuck at him and the semblance of a silly grin on his face.

The buccaneer shuddered and cursed out loud. Try as he might, he could not shake the memory which recurred at intervals as he looked upon the insane

* This story began in The Cavalier for January.

streets of the lust-ridden town. Now the man was cowering behind Katharine, now he was hanging in the cabin, and again he was down in the dark, green, slimy weed of the sea-bottom, where they had pitched him.

And Davy was still, to Morgan's imagination, grinning at this, his work, with his tongue stuck out in rigid insolence.

Morgan hitched himself together with a snarl. To-morrow! He must think of to-morrow! What effect would this have upon to-morrow and to-morrow and to-morrow? The Spaniards had fled. They would warn the Spaniards in every settlement and town between the Atlantic coast and the Pacific capital.

Morgan knew enough of the dread that his name inspired to know that the Spaniards, from Chagres to Panama, would join the westward panic-stricken rush. Supposing they set fire to their towns as they went? Supposing they carried their provisions with them and destroyed what they could not carry?

There was the dread in Morgan's mind.

He had vowed to lead three thousand men across that fifty miles between sea and sea to Panama and victory. Only fifty miles, but the most dreaded fifty miles on the Spanish main.

Fever, stagnation, reptiles, Indians—and no food for his army of three thousand clamorous men! But he had sworn it. He had sworn it! And, by Heaven, he would do it, even if he came to the walls of that Pacific treasure-store with a remnant of three and suffered ignominious defeat! He had cast the die. He would abide by the luck.

Luck! He suddenly remembered.

He turned sharply to the east. The dawn was breaking. Against the roseate hues of the far horizon he could see the spars of the Revenge and of the other two frigates silhouetted at significant angles. With the pang of regret at the loss of his flag-ship came the memory of the woman.

Where was she? What had become of her? Was she still aboard? Or had that fiendish Quaker taken advantage of the panic to smuggle her ashore?

He reflected with a chuckle that, even if she had been brought ashore, it would be hard to lose her on this enemy-ridden strip of land. But he must find her—at once! Perhaps, if he found her and kept her close by him— Pah! But he must find her.

He swiftly left the house and walked toward the beach with his hat pulled over his eyes. As he neared the outskirts of the town, where the road diverged to the beach and the fort, he revealed himself to a few of the pirates who happened to be in knots of twos and threes.

In small numbers they still feared him enough to restrain their boisterous enthusiasm. He made up a boat's crew, and presently sailed on the now incoming tide toward his wrecked flagship. Alone he boarded her, and alone he walked to the cabin where she had lodged.

It was empty. The cabins of Piggott and Lockhart were also empty. He traversed the ship from end to end, walking as if the vessel were the haunt of ghosts. There was not a sound, save for the washing of the sea on the reef. There was not a soul aboard the Revenge, except the fantom of Davy Brock.

She was gone. Henry Morgan had lost his luck!

From the hiding-place in the brush Piggott and Lockhart watched the boat return. They knew what Morgan sought, and they knew he had suffered disappointment.

Presently, while the two men and the girl held their breath, Morgan and his crew returned up the path toward the town. The buccaneer was walking ahead, with his cloak pulled high up round his breast and his chin hanging low. Behind him, at a respectful distance, came his followers in awed silence. None dared speak. All knew the signs.

"I be thinking," remarked Piggott when the footsteps had died away townward, "that we may now be moving."

"I have been thinking what that move should be," said the lieutenant. "One thing is certain. We cannot escape either by land or by sea. It is also certain that we would be recaptured on the instant if we reappeared as we are—a woman, a Quaker, and an officer in the king's dress. A marked three, I would wager."

"We be," said the Quaker simply.

Katharine turned her head away. The color had flooded her neck and face. She perceived what was coming.

Her modesty recoiled from it, but that

spirit of mischief which had made her the idol of the soldiers and sailors at Port Royal was smiling about her mouth. In moments of adventurous enthusiasm she had often exclaimed:

"Would I had been born a lad!"

Now it seemed that her wish was about to be gratified as nearly in fact as could be. From the adventurous side of it her spirit did not recoil. It was only that—well—you see—after all, she had been born a *girl!*

But Lockhart, who had been weighing the matter for hours, came straight to the alternative of the matter.

"We would be recognized at once. On the other hand, if we pushed on alone, we could expect neither mercy nor charity from the Indians or the Spaniards, if we outlived reptiles and fever long enough to fall into their hands. Our escape by sea is cut off for the present.

"We must go forward, disguised. You, Friend John, must consent to throw off your sober garb and don the habit of piracy. I must do the same, which is a matter that troubles me little. As for Katharine—"

"Even so," said the Quaker comically.

There fell an awkward silence. Katharine's head was still turned away. John Piggott, squatted on the ground, was twiddling the fat thumbs of his clasped hands, while Lockhart was regarding both with half-amused, half-embarrassed eyes.

Presently the Quaker, whose face was a study of humor and disturbed piety, slowly turned his head in the direction of Katharine. It happened at that moment that she also turned her head in order to see how Friend John viewed the prospect.

Their eyes met.

To Lockhart the situation was replete with humor. Maidenly modesty questioning disturbed piety! The lieutenant suddenly rolled over on the leaf-moldy ground and laughed as he had not laughed since that day when the Quaker refused to come out of his cage in the Port Royal dungeon.

His laughter was contagious. Presently Katharine, her face crimson as a rose, was pealing merriment, while John Piggott broke out in a broad smile that was all humor—nothing but tickled humor. But suddenly he straightened his face and asked, with an assumption of solemnity:

"Thee says very well, Tom Lockhart. But where be the clothes? And where be the clothes that will fit me? Where be the clothes that will fit Mistress Katharine?"

"That is my charge," said Lockhart, laughing, and he rose to his feet.

He walked stealthily toward the black ruins of San Lorenzo. The last he saw of Katharine and the Quaker they were sitting on the ground, almost back to back. Tom could not see Katharine's face, but the Quaker's presented an air of profound preoccupation.

Smothering his laughter, the lieutenant settled down to the real business in hand, which was that of borrowing clothes from the scores of Spaniards and buccaneers who had fallen in the siege of the previous night.

It was an ill task, but Lockhart succeeded in accomplishing his object with a modicum of reverence for the dead. Among so many it was easy to take this from one and that from another, all with due regard to the proportions of the persons who were to be fitted.

About twenty minutes later he returned to the hiding-place in the thicket with a great armful of clothing, and his own belt a glistening arsenal of sheath-knives and pistols. He had performed his task in a finished manner.

Then came the next delicate step. Boots, bonnet, pantaloons, shirt, belt, pistols, and a knife were laid in silence at Katharine's feet. Lockhart laid his hand on the shoulder that was turned to him. He whispered words of encouragement in her ear. The Quaker, grimly surveying the ferocious raiment which he was expected to wear, remarked quietly:

"I know how hard it be, but it be for the best."

That settled it. Without turning her head Katharine said, with a gulp:

"I — I suppose it must be. Please stay away for a long time."

Lockhart, his face expressive of many unusual feelings, looked at Piggott and gave a half-hearted smile. In silence the two men walked away into the brush. When they came to a secluded spot each began to divest himself of his customary garb.

In about fifteen minutes Lockhart, a fine, swashbuckling figure in long leather boots and with a bristling belt, faced a broad-shouldered buccaneer who, despite his piratic garb, had a tendency to embonpoint and a rather gentle cast of countenance. The lieutenant laughed heartily, and Friend John smiled; but suddenly Lockhart said seriously:

"Friend John, you must even look more fierce. Y'are as gentle of face as a lamb."

The Quaker, now that he had consented to play the rôle of buccaneer, made up his mind on the instant that he might as well play it to perfection. He suddenly bared his teeth in an expression of assumed savagery.

Drawing the cutlas with which Tom had provided him, he suddenly clove the air, as if he were splitting the head of an enemy.

"Does that satisfy thee?" he demanded with ludicrous ferocity. "But," he added gravely, as if in exculpation of himself, "I still be a man of God."

He turned to gather up his Quaker clothes and tie them in a shirt. Presently he said over his shoulder:

"My name be John L'Hommedieu."

"Good!" chuckled Lockhart. "Mine is Tom Sanderson. And now—"

He was interrupted by a crashing in the underbrush. A moment later, almost within touch of them, several of the buccaneers went past, evidently making a short cut to the fort—perhaps to loot the dead there.

"Heaven grant they may not stumble upon her!" said Lockhart.

"They be going straight toward her!" whispered the Quaker pirate.

They listened intently. Once they thought they heard a loud laugh and a "Hallo!" and voices in conversation.

But presently this ceased. Then there was absolute silence, save for the far-off noises of the town, and the sighing of the sea-breeze.

"I think we might even be returning," said the Quaker quietly.

"Aye!" said Lockhart nervously. "They may—they must have passed."

John L'Hommedieu said nothing, but started back toward the spot where they had left Katharine. Presently they came to a standstill and looked at one another, puzzled. Lockhart laughed, but there was a note of anxiety in the sound. The Quaker was gazing at the screen of thicket with a troubled expression, and he played in a nervous way with his fingers.

"Tom Lockhart," said he, "thee is to be her husband. Thee must go."

At that the ludicrous side of the situation returned to the lieutenant. Half to hide his embarrassment at the Quaker's remark, he burst out in a guffaw.

But his laughter suddenly ceased, and there was an ominous stillness. They were so near that she must have heard. Yet she did not make any sound—any signal, as a woman would assuredly have done under the circumstances.

In a husky voice Lockhart called her name. The sea-breeze washing through the brush was the only reply. Forgetting every other feeling in the dread of the moment, the lieutenant marched boldly up to the thicket and pushed through it.

The Quaker followed more cautiously. He found Lockhart staring like a man bereft of his senses at—nothing! The hiding-place was vacant.

"Gone!" he said dazedly.

"No, here she be!" said the Quaker, catching side of a glint of red in the brush. "She be hiding from us."

Lockhart gave a laugh of relief and thrust the bushes aside. There, as if hurriedly concealed, were the garments which Katharine had last worn when they left her.

Tom Lockhart suddenly dropped on his knees and buried his face in the sweetly feminine gewgaws which so breathed of her. The Quaker understood, and he turned his face away with a sudden springing of tears to his eyes.

"It be all right, Tom," he said bravely, but there was no hiding the agony in his heart. "She heard the buccaneers coming and hid the clothing. I be thinking they hailed her, and to save matters she hath gone with them. Tom, thee must remember she be a man now. All's well, lad!"

But Lockhart only buried his face in his hands. She was gone. She was in the company and at the mercy of a gang of roystering, looting drunkards.

There was not a spark of hope left in

his heart; nor, to tell the truth, was there a flicker in the Quaker's.

Katharine was lost!

CHAPTER XIV.

UNLUCKY LARRY.

WHATEVER might have been in John Piggott's mind as to Katharine's future, his surmise about what had recently happened was correct. The buccaneers had stumbled upon her.

She had just given the finishing touches to her strange, manly garb and was half ruefully regarding the big leather boots which wabbled loosely about her knees, when she heard the pirates coming.

At first she thought it was Tom and Friend John, and a wave of anger leaped over her face that they should come unbidden. But a glance through the brush told her that her ears had not deceived her as to the profanity of the oncomers. She gathered up her cast-off garments and flung them hastily into the bushes.

A red ribbon glowed visible even at that, but she covered it with her body and stood awaiting the intruders, her heart beating fast, but her every nerve keyed to the test of courage.

"Hallo, mate!" bellowed the first of the buccaneers, going past her with only a glance. He was followed by three others, one of whom seized her by the arm and dragged her along with convivial familiarity.

To resist would have been fatal. Gathering her scattered wits Katharine gave a faint huzza in the deepest voice she could find in her delicate throat.

Presently the buccaneer let go his hold and Katharine, while still pretending to run, fell back. In another moment she was walking. She would have turned back to the spot where Friend John and Lockhart had left her, but a sound of crashing in the brush behind told her that she would meet at least one more buccaneer.

There was only one. He overtook her at a half trot. Seeing in her a mate who seemed to be in no particular hurry, this last man fell into a walk at her side.

Katharine's heart stood still, but she manfully took big strides and pursed her lips to a whistle, as she swaggered along.

Nevertheless, she was conscious that a pair of eyes were regarding her with interest, perhaps suspicion. What sort of person the man at her side was, she had no means of knowing.

It might be Morgan himself. It might be some bearded monster, with blood on his hands and rum on his breath. But it would never do to pretend unconsciousness of his presence.

"Hallo!" she cried, imitating the style of the first of the buccaneers.

A sort of silly laugh came from her unwelcome eompanion. Katharine turned her head suddenly. She was surprised, not to say relieved, to find that he was little more than a lad.

He was quite beardless; indeed, his young face, though marked with hardship, was as smooth as her own. He had a pair of eyes, too, from which looked kindliness, if no great courage. He was smirking at her in a way that reminded her of a dog that looks for a pat while it expects a kick.

"Who are you?" demanded Katharine, taking courage. The power of mind over matter asserted itself on the instant.

"I'm Larry," said the lad, with a grin, touching his bonnet with an obsequious forefinger.

"Humph!" grunted Katharine.

They walked on in silence. She was wondering what to do. Risk this apparently amiable lad and turn back? Or trust herself in his company?

If he dwelt among the pirates, so might she. He was probably a cabin-boy; so might she be. She might learn from him—now—and play the rôle with success.

Larry, on his part, was wondering why he had never met this lad before. His poor, homesick heart was solitary among that crew of grown-up scoundrels. Katharine fascinated him.

"What ship was you on?" he asked, betraying his nationality in a pretty brogue.

"The Revenge," said Katharine.

Larry's eyes opened wide with wonder, almost reverence.

"The adm'ral's ship!" he said, with awe. "What may yer name be?"

The question was unexpected. Katharine could not for the life of her think of any masculine names but "John Piggott" and "Tom Lockhart." Neither of these would do. She temporized by saying:

"Guess!"

Larry began to titter. He was looking at her hair, which she had tucked under a wide straw hat.

"If I guess right, ye will tell?" said Larry. "They call ye Redhead."

"How dare you!" cried Katharine, coming to a standstill and stamping her foot in genuine rage. Her father had many a time, wrought her to tears by this description of her red-gold tresses.

At sight of her anger, Larry's face fell. It was a doleful countenance, which quite melted Katharine's anger.

"There I go again," said he mournfully. "I'm always in trouble. That's why they call me Unlucky Larry. Ever since I ran away from home — but if ye will tell me yer name, I'll swear not to say 'Redhead' again," he broke off, in an effort to patch up the matter at once.

"My name is Redhead," said Katharine, with an inconsistency that was not without sudden purpose.

"Then why did ye flare at me?" asked Larry with pitiful submission to the contradiction. "Was ye making sport of me? They all do that."

Tears appeared in his eyes.

On the instant a wave of pity swept over through Katharine's heart. Here was a lad whose position was as nearly analogous to hers as could be.

He had been bullied and buffeted into submission and servitude. It looked out of his eyes. It was in every gesture—in every word he uttered. If she clung to him, he might cling to her until such time as she could be reunited with her friends. But for the moment she forgot her own troubles in sympathy for his.

"Did you run away from your home?" she asked, her voice tender with the solicitude of the grown woman.

Something in her words, her intonation —something in her very presence—stirred the cabin-boy's heart strangely. He could not understand it, of course, but his instinct responded at once to the touch of sex magic.

"Aye," said he, and all at once he burst into tears. But in a minute he dashed the water from his eyes and braced up. "I dunno why I should be for doing that," said he. "Ye will be thinking me a fool."

"No, but y'are a good lad," said Katharine. "And we must be friends, Larry."

"And might I be calling ye Redhead?" he asked, his eyes suddenly brightening at the prospect of an intimate friend of his own age.

Katharine's mouth twitched for a moment; then she answered with a suppressed laugh:

"Aye, ye may call me Redhead, if ye will."

"Thankee," said Larry joyfully.

They had been walking toward the fort, on the trail of the other buccaneers. Larry suddenly slipped an arm through hers and straightway hurled at her such a volley of questions as to how long she had been at sea, if she had run away from home, if Morgan had beaten her, and so on, that she was in peril of standing convicted as an impostor. But, feeling that she had the whip-hand—over Unlucky Larry, at least—she demanded that he tell his story first.

There was not much time to tell it then, for presently they heard the pirates who had gone ahead cursing and bawling for "that cabin-brat, Larry."

But this much Katharine learned of her new and strange associate. The boy had been born and brought up on Sir John O'Malley's place near Fermoy, in County Cork; his childhood had been one long series of misfortunes and he had been "left an orphant—twice." At last he had fled from home, following the accidental poisoning of half of Sir John's pigs, and had shipped as cabin-boy and bolted from the vessel at Barbadoes.

There he had become apprenticed to a merchant whose business collapse resulted in Larry being sold with the goods and chattels to a Spaniard who took him as a slave on a ship bound for the Spanish Main.

The ship had fallen into the hands of Morgan, who had given Larry to Brodeley, the gift of a cabin-boy being "a small mark of a great esteem."

"He beat me cruel," said Larry,

wagging his head reminiscently. "I'm that glad he got his legs shot off last night!"

"La-a-arrry!" yelled a buccaneer, from the vicinity of the fort.

Larry started to run, but Katharine clutched his arm and brought him to a standstill.

"Listen!" she said sharply. "I have run away from Morgan's ship. He used me cruel, too. But I have friends. Help me to find the way back to where you found me.

"I can't! I can't—not now!" said Larry frantically. "That's Harry Satan bawling. He'll beat me black and blue, if I don't come quick. You don't know Harry Satan."

Before Katharine could make up her mind to turn tail and run for it, the bushes parted and, with a curse of fury, the buccaneer known as Harry Satan fell upon Larry. He caught him by the shirt and administered a sound cuff on the unhappy Irish boy's ear.

Then, catching sight of what appeared to be another lad, he seized Katharine with his left hand.

"So that was it, ye whelps!" he cried, not without a certain paternal air. "Playin' marbles, was ye—eh?"

And he knocked their heads together in the most fatherly manner.

Larry howled, but Katharine staggered back with her whole being convulsed between blazing anger and a desire to shriek with laughter at the ludicrous side of the matter. It was such an odd adventure for a start, and such an extraordinary cementing of the ties between her and Unlucky Larry.

Half an hour later, Katharine and Larry were trailing in the wake of the buccaneers, as they returned to the still roystering town. The arms of both lads —the real and the masquerading—were filled with choice loot, which the pirates had taken from the bodies of their dead comrades and the Spanish soldiers.

To Katharine, the task of carrying this load of "dead men's shoes" was one of the greatest repugnance, but the situation was not as bad as it might have been. At least, the buccaneers had not penetrated her disguise.

They thought her what she appeared to be—a ship's boy. And, better still, she had found a friend, unlucky as Larry was.

"Wait!" whispered Larry, as they both staggered along under their loads of loot, "when we have got rid of this stuff, you and me will go to your friends, if ye know where ye can find them."

"Indeed, I do!" gasped Katharine, struggling along with her bundle.

She had never a thought but that she should find Friend John and Tom at the spot where they had left her. But there was one thing she reckoned without —her woman's uncertainty as to location.

When, therefore, she and Larry had been released from the temporary service of the buccaneers (who rewarded them each with a sound cuff), and she had failed to find the spot where she had left her clothes, her predicament dawned upon her as it had dawned upon Tom Lockhart and John Piggott, of York, hours before.

Try as she did, her sense of direction would not lead her to the place, nor could she describe it in any manner that conveyed a hint to Larry, who, to speak truth, was as much at sea in the brush as she was.

Had she found the place, she would have found John Piggott awaiting her, while Tom Lockhart scoured the town of Chagres in the hope of meeting her.

When night came, and Tom returned, disheartened, to find only Piggott at the rendezvous, both men were compelled to abandon hope of her returning to the spot, and sadly they turned their faces to the town, trusting in luck and the morrow.

Five minutes after they left the rendezvous, Katharine and Larry passed through it, without either of them being conscious of the fact. Thus does chance lead to world-wide separations and turn the current of human destinies.

In the days that followed, while the debauch of the buccaneers continued, the "lad" known as Redhead passed and repassed two buccaneers, in whose stubble-bearded faces she failed to recognize Lieutenant Tom Lockhart and John Piggott, Quaker, of York.

They, in turn, forgot in their eagerness that the Katharine whom they had last seen in all her glory of red-gold

hair and womanly apparel, was a very different-looking person in the streets of Chagres.

CHAPTER XV.

DISASTER!

UNDER the shade of a wild banana-tree sat Harry Morgan, hollow-cheeked, stubble-bearded, fever-eyed, and with his shoulders drooping brokenly.

He leaned over and blew into flame the spark which he had struck into a small pile of sticks from his flint and steel.

As the flame, almost invisible in the brilliant light of the tropic afternoon, curled up through the wisp of bluish smoke, the buccaneer's eyes lit up with almost pathetic satisfaction.

Presently, when the little fire was burning merrily, Morgan turned to a canister and drew from it a dripping, water-soaked piece of cowhide.

It was his portion of the dried hides which, discovered in an abandoned Spanish settlement, had been divided among twelve hundred men.

He had soaked it in water, scraped the hair from it, beaten it between stones and soaked it in water again. Now the fire was lit, the piece of hide prepared, and in another moment the haggard man—the once immaculate, debonair Morgan—was toasting it on the end of his knife.

Bitterness was in his soul.

Four days ago they had left Chagres. Out of a drunken three thousand he had at last picked twelve hundred men—such men as might be less susceptible to the ravages of this fearful, if brief, journey. Yet the disaster could not have been more complete.

At the end of four days they were only half way to Cruces, and already a quarter of the men were sick of fever, and the rest were living on roots, leaves, raw corn (when they could find it), and dried hides. The last *pièce de résistance* was a luxury which they had stumbled upon that day. It was a windfall.

From Chagres to Cruces, the highest navigation point of the river, was ordinarily but thirty-six hours' journey. From Cruces over the trail to the city of Panama was but twenty-four miles.

Yet after four days they were but halfway up the river to Cruces. Disaster had dogged every league of the journey so far.

From Chagres, Morgan and his twelve hundred picked men had sailed in sloops. The first day they had made only six leagues, owing to the condition of the majority of the buccaneers.

The second day saw no greater progress, owing to the result of the pirates' previous condition.

On the morning of the third day the situation was becoming serious. The deadly Chagres fever had appeared among the men, and already a dozen sloops were filled with the sick, dying, and dead. At intervals a splash told of the latter's interment in the muddy waters.

That day a Spanish settlement was rushed and captured, but there was no opposition. The single street was deserted; the huts stood tenantless; there was nothing left but the bare town and one bag of raw corn, for the ironic Spaniards had even refrained from firing the town that their revenge upon the buccaneers might stab with more poignancy. They, themselves, had fallen back, as the inhabitants of Chagres had done, to warn and strengthen the defenses of the Pacific capital.

The camp of the third night was one of despair. Starvation was at work.

There was no thirst, but the waters of the Chagres had been as drafts of death. Around the camp of the buccaneers the rank, miasmatic jungle oozed a damp, chill, rotting odor, and reptiles, insects, and wild animals shrieked a mocking chorus all night long.

The dawn of the fourth day brought a shower of poisoned arrows from the brush. That and the sudden chattering of parrots and the shrieking of panic-stricken monkeys told of a certain enemy at hand.

On this day it was found that the water was too shallow for the sloops with their crowded loads. The sick men were distributed over the fleet of canoes and rowed onward, while seven hundred buccaneers hewed through the serpent-ridden Eden of tangled, flowering jungle.

Men fell by the wayside and were left by the others, who staggered on, with the strange plants lacerating their perspiring,

gaunt faces and the bloom of the "cow-itch" searing their necks and hands as with fire-dust. And they were still only half-way to Cruces.

In the afternoon of that fourth day they entered another abandoned settlement and, to their joy, discovered a storehouse full of packed, cured cowhides.

These Morgan immediately confiscated, and that there should be no cause for quarrel, he himself stood over the men who cut the skins into pieces no larger than a man's hand, and saw that each and every man received one piece.

Disaster! Disaster at every step!

Morgan turned the hissing piece of hide upon the knife's end and watched it with burning eyes. Presently he drew the knife from the fire.

When the cooked morsel had cooled he began to tear it ravenously with his teeth. When he had eaten the tasteless thing, he sat silent, with his eyes on the ground. His luck was gone.

The setting sun cast a sudden long shadow before him. The chief of the buccaneers raised his eyes.

"Dirk?" said he.

"Aye, aye, sir," said the long, thin cutthroat. "Here I be and here I stay, as the dead man said when they put him in his grave."

There was silence. Morgan was looking at the whitening ashes in the little wood fire. Dirk MacAllister was peering suspicously around in the bushes. Suddenly he leaned forward and a piece of red, bleeding meat appeared in his hand.

"Here—quick!" he whispered.

Morgan lifted his eyes quickly. At sight of the fresh meat his hand almost shot out from his side. But he drew it back and shook his head.

"Who's to know?" said Dirk. "I've had a share—as fine a meal as the king could eat. It's dog. He was skulkin' round and came to my whistle. I knifed him that quick he never knew nothing."

Morgan waved his hand toward the camp.

"Share and share alike!" he said tersely.

It was not any sudden virtue in him. It was the diplomacy of the leader. Dirk MacAllister winked and walked toward the camp.

The sick had been landed from the canoes and were lying everywhere. Passing from one to the other, soothing here with a touch of the hand on a fevered brow, there with a word of cheer and a pat on the shoulder, was a red-haired lad.

Behind this little doctor followed another lad, who carried a bucket of fresh water and an armful of torn strips of varicolored material. Now the red-headed lad would kneel by the side of a sufferer and bind his head with a strip dipped in the cold water, or, lifting the sick man, aid him to swallow a few gulps of the fluid.

"Hey, Redhead!" Dirk hailed, pitching the bleeding meat in the lad's direction. "Gift from the adm'ral for the sick ones. Tell 'em that when ye feed it to 'em. How many gone to glory this day?"

"Thirty," said Redhead, without turning.

Dirk MacAllister uttered a curse, the source of which was more irritation at the loss of men than regret for departed comrades.

Redhead and Unlucky Larry went on with their labor of mercy.

Thus was Katharine employed at the end of four days. That strange fortitude which is so characteristic of women when men are falling beneath hardship, had brought her almost unscathed through the perils of those days. True, she was thinner and paler, and the grime of travel had further hidden her sex, but she was still strong in body and rich in heart.

The belief that Friend John and Lockhart would follow Morgan in the hope of finding her had brought her along with Unlucky Larry in the sloops. Picked men as the twelve hundred were, there were yet many servitors of weaker mold in the following of the merciless rascals.

In the days following her separation from her friends, the strange intimacy between Katharine and Larry had strengthened. At once her protector and her slave, Larry followed her as a dog follows the superior creature.

What it was bound the lad to Redhead, Katharine knew, but she dared not tell. The Irish boy, himself, believed that it was the spirit of companionship, pure and simple; yet at times she found him watching her with wistful eyes, as if his instincts were at war. And there were

times when Larry could not understand himself.

At a rebuke from her, he, who was so used to beatings and abuse, burst into tears; and if she betrayed the slightest tenderness or pity, which she sometimes did, something would well up in the poor lad's throat, something which he fought down, ashamed of his incomprehensible weakness and emotion in the presence of his comrade, Redhead.

Not twenty yards from Katharine, as she deftly bound the cool strip around a pirate's head, sat the buccaneer known as John L'Hommedieu. Those four days had wrought a marvelous change in the heavy Quaker.

His face, like those all round him, was hollow, and his eyes bright. Starvation and anxiety had wrought the change. Katharine, whom he had hoped to find wherever Morgan was, had seemingly vanished from human ken.

To add to the general disaster, Lockhart's wound had reopened, and at the present moment John L'Hommedieu sat by the side of a raving man, who muttered in the wonderland of delirium:

"Stuns'ls! Stuns'ls! As the ship wears, treat them to another broadside, Mr. Sheldon. Katharine! Katharine!"

The Quaker rose to his feet with a sudden outflinging of his arms. Leaving the delirious man, who was now shouting a command or acknowledging one in respectful tones, and again whispering the name of the lost Katharine, John L'Hommedieu passed out of the camp to that place apart where his ever-watchful eyes had seen Morgan bivouac.

Down in the west, over the treasure-hold of the Pacific, the sun was still throwing back a mocking halo of gold and jewels. Again, as a shadow fell at his feet, Morgan raised his eyes. He saw an unfamiliar figure, a buccaneer of the rank and file who had dared his presence unbidden.

"Who are ye?" he demanded harshly.

"I be John Piggott of York," said the Quaker-pirate, with the same old quiet of voice and inflection.

Morgan leaped to his feet as if he had been stung by a serpent in the grass, but this time the knowledge of this sudden confronter's identity awoke no fear or superstition. The buccaneer's face was all aglow with hope renewed and expectation.

"The Quaker!" he gasped. "Then—Tell me! Where is she? The woman? The talisman?"

It was Friend John's turn to be astonished. This was the very question he had come to ask Morgan.

Failing all other methods of discovering her fate, John Piggott had decided to take the bull by the horns, and Morgan's question fairly staggered him.

"Thee does not know thyself?" he said, evasively.

For a full minute buccaneer and Quaker stared into each other's eyes, each trying to probe the other's secret. What the other knew Morgan could not divine, but in that minute's searching John Piggott discovered that Morgan knew no more about Katharine's whereabouts than he or Lockhart did.

What should he do? What say? He had thrust himself into the tiger's clutches for nothing. He did not fear for himself. It was Katharine and the fever-stricken Lockhart.

Had he not prayed ten times—a hundred times a day—that she might be restored to them? And had Heaven ever turned a deaf ear to the plea of sincerity?

He was still wondering, still looking into Morgan's eyes, when a strange thing occurred. Morgan suddenly leaped forward and caught him by the wrists. The Quaker could feel the vise-like grip of the powerful hands, but he did not struggle or change countenance.

He merely looked into the haggard face which was thrust close to his and said:

"Well, Friend Morgan?"

Morgan swallowed hard. He had expected something different, and for the moment he was discomfited. But his purpose had not violence.

His eagerness to know the truth, to save himself and the situation which he firmly believed due to Katharine's absence, had wrought him to the point of frenzy.

"John Piggott of York!" he said hoarsely. "Tell me—where is she? Ye know! What did ye come to propose? I'm willing. Anything I will grant ye—anything! But tell me where she is. Where is she? Santa Catarina!"

Through all this rambling outburst the Quaker held Morgan's eyes to his, but he

was still wondering what he should do while he marveled at the intensity of the buccaneer's words.

Morgan, not comprehending the other's silence, became more pitiably stricken.

"Quaker," he said, like some penitent at the confessional, "I grant ye were right. I was wrong—I did wrong. I thought wrong. See the curse that has fallen upon me. I swear by my mother—and all the angels—I swear upon my knife—if ye will bring her back—but a few days and we shall be to the walls of Panama—she shall be honored and she shall go free—and you—"

"Swear not at all," said the Quaker. "Thee swears to-day, and forswears to-morrow."

Morgan loosened his grip on Piggott's wrist and turned away, strangely quiet. With folded arms he stared blindly at the red-gold sunset over Panama.

When he spoke again his voice was quiet and wonderfully, pathetically human.

"This was my dream—and ye would shatter it, Quaker. 'Twas your word that told me, whatsoever my enterprise, her honor were my talisman. Am I to rot in this swamp, within sight of the goal?

"In moments like these a huge emprise stumbles upon a fool's belief. I may be a fool, Quaker, but this is my belief—that if she walks with me the curse will lift. Judge me as ye will; only tell me where she is. She shall be inviolate as a saint."

There was no doubting the sincerity of the man, but John Piggott, ever truthful, wished to put an end to the scene.

"Friend Morgan, I believe thee is sincere," he said. "I would let thee see Mistress Katharine were it in my hands. But I have no knowledge of her. I came to ask thee."

The *dénouement* was unexpected. Morgan spun round with a scream of mortified emotion. His hand flew to his knife and he sprang at the Quaker.

"Ye lie, ye white-gilled, prating demon!" he yelled.

But even as the words hurtled from his mouth and he lifted the knife over the Quaker's body, a subtle hue spread over his face. He became white as a dead man.

His eyes lost their luster, and all at once he fell, a collapsing heap, to the ground, where he lay with his hands twitching strangely.

John Piggott knelt beside him. The buccaneer had fallen in some kind of fit. The Quaker gently unloosed the kerchief round his neck.

He would have nursed the man back to life, but he heard footsteps. Adopting the better part of valor, he stepped lightly behind the drooping foliage of the wild-banana.

Peering from this umbrage, he saw Dirk MacAllister bending over his fallen chief. The lanky pirate seemed to believe that Morgan could only have fallen to the knife or a pistol-ball.

Such a weakness as physical sickness could not have entered his mind, for he tore at Morgan's shirt and peered over his body, as if in search of a wound.

"Thee must pour water in his face," said a quiet voice from the shade of the wild-banana.

With a curse, Dirk MacAllister dashed to the spot whence the suggestion had come, but no human being was found to be there.

John L'Hommedieu, Quaker-pirate, had made a hasty retreat in the direction of the camp.

Arrived there, he was gratified to find a red-haired "boy" bathing Lockhart's face with water and binding his head with a moistened cloth. Behind Redhead stood Unlucky Larry, with the ever-ready bucket.

Redhead looked up as John L'Hommedieu approached, and started at sight of the disguised Quaker. But there was little in the bearded, hollow-eyed buccaneer to suggest John Piggott, of York, any more than there was in the raving patient to suggest Lieutenant Thomas Lockhart, of his majesty's ship-of-the-line, Scorpion.

Redhead turned to the task in hand. L'Hommedieu stood by with a grateful look in his eyes.

Presently, when the cool bandage was adjusted to the gentle doctor's satisfaction, the Quaker asked:

"What be thy name, lad?"

Redhead started, and scanned the other's face and dress. The sun had gone down. The dusk was deepening, and the stars were beginning to sparkle in the east. In the dim light Redhead saw

nothing to suggest the other's identity, save a familiar sound of voice and speech.

"Redhead, they call me," was the reply. "And you?"

"John L'Hommedieu," said the Quaker, with a strange something knocking at the doors of certainty.

"And his?" said the same gentle voice.

"Tom Sanderson."

That was all. The little doctor gathered up a few shreds of cloth, and was about to move on to the next patient, when Lockhart, who had been strangely quiet while Redhead had been administering, suddenly said softly:

"Katharine—Katharine!"

Redhead stopped and listened. Was it a dream? Was some one—some one whom she had lost—calling her name in faraway tones from ghostland? She turned and looked back. John L'Hommedieu was still standing near Lockhart, and his face was turned toward her. The air was athrill with mystic imminence. Again the voice said, with a dry laugh:

"So they even had to throw him out of jail. Ha, ha! He was a Quaker, ye see."

The strips of cloth dropped from Redhead's hand. John L'Hommedieu saw a lad rush back to the patient's side and peer into his face.

Next moment a pair of arms were round his own neck, and a face was buried in his stubbly beard and a voice was sobbing wildly:

"John—Friend John! Oh, Friend John, I have found you!"

"Katharine!" John L'Hommedieu gasped. "Mistress Katharine!"

With a howl that might have been caused by any of many emotions, Unlucky Larry dropped his bucket and took to his heels.

In the momentary silence which followed the reunion, the fever-stricken lieutenant's voice, dry and dead, came to the ears of the Quaker and the woman whose arms were clinging tightly to his neck, and whose head was lying contentedly on his shoulder:

"Katharine—Katharine! Who has dared come between us?"

A sudden blank fell upon John Piggott's soul. He gently disengaged himself from the girl's arms and softly waved her to Lockhart's side. Katharine, without a word, obeyed.

She knelt down by her lover's side and kissed him on the brow.

The Quaker, deeply perturbed, walked away from them. Presently he came to a halt, with his face upturned to the stars of the tropic night.

