

THE MIND MA
No. 126

TWICE-A-MONTH

15 CENT.

The Popular Magazine



THIS

**Gem Jr.
Damaskeene
Razor**

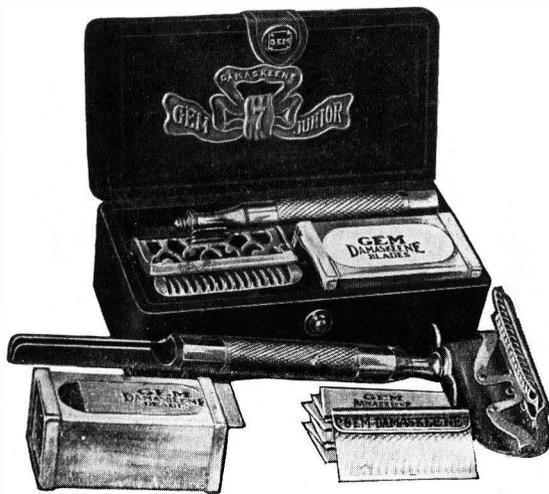
H-7
DAMASKEENE
BLADES

WITH - 7
GEM DAMASKEENE
BLADES

ONE DOLLAR

**Gem Jr.
Damaskeene
Razor**

The one dollar outfit complete includes the famous Gem frame, which alone has a national reputation, combination stropping and shaving handles and 7 Gem Damaskeene blades, all in velvet lined case as illustrated. Blades are packed separately in self-unloading metal box.



**Gem
Damaskeene
Blades**

Just what self shavers have been looking for, for years. Blades are tempered individually, insuring for each the highest possible degree of efficiency—hold their edge indefinitely — e a c h blade giving many perfect shaves. Separate set 7 Damaskeene Blades, 35c.

Preeminently a gem.

No time more opportune than this to give it—everybody seeks to gladden the heart of someone at Holiday time. Send a GEM Razor Set to the boy at college—or the boy or man who never saw college. Its coming from mother, sister, brother or sweetheart will enhance his estimate of the worth of home ties and true friends, and the use of it daily will revive genuine appreciation and pleasant thoughts of the donor.

All up to date dealers sell the Gem Junior Damaskeene Razor and Damaskeene Blades—accept no substitutes.

GEM CUTLERY COMPANY

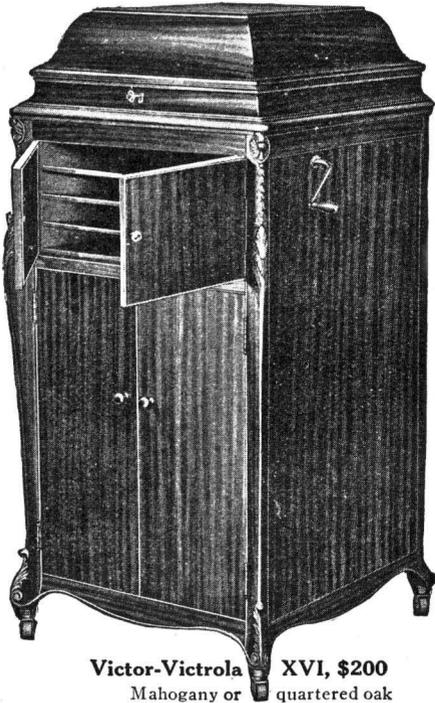
210-216 Eleventh Ave., New York

*Pioneer Safety Razor Makers
31 years in business.*

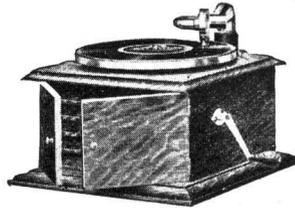
HIS

GIFT

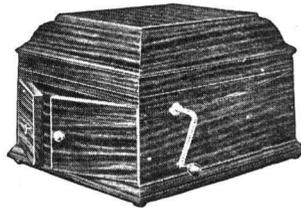
Victor-Victrola for Christmas



Victor-Victrola XVI, \$200
Mahogany or quartered oak



Victor-Victrola IV, \$15
Oak



Victor-Victrola IX, \$50
Mahogany or oak

\$15

\$25

\$40

\$50

\$75

\$100

\$150

\$200

You can search the whole world over and not find another gift that will bring so much pleasure to every member of the family.

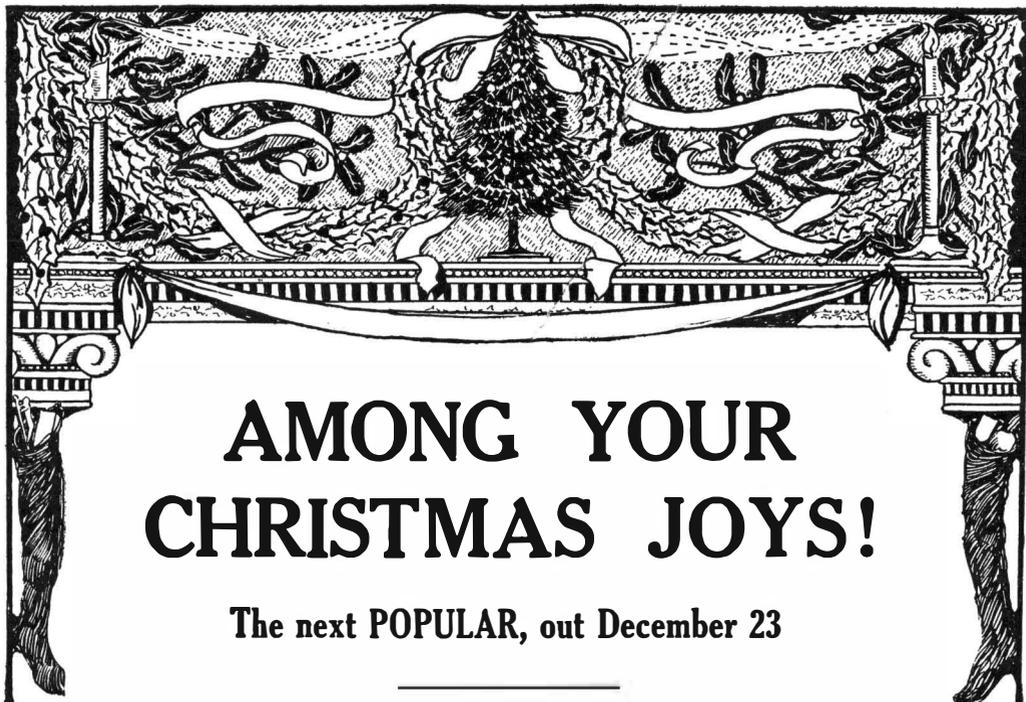
Any Victor dealer in any city in the world will gladly play any music you wish to hear and demonstrate to you the wonderful Victor-Victrola.

Victor Talking Machine Co., Camden, N. J., U. S. A.

Berliner Gramophone Co., Montreal, Canadian Distributors.

New Victor Records are on sale at all dealers on the 28th of each month.

Please mention this magazine when answering advertisements.



AMONG YOUR CHRISTMAS JOYS!

The next POPULAR, out December 23

GOODIES GALORE

When you look in our magazine "stocking" of good things, you will be glad to find, first, a big novel, "FREE REIN," by Frederick R. Bechdolt, and then FOUR FINE CHRISTMAS TALES from the ever entertaining pens of Richard Washburn Child, Francis Lynde, Ralph D. Paine, and Courtney Ryley Cooper.

Dig deeper, and you'll come across a half dozen or more noteworthy stories by such prime favorites as Charles E. Van Loan, Bertrand Sinclair, Daniel Steele, Rupert Hughes, George Bronson-Howard, and William Hamilton Osborne.

Go further, and you should become enthralled by the latest great mystery serial by Burton E. Stevenson, "THE MIND MASTER," which no true lover of distinctive detective fiction ought to miss.

*Ten Christmas Days the POPULAR has known
The joy of greeting you with right good cheer;
Yet still we hope to say when years have flown—
And we together like old pals have grown—
"A Merry Christmas and a bright New Year!"*

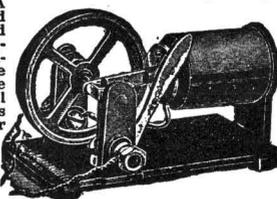
A Merry Christmas for that Boy of Yours!



Your boy's Christmas will be the happiest ever, if you will send him **THE BOYS' MAGAZINE**. It is a gift that lasts a whole year. **THE BOYS' MAGAZINE** is chock full of just the kind of reading you want your boy to have. Clean, inspiring stories written by such noted boys' authors as Hugh Pendexter, Everett T. Tomlinson, Wm. Heylinger, etc., etc. *Practical and instructive* departments devoted to Electricity, Mechanics, Photography, Carpentry, The Boy Scouts of America, Stamps and Coins. **THE BOYS' MAGAZINE** is beautifully illustrated throughout—each issue has a new handsome cover in colors.

WALTER CAMP edits **THE BOYS' MAGAZINE**. Mr. Camp is known everywhere as America's highest authority on Athletics. Every boy should read his ideas of true, manly sportsmanship.

SPECIAL OFFER! FOR ONLY \$1.00 we will send you **THE BOYS' MAGAZINE** for a whole year and a copy of the most useful and practical book you ever read, "Fifty Ways for Boys to Earn Money," and this Electric Engine. This engine is a perfect piece of workmanship. It is considerably larger than illustration. Runs 1,000 revolutions a minute on one dry battery. Safely easy to operate. A marvel of mechanical and scientific ingenuity. Send in your subscription today. It will have immediate attention and the engine and book will be forwarded at once, all transportation charges prepaid. Satisfaction, or money refunded.



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We make your home a university. Leading Correspondence Law Course in America—recognized by resident colleges. New text, specially prepared by 20 Deans and Univ. law school teachers. We guarantee to coach free any graduate failing to pass bar examination. Special Business Law-Course. "Legally trained men always succeed." Over 10,000 students enrolled. Begin now. Easy terms. Catalog and Particulars Free.
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Short-Story Writing

A course of forty lessons in the history, form, structure, and writing of the Short-Story, taught by J. Berg Eenwein, Editor Lippincott's Magazine. Over one hundred Home Study Courses under professors in Harvard, Brown, Cornell, and leading colleges. 250-page catalog free. Write to-day.
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Good memory is absolutely essential to success, for memory is power. Be successful—**Stop Forgetting!** Begin your real training at once.
The Dickson Method of Memory Training makes you "Forget Proof," develops concentration, will, self-confidence, quick thought, ready speech. Write today for my free book, "How to Remember"—faces, names, studies, also how to secure FREE, a copy of my \$2.00 DeLuxe book, "How to Speak in Public." Address Dickson Memory School, 960 Auditorium Bldg., Chicago.

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Can be learned quickly, easily and pleasantly, at spare moments, in your own home. You hear the living voice of a native professor pronounce each word and phrase. In a surprisingly short time you can speak a new language by the **LANGUAGE-PHONE METHOD** combined with **ROSENTHAL'S PRACTICAL LINGUISTRY**. Send for Booklet and Testimonials
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975 Chicago Opera House Block, Chicago, Ill.

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We can positively show you by mail how to increase your salary. Book mailed free. **PACE-DAVIS CO.**, 1171 Page Building, Chicago, Ill., or 150 Nassau Street, New York

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A high salaried and easily learned trade, taught thoroughly by mail. We will teach the beginner better engraving than he can gain in years of rigid apprenticeship. We will also improve the skill of any engraver. Send for our catalog. The Engraving School, 1171 Page Bldg., Chicago, Ill.

YOU CAN WRITE A SHORT STORY.

Beginners learn thoroughly under our perfect method; many sell their stories before completing the course. We help those who want to sell their stories. Write for particulars. School of Short-Story Writing, Dept. 1171 Page Building, Chicago

BE AN ILLUSTRATOR. Learn to draw. We will teach you by mail how to draw for magazines and newspapers.

Send for Catalog. School of Illustration, 717 Page Bldg., Chicago, Ill.

Learn Lettering and Show Card Writing

The man with a Lettering and Show Card Writing ability is in demand everywhere. Work is congenial, pay good, opportunities many. The I. C. S. will teach you Lettering and Show Card Writing at home and in your spare time no matter where you live. Write today for free book and other information telling how the I. C. S. can help you.
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FREE BOOK ON MOTORING

Explains how we can start YOU in the Auto Business as Repairman, Chauffeur, Salesman or Auto Expert with Dyke's New Idea Working Model System of teaching by mail and our new idea Employment Plan. Let us tell you the names of some of our students and the salaries they are drawing today—more than you are making. Don't miss it—**Send for Booklet NOW!**
Dyke's School of Motoring, Box 86, Roe Bldg., St. Louis, Mo.

Study SHORTHAND Home Big Pay-Short Hours-Quick Advancement.

MEN become Secretaries, Dept. Heads and Managers. **WOMEN** can earn as much as Men. Stenography is the quickest and surest means of advancing you from dull unprofitable toil to congenial work with good pay and short hours. Positions open everywhere. You can learn at home in spare hours at little expense, and in a short time be an expert. We furnish a typewriter free in your home while learning. Our free 38-page book is full of valuable information about our system and what it will do for you. Write for it today, now.
PRACTICAL CORRESPONDENCE SCHOOL, 1132 Pearl St., New York

DO YOU LIKE TO DRAW?

That's all we want to know. Now we will not give you any grand prize or a lot of free stuff if you answer this ad. Nor do we claim to make you rich in a week. But if you are anxious to develop your talent with a successful cartoonist, so you can make money, send a copy of this picture with 6c. in stamps for portfolio of cartoons and sample lesson plate, and let us explain.
THE W. L. EVANS SCHOOL OF CARTOONING, 335 Ball Building, Cleveland, O.



Please mention this magazine when answering advertisements.



CLASSIFIED ADVERTISING SECTION

Rate, \$1.25 a line, or \$2.61¼ a line, which includes AINSLEE'S and SMITH'S Magazines, making a total of 4,000,000 readers—the cheapest and best Classified Advertising medium on the market. Next issue of POPULAR closes Dec. 11th.

Agents & Help Wanted

AGENTS WANTED in every county to sell the Transparent Handle Pocket Knife. Big commission paid. From \$75 to \$300 a month can be made. Write for terms. Novelty Cutlery Co., No. 14 Bar St., Canton, Ohio.

AGENTS—Handkerchiefs, Dress Goods. Carlton made \$8.00 one afternoon; Mrs. Bosworth \$25.00 in two days. Free Samples. Credit. Stamp brings particulars. Freeport Mfg. Company, 45 Main St., Brooklyn, N. Y.

AGENTS—Either sex, sell our guaranteed hosiery. Whole or part time. 70 per cent profit. Goods replaced free if hole appears. Experience unnecessary. Quaker Knit, 26 So. 31st Street, Philadelphia, Pa.

BIG MONEY WRITING SONGS. Hundreds of dollars have been made by successful writers. We Pay 50 per cent of profits if successful. Send us your original Poems, Songs or Melodies today, or write for Free Particulars. Dugdale Co., Dept. 256, Washington, D. C.

AGENTS MAKE BIG MONEY and become sales managers for our goods. Fast office sellers. Fine profits. Particulars and sample free. One Dip Pen Company, Dept. 9, Baltimore, Md.

AGENTS. Portraits 35c. Frames 15c, sheet pictures 1c, stereoscopes 25c, views 1c. 30 days' credit. Samples & Catalog Free. Consolidated Portrait, Dept. 1146, 1027 W. Adams St., Chicago.

AGENTS earn from \$3.00 to \$9.00 a day selling Scientifically Tempered Knives and Razors with photo handles. We show you how to make money. Write today for special outfit offer. Canton Cutlery Co. Dept. 223, Canton, O.

AGENTS—GET PARTICULARS OF one of the best paying propositions ever put on the market. Something no one else sells. Can make \$1000 yearly. E. M. Feltman, Sales Manager, 6150 Sycamore St., Cincinnati, O.

CASH IN YOUR SPARE TIME. Good, active men wanted. We Pay You Well for all or part of your time. No money required—no traveling necessary. Write at Once for our proposition. F. W. Paul, Room E, Patten Building, Chicago.

AGENTS—A pair silk Hose Free. Send no money, state size. Agents wanted in every town. Beautiful line. Large profits. Triplewear Mills, Dept. S, 112 So. 13th St., Philadelphia, Pa.

AGENTS—\$300 every month selling our wonderful 7-piece Kitchen Set. Send for sworn statement of \$12 daily profit. Outfit free. Thomas Mfg. Co., 260 Third St., Dayton, O.

Agents and Help Wanted—Continued.

MANUFACTURER of popular brand guaranteed hosiery with linen heels and toes and many other exclusive features wants agents to sell direct to consumer. Re-orders insure permanent, increasing income. Exclusive territory. Credit. P. Parker Mills, 720 Chestnut St., Philadelphia, Pa.

\$1000.00 earned by three people in 30 days selling our Fire Extinguishers. 500% profit. Protected territory. United Mfg. Co., 1217 Jefferson, Toledo, O.

AGENTS—No matter what you are doing, or what you have done before—get busy. A real new, wide awake, money making proposition. 100 per cent profits. Start while it's new. Universal Import Co., Dept. 12, Cincinnati, Ohio.

WANTED—MEN AND WOMEN for Government jobs. \$90.00 month. Write for list of positions open. Franklin Institute, Dep't H 6, Rochester, N. Y.

FREE ILLUSTRATED BOOK tells about over 360,000 protected positions in U. S. service. More than 40,000 vacancies every year. There is a big chance here for you, sure and generous pay, lifetime employment. Easy to get. Just ask for booklet A11. No obligation. Earl Hopkins, Washington, D. C.

AGENTS, \$25 a week for 2 hours work a day. A brand new hosiery proposition; beats them all. Write for terms and free sample if you mean business. Guaranteed Hosiery Company, 1060 Third St., Dayton, O.

MONEY By Mail—Start mail order business, or manage an agency for me; printed matter furnished for half profits; write for particulars. Hazen A. Horton, Desk 638, Tekonsha, Mich.

Motorcycle Manual

Construction and Operation of a motorcycle fully described; complete trouble chart; 125 pages; cloth bound, 50 cents postpaid; paper covers 25 cents. Motorcycle Manual, Room 721, 51 Chambers St., New York.

Automobile School

MEN Wanted—For Auto Salesmen, Demonstrators and Drivers. Our graduates in big demand. We supply men to six Auto Makers and over 35 Auto Companies. Write for Free Book. Practical Auto School, 117 D Pearl St., N. Y.

Patents and Lawyers

PATENTS SECURED OR FEE returned. Send sketch for free report as to patentability. Guide Book and What to Invent, with valuable List of Inventions Wanted, sent free. One Million Dollars offered for one invention. Patents secured by us advertised free in World's Progress, sample free. Victor J. Evans & Co., Washington, D. C.

IDEAS WANTED—Manufacturers are writing for patents procured through me. 3 books with list 200 inventions wanted sent free. Advice free. I get patent or no fee. R. B. Owen, 39 Owen Building, Washington, D. C.

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PATENTS THAT PAY BEST. Inventions Sought by Capital. Write for free book. R. S. & A. B. Lacey, Dept. 62, Washington, D. C.

Financial

INVEST in 6%, \$100 Conrad City, Montana, Water Bonds. Recommended by bankers. Send for particulars. L. N. Rosenbaum, Municipal and Corp. Bonds, Haight Bldg., Seattle, Wash.

Business Opportunities

WANT all kinds of Business Places and Real Estate for Cash Buyers. I bring buyers and sellers together. Frank P. Cleveland, 1506 Adams Express Building, Chicago, Illinois.

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PLAY'S, Vaudeville Sketches, Monologues, Dialogues, Speakers, Minstrel Material, Jokes, Recitations, Tableaux, Drills, Entertainments. Make Up Goods. Large Catalog Free. T. S. Denison & Co., Dept. 19, Chicago

DIAMONDS ON CREDIT

HOLIDAY SPECIALS AT BARGAIN PRICES.
 These diamonds, mounted in 14kt solid gold mountings are our great specials. Only the finest quality pure white diamonds, perfect in cut are used. **Send for our free Catalog.** Select anything desired, have it sent to your home or express office, all charges prepaid. If satisfactory send us one-fifth of the purchase price and keep it, balance in eight equal monthly amounts. **Great bargains in Watches and Jewelry for Xmas presents. Write for Catalog.** Established 1896. Dept. 8213. **JAMES BERGMAN, 37-39 Maiden Lane, New York**

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If you are an American over 18 and can read and write, there are many fine U. S. Government positions open to you. The free Civil Service Book of the I. C. S. gives you the complete list, explains how the I. C. S. can help you qualify to pass any Civil Service examination, and gives you names and addresses of hundreds of successful I. C. S. candidates. Write for the book today. Doing so involves no obligation.

International Correspondence Schools
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BE AN AUTO EXPERT. We teach you at home in your leisure hours. Our course is so simple and thorough that you become an expert in 12 lessons. **FREE** Auto Model furnished to each pupil. Diplomas issued and Graduates assisted to positions. There is a **Big Demand and Big Pay** for Chauffeurs, Mechanics, Demonstrators and Salesmen. Our 38-page book containing employment plan, sample lessons with many sets of charts and diagrams, is **FREE.** Write for it **TODAY NOW.**

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"The 'Whys' of Exercise"

Tells how and "Why" you can secure powerful lungs, a broad chest, a strong neck, an arm of steel and broad shoulders. It tells you why two kinds of strength must be developed before you can be really healthy and strong. You must develop functional strength (strength of heart, lungs and vital organs) as well as muscular strength. It tells of the most successful way to take physical exercise.



To cover cost of mailing send four cents.

PROF. H. W. TITUS,

"The strongest man in the world of his weight"

604 Titus Building
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NEW YORK CITY

Health

CHOOSE A BRAINY DIET

No Foods Sold

"Fat, oil, butter, cream and eggs certainly caused my catarrh and deafness, but your diet of lean meats, green vegetables, fruits, etc., cured me in a few weeks. My brain power and complexion improved tremendously, and I succeeded financially." Different classes of foods cause different diseases, but correct combinations cure. Foods which cause expectoration, catarrh, fevers, rheumatism, constipation, etc., are specified in 4 very instructive booklets—sent for ten cents.

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DO YOU WANT A GOOD POSITION WHERE YOU CAN EARN FROM \$1,000.00 TO \$5,000.00 A YEAR AND EXPENSES?

There are hundreds of such positions now open. No former experience as a salesman required to get one of them. If you want to enter the **world's best paying profession** our Free Employment Bureau will assist you to secure a position where you can earn good wages while you are learning Practical Salesmanship. Write today for full particulars; list of good openings and testimonial letters from hundreds of our students for whom we have recently secured good positions paying from \$100.00 to \$500.00 a month and expenses. **Address nearest office, Dept. 108**
National Salesmen's Training Association
 Chicago New York Kansas City Seattle New Orleans Toronto

Coins, Stamps, Etc.

5 FRENCH Colonial Stamps 2c, 1000 Diff. Foreign Stamps \$1.75, 10 Diff. Foreign Coins 25cts, 25 Beautiful Embossed Post Cards 10cts, Buying List Coins 10cts, Sample "Stamp & Coin Collector" free. A. H. Krans, 409 A Chestnut St., Milwaukee, Wis.

Poultry and Incubators

GREIDER'S Illustrated Catalogue of Prize Poultry for 1913 describes incubators, brooders; gives low prices on all stock and eggs. How to make hens lay. 10 cents. B. H. Greider, Box 88, Rheims, Pa.

Telegraphy

THE Omnigraph Automatic Transmitter. Sends your telegraph messages. Teaches in the shortest time. 5 styles \$2 up. Circular free. Omnigraph Mfg. Co., 39 N Cortlandt St., N. Y.

Typewriters

REMINGTON TYPEWRITER only \$18.75. Most interesting proposition ever made. Bargains in every make. Price from \$5.00 up. Get our agents prices. Standard Typewriter Exchange, 23 Park Row, New York.

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SONG POEMS WANTED. Send us your song poems or melodies. They may become big hits and bring thousands of dollars. Past experience unnecessary. Available work accepted for publication. Copyrights secured. Instructive booklet and information free. Marks-Goldsmith Co., Dept. 15, 506 14th Street, Washington, D. C.

MAKE MONEY WRITING SONG POEMS. I'll write the music, copyright in YOUR name and publish on liberal royalty. Success means thousands. Particulars free. Established 15 years. C. L. Partee, 809 Astor Theatre Building, New York.

SONG POEMS WANTED. Send us yours. We publish acceptable manuscripts on liberal royalty. Booklet and catalogs free. Kellogg Music Co. (Dept. D) 1431 Broadway, New York.

SONGS—Learn to write them. We teach you Free and publication guaranteed. Big money in successful songs. Costs nothing to investigate. Universal Music Pub. Co., Desk 94, Washington, D. C.

SONG-WRITERS. Composers send us your words or music. Songs, Waltzes, Two-steps, Rags. We revise, arrange and publish on royalty. P. J. Howley Music Co., Dep. 9, 102 W. 42d St., N. Y.

Music—Continued.

SONGS, Poems, Melodies, Wanted. Our offer positively unequalled. Send for booklet. A. Dublin & Co., Dept. 20, 404 Washington Building, Phila., Pa.

SONG POEMS Wanted—Send us words or music. Big money in successful Songs. Book Free. Hayworth Music Pub. Co., 614 G, Washington, D. C.

Motion Picture Plays

BIG money writing moving picture plays. Great demand. We teach only sure method. Valuable information booklet Free. Chicago Photo-playwright College, Box 278 E, Chicago.

MOTION Picture Plays Wanted. You can write them. We teach you by mail. No experience needed. Big demand and good pay. Details free. Associated Motion Picture Schools, 617 Sheridan Rd., Chicago.

WRITE IDEAS for moving picture plays. Make \$50 weekly in spare time. No experience or literary excellence necessary. Easy, fascinating work. We'll show you how. National Authors Institute, 414 Gaiety Theatre Bldg., New York.

Finding Financial Freedom

BY FRANKLIN O. KING

Did You ever stay Awake all Night trying to Figure out a Plan which would Free you from the Financial Fetters that seem to have You Tied—Hand and Foot? Half the World doesn't Worry so much How the Other Half Lives, but EVERYMAN should Try to Find How *He and His Family* can Live Half-way like *Human Beings*.

Thirteen Per Cent. of the People of the United States own Eighty-seven Per Cent. of the Wealth, while the Remaining Thirteen Per Cent. of Wealth is Doled out between the Eighty-seven Per Cent. of the People that are *Left*. Most of Us are nearly always "Left." Now I haven't any Grouch against Society, but I should like to Mix a Few Loaves and Fishes with the Crumbs and Husks that fall from DIVES' Table. The Fault, however, is Not Entirely with the Rich Man—It is largely YOURS and MINE. The Unequal Distribution of Wealth is Due almost entirely to the Unequal Distribution of Population. These are Fundamental Facts minus Frills and Fallacies.

There are too many Good People Trying to Live in the Cities on a slender margin of Resources, who Ought to Be Elsewhere in this Broad Land where Fertile Acres stretch Unoccupied under Gentle Breezes, and where All of the Best of Earth's Products are to Be Found in Overflowing Abundance. A Pied Piper is Perpetually Pulling Them From the Country to some Magical Metropolis, and There They Live and Swelter in City Tenements and Flats—Dreaming of the Days when "Three Square Meals" was a Habit and not an Hallucination. The City's Lure has Led Them from the Country Fields that Fed Them. I didn't Intend to Break into Poetry, but *I Do Want You to Break Away from Poverty*.

My Advice to You, therefore, is—GET A HOME IN GULF COAST TEXAS. I would Further say—GET A HOME IN OUR DANBURY COLONY—IN THE RAIN BELT, where you can Grow Three Big Money-Making Crops a Year, and Where IRRIGATION and FERTILIZATION do not eat up the Profits Your HANDS CREATE.

We are Extending to our Colonists the kind of CO-OPERATION that CO-OPERATES—building Bridges, making Roads, and Ditches, etc., and

have Expended nearly Fifty Thousand Dollars the past Summer in such Improvements. More than Ten Thousand Acres have been Sold during the past ten Months to Satisfied Purchasers, because we have a proposition that can Stand Unashamed beneath the Spot Light of Publicity, and Where Your Days of Prosperity Shall Be Long—Upon The LAND. We are selling Real Land and not Sand—GET THAT—a Rich, Loamy, Black Soil, that You COULDN'T WEAR OUT IN A HUNDRED YEARS.

I believe you could save Twenty-five Cents a Day if You tried. I know you would Try if you Realized that our Growers of Figs, Strawberries and Early Vegetables clear a net profit of \$300 to \$500 an Acre. Men have Realized more than \$1,000 an Acre growing Oranges in our Country. Remember that our Early Vegetables get to Northern Markets in Mid-Winter and Early Spring, when they command Top Prices.

One German Truck Grower on adjoining lands this spring realized nearly \$500 from three-fourths of an acre of Strawberries. You could do as well if you only Tried, and on a Ten-Acre Tract FIND FINANCIAL FREEDOM.

The Biggest Price paid for a car of watermelons on the Houston Market this year was \$140. The car was shipped by the Danbury Fruit and Truck Growers' Association.

We are situated within convenient shipping distance of Three Good Railroads, and in addition to this have the inestimable Advantages of Water Transportation through the Splendid Harbors of Galveston and Velasco, so that our Freight Rates are Cut Practically in Half. The Climate is Extremely Healthful and Superior to that of California or Florida—Winter or Summer—owing to the Con-



Two Texas Gulf Coast Products

stant Gulf Breeze.

Our Contract Embodies Life and Accident Insurance, and should You Die, or become totally disabled, Your Family, or anyone else You name, will get the Farm without the Payment of Another Penny. If You should be Dissatisfied, we will Absolutely Refund your Money, as per the Terms of our Guarantee.

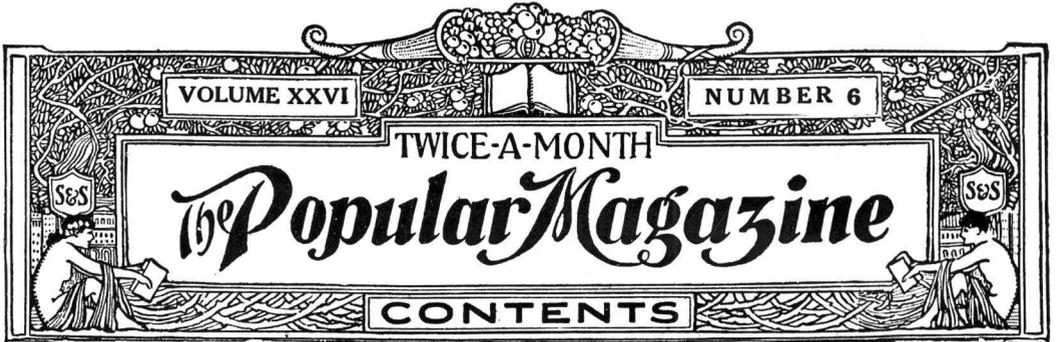
Write for our Free Book, which Contains nearly 100 Photographs of Growing Crops, etc. Fill Out the Blank Space below with your Name and Address, plainly written, and mail it to the Texas-Gulf Realty Company, 1301 Peoples Gas Bldg., Chicago, Illinois. Read it Carefully, then use your own Good Judgment.

* * *

Please send me your book, "Independence With Ten Acres."

SPEAKING OF CHRISTMAS PRESENTS

THE CHRISTMAS POPULAR WILL BE ON THE STANDS DECEMBER 23rd



JANUARY 1, 1913

COVER DESIGN,	Pearson Barnes	
THE SPELLBINDERS. A Complete Novel,	Francis Lynde	1
An illuminating story of inside politics. A fight to the finish with the Big Boss.		
A BRAVE MAN. A Short Story,	Peter B. Kyne	62
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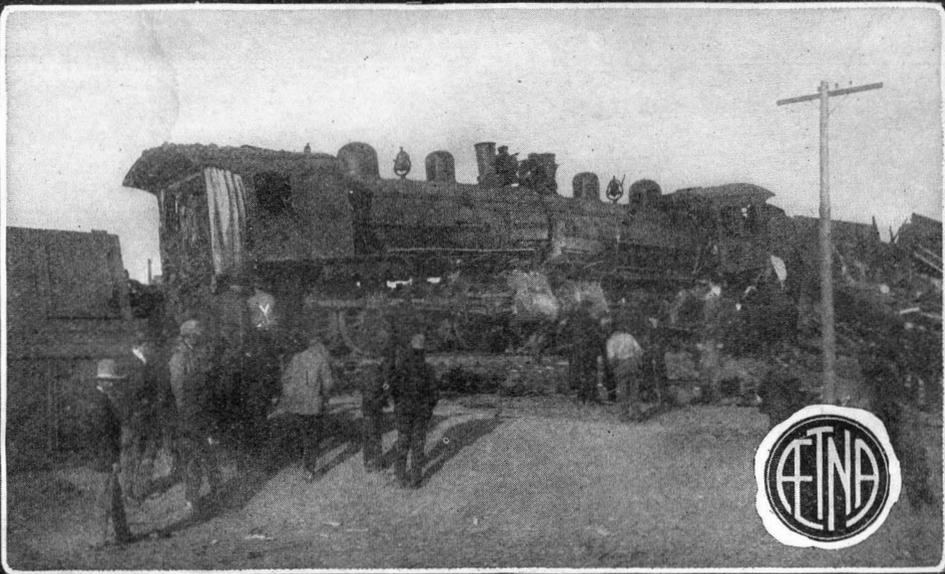
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THE POPULAR MAGAZINE

VOL. XXVI.

JANUARY 1, 1913.

No. 6.

The Spellbinders

By Francis Lynde

Author of "The Taming of Red Butte Western," "The King of Arcadia," Etc.

It is very easy to say, "The Boss must go;" but it seems impossible to oust him without creating another, for it must be remembered that an honest individual in politics is but the merest drop in the bucket; to accomplish anything at all the reformer must have a following, and as soon as he acquires the following he becomes the very thing he is trying to abolish—the Boss. It is an interesting problem, and you will hear how one man met it in this lively story of present-day politics. An illuminating story, and one of the best that Francis Lynde has written.

(A Complete Novel)

CHAPTER I.

THE STEAM ROLLER.

THOUGH it had been something more than two years since Edward Van Horne had taken Horace Greeley's advice to "Go West, young man, and grow up with the country," and had become in that short period a fairly well-known and rising young business attorney in the capital of the new and strenuous "Mesquite State," this was his first visit to the Sutro mining district.

Sutro was an old town, dating back, as a few remaining ancient adobe houses testified, to the time of the Mexican ownership, but it had lately taken on a new lease of life upon the discovery of the quartz veins in Turquoise Gulch, and the lobby of the Hotel Alcazar in which Van Horne was lighting

his after-dinner cigar was modern to the last word in onyx wainscoting, blazing electroliers, and red leather furnishings.

Van Horne's business in Sutro, which had been the examining of title records on a certain old Spanish land grant for a rather mysterious client in the capital, had been completed before dinner, and he settled himself in a quiet corner of the lobby to smoke and to wear out the time which must elapse before he could take the late train back to the capital. Measured by the growing ash on his cigar, a mere inch of the waiting time had passed when the restless revolving door at his right was twirled vigorously to admit a square-shouldered, sun-browned young fellow in the service duck and leggings of the mining camps.

One glance around the comfortably

filled lobby placed the chair in the quiet corner for the incomer, and three quick strides brought him to handgrips with Van Horne.

"Well, well, Van, old boy!" he cried. "This is the time when you sure put one across on me! I didn't dream you were within two thousand miles of Sutro until Barton, the county registrar, told me you'd been in his office all day and described you so I knew there couldn't possibly be any mistake. When did you leave old Illinois and the yonder parts of God's country?"

Van Horne, tall, clean-shaven, and alertly self-possessed, had risen quickly to grasp and wring the hand of welcoming.

"You haven't any the better of me in the 'sudden-shock' business, Clifford," he said warmly. "The last I heard of you, you were experimenting on somebody's mine in southern Oaxaca. Sit down here and let's flail it out. As for Illinois and the effete regions, I haven't set eyes on them for ages. I've been quietly grinding business law out here in the capital of your new and excitingly primitive Mesquite State for something better than two years."

"Two years?" echoed the young mining engineer, drawing up a chair and planting himself solidly in it; and thereupon they went back to the beginning of things and brought up the arrears, covering a period which ran deep into their boyhood school days together in the central Illinois town which had been their common birthplace.

"And you say you are in business law?" queried the miner, when the reminiscence field had been duly plowed and harrowed. "I guess you'll have to show me, Van. The only kind of law I know anything about is the kind some of the hard-rock men invoke when they get shot up in the tunnel heading."

Van Horne laughed quietly. "I suppose I am what they would call a 'solicitor' in England. I have gone in more for the consulting end of it in business deals than for court practice. My trip up here to-day was made for the purpose of looking up the titles on the old Don Villarosa grant which cov-

ers, or did cover, a greater part of the Amigo Valley just below here."

It was Clifford Grisby's turn to grin. "I owe you an apology," he said. "I didn't know but you had dropped into politics and were up here to help run the steam roller in our county convention. That is what this lobby crowd means to-night. It is a gathering of the clans—and the wheel horses."

The young business attorney shook his head dubiously.

"Politics in this brash and belligerent commonwealth of yours would be rather beyond me, I'm afraid. Not to be too outspokenly offensive, the political situation here is simply rotten, Clifford."

It was at this point in the conversation that Grisby first noticed the cross-eyed man. He was sitting in a chair which faced the elevators with his back partly turned to the two in the quiet corner; but Grisby thought he saw the slight change in attitude which betokens the listener. None the less, the mining engineer answered without regard to the possible eavesdropping:

"You can't tell me anything about politics, Edward. I've been up against the bosses, more or less, ever since I took the manager's job on the Turquoise. The money we've had to put up, first and last, would buy a dozen of the best farms back in old Macon County."

"You?" queried the attorney. "How do they manage to get at you for campaign contributions?"

"As easy as rolling off a log," laughed the engineer-manager. "The bosses stand for the 'interests,' and one of the biggest of the interests in this State is the Smelter Trust. If we should neglect to come across with our little contribution, the next thing on the docket would be a notice from the smelter people telling us that the Turquoise ore had suddenly become 'refractory,' greatly increasing the cost of treatment. That is about where we would get off."

Van Horne's smile was gravely ironical.

"This is an election year," he re-

minded the engineer. "Why don't you jump in and straighten things out?"

"Well, I like that!" retorted Grisby. "Why don't you do it? You say you've been in the State two years and more; you're just about as much of a citizen as any of us."

Van Horne smoked on in silence for a full minute before he said: "You've touched the raw place, Clifford. A good many times in the past year I've wondered why I don't. If I should tell you the principal reason you'd give me the laugh."

"Try it, and see," encouraged Grisby.

"It is just this: It is a kindergarten fact that the individual in politics is the merest inconsequent drop in the bucket. To accomplish anything at all, the reformer in any sort must have a following. As soon as he acquires the following he becomes the very thing he is trying to abolish—a boss."

The young engineer, marking half absently the renewed listening attitude of the cross-eyed man, refused to be diverted.

"What of it?" he commented. "A boss in the modern meaning of the word is only a highly successful leader gone wrong. You might say that truthfully of old Dan Darragh, the man who carries the fortunes of the Mesquite State in his vest pocket. There's a lot of good in Darragh. He is loyal to his friends, and nobody has ever accused him of welshing. I suppose he takes his rake-off like any other grafter, and yet in private life his word is as good as his bond."

Van Horne nodded.

"Yes, I've always heard that of Darragh. Yet he is the first man a reformer would have to kill off. The 'interests,' as you call them, would be practically powerless in this or any other State without some such man as Darragh to use as an instrument."

Grisby had straightened up in his chair and was looking over the groups of arguing politicians dotting the spacious lobby.

"Speaking of angels," he said, "there is Darragh, now; over there in that mob by the door. Do you know him?"

The young business lawyer looked the big, florid-faced figure of the boss over calmly before replying:

"Only by sight. Thus far, I am happy to say, my business had not brought me in contact with him—which is perhaps luckier for me than for Mr. Darragh."

Grisby took another look around the lobby.

"They are making ready to get busy in the convention," he suggested, as some of the groups began to move toward the revolving doors. "You have plenty of time to kill before the late train goes down the gulch—suppose we stroll around to the courthouse and look on. There is a fighting minority of our own kind of people here in Sutro, and it will be instructive to watch Darragh and his strikers put the road roller over them."

Van Horne's agreement was not wholly enthusiastic, but it sufficed, and they left the hotel together, coming out into the single business street of the mining-camp county seat. Sutro, the renewed, had passed the blatant stage common to all new mining centers, but there was still a brisk street life to blazon itself in flaring electricity, in the occasional dance hall or open gambling house, and in the sidewalk crowds.

At the western edge of the town where the ornate new county building occupied a silent square by itself the sidewalk life and the electric glare dwindled to double rows of roadway lamps. Grisby led the way through the square to a side entrance of the courthouse. A single elevator was running, but the incoming groups of delegates were not large enough to fill it. It was the elevator pilot who told them that the convention was assembling in the circuit courtroom, and who put them off at the proper landing.

A single cluster of incandescents lighted the corridor leading to the room of party deliberations, and when the mine manager and his companion reached the space railed off for the public in the great echoing courtroom the convention had already been called to order by the county chairman sitting

behind the judge's desk, a thin, hatchet-faced man in a black frock coat buttoned across a limp shirt with a turn-down collar, and whose cuffs required constant repression to keep them from slipping down and submerging his slender, womanish hands.

"Abe Littlejohn, our one and only criminal lawyer," whispered Grisby, identifying the chairman for Van Horne, when the two had taken seats in the rear row of chairs in the public space.

Van Horne nodded. "Everybody knows him by this time," he returned. "He is emphatically in the limelight just now at the capital as one of the attorneys for the defense in the McBry case. I didn't know, however, that he was an Aroya County man."

"He is—for purely political purposes," was Grisby's qualifying reply; and then, the convention having been declared open for business by the hatchet-faced chairman, the two in the spectators' seats fell silent.

There was little, very little indeed, to distinguish the quietly summoned Aroya County convention from others of its kind held from time immemorial in the history of organized politics, in Sutro or elsewhere in the great American sisterhood of republics.

After a short speech by an imported party spellbinder, in which the changes were rung upon the time-worn phrases setting forth the glorious achievements of the party in the past, nominations for the delegates to the State convention at the capital were declared in order.

With the promptness of well-regulated puppets, the nominating members rose each in his place, and the veriest novice of an onlooker might have seen that the slate had been carefully made up long in advance. After the final bouquet of the flowers of rhetoric had been thrown in the launching of the concluding name, and the lean-faced chairman was declaring the nominations closed, a protest was made by a big, bearded man figuring as the leader of a group on the left, who got upon his feet to ask recognition from the chair.

The recognition was given grudgingly, and the big man, whose embarrassment proclaimed him awkwardly unused to public speaking, made a blunt plea for the minority of which he was evidently the spokesman. In no very complimentary terms he informed the convention that the list of names put forward represented only the machine element in the party, and that the men nominated were pledged to vote in the State convention for Shackleton, the machine candidate for governor. Also, they could be depended upon to a man to vote for the machine delegates to the national convention. In common fairness, he urged that the nominations be held open until other names could be presented; the names of men who would better represent the sentiment and convictions of the voting rank and file of the party.

"Now listen and you'll hear the trundling of the road roller," whispered Grisby, as the protesting delegate was trying to find an easy place in which to drop from his own train of unfamiliar effort.

"The gentleman from Corral Siding is out of order!" barked the frock-coated chairman as the big man was falling back into his chair; and the formula was repeated twice when two other members of the left-hand group sprang to their feet and tried to back up their leader. With the attempt of a third, the chairman brought his paper-weight gavel down with a whack upon the judge's desk, and, ignoring the third man entirely, again declared the nominations closed, following the announcement briskly with a call for a *viva-voce* vote, in which, when it was given, the small chorus of noes was all but lost in the yelling clamor of ayes.

Again the big man struggled to his feet and began to protest, but the chairman was not listening. In rapid cut-and-dried speech he was announcing the election of the nominees, and was asking if there were any other business to come before the convention; if not, a motion to adjourn was in order. With smooth precision, the motion was made and seconded and voted upon in the

same deep-toned bellow of ayes; and, with the greater number of the delegates already on their feet and crowding toward the exits in the bar railing, the county convention of Aroya was a thing of the past.

Van Horne lighted a fresh cigar as soon as he was out of the building and tramped silently beside the mine manager through the three blocks of stirring sidewalk life intervening between the courthouse square and the Alcazar. Once more in the hotel, the business lawyer led the way through the dining-room foyer to the side porch fronting upon the railroad approach.

"After what we have just seen and endured, four square walls and a ceiling would be a little too stifling," he commented, placing a chair for his companion and another for himself. "It's worse than I thought it was, Clifford, vastly worse; and that is putting it about as strong as the language admits!"

Grisby had lighted a cigar drawn from Van Horne's proffered pocket case, and he turned slowly toward the hotel windows before taking the placed chair. The cross-eyed man was standing with his hands in his pockets at the window directly behind Van Horne's chair, and Grisby made sure that the sash was raised an inch or two.

"Whatever you have to say about what we've just seen and heard will keep till another time," was the mine manager's quiet comment; and thereupon he sat down and plunged deliberately for the second time that evening into the school-day reminiscences.

It was an hour later, and some of the out-of-town delegates had already gone across to the railroad station, where the short night train on the Sutro Valley had been made up and pushed to its place at the platform, when Van Horne tossed the stump of his cigar into the street and glanced at his watch.

"I'm owing you a debt which I'll cheerfully pay any day you see fit to run down to the capital, Clifford," he said gratefully. "I was tuning myself up for a mighty dull evening, when you dropped in upon me after dinner."

"Don't mention it," protested the young engineer-manager, and he was going on to say other and still more friendly things, when a young woman in a tan ~~duet~~ coat and the latest gasp in traveling hats came out of the side entrance of the hotel and stood for a moment on the porch drawing on her gloves.

It was Van Horne who made the mine manager's pause obligatory. He was staring in frank admiration at the young woman standing under the entrance droplight and trying to determine for his own satisfaction whether the closely drawn traveling veil was a detriment or an enhancement to her beauty. "Stunning" was the word which thrust itself upon him, and it came back again after he had rejected it as being too baldly commonplace to apply to so much loveliness.

"For Heaven's sake, Clifford! Who is she?" he demanded, after the young woman had tripped lightly down the steps to cross, unescorted, to the railroad station.

Grisby laughed unfeelingly.

"You say you've lived for two whole years in the capital? I'm beginning to doubt it. You must have dug a hole in your business law and buried yourself out of sight, to ask such a question as that. The pretty lady is Miss Anita Darragh, old Dan's only daughter, and there are those who say that for fine-haired, born-in-the-blood political finesse she hasn't her equal between the Sierras and the Rockies. Even if you've been burying yourself so that you couldn't see her, you must certainly have heard of her."

Van Horne was nodding slowly. "You are quite right," he said half absently, and his gaze was following the girl as she walked with the free-shoulder swing of the West across to the railroad platform; "I have heard of her often and emphatically, and I have also seen her, not once, but many times, though not when there was anybody at hand to tell me who she was." Then, with another glance at his watch, he got up and beckoned to the door porter, giving the man the check for his hand bag-

gage. "I think I'll be going over to the train now. Will you walk across with me?"

Grisby had risen, and his good-natured grin spread from ear to ear.

"It's bully good of you to ask that when you are praying in your inmost soul that I'll say 'No.' No, I won't walk across with you. Go on over and try to get next, if you want to, but I can tell you right now that Miss Anita will freeze you, pronto—unless it should happen to occur to her that her father might some day be able to make use of you. Good night, old man, and good-by. I'm off to my diggings at the Turquoise. Write me when you get home and give me the temperature of the Miss Darragh bluff. I'll bet a box of cigars that you won't dare to. So long." And, with a comradely hand-grip, he was gone.

CHAPTER II.

MEASURING THE PLUNGE.

Edward Van Horne, making enough money to enable him to live in such circumstance as he pleased in the busy, bustling capital of the Mesquite State, chose to live quietly as an inconspicuous unit in the Widow Drew's family of select boarders, gathering twice a day around a common table in a rather sadly pretentious private house in Alameda Street.

Mrs. Drew was the relict of a man who had thrice "made his stake" in the Barreda mining district, and who, having finally blown himself up in the tunnel of his fourth venture, left his widow little more than the scroll-saw filigreed house in town. Owing the spirit of the pioneers, Mrs. Drew had collected her family forthwith, and it was said of her that she never lost a boarder save by death or matrimony.

Like most collections of a similar nature, Mrs. Drew's assortment was handsomely varied. Colonel Purlin, who held the post of honor at the head of the table and who was known to the others as the First Walking Gentleman of Virginia, was the oldest of the boarders both in point of years and in resi-

dence. Jecks, the lawyer, who sat at Mrs. Drew's right, always spoke of the colonel as "The Voice," or more completely as "The Voice of One Crying in the Wilderness," Colonel Purlin's gift being blandly oratorical, with a slant toward the grandiloquent when he was enlarging upon the merits of one or another of the projects financial, industrial, or climatic which he was always promoting.

On the colonel's right, and shining only by the reflected effulgence of the white-haired, fiercely mustached table's head, sat Miss Pinks, a New England school-teacher, who had somehow missed her chance of marrying in the man-burdened West. Between Miss Pinks and the widow the two intervening places were filled by a big, bearded contractor, whose name was Durlan, and by one J. Jenkins Amerce, the mining broker whose spectacular campaign in Turquoise stocks had left a broad trail of sparks—and ashes—to mark its rocketlike progress.

Van Horne, sharing with Miss Pinks the honors of the head of the table, had for his left-hand neighbor a young woman who wore short khaki skirts and laced tan boots, whose thick coils of copper-red hair were always upon the point of coming down, and whose *métier*, in direct antagonism to a pretty face with melting eyes, a pert nose, and distinctly kissable lips, was hopelessly mannish. Miss Caddie Wester was a reporter on the *Daily Flashlight*, and her abilities went with the mannish *métier* rather than with the pretty face and the artistic negligee of the copper-red hair.

On the day following his trip to Suro, Van Horne was a little late in getting around to his dinner in Alameda Street. The day had been well filled with further investigations into the intricacies of the Spanish land-grant titles, and a line of discovery had developed which made him more and more curious as to the object of his client, a retired capitalist who professed to be looking for an investment in irrigable lands.

When he entered the dining room and

took his accustomed place at the common table, an animated discussion was going on touching a trial in progress in the criminal court, namely, the trial of one Douglas McBry, a former member of the city council, who was under indictment for bribery and graft.

"Bristow is certainly making it warm and nervous for a lot of other people besides Doug McBry," came from Amerce's end of the table, as Van Horne drew back his chair and took his seat. "They are saying on the street that the trail is going to lead straight up to old Boss Darragh himself before it finally peters out."

"Don't you believe it for one little minute!" snapped Jecks, the justice-court lawyer. "It will be a cold day in the middle of summer when Bristow or anybody else catches old Dan napping."

"It strikes me that Bristow is figurin' pretty hard to get himself disliked," growled the big contractor, whose own record as a deputy dipper into the public-works fund was not entirely unblemished. "This is an election year, and Parker Bristow is aimin' to succeed himself. He hadn't ought to forget that."

Colonel Purlin came promptly to the rescue of the maligned prosecuting attorney. "Misteh Parkeh Bristow is a Virginia gentleman, suh, and you impugn the honoh of our grand old commonwealth when you intimate that he would be swerved one single iota from the cou'se of duty by motives of a political charateh, suh," was the form his protest took, and it was emphasized by a fiercer uptilt of the gray military mustaches.

"In the language of your dear old commonwealth, colonel, Mr. Bristow is fixing to get himself shot up," put in Miss Wester, with manlike assurance. "The way he abused some of the witnesses to-day was enough to make your hair curl."

"Bristow is counting upon the new primary law to give him his next nomination," said Jecks confidently.

"Bah!" said Miss Wester. "What

good will a nomination do him if he can't get the votes?"

"He won't get 'em," asserted the big contractor definitely. "Darragh and the boys will see to it that he's a dead one from this time on. Anybody that thinks he's goin' to cut any kind of a melon in this State without asking Dan Darragh whether it's to be stood on end or sliced crossways, is makin' the mistake of his life. Ain't that so, Miss Caddie?"

The appeal to the manly young woman was based upon the open secret that Darragh, the State boss, owned a controlling interest in the *Daily Flashlight*; but Miss Wester was not to be caught on a hook so clumsily baited.

"You can't prove anything by me," she said flippantly. "What I don't know about the workings of Mr. Daniel Darragh's inside machinery would fill a Sunday edition of the *Flashlight*."

Faded little Miss Pinks, dispatching her dinner in rabbitlike meekness under the sheltering ægis of the colonel's nearness, winced a little, as she always did at Miss Wester's mannish mannerisms; and even the comely widow at the other end of the table suffered a placid wrinkle to groove itself between her motherly eyes. She knew, as few others did, that Miss Wester was womanly to her pink finger tips under the carefully adjusted mask of masculinity. None the less, the grim crudeness of the mask was always more or less disturbing.

It was J. Jenkins Amerce who summed up the situation thus broken into by the talk of Darragh and the McBry case:

"When you come right down to brass tacks, we're still in the same old boat with the broken rowlocks and the crooked rudder. The new primary law that everybody's betting on won't change a thing on top of earth. I'll grant that it may be a little more complicated for Darragh and his crowd. It's easier to control a bunch of political strikers in the conventions than it is to flog the honest voter into line at the polls. But the organization can do either or both. Why? Just because it is an organization, and teamwork in

politics is the real thing—the only thing that counts. Don't you think so, Van Horne?"

Van Horne looked up, with his quiet smile, and said: "Are you consulting me professionally, Amerce?"

The mining broker grinned, and spun a silver dollar across the table. "There's your retainer," he scoffed, and Van Horne quietly pocketed the coin.

"Thanks," he said gravely; "you shall have your money's worth. I heartily agree with you. Teamwork is the only thing that counts in any field—which is the only good ground for objection to the primary wave which is sweeping the country at the present moment. Teamwork in the mass is a pretty hard thing to compass. I think we all believe that the honest voter is in the majority the country over, but he is too often helpless, lacking leaders and an organization."

Miss Wester took him up promptly.

"Then you think the need of the hour is for honest leaders rather than for more or better laws?"

"The need is for both," he rejoined promptly, "though the good laws would follow quickly upon the sending of capable lawmakers to the State legislatures and to Congress. Under present conditions we don't send good men, not because the voters don't want to send them, but because the bosses are allowed to name the candidates."

At this, Amerce looked up to put in his oar again.

"And, of course, you'll argue that the new primary law will do away with this naming of candidates by the Darragh crowd? I see this is where I stand to lose my dollar."

"The new law should work the miracle, and it will, if the people demand it," insisted Van Horne quietly; and then Jacks took a hand.

"That's all theoretical bosh," he barked snappily. "The new law merely makes it a rich man's game. You've got to subsidize a hundred men now where one was enough before. It's a frost!"

"There need be no subsidizing of anybody," said Van Horne evenly.

Durlan, the contractor, chuckled in his beard, and the mining broker laughed openly.

"You'll find out about that, Van Horne, if you're ever fool enough to go into politics," he asserted. "But I take it that is an unassailable case."

"I'm afraid it is," Van Horne returned. "I'm like the vast majority of other men who have theories—I'm much too busy to try to work them out." After which, having finished his dinner, he left the table to go to his room.

It was on the hall rack at the foot of the stairs that he found a letter in a square envelope bearing the Alameda Street address. It was so unusual—the house address part of it—that he stopped and turned the letter over curiously, examining the handwriting under the hall droplight. It was a woman's hand, he decided; and upon opening the envelope the guess was confirmed. The inclosure was a five-line note generously filling one page of the delicately perfumed paper. Mrs. Daniel Darragh requested the pleasure of Mr. Edward Van Horne's company on Wednesday evening, at a reception given in honor of the Misses Kirkpatrick.

Two days earlier, or, to be more exact, at any time previous to the business trip to Sutro with its challenging ending, Van Horne would have sent a polite note conveying his regrets. Without being in any sense a social iconoclast, he had been slow to make friends other than the business sort in the Mesquite capital. The reason was not far to seek. Up to the present time his work had comfortably filled all horizons for him, and he had a willing worker's distaste for the purely social divagations.

Again, reconsidering the workaday resolution, he would hardly have chosen the Darragh entrance to the social field, strictly on account of his antagonism to the man Daniel Darragh and that for which he stood. But these were merely theories, and in all the varied history of humankind, theories have ever been obliged to compromise with the facts. On the three-hour run down the Sutro Valley the previous evening he had sat

opposite the young woman in the tan dust coat and her burly, red-faced father. Wherefore, at the second reading of the note, he ran upstairs to change his clothes, and half an hour later he was handing his card to a blank-faced English footman at the door of the most pretentious mansion in Sonora Plaza.

It changed no line or word of his opinion of the chief grafter to find the great mansion in the plaza crowded with the city's best. Still wondering why he had received his invitation, he made his way to the reception line, and presently found himself shaking hands with a pleasant-faced, motherly-looking lady, whose fine eyes beamed cordial hospitality, and whose voice and hand-clasp were at least heartily sincere.

"So glad you were able to come, Mr. Van Horne," she murmured. "The young ladies—Anita's schoolmates from Bryn Mawr, you know—are with us for such a short time, and we simply couldn't let them go without having the chance to meet a few of our friends. Edith, dear—and Alice—Mr. Van Horne: the Misses Kirkpatrick." And then to her daughter, who was the only one of the trio of younger women visible at the moment to Van Horne: "Anita, shake hands with Mr. Van Horne and be nice to him—Mr. Van Horne, my daughter."

Two or three brief sentences in exchange were all that were permissible in the moving line, and afterward Van Horne was free to amuse himself as he might. Happily, there were a goodly number of people in the crowded rooms whom he knew, and who were at least friendly acquaintances, and social patter to fill the round of the great rooms was not lacking.

It was in a temporarily deserted corner of the smoking den that he found Bronson, a man whom he counted as one of his few close friends, a rather eccentric young millionaire from New York whose doctor had driven him to the high and dry altitudes. Bronson was laughing when the young lawyer came in, and instantly proffered his cigarette case.

"Aha! here you are. I told 'em I

could put one across on you, and so I did. How does it feel to be in the swim again?"

Van Horne grinned good-naturedly.

"I was just wondering to whom I owed the hook," he returned, meeting the little millionaire on his own ground. And then: "What made you do it?"

"If I tell you, you'll want to swat me: I wanted to find out whether you owned a dress coat. Sadie said you didn't, or, if you did, it was mildewed and moth-eaten. I bet her a box of chocolates the other way, and I win."

The business lawyer laughed, without prejudice to a shrewd suspicion that Bronson was telling anything but the truth. "I have one, as you see," he retorted. "Later on I shall put you in a hole by asking Mrs. Bronson if she were a party to any such plot. Where is she?"

"She's out yonder in the jam, somewhere, holding forth to her usual circle of college—or cow—boys; it's a matter of utter indifference to her which."

Van Horne dropped into a chair and lighted the gilt-monogrammed cigarette.

"I haven't yet had the opportunity of meeting Mr. Darragh," he said.

"And you won't have, here," returned Bronson promptly. "He may instigate these little social flights of Mrs. Darragh's, but he is foxy enough to stay away from them."

"The bull in the china shop?" ventured Van Horne.

"Oh, no; not at all. Old Dan is the cultivated Irish gentleman, when he chooses to be. You are missing something by not knowing him, Edward."

Van Horne let the missed privilege go by default. "You say Mr. Darragh 'instigates'; what is the particular significance of this present little courtesy to Miss Anita's schoolmates?"

Bronson waved his cigarette airily. "*Quien sabe?*" he queried, airing his one Spanish phrase with the satisfied grin of a tenderfoot. "The Honorable Daniel's burrowings are far too subtle for me. But I'll bet you a new hat that the wheels are going around to some good purpose, if we could only see them."

Further talk with Bronson being presently made impossible by the advent of other smokers, Van Horne drifted away again, killing time deliberately because he had made up his mind not to leave until he had become better acquainted with Anita Darragh. Oddly enough, as he thought afterward, his opportunity came in the midst of things, and it was Miss Darragh herself who made it. Long before he supposed she would be free to leave the receiving line she sought him out, and, with a frank friendliness which was all the more charming for its unconventionality, asked him to take her for a turn on the veranda.

"I'm fairly gasping for a breath of fresh air, and I know you must be, Mr. Van Horne," was the way in which she gave him his chance; and, after they had attained the semiprivacy of the softly lighted open-air promenade: "I'm feeling all kinds of triumphant, if you'd like to know. Sadie Bronson said you wouldn't come, and I said you would. You don't care much for the little social frills, do you?"—this with the friendliest of smiles and a flash of the beautiful eyes of Irish gray.

"Perhaps it would be nearer the truth to say that I have been too busy," said Van Horne, tingling to his finger tips in the radiance of the smile. "I am only a poor workingman, you know."

"And I am a useless butterfly, I am afraid," she returned quickly. "Tell me about your work, Mr. Van Horne."

He did it joyously, striving with all his might not to be too desperately prosaic in the telling. Happily, as it appeared, Miss Darragh was sympathetically interested in the rather barren details. Business law was evidently a hitherto unturned page in the young woman's book of experience, and she wanted to know so many things about it that Van Horne talked shop until he was ashamed of himself. Taking one thing with another, the turn in the open air multiplied itself by many, and when Miss Darragh finally pleaded her duties and asked him to take her in, Van Horne felt that many miles of the broad highway of acquaintanceship—a road

which he was beginning ardently to tread in the hope that it would presently lead to the house of intimacy—had been covered.

After that he had no thought of leaving until he could have speech with her again, and again she gave him his opportunity when the crowds were beginning to thin in the great drawing-rooms and the bread-and-butter contingent was making a final and forlorn-hope charge upon the refreshment tables.

"Your loyalty is beyond all praise, Mr. Van Horne," she said, giving him another of the radiant smiles. "You've been standing by faithfully, when I know you've just been aching to get away from us all and go home. Tell me, haven't you?"

"Indeed I haven't," he protested warmly. "I've been enjoying myself more than I thought possible."

"It's a grind," she asserted cheerfully, "but we have to be in it and of it if we mean to stay upon earth. Besides, these foolish little crushes serve their purpose. They are trail breakers, in a way, and there are a lot of people who would never break trail if they couldn't do it in a crowd. Will you consider your trail broken, now—to our front door, Mr. Van Horne?"

There was a daring light in the gray eyes that was more than a half challenge, and he met it like a man and a lover.

"Do you mean the trail out or in?" he asked gravely.

He took it as a good omen that her answering laugh rang clear and unembarrassed.

"That was worthy of my father," she said. "I wish he were here to pay you back in your own coin. You don't know him, do you?"

"I haven't the pleasure," returned the young business lawyer, voicing his first insincere sentiment of the evening.

"That is a river which may be easily bridged," she put in quickly. "You must come to us often, Mr. Van Horne. Will you do it?"

"I shall come so often that you will be sending me away," said Van Horne

eagerly; and at that Bronson came to drag him off to the coat room.

"You're like a small dog with his first bone—you don't know how to let go," laughed the New Yorker. "No, you don't have to say good-by to Mrs. Darragh; she'll know you've gone. Get into your coat, and I'll walk you home. Sadie has taken the car and dropped out with some of her college—or cow—boys."

For a square or two westward from Sonora Plaza, Van Horne puffed silently at the cigar which Bronson had thrust upon him. Then he broke out: "I'm afraid I've been miserably uncharitable toward the Darraghs, Bronson."

The little millionaire chuckled. "Toward Miss Anita, in particular, you mean, I suppose? She's put the 'comether' on you already, has she?"

Van Horne resented the Irish folk word, and said so morosely.

"Miss Darragh was exceedingly kind to me when she didn't have to be, if that is what you mean. She is a very attractive young woman—as bright-minded as she is beautiful."

"Bright-minded? You are right there; she is all that, and then some. What did she ask you to do for her?"

Again Van Horne gave place to resentment.

"What have you been eating that doesn't agree with you, Bronson?" he demanded. "It isn't like you to back-cap the people who have been feeding you."

"Oh, piffle! I'm not backcapping anybody. I'm merely saying what everybody knows—that Anita Darragh is the real power behind the throne in the machine politics of this State. She is the brain, as her father is the clenched fist. She wanted you to-night for some purpose or another, and I thought perhaps you had been shrewd enough to find out what it was, or is."

Again Van Horne covered a full square—the final one in the cross-town walk which led to Alameda Street—in silence. But at Mrs. Drew's gate he turned upon the New Yorker and emptied his mind.

"I wouldn't have your digestion for

a farm in God's country, Bronson," he said sourly. "You may say what you please about Mr. Daniel Darragh, and the facts will probably bear you out. But for Mr. Darragh's womankind I have my own opinion, and I shall keep it."

But, after all, it was the little millionaire who had the last word:

"Just the same, it was Miss Anita who engineered things so that Sadie would ask to have you invited to-night." And then, as he was turning away: "And it was at the last minute, too. Put that in your pipe and smoke it. Nobody loves me, and I'm going home and to bed. Good night."

CHAPTER III.

THE HIGH DIVE.

Van Horne's office in the Marburg Building was a two-room suite—an inner den, with book-lined walls and a huge writing table, which served for a desk, with an anteroom for the convenience of his single office helper, a young man named Wilson, who read title law in the intervals when he was not pounding the typewriter for his employer.

On the morning succeeding his break into the social preserves, Van Horne was sitting at the great table in his private room, digging once more into the intricacies titlewise of the Don Villars grant, when the corridor door opened to admit Miss Wester, militant in her working uniform of well-worn khaki, and "noisy," as Bronson would have put it, no less in the laced boots than in the cowboy Stetson carelessly pinned upon the rebellious luxuriance of copper-colored hair.

"How!" she said abruptly, making the Indian greeting sound little less than an impertinence on the kissable lips. And then, without waiting for the invitation, she cast herself into a chair, and crossed her legs, preparatory to the deft rolling and lighting of a cigarette.

Van Horne sat back in his chair and smiled. He was well used to Miss Wester's masculine vagaries, and often

caught himself wondering whether they were really any more than skin deep.

"You are out early," he said. "I thought you newspaper people made it a principle never to be visible before noon?"

"The dear public is much given to thinking carelessly about newspaper people, I believe," was the offhand reply; and then shrewdly: "I didn't have to sit up with the Darragh function last night, so there was no excuse for lying abed this morning. You went, didn't you?"

Van Horne nodded. "It was my first offense of the kind, and I'm paying for it with an unusual amount of stupidity this morning."

"That's bad," said Miss Wester coolly. "I was hoping to get something out of you to pay for the early-bird call." Then abruptly: "You don't mind my smoking, do you?"

Van Horne smiled again.

"Not more than I do any woman's."

"Which is another way of saying that you do mind it a great deal," she laughed. "Never mind; I didn't come up here to discuss proprieties with you; I came to pry into your business a little. Johnson was telling me yesterday that you had been retained on the Amigo Valley deal. Have you?"

"Yes."

"For Mr. Jackson Winter?"

Van Horne nodded. "Yes, but not for publication."

"I understand," was the curt reply. "If I should print what I know about the Amigo deal, I fancy you'd open your eyes. I haven't printed it—yet."

"I can't very well discuss it with you, can I?" said Van Horne quite amiably.

"Oh, no, I suppose not. But for my own personal satisfaction you might tell me how much you know about Jackson Winter."

"I know what everybody knows—that Mr. Winter is a wealthy New Yorker who originally came out here for his health, and who now has a finger in a good many local financial pies. It is said of him that he is a philanthropist who is cautiously careful not

to lose sight of the profit column in his bookkeeping. I have understood, though not from him, that he is capitalizing a colonization plan looking to the settlement of the Amigo Valley."

Miss Wester sat back in her chair, and stared absently across the table at her unwilling victim.

"Have you ever, by any chance, heard the figure of Mr. Winter's holdings in railroad stocks and bonds?" she asked, with apparently the most cursory interest in the entire matter.

"No."

"Or that there might possibly be a railroad deal of some sort wrapped up in the husk of the colonization scheme?"

"No."

"Then you are not more than half as wide awake as I thought you were, Mr. Edward Van Horne," was the half-impudent rejoinder. Then she added, still more offensively: "I've been paying you the compliment of believing that you'd be about the last man in the bunch to let yourself be clamped into any man's machine tool holder."

Van Horne's placable smile broadened into a laugh.

"If you were a man, Caddie, I should say that you are talking through your hat in the hope of making me fall for something in the way of a newspaper sensation. I think I can say without violating any professional confidence that Mr. Winter's object in the Amigo Valley deal is straightforward enough. Naturally he doesn't care to have it talked about in public. That would be the surest way to invite failure in any business deal as big as this."

"Still you're dodging the railroad part of it," insisted the young woman coolly.

"That is purely a figment of your young and pointedly news-hunting brain. The Amigo Valley has one railroad already, and from present indications it will be many years before another is needed."

Miss Wester was absently smoothing the khaki over her knee.

"Two or three things seem to have escaped you," she remarked calmly. "One of them is that the Sutro Valley

jerk water is about the only remaining railroad in the State that is locally owned and controlled. Another is that it is too poor to be able to build on from Sutro to the rich Barreda Gulch district; and a third is that Mr. Winter's benevolent timber-planting and irrigation project, for which he is asking a land grant and a perpetual franchise, might easily be developed into the banner graft of the century."

If Van Horne saw unexpected vistas of possibility opening out at Miss Wester's purely speculatively curtain drawing, he was much too good a lawyer to show it.

"I'm glad you don't see fit to turn quite all of your ingenious imaginings into newspaper copy," he laughed. "If you should, I am afraid the *Flashlight* would be more—er——"

"More yellow than it is now," she finished for him. "Perhaps it would. But you needn't be afraid that I'm going to turn this particular imagining into copy. The chief might be stupid enough to take it and print it; but, if he should, his decapitated head wouldn't stop rolling this side of the Mexican boundary—or mine, either, for that matter."

"Now you *are* talking through your hat," said the victim, in mock despair. "Why should there be any beheadings over a bit of space filling not a whit less incredible than others that go daily into the *Flashlight*?"

Miss Wester had got upon her feet, and was walking up and down beside the table in what was meant to be a letter-perfect imitation of manly impatience.

"Who would order the decapitations, you mean? The man who has the ax up his sleeve—the man who framed up the Amigo land deal, and who dictated every detail of it, even to the employment of a certain rising young lawyer whose good name was in itself a guarantee of honesty and straightforwardness." She laid her hand upon the doorknob. "Excuse me for coming up here and breaking in on you. I couldn't very well say these things at Mother Drew's dinner table."

After Miss Wester had gone, Van Horne began to realize that she had come, not so much to get information, as to impart it; in other words, to give him a chance to justify his connection with the Amigo deal. Though he was not willing to admit it yet, Caddie Wester's visit was the one grain of sand added in the doubtful scale of a rather delicately adjusted pair of balances. He was still calling her crude accusations "imaginings"; but the door had been opened, and it refused to close again. After a thoughtful period, during which the notes and memoranda under his hand grew only by words and phrases, he got up, and reached for his hat.

"I'm going out for a while, and I may not be back until afternoon," he said through the door of communication to Wilson, his stenographer; and thereupon he went upon a quest which, he assured himself in advance, was quite likely to be fruitless. For if the Amigo land deal were crooked, it could be safely assumed that every precaution had been taken to conceal the lurking place of the graft.

It was between three and four o'clock in the afternoon when Van Horne returned to his office in the Marburg Building. As he had feared it would be, the quest for further information had been fruitless. Every footprint, if footprints there were, had been carefully obliterated, and the matter resolved itself into the simple and straightforward effort of a capitalist with money to invest groping tentatively for a safe place in which to invest it.

Squaring himself at the worktable, he began a mechanical rearrangement of the accumulated files which had grown out of his title researches. As he was snapping the rubber band upon the last of them there were hurried footsteps in the anteroom, and he heard the stenographer say: "Yes, he has just come in." An instant later Bronson let himself quickly through the door of communication between the two rooms, closing it carefully behind him. The little millionaire's face was pale.

"Wilson says you have just come

in," he began. "Have you heard the news?"

"No, nothing startling. What is it?"

"It's bad," said Bronson. "Bristow has collapsed."

"Collapsed?"

"Yes. He's been a sick man for a long time—typhoid—but he wouldn't give up. It was a big strain, and—well, he keeled over in the midst of his fierce cross-examination of that fellow Craddock, McBry's bookkeeper and confidential man in the contracting firm. Bristow was rushed to the hospital, but the doctors say it will be weeks—maybe months—before he is out again."

"It's bad news, Bronson," said Van Horne; "mighty bad. But it isn't much of a surprise to me. Do you know that Bristow spent the better part of an evening trying to persuade me to act as his associate in this prosecution? I believe now he feared that something of the sort might happen—though he didn't say so—and he wanted me to be on hand in case it did. More than that, he sent some of his friends after me later on."

"Why did you refuse?" asked Bronson soberly.

"Because I was selfishly unwilling to be dragged out of my own quiet rut. That was the real reason, though I told Bristow and his friends, truthfully enough, that I couldn't afford to put aside my own work for the public duty."

"But afterward you relented," put in Bronson quickly.

"How did you know that?"

"Never mind; I do know it. You worked nights, and did a good deal of the digging up of evidence in this case. It was entirely the result of your faithful work in producing evidence that could not be ignored which enabled Bristow to secure McBry's indictment by the grand jury. You don't deny this, I suppose?"

"No; I was willing enough to help Bristow in that way."

The little millionaire put his hands behind him, and walked away to the single window, which looked down into the white-walled court of the Marburg

Building. When he turned back again his eyes were flashing.

"Van Horne, have you got sand, or are you just the ordinary civilized human being who cautiously walks around a scrap rather than through it?"

The younger man was frowning thoughtfully when he said: "You know me better than any one else out here knows me. What do you think about it?"

"I'm going to make up my mind right now as to what I shall think about it. Van Horne, your duty lies straight before you—if you've got the sand. You are the next man in line in this business of graft scotching. Now that Bristow is out of it, you are the one man in the State who is able to step into his shoes and send McBry over the road. Will you do it?"

If Van Horne fell silent and started to pace the floor, it was not because he was lacking that particular type of courage the American name for which is "sand." Though he was not given to boasting of it, he came of fighting ancestors, one of whom had fallen in the Revolutionary War; another on the hard-fought field of Tippecanoe; and a third in the struggle between the States.

But there were other and emphatic urgings to make him hesitate. He saw clearly that he stood at the parting of the ways—that the plunge into the public service might mean the total abandonment of the quieter paths he had chosen for himself. He weighed at its just appraisal the vindictive antagonism of the Darragh machine, and he knew well that the straight path to the arousing of public sentiment lay in provoking the wrath of the grafters and forcing them to make the fight in the open.

That the fight would bring him unscrupulous enemies, with Daniel Darragh at their head, weighed lightly. The hesitation hung solely upon the question of time. Little more than five weeks remained before the date of the primaries. Would it be possible in so short a time to arouse public indignation to the point of successful resistance at the polls? That was the main ques-

tion, and the only one that was worth considering. The mountain in labor would bring forth but a mouse if the sole result were the conviction of the single indicted grafter.

When he paused finally, and turned to face the little millionaire, his decision was taken:

"I shall see Judge Farnham to-night, and if he will accept me as Bristow's substitute, the grafters will have another man to grapple with to-morrow morning."

CHAPTER IV.

IN THE LIMELIGHT.

Van Horne's assumption that his plunge into the McBry case as the prosecuting attorney's substitute would make him a marked man was amply verified, when, at the morning session following the collapse of Bristow, he took his place in the courtroom and declared himself ready to proceed with the cross-examination of Craddock.

Coldly, and without a trace of hesitation, he took up the cross-questioning at the point where Bristow's notes showed that it had been broken off at the moment of his collapse. Craddock was scornful, impudent, and sullen by turns; but presently he became a man tormented. Without heat, and equally without mercy, Van Horne put him upon the rack, and held him there. Bit by bit, his testimony in the direct examination was torn to pieces and nullified, and when the witness, haggard and pale, and with the sweat running down his face, was finally dismissed, a low murmur went through the courtroom, and the young business lawyer's emergence into the limelight was a fact accomplished.

What the courtroom crowd began was continued excitedly on the streets, in the lobbies and clubs, and a little later in the newspapers throughout the State. Van Horne's name was upon all lips. Even at the common table in Alameda Street he could not escape. At his first dinner appearance, Amerce stood up to shake his hand across the table; and Jacks, still snappily sarcas-

tic, ironically asked the newly risen ex-arch to remember him when he should come into his kingdom.

Burlan, the big contractor, was silent with the silence imposed by a guilty conscience in the presence of a possible accuser; but Colonel Purlin burst into grandiloquent eulogy, lamenting only that Van Horne's birthplace had been so far removed from the sacred soil of Virginia.

Even Miss Pinks was moved to murmur cooingly: "Really, you know, it was the *bravest* thing, Mr. Van Horne." And she so far forgot herself as to appeal to Caddie Wester for confirmation: "Don't you think so, Miss Wester?"

"What I think will probably be said in print to-morrow morning, if it gets past the Old Man's blue pencil," was Miss Wester's blunt rejoinder, and little Miss Pinks hastily withdrew into her shell.

As Caddie Wester had intimated, her say did appear in the *Flashlight* the following morning, and, with popular approval blazing on every beacon hill in the State, even the Darragh-owned morning daily of the capital could not well withhold its meed of praise, to the later-expressed sarcastic surprise of the *Tribune*, the rival and independent morning paper.

That night, while Van Horne was working late in his office, reading studiously to work up through the mass of evidence which had been taken in the McBry case, Bronson dropped in to add his bucketing to the floodstream of approval.

"You have certainly pressed the right button at the right moment, Edward," he said, dropping into a chair, and cocking his feet comfortably in another. "I spent some of my good money to-day buying up copies of the State newspapers as they came in, and you have sure 'prodded the tagger' to good effect. I am telling you because I know you haven't time to read anything for yourself. The State is ablaze from one end to the other, and it's funny. Nobody outside of the city paid much attention to the McBry trial before; but

you have made it a State-wide question, and a pretty burning one, at that."

"Oh, no," said the substitute, frowning absently across at his late visitor. "McBry is the man who has made the issue State-wide—McBry, and probably somebody higher up."

"You're doing bully work," Bronson continued; "far better than Bristow was doing. Somebody told me this afternoon that the Inner Circle had a meeting last night at Dan Darragh's house. Craddock has done something more than to tie himself into a knot; it is beginning to look as if he had unwittingly given away information that is going to make trouble in the camp of his friends—thanks to your rapid-fire cross-questioning."

"There is more to this McBry business than has ever appeared on the surface," said Van Horne gravely. "I have known it from the first. McBry is guilty, Bronson, but there were other and bigger men behind him. I am going to get some of them before I am through."

"Let me name some of them for you," laughed the little man with his feet in the chair. "There is Levy, of the Smelter Trust; and Bogardus, the timber king; and Smith and Hervey, the irrigation octopi; and lastly the Sierra Pacific gang, with Third Vice-president Guthrie at its head."

"Perhaps," said Van Horne, "one of all of them. We shall see. And now I'm going to fire you out—ask you to run away and leave me. Just now I could conveniently use a few forty-eight-hour days, and even then I'd be pushed for time."

"I'm gone," said the best friend, taking his feet from the chair, and groping for his cigarette case; and it was far past midnight when the lights finally went out in the fourth-floor office in the Marburg Building.

For five exciting days the case of the people against Douglas McBry went steadily on in Judge Farnham's court, and there was no diminution in the newspaper chorus of encouragement

passed out to the young substitute prosecutor. Newspaper praise apart, Van Horne was earning his laurels fairly. Step by step, he was driving the defense to riskier and still more hazardous expedients; and day by day it became more evident that McBry's unseen backers were entirely willing to sacrifice him, if so be they might themselves escape from the web which Bristow's successor was slowly but surely drawing around them.

On the evening of the fifth day, when it became evident that one more session would see the closing of the evidence, Van Horne found a messenger waiting for him when he crossed to his office in the Marburg Building from the café where he had lately been taking his dinners. The messenger was the bearer of a note from Miss Darragh. Divested of the polite euphemisms, the note was a summons, and he knew it. Moreover, the messenger, who chanced to be the Darragh chauffeur, waited for an answer.

It was one of Van Horne's gifts to be able to think quickly in a crisis. Ever since the night when Bronson had shown him his duty, he had felt well assured that a reckoning of some sort with Anita Darragh would be inevitable. On the back of one of his cards he wrote:

I am exceedingly busy, as you must know, and I can hardly be with you before nine. If that is not too late, I'll come.

Having given the card to the waiting car driver, and so committed himself beyond the possibility of retreat, he went up to his office, and buried himself resolutely in his papers, meaning to compress the work of five or six hours into two. But promptly on the stroke of nine he flung the evidence files into his safe, turned off the lights, and went down to the street entrance. The Darragh car was standing at the curb, as he more than half suspected it would be, and the silent chauffeur held the tonneau door open for him. Three minutes later he was descending at the carriage portway of the great house in Sonora Plaza.

It was Miss Darragh herself who opened the door for him, and Van Horne was rather surprised to find the house quiet and dark, and all but deserted.

"You are promptness itself," was the young woman's greeting, and once again the hard-worked attorney had a chance to bask in the radiant smile. "Come in and let me make you comfortable while you tell me why you force your friends to send for you when they want to do you a kindness." And, without giving him a chance to reply, she led him to the smoking room at the farther side of the house, placed a cool wicker easy-chair for him at the great open window, and shifted the light switches so that the glare of the electrolier was softened to a tinted glow, filling the luxurious little room with a tempered light most restful to tired eyes.

Van Horne had left the Marburg Building rigorously determined to be on his guard in the camp of the enemy. But he was not sufficiently hardened to begin at once the battle for aloofness.

"You are very good and thoughtful," he said. "I believe I am pretty tired, since you have suggested it with all these comforts."

"I knew you were," she said quickly, "and that is why I asked you to come. Mr. Bronson has been telling me how you have been spending your days in court and your nights in your office." And then, with the unconventionality which had twice charmed him a week earlier: "Why do you do it? Haven't you a particle of sense?"

"Not very much in some directions," he admitted readily enough; and because he couldn't find anything else to say he went back to first principles: "It was very kind and thoughtful of you to make the break for me when I didn't know enough to make it for myself."

"I thought that was about the way of it," she rejoined, perching herself among the cushions in the wide window seat in the exact focus of the softly shaded lights. "As I have just said, I have been gossiping with Mr. Bronson about you, and he tells me that you

haven't anybody to be fussy over you when you need it."

Now, it says itself that a man may be the shrewdest of lawyers, and still be helpless in the hands of a sympathetic woman. Van Horne closed his eyes restfully, and said many things that he had not meant to say—allowed himself to drift insensibly into a recountal of the strains and stresses of the past five days, forgetting, and not wishing to remember, that he was talking to the daughter of the man who might easily be the arch conspirator behind the grafter, McBry. If Anita Darragh could be a good talker upon occasion, she could also be a good listener; and she let him go on without interruption other than the occasional suggestion which kept him going.

"After all, it is a terribly thankless task you lawyers have, and one that demands the flinty heart," she commented, when he had fairly talked himself out on the subject of the five days. "In the present instance, for example, it is your sworn duty to send this poor wretch to the penitentiary, if you can, without any thought of the dreadful issues that may be involved outside and beyond the punishing of a possible criminal."

Van Horne sat up at this, and opened his eyes a little wider.

"I don't quite understand," he objected. "What are the issues?"

"Issues of life and death, it may be," she said soberly. "I venture to say you don't know anything about this man McBry save that he is a prisoner in the dock."

"That is true," he admitted thoughtfully. "What is there that I ought to know?"

"Nothing, I suppose—nothing that would in any way change your attitude toward him." And then, with a swift glance from under the drooping eyelids: "You knew there were a wife and children?"

He nodded. "Yes, I knew that much."

"But I presume you did not know that the wife is lying at the point of death in a California sanitarium?"

"No, I didn't know that."

"It is true. And it is also true that one of the children—a little girl—is a hopeless cripple. Admitting that McBry has done all the things that you are trying to prove against him, it still isn't beyond belief that he is a human being, capable of suffering quite as keenly as any of us, is it?"

"No, it is not beyond belief. Neither is it impossible for a hard-hearted lawyer to feel for him. But you spoke a moment ago of my sworn duty, you remember."

"Yes, and I find no fault with that beyond the blind necessity of it. It is your business to find the prisoner at the bar guilty, as charged, whether he is the real fountainhead of the criminality or not."

Van Horne came out of the restful trance with a start. Could it be possible that she was pleading the cause of McBry when the alternative would be the reaching past McBry to her own father?

"I am not sure that I ought to be discussing these matters, even with you, Miss Anita," he said gravely; and at this the alluring smile caught and held him.

"That is the duty idea again, isn't it?" she queried. And then: "We women are not allowed to vote in the Mesquite State, as yet, and so we are above the law. It is my privilege to speak in the name of humanity and mercy. Whether you know it or not, I know that Douglas McBry is not the chief sinner in this case. I don't say that he isn't deserving of punishment, but I do say that a penitentiary sentence will kill his wife, and leave his children worse than orphans. If I, or any other woman, were the prosecuting attorney these things would have their weight."

Van Horne made one final effort to break away from the gaze of the compelling eyes—and failed.

"If you could convince me that McBry is——"

"I can convince you," she broke in quickly. "You have one more witness for the defense to cross-examine to-

morrow. If you could persuade yourself to ask him a single question that I could dictate, you would be convinced."

"What is the question?" he asked half absently.

"I can't tell you now; you would have to give me a little time to make it comprehensive enough. But I can do it if you'll let me. Will you?"

Van Horne's laugh was the outward presentment of a vague uneasiness which he immediately pushed aside.

"I suppose you are referring to the man Wilkins? If you can suggest any possible question that I hadn't already thought of asking him, I shall be your debtor to that extent."

"You are daring me, saying in your heart that you are shrewder than any woman who has ever lived. Is it a promise?"

Lost now to all sense of the professional strictures, Van Horne nodded gravely. "If you wish to consider it so," he said; and after that, for another restful half hour or so, the McBry case was as if it had never been.

As the tête-à-tête in the cozy smoking room had been entirely of Miss Darragh's making, it was she who brought it to an end as the tiny clock on the mantel was chiming the half hour past ten.

"You mustn't sit up a moment longer," she protested, when the two silvery tones died away in the quiet room. "More than that, you must promise me that you will go straight home and go to bed. Barney will take you in the car."

And when she went with him to the carriage entrance, where the big touring car was still waiting, Van Horne's brain was reeling in a subtle intoxication, which was not altogether the reaction consequent upon his five days and nights of strenuous toil.

CHAPTER V.

THE FLICK OF THE SWITCH.

Notwithstanding Anita Darragh's command that he should go home and go to bed, Van Horne changed the order to the chauffeur when the car rolled

out of Sonora Plaza, asking that he be driven back to the Marburg Building.

Since it was now close upon eleven o'clock, the great office building was dark and deserted, and even the night elevator had stopped running. Van Horne toiled up the four flights of dimly lighted stairs to his office floor, let himself in through the corridor entrance to his private den, and groped for the wall switch near the door which turned the current into the shaded drop-light placed in the middle of the big working table.

With the light turned on, he went around to take his chair on the opposite side of the table, dropping into it like a man wearied, and propping his head in his hands, with his elbows on the blotting pad. The swift run in the auto from the opposite side of town, a dash through the cool night air, which had had the effect of a revivifying shower bath, had cleared the cobwebs from his brain, and he was beginning to realize that the softly shaded lights in Daniel Darragh's smoking den—these, and the girl who had sat in the window seat and made him talk, were in a manner sins to be repented of.

What had he said that he ought not to have said? That a judge who is trying a cause should never by any means permit himself to discuss it with any one is one of the axioms of professional ethics. Would not the same restriction justly apply to the State's attorney? And, if so, had he not violated the rule in the spirit, if not in the letter?

To be a good man—and much more to be a good lawyer—the alert conscience is the first requisite. Van Horne had flogged himself completely around the circle of self-accusation before the bigger fact fell upon and crushed him. Anita Darragh had asked him, and he had answered; and in a flash it was revealed to him that in the two hours which had elapsed between the going and the coming he had crossed a hitherto unknown boundary in his field of human experience.

For a long time he was unwilling to

admit the blank truth, but the truth was inexorable, and when it finally came to its own he smiled grimly. He was in love with Anita Darragh, with the daughter of the man whom for five days he had been seeking, by every means in his power, to implicate in the McBry graft. It was a tragedy, and no less, and when he fully realized the length and breadth of it the grim smile came again.

Searching painfully through the happenings of the two hours, he could see clearly now the depths into which he had permitted himself to sink, and Anita's purpose in sending for him was very clearly defined. It was the last resort of the machine, and he had played into Darragh's hands like the callowest of beginners. The girl had openly worked upon his sympathies, and in the end she had committed him to a promise. True, it was only a promise that he should ask the witness—Wilkins—a single question of her dictating; but in the light of this later reasoning he saw that the question might involve the losing of the hard-fought trial.

When it came to that, he sat back in his chair, staring blankly past the drop-light at the opposite wall. Though he was far enough from suspecting it, he was fighting the crucial battle of all the ages—the battle in which love of a woman arrays itself against the plain duty of the moment. To be even the least conscientious of lawyers, one has first to be a man, and the wellsprings of human nature are deeper than those of any calling. To break his promise, and refuse to ask the question, which, as he supposed, she would send him in writing some time before the resumption of the trial in the morning, would be to stultify himself, and to lose his chance as a lover once and for all, and every drop of the man blood in him cried out in protest.