He clasped his hands before him in the old way. But the old mask of piety and the later mask of piratic fierceness had given way to an expression of human yearning and pain.

The tears glinted in his eyes as he told the stars his secret, adding thereto this quaint statement:

"This be the twenty-first day of January. I be forty to-morrow."

CHAPTER XVI.

IN CRUCES.

THREE more days—three days of suffering unparalleled in the annals of militant history!

Poling canoes of sick men over sandbars, and where the water was deep enough for the sloops to take human cargoes, making double trips to bring up the entire force.

Attacks by Indians, who feared and hated Spaniard and buccaneer alike, and poured unexpected showers of poisoned barbs from the shelter of the tangled bush.

And ever the fever increased; ever the sick-list swelled; ever the hardships grew, and starvation stalked throughout the length and breadth of Morgan's depleted army.

Already discontent was an open clamor. Already mutiny was as clearly foreshadowed as lightning by storm-clouds.

Morgan, himself broken in mind and body, held aloof from the men, whom he yet led doggedly forward, fearing to hear that word of defiance which would let loose the whole hornet's nest.

Only the man's remarkable veneer, his outward show of cheeriness and confidence, his diplomacy and camaraderie, held the outbreak in check.

Cruces!

Reach Cruces and all would be well. Cruces was a central mart of trade between Panama and Chagres.

Here merchants transferred their merchandise from mule-train to canoe or

sloop. The town could be taken, and there would be food for all!

Then on to Panama—only twenty-four miles—his men strengthened by rest and fine living. Out of all this privation, to come a victory all the more splendid.

But it was hard talking on an empty stomach—hard to throw into his words the old spirit which had quelled mutiny a score of times; and harder still was it to stir the same spirit in an army of starving men, who had left the hilarious joys of Chagres for misery on what seemed a bootless quest.

But his words were not altogether in vain. They contained a definite promise, which satisfied the buccaneers that matters would be settled one way or another very soon. Cruces! If Cruces failed, then their leader could hardly hope to push on to Panama.

Morgan knew that if Cruces failed, the allied buccaneers would retreat toward Chagres, a disbanded army, and his dream would be at an end. Cruces! The very name was fraught with significance. Cruces was likely to prove the cross-roads of his life.

In the meantime, as he pushed on through the steaming jungle and evil-smelling morass, half of his men behind him and the other half navigating the canoes and sloops over the shallows, Morgan remembered the interview with John Piggott, of York, as something in the nature of a fantasy or delirium.

He had seen a bearded buccaneer who called himself "John Piggott, of York." They had spoken together of that which was ever in Morgan's mind, but they had spoken like men at cross-purposes; or he had imagined the confusion, as a man may do in delirium. He had awakened from some strange sickness to find Dirk MacAllister bending over him. That was all.

Since then he had seen nothing of either bearded buccaneer or somber Quaker, and he was almost convinced that the experience had been the chimera of an overwrought mind. The talisman was as far from him as ever.

Katharine, in the meantime, had adjusted herself to new conditions. She still tended the sick pirates, but continually she returned to Lockhart, who recovered his senses on the day after their reunion. John Piggott, oddly enough, seemed to take a sudden dislike to the society of the pair and even to Katharine herself.

The change was immediately apparent. He was absent from them most of the time, and when he was with them his face was troubled and he was no longer the kindly, quaint Friend John. He was apparently giving way to the strain of hardship, for he was irritable and morose, especially with Katharine.

Lockhart, of course, traveled in one of the sloops, as befitted a sick man. Katharine's duties as Dr. Redhead took her there also, but John L'Hommedieu chose to travel with the shore party.

"Poor Friend John," said Katharine with the air of an old campaigner, "I fear me he is not used to scenes like these."

Lockhart said nothing, but he wondered.

The day after Larry's discovery that his chum was a woman, the unlucky one came back with an expression of countenance which nearly threw Katharine into a state of hysterical laughter.

Poor Unlucky Larry! All night long he had carefully sifted every word he had ever uttered in the presence of Redhead, and he groaned at the memory of one particular day when he had been trying to play the man for Redhead's edification, and had sworn like a real, blood-soaked pirate.

He gradually came to understand, too, why he had felt so strangely toward this Redhead, and there was some consolation in the fact that his weakness had not been without inspiration. There was consolation, too, in the fact that, if he had lost a chum, he had found a lady and two grown-up friends, for surely she would tell them he had befriended her.

But when he came upon Katharine for the first time after the discovery, he was as confused as a girl himself. He scraped the ground with his feet, grinned in nervous embarrassment, and pulled himself together with sudden, solemn awe.

He had never known his mother. He had never known a woman, save that fat, old Mrs. Docherty, who used to be Sir John O'Malley's housekeeper; and she had bullied everything from Sir John right down to Larry, the pig-boy.

John Piggott happened to be with Katharine and Lockhart when Larry appeared.

Katharine, after setting the unlucky one at ease, and swearing him to absolute secrecy about her sex, told John Piggott and her lover the whole story of the Irish boy's kindness to her. She had told them the whole story before, but it was now being told, as for the first time, for Larry's benefit.

Larry conducted himself accordingly, blushing and grinning and protesting, squirming the while in an embarrassment of joy.

When the story was all told, there was not a prouder, happier lad in all the world. As he went away on some errand of service for his new-found mistress, stepping high and walking fast, as if he would break into a run from sheer, riotous happiness, the tears sprang into Katharine's eyes.

She vowed to Lockhart and Friend John that if ever they got out of their dilemma alive, she would "find an employment" for Unlucky Larry.

Seven days after the departure from Chagres, that voyage, which was ordinarily made by merchants and Indians in thirty-six hours, brought the buccaneers within sight of Cruces.

Morgan would have called a halt, in order to reconnoiter; but at a glance he saw that an order would only result in open defiance of his authority. Making a virtue of a necessity, it was he who led the buccaneers into the town, himself waving a sword and giving the buccaneer war-cry:

"*Ooo-c-c-e-e-e-e!*"

Into the streets of the town they rushed, eight hundred starving and desperate men.

In the eagerness of the attack, none but Morgan noted that not a shot had been fired as they approached. The leader noted it with a sinking heart.

The absence of resistance told him its own tale.

When, therefore, he led his men into the main street of the town without meeting a human being, he was prepared for what followed.

At a glance, the buccaneers realized that here again the Spaniards had destroyed the provisions, abandoned the town, and gone westward to swell the army which was waiting to beat Morgan from the gates of Panama.

Starvation was still their master.

(To be continued.)

The Vanishing of Benjamin Vex.

BY ROBERT KEENE.

And All They Found of Him Was a Cake of Soap, Floating Placidly in a Hot Bath.

MRS. VEX came down the hall and stopped before the bath-room door. Taking the knob in her hand, she rattled it noisily, calling out to her husband, who was bathing in the tub within:

"Hurry up, Benjamin! It's quarter past six, and you haven't any time to lose!"

There was no response.

Impatiently Mrs. Vex took her hand off the knob and rapped with its knuckles against the square pane of opaque glass set into the locked door.

"Benjamin!" she called. "Benjamin!" more sharply. And again: "Ben-ja-min!"

Not a sound came to her from behind the door.

It was impossible that her husband could not hear her. He was only three

feet away—only a single yard—lying in the tub where he had repaired to bathe not ten minutes before.

"Benjamin!" cried his wife exasperatedly. "Answer me—are you all right in there?"

Silence.

Was it possible, thought the lady frowningly, that Mr. Vex, whose habit it was to read in the tub, was so engrossed in magazine, book, or newspaper that he had not noticed the noise she was making at the door?

That was too unreasonable to suppose for a minute—it could not be the case.

Then why—

"Benjamin, Benjamin!" Mrs. Vex called at the top of her lungs, her voice quivering anxiously, while she beat with renewed vigor on the door. "Has anything happened to you? Are you all right in there? Speak to me, speak to me!"

She pressed her ear to the jamb of the door—listening.

Only absolute quiet could be detected inside the bath-room.

The lady's knees caved in. She clung to the knob of the door, her trembling form sagging against the woodwork, her frightened breathing sounding loud in the narrow hall.

Something had happened to her husband! Of that there could be no doubt. Something—but what?

Through her mind a troop of fear-drawn specters marched, each one a tragically imagined conjecture of what had happened to Mr. Vex inside that bath-room.

Perhaps the water in his bath had proved too hot. He had fainted—was lying unconscious in the tub, out of her sight, beyond her possible reach.

Any one of a score of dire calamities might have befallen him, but that one which first entered her head stuck in her mind as the real truth of the hideous matter.

He was lying senseless in the tub—prostrated by the heat of a too warm bath—and—something must be done at once to get him out of the water.

He might slip down over his head. Then he would drown!

Perhaps—already—

Mrs. Vex beat at the door, kicked at it, clawed at it, incoherently calling to her husband the while in gasping, terrified whispers that escaped her pallid lips wildly.

Oh, if only he hadn't locked that door! She could have gone to him then.

Now, somehow, some way, by somebody more capable to undertake the task than her frail self, that door must be opened—and quickly—her husband rescued, saved from the vital termination of whatever catastrophe had befallen him inside that bath-room, whereby he could not speak in answer to her call, because he could not hear her calling.

The janitor! That thought pierced her brain in a lightning flash of inspiration—stirring her to instant action.

She stepped away from the door, caught at the wall to steady her balance, then proceeded staggeringly down the hall toward the kitchen. She punched the button connecting with the bell in the janitor's quarters in the cellar.

A minute passed. She pushed frantically at the button again—again—and yet again.

Then, the wail of the dumb-waiter whistle sounding, she sped into the kitchen, opened the door of the waiter-shaft, and called wildly down to the man.

He must come up to her apartment at once—flying. Something had happened to her husband—he was locked in the bath-room, and had met with a desperate accident.

"Bring tools—anything—something to open or break down the door!" finished Mrs. Vex hysterically. "And hurry, hurry—I'm going mad with worry!"

Two minutes later the janitor rang the front-door bell. Down the private hall of the Vex apartment he hurried after Mrs. Vex.

He tried the knob of the bath-room door, beat against the pane of glass, bellowed to the man within—without disturbing the silence beyond the fastened portal.

Then, satisfied that there was no other alternative, he dropped on his knees and applied the tools he had brought to the lock.

While he worked, he talked to the distracted lady hovering anguished above him.

"Ye've yer street-clothes, hat an' coat,

on, Mis' Vex," he said. "Were ye out when the mister wint in here t' his bath?"

"I stepped out to telephone," explained Mrs. Vex brokenly. "Mr. Vex and I have—had—a dinner engagement to-night. My husband went in to take his bath before I went out. He took off his clothes before I left the flat. I heard him come in here and close the door behind him just as I went out of the front door. I wasn't gone ten minutes—and when I came back—I called to him—"

The lady broke down, weeping.

"There, there!" soothed the janitor, unscrewing the last fastening that held the lock to the door. "Nothin's happened to Mr. Vex that a half-hour won't straighten out. Depind upon it—nothin' could, safe here in this bath-room where it's impossible fer him to meet wid har-rm."

He fumbled a moment over the pulling of the bolt out of the aperture left by his removal of the door-knob and lock. Then he stood to his feet.

"There, now! She's ready to open at a turn of th' wrist. Step back a bit, Mis' Vex, an' l'ave me take a peep widin first—in case—that's right. Wait there half a second!"

The janitor opened the door and stepped inside the bath-room.

For a full ten seconds Mrs. Vex obeyed his instructions that she remain out of sight of what might be inside the room. Then, agonized by doubt and fear which took new life at the silence from the janitor, she stepped to the opened doorway.

She looked over the shirt-sleeved shoulder of the man who stood within the threshold. And the sight that met her wide eyes forced a choked cry of amazed horror from her lips.

The tub was three-quarters filled with water. It's top was as unrippled and placid as a sheet of green glass.

All that was in the water was a spread-open magazine, floating on its surface beside a cake of soap.

There was not a single drop of moisture on the rug spread beside the porcelain tub. Nor was there a spatter of water any place to be seen in the four-feet-by-seven bath-room, on walls, or floor.

A neat pile of Mr. Vex's underclothes, freshly laundered and pressed, lay beside the single, upright steam-pipe against the wall opposite the tub. On top of the pile was a folded pair of Mr. Vex's socks.

Beyond that—there was nothing more that was even reminiscent of Mr. Vex in the room.

Nowhere, from ceiling to floor, from closed and locked window at one end, to the door which had been partially taken apart to give entrance to the janitor and Mrs. Vex.

And as for that lady's husband—

He was nowhere to be seen. Gone from the keenest sight that ever searched successfully for a needle in a haystack.

Out of that tightly locked-up bath-room, no bigger than a bandbox for this year's Paris hats, Mr. Vex had disappeared.

Utterly and completely vanished!

II.

THE janitor turned a mystified face to Mrs. Vex, and said unnecessarily:

"Yer husband's not here, ma'am."

The lady fell back against the jamb of the open door, one white hand tremblingly resting on the wash-stand bowl, her eyes popping from her chalky face.

"N - no!" she stammered dazedly. "He's—he's not here in the bath-room."

The janitor looked up at the ceiling, then down to the floor again in puzzlement. His eyes shifted to Mrs. Vex's blanched countenance, taking in the tenseness of her pose.

"Ye've made some mistake, Mis' Vex, ma'am, it's plain," he said in a reassuring tone. "Mr. Vex could not have come into the bath-room, as ye' thought he was after doin'."

"But he did!" cried the missing gentleman's wife. "I know he did!"

The janitor scratched his head.

"I can't seem to figger how he comes not t' be here now, thin!" he said wonderingly. "An' he ain't here—me eyes ain't desayvin' me, ma'am. Ye don't see hide nor hair of him yer own self, do you at all, at all, Mis' Vex?"

"I—I don't!" replied the lady quickly. "But— we haven't looked round yet"—eagerly.

The janitor surveyed the tiny room once more, the puzzlement on his face deepening.

"Where would we be after lookin', thin?" he asked.

"Everywhere—anywhere!" cried Mrs. Vex shrilly. "He must be here somewhere—we'll find him if we look around us, I know. I'm sure of it—oh, he must be here; we must find him!"

Her companion stooped and looked under the wash-stand, while Mrs. Vex futilely opened the door of the medicine-cabinet above it. Revealed before her eyes was a compartment about two feet wide by one and a half high, and not more than three and a half inches deep.

It was empty of all save the serried shelves of bottles, boxes, and Mr. Vex's shaving materials. A mouse — a very small mouse, indeed—might, with painful cramping, have hidden there. But not Mr. Vex—nor a man of half that gentleman's girth and height.

Together she and her assistant looked under the bath-tub. A space of less than six inches separated the floor from its bottom. There was no obstruction under it which prevented a clear view to the wall against which one rim of the tub touched.

"He's not here, ma'am, any place," said the janitor, dropping to the floor. "There's nowhere to look fer him—the man, be all the sivin little divvles of ill-luck, ain't here!"

"Then — then, where is he?" asked Mrs. Vex blankly.

"Th' dear on'y knows!" responded the other with equal barrenness of idea. "An'—that brings me back t' where we started first off. Ye've been mistaken. He never come into the bath-room here at all—fer he couldn't have, an' got this clean away! Any wan wid half the use of a pair o' blind eyes kin see that!"

"But I tell you, Mr. Casey, I know that my husband *did* come into this bath-room."

"An' how do ye know that? Till me ag'in."

"I saw him take his clothes off and come down the hall toward this room."

"An' thin?"

"And then, just as I went out of the front door of this apartment, going out to telephone, as I explained before, I heard the bath-room door close behind him."

"Ah!" cried Casey. "An' there ye have it! Ye didn't *see* him come in here, did ye now?"

"No!" answered Mrs. Vex.

"Thin he didn't come in."

"But he did—he must have. Here are his fresh clothes and his clean socks. There is his book, floating in the water—oh, the thing is horrible! He must have been spirited out of the water, out of the tub, out of this room, in the midst of his reading—"

"Wan minute, wan minute!" broke in the janitor. "He was spirited out of the tub, ye say. Tell me, thin—why ain't there no wet feetprints on this here bath-rug? Why ain't there wather spattered somewhere—anywhere—round this room if that's the case? Tell me that, now, Mis' Vex, ma'am, if ye kin do ut."

"I tell you he was spirited away! Some plot was hatched to kidnap him from this room—"

"Through a locked door?"

"I don't know, I don't know!" cried the distracted lady. "How can I believe anything impossible in the face of this weird affair, from start to finish? My husband has vanished—into thin air, by magic, and some uncanny power is responsible for it, I know!"

Indeed, the lady had just cause for this belief in the supernatural, which seemed the only means accountable for her husband's mysterious disappearance that evening.

How he—or anybody else living, for that matter—could have left that room of his own will or otherwise was beyond figuring out.

There was the bath-room. And there was the locked door, the closed window, the absolute, positive, undoubting lack of loophole for his escape from the tiny chamber.

And there *wasn't* Mr. Vex.

Besides that, there wasn't, as Casey, the janitor, had pointed out, a sign or speck of spattered water anywhere on the bath-rug or floor.

Such signs would surely have been left by anybody getting out of the bath-tub. Mr. Vex had undoubtedly got out—but without leaving any such trace of so doing behind him.

Was it any wonder that Mrs. Vex, at just that moment, overcome by emotions easily to be imagined — no, difficult to

conjecture, since the situation was more unusual than ever woman faced before! —was it to be wondered at, then, that she should collapse into the arms of the janitor in a dead faint?

Or was it surprising that Casey, having brought the lady to herself at the termination of five minutes' hard work, should maintain his view-point on the affair as stoutly as before?

"It's impossible, Mis' Vex, that Mr. Vex wuz ever in this here bath-room!" said he, when Mrs. Vex, restored to consciousness, stood tremblingly before him again. "Ye don't believe in spirits yerself, any more than I do, when ye stop to think things over a bit. An' so—it's out o' r'ason that he was ever in this room at all, since he couldn't have got out of it, once in."

"But how do you account for the fact that the door was locked?" asked Mrs. Vex.

The janitor rubbed his ear for a full minute of deep and profitless reflection.

"Do ye know," he said slowly, "I'd forgot entoirely that side of the matter, ma'am. How could Mr. Vex have got out of this room, whin th' dure was locked—as me own two eyes and pair o' hands knows full well that it was?"

"That's what I want you to tell me!" cried the lady wildly. "You say we don't either of us, on reflection, believe in the supernatural. But—how else can you account for my husband being taken from this room through that locked door?"

Casey studied the toes of his shoes.

"P'rhaps th' dure ain't the way he wint out," he suggested at length. "What's the matter wid what we ain't thought of before—the winder?"

"Impossible—exactly as the door is out of the question," replied Mrs. Vex quickly. "That window is locked, top and bottom, I know positively."

"Did ye try it just now?"

"No."

"Then, how d'ye know it's fastened?"

"Because—as you should remember—the thing has been out of order for the last three weeks. The catch on both sashes is stuck; it can't be opened or shut, and we have complained about it to you at least half a dozen times. That's how I know positively that my husband could not have left this room by that window."

The janitor took the single step across the floor that carried him to the window at the other end of the room. He examined it, tested it, and turned back to his companion—satisfied that she was right; the window could not be opened, and out of it Mr. Vex had certainly not gone that evening.

"Besides," said Mrs. Vex, "why should my husband want to go out that window, even if he could open it and get through it—and how could he lock it behind him, as it is now? It doesn't lead any place. He couldn't go from it any place but straight down the air-shaft to his certain death.

"And that's the strangest part of this whole thing! *Why* should Mr. Vex want to leave this bath-room at all — either through the door, or the window, or by any other way? It's not so much where he has gone that is killing me with anxiety, as it is why, why, why he is gone from this tub at all."

"Sure," sighed Casey, "it's a bigger riddle than ever I heard of before in all me life. I'm a plain man, Mis' Vex, ma'am, an' I ain't overstocked wid brains. But, begobs, I'll have to give this puzzle up, if ye won't belave that Mr. Vex could never, nohow, noway, have come inter this bath-room at all this night!"

"There are his underclothes," said Mrs. Vex, pointing one trembling finger at the pile of fresh clothing on the floor. "Come," she said, leading the way to the bedroom shared by her and her husband at the other end of the flat. "There are the undergarments he discarded, with the suit of clothes he took off."

She faced the janitor in the center of the room.

"Now," she demanded, "tell me where my husband could have gone if he didn't go into that bath-room, into that tub, lay there reading—until he was—until he—disappeared?"

"Widout a stitch of clothes t' his back," said Casey, reddening embarrassedly. "I'll agree wid ye, I don't see where he could have gone."

"We'll search the flat from end to end," said Mrs. Vex determinedly. "Come—follow me."

And then ensued such a fine-tooth-combing of that house, from one end to

the other, as never was and never can be again.

All fruitlessly, for nothing, to no avail.

Mr. Vex, at the conclusion of the half-hour's scrutiny of every inch of space in the apartment, was still missing—as completely and mystifyingly as before.

"He ain't out in the street, that's a sure thing!" commented Casey finally. "There'd be noises—lots and plenty of thim—if he was. A man—er—dressed like Adam, as the mister must be at this very minute, couldn't be trapesin' the public highways widout callin' out the reserves and makin' the establishment o' mob law necessary wherever he was."

"I know it, I know it!" sobbed the absent gentleman's nervously prostrated wife. "The thing is beyond me—beyond you—beyond anybody."

She walked unsteadily to the bath-room, and stood at the doorway looking in. Still the opened magazine, now water-logged, floated on top of the placid, long-cold water in the tub. Beyond that, nothing in the little, open room had motion.

Behind her stood Casey, muttering to himself as he looked over her shoulder:

"Out o' the winder means a broken neck down in the area. Out of the dure—that's as impossible as up through the ceilin'. Through the walls—it can't be that. Mis' Vex!"

"What is it?" cried the lady, wheeling swiftly at the tone of his voice.

"Can Mr. Vex—do ye belave it could be, tell me—can he have e-e-evaporated from layin' in the hot wather? Ye know more about such things than me—tell me, kin he have gone up in smoke, to say what I mean in me own way?"

Mrs. Vex groaned.

"That's as good an explanation as any, Mr. Casey, of what has become of my poor, dear Benjamin!" she wept. "He may have—evaporated, as you put it!"

"That's the on'y way," agreed the janitor sadly. "Unless— I'm goin' t' have a look out o' that winder, down into the air-shaft, Mis' Vex. I'll take me tools an' open her up now, an' see what I kin see—though I can't reason, poor Mr. Vex not being, as I know of, able t' flit through a pane o' glass, how he could get out through them sashes!"

In two minutes Casey had the portal open. He knelt on the window-sill and looked down the air-shaft separating the apartment-house next door from the flat-building in which he was in.

He saw nothing, looking down through the darkness, on the concrete paving of the areaway, five floors below—the Vex apartment being on the top story of the house.

Nothing, either, met his anxious sight as he looked along the walls of both his own building and the one next door.

"It's no use, ma'am," he said, jumping down on the bath-room floor. "Evaporation's th' on'y the'ry t' account fer yer man's vanishin'."

"What shall I do?" sobbed Mrs. Vex. "This is dreadful—dreadful!"

"Ca'm yerself, ma'am!" soothed Casey.

"I can't be calm!"

"D'ye think it wud be any use notifyin' the police, Mis' Vex—maybe a detective on th' thrail av' this mystery might be able to find some dacent, satisfyin' answer to this Chinese puzzle out av the facts—"

"That's it!" cried Mrs. Vex. "The police — no, a private detective agency might be better. How do I get a detective, Mr. Casey? Tell me — quickly—use the telephone—go out—hurry, hurry—get the best man in the city to handle this—this case—"

"I'll go at once, ma'am—" began the janitor.

Then he stopped.

Mrs. Vex's blood ran suddenly cold in her veins.

From somewhere out of sight—somewhere, seemingly over their heads, perhaps under their feet, beside them, they did not know where—sounded a voice.

And it was the unmistakable voice of the vanished Mr. Vex!

"Martha!" said the voice of the missing man.

Mrs. Vex caught herself just as she was about to fall to the floor in another faint — bracing herself with one hand against the woodwork of the open bath-room door.

"Benjamin!" she mouthed.

Mr. Casey caught the name on her lips.

"Saints presarve us!" he gasped, staggering backward against the steam-

pipe, and then quickly away again. "It's—it's Mr. Vex's voice that do be callin' to ye, ma'am?" he whispered frightenedly to the trembling Mrs. Vex.

She ignored him, her eyes—popped half out of her head—roving round the atmosphere of the bath-room, over wall and ceiling and floor in an unavailing search for her husband, whose voice had sounded so startlingly but the moment before.

And now it came again.

"Martha!" The tone was peremptory.

"Benjamin!" screamed the poor woman. "Where are you—oh, where are you, in Heaven's name? Tell me—can I see you? Can you come to me—or I to you?"

"Look up here!" ordered her husband's voice.

This time, the words sounding more distinctly — or, perhaps, her first shock having passed, leaving her ears more keen to trace the direction of the voice—Mrs. Vex looked up through the opened upper sash of the bath-room window.

And there, in the window of the top floor of the apartment-house next door—one floor higher than their own top-story flat—she saw the face of Mr. Vex.

More than that—she saw that he was not "dressed like Adam," as the janitor had put it.

She could see his neck and shoulders, as well as his face and head, and this former portion of his anatomy was correctly garbed in high collar, white lawn tie, and well-fitting evening coat.

The sight of Mr. Vex thus attired capped the climax of the entire mystery.

How—how, in the name of anything that was explainable—had her husband left that locked bath-room, dressed himself for the dinner-party they were to attend that evening, and got out of the room itself, out of the very apartment, the building, even—and into the flat next door?

The thing was more weird, more uncanny, more supernatural, than ever before. Mrs. Vex felt reason tottering on its throne as she walked haltingly to the window and looked up at her husband, looking down at *her*.

"What — what are you doing there, Benjamin?" she stammered.

"What are *you* doing *there* with that man—whoever he is—I heard you talking with?" countered Mr. Vex promptly, his tone angry.

For a full five minutes Mrs. Vex explained exactly what she was doing, what she was not doing, and what she would eventually do if Mr. Vex did not answer her question at once, immediately, quicker than that—and in the most complete detail that he could command.

After a minute for the gentleman to get into his head the facts that had confronted his wife with their mystery, he complied with her request as follows:

"When you went out to telephone," he began, "I had just gone into that bath-room. And no sooner had the door shut behind you than I remembered something.

"That something was a very pressing business engagement I had with Terwilliger, who, as you know, lives in this apartment from whose window I am now talking.

"I had some important papers for him to sign to-night. I should have remembered them, and taken the things up for his signature before I came home. But, however that might have been, it was up to me to see him at once, right then. So, no sooner having stepped foot inside the bath-room than I remembered all this, I stepped out again. You had only just gone out of the flat.

"How I happened to do it, I don't know. Fussed up, I suppose, over having forgotten my engagement with Terwilliger—hearing you shut the front door, and realizing vaguely that I was all alone in the flat, which made me cautious—remembering, too, that burglar who broke in through the bath-room in the Willets' flat next door—I locked the bath-room door behind me.

"Inside was the water in the tub, which I had not used, my underwear—freshly laid out for me to put on—and the magazine I meant to look through while I sat in the tub.

"I laid this, I remember, over the rim of the bath-tub before I came out. It probably fell off into the water at once—which I, having left the room and locked it up behind me, did not notice.

"Then I hurried into my evening clothes, which I meant to wear to-night.

Absent-mindedly still, I took out fresh underwear and put it on—instead of remembering about the suit I had taken into the bath-room with me.

"Because I put on my dress clothes, and you found only the garments I had taken off, you thought, as you have told me you did, that I had no clothes on after my disappearance from the bath-room.

"That explains that much of what went far to make you mystified. Anyway, I left the flat before you came back. Forgot to leave a note telling you I had gone—you'd not expect me to do that, anyway, since I was only going next door, expecting to be right back; and never thought that you would worry over what you found.

"Then—I was delayed in getting my papers signed. We had to go out and find a notary—which took us till now. So—that's the whole story, my dear. And I'm extremely sorry I've caused you any distress of mind due to my unthinking carelessness."

Mrs. Vex stepped nearer to the window.

"Benjamin Vex," she said coldly, "you come home here to me—as fast as ever you can waddle!"

Behind her, Mr. Casey, the janitor, turned silently and stepped out into the hall.

"Now's the toime, Oi fale it inside of me bones," he said, with a chuckle for the impending welcome home to Mr. Vex, "fer me t' do a little vanishin' act of me own, begobs!"

AS MIDNIGHT COMES.

As midnight comes, when all the world is snow,
And bare trees, trembling, quiver to and fro,
The house is quiet, save for noises small:
Low creakings here and there, the cricket's call—
Wee, subtle sounds such as the shadows know.

The dim fire chuckles with quaint laughter low,
The tall clock speaks with pond'rous tick and slow,
And crisply counts the minutes as they fall,
As midnight comes.

Tall, stately shadows stand in solemn row
Along the stairs; and, in the hall below,
Queer shadow-beings lurk with stealthy crawl;
A single moon-gleam etches on the wall
With slender fingers, like a dim star-glow,
As midnight comes.

Robert Kilduffe 3d.

Morning Star.*

BY H. RIDER HAGGARD,

Author of "King Solomon's Mines," "She," "Mr. Meeson's Will," "Allan Quatermain," "Swallow," Etc., Etc.

Magic and Mystery Join Strangely in the Life March of a Queen and a Son of Kings.

SYNOPSIS OF PRECEDING CHAPTERS.

BY special favor of the god Amen, Pharaoh's queen, Ahura, bears a daughter, called Morning Star. On the death of Ahura, Morning Star is reared by Asti, the enchantress, who is the mother of Rames. Princes and foreign kings seek her hand in marriage, but she loves Rames, though she dare not marry him. Knowing that Asti can summon the gods, she compels her to call Amen that she may question him. The spirit of the queen's mother appears and foretells wo, but gives the queen assurance that she shall not love in vain.

In an encounter between a rejected suitor and Rames, the latter is victorious. Morning Star, by a decree, sends Rames on an armed expedition to Napata, bidding him press his suit to the crown of Kesh, and, returning, ask Egypt's queen in marriage. Pharaoh, with Morning Star, goes to Memphis as guest of his brother, Abi. He, too, seeks Morning Star for a wife. She repels him, with the result that Merytra, Pharaoh's lady of the footstool, and Kaku, the astrologer, compass Pharaoh's death by magic. Abi tries then to capture Morning Star; her bodyguard is slain, and with the faithful Asti, she takes refuge in the pylon of the old temple at Sekhet. There, awaiting starvation, she is magically succored by her Ka—a sort of astral body or other self—and told to choose between a hateful marriage or death in the river. She chooses death. And while an attacking party is heard at the gates below, she and Asti lose consciousness.

To Kaku and Merytra disturbing visions have come, yet they advise Abi to go to the temple and get Morning Star as his bride, thus ruling in Egypt. They repair with a great retinue to the temple, where, seated beneath the altar, they see a resplendent Morning Star, unharmed, evidently, by her recent privations. Though the populace is against her, she refuses to bow down to Abi, demanding that he defer to her. The populace threatens her, and she calls on Amen, her god, who gives a terrible sign—overthrowing the temple obelisks. All are terrified, and seek Morning Star's forgiveness, especially Kaku, in whose ears she whispers something; whereupon the astrologer flees incontinently.

CHAPTER XIII.

ABI LEARNS THE TRUTH.

A MOON had gone by, and on the first day of the new month, Kaku the vizier sat in the Hall of the Great Officers at Memphis, checking up the public accounts of the city.

It was not easy work, for during the past ten days twice these accounts had been sent back to him by the command of the queen, or the Pharaoh as she called herself, requesting information as to their items, and other awkward queries.

Abi had overlooked such matters, recognizing that a faithful servant was worthy of his hire—provided that he paid himself.

But now it seemed that things were different, and that the amount received was the exact amount that had to be handed over to the Crown, neither more nor less. Well, there was a large discrepancy which must be made up from somewhere, or, in other words, from Kaku's private store.

*** This story began in The Cavalier for November, 1909**

In a rage he caused the two head collectors of taxes to be brought before him, and as they would not pay, bade the executioners throw them down and beat them on the feet until they promised to produce the missing sums, most of which he himself had stolen.

Then, somewhat soothed, he retired from the hall into his own office, to find himself face to face with Abi, who was waiting for him.

So changed was the prince from his old, portly self, so aged and thin and miserable did he look, that in the dusk of that chamber Kaku failed to recognize him. Thinking that he was some suppliant, he began to revile him and order him to be gone.

Then the fury of Abi broke out.

Rushing at him, he seized the astrologer by the beard and smote him on the ears, saying:

"Dog, is it thus that you speak to your king? Well, on you at least I can revenge myself."

"Pardon, your majesty," said Kaku, "I did not know you in these shadows. Your majesty is changed of late."

"Changed!" said Abi, letting him go. "Who would not be changed who suffers as I do ever since I listened to your cursed counsel and tried to climb into the seat of Pharaoh?

"Before that I was happy. I had my sons, I had my wives, as many as I wished. I had my revenues and armies. Now everything has gone. My sons are dead, my women are driven away, my revenues are taken from me, my armies serve another."

"At least," suggested Kaku, "you are Pharaoh, and the husband of the most beautiful and the wisest woman in the world."

"Pharaoh!" groaned Abi. "The humblest mummy in the common city vaults is a greater king than I am, and as for the rest—"

He stopped and groaned again.

"What is the matter with your majesty?" asked Kaku.

"The matter is that I have fallen under the influence of an evil planet."

"The Star of Amen," suggested the astrologer.

"Yes, the Star of Amen, that lovely terror whom you call my wife. Man, she is no wife to me. Listen—there in the harem I went into the chamber where she was, none forbidding me, and found her sitting before her mirror and singing, clothed only in a thin robe of white, and her dark hair—O Kaku, never did you see such hair—which fell almost to the ground.

"She smiled on me, she spoke me fair, she drew me with those glittering eyes of hers—yes, she even called me husband, and sighed and talked of love, till at length I drew near to her and threw my arms about her."

"And then—"

"And then, Kaku, she was gone, and where her sweet face should have been I saw the yellow, mummied head of Pharaoh, he who is with Osiris, that seemed to grin at me.

"I opened my arms again, and lo! there she sat, laughing and shaking perfume from her hair, asking me, too, what ailed me that I turned so white, and if such were the way of husbands?

"Well, that was nigh a month ago, and as it began, so it has gone on. I seek my wife, and I find the mummied head of Pharaoh, and all the while she mocks me.

"Nor may I see the others any more, for she has caused them to be hunted hence, even those who have dwelt with me for years, saying that she must rule alone."

"Is that all?" asked Kaku.

"No, indeed, for as she torments me, so she torments every other man who comes near to her. She nets them with smiles, she bewitches them with her eyes till they go mad for love of her, and then, still smiling, she sends them about their business.

"Already two of them who were leaders in the great plot have died by their own hands, and another is mad, while the rest have become my secret but my bitter foes, because they love my queen and think that I stand between her and them."

"Is that all?" asked Kaku again.

"No, not all, for my power is taken from me. I who was great, after Pharaoh the greatest in all the land, now am but a slave. From morning to night I must work at tasks I hate; I must build temples to Amen, I must dig canals, I

must truckle to the common herd, and redress their grievances and remit their taxes.

"More, I must chastise the Bedouin, who have ever been my friends, and—next month undertake a war against that King of the Khita, with whom I made a secret treaty, and whose daughter that I married has been sent back to him because I loved her."

"And then?" asked Kaku.

"Oh! then when the Khita have been destroyed and made subject to Egypt, then her majesty purposes to return in state to Thebes to attend to the fashioning of my sepulcher, since, so she says, this is a matter that will not bear delay. Indeed, already she makes drawings for it, horrible and mystic drawings that I cannot understand, and brings them to me to see.

"Moreover, friend, know this, out of it opens another smaller tomb for *you*. Indeed, but this morning she sent an expedition to the desert quarries to bring thence three blocks of stone, one for my sarcophagus, one for yours, and one for that of your wife, Merytra. For she says that after the old fashion she purposes to honor both of you with these gifts."