Then the compromise began subtly to suggest itself. Why should he not keep his promise, matching wit against wit, thus transforming the weapon which was to slay him into a still sharper weapon of defense? He was turning

the possibilities over in his mind, with his gaze still fixed upon the opposite wall. So shrewd was the mental pre-occupation that he failed to hear a muffled step in the corridor, failed to see that the corridor door, which had been left ajar, was opening by imperceptible fractions of an inch at a time; failed, also, to see the hand that was thrust in to grope on the wall for the electric-light switch.

Missing these swiftly accomplished preliminaries, the man at the table was taken completely by surprise when the switch clicked and the small office room was plunged in midnight darkness; but before he could spring to his feet the light switch clicked again. In the immeasurably brief interval of darkness there had been a bit of sceneshifting. The door had opened and closed, and a cross-eyed man, muffled to the ears in the turned-up collar of his light topcoat, was standing with his back against it. Van Horne blinked twice in the sudden relighting of the electric globe, and then he saw the man at the door—saw also that the man was covering him with an automatic pistol.

Having seen and understood, Van Horne was the first to break the silence which followed the resetting of the switch.

"Well?" he said coolly. "It's your play, my friend. What can I do for you?"

"You can pass out mighty easy," said the cross-eyed man. Then came a quick command: "Lay your hands flat on the table, and keep 'em there!"

Van Horne made a virtue of necessity, and complied with the command.

"If it's money you're after, you have come to the wrong shop, and at the wrong time of day. I am taking it for granted that a check won't do you any good."

"I don't want money," said the man at the door. "This is another kind of a lay. When I tell you that Doug McBry is my friend, you'll know what's comin'. It's you for the down and out in that court business, Mr. Van Horne; otherwise, you're goin' to be too dead

to bury inside of the next minute or two."

Now that the danger was a danger defined, Van Horne's smile was the smile of the unterrified.

"So that's it, is it?" he said. "It seems to me the question is one which does not concern me as much as it does you. How are you going to pull it off and get away with it?"

As he spoke, his right hand was moving cautiously toward a lead pencil which lay on the desk blotter within an inch of his finger tips. When the man at the door began to speak the creeping fingers had closed about the pencil, and Van Horne was idly describing a string of interlocking figure eights with the pencil point on the white blotter, penciling absently, and shrewdly working out a small problem in geometry. The problem concerned itself with the distance from the penciling fingers to a heavy iron paper weight lying a little to the right, and with certain angles of sight, air drawn from the paper weight through the obstructing globe of the droplight to the one good eye of the man at the door.

"I reckon there won't be any trouble about gettin' away with it," the man was saying. "You've got a Savage automatic in that table drawer in front of you that is exactly like the one I'm holdin' on you—the one you're goin' to die of. When you're found, some time tomorrow mornin', your pistol'll be gone, and this one'll be layin' on the floor right where you dropped it when you committed suicide—see? There's nobody on this floor but you and me, and nobody in the buildin', I reckon, short of the watchman in the basement—and there you are."

"Neat, but not gaudy," said Van Horne briefly, while the string of connected figure eights worked its way slowly but surely toward the iron paper weight. And then: "I should think you would find it safer to shoot. Any promise that you might exact from me wouldn't be worth the breath it would take to utter it in the circumstances."

The cross-eyed man winked the eye which was temporarily out of focus,

and the act gave his hard-lined face an expression at once grotesque and indescribably ferocious.

"That'll be all right, too," he grated. "If you pass your word, you're going to keep it. That's the way you've been stacked up for me."

"By whom?" demanded the victim suddenly.

"Never mind about that. The question is: Do you, or don't you? Say it quick. My finger's gettin' mighty nervous."

"I'll think about it," snapped Van Horne, and at the words the pencil-holding hand shot to the paper weight, which was whisked with a quick upward flirt at the bulb of the shaded droplight.

Coincident with the crash of breaking glass, Van Horne threw himself backward in the darkness, expecting the flash and crack of the automatic. Springing quickly free of the overturned chair, he hurled himself at the place where he had last seen the intruder, only to bring up violently against the closed door. There was another electric globe in the ceiling of the room, and, darting quickly to the switch, he turned on the ceiling light. Save for himself, the room was empty, with the broken droplight on the table as the only evidence of what had taken place. Arming himself promptly, he ran to the door, jerked it open, and looked up and down the corridor. It was empty; and the winding stair in the elevator well was also empty when he went to stand at the head of it and look down.

CHAPTER VI.

THE BREAK FOR THE OPEN.

Van Horne went into court on the last day of the McBry trial with resolution keyed to the fighting pitch, and his mind well cleared of any doubts touching the course he should pursue. Accusing Anita in his heart of nothing worse than an attempt to shield her father, and exonerating her entirely in the matter of the man with the auto-

matic pistol, he was once more setting his face like a flint toward the accomplishment of the one end—the conviction of the criminal, and the reaching forward through it, if possible, to the men who were behind McBry.

It was at the door of the courtroom that Anita's messenger—the chauffeur who had driven the car the night before—found him, and handed him a sealed note. Van Horne waited until he was arranging his papers at the lawyers' table within the bar before he opened and read the note. It was brief and succinct, and was without date line, salutation, or signature:

Ask the man to tell you circumstantially what he overheard on the night of May second, when he was dining with a woman in a private room on the second floor of Fracassi's café.

Apart from the precise details of place, time, and company, Anita's request was in line with his own prefigured plan. In the cross-examination of the man Wilkins, who, in his direct examination as a witness for the defense, had merely stated it as his opinion and belief that McBry was innocent, he had been intending to dig deeply into details—the details of the man's relations with McBry and others. With this end in view, Anita's note was a help, and he was too much elated at the moment to wonder why she had taken the trouble to make his task so much easier.

A little farther on, when the summoning of Wilkins was the final remaining step in the long-drawn-out legal battle, Van Horne began his inquisition. Step by step through the man's reluctant answers, he traced Wilkins' connection with the efforts of certain corporations to pass a franchise ordinance through the city council.

Incontrovertibly it was shown by Wilkins' own story that he had acted as an intermediary, forming the line of communication between the officers of the railroad company, Daniel Darragh, and a number of the council members. Also, it was proved in the same way that the go-between, though he stoutly denied it, had been under pay from some one, the broad inference being

that the paymaster was the railroad company.

At the critical moment, when every eye in the crowded courtroom was fixed upon the perspiring witness in the high chair facing the jury, Van Horne drew the crumpled note from his pocket, glanced at it quickly, and turned to the witness.

"Now, Mr. Wilkins," he said, in his coldest tones, "you may tell the court and this jury what you overheard on the night of May second, when you were dining with a woman in a private room on the second floor of Fracassi's café."

If he were expecting anything remarkable to follow, he was promptly disappointed. In the same reluctant manner in which he had given all of his testimony, the man in the high chair went on like a well-trained actor who has just been given his cue.

"I shall have to tell the story in my own way," he said slowly. "I had been to the theater with the lady in question, and we had stopped for supper at Fracassi's. There were a good many people in the upper dining room, and the stall next to our own was taken shortly after we had given our supper order by two men."

"Wait a moment," interjected Van Horne. "Did you see the men?"

"No. The stall they occupied was nearer the stair head, and they did not pass us."

"But you knew who they were?" persisted Van Horne.

The witness looked around, as if for help, and, with a very evident show of unwillingness, said: "Yes, I recognized their voices."

"Very good! Tell the court and the jury who they were."

Again the spasm of unwillingness came, but it was apparently overborne by the cruel necessities.

"They were—they were Mr. Daniel Darragh and—and the prisoner at the bar."

"Be very careful," said Van Horne quickly, realizing that a sudden sea of mixed emotions was engulfing him.

"You are very sure of these identities, are you?"

"Yes, I am quite sure," said the witness mildly.

Van Horne struggled manfully with the engulfing sea, mastered it, and came up gasping.

"Very well; tell the court and the jury what you overheard."

Once more the witness drew a long breath, and then went on steadily in a silence which, notwithstanding the crowd, which packed the courtroom to suffocation, was fairly breathless.

"I cannot repeat all that was said, word for word. Sometimes I missed part of it; as I have said, the rooms were full, and there was a good deal of noise—waiters coming and going, and everybody talking. But, as near as I could make out, the prisoner was telling Mr. Darragh something that had been done, or was going to be done, about the Sierra Pacific franchise through Fourth Street. He said distinctly, as I remember, that a money offer had been made, the object of which was to defray the expenses of the committee which had gone to San Francisco to meet the railroad officials. The money had not been taken; it had only been offered."

"You are sure about that, are you?" snapped Van Horne.

"Yes, quite sure. McBry thought it would be all right to take the money, and he argued that it was only fair that the railroad company should pay for a trip which could hardly be charged to the city."

"Very good. Go on."

"As I understood it, McBry was asking Mr. Darragh's advice," the witness went on, still testifying, as it seemed, with no little reluctance. "Mr. Darragh told him very emphatically that the money could not be taken by the members of the council committee—that while it might be justly due from the railroad people, its taking could be easily twisted and made a handle of. He said it wouldn't be right."

The spectacle of Boss Darragh arguing ethics with one of his own led captains in the city council was too much

for the overstrained crowd, and a murmur, deep-drawn, like the sigh of an awakening giant, ran through the courtroom.

Too late Van Horne saw the trap into which the cunningly worded question had led him, and by all the arts known to the skillful lawyer who finds himself confronting an unlooked-for barrier he strove to break down Wilkins' testimony. It was all to little purpose. Calmly, and with his gaze fixed upon the midmost man in the upper tier of jury-chairs, Wilkins repeated his story, never wavering, and never changing the recountal to leave a weak place for an opening under the rapid fire of shotlike questions.

Try as he might, Van Horne could not shake the man; and when he finally fired the last shot, which he had been holding in reserve, and saw it fall harmless, he knew he was done.

"You still insist that at the time mentioned the prisoner at the bar had not taken the railroad's money, and that Mr. Darragh was trying to dissuade him from taking it. Now, then, remembering that you are under oath, and that you were called first in this cause as a witness for the defense, please tell the honorable court and these gentlemen of the jury why you did not state these facts and tell this story in your direct examination."

Again the deep-drawn murmur ran through the courtroom, followed by a silence like the silence of the grave. Into the midst of the stillness came the voice of the witness, low-toned and still more pointedly deprecatory:

"As I admitted at first, I was not alone in the private dining room at Fracassi's. I did not wish the lady to be involved. She heard what I heard, and I—I was afraid she might be called into court to corroborate my story." Then he added: "I am sure every gentleman present will appreciate my feelings in the matter. I have told the story now only because it was evident that I could not help myself."

Van Horne saw now still more clearly how painstakingly he had been slain in the house of a friend. The one small

chance he might have had of impugning Wilkins' story had become a vanishing chance with the introduction of the other unnamed and as yet unsummoned witness. It was not yet too late to call the unnamed woman into court, but Van Horne quickly realized that he would lose much and gain little by doing so. Abruptly he closed the cross-examination, and, telling the witness to stand down, he launched at once into his summing up of the case for the prosecution, making, under the stimulus of the small defeat, the most eloquent plea of his life.

It was noon before he finished, and when the court took a recess and the crowd filed out, the passing comment showed that the substitute prosecutor had regained much of his lost ground. Not at any time within the short history of the Mesquite State had there been a summing up so logical and so forcefully convincing: Bronson's companion among the onlookers—a short, thickset man, with fiery hair and an Irish shave to go with his rich brogue—voiced the sentiment of the mob sufficiently well, when, at the noon recess, the two linked arms and pointed for the Caliente Club.

"'Tis what I was afther telling you at the start," declared the rich-brogued one. "You get that felly Van Horne good an' mad wunst, and the Ould Boy himself cuddent talk him down. Abe Littlejohn would betther be thinkin' his har-rdest, instead of atein' his dinner, if he's m'aning to make that jury come his way afther this."

The afternoon session of the court was harder upon Van Horne than the forenoon had been, chiefly because the reaction which sets in when a man has done his best, and knows that he can do no more, is never keener than in the case of a court pleader who has made his summing up, and has only to listen to the closing plea of his opponent.

Abe Littlejohn, the leading attorney for the defense, still funereal in his black frock coat, which, in spite of the heat, he wore tightly buttoned, and still pausing now and then to knock the obtrusive cuffs into hiding, made a

strong plea, as even Van Horne was obliged to admit. The case, as so many graft trials are like to be, was one in which the guilt of the grafters was apparent in reverse proportion to the State's ability to prove it beyond all question of doubt. Littlejohn made the most of the dubieties. The burden of his plea was that it is always better to free ten guilty men than to condemn one innocent.

All through the long afternoon, Littlejohn's closing argument droned on, covering a complete review of the hard-fought case. Van Horne saw nothing in the extended plea to make him wish to reply; and yet he knew that in any appeal to a jury it is the last man's word which counts for most. Notwithstanding, when Littlejohn finally made an end, the substitute prosecuting attorney was glad enough to end the agony by refusing to reopen the case for the State; and immediately the judge began his charge to the jury.

Judge Farnham's charge was fair, and more than fair, to the indicted man. He, too, dwelt at some length upon the uncertainty of circumstantial evidence, and yet he cautioned the jury not to be swayed by their sympathies or their prejudices. When the jury went out, it was after five o'clock, and the court rose, subject to a resumptioning.

Van Horne got no farther away than to his office in the opposite square, and it was here that Bronson found him a little after six.

"Gone into your hole, and pulled the hole in after you, have you?" said the new arrival cheerily. "I was pretty sure I'd find you up here, mulling over all the things you can't help. Come on over to Fracassi's with me, and get a bite of dinner. The jury is still out, and it is to be locked up for the night. Is that hopeful, or the reverse?"

Van Horne shook his head. "It is hard to say. If those twelve men wish to convict, as I hope they do, there are still good reasons why they may well hesitate. It is hardly fair to compare the Darragh machine with the Camorra; nevertheless, these men may well fear that they may be made to

feel the heavy hand of the boss if they earn his enmity."

"Yes," assented the millionaire; "there are many means quite as effectual as the stiletto in evening up grudges nowadays. But come on; let's go and eat."

At table in one of the Fracassi dining rooms, Van Horne was inclined to sober silence. But Bronson prodded him faithfully, and finally got him aroused.

"No, I'm not surfeited; I'm just fairly getting started," was the way the substitute prosecutor defined his present attitude. "If ever a State in the Union needed a housecleaning, this one does. Sending a man like McBry over the road—if we're lucky enough to do it—is like swatting the single fly without cleaning the barnyard. This trial has cost thousands of dollars, and, as everybody knows, it deals only with an effort, and not even remotely with the cause."

"And the cause isn't going to be removed?" said the little millionaire.

"Certainly not. Shackleton, the man put forward by the machine, will be the next governor of the State, and he will be backed by the usual ignorant and subservient legislature. That means more of the same."

"But the new primary law," Bronson interposed. "Won't that do something for the plain people?"

"It is the efficient tool without the power to drive it. Principles still have their effect in America, thank God, but unhappily human nature responds less to the principles than to the man who advocates them. Shackleton will have no opponent worthy of the name. Garford is a good man without any of the gifts of the leader. Stannard is another good man, but he has too much money. Barker is a spellbinder, all right, but he is too much of a partisan to make the appeal to the solid men of all parties. And there you are."

Bronson ate in silence fairly through the salad course before he began again. Then he said: "I've got a bug in my bonnet, Van Horne. I was in the courtroom this morning, and heard your

sunning up. I don't know whether you realize it or not, but you are something of a spellbinder yourself. You have the ability to get good and hot under the collar in a righteous cause, and you have the gift of talking straight from the shoulder to men. I don't suppose you knew it, but you had that big crowd standing on its tiptoes this morning. Men around me were holding their breath for fear they might make a noise and so lose something that you were saying."

A slow smile spread itself over Van Horne's strong, square-jawed face.

"Oh, yes, I can rant when I have something to rant about."

"You proved it this morning. What do you say to stumping the State for the right candidate, if the right candidate can be found?"

It was the attack direct, and Van Horne ducked.

"I am not enough of a party man," he objected. "I don't mind telling you, Bronson, that I have never voted a completely straight ticket in my life."

"Parties be hanged!" said the millionaire. "The scratched tickets are rather to your credit than otherwise. If we can find the right kind of a leader, this won't be a party fight in any sense of the word; it will be the plain people against the bosses."

At this Van Horne smiled again.

"You rich people merely play at politics now and then, Bronson, and you don't know the first rules of the game. A man without an organization behind him is like a boss without a following."

"Is he so?" queried Bronson mockingly. "Then why is the new primary law on the statute books? Perhaps you can give me a guess at that."

"I know," returned Van Horne. "But there is no time now to organize the plain people, as you call them. Four weeks from to-day is the date set for the primaries."

Again the little millionaire relapsed into silence. When he broke it, it was to say: "I'm going to let you in on a small secret, Van Horne. Have you

ever heard of the Mesquite Business League?"

"Of course," was the short reply.

"I suppose you have been regarding it as a sort of sublimated chamber of commerce, haven't you?"

"Something of the sort—yes."

"Well, it is all that, and then some. Latterly it has been holding quiet little meetings and talking politics. We have men of all shades of political belief with us, but we are all pretty well united on the housecleaning question."

"We?" queried the attorney. "Do you mean to say that you are a member?"

"It is even so, singular as it may seem," grinned the millionaire. "To qualify, I became a silent partner in young Hudspeth's Foundry Company. So, you see, I stand for business—business with a little 'b.'"

"Good man!" applauded Van Horne. "But go on with your story. The Business League is in politics, you say. Just what is it doing—or trying to do?"

"Just now it has a tracer out for a strong man—some fellow who can get out and wake the people up to a sense of their responsibilities. It's biting me just now that you're the man, Van Horne."

"What makes you think so?"

"A number of things—you yourself first, and next the fact that at the present moment you are the most talked-of man in the State. This McBry trial has opened the door for you, and it'll be a crime if you don't walk in and take possession."

Van Horne was not given to making ill-considered decisions, but something in the little man's tone and words stirred him curiously.

"To-morrow morning when the jury brings in its verdict, I may be the deadest piece of political timber on this side of the Rocky Mountains, Bronson. Had you thought of that?"

"I am thinking of it now, and I'll make my asking merely tentative. If the verdict is with you, will you jump in and help us?"

This time Van Horne took plenty of

time to consider, and at the end his acquiescence was only conditional.

"Give me a good man to support, Bronson—a man with the right stuff in him, who will not only stand for the principles involved, but will really carry them out if he should be elected—and I'll be your spellbinder," he said, "provided I am still in the ring after to-morrow morning."

"You will be in the ring—I feel it in my bones," laughed Bronson; and then, after a rather longish pause: "I don't want to take snap judgment on you while you're excited. It will be a bitter fight—you know that, don't you?"

"Of course I do. It couldn't well be anything else, could it?"

"No. It will make you plenty of warm enemies—of the kind who will not stop at anything. You'll be broken on the wheel if breaking is in you; and if we shouldn't happen to win, you'll be a marked man—marked for a killing. I'm not sure that the machine couldn't make the State too hot to hold you."

Van Horne laughed. "You are taking exactly the right line now to make me hit out all the harder. If it wasn't for boasting, Bronson, I might take a leaf from Alan Breck's book, and ask you: 'Am I no' a bonnie fighter?'"

"You are, indeed," was the ready reply; "that is why I'm reaching out for you. But that isn't all; you'll have to say a lot of hard things about Boss Darragh."

"Not harder than I've been thinking for a long time past."

"Yes, but that was before you had been Mrs. Darragh's guest."

Van Horne's grin was militant. "Mr. Daniel Darragh is a fighting man himself, and he will take it as it is meant."

"Yes, but how about Anita?"

Van Horne had a rush of blood to the head—or heart—but he managed to say quite calmly: "Why should the political fight concern Miss Darragh?"

"You will find that it will concern her—very pointedly. Haven't I told you that she is the brains of the machine?"

"Yes; and I didn't believe it—don't believe it yet. If I take the field I shall give Mr. Daniel Darragh the time of his life—and do it without losing social face at the house in Sonora Plaza. You think I can't do it? I'll show you!"

Bronson bunched his napkin beside his plate, and took one of the cigars which the waiter was offering.

"Here's hoping," he said; and then: "I'm going to ask you to excuse me now. I've got a date with the small lady who spends the biggest half of my income for me."

Leaving the café with Bronson, Van Horne went to a near-by garage and hired a runabout for a drive into the country. It was a hot evening, hot with the desert-day heat that knows no surcease until the stars come out, and at the moment he was consumed by a vast desire to be alone. It was past nine o'clock when he drove back to town, and, surrendering the car, crossed to his office to once more try to get in touch with the postponed Amigo Valley purchase. He was scarcely settled at the big table before the door opened and Caddie Wester lounged in and dropped into a chair.

"Well, how is it coming by now?" she asked. "We missed you at Mother Drew's this evening."

"Yes, I was dining at Fracassi's with Bronson."

"Doing time while the wheels go round, are you? It's pretty rocky to have to wait until to-morrow morning before you can climb down out of the dizzy atmosphere, isn't it? Any hint from the jury yet?"

Van Horne's smile was entirely good-natured.

"You are first, last, and all the time a news gatherer, aren't you, Caddie?" he said amicably. "No, there is no word from the jury, and there ought not to be. And if there were, I should be the last man to pass it on to you."

Miss Wester tried to grin, but the effort, with the pretty eyes and the kissable lips for a background, was a failure.

"I've had a hint," she said. "There

are two men on that jury who will hang it."

"Bribery?" queried Van Horne, his eyes darkening.

"No, just plain scare. They are afraid of Dan Darragh—as you ought to be."

"Nonsense!" he retorted. "That is only a woman's notion. And you're trying pretty hard to be a man, aren't you, Caddie?"

In a flash the pretty eyes filled, and the man-girl turned her head away. A little later she said: "It's up to me to be a man, I guess. There isn't much room for a woman on my job."

"Then why are you doing newspaper work?"

"Why do any of us do anything that we do?" she retorted quickly. "Did you pick your job in life?"

"Yes, I think I did, in a measure."

"Then you are lucky. I couldn't pick mine. It was work or starve, and starving isn't easy; I know, because I've tried it."

"But your people——" he began.

"I have no people, except a couple of little kid sisters that I'm trying to keep in school. Wouldn't that jar you?"

Van Horne got up and walked around the table to stand in front of her. "You are a man and a gentleman, Caddie, and that is the finest thing I can think of to say to you just now. Past that I believe you are a true woman in all that the word implies. Does that help any?"

Again she turned her face away.

"Quit it! You are making me feel soft and squashy, when I ought to be as hard as nails," she snapped. "I came up here to bite the hand that feeds me, and if you go on talking that way I shan't be able to do it. Whichever way this trial comes out, you're in for the third degree. It's written in the book."

"You mean that the ringsters are going after me?"

"Something of the sort, yes."

He laughed easily.

"My record is good. I'm not afraid of them."

"Your record may not be so good

after they get through with you," she retorted. "You have already fallen for one little trap setting. You spent a couple of hours with Anita Darragh last evening, and this morning she sent you a note that came mighty near putting you into a hole. It was a clean frame-up from beginning to end—springing that crazy question on Wilkins. If you hadn't been the greatest idiot on earth—a man in love—you wouldn't have done it."

Van Horne was shocked, and he said so. "Your job on the *Flashlight* doesn't require you to be a detective or a spy, Caddie."

She laughed heartily.

"I didn't spy on you," she replied. "It was much worse than that. I overheard the frame-up."

It was rather a bolt from the blue for the man, who was just beginning to realize that he was in love.

"Caddie, are you asking me to believe that Miss Darragh lent herself to any such thing as that?"

Miss Wester left her chair, and went to sit on the edge of the great writing table. "You are only a man, after all," she said reflectively. "Don't you see what a good chance you are giving me to assassinate another woman? For some reasons I'd like to do it, only it might not be quite square in the present instance. It's possible—just barely possible, you know—that Anita Darragh wasn't entirely wise to the frame-up. Of course, I believe she was; but as long as you don't want to believe it you needn't."

"I certainly shouldn't believe it without very good and positive proof," retorted the man, who was acquiring the lover habit. "Is that all?"

"No. If you'll take a fool's advice, you'll stay out of politics, Mr. Edward Van Horne. If you go in, you'll get the third degree, as I said a few minutes ago—and it'll be given to you in the way that will hurt most. That's all—all but one thing: You come from a section of the country where it is considered disgraceful for a man to carry arms. Forget it, and go heeled. I know what I'm talking about. Now you can

go on gnawing among your papers; I've got to get back to the office and go to work."

Van Horne thought it odd that the merest bit of gentlemanly courtesy was sufficient to bring the tears to the resolute, boyish eyes again. When he stepped to the door and opened it for her, she turned upon him fiercely, with her lips trembling.

"Don't do that! Don't ever do anything like that to me!" she flashed out, and with that she was gone.

CHAPTER VII.

THE BUSINESS LEAGUE.

With the announcement in the morning papers that the jury in the McBry trial would undoubtedly bring in its verdict at the opening of the court, the capital city, known to buyers and sellers throughout the West as an "early-morning town," paused in its business hustle long enough to work itself up to a proper pitch of expectation.

In no uncertain sense, the result of the trial would be more than a routine victory or defeat for the good-government element. Victory would mean that there was still hope for the reform cause in the impending election, while defeat would prove that the machine was still triumphant and likely to continue so. Accordingly Judge Farnham's courtroom was thronged long before the opening hour; and when Van Horne, cutting the period of courtroom suspense to its narrowest limit, crossed the courthouse square, he was obliged to elbow his way into the courtroom through a crowd jammed to suffocation.

He had scarcely taken his place at the attorneys' table within the bar when the deputy sheriff's cry of "Oyez! Oyez! Oyez! This court is now in session!" rose above the buzzing of many voices, and a whisper ran through the crowd that jury number two was ready with its verdict.

Van Horne hardly dared to search the faces of the twelve men as the jury filed slowly into the double-tiered box,

and it seemed an interminable interval before the foreman, a retired cattleman, who had moved to the city to educate his children, stood up and cleared his throat. "We find the defendant, Douglas McBry, guilty as charged in the indictment," he said hoarsely, in reply to the judge's formal question; and at the words pandemonium broke loose in the thronged courtroom.

Judge Farnham was a Western judge, but he was enough of a martinet to resent vigorously the public assault upon the dignity of his court. When the court officer, hammering on the clerk's desk until the dust flew in clouds, had restored order, the judge read the spectators a biting homily on mob rule and the frame of mind which leads up to it, winding up with the promise that he would by no means proceed to pass sentence upon the prisoner at the bar in the presence of a riotous mob.

It was McBry himself, asking respectfully for permission to be heard, who begged the judge to reconsider. In a few broken words, he prayed that he might not be kept longer in suspense. "I can't stand it another day, your honor; give me what's coming to me, and let me face it like a man while I can!" he pleaded; and, notwithstanding the efforts of his attorneys to make him sit down, he repeated the plea, dropping into his chair only when the judge, relenting, made the sign of assent. Instantly Van Horne was upon his feet.

"May it please the court—one moment," he began; and then, wholly without premeditation, and in a burst of generous magnanimity which he could neither account for nor control, he made an eloquent and earnest plea for judicial clemency, rising to a height of pathos which was neither predetermined nor affected when he spoke of the sick wife, and of the children who were destined to be deprived, possibly in the same day, of both of their natural protectors. Never in his life had he spoken with more fervor and generous enthusiasm, and the strained silence of the listening hundreds bore eloquent testimony to the broader human sympathy

touched and instantly revived by his appeal.

Happily for the pleader's standing with the listening throng, the court, too, was moved by the earnest plea for mercy. In the few words in which he passed sentence upon the convicted grafter, Judge Farnham referred to the magnanimous appeal, saying that it was quite without precedent in his experience. In deference to the application of the acting prosecuting attorney, and to the fact that justice, in reaching for the many, had brought only a single offender to the bar, he would impose only the minimum statutory penalty, which he proceeded to do.

A few minutes later the prisoner had been remanded to jail, the court had risen, and the crowd was slowly wedging its way in buzzings of excitement toward the exits. The good news had already made its escape to the streets, and was spreading rapidly from lip to lip. Round one in the long battle with graft and corruption had been fought to a finish, and for a little space the pause in the business hustle became a clamant demonstration of triumph.

Van Horne waited purposely until he could slip out to the open square without too many waylayings and congratulations. At the curb, where Bronson and a few of his fellow enthusiasts caught him, and were proceeding to make him unpleasantly conspicuous, he saw Anita Darragh about to enter her car. At her beckoning, he broke away from the enthusiasts quickly, and crossed the sidewalk.

"I suppose I, too, may be permitted to offer my congratulations?" she said, giving him her hand; and then she quoted, half mockingly, he thought: "Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other.' You are the man of the hour, Mr. Van Horne—the popular idol, if you choose to be."

"I have no choice in the matter; I have simply done my duty as I saw it," he hastened to say. "I am sorry, for your sake, that I had to step into Bristow's shoes, but the public duty was emphatic."

"Sorry?" she echoed. "I don't see why you should be. So far from blaming you, I want to thank you very heartily for what you did a few moments ago. I was there, and heard you, you know. It proved what I have been hoping—that you are big enough and manly enough to play fair. Just the same, I'm glad it's over—for your sake."

"So am I," he said frankly. "It is not my line; otherwise I should have chosen it long ago."

"Then you will drop back into your regular practice?" she asked, with whatever interest she may have felt carefully concealed.

"Oh, yes, for a steady thing. I had no idea of abandoning business law when I took Bristow's place in the emergency."

"That is better. After what has happened, I should be sorry to see you yield to the temptation."

"What temptation?"

"The temptation to go into public life—to become a politician. Of course, you know you have the chance—a chance that will hardly come twice in a lifetime. Your name is in everybody's mouth just at the moment, and I fancy you could have what you should ask for—if you ask quickly enough."

"And you think I ought not to ask?"

"I should think it would be pleasanter for you if you don't. I have read your character very carelessly, Mr. Van Horne, if I am mistaken in thinking that you don't like to make enemies. You have made some very enthusiastic enemies in the past week, I'm afraid, but they'll forget you presently if you don't repeat the offense."

His laugh was meant to be a clever evasion. "You think I may be tempted to repeat it?"

"You will probably be given ample opportunity," she returned. "Mr. Bronson and his friends will see to that. They're waiting to get hold of you again now, and I mustn't keep you." And with that she let him put her into the waiting machine.

Notwithstanding Miss Darragh's con-

fidant prediction, Van Horne did break away from Bronson and his fellow enthusiasts, excusing himself rather abruptly when the Darragh car rolled away, and going across to his office to take the final plunge into the matter of Amigo Valley titles. Being by this time sufficiently well convinced that his client—Winter—was not giving him his entire confidence, he meant to conclude his researches in the shortest possible order, and when the papers were in condition to be turned over to another attorney he meant to drop out of the matter.

The work carried him safely through the day, and there were few interruptions—none at all from the political quarter of the heavens. Late in the evening he went across to Fracassi's for a solitary dinner, returning afterward to his office to push the title business to its conclusion.

It was precisely at this hour, as it chanced, when Van Horne was squaring himself at his table for a long evening's work, that a few representative business men of the State met behind locked doors in the ordinary of the Sierra Hotel. In the meeting, which was informal, Bronson was the acting chairman, and a sun-browned young man from Sutro, answering to the name of Grisby, served as secretary.

"I owe you gentlemen an apology for calling you in by wire from all parts of the State to be present at this meeting," Bronson was saying; "but the time was so critically propitious that it must plead my excuse. In former conferences we have all agreed upon this one point—that any movement looking toward the possibility of success must turn upon the question of leadership. Hitherto we have been unable to agree upon a man who could take the field with some hope of success against Lewis Shackleton. You all read the newspapers; have we, or have we not, found the man?"

"Van Horne, do you mean?" It was Halsted, the owner of a small group of mines in the Arriba Hills, who asked.

"And who else would it be, I'd like

to know?" broke in the thickset man with the rich brogue.

There was a chorus of approval, followed immediately by more or less dubious questions:

"Will he run, do you think?"

"Has he been long enough in the State to qualify?"

"Has he got the sand to make the big fight as stiff as he made the little one?"

And from a quiet gentleman whose house was next door to the Darraghs', in Sonora Plaza: "Is it entirely certain that Van Horne is free from entanglements, social or otherwise, which might hamper him in the bigger fight?"

Bronson held up his hand, and won his chance to speak.

"One at a time, and I'll try to answer you," he laughed. "Yes, he will run if we take snap judgment upon him and make him run. To you, Mr. Black, I will say that he is a legal resident of the State not disqualified in any way from an election to the highest office in the gift of his fellow citizens. You, Mr. Chambers, ask if he has the courage. I haven't known him very long, but——"

"Hold on!" cut in Grisby. "I've known him since he was knee-high to a hoptoad. If Ed Van Horne was ever afraid of anything that goes on two legs, nobody ever discovered it. As a boy, he used to be the kind of fellow who would do all his shivering and teeth chattering before the fact, and then walk up to the thing and smack it on the jaw."

"That leaves only your suggestion unanswered, Mr. Thorndyke," said Bronson, turning to the quiet gentleman in the corner. "I am reasonably certain that Van Horne has none of the entanglements, social or other, which might make him less available at this crisis. Beyond that, as I know the man, his high character is a sufficient guarantee of his loyalty. Mr. Grisby has said that he does not know what fear is; I may add that his honesty of purpose is also beyond question."

From this hasty discussion of the

man, the meeting went quickly to the matter of ways and means. Under the new primary law, the name of any candidate could be placed upon the ticket in the preference column upon the petition of a certain number of qualified voters. It was a fact well appreciated by all present that the time was crucially short; also that the moment for launching Van Horne could not be postponed. Grisby and a number of the others argued that the present was the psychological moment—the moment when Van Horne's brilliant court success had placed him so prominently before the people of the State.

At this several of the delegates offered to be responsible for the petition lists, each in his own neighborhood; and Grisby, again taking the floor, urged that prompt action be taken, so that the benefit of the court episode might not be thrown away.

"Mr. Bronson has spoken of taking 'snap judgment' upon the situation," he went on; "from which I infer that Van Horne might not consent unless he is fairly committed before he has a chance to refuse. Gentlemen all, there are no longer any party lines in this State; it is every honest man against the gang. Mr. Chairman, I move you that Edward Van Horne be, and is hereby, declared to be the independent candidate before the primaries for governor of this State!"

There were half a dozen eager seconds, and a roar of approval when Bronson put the question. After which Grisby rose again.

"I don't want to be the man to lead the Business League into a hole without pointing the way out of it," he said, with his cheerful grin. "If the chairman will appoint a committee of three to wait upon Editor Rawley, of the *Tribune*, I think we may assume that Van Horne will be committed beyond any hope of escape by the time the *Tribune* gets on the streets in the morning."

"If there is no objection," said Bronson; and he thereupon appointed the committee, which, with Grisby as its chairman, went immediately upon its

errand, and the meeting of delegates—"associate members of the Mesquite Business League" they called themselves—was adjourned to reconvene in the lobby of the hotel early the following morning.

In the dispersal at the door of the ordinary, Bronson locked arms with the quiet-eyed man, who stood at the head of the Thorndyke Mercantile Company.

"You spoke of possible entanglements; just what were you aiming at, Thorndyke?"

"Nothing; possibly less than nothing," was the ready answer. "Night before last I happened to be sitting out on my porch, smoking a bedtime pipe. You know, there is a street light hanging opposite the Darragh carriage entrance. About nine o'clock I saw the Darragh open car come in with a single passenger. The passenger was Van Horne, and I wondered whom he was going to see."

"Why did you wonder?" asked Bronson quickly.

"Because I knew, or thought I knew, that the Darraghs were all out at their ranch on the Pedro. My daughter had told me they were going, and the big house, from my point of view, was all dark, as if it were shut up. Of course, it was none of my business, and I didn't think any more of it at the time—forgot is so completely that I fell asleep in my chair. When I awakened, it was half past ten, and the Darragh auto, again with Van Horne as its single passenger, was just coming out through the carriage gate. I don't know why I should attach any importance to so small a thing, and now that I have stood it fairly upon its feet I guess I don't."

Bronson was silent while they were walking the length of the mezzanine floor together. Then he said: "I guess I'm responsible, in a way, Thorndyke, for Van Horne's social connection with the Darraghs—or, rather, I should say, with the Darragh women, for I don't believe he has ever met the boss to speak to him. Just why he should make the late-in-the-evening call you speak of

I don't know. But if you weren't sure that Miss Anita Darragh was a member of the Pedro ranch party, I'd hazard a guess, and say she sent for him."

"On the McBry business?" queried Thorndyke, as he was pressing the button for the elevator.

"Just that, you'd say. I happen to know that the camp of the enemy was pretty thoroughly stirred up after Van Horne took Bristow's place, and old Dan wouldn't be above going at the new prosecuting attorney through Anita."

"That is exactly what I was thinking," remarked the quiet man slowly, as the elevator came up. "And it was what made me say what I did in the meeting. Miss Darragh is a strikingly beautiful young woman, and if her father should be unscrupulous enough to use her in the fight we've been outlining there's no knowing what might happen. I was young once myself, incredible as it may seem to you, Bronson, and in my case also there was a woman. You're not going down? All right; I'll bid you good night and go home."

CHAPTER VIII.

IN THE HANDS OF HIS FRIENDS.

There were usually copies of each of the morning papers waiting upon Mrs. Drew's breakfast table when her guests came down to the meal, which was served indifferently from half past six to eight o'clock.

Van Horne was commonly one of the first to come down, and on the morning in question he had only Jecks and Durlan for his companions. Inquiry developing the fact that neither of these had seen the morning papers, Van Horne went to business a little later with an eye alert for a newsboy. Oddly enough, he had walked the three squares intervening between Alameda and Sierra Streets before he found one, and in that short space he had been met and enthusiastically congratulated—upon the outcome of the McBry trial, as he supposed—by at least a half dozen of his townsmen acquaintances.

Upon turning into the business street, he soon found what he was looking for, and he remembered afterward that he had wondered vaguely why the boy was yelling "All about the nomination!" and why the passers-by were stopping in knots and groups to buy papers. But a single glance at the first page of the *Tribune* banished the wonder—or, rather, turned it into a crude shock of astoundment. In black-type headlines which began by giving him generous credit for the conviction of McBry, he read:

BRIGHT YOUNG ATTORNEY MAKES HIS MARK.

Edward Van Horne's Hat Is In the Ring. Independent Caucus Names Him Candidate for Governor Before Primaries.

Van Horne, still staring incredulously at the black type, had bumped awkwardly into three or four people on the sidewalk before he realized that he was passing the entrance to the Marburg Building. Seeing a dodge hole of safety, he ran for a waiting elevator, and was presently ducking to cover in his fourth-floor office. He had scarcely taken his seat at the table, however, when the telephone bell rang, and Bronson's voice came over the wire.

"Hello!" said the voice cheerfully. "You're there at last, are you? Just sit still and hold your breath for a minute. A few of your friends are coming around to call upon you."

Van Horne said "All right," though in his heart of hearts he was well convinced that it was anything but right. Happily he was not kept long in suspense. After an interval so short as to suggest the alertest readiness on the part of the callers, the corridor door opened under Bronson's hand, and the small office filled quickly with men pressing forward to shake hands with the honoree, all talking at once, and each adding his word of hearty congratulation.

After the handshaking, Bronson, act-

ing as spokesman, introduced his crowd as State-wide members of the Mesquite Business League representing for the moment the independent voters of the State. In a few well-chosen phrases, he told Van Horne what had been done, and why, winding up with an earnest plea for the favorable consideration of the unofficial convention's action.

Van Horne, who had struggled to his feet at the door opening, was beginning to regain something of his customary self-possession when he replied:

"Bronson—and you gentlemen all—I should be something less than a human being if I did not appreciate at its true value the honor you are seeking to do me. But for many reasons I feel it is my duty to decline——"

"Name 'em!" shouted the delegates as one man; and the nominee responded promptly:

"In the first place, I am a young man, and comparatively a newcomer in your State. Until within the last week I venture to say that not even one voter in a thousand had ever heard my name. In this crisis you need a man well known and well trusted by the common people—a man whose name and standing are already well assured. There are scarcely half a dozen towns in this State where I would not have to be introduced as an entire stranger, and for this cause, if for no other, you would be inviting defeat by choosing me for your leader."

"Piper's news!" sang out a voice in the crowd. "We've considered all that. Shake down some more of the reasons."

"There are plenty of them," said Van Horne definitely. "Next in order is the fact that I know practically nothing about the local politics of this State. I have been a quiet working-man——"

This time it was the square-shouldered Irishman with the red hair and fringed beard who interrupted:

"'Tis a ricommendation you're givin' us now, Misther Van Horne. 'Tis the political expert that we're thryin' to bar out o' the game."

And another voice added: "There are no politics in this fight, and there

is only one issue—the people against the bosses."

"Very well, then," Van Horne went on; "I'll drop the personal side of it, and take up the other. One condition has been lost sight of in all the comment I have seen upon the new primary law. In no uncertain sense, the new law has made politics a rich man's game. Let me give you an illustration: In a certain State not long ago—a State which has a very excellent primary law—one of the senators has been under investigation for an expenditure of something over a hundred thousand dollars in his campaign for reelection. An examination of the facts proved that nearly half of the hundred thousand might have been legitimately used, and was probably so used, in a straight canvass of the voters and in a very moderate and modest campaign of publicity. I can assure those of you who don't know me personally that I am anything but a rich man."

At this Bronson came promptly to the front.

"There are a few of us who have a little money to invest in a good cause," he said modestly; "enough of us right here in this room to guarantee the legitimate expenses of the campaign. I may go so far as to say that we considered this phase of the situation last night in our caucus." And then, with his quaint smile: "Haven't you about exhausted your kicking ammunition, Van Horne?"

"I see that I'll have to go back to the personal end of it, after all," said the nominee, flushing a little under the pressure of things. "I'm afraid you all have a mistaken idea of me. Just now, when certain circumstances have combined to make me loom rather larger than I deserve to, you are saying to yourselves that I am the one God-sent leader; no one knows better than I do how sorely you may be disappointed if I take you at your word this morning. I will confess to you who are my friends that I have had little experience in public speaking outside of a courtroom. I am not at all sure that I could hold an ordinary mixed au-

dience for a short half hour. Don't you see that you can't afford to make experiments?"

It was Thorndyke who replied, speaking for the first time since the beginning of the conference:

"This last reason of yours is entirely our risk, Mr. Van Horne, and if we choose to take it—but, as you know, we have already taken it definitely and beyond the possibility of backing out. We are committed, even more decidedly than you are." And then to Bronson: "Mr. Chairman, I move you that we call the discussion closed, and proceed to a consideration of ways and means—in other words, get busy. Mr. Van Horne, what is your idea of the way in which the campaign should be conducted?"

Van Horne laughed like a game fighter who has been hammered fairly to the ropes.

"You've got me, gentlemen," he said. "If you still insist, I am your man, for better or for worse. As to the campaign, there is only one kind of a campaign that we can hope to make in the desperately short time which remains to us. I would suggest that a committee be appointed here and now to arrange speaking dates for me anywhere and everywhere, keeping in view the fact that practically the entire State must be covered within the next four weeks. The personal, man-to-man appeal is the only thing that can possibly count now. What do you say?"

It was Bronson who said, and he said it very promptly. "Volunteers for a committee of arrangements," he called; and half a dozen men, with Editor Rawley at their head, fell into line. "Good!" said the chairman; and then to Van Horne: "How soon can you be ready to begin firing?"

The nominee rose courageously to the occasion: "By to-morrow evening, if you can make that early a date for me. After that you may count upon me for as many speeches in each twenty-four hours as the distances to be covered will admit. If I had an auto——"

"You've got one," put in Bronson. "The pukka doctor says I've got to keep

outdoors if I want to live, and I'll donate the car and a dead-alive man to drive it. Rawley, gather your committee and go to work, and we'll adjourn, since there is nothing to sit on here but the floor. Van Horne, our temporary headquarters are in suite seventeen at the Sierra. You'll find some of us there at any time when you think you need a conference with the powers. And now we'll leave you to think it over."

During the day of announcements, the plunge of the new independent party into the political pool, with the deputy prosecuting attorney for its leader, was easily the headliner for the capital city. Hearty approval characterized much of the street talk, but coupled with it there were many forebodings. Would the machine lie down and let the bantling run over it? Not in a thousand years, so said the public voice; at least, not while Boss Darragh was at the steering wheel.

All day long anxious young newspaper men roamed the streets in search of people who could talk with authority, or besieged the third-floor suite in the Sierra; and when the evening edition of the *Flashlight* came out with a covert sneer at the new nominee, everybody knew that Darragh had spoken, and that the battle was on.

Van Horne, free at last from the Amigo Valley land muddle, dined that evening at the Sierra Hotel with Bronson, Grisby, and Rawley, the editor of the *Tribune*. One of the first things that Grisby asked him about was the Amigo deal, and when Van Horne remarked that he had given the title hunt over to young Ellijay, the manager of the *Turquoise* smiled.

"It's a good thing you gave it up," he said. "You couldn't very well run for governor on the antimachine ticket, and at the same time act as advisory counsel for the Sierra Pacific Railroad."

"What's that?" queried Van Horne.

"It's right," said Rawley, breaking in. "Winter's scheme—or, rather, Vice-president Guthrie's—was to get hold of the Villarosa grant under irrigation rights, and so to freeze the Su-

tro Valley quietly out of existence. I've known it for some time."

"You should have published it," Van Horne put in quickly. "One of the weaknesses of the times is a certain lack of sincere public spirit in the newspapers."

"Not guilty," laughed Rawley. "I was merely keeping it until the time should arrive when the pricking of the bubble would do the most good. Now that you are out of it, we shall pay our respects to Mr. Winter to-morrow morning. No, don't look shocked—I'm not going to ask you for any of the dope, or involve you in any way. We've got the stuff on file in the office, and some of it is already in type."

"Another narrow escape for you, Van Horne," laughed Bronson; and after that the talk concerned itself more pointedly with plans for the coming campaign.

It was during the frozen-punch interval that Grisby, leaning across the table, said to Van Horne: "Look who's here—three tables to the right, and straight across."

Van Horne looked, and saw Miss Darragh, who was apparently playing the hostess to four young women. The quintet had just come in, and Van Horne was wondering vaguely why Miss Anita chose to entertain her friends at the hotel instead of in her own home, when Bronson called him off:

"If you are through, Van Horne, we'll go up to the rooms. There are half a dozen little things that ought to be thrashed out, and I don't know when we four shall be able to sneak a quiet half hour together again."

Now, the straight course to the dining-room door which gave upon the lobby was directly past the table occupied by Miss Darragh and her friends, and it was the lover in Van Horne which prompted him to let the others precede him, so that he might stop and say good evening to the boss' daughter. It was a rather reckless thing to do in the public dining room—or, to say the least, impolitic—but he himself was so far above the meaner subterfuges

that he was slow to play any game of expediency.

"I was wondering if you were going to pass me by without speaking," was the greeting he got; and then, in a tone meant for his ear only: "Shall I introduce you?"

"Not now, please; my friends are waiting for me in the lobby. I merely stopped to ask how you have been."

"Since yesterday?" she asked, with a return of the radiant smile. "I ought to feel flattered, and I'm not sure that I don't. When one is twenty-three and past one learns to value such kindly solicitude at its true worth." Then before he could reply: "What are you doing this evening—anything so special that you cannot give us a half hour in Sonora Plaza?"

If Van Horne had been more of the politician and less of the lover, he would certainly have replied in the affirmative. As it was, he said eagerly: "I think I shall have a little time later—perhaps between eight and nine, if that will not be too late."

"It is never too late to mend," she quoted playfully. "I shall expect you. Now run along, and don't keep Mr. Bronson and Mr. Rawley and the other gentleman, whose name I don't know, waiting."

It is to be feared that Van Horne did not measure quite up to his normal standard of keenness and originality in the conference abovestairs which followed close upon the heels of this meeting with Anita Darragh. At the end of it, it was Bronson who said:

"You're tired, Van Horne, and you show it. Go home and go to bed. You need a good night's rest, and this will be the only one you can safely figure on for the next four weeks."

Van Horne got up and reached for his hat.

"I believe I will go, if you don't mind," he said; and two minutes later he was climbing into a taxicab and giving the driver orders for Sonora Plaza.

As on the occasion of his former late-in-the-evening visit, the great house was quiet and apparently deserted, though there were lights on in the lower

story. And as before, it was Miss Darragh herself who came to the door to admit him. But this time she did not take him to the smoking den. On the contrary, she drew the portières, and led the way into one of the great drawing-rooms. One of the side windows had a deep seat with a couch and cushions, and she made him stretch himself out in luxurious comfort before she would let him begin to talk.

"You certainly do have the knack of making a man comfortable, Miss Anita," he said, when the subtle thrills of the needful relaxation stole over and through him. "I never know how tightly I'm keyed up until I come here and let you cosset me."

"That is my *métier*—making people comfortable," she returned, sinking into a low chair where he could look into her eyes without turning his head. Then she added: "I think you need comforting just now more than anybody else I know."

He laughed easily. "Politically, you mean? I can at least plead guilty in intention. I think you must know that the announcement in the *Tribune* this morning was as great a surprise to me as it was to the public at large."

"I guessed it," she said simply. "What you said yesterday about taking up your law practice again made me sure that you hadn't authorized it. You are going to decline the honor, are you not?"

He flushed a little when he said: "On the contrary, I have accepted."

"It was a mistake," she remarked calmly.

"Just why?" he queried. Then he added: "I've been hearing so many things on the other side that I'd be thankful for an *ex-parte* opinion."

She smiled straight into his eyes. "As if you could hope to get that from Mr. Daniel Darragh's daughter!" she retorted mockingly.

"I do hope to get it," he persisted. "I believe in you thoroughly enough to be sure that you would say what you think in any circumstances. Don't spare me."

"If I don't," she said half musingly,

"it will be because I don't want to see you hurt. You are on the eve of entering a perfectly hopeless battle. I don't say that you will come out without honor. I am sure you will make a brave fight. But you will not win; you will not be allowed to win."

"That is what your father would doubtless say, but I am very sure you are not speaking for him. Why do you say I won't be allowed to win?"

"Because the reforms you advocate cannot come suddenly, and when they do come they will not come from below. Your appeal must necessarily be to the people—to the public at large—and you can hardly be a practicing attorney without knowing how loose a handful of sand public sentiment is likely to be. You can't make a rope of it, try as you may."

At this the fighting smile came and wrinkled itself at the corners of the steadfast eyes.

"We are miles apart right at the beginning, Miss Anita," he said soberly. "You see, I believe in the people, and you do not. Show me one great reform that has ever won its way in America, and I will show you a well-spring of motive which has gone deep into the hearts of the common people."

"But I am sure you have not weighed the cost," she asserted.

He smiled again.

"You would say that this State has been virtually owned and controlled by the Sierra Pacific until the railroad people think they have acquired a property title in fee simple. You will add that I will make many and bitter enemies, as you intimated yesterday. I know—perhaps better than you do—how true this is. Within the past three days I have been held up by a man with a gun in my own office."

"That is the least of the dangers," she returned, shaking her head gravely. "May I be entirely frank with you—as a faithful friend?"

"Indeed, you may," he answered warmly.

"I don't think you need fear violence. The day when men used to shoot first and ask questions afterward has safely

passed for us, I hope. But there are other wounds more deadly. Could you stand it to have every little act of your past life scrutinized, twisted, turned, distorted, and held up to public view? If you can, you are not like most men."

"Yes, I can stand it," he said, meeting her gaze fairly. "Not because I have been better than other men, perhaps, but because I am entirely willing to suffer something for the common good. But I am taking an unfair advantage of you. I am letting you try to argue me out of it, when I ought to have said at first that it is definitely too late. I am 'in the hands of my friends,' to use the hackneyed phrase, and my word is passed to do my best."

She rose half wearily, as he thought, and he made to rise with her. But she waved him back among the cushions of the window seat.

"Don't go yet," she begged. "I have one more argument to offer. Will you excuse me for a moment?"

He nodded, and said "Certainly," wondering a little as she disappeared between the portières what shape the final argument would take. He was not kept long in doubt. When she came back it was to hold the portière aside for the entrance of a big, florid-faced man in smoking jacket and slippers, and with a half-burned cigar between his strong teeth—a man whose eyes of Irish gray were twinkling genially when he crossed the room and held out his hand to Van Horne.

"My father, Mr. Van Horne," she said briefly; and then she disappeared, leaving the freshly plucked nominee shaking hands rather grimly with the arch enemy of reform.

CHAPTER IX.

BOSS DARRAGH.

Van Horne, taken wholly by surprise by the unexpected entrance of Daniel Darragh, lost his head only for a moment. While he was shaking hands with Anita's father, he was making a swift estimate of his antagonist, sizing him up as the ring fighter meas-

ures his opponent in the perfunctory glove touch before the battle.

Oddly enough, his first impression was that Darragh was formidable chiefly for his size. The most malignant of tyrants could scarcely look the part in an embroidered smoking jacket and slippers. When Darragh began to speak, the impression tended to confirm itself. His voice was rich and musical, and the twinkling eyes, set deeply in the massive frame of the face, were wise and kindly.

"'Tis a fine thing in ye, Mr. Van Horne, to remember your friends on this day," he said genially; and the Irish, what little there was of it, was more in the tone and the softly trilled "r's" than in the pronunciation. "Not many men would find time to go calling on the day of their political baptizing. 'Tis an honor ye do us."

Van Horne hardly knew at first how to take the gentle raillery of the arch enemy. But, being a guest in the man's own house, he could only retort in kind:

"If I were as good a politician as you are said to be, Mr. Darragh, I might say that a man's friends always come first. Being so definitely on the other side of the fence in the political field, I thought it might be well to come here at once and make my peace," he laughed.

"I can see this minute, Mr. Van Horne, that you are going to be a fighting man after my own heart," declared the boss, planting himself deeply in the easiest of the big chairs. "You're not smoking; if you'll push the button on the window frame behind your head, the man'll come and bring ye the makings."

"Thank you," said Van Horne; "I don't care to smoke just now. I have been smoking too much lately."

"A drop of the creature, then? I've a spoonful or two of the real Irish left in the ship's locker."

"Nor that, either," was the smiling rejoinder; then, with a sudden plunge into the midst of things: "I'm thinking it may be well to keep my sober wits about me, Mr. Darragh. Miss

Anita told me when she went away that she was going to bring another argument. She has been trying to convince me that I ought to decline the honor which has just been thrust upon me, you know."

"The gir-rl has a level head; I'll say that much for her, if I am the father of her. Whatever possessed ye, Mr. Van Horne?"

"Not any very keen desire for political prominence, I assure you," was the ready reply. "I'll say frankly that I am heartily in sympathy with the independent movement, but I had no thought of offering myself as a leader."

"Some are born to honors, some acquire honors, and now and then there's wan or two of us that have them crammed down our throats," said the man in the big chair sententiously. "I thought that was the way of it; they picked ye first and told ye afterward."

"Something of the kind, yes," Van Horne acquiesced.

"And you, not knowing how to refuse a bunch of good fellows, let them slip the rope over your head. 'Twas a foolish thing, if ye'll let me say so, Mr. Van Horne."

"Just why was it foolish—beyond the fact that my friends may have chosen a lame duck?"

"For yourself," was the prompt reply. "There's nothing doing in politics for a young man of your ability. Ye've had an object lesson in the last few days that ought to 've told ye that."

"More money, you mean?" said Van Horne coolly.

"A deal more money. I'm on the inside, Mr. Van Horne, and I happen to know that another day would have brought you the biggest job in the State. Ye wouldn't believe it, maybe, but I saw the wire from Frisco."

Van Horne smiled.

"A railroad job, I take it," he said quietly; and then: "It's too late now, Mr. Darragh."

"Not if ye have sense enough to reconsider," was the shotlike answer.

"Let us say, for the sake of the argument, that I am totally lacking in that kind of sense. What then?"

"Then we can come back to the other foolishness. Of course, ye know ye can't win in the political free-for-all?"

"I know you say I can't, Mr. Darragh."

"'Tis the Heaven's truth, Mr. Van Horne. Ye have no organization, no platform, none of the pulleys and wheels that go to the making of a political party. Ye'll say that ye need none of these things—that you'll appeal to the plain people. 'Tis a fallacy that's ruined many a bright young man before this; I've seen it many's the time."

The boss was lying back in his chair, with his dead stump of a cigar tilted at an angle of forty-five degrees, and his eyes were half closed. In the moment of silence which supervened, Van Horne heard a rustling in the shrubbery outside of the deep-seated window. Turning quickly, he thought he saw a shadowy figure sink out of sight below the window sill. His first thought was to give the alarm, but at the instant the shadow resolved itself into the figure of a man in chauffeur leather walking openly along the driveway to the rear.

"Fallacy or not, I am fairly committed, Mr. Darragh," he said at the end of the pause. "I must fight it out as I may. And that brings me to another thing which I am anxious to say to you as man to man, and I hope you will forgive me for saying it to you in your own house. Rightly or wrongly, you are called the boss of this State, and I shall probably have to say a good many hard things about you in public during the next four weeks. I hope you won't take it——"

The big man's laugh was deep-chested and apparently sincere. "As if I'd be minding a little thing like that!" he chuckled. "The Lord love ye, Mr. Van Horne! If you can think of anything to say of me that hasn't already been said by every spellbinder under heavens, 'tis a fine invention ye'll have. More than that, I'll give ye my blessing. Go to it, and bring back the money, as they say up in Washington; and remember in the thick of it that the front door'll be always open to ye."

It's not Dan Darragh that'll be turning you out for the bit of political difference that may lie between the two of us."

After that Van Horne could scarcely refuse to go with his host to the cozy smoking room and to burn a peace offering with him out of a box of gold-banded cigars. Needless to say, the political field was left safely behind in the great drawing-room. Not once in the quiet half hour which followed did the boss refer to the political situation. On the contrary, he talked art, and Van Horne was not a little surprised to find that his host was no mean connoisseur, with a collection which would have been creditable in many an older environment. When he finally took his leave, Darragh went to the door with him, and, as once before, he found the house automobile waiting.

"Ye wouldn't be walking downtown after the hard day ye've been spending," said the boss hospitably. "The machine is yours; keep it and Barney until you're through with them. Good night to ye, Mr. Van Horne, and ye'll remember what I said about the front door. The more ye use it, the better I'll know ye're not meaning more than half of the hard things ye're saying about me. Good night."

On the following morning, which had been scheduled in the hasty conferences in suite seventeen as the opening day in the campaign, the *Flashlight* came out with an editorial retracting much which had been said in its evening edition of the previous day. The article took the form of a correction. Lest the readers of the evening edition should be misled, it was stated that the *Flashlight* had nothing to say against Mr. Van Horne as a man, a gentleman, and an able attorney. So far from it — And then followed a half column of dignified praise which might have been written by Van Horne's most partisan indorser. And the edge of the praise was scarcely dulled by the concluding paragraph, in which the editor lamented that so good a man should be so little known, and should stand so small a chance of reaching his goal.

Bronson was the first member of the league to burst into Van Horne's private office, newspaper in hand.

"Here's the devil to pay!" he exclaimed excitedly. "Darragh's going to choke you to death with butter. Have you seen his editorial?"

Van Horne nodded.

"It's dictated," Bronson declared.

"What makes you think so?"

"Because it proves that Darragh has seen some reason for changing his tactics. His evening paper says one thing, and his morning paper says another."

"I am concerned less with what Mr. Daniel Darragh does than I am with what we are going to do," said Van Horne briefly. And then: "You'll have to fend for me to-day, Bronson. Be a good fellow, and keep everybody away from me. I've got to do some pretty hard grinding if I am to speak at the opera house to-night, as you fellows have arranged."

Bronson went away obediently, taking his copy of the *Flashlight* with him. Further, he took the word to the headquarters at the Sierra Hotel that the "Big Smoke" was at work on his speech, and was not to be interrupted. The prohibition held good until the middle of the afternoon, when Thorn-dyke came up to the headquarters. Finding only Grisby and Bronson, both friends of Van Horne's, in possession, he freed his mind frankly.

"The trouble has begun," he announced, with an abruptness which was unusual for him. "There's a story on the street that our man has already struck hands with the machine."

"Nonsense!" said Bronson, half starting to his feet; and then he added: "We can look for things of that sort right from the jump. They'd be a poor lot if they couldn't lie about us."

Thorndyke's smile was grimly deprecatory.

"I'm sorry to have to be the one to throw cold water," he said; "and I'm also sorry that there seems to be just a shadow of foundation for the story. We've got to devise some means of keeping Van Horne away from the Darragh house. He was there again

last night—went there after he left us here.”

Bronson bounced up, and began to walk the floor, saying things. “Of course, he went to see the girl,” he rasped; “but that wouldn’t take the edge off for anybody that wanted to make capital of it.”

“It wasn’t Miss Darragh who came to the door with him about ten o’clock and sent him home in the Darragh car,” said Thorndyke; “it was Dan Darragh himself.”

Bronson whirled upon the wholesale grocer with a bad word. “You say the thing is on the street—you shouldn’t have mentioned it, Thorndyke.”

“I haven’t mentioned it until now,” was the quiet reply. “That is why I am saying that Van Horne ought to be labored with.”

“I’ll labor with him,” said Grisby; and he went to do it forthwith.

The emissary found Van Horne’s office door locked, and it was not until he had beaten his fist sore that the one who was to be labored with opened to him.

“Oh, it’s you, is it?” was the not too hospitable greeting; and then: “Come in and say it, and say it quick. This is my busy day.”

Grisby needed no second invitation, and when the door was closed and locked he began in the middle of things:

“You were out at Dan Darragh’s again last night, Van, and it won’t do. You’ve got to quit it.”

Van Horne sank back into his chair, with the fighting smile wrinkling at the corners of his eyes.

“Clifford, if you, or Bronson, or any of them, think I’m going to be dictated to in any such way as this, you are making the biggest mistake of your lives. I did go to Mr. Darragh’s house last night; and, more than that, I saw and talked with Mr. Darragh himself. Now, make the most of it.”

“I tell you it won’t do!” insisted the faithful friend. “The story is already on the street that you’ve made a bargain of some sort with Darragh, and

it’ll grow—grow like a weed! We’ll take it for granted that you’re hooked up with the girl——”

Van Horne froze solid at the word. “Clifford, you’ll oblige me by leaving Miss Anita entirely out of it. There is no man, or party of men, on God’s green earth who can tell me what houses I may visit, or what houses I must dodge. Let that end it. Now you can tell me about this story which has sent you here to stick pins into me.”

“It is known on the street that you were at Darragh’s house in conference with the boss. Naturally the worst possible construction is put upon it, and it will be used against you. That might not make so much difference if it didn’t have a tendency to throw a scare into your best friends. You must remember that they don’t all know you as well as I do.”

“Piffle!” said Van Horne angrily. “If I’ve got to fight street gossip as well as all the other things, I might as well throw up my hands at the start. Keep them off of me, Clifford—keep ’em all off of me. I’m busy, and I don’t want to be disturbed.” And when Grisby had let himself out through the corridor door he heard the lock snap viciously behind him.

In point of numbers, at least, the independent rally at the opera house that night, the opening gun of the campaign, was an unqualified success. The great auditorium was packed to the foyer, and when Van Horne, who was a little late, took his place on the stage in a semicircle which was well filled with members of the Business League, he was greeted with round after round of applause.

It was Thorndyke who made the introductory address. Stating briefly the object of the meeting, and touching lightly upon the reforms which the new movement was designed to bring about, he presented the league’s nominee for the governorship as a man who had already earned the right to be heard.

There was more applause when Van Horne, looking every inch the alert fighter, came forward and took his

place beside the piece of stage property which was made to serve for a rostrum. With little or no preliminary, he began at once precisely where Thorndyke had left off. Passing rapidly through a review of the existing situation, and emphasizing in the plainest possible speech, not more the ring rule which disgraced the State than the public apathy which permitted it, he proceeded to point out clearly and concisely the remedy and manner of its application.

At first the applause was merely respectful, but as the speaker warmed to his subject it began to come spontaneously, and at the first mention of Darragh's name it burst out in an uproar. "That's right! Give it to the boss—he needs it!" yelled a man in the upper gallery; and Van Horne held up his hand for silence.

"So far as I am concerned, my friends, this is not going to be a campaign of personal abuse," he went on, his clear tenor reaching to the farthest corner of the great auditorium. "Unhappily for Mr. Darragh, the fight must necessarily center upon him as a man because, to the best of your belief and mine, he serves as the instrument in the hands of those who are oppressing us."

Again the thunderous outburst interrupted him, and when it subsided he went on:

"But it is with Mr. Darragh, the boss, and not at all with Mr. Darragh, the individual, that we have to deal. This fight is not against the individual; it is against the machine and its methods in politics; it is against the small oligarchy which names for us our governors, the members of our legislature, our judges, and to an appalling extent our lesser public officials. Naming the lawmakers, it is able to make its own laws, and to force them upon the unwilling citizenry of the State. It is our shame and humiliation that we have to bear the taunt that no citizen of this State, however just his cause, may securely count upon justice when that cause is tried under statutes formulated by the general counsel of a corporation, when juries are bought, and court

officials bribed, and when even the judges themselves are often overawed by the threatening shadow which hangs like an ominous cloud over every courtroom in this fair young commonwealth of ours."

Once more the applause was deafening, and it was a full minute before the speaker could again make himself heard. When he resumed, he was once more the calm and dispassionate leader of men.

"In a few short weeks, my friends, we shall be given an opportunity—this time, thank God, under more favorable auspices than ever before—to say whether this State shall be a democracy or whether it shall continue to be a shameful oligarchy. Right here let me say a word in honor of the faithful and loyal few in the last legislature who fought against overwhelming odds, and won for us, wringing it by the sheer might of righteous conviction from an unwilling majority, a law which once more restores the governing power to the common people.

"When that opportunity comes there must be no halfway measures. An angel from heaven in the gubernatorial chair could do nothing if the members of his legislature were not heartily and honestly true representatives of the people whom they are pledged, not to govern, but to serve. Here, to-night, as elsewhere in the State where I may be permitted to speak, I desire to urge with all the force and earnestness there is in me the necessity of the clean sweep. Know your senator, or your representative, personally, if you can; but in any event well enough to be sure that he is *your* representative, or *your* senator, and not a creature of the machine. Knife me at the polls, if such be your pleasure; you might find a far better leader than I could ever hope to be, and at best your governor is but one man, helpless if he be alone in a fight against many; but for your own sakes, and for the honor of this fair State of ours, choose out men for your legislature and for the other elective offices who will have the courage to say to Mr. Darragh, to his machine, and to the oli-

garchy which they represent: "Thus far, and no farther, shalt thou go!"

A short half hour after Van Horne, interrupted at every period by the recurrent bursts of handclappings and cheerings, had climaxed in a peroration which earned for him the campaign name of the "Silver-tongued Spellbinder of the Sierras," a little group of men was gathered in the superintendent's office on the second floor of the railroad building. Darragh was there, his big body tightly filling the superintendent's armchair. At his right sat Bogardus, the timber king, and Morris Levy, the Western head of the Smelter Trust. The irrigation barony was represented by a small man with hatchet-like features, and at the head of the superintendent's table desk sat a rugged figure of a man whose personality dominated the room as his railroad dominated the Mesquite State.

"Well," the railroad vice president was saying in his quiet, masterful tone, "you've all heard him; what do you say?"

"He's a spellbinder, all right," said the man with the hatchet face. "I'm giving it out that he's going to cut ice with the dear people."

"It's up, to you, Darragh," said the vice president definitively. "Give him what he wants, and get him out of the way. We can't afford to have that kind of a fight on our hands this year."

The boss was shaking his big head doubtfully.

"I'm thinking we'll not buy this one, Mr. Guthrie," he said slowly.

"Then it's up to you to fix him some other way. Don't say that it can't be done; it's got to be done!"

"I've been thinking," said Darragh, still more deliberately; and then, in an even monotone, he let his thoughts dribble into words. When he made an end the other members of the Inner Circle were applauding silently.

"You'll do, Darragh," was the railroad official's comment. "I'll say this much for you—you're loyal to your salt, even when it costs you something. I think you can count upon a proper testimonial from the Sierra Pacific—

for the young people, you know. Gentlemen, I move you we adjourn. It's getting rather late in the night."

CHAPTER X.

THE CAMPAIGN.

With the rally at the opera house in the capital for its starting point, the whirlwind campaign through the State began vigorously. Taking first the larger towns, which could be reached by railroad, Van Horne followed the itinerary made up for him by his committee of arrangements, speaking three and four times in the twenty-four hours, and throwing himself into the work with a fine disregard for the limitations of strength and endurance.

Everywhere he was greeted by enthusiastic crowds, and his audiences were eagerly sympathetic. In mining camp or agricultural town, the attitude of the people was the same, and this was the more remarkable since the committee, lacking a well-equipped party organization to back it, was able to do little preparatory work.

What little the committee did do, however, was well done. Old-line party issues were ignored, and the rallies were mass meetings of citizens rather than partisan gatherings. After the larger towns had been covered the nominee took the field in Bronson's auto with the pseudo sick man driving. At once the work became immeasurably harder upon Van Horne, the number of the daily speakings being vastly increased among the smaller audiences. Everywhere the speaker harped upon the one theme—steadfastness of purpose in the rank and file, with a careful, common-sense selection of candidates. More and more he emphasized the duty of the voters to act for themselves, warning his hearers that there was no party organization behind the independent movement, and telling them plainly that with the well-oiled Darragh machine against them, it was a war in which there could be no exemptions.

After three or four days of the auto

racing, Bronson and Grisby both saw that Van Horne would cheerfully kill himself if he were allowed to do so. Hence the route was varied, and the dates rearranged so that there could be a night spent now and then in the capital for rest.

What Van Horne did with himself on these off nights was presently well known both to his friends and to his enemies. With the slightest possible excuse, he was either at the Darragh house, or the Country Club, or elsewhere with Anita; and more and more the story gained ground that there was a secret understanding between the independent candidate and Dan Darragh.

Before three of the critical four weeks had passed the story had acquired a startling addition. It was whispered about that the young attorney who was fulminating so emphatically against Boss Darragh and the machine in his daily speechmaking was, or was about to be, Anita Darragh's accepted suitor. At the first hint of this, Grisby and Bronson, sharing the onus together this time, tried to break down the barrier of reserve which Van Horne had builded about his private affair.

The effort was a flat failure. "Once more I must tell you two good friends of mine that I will not stand for any interference in my social affairs," was the way in which Van Horne went back at his overanxious advisers. "Miss Darragh and I are good friends, and I don't mean to do or say anything, or to refrain from doing or saying anything, that will break the combination. The public has less than nothing to do with my social diversions. I am fighting for freedom, and I mean to have my share of it."

"But, Van," protested Grisby, "they are saying now that there is an engagement which would be openly acknowledged if you were not in the thick of the fight. Jacks told me to-day that even the boss himself doesn't deny it when he is pushed to the wall."

"Well, there isn't—not yet," said the nominee sourly. "But if there were, it is nobody's business but my own, and

it wouldn't make any manner of difference politically. I will leave it to you two to say if I have spared Darragh or the machine in any way since I took the stump here in the capital on the first day of the campaign. It is true that I haven't vilified Mr. Darragh personally, but that is because I don't believe a campaign of personal vilification is what is needed."

Bronson groaned, and Grisby shook his head; whereupon the candidate said more:

"It has been a clean fight thus far, and you will have to admit that the opposition has met us decently upon our own ground. Shackleton has had a good deal to say about the amateur in politics, but he has never once descended to personalities."

"You're dodging," said Grisby. "The point is just this: You are constantly giving grounds for the accusation that there is a secret understanding between you and the boss. We, and a few of your closest friends, know that it isn't true; but that doesn't help out much."

"Just the same, I refuse to be dictated to in this matter," insisted Van Horne stubbornly; "and I'll tell you both again that you may as well drop it. As a matter of fact, I haven't exchanged ten words with Daniel Darragh since that first night, when I told him plainly what I was going to try to do to him and to his machine. He took it in good part, and left his front door open for me—and, by heavens, I'll use it as I see fit!"

This futile attempt to rope Van Horne down in the sentimental field timed itself in the third week of the whirlwind campaign. After that there were few opportunities for the sentimental divagations, either at the capital or in the field. Bronson, grimly setting his jaw, drove the touring auto from camp to camp in the hills, determined to wear himself, the machine, and the candidate to frazzles before he would permit another return to the city of temptation.

Grisby was also deep in the plot. Surrendering his place in the candidate's car to Caddie Wester, who had

been given a speech-reporting assignment for the *Flashlight*, he borrowed a runabout, and turned himself into an advance agent, wiring back an addition of dates that gave the candidate scant time to eat or sleep.

"These fellows are doing their best to kill me off, Caddie," said the hard-worked one on the last night but one of the whirlwind round, the place being the lobby of the Hotel Alcazar, in Su-tro, and the exact time being the quarter hour before midnight, when Van Horne had made one speech in the opera house, one at the Turquoise Mine, and two to overflow crowds in the open air.

"It sticks in my mind that you need killing off worse than any man I know," was the entirely manlike rejoinder. "It's a plot, if you want to know it, and I'm in on it."

"A plot?" queried Van Horne, who was too weary to be alertly himself.

"Yes—a little scheme to keep you from making a fool of yourself in town. I don't mind telling you now that we've got only one more day of it."

"Oh, good Lord! You, too, Caddie?" groaned the victim of the plot. "And I've been taking all the nice things you've been sending in to the *Flashlight* about me as if you meant them!"

"Humph!" said the man-girl bluntly. "I write what I'm told to write, and I haven't been told to blacklist you. That only goes to show how much more the plot was needed." Then she added: "Thank goodness, it won't make any difference after the day after to-morrow."

"You'll have to show me," said Van Horne. "I'm too tired to-night to know or care anything about the to-morrows."

"You'll be shown, all right," was the offhand reply. "If you want to know just how, you might read up in the Book of Judges along somewhere about three-quarters of the way through it."

"That doesn't tell me anything," he laughed. "If you could make it Chitty or Blackstone, I might be able to recall it."

"It's a story," she said, with a quick upflash of the pretty eyes; "the story of a man who thought he was the Big Ike of his day. He played politics, just as you're doing, and, like you, he thought he could run a little sentimental side show coincidentally. You lack a good bit of being a Samson, my friend, but you are playing with Delilah just the same, and one of these fine mornings you're going to wake up to find that she has given you a convict clip, right."

CHAPTER XI.

THE PESTILENCE THAT WALKETH IN DARKNESS.

It was the night before the battle of the primaries. Grisby had taken Bronson's place at the wheel of the touring car, and was making the last flying trip with the candidate in the region of the Barreda camps, and the little millionaire, worn to the frazzle he had been confidently expecting, was closeted with Thorndyke and Rawley in the editorial rooms of the *Tribune*.

"We're near enough to the edge now to begin on the summing up," Rawley was saying, "and I'm wondering if you two have the backbone to face the chilly fact. I don't want to be the first to start an epidemic of cold feet, but I can tell you it looks mighty bad for us."

"On account of these asinine stories about Van Horne and Miss Darragh?" questioned Bronson.

"The stories have doubtless done their part," said the editor; "but the deeper I dig the more I am convinced that the sentimental business has been merely a bit of skillful dust throwing to hide the real purpose of the machine. You will both admit that the stories have hampered us to the queen's taste. We have all been kept so infernally busy denying them that we haven't had much time to do anything else."

"That's so," admitted Thorndyke thoughtfully.

"I am confident that there is something else going on in the background," Rawley went on, "and the fact that

Darragh has made no open fight is the best possible evidence that he has been carefully and painstakingly making the other kind. This young-woman diversion has come in pat, and it is pretty evident now to all of us that Darragh himself has been helping it along."

"If he has been doing that for the mere dust-throwing purpose, it is the foxiest thing he has ever put across," said Bronson, adding: "It is beginning to look as if we might have a pretty bad case of paralysis without knowing it."

Rawley was nodding slowly.

"Old Dan is pretty hard to beat when he puts his mind to a thing. I've been digging like a gopher during these last few days, putting every man on the staff into the detective squad. And now, at the eleventh hour, I am obliged to confess that there is nothing doing. If Darragh has a subterranean plan carefully hidden under the sentimental business—as I make no doubt he has—he has tunneled it so deep that we haven't been able to unearth it."

"How much or how little is Miss Darragh herself concerned in these plots and counterplots?" queried Bronson. "I'm asking for Van Horne's sake. I'm afraid—I'm horribly afraid—that it's no joke to him."

It was John Thorndyke who answered the query:

"We know the Darraghs pretty well—we can't very well help it, living next door to them—and my daughter has always been very fond of Anita. We all know that Anita has some advanced notions about the suffrage, and all that, and for that reason she has been credited with taking part in her father's political plottings. Personally I don't believe she has; personally, again, I believe she is a high-minded young woman who would be the first to condemn chicanery and corruption wherever she might find it."

"That helps out—a little," said Bronson. "I've hated to think that she was lending herself knowingly to this dust-throwing business. Van Horne is much too good a fellow to be treated that way. But all this isn't bringing

us any nearer to old Dan's subterranean tunnelings. I've realized, in knocking about the State with Van Horne, how utterly helpless we are in the matter of machinery. We have been able to do nothing, you might say, but to try to arouse public sentiment. We haven't been able to get at the working part of it at all; and we can't shut our eyes to the fact that all the election machinery is still in the hands of the Darragh crowd."

"That's just the point," put in the editor dejectedly. "The present election committees will appoint all the judges and polling officers, dividing the places between the two great parties, and taking care that a safe majority of them are machine men, regardless of party. In addition to that, they will, to a very considerable extent, be able to put forward the men whose names will appear on the ballots as delegates to the State convention. Here's what I've been coming around to in these last few days: We may get a majority for our candidate for governor in the preferential column on the ballots, and at the same time lose out on the other State officers, the legislature, and on the delegates to the State convention."

"In other words, at the pinch, the new primary law is going to prove a lame straddle between a straight-out election by the people at the polls and the old, worn-out convention system. When all is done, the final fight will have to be made in the convention, after all," said Bronson.

The editor nodded. "The primary law was the best we could get at the time, and we were lucky to get even that much out of the last legislature. What we've got to hope for is this: That the preferential vote for Van Horne will be so overwhelming that the delegates, machine men or not, will not dare to go against the plainly expressed will of the people. It's a sort of shackly hope, I'll admit, with a man like Dan Darragh in the saddle on the other side."

"Well," Bronson summed up, reaching for his hat, "it's on the knees of the high gods now; we're at the end of

the rope, and to-morrow will tell the tale. I only hope Van Horne won't break down after the strain comes off. He's as big a fool about overworking as he is about Anita Darragh. Come on, Thorndyke, let's go home. If Rawley wasn't the most good-natured editor on the planet he would have fired us out an hour ago."

At the precise moment when Bronson and Thorndyke were leaving the *Tribune* office, the man whose personality had figured so largely in their talk with the editor was playing a solitary game of billiards against himself in the great, bare room at the top of the mansion in Sonora Plaza. Darragh was in his shirt sleeves, and he had the customary half-burned cigar between his teeth as he circled slowly around the table, nursing the balls like an adept. When he was splitting the string for a continuation of a run which was already well up toward the hundred mark an automobile with its exhaust cut out came roaring into the plaza.

By the sounds, the auto stopped somewhere in the near neighborhood. Through the open windows of the billiard room came the squeak of the brakes and the low drumming of the motor out of gear. Darragh shut one eye and stared knowingly at the open door giving upon the boxlike entry to the automatic electric house elevator. Then he went on playing his string placidly until the elevator came up, bringing the big-figured man who presided over the destinies of the Sierra Pacific.

"They told me down below I'd find you up here," said the vice president curtly. "You're a lucky man, Darragh, to be able to play solitaire with a billiard cue at a time when every other man in the State is working or worrying his head off."

"That's it," said the billiard player calmly; "that's just it, Guthrie. 'Tis the man that can take it easy that wins out in the political game. I was up here knocking the balls about with the girl, to rest up a bit, but she's gone now."

Guthrie perched himself in one of

the high-legged players' chairs, and Darragh went on with his game as if there were nothing more important in the world than the holding of his run unbroken. After the nursed balls had made another inching circuit of the table, Guthrie broke out impatiently.

"Well?" he growled. "I didn't stop my special train and motor up here to watch you play billiards. What's the outlook?"

"Wan of them is Teddy Roosevelt's paper in New York," said the big billiard player, with a twinkle in the gray Irish eyes. "The other wan—the wan you're sweating about—is on its last legs"—he paused, and slowly shifted the extinct cigar from one corner of his mouth to the other before adding: "For the independents."

The vice president sprang to his feet with a bound, and Darragh held up his hand, saying: "Not so heavy on the floor, if you please, Guthrie. You'll be juggling the table."

"Confound your table—and you with it, Darragh!" said the great man testily. "Do you mean to say that we've put it across, after all?"

The boss laughed grimly. "Would I be here playing billiards with the end of my nose if we hadn't?" he demanded. "All we're needing now is for the pay car to come along."

"I gave you a free hand," snapped the railroad man. "We'll foot the bills. How much has it cost you?"

"Take a piece of paper and a pencil, and put it down," said the player, deftly herding the three balls ahead of his cue into a promising corner. And then: "Ye'd better itemize 'em, for it's the only bookkeeping ye'll ever get."

The vice president dug into his pockets, and found a pencil and the small pocket pad of telegraph blanks which he always carried on his journeys.

"Call them off," he said shortly.

Darragh did it by districts, naming the districts and the men who were bribed in them as readily from memory as if he had been reading from a printed list, and never missing a shot in the solitary game of billiards while he talked. But at the end of the list the

phenomenal run broke with a miss, and he threw down his cue in impatience.

"I knew ye'd do it before ye got through," he said morosely. And then, struggling into his coat: "You say your special is waiting? I'll go below with you, and we'll take a small drop of the Irish on our friends, the enemy. 'Tis easy when you know how. Chambers'll get a few votes, and Shackleton'll come next, with the young fellow from the law office pulling the big string. But when they come to count up the votes for the delegates to the convention—do ye see? 'Twas a grand fight, and, between the two of us, Guthrie, I'm sorry for Eddie Van Horne. Let's be going."

The small electric house elevator was still sinking on its way to the ground floor when a young woman whose face had scarcely more color in it than there was in the white house dress she was wearing entered the billiard room through a French window opening upon a small aerial balcony which formed the outdoor lounging place for the third-story recreation room.

Passing swiftly around the billiard table to the spot where the vice president had been standing while he wrote in his telegraph book, she stooped and picked up a sheet of carbon paper which she had seen flutter to the floor when Guthrie was returning the book to his pocket. She knew instantly what had happened. The book of blanks was a self-copying affair, with a carbon sheet inserted between the leaves, and at the critical moment the carbon had slipped out. Wide-eyed and pallid, but with her pretty jaw set in a very fair imitation of her father's when he was reaching for a strangle hold upon some antagonist, physical or figurative, she held the slip of black paper up to the cluster of table lights.

The chances were a thousand to one against her, but the odd chance was in her favor. The carbon paper proved to be a new sheet, and there were no marring doublings to obscure the names and figures in the dreadful list inculcating not only the bribed henchmen

in every quarter of the State, but also Vice-president Guthrie and—her father.

While she was holding the paper up between her eyes and the light, the gentle purring of the electric elevator began again. Like a guilty thing, she thrust the bit of black paper into her bosom, and fled down the long room and through a door from which an unused stair led to the lower parts of the house.

CHAPTER XII.

AFTER THE BATTLE.

There was a hustle of fierce work on in the office of the *Tribune* on the night of Election Day, but it did not penetrate to the big room at the end of the suite, where the editor in chief sat at his desk, surrounded by Bronson, Thorndyke, Grisby, and a dozen or more other members of the Business League.

The exciting game of watching the returns was on, and from time to time a boy darted in from the telegraph editors' room, bringing tidings. As each fresh installment of news came in, the group around the editor's desk turned itself into the likeness of a college crowd celebrating a hard-won victory on the gridiron. By all accounts, Van Horne had swept the State from Bull Dog to the boundary in the preferential vote, with Shackleton a bad second, and the third man entirely out of the running.

Since the league's fight had centered almost exclusively upon Van Horne, and his indorsement was taken to be the best possible evidence of the turn of the tide, the minor details were naturally obscured for the hilarious celebrators. That Van Horne had won triumphantly soon became unquestionably evident. Long before midnight the returns had given him such a safe lead that the result was no longer in doubt.

It was the thickset Irish iron founder with the fringe beard who first asked why the winner was conspicuous by his absence, and a knowing smile went around the circle.

"I guess we know about where we

can pot him," said Grisby; and Rawley reached for the telephone, the knowing smiles of the others broadening into grins when he called for the Darragh house number.

At the mansion in Sonora Plaza there was a dearth of excitement—of stirrings of any kind. The boss' wife had gone East on a visit; and the daughter, acting as chatelaine, had cut the roll of servants to the bone, as she usually did when her mother went away. Earlier in the evening the master of the house had been visible at intervals, but he had disappeared some time after nine o'clock, leaving his daughter to entertain her chosen guest as she might.

They were together in the smoking den—Van Horne and the young woman—when the telephone call came from the *Tribune* office, and it was Anita who answered. "Somebody is asking for you, and from the color of the voice I should say it was Mr. Editor Rawley," she said, beckoning to Van Horne, and extending the earpiece of the phone.

Van Horne resumed the lately cast political burden unwillingly. He was much nearer to the breaking point physically than he would have cared to admit, and he said hard things under his breath when he saw how his hand trembled in taking the phone.

At Rawley's first words, however, the bitter aftermath of fatigue vanished magically. After a one-sided conversation in which the listener's part was merely the interjection now and then of "Fine!" "Good enough!" "Splendid!" he hung the receiver up, and turned to the young woman with a little pulse of excitement beating at the edge of his clean-lined jaw.

"What would you like to hear?" he asked, striving to make the question fit in with the light and entirely frivolous talk which had gone before.

She seemed strangely embarrassed. "You mean the—the election returns?" she asked half hesitantly. "There is good news?"

His laugh was not intended to be grim, but it figured that way.

"That depends upon the point of view. I am afraid your father will consider it very bad news, indeed. Rawley tells me that I am running far ahead of Shackleton, and that Chambers is nowhere. Are you glad or sorry?"

At this the young woman's embarrassment grew palpably painful. Finally she managed to say: "I am sorry—sorrer than I could make you understand." Then, with purely feminine irrelevancy: "It's cruel! It is worse than that—it's dastardly!"

Van Horne's laugh was perfectly good-natured. He could afford to be generous.

"I didn't know you cared so much," he said. "You haven't seemed to take much interest in this campaign, and you haven't said anything to lead me to believe that you would consider my nomination by the primaries such a tremendous misfortune for the State."

When she looked up her eyes were suspiciously bright.

"It isn't that," she began. "If I could only tell you—but I can't. Only you mustn't climb so high that the fall will kill you. There might be a fall, you know; surely they can't tell definitely yet what the result will be."

This time Van Horne's laugh was a little cynical.

"You were so sure I would be beaten?" he returned, adding quickly: "I don't blame you in the least, you know. It is only natural and right that you should stand with your father. But you don't know just how much this success means to me"—he had dropped back into his easy-chair, and the look of utter weariness was coming again to dull his eyes—"how much I needed it."

Again the flush of embarrassment rose in the pretty neck and cheek. Van Horne had flattered himself that he was coming to know Anita Darragh intimately, but this was an entirely new presentment of her.

"Needed it?" she queried. "I have been thinking that the State and the public service needed you—that you were above any need for the office or the honor."

"You don't understand," he said gently; "and perhaps this is a good time for me to tell you. Four weeks ago, when I began coming here to see you, the story got about that I was shamelessly double-crossing my own friends; in other words, that I had made a bargain with your father."

The young woman looked shocked, as she had a right to.

"They were saying that my father was playing his daughter off against the political opposition?" she said, and the brightness in the beautiful eyes grew rather hard.

"Something of that sort," he rejoined gravely.

"And they came to you about it?"

"A few of them did—some of my closer friends. Quite naturally, I told them to go to the devil."

"But you believed it," she insisted.

"I didn't go far enough into that phase of it to believe or disbelieve. As a matter of fact, I didn't care what your father was doing. So long as you were good enough to be kind to me, it didn't make any difference what he thought, or what people were saying."

"But your honor was involved," she cut in quickly. "If you had been defeated at the polls to-day—if you had not received the indorsement of the public—you would have been ruined, utterly ruined. They would have said then that the bargain had been carried out. How can you sit there and calmly tell me such a thing as that?"

It was Van Horne's turn to be embarrassed now.

"I thought you knew," he blundered helplessly. "I have done my best in the political fight, as I think every one of my friends will bear me witness. But that was entirely apart from another and a much greater thing. I love you, Anita! Surely it hasn't taken you four weeks to discover that, has it?"

If her changed attitude had been puzzling before, it now became wholly inexplicable.

"No, no!" she burst out almost fiercely. "You mustn't say that—here and—and now. Wait—wait until you know. Then you will—then you'll—"

The skirl of the telephone bell broke into her impassioned protest, and since she made no motion to answer, Van Horne again took the receiver. When he turned back to her he was trying to regain some of the verve and energy which had carried him through the hard-fought campaign.

"You spoke better than you knew," he said quietly. "I am not to be allowed to win out so easily. Rawley tells me now that Shackleton's men all over the State are filing notices of contest, the charge being that Bronson and others of my friends have been resorting to bribery. I must go. My place is once more in the thick of it. I—I rather think I underestimated your father, Anita, dear. You may tell him so, if you wish."

She went with him to the hall, and helped him on with his light topcoat, coldly and quite dispassionately, as he thought; and at the door opening he said what he was constrained to say:

"Anita, girl, there is only one way in which this wretched gossip tangle can be straightened out. Some people will say that I made love to you to tie your father's hands; others will say that your father has been using you in the way I have intimated. But if we let it be known now, before the result can possibly be settled beyond any question, that we are engaged—"

She shook her head stubbornly.