At these words Kaku could no longer control himself, but began to walk up and down the room, muttering and snatching at his beard.

"How can you suffer it?" he said at length.

"You who were a great prince, to become a woman's slave, to be made as dirt beneath her feet, to be held up to the mockery of those you rule, to see your wives and household driven away from you, to be tormented, to be mocked, to look on other men favored before your eyes, to be threatened with early death. Oh! how can you suffer it? Why do you not kill her, and make an end?"

"Because," answered Abi, "because I dare not, since if I dreamed of such a thing she would guess my thought and kill *me*. Fool, do you not remember the fall of the eternal obelisks upon my captains, and what befell that man who mocked her, and sought refuge among the priests? No, I dare not lift a finger against her."

"Then, prince, you must carry your yoke until it wears through to the marrow, which will be when that sepulcher is ready."

"Not so," answered Abi, shivering, "for I have another plan; it is of it that I am come to speak with you. Friend Kaku, *you* must kill her.

"Listen: you are a master of spells. The magic which prevailed against the father will overcome the daughter also. You have but to make a waxen image or two and breathe strength into them, and the thing is done, and then—think of the reward."

"Indeed, I am thinking, most noble prince," replied the astrologer with sarcasm. "Shall I tell you of that reward? It would be my death by slow torture. Moreover, it is impossible, for if you would know the truth, she cannot be killed."

"What do you mean, fool?" asked Abi angrily. "Flesh and blood must bow to death."

A sickly smile spread itself over Kaku's thin face as he answered:

"A saying worthy of your wisdom, prince. Certainly the experience of mankind is that flesh and blood must bow to death. Yes, yes, flesh and blood!"

"Cease grinning at me, you ape of the rocks," hissed the enraged Abi, "or I will prove as much on your mocking throat." Snatching out his sword he threatened him with it, adding: "Now tell me what you mean, or—"

"Prince," ejaculated Kaku, falling to his knees, "I may not, I cannot. Spare me, it is a secret of the gods."

"Then get you gone to the gods, you lying cur, and talk it over with them," answered Abi, lifting the sword, "for at least she will not blame me if I send you there."

"Mercy, mercy!" gasped Kaku, sprawling on the ground, while his lord held the sword above his bald head, thinking that he would choose speech rather than death.

It was at this moment, while the astrologer's fate trembled in the balance, that a sound of voices reached their ears, and above them the ring of a light, clear laugh which they knew well.

Forgetting his purpose, Abi stepped to the window-place, and looked through the opening of the shutters. Presently

he turned, beckoning to Kaku, and whispered:

"Come and look; there is always time for you to die."

The vizier heard, and, creeping on his hands and knees to the window-place, raised himself and peeped through the shutter. This was what he saw:

In the walled garden below, the secret garden of the palace, stood the queen Neter-Tua, and the sunlight piercing through the boughs of a flowering tree, fell in bright bars upon her beauty. She was not alone, for before her knelt a man wearing the rich robes of a noble.

Kaku knew him at once, for, although still young, he was Abi's favorite captain, an officer whom he loved, and had raised to high place because of his wit and valor, having given him one of his daughters in marriage. Also he had played a chief part in the great plot against Pharaoh, and it was he who had dealt the death-blow to Mermes, the husband of the Lady Asti.

Now he was playing another part, namely that of lover to the queen, for he clasped the hem of her robe in his hands, and kissed it with his lips, and pleaded with her passionately. They could catch some of his words.

He had risked his life to climb the wall. He worshiped her. He could not live without her. He was ready to do her bidding in all things—to gather a band and slay Abi; it would be easy, for every man was jealous of the prince, and thought him quite unworthy of her.

Let her give him her love, and he would make her sole Pharaoh of Egypt again, and be content to serve her as a slave. At least let her say one kind word to him.

Thus he spoke, wildly, imploringly, like a man that is drunk with passion and knows not what he says or does, while Neter-Tua listened calmly, and now and again laughed that light, low laugh of hers.

At length he rose and strove to take her hand, but, still laughing, she waved him back, then said suddenly:

"You slew Mermes when he was weak with wounds, did you not, and he was my foster-father. Well, well, it was done in war, and you must be a brave man, as brave as you are handsome, for otherwise you would scarcely have ventured here, where a word of mine would give you to your death.

"And now get you gone, friend, back to my lord's daughter, who is your wife, and if you dare—tell her where you have been, and why, you who are so brave a man." Once more she laughed.

Again he began his passionate implorings, begging for some token, till at length she seemed to melt and take pity on him, for, stretching out her hand, she chose a flower from the many that grew near, and gave it to him, then pointed to the trees that hid the wall, among which presently he vanished, reeling in the delirium of his joy.

She watched him go, smiling very strangely, then, still smiling, looked down at the bush whence she had plucked the flower, and Kaku noted that it was one used only by the embalmers to furnish coronals for the dead.

But Abi noted no such thing. Forgetting his quarrel with Kaku and all else, he gasped, and foamed in his jealous rage, muttering that he would kill that captain, yes, and the false queen, too, who dared to listen to a tale of love and give the lover flowers.

Yes, were she ten times Pharaoh, he would kill her, as he had the right to do, and, the naked sword still in his hand, he turned to leave the place.

"If that is your will, lord," said Kaku in a strained voice, "bide here."

"Why, man?" asked Abi.

"Because her majesty comes," he answered, "and this chamber is quiet and fitting. None enter it save myself."

As he spoke the words the door opened and closed again, and before them stood Neter-Tua, Star of Amen.

In the dusk of that room the first thing that seemed to catch her eye was the bared blade in Abi's hand. For a moment she looked at it and him, also at Kaku crouching in the corner, then asked in her quiet voice:

"Why is your sword drawn, O husband?"

"To kill you, O wife," he answered furiously, for his rage mastered him.

She continued to look at him a little while and said, smiling in her strange fashion:

"Indeed? But why more now than at

any other time? Has Kaku's counsel given you courage?"

"Need you ask, shameless woman? Does not this window-place open on to yonder garden?"

"Oh! I remember, that captain of yours—he who slew Mermes, your daughter's husband, who made love to me—so well that I rewarded him with a funeral flower, knowing that you watched us.

"Settle your account with him, as you and his wife may wish; it is no matter of mine. But I warn you that if you would take men's lives for such a fault as this, soon you will have no servants left, since they all are sinners who desire to usurp your place."

Then Abi's fury broke out. He cursed and reviled her, he called her by ill names, swearing that she should die, who bewitched all men and was the love of none, and who made him a mock and a shame in the sight of Egypt.

But Neter-Tua only listened, until at length he raved himself to silence.

"You talk much and do little," she said at length. "The sword is in your hand, use it, I am here."

Maddened by her scorn, he lifted the weapon and rushed at her, only to reel back again as though he had been smitten by some power unseen. He rested against the wall, then again rushed and again reeled back.

"You are a poor butcher," she said at length, "after so many years of practise. Let Kaku, yonder, try. I think he has more skill in murder."

"Oh! your majesty," broke in the astrologer, "unsay those cruel words, you who know that rather than lift hands against you I would die a thousand times."

"Yes," she answered gravely, "the Prince Abi suggested it to you but now, did he not, after you had suggested it to him, and you refused—for your own reasons?"

Then the sword fell from Abi's hand, and there was silence in that chamber.

"What were you talking of, Abi, before you peeped through the shutters and saw that captain of yours and me together in the garden, and why did you wish to kill this dog?" she went on presently. "Must I answer for you?

"You were talking of how you might be rid of me, and you wished to kill him, because he did not dare to tell you why he could not do the deed, knowing that if he did so he must die. Well, you shall learn, and now.

"Look on me, wretched man whom men name my husband. Look on me, accursed slave whom Amen has given into my hands to punish upon the earth, until you pass to his in the underworld."

He looked, and Kaku looked also, because he could not help it, but what they saw they never told. Only they fell down upon their faces, and groaned; beating the floor with their foreheads.

At length the icy terror seemed to be lifted from their hearts, and they dared to glance up again, and saw that she was as she had been, a most royal and lovely woman, but no more.

"What are you?" gasped Abi. "The goddess Sekhet in the flesh, or Isis, Queen of Death, or but dead Tua's ghost sent here for vengeance?"

"All of them, or none of them, as you will, though, man, it is true that I am sent here for vengeance. Ask the wizard yonder. He knows."

"*She is the double of Amen's daughter,*" moaned Kaku. "She is her Ka set free to bring doom upon those who would have wronged her. She is a ghost armed with the might of the gods, and all we who have sinned against dead Pharaoh and her and her father Amen are given into her hand to be tormented and brought to doom."

"Where, then, is Neter-Tua, who was Queen of Egypt?" gasped Abi, rolling his great eyes. "Is she with Osiris?"

"I will tell you, man," answered the royal shape. "She is not dead—she lives, and is gone to seek one she loves.

"When she returns with him and a certain beggar, then I shall depart and you will die, both of you, for such is the punishment decreed upon you. Until then, arise and do my bidding."

CHAPTER XIV.

THE BOAT OF RA.

TUA, Star of Amen, opened her eyes. For some time already she had lain as one lies between sleep and waking, and it seemed to her that she

heard the sound of dipping oars, and of water that rippled gently against the sides of a ship. She thought to herself that she dreamed.

Doubtless she was in her bed in the palace at Thebes, and presently, when it was light, her ladies would come to waken her.

In the palace at Thebes!

Why, now she remembered that it was months since she had seen that royal city, she who had traveled far since then, and come at last to white-walled Memphis, where many terrible things had befallen her.

One by one they came into her mind; the snare, Pharaoh's murder by magic, the battle, and the slaughter of her guards, the starvation in the tower, with death on one hand and the hateful Abi on the other; the wondrous vision of that spirit who wore her face, and said she was the guardian Ka given to her at birth, the words it spoke, and her dread resolve.

And last of all Asti and herself standing in the lofty window niche, then a flame of fire before her face, and that fearful downward rush.

Oh! without a doubt it was over; she was dead, and these dreams and memories were such as come to the dwellers in the underworld. Only then why did she hear the sound of lapping water and of dipping oars?

Very slowly she opened her eyes, for Tua greatly feared what she might see. Light flowed upon her, the light of the moon which hung in a clear sky like some great lamp of gold.

By it she saw that, robed all in white, she lay upon a couch in a pavilion, whereof the silken curtains were drawn back in front and tied to gilded posts. At her side, wrapped in a gray robe, lay another figure, which she knew for Asti.

It was still, so still that she was sure it must be dead, yet she knew that this was Asti. Perchance Asti dreamed also, and could hear her in her dreams; at least, she would speak to her.

"Asti," she whispered, "Asti, can you hear me?"

The gray figure at her side stirred, and the head turned toward her. Then the voice of Asti, none other, answered:

"Aye, lady, I hear and see. But say, where are we now?"

"In the underworld, I think, Asti. Oh! that fire was death, and now we journey to the Place of Souls."

"If so, lady, it is strange that we should still have eyes and flesh and voices as mortal women have. Let us sit up and look."

So they sat up, their arms about each other, and peered through the open curtains.

Behold! they were on a ship more beautiful than any they had ever seen, for it seemed to be covered with gold and silver, while sweet odors floated from its hold.

Their pavilion was set in the center of the ship, and looking aft they perceived lines of white-clad rowers seated at their oars in the shadow of the bulwarks, and on the high stern—also robed in white—a tall steersman, whose face was veiled, behind whom, in the dim glimpses of the moon, they caught sight of a wide and silvery river, and on its distant banks palms and temple towers.

"It is the boat of Ra," murmured Tua, "which bears us down the River of Death to the kingdom behind the sun."

Then she sank back upon her cushions, and once more fell into swoon or sleep.

Tua woke again, and lo! the sun was shining brightly, and at her side sat Asti watching her. Moreover, in front of them was set a table spread with delicate food.

"Tell me what has chanced, nurse," she said faintly, "for I am bewildered, and know not in what world we wander."

"Our own, queen, I think," answered Asti, "but in charge of those who are not of it, for surely this is no mortal boat, nor do mortals guide her to her port. Come, we need food. Let us eat while we may."

So they ate and drank heartily enough, and when they had finished even dared to go out of the pavilion. Looking round them they saw that they stood upon a high deck in the midst of a great ship, but that this deck was enclosed with a net of silver cords in which they could find no opening.

Looking through its meshes they noted that the oars were inboard, and the great purple sails set upon the mast, also that rowers were gone, perchance to rest be-

neath the deck, while on the forecastle of the ship stood the captain, white-robed and masked, and aft the steersman, also still masked, so that they could see nothing of their faces.

Now, too, they were no longer sailing on a river, but down a canal bordered by banks of sand on either side, beyond which stretched desert farther than the eye could reach.

Asti studied the desert, then turned and said:

"I think I know this canal, lady, for once I sailed it as a child. I think it is that which was dug by the Pharaohs of old, and repaired after the fall of the Hyksos kings, and that it runs from Bubastis to that bay down which wanderers sail toward the rising sun."

"Mayhap," answered Tua. "At least this is the world that bore us, and no other, and by the mercy of Amen and the power of my spirit we are still alive, and not dead—or so it seems. Call now to the captain on yonder deck; perhaps he will tell whither he bears us in his magic ship."

So Asti called, but the captain made no sign that he saw or heard her. Next she called to the steersman, but although his veiled face was toward them, he also made no sign, so that at last they believed either that these were spirits or that they were men born deaf and dumb.

In the end, growing weary of staring at this beautiful ship, at the canal, and the desert beyond it, and of wondering where they were, and how they came thither, they returned to the pavilion to avoid the heat of the sun. Here they found that during their absence some hand unseen had arranged the silken bed-clothing on their couches and cleared away the fragments of their meal, resetting the beautiful table with other foods.

"Truly here is wizardry at work," said Tua, as she sank into a leather-seated, ivory chair that was placed ready.

"Who doubts it?" answered Asti calmly. "By wizardry were you born; by wizardry was Pharaoh slain; by wizardry are we saved to an end that we cannot guess; by wizardry, or what men so name, does the whole world move, only being so near we see it not."

Tua thought a while, then said:

"Well, this golden ship is better than the sty of Abi the hog, nor do I believe that we journey to no purpose. Still, I wonder what that spirit who named herself my Ka does on the throne of Egypt; also how we came on board this boat, and whither we sail."

"Wonder not, for all these things we shall learn in due season, and for my part, although I hate him, I am sorry for Abi," answered Asti dryly.

So they sat there in the pavilion watching the desert, over the sands of which their ship seemed to move, till at length the sun grew low, and they went to walk upon the deck.

Then they returned to eat of the delicious food that was always provided for them in such plenty, and at nightfall sought their couches, and slept heavily, for they needed rest.

When they awoke again it was daylight, though no sun shone through the clouds, and their vessel rolled onward across a wide and sullen sea out of sight of land. Also the silken pavilion about them was gone, and replaced by a cabin of massive cedar wood, though of this, being sated with marvels, Tua and Asti took little note.

Indeed, having neither of them been on an angry ocean before, a strange dizziness overcame them, which caused them to sleep much and think little for three whole days and nights.

At length, one evening as the sun sank, they perceived that the violent motion of the vessel had ceased with the roaring of the gale above, which for all this while had driven them onward at such fearful speed.

Venturing from their cedar house, they saw that they had entered the mouth of a great river, upon the banks of which grew enormous trees that sent out long, crooked roots into the water, and that among these roots crouched crocodiles and other noisome reptiles.

Also the white-robed oarsmen had appeared again, and as there was no wind, rowed the ship up the river, till at length they came to a spit of sand which jutted out into the stream, and here cast anchor.

Now Tua's and Asti's desire for food returned to them, and they ate. Just as they had finished their meal, and the sun was sinking, suddenly there appeared be-

fore them two masked men, each of whom bore a basket in his hand.

Asti began to question them, but, like the captain and the steersman, they seemed to be deaf and dumb. At least they made no answer, only prostrated themselves humbly, and pointed toward the shore, where now Tua saw a fire burning upon a rock, though who had lit it she did not know.

"They mean us to leave the ship," said Asti. "Come, queen, let us follow our fortunes, for doubtless these are high."

"As you will," answered Tua, "seeing that we should scarcely have been brought here to no end."

So they accompanied the men to the side of that splendid vessel, for now the netting that confined them had been removed, to find that a gangway had been laid from its bulwark to the shore.

As they stepped onto this gangway their masked companions handed to each of them one of the baskets, then again bowed humbly and were gone. Soon they gained the bank, and scarcely had their feet touched it when the gangway was withdrawn, and the great oars began to beat the muddy water.

Round swung the ship, and for a minute hung in midstream. There stood the captain on the foredeck, and there was the steersman at the helm, and the red light of the sinking sun turned them into figures of flame.

Suddenly, with a simultaneous motion, these men tore off their masks, so that for a moment Asti and Tua saw their faces —and behold! the face of the captain was the face of Pharaoh, Tua's father, and the face of the steersman was the face of Mermes, Asti's husband.

For one moment only did they see them, then a dark cloud hid the dying sun, and when it passed that ship was gone, whither they knew not.

The two women looked at each other, and for the first time were much afraid.

"Truly," said Tua, "we are haunted if ever mortals were, for yonder ship has ghosts for mariners."

"Aye, lady," answered Asti, "so have I thought from the first. Still, take heart, for these ghosts once were men who loved us well, and doubtless they love us still.

"Be sure that for no ill purpose have we been snatched out of the hand of Abi, and brought living and unharmed by the shades of Pharaoh, your sire, and Mermes, my husband, to this secret shore. See, yonder burns a fire, let us go to it and await what may befall bravely, knowing that at least it can be naught but good."

So they went to the rock, and darkness being come, sat themselves down by the fire, alongside of which lay wood for its replenishment, and near the wood soft robes of camel's-hair to shield them from the cold.

These robes they put on with thankfulness, and, having fed the flame, bethought them of and opened the baskets which were given to them when they left the ship.

The first basket, that which Asti held, they found to contain food, cakes, dried meats and dates, as much as one woman could carry. But the second, that which had been given to Tua, was otherwise provided, for in the mouth of it lay a lovely harp of ivory with golden strings, whereof the frame was fashioned to the shape of a woman. Tua drew it out and looked at it by the light of the fire.

"It is my own harp," she said in an awed voice; "the harp that the Prince of Kesh, whom Rames slew, brought as a gift to me, to the notes of which I sang the 'Song of the Lovers' but just before the giver died.

"Yes, it is my own harp that I left in Thebes. Say, now, nurse, how came it here?"

"How came *we* here?" answered Asti shortly. "Answer my question and I will answer yours."

Then, laying down the harp, Tua looked again into her basket and found that beneath a layer of dried papyrus-leaves were hidden pearls—thousands of pearls of all sizes, and of such luster and beauty as she had never seen.

They were strung upon threads of silk, all those of a like size being set upon a single thread, except the very biggest, which were as great as a finger-nail, or even larger, that lay wrapped up separately in cloth at the bottom of the basket.

"Surely," said Tua, amazed, "no queen in all the earth ever had a dower of such

priceless pearls. Moreover, what good they and the harp can be to us in this forest I may not guess."

"Doubtless we shall discover in due course," answered Asti. "Meanwhile let us thank the gods for their gifts and eat."

So they ate, and then, having nothing else to do, lay down by the fire and would have slept.

But scarcely had they closed their eyes when the forest seemed to awake.

First from down by the river there came dreadful roarings, which they knew must be the voice of lions, for there were tame beasts of this sort in the gardens at Thebes. Next they heard the whines and whimperings of wolves and jackals, and mingled with them great snortings, such as are made by the rhinoceros and the river-horse.

Nearer, nearer came these awful sounds, till at length they saw yellow eyes moving like stars in the darkness at the edge of the forest, while across the patch of sand beneath their rock galloped swift shapes, which halted and sniffed toward them.

Also on the river side of them appeared huge, hoglike beasts, with gleaming tusks and red cavernous mouths, and beyond these again, crashing through the brushwood, a gigantic brute that bore a single horn upon its snout.

"Now our end is at hand," said Tua faintly; "for surely these creatures will devour us."

But Asti only threw more wood upon the fire and waited, thinking that the flame would frighten them away.

Yet it did not, for so curious, or so hungry, were they that the lions crept and crept nearer, and still more near, till at length they lay lashing their tails in the sand almost within springing distance of the rock, while on the farther side of these, like a court waiting on its monarch, gathered the hyenas and other beasts.

"They will spring presently," whispered Tua.

"Did the spirits of the divine Pharaoh, your father, and of Mermes, my lord, bring us here in the boat of Ra that we should be devoured by wild animals, like lost sheep in the desert?" asked Asti.

Then, as though by an inspiration, she added: "Lady, take that harp of yours and play and sing to it."

So Tua took the harp and swept its golden chords, and, lifting up her lovely voice, she began to sing. At first it trembled a little, but by degrees, as she forgot all save the music, it grew strong, and rang out sweetly in the silence of the forest, and the great, slow-moving river.

And lo! as she sang thus the wild brutes grew still and seemed to listen as though they were charmed. Yes, even a snake wriggled out from between the rocks and listened, waving its crested head to and fro.

At length Tua ceased, and as the echoes died away the brutes, every one of them, turned and vanished into the forest or the river, all save the snake, that coiled itself up and slept where it was.

So stillness came again, and Tua and Asti slept also, nor did they awake until the sun was shining in the heavens.

Then they arose wondering, and went down over the patch of sand that was marked with the footprints of all the beasts to the river's brink, and drank and washed themselves, peering the while through the mists, for they thought that perchance they would see that golden ship with the veiled crew which had carried them from Memphis returning and awaiting them in midstream.

But no ship was there; nothing was there except the river-horses, which rose and sank, and the crocodiles on the mud-banks, and the wild fowl that flighted inward from the sea to feed.

So they went back to the ashes of their fire and ate of the food in Asti's basket, and, when they had eaten, looked at each other, not knowing what to do. Then Tua said:

"Come, nurse, let us be going. Up the river and down the river we cannot walk, for there are nothing but weeds and mud, so we must strike out through the forest, whither the gods may lead us."

Asti nodded, and, clad in the light, warm clothes of camel's-hair, they set the basket upon their heads after the fashion of the peasant women of Egypt, and started forward, the harp of ivory and of gold hanging upon Tua's back.

For hour after hour they marched hus through the forest, threading their ›ath between the big boles of the trees, ınd heading always for the south, for hat way ran the woodland glades be-ond which was dense bush.

Great apes chattered above them in he tree-tops, and now and again some ›east of prey crossed their path and van-shed in the underwood, but nothing else lid they see. At length, toward midday, he ground began to rise, and the trees grew smaller and farther apart, till at ast they reached the edge of a sandy lesert and walked out to a little oasis, vhere the green grass showed them they vould find water.

In this oasis there was a spring, and ›y the edge of it they sat down and lrank, and ate of their store of food, and ıfterward slept a while.

Suddenly Tua, in her sleep, heard a voice, and, awakening with a start, saw ı man who stood near by, leaning on a hornwood staff and contemplating them.

He was a very strange man, apparent-y of great age, for his long, white hair ell down upon his shoulders, and his vhite beard reached to his middle. Once ıe must have been very tall, but now he vas bent with age, and the bones of his gaunt frame thrust out his ragged gar-nents.

His dark eyes also were horny; indeed t seemed as though he could scarcely ee with them, for he leaned forward to ›eer at their faces where they lay. His ace was scored by a thousand wrinkles, ınd almost black with exposure to the un and wind, but yet of a marvelous enderness and beauty.

Indeed, except that it was far more ıncient, and the features were on a larger ınd a grander scale, it reminded Tua of he face of Pharaoh after he was dead.

"My father," said Tua, sitting up, for ın impulse prompted her to name this vanderer thus, "say whence do you ome, and what would you with your ervants?"

"My daughter," answered the old nan in a sweet, grave voice. "I come rom the wilderness, which is my home. ong have I outlived all those of my generation; yes, and their children also.

"Therefore, the wilderness and the orest that do not change are now my only friends, since they alone knew me when I was young. Be pitiful now to me, for I am poor—so poor that for three whole days no food has passed my lips. It was the smell of the meat which you have with you that led me to you. Give me of that meat, daughter, for I starve."

"It is yours, O—" and she paused.

"I am called Kepher."

"Kepher, Kepher!" repeated Tua, for she thought it strange that a beggar-man should be named after that scara-bæus insect, which among the Egyptians was the symbol of eternity.

"Well, take and eat, O Kepher," she said, and handed him the basket that contained what was left to them of their store.

The beggar took it, and having looked up to heaven as though to ask a blessing on his meal, sat down upon the sand and began to devour the food ravenously.

"Lady," said Asti, "he will eat it all, and then we shall starve in this desert. He is a locust, not a man," she added, as another cake disappeared.

"He is our guest," answered Tua, "let him take what we have to give."

For a while Asti was silent, then again she broke out into remonstrance.

"Peace, nurse," replied Tua, "I have said that he is our guest, and the law of hospitality may not be broken."

"Then the law of hospitality will bring us to our deaths," muttered Asti.

"If so, so let it be, nurse; at least this poor man will be filled, and for the rest, as always, we must trust to Amen, our father."

Yet as she spoke the words, tears gathered in her eyes, for she knew that Asti was right, and now that all the food was gone, on which with care they might have lived for two days or more, soon they would faint and perish unless help came to them, which was not likely in that lonesome place.

Once, not so long ago, they had starved for lack of sustenance, and it was the thought of that slow pain so soon to be renewed that brought the water to her eyes.

Meanwhile Kepher, whose appetite for one so ancient was sharp, indeed, finished the contents of the basket down to the last date, and handed it back to Tua with a bow, saying:

"I thank you, daughter; the queen of Egypt could not have entertained me more royally," and he peered at her with his horny eyes.

"I who have been empty for long am full again, and since I cannot reward you I pray to the gods that they will do so. Beautiful daughter, may you never know what it is to lack a meal."

At this saying Tua could restrain herself no more. A large tear from her eyes fell upon Kepher's rough hand as she answered with a little sob:

"I am glad that you are comforted with meat, but do not mock us, friend, seeing that we are but lost wanderers, who very soon must starve, since now our food is done."

"What, daughter," asked the old man in an astonished voice, "what? Can I believe that you gave all you had to a beggar of the wilderness, and sat still while he devoured it? And is it for this reason that you weep?"

"Forgive me, father, but it is so," answered Tua. "I am ashamed of such weakness, but recently my friend here and I have known hunger, very sore hunger, and the dread of it moves me. Come, Asti, let us be going while our strength remains in us."

Kepher looked up at the name, then turned to Tua and said:

"Daughter, your face is fair and your heart is perfect, since otherwise you would not have dealt with me as you have done. Still, it seems that you lack one thing—undoubting faith in the goodness of the gods.

"Though, surely," he added in a slow voice, "those who have passed yonder lion-haunted forest without hurt should not lack faith. Say, now, how came you there?"

"We are ladies of Egypt," interrupted Asti, "or at least this maiden is, for I am but her old nurse. Man-stealing pirates of Phenicia seized us while we wandered on the shores of the Nile, and brought us hither in their ship, by what way we do not know. At length they put into yonder river for water, and we fled at night. We are escaped slaves, no more."

"Ah!" said Kepher, "those pirates must mourn their loss. I almost wonder that they did not follow you.

"Indeed, I thought that you might be other folk, for, strangely enough, as I slept in the sand last night, a certain spirit from the underworld visited me in my dreams, and told me to search for one Asti and another lady who was with her—I cannot remember the name of that lady. But I do remember the name of the spirit, for he told it to me; it was Mermes."

Now Asti gave a little cry, and, springing up, searched Kepher's face with her eyes, nor did he shrink from her gaze.

"I perceive," she said slowly, "that you who seem to be a beggar are also a seer."

"Mayhap, Asti," he answered. "In my long life I have often noted that sometimes men are more than they seem—and women also.

"Perhaps you have learned the same, for nurses in great houses may note many things if they choose. But let us say no more. I think it is better that we should say no more. You and your companion—how is she named?"

"Neferte," answered Asti promptly.

"Neferte, ah! certainly that was not the name which the spirit used, though it is true that other name began with the same sound, or so I think. Well, you and your companion, Neferte, escaped from those wicked pirates, and managed to bring certain things with you; for instance, that beautiful harp, wreathed with the royal *uræi,* and—but what is in that second basket?"

"Pearls," broke in Tua quickly.

"And a large basket of pearls. Might I see them? Oh! do not be afraid; I shall not rob those whose food I have eaten; it is against the custom of the desert."

"Certainly," answered Tua. "I never thought that you would rob us, for if you were of the tribe of thieves, surely you would be richer and less hungry than you seem.

"I only thought that you were almost blind, Father Kepher, and therefore could not know the difference between a pearl and a pebble."

"My feeling still remains to me, Daughter Neferte," he answered with a little smile.

Then Tua gave him the basket. He opened it and drew out the strings of

pearls, feeling them, smelling and peering at them, touching them with his tongue, especially the large single ones, which were wrapped up by themselves.

At length, having handled them all, he restored them to the basket, saying dryly:

"It is strange, indeed, Nurse Asti, that those Syrian man-stealers attempted no pursuit of you, for here, whether they were theirs or yours, are enough gems to buy a kingdom."

"We cannot eat pearls," answered Asti.

"No, but pearls will buy more than you need to eat."

"Not in a desert," said Asti.

"True, but as it chances there is a city in this desert, and not so very far away."

"Is it named Napata?" asked Tua eagerly.

"Napata? No, indeed. Yet, I have heard of such a place, the City of Gold they called it. In fact, once I visited it in my youth, over a hundred years ago."

"A hundred years ago! Do you remember the way thither?"

"Yes, more or less, but on foot it is over a year's journey away, and the path thither lies across great deserts and through tribes of savage men. Few live to reach that city."

"Yet I will reach it or die, father."

"Perhaps you will, Daughter Neferte, perhaps you will, but I think not at present. Meanwhile, you have a harp, and therefore it is probable that you can play and sing; also you have pearls. Now, the inhabitants of this town whereof I spoke to you love music.

"Also they love pearls, and as you cannot begin your journey to Napata for three months, when the rain on the mountains will have filled the desert wells, I suggest that you would do wisely to settle yourselves there for a while. Nurse Asti, here, would be a dealer in pearls, and you, her daughter, would be a musician. What say you?"

"I say that I should be glad to settle myself anywhere out of this desert," said Tua wearily. "Lead us on to the city, Father Kepher, if you know the way."

"I know the way, and will guide you thither in payment for that good meal of yours. Now come; follow me." And taking his long staff he strode away in front of them.

"This Kepher goes at a wonderful pace for an old man," said Tua presently. "When first we saw him he could scarcely hobble."

"Man!" answered Asti. "He is not a man, but a spirit, good or bad, I don't know which, appearing as a beggar. Could a man eat as much as he did—all our basketful of food?

"Does a man talk of cities that he visited in his youth over a hundred years ago, or declare that my dead husband spoke to him in his dreams? No, no, he is a ghost like those upon the ship."

"So much the better," answered Tua cheerfully, "since ghosts have been good friends to us; had it not been for them I should have been dead or shamed to-day."

"That we shall find out at the end of the story," said Asti, who was cross and weary, for the heat of the sun was great. "Meanwhile, follow on. There is nothing else to do."

For hour after hour they walked, till at length toward evening, when they were almost exhausted, they struggled up a long rise of sand and rocks, and from the crest of it perceived a large walled town set in a green and fertile valley not very far beneath them.

Toward this town Kepher, who marched at a distance in front, guided them till they reached a clump of trees on the outskirts of the cultivated land. Here he halted, and when they came up to him, led them among the trees.

"Now," he said, "drop your veils and bide here, and if any should come to you, say that you are poor wandering players who rest. Also, if it pleases you, give me a small pearl off one of those strings, that I may go into the city, which is named Tat, and sell it to buy you food and a place to dwell in."

"Take a string," said Tua faintly.

"Nay, nay, daughter, one will be enough, for in this town pearls are rare, and have a great value."

So she gave him the gem, or rather let him take it from the silk, which he refastened very neatly for one who seemed to be almost blind, and strode off swiftly toward the town.

"Man or spirit, I wonder if we shall see him again?" said Asti.

Tua made no answer—she was too tired, but resting herself against the bole of a tree, fell into a doze.

When she awoke again it was to see that the sun had sunk, and that before her stood the beggar Kepher, and with him two black men, each of whom led a saddled mule.

"Mount, friends," he said, "for I have found you a lodging."

So they mounted, and were led to the gate of the city, which at the word of Kepher was opened for them, and thence down a long street to a house built in a walled garden.

Into this house they entered, the black men leading off the mules, to find that it was a well-furnished place with a table ready set in the anteroom, on which was food in plenty.

They ate of it, all three of them, and when they had finished Kepher bade a woman who was waiting on them lead them to their chamber, saying that he himself would sleep in the garden.

Thither then they went without more questions, and throwing themselves down upon beds which were prepared for them, were soon fast asleep.

CHAPTER XV.

TUA AND THE KING OF TAT.

IN the morning, after Tua and Asti had put on the clean robes that lay to their hands, and eaten, suddenly they looked up and perceived that Kepher, the ancient beggar of the desert, was in the room with them, though neither of them had heard or seen him enter.

"You come silently, friend," said Asti, looking at him with a curious eye. "A double could not move with less noise, and—where is your shadow?" she added, staring first at the sun without and then at the floor upon which he stood.

"I forgot it," he answered in his deep voice. "One so poor as I am cannot always afford a shadow. But look, there it is now.

"And for the rest, what do you know of doubles, which those who are uninstructed cannot discern? Now, I have heard of a lady in Egypt who by some chance bore your name, and who has the power not only to see the double, but to draw it forth from the body of the living, and furnish it with every semblance of mortal life.

"Also I have heard that she who reigns in Egypt to-day has such a Ka or double that can take her place, and none know the difference, save that this Ka, which Amen gave her at her birth, works the vengeance of the gods without pity or remorse. Tell me, Friend Asti, when you were a slave-woman in Egypt, did you ever hear talk of such things as these?"

Now he looked at Asti, and Asti looked at him, till at length he moved his old hands in a certain fashion, whereon she bowed her head and was silent.

But Tua, who was terrified at this talk, for she knew not what would befall them if the truth were guessed, broke in, saying:

"Welcome, father, however it may please you to come, and with or without a shadow. Surely we have much to thank you for, who have found us this fine house and servants and food—by the way, will you not eat again?"

"Nay," he answered, smiling, "as you may have guessed yesterday, I touch meat seldom; as a rule once only in three days, and then take my fill. Life is so short that I cannot waste time in eating."

"Oh!" said Tua, "if you feel thus whose youth began more than a hundred years ago, how must it seem to the rest of us? But, Father Kepher, what are we to do in this town Tat?"

"I have told you, maiden. Asti here will deal in pearls and other goods, and you will sing, but always behind the curtain, since here in Tat you must suffer no man to see your beauty, and least of all him who rules it.

"Now give me two more pearls, for I go out to buy for you other things that are needful, and after that perhaps you will see me no more for a long while. Yet if trouble should fall upon you, go to the window-place wherever you may be, and strike upon that harp of yours and call thrice upon the name of Kepher.

"Doubtless there will be some listening who will hear you and bring me the news in the desert, where I dwell, who do not love towns, and then I may be able to help you."

"I thank you, my father, and I will remember. But pardon me if I ask how can one so—" and she paused.

"So old, so ragged, and so miserable give help to man or woman—that is what you would say, Daughter Neferte, is it not? Well, judge not from the outward seeming; good wine is often found in jars of common clay, and the fire hid in a rough flint can destroy a city."

"And therefore a wanderer who can swallow his own shadow can aid another wanderer in distress," remarked Tua dryly. "My father, I understand, who, although I am still young, have seen many things, and ere now been dragged out of deep water by strange hands."

"Such as those of Phenician pirates," suggested Kepher. "Well, good-by. I go to purchase what you need with the price of these pearls, and then the desert calls me for a while.