"No, Edward; while I have the breath and strength to say it, it must be 'No.' Hear me; if you knew what I know—what I could tell you—you would never come here again; you would despise the name of Darragh and everything connected with it. Go back to your friends; you are their leader, and your place is on the firing line. Forget these last four weeks, if you can, and try to believe that I—"

Van Horne had opened the door, and this time the interruption was the deep-toned clang of the fire bell in the tower of the city hall.

"Listen," she said, breaking off quickly; and together they counted the strokes: One—two—three, a pause, and then: One—two—three—four.

"Thirty-four! That is the Plaza box. It must be somewhere near here!"

As she spoke, a man came running across the parked circle, yelling at the top of his voice. Van Horne darted out, and ran down the steps of the veranda, turning quickly as soon as he was clear of the eaves to look upward. Out of the open windows of the third-story billiard room a thick smoke cloud, laced here and there with tongues of flame, was rolling silently.

With a cry of horror, Van Horne dashed back to the door. "It's your own house!" he burst out. "The upper story! Is there anybody up there?"

The clamor of the coming fire apparatus was filling the air, but he heard her choking reply:

"My father! After he left us, I heard the elevator running. He must have gone up to amuse himself alone at the billiard table, as he so often does. Come—come quick!"

She led the race to the little entry in the rear hall which gave access to the electric elevator, but Van Horne was at her side when she stopped with a sharp little cry of dismay. The elevator was up, and there was no answering pur when she frantically pressed the button.

"The stairs!" she panted. "The current has gone off!" And the fire machines were clanging in the plaza when they ran up the broad stair in the entrance hall to the second floor. Here, as it became quickly apparent, the main stair to the third floor would have to be abandoned. The smoke was rolling thickly down from above, and it was evident that the fire had been burning for some time before the alarm had been turned in.

"This way!" she cried, leading Van Horne quickly through her own chamber and dressing room to the unused stair down which she had made her escape the night before. The door at the stair foot was closed and locked, but Van Horne put his shoulder to it, and the light panels gave with a splintering crash.

Instantly they were met by a smothering outrush of the thick smoke cloud,

but when the girl would have plunged into it, regardless of consequences, Van Horne held her back. "No, this is a man's job," he said sharply. "Go back and see that the servants are out. I'll get him if he's up there!" And, with his bent arm as a shield for his face, he darted up into the crackling inferno.

What happened after the dash up the stifling stairway figured to Van Horne, farther along, as a series of broken sceneshifting in a harrowing dream. When he reached the billiard room the fire was roaring in the attic space above, and the smoke, save at the level of the floor, was filling the room with a warm black cloud. Van Horne went down on his hands and knees, and, with his face to the floor, he crept blindly through the reek.

But for a sudden crash of the plastering overhead, and the illuminating of the cloud by a burst of flame that seemed to scorch and shrivel him as he crouched, he would never have been able to find the big figure of the boss lying face down in the door of the elevator entry. When he did find it, he was at loss what to do. To drag the huge body of the boss back to the little stairway was his first thought, but now the ceiling was giving way in great patches, and he realized that the retreat in that direction was cut off.

Frantically he strove to lift Darragh, and was suddenly made to understand that he had overdrawn his account in the killing work of the past four weeks. Try as he might, he could not raise the big man to his feet, and the effort showed him that Darragh was far past helping himself.

For the moment it looked as if he would have to stay and be burned to death with the man he had come to rescue. Then, by the red glow of the fire above him, he saw the car of the electric elevator hanging in its well, with the door of the cage standing open. Instantly he understood why the machinery had not responded to Anita's touch of the button below. Like all automatic installations, the elevator could not be moved while any of the doors of exit were left unclosed.

After that the way of escape seemed broadly open. Crouching for a better hold, he dragged Darragh across the little entry, and, with his breath coming in gasps, got him into the car. Dizzied and reeling, he thought it strange that it took his last ounce of strength and resolution to slide the wire door of the cage into place. By this time the ceiling of the entry was beginning to crack and fall, and, glancing upward, Van Horne could see the flames playing about the framework which supported the cable pulleys.

Praying that the framework might hold until the descent could be made, the rescuer groped for the row of electric push buttons at the side of the cage. Two of them he pressed without result. At the third touch there was a crash, a blinding shower of coals like the blast from the mouth of the bottomless pit, and Van Horne knew no more.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE NEWS FROM AROYA.

It was two days before the date of the assembling of the delegates to the State convention in the capital, and a week after the spectacular race of the independent candidate for the governorship at the polls, when Grisby came in on the noon train from Sutro, and sought Bronson in the deserted committee rooms at the Sierra Hotel.

"Aroya was our best chance, and it has gone by the board," he said, wearily dropping into a chair. "I have been over the entire situation up there, and they've got it on us hard and fast, with suborned witnesses, who will swear that you spent money illegitimately to secure the result. They are going to do the same in Higbee County, in El Chico, and in the Bull Dog district."

Bronson rapidly made a few figures on the pad under his hand.

"That won't give them a working majority," he objected.

Grisby's answer was a cynical grin.

"No; it will merely give them something to wrangle over in the temporary organization. As a matter of fact,

Bronson, it is a mere mask for the biggest piece of villainy ever perpetrated in this State. *They've got the majority in the convention without these contests!*"

Bronson bounded from his chair in a rage so healthy that his Eastern physician would have pronounced him entirely cured.

"Got the majority!" he echoed. "What in the name of common sense do you mean, Grisby?"

"It's the simplest thing in the world," said the engineer mine manager in curt derision. "While we were out speechmaking, Darragh was quietly making sure of the personnel of the delegates. The result is that our own ticket has carried a good many machine politicians here and there—men who have not made much stir, even in their own district, but who can be depended upon to vote as Darragh dictates. Where these men were at all doubtful, money—Sierra Pacific money, without doubt—has been used liberally. I have been assured of this in a dozen different ways; but, of course, there is no evidence."

"Naturally," snapped Bronson, sitting down again, and gritting his teeth. "Which means that we shall have to sit calmly by and see them put the steam roller over us and Van Horne while the poor fellow is too sick to say a word for himself in his own defense. Just the same, it doesn't seem possible that Darragh will have the nerve to push it through in the face of Van Horne's overwhelming majority. If he does, it will mean the end of the machine in this State even more definitely than it would be brought about by a victory for Van Horne."

"Darragh's up again, is he?" questioned Grisby half absently.

"Oh, yes; he wasn't hurt very much by the fall of the elevator in the burning house. He's up and out, and no doubt caucusing with his bribed delegates this minute."

"Has the mystery of the fire been cleared up yet?"

"Partly. It was probably a short-circuited electric wire. Darragh says that

he was upstairs alone, knocking the billiard balls about to amuse himself, when he first smelled the smoke. Thinking that it was some one burning trash in one of the neighboring back yards, he paid no attention to it until a sheet of plastering fell off and hit him on the head. After that he says he remembers nothing clearly. As he recollects, he was trying to find the elevator when the smoke choked him and put him out of the fight. He didn't know when Van Horne reached him."

"Then Van Horne got the worst of it, after all?" said Grisby thoughtfully. "It's a pity that the falling elevator didn't crack Darragh's head instead of his. How's Van getting along by this time?"

"He is still unconscious—or, rather, delirious—and the hospital doctors shake their heads and look wise when you ask about him. He'll get well, all right, of course, but he'd do it a good deal quicker if he hadn't so nearly killed himself in the four weeks' campaign. He was just about all in physically when the fight was over. We were a pair of asses, Grisby, to let him do it. I know it, because three very excellent women have told me so."

"Mrs. Bronson is one of them," hazarded Grisby, with his boyish grin; "and, for a guess, Miss Caddie Wester is another. Am I right?"

"You are."

"And the third?"

"Is Anita Darragh, of course. What she said to me would make a whole campaign document in itself. She told me that if Van Horne died his blood would be upon my head—or words to that effect."

"Bronson, do you believe down deep in your heart that she knows what her father is trying to do to Van Horne?"

"You can search me, Grisby—and you won't find the answer to that. Sometimes I think she does, and at other times I'd be willing to make affidavit before a string of notaries a mile long that she doesn't. Anyhow, she's standing by Van Horne like a little lady. She spends half of her time in the hospital anteroom, waiting to get

word from him; and Becker, the house physician, told me last night that in spite of all his prohibitions she bribed one of the nurses to change places with her in Van Horne's room for an hour or so."

"Good little girl!" said Grisby approvingly. "I know but one other with grit enough to do it."

Bronson looked across the table at his companion with a slow drooping of the left eyelid.

"I'll bet a piebald broncho worth at least ten dollars and a half that you don't dare to say as much to the other one, Clifford," he said mockingly.

"I'm only waiting for my chance," declared the engineer. And then warmly: "It's the most pathetic thing you ever heard of, Bronson—the fight that poor little girl has been making. I didn't get it from her, as you may well believe, but I've fished it out, a little here and a little there, until I've got the whole story. Her father was a professor in an Eastern university, and up to the time she left college she'd never known anything harsher than the well-behaved tittle-tattle of the university town where she had been born and raised."

Grisby got up and tramped to the window, and when he came back he went on soberly:

"Just about that time her father broke down in health, and was ordered to come out here. There was little enough money, as there always is in a school-teacher's family, but they made the move—the father and mother, the girl and her two little sisters. Inside of six months their money was gone, the father was dying, and the mother was in the middle stages of a galloping consumption contracted from nursing the father. A few weeks later the girl was left alone to care for the two little ones. It was Anita Darragh who found her starving bravely, and got the boss to give her a place on the *Flashlight*. She's a womanly woman, Bronson—womanly and sensitive to the marrow of her bones. It's a rough crowd on the *Flashlight*, and in sheer self-defense she has made herself what she

is. When this scrap of ours is over I'm going to marry her if she'll let me."

Bronson rose up and reached across the table to grip Grisby's hand.

"Clifford, you're a man and a brother," he said, adding quizzically: "They say love and politics don't mix, but it strikes me that there has been more or less of the mixing all the way through this campaign. Let's go down and get a taxi, and take a run out to the hospital. It's just barely possible that Van Horne may have found himself by this time, and be able to see us."

CHAPTER XIV.

THE WELL-GEARED MACHINE.

While Van Horne was still in the earlier stages of a return to the domain of things as they are, the State committee met in the capital to prepare for the opening of the State convention.

Being made of the stuff that dies hard, the candidate insisted upon seeing his friends in spite of the doctor's protests, and it was Bronson who came to tell him what was going on.

"The 'powers' are here, and most of the delegates have arrived," said the news bringer, drawing his chair to Van Horne's bedside. "Yesterday the committee began to pass upon the contests, and we are beginning to see what we are in for. Your delegates from Aroya have been thrown out, notwithstanding the fact that they couldn't begin to prove any bribery against us; and last night I heard that our El Chico delegation was likely to be served the same way. Of course, we're doing what we can. Bristow is up and about, and he has temporarily resigned his office as prosecuting attorney to defend us before the committee."

"Bristow will do what any man can do in the circumstances," returned Van Horne weakly; "but I doubt if anybody can stop the steam roller this time. It is do or die for the grafters, and they know it. How did the legislative vote turn out? You remember, I went blink before I got a chance to hear about that."

"Oddly enough, we seem to have played safe on the legislature by a comfortable majority. This, too, was a part of the Darragh plan, I believe. He was willing to give us anything in the legislature up to, but not including, the two-thirds vote which would be necessary to pass enactments over the governor's veto. You see how it stacks up. If he can get his own governor in, we shall have no reform legislation. On the other hand, he was able to acquire merit by not thrusting his machine candidates for the legislature upon the voters at the primaries."

"I can see that I'm not big enough to breathe in the same day with Boss Darragh," said the sick man, with a wan smile. "Just the same, I am glad I didn't let him burn up. They tell me that he wasn't seriously hurt."

Bronson's laugh was rather bitter. "That sort of man has nine lives, Van Horne—like a cat. It is one of life's little ironies—you flat on your back here, and helpless, as the price you have paid for keeping Dan Darragh alive and fit and able to see that you are safely counted out."

"No, you mustn't say that, Bronson; I hope I'm bigger than that comes to. You would have done the same thing with as little thought for the political fight as I had. Besides, there was Anita to be considered. Whatever else Mr. Darragh is, he is her father."

"They are living at the Sierra, and nothing has been done toward rebuilding the half-burned house," said Bronson, anticipating the sick man's desire for more intimate news. And then: "I suppose you know that Anita has fairly been wearing the roads out between here and town, looking after you?"

"The nurse has told me," Van Horne admitted. "She is a dear girl."

"Who—the nurse?"

"No, Anita." There was a pause, apparently painful for the sick man, and then he went on: "Bronson, it's all over now, and I can tell you straight. I'm in love with Anita Darragh, and I have been ever since that night when you got me invited to her mother's reception. Don't you see now why I

couldn't stand for any of the things you and Grisby were trying to say to me—about the gossip?"

"That's all right," said Bronson generously, being far too good a man to bully an invalid.

"It will be all right when you assure me that you didn't believe the stories, Bronson. They were lies—every one of them. So far from trying to down me in the political tussle, I more than half believe she wanted me to win."

Bronson grinned broadly.

"It wouldn't be the first time in the history of the world," he said. "Nevertheless, as your next friend, I can't help wishing that she had made her preference a little more practical."

"I don't understand," said Van Horne.

"I mean with her father. She's the apple of his eye, Van Horne, and if she had laid the law down for the boss you'd be the next governor of the State in spite of all the grafters in the world."

Van Horne rolled his head on the pillow.

"I couldn't take it that way; you know I couldn't," he protested.

Bronson was closing one eye, and staring vacantly at the ceiling with the other.

"Van Horne, it's running in my mind that you may have to take it that way, after all, if you take it at all. Just now your friends are praying very fervently that Miss Darragh's attachment for you is the real thing, and not a mere move on the political chessboard. The wise ones are saying that that is about our only hope."

Fortunately it was at this juncture that the nurse came in to tell the visitor that his time was up. At the leave-taking he bent over Van Horne to say gently: "Don't sweat, and don't lose any sleep for fear we shall mess or meddle in your little love affair. We shan't; we shall only hope that the gods will meddle."

It was during the forenoon of the following day, at eleven o'clock, to be precisely accurate as to the hour, that

the State convention met in the opera house. Contrary to all precedent, the galleries were jammed with spectators; and it was with great difficulty that the sergeants at arms were able to keep the crowds from swamping the delegates on the floor.

The first test of strength came in forming the temporary organization; and in the choosing of a temporary chairman, Darragh's man, Abe Littlejohn, was seated by a bare majority of one. When the vote was announced and Littlejohn climbed to the stage to take the chair, the jammed crowd of spectators made its sympathies clearly plain. There were hoots and yells and catcalls, and a general pandemonium which made all business impossible for a good quarter of an hour.

Littlejohn made no effort to quell the tumult. Backed by a goodly group of machine politicians on the stage, he sat quietly and waited for the storm to spend itself. When the shouting had died of its own accord the business of the temporary organization was taken up quite as if nothing had happened, and the convention went into a committee of the whole for a reconsideration of the contests already decided by the State committee.

Here the machine methods became quickly evident. With less than any decent show of fairness, the grafters' program was carried out, and the contesting delegates from Bull Dog, Aroya, and El Chico were seated. This time there was no protest from the crowd. It was as if the sight of the steam roller in action had paralyzed all tongues.

It was only a little after twelve o'clock when the temporary organization was made permanent by a majority vote of sixteen, and the convention was ready for business.

The haste with which the contests had been decided suddenly paused. In a long-winded speech, which the chairman made no effort to cut short, Chambers, the minority candidate, was placed in nomination, and the three seconds killed two more hours telling the listening heavens what a good governor Mr. Chambers would make.

At three o'clock—there having been no noon recess—the convention adjourned, to meet again at nine o'clock in the evening; and when this was done everybody in the vast auditorium knew that for some inscrutable reason a halt had been called, though who had called it, or why it had been called, were mysteries unfathomable. With a safe majority in the convention, everybody had expected to see Darragh put his man, Shackleton, through with a whoop; and when the crowds poured out of the opera house the air was buzzing with queries.

The same condition obtained a little later in the lobby of the Sierra Hotel, which was jammed with caucusing delegates and their still more excited following. Bronson dragged Thorndyke and Editor Rawley up to his own rooms in suite seventeen, and the three of them sought to thrash out the mystery.

"There is a hitch somewhere," said Bronson, when the three had the privacy they sought. "Darragh's got his majority good and safe, but for some reason he's hesitating to use it. Can it be possible that the boss has actually reached a crisis where he is afraid to go flatly against public sentiment? If so, it's the first time he's ever been afflicted that way. What do you say, Rawley?"

The editor shook his head. "Dan Darragh's always been past finding out. I am sure of only one thing: A halt has been called, and he has called it. My young men are after him. He's got to make his moves mighty secretly if we fail to catch on."

It was John Thorndyke, the self-contained, who offered a possible explanation.

"You may laugh at me if you want to, gentlemen," he said slowly, "but I'm guessing that this is one political fight in which sentiment is having something to say—sentiment possibly of two kinds. It is pretty generally known now that Miss Anita's preference for Van Horne wasn't a purely political simulation; and, apart from that, we mustn't forget that the boss himself owes his life to our candidate. Under

such conditions, the biggest tyrant of them all might well hesitate."

While Thorndyke was speaking Grisby came in, but before he could join the group at the head of the big committee table the door opened again, and a pretty head, jauntily covered with a pinned-on cowboy Stetson, was thrust into the room.

"The privilege of the press, gentlemen!" the owner of the hat called out cheerily, and then, in a quick aside, she beckoned to Grisby. "I want a swift interview—with you," she said, in low tones, and thereupon she promptly dragged him to the lower end of the long room and crowded him into a corner by the window.

"I'm a welsher," she began hurriedly, when Grisby was at her mercy. "I'm going to be disloyal to my salt. But before I do it, I'm going to tell you why. Mr. Daniel Darragh pays my salary, but it was Miss Anita Darragh who got me my job. When I can't be loyal to both, I'm going to stand with my sex. Do you know why the convention is marking time?"

"No," said Grisby, shaking his head. "I wish I did."

"I can tell you. The order has gone out from Mr. Darragh's headquarters on the floor below that nothing is to be done until the word is given. All this caucusing downstairs doesn't mean anything at all more than the sputtering of the safety valve. Do you know why Mr. Darragh has called a halt?"

Again Grisby shook his head.

"I can tell you that, too," she went on calmly. "There is a special train on its way here from the West. It has only one car, and it is probably drawn by the fastest engine on the Sierra Pacific, but it can't possibly reach here much before eight o'clock to-night. That is why the convention adjourned at three to meet again at nine. Are you on?"

"Only sort of confusedly," returned Grisby. "Who is coming? And why is he coming?"

"Mr. Guthrie is the 'who,' and I can't tell you the 'why,'" was the shotlike answer. "I didn't know but you might

be able to find out some few little things for yourself."

"I've found out one thing," he rejoined, looking straight into the pretty eyes, "but it hasn't anything to do with this political muddle, Caddie. Let me mention it before it gets everlastingly buried again in Van Horne's troubles. You look mighty good to me, little girl, and after this tussle is over I'm going to take you off to some quiet place and tell you so in the proper manner. I know you'll say you haven't time for such things now, but a little later we'll take time. Now, go on telling me the things I ought to know about this convention business. Being in the—er—the sentimental swim up to our necks, ourselves, you see, we've simply got to stand by Van Horne and Anita."

If Miss Wester had her sham manlike breath taken away she did not show it.

"Of all the cold-blooded Romeos that ever lived, you are certainly the limit, Mr. Clifford Grisby!" This was what she made the kissable lips say, but Grisby was not relaxing his eyehold, and he saw things unutterable in the depths of the pretty eyes. After that—he said to himself—nothing mattered, and he was only paying half attention when she went on rapidly: "Something has gone wrong, and it is my guess—it's only a guess, you know—that Mr. Darragh has sent some sort of a message to Mr. Guthrie which is bringing the railroad magnate here hotfoot. If I were a capable young man with only a mining engineer's reputation to sustain, I should find out what goes on after Mr. Guthrie gets here, if it cost me something. That's all; now I'm gone."

"Not quite," said Grisby, and before she could dart away he had caught her hand and pressed it to his lips, forgetting, or not caring that the three men at the other end of the room were looking on curiously.

Grisby was morosely noncommittal when the door had closed behind Miss Wester, and he had gone to join the three at the committee table.

"I've got a pointer, and I can't give it away," he protested stubbornly, in

answer to the questions of the three. "But between eight and nine o'clock to-night I want you fellows to pack the galleries of the opera house with as many of our friends as you can round up, and then I want you to make sure that one of the box entrances, preferably the one in the second tier on the west side, is left open so that I can get in and get at you. Pass the word to the crowd that its job will be to yell bloody murder when it gets the signal." And, with that, he went downstairs to plunge into the lobby jam, and the three saw him no more.

CHAPTER XV.

THE WILL OF THE PEOPLE.

It was a little after dark in the evening of this day of many wire pullings; or, again to be precise, at seven-forty-seven by the electrically synchronized clock in the Sierra Pacific's capital city dispatching office, when the report came from Matadora that the vice president's special train would reach the capital at seven-fifty-nine. Coupled with the notice to the dispatcher was a word of caution. On no account was notice of the special's coming to be made public. It was to be stopped in the lower yard and a covered automobile with a trustworthy driver was to be in waiting.

At seven-fifty-nine to the second, the one-car special train from the West slid quietly into a company siding at the lower end of the railroad yard, stopping with the rear step of the car fairly opposite a waiting limousine. There was a quick transfer of a single passenger, a big man, whose turned-up collar and a soft fet hat effectually concealed his face, and the limousine rolled away to the distant suburb built around the parklike circle known as Sonora Plaza.

When the covered car rolled silently into the circle illuminated by the park lights, it stopped opposite a house some portions of the roof of which were gone, whose walls were blackened and smoke stained, and which, judging

from the boarded-up windows and doors, was uninhabited.

Alighting from the limousine, the big man in the soft hat passed through the wrecked gate, and, turning to the left, disappeared around the corner of the half-burned house. At a side door, where the fire destruction was least evident, a glimmer of light came through the carefully shaded transom. The big man stopped, and, at his rap, the door was opened, and he went in.

The small room into which the side door opened was lighted by a shaded kerosene lamp on the smoking table, and it showed no signs of the fire desolation other than a streaking of the walls by the extinguishing deluge. Before the vice president's entrance the room had held but a single occupant, the hard-featured master of the house who had opened the door for his visitor. Taking the padded easy-chair, the railroad magnate began abruptly.

"What the devil did you mean by sending me that ridiculous telegram, Darragh?" he grated. "I haven't any time to coach on the side lines; that's your job."

Darragh went softly to a small locker at the other end of the room and found a bottle and two glasses, which he placed upon the table at the vice president's elbow. But neither of them touched the liquor.

"'Twas up to me to give you a chance for your life, Guthrie, and I did it," was the boss' answer to the grating question. "Between us two, the time has come when the man who has sense enough to give most will get most. You're dead in this State, Guthrie; as dead as wan of them Philistines that old Samson knocked on the head with the burro's jawbone. I'm wondering if ye have sense enough to see it."

"You may have your own reasons for talking that way, Darragh, but you needn't expect me to agree with you," was the short reply. "I have the facts. The wires were working well this afternoon, and I had a pretty full report of the convention a few minutes after it adjourned. You've got your majority; why don't you use it?"

Darragh had been hovering about the table, and now it developed what he was looking for. It was the stub of a half-burned cigar, and he stuck it between his teeth without lighting it.

"Why don't I use it? 'Tis to save your life, Guthrie, if ye don't know without the plain telling. Back yonder in the histories of Ireland they tell of a man, a king he was, that was showing some of his court people what he could do and what he couldn't. He had his throne carried down to the beach when the tide was coming in, and he told the sea to keep back. 'Tis a flood tide here in this State, Guthrie. 'Tis not like you to be the only man not to know it."

The railroad man sat up and brought his clenched hand down upon the table with a crash that made the empty glasses jingle.

"Darragh, you're at your old trick of dust throwing; either that, or else you've lost your nerve. Cut it all out, and tell me in plain words what you want. Is it more money?"

If the Darragh temper, known and dreaded by every man who figured as a cog in the well-oiled machine, was stirred, there were no visible signs.

"Ye've always been a stubborn fighter, Guthrie, hitting hard and covering your tracks well. 'Tis not like you to be losing your head at this time," was the quiet retort. "I'm giving you the straight of it. You can have your governor, so far as the convention can give him to you. Beyond that hell's gaping open. If you're the man I've taken you to be, ye'll read the handwriting on the wall and be content to fall back and wait."

"And have the life cut out of us by a crazy populist administration for two solid years? Not much! Again I'm asking you what you want."

Darragh sat back in the big chair which he had been occupying before his visitor came.

"'Tis little need that ye should ask so many times, Guthrie," he said, shifting the extinct cigar stub to the other corner of his mouth. "I have played straight with you from the beginning,

though there have been times when I have been tempted to tell the men over you that you were a dub, too narrow for your job. I wired you because I wanted to give you your chance wan more time—the chance to use your common sense and get down like a man when the other fellow's got the struggle hold. D'ye see?"

"Go on," said the vice president tersely.

"Your chance is before you—to take it or leave it. I took your money and passed my word that the convention would be yours. 'Tis yours, and I've kept my word. As I say, take it or leave it."

Guthrie started up in his chair. "Meaning that you're going to throw us down, Darragh?"

"Meaning that I'm out of it from this night on, Guthrie. 'Tis no Casabianca part that I'm playing this day. I know, and you'd know if you had the sense of a man, that the ship's due to burn this wan time, if it never has before and never does again. That's the political part of it, and 'tis enough. But past that, the man you're trying to rob is on the flat of his back, and, Guthrie, he got there by saving my life."

The lamp on the table, an unused one by its appearance, flared smokily, but even its yellow light showed the dark flush of anger in the railroad man's massive face.

"I thought you'd touch bottom, if I gave you time enough, Darragh," he rasped angrily. "Congreve wired me a week ago that you'd be mixing business and sentiment if we didn't call you down. Here's the layout: you jump back on us now, and you'll jump clear over the wall of the penitentiary. We can put the stripes on you, and you know it, Dan Darragh!"

It was high time for an interruption of some sort, and it came, so silently and unobtrusively that both men started guiltily. The door into the wrecked part of the house had opened noiselessly and the gray-gowned figure of a woman had come to stand with a hand on the arm of Darragh's chair. Though the boss prided himself grimly upon

being the homeliest of men, and his daughter was one of the most beautiful of women, there was more than a suggestion of resemblance in the two when Anita faced the vice president.

"You were saying, Mr. Guthrie?" she suggested calmly. And when there was no reply: "I overheard you without meaning to. You were telling my father that if he did something you don't want him to do, you'd send him to the penitentiary. Did I hear it right?"

"You did," said the great man gruffly.

The girl's smile had a touch of her father's grimness in it when she said softly: "Oh, no, you wouldn't do that, Mr. Guthrie. Shall I tell you why? It is because, on the day following the first lifting of your finger against my father, there would appear in every newspaper of the West a facsimile of a certain memorandum in your own handwriting; a memorandum which you made in your own notebook in this house a few days ago, and of which you were careless enough to leave a carbon copy."

Guthrie sprang to his feet with an exclamation which was only half smothered.

"Miss Darragh, where is that carbon?" he demanded excitedly. "I missed it, and went back upstairs to look for it, as you probably know. Where is it?"

"It is in the safest place I could possibly find for it, Mr. Guthrie, and it will stay there until——"

"Until when?"

"Until after the next governor of this State is safely nominated."

Guthrie rose heavily out of his chair, and so far forgot himself as to shake his fist in Darragh's face, accompanying the bit of frenzy with an epithet which showed conclusively how completely the gentlemanly traditions were effaced for him. Then, without another word, he snatched up the soft hat and went out, slamming the door behind him. A moment later the two in the small smoking room heard the diminishing pur of the motor as the hired limousine sped away

to its destination in the lower railroad yards.

For a long minute there was no word spoken in the lamp-lighted room. Then the girl made a place for herself on the flat arm of the chair, and rested her cheek lightly against the grizzled head lying back on the cushion.

"Daddy, dear," she said softly, "it's nearly nine o'clock."

"And that means?" said the boss, matching her low tone.

"That means that they won't know what to do over at the opera house if you don't go back to the hotel and send them word."

Again there was a silence, and this time it was the man who broke it.

"Tell me, Nita, colleen, is it that you've set your heart on being a governor's lady?"

"As if I cared about that!"

"Then what is it that you are caring about?"

"A number of things," she said sweetly. "One of them is Edward, of course, but it has nothing to do with his being the governor—of anything but me. But another is a bigger thing, daddy, dear. I heard what you said to Mr. Guthrie and what he said to you that night in the billiard room; I didn't mean to, but I couldn't help it, you know. Afterward, I found the piece of black paper—I'll give it to you to-morrow, and you can burn it up——" And then, with the perfect intuition of one who knows precisely when and where to stop, she said: "*Please, daddy!*"

There was another minute of the full-blown silence, and again it was the boss who terminated it.

"'Tis both a big thing, and a little wan that you're asking of me, Nita, dear," he said slowly. "Whatever I've done, and whatever I've been, no man has it to say that Dan Darragh has been a dog to bite the hand that pulls him out of the water by the scruff of his neck. 'Twould be a fine thing to see that same Dan Darragh's daughter at the head of the rest of them in the governor's reception." Then, with an up-reaching hand, big-knuckled and mighty from the pick-and-shovel days of his

youth, a hand that for all its hugeness rested lightly on the rounded shoulder: "Ye're my only gir-rl, Nita, colleen, and"—with a quick shift of the half-burned cigar—"after all, there'll maybe be another election some day. Let's go."

In the opera house, jammed even more suffocatingly than it had been at the morning session, the State convention was once more marking time with anxious expectancy. The member who had seconded Shackleton's nomination was still upon his feet, bringing up the history of the State slowly and by time-killing degrees from the days of the early pioneers. From the stage entrance messengers were going and coming in hot haste, vibrating, as it were, between the convention and the Sierra Hotel.

In the first gallery, Bronson and Thorndyke had massed Van Horne's supporters, and the red-headed foundryman with the fringed beard was guarding the box entrance, holding it open for Grisby. Shackleton's seconding spellbinder was no more than in the middle distance of his historical address when the engineer mine manager came in breathless.

"Pass the word to be ready!" he said quickly to Bronson and Thorndyke. "The heavens are about to fall. Darragh has just come back to the hotel, and his daughter is with him. I know because I happen to be the cabby who drove them. He's sending word to the convention now, but I've beat his man to it."

Two minutes later, word of some sort was passed around the semicircle ringing the chairman's rostrum on the stage. That it was something astounding could be read in the faces of all. Instantly one in the background rose and whispered in the chairman's ear; whereupon Abe Littlejohn promptly mirrored in his face the consternation which had stricken his stage supporters.

Only a few, outside of the chosen cohorts on the floor, saw Littlejohn's furtive finger signal to the spouting historian. Like a punctured bladder, the speaker's period trailed off to an in-

consequent end, and he collapsed into his chair. Again the chairman beckoned, this time to a big, hairy-faced mine owner from the Barreda district, who had been one of Van Horne's ablest lieutenants. While the vast assemblage held its breath, the big man climbed to the stage and had whispered speech with Littlejohn. At the end of it, without returning to his place on the floor, he strode out in front of the rostrum and in a bull bellow that might have been heard in the street beyond the entrance, placed Van Horne's nomination before the convention.

A bare fraction of a minute elapsed before the compact little body of independent delegates could realize that their opportunity had come; then, as one man, a dozen of them leaped up to shout their seconds. At this, the word must have been passed in the galleries. Like wildfire the realization of what was happening ran through the perspiring crowd, and the tumult of noise that burst forth was the roar of a triumphant majority. Again and again it rose and fell, while the big man held his place stubbornly in front of the chairman's desk, and Littlejohn held up his finger for the silence which refused to be beckoned.

As has chanced in other and similar popular outbursts, the crowd roared and cheered until hoarseness came to stop it, and when the last ringing shout had died down, the chairman pulled himself to his feet with a very palpable effort. In the fewest possible words he declared the nominations closed, calmly appointed tellers to take the ballots, and was proceeding in due and formal course when the big, whiskered delegate put in his word, suggesting that it was a waste of time to hold the members of the convention through the formal balloting, and asking that a rising vote be taken.

Littlejohn, the fight all gone out of him, made an impatient gesture of assent, and put the suggestion before the convention. While he was doing it, the big man from Barreda leaned over and whispered a word in his ear: "Tell them—tell them straight so there won't

be any mistake," he hissed; and Littlejohn did it like a man reading his own death sentence.

"Friends and fellow citizens," he went on in his best court voice, "the question now before this convention brings us face to face with our duty, not as representatives of this party or that, but as representatives of the people of this State. While we have met here to deliberate and to decide, we must not forget that we are the representatives of the sovereign people of this commonwealth. They have decided by a majority which we must all accept that Edward Van Horne is their choice for the next governor of the Mesquite State. Therefore, after due deliberation, and—and word received from the leaders of the great parties now in conference in this city, I suggest that you make Mr. Van Horne's nomination unanimous."

After that it was all over but the shouting, and if the crowded galleries went mad with triumph when the delegates to a man rose in their places, it was but a joyous earthquake that shook and rocked the great auditorium. Cheers for Van Horne, for the Mesquite Business League, and for the delegates split the air in deafening chortus; and finally, when some man in the lower gallery stood up and proposed a cheer for the abdicating boss, it was given with no less tumult and applause.

A few minutes later, when the convention was adjourning without date and the house was rising, Grisby and Bronson fought with the crowd to get out before the crush could come. Each had the same thought in mind, namely, to be the first to bear the joyous news to the sick man in the hospital.

As it chanced, they both won out together, and Grisby became Bronson's debtor for a seat in the fast runabout that the little millionaire had provided for the occasion—any occasion.

"Tell me what you can as we go," said Bronson, skillfully cutting the car out of the crowded carriage rank in front of the opera house.

"It's a short horse, soon curried," replied the young engineer. "I had a

pointer, and I followed it up. Something over an hour ago a special train came in from the West. It was stopped in the lower yards and one man got out and took a motor for Sonora Plaza. I followed close enough to see where he stopped, and then I rushed my own car back to the Sierra Hotel. There was a little hitch, and it took me fifteen or twenty minutes to find Miss Darragh and fully five more to make her understand that she must take a little drive with me, asking no questions. I don't believe she would have done it, after all, if Caddie Wester hadn't butted in and told her it was all right. That's the story—all of it."

"Oh, surely not all of it," said Bronson, in keen disappointment.

"Practically all," returned the mine manager. "I drove Miss Darragh out to her father's house—or what is left of it—in Sonora Plaza, and she got out of the car and went in. A little later, the special train's single passenger came out through the wrecked gate in a hurry, jumped into his limousine, and disappeared. I waited, and after a while Miss Darragh came out with her father and I drove them both to the hotel. Darragh thought I was a cabby, and he didn't notice when she whispered to me as I was opening the tonneau door. 'Tell Mr. Bronson and the others that it's all right,' was what she said, 'and if I didn't do it, it was because it wasn't necessary.'"

Driving like Jehu, the son of Nimshi, Bronson was cramping the runabout for the turn into the hospital grounds as Grisby finished. In the anteroom they found the night nurse in charge, and were calmly told that they could by no means be permitted to disturb Mr. Van Horne.

"But we've got news that'll make him well in half a minute," protested Grisby. "For Heaven's sake, let us go up and say just ten words to him. Please don't turn us down. Mr. Van Horne is going to be the next governor of the State, and it would be little short of murder not to let him know it!"

The nurse in charge was a young woman, and when she smiled, as she

did now, she was pretty rather than magisterial.

"The—er—a nurse is with him, just now, I believe, and you might—er—telephone to her over the house wire, if you wish."

They both grabbed for the phone at the same instant, but Grisby was the one who got it. "Ask the house exchange for private room forty-six," the night nurse directed, and Grisby did it in a fever of impatience.

On the second floor, in a cool, airy room at the end of the corridor, whose windows looked out upon the snow-capped Sierras, a radiant-eyed young woman who could only by courtesy have been called a nurse got up from her chair at the bedside and went to answer the muffled tinkle of the house telephone. When she came back to take her place at the bedside, she was smiling serenely.

"How foolish men can be sometimes," she said, letting the sick man repossess himself of the hand he had reluctantly relinquished a moment earlier. "It's Mr. Bronson and that other friend of yours, Mr. Grisby. They've driven all the way out here to tell you that you are to be the next governor of the State!" And then: "As you were saying when the telephone rang——"

"I was saying that your father is a bigger man than I thought he was, and now that he has broken with the Sierra Pacific—— But what do we care about those things now, dearest? It's enough for me to lie here and look into your eyes and say——"

Downstairs in the head nurse's room two men sat and stared at each other.

"Are you sure it's Anita?" queried Bronson.

Grisby burst into a laugh.

"After going through what I did an hour ago, I'd know her voice in a thousand. It's all right, of course, but what I was laughing at is the Dan Darragh brand of diplomacy. We thought we had beaten the old man at his own game, and I hope we have. Just the same, the next governor of this State is going to be his son-in-law!"

A Brave Man

By Peter B. Kyne

Author of "On Irish Hill," "Short-Bred," Etc.

It sounds somewhat paradoxical to speak of "the fears of a brave man." You will understand how it is possible for a man to be brave and yet afraid when you have read this story. In it Mr. Kyne gives us a glimpse of a gallant troop commander who was ready to dare death and yet became a coward at the sight of blood; brave to the point of recklessness he weakens when a man is killed. It is the resourceful "Sergeant Jawn" Ryan who comes to his aid in the establishing of the Loyal Order of Chick Fish's Friends, and it is this same "Jawn" Ryan who tells the tale in his own picturesque language. An absorbing narrative, dramatic and startlingly real.

MY friend, First Sergeant John Ryan, B Troop, —th United States cavalry, quartered in the nipa barracks at Pasay, island of Luzon, had announced that he would do me the honor to walk with me after retreat; hence I came, quite naturally, by this story. So I waited until B Troop had been reported present and accounted for, and John joined me for a walk through the balmy, fragrant tropic twilight.

I guessed that some trouble lay heavy on his mind, so I refrained from asking questions. We struck off down the Calle Real toward the little fishing village of Paranaque, followed it for half a mile, then turned into a bypath that led us out onto the beach of Manila Bay. An upturned banca attracted the sergeant's attention. He walked to it, sat down a little wearily, and sighed. I filled my pipe and smoked discreetly, the while I watched the sun gods retreating into the darkening west, out beyond Mariveles. And presently John Ryan unburdened himself of his woe.

"There's glanders in the throop," he said. "Jack Dempsey's been condemned an' ordhered desthroyed. They'll have shot the poor beast an'

burrned him be the time tattoo goes—an' I was minded to walk out wit' a man that wouldn't talk to me when I'm feelin' that bad over Jack Dempsey I could go this minute an' get blind, tearin', tatterin' drunk wit' the thought av it."

I handed him my tobacco. "Infection from a native caballo?" I queried sympathetically.

"Gawd knows," mourned the sergeant. "That dirrty little codger, Meyers, was on mounted pass a week ago—an' 'tis a wise man that can guess where Meyers'll stable his horse. Three days afther, his mount was off his feed an' runnin' at the nose, wit' me poor Jack Dempsey, worse luck, makin' friends wit' him across the picket line. I sneaked Jack Dempsey away into the bamboo a matther av half a mile before reportin' the case to the farrier. I was in hopes Jack'd get by wit'out catchin' it if I moved him away from the infection—which I'd a right to do. Did I tell ye, sir, that Jack Dempsey was no governmint horrse? Sorra bit av the U. S. brand on Jack. He was me own horse—give to me by Lootenant Archibauld Chickering Fish—an' I prized him as a gift horrse in addition to the

blood that was in him. His dam was an Irish steeplechaser that Chick Fish's auld man imported from Galway, an' his sire was a slashin' fine chunk av a Nevada range horse, game an' tough, an' able to live on nothin' at all. Bechune the two, Chick Fish's father got Jack Dempsey—he was called afther the prize fighter because he was sthrong, game, clever, an' light on his feet—an' if I live to be ten t'ousand years old, I'll never get another Jack Dempsey. Sure, Chick Fish cried when he give him to me."

"Who is Chick Fish?" I scented a story, and John Ryan told it feelingly.

Chick Fish is a memory now, at least in the service. He was cashiered for cowardice wanst—an' him as fine an' brave a lad as ever clapped leg to leather. But sure, I couldn't prove that he wasn't a coward, for all that I went to his colonel wit' tears in me eyes, an' begged like a blitherin' auld woman.

"Sergeant," sez he, "a rat'll fight when it's cornered, but the army's no place for an officer that'll run when his throop's puttin' up a winnin' fight. Ye may go to yer quarters."

Sure, poor Chick Fish never had no chanst. He'd been thripped up in mathematics in second year at West P'int, though what in blazes mathematics has to do wit' a cavalryman is more nor I can tell ye. At any rate, me brave Chick immejiately takes on as a private in I Throop av ours, puts in his two years' service, gets a corporal's rags tacked onto him, an' in nineteen hundred goes up for his commission—an' gets it from the ranks—gets it, too, be the same token, ahead av his auld class at the P'int. They speak uv the app'intmint av Chick Fish an' the likes av him as "The Crime av Nineteen Hundred."

With sixty t'ousand men in the islands in them days, officers was scarce, so the secret'y av war took the best material at hand, an' made officers an' gentlemen out of it. Sure, Chick Fish was a gentleman long before he was an officer, but he'd been a private, too; also he'd been bounced from the

P'int, an' 'twas said that he refused three fights when his man called him out. In consequence av which, when they got the goods on poor Fish, they give him the hook—an' he give me Jack Dempsey.

When he got his commission, the adjutant general had the bad taste to assign him to command av B Throop—there wasn't three throops in the regiment with a full complement av officers—which was rotten bad taste; not the officers, but the assigning av Chick Fish to a regiment where he'd served as an enlisted man. However, I never knew the bhoy till he come walkin' into me ordherly room, wit' his new saber rappin' agin' his puttees, an' lookin' as proud as a peacock in his new shouldher sthraps.

"Sergeant," sez he very pleasantly, "what is your name?"

"Sergeant Jawn Ryan, sir."

"Sergeant Jawn Ryan," sez he, "I'll have a look at your mornin' report. I'm your new throop commander, Second Lieutenant Archibauld Chickering Fish. When I was an enlisted man in I Troop I was known as Chick Fish. Perhaps ye've hearrd av me?"

"I have, sir," sez I. "Gawd spare ve to the service, Chick Fish," says I, as fresh as a pansy blossom, an' takin' auld soldier's license, for we two was alone. I liked the bhoy on sight, an' I knew he was no snob.

He sthuck out his hand wit'out wanst turrnin' to see if any av the enlisted men was lookin', an' he give me a man's handshake.

"Jawn Ryan," sez he, "bechune the two av us we should be able to run B Throop nicely. Can ye keep a secret?"

"Thry me, sir," sez I.

Chick Fish closes the door of me ordherly room, sets down, an' looks his auld top cutter fair in the eye.

"Sergeant," sez he, "I need a friend—an' divil a friend have I at the officers' mess. I've fed too long wit' the line. We'll be ordhered into Santa Cruz Province some time to-day, or I miss my guess, an' there'll be many a dirtty piece av wurrk around Laguna de

Bay. How many times have ye been in action, sergeant?"

"A matter av nineteen general engagements, thirty-seven skirmishes, outposts, scoutin' parties, reconnoissances, and suchlike shootin' scrapes, both plain an' fancy, till I've lost count."

"D'ye remember, sergeant," sez he, "how ye felt undher fire in yer firrst general engagement?"

"I do, sir. I felt like runnin'. An' if ye can keep a secret yerself, sir, I *did* run. I run like a devil—an' I was the only man that did run."

"Is that so?" sez he, like the big baby that he was. "An' how come that, Sergeant Ryan?"

"'Twas on the Gondera," sez I, "an' I was a doughboy then. We was jumped at breakfast, an' a matter av fifty bolomen got bechune us an' most av the guns. There was just thirrtty av us—an' twinty-nine of us was bolloed—in consequence av which, sir, I was the only man that run."

"Did ye see blood?" says Chick Fish, his two eyes poppin' out.

"Did Robert Emmet die av auld age? Av coorse I seen blood—lashin's an' lavin's av it. The place was a shambles."

"An' ye didn't feel like faintin'?"

"What? An' me busy fightin'? 'Tis but a poor estimate ye have av the Irish, Lutenant Fish. 'Twas 'butts to the front,' parry, thrust, guard, kick, bite, an' scream till I'd fought me way through the howlin' heart av the scrimmage, an' showed them pulahanes the cleanest pair av heels in Samar. Sure, if I'd fainted, I wouldn't be here tellin' ye about it. Is that yer secret, sir? Do ye faint at the sight av blood?"

"Ye've guessed it, sergeant," sez he. "A fight never bothers me unless I see a man killed—that is, killed bloody—an' then it's Kitty bar the door for me."