"Remember what I told you, and do not seek to leave this town of Tat until the rain has fallen on the mountains and there is water in the wells. Good-by, Friend Asti, also; when I come again we will talk more of doubles, until which time may the great god of Egypt—he is called Amen, is he not?—have you and your lady in his keeping."

Then he turned and went.

"What is that man?" asked Tua when they had heard the door of the house close behind him.

"Man?" answered Asti. "I have told you that he is no man. Do men unfold their shadows like a garment? He is a god or a ghost, wearing a beggar's shape."

"Man or ghost, I like him well, for he has befriended us in our need, nurse."

"That we shall know when he has done with us," answered Asti.

An hour later, while they were still talking of Kepher and all the marvels that had befallen them, porters began to arrive, bearing bundles, which, when opened, were found to contain silks and broideries in gold and silver thread, and leather richly worked, such as the Arabs make, and alabaster pots of ointments, and brass work from Syria, and copper jars from Cyprus, with many other goods, all very costly, and in number more than enough for a wealthy trader's store.

These goods the porters set out on the mats and shelves of the large front room of the house that opened to the street, which room seemed to have been built to receive them.

Then they departed, asking no fees, and there appeared a man riding a fine white horse, who dismounted, and, bowing low toward the screen of pierced woodwork, behind which Tua and Asti were hidden, laid a writing upon a little table, and rode away. When he had gone Asti opened the door in the screen and took the writing, which she found she could read well enough, for it was in the Egyptian character and language.

It proved to be the title-deed of the house and garden conveyed to them jointly, and also of the rich goods which the porters had brought. At the foot of this document was written:

"Received by Kepher, the Wanderer, in payment of the above house and land and goods, three pearls and one full meal of meat and dates.

Then followed the seal of Kepher in wax, a finely cut scarabæus holding the symbol of the sun between its two front feet.

"A proud seal for a tattered wanderer, though it is but his name writ in wax," said Tua.

But Asti only answered:

"If small pearls have such value in this city, what price will the large ones bring? Well, let us to our business, for we have time upon our hands, and cannot live upon pearls and costly stuffs."

So it happened that Neter-Tua, Star of Amen, Queen of Egypt, and Asti her nurse, the Mistress of Magic, became merchants in the town of Tat.

This was the manner of their trade. For one hour in the morning, and one in the afternoon, Asti, heavily veiled, and a woman of the servants whom they had found in the house, would sit on stools amid the goods, and traffic with all comers, selling to those who would buy, and taking payment in gold dust or other articles of value, or buying from those who would sell.

Then, when the hour drew toward its close, Tua would sweep her harp behind the screen that hid her and begin

to sing, whereon all would cease from their chaffering and listen, for never before had they heard so sweet a voice. Indeed, at these times the broad street in front of their house was packed with people, for the fame of this singing of hers went through the city and far into the country that lay beyond.

Then the traffic came to an end, with her song, and leaving their goods in charge of the servants, Tua and Asti departed to the back rooms of the house, and ate their meals or wandered in the large, walled garden that lay behind.

Thus the weeks went on, and soon, although they sold few of the pearls, and those the smallest, for of the larger gems they said little or nothing, they began to grow rich, and to hoard up such a weight of gold in dust and nuggets, and so many precious things, that they scarcely knew what they should do with them.

Still, that seemed to be a peaceful city, or at the least none tried to rob or molest them, perhaps because a rumor was abroad that these strangers who came out of the unknown were under the protection of some god.

There was nothing to show how or why this rumor had arisen in the city, but on account of it, if for no other reason, these pearl-merchants, as they were called, suffered no wrong, and although they were only undefended women, whatever credit they might give, the debt was always paid.

Also their servants, to whom they added as they had means, were all faithful to them. So there they remained and traded, keeping their secrets and awaiting the appointed hour of escape, but never venturing to leave the shelter of their own walls.

Now, as it happened, when they came thither the King of Tat was away making war upon another king whose country lay upon the coast, but after they had dwelt for many weeks in the place, this king, who was named Janees, returned victorious from his war and prepared to celebrate a triumph.

While he was making ready for this triumph his courtiers told him of these pearl-merchants, and, desiring pearls for his adornment on that great day, he went in disguise to the house of those who sold them.

As it chanced he arrived late, and requested to see the gems just as Tua, according to her custom, was playing upon her harp. Then she began to sing, and this King Janees, who was a man under forty years of age, listened intently to her beautiful voice, forgetting all about the pearls that he had come to buy.

Her song finished, the veiled Asti rose, and bowing to all the company gathered in the street, bade her servants shut up the coffers and remove the goods.

"But I would buy pearls, merchant, if you have such to sell," said Janees.

"Then you must return this afternoon, purchaser," replied Asti, scanning his pale and haughty face, "for even if you were the King of Tat, I would not sell to you out of my hours."

"You speak high words, woman," exclaimed Janees angrily.

"High or low, they are what I mean," answered Asti, and went away.

The end of it was that this King Janees returned at the evening hour, led thither more by a desire to hear that lovely voice again than to purchase gems. Still he asked to see pearls, and Asti showed him some which he thrust aside as too small.

Then she produced those that were larger, and again he thrust them aside, and so it went on for a long while. At length from somewhere in her clothing Asti drew two of the biggest that she had, perfect pearls of the size of the middle nail of a man's finger, and at the sight of these the eyes of Janees brightened, for such gems he had never seen before. Then he asked the price. Asti answered carelessly that it was doubtless more than he would wish to pay, since there were few such pearls in the whole world, and she named a weight in gold that caused him to step back from her amazed, for it was a quarter of the tribute that he had taken from his new-conquered kingdom.

"Woman, you jest," he said, "surely there is some abatement."

"Man," she answered, "I jest not; there is no abatement." And she replaced the pearls in her garments.

Now he grew very angry, and asked: "Do you know that I am the King of Tat, and if I will, can take your pearls without any payment at all?"

"Are you?" asked Asti, looking at him coolly. "I should never have guessed it. Well, if you steal my goods, as you say you can, you will be King of Thieves also."

Now those who heard this saying laughed, and the king thought it best to join in their merriment. Then the bargaining went on, but before it was finished at her appointed hour Tua began to sing behind the screen.

"Have done," said the king to Asti, "to-morrow you shall be paid your price. I would listen to that music, which is above price."

So Janees listened like one fascinated, for Tua was singing her best. Step by step he drew ever nearer to the screen, though this Asti did not notice, for she was engaged in locking up her goods.

At length he reached it, and thrusting his fingers through the openings in the pierced woodwork, rested his weight upon it like a man who is faint, as perhaps he was with the sweetness of that music.

Then of a sudden, by craft or chance, he swung himself backward, and with him came the frail screen. Down it clattered to the floor, and lo! beyond it, unveiled, but clad in rich attire, stood Tua sweeping her harp of ivory and gold.

Like sunlight from a cloud the bright vision of her beauty struck the eyes of the people gathered there, and seemed to dazzle them, since for a while they were silent. Then one said:

"Surely this woman is a queen," and another answered:

"Nay, she is a goddess," but ere the words had left his lips Tua was gone.

As for Janees the king, he stared at her open-mouthed, reeling upon his feet, then, as she fled, turning to Asti, saying:

"Is this lady your slave?"

"Nay, king, my daughter, whom you have done ill to spy upon."

"Then," said Janees slowly, "I who might do less, desire to make this daughter of yours my queen—do you understand, Merchant of Pearls—my queen, and as a gift you shall have as much gold again as I have promised for your gems."

"Other kings have desired as much and offered more, but she is not for you or any of them," answered Asti, looking him in the face.

Now Janees made a movement as though he would strike her, then seemed to change his mind, for he replied only:

"A rough answer to a fair offer, seeing that none know who you are or whence you come. But there are eyes upon us. I will talk with you again to-morrow; till then, rest in peace."

"It is useless," began Asti, but he was already gone.

Presently Asti found Tua in the garden, and told her everything.

"Now I wish that Kepher of the Desert were at hand," said Tua nervously, "for it seems that I am in a snare, who like this Janees no better than I did Abi or the Prince of Kesh, and will never be his queen."

"Then I think we had better fly to the wilderness and seek him there this very night, for, lady, you know what chances to men who look upon your loveliness."

"I know what chanced to the Prince of Kesh, and what will chance to Abi at the hands of one I left behind me, I can guess; perhaps this Janees will fare no better. Still, let us go."

Asti nodded, then by an afterthought went into the house and asked some questions of the servants. Presently she returned, and said:

"It is useless. Soldiers are already stationed about the place, and some of our women who tried to go out have been turned back, for they say that by the king's order none may leave our door."

"Now shall I strike upon the harp and call upon the name of Kepher, as he bade me?" asked Tua.

"I think not yet a while, lady. This danger may pass by or the night bring counsel, and then he would be angry if you summoned him for naught. Let us go in and eat."

So they went in, and while they sat at their food suddenly they heard a noise, and looking up, perceived by the light of the lamp that women were crowding into the room, led by two eunuchs.

Tua drew a dagger from her robe and sprang up, but the head eunuch, an old, white-haired man, bowed low before her, and said:

"Lady, you can kill me if you will, for I am unarmed, but there are many more of us without, and to resist is

useless. Harken; no harm shall be done to you or to your companion, but it is the king's desire that one so royal and beautiful should be better lodged than in this place of traffic.

"Therefore he has commanded me to take you and all your household and all your goods to no less a place than his own palace, where he would speak with you."

"Sheathe the dagger and waste no words upon these slaves, daughter," said Asti. "Since we have no choice, let us go."

So, after they had veiled and robed, they suffered themselves to be led out and placed in a double litter with their pearls and gold, while the king's women collected all the rest of their goods and took them away together with their servants, leaving the house quite empty.

Then, guarded by soldiers, they were borne through the silent streets till they came to great gates which closed behind them, and having passed up many stairs, the litter was set down in a large and beautiful room lit with silver lamps of scented oil.

Here, and in other rooms beyond, they found women of the royal household and their own servants already arranging their possessions.

Soon it was done, and food and wine having been set for them, they were left alone in that room, and stood looking at each other.

"Now shall I strike and call?" said Tua, lifting the harp which she had brought with her. "Look, yonder is a window-place such as that of which Kepher spoke."

"Not yet I think, lady. Let us learn all our case ere we call for help."

As the words left her lips, the door opened, and through it, clad in his royal robes, walked Janees the king.

(To be continued.)

A Moving Story With a Full Stop.

BY HELEN A. HOLDEN.

Sorrow, Like Trouble, Is Not So Very Difficult to Find, if You Look Real Hard for It.

"FROM force of habit Stotesberry dropped in his ticket and started down the Subway stairs. Half way he noticed the crowd on the platform below.

"They'll get jolly well pushed and shoved, and it serves them right," he remarked to himself irritably. "Why can't some few people stay at home occasionally, and not crowd the Subway?"

Trying to keep calm, he threaded his way back through the crowd still pouring down the stairs. He bought another ticket, dropped it in the box, and went down the opposite side.

The up-town platform was almost deserted. Stotesberry sighed with relief.

He boarded the first car that came along. It mattered little to him where he went. The important thing was to keep going.

He would go until he was too weary to think. Then, perhaps, he could sleep.

It was maddening to have something on one's mind that would not be forgotten. Something unpleasant to be gone over and over.

When he finally left the Subway he found himself in an entirely strange part of the city. As far as he could see the street was deserted. This suited his mood.

He pulled down his hat more securely on his head and started on his tramp.

He had a half-formed idea that if he walked briskly enough he might shake off the trouble that was tormenting him. Perhaps the longer he walked the further behind he would leave it.

At first the fresh air and the half darkness helped. He felt grateful for the quiet of the almost deserted street.

But as he walked along the stillness grew oppressive. His thoughts followed, and dogged his footsteps like the shadows. The quiet made it easier to think. What he was trying to do was to forget to think.

Suddenly he felt as though awakened from a sound sleep. He came abruptly from the accustomed gloom into a blaze of lights. The street was crowded with people hurrying to and fro.

Stotesberry opened his eyes in amazement.

"With due apology to 'The Broad White Way,' where am I?" he queried. "I surely came up-town in that Subway."

Carried along by the hurrying throng, he was really becoming interested. Not that he had actually forgotten himself or his troubles, but they seemed less heavy in this crowd of good-natured men and women.

When he came to a theater he scarcely hesitated. Its doors were invitingly open. The bright electric lights beckoned cheerfully.

"Some jolly play," thought Stotesberry to himself, "will perhaps put me on my feet again. The crowd looks that kind. They seemed to have missed that haunted, worried look the people down-town wear."

The theater was crowded. Stotesberry's seat was far back. With a feeling almost of content he comfortably settled himself to be amused.

The play had already begun. The head of the house had just entered the stage. Harassed and worried with the cares of business, he came in looking for sympathy from the assembled family.

In vain he approached his wife. He found her cross and irritable, in consequence of having been snubbed by prominent social leaders, at an afternoon reception. The oldest daughter had been spending her time at "bridge." Having cut for and lost the first prize, she was on a veritable war-path.

Stotesberry did not wait for more. Seizing his hat and coat, he escaped.

"If it begins like that, what will it be when the climax is reached?" he groaned. "Isn't there enough real tragedy in life? Why invent it and offer it as an amusement?"

Wrath filled his soul as he again hurried along the street. He wanted so much to forget. Why did fate conspire to keep him reminded of his trouble?

A little farther on a brilliant sign announced, "Motion Pictures." As Stotesberry passed, the door opened. A shout went up from the audience inside. The faces of the man and woman on their way out smiled broadly in sympathy.

"That promises well." Still, after his former unhappy experience, Stotesberry hesitated. "Anyway, it would be something to know just what a moving-picture show is like. I'll chance it. If it comes to the worst, I can escape."

Stotesberry paid the required dime. As he did so he noticed a sign in the window of the ticket-office.

"Boys under sixteen not allowed unless accompanied by parent or guardian."

"Glad it doesn't say 'over,' thought Stotesberry. "Fate is at last kind in letting me be on the right side."

To all appearances the house was crowded. The usher offered to find Stotesberry a seat down near the front.

"I say," exclaimed Stotesberry, as his guide led him to the front row. "I thought you said near. This is close to being on."

"It is all there is left. But," the boy added encouragingly, "there'll be an intermission soon, when a lot of people will be getting out. You can get a seat most anywhere then."

Stotesberry did not take off his coat. If his stay were to be as short as it had been at the theater, it would hardly be worth while.

"Orchestra of one!" He was sitting on a line with a young girl at the piano. "Does she keep up that pace all through the performance? Couldn't! Yet her hands look it. The veins are all standing out about a yard.

"What would possess a girl to do a thing like that?" He had forgotten the pictures in his interest in the girl. "Nice looking, too. But doesn't she look all in?

Never in my life saw any one so fagged—her face, her hands, her whole attitude.

"Wonder what her tragedy is? It's a bad one, or she wouldn't be playing her thirty knots an hour, for, I wonder, how many hours a day, anyway?"

Stotesberry's thoughts were interrupted by the unexpected appearance of a young man. He took his place near the piano and sang through his nose a song called "Carrots."

After the pictures illustrating the song there was flashed on the curtain the words of the chorus. The audience joined in with a will. Almost unconsciously, Stotesberry followed the others, humming the air.

"It must have been the music that was inspiring," he apologized to himself afterward. "That girl certainly can play."

Then came a series of pictures that convulsed the audience. A woman was greatly annoyed by a tree too near her house. The "Crack Shot" quickly aimed his pistol, and down came the tree, branch after branch, finally the big trunk.

A man forgot to remove his hat as the flag passed during a parade. The Crack Shot removed it for him.

He shot away the wooden stumps of a fake beggar, and laughed to see the scamp run off on his own good legs.

Stotesberry was only dimly conscious of the pictures. His attention was riveted on the girl at the piano. Her fingers moved slower and slower. It seemed as though they must stop altogether.

Then, with an effort, she would strike up a lively air. From time to time she glanced quickly at the pictures, but there was no actual break in the music.

Even when she passed her left hand wearily across her forehead her right carried on the air without interruption. Once she swayed as though she would fall.

"Why doesn't some one stop her?" Stotesberry felt righteous indignation. "There's something worrying that girl almost insane. And she has to keep on playing those jig tunes probably half the night."

With its customary abruptness, the curtain announced a few minutes intermission.

The tired hands came to a stop. The exhausted girl leaned her head wearily on them as they rested on the piano.

This was the chance for Stotesberry to change to a more desirable seat. But the performance was forgotten.

His entire attention was absorbed by the girl. If there was only something he could do!

What was her tragedy? Was it a cruel father—a worthless husband? No, surely she was too young to be married.

The lights went out. The girl straightened herself at the piano. The moving pictures were "on" again.

The opening picture was one of a discouraged playwright. A mere lad, whose ambition is suddenly and irrevocably extinguished. It was the usual story. Instead of being accepted, his play was returned.

In the next picture he bids his young wife good-by. He is leaving to try his luck at the gold-mines.

The pictures succeed each other rapidly. The lad makes friends at the camp—one, a reporter, who is there taking pictures for his paper. The reporter is leaving for the East again. The lad shows him his wife's picture. The reporter recognizes a former sweetheart. He plans revenge.

Arriving in the East, he visits the young wife. Shows her the pictures he has taken at the camp. He apparently hesitates, but finally shows her one in which the lad is sitting close to a girl. His arms are about her, while he looks fondly into her eyes.

With white face the girl at the piano glanced at the curtain from time to time. Stotesberry sat leaning forward, his hands clenching the arms of his chair.

His eyes flashed from the girl to the pictures, and back again.

She stooped lower and lower over the keys. Stotesberry expected any minute to see her fall.

"So that is your story?" he whispered hoarsely to himself. "Confounded beggar, to leave you!"

For the briefest moment there is flashed on the screen the villainy of the reporter. He has cut out the lad's head from another photograph. It is pasted carefully in place over that of the other man.

"Look—look!" Stotesberry could hardly refrain from speaking out loud. "Look, girl! The lad's all straight. It's only a dastardly trick of that villain of a

reporter. Your lad may be able to explain. Give him a chance."

But the girl had never glanced up. Her head hung low over the piano.

"I say, look!" shouted Stotesberry, unable to contain himself any longer.

It was too late. His words were drowned in a final crash, as the girl fell over in a dead faint.

Stotesberry was the first to reach her.

In a few minutes it was all over. Stotesberry had insisted on taking the girl directly home. The manager stormily refused.

With a graceful glance at Stotesberry, the girl declared herself all right. She wouldn't for anything break up the show! She promised not to faint again.

It was only a short time before the place would close. Stotesberry sat down to wait.

He sat with closed eyes. He had seen enough pictures for one night. Besides, he wanted to think. At last he wanted to think, not to forget.

He had started out to forget. In the light of another's troubles his own had been forgotten. Now, as he remembered them, a wave of shame came over him.

He felt hot as he remembered what it was he had come out to forget. With a new feeling of humiliation, he compared his troubles to those of the girl.

He had been busy trying to forget a paltry twenty-five thousand he had made in Wall Street that day. His disappointment had been overwhelming—he had counted on fifty thousand.

The girl insisted on walking. It was not far to her home, and she needed the air.

"I can't tell you how sorry I am," Stotesberry did not know just how to put it. "But I think if you knew all the circumstances it would probably not be nearly so bad as you imagine."

"Oh, it could not be much worse," replied the girl wearily. "It's all over, and there's no use thinking about it."

"Give him a chance to explain," begged Stotesberry.

"Him explain!" said the girl scornfully. "He's just mad clean through. And there are plenty of others waiting for the job."

"But," replied Stotesberry, "I wasn't talking about the motion-picture man. I referred to your—the real—the man who—the one out West," he finished incoherently.

"You're on the wrong track." For the first time a smile crossed the girl's face. "I say, though—but you're good-hearted to take all this trouble about me.

"You thought it was something about those motion pictures what queered me. No such fancy trimmings. The plain, common facts is these:

"Me and Tom went out skating at six o'clock this morning. Tom had to go to work at seven, but the ice was so good I stayed out all morning."

"Tom is—?" suggested Stotesberry.

"Yes," replied the girl, "as soon as he gets a raise we're going to get married.

"Being out in the air all morning made me so sleepy I could hardly keep my eyes open in that hot place. It got worse and worse, till I couldn't fight it any longer, so I just dropped off for a few minutes."

"You must let me know when Tom gets that raise," said Stotesberry. "I was fortunate enough to-day to make some money down-town and an important discovery up-town.

"There's nothing I'd like better than to celebrate by investing some of the money in a wedding-present."

ARBUTUS.

SEE by the forest's edge,
Nature's first vernal pledge!
Like hope's fulfilment,
The springtime's sweet distilment!

Clinton Scollard.

The Paddington Case.*

BY ALFRED L. DONALDSON.

Fleeing from a Crime He Did Not Commit, a Clever American Entangles Himself in a Web That Threatens an Uglier Plight.

CHAPTER XX.

THE CONFESSION.

THIS was the letter the priest had written out for Branbane, from the notes he had made of the dying man's confession, and as he had drafted it from the latter's dictation:

DEAR SIR:

I am writing this at the request of a dying man who, if known to you at all, was probably known by his last alias, Mike Regan.

He was born in this country in poverty and vice, and at an early age was cast adrift by worthless parents to fight the battle of life as best he might.

He paid the penalty of environment and led a shiftless life of petty crime. At odd times he worked as fireman on railroads in this country and England, and when he got in trouble in one place or the other, he shipped as stoker on some steamer.

Last spring, after a long trip in a freight-vessel, he landed in London, and after spending all his money got a job as fireman with the Great Western Railroad.

He was put on a train between Wolverhampton and London to take the place of the regular fireman, who was sick. He kept the job for two months, but at the end of that time he felt the periodical craving for a spree rising within him, and decided to quit.

On his last run into London the train was held beyond the schedule at Reading, on account of some obstruction on the track. While waiting for orders to go ahead, the guard of the train—whose name Regan forgets, but of whom he speaks of as a "soft chap"—came up to the engine-cab and began talking.

He was much excited over a large sum of money he had seen, while the tickets were collecting, in the possession of one of the passengers.

As this person was leaning out of the window of a near-by coach at the time, the guard pointed him out to Regan, saying he thought he must be a director of the Bank of England to carry so much money with him.

Regan began to speculate to himself on the chance of getting some or all of the money, but he saw no possibility of doing it with safety. Thinking, however, that the guard naturally had the same desire, he decided to watch things closely.

On reaching London, therefore, he was not greatly surprised to see a commotion about the compartment in which the man with the money had been pointed out to him, nor to hear that some one inside had been shot.

He thought, of course, that the guard had done it, and watched his every movement closely. On account of the murder the train was held at the platform longer than usual.

Regan saw the guard go into the room where the dead man was carried, and then he saw him come out and go round the end of the train, and come down the alleyway between his own and the one on the next track. When he came to the compartment where the murder had occurred, he climbed on the foot-board and leaned into the open window.

Regan slipped quickly from the cab, and was beside the guard when he stepped down from the foot-board with a black satchel in his hand. Thinking, naturally, that it contained the money of the murdered man, and that the guard had come round this way to get his booty, because an officer was stationed on the other side, Regan decided he might as well have the money as the other fellow.

He drew a small revolver—one he said

* **This story began in The Cavalier for December, 1909.**

he had bought as a boy in America and always carried with him for emergencies—and pointed it at the guard, demanding the surrender of the bag. He expected that this fellow would be cowed at once, and, although he had cocked the revolver, he held it loosely and had no intention of firing.

To his surprise, however, the little guard showed fight, and knocked the weapon out of his hand. In falling it struck the footboard and discharged.

This made Regan angry, and he grappled with the guard and easily threw him to the ground. Then, reaching for the revolver, which lay near by, he used the butt to stun his victim with.

Regan then took thought of his own safety. He feared that the report of the firearm might have been heard, although the place was full of other noises at the time, and so he decided to get rid of his revolver.

The open window of the compartment suggested stuffing the weapon between the cushions of one of the seats. While doing this, he noticed a forgotten newspaper, which he took to cover the bag with.

His next dilemma was what to do with the unconscious guard. As soon as one or other of the trains pulled out he would be discovered and put in condition to describe his assailant. Just then Regan heard noises that indicated to him that the other train was about to pull away—and he knew it was empty.

A sudden thought occurred to him. He tried the door of one of the coaches. It opened. He quickly lifted the guard's body inside, and closed the door again.

That is the last Regan knew of him. He did not intend to kill him, and he hopes very sincerely that he did not die, but in his anger and excitement he realizes that he may have struck harder than he meant to.

These incidents, which take so long in the telling, had taken but a few minutes in the doing; and Regan was back in the cab, with a newspaper bundle under his arm, before he had been missed.

He went to the round-house with his engine and attended to all his duties as usual. He then went to the office and asked for a day off.

After that he loitered around the station and talked with people whom he knew, not only with a view of disarming suspicion, but with the intention of finding out if any one had heard the pistol-shot or found the wounded guard.

Neither of these things were mentioned, but every one talked of the murder and told all they knew about it. When he left the station, he decided it would be best to get out of the country as soon as possible, especially as he thought he had a small fortune under his arm.

So he did not even go to his lodgings for the few things he had there, but took the first train for Southampton. Here he found that one of the big liners, sailing the next day, needed a stoker. He applied for the job and got it.

It was not till he was on board the ship that he found a safe opportunity to open the bag; and then, of course, he was greatly disappointed. Instead of many bank-notes, he only found toilet-articles, a bunch of letters, and about fifty dollars in American money.

He then began to think the matter over. The guard had not told him where the man kept his money, and Regan, seeing no reason to ask, had not inquired. When he saw the guard take the bag, he had merely jumped at the conclusion that the money was in it.

He recalled now that some one had told him about a wallet, found on the dead man, that contained some money, but more samples. But at the time this only confirmed his belief that the bulk of the booty was in the bag.

Now, however, he began to see things in a different light, and he soon came to the conclusion that this guard—whom he knew to be a simple, foolish sort of fellow anyway—had probably seen this wallet, and, because it held some bank-notes, had concluded it was full of them.

Regan further recalled now what had escaped, not his notice, but his attention in the excitement of the moment; that the bag was taken from the opposite end of the compartment from the murdered man. Putting all these things together, he reasoned that the bag did not belong to the dead man at all, but to some one else.

In spite of his disappointment, he was well satisfied with the course he had taken, in view of his attack on the guard; and he thought he might still turn the bag to good account in America by using the money it contained and asking a reward for the letters.

He was, of course, not much of a hand to read, but he had managed to make out your name and that of Saranac Lake, and to gather that the letters were of an intimate nature.

One day, when the steamer was in mid-ocean, Regan fainted—as stokers often do, I believe—from the intense heat of the furnaces. He was carried on deck to revive, and left to rest for a while.

Suddenly he was seized with a frenzied impulse to jump into the cool water of the sea—and the next thing he knew he was in it.

The shock, however, brought him to his senses at once, and he made every effort to keep from drowning. He was strong and a good swimmer, and soon managed to reach the life-line which had been thrown over. The steamer slowed down, a boat was lowered, and he was saved.

The next day he went back to his work, but he felt sick and miserable the rest of the way over. On landing he went to a sailors' home he knew about. He was taken in and put to bed.

He overheard the doctor who examined him tell some one else that it was a case of hasty consumption, and that nothing could help him but the mountain air of some place like Saranac Lake.

Regan caught at the name, and told the doctor he would like to go there and had money enough to pay his way. He was nursed into traveling condition, and allowed to go—only too gladly, perhaps.

When he reached Saranac Lake he found "The Farm" was eight miles away, and he made the distance on foot on a very hot day. The result was a complete collapse, followed by death.

From the first he was very anxious to see you and receive the reward he seemed to feel sure you would give for the safe return of the letters.

When he realized the end was drawing near, he craved the benefit of the clergy, and sent for me. While this poor man's many sins were told to me under the sacred seal of the confessional, of course, it was expressly stipulated that this one should be made known to you. Regan hoped that through it you would see fit to exonerate him publicly from the imputation of wilful murder—in the event of the guard having died from his injuries.

It may surprise you that such a man should lay any stress on such a thing.

But we who minister among degraded souls at the last, solemn hour, often find in the warped recesses of the thing we think has turned to stone, strange, distorted fossils of pride and honor.

This man who committed many crimes, yet stayed his hand from murder, and feared nothing more than to be charged with it by the Great Judge whom he has gone to face. I am, sir,

Your obedient servant,

FATHER DENNIS.

When Branbane had finished reading the letter he laid it down and looked at the deacon with blank disappointment and perplexity in his face.

"Well," he said, "this is the biggest surprise of all. Not a word about the murdered man! This makes it look as if Mickleham were guilty after all, don't you think so?"

"No, indeed," answered the deacon emphatically. "This letter only confirms my strong conviction on that point. It explains the revolver, in the first place; and secondly, simple as Mickleham was, he would never have told Regan about the money if he had been scheming to get it himself."

"Don't you think, then, that Regan may have done the deed, and hoped to cover it by confessing something else?" asked Branbane.

"Never," said the deacon with conviction. "If the priest says and believes that Regan never committed intentional murder, we can accept the fact as beyond question. Under the combined awe of death and the confessional to such a man, a lie, even of concealment, would be unheard of.

"You may depend upon it that letter contains not only the truth, but all of the truth. Disappointing as it is in this respect, however, I believe it has finally given me the right clue to this mystery."

"How is that possible!" exclaimed Branbane in complete surprise at this unexpected announcement.

"It is always possible," answered the deacon thoughtfully, tapping the table lightly with his fingers as he spoke, "to discover, after a certain lapse of time, that you have been trying to unlock the right door with the wrong key. When you make this discovery you are face to face with the psychological moment for changing keys, and that is what I intend to do as soon as I return to England. If you come over to visit me in September, as you have promised to do, I think you will find not only the door to my house but the door to this mystery wide open. For the present, however, let us forget the Paddington Case, and give ourselves up entirely to the pleasure of the simple preparations for your wedding."

Branbane was quite willing to agree to this, not only because this event claimed easy ascendency over his thoughts, but because he considered that the mystery of the murder had become practically insoluble, and that the deacon's assumption of new hope was a palliative of failure rather than an earnest of success.

Soon after, Branbane and Beatrice were married at "The Farm," in what has ever since been known as the "Chapel"—a good-sized room, erstwhile a tool-shop, built at one end of the large wood-shed.

The walls had been covered with red bunting, the ceiling with Japanese parasols, and the whole place banked with cedar and wild flowers from the fields. In one corner stood an upright piano on which Branbane's mother played the Wedding March.

The bridal procession formed in the old, timbered kitchen, and carried "Uncle John" and "Aunt Sarah" away from the big stove steaming with good things just long enough to be present at the ceremony.

Then they hurried back to serve such a wedding breakfast—at the long table in the large bow-window of the dining-room—as only their hands could prepare.

Later in the day the little group separated, and the deacon's last words to Mr. and Mrs. Branbane were of their promise to visit him in the fall.

CHAPTER XXI.

READING JAIL.

MR. and Mrs. Branbane kept their promise and paid the deacon a visit in September.

The letters that had passed between them in the interim had been infrequent and brief, and had contained no mention of the Paddington affair.

Branbane was not surprised at this, and, naturally, assumed that the mystery remained unsolved. He, therefore, decided to spare the deacon the acknowledgment of another failure by avoiding any reference to this topic.

The morning after his arrival, however, as they sat round the breakfast-table, the deacon unexpectedly broached the subject of his own accord.

"You do not mention the Paddington affair, Mr. Branbane," he said. "Is it because you have lost all interest in it, or merely all faith in me?"

Branbane looked up with surprised amusement on his face.

"Of course I am still interested," he answered; "but as long as it remained unsolved, I thought I was sparing your feelings, perhaps, by not referring to it."

"You are very considerate," said the deacon, smiling in his quiet way. "I find no more pleasure in discussing a failure than other people, but I do enjoy sharing my successes with my friends; and, frankly, I take more pride in having unraveled this mystery than in any other detective work I have ever achieved."

Branbane and his wife both looked up in surprise.

"Are you in earnest, deacon?" he asked incredulously.

"So much so that, if you and Mrs. Branbane feel inclined to take a little excursion this morning, I will show you the Paddington murderer in the flesh!" replied the deacon with evident relish of his friend's astonishment.

"Oh, no," said Beatrice, shuddering. "I don't think I want to see a murderer. It must be an awful sight. It would haunt me the rest of my life!"

"In this instance," said the deacon, "it would be far less repulsive than you imagine."

"Where is he confined?" asked Branbane.

"In Reading Jail," answered the deacon with a quizzical expression. "And you may be sure," he continued, addressing himself particularly to Mrs. Branbane, "that I would not suggest your going there if it involved anything in the least unpleasant."

"I might have known that," replied Beatrice confidently. "I will go, with pleasure."

"Somehow I feel," interposed Branbane, "that you are only telling us half the truth of what is before us, deacon."

"You are quite right," replied that gentleman. "But the whole truth is so strange and unusual that, in order thoroughly to be convinced, I want you to see it for yourselves. That is one reason why I wrote nothing about it, but kept it as a surprise for your arrival."

"You certainly make us very curious and eager to start," said Beatrice, rising from the table to prepare for the expedition.

"I must impose two conditions before we go, however," said the deacon, detaining her a moment. "I must ask you to voice no surprise in the presence of others

at being where I take you, and to make no slightest reference to the Paddington murder."

Puzzled more than ever at these strange injunctions, Branbane and his wife left the room in a state of suppressed excitement.

Half an hour later they were in the deacon's car, headed for Paddington Station.

"What! Are we going out of town?" asked Beatrice in new surprise, on hearing the destination.

"Why, certainly," said the deacon. "I told you we were going to Reading—to Reading Jail."

"Oh, I see," said Beatrice feebly—much as a blind man would say it on hearing a landscape described. She had a vague idea that Reading Jail was in London. So had Branbane, for that matter; but he held his peace.

The short run to Reading was soon made. As they neared the town, the deacon called their attention to a clump of trees on a bit of rising ground quite near the track. Some rocks and bushes were also on the edge of the knoll.

"Look here," he said, pointing out of the window. "Can you see any one in that little copse over there?"

His companions strained their eyes at the spot indicated, but could discover no one.

"I can't," said Branbane.

"Nor I," said Beatrice. "Did you see some one?"

"I was not sure," said the deacon. "That was why I asked you to look. I don't like to feel that my sight is failing in accuracy."

On reaching the station the deacon drove his friends to the outskirts of the town, where he suggested that they leave the carriage and walk to their destination.

So they all got out and strolled leisurely along over the rich, rolling country, expecting at any moment to see the gloomy walls of a prison loom up before them.

But the deacon explained that he was going to take them to a farmhouse for lunch, where he had spent a part of the summer, and still kept a room at his disposal.

"What did you do that for?" asked Beatrice.

"I wanted to be near the prison," answered the deacon.

"Well, I am glad we are going to have our lunch in such a nice place first," she said with evident relief, as the deacon pointed to a neat, low-roofed cottage as their destination. In spite of his assurances, Beatrice rather dreaded the prison episode, and was glad to have it deferred as long as possible.

The farmer and his wife were plain, cleanly, honest folk of the middle class, and their family consisted of two children—a pretty girl of eight and a sturdy boy of ten.

The deacon, as well as his guests, had the knack—a poor word for the very essence of gentlehood!—not only of being at home in any company, but of making any company at home with them. The simple noon-day meal, therefore, was a pleasant affair for all concerned.

After it the farmer went back to his fields, and the wife and the little girl busied themselves with the dishes. The boy, who seemed very chummy with the deacon, went up-stairs with him when he suggested showing his pleasant room to the Branbanes.

Beatrice was glad of this, for she had been attracted to the boy at the dinner-table, although he and his sister had been awed into complete silence by the city visitors. He was not a handsome boy, but sturdy and healthy, and had frank blue eyes and a certain manliness of bearing that were attractive.

Between him and the deacon a pleasing comradeship had been established; and, once in his room, the little fellow quickly yielded to advances from Beatrice. After they had made friends and chatted together a while, the deacon, who had been standing apart talking to Branbane, turned round and made a rather startling request.

"Walter," he said, calling the boy by name, "suppose you show my friends your revolver. I think they would like to see it."

Branbane and Beatrice both showed surprise at the suggested possession of a firearm by such a child; and even the child demurred about acknowledging the implication.

He sidled up to the deacon, with his hands in his pockets, and said, in what

was intended to be a confidential whisper: "They wouldn't tell, would they?"

"No, indeed," said the deacon reassuringly. "They are my friends, and you can trust them to keep a secret."

"Then I'll show it to you," Walter said; and he drew a small revolver from his pocket, and laid it on the table with evident pride.

"You see," said the deacon, by way of explanation, "Walter bought that with his own money—money that he saved up from what his father gave him from time to time for helping on the farm. He bought it from an older boy who wanted a bigger revolver, and was glad of the chance to sell this one.

"Of course, he ought not to have sold it to Walter; and Walter knows that he ought not to have it, and that is why he has not told his parents about it—and doesn't want you to."

Then, turning toward Beatrice, he lowered his voice, and added: "But there are extenuating circumstances which I will explain to you later."

"A boy doesn't have to tell his parents everything," suggested Walter in self-defense.

"No; but a manly boy never does anything he is ashamed to tell," said Beatrice, who, with feminine intuition, had caught the deacon's cue and used it to advantage.

"I'm not ashamed to tell," retorted Walter, stiffening up a bit and twisting his hands round in his pockets; "I'd just rather not. I don't do no harm. I just shoot at a target, way off from here among the trees where nobody ever goes. I never shoot anywhere else.

"Don't you want to come out and see me shoot?" he added, with sudden inspiration, feeling some diversion would be welcome to everybody—especially to himself.

"I would much rather buy your revolver than see you shoot it," said Beatrice. "Will you sell it to me?"

"It cost me ten and six," said Walter, in a tone of discouragement.

"Then I'll give you a pound for it," urged Beatrice.

"No, no," interposed the deacon before Walter had recovered from his astonishment over this unexpected offer. "I can't let you do that, Mrs. Branbane. Walter is too much of a little man to be bribed.

"I want him to give up the revolver of his own free will—and some day he will." Then, turning to the boy, he said: "Run along now, Walter, and we will come down to your target-range and see you shoot a little later."

Beatrice was somewhat surprised at being thwarted instead of abetted by the deacon in her offer to buy the revolver; but she saw the moral advantage of voluntary renouncement, and yielded the point without comment.

Walter picked up his dangerous toy and left the room with a sly wink at the deacon, that implied some confidential understanding between them. As he went out, Beatrice followed him with fond eyes.

"What a sweet, attractive little fellow he is!" she exclaimed.

"Yes," assented the deacon slowly and quietly. "And to think that such a child is the murderer of Horace Grimpell!"

CHAPTER XXII.

THE LAST.

BEATRICE was completely taken aback by the deacon's words. When he had said that he would show them the Paddington murderer, she had expected, of course, to see a hardened criminal; and the deacon's assurances of nothing unpleasant merely meant to her some prearranged gloss over ugly facts.

The farmhouse and the boy she considered a mere episode on the way to the prison; and it seemed to her quite natural that the deacon should take advantage of a woman's presence to give weight to the stand he had taken about Walter and the revolver.

She thought his interest in the boy merely a boarder's casual one in the attractive child of his landlady.

Branbane, however, surmised a deeper meaning in all that happened. He knew that the deacon always kept his promises, although he was often fond of devious ways.

He had promised to show them the Paddington murderer; and Branbane felt sure he would do it, in his own way, before the day was over. The farmhouse

appeared to him, quite as much as to Beatrice, a mere incident until the revolver was produced.

Then, however, knowing that the murder had been committed by a weapon of the same size, he was fully prepared to hear the deacon connect the two in some way; but even then it did not occur to him that the boy himself had fired the fatal shot.

"What you affirm, deacon," he said, "sounds so extraordinary as to be almost incredible. Do you really mean that this boy, Walter, fired the shot that killed Horace Grimpell?"

"I have established the fact beyond any doubt," answered the deacon gravely.

"But, surely, he did not do it intentionally?" pleaded Beatrice tremulously.

"No," said the deacon, "not intentionally. It was a boyish act of thoughtless bravado, and he has no idea of its fatal results. He bought the revolver in the manner I have described, and I have been able to trace the transaction to the afternoon of May 10th last.

"Of course, most boys have an innate desire to possess and use firearms; but in this case the natural tendency has been stimulated by the fact that his father is a crack shot with a revolver, belongs to a local gun club, and has won several notable trophies.

"He talks freely about his hobby before the boy, and often takes him to the club; but, on the other hand, he forbids him to touch a revolver under penalty of severe punishment. The result is what might be expected. The boy buys one surreptitiously at the first opportunity."

"But how did he come to fire the fatal shot, and how did you manage to ferret it all out?" urged Branbane, who, like Beatrice, was eager to get the story.

"I will tell you all about it as we stroll along," said the deacon, suggesting that they walk out in the direction of Walter's haunt by the railroad track, half a mile or so away.

"After reading the priest's letter," began the deacon, "you will remember my saying that, although a disappointment in itself, I thought it had given me at last the right clue. In solving a murder problem, where the criminal is not caught redhanded, we first seek a motive, and then try to trace through it to the perpetrator.

"In this case Grimpell's supposed money seemed an obvious motive, and we discovered two men—after you had been cleared of suspicion—who knew about it, and who might be presumed to covet it. Mickleham appeared, at first, a possible offender; and Regan, to the last, a very probable one.

"With the elimination of these two, however, the mystery evidently demanded approach from a different angle; and, after hearing Regan's letter, the thought first came to me that the murder was not intentional at all, but was purely accidental.

"The more I worked on this hypothesis, and weighed the facts by it, the more convinced I became that I had hit the right trail at last. One hardly realizes what an important part stray bullets play in the casualties of every day; but, if you look through the paper with that in view, you will be surprised at the almost daily reports of accidental shooting, or of stray bullets that have frightened without harming.

"Furthermore—if you take the trouble to investigate, as I did—you will find that railroads suffer from this pest much more than is supposed; because, unless some very serious harm is done, petty annoyances from this source are hushed up, as all minor railroad casualties are."

"Now that you speak of it," interrupted Branbane, "I remember, a year or so ago, that the papers reported the activities of a gang of youthful hoodlums in the suburbs of New York, who fired stones and occasional pistol-shots at the passing trains.

"No one was killed, but several people were injured. I also remember," he continued, smiling a little, "that when I was a boy and lived in the country, I myself was not above firing stones at a passing train sometimes."

"Of course you were not!" said the deacon. "No boy is, in the stone-age; and the pistol-age is only a less available refinement of the adolescent impulse to throw things. Well, as soon as I had refreshed my mind on these points, I started in along lines of their suggestion.

"It was pretty well established that Grimpell had met his death very soon after the train left Reading; so I decided to start my new investigations from

that point. I came down here and began prowling round.

"In my wanderings I ran across this pleasant place, and found they were willing to take a single boarder. The location, being out of the town and not very far from the railroad, was just what I wanted. So I settled down here under the guise of an itinerant geologist—which would explain my prowling habits.

"After I had been here nearly a week, I was strolling along by the railroad one evening when I heard pistol-shots in the distance. Following them to their source, I came to a little copse very near the railroad, where, to my considerable surprise, I found this youngster, Walter, firing a small revolver at a target.

"He was plainly a little uneasy at first at being discovered; but as soon as I made it clear that I had come in no tell-tale spirit, he showed me the weapon, and told me little by little all about it.

"I had already made friends with the boy at the house; and when he saw that I knew about revolvers, and could shoot one with some accuracy, I won his heart and confidence completely. I have been able to corroborate everything he has told me, but I need only give you the established facts.

"He came into possession of the little .22-caliber revolver on the afternoon of May 10 last. That evening, after a six o'clock supper hastily eaten, he and a friend—a somewhat older boy, named Bob Plumley—hurried away to the secluded spot where we are going, and which Walter thought well-suited to his forbidden purposes.

"He had loaded, and stood debating what to fire at first, when the Wolverhampton train came by. Something impelled his companion to dare Walter to fire at it. Boylike, he took the dare and fired. He has no conception of having done more than a mischievous thing, but the fatal results are now only too clear.

"The bullet passed through the closed window on your side of the compartment, making the small hole I showed you. Directly opposite was poor Grimpell, with the back of his neck squarely exposed to the missile, and it just so happened that it penetrated a vital spot—the medulla oblongata."

"Then, if it had not happened to strike this particular spot, it would not have killed him, you think?"

"It is highly improbable," answered the deacon. "Indeed, when the tiny bullet was first extracted and shown to me, I could hardly believe it to have been the sole cause of death, until the doctor pointed out the location of the wound and explained to me about the medulla."

"There is another detail I have wanted to ask about," said Branbane. "Is it not unusual for a bullet to pass through glass without breaking it?"

"Not at all," was the answer. "It is the usual result if the bullet is not spent, and strikes the glass squarely—not at an angle. In this case the shot was fired from a very small revolver, to be sure; but I will show you in a moment that a .22 hits harder and carries farther than many people imagine."

By this time they had reached the little copse where Walter was waiting. He rushed out to meet them, and led them proudly into the gloom of his sacred grove.

In the center, where the shooting was done, was an open space a hundred feet square, perhaps, and just enough trees encircled it to keep those without from seeing those within. Walter fired one or two shots, and then allowed himself to be drawn into a chat with Beatrice, while Branbane and the deacon walked about, and the latter pointed out some trees where Walter's bullets had lodged.

"You see," he said, "all of these penetrate the wood a certain distance; some more, some less. And they were all fired at about seventy feet; whereas the shot that went through the window and killed Grimpell was fired at fifty feet."

"Are we as close to the track as that?" asked Branbane in surprise.

"Not now," said the deacon; "but from where Walter stood that day, I have measured it, and it is exactly fifty feet. Come, and I will show you."

They crossed to the other side of the clearing, where the fringe of bordering trees was thinner, and Branbane saw the railroad just below, at the base of a gentle slope.

The deacon continued on down this until they reached the tracks. He then asked Branbane to turn and look back.

"That," he said, "is the copse I asked

you to look at this morning as we passed in the train. Neither you nor your wife could see any one in it, but Walter stood just behind that bush and rock—by prearrangement — in the exact place from which he fired at the train.

"The little experiment proves that he was not likely to be seen by people in the coaches. I have further reckoned out that the rise in the ground to where Walter stood would bring the revolver in his hand on an exact level with the compartment windows.

"It is all as clear as day now, excepting what I ought to do with the boy," concluded the deacon with a smile of frank perplexity.

"I have been thinking of that," said Branbane, "and it seems to me that Bob Plumley is the real culprit, and morally guilty one. He was older, you say, and should have known better. But for him the fatal shot would never have been fired. Why not arrest him?"

"Because he is beyond my reach," answered the deacon. "He died suddenly six weeks ago."

"Then what are you going to do?"

"Frankly," said the deacon meditatively, "I don't know what to do. Technically, of course, Walter is guilty of a crime; but, morally, he is as innocent as you are.

"Take your own case, for instance. You fired a stone at a train, and might have hit some one on the temple and killed him—but, by good luck, you did not. Walter fired a bullet which, ordinarily, would have done no more harm than your stone—but he fell a victim to the one chance in ten thousand—and the tiny missile lodged in the most vital spot of a man's body.

"Now, ought I to drag him before the courts and the public for this—blight his young life with notoriety, and embitter his parents with shame and remorse? The end to be achieved is not the punishment of a bad boy, but the moral quickening of a thoughtless one.

"If I can accomplish this without endangering the boy and sacrificing the parents, is it not my higher duty to do so? One reason why I asked you and your wife to come and see this complication was that I might have the advantage of your advice in solving it."

"Then let us lay the matter before Beatrice," suggested Branbane. "It seems to me one of those complex questions to which the intuitions of a good woman are more apt to find the right answer than the laborious reasonings of men."

The deacon gladly acquiesced in this proposal, and the two men returned to the clearing in the copse where they had left Beatrice. They found her seated on a rock, looking rather sad and troubled.

"Where is Walter?" asked the deacon, not seeing the boy.

"He has gone home," said Beatrice, looking up with pleading, slightly tear-stained eyes. "Oh, deacon, what are you going to do with the poor little fellow?"

"That is just what we have come to ask *you*," said the deacon, smiling gravely.

"Me!" exclaimed Beatrice, her face brightening with pleasure and hope. "Do you really mean that you will let me influence you in this matter? Then please don't arrest Walter, and I will vouch for it that he never does any more harm with a firearm."

"Do you honestly feel competent to vouch for so much?" asked the detective a little dubiously.

"I do," she said stoutly, pointing to something in her lap. "Here is his revolver, given me with a voluntary promise never to use one again."

Both men looked at it in surprise and mute inquiry, and Beatrice went on to explain a little nervously: "Oh, deacon, I have done wrong, perhaps, but I could not help it! After you had gone, something impelled me to tell Walter the terrible thing he had unconsciously done. He could not quite grasp it at first, but, little by little, I made him comprehend; and it was touching to see him—that is why my eyes are red! His contrition was genuine, I could see.

"'I didn't mean to hurt nobody, or do anything wicked,' he said.

"Then he straightened up, and I could see his eyes fill with tears, which he tried to choke back, like the little man he is. 'If it's really wicked to have a revolver which does things you don't intend, I don't want one. Here,' he added—it was a hard wrench, I could see, but he carried it off bravely—'here is my revolver, and

I'll never buy another!' And, dropping it quickly in my lap, he ran away."

"My dear Mrs. Branbane," said the deacon warmly, "you have cut the Gordian knot in this matter. You have acted where I hesitated. You have taught the boy his lesson, not through fear, but through sympathy—as only a woman could do. Thanks to you, the Paddington Case, as far as I am concerned, is closed forever!"

"Are you really willing to forego the world-wide acclaim of success in this case and bear the stings of apparent failure for the sake of a little boy and a grateful woman?" asked Beatrice, looking up with wide-eyed admiration tempered by incredulity.

"I am willing to do what is right and best in this matter," said the deacon with a rich glow of impressive earnestness on his face and in his words. "The end of detective work is not by any means the prison.

"But, as with every other calling, its highest aim—to do good—is often obscured and forgotten, because the public sees nothing but its routine of arrest. Some lawyers pride themselves on the litigation they avoid; and I am never happier than when I can conscientiously spare a first offender from the contamination of his crime. And this is a case where I think it is right to break the letter of the law in order to more fully achieve its spirit."

"It is not only right," said Branbane, stepping forward and grasping the speaker warmly by the hand. "It is very noble of you; for it involves, as we well know, a sacrifice of personal prestige that few men would make."

"Amen to that!" said Beatrice sweetly.

And so, in the silence that settles like an afterglow on a good deed done and honored, these three, whom fate had brought so strangely together, left the little copse which was the cradle, and had now become the grave, of the once famous Paddington Case.

(The end.)

The Hawkins Vacu-Ornament.

BY EDGAR FRANKLIN.

Poor Mrs. Hawkins! Her House is as Safe as a Pitched Battle, and Her Drawing-Room as Cozy as a Boiler-Factory.

HAWKINS, officially, was tamed.

Officially, I say, because his wife told my wife and my wife told me—which of course, stamps the news as authentic.

But for the matter of that, I had noticed it myself and wondered.

Had some clever surgeon blasted and hacked the inventive lobe from Hawkins's brain, or had he bought a second-hand pair of common senses, or—was it merely the calm before the storm?

At the end of two months, I abandoned that last idea.

Hawkins had actually given up inventing things and was attending regularly to business. His evenings, to be sure, were spent mainly in his workshop on the top-floor; but that, he informed me with no enthusiasm was just pottering.

Wherefore, it was not surprising news that Hawkins was going to attend the little late afternoon celebration in honor of his wife's birthday. I was slated for the same gathering and had been contemplating it with some terror; but the prospect of a secluded smoke with the new, the domesticated Hawkins removed the sting.

The Hawkins drawing-room looked particularly well that afternoon. The women, half a dozen of them, departed

sufficiently from the custom of their sex to chatter incessantly.

There was Mrs. Allis, who discovered a draft at once because she was wearing her brand-new, indisputably Russian sable set. There was Miss Weymiss, who carries her nerves with her. There were the Brindon girls and the Campton girls, and there was elderly Mrs. Thorbury, who never leaves the house without her thousand dollars worth of unlovely, wet-nosed toy dog.

There was also a series of dull thuds behind the curtains to the adjoining dining-room.

Hawkins fidgeted after a while. I was glad, for it seemed to portend that the male element was about to adjourn for a recess. I was wrong; I might have known that.

Hawkins was merely waiting for an opening.

It came at last, and Hawkins split the momentary lull with a cough of the locomotive exhaust variety. By the time the company had turned, he was on his feet, beaming benevolently and bowing.

"Er—ladies!"

"Speech!" cried the younger Miss Campton.

"It is a speech!" answered the reformed inventor, with a heavy, happy smile. "Ladies! We are assembled here to-day for the pleasant purpose of felicitating my dear wife upon having—"

"Survived you!" escaped me.

"Upon having—upon—" Hawkins turned and crushed me to a pulp with a glare. "Upon having—well, we're here, anyway, to celebrate Mrs. Hawkins's natal anniversary, you understand!"

"Why, I thought—" giggled Miss Campton the younger.

"Ladies, I am a plain man—a man of few words!" said Hawkins loudly. "I had intended saying a few words anent this happy occasion. I find that I am no orator."

"I could have told you that before, Hawkins," I murmured.

Hawkins's speech seemed to evanesce.

"Say! What I'm trying to get at is just this!" he cried wildly. "What is the hardest way of cleaning house?"

"Oh, it's a conundrum party!" said the elder Miss Brindon.

"I know the answer!" volunteered the younger Miss Campton. "Pick up each particle of dust on a polished toothpick and blow it out of the window!"

Hawkins, somehow, seemed to have grown extremely red.

"The hardest way to clean house is to take a broom and dig, dig, dig!"

"Then take a broom and dance, dance, dance!" I suggested.

"There are other ways to be sure!" the inventor vociferated furiously. "There is the carpet-sweeper — worthless! There is the vacuum-cleaner, who comes with his wagon, opens every window, spends days with you and charges you a fortune!"

He wagged his head so fiercely that no one dared answer.

"There are the thousand and one contrivances for the home—vacuum cleaners! Pah! Pooh!"

"And likewise pish!" I added.

"They, too, are worthless—worthless because they are all slow, all expensive, all inefficient! Consider the hours and hours of going over carpets with a little rubber pipe—and in the end, what? Half-cleaning, perhaps—nothing more!" He straightened up and cleared his throat again. "Ladies, what the home needs is a system that cleans—cleans instantly, cleans perfectly!"

He stopped to let the profound words sink in. His wife smiled serenely.

"Some day you can contrive one, dear, and present it to me in the interest of the whole sex!" she said.

She was smiling as she said it. The smile vanished as if blown away! Cold, white terror took its place—for Hawkins was all but yelling:

"I have contrived one, my dear! And upon this, your birthday, I present my modest little work to you!"

I will say for Hawkins that he is a good stage-manager. The words were no more than out of his mouth when the dining-room curtains slid back suddenly —and to our gaze was revealed the shining, polished case of what looked like a grand piano, very thick of body, on very squat legs.

"With art in every line, with the craftsman's most exquisite touch upon the case, with mechanical perfection over all—The Hawkins Vacu-ornament!" declaimed the inventor. With a

swirl, he produced a bundle, neatly tied with brilliant ribbon, and tendered it to his wife with: "The Letters Patent, assigned to you!"

"Well—Herbert—I—you know that I—" his wife stammered painfully.

"Just a little natural emotion, Griggs," smiled the inventor, as he considerately turned away. "Come over here with me, Griggs. She'll be over it in a minute."

I followed him. He walked to the side of the thing and beamed anew.

"It is called the Vacu-ornament for obvious reasons," he explained quietly. "It is ornamental in the extreme—it is a vacuum cleaner, although the term seems a slander. It does, ladies, what no other cleaner can ever do. It cleanses the room within two minutes, drawing into its capacious, steel-lined reservoir every atom of dust! Why? I will demonstrate!"

He leaned over a little door, gracefully, and I sighed and glanced down the room, where William, the Hawkins butler, was entering with a huge, silver tray.

And as I did so, there was a sudden, terrific roar, immediately beside me!

Something huge and black whirled out into the room—stretched on and on and on in the millionth part of a second—something that looked much like a boa constrictor, not less than two feet in diameter!

It consumed perhaps one second in stretching the length of the drawing-room. At the end of the second it had encountered William. It struck William amidships. And William's tray shot up and struck the ceiling, while William himself was hurtled headlong through the air, steered a straight course for the front wall and struck it.

William does everything thoroughly. Moreover, you can hardly expect a man to impress the shape and style of his cranium on hard plaster and then bounce up and kiss his hands to the audience.

William did not bounce up.

William just lay there for a minute, while the ladies screamed wildly and Mrs. Thorbury's dear little dog barked himself into a canine perspiration.

And that great, black pipe, which seemed to have developed two or three little pairs of wheels and a huge, yawning mouth, swayed over him as if daring him to rise and try it again.

And William, facing it, cowered and struggled to his hands and knees beside the uncanny, wiggling monster; and, gathering his breath, gave one awful cry and leaped from the room and up the stairs.

Hawkins, I am forced to admit, merely smiled and remarked:

"Can't that clumsy fool see?"

"Does it—does it always—do that?" came faintly from the younger Miss Campton.

"In practise—never. But the door slipped. That is all," said the inventor evenly. "In ordinary use, it is controlled thus."

He twisted at a crank, somewhere at the side of his Vacu-ornament. Very obediently, the great, flexible pipe began to back into the case, while Hawkins purred his satisfaction.

"Bullet-proof and pressure-proof rubber tube, set on a strong, steel spiral spring, Griggs!" he observed. "Rather neat idea, eh?"

"Yes, it's great!" I said hurriedly. "Now put it away and—"

"Yes, dear," said Mrs. Hawkins almost piteously. "We've seen enough, Herbert, and—"

"Just one moment, my dear. Just—one—moment!" He turned back to the company smilingly. "Despite the little accident, we shall now see the Vacu-ornament in working trim!" he announced. He bent over the box and found a new handle and—

"Confound that spring! It's slipping again, Gri—"

It had slipped! With a new roar, his forty feet of miniature subway banged the length of the parlor once more. But this time, it steered clear of human game. It merely picked up an exquisite little chair and shot it through the big window with the accuracy of a trained marksman.

"Oh—*dear!*" screamed the man's afflicted wife, as she hurled herself into the mass of femininity that struggled for exit.

"I'll make this thing work now or dynamite it!" snarled the inventor for my private benefit. "There! Now it's in working shape!"

He confronted the several white faces in the doorway defiantly.

"The Vacu-ornament," he cried, "is happily free of need for any electric current, any applied power, whatever. It furnishes its own power—the power of a huge steel spring motor—a very much enlarged clock, you ladies will understand more readily. Set in motion—thus—the most powerful known vacuum is created!"

There was a hissing forward, at the mouth of the tube. The thing wiggled furiously, and Hawkins chuckled through his clenched teeth.

"The secret of swift cleaning is the tremendous drawing surface at the end of the pipe!" he explained, to the retiring group, some of whom were on the stairs now. "No more tiny tubes, no more toy end-pieces, no more limited areas and unlimited care and trouble. Watch!"

They watched. So did I. In fact, I watched harder than I had ever watched anything in my life before.

My plans were all made, too. I dared not break for the corridor, snatch up my wife and leap the few steps to the street—that was putting too much temptation in the way of a Hawkins contraption.

Instead, I waited near the window just behind me. It is a big window and in case of emergency one can step down to an extension roof and make the backyard without danger. Stealthily, I opened it and waited.

"Controlled—from—here!" declaimed Hawkins, as, under guidance of some levers, the mouth of his tube swayed here and there, up and down. "Now we'll begin at the beginning. We will clean up the muss of that clown of a man!"

Hissing, sizzling, chugging, the tube shrunk in a little and swerved to the spot where William's tray had located after its ascension. A moment, it paused. Then it dipped gracefully—and I am bound to say that the entire square yard was clean and fresh as an hour's work could have made it.

There was a little tinkling of crockery somewhere inside the Vacu-ornament.

"Simple as it is swift!" Hawkins remarked. "Now for the rest of the rug!"

Deftly; if the truth must be told, he steered his pipe over the carpet—in corners and out of corners—round furniture and under furniture—until, within an incredibly short space of time, bright, shining carpet colors were everywhere!

"Cleaning — furniture!" announced the inventor, leaning gracefully on the polished case.

The great pipe traveled on. It found a big, deeply tufted piece and passed over it. It twirled and raced over the tufted back—and the thing was spotless.

"Dusting—walls!" pursued Hawkins forcefully.

The tube twirled flippantly upward and headed for the wall—and just by accident it snapped loose a little water-color gem and landed it, quarter of a second later, with a crash inside the reservoir!

"Drat those confounded little pictures anyway!" snarled the inventor, as he jerked down a lever with more force than judgment.

And then, with a scream that rent the air, he leaped skyward and howled:

"*Look out,* Griggs!"

There was no necessity for his repeating it.

I was in the corner before he touched the floor, and the serving table was in front of me; and Hawkins joined me with a breathless rush as a queer, violent "*Slap! Slap! Slap!*" began to come from the front of his engine.

"What've you done?" I gasped.

"Switched — gear too hard —too quick!" choked the inventor, as he caressed a hand that bore a bruise somewhat larger than a baseball. "The motor spring's snapped!"

"What's it going to do now?" I cried.

"Go on till it runs down, you ass!" Hawkins explained courteously.

"How long—"

"Shut up; I—Oh, my heavens!"

I followed his eye. Also I groaned. The Hawkins Vacu-ornament was beginning to show some real tricks.

It appeared to scan the field of action for worthy prey. With inordinately good taste, it spied Mrs. Allis's fur set. It wiggled with pure ecstacy and sort of jerked itself all over.

Then, with a snort, it jumped at the chair and removed chair, furs and all

from the scenery, depositing them with a grinding roar in the reservoir.

There was a violent scream in the hall, and the sound of some one falling. That needed no explanation. Happy Mrs. Allis had fainted; she could see no more Vacu-ornament stunts. Probably she would never see anything again. Probably before she revived, the Vacu-ornament would have pulverized the house and sucked it up, and we should all be dead!

But the Vacu-ornament took things slowly. It was wiggling again and considering. It sighted the delicate inlaid tea-table at the side and crept upon it with fiendish stealth. Fascinated, perhaps, the unwary tea-table never moved an inch.

And one swoop, one hideous roar, and the poor little thing crumpled up and disappeared!

"Say! It—it takes quite a few things to—to satisfy it!" I said dazedly.

Hawkins was not listening. Hawkins was leaning forward with wild-eyed horror and gibbering.

"The dog! The dog! Oh, the—"

I noted the dear little animal then. Mrs. Thorbury's little pet had tired of life at last! It had actually raced into the drawing-room and was barking doggy defiance at the Vacu-ornament.

And I will swear that that fiendish thing laughed aloud as it swerved from a futile effort on the mahogany divan! It aimed itself at the toy dog. The toy dog darted back.

The Vacu-ornament darted forward and—well, suffice it that the weak, pampered bark was forever stilled!

But the taste of blood seemed to have been the last desirable thing for the Vacu-ornament! It began to thresh up and down, to the accompaniment of the loosened spring end. It hurled itself against the wall, bringing down plaster! It plunged horribly at the big mirror—and reduced it to little two-cent mirrors—and then absorbed them all!

It wrestled with a big armchair and succeeded only in ruining it. It reared up, like a snake about to strike—and with a queer, deadly calm, Hawkins moved from behind the table.

"What are you going to do, Hawkins?" I asked shakily.

"Jam it against the wall, Griggs, if I can! It can't pull down the wall!"

"Don't try it! Don't—"

Hawkins, green-cheeked and staring, faced me stonily.

"Griggs!" he choked. "I'll save the women and children, if I have to die! Good-by!"

And he walked straight at it!

Yes, carefully avoiding the flat steel weapon of the Vacu-ornament, he walked straight at the great rubber pipe! Swiftly, he passed down to the yawning, insatiable jaws.

He gripped the mouth and dragged it toward the brick outer wall, to a running accompaniment of screams from the corridor. He jerked at it savagely! He tugged and snarled at it.

And then—well, he swore at it, ladies notwithstanding! And the Vacu-ornament refused to tolerate it!

With a sidewise bounce, it knocked him flat! With a dive, it snatched him up, head first! It yanked itself into the air, and Hawkins, head and shoulders and body to his waist—disappeared!

Hawkins, as I groaned to myself, was dead!

Or—no! He was not quite dead yet, for his legs were kicking wildly—kicking an expensive chandelier into the smallest kind of flinders.

He was alive; and somehow superhuman courage rose in me! I rushed out from behind that table and crossed the drawing-room like a charger.

I snatched a chair and leaped on it. I threw my arms round Hawkins's knees and, regardless of all, leaped backward.

We came to the floor with a crash, and I set my teeth and tightened my muscles to the breaking-point, as I strained to drag Hawkins out of that cursed black hole! I strained until I could hear joints cracking—and strained still more!

Even if Hawkins broke in two, I would at least save enough for decent burial! And I buried my heels in the carpet and tugged on!

And then—well, I saw it only vaguely at the time. Down-stairs was pounding a black-faced, roaring man. It was William, and if ever murder was written on a man's countenance, it was engraved inch-deep on William's.

There is a certain sledge-hammer,

weighing about one hundred pounds, which the inventor uses in his workshop to drive tacks and knock anvils to pieces and do similar light work.

It was this sledge which William bore aloft! He had a death-grip on it, too, and his arms were bare. Plainly, after all my trouble, he was going to eradicate Hawkins.

But his attention didn't seem to be in that direction, after all. Instead, that massive, noble man, his hair flying, his sledge swinging, shot straight for the Vacu-ornament itself! With a tiger-leap, his heels were on the shining case! He gave one long, terrible battle-cry and swung his great sledge aloft.

That man knew no fear!

He brought down the hammer, with neatness and precision, directly upon the maindeck of the Vacu-ornament!

There was a crash and a splintering! Yards of steel spring shot out and tore the plaster from the whole side of the dining-room! The butler made a cat-like spring for safety—and the vacuum pump stopped and Hawkins and I rolled together on the floor!

I sat up first.

Hawkins was struggling for an upright posture. I did not help him. I merely looked at him. Hawkins's face had been vacuumized, or whatever the proper term may be, to about three times its normal size! His tie and collar were gone altogether, as was most of his coat.

His nose was beginning to bleed freely—a neat little nose that somewhat resembled a red turnip. His eyes were popping a full inch from his head; and his huge, thick lips were struggling aimlessly to dislodge any words that had not been pumped out by the Vacu-ornament.

And as I was about to state my sense of the case in a few, well-chosen words, a delicate hand tapped me on the shoulder and my wife's weak, tearful voice said:

"Please—come home!"

I went.

I returned, next day, to see Hawkins, though. It seemed only decent.

The doctor had just left, after his morning call, and the inventor was resting easily. The doctor had said that Hawkins would subside in a week or so and that his eyes would probably return to and stay in place without the aid of glue or nails.

I took one long look at the figure, with its bandaged head, its bandaged neck, and its bandaged arm—and I turned away relieved.

Hawkins could not explain why the Vacu-ornament had not worked.

Mrs. Hawkins was out.

On the way down-stairs, I thought to glance through what remained of the dining-room. What was left had been cleaned up, and through the window floated puffs of thick smoke.

I looked into the backyard and perceived William, standing beside a great bonfire, leaning on an ax and smiling blissfully.

And really, although I never knew it before, the celestially sweet, soul-satisfying perfume that comes from a fire of fine hardwood and expensive varnish is wonderful!

A CITY DAWN.

UPROSE, a disk of vermeil fire,
The sun, and burnished roof and spire;
The shadows fled from street and square,
While life, with its renewed desire,
Awoke in each gray thoroughfare.

The dreams, the sweet elusive dreams,
Lapsed with the bright and searching beams;
The glamour of the night was gone—
Its fair white visions—with the gleams,
The red, relentless rays of dawn!

Sennett Stephens.

Chasing Feathers.

BY JOHN S. BRACKETT.

How a Rare Vintage Disappeared Into the Air and Became Worth Many Times Its Weight in Gold.

"BLOW me for a blarsted rope-nipper an' hang me to the martingale on the fish-davit, if I don't think you're right, sonny."

The reply came from the first mate in response to my innocent suggestion that it looked as though we were about to run into a "northeast by norther" that night.

I had heard somebody call it that; as a matter of fact, I was rather unused to the ways of the sea. All I knew about such matters was learned on the bathing beach at Coney Island.

That was as near being on the sea as I'd ever been until I boarded the Sally G., bound for Africa with a load of butcher-knives and miscellaneous hardware for trade.

It was a poky, old sailing vessel, with a crew that looked like pirates and a captain who ate with his knife. We'd been out for forty days when the "northeast by norther" blew up.

You see, I'd chosen the old tramp-schooner in order to save money. I'm a man-milliner, and, while it's not a lofty profession, there's money in it, and I'm not one bit ashamed.

Business had been pretty good, and I wanted to open a place on Fifth Avenue. In order to do that, I figured I'd have to import an innovation of some sort.

I'd heard of the wonderful feathers in Africa, and it seemed to me that if I went over there and invested the two thousand dollars I had saved, I could come back and open up an exclusive shop in the fashionable section and sell out my stock at a hundred or two per hat.

So I bought a trunk with a false bottom, placed the two thousand in gold at the bottom of it, and set sail on the Sally G.

Of course, I was optimistic; you could hardly blame me. I could buy wonderful feathers cheap in Africa; I'd find some new kind and bring them back. There would be thousands of dollars profit in it, beyond a doubt.

Things went pretty well; I was seasick for the first ten days, and for twenty days after that laid up with the grip. But I didn't mind a bit. I occupied my mind with the feathers, and learned to eat hardtack.

The journey had been rather monotonous, the weather was foggy, and the gales didn't amount to much. Naturally, the crew wanted a little excitement, so they greeted the prospect of a stiff "nor'-east by norther" with evident delight.

We were just off the coast of East Africa and in the Agulhas current.

"Don't think the 'nor'east norther' will cause any trouble, do you?" I asked the mate.

"It's as uncertain as hookin' the sail-burton to the pendant on the yard-arm," replied the mate, as he spat speculatively and jerked up his breeches in true sailor fashion. "By the deck-stopper-knot, you can't most always sometimes tell in these here parts. Th' month bein' May, we're apt to run into a cyclone any minute."

"Cyclone!" I cried. "I thought they only had those on deserts."

"They're sure enough cyclones, all right. Some call 'em hurricanes; but, by the clew-garnets an' blarsted bow-buntlines, there ain't no differunce."

His remarks made me rather nervous. I sneaked down to my bunk and took a

look at the load of gold in my trunk. If anything happened, I wouldn't kiss that good-by. I'd take it with me at all risks. I had put everything into this venture, and I simply had to make good with myself.

The hurricane struck us amidships at ten o'clock that night. I rolled out of my bunk and banged up against the opposite wall.

A lurch of the ship brought me to my feet, and I clambered out of the hold and grabbed onto a mast on deck for support.

The captain was fuming all over the deck, and all the sailors were out. It was pretty fierce. I had to hold onto my mustache to keep it from being blown off.

But that wasn't the worst of it. The ship gave a sudden skid to one side and shipped a couple tons of water.

I let out a yell as she righted herself, and then plunged head first into a wave higher than the Tower of Babel.

Splash! Glug! Glug! Glug! And also gurgle!

I found myself clinging to the mast with arms and legs, like a monkey, and the black water was all over me and under me and everywhere.