"A nasty habit for an officer, sir," sez I. "Ye could aizey be misundherstood. How did ye get along as an enlisted man? Ye've seen some serrvice wit' I Throop?"

"I shtarred to run twict," sez he.

"Then why didn't ye run—if ye shtarred to?"

"I had good friends in I Throop," says Chick Fish, "an' they kept an eye on me, an' thripped me up an' sat on me till I got over it. Me throuble's physical, not mental, Sergeant Ryan," sez he, very pitiful. "To see a man butchered throws me off me balance. I get hysterical, like a girrl, an' run plain, lunatic crazy when I don't faint outright. I'm not a coward, sergeant, but Gawd knows I need some friends, now that I'm an officer, an' I have none at the mess table. So I've got to go back where I come from," sez he, "back to the enlisted men."

"Chick Fish, my son," says I—I called him that, seein' as we were talkin' man to man—"I'll be yer friend through thick an' thin. But even Jawn Ryan, for all that the devil's on his side, ain't bullet proof, so I'll detail six other good men to look after ye an' be yer friends in time av need. Wit' the help av Gawd, Jawn Ryan, an' six dipindible auld sojers, we'll thry to pull ye through until this crool war is over an' ye've made friends at the officers' mess."

"Thank ye, friend Jawn," says he, an' that ended it.

"What's this, sergeant?" sez he a second later, pokin' his young nose into the mornin' report. "Corporal Donohue absent from reveille? What's the matter wit' Corporal Donohue that he's missin' calls?"

"He was playin' poker, sir, an', sittin' in a winnin' game, he delayed answerin' firrst call until he could call two little pair, an' be the time he could get into line his name had been called."

"Ye will place this gamblin' Corporal Donohue in charge av quarters for three days, as a penance for his sins," says Lutenant Fish.

"'Twould be well, sir, to overlook this shlip av Donohue's, sir. He's a good sojer—an' ye'll find him a good friend, I'm thinkin'."

"Very well; since you suggest it, sergeant," sez Chick Fish, smilin' a little, Gawd bless him. "I shtand bechune me love an' dooty," an' wit' that he was off to answer officers' call while I went into the squad room to organize the Loyal Order av Chick Fish's Friends.

I picked a high-sprung little Frinch Canadian be the name av Felix Labory; Con Donohue, a fine, sthrappin', red-headed Far Down; Axel Gunderson, a big Norwegian sergeant; Rat Hosmer, a private, an' a Bowery guttersnipe wit' a medal av honor; a windy little cockney be the name av Alf Buttherfield; George Slattery, a Boston mick wit' a cauliflower ear; an'—mesilf. I knew them all, down to the last kink in their dare-devil backs, an' I made no mistake in pickin' them, for when the pinch came they proved their friendship for Chick Fish be dyin' for him—an' no man can do more.

Well, sir, to make a long sthory short enough to tell it bechune now an' the call to quarters, I'd no sooner got through initiating the Loyal Ordher av Chick Fish's Friends than young Chick himself comes prancing joyous up the barrack stheps, three at a time.

"Sergeant Ryan," sez he; "ye will have a bugler sound boots an' saddles, an' prepare to take the field at wanst. The quartermaster sergeant will issue three days' rations for man an' beast, together with wan hundhred rounds av ammunition exthra. We move out in half an hour. The sthock'll be loaded in cascos at Binondo, an' we're to tow up the Pasig an' across Laguna de Bay to tackle the town av Santa Cruz. 'Twill be a flyin' column av fifteen hundhred men, an' they're sendin' but wan throop av cavalry. We're to live on the counthry when our three days' rations are gone."

An' wit' that he runs off to his quarters to get ready.

Con Donohue sthicks his red head out the barrack window, an' sez he to me: "Jawn, is that the young feller I'm to be friends wit'?"

"It is," sez I.

"Glory be," sez Con. "Sure, the man's just sphoilin' to lead B Throop into action. 'Tis little av my friendship he'll need, I'm thinkin'."

We led out within the hour eighty-four throopers, wit' Chick Fish ridin' at the head av his throop on Jack Dempsey that his auld man'd sint out to him from California in anticipation

av Chick's commission. At Binondo we loaded into a sthring av cascos, an' the *Napidan* towed us' upriver to Pateros that same afthernoop. Beyond ye could get promiscuous shootin', wit' or wit'out the askin', so we lay at Pateros till sundown, an' towed up to Laguna de Bay afther dark.

The followin' afthernoop we come to a sizable town, called Santa Cruz, an' undher a smatther av long-range rifle fire we swum our mounts ashore. We'd with us a jackass batt'ry, two battalions av the Ninth Infanthry, wan av the Fourteenth, a battalion av *voluntarios*, a detachment av signal corps, a platoon av engineers, an' a detail av poultice wallopers—all undher a brigadier ginerel who has since, praise be, gone back to his job in the bank that he left when the war bruk out.

Ye may think 'tis a risky matther goin' into action undher a man that's spint his life figurin' intherest, but be the grace av Gawd an' the cuteness av the commander in chief, our little man was saddled wit' a regular army windjammer wit' sinse enough to blow the right call when the brigadier give the wrong ordher—so we got along nicely, an' the brigadier was as happy as could be, thinkin' what a great sojer he was—but wasn't.

'Twas a nice fight we had in front av Santa Cruz, wit' upward av three t'ousand amigos facin' us forninst a four-foot sthone wall, wit' diamond-shaped loopholes that run clear around the city. Wit' wan regiment av doughboys behind that wall, an' an hour's time to dig a good ditch in front av it, an' t'row the dirrt up agin' the front av the wall for sthoppin' shrapnel, I'd 'a' held Santa Cruz agin' an army. But divil a ditch had the amigos dug, dependin' upon numbers an' firin' at will to keep us from crossin' the field foreninst them an' climbin' over the wall. Faith, be this an' be that now, 'twas nasty wurrk, as we found when the doughboys charrged twict an' come peltin' back to the shelter av the bamboo jungle, sadder an' wiser than when they stharterd.

B Throop, horrses an' men, was layin' flat in a bit av a swale on the right flank,

an' well out av range av the heavy firin'. Me an' Chick Fish poked our heads up over the crest av the knoll in time to see the infantry fallin' back to think it over the second time, an' says Chick Fish to me, sez he:

"Sergeant, there's a bit av old-fashioned wurrk here for B Throop. I've a notion that this town is sthrong enough in front, but weak in the rear. Eighty-five men in B Throop, countin' meself, might make a quick sneak around in back, each throoper carryin' a willin' infantryman behind him. We could make the move, an' get there before the inimy knew what we were up to, an' rush reënforcements to the rear; an' with a hundhred an' seventy men in the gap that B Throop can break in that wall, the divil a thousand amigos can sthand agin' us. We could carry the infantry to the edge av the town, an' then break the way for them wit' a pistol charrge. Is there a nag in the throop that can't lep that wall, sergeant?" sez he.

"Sorra wan, sir," sez I; "an' if ye'd be afther sindin' wurrd to the brigadier——"

"Would ye tackle them on the plan I've outlined, sergeant?"

"Would a cat ate liver?"

"Ye wild Irishman, ye!" sez he, grinin' at me. "Tell Corporal Donohue to crawl up here till I have a wurrd wit' him."

I passed the wurrd to Con, an' when he come up, sez Chick Fish to Con:

"Me compliments to the commandin' officer, an' tell him that Lootenant Fish has had ye scoutin' in the rear av the town, an' that ye report a weak defense in that quarther. Tell him, corporal, wit' my compliments—an' don't forget the compliments—that if he'll lind me a company av regulars, B Throop'll carry double, move 'em in jig time, an' break a gap in that wall in less than an hour. Ye undherstand, Corporal Donohue, that ye're to tell the brigadier whatever ye plaze, in ordher to get the company av infantry, an' if the good Lord has endowed ye wit' the imagination av yer race, ye'll come back with what I've sint ye afther."

"I'll be back with them directly, sir," sez Con, an' was off like a shot. As he went, he turned his red head an' winked at me, an' sure 'twas the proud man he was to be friends wit' Chick Fish.

A half hour later back comes Con, followed be a company av the Fourteenth, in command av a top sergeant, the company commander havin' been winged be a sthray bullet on his way over. An' who should be ridin' wit' Con but the brigadier and his staff, as pompous as a cockatoo.

"This is a darin' plan av yours, Lootenant Fish," sez he, "but this corporal av yours tells me he's been within a stone's throw av the wall in back, an' 'tis held be—how many men did ye say, corporal?"

"Two hundhred an' nineteen I counted, sir," says Con, like the grrand liar that he was, the Lord 'a' merrcy on his sowl.

"Ye're a young man, Lootenant Fish, an' I misdoubt me av the wisdom av the move. However, I'm intrustin' ye wit' the men—— Lootenant Fish, what in the divil's name is the matther wit' ye?"

I took a quick look at Chick Fish, an' saw that he was starin' at somethin'. I looked—an', tough as I am, I didn't care for a second look. A big Remington slug had skipped over the hill, an' slammed into the head av Number One in the second set av fours that Chick Fish had borrowed from the brigadier. Chick's face was apple green, an' the two eyes av him poppin' out; while ye'd be sayin' Jack Robinson he turnded, an' somethin' towld me that there was wurrk for the Loyal Ordher av Chick Fish's Friends. I out wit' me foot an' thripped him up, an' Con Donohue fell off his horse like a dead man, fair on top av Chick Fish. He was a heavy man, was Con, an' when he hit Chick Fish he laid him out for fair.

"What ails him, sergeant?" sez the brigadier, not noticin' the dead man in back av him.

"A touch av the sun, sir," sez I. "Corporal Donohue, ye great red booby ye, the next time ye go to catch a faintin' man come off yer horrse the way I

taught ye to. Ye've like to killed the throop commander."

"A touch av the sun, eh?" sez the brigadier kindly. "'Tis come at a most unfortunate moment."

"'Tis nothin' much, sir. He'll be himself in a jiffy," sez I. "'Tis more av Corporal Donohue's red head in the pit av his stummick than the sun, I'm thinkin'," an' I scowled fearful harrd at Con.

The red devil winked at me, an' while I was pourin' a canteen av wather into Chick Fish's face, Felix Labory chucked a shelter half over the face av the dead man, an' Rat Hosmer threw his horrse in front av the body to hide it from Chick Fish when he should come to—which he did in about two minutes. He sat up, gaspin', an' lookin' around for what'd frightened him. He saw the brigadier and the staff instead, an', begorra, ye could see the look av terror in the bhoys' face. He thought he'd been found out. I peaked his campaign hat, clapped a wet handkerchief undher it, an', undher pretense av liftin' him up, I whispered:

"Buck up, sir. Ye're safe. The friends saved ye, an' I blamed it on the sun."

"Ye should be more careful in this heat, me bhoys," says the little brigadier. "How do ye feel now? Able to sit yer horrse?"

"I will, sir—in a minute," mumbles poor Fish, an' Rat Hosmer comes up an' gives him a pull at his canteen, an' be the same token there was more than ditch wather in that canteen. For all that, 'twas five minutes before Chick Fish got back his natural color, but, what wit' me facin' him the other way, an' the elixir av life in Rat's canteen, he was able to climb aboard Jack Dempsey an' take command, an' the brigadier an' his staff rode back to the main command.

"Begorra, Jawn, but that was a close shave," sez Chick Fish, as we jogged away, each av us with a lump av a doughboy behind us an' grabbin' us around the middle. "Ye'll thank me friends for me, if ye plaze."

"Ye'll get through the charrge nicely,

sir," says I, "provided ye make the pace an' don't sthoph to take notes av the scenery."

We made a detour av three miles, an' come in at the back av the town. Two hundred yards from the wall we jumped an outpost, an' a second later the air was full av lead. The top av that wall fair spit fire at us.

"Off wit' ye!" yells Chick Fish, givin' his doughboy a dig in the ribs. An' "Off wit' ye!" yells the noncoms. An' "Off wit' ye!" yells the throopers. An' off slid the doughboys, glad enough to do their fightin' on foot, accordin' to their nature an' inclination.

"Dhraw pistols," says Chick Fish, an' our bugler bhoys sounded off. "Left wheel! Forward! Trot! Gallop!" as we come into the open. "Charrge!" an' away we went, head an' tail up, sthraight for the wall, wit' the infantry, yellin' blue murder, trailin' afther us like a pack av foxhounds. The blood av his Irish mother swelled up in Jack Dempsey, an' he took out, six lengths in front av the line. Wanst I saw Chick Fish look back over his shouldher an' grin wit' the pure love av the fightin', and then "*Smack!*" comes a big forty-five-seventy Remington into me horse's shouldher, an' down he goes, pinnin' me undher him be wan foot.

"Pull me outer this," sez I, as soon as the infantry caught up to me. I was ready to cry wit' the thought av missin' the sight av Jack Dempsey takin' that wall wit' Chick Fish.

"Out ye come, ye little Irish wild cat," says a big doughboy, grabbin' me horrse be the tail an' twistin' him around like he would a sheep. "Ye'll fight respectably now, ye gossoon, on yer two feet, as Gawd intended ye should, not on a ramping, bone-rackin' brute av a horrse."

"Come wit' the infantry, sergeant," sputthers another, with a Mauser hole through both cheeks, an' him grinnin' like Punch, spittin' blood an' teeth. "'Tis the backbone av the service," an' he snakes me carbine out of the gun boot an' hands it over to me—we used the Krag carbine in the cavalry in them days. "Haste to the weddin', me

bucko," says he, an' skips along wit' his bunkie.

B Throop was at the wall just as I got to me feet, an' the firrst thing I saw was poor Jack Dempsey, wit' Chick Fish still on his back, provin' faithful to his Irish blood. He went at that wall like a buck, an' cleared it wit' two foot to spare, as I'm a livin' man. Och, but 'tis the grrand big jumpin' jack av a horrsse he was—an' he dead av the glanders now, an' I'll never own another Jack Dempsey.

Into the heart av that mess av Filipinos he lepped, an' B Throop come rampin' afther him, with the pistols poppin' left an' right. Never a bit of a rein did Chick Fish dhraw. Sthraight through they went on toward the town, reloadin' as they rode, then left wheel an' back ag'in over another section av the wall, lavin' the makin' av a fair little scrimmage behind them, as I discovered when I come limpin' up to the wall with the infantry, puffin' like a runaway carabao.

The infantry went into the gap with the bayonet, lavin' me to poke around wit' the butt av me little carbine, hoppin' here an' hoppin' there on me sound hoof, an' havin' a terrible time entirely dodgin' wounded amigos that kept cuttin' at me with bolos an' bayonets. Sure, 'tis the lonesome, frightened man I was until I spotted a B Throop man curled up at the wall, howlin' hell an' damnation with a broken collar bone, an' a little Filipino bitin' him in the calf av the leg, for all the worrld like a fice dog.

"Lave be, ye little skut!" sez I, slap-pin' the amigo in the snoot, an' makin' him let go the throoper's leg.

"Kill him, sarge," says the throoper. "He bit me."

"I will not," sez I. "Learn to sit yer horrsse takin' a wall, an' ye won't get bit."

Just then his throop horse sthuck his nose over the wall, nickerin' for his rider, so I helped the lad across an' into his saddle, an' mounted double behind him; an', be the Rock av Cashel, if that ungrateful little amigo didn't give me a nip on the heel as I clumb up. I was

that mad I clumb down ag'in an' lathered him well wit' his own gun sling, the little tarantu-la!

"We'll go hunt for B Throop now," sez I when I'd finished, "an' be the racket they're makin' down in that cane field, 'twill not be hard to find them," an' we jogged off about our business.

I found Chick Fish an' B Throop in the cane field, playin' a game av hide an' go seek with the inimy, an' when the last av them had been run out into the open, Chick Fish come up to me smilin'.

"We'll wait for the infantry here, sergeant," sez he. "When they come up, we'll dismount an' fight on foot."

Which we did. The amigos in front av our main command was sthilla in ignorance o' what we'd done to their rear, an' when we come prancin' in at their backs, faith, there was wailin' an' gnashin' av teeth. We policed a half mile av that wall, trustin' to luck that the brigadier had had the good sinse to move the main command out of line with our fire—which, thanks to the bugler orderly, no doubt, he had—an' when we bruk the center they sthreamed through, an' it was all off but the cheerin'; an' there was heaps av that for Chick Fish an' the seventy-two men that was left in B Throop.

The Loyal Ordher av Chick Fish's Friends was intact, barrin' a few scratches here an' there, an' when it was all over, says Con Donohue to me, sez he:

"Divil a wan av me knows whether Chick Fish is man, woman, or divil, but I'll say this much: For a man that needs the protection av his friends—an' Chick Fish needs it—I never rode behind a braver little man."

"'E's a bloomin' little ginger pot, that's wot 'e is," says Alf Buttherfield, the cockney.

"By tam, yes," says Felix Labory, the Frinch Canuk, an' so on through all the friends.

"Never take yer eyes off him in action, lads, for all that," says I, an' I went over to look at Jack Dempsey. The poor divil had been creased across the neck, an' his poor head was hangin'

bechune his two knees. But, praise be, 'twas only a scratch, an' I knew his head would be up ag'in in a week, as proud as ever.

Ah, 'twas a pretty piece av wurrk, a pretty piece, that scrimmage at the wall, but the currse av it was, divil an officer was there to see it. Not a sowl but the enlisted men in B Throop an' that company av doughboys. But for all that, Chick Fish was compensated. He went over that wall on Jack Dempsey, an' seven friends followed him. When he rode back he was followed be seventy-two—an' every man jack av them ready an' willin' to die for Chick Fish.

For a week, 'twas the usual wurrk av rushing a barrio at daybreak, a ten-minute spatther av fire, an' breakfast in the main calle on whatever grub the counthry afforded. I'd got me another horrse, an' me an' the Loyal Ordher av Chick Fish's Friends took it upon ourselves to forage for Chick Fish an' Jack Dempsey. We roved the universe round for the best—an' got it. 'Twas nice light wurrk, fair coolin' to the blood, an' where there was bloody dead we threw somethin' over them or kept Chick Fish away from them.

But, careful as we were, the finish come at Muntinlupa, not because of the friends, but in spite av them. 'Twas the brigadier's fault, sending us in to do a nasty job that could as well have been done be a light batt'ry at two miles' range. However, be that as it may, we tackled Muntinlupa of a bright May mornin', while the infantry an' the jackass batt'ry, whose wurrk it was, went down be the river an' had an ilegant swim.

"Sir," says I to Chick Fish, just before we stharterd, "they're holdin' this town av Muntinlupa too cheap entirely."

"I know it, sergeant," snaps Chick Fish, "an' you know the reason."

"If ye'll pardon me impidince, sir," says I, "if I was you I'd borrow another company av infantry."

"I asked him," says Chick Fish, an' his lips was thremblin', "an' he asked *me* if B Throop was gettin' cowl'd feet."

"Enough, sir," sez I. "We'll take this town av Muntinlupa, or may the divil fly away wit' B Throop."

"Gawd 'elp that puffy little toad av a brigadier if I hever gets 'im at the wrong hend av a Krag," says Alf Butterfield. "E cawn't hinsult Chick Fish an' get away with hit."

The men was muttherin' an' murmurin', for some av the friends had hearrd Chick Fish talkin' to me, an' the wurrd was passed along the line that the brigadier had put a slur on B Throop.

"I could kill 'im," says Windy Alf, loud enough for Chick Fish to hear him.

"Divil a chance, Alf," says George Slattery, "for ye'll never get him nearer the firin' line than he is now, an' 'tis murder if ye shoot him on parade."

At that a laugh went up from B Throop. Chick Fish hearrd every wurrd, an' bit his lip, but divil a wurrd did he say. Sure, they was all the friends he had in the wurrld, an' he sthoo'd bechune his love an' dooty.

We jumped the little brown men av Muntinlupa a mile outside the town—jumped the divils when we weren't expectin' it—an' they caught us in column. Ye must know that we'd left the horrses behind, an' was fightin' on foot.

No need for Chick Fish to give orders to auld campaigners like B Throop. We jumped into a skirmish line, an' went for them on the bit. They was so close, 'twas the on'y thing to do, an' Chick Fish showed his common sinse when he ordhered a charge on their trench.

I looked back as we rushed in, an' saw eight av B Throop lyin' quiet enough in the road behind us, with big Axel Gunderson, the Norwegian, staggerin' along a dozen paces in the rear, an' blood spoutin' from his mouth. He was dyin' on his feet, an' cryin':

"Pocketed, sarge, pocketed. Look out for little Chick Fish. Dis is bad business."

"Who's that?" says Chick Fish, an' turnd. I sthraightened him out with a cuff on the side av his inquisitive head—aye, I sthru'd the throop commander, for was I not wan av his friends?—an' "'Tind to yer business, Chick Fish," sez

I, "an' lave yer friends to 'tind to theirs."

The wurds weren't out of me mouth before we had a bunch av bolomen on top av us. They rose out av the cogon grass like mosquitoes, with their bolos an' creeses lickin' out at us. I saw a big, two-handed barong come down on top av little Tommy Kernan, who'd carried a guidon in B Throop through three enlistments. Wan second Tommy was standin' there in front av me an' Chick Fish, cut clean through from the top av his head to his collar bone; the next he'd pitched forward, as dead as a mackerel, into Chick Fish's arms.

Gawd! I can hear it yet, the scream Chick Fish let out av him when Tommy Kernan passed on to his honorable discharge from the service. I'd just time to parry a cut from the same big barong an' peck a nate little hole in a tribesman's skull with the barrel av me Krag, when I observed that Chick Fish was runnin', leavin' me in command av B Throop.

"Sthop him, for the love av Heaven!" I yelled to Gunderson.

"Sure, sarge, I sthop him," says Gunderson, as thick as a harelipped man, an' pitched forward, grabbin' Chick Fish around the knees as he fell. He died there, did Gunderson, like the good friend av Chick Fish's that he was.

Screamin' like a lunatic, Chick Fish threw him off, but, like a hound on a hare, Con Donohue lepped out av the thick av the fightin', an' grabbed him be the nape av the neck. An' then a big, wavy-bladed creese come whizzin' over.

Con bent over Chick Fish an' took the creese in his back, but he saved Chick Fish before he went to join Gunderson.

"Sthand by him, B Throop!" screams little Rat Hosmer, pluckin' the creese out av Con an' layin' about him, left an' right.

At the call, Felix Labory, Alf Buttherfield, an' George Slattery closed in around Chick Fish, pistols in hand, an' there, facin' twenty brown savages, with Chick Fish safe in their midst, they died to a man.

Me? I was in command av B Throop, an' there was too many brave men in B Throop for me to forget it, even for the sake av Chick Fish, that I loved like a son. All I can remember is a lot av hot, sweaty, ill-smellin' divils pressin' around me, cuttin' an' slashin', an' then, little be little, B Throop closed in on them. When it was over, we needed recruitin' badly, an' Chick Fish was gone, for all that I prayed Gawd we'd find him dead with the Loyal Ordher av Friends that was ringed around him when I'd seen him last.

No, we did *not* retreat. That thievin', incompetent, volunteer brigadier had put his slight on men that had soldiered where he couldn't have been a dog robber, an' for the sake av Chick Fish, dead or alive, honored or disgraced, I made up me mind to take Muntinlupa. So we took it, for there was no sthoppin' us, an' I was settin' in the parlor av the alcalde's casa in Muntinlupa, dividin' among Chick Fish's friends a big sack av Chile dollars that we'd found in the town treasury, when the brigadier, ridin' at the head av the entire command, come into Muntinlupa. I looked out the window, an' there, sittin' on Jack Dempsey, with his side arrms gone an' a guard on each side av him, rode poor Chick Fish, who couldn't sthand the sight av blood. He'd deserted his command when it was fightin' a winnin' fight, an' they'd found him two miles away, leanin' up ag'in Jack Dempsey, an' cryin'.

An' that's the sthory av a brave man who went crazy. What could we do? They tried him be general court-martial for cowardice in the face av the inimy—an' that's punishable be death or such other punishment as a court-martial may inflict. So they bobtailed Chick Fish—turned him out av the service, without honor—an' when B Throop had finished the campaign in Santa Cruz, they sent us down to the Walled City to rest up and wait for the next detachment av rooks to come down from the States.

Afther Chick Fish left us in Santa Cruz, what wit' the scarcity av cavalry officers, an' me bein' top cutter an' an

auld sojer, I had command av the throop until the day we come back down the river in the same auld cascos an' disembarked at Binondo. I was ridin' Jack Dempsey. Chick Fish give him to me for me own horrse the day they took him down undher arrest to old Fort Santiago. He cried, poor bhoy, an' said he'd never ride Jack Dempsey ag'in, an' I give him me wurrd that I'd cherish the horrse for the sake av the master, an' he bade me good-by an' good luck.

We'd just led the sthock off the cascos onto the stone quay, when the big quartermaster's tug that carries the home-goin' throops out to the transports in the fairway pulled in to the dock ahead av us. There was a party av army people goin' home to San Francisco—a ginerol officer an' his ladies, together with two aids an' a passel o' young shavetails carryin' rugs an' candies for the young ladies. The ginerol—he was a major ginerol, an' *he* knew his business—sees the fragment av B Throop on the dock, an' sez he to his party, sez he:

“There's what's left o' the throop that was cut up at Muntinlupa.”

He took off his hat to B Throop, like the true officer an' gintleman that he was, for he knew that we'd suffered crool hard, an' did the wurrk that was give us to do. Not so his aids an' the shavetails. They was the newer breed av sojer, filled with blue blood an' conceit. They looks me little band av ragamuffins over lazylike, an' says one av the young shavetails:

“Ginerol, if I mistake not, that's my new command. I was told to take them over when they should come down river to-day, an' if you'll excuse me, sir, I'll go back to duty with the line,” an' wit' that he shakes hands with the ginerol, bows to the ladies, an' comes over to where I'm sittin' Jack Dempsey. I dismounted an' saluted him.

“I have to report B Throop present, sir, an' accounted for.”

He give me a cool nod. “Very well, me man,” sez he. He took a long look at Jack Dempsey, then at the led horses we had with the throop, an' faith he was a judge av horseflesh, for, without

a by your l'ave, or if ye plaze, he climbs aboard Jack Dempsey.

The airs av him angered me. Chick Fish had never sphoke to me as “me man;” an' nayther does any other officer that's a gintleman when he speaks to a top sergeant wit' fifteen years av honorable service behind him, an' the Auld Soldier's Home in front.

“Beggin' yer pardon, sir,” sez I, “but ye'll have to avail yerself of wan av the led horses, sir. That horrse ye're on belongs to me. He was give to me be Lootenant Fish, who believed in follerin' the regulations an' furnishin' his own mounts.”

He blushed at that, an' climbed down, rippin' mad to be put upon be an enlisted man in the hearin' av the commander in chief an' his ladies, without bein' able to think av a come-back. I looked at the ginerol out av the tail av me eye, an' he winked at me, so he did. I was about to wink back at him, when what should I see but Chick Fish, in civilian clothes an' a new bag in his hand, walkin' down the dock, head up an' pale as milk. The men saw him, too, an' there was a murmur went up among them.

I wheeled Jack Dempsey on his hind legs, an' looked at B Throop, an' sure there was pity for poor Chick Fish in the eyes of every man. It fair bruk me auld heart to see the poor bhoy, leavin' the service, goin' home crushed an' disgraced, with we av B Throop, that knew him an' loved him, lookin' on. It's aisy enough to die, sir, but livin' down disgrace is crool hard, an' it come into me head at that minute to let Chick Fish know that, even if the Loyal Ordher av Friends was gone, B Throop knew—an' undherstood.

“Tenshun!” sez I, an' our bugler sounded the call. “Lead out! Prepare to mount! Mount!” An' there we was lined up along the dock as Chick Fish come sheppin' by. I rode out, front an' center, an' he sthopped at sight av Jack Dempsey an' me, an' looked up at me like the poor lost soul that he was.

“Dhraw sabers!” I looked Chick Fish fair in the eyes, an' they were wet. “Present sabers!” an' forty-one o' the

finest throopers Gawd A'mighty ever created come up in salute to the officer an' the gintleman that was.

Chick Fish stood there a minute, lookin' at us. A minute passed, an' still he stood there, stupid an' uncomprehendin', with B Throop's sabers sthll raised in salute. I was waitin' for Chick Fish to return our salute before returnin' sabers, but he didn't undherstand; so we stood there at salute, starin' straight ahead av us; an' another minute passed. From somewhere back in the throop I hearrd a man give a sob, an' it was that silent on the dock the sound av that sob rung out like a shot.

Then our new throop commander—he was a slow-thinkin' divil an' I never liked him an' never will—got next to the true sthate av affairs. If he was wild wit' me for ordherin' him off Jack Dempsey, he was wilder now at B Throop's salute to a condemned coward.

"B Troop! Return—sabers!"

B Throop heard, but it did not heed. Who was this young blood that dared to give them ordhers in the presence av Chick Fish? The sabers stayed at salute, mine wit' the rest av them. Not a man so much as moved an eyelash.

'Twas only then that Chick Fish understood, an' his face lit up. He dhropped his bag, clicked his heels together, an' brings his hand up to the rim av his sthraw hat.

He was sthandin' close to Jack Dempsey's head, an' I could speak to him without bein' hearrd be me new throop commander.

"Give the ordher, sir," sez I between me teeth; "for Gawd's sake, give the ordher, sir! They'll not obey this new man."

Chick Fish's voice was hearrd in B Throop for the last time:

"B Throop! Return-n-n-n—sabers!"

Forty-two sabers went home to their scabbards with a crash, an' me new throop commander comes sthrollin' up to Chick Fish an' me. He was red wit' rage, an' he snaps out:

"Sergeant, how dare you presume to give ordhers to this throop over my head! Ye will hand me your resigna-

tion as first sergeant av B Throop at retreat this evening. I'll teach ye to give salutes to them that earns them."

"Faith, ye can go to blazes, if ye like, sir," says I, very uppish, in wan second forgettin' me fifteen years av honest an' faithful service. "Neither ye nor the likes av ye, ye unlicked, unwashed, untried cub, ye coffee-coolin', malingerin', lady tender, ye pen-pushin' dandy, ye feather-bed sojer, can prevint Jawn Ryan or B Throop from salutin' the brave." I stood in me stirrups an' shook me fist in his face. "I've cast me future where me past is—behind me, with that speech, sir," sez I, "but I can rot in Bilibid for Chick Fish's sake more cheerful than I can serrve as top cutther under you," an' wit' that I tore off me chevrons an' threw them at his feet. Then I reached down an' shook hands with Chick Fish, backed Jack Dempsey down the dock, with me auld back as stiff as a ramrod, an' took me place on the left flank, a private av the line.

"Bravo!" calls wan av the ladies in the ginerals party. "Spoken like a B Throop man, sergeant," an' she waves her parasol at me.

'Twas a day av surprises, but the most surprisin' thing was what that regular army ginerals wint an' did. He walked up to me chevrons lyin' on the dock, picked them up, sthepped up alongside Jack Dempsey, an' says he to me, sez he:

"Tack thim on ag'in, sergeant. Ye know how to wear them wit' honor. Should ye resign formally, I'll see to it that your colonel does not accept your resignation."

"I shall resign, sir," sez I, shakin' an' tremblin'. "'Twould be useless to serve under him—now."

"B Throop needs you worse nor it needs him," sez the ginerals, very low. "I thank ye for showin' him his place—an' in the years to come he'll thank ye, too. He needs dhrillin', an' I ought to know. He's me own son. Mr. Fish, sir."

Chick Fish saluted him, an' walked over.

"Sir," sez the auld man, "I'm av the opinion that when an officer's men impugn his courage, 'tis high time he was kicked out o' the service body an' bones. But there seems to be a difference av opinion concernin' your conduct; Mr. Fish, an', since I was a private wanst meself, I think we may safely bank on the opinions av the men ye led over that wall at Santa Cruz, even if ye did flunk it at Muntinlupa. I think, Mr. Fish, that I have influence enough in Washington to have your case reopened. Ye may l'ave your address with me aid. I wish ye good luck an' godspeed, sir, an', if ye don't mind, I'd like to shake the hand av a man that's loved like B Throop loves you."

An' so we lost Chick Fish an' I gained Jack Dempsey. The gineral was as good as his wurrd to Chick Fish. When we returnrd to the States we took station at Fort Meyer, Virginia, an' one fine day I was called into the adjutant's office, an' towld to report to the President av the United States, at the White House. I took the throlley, an' wint up to Washington, an' sint in me name to the president.

He was sittin' in a room be himself when I come in.

"How do ye do, Sergeant Ryan," sez he, an' shook hands wit' me. He picked somethin' off his desk. "Here is a little somethin' for ye, sergeant," sez he. "Congress voted it to ye at the last session for conspicuous gallantry in action at a place called Muntinlupa," an' he pins on me blue blouse a medal av honor. "Be the way, sergeant," sez he, "what kind av a man was that young officer, Fish, an' what was behind that affair at Muntinlupa?"

I towld him about Chick Fish.

"Very well," sez he, "'tis the brave that know the brave."

A week later Chick Fish was given back his commission, an' sint back to furrin service. He serrved a year, wit' honor, an' then resigned. He's a lawyer now, in New York, where he can fight to his heart's contint without seein' blood, an' Jack Dempsey's dead av the glanders, an' me auld heart's sore this night. Thank ye for walkin' out wit' me. Ochone, ochone. A man's friends comes and they goes in the service—they comes an' they goes.

In two weeks you will get the Christmas POPULAR, containing four or five Christmas stories by Richard Washburn Child, Francis Lynde and others. On the stands December 23rd.



"FROM NICK TO ALICE"

WHEN President Taft headed the distinguished party which made its trip around the world and added to its fame by having as two of its members Representative Nicholas Longworth and Miss Alice Roosevelt, the courtship between Nick and Alice had reached its romantic height when the tourists arrived at St. Petersburg.

Mr. Taft was received by the czar, and he came back from the palace evidently much impressed with something. The more he smiled, the more the members of the party plied him with questions.

"Well," he said, "it's a wonder how news flies and how the evidence of love affairs travel. What do you think I saw inscribed in a book in the drawing-room of the czar?"

"What?" he was asked.

"'From Nick to Alice,'" he replied.

"Why, how on earth did they know and how did the book get there?" chorused his hearers, knowing that the czar would be interested in the love affairs of President Roosevelt's daughter.

"Simply," replied Mr. Taft, with a broad smile on his face, "because it was a present from Nicholas, the Czar of all the Russias, to his wife Alice."

The Ghost of One Man Coulee

By B. M. Bower

Author of "The Happy Family Stories," "Lonesome Land," Etc.

The reappearance of Olafson, the violinist, who had gone out in the blizzard and was lost seeking the north wind that he might learn the song it sang, and who, according to Happy Jack, returned to earth on moonlight nights to play his violin in the doorway of the deserted shack in One Man Coulee

HAPPY JACK, by some freak of misguided ambition, was emulating rather heavily the elfish imagination of Andy Green. He was—to put it baldly and colloquially—throwing a big load into the Native Son who jingled his gorgeous silver spurs close alongside Happy's more soberly accoutered heel.

"That there," Happy was saying, with ponderous gravity, "is the shack where the old fiddler went crazy trying to play a tune like the wind—or some blamed fool thing like that—and killed himself because he couldn't make it stick. It's haunted, that shack is. The old fellow's ghost comes around there moonlight nights and plays the fiddle in the door."

The Native Son, more properly christened Miguel, turned a languidly velvet glance toward the cabin and flicked the ashes from his cigarette daintily. "Have you ever seen the ghost, Happy?" he asked indulgently.

"Ah—yes, sure! I seen it m'self," Happy lied boldly.

"And were you scared?"

"Me? Scared? Hunh!" Happy gave a fairly good imitation of dumb disgust. "Why, I went and——" Happy's imagination floundered in the stagnant pool of a slow-thinking brain. "I went right in and——"

"Exactly." Miguel smiled a smile of even, white teeth and ironical lips. "Some moonlight night we will come back here at midnight, you and I. I

have heard of that man, and I am fond of music. We will come and listen to him."

Some of the other boys, ambling up from behind, caught a part of the speech, and looked at one another, grinning.

"The Native Son's broke out all over with schoolbook grammar ag'in," Big Medicine remarked. "Wonder what Happy's done? I've noticed, by cripes, that the guilty party better duck, when that there Miguel begins to talk like a schoolma'am huntin' a job! Hey, there!" he bellowed suddenly, so that one might hear him half a mile away. "What's this here music talk I hear? Who's goin' to play, and where at, and how much is it a head?"

Miguel turned and looked back at the group, smiling still. "Happy was telling me about a ghost in that cabin down there." He flung out a hand toward the place so suddenly that his horse jumped in fear of the quirt. "I say we'll come back some night and listen to the ghost. Happy says he frequently rides over to hear it play on moonlight nights, and——"

"Aw, g'wan!" Happy Jack began to look uncomfortable in his mind. "I said——"

"Happy? If he thought there was a ghost in One Man Coulee, you couldn't tie him down and haul him past in a hayrack at noon," Andy asserted sharply. "There isn't any ghost."

Andy set his lips firmly together, and

stared reminiscently down the hill at the lonely little cabin in the coulee. Memory, the original moving-picture machine, which can never be equaled by any man-made contrivance, flashed upon him vividly a picture of the night when he had sat within that cabin, listening to the man who would play the north wind, and who wept because it eluded him always; who played wonderfully—a genius gone mad under the spell of his own music—and at last rushed out into the blizzard and was lost, seeking the north wind that he might learn the song it sang. The scene gripped Andy, even in memory. He wondered fancifully if Olafson was still wandering with his violin, searching for the home of the north wind. They had never found him, not even when the snows had gone and the land lay bare beneath a spring sky. He must have frozen, for the night had been bitter, and a blizzard raged blindingly. Still, they had never found a trace of him.

There had been those who, after searching a while in vain, had accused Andy to his face of building the story to excite his fellows. He had been known to deceive his friends heartlessly, and there had been some argument over the real fate of the vanished Olafson. If Andy had told the truth, asked the doubters, where was Olafson's body? And who had ever tried to play the wind? Who, save Andy Green, would ever think of such a fantastic tale? Happy Jack, Andy remembered resentfully, had been unusually vociferous in his unbelief, even for him.

"Aw, you stuck to it there was all the makin's of a ghost," Happy defended awkwardly, and wished that Andy Green had not overheard the yarn he told Miguel. "Sure, there's a ghost!" He fell back a step that he might wink at Big Medicine, and so enlist his sledge-hammer assistance. "I leave it to Bud if we didn't hear it, one night——"

"And seen it, too, by cripes!" Big Medicine enlarged readily and shamelessly. "Standin' right in the door, playin' the fiddle to beat a straight

flush." He glared around the little group with his protruding eyes until his glance met the curious look of Cal Emmett. "You was with us, Cal," he asserted boldly. "I leave it to you if we didn't see 'im and hear 'im."

Cal, thus besought to bear false witness, did so with amiable alacrity. "We sure did," he declared.

"Funny you never said a word about it before," snapped Andy, with open disbelief in his tone.

"We thought nobody'd believe us if we did tell it," Big Medicine explained.

"Pity yuh don't always think as close to the mark as yuh done then," Andy retorted.

"How do yuh know there ain't a ghost?" Big Medicine demanded with some slight rancor, born not of the argument, but of temporary ill feeling between the two. "Is it because yuh know, by cripes, that yuh lied last winter?"

Andy's lips tightened. "I've heard about enough of that," he said, with a flash of anger. With the cabin in sight, and recalling the tragedy of that night, he was not in the mood to wrangle good-naturedly about it with any one—least of all with Big Medicine. "I didn't lie. I'm dead willing to back what I said about it with my fists, if——"

Big Medicine twitched the reins to ride close, but Miguel's horse sidled suddenly and blocked the move. Also, Miguel smiled guilelessly into the angry eyes of Big Medicine.

"Will you fellows come back with me to-night, then, and see the ghost?" he asked lightly. "Or don't you dare tackle it again?"

Big Medicine snorted and forgot his immediate intentions toward Andy, just as Miguel, perhaps, intended that he should do.

"You wouldn't dast come along, if we did," he glowered. "I'd camp there alone for a month, far as I'm concerned, if there was any grub, by cripes!"

"That shows how much you know about the place," put in Pink, siding with Andy. "Unless somebody's

packed it away lately, there's all kinds of grub left. Maybe the flour, and bacon, and beans is gone, but there's enough pickles and stuffed olives to last—"

"Olives!" cried the Native Son, and looked back longingly at the rugged bluff which marked One Man Coulee. "Say, does anybody belong to them olives?"

"Nobody but the ghost," grinned Pink. "We bought him twelve lovely tall bottles, just to please Jimmie; he told us there wasn't any sale for stuffed olives in Dry Lake, and he offered 'em to us at cost. We did think uh taking all he had, but we cut it down to twelve bottles afterward. And Olafson never ate a darned olive all the time he was there!"

"And they're there yet, you say?" It was plain that Miguel was far more interested in the olives than he was in the ghost.

"Sure, they're there." Pink was not troubling to warp the truth, as Miguel decided, after a sharp glance. "The stuff all belonged to Olafson, and the shack belongs to the Old Man. And when Olafson went crazy over the wind, and froze to death," he stipulated distinctly, with a challenging glance at Big Medicine, "we all kept thinking at first he'd come back, maybe. But he never did—"

"Exceptin' his ghost, by golly!" put in Slim unexpectedly, with a belated snort of amusement at the idea.

"I'd rather," sighed Miguel, "have a dozen bottles of stuffed olives than a dozen kisses from the prettiest girl in the State."

"Mamma! they're easier to get, anyway. If you want 'em that bad—"

"That there ghost may have something to say about them olives," Happy Jack warned, sticking stubbornly to his story.

Miguel smiled—and there was that in his smile which sent four mendacious cow-punchers hot with resentment.

"Maybe yuh don't believe in that ghost, by cripes?" Big Medicine challenged indignantly, and gave Miguel a

pale, pop-eyed stare meant to be intimidating.

Miguel smiled again as at some secret joke, and made no reply at all.

"Well—don't yuh believe it?" Big Medicine roared after a minute.

Miguel smiled gently and inspected his cigarette; emotions might surge about this Native Son and beat themselves to a white froth upon the rock of his absolute, inimitable imperturbability, as the Happy Family knew well. Now they rode close-grouped, intensely interested in this struggle between bull-bellowing violence and languid impassivity.

"You don't believe it yourself, do you?" Miguel inquired evenly at last, rousing himself from his abstraction. "Did you expect me to swallow hook, sinker, and all?"

Big Medicine looked positively murderous. "When I say a thing is so," he cried, "I expect, by cripes, that folks will take m' bare word for it. I don't have to produce no affidavies, nor haul in any witnesses. I ain't like Andy, here. You're dealin' now with a man that can look truth in the face and never bat an eye."

Miguel smiled again, this time more humanly amused. "I've met men before who hadn't a speaking acquaintance with Dame Truth," he drawled. "They looked her in the face, too—and she never recognized 'em."

Big Medicine was at that critical point where make-believe may easily become reality. He had been "joshing" and playing he was mad before; now his glare hardened perceptibly, so that more than one of the boys noticed the difference.

"Aw, if he don't want to believe it he don't have to," Happy Jack intercepted Big Medicine's belligerent speech. "Chances is them olives'll stay where they're at a good long while, though—if Mig-u-ell has to get 'em after dark."

Miguel smoked while he rode ten rods. "I offered to come and listen to the ghost fiddle his fastest," he observed at last, "and not one of you fellows took me up on it. To-night I'll

come alone and get those olives. I guess I can carry twelve bottles all right."

"It's no use to-night," Cal Emmett objected. "It's only on moonlight nights——" He looked a question at Big Medicine.

"Moonlight it's got to be. There ain't a moon till——"

"I can find stuffed olives any old kind of a night." Miguel blew the ashes from his cigarette. "It's the olives I want, amigo. I don't give a whoop for your ghost."

"Aw, I betche yuh dassent come when it's moonlight, just the same," cried Happy Jack. "I betche ten dollars yuh *dassent*."

It would be tiresome to repeat all that was said upon the subject thereafter. So slight a thing as Happy Jack's wrongful desire to lie as convincingly as could Andy Green, led the whole Happy Family into a profitless and more or less acrimonious argument. Each man, according to his nature, and the mood he happened to be in at the moment, took up the discussion. And speedily it developed that the faction against Miguel, Andy Green, and Pink included every man of them save Weary, who would stand by Pink regardless of the issue.

It was nearly noon, and they were hungry, and headed toward camp; but despite their haste they argued the foolish question of whether the cabin in One Man Coulee was haunted. Six of them maintained stubbornly that it was—for Irish began to side with Happy Jack just because he did not like the Native Son very well, and that ironical smile of Miguel's irritated him to a degree; and Jack Bates also espoused the ghost because he scented an opportunity for excitement. The minority, composed of Miguel, Pink, Andy Green, and Weary, confined themselves largely to sarcasm—which is the oil which feeds fastest the flames of dissension.

It was foolish, to be sure; just as foolish as many other things which men drift into doing. But they, nevertheless, reached that point where, as in the

case of Big Medicine, make-believe crowded close upon reality. The four rode together into camp ten paces ahead of the six, and they talked in low tones among themselves mostly. When they did deign to look at the six, their glances were unfriendly, and when they spoke their speech was barbed so that it stung the listeners. And the six retaliated vigorously—the more so because they had been silly enough in the first place to declare their belief in the nonexistent, and had been betrayed into making many ridiculous assertions which they were too obstinate to withdraw; so that once again the Happy Family belied the name men had given it, and became for the time being a bunch of as disagreeable cow-punchers as one could find in four days' ride.

"Aw, say, I sure would like to put it on them fellers *good!*" Happy Jack growled to Cal and Jack Bates on the way to the corralled saddle bunch after dinner. Happy Jack was purple with wrath, for a caustic sentence or two spoken in Miguel's most maddening drawl was yet stinging his ears. "That there Natiff Son makes me *tired!* I wisht there *was* a ghost—I'd sure——"

"Oh, there's a ghost, all right," Jack Bates stated meaningly; "all yuh got to do is make one."

"Say, by golly!" Slim, close behind them, gulped excitedly. "Wouldn't it——"

"Say, don't let them faces get to leaking," Cal advised bluntly. "It's a whole week till the moon's good. Shut up!"

Slim goggled at him, caught the hazy beginning of an idea, grinned, and stepped over the rope into the corral. He was grinning when he caught his horse, and he was still grinning widely while he cinched the saddle. He caught Andy Green eying him suspiciously, and snickered outright. But he did not say a word, and, therefore, went his way, believing that he had given no hint of what was in his mind.

Slim and Happy Jack were alike in one respect: Their minds worked slowly and rather ponderously—and,

like other ponderous machinery, once in motion they were hard to stop. The others would have left the subject alone, after that hour of hot argument, and in time would have forgotten it except for an occasional jeer, perhaps; but not so Happy Jack and Slim.

The Flying U outfit ate, saddled fresh horses, reloaded the mess wagon, and moved on toward Dry Creek, and that night flung weary bodies upon the growing grass in the shade of the tents, twenty miles and more from One Man Coulee and the little cabin with its grim history of genius blotted out in madness. Nevertheless, Slim searched ostentatiously with plate, knife, and fork in his hand, at supper time, and craned his neck over boxes and cans, until he had the attention of his fellows, who were hungry, and elbowed him out of their way with scant courtesy.

"Sa, Mig-u-ell, where's them stuffed olives?" he called at last. "I thought, by golly, we was goin' to have some olives for supper?"

"Olives—*stuffed* olives, are best picked by moonlight, they tell me," Miguel responded unemotionally, glancing up over his cup. "Have patience, amigo."

Slim nudged Happy Jack so that he spilled half his coffee and swore because it was hot, caught Big Medicine's pale-eyed glare upon him, and subsided so suddenly that he choked over his next sentence, which had nothing at all to do with olives, or ghosts, or insane fiddlers.

Men, it would seem, never quite leave their boyhood behind them; at least, those men do not who live naturally and individually, untainted by the poison of the great money marts where human nature is warped and perverted so that nearly all natural instincts are subordinated to the lust for gain of one sort and another. In the Bear Paw country men labor for gain, it is true; but they also live the lives for which nature has created them. There is that in the wide reaches of plain and valley, in the clean arch of blue sky and drifting clouds overhead, which keeps the best

of them boyish till their temples are marked with white—yes, and after.

It was that tenacious element which started Irish, Cal Emmett, Jack Bates, and Big Medicine to tilting hat brims together when none others were near to observe them. It was that which sent them off riding by themselves—to town, they said before they started—early on the first Sunday after the wagons had pulled in to the ranch, there to stand until the beef round-up started.

They returned unobtrusively by mid-afternoon, and they looked very well satisfied with themselves, and inclined to facetiousness.

"What's the matter?" Weary asked them pointedly when they dismounted at the corral. "Come back after something you forgot?"

"Yeah—sure," Cal returned, with a flicker of eyelids. "Nothing doing in that darned imitation of a town, anyway."

"Where's the mail?" Pink demanded expectantly.

"We—plumb forgot that there mail, by cripes!" Big Medicine looked up quickly. "Irish was goin' to git it, but he didn't."

Pink said nothing, but he studied the four from under the long, curled lashes which he had found very useful in concealing covert glances.

"Sorry, Little One—honest to grandma, I am!" Big Medicine clapped him patronizingly on the shoulder as he passed him.

"I don't know as it matters," said Pink sweetly. "Some of us were just about ready to hit the trail. We can get it, I guess. Say! Ain't you got that cayuse caught up yet, Mig?" he called out to the Native Son, who was reclining luxuriously against a new stack of sweet-smelling bluejoint hay. "Come out of your trance, or we'll go off and leave you!"

"Oh—yuh going to town?" Cal looked over his shoulder with some uneasiness in his baby-blue eyes.

"Maybe we are and maybe we ain't. Maybe we're going to see our best girls. What's it to you?" Pink turned his back on Cal and looked full at Weary.

"Come on—the girls will be plumb wild if we don't get a move on," he said carelessly, and picked up his bridle. "Where's Andy? I thought he said he wanted to go along. Hurry up, Mig, if you're going."

Nobody knew what he was driving at, but the three were mounted well within ten minutes, and flinging back remarks to the four who had lately returned. The departing ones were well up on the hogback before any one of them ventured to question Pink, who rode with the air of one whose destination is fixed, and whose desire outstrips his body in the journey.

"Say, Cadwolloper, where are we headed for?" Weary inquired then resignedly. "And what's the rush?"

Pink glanced down the hill toward the stable and corrals, decided that they were being observed with something very like suspicion, and faced to the front again. "We're going to *head* for Rogers'," he dimpled, "but we ain't going to get there. Yuh needn't look down there—but Irish and Cal are saddling up again. They're afraid we're going to town. They're going to trail us up and find out for sure."

"They sure did act like they'd been holding up a train, when they rode up," Weary observed. "I've been searching my soul with a spyglass trying to find the answer for all that guilt on their faces."

"Happy Jack has been mentioning stuffed olives and moonlight pretty often to-day," the Native Son remarked with apparent irrelevance. "I thought he'd pickled that josh, but he's working things up again. Two and two make four; *that* four." With the slightest of head tilts he indicated those below, and flashed his even, white teeth in a smile. "Do you want me to guess where you're going, Pink?"

"I wish you fellows would guess how we're going to ditch them two pirates, first," Pink retorted, glancing down again at the stable without turning his head. "If we strike straight for Rogers', maybe they'll turn back, though. They'll think we've gone over there to see the girls."

"If I knew the country a little better——" began the Native Son, and stopped with that.

"If they don't follow us over the ridge," spoke up Andy, who had been thinking deeply, "we can go up Antelope Coulee instead of down, and follow along in the edge of the breaks to the head of One Man, and down that; that's where you're going, isn't it? It will be five or six miles farther."

Pink threw up his hand impatiently. "Uh course, that's what I intended to do. But if they ride over the ridge they'll know we never kept straight on to Rogers', and then they'll know we're dodging." He urged his horse up the last steep slope, and led the way over the brow of the bluff and out of sight of the ranch below. "And I'm sure going to find out what that bunch has been making themselves so mysterious about, the last couple uh days," he vowed grimly. "I slipped up on 'em yesterday down in the hay corral, and I heard Cal say, 'Sure, we can! There's one in that Injun grave over in Antelope Coulee.'" He stared at the others with purpling eyes. "What's in that grave, Weary? I never was right to it, myself."

"Nothing, Cadwolloper—except what is left of the old boy they tucked under that ledge. There ain't even a *perfume* any more. We can go by that way and see if they've been there."

With that wordless understanding common among men who have lived long together, they left the trail and ambled slowly across the prairie in the direction of the Rogers Ranch. And they had not traveled more than half a mile when Miguel, looking back very cautiously, smiled.

"Don't look," he said, and then added melodramatically: "We are followed! Hist! The pursuers are in sight. Courage, men!"

Pink risked a glance over his shoulder, and glimpsed two bobbing hat crowns just over the brow of Flying U Coulee.

"Now, wouldn't that jar yuh?" he exclaimed, just as disgustedly as if he

had not all along suspected that very thing to happen.

The moving specks stopped, remained stationary for a minute or two, and then went bobbing back again. The four laughed, pressed spurred heels against their horses, and galloped over the ridge and into the lower end of Antelope Coulee. At the bottom they swung sharply to the right, instead of to the left, rode as hurriedly as the uneven ground would permit for a mile or more; crossed the trail to Dry Lake, and kept on up the coulee to its very head.

At one point their quick eyes saw where several horsemen had ridden down into the coulee, dismounted, and climbed through shale rock to the lone Indian grave under a low shelf of sandstone, left there betraying imprints of high-heeled boots, returned again to where their horses had waited, and ridden on. They also rode on, toward One Man Coulee. Before them always lay the trail of shod hoofs, where the soil was not too hard to receive an imprint.

Patsy was standing in the door of the mess house beating his fat knuckles upon a tin pan for the supper call, when Andy Green and Miguel rode leisurely down the grade. The boys were straggling toward the sound, and there was the usual bustle around the washbasins and roller towels, and in the quiet air hung the enticing odor of Patsy's delectable chicken potpie. The two hurried to the stable, unsaddled with the haste of hungry men, and reached the mess house just as the clatter of feet had subsided and the potpie was making its first round.

Cal looked up from a generous helping. "Hello, where's the rest of the bunch?" he queried.

"Oh, the girls have got them roped and tied," Andy responded carelessly. "Mig and I got cold feet, and broke back on them."

"Didn't yuh go to town?" Irish spoke as innocently as if he had not watched them well on their way from the shelter of the bluff.

Miguel deigned him one of his heavy-

lidded stares. "Why should one go to town, when there are three pretty girls at the next ranch? Town didn't hold *you* fellows very long."

"I thought sure you'd gone after olives, by golly," blurted Slim, with his mouth half full of dumpling.

"If I'd gone after them, I'd have got them," Miguel, usually so exasperatingly calm, spoke with some feeling.

"Aw, g'wan! I betche yuh *dassent* go." Happy Jack grinned arrogantly.

"You wouldn't bet anything but words," retorted Miguel. "There are several of you fellows that seem to be just that brand of sports." He gave the faint shrug which they all hated.

Big Medicine laid down his knife and fork. "Say, do yuh mind naming over them several fellers?" he inquired abruptly in his booming voice. "I don't bet words, by cripes—when I bet—"

Miguel smiled across at him blandly. "We were speaking of olives," he purred. "Happy Jack wanted to 'betche' I daren't go after them. He didn't name the stakes, though."

"It ain't because I ain't willin' to put 'em up," glowered Happy. "I'll betche five dollars, then—if that suits yuh any better."

Miguel laughed, which was unusual when he was arguing with any one. "Do you mean it? Do you really think that little, weak, pretty-pretty ghost story would scare—a—nigger baby?" His voice taunted the lot of them.

"Don't yuh *believe* there's a ghost, by cripes?" Big Medicine bawled pugna- ciously.

"No. Of course I don't believe it. Neither do you." Miguel spoke with that weary tolerance which is so hard to endure.

"I do," Cal Emmett declared flatly. "And I'm willing to bet a horse against them fancy spurs of yours that you *dassent* go to-night to One Man Coulee and bring away them bottles of stuffed olives."

"What horse?" asked Miguel, reaching for the chicken platter.

"Well—*any* darned horse I *own*!" Cal wore the open-eyed look of innocence which had helped him scare out

his opponents in many a poker game. "I say to-night," he added apologetically to the others, "because it's going to be clear and lots uh moonlight; and it's Sunday. But I don't care *what* night he tries it. I'll bet he won't bring away no *olives*."

"Aren't they there?" Miguel wanted to know.

"Oh—they're there, I guess. I'll change the wordin' a little. I'll bet yuh dassent go to that shack, and go into it and stay long enough to freeze onto twelve bottles uh *anything*. To-night," he added, "at mid—no, any old time between ten and one. And I'll bet any one uh my four cayuses against your spurs."

"It's a go. Does the rest of my riding outfit look good to any of you fellows?" Miguel glanced around the table smilingly. "Happy, for instance——"

"I got five dollars up," Happy Jack reminded. "But I'll put twenty with it against your bridle."

"That bridle's worth fifty dollars. And my saddle cost two hundred and eighty. I'll put them up, though, if any one wants to cover the bet."

"Say, this is a shame. Honest to grandma, I'd hate to see Maggie ridin' bareback the rest uh the summer—with a rope hackamore, by cripes! Don't go 'n take all his purty-purties away from him like that, boys! Haw-haw-haw!" It is unwise to laugh like that with one's mouth full of chicken. Big Medicine choked and retired from the conversation and the room.

"Say, you don't realize, by golly, what you're up ag'inst," Slim observed ponderously. "If you did——"

"Are you dead-game sports, or are you a bunch of old women?" drawled Miguel. "My outfit is up, if any one has nerve enough to take the bets."

They wrangled more or less amicably over it, as was their habit. But they did finally bet a great deal more on the foolish venture than they should have done. When, finally, they reached the time and the point of departure, Miguel, like the plains Indians during the fever of horse-racing, was pledged to his hat

and his high-heeled boots; while the Happy Family, if they lost, would have plenty of reason to repent them of their rashness.

They waited an hour for Pink and Weary to return, and, when they did not appear, they rode off without them. They pitied Miguel, and told him so. They told of haunted cabins, and of murders and dreams come true, and of disasters that were weird.

Andy Green, when half of the ten miles had been covered, roused himself from his disapproving silence and told them a fearsome tale of two miners murdered mysteriously and thrown into their own mine, and of their dog which howled up and down the mountain gulches when the moonlight lay soft upon the land; told it so that they rode close-huddled that they might catch it all, down to the last gruesomely mysterious incident of the murdered master whistling from the pit to the dog, and of the animal's whimpering obedience—long years after, when the dog's bones were bleaching through sun and storm above, and the master's bones were rotting in the darkness below.

Happy Jack more than once glanced uneasily toward the shadowy hollows as they rode slowly across the prairies through the night silence. Slim set his jaw and rode stiffly, staring straight ahead of him as if he feared what he might see, if he looked aside. Miguel was seen to shiver, though the air was soft and warm.

"Now, this Olafson——" Andy began after a silence which no one thought to break. "The boys joshed me a lot about that. But it was queer—the queerest thing I ever saw or heard. To see him sitting there in the firelight, listening—and while he listened, to hear the wind *whoo-whoo* around the corners and down the chimney—and the snow *swish-swishing* against the walls like grave clothes when the ghosts walk——"

"Aw—I thought yuh said there *wasn't* any ghosts!" croaked Happy Jack uneasily.

"And then Olafson would lift his violin and draw the bow across——"

Andy, the reins dropped upon the saddle horn, held an imaginary violin cuddled under his chin, and across the phantom strings drew an imaginary bow with slow, sweeping gestures, while his voice went on with the tale, and the Happy Family watched, and listened, and saw what he meant them to see. "And then would come that lonesome *whoo-oo* of the wind—from the violin. He made me see things. He made me see the storm, like it was a white spirit creeping over the range. He made me see——"

They had reached One Man Coulee while he talked. The Happy Family stared down into the lonely place lying nakedly white under the moon, shivered, and rode slowly down the slope. Like one in a trance Andy rode in their midst, and compelled them with his voice to see the things he would have them see. Compelled them to see Olafson, the master musician, striving after the song of the north wind, and the prairie, and the wolf; made them see him as he opened the door and stood there gazing wildly out, playing—always playing—something weird and wonderful, and supernaturally terrible.

"I don't envy Miguel his job none, by cripes," Big Medicine said, as they drew near the point beyond which the cabin would stand revealed to them, and for a wonder he spoke softly.

Andy glanced up at the yellow ball floating serenely over the blue ocean of the sky, down the white-lighted coulee, with fringes of black shadows here and there, and then at the cabin squatting deserted against the green background of willows, with blank, staring window and open doorway.

"If such things can be—if the ghost of Olafson can come back, he'll come to-night and try again to play the wind," he said solemnly. "Just a low, even, creepy tone first on open G——"

They rode slowly around to where they faced the door, pulled up short fifty feet away from it, and stared.

"*There he is!*" Andy's voice was the whisper which carries far. "He's come, boys—to play the wind again! A low, creepy note on open G——"

In the doorway, where the moon shone radiantly in, stood a black-clothed figure topped by a grinning, fleshless skull. Cuddled under the horrid, bony chin of it was a violin. The right arm was upraised and bent, poising the bow above the strings. The staring, empty eye sockets were lighted with a pale, phosphorescent glow.

"Well, by golly!" gulped Slim, in an undertone, and backed his horse a little involuntarily.

"Aw——" Happy Jack looked at Irish and Cal, grinned sheepishly, and was silent.

"Go on, Miggie, and git your olives," Big Medicine murmured. "Twelve bottles. We'll wait for yuh here."

Miguel slid off his horse without a word and started forward, hesitating a trifle, if the truth were known.

In the doorway the right arm of the figure trembled and moved slowly upward, pulling the bow lightly across the strings. Came a low, wailing note on open G, which swelled resonantly in the quiet air, rose a tone, clung there, and slid eerily down to silence.

Big Medicine started and stared across at Irish, and Cal Emmett, and Jack Bates, who met his look incredulously. Miguel stopped short and stood a moment in the blank silence which followed. The gaunt, black figure bulked huge in the doorway, and the fleshless mouth grinned at him sardonically.

Miguel took a step or two forward. Again that ghostly arm lifted and swept the bow across the strings. Again the eerie tones came vibrantly, sliding up the scale, clinging, and wailing, and falling again to silence when Miguel stood still.

Big Medicine turned his horse short around, so that he faced those three—Cal, Jack Bates, and Irish.

"Say!—the—the thing's *playin'*, by cripes!" he muttered accusingly, and edged off fearfully.

"Aw—say!" Happy Jack moved farther away in sudden, unashamed terror. "What makes it—*play?*"

Miguel stood longer that time, and the silence rasped the nerves of those

who waited farther off. When he moved forward again the playing began. When he stopped, the ghostly arm was still.

Happy Jack, with an unexpected, inarticulate squawk, kicked his horse in the ribs and fled down the coulee. Slim went after him, galloping with elbows flapping wildly. Those who waited longer saw Miguel walk slowly up to the very threshold, and face the ghost that played over and over that one, awful strain. They saw him stop as if to gather together his courage, put down his head as if he were battling a blizzard, and edge past the unearthly figure.

As he disappeared within, brushing swiftly past the ghost, the strings twanged ominously. Came an unearthly screech which was like demons howling as howls the gray wolf before a storm. It raised the hair on the scalp with that prickling sensation which is so extremely unpleasant, and it sent Big Medicine, Cal, Jack Bates, and Irish clattering down the coulee in the wake of Slim and Happy Jack.

Andy Green held his horse and Miguel's back from following, and watched them out of sight before he rode closer to the awful thing which guarded the door.

"All right, boys—yuh may as well stop the concert; the audience is half-way home by this time," he called out, chuckling as he dismounted and went clanking up to the doorway. "Say, by gracious, yuh done fine! That last screech was sure a pippin—it like to have stampeded *me*."

Pink disentangled his fingers from a fine bit of string and grunted. "It ought to be. We've been practicing that howl, off and on, for four hours. How was the fiddling, Andy?"

"Outa sight. Say, yuh better take them strings off the bow, and make darned sure you ain't leaving any tracks, or anything. Let 'em come back and find everything just the way they fixed the plant—and then let 'em put in their spare time figuring the thing out, if they can. They'll likely come moseying back up here, pretty soon—all but

Happy and Slim—so you want to hurry. If you two can beat us home, they'll never get wise in a thousand years uh hard thinking." He looked the ghost over critically, gave a snort, and painstakingly straightened the bow. "Darned grave robbers," he exclaimed, looking at the skull. "Well, hike, boys; I hear 'em coming. Got the olives all right, Miguel? Come and get on your horse. We'll meet 'em down the trail a ways if we can. And say," he called over his shoulder, when he was beside his horse again, "you fellows do some *going*! If you ain't in bed when we get there, the stuff's off." Even while he looked back, Pink and Weary dodged out and vanished in the gloom of the willows.

The Native Son, bearing in a gunny sack twelve bottles of stuffed olives, and on his swarthy face an unstudied grin of elation, was just making ready to mount when Irish and Big Medicine became recognizable in the moonlight below.

"We thought we'd come back and see if you were alive, anyway," Irish announced shamefacedly, with a glance toward the cabin and the spectral figure in the doorway. "What did it do to yuh, Mig?"

"Nothing, only caterwaul like the devil all the time I was getting the olives. It's shut up since I came out of the cabin. Seems like it hates visitors."

"Er—did it—did the ghost make all that noise, honest?" Big Medicine's voice had lost some of its blatant assurance. He was bewildered, and he showed it.

"You heard him sawing on that fiddle, didn't you? The screeching seemed to come from—just all over the room." Miguel waved his free hand vaguely. "Just all over at once. Kinda got my goat, for a minute or two."

The group rode slowly away, and when Miguel was through speaking they went in silence. Halfway up the hill, Irish turned in the saddle and stared down at the roof of the little cabin showing black under the moon.

"Well—I'll—be—darned!" he stated slowly and emphatically, and rode on with the others, who seemed to be thinking deeply.

Their meditations must have been to some purpose, for, after a hasty word or two snatched in private with his fellow conspirators, Irish set the pace.

At the stable he did not wait to unsaddle first of all. Instead he went hurriedly inside, lighted a match, and held it up while he surveyed the wall where the Happy Family were wont to hang their saddles—when they hung them anywhere. Two familiar saddles

dangled there, each hanging upon its accustomed peg by its accustomed right stirrup, proclaiming silently and unanswerably the fact of their owners' presence upon the ranch. When the match flickered and went out, Irish discovered that Cal, Jack Bates, Big Medicine, and Happy Jack were standing behind him, staring also.

"Well—I'll—be—darned!" said Irish again softly, and dropped the stub with a gesture of keen disappointment.

"It wasn't them, then," muttered Big Medicine at his shoulder. "And the—the thing—it *played*, by cripes!"

You will get several Western stories in the next POPULAR, notably a complete novel by Frederick R. Becholdt and a short story by Bertrand W. Sinclair.



SMASHING ALL PRECEDENTS

ROBERT O. BAILEY, assistant secretary of the treasury, frequently shocks Washington, knocks its traditions into the semblance of a secondhand hat store, and pounds its precedents into pulp. First of all, however, it is well to describe the national capital. Everybody there derrick himself out of bed at half past seven in the morning, takes a bath if he has time, bolts his breakfast, gets to his office at nine o'clock, gets out of it at half past four, and goes home to read the paper, with the object of getting to bed at eleven o'clock. Washington is a city of quiet and routine. Nobody goes to his office before he has to, and nobody stays there a second longer than is necessary. Working for the government would be a soft thing if anybody got anything more than starvation wages out of it.

But Bob is the boy with the remarkable idea of working more than he has to. Whenever he has ahead of him an unusually heavy day's work, he arises at four in the morning, and by five o'clock is at his desk.



THE DISSECTION OF A BIT OF HUMOR

OHIO now has a stringent corrupt-practices act which aims to do away entirely with the use of money in politics. In speaking of the emancipation of prominent men from the necessity of making contributions to every public enterprise and selfish person, Judge William E. Scofield, of the Buckeye State, tells this story:

"It reminds me of Jim Fisk, the railroad king of the 'seventies. Jim always gave freely to the institutions in the little town from which he came. His name was on every subscription list, but he balked one day when he was asked to send one hundred dollars for putting a new fence around the village cemetery. In denying the request, he wrote:

"I don't see any use for a fence around a graveyard. Those on the outside don't want to get in, and those on the inside can't get out.

"I told this story to an Englishman last year when I was abroad. After ruminating a few minutes, he said:

"'Aw, I think your Mr. Fisk was about hawf right; really I do.'"

Pizen

By Richard Washburn Child

Author of "The Blue Wall," Etc.

An unusual story of the Caribbean. How the Hermit of Spongecake Key, retired filibuster and wrecker, was tempted from the comfort of his limestone hump-back island and the society of the white cranes and the rattlesnakes and the palms to embark on a cruise at once dangerous and romantic. He found not only adventure but a missing word that had long eluded him.

SOMETIMES adventure calls to a seasoned but retired veteran of romance, and with a whoop his soul awakens at the familiar signs of mystery, danger, and difficulty.

So it was with the Hermit of Spongecake Key when Monahan made his proposal.

Years ago, as Monahan had been well informed, the name of Pindar Rowe was known as well as that of Beeman, the outlaw, to every shooting man in the Florida Peninsula, for had Pindar not been sheriff of Monticello County? It was known to Cuban patriots desiring arms and dynamite as well as the name of Gomez, for had he not been a tireless filibuster? It was known to the beach combers of the Caribbean, for had there ever been a wreck on those shores toward which Pindar, with a hand on the tiller and a gun pressing on his lean and bony hip, had not directed the *Red Mary*? It was known to the gold miners in Guatemala and the harbor masters of the Spanish Main as well as that of historic Morgan, the pirate. Truth demands that old man Rowe should look back upon his career as one of lawlessness in a region where law was not. But truth also demands that when they bury Pindar, they inscribe upon a simple stone, "He loved one woman tenderly, and for every man he

rapped on the skull with a belying pin he did some other man a kindness."

When the "old lady" died in 1903 Pindar, who had amassed a considerable fortune, gave up life. Not only did he give up a principal part on the stage, but he even refused to sit in the audience of life as a spectator. He bought Spongecake Key, a limestone, hump-backed island in a maze of channels where palms and mangrove bushes were reflected during the seasons of calm in beryl-green waters. There he built his shacks, and there he had the society of the white cranes that wade, the fish that leap, the rattlesnakes that bask in the tropic sunlight, the palms that whisper overhead, the distant ships which pass far out, through Hawk Channel, like things in a groove, and occasionally the roar of the hurricane with its wet dance of death.

The passes between the dotted keys, through which vessels of any size can come in from the open sea to lie over the fifty-fathom water pocket between Spongecake and Barracouta Keys, is so tortuous, and must be "felt out" by the stranger so slowly that when a vessel had appeared there could be no question that she had come for real business.

Pindar knew this as he watched a sleeky, white steam craft, with polished,

sun-glinting brass rails, come up through Devilfish Pass, whisk her sharp nose from left to right like a hound doubtful of the scent, and then, after cutting the water with feminine daintiness, come to a pretty stop at the edge of the reef and rattle out her anchor like a woman chattering about her mission.

The late fall had produced the rarity of a windless day; Pindar, who sat on his little rickety wharf swinging his legs in time with the sway of the mast of his own little sloop, and with the sway of the water and the sway of the late afternoon mists which crawled along the beach, was dressed in his distinctive outfit of black cloth trousers creased at the sides, a white shirt immaculately clean, and of fine enough linen to show his lean and sinewy old trunk and shoulders, a derby hat worn so far back on his head that it seemed about to go overboard, and a pair of horn-rimmed spectacles which drooped on either side of his nose and over which he looked, just as his gray mustaches drooped on either side of his thin lips, and over which he sometimes drew up his nostrils to catch the significant odors of the tropic seas.

"There's a woman aboard that boat," said he, squinting his eyes at the sky rather than at the vessel. "I feel my rheumatism, and that's a sign."

The tender which was being rowed toward his wharf, gave, however, no evidence of the truth of Pindar's premonition; in fact, the little varnished boat had in it only a sailor at the oars and a bull of a man with prickly black hair, and a prickly black mustache, and fat hands adapted less to buttoning the back of a dress than to strangling a throat.

"I'm Monahan," said this great ad-juster of affairs, with a foghorn rumble of his bass.

"You surprise me," remarked Pindar, still swinging his legs. "If you're the Monahan I knew, you've got over your habits of profanity, and lost a couple of gold teeth. If you was Joe Monahan, of San Dominic, I'd seen the sun on your teeth a mile away, and heard you some time last night cussin' toward me over the water."

The grim and cruel placidity of Monahan's face rippled for a moment.

"You put one over on me," said he. "I thought maybe you'd heard of me. Most everybody in little old New York knows how my face looks when it's too dark to see it. I'm James O'H. Monahan, of Monahan's Agency."

"I ain't subscribed for no newspaper in ten years," snapped Pindar.

"I'm a detective," growled the other.

Pindar laughed outright.

"The business is awful slow on Spongecake," said he, with a little quirk of his old mouth. "There ain't anythin' to detect, Monahan. It's the most open-faced place you ever see."

The big man made the empty motions of twirling the black bristles on his upper lip; he began anew.

"Did you ever hear of Paul S. Bretton, Mr. Rowe?" he asked.

"How'd you know my name was Rowe?"

"I ain't a simp. I came here to see you. I've got a job for you—a pilot job; a good, ticklish, dangerous job, takin' sense, an' nothin' for any fussy old gent."

"Well, what's your question?"

"I say did yer ever hear of Paul S. Bretton?"

Pindar nodded.

"Where?"

"A friend of mine, Henry Cassins—the biggest wrecker in all of Florida—was the man who took him down to Rio Cigarillo off the Green Stretches, and landed him up among the jaguars and monkeys. Bretton was the man who took sixty-eight thousand dollars from the Trade and Exchange National Bank."

"Right," said Monahan. "He's there yet, up the Cigarillo River, livin' swell and lonely with eighty-five niggers, and no way to spend the money, and laughin' at our extradition laws. This is my fifth year tryin' to get him. No man's beat me yet. I'm Monahan. I've got the yacht and the wine and all the scenery, and it's all day with Paul if I don't put it on the wrong number."

"He was a nice-lookin' boy," Pindar remarked, rising and yawning. "Cas-

sins says he had a hundred thousand of his own when he started to work for the bank, and that the president gave him the wrong tip on some stock deal. So he took the sixty-eight and put to sea."

"It's nothin' to me whether he's a good feller or not," the detective stated. "I'm out to get him. It may mean jail for him, and it may mean he'll cough up what's left and buy himself off. Monahan doesn't know. But Monahan is the little man that don't know nothin' except '*get the guy you're sent for.*' That's *me!*"

Pindar filled and lighted his pipe.

"Well, now, I'll explain to you," Monahan began.

"Fiddlesticks!" snapped Pindar.

"I was only going to tell you the plan," whined the other. "It's a pip-pin! It's a quick one. Listen!"

Pindar squinted so that the weather-beaten skin around his puckering eyes creased into a thousand wrinkles.

"Fiddlesticks," he repeated. "I ain't a piece of salt fish yet. I been livin' alone here some pert years, but I ain't any leakier in my seams than a lot of folks from up New York way. You don't dare to go yourself because he knows you. You want me to take charge, eh? You want a pilot and some one that can spit to windward in a hurricane, and knows the waters, and can keep as still as a piece of coral, and wouldn't mind hearin' a bark or two out of a forty-four. That what you mean?"

"You've got it on the mat," Monahan admitted. "No palm reader has anythin' on you. Listen! I'll tell you the rest."

"Wait a bit," commanded Pindar.

He leaned his head down on one shoulder, and half closed his eyes in the attitude of one who listens. Over the quiet water which sparkled on the white coral sand bars, turned to pale green in the pellucid shallows, and then to verdant velvet in the depths of the channel, from the white yacht came the faint notes of a new cabaret melody rendered by a woman's voice.

The old man smiled like a cynic; the famous head of the Monahan Agency smiled, too, but smiled like a sheep.

"Well?" said Pindar.

"Well?" said Monahan.

"I felt it in my bones," the old wrecker asserted. He fell to whistling softly "The Last Rose of Summer," always an indication that he was uneasy, saw the approach of rough weather, or found some problem difficult of solution.

"I think it's all plain enough," he said to the exasperated sleuth at last. "You've figured that life on the Rio Cigarillo among a lot of voodoo niggers, and nothin' to do but watch the alligators sunnin' their noses ain't very entertainin'. You figure a man who's been used to what them newspapers calls the myriad of lights on Broadway ain't satisfied with South American fireflies and them lonesome critters howlin' in the jungle. You figure he'd like to see some wheels go round, and hear a white man laugh, and a new song on the red lips of a——"

Monahan, gazing at the Hermit of Spongecake admiringly, interrupted by clearing his massive throat.

"Say!" said he, thrusting a stubby forefinger at the old man. "You're a bear! It took me two months to work out this dope, and you get it like taking a plate of beer away from a child. I don't have to explain nothin' to you. You come with me, see. You drop me at Trinidad or Havana or to-night at Key West. Then you're in charge, see. Youse all go up the Rio Cigarillo, and anchor off Bretton's place. At night you're singin' rags and poppin' of champagne corks, and playin' on a guitar. You're a bunch of millionaires, and on a trip, and out of reach of the reporters, and kind of free an' easy. By and by he can't stand it any longer. He's crazy! He sends out an' invites youse on shore. I got a good-lookin' young feller fer a college man. He goes with the party. He'll be the one to invite the embezzler on board the yacht. Maybe he don't come at first. They invites him again. He comes. There's a struggle now. You've got him down on the deck. You put yer hand over his mouth and get the irons on him. You get up steam, and burn

the wind till you're in sight of the U. S. Am I right?"

"He might have a gun," said Pindar reflectively. "He might have a lot of those niggers with machetes."

"Too true," the detective admitted. "But the bank is ready to spend money on this. There's five hundred dollars fer you, Mr. Rowe, personally, if you pull it off. The collector at Jacksonville said you was the only man. And I made the price right."

"Price go dangle!" roared Pindar. "I ain't a skipjack. "Why, I'd *pay* to go on a trip like this."

"When can you start?"

"Sit down on this cracker box," said Pindar, and for an answer to Monahan's question, he went up the incline of coral sand and mollusk shells to the door of his shack. To a scorpion crawling on the window ledge he said: "Always lookin' for trouble, ain't you?" Very gravely he took off the frayed derby which he wore, and hung it on a nail under the little porch roof; very gravely he took down another frayed derby and brushed it on the sleeve of his cotton shirt.

"I thought I'd wear my new hat," he explained.

Monahan waved his hand, with his lips set to say a silent: "Saints preserve us!"

"Are you bringin' a book?" he asked, as the old man came back to the little pier.

"Yep," said Pindar, consulting the title on the back. "This is volume two of the 'People's Cyclopedia—Paternity—Z.' I'm 'most three-quarters through it now, and kind of restless to get done."

"Bring it right along," assented the detective affably, as if the tome were a guest suggested by Pindar. "This man does the rowing."

Pindar sniffed.

"He look and rows like one of them hotel bell boys," said he to Monahan.

"Perhaps you'd like to know who else is in the party."

"Women!" snorted Pindar. "That's the worms in the hard-tack!"

"Well, we had to have 'em," urged

the other. "There's no use framing it unless it's framed right. I've got a girl from the chorus of the 'Chicka-dee' Company. She's nice, respectable, comes from good family in Terre Haute. Good manners, see? Trained in a convent. Talks French. Good-lookin'? Well, you *know it!* On this trip she's Miss Margaretta Mortimer, of Dougan Villa."

"Go on," growled the old pirate.

"Then there's Miss Cowan. Ever hear of Miss Isabel Cowan?" asked Monahan, trailing his fat fingers in the oily water. "Dear, dear, dear—such a worker! She graduated into general work out of bein' the head of a department-store detective bureau. Got cold blue eyes—like a police commissioner's. I'd hate to have her after me if I was makin' a get-away. Tall, thin; never says nothin'. No heart. No mercy. The coolest, bravest, straightest lady detective in the game, and she'd arrest her own grandmother with one of them dry smiles on her face. She's supposed to be the second wife of Henry Peele Mortimer, who owns the asphalt fields in Trinidad. There she is now, with Margaretta, waitin' on them flight of steps on the ground floor of the yacht. Take a slant at 'em. Pipe 'em off."

Pindar was not pleased with his glance of inspection given Miss Margaretta as he set foot on the deck of the *Olysa*. She was pretty; no doubt of that. She was too pretty! The freshness of youth was in her cheeks and round, sun-tinted neck. She seemed shy of strangers; innocence and a lack of practical worldly wisdom shone from her eyes. Yet the old man sensed some mischievous impishness of personality. He concluded that he would never have picked a young person so apparently independable as a bait for Mr. Paul Selkirk Bretton, who had so coolly made way with a tidy fortune, and had beaten the extradition laws.

On the other hand, Miss Cowan reassured him. She was not dressed, as he would have expressed it, "like all the flags in the international code." She was not fluffed. She had no soft

lace falling away from a soft neck. She did not look out over the water dreamily. On the contrary, the white linen dress she wore was as severe as her mouth, which had been pressed together so often in the stern lines of one who does duty that the soft curves which it might once have possessed had gone like the tender thoughts which might once have dwelt behind her large, steady blue eyes. Her embroidered linen dress was elegant, but severe, and the feet in white tennis shoes which peeped out beneath the long skirt asserted that they were made to walk with a long, swinging, free gait. No whiff of dainty perfume entered Pindar's nose as in greeting her firm hand clasped his. He found himself looking into the face of a woman past thirty, who had kept her figure lithe and young by activity and remolded her face by a long process of refrigerating the thoughts which went on beneath a head of carefully parted, thick, well-washed brown hair.

"This is Mr. Pindar Rowe, then?" she said to Monahan, in words which sounded like tacks dropping out of a machine. "I am glad to meet Mr. Rowe. I shall be glad to furnish him with whatever plans I can contribute to make this expedition a success. Mr. Rowe, let me say to you that I have never felt so strongly as now that I was on my mettle. This case is the most important I have had."

"We had the loveliest ocean ride coming down!" chirped Margareta, of the Chickadee Company.

"Umph!" snorted Pindar.

"Well, you're in command now, Mr. Rowe," Monahan boomed. "The crew knows it."

"Does, eh?" the old man shouted. "Well, then, here you! You with the tattooed hand! Get up that anchor. Send the engineer to the captain's cabin for orders. Guests on board this boat step aft there. I'll take the wheel later. Tell the first officer to steer to Key West."

"Goin' to leave me there?" asked the great Monahan, twirling a diamond stud.

"Where'd you think I was goin' to leave you—on one of these sand reefs?"

Margareta giggled; the angular and cold Isabel assumed a stern and masculine attitude, and nodded approvingly. Monahan coughed into his hand, then wiped his forehead with a huge silk handkerchief.

"I guess we've got this here Paul S. Bretton," he whispered to Miss Cowan. "Rowe is the man for the job. Go to his cabin as soon as I've dropped off, and tell him how you mean to do the work."

That afternoon Pindar, with his half-shut eyes watching the flight of man-o'-war birds, and hardly glancing at the familiar turns and twists of the channel, sat in a wicker chair, and turned the wheel with the toe of his boot.

"Great horned spoon! She answers to her steerin' gear like a lady!" were the only words he uttered, and these he addressed to an imaginary sprite of the sea which might have been astride a passing bale of gulf weed.

With the irrepressible Margareta singing joyously at the bow, Miss Cowan biting her thin lips in meditation in the stern, Monahan, with his traveling bag ready to disembark, beside a table, and a long glass of rye and ginger ale wetting his black bristles, the young man Bowlen, who was to enact the part of Freddy Vorhees, first cousin of the Mortimers', smoking cigarette after cigarette, and Pindar Rowe at the wheel, sneeringly eating a supper of a plate of inch-square lettuce and cream-cheese sandwiches prepared by the ship's cook, the graceful *Olysa* came around the old decaying brick fort at Key West, and snuggled up to the coal wharf as shyly as a maiden approaching a toil-begrimed longshoreman.

"I'm leaving it to you, Mr. Rowe," said Monahan, saying his farewell. "I'm leaving it to you and Miss Cowan. The game is to land the man. You'll find young Bowlen ain't what he seems. Before he got the rheumatism he was the best of all the youngsters that was being tried out in the National League. He's got the manners, too. But his nerve is good. Get me now—his nerve is good."

"I see it is," snapped Pindar. "He offered me one of them cigarettes!"

Monahan smiled, then drew his head down between his shoulders so that his neck vanished wholly, pulled in a long breath, wet his lips, gathered strength, and then, surveying the ship, the crew, the stars, the flotsam about the piles of the old wharf, grasped Miss Cowan's slim hand with one of his own, and Pindar's knotted, salt-cracked fingers in the other, and rumbled his voice downhill into a terrible and awe-inspiring bass.

"Get yer man," said the great detective. "Not another word. Getcher—man!"

"Mr. Monahan, I will do my best," said Miss Cowan, with a flash of spirit lighting up in her pupils, and her slender hands clenched.

"I'm crazy to see this Bretton man," exclaimed Margareta. "He's awful nice-looking."

"Fiddle-dee-dec!" growled Pindar Rowe.

Such was the parting. The head of the great Monahan Agency waved a farewell. Bowlen rolled up his sleeves to expose a pair of well-browned, muscular forearms, and lit a cigarette. Margareta went back to her red-bound novel in the narrow saloon, the detective lady paced up and down the deck.

"Cast her off there, Mr. Swanson," commanded Pindar, tipping his derby hat still farther back over his gray hair. "Tell the engineer to give us plenty of speed. I want to be abreast of the Isle of Pines by midnight, and it's getting dark already. There's Sand Key Light now! We ought to be ready to run up the Cigarillo by daylight."

As the *Olysa* churned a semicircle in the phosphorescent, burning waters of the channel, the old Hermit of Spongecake, satisfied with the carrying out of his orders, swung one thin leg over the teakwood rail, lit his pipe, and watched the lights of the island town recede like a plaything allowed to drop behind as the tide slid astern. The engines fell into the comfortable croon of good machinery in a happy mood.

Pindar's thin lips parted rhythmically to emit slices of smoke which curled in

the soft breeze from the gulf. Contentedly he watched the screaming pelicans flying home to roosts on isolated mangrove reefs; contentedly he sniffed the distinct odor of the Great Stream; contentedly he felt the warm salt spray gathering in the wrinkles of his forehead. He was the skipper again! And again he had broken his promise to his departed wife, and as he thought of it he smiled mischievously, as he had done when she had been alive; he was off on another adventure.

"And yet something tells me inside," he grumbled to himself, "something tells me——"

He hopped off the rail, and wiped his glasses to look up for a moment at the rotunda of the night sky reflectively.

"Send Miss Cowan to my cabin," he shouted to the steward, who was passing with a tray of fruit. "And put a light on my swinging table."

When Miss Cowan presented herself it was with a businesslike manner; it was evident that she was eager to show her recognition of authority, and acknowledge that the old man was in command. Her masculine air offended Pindar.

"I am at your service," said she briskly.

"No, you ain't, beggin' your pardon, ma'am," drawled the old wrecker, leaning forward over the open charts. "No woman ain't never been so to me, an' I guess that when all is said an' done, you may be a detective lady of some standin', ma'am, but I reckon you're a woman first."

Miss Cowan flushed angrily; to meet men on equality was her pride.

"Set down, ma'am," the old cavalier requested. "I just wanted to ask you a question, ma'am. We're goin' to rip off some knots to-night, an' the time for discussion, debate, consideration, reflection, an' decision, as John Knox, of the Azores, used to say, is short."

"Ask," Miss Cowan said, attempting brevity.

"Yes, ma'am," said Pindar. "Now, there's two women on board this craft, ma'am. There's you, an' there's that other young woman. Which of you is

goin' to attend to talkin' with Mr. Bretton, to walkin' with him—say along the beach in the moonlight—an' pourin' out his cup of coffee—say if you set down to a meal with him, an' doin' them little things a woman does—say brushin' a speck of dust off his necktie."

Miss Cowan smiled grimly.

"You mean who is to make it their business to be especially friendly, and win his confidence, and induce him to visit the yacht?"

Mr. Rowe nodded.

"We brought Margaretta for that purpose," Isabel answered, smoothing her severely parted hair.

"I'm an old man," said Pindar.

"Well?"

"Just the same I ain't forgot."

"Forgot what?"

At this question the Hermit arose, scratched his ear with embarrassment, and, after thinking a long time, said the one word: "Pizen!"

"Poison?" exclaimed the other.

"Miss Cowan," said Pindar earnestly, "this Paul Bretton ain't a bad sort of man, maybe. An' if my eye is still weather good, he is mighty smart and prompt in looks. Maybe I can't box the compass of men and women any more, but if I ain't mistaken, this Margaretta, as you call her, is a mighty pretty woman. Young Bowlen has 'most noticed it already. She is certainly not very old an' steady. An' she ain't the one to trust to fool her time away with Paul B. Ma'am, no two young folks in good health spend much time together without gettin' to wonderin' what they'll do when the summer's over, or the old man takes the girl away, or the ship sails, or death takes the other. They go walkin' an' talkin' together. That, ma'am, is the way young folks gets pizen!"

"You mean that if Margaretta and Bretton are alone together for just a little while the girl might fall in love with him!" cried Miss Cowan. "Nonsense! She's a cool one—she is. Anybody would think you were talking about about some kind of magic."

"Maybe I be," said Pindar. "But they always told me that—I read in the

cyclopedia not a week ago, somewhere in the P's, that——"

"That what?" inquired the woman.

"Jimminetty! There's the trouble," the old man said. "I can't think of the word. It means magic an' pizen, an' I know it. An' it means love."