I held my breath and waited for the wave to pass over. Something wrenched loose under me. My feet gave way. I clung to the mast and prayed. I felt as though I were sailing through the water at a powerful rate. I didn't dare open my eyes, but I knew all was black.

Suddenly my lungs seemed to burst. I slowly realized that my mouth was open, that I was out of water, and that I was clinging to a cold and slippery mast, being tossed about on wave-tops by the terrific wind.

I gagged for a minute, and tried to remember where I was and why I wasn't elsewhere.

It took me some time; but finally I realized fully that I was floating on the surface of the ocean, alone with my mast. The big wooden spar had evidently been jerked loose by the wave, and I had gone over the ship with it.

It seemed days that the mast and I floated round. The wind yowled, and the salt water began to pickle me.

I only know that I finally became unconscious, because some time afterward I awakened and found myself lying high and dry on a sandy shore. The faithful mast was beside me, and I still had one leg crooked round it.

I tried to holler in my surprise, but my tongue was pickled and caked with salt.

After some effort, I managed to scramble to my feet and look round. It was a nice sunny day. The hurricane had passed. In true sailor fashion I shaded my eyes from the sun and looked for the Sally G.

Great Heavens! She was nowhere to be seen. I spent the whole day looking for her, but I saw nothing; she had either sunk or sailed out of sight.

All I ever heard from the Sally G. was that afternoon; a case of butcher-knives floated ashore, marked with the good ship's name.

As I couldn't eat the knives, I put them aside and prayed for a case of sausage. But nothing more floated in.

I looked about the island that day, and found that it wasn't more than three miles around the thing. I walked with my head bent, sorrowing for the gold in my trunk.

Two thousand dollars is a lot of money. I like money; and it hurt my feelings to be parted from all I had in the world so unexpectedly.

My case seemed pretty bad. The blooming island I knew was out of the regular course of ships, for there were no signs of it ever having been touched by human hand.

I didn't survey the place very well. Most of the time I sat on the mast on the beach and sorrowed for my lost gold.

It was a rather sudden termination of my rosy dreams for the future. Here I was stranded alone on a little tropical island near Africa, with a mast and a case of butcher-knives, and nothing else to show for my two thousand dollars.

I had been so hopeful up to this time; but now black despair settled like a blight over my whole being.

My career as a man-milliner had been nipped in the bud. I would now either have to turn cannibal or be dissected by some man-eating tribe from a neighboring island.

The prospect was not at all alluring.

But I did sleep that night, right there on the beach, after having eaten a luscious bunch of reddish grapes, which I found

to be very abundant on the island, and, in fact, about the only thing edible.

They were quite green yet, but they seemed luscious to me on account of the brackish taste the salt water had left in my mouth.

In the morning I was suddenly awakened by the pressure of a human foot at the pit of my stomach.

I let out a wild yell, and my arms and legs flew out automatically as my eyes popped out and I looked into the glowing face of a black man, naked but for a loin-cloth of tiger-skin.

"Who the deuce are you, and where did you come from?" I screamed, as I leaped to my feet and ran toward the case of butcher-knives.

"*Uglug! Uglug!*" was all he said, but he showed a row of gleaming ivories in a grin, and I thought he was a pretty decent sort of fellow.

I tried to get further information from him; but all he said was "*Uglug!*"

"Well, Uglug!" I remarked, as he continued to hang round. "Where's there something for breakfast?"

I accompanied the question by opening my mouth at him like a boy in a pie-eating contest, and poking my finger at the cavity. A look of fear swept across his face; I guess he thought I wanted to eat him.

But in a minute the smile came back; he took me by the arm and led me to the center of the island, which I had not before penetrated. There he had a little hut, made out of bark, and out of one corner he pulled a big stone jar, which he had evidently made himself out of baked clay.

He signed to me to drink from it. The stuff looked like poison, and I was a little bit backward. But I was thirsty and hungry, so I dipped in with a gourd he handed me and took a sip.

"Gracious!" I exclaimed. "That's the best stuff I ever drank. What is it, Uglug?"

I can remember the taste of it to this minute.

It was like nectar. The most delicious drink I had ever tasted. It was almost like wine, and yet it was unfermented and seemed to have real food properties in it.

He laughed like a pleased child, and pointed to a big grape-vine near by, clustered with green grapes.

"Oh-ho!" I cried. "Grape-juice!"

I knew from the greenness of the grapes on the vine that he had squeezed out the juice I was drinking the year before.

Doubtless he ate the grapes when they were ripe, and then bottled them up for use when the season was over.

A sudden thought sprang to my mind. I gulped down two more gourdfuls and rubbed my hand over my belt with a pleased motion, which tickled Uglug.

The idea was immense. I had never tasted such a drink. My fortune was made. Uglug had not developed the opportunities as he should.

If I could get some of that superb grape-juice back to America, I could sell it at two dollars a quart. It was just the thing. There was no comparison between that and the ordinary, cheap grape-juice already sold at home. The people would jump at a non-intoxicating beverage with such a wonderful flavor.

I began suddenly to think that it wasn't so bad, after all, that I'd been shipwrecked on the island. Uglug had opened up wonderful possibilities to me.

The island swarmed with grapes, and in a month's time they would be ripe and ready to make the wonderful drink.

I was enthusiastic. What we couldn't squeeze into juice we'd dry for raisins. My lost two thousand dollars didn't look so big when I realized I could make it back, and more, by taking a good cargo of this back to the States.

I didn't spend much time thinking about how I'd get it back unless a ship came along and picked me up. What I did was to act, and without waste of time. If the crop was to be picked in a month or less, we would have to get busy, because I would have to take back thousands of gallons in order to make the proper profit.

So I motioned to Uglug that I wanted to learn how to make those big stone jars. The one he had held at least two gallons.

I never saw a more enthusiastic man than Uglug. Evidently the poor soul had been alone on the island for years, and he was just tickled to death to have somebody around.

He took me to a clay-pit a little to the

left of his hut, and quickly molded one of the jugs at my suggestion. It wasn't hard; while he had the thing baking in the sun, I pitched into the clay, and we made another together.

Well, for two weeks we worked steadily. Each day I inspected the grapes and kept a weather-eye out for a passing ship. The grapes came along nicely, but the ships didn't. I was most enthusiastic.

Good old Uglug seemed very happy to work fourteen hours a day.

I was afraid that the thing might become monotonous to him, and, being perfectly sure that he was my *Man Friday* and loved me, I opened up the case of butcher-knives for his enjoyment.

He was like a child with a new toy. He fondled them, kissed them, and then stood off fifty paces from a palm-tree and began throwing them at it.

The first landed directly in the center of the trunk, about five feet from the ground. The next was on a direct line, three inches below it. Well, in less time than it takes to tell Uglug had thrown the whole four dozen at the tree, and made each one stick in so that when the thing was finished it made a very pretty geometrical figure.

Then I remembered that African gentlemen are accomplished javelin-throwers, and so I let him play with the knives every night until he became so expert that he could cut off a mosquito's leg at sixty feet. I know it sounds exaggerated, but the mosquitoes were pretty big over there.

Well, the time drew nearer for the grape-picking and juice-making. The crop was in wonderful condition. I was so happy that there were no monkeys or birds on the island to destroy the fruit.

The sun was doing its work well, and I could see myself wearing diamonds down Broadway if we got the juice all bottled in the nice clay receptacles and managed to get a ship to take them back to America.

Uglug began to get a little worried toward the time when the picking was to commence. I couldn't understand what was the matter; but he often looked toward a dim outline of a far-off island, and he seemed to watch the air with an anxious eye.

I couldn't understand what it was all about, so I didn't pay any attention to him, but stuck to making the clay holders and preparing to pick the fruit.

Uglug didn't seem very happy the last day. He watched the air above him, and often looked toward the little island, far away.

But when night came, and I let him practise with the knives, he seemed to forget his uneasiness and had a good time at his sport, picking a bunch of grapes carefully, one at a time, by throwing the knives at them.

Next morning when I awakened the island seemed different. There was a horrible clatter and chattering. I couldn't understand. Uglug was gone from my side, where he always slept, and I began to be worried.

As I peered out of the hut I suddenly saw an amazing sight.

Our grape-vines were overrun with huge brilliant birds, feasting on the grapes.

Oh, it was too horrible! I shooed them off from one pet vine that had been nicely loaded with the luscious fruit—one that I figured we would get at least six gallons of juice from.

Every grape was gone.

Faint and trembling, I halloed for Uglug. It was too awful! All my plans had been knocked in the head again by a thieving flock of birds. It was too horrible to hear the gluttons screaming and cackling over my grapes—my grapes that were to make my fortune.

Uglug looked very sad when he came running up in answer to my shout.

He pointed toward the far-off island tearfully, and shook his head as though to say: "I told you so."

Coming from the direction of that island, I saw a flock of birds that almost made the sky black. They were all coming to feast on my grapes. Evidently it was a yearly occurrence, and that was why Uglug had looked toward the island and watched the air. I began to see things more plainly.

Meantime, my fortune was vanishing. I rushed to some reed baskets we had made to carry the fruit, and signed Uglug to follow. We shooed the jabbering birds from one of the vines and tried frantically to save some of the fruit. But what little we got was horribly mangled. It would hardly be worth saving.

I was so disappointed I could have cried. All my plans were vanishing in smoke. I had lost the one big opportunity. The thought of my two thousand dollars in gold came back and depressed me so that I could hardly pick the grapes.

After an hour's struggle in trying to rescue some of the crop from the villainous birds, I gave it up in sheer despair and dropped down on the ground, weeping for the first time in my life.

Ugh! I wanted to get up and kill every bird on the island. It was too awful! The cursed pests had spoiled all my chances, ruined me; and I had been hopeful, so hopeful before.

Poor Uglug set up a great wail at seeing me cry, and he ran to the hut and brought back the four dozen butcher-knives. I picked up one and looked at it.

My thoughts were desperate; but, a sudden impulse seizing me, I hurled the knife at a grape-vine literally covered with a swarm of the chattering, fighting, brilliant birds.

Several fell and many flew away, leaving the riddled vine. Uglug, at the sight of the bird's blood, ran off like a retriever, and came back in a minute with two of the birds I had killed.

I looked at them idly. There was the cause of my failure. A flock of birds, strange African birds, that had ruined me.

In turning one over, Uglug disclosed a long pair of tail-feathers. Instinctively I was interested. Before, the grapes had been the one idea in my mind, and I had not thought of the birds except as pests.

Now, my millinery instinct asserted itself, and I saw at a glance that the bird was a beautiful, wonderful creation.

I could just see those two long tail-feathers trimming a splendid hat.

With a wild leap I reached my feet and grabbed the bird away from Uglug. He stood by in astonishment. I quickly catalogued the bird. It was a very rare species of whidah-bird, found only on islands off the African coast.

My mind was in a maze. I had started out to buy feathers, but had never expected to get them for nothing. I didn't need any two thousand dollars now. Here they were for the picking.

Grasping up another butcher-knife, I hurled it at a second vine loaded with whidah-birds. Uglug saw my intention, and he suddenly began deadly execution. His training at knife-throwing came in with wonderful execution, and he knocked the birds off so skilfully that not even a feather was disarranged.

I gave the whole job over to him, and he went after it in a masterful manner, while I hurried round picking up the birds in the baskets we had made to contain the grapes.

I know lots of people don't believe in killing birds to adorn hats. But these birds were positive pests.

Farmers kill potato-bugs when they swarm. The birds had ruined my grape crop, and I didn't feel at all guilty in slaughtering them by the thousands. There were too many, anyway.

Well, before nightfall we had birds piled all over the place. They took warning and flew away, what was left of them; and all the next day Uglug and I were busy bundling up the tail-feathers which we plucked from the bodies.

They were wonderful feathers, of a strange, unusual sheen, and they had sold in New York for fifty dollars a pair.

I had bales of them. They didn't take up much room. I figured up the day's work roughly. I had over eight thousand dollars' worth of feathers; more than enough to make fifteen thousand dollars' worth of hats.

My fortune was made.

As I sat on the beach with Uglug, figuring things up, it looked to me as though I had been very fortunate in losing my two thousand dollars, losing the grape crop, and thinking of the birds in a millinery sense. Besides, it had been rather fortunate that the case of butcher-knives had floated ashore.

A week later we were picked up by a vessel bound for America. Uglug insisted on going along. He wouldn't part company with me. So we packed the feathers and the case of knives on board and set sail.

Two months later I opened my shop in Fifth Avenue. Uglug has a little room in the rear of the establishment.

It is fitted up with oriental rugs, and quite appeals to the fashionable ladies. I take them in before I sell them a hat and show them Uglug. the famous whidah-bird-hunter. I have photographs, which I had made in New York, showing Uglug

killing the whidah-birds by throwing javelins at them.

It makes a rather novel advertisement, and the feathers are so unique that I sell the hats without any difficulty.

If you're out in your automobile on Fifth Avenue some day next week, drop in and see me.

Uglug can say "How!" just like a white man, and I'll let you shake his hand if you'll agree to buy one of the famous whidah-bird hats at our next week's sale price of $110.

You know, when you're catering to the rich it would spell ruin to price a hat $98, like the cheap merchants have a habit of doing.

Have something special; tack on ten dollars above the even hundred, and you'll sell twice as many. Take it from me.

If you don't believe it, ask Uglug.

The Lengthening of Malone.

BY FRANK CONDON.

A Matter that is Somewhere Between Five Feet Six and Five Feet Ten.

YOU see it on the vaudeville stage in the form of jokes and songs, you read it in your magazines in the guise of fiction, and your daily paper brings it to you in the shape of news. The divorce courts inform you in detail, and your friends will tell you warningly, if you ask them; and yet, in spite of it all, a young man will take his best friend up to see his best girl, because he wants to display his acumen and to do a little gloating.

And that's exactly what Angus Malone did to his friend Julius Smoot, the girl being Marjory Gregg, of the Grand Street Gregg family.

There are other Greggs in New York, but not on Grand Street, and even if there were, one would naturally think of the Crutch Greggs any time the name was mentioned.

Angus brought Julius on Friday night. He had previously suggested that Marjory wear the black gown with the lace arms, and it would be nice also if she could fix her hair with the gold band over her forehead. Julius was such an appreciative chap, Angus said.

"Well, what do you think?" Angus asked when the visit was over, and the two were waiting for the Elevated train.

"She's a peach," Julius replied abstractedly. "You're lucky to know her, Angus."

All the way down-town Julius was strangely silent, almost moody. Angus observed him out of the corner of his eye.

"Good night, Angus," Julius said, when they parted. "Thanks for bringing me up to see your friend. She's all right."

"I thought you'd like her," Angus replied in a pleased tone.

Julius went out on the road the next day, and it was a long time before Angus saw him again. Even when Julius returned to New York, he failed to hunt Angus up and chat with him over a glass of coffee in the little French restaurant.

It had been an invariable custom between the chums. Angus wondered, because he had heard Julius was back.

Moehler, who worked in the shipping department, came into the office one morning, and said to Angus:

"I seen Julius last night, Angus. He was comin' out of a theater about eleven o'clock, and I couldn't help seein' who was with him. Who do you think, Angus? Why, your girl, Marjory. I followed 'em a block, and they got into a taxicab. Julius must be makin' money these days, Angus."

Such information is not conducive to helping a man do his work. Angus struggled with his ledger for a half-hour after the news report came in. Then he put his hat on his head and walked out into the air.

"So Julius is stealing my girl from me, is he?" Angus commented bitterly. "That's what I get for trying to be decent to him."

He reflected that he had never taken Marjory anywhere in a taxicab. It cost too much. Moreover, it was rarely that he took her to a theater.

"I suppose," he soliloquized as he walked—"I suppose Julius took her to one of those all-night restaurants, and bought her lobster salad and club sandwiches. Women are certainly out after the coin, I tell you. What's love to them? I wish I wasn't so short?"

Angus's reference was not only to his financial state, but to his physical stature as well.

He stood five feet six inches in his stockings. So did Julius. They had often compared their heights standing back to back.

Five and one-half feet is not a dwarfish stature, but on the other hand it is not as imposingly masculine as six feet, or even six feet two inches. And Marjory loved tall men.

"I hate these little shrimps," she had told Angus in confidence. "I'm almost as tall as you myself. I like a man about a foot taller than I am, so that I can look up into his eyes. It makes you feel that you've got a protector when your fellow is a foot taller than you are."

Angus winced under the indirect criticism, but at the time there was no immediate need for action. Now he reflected with some pleasure that Julius was no taller than he. The thought begot another one.

Why shouldn't he be taller than Julius? If he were taller, perhaps his increased charm in the eyes of Marjory would head off the new danger.

Angus met Julius on Nassau Street.

They paused before each other with some embarrassment, and shook hands.

"Well, Julius," Angus began, "there's no use beating round the bush. I hear you've been going out with Marjory."

"That's no lie, Angus. I might as well tell you the truth. We're too old friends to lie to each other. Ever since that night you brought me up there I've been writing her letters, and she's been writing me. Three times I took her to the theater and twice to dinner and once to a dance, and so far I've told her that I think she's the finest girl in the world, and I've asked her to marry me."

"You ain't so awful slow, are you, Julius?" Angus replied without emotion. "What did she say when you asked her to marry you?"

"She said there was you to consider, and that you and she had practically arranged to get married some day, as soon as you got a little money ahead. She couldn't marry both of us."

"I ain't seen much of her lately," Angus said. "I've been kind of sore about your taking her out, but I guess it's all right. If I've got to be cut out by somebody, I'd rather have you do it than some total stranger. But I ain't going to let you have a walk-away. You got to fight for her, Julius."

They laughed, and shook hands.

"We're friends yet, anyhow, hey Angus?" Julius said as he departed. "We won't let any woman come between us, no matter who gets her."

"That's right," Angus replied. "So-long, Julius."

After that Julius became a recognized suitor, and Marjory had a fairly good time for a young woman. Angus had Sunday and Wednesday nights, and Julius took Mondays and Thursdays. Angus took Marjory to the theaters more frequently, and once he plunged and rode in a taxicab with her.

It was understood in a vague way that the man who married Marjory would be taken in as a partner by Adolphus Gregg in the crutch business.

Then it was that Angus began to work upon his new thought.

Marjory expressed no preference. She liked Angus and she liked Julius. One had good qualities that the other lacked.

Angus took counsel unto himself, and for a week he disappeared. When he came back to Grand Street he was obviously thinner and slightly taller.

"Why, what have you done to yourself?" Marjory exclaimed in amazement.

"How do you mean?" inquired Angus.

"Why, you're taller than you were."

"I know it," Angus said loftily. "Maybe you thought I was through growing, Marjory. Not at all. I am getting my second growth."

Shortly thereafter he disappeared for another week, and returned looking more attenuated than ever—a trifle pale, and a trifle taller.

The secret was his own. He had found in a quack journal an advertisement that lured him to Yonkers. There he had found a large, burly man in a back room who had offered to increase his height for a consideration.

Angus accepted. He went in for the full course, and the pains he suffered would have shamed the best agony-makers of the Inquisition.

He submitted to massage treatment by which his breadth was rolled out flat and converted into length. He had ropes tied to his ankles and ropes tied to his shoulders, and for hours he lay on a table with heavy weights dragging at his extremities until his joints creaked and tried to come apart.

He also wore small pads in the heels of his shoes, and after four months of treatment that nobody but a desperate lover could have endured, Angus returned to civilization completely lengthened.

He was drawn and weak, but he had raised himself from five feet six to five feet ten inches, and Marjory seemed delighted.

"Now, if you will only grow a little heavier," she said, looking at him critically, "I'd like you better than ever. It's very strange, isn't it, that you should grow tall at your time of life?"

"Many people don't get their full growth until late," Angus said sorrowfully. "I'll get heavier later on."

Julius complimented him unreservedly.

"You look great, Angus," he said. "I wish I'd grow a little taller myself."

Julius did not know what Marjory thought about the attraction of tall men.

It was at this time that Adolphus Gregg took an active hand in the courtship situation.

He came into the room one evening when Angus was visiting and surveyed that young gentleman with mild astonishment.

"My, how you have grown, Angus!" he said. "How tall are you now?"

"I'm five feet ten inches," Angus said proudly. "Don't you think I look better?"

"Yes, you look better," Marjory's father said.

Then he walked out.

Later in the evening Adolphus discussed affairs with Marjory.

"You got to get married," he said sternly. "That's settled, because I need help down at the shop. The fellow you marry is going to be made a partner with me, and I need his help right away. Now, suppose you marry Julius to-morrow, and he can start in with me the next day."

"Julius, father!" exclaimed Marjory. "Why not Angus? Didn't you always like Angus?"

"Sure. I like Angus now, even. But look at him. Didn't you see how tall he is. You can't marry him, Marjory. You marry Julius to-morrow. Call him up on the telephone in the morning, and I'll pay the expenses. He wants to marry you, don't he?"

"Yes; he says he does," Marjory answered.

"You like him, don't you?"

Marjory bowed.

"Well, then, you call him up to-morrow morning and tell him to come round in his dress-suit."

Now, an important thing about the business of making crutches is what is known as "breaking in." No crutch-maker in the world, with an atom of common decency, will send out a shipment of crutches that aren't "broken in."

Crutches are very much like razor-strops or new shoes or a new pipe. When the crutches come from the factory they are in a state of stiff greenness, and before they can be comfortable and restful to the person who finally uses them, they must go through a course of sprouts, and this important handling must be done by an expert and by one physically fitted.

The work consists of taking the shiny new crutches as they are delivered from the shop and "breaking" them in by stamping up and down, bending them in and out, softening the stiff material, and actually using them the same as though the operator were a cripple.

Furthermore, all stock crutches are

constructed upon a pattern, and this pattern is never departed from. Every crutch turned out by Adolphus Gregg—and he had found, by long experience, that the size was most generally profitable—was made for a man or a woman five feet six inches tall.

And, in addition, the new partner whom he would take in as a result of his daughter's marriage, would be the expert upon whom would devolve the work of the "breaking in."

You can see with half an eye that a man five feet ten inches tall would never do. The crutches would wabble under his armpits.

If he attempted to "break" them in, he would simply ruin the artistic efforts of the workmen. The crutches would be out of plumb. The trade would fall off. Adolphus knew all this better than any one else.

Marjory sighed deeply when she learned the news, but there was nothing to do but to telephone Julius the following morning.

"I'll be right around," Julius said joyously.

They were married at noon under the Christmas mistletoe, which was still hanging.

"You start work to-morrow, Julius," Adolphus said to the bridegroom. "I'll have to teach you how to 'break in' the crutches. You're a half partner, so work hard."

Angus was notified in a letter. The next evening he walked down Grand Street, and Marjory met him as she was coming out of the delicatessen-shop. It was then he learned exactly why he had lost her.

Marjory wept. Angus almost wept.

She left him standing before the mirror of a candy-store window gazing thoughtfully at his four inches of added height.

"I wonder if murder is a criminal offense in Yonkers," he muttered sadly.

Then he walked down the street and turned into the brilliantly lighted building where, in the entrance, the swinging-doors swing in and out, in and out.

An Artistic Temperament.

BY MARIE B. SCHRADER.

Of the Mysterious Links that Bound Father and Son in Spite of a Bitter Family Quarrel.

WHEN the Kaiserin Augusta Victoria anchored safely at her dock after a stormy voyage across the Atlantic, three of her second-cabin passengers heaved sighs of relief.

They formed an interesting group as they stood quite still, and gazed round as if trying to comprehend some of the intricacies of their new surroundings.

No one need have asked regarding their nationality. Father, mother, and son were unmistakably German.

Their faces wore the look of persons in search of better fortune. There was evident an eagerness in the glance of each.

"Well, mother, now we will see!" exclaimed Heinrich Müller as his eyes fell on the wondering ones of his wife. "Always you talk about America. 'Oh, the wonderful land where every one is rich and happy,' as you forever have said. Well, here we are. Now to get rich and happy. That is it."

Frau Müller smiled a pleased smile. From childhood she had entertained the greatest love for the far-off Yankeeland. It was the dream of her life to cross the ocean some day to the great city of New York, for she held a superstitious belief that a miracle of good fortune lay in wait for her and hers if only they had the courage to go seek it.

"What you have to say on the subject, Benjamin Franklin?" asked Müller, with an affectionate pat on the flaxen hair of the blue-eyed, rosy-cheeked boy who stood quietly by.

The little fellow, who seemed about twelve years of age, thought steadily for a moment. Although his mother had named him for a famous American statesman, the resemblance ceased with the name. Benjamin possessed the German characteristic manner of slowness but sureness.

"Are you sure the Americans will like sausage, father?" he asked at last.

"Why, Benjamin," replied the father, "what a question! The whole world eats sausage. The Americans like it just as the Germans. Some say they like it better, but I do not believe that.

"Anyhow, it is all the same. Do you think I would have sold my shop, my little home, to come to this foreign land if I am not sure that people buy my sausage? What you think?"

The father was, for a moment, upset by the boy's query. His wife soothed him.

"There, there, Heinrich," she said, "you make the best sausage in Frankfort. It won't be long before the Americans will find it out, and Müller sausage will be what every one will ask for."

"Yes, yes, it will be so," answered the older Müller, his face brightening. "I will work. I will wait, and then, when Benjamin Franklin grows to be a young man, he will know all about the business. He will learn enough to make even better sausage than his father.

"And then he will marry and leave the business to his son, and his son will—"

Before Müller could finish speculating on the growth of the Müller family and the triumph of the Müller sausage, he was called to look after his baggage.

A few hours later found the three Müllers comfortably housed with relatives of old friends in Germany.

Benjamin spent his first night in America in dreaming that a long chain of Müller sausages was being tied round his neck by his father, who announced his determination of casting Benjamin into the sea.

He awoke with an uncomfortable feeling that his sausage-dream really meant something.

Years after, when young Müller had become a good American citizen, he recalled the incident, and thought it had actually worked itself into a solution.

The Müllers soon settled down to an economic life in America. Getting a start was slow and discouraging, and Heinrich Müller learned that to become rich and happy in the new country was not a matter of immediate acquisition. He had inherited his sausage business from his own father, who had borne the reputation of "making the best."

In America, he found that there were not only a great many Germans in the business, but the competition was shared by various other nationalities.

Still, Müller did not lose heart. He invested his small fortune in a little place in an out-of-the-way section of the city, and started to make the name Müller a household word.

It was a gloomy outlook at first, but he kept to his determination to win out in the struggle.

"Well, mother," he said one day, "it looks like we don't get rich and happy right away. Sometimes I wish we had never left the dear old Fatherland."

"Don't say that, father," interrupted Benjamin, who was studying his lessons. "I am glad we came. America is great."

It pleased Müller to hear his son talk in such a strain. He was very proud of the lad and his aptitude for acquiring American ways.

During the few years which had passed since their arrival in America, Benjamin had become as Yankee as any one. Most people were surprised to learn of his German parentage, because he spoke English so perfectly.

"My American son," said the father, in speaking of the boy, "has sense enough to stick to the German way of making a living. Just wait until you eat one of his sausages. Ah, then you will taste something. A Müller sausage with American improvements. That would be a wonderful sausage. Ha, ha!"

Soon the Müller sausage began to make itself acquainted in the big city. People with discriminating tastes wanted to know where it was to be bought, and the honest German had more orders than he could

attend to. He sold his modest shop and bought a bigger one.

Several times he found himself obliged to repeat this experiment, until one day he remarked to his good wife, as he gazed round his comfortable home:

"Well, wife, your dream has come true. Here we are, rich and happy. You have been a good wife to me, and Benjamin is a good son. What else can there be for me? When Benjamin graduates from college in June, I will have a great surprise for him. Then everything will be as it should be."

The "great surprise" was carefully kept from Benjamin until his return home after the proudest day of his life—the day when he received his diploma with great honors; when he felt that no father and mother present had the right to be better pleased than his own.

Benjamin had studied hard, and was popular. And now the great wide world awaited him.

He stood on the threshold of the future as he left the college gate for the last time.

Varying thoughts filled his mind as he finished his coffee at the first family dinner he had had in several months.

"And now, Benjamin," said Müller, as the little family gathered around the library table, "I am going to prove how proud I am of all you have done. I am going to show how much confidence I have in your ability."

"Yes, father," answered B. Franklin, as he preferred to be called since his entrance in college. The name Müller, too, had undergone a slight change under his insistence.

"No American calls himself Müller," he explained to his parents. "Müller is all right in Germany, but this is the United States."

Accordingly, by the change of a simple letter *ü* to the equally simple one *i*, Benjamin Franklin Müller became B. Franklin Miller, and he felt that his Americanization was complete.

"Yes, I am going to do something fine for you," continued Müller. "Have you ever thought of what you would do when you left college?"

"Yes, father, I have," replied B. Franklin. "I haven't spoken about it before, because—"

He hesitated.

"That's all right, my boy," interrupted Müller. "I know all you would say. You didn't like to ask me. You don't have to. Benjamin, as proof of my affection, I will put you in charge of the sausage business. I will rest."

Müller looked expectantly at his son. He waited for an overflow of words in appreciation of his gift. Instead, there was a painful silence.

B. Franklin sat with eyes downcast as he nervously fingered some books.

"Well!" impatiently exclaimed the father at last.

"Father," began the young man, "please don't think me ungrateful for what you have just said. I am not. You mean well; but, father, I am going to be frank with you. I hate the sausage business. I would rather die than make sausages. I hate the very sight, the very smell, of them."

The old man was utterly dumfounded for a moment. He couldn't believe what his own ears had heard.

"It's true, father," continued the son. "I never said anything about this before. I couldn't, because I knew how you had set your heart on the idea of my taking up your business some day. I didn't think it would come so soon. I can't do it, and there's no use in my deceiving you and saying I can."

"Do you realize all you are saying, my boy?" asked the elder Müller, when he gained control of himself. "Do you understand all you are throwing away? Why, it was your grandfather's business, and it's mine. It should be yours."

Suddenly a thought struck him.

"I see it all," he said bitterly. "It's this fine college life that's put all this in your head. You're ashamed of your own father because he makes sausages. You owe it to those same sausages that you ever went to that college and met all those high society folks. Those people have turned you against your own."

"You're all wrong, father," interrupted the young man. "I am not ashamed of you or the sausages. It's all because I am unfortunate enough to possess an artistic temperament."

"An artistic temperament!" repeated the old man savagely. "What's that got to do with sausages?"

"That's just the point I am trying to make, father," persisted B. Franklin. "My temperament won't permit me to devote my life to sausage-making."

The old man brought his fist down on the table with a crash.

"What will your 'artistic temperament,' as you call it, allow you to do?" he demanded with undisguised sarcasm.

"I want to become an artist," answered the younger Müller in calm tones.

"An artist!" exclaimed the father.

"Yes," continued the son. "I want to paint pictures—landscapes, portraits. Father, do you remember that part of the river where we used to go sometimes on Sundays in Germany? I've often thought I could paint it from memory. I can see the three tall trees on the right at the river-bend, the slope of the bank with the tangled weeds, the dip of the sun in the background—"

"That's enough!" said Müller. "A paint-slinger! So that's your ambition—that's what I have raised you for! One of those velvet-jacket fellows who sits in the house all day and dreams while other people are making money."

"It's the ambition of my life," answered B. Franklin.

"Well, then," said the old man with decision, "from this time on you can get out and hustle. You can paint your pictures, but I won't have you mooning around here. And not one dollar will you get from me. You're no son of mine."

Frau Müller begged, with tears streaming down her face, that the old man relent, but he refused to listen to her pleadings.

"Very well, then, father," said B. Franklin, "I will go. And you will never see me again, unless you want to. I will make my living in my own way, but I promise you that I will never do anything to bring dishonor on the family name, even if I do sign it on pictures instead of sausages."

In another moment the door slammed behind him, and Müller and his wife were alone. It took them a long time to become accustomed to the absence of their only child.

Frau Müller spent many a sleepless, tearful night, while the old man brooded over his outburst of temper, which had driven his son from home. However, he determined not to admit that he was worried, not even to his good wife.

"Oh, he'll get tired of the picture business and be glad enough to come back," the old man remarked. But the years went by and B. Franklin did not return.

In the meantime, disheartened by his own action, the elder Müller lost interest in the perfection of sausage research. New makes of sausage became popular and the Müller variety lost its prestige. Müller did not realize for a long time how rapidly he was losing all he had worked so hard to gain.

When he did, he did not have enough money to spare for advertising and rebuilding his custom. His comfortable home was sold and his place of business soon followed.

Once more he found himself in the neighborhood in which he had started. But it recalled the memory of his son, from whom he had heard no word in many years. The old man, too, became more feeble as time went by.

One day, while he sat in the door of his little shop, with his head bowed on his hands, a former acquaintance stopped for a chat.

"By the way, Müller," he said, "I saw your son in Chicago the other day. He asked about you. Said he was living on the Grand Boulevard. Asked me to call, but I didn't have time."

"What about his pictures?" asked the old man.

"I don't know," answered the visitor. "I was in such a hurry I forgot to ask. I guess he's selling them all right. He looked prosperous enough."

"'Chicago,' 'Grand Boulevard,'" repeated Müller over and over. "Mother," he called to Frau Müller, "I've made up my mind. I can't stand it any longer. We can't keep this up. I'm going to Chicago to see Benjamin. I couldn't die without seeing my boy once more."

Müller set about disposing of the little that remained of his sausage business, and with the proceeds he and his wife made the trip West.

They lost no time in hunting up B. Franklin Miller's address in the directory. Yes, there it was on Grand Boulevard.

Quickly the pair found their way there. They arrived in front of a handsome marble house, with a beautiful lawn on all sides.

"Must be the wrong address," muttered the old man as he timidly rang the bell.

A pompous butler answered, and without waiting for them to speak directed:

"Side entrance."

Then he shut the door.

Trembling, the Müllers once more rang the other bell. A less important person answered.

"Does Mr. B. Franklin Miller live here?" asked the old man.

"He does, but can't see you," answered the servant.

At this moment a familiar voice fell upon their ears.

"Benjamin," called out the old man.

The owner of the voice came forward.

"Father! Mother!" he said, and all three embraced.

When the old couple had been ushered into the house, which was furnished with a magnificence such as the elder Müller could not have dreamed of in the days of his greatest opulence, the son said:

"Well, father, what do you think of my home?"

"Your home!" exclaimed Müller in astonishment. "Why, Benjamin, you don't mean to tell me that this palace belongs to you?"

"Yes, father, it's mine," proudly answered the son.

"Then, my dear boy," said the father, "I must beg your forgiveness. That day when I drove you from our home I did it because I thought it was best that you should make sausages. You insisted on painting pictures.

"I was in the wrong, Benjamin; all in the wrong. I see it now. You were right, my son. You have proved it. You were never intended for sausage-making. You have, indeed the artistic temperament.

"But you must show me some of those wonderful pictures which have brought you so much money."

By way of reply, B. Franklin Miller put his arm round the honest old sausage-maker's neck.

"Suppose, father, I were to confess that after all it was you who were right. Suppose I were to own up that I was not quite as smart as I thought myself that day—"

"I don't understand," said Müller."

"The truth is this," said B. Franklin: "I am rich and you and mother shall share everything, but I haven't made my money out of pictures. I owe all I am and possess to sausages."

"What!" exclaimed Müller.

"Yes," continued the son. "I tried painting pictures and I nearly starved to death.

"I tried a great many other ways of making a living, but finally I was forced to turn to the one thing I knew—making sausages.

"It was not long before my artistic temperament asserted itself and I learned that a greater art is required in presenting sausage to the people than in the making.

"Now the housekeeper receives her sausage daintily done up in tissue paper, in specially decorated boxes, designed by myself. The husband on his way to and from work is made acquainted with the charms of my sausage by means of attractive advertisements.

"So at last I am a Yankee. I am known as the Sausage King."

DREAM RIVER.

SUCH a tiny, rippling river,
Poppy-fields on either side,
Snow-white swans, so stately, sailing
Down the lily-bordered tide;
Water-lilies, golden-chaliced,
Filled with heaven's dewy balm,
Wafted from the starlit branches
Of the night's o'ershadowing palm.

Clarence Urmy.

The Lady of Niger.

BY ALLEN FRENCH.

Memorable Experience of a Clerk Who Lived in the Suburbs and Lost His Job in Double-Quick Time.

I.

"THERE WAS ONCE A LADY OF NIGER."

THIS is a story for husbands. Wives, as a class, are warned off. Individual wives may read, if broad-minded. No suffragists need apply. There is in the story much possible good for the young person.

The springs of a man's action are sometimes hard to come at. Saxe never told his wife where he got his ambition, nor why it came so late.

He was of the suburban class of clerks, men who live at way-stations ten to thirty miles out, and who persuade themselves that hours of daily travel, with early breakfasts and late dinners and little sight of their children, are in some way equaled by low rents, large garden spaces, and landscapes.

In bundles or bags they carry home great burdens daily, and pay express charges besides. They mow lawns, raise vegetables, have a weakness for flowers, and display uncanny knowledge of insecticides and spray mixtures. It is chiefly they who support the magazines of gardening and suburban living; in fact, it is also they—or their wives—who write for these periodicals the little articles telling of expedients for doing similar things in different ways.

The most prominent household possessions of these men are the baby-carriage and the kodak; the graphophone has much popularity among them; and the ambition of each and every one is to own an automobile. In the proper seasons they keep ready for immediate use the snow-shovel, the garden hose, and —for rose-bugs—the pan of water, with a little kerosene on top. As a class, these men are firm believers in the simple life.

Saxe, in spite of a promising youth, had come into this way of living. It was probably because of his early marriage. Upon acceptance by the first girl that he proposed to, he was humbly surprised and delighted, and determined to work for her all his life.

He slid easily and naturally into the class of average American young men, and went to live in the average American suburb, where, becoming the average American husband—the national adjective is in each case important—he was both his wife's body-servant and his own man of all work.

As choreman, he had the care of the furnace in winter and the garden in summer, the two overlapping each other with never a period of rest between. An increasing family more than doubled his household responsibilities; he lost his perspective, and thought that these were the most important things in life.

So he shoveled the coal and raised the vegetables, and learned to do what in his youth he had never been taught: to put up shelves, to hang doors, to mend locks, to tinker bicycles and children's carts, and to put on screens and storm-windows each in their season. He drew the line at washing windows and beating rugs; but he oiled his floors, split his kindling, raked his lawn and driveway, and carried out his ashes and dumped them in a corner which his landlord was willing that he should fill.

There was no harm in all this; in many ways it did him good. It was the body-servant relationship which was wrong. Of course, there are certain duties which naturally fall to the lot of the husband in a family of limited means. He is bound to learn of the hooking-up of dresses, and of the ways of children's buttons.

But when Saxe became errand-boy and assistant shopper, he took a downward step which led him where it is not well for a man to go. To know the difference between gros-grain and satinette—if these are right, or rightly spelled—to be able to match thread with material—Saxe's judgment was excellent—or, for that matter, to know the difference between thread and silk, and material and cloth; these are not masculine. Saxe learned these mysteries, and more. He knew the dry-goods departments of all the big stores, and the clerks knew him.

He descended, at last, to the deepest degradation which can overtake domesticated man, for he used to carry back to the stores the articles which his wife had bought and did not want, and he made the clerks accept or change them. He was really a very useful and docile husband.

This brings us to the subject of Mrs. Saxe. Nothing could reveal her character better than a sight of Saxe with his children. He loved to do for them, and there are few sights more charming than a man acting as a father should with his children. But when he becomes motherly, he shows up his wife.

Of course, there is something to be said for her. She was human in following her own nature and in taking advantage of what she thought she knew of his. But it seems fair to point out that things might not always be thus, and that her coolly high-handed and peremptory methods—you shall have a glimpse of them presently — did not cultivate suppleness or diplomacy, qualities prized, in a crisis, by the average woman.

Further, consider that a managing woman has her worries and dissatisfactions. She has saddled her tiger, but will it stay saddled? Also, she doubts if her neighbors believe it is much of a tiger after all. Mrs. Saxe knew—none better — that her husband was not the man he might be. Hence—the "nameless discontent" of the poets reduced to household terms—Mrs. Saxe was often disgruntled without knowing why.

It would be an indelicate intrusion into woman's sphere to suggest that this is the usual fate of her who usurps man's estate. It would be bold to conclude that only the exceptional woman can rule, and that she usually sacrifices peace of mind. I come to no conclusion of the kind; in fact, this should be left to the reviewer. I will point out, however, for the benefit of married women who may have ventured so far into this story, that there is a wide difference between ruling your husband for his good and ruling him for your own.

But she made no change—not intentionally. The next section of the tale might be called "The Soul's Awakening."

II

WHO SMILED AS SHE RODE ON A TIGER.

SAXE had had a hard day. Up at five-thirty—he was a sort of human alarm-clock, you know the kind—cold bath, quick rub, into garden clothes, and in stocking-feet down stairs in ten minutes—that was the usual plan, interrupted this morning by a squawk from a child.

"Father!"

Now it is a wonderful instinct which fathers develop, under proper training. There are husbands who have surprising understanding of child squawks, their particular child, their approximate direction and distance, their exact meaning. This is a provision of nature on which I will not dwell, except to point out that husband-proficiency usually goes with wife-deficiency. To draw conclusions from this is again the province of the critic.

Saxe, then, laid down his boots and peeped in at the right door.

"What is it?" he whispered.

"How soon will nursie come?"

"Not for an hour. Go to sleep again, dear."

"How long is an hour?"

"Oh, not long, if you sleep."

"But I can't sleep."

"Try, sweetheart. Remember mother mustn't be waked."

"All right."

Kisses were exchanged, and the door set at the proper angle. Saxe, picking up his boots, approached the stairs.

"Fazzer!" A loud whisper.

Saxe put in his head at another door. "Well?"

"How thoon will nurthie come?"

"In about an hour. Go to sleep again."

"How long'th an hour?"

"It isn't long, dear, if you only sleep."

"Tan't sleep."

"Now, darling, try. Don't wake mother."

"All right."

More kisses. Saxe, recovering his boots, got a few steps down-stairs, when he heard voice number three.

"Papa!"

"What is it, Jojo?" At door number three.

"Want Lolo!"—Lolo is the nurse.

"But it's too early, sweetheart—"

And so on; "Home, Sweet Home," with variations. Note that the appeal concerning mother's sacred sleep is in each case sufficient to produce quiescence. Mother had allowed herself to become a very important person in her family. I sometimes wonder if she listened in silence to these colloquies, and then turned over for her beauty sleep.

So in the end Saxe got to his gardening, which this morning lasted too long. For there was just one plant too many to transplant. It took the few minutes that were needed for the comfort of the whole task, and made him hurry. It took the few ounces of strength which would have given him the proper margin of energy. He came into the house, hot, tired, dirty, hastening to clean up and get dressed. The last plant spoiled his gardening pleasure, hurried his breakfast, oppressed his whole day—the day being what it was.

The immediate result was that he was late for breakfast—also for his wife's. She—there was nothing of the alarm-clock about her—always depending upon his entrance to rouse her in time to dress. She was disgusted, as she explained to him with pointed words. He would be late, and she would be late, and it was *so* bad for the servants!

"I'm mighty sorry, Maria," said Saxe meekly. "It's too bad. Now why not stay in bed for your breakfast? I'll bring it up."

So, in addition to his duties before catching the train, which was usually caught on the fly, Saxe added those of carrying the breakfast-tray up-stairs and down again. Perhaps he did not realize that the act, often enough repeated, was bound to become a habit. Perhaps his wife did not realize it either!

"George," she said, when finally he kissed her good-by, "do please get me half a yard of this." She gave him a sample, he clutched it, and bolted for his train as he had bolted his breakfast.

Oh, surely there is an immense amount of energy wasted by the husbands of America. Saxe says so now.

He had his usual morning's grind at the office, the city office of a manufactory, where his position was somewhat comparable to his status at home. He was the willing man-of-all-work, the trusted upper clerk who knows everything, yet never gets to be manager. A willingness to do, an unwillingness to assert himself, were the two qualities which made Saxe the man he was.

There was but one interesting incident of the morning, and that did not seem interesting at the time. The manager—

The manager was named Bingham. The clerks, among themselves, spelled the name Bing'em, on account of his habit of coming down heavily on those who displeased him.

His favorite phrase was: "You leave at the end of the week!" Only Saxe and one or two colorless individuals—let us be candid and say Saxe and one or two other colorless individuals—had for any length of time succeeded in not being "binged." Saxe had been in the office for twelve years.

The manager, then, came to Saxe for certain figures. Specifications for a big contract had come in, and Saxe had been asked for details of the figuring. He gave the papers to Bingham.

"Seems to me," volunteered Saxe, "this time we can screw it down to thirty-two."

"Per box or per pound?" asked Bingham.

A box, as is the usual way with manufacturers, contained a little less than a

pound. Of anything, of course; it doesn't matter.

Now the specifications called for pounds, and Saxe meant pounds and said so.

"Man," cried Bingham, with every appearance of horror, "don't you know we've never made it thirty-two except for small contracts? We're not equipped for big amounts, at such a rate of delivery, and with such a short time to prepare."

"We'll lose the contract, then, as we always do," remarked Saxe. He didn't insist or argue, but he added, by way of finishing off: "What's the use of getting the little contracts and losing the big ones? I know we can fill the requirements and make big money."

Bingham stared at him.

"*You* know!" he retorted, but not ironically.

There was something more than irony in the words. After Bingham went away Saxe wondered when, in all these years, he had been quite so positive in his advice. Then he forgot the matter. Bingham didn't.

At the lunch-hour came Saxe's chance to do his wife's errand—and he knew from the looks of the sample that it would not be easy. So he hurried to his restaurant, skimped his lunch, and began his search. He tried the nearest department-store, and the next, and the next, and the next. Going up in elevators, threading his way among women, walking long distances between counters heaped with goods, discussing a minor matter—only half a yard!—with unsympathetic girls, some of whom were only too evidently amused with him, and after each attempt coming away baffled.

All this made him remember, with growing distinctness, the last plant which he had set before breakfast. He returned to his office late and hot and tired, with half his day still before him.

When he left the office at night he tried, by rapid walking, to do his errand in two more shops, failed at both, and lost the express-train home. So he took the train which started ten minutes later, and reached his town some twenty-five minutes later still. It was a hot, dusty, exhausting ride, and all the way he remembered the last tomato-plant.

He laid his fatigue, you notice, to the plant, and not to his wife's errand.

Saxe reached home tired out, but it cheered him to see his children put to bed, and to wash up, and to sit down to supper—or to expect to. But his wife had not yet come from her bridge, and there were no visible means of supping. He glanced in at the dining-room, but the girl had not even begun to set the table. It was nearly seven o'clock.

Then his wife appeared, flustered and peevish. She looked at the dining-table before she greeted her husband. In consequence, he got no greeting at all.

"I knew it!" she exclaimed. "I told Anna she might have this afternoon and evening, instead of Thursday, and if she hasn't gone without preparing supper for us!"

"She never does, on her days," Saxe reminded her gently, although he saw just what his part was to be.

"And the rubbers were very long this afternoon," complained Mrs. Saxe, "and Mrs. Robinson *would* discuss! I meant to have got home in time to set the table, but it not being the usual afternoon—George, would you mind just getting supper, while I run up-stairs and fix up? There's cold chicken."

George did not mind, outwardly. In fact, he took it very easily at the time. To be stop-gap was so normal with him that he toddled off and set the table without a thought of discontent.

After supper he lit his pipe and sat on the piazza-steps with his wife. It was a lovely evening, and he was enjoying his wife's company; but in a few minutes she broke in upon the charm.

"George—" She paused to kill a mosquito—which gives opportunity to remark that in spite of thousands of examples, even the example of the father of our country, George is a name that suggests docility. "George," resumed Mrs. Saxe, when the murder was accomplished, "the path and flower-beds are very weedy and very dry."

Saxe looked at the weeds and the dusty ground, and — figuratively—caressed his pipe and clung to his ease. It was his first restful period since half past five in the morning.

"They aren't so bad," said he.

"They are almost never as bad as this," responded Mrs. Saxe. "You do neglect the flowers for the vegetables, you know." Saxe did. It is a masculine characteristic, born of the instinct for practical results. "And the bridge class meets here to-morrow," added Mrs. Saxe.

She belonged to a bridge class and a bridge club, both of which met every week.

"I'll do it in the morning," said Saxe, sighing. He had meant to transplant his cauliflowers.

"You know," replied his inexorable wife, "that the morning is not the time to hose. It never does so much good; and, besides, the sun will be full on the plants in the morning, and will burn them. I've heard you say so lots of times. And you will be just under my window" —and will wake me up, she meant him to understand. He did so understand it. "And Mrs. Walterson is coming," she finished.

Saxe was finished, too. Every one of her arguments was good, even the last, for the place must be looking its best for the local leader of society. He looked at the sky, but there was no help there, for darkness would be on him before he could finish his smoke.

So he took what comfort he could with his pipe and his hoe and his hose together. He hosed the borders while he weeded the path; then he aimed the hose at the path while he weeded and cultivated the borders.

But his method was bad.

He should have gone into the house first, should have changed into his garden-clothes, should have got his heavy gloves, and so have done his work in comfort. Instead, he tried to work as he was, and merely took off his jacket. He knew that his cuffs were not removable, he knew that he had on his best suit, he knew that a hose makes hands more dirty than does dirt itself.

But fatigue, and after-supper indolence, and disgust with circumstances—not with his wife; not yet—combined to make him take the risk. The odds were against him.

The job—for Saxe was always thorough—was a long one. The moon helped him by rising early, but the mosquitoes were no aid; and when at last Saxe entered the house—where, on account of mosquitoes, his wife had long since retired—his shoes and clothes were dirty, his shirt was done for, his collar had wilted, his hands were black as rubber, and he was in a fine state of itch and perspiration.

"I'll have to go up-stairs and wash," he called to his wife.

Even then Mrs. Saxe might have saved herself the calamity—no, it wasn't a calamity. Yet certainly sympathy and thanks were due him.

But Mrs. Saxe had the magazine habit, and had it badly; she came out of her story with difficulty, and, wishing to waste no time before she got back into it, she called, in her assured, offhand manner—you know how a boy, who for the moment has appropriated your dog, takes particular joy in believing it his dog; well, The Lady of Niger, for a time, was just like that—she called, then, confidently:

"Since you're going up-stairs, George, just do up the bundle that's on the bed. I want you to take it to the city to-morrow. Everything is there together."

So Saxe went up-stairs and washed his hands, and began his new task before changing his clothes. On the bed were articles of apparel and a pasteboard box, with paper and string.

Saxe folded the things, and found that they wouldn't fit into the box; so he got a larger one from the attic. Then he tried to wrap the box with the paper, but the paper was flimsy, and tore; so he got more—also from the attic, going up with a candle into the stuffy space. Then he tried to tie the bundle, but found that the string was too short by about an inch, so that whenever he tried to finish the knot it slipped through his fingers. He tried three times, and was just trying for the fourth, hopelessly endeavoring to avoid another trip to the sweltering storeroom, when he heard his wife's voice from below.

She had finished her story and was comfortably sleepy, and needed him to help her take a little nap, after which she would be good for another hour, before bed.

"George," she called. Her voice sounded injured, as if he had been neg-

lecting her. "It's getting so late! Aren't you coming to play to me?"

Play to her!

Saxe looked at his hands, stiff from the use of the hoe, and wondered when he would ever be willing to touch the piano again. He surveyed himself, hot, limp, and uncomfortable—the only place for him was the bath-tub.

He pulled again at the string, and once more it slipped from his fingers.

The bundle slipped, too, fell from the bed, and poured its contents over the floor.

"No!" roared Saxe.

He heard his wife go back to the parlor with a sniff. He sat down and took a rapid oversight of the day, of his life.

His soul awoke. It gritted its teeth.

Saxe made two remarks.

The first was: "Servant!"

The second, after a long pause, was: "Never again!"

III.

"THEY RETURNED FROM THE RIDE . . ."

SAXE'S declaration of independence, you must understand, was made under his breath. A man of different temperament would have bellowed it at his wife; but, then, a man of different temperament would never have got himself into trouble.

Besides, Saxe was bewildered. It came over him, like a souse of cold water, that his wife had betrayed him. She had made use of him to her own ends—and to no purpose, for where had they arrived?

He had the simple-minded man's bitter moments, as he sat on the edge of the bed, realizing that she had enslaved him. Could he ever get free?

It was very American of him to decide that he must buy his freedom. In these throes of thought was born his ambition. More servants for his wife, to take his place at home, meant a raise in salary. Would Bingham be propitious?

Bingham did not seem to be mild when Saxe appeared the next morning. His greeting was gruff; his demeanor for the first hour or two was such as Saxe had never before seen directed toward himself. At other clerks—oh, plenty of times! Before the firing process. Today it almost looked as if Saxe himself were to be "binged." Yesterday, under such circumstances, he would have been frightened and propitiatory. Now things had changed.

When worms turn, they are supposed to be very dangerous. Saxe was a worm—had been a worm, at least. But now, in default of being angry with his wife, it occurred to him to be angry with Bingham. With himself, as well. Had he been serving this underbred fellow all these years, servilely? Saxe had a waking vision of himself cringing before this office bully. Thereupon occurred a boiling within him, such as he had seldom felt in all his gentle existence since the days when, as a boy, he had felt fighting mad.

Bingham coming near, Saxe actually turned white and trembled. Bingham supposed himself to observe the signs of fright; so he paused in a rigid attitude, frowned heavily, and remarked:

"Saxe, I didn't like the way you spoke to me yesterday."

Saxe, who for many, many years had never quarreled, saw that he must quarrel now. A miracle had happened—or what seemed to him a miracle, since he forgot that as a boy he had rather enjoyed his little troubles when once they really had begun. His self-control, after twenty years of disuse, suddenly returned, as dependable as ever.

"When?" he asked.

"When you spoke of a figure of thirty-two cents."

"There was no harm in what I said," replied Saxe. "It was merely my opinion."

"Well," replied Bingham, "your opinion wasn't wanted."

"You didn't need to take it," answered Saxe. "In fact, I find you haven't. You bid thirty-six."

Bingham, following his only method, raised his voice. "I'll bid thirty-seven the next time, if I please."

"You needn't shout," said Saxe. "I have no doubt that you'll do as you please. The boss doesn't seem to count for anything."

Suddenly it occurred to Saxe to wonder why the boss didn't count for anything. He took time to satisfy his wonder.

The boss was the owner of the office and of its mills; but certainly, except for occasionally looking in amiably upon the clerks, he kept in his own glass case—when he came to the office at all—and consulted solely with Bingham. His office hours were short and irregular, and he was old. That was it, Saxe decided; it was because he was old.

"Do you hear me?" roared Bingham.

"I ought to," replied Saxe politely. He saw, and Bingham saw, that the other clerks laughed at this behind their hands. "But I wasn't attending," Saxe went on. "What were you saying?"

To repeat a denunciation weakens it wonderfully. No energy of manner could make Bingham feel that he had not been taken down. But there was an audience, and he roared his loudest:

"I said you were insulting."

It was plain enough to Saxe, afterward, what Bingham was about. He was alarmed about Saxe's remarks of yesterday, and was trying to find out what he knew, or what he suspected, and wanted an apology.

Observe here the fine hand of Mrs. Saxe. Any day of the previous twelve years would have produced the apology. To-day it was different.

Again Saxe took time off, in order to think. If this quarrel were carried out to the end he would be discharged. Then what of his wife's greater comfort? But really, a man, if he is a man, must save his self-respect—and then Saxe remembered that he had been hanging onto the last rag of his. He boiled a little again internally.

"You're easily insulted, then," he returned.

"You—leave—at—the—end—of—the—week!" shouted Bingham.

"I'll leave now," answered Saxe, rising.

"Tut, tut!" said the boss, looking in.

The manager had thought the old gentleman was out. If Bingham could but have let matters alone, all would have gone well with him; but a bad conscience makes a man uneasy. Yet nothing was ever proved against him.

"This will never do," said the boss. "Gentlemen, please come into my office."

In his private office the boss was very fatherly. He reminded the two that they had worked for years together, and begged them to make the quarrel up. All would go on as before; they would see if it wouldn't.

Saxe looked at Bingham cheerfully. "It's up to you," he said.

Bingham became very gloomy. "Mr. Saxe is going for your own good, Mr. Carter." Like a flash, the old gentleman became keen and brisk.

"Then, since it's business," he said, "let's get at the bottom of it. I must say, Mr. Bingham, that I've not liked your failure to build up in the office a body of young men devoted to the business. I've been hoping for a staff that could carry it on without me. Now I want to be satisfied that Mr. Saxe is discharged with cause. What is it all about?"

Bingham, gloomier than ever, declared that Saxe was interfering with him. Then Mr. Carter extracted the whole of the conversation that had passed between the two.

"Mr. Bingham," he then asked, "why should not Mr. Saxe make suggestions?"

He waited for an answer. Saxe, looking on, began to see why the boss owned mills. Bingham mumbled.

"Tell me," said the boss, "why you did not bid thirty-two cents?"

"I couldn't have."

"You could," said Saxe. "You never bid on a big contract as low as you can."

Then—it all happened in an instant—Bingham turned putty-white and stepped back. The boss, after a lightning glance at Saxe, was on his feet, shaking a finger in Bingham's face.

"If you have been standing in with those others, taking the little contracts and letting them have the big ones, and getting a rake-off for yourself—"

"Mr. Carter!" stammered Bingham, backing away. "Mr. Carter!" But he had nothing else to say.

The old gentleman controlled himself.

"You are discharged," he said in a matter-of-fact voice. "Mr. Saxe takes your place."

He sat down at his desk and drew out his check-book. There was silence in the office while he wrote. Mr. Carter tore off the check and held it out.

"Your salary to the end of the quarter," he said.

Bingham first made sure of the check. There was much character-expression in that; it let in floods of light on the real man. Then he tried bluster.

"I shall bring suit for defamation," he said.

"Not you," snapped Mr. Carter. "I discharge you because you haven't the confidence of your staff, and because you are *afraid* of a big contract. I want a man who will run the mills double time, if need be; who will take a fair risk for a fair profit; who's got stuff in him, Mr. Bingham. That is all. Find ground there for a suit, if you can. *Bring suit if you dare!* Good day!"

Bingham got himself away, and Mr. Carter turned to Saxe:

"He's been spending too much money. I've suspected him, but not in this way. There will be no suit. And now, Mr. Manager—"

"If you'll excuse me, Mr. Carter," said Saxe, looking at his watch. "The bids on that contract should be in by noon to-day. I have just time to get in a lower bid. I think it will get us the contract."

It did.

The old gentleman was delighted.

IV.

"WITH THE LADY INSIDE . . ."

SAXE considered that he had achieved nothing. The managership, he thought—not reckoning on the impetus to self-assertion that his wife had given—had merely fallen to him. Now it was time to show what he was good for at home.

He was dismayed by what he thought he knew of his wife's character, and was unable to see a gleam of hope. And yet there was a gleam. It consisted in the fact that she had gained her ascendency over him by the strength of her character. She should have depended upon her weakness, for then her reliance would never fail her.

In doing exactly the opposite, certainly she had so far succeeded; certainly, also, she had at first acted with caution. Likewise certainly, in the early days, she would never have provoked Saxe to the danger-point, and even now she would scarcely have made Bingham's mistake in not recognizing the signals.

As a boy, when under provocation, Saxe's danger-signs had been paleness, trembling, and a peculiar twitching of the nostrils. The same signals had persisted into his manhood. She even remembered an occasion when they had heralded a piston-like motion of his arm, after which a drunk and disorderly person had been laid by for repairs.

But Saxe's fighting days were long since past, and he had never had any courage with women. In fact, his wife was sometimes—theoretically—out of patience with him for his lack of gumption. She never expected to see the danger-signals again, least of all directed against herself.

Saxe came home that night with no elation from his promotion, but conscientiously determined to set things right, and mightily troubled for the future. He was worried that he had no plan of campaign, even though he knew just where his wife would begin hers.

Yes, she did begin it—after the news and the first joyous embrace.

"And now an automobile!"

Saxe's jaws quivered, but made no sound. She rushed happily onward.

"One with a tonneau, to take the children out in. One of those big, silent ones! And a top, of course, so that we sha'n't mind the weather. Won't it be fine!"

Saxe did not see how to resist this. It was such a natural wish, and after so many years of economy it seemed cruel to deny her. Remember, too, his own desires—since he had developed mechanical tastes, he had itched for an automobile.

"Just think!" cried his wife. "Picnicking with the children whenever and wherever we please!"

It was a picture alluring to any father. And his wife was so happy over the idea, and looked so pretty! But then the chasm suddenly yawned.

"And," cried Mrs. Saxe, radiantly clasping her hands, "the rides we can give our friends!"

An automobile means much in a non-automobile town. One can confer so many favors. Saxe, with a knowledge that seemed ages old, saw his wife ta-

king out party after party, dazzling them by her new splendor. But who was doing the work?

A woman—a feminine woman—can show off her new hat by simply wearing it in public places; but she cannot display her automobile without the aid of her husband or a chauffeur.

A chauffeur! Saxe's ambition tightened its belt, and from that instant aimed at partnership. Till then it was life and death to him not to have an automobile. He pulled himself together.

"I owe you an automobile, of course," he said.

He meant it, but to her it seemed irony. Further, his unnatural tone stopped her dead. She looked at him, and he smiled. It was not much of a smile; it was even a very ghastly affair; but it was enough, it served. For his nostrils twitched above it, and he was pale; he was trembling also. The past rose up from its grave. The Lady of Niger and her tiger were about to have a very unpleasant quarter of a minute.

Her happy color went, and she stood before him gasping. Desperately repressing his instincts, he fought to retain his smile, and fought successfully. It became ghastlier than before.

"But remember," he said, "I may be turned out to-morrow, if I don't suit."

Right here the story-plot is weak. There should be some striking action, or at least some soul-piercing speech. But the story is not taking refuge in the psychological; it has been psychological from the first. Look back and see. Further, some of the most momentous domestic interviews have been "dialogues —without words."

Saxe did not put his nose close to his wife's; nor, while he hammered on the table, did he hiss remarks into her teeth. Yet somehow his meaning became clear to her.

She felt three emotions. Two were indignation and alarm, personal and selfish, suggesting resistance. The last—fear—did the business. It was new to her, yet primitive and striking deep. Not physical fear, yet curiously akin to it. It was sudden and overmastering, for Saxe had unknowingly called to his aid the original fear of woman for man.

Pay no attention to the woman-suffragists. There is such a fear.

She felt, rather than knew, that she had better give in.

"Very well, George," she said.

She was not meek, nor even cheerful. Indeed, she was plain sulky. But she gave in.

His smile became natural, and he patted her on the shoulder. "Some day, Maria," he promised. "Meanwhile, what do you say to another servant?"

She found a wan smile.

"I should like another."

"I shall go in for hired help in the garden," he said. "We can take things easier now."

When it was over, and they had separated, he sat with his head in his hands, his courage gone, wondering how this had come about. If the brave man fears after the fight, surely Saxe was developing bravery.

But his wife was irritated. Reviewing the affray, she wondered what had happened. There was nothing definite to remember. After the lapse of an hour she forgot that primitive and panic fear, and wondered how she had been so weak. She became indignant again, and alarmed for her prestige.

On a later morning, at train time, therefore, she spoke with decision:

"George, I should like you to take back these things to the dry-goods store to-day, and get credit for them, and to try again to match me that sample."

Saxe felt the shock of the emergency. He took time, while he felt for the sample in his pocket, to consider the meaning of the bundle which his wife herself had finally tied up. A clumsy parcel, a fifteen-pound weight; humiliating interviews with a saleswoman, with a floorwalker, and with a department head; and, finally, a doubtful outcome.

The things that women think they can make their tradesmen do! He saw himself carrying the bundle home again.

"George," asked his wife impatiently, "do you hear me?"

He waited another moment, inspired to rely upon silence as his most effective weapon. But when he drew out the sample his nostrils were twitching again.

"You'd better do the errands by express, Maria," said Saxe. "Of course,

you see I can't be so useful to you after this." He offered her the sample.

There was a very tense moment. The romantic school would have called it terrible, for husband and wife were deliberately measuring their strength against each other. If neither had given way—

She grew red. She hesitated between anger and—more anger, possibly. She was about to speak.

Saxe looked at his watch.

A man does not think out such actions. The impulse comes, and is obeyed before the brain has time to act. Surely the inspiration in this case was heaven-sent. For Mrs. Saxe, since he was not looking at her, saw that she might save her face, and—took the sample.

"I am so glad you are manager, George," she murmured. "You mustn't lose your train."

He fairly staggered from the house. What did this mean? Selfishness, degeneration? Where did it lead? To wife-beating? Was this new feeling self-respect?

And she, once more boiling with wrath at her weakness, prepared a little surprise for him that night. Saxe came home tired—honestly tired. He had somewhere found ideas, and was rearranging the work at the office. Mr. Carter was much pleased, but the work, being new, was exhausting. Saxe came home to find that this time it was the nurse's day off—bridge-class afternoon again, and his wife not yet home, and himself—per scrawl stuck in the hall-mirror—expected to put the children to bed.

A moment's thought showed him opportunity.

His wife came home to find, on her carefully delayed arrival, Saxe and the children on the front steps. It was long past bedtime, and he was telling them a story.

"Didn't you find my note?" she demanded portentously.

He looked at her thoughtfully.

"I've been thinking, Maria, that on bridge afternoons I'd better get a comfortable dinner in the city, and perhaps stay over to the theater, unless the new servant, when she comes, can make things easier."

The telltale twitching at the nose was less, his confidence greater. How was she to know that inwardly he quaked? She looked at him aghast, swept past him, dragged the little ones in the vortex after her, and got them up-stairs. Saxe sauntered up in time to kiss them good night.

Then at times, during an almost silent meal, Mrs. Saxe was like a storm-cloud. Yet she did not thunder—nor rain. At other times she was pale; and these were the times when all anger had left her, and she was afraid.

The fear was in part the new-old dread of threatening man. It was the modern fear of what suburban neighbors will say, when one's husband begins to stay in the city for the evening, to sup with men friends and to go to the theater. It was the fear of all ages of the woman who dreads to lose her influence over her mate. It was a complex fear, then, female and feminine and womanly.

Once more elemental emotions were on Saxe's side. Altogether, they were too much for her. When the pair left the table she went and put her arm through her husband's.

"I hope to find a new servant next week," she said appealingly.

"Good!" he responded.

And soon came the new servant. Next there were some days of peace, which yet were days of change. He wondered if Maria marked what was happening. He was gently giving up his duties as body-servant, and gaining his freedom. He was also gaining self-confidence.

If Mrs. Saxe was waiting for the final struggle, she waited very long. But it came.

"George," she said one evening, "I have invited the Waltersons to dinner on Thursday. I think of making it a dinner of ten."

The statement was definite, and firmly made. He wondered if he could change his plans; next, if he could afford to change them. Then he took his stand.

"I'm sorry, dear, but I've planned to go down to the mills on Thursday, and I can't get back till late. You'll have to get some one for my place."

"But that isn't proper," she replied.

"Then change the date," he suggested.

"But it's the Waltersons!" she cried in horror. "Can't you change your trip?"

He did not really lie. "This," he whispered to himself, "is for Maria's own good." And he smiled, kindly but firmly smiled, and said nothing.

"But Mr. Bingham seldom went down to the mills," she complained. "I've heard you say so."

"That," he pointed out, "is one reason why Mr. Carter prefers me."

She stood in dismay. She was so helpless that she felt a sob rising in her throat, but she repressed it. In so doing she rejected her only available weapon.

She should have used it from the first. Weakness and not strength might have saved her. It is dropping water which wears away the stone. But it was not in her to weep; habit and cast of mind both were against it.

Saxe's only danger passed him by, and neither of them realized that for an instant it had impended. Repressing her sob, she stood helpless, yet not quite ready to surrender.

"If giving a dinner interferes with your business," he quoted, smiling, "give up your business."

And she cast herself on his bosom. He enjoyed this.

She was beginning to like it, too.

For it took from her mind the burden of empire, and put her where she felt that she belonged. She was a traitress to her sex, and all that, of course. But to lean on your husband's breast, to smile up at him, to feel that he is stronger than you, *and that you are glad of it*—this, for a certain type of woman, is the most welcome destiny.

A very despicable type it is, to be sure—a one-horse, one-cylinder, one-idea'd type. But if you belong to it, and discover—even late—that you belong to it, and do not care for the progress of woman, you may consider yourself lucky. Mrs. Saxe did.

The rest is simple. It is the tale of the hardening of his conscience, which, like providing a softshell crab with a new shell, was good for him. It is also the tale of the softening of her nature, which, like the casting of the crab's hard shell, much improved her value.

"George," said Mrs. Saxe a year later, "I find this is Wilson's day off, and I had planned to run over to the Hunt Club this afternoon."

A request for her husband's company and help—a request, you understand. Wilson, by the way, was the Saxes' chauffeur.

Saxe flicked the ashes from his cigar. He had been waiting for a chance to make sure that Maria understood.

"You'd better get a carriage, then," he told her, speaking with the accent of a man accustomed to dispose, offhand, of little matters. "I'd like to take you over in the car, but this afternoon I'm rather busy."

Busy? It was Saturday afternoon, and he had been sitting in his new summer-house, watching his gardener. Busy? Would the bluff work?

Suddenly she stooped over and kissed him.

"I'm stupid," she said. "I don't realize how many things you have on your mind since you've become partner. I'll get a livery carriage."

And the smile on the face of the tiger!

Saxe drew a long breath. The future was safe. He rose.

"After all," he said, "I can think this out before Monday. I'll take you over, Maria."

He had difficulty in persuading her that he ought to do it.

Of course, persons who have read this story, in spite of warning, are likely to criticize it. But, as I said at first, it is a husband story.

SOMETHING BETTER.

"My true love hath my heart, and I have his"—
So sang Sir Philip in the old-time verse;
But in these days the pleasant version is:
"My true love hath my heart: I have her purse."

Warm as the summer beach

If anybody needs or deserves rooms just right to live in, to play in, to sleep in, it is the little folks. In spite of all precautions, the old-fashioned heating methods soon begin to leak or force ash-dust and coal-gases into the living rooms, and the loved ones are made to breathe burned, devitalized air, totally unfit for the lungs. Whereas Hot Water or Low Pressure Steam heating with

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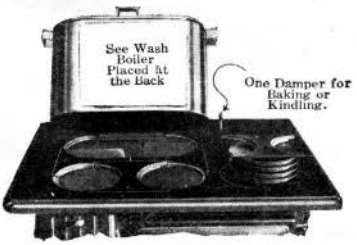
The Sectional Top prevents warping, and is so planned that by changing the cross-shaped castings that hold the covers (see illustration) a wash-boiler may be placed at back of range, leaving all front holes free for cooking.

The Oven, Damper, Grates and Clean-out are each worthy of special mention.



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The heat in both coal and gas ovens is registered by the wonderful Glenwood patent oven heat indicator which shows at a glance when to put food in the oven.

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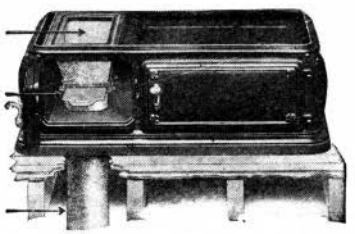

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We will pay $50.00 in Cash for the Best Letter of 200 words **or less**, answering this query. And $215.00 more will be apportioned among the 19 next closest competitors.

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This contest is wide open to anyone, anywhere. There is no fee, no condition, no obligation. Simply state on one side of your paper what you consider the One Best Reason "Why a Man Should Prefer SHIRLEY PRESIDENT SUSPENDERS."

Then sign your name, indicate plainly your address, and give the name of your Clothing Dealer, or Haberdasher, and **his address.** It is essential that we have the dealer's address, for the prizes will be distributed through him **whether he sells SHIRLEY PRESIDENT SUSPENDERS or not.**

Give one reason only. Make your letter short—not more than 200 words. (Date, Address, Signature and Dealer's Name **not** being counted as words.) Forget grammar and avoid "advertisy" adjectives. What we want is a simple expression of your reason for preferring SHIRLEY PRESIDENT SUSPENDERS to all other kinds.

CONTEST CLOSES APRIL 15th

—and all letters postmarked after midnight of the 15th will be disqualified. Watch our advertisements closely after that date. P. F. Collier & Son and The Frank A. Munsey Company will each furnish an expert to assist Mr. C. F. Edgarton, of The C. A. Edgarton Manufacturing Company, in selecting the Best Letters. The names of the winners will be announced and prizes awarded about May 10th.

There are plenty of Reasons for preferring SHIRLEY PRESIDENT SUSPENDERS, but what particular feature appeals to you—and why? Tell us in a Contest Letter.

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E 330 Men's "ONYX" Black and Colored Silklisle "Doublex" Heel and Toe, re-enforced sole; soft, lustrous, silky, gauze weight; the equal of this quality does not exist . . . . . 75c a pair

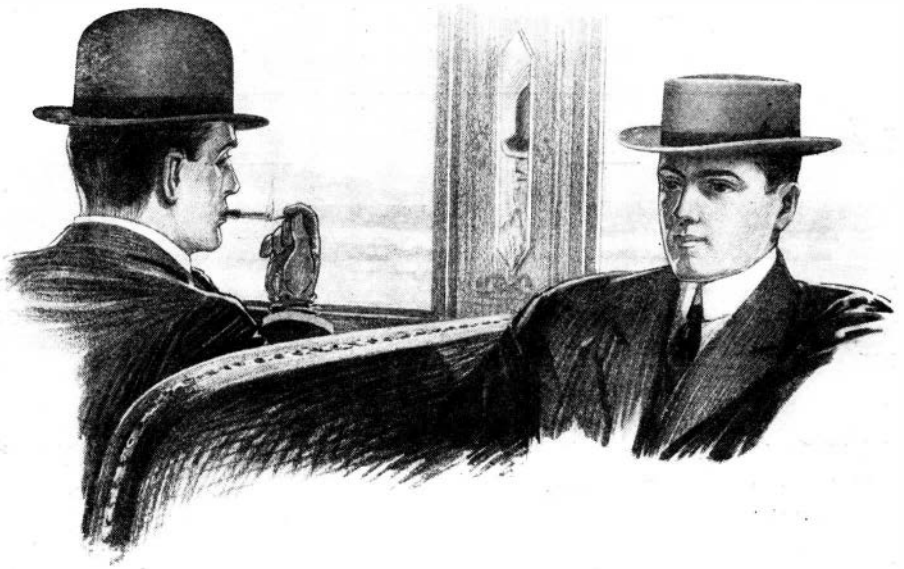
E 311 Men's "ONYX" Black only "Doublex" Heel and Toe, double sole; finest quality sea island combed Lisle; the sheerest weight made; will be a revelation in fineness of texture and durability . . . . 75c a pair

620 Men's "ONYX" Black and Colored Pure Thread Silk inner lisle-lined sole; doubles life of hose; one of the most reliable silk numbers, $1.50 a pair

If your dealer cannot supply you, we will direct you to nearest dealer, or send, postpaid, any number desired. Write to Dept. 94.

Lord & Taylor *Wholesale Distributors* *New York*

Hawes, von Gal HATS



The very newest shapes for spring wear—the style leaders of them all—are shown in Hawes, von Gal Hats. Note especially the beauty of the telescope soft hat—a style becoming to almost every man.

Compare a Hawes, von Gal Hat—either stiff or soft—with a hat of any other make—the quality is apparent. Ask your dealer about the guarantee. Prices, $3, $4 and $5.

We are Makers of the Hawes Celebrated $3.00 Hats

If not at your local dealer's, write for our new Spring Style Book "P." We will fill your order direct from the factory if you will indicate style wanted and give your hat size, your height, weight and waist measure. Add 25 cents to cover cost of expressage.

Hawes, von Gal
INCORPORATED

FACTORY:
DANBURY, Connecticut

1178 Broadway, New York

Wholesale Offices:
CHICAGO BOSTON

Look for this Trade Mark on

Outing Shirts. Negligee Shirts. Men's and Women's Pajamas. Office Coats. Athletic Summer Underwear. Women's Shirt Waists, Etc.

SOIESETTE is the ideal summer fabric for men's ready-to-wear garments. Looks like silk, feels like silk. Much more durable—at a fraction of the cost.

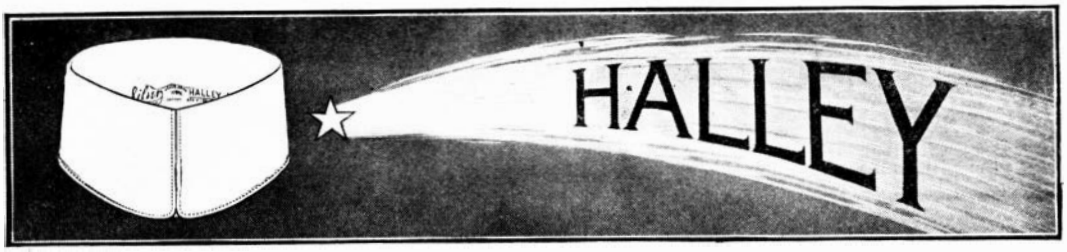
Look for this label SOIESETTE REGISTERED ***on each garment***

Retains its fresh, snappy, lustrous appearance and rich coloring after repeated laundering. Always fashionable, cool, healthful.

By the yard in over 50 shades at all retail stores.

***SOIESETTE* stamped on selvage of every yard**

CLARENCE WHITMAN & CO., Mfrs., 39 Leonard St., New York

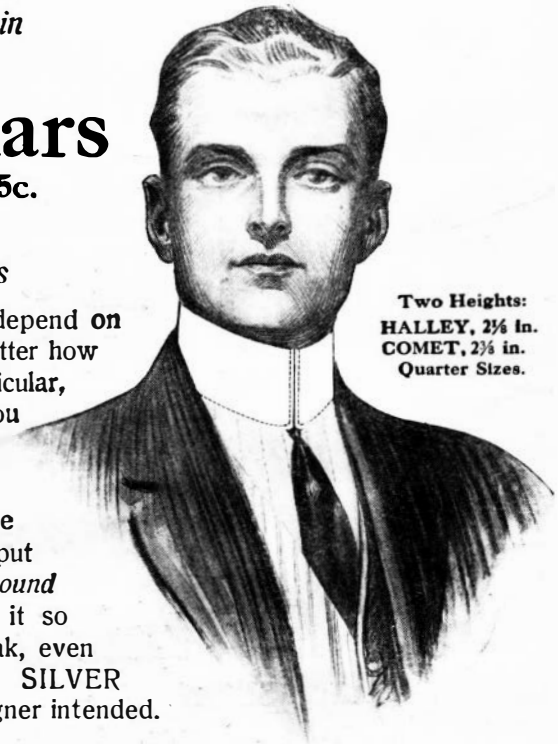


A New and Becoming Style in

Silver BRAND Collars

2 for 25c.

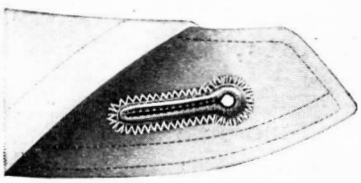
The Only Collars with Linocord Endless Buttonholes



Two Heights:
HALLEY, 2⅛ in.
COMET, 2⅛ in.
Quarter Sizes.

In collars the *Style, Fit and Comfort* depend on having strong, sound buttonholes. No matter how good the collar may be in every other particular, once a buttonhole is stretched or broken, you have a gaping, slovenly, ill-fitting collar.

THE LINOCORD BUTTONHOLE is made with an eyelet like the buttonhole in your coat, hence is pliable, easy to put on and off. It is *reinforced all around* with a *Stout Linen Cord,* which makes it so strong it can't possibly stretch or break, even with the hardest or longest wear—a SILVER Collar will always fit and look as the designer intended.



Linocord Endless Eyelet Buttonhole.

SEND FOR "WHAT'S WHAT."

The latest word in Men's Fashions. It embodies the dicta of the foremost fashion authorities with reference to every item of men's apparel. It not only tells what to wear but also what not to wear. Fully illustrated. Invaluable for reference. Yours for the asking.

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A Salary Increase For You

Add to the three hundred students heard from every month, the other successful students not heard from, and you have some idea of the tremendous salary-raising power of the I. C. S. During January the number of students who reported success was 426. Mark the coupon.

Marking the coupon costs you nothing, and does not bind you in any way. An I. C. S. training can be acquired in your *spare time.*

Mark It N-O-W!

SALARY-RAISING COUPON

INTERNATIONAL CORRESPONDENCE SCHOOLS
Box 837 Scranton, Pa.

Please explain, without further obligation on my part, how I can qualify for the position before which I have marked X.

Bookkeeper	Mechan'l Draftsman
Stenographer	Telephone Eng'eer
Advertisement Writer	Elec. Lighting Supt.
Show Card Writer	Mechan. Engineer
Window Trimmer	Plumber & Steam Fitter
Commercial Law	Stationary Engineer
Illustrator	Civil Engineer
Designer & Craftsman	Build'g Contractor
Civil Service	Architec'l Draftsman
Chemist	Architect
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INVEST YOUR SAVINGS
Remarkable Profit-Sharing Offer

NEVER before has the small investor had a better opportunity to place his savings where they will be amply protected and at the same time produce for him a **guaranteed income.**

If you have $50, $100 or $1,000, or if you can save a few dollars each month, which you would invest where it will provide you with a large immediate income, with the opportunity for still greater profits, you will be interested in reading a book we have just issued and which we will send to you free on request.

In this book we have outlined the story of **the foremost business of its kind in America,** of the splendid success of the business, of its unusually large profits, and of the stability of its earnings.

In this book we have also outlined, as a part of its plan for handling its large and increasing business, an offer made by this Company by which you may share, on an unusual basis, in the greater profits which this Company will make.

Please Note These Facts:

1. **Your investment is guaranteed by ample assets of great value.**
2. **You will receive dividends from the very start.**
3. **The business is firmly established.**
4. **It is in a thriving and prosperous condition.**
5. **It has very great prospects for the future.**

In addition to the **guaranteed income paid at once,** the opportunity offered is extraordinary because of **the profit-sharing feature,** by which you may share **permanently** in **all** the future profits of the Company, in its large and rapidly increasing business.

The Departments of the United States Government, leading professional and business men in every State in the Union, and in the Provinces in Canada, purchase and endorse the product of this Company, which is of world-wide interest in its character.

This most interesting book, fully explaining our "Profit-Sharing Offer," will be mailed to you promptly on request.

Cut Out the Coupon and Mail It To-day

Cavalier
4-'10

R. S. PEALE
President

225 Fifth Ave.
New York

Please send me book explaining your "Profit-Sharing Offer" without obligation on my part.

Name_____

Address_____

FISH, OYSTERS, All Sea Foods

No better or more delicate flavor can be added to all Fish Cooking than by using

LEA & PERRINS SAUCE

THE ORIGINAL WORCESTERSHIRE

Soups, Stews and Hashes, Steaks, Roasts, Chops, Game, Gravies, Chafing Dish Cooking, Salads, Welsh Rarebit and many other dishes are improved by its use.

See that **Lea & Perrins'** Signature is on Wrapper and Label.

Avoid Imitations. JOHN DUNCAN'S SONS, Agents, New York.

$1.95 for this genuine 17-in. Ostrich Plume

This magnificent French Curl Ostrich Plume is full 17-inch in length.

Made of the highest grade hard flue ostrich, selected from the male bird. Has a very glossy fiber and is extra wide, with heavy drooping head.

Let us send you this Plume on approval.

Send us 15c. to pay express charges, and we will send you this beautiful Plume in black, white or colors, to your express office C.O.D. with privilege of examination. If satisfactory, pay the express agent $1.95 and the Plume is yours. If, however, you do not think this the most marvelous value you ever saw, tell the express agent to return the Plume to us and **we will refund your 15c. Or, if you prefer** to send the full amount, $1.95, we will send the Plume immediately, **express prepaid,** and if not satisfactory, we will promptly refund your money. **We take all the risk.** For complete line of Ostrich Feathers, including bargains in Willow Plumes, write for free catalogue.

SPECIAL Full 18-inch Ostrich Plume Black and Colors **$2.28**

Beautiful 19 in. French Curl Plume, This will compare with plumes sold by your local dealer and elsewhere for **$10.00.** **$5**

South African Importing Co. 1841 WABASH AVE Dept. 115 CHICAGO.

THE OSTRICH PLUME HOUSE OF AMERICA

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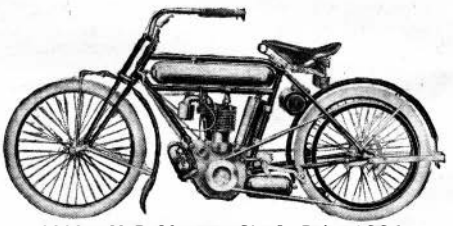
1 cent for 4 miles on a motorcycle

The motorcycle combines the attractiveness of bicycling with the comfort of automobiling. It offers you the cheapest method of mechanical transportation ever devised—¼ of one cent per mile pays for both fuel and oil. It provides just enough physical exercise in the open air to stimulate—not fatigue.



M.M. 4 H. P. Magneto Single, Price $225

Investigate the claims we make for motorcycling in general and for the M. M. motorcycle in particular. The M. M. is the leader, and 1910 models are better than ever. Let us send you catalog and other literature.

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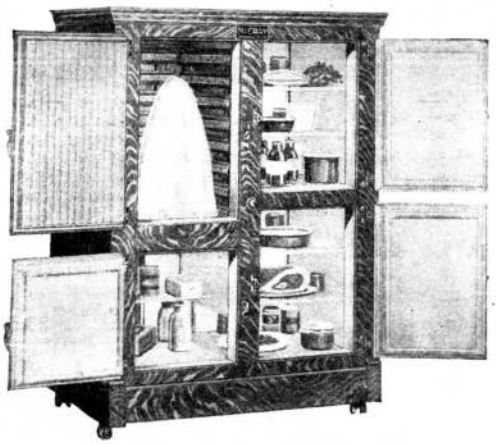
(Member Motorcycle Mfrs. Ass'n.)

722 Center St., Brockton, Mass.

BRANCHES: Boston, 173 Huntington Ave.; New York, 10 W. 60th St.; Buffalo, 895 Main St.; Chicago, 2127 Michigan Ave.; Dallas, Tex., M. M. Bldg., So. Ervay St.; Los Angeles, 1034 So. Main St.

AGENTS EVERYWHERE



What do you find when you open your refrigerator? Do you find clean, sweet, wholesome food and nothing else; or do you find partially spoiled food, moisture and unpleasant odors? If you find the latter it means your refrigerator is unsanitary—a possible source of sickness to yourself or family. Do not temporize if you have this kind of a refrigerator. Investigate at once the merits of the famous

McCRAY Refrigerators

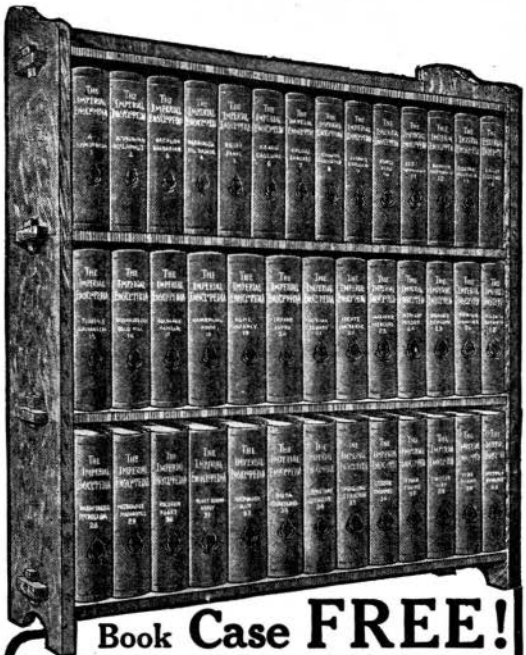
—the kind that are clean and wholesome because there is always a constant circulation of cold, dry air through every food compartment as long as a pound of ice remains. Ordinary refrigerators cannot keep food the way the McCray does, because ordinary refrigerators do not have the McCray patented construction. TRY YOUR ICE BOX by placing salt in it for a few hours. Note how quickly the salt becomes damp and lumpy; then write for booklet which tells why it will keep dry in a McCray, and why it is the safest as well as the most economical refrigerator you can buy.

Write for the Free Book

"How to Use Leftover Foods"—by Elizabeth O. Hiller, and for any of these free catalogs:—No. A. H., Built-to-order for Residences: No. 87, regular sizes for Residences; No. 67, for Groceries; No. 59, for Meat Markets: No. 48, for Hotels, Clubs and Institutions; No. 72, for Flower Shops.

McCray Refrigerator Company

85 Lake Street Kendallville, Indiana



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$20.00 to $50.00 A Day Easily Made

Go in Business for Yourself

Let Us Send You a

Little Giant Cleaner On 30 Days Trial

A Little Giant Cleaner should pay for itself in less than two months, out of the profits of the business after paying help and all expenses.

It is capable of earning $250.00 to $300.00 clear profit a month and we cannot see where there is a possible chance for anyone that buys a machine to fail to make big money, but every reason why they should make thousands of dollars.

Convert Dirt and Dust into Gold Dollars

Send for the Free Book, it Tells All

Give Us a Chance to Help You

You can make $2500 to $3000 a year on each machine. It advertises itself and orders for work come pouring in so you should be busy all the time.

The Little Giant House Cleaner is proving one of the greatest money-makers ever put on the market. If you are willing to hustle you can easily make $2,500 to $3,000 a year on each machine you own. Make a start to-day and you will never regret it. As soon as you earn money enough and have one machine paid for, buy another, hire other men and let them make $10 or $15 a day for you. Getting one of these machines and hiring a man to run it, beats working for a living to a standstill. Be "Johnny on the Spot" with a machine and get the cream of the business. If you can get a number of these machines working, **they should make you rich.** We believe there never has been a machine placed on the market that has so pleased everybody, met with such immediate success, and made so much money as the house cleaning machine.

A Perfect Wonder

The Little Giant reaches every crack, corner and crevice of the floor; the cracks in the wall, the ceiling and mouldings. It cleans and renovates bedding, comforts, blankets, mattresses and pillows; the cracks or crevices in wooden and iron beds; even the dust, fuzz and other accumulation in tightly coiled woven-wire springs.

It consists of a powerful gasoline engine, a double acting suction air pump, a vacuum condenser, cold water tank, electric spark battery, vacuum gauge, high-pressure suction hose, observation glass and cleaning tools—all properly connected so as to work in unison and give the desired results. The whole is erected on a substantial four-wheel wagon, to be drawn by hand, so that it can be moved from place to place.

Nothing to Compare With It.

There are several small machines on the market for home use to be worked either by hand or a small water or electric motor, but they have never been a success because they do not have power enough to clean with, although they will draw the top dust from the room. **The Little Giant Cleaner** does the same work in the same way as the large machines costing from $2,000 to $7,000 each. It has the same size hose.

We have seen it pull out pail after pail of dirt from houses—dirt that was impossible to remove completely by the ordinary means of beating, etc. When it is working on the streets, the dirt and filth pouring through the observation glass attracts a crowd of people that look with wonder. They would not believe it possible.

Our Liberal Offer—Pay for it Out of Your Profits

We want you to investigate this exceptional opportunity. We do not believe there is any business where so small an investment will bring such wonderful returns, because right here in Toledo we have proved this by our own actual experience

We have such implicit confidence in the wonderful money-making powers of the **Little Giant House Cleaner**—that we will ship one to any live man, who is honest and willing to work, **on 30 Day's Trial**—upon such liberal terms that it is next to impossible to lose. We will even go further and allow you to **pay for it in installments,** and in such a way that your profit should easily take care of your payments.

In our illustrated book we give full particulars as to how to organize your business solicit orders, what to charge for the work and how to turn every minute of your time into money. We will send it to you **free.** Every ambitious man who has any "get-up" in him should write at once for this book. A postage stamp will bring it to you and it will show you how you can become independent and one of the prosperous men in your community.

Send the Coupon for Free Book, full information and Our Easy Terms.

McCreery Manufacturing Co.
112 McCreery Building
Toledo, Ohio

Cut off here—Write plainly

McCreery Mf'g Co., 112 McCreery Bldg., Toledo, Ohio

Please send me your free book and full information about The Little Giant House Cleaner.

Name.....

Address.....

Send Today for Our Personal to You Offer to First Buyers in Each Community of Hand-Made Schmoller & Mueller Pianos

Five thousand HAND-MADE SCHMOLLER & MUELLER PIANOS to sell this season. An impossible task—were we offering any other than a **High Grade, Fully Guaranteed for Twenty-five Years, Sweet** and **Mellow Toned SCHMOLLER & MUELLER Piano.**

But this Piano sells itself. It makes numberless friends. Often—one SCHMOLLER & MUELLER PIANO in a new community helps to sell 3, 4, 6 and even 12 other SCHMOLLER & MUELLER PIANOS. Makes customers—lifelong—friends—that's the record of this Piano, which has created such favorable comment with music lovers everywhere.

So—our task in finding buyers for these Five Thousand **SCHMOLLER & MUELLER PIANOS** will be easy by placing one **SCHMOLLER & MUELLER PIANO** in every community.

To first buyers our proposition is unparalleled. Never has it been approached. A straight-out-and-out saving of $100.00 to $150.00 of customary middlemen's profits which buyers pay when purchasing from dealers has always been the record of saving of the **SCHMOLLER & MUELLER PIANO.** This **first buyer proposition** means a still greater saving.

We can't take the space to give it here, but will tell you all about it if you write to-day as the first buyer in your community. Use coupon, fill out plainly and send direct to us.

Our **Complete Personal First Buyer Proposition** comes back to you by return mail with our **Complete Handsomely Illustrated Piano Book.** Do it right now. Send to

Schmoller & Mueller Piano Co.

Dept. A. C. 04. (Est. 1859) OMAHA, NEB.

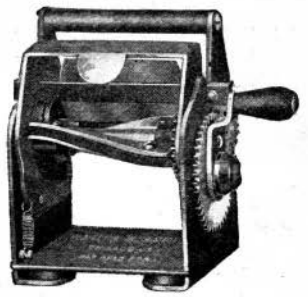
.. FILL OUT COUPON. SEND TO-DAY ..

Schmoller & Mueller Piano Co.,
Department A. C. 04, Omaha, Neb.

Gentlemen—I would like to have your proposition to the First Buyer in My Community. Please send to my address all information and your **Complete Piano** Book.

Name .....

Address .....



Sharpen Your Blades

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Perfection Automatic Razor Strop

For Safety or Ordinary Blades

You will be amazed at the difference in the edge. It's easy too. Just turn the crank—every revolution gives ***six complete strokings.*** It is just like the ***expert's twist of the wrist***—the true principle of good stropping. It makes the old blades better than new and new blades better than ever. Write for free trial offer. If you desire, send name of your dealer. ***Name style of razor, if safety.*** Satisfaction positively guaranteed or money back.

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25,000 Women Use It

25,000 women know that the Imperial Self-heating Flat-iron makes ironing comfortable because of less heat, and saves its cost in fuel. Uses gasoline or alcohol. No wires, tubes or strings—just a plain iron—heats itself—satisfaction guaranteed. Without question the most satisfactory self-heating iron made. 25,000 in use already. One salesman has sold 3,000 in California.

Write for booklet and address of nearest agency—no charge.

The Imperial Brass Manufacturing Co., 455 Jefferson Street, Chicago

NOTE: Agents wanted everywhere. Easy sales—good profits—satisfied customers. Sell a woman an Imperial Iron and you need not be afraid to go back.

Hair Like This is the Crowning Glory of Man or Woman

Is it yours? Are hair troubles overtaking you? If you are bald or near bald; when your hair is falling, faded or dying; when dandruff begins to get in its destructive work, get **Lorrimer's Excelsior Hair Tonic,** the remarkable treatment the newspapers everywhere are telling about; the remedy that does more than is claimed for it; the remedy that doctors are praising. Get it or order it of a reliable druggist—one who will not offer you a substitute. If you have never used **Lorrimer's Excelsior Treatment** let me send you **FREE** by prepaid mail a trial supply of this remarkable hair food. Write today to **WM. CHAS. KEENE, Pres't. Lorrimer Institute,** Dept. 2799, **Baltimore, Maryland.**

PEGGY
Highest Scoring Bird in the World.

Money in Poultry
$3,600.00

Net Profit From 30 Hens in One Season on a Lot 24 x 40. It is Not an Experiment, it Has Been Done on the KELLERSTRASS FARM

MY NEW POULTRY BOOK

Covers all branches necessary for Success with Poultry. It tells you what I have done. It was written from actual experience.

IT TELLS YOU

How I made $3,600.00 in one season from thirty hens on a lot 24 x 40 by feeding them the scraps from my table three times a day. The test was made to show what can be done on a city lot as well as on a farm. I also furnish you the names of the parties who paid me over $2,000.00 for the eggs alone from these thirty hens, for reference, which is evidence undisputable. Remember this book is written by a man who has had the actual experience.

How I make my chickens weigh two and one-half pounds when they are eight weeks old.

How I prepared my chickens for the show room so that I won over 90 per cent of all the blue ribbons that were offered during 1907 and 1908, the last season that I showed. A "secret" that has never been published before.

How I built my indoor and outdoor brooders for 85 cts. each, to be used either as fireless or with heat in them and plans for the same.

How I raised ninety-eight chickens out of a hundred that I hatch.

How I took a flock of chickens and made them lay $68 worth of eggs per hen in ten months!

How I keep my male birds from fighting without injuring them.

How I raised the five chickens I sold to Madame Paderewski for $7,500.00.

How I feed my chickens for egg production.

How I keep my chickens healthy and free from sickness.

How I select a good laying hen from the poor layer.

How I break up my broody hens without injuring them.

How I pack my eggs so they will stay fresh.

How I mate up my chickens for breeding and fertility.

How I run my incubators and supply moisture.

How I raised my famous $10,000.00 hen "Peggy."

How I build my hen houses and plans for the same.

How I bred my big egg-laying strain.

It also tells about broiler plants, egg plants, and remember there is also an article in this book called "Two Years on the Kellerstrass Poultry Farm," which explains hundreds of things—just what we do in two years on the farm, or in other words, a two years' course on the "World's Greatest Poultry Plant." This is the greatest article ever written by a real practical poultryman.

Try My Way and You Can Raise Them by the Thousands.

Remember, this book was written by a man who has sold the highest priced chickens in the world, who also sold $68.00 worth of eggs per hen from a flock of hens in one season, in fact, if you breed a chicken of any kind, you know my reputation as a breeder. This is the first time I have ever offered to sell any of my "methods or secrets" to the breeder or to the public.

Please Read All These Letters:

263 Eggs in 272 Days

ERNEST KELLERSTRASS, Kansas City, Mo.

Dear Sir: I herewith inclose you affidavit, also trap nest record of the Kellerstrass Strain Crystal White Orpington Hen register No. 503, that laid two hundred and sixty-three (263) eggs in 272 days.

(Signed) P. J. HAILLEE. Chattahoochee, Ga.

Saves Thirty Million Chicks' Lives Annually

The simplest sort of thing—common black dirt—has solved the problem of eradicating a chicken disease which cost thirty million chicks' lives annually, a disease which scientists of the National and State Experimental Stations have been studying without success for ten years. Ernest Kellerstrass, the Kansas City poultry fancier, found the secret.—*St. Louis Republic.*

Good, Sound Logic

Winchester, Kans.

Dear Sir: Received your book all O. K. this A. M. and find same very interesting and full of *good, sound logic.*

Yours truly, CHAS. FORSYTHE.

231 Eggs Per Bird

My Dear Mr. Kellerstrass: I have sixteen of your hens that averaged two hundred and thirty-one (231) eggs per bird in 12 months.

LAWRENCE JACKSON, Pittsburg, Pa.

Worth $1,000.00

KELLERSTRASS FARM, Kansas City, Mo. Burnett, Cal.

Dear Sir: I received your book sent me Saturday A. M. It would have been worth to me $500.00 if I had had it last Spring. "Good Book." Common Sense, brained by hard-earned experience. Worth $1,000.00 to me. Respt. (Signed) L. R. HAYWARD.

Best Dollar's Worth

MR. E. KELLERSTRASS, Kansas City, Mo. Oct. 16th, 1909.

Dear Sir: Received your book all right. Am well pleased with book: best dollar's worth I have ever received.

Yours truly, (Signed) CHAS. P. GOETZ, Buffalo, N. Y.

Best Book on Poultry

Adah, Pa., Oct. 20th, 1909.

MR. ERNEST KELLERSTRASS, Kansas City, Mo.

Dear Friend: The book at hand. It is the best book that I ever opened on poultry talk. I think every person that has a bird on his lot or farm should have one of these books. I was surprised when I read where you opened those chicks and found lath nails and tacks in their craws. I never heard of such a thing; it stands to reason that would kill them. Yours truly, (Signed) H. M. GROVER.

$68.00 Worth of Eggs Per Hen

ERNEST KELLERSTRASS, Kansas City, Mo.

Dear Sir: Congratulations on the splendid showing you have made by selling $68.00 worth of eggs per hen from thirty hens in one season. G. M. CURTIS, Editor, Reliable Poultry Journal, Quincy, Ill.

Worth Many Times the Price

195 Orange Ave., Irvington, N. J., Nov. 8th, 1909.

ERNEST KELLERSTRASS.

Dear Sir: Received your poultry book. It is worth many times the price and should be in the hands of every one handling chickens, as it contains information that would take many years to learn.

I remain yours very truly, (Signed) JOHN SENFELDER.

Common Sense Methods

Springfield, Ill., Jan. 29th, 1910.

MR. ERNEST KELLERSTRASS, Kansas City, Mo.

Dear Sir: I received your poultry book the 27th inst. It is full of good common sense methods, that one can acquire in no other way than by actual experience in breeding and caring for fowls. I am very well pleased with it.

Yours truly, W. H. HARRISON, 338 So. Douglas Ave.

More Than My Money's Worth

Cincinnati, Ohio, Dec. 31st, 1909.

MR. ERNEST KELLERSTRASS, Kansas City, Mo.

Dear Sir: I consider your book chuck full of valuable information for any one, especially a beginner. I have already received more than my money's worth and have only read about one-third of the book.

Yours respectfully, (Signed) GEO. W. BENCKENSTEIN.

Send $1.00—and a Copy of the Latest Revised Edition of the Book will be Sent You by Return Mail.

Address, ERNEST KELLERSTRASS, Publisher, 529 Westport Road, R. F. D. No. 1 Kansas City, Mo.

NOTE—Ask any editor of any Poultry Journal or any "Licensed" poultry judge as to my reputation as a breeder.

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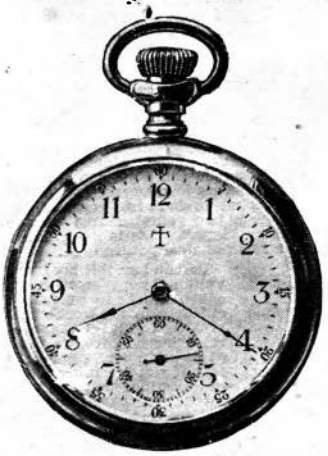
The INGERSOLL-TRENTON solves the watch-problem for the man who wants to be told the exact time by a handsome and honestly-built watch which he can buy at a moderate price.



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The Ingersoll-Trenton rivals in accuracy *any other high-grade watch*. It is sold by 6,000 responsible jewelers at a factory-fixed price which pleases the purchaser and puzzles other watch-makers who make their product in smaller quantities, employ expensive and (sometimes) unscrupulous selling-methods, and are obliged thereby to make the watch-buyer pay unnecessary and fictitious prices.

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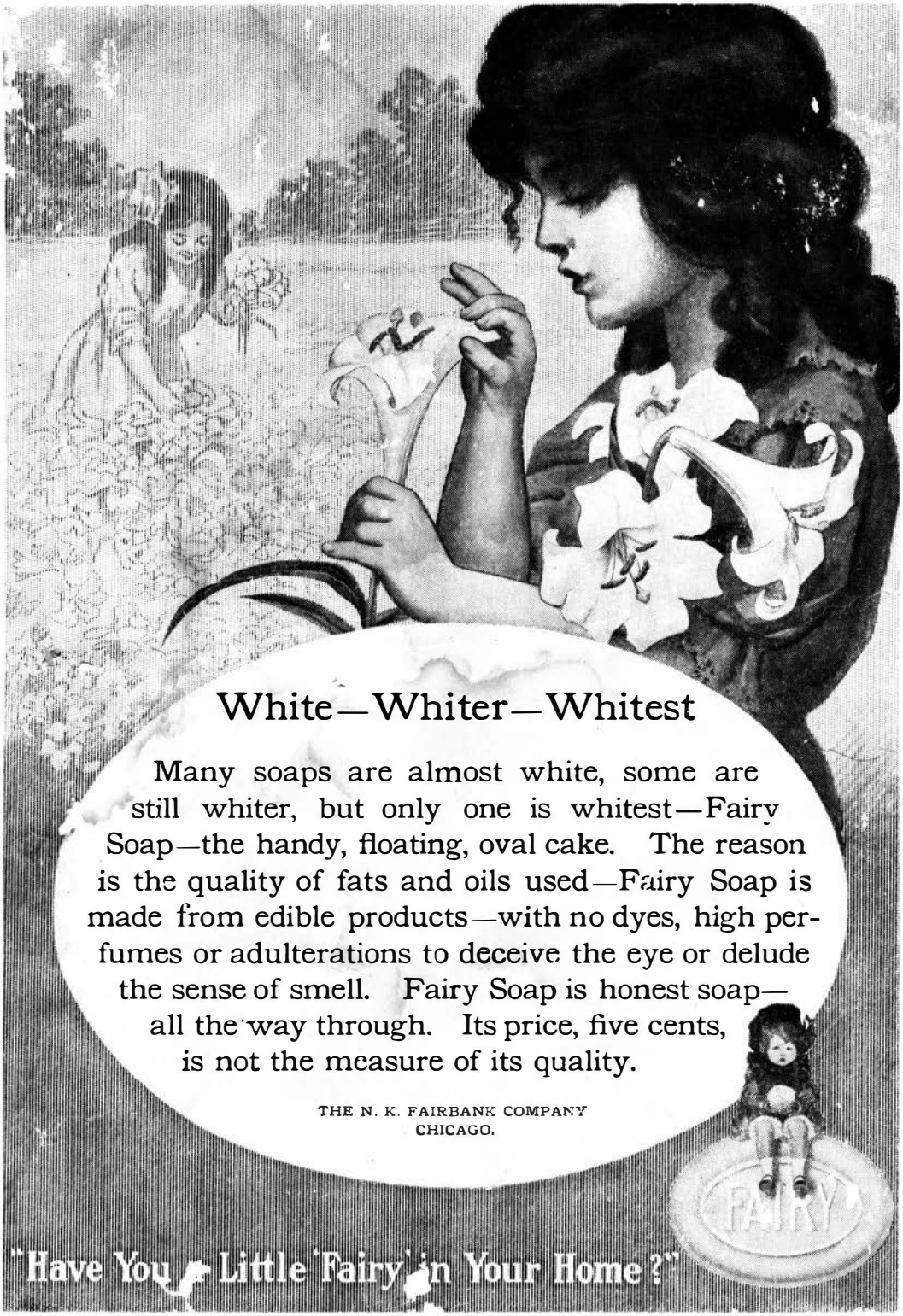
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