The ship's clock ticked monotonously, and the yacht's engines went crooning on as Pindar tried to remember. He ran over the pages of his volume two of the People's Cyclopeda in a vain endeavor to chance upon the word.

"C'nfound it!" he cried at last. "It's gone from me like a fish, with hook, line, and sinker. I can't remember it."

"It's utter folly, anyway," asserted the lady, opening her soft hands in a motion of impatience. "The idea of thinking they would fall in love or that any girl in her senses would plan such a marriage! Margaretta was chosen not alone because she was pretty, but because we knew that she had been subjected to all manner of advances, and had never lost her head, or become engaged, or shown any trace of foolish sentiment. I am a business woman, Mr. Rowe, and I have as much contempt as you for all that is emotional or romantic, but——"

"I wish I could gaff that word, ma'am," Pindar interrupted. "I won't be satisfied till I think of it. But never mind now. I just don't like puttin' the affair into her hands. It's all right for you to sniff. But you're a woman, an' women is always sniffin' beforehand in this world, and wishin' they was dead afterward. Suppose this stage girl spoiled our game."

"What do you suggest?"

"I wish I could think of that word. Suggest? Well, ma'am, I suggest that you keep them two—Bretton an' Miss M. apart. If anybody is goin' to spend time entertainin' him, it ought to be you."

"Me!"

"For safety's sake," urged the old man.

Miss Cowan pressed her knuckles against her firm-pointed chin; she looked the very portrait of Stern Duty.

"Goodness knows it would be a new

game for me," she said, laughing with some harshness. "I gave up all claim to skill years ago. The attempt should not be carried on by an old maid."

"It might not be so successful, ma'am," Pindar said, blinking his eyes. "But it's ten fathoms safer!"

"Perhaps you are right," said the woman.

"There!" cried the old man, pushing his shirt sleeves back from his bony wrists; and before Miss Cowan could carry the discussion further, Pindar had hurried up the stairs and hastened forward toward the bow.

"I wish I could think of that tar-nashun word!" he muttered to himself. "Ain't it funny how a good word like that will slip away from a full-sized man!"

Bowlen was still smoking his cigarettes and snapping the ashes over the rail as he gazed down into the rush of black waters of the tossing Gulf Stream. But when he saw Pindar he followed the old man toward the stern, and sat down with him to hold a long communion of silence.

At midnight the old man pointed to a light flashing east of their course.

"Cuba," he said laconically.

The other looked up at the belching of black smoke from the yacht's funnels, and yawned.

"What's the word that means that love is comin' certain to two young folks?" asked Pindar, with his thumb on the hot ashes of his pipe.

"Doughnuts," suggested Bowlen.

"That ain't it."

"I'm going to bed," said the young man.

"Miss Cowan is certainly a business-like lady," Pindar said at a venture.

"Hard as nails," replied Bowlen, strolling away. "Cold as stone, sharp as tacks. There's a woman who don't know the difference between love and laundry."

His words were reassuring. At least Miss Cowan had been chosen properly for a cold-blooded piece of work, but none the less various doubts lingered in Pindar's heart. He reflected he had come upon an expedition without any

assurance that Monahan had told the truth about its real object; he felt to see that his weapon was in place, hanging to his suspenders, and concealed beneath the voluminous folds of his trousers. He reflected that in any case he had made a wise change in the plan to induce the fugitive from justice to come aboard the boat. And in spite of all he felt some sympathy for this lonely young man who was forced to live in white man's loneliness among the alligators and flies on a river near the equator, and wonder what was going on in the dear old cities.

"Umph!" said Pindar, and went to bed.

At dawn he had a sailor pour a bucket of water over him, and then, having dressed, went out on deck.

Margaretta, clad in a kimono with frills, ribbons, and laces, lolled in one of the wicker chairs—her great, round, deep trout-pool eyes, so different from Miss Cowan's stern orbs, gazing dreamily at the distant tropic shore, which hemmed a long line of dense jungle at the edge of a glassy, copper-colored sea.

"Isn't it lovely!" she gurgled.

The old wrecker sniffed.

"That's the Rio Cigarillo," said he, pointing to a coffee streak in the waters. "That's the river mud."

He snapped his calloused fingers vexatiously.

"What troubles you?" Margaretta asked, throwing one plump and perfect arm behind the mass of her hair.

"Tryin' to think of a word," snapped Pindar.

"Ask Miss Cowan," suggested the chorus girl. "She has a mind like a piece of steel watch spring."

"Yep," the old man answered, and went forward to the pilot house for the morning ascent of the river.

From dawn till dusk the *Olysa*, slowly feeling her way under the hand of old Pindar, plowed up the flow of the stream between banks covered with rank growth, and through occasional fields of river weeds, over which swarms of gnats, butterflies, and even humming birds hovered. At times some animal peeked from the jungle, and,

uttering a low and melancholy cry, stirred the giant leaves of tropical plants in his flight. The sun, beating down in a fury upon the oily river, so vibrated the air with intense heat that all the world seemed to wriggle and appear as a thing seen through the eyes of a person suffering with vertigo.

Of all the crew, Margareta was the only one whose spirit survived the midday and afternoon gloom of the funereal passage through this inhuman and terrifying country. Perched on a capstan under an awning, she drank raspberry "shrub," lemonades, sarsaparillas, orange sodas, ate moist and melted chocolate candy, and playing dream waltzes on her guitar, sang till the screens of the tangled forests echoed like an empty theater at a Broadway rehearsal.

It was dark before those on the yacht sighted the bungalow and negroes' cabins grouped about the old rubber plantation settlement which had been appropriated by Mr. Bretton, the absconder. As the *Olysa* stopped her engines, Pindar, through his glass, saw a man not over thirty-five, whose black hair was prematurely streaked with gray, come out on his porch with a carbine slung between his two hands.

"Umph!" said old Rowe to Bowlen, handing the latter the telescope. "He's lookin' for trouble. Nice-appearin' young feller, ain't he?"

The ex-pitcher took a long look.

"See here, Mr. Rowe," said he. "It's a shame to put Miss Margareta in the position of winning this guy's confidence, and all that."

"Plans have changed," said Pindar. "I wish I could think of that word. But never mind. It ain't Miss Doty Twotoes who's goin' to do the trick. It's Miss Cowan. She ain't so good-lookin', but maybe that's the best way."

Bowlen pretended to give the matter consideration.

"Well," said he at last, "I think you're dead right. Miss Cowan can put it through in cold blood."

The yacht had dropped her anchor on the far side of the river, and, held by the current, settled down to a steady

swinging on her hawser, like a weight on a plumb line. The moon came up behind the wild jungle, mists rose and crept like ghosts along the shore, where mysterious night birds with soft wings fluttered like things of the Styx.

"Great Scott," said young Bowlen, when supper was being served under the awning, "I'd hate to see this alone—every night."

"Bretton's probably used to it," giggled Margareta, forking a stalk of canned asparagus. "And besides, it's so romantic!"

"Umph!" said Pindar. "I got the rheumatism again, an' there's a bad sign. It ain't goin' to be so easy to get Bretton on board as we thought. See that rowboat yonder in the shadows. He's in it, and he's lookin' us over!"

"Sing and laugh; pull some corks, steward. Rattle the dishes!" commanded Miss Cowan. "Get out your mandolin, Margareta. We'll have some dancing. He won't be able to stand it. He's been here a long time without the thrills."

The detective's feminine analysis was correct. The next day a black man clad in white cotton sculled a little flat-bottomed boat out to the *Olysa's* side, and delivered a note, inviting the party on shore.

Bowlen, Margareta, and Miss Cowan went. At five, when they returned after a day about the bungalow, and down the pathways of the jungle, Pindar, who had been watching them hour after hour from the deck, met the party with gloom written on his countenance.

"Well, what kind of fish is he?" asked the old man.

"Darn good feller, I think," said Bowlen, yawning.

"A swell man," chortled Margareta. "He walked Isabel all over the place, and climbed a tree to get her a coconut."

Pindar's shrewd gray eyes narrowed as he turned toward Miss Cowan inquiringly.

"I think he likes me," she said. "He was very polite. I asked him to dine with us. He made some sort of an ex-

cuse, and I am afraid we'll have to take time and patience to get him."

"I suppose you're going ashore to-morrow?" inquired Mr. Rowe.

"She is," said Margaretta, pointing to Miss Cowan. "He has promised to take one of the sailors and Isabel shooting toucans."

"Umph!" said Pindar. "We're on a sand bank, so to speak. It will take time, and I don't like this business of a woman going ashore."

"Why?" asked Bowlen, snapping away his cigarette.

"Dangerous," said old Rowe. "There's one word for it, and I can't remember it no ways."

"Nonsense!" exclaimed Miss Cowan hastily.

Nevertheless, during the three days that followed, in which invitations on shore were accepted by the New York "millionaires," and invitations to go on board the *Olysa* were declined as constantly by the victim of the trap, Pindar watched Miss Cowan's behavior with concern.

To him it seemed that he could detect some humanizing effect of her association with Bretton. She often spoke of how a man must suffer alone in such a wilderness with none but an aged and deaf Jesuit, and a ship's crew of black men and women. She ceased to speak with spirit of the triumph of being able to bring such a noted fugitive into New York harbor.

"There is nothing so sad as being dependent on nobody, unless it is to have nobody dependent upon you," said she.

"I wish I could think of the word I want to," Pindar said in answer. "But, above all, I'm glad we didn't let that chorus girl get into a fix where she would want to marry him."

Miss Cowan laughed derisively. "We cannot fail," said she. "He really likes me. He is learning to trust me."

"And time flies!" finished the old man sourly.

"Of course, if we are in a hurry," she said thoughtfully, "I have another plan. I am going to dinner with him and the old Jesuit to-morrow."

"And then——" inquired Pindar.

"Then, Mr. Rowe, you could come ashore with Mr. Bowlen, slide softly up to his wharf, where we'd be waiting, and when I had distracted his attention, throw a sack over his head from behind. It's an old trick of ours in the profession, and a good trick."

"Could you walk him down to the wharf, say at nine o'clock? Tell him we're coming to get you."

"Good! Only, of course, you must not appear as two men," said Miss Cowan. "You must seem to be two weak women. You must wear dresses."

"Dresses!" roared Pindar. "Me? Wear dresses? I'd look like a fool!"

"It's the only way," said Miss Cowan. "If you were two men, he'd walk away. He's suspicious."

"Umph!" said Pindar, in reluctant assent. "I knew when I first set eyes on this yacht that some tomfoolery was in the wind. Never mind, mark that hour. Nine o'clock. We'll be there."

Miss Cowan went ashore, apparently well pleased with arriving at a solution of the problem, and with the violent kidnaping in prospect, she hummed a joyful little tune as she rowed away the following morning.

Margaretta watched her till she climbed out upon the little wharf, and was met by Bretton, whose youthful figure, clad in cream-colored silk, suggested by its movements a thankful welcome.

"Funny," said Margaretta.

"What?" asked Bowlen.

"That she introduced herself, not as Mrs. Mortimer, but as Miss Mortimer."

Pindar's eyes sparkled with the knowledge of why this had been done.

"I had supposed I was to do the snake-charming here," the girl went on with some pique. "I was to do the love-making, and I haven't had a look in!"

Old Rowe laughed outright—the mystery laugh of the conspirator, who will not explain why this or that step in a series of machinations has been taken.

"It'll be all over by midnight," said he to himself, as he gave the engineers orders to be ready to go at any mo-

ment. "Bowlen and I will leave this chorus girl on board, where she can't do any harm, and then——"

He whistled softly the bars of "The Last Rose of Summer"; he whistled them after dinner, and only stopped whistling them when, clad in Miss Cowan's linen waist and skirt, with his spectacles astride the red mark on his hawk nose, and his derby hat hanging far back on his grizzled head, he surveyed himself in the mirror.

"Feminity!" he roared at his own reflection. "I thought I'd been all possible kinds of fools in my time, but look at me now. Blow me if I ain't a water-spout!"

"Oh, it's all right," said Bowlen, pinning on his own skirt. "The night is dark."

"I'll loan you my automobile hat," added Margaretta, stifling her mirth.

"Ding-dong it!" bellowed the old man, in his misery. "I wish'd I'd never come! This ain't no work for pirates. And if it was ever known it would be the talk of the gulf!"

With bad grace he climbed down into the tender, and, taking the oars, dug their blades fiercely into the oily waters. Night insects of the tropics buzzed about his ears, the long shadow of an alligator crossed the bows, the flow of water brought pressure to bear upon the port side of the little boat, but Pindar, biting his thin lips, beneath the drooping gray mustache, rowed on.

"Why didn't you let Margaretta play her part?" whispered Bowlen, as they neared the wharf.

"Plain as day. No two healthy young people can spend much time in each other's company, without danger of this love business," said the old man. "That's the answer. There's a word for it, and I can't think of it."

"I guess you're right," Bowlen admitted, leaning forward confidentially. "It worked with Margaretta and me. She hated me at first, but she promised to marry me last night. She was so afraid to have me go on this excursion that she cried just now."

"Pizen!" hissed Pindar. "I seen it all

around when I went on board the *Olysa*. Monahan didn't fix up any sport for men. What he fixed up was a cruise for lunatics, with me for skipper! And only one sensible head on board—Miss Cowan's."

"Sh!" cautioned the ex-pitcher. "We're running up to the wharf, and everything's as dark as a pocket. There's some one there. I can't see who, or how many."

The old man turned his head till the rheumatic twinges went rattling down the muscles of his bony shoulders.

"Here we be, Miss Cowan," he called out into the dark, and his voice raised a clamoring of the wild things in the jungle. "This is the sailor speaking, ma'am, and I brought Margaretta and her French maid for a little row."

Miss Cowan's voice came back from the wharf.

"What's the name of the French maid?" it inquired mischievously. "Is she Miss Pindar Rowe d' Rowe?"

"Hosophat!" whispered the old man to Bowlen. "I knew it. The worst *has* happened."

"Stand off, you old doddering monkey in skirts," came Miss Cowan's voice again. "Don't you come any nearer this wharf. I've got an automatic, and I'll rake you with it!"

"You've given us the double cross," said Bowlen, to the shadowy form on the pier.

"I know it," said Miss Cowan cheerfully. "It's my right. Goodness knows I've had a lonely enough life—hard and cruel to myself. A man can't understand. And when a woman finds tenderness, and knows her heart is throbbing again, and somebody cares——"

"Fiddlesticks!" exclaimed Pindar. "All you need is some mamma, and I'll be it. I ain't going to let you get the pizen of being together with Bretton, and just leave you here to get married. I'm going to take you back to the ship, Miss Cowan. You're coming with me!"

He pulled the oars once; the tender shot a length nearer the wharf, where even in the velvet blackness of shadows a revolver barrel gleamed.

"I saw you!" cried the female detective accusingly. "Stand off, I say. I've shot for duty, Pindar Rowe, but I'll shoot quicker for my hope of happiness."

"Look out," cautioned Bowlen, ducking down. "Maybe Bretton is there, too."

"She won't shoot," snapped Pindar digging his oars.

Bing!

Bowlen dropped into the bottom of the boat unhurt. Pindar sniffed.

"She's spoiled the auty-mobile hat," said he. "But she won't shoot again."

Bang!

"Makes a nasty white fire—this new smokeless powder," commented Pindar. "I guess she must really love him."

Bing!

"It never does for two young folks to spend too much time together," said Pindar, turning the boat around. "We'd better leave the matter at that."

Bing! Bing! Splinters flew from the gunwale.

"If you say so," said old Rowe, to the New York athlete, "we'll be going back to the ship."

Bing!

"Row like the devil!" cried Bowlen feelingly. "My girl would die if I got hurt."

"Umph!" said Pindar, with a cackling laugh. "I guess she and Monahan would pass away together."

The rowboat slid back across the black water, through the clouds of invisible gnats. Later the *Olysa* slid down the river toward the sea.

Not till midnight did old Rowe, still clad in woman's shirt waist and skirt, open his mouth, and then, watching two figures leaning close together in the bow, he suddenly gave vent to a shout, and leaped from his chair.

"I've thought of the word!" he bellowed. "It came to me like a flash."

"What word?" called Bowlen,

"What word?" Margaretta chirped.

"Propinquity!" shouted Pindar Rowe.

Richard Washburn Child has written a whimsical Christmas story for us. It will appear in the next POPULAR, on sale December 23rd.



THE RETURN OF THE PRODIGAL

CASH MARTIN was the most brilliant boy in his community. Whenever the neighbors got tired of discussing the weather or wondering why the hens had stopped laying, they turned themselves into a prophesying circle for the benefit of Cash. The future of Cash unrolled itself before their admiring gaze in limitless splendor and led to a towering pinnacle of greatness.

One day excitement in the village became intense. Cash had decided to leave home and wrest from the cold and cruel world that fame and fortune which must surely be his. One old man opined that Cash would be gone twenty years and return with his pockets bulging with the wealth of J. P. Morgan. Another declared that at the end of seventeen years he would come whirling through his native town on the rear platform of a special car in his campaign for the presidency of the United States. Cash listened to all these predictions with a smiling ease that indicated his belief in everything his admirers said. Then he went away.

One week later Cash returned, and, worn out by excessive walking and terrific underfeeding, strolled into his home and asked his mother for a piece of bread. Cash's younger brother went to break the news to Cash's father, who ran a sawmill. There ensued this dialogue:

"Pop, Cash is come back, by George!"

"He has, by George?"

"Yes, by George!"

"By George!"

Assorted Chips

By Hulbert Footner

Author of "The Way of the North," "Not to the Swiftest," Etc.

The Kakisa Indian has a sweet tooth, and the white trader is wise who includes in his outfit a box or two of "assorted chips." Chris McKeand had so provided, but the blow was great when the chips turned out to be of the celluloid variety. There was little hope of disposing of poker chips in the lone outpost on the Kakisa River, but Chris found a way.

YOUNG Chris McKeand was half-heartedly opening boxes and arranging his stock on the shelves of the French outfit's store at Kakisa River. It was a tiny, log-walled interior, with beams but an inch or two above Chris' head, a door that he was obliged to duck through, and a single small window incorrigibly out of plumb. Earlier in the day Chris had arrived to begin his annual five months' bit, as he called it, five months' incarceration from the sight of white men, excepting his friend and competitor, Dave Rennie, the Company's clerk at the same lone outpost. And even Dave's face was a thought dusky; moreover, Dave had a copper-colored wife, which made a difference. Dave was at home at Kakisa River, and Chris had nothing but a concertina.

His first customer of the season was Tommy Ascota, a slender fourteen-year-old. He came in with a brave assumption of his father's man-to-man air, that speedily wilted into sheepishness under the white man's grin. Tommy desired a can of condensed milk. Every year for a few days after the arrival of the traders, the Kakisa Indians must have milk in their tea. The rest of the year they do very well without it.

Chris filled his order, keeping up a humorous commentary that was lost on

Tommy. It was Chris' custom to present each of his youthful customers with a piece of candy as long as it held out. To tease Tommy, who had put childish things far behind him, he took the cover off a box labeled "Assorted Chips," that was lying on the counter, and pushed it toward the boy. Tommy hesitated with a dark frown; then fell. Snatching a piece out of the box, he darted out of the store. Chris laughed. Tommy suddenly reappeared with a furiously angry young face, and with a round oath in perfectly good English, all he knew, threw the chip at Chris and disappeared again.

Chris examined the undamaged chip curiously. It proved to be of celluloid. "Poker chips, by gum!" he exclaimed disgustedly. "How in glory do they expect me to sell poker chips out here!"

Although it was not three o'clock, it was already growing dark. By and by Dave Rennie came in, and joined Chris beside his air-tight stove. They were excellent friends. For a few days they would have plenty to say to each other, and after that they would sit for hours, taking mute comfort out of each other's society. Chris could not go to Dave's cabin, because Mrs. Rennie was jealous of the white influence over her white husband.

Dave was a small man of what age it

would have been hard to say. He had inherited the large, pensive brown eyes of that red ancestress of his, and he was capable, unassuming, and patient. He alone of the white men of the country could speak the uncouth Kakisa dialect fluently, and he had considerable weight in the councils of the tribe. The quiet little man made a strong contrast to the bulky, sanguine, restless young Chris.

"Well, how goes it, kid?" said Dave.

"R-r-rotter!" answered Chris, rolling the "r" to give the word additional vicious emphasis.

Dave chuckled quietly.

"You can laugh," said Chris. "You're well fixed here. You've got the trade cinched. You can speak their lingo. You're one——" He pulled himself up.

"I'm one of them, you were going to say," put in Dave.

"No offense meant," said Chris gruffly.

"None taken," said Dave quietly.

"Honest, I wish some one would tell me why they send me out here," Chris went on querulously. "The post has never paid a cent. There are goods on the shelf that came out with the first consignment five years ago. How do they expect me to cut out your trade when you've known 'em for twenty years, and are related to the chief men. I believe our two concerns are in cahoots anyway. They won't let me cut prices."

"It's a hard proposition," agreed Dave.

Chris sprang up. "Hard!" he cried. "If you were twenty-five years old, and had a girl waiting for you outside, you'd know how hard it was!"

"Why don't you apply for a transfer?" suggested Dave.

Chris sullenly sat down again. "I have, twice," he said. "They make me sick. They say they'll give me a better post as soon as I make good here. They put me up against a smooth wall, and then blame me because I don't skin over it!"

"You'll feel better in a day or so," said Dave soothingly. "When the first strangeness wears off."

Chris picked up his concertina. "Oh, yes, yes!" he said, with careless bitterness. "They say a man can get accustomed to a diet of arsenic in time!" He made a few flourishes on the concertina. "It's the girl I'm thinking of," he went on in a lower tone. "You can't expect a girl to wait forever. She's a queen, Dave! If it wasn't for her letters I'd go clean off my nut. She sends me in a whole bundle by the last mail, one for each week during the winter. But there are plenty of other men on the spot. Better men than me, maybe. And five months——"

"I don't think you need worry about the girl," said Dave. "They're pretty steady."

Chris looked at him sharply, as much as to say: "What do you know about white girls?" But he held his tongue.

"Give us a tune," said Dave.

And Chris played "As Long as the Congo Flows to the Sea," which had just reached Fort Enterprise during the past summer. With three feet of snow outside, and a temperature of twenty below, it seemed particularly appropriate.

"You get a lot of pleasure out of that," said Dave enviously. "Will you teach me how to squeeze it?"

"Sure!" said Chris. "It'll help pass the time."

He gave the first lesson on the spot, a lesson that lasted until Dave's eldest girl came to bring him home to supper. But all the time Chris was thinking about something else.

"Did your stuff come over all right?" asked Dave as he rose.

"Same as usual," said Chris. "Only the blank fools sent me a box of poker chips instead of the candy I ordered. Poker chips at Kakisa River!"

"We might get up a game," suggested Dave.

"Ah-h! It's no fun for two," said Chris. "And if we tried to teach Lookoovar or Jimmy Providence, the priest 'ud give us what-for in the spring for corruptin' the morals of his precious lambs."

"Well, so long, and buck up, old top," said Dave.

"Wait a second," said Chris abstractedly. "Look a-here, Dave." He was frowning now. "You know my only chance of getting out of this hole is in doing you. I want to give you fair warning. I'm going to get a share of your fur this winter or bust!"

Dave laughed. "Go as far as you like," he said.

They shook hands on it.

When Chris was left alone he walked up and down the narrow length of his store, scowling. Anon he stopped, and went on again jerkily. He thrust his hands deep in his pockets; he drew them out, and abstractedly pulled his ears. His troubled eyes searched the floor, the walls, the stove, and along the shelves, as if he thought there must be a scheme concealed somewhere about the cabin. He finally drew a letter from his pocket, and consulted it for inspiration. There was this paragraph:

I am saving up trading stamps to buy a lamp for us to read by some day, dear. I send a picture of it from the catalogue. Everybody has the trading-stamp craze here. It's very childish, but you can't resist it. You know how they do it, don't you? With every purchase of ten cents' worth you get a stamp that you paste in a book, and when the book is full you may exchange it for all kinds of fine things. I should think you might do something like this with the Indians, you have said they are so childish. But then I suppose you have nothing you could use for stamps.

Chris' eyes fell from the letter to the box of chips that still lay on the counter. He dug up one of the neat rolls, and let the thin spheres run clicking through his fingers. That sound, which is exactly like no other sound in the world, is inextricably associated in the male human mind with green baize and tobacco smoke. As Chris listened to it his eyes widened until they became as round as the chips themselves, and a slow, delighted smile spread to the farthest confines of his face.

"By Heaven, I have it!" he cried out loud.

Next morning Lookoovar came to make a small purchase from the French outfit, and to welcome the trader back

to Kakisa River. The name Lookoovar was local patois for Le Couvert, the Blanket. The bearer of the name was not a beautiful object. His stringy gray hair was bound round with a band of dingy cotton that had not been changed within the memory of the village; his skin was wrinkled like a piece of dirty brown crêpe; and, when he smiled, a hideous cavern of blackened and brown stumps was revealed. But Lookoovar was enormously good-natured. He was very proud of his English.

"Hello! Hello!" he cried, pawing Chris' hand and shouting with laughter. "You good man. Glad come, me. *Bienvenu! Bienvenu!*"

The concertina lay conspicuously on the counter. Lookoovar, his first transports over, signified that he would like to hear a tune, whereupon Chris, negligently sitting on the counter, played "Ta-ra-ra-boom-de-ay," the Kakisas' favorite air. It was the only one they could be sure of recognizing. Lookoovar, laughing continually, beat time with head and hands.

"Like to try it?" suggested Chris casually.

The old man eagerly nodded, and Chris showed him how to hold the instrument, and to press it in. At the first squeak that issued from between his hands, Lookoovar jumped nervously, and would have dropped the instrument had it not been for the straps. At the second wail he took heart and began to smile. At the third excruciating discord he shouted with laughter, and began working the bellows so violently Chris was constrained to relieve him of it.

"You sell?" asked Lookoovar eagerly.

Chris shook his head.

"Twenty-five skins? Fifty skins?"

"No sell," said Chris coolly. "Give away."

Lookoovar stared at him incredulously. "You give me?" he demanded to know.

Chris shrugged elaborately. "What you want to-day?" he asked.

"Plug tobacco one skin," said Lookoovar. "You give to me?" he repeated.

Chris counted the plugs out on the

counter. "You buy your flour, and blankets, and traps from me this winter?" he asked.

Lookoovar shrugged, and looked out of the window.

Chris put on top of the tobacco—one white chip. Lookoovar started to convey it to his mouth, but Chris laid a restraining hand on his arm.

"No eat," he said. "Put away."

Lookoovar peered at him inquiringly.

Chris studied how to convey the scheme in sufficiently simple words. "To all who buy from me I give these pieces," he explained carefully. "One white piece with every skin's worth of goods. One red piece for five white pieces. One blue piece for two red pieces. In the spring when I close the store, I give the singing box to the man who has the most blue pieces."

Lookoovar pondered upon this.

"You buy your winter flour, and tea, and blankets, and traps from me," Chris continued, "perhaps one hundred skins. Then I give you these." He measured out two piles of fifty white chips each.

Lookoovar's old eyes brightened. But Chris could not be sure if he understood aright. Lookoovar pocketed the chip he had received, and left the store without another word. Chris hoped that he had gone to talk it over in the village.

The young trader spent an anxious half hour. At the end of that time Lookoovar returned, bringing his three sons to lend due effect to the transaction, and ordered a complete outfit for the use of his family at the fur camps. It was a triumph for Chris. His heart sang inside him, but he was careful to preserve as stolid a face as any Indian among them. It was much the largest order he had ever received, and the payment was assured, because the buyer was the second best hunter of the tribe. Lookoovar stowed away the chips in a tobacco bag he had brought for the purpose, and rattled them deliciously amidst the grins and the exclamations of his family. It was the nearest thing to money they had ever possessed.

A still greater triumph awaited Chris, for, by and by, who should come to the store but Jimmy Providence, the chief man of the largest family of the tribe! Jimmy was of a different type from old Lookoovar, a small, neat, agile hunter, with gentlemanly manners. He had a magnificent head of hair that was like a luxuriant black chrysanthemum clapped over his head. He disdained any other head covering.

Jimmy, after polite greetings, went directly to the heart of the matter. Pointing to the concertina, he said: "You show me?"

Chris was only too glad to give him a lesson.

Jimmy's eyes took on a delighted, far-away look at the diverse squeaks and wails that issued from the concertina in response to the pressure of his fingers.

"You give away?" he asked.

Chris explained the proposed offer.

Jimmy understood readily. "It is mine," he said superbly. "not any man big store credit as much like me!"

He thereupon gave Chris a larger order than Lookoovar's, and Chris counted out his chips.

These were the two chief men of the village, and thus Chris' plan was crowned with success. He trembled a little at his own temerity, and wondered how far the results would reach. He had actually delivered a body blow upon the mighty Company, that was so strong and so proud it could afford to laugh at its opponents. The other store was visible through Chris' little, crooked window, and Chris often looked in that direction, wondering how Dave was taking it. He would know, of course; there were plenty to carry the news.

Sure enough, in the middle of the day Dave came strolling carelessly over. Chris circumspectly ironed the grin out of his face.

"Morning, kid," said Dave, offhand—there was no change in his face. "Thought I'd drop over and have a pipe with you."

"Good!" said Chris. He could not resist adding: "How's business?"

"So-so," said Dave. "How are you doing?"

"Not too badly," said Chris, swallowing the snigger of laughter that made his diaphragm quiver.

Dave picked up the concertina, and produced a few tentative chords. "What'll you take for it?" he indifferently inquired.

"Not for sale," said Chris.

"Twenty-five skins?"

"I've already been offered fifty."

"Seventy-five, then?"

Chris shook his head.

"A hundred?"

"Two hundred wouldn't buy it," said Chris.

"You could get one in from outside as good for twenty skins," said Dave quietly.

"Sure," said Chris. "In a year's time, if nothing happened to it on the way. I don't have to sell, do I?"

Dave laid it down quietly. If he was disturbed, he concealed it admirably, but it was noticeable that he forgot his expressed intention of having come for a smoke. He made for the door again.

"No hard feelings, Dave," sang Chris.

"None in the world," said Dave. "I just wanted to give you a chance to sell out while the price was up. It may take a tumble later."

That was all.

After two days of heart-lifting business, the trade at Chris' store suddenly fell away to nothing, and, as before, he played the concertina to an admiring audience that looked out of the window and smiled blandly at any mention of trade. He suspected that some move of Dave's lay behind this, and he deputed Aleck Capot-blanc to find out. Aleck was the dandy young savage that broke trail for Chris when he traveled, and acted as his interpreter upon occasion. Chris showed Aleck an orange silk handkerchief, and became the master of his soul.

There was no difficulty in finding out. The explanation was simplicity itself. Dave had merely told all the people that if they would hold back their orders for eight days, after that the

Company would give *two* white pieces with every skin's worth of goods.

Chris whistled softly and long. He knew that Dave had dispatched a messenger by dog train to Fort Enterprise, but since he also knew that there was no concertina to be had there, and that nothing could be got in from the outside world before spring, he had not disturbed himself. He had not thought of more chips. Evidently Dave intended to issue trading stamps that he, Chris, would have to redeem. It was an ingenious idea. Chris became very thoughtful.

Ordinarily the round trip took twelve days, but if one changed dogs at the fort, and spared them neither going nor coming, it might be done in eight. Chris had plenty of time to think up a counter move. For a couple of days he was baffled, but then he received inspiration from a notice printed on the box of chips itself. He issued some private instructions to Aleck, who received them with an appreciative grin. After dark that afternoon, Aleck harnessed Chris' dogs, and, with his brother to keep him company, set off very quietly over the trail to the fort.

The entire village looked for the return of Ahcunazie, the Company's messenger, and, when he finally appeared on schedule, a good many of the people pushed into the Company's store to take advantage of the offer of double chips. Chris McKeand strolled over also. He observed that Ahcunazie was hiding a strained anxiety under an air of bravado, and he smiled comfortably to himself.

Ahcunazie entered to the waiting crowd. He was a little, shriveled specimen, bundled in miscellaneous ragged garments almost out of human semblance. His face was as blank and as bland as a child's that expects a beating, but still hopes against hope. His hands were empty.

"Where is the box?" demanded Dave sharply.

Ahcunazie shrugged expressively, and spread out his hands.

Dave came threateningly from behind the counter. "I know they have

them," he said. "What have you done with the box?"

Ahcunazie, looking to see if his line of retreat was open, made a spiral motion with his finger in the air.

Dave was fairly startled out of his quietness. "You——" he cried, making a dive for his messenger, but Ahcunazie was already out of the door. He was not to be tempted inside again, until Dave promised not to lay hands on him.

"Now tell me what happened," said Dave.

Ahcunazie looked around the waiting circle, and, in the pleasure of having a wonderful story to tell, he forgot his fears. "I get the box from Grierson at the fort," he began dramatically. "I come back much quick. I spell by the little lake two sleeps from the fort, and Aleck Capot-blanc and his brother come on the trail. Aleck Capot-blanc say to me: 'Wah! What you got?' I say: 'White pieces, and red pieces, and blue pieces for the Company to give away.' Aleck Capot-blanc say: 'Let me see me.' I say: 'Non! It is tie by string.'

"Aleck Capot-blanc say: 'You not let him get cold.' 'Why?' I say, me. 'If him freeze no more good,' Aleck Capot-blanc say. Aleck, him take box, and shake him by the ear, and listen. 'So!' Aleck say, 'him froze I guess. You'll get it. Better put by the fire, you. Put box in the pan while you hitch up.'

"So Aleck Capot-blanc and his brother go on the trail. I feel bad me, for the pieces is froze. And when I go to catch the dogs I put the box in the pan to warm a little. Afterward I am lighting my pipe so. I think no harm at all. I go to get box. *Bang!* My head break open. I fall down. When I get up no box, no pan, no fire! There is big hole in the ground!"

The Indians, seeing Chris smile, were quick to understand the trick that had been played, and the cabin rang with their laughter. The prestige of the mighty Company received another blow, but Dave minimized its effect by the way he received it.

He shrugged, and forced a smile. "I lose!" he said cheerfully. From under the counter he produced the precious box of cigars that was opened only on occasions of moment. "Have one on me," he said to Chris, to Jimmy Providence, to Lookoovar, and to Mahtsonza.

Later, as Chris was serving the custom that had transferred itself back to him, on taking down the box of chips, he caught sight of the notice on the label, and he laughed afresh.

Danger. Celluloid. Do not store near steam pipes or furnace flues.

On a morning in February Dave Rennie and Chris McKeand were once more seated by the air-tight stove. In the meantime a striking change had taken place in the aspect of the French outfit's little store. The shelves, the counter, and the walls were swept clean of goods. There was not so much as a pail of lard or a last summer's hat remaining. Chris' limited personal belongings lay packed and roped on the floor ready to be loaded on his sledge. Chris himself was in a state of jerky exhilaration.

He played a series of arpeggios on the concertina. "Going home!" he burst out. "I wish I knew a song about it! If I have any luck I'll catch the mail out from the fort. I'll be outside before the ice moves. I'll telegraph her from the lake that I'm coming after her. They'll have to give me a post now where I can take her!"

Dave smoked sympathetically.

Chris' thoughts took a fresh turn. "Why in thunder do you suppose the redskins don't come up to cash in their chips?" he exclaimed.

Springing up, he went to the door to look out. Dave cautiously picked up the concertina, and started to play "Home, Sweet Home," with true feeling, if somewhat halting execution.

"Not a man in sight!" said Chris, coming back.

"Most of them went back to the fur camps before daylight," said Dave quietly.

"I know," said Chris. "Doesn't it

beat the Dutch! Here for two months they fight like politicians over the singing box, and then, just before the time comes to decide it, every man jack loses interest, and they haven't even got the curiosity to come and see who wins it. Who could understand the beggars?"

"Who do you think has won it?" asked Dave, still attending closely to the concertina.

"Who knows?" said Chris, with a shrug. "Jimmy Providence is credited with the most chips, but it's not so simple as that. Why, the scheme hadn't been working a week before they were all dealing in chips among themselves. And when Aleck came back after taking the first lot of my fur to the fort, he taught 'em how to play met-o-wan, and after that whole fortunes in chips changed hands every night."

"And the chips were used for their original purpose, after all," put in Dave.

"It all helped me," said Chris. "Even after my goods gave out they kept bringing me their best fur, and I gave 'em credit for next season, and handed over the chips."

"Yes, darn you!" said Dave amiably.

"And then, a week ago, when the last crowd came in from the camps, the lot your family came back with, instead of the boost I had a right to expect, the whole business went flat. There was a sudden tightness in the chip market. The chips simply disappeared. I couldn't get any back in exchange for certificates, no matter what premium I offered. Jimmy, Lookoovar, Mahtsonza, Aleck, they all swore they had none, and all had lost interest in the singing box. So I decided there was nothing to do but close up. I

wouldn't get to understand these beggars in a hundred years!"

"They're too simple for you," remarked Dave sententiously.

Chris sprang up again. "I'm not going to wait any longer for them," he cried. "What'll I do with the pesky instrument?"

Dave joined him by the counter. "I'll take it," he said, in his quiet way.

"You!" said Chris, astonished.

Dave thrust a hand inside his shirt, and, drawing forth a soiled canvas bag, dropped it on the counter. From within came the unmistakable click of the celluloid disks. From the same hiding place he produced another bag, and still another.

"You'll find 'em all there except a few that were lost," he said, with a conscientious air. "And here are the certificates you issued for those they brought back." He pulled a bunch of papers from his pocket.

"Well, I'm jiggered!" said Chris. He repeated this with variations in several keys. "How did you get them?" he demanded.

"Traded for 'em with some of the fur my family brought in," said Dave seriously. He was feeling for the notes of "As Long as the Congo" on the concertina. "It was my own to do what I liked with. I'll tell you, kid, if it's any satisfaction to you, it's the first time in the history of the Company that a Hudson's Bay man ever let any fur get away from him."

Chris laughed. "I bet it cost you a pretty penny," he said.

Dave smiled at last. "Not too much," he said softly. "Seems it's been going the rounds lately that the singing box was bewitched, as you might say."

There is a great story coming by Frederick R. Bechdolt, who wrote "The 'Old Man' of Eagle Pass." It is called "Free Rein" and describes the experiences of a young adventurer in the gold country. It is a long novel, regular book length, but you will get it complete in the Christmas POPULAR, on sale December 23rd.

The Treasury

THE dreams of your youth—

They are your treasury, and the world's, from which has been paid out through all the centuries the royal wealth of eminence and immortality.

Fortune, happiness, fame—all these lesser riches will be yours—

If, faced by despair in later years, you can see a gleam of that hope-star which once rode always in its meridian for you;

Or, denied a happiness long-sought, discern through the dust of thoroughfare and countingroom the glory of some once-beloved woman's hair;

Or, confronted by ugliness of thought, remember the vague and vagrant sweetness of a summer wind that robbed the rose;

Or, bankrupt of ideas, wield for but a moment Romance's gorgeous lance with which in certain years you made a radiant play;

Or, hungered for love, read again the moving manuscript the moon wrote at your feet one night in June so many Junes ago.

Dreams of your youth!

They laid the sure foundation of your structured life, became the tested steel of what you builded. They are courage, imagination, beauty. They, returning, write for you on monuments mystic epitaphs, or trace in violet skies footprints of the angels, or perceive in blossoming buds the white and lovely lilies of Paradise.

They are your treasury, for they are ideas—and, without ideas, the lives of men are ashes of promise.

They are the world's treasury, for, without dreams, the heart of the world is starved.

JAMES HAY, JR.

Memling in Paris

By Rupert Hughes

Author of "The Angel on the Front Cloud," "The After-Honor," Etc.

When it comes to art, commend us to Dirk Memling. If he paints a picture it is a real painting, not a daub. His heart is in it; his soul. This is the story of how, during his stay in the beautiful city on the Seine, he painted, alas, too well

IF I'd 'a' been slammed ashore on Robinson Caruso's island all by me lonesome, I couldn't feel lonesomer than what I feel lonesome now." Nellie Gaskell was mumbling to herself for company. Crowds surrounded her, but she knew nobody. She faced the city of Cherbourg, and was afraid of it. She looked back over her left shoulder, and saw the huge steamer *Mutterland* that had brought her across the sea, already dwindling off toward its German port, after exuding its Paris-bound passengers on board a tender.

Nellie sat on somebody's else trunk, and kicked her heels against somebody's else initials. And then a porter came up and pulled the trunk out from under her. She had to stand up, and her shoes were too tight. She had saved them to wear down the gangplank, because he was to have met her, and a gangplank is a good place to show off shoes. Item, the toes were patent leather; item, buckles of silver-pearl.

Her plight was pitiful. She was friendless and Frenchless in France. And her shoes were too tight. And her other shoes were in her trunk. And she didn't know where her trunk was.

After the harrowing series of mishaps that had attended her efforts to reach Paris with Dirk Memling, it seemed hardly possible that Fate should have another knife up her sleeve. She and Dirk had managed to get themselves separated in New York, and take different ships oversea. That ought to have been enough. But evidently it was not. Nellie bitterly recalled her motto:

"Poik up, old goil, the woist that ever was can always get a little woisser."

But Doik hadn't otta not met her. He knew she didn't know enough French to keep from starving at a table dot. Besides, he had sent her a wireless that he would be at the shore end of the gangplank, and she had hurried down the cleated way with her face all made up to greet him. Her smiles had relaxed like curtains slowly lowered.

She had run hither and yon about the dock, dodging the *facteurs* as they catapulted trunks in all directions and howled "At-taw-shaw!" whatever that meant. But never a Memling she found. The other passengers had stamped every which way, identifying luggage, and seeing it carried into the room where the customs officers made a polite pretense of examining things.

In time the trunks and the passengers and their parcels were stowed on the funny train which was evidently panting to get back to Paris. But no Memling came for Nellie.

A number of uniformed Frenchmen poured out a vast amount of words which Nellie supposed to be French; but she drearily shook her head, and answered:

"I don't get you, Gastong."

Nellie was so pretty that it was not hard even for a Frenchman to be polite to her, but she could not, or would not, understand.

Finally two interpreters approached her, and addressed her in English. They explained graciously that she should get

her trunks through the customs, and get herself on board the train. They thought they knew English, but they had not met with East Side New Yorkese. Her answer threw them into complete disorder:

"Nay, nay, Pauline! Nix on the choo-choo for mine. A soittain poisson Marconies me he'll toin up at the dock; so I'm all to the Cassie Bianca; 'the goil stood on the boinin' dock'—you know the rest."

The first interpreter walked apart with the second interpreter, and said:

"What language is it she speaks? And who is Pauline?"

The second interpreter leaned on the first interpreter, and answered:

"But yes; but who is Choo-Choo? Some words are nearly Angleesh, but they do not mean somesing togezzer, and some words mean nossing alone, so perhaps it is Indian she talks."

"But Choo-Choo is Chinois!"

They debated the mystic syllables, but all they got from them was a headache; also a vague notion that she was waiting for somebody named Bianca.

They asked her again if she were expecting perhaps somebody.

"Sure, Mike!" she brightened.

"What is it her name, please? Is it Pauline or Bianca?"

Nellie laughed Nellishly. "Her name! Pauline! I'd like you to hand that to him!"

"Ah, she is a him?"

"Her am."

"Then perhaps if you will tell us who it is, he is, we could write him a little blue—a telegram, and he comes or answers. Who is it he is and where, please?"

Nellie could not resist answering with an expression her Irish mother had used to use:

"If you knew that and had your supper, you could go to bed."

The interpreters looked at each other and blushed, particularly the married one. She explained:

"If you could put me wise to where he is, you'd be some intoipreter."

The unmarried interpreter desperately urged:

"You wish to go to Paris, yes?"

"Yes, but not as any monologue act. I'm one of a team. Get me?"

The married interpreter found Nellie so pretty that he was tempted to the romantic sublimity of offering to leave wife and children to beg in Cherbourg while he escorted her; and the unmarried interpreter trembled with a similar declaration; but the chief guard of the train intervened with a Now or Never, and Nellie, answering rather what his watch implied than what his French declared, said:

"Don't let me lose your job on you, conductor. I couldn't get you another."

The conductor lifted his hat and signaled the engine drivers to move on.

The train writhed out of the station, glided along the quay, and slid from sight like a many-jointed snake. It left the interpreters to their own desperate devices with Nellie.

Once more they asked her who it was that that gentleman was who was so blessed as to be waited for by her, and so cursed as to keep her waiting. Nellie began to explain Dirk Memling's name and appearance, when an old habit of caution checked her.

An iciclic chill formed on her heart, in a sudden dread that Memling had failed her because he had been arrested on some one of the dozen charges that were always hanging over his beautiful head. Or perhaps he was hovering in the vicinity, not daring to appear. Perhaps he was even now watching her from behind some building, or trunk, or door. Perhaps he was waving vain signals to her from a lair.

II.

To give Memling's name or describe him might bring down no end of disasters. She decided not to divulge, at any hazard of distress for herself.

Herein must lie one of the chief inconveniences of the thief's profession. Every art has its drawbacks, of course, and this must be thievery's. The constant necessity for anonymity or pseudonymity is surely one of the major

hardships of dishonesty. And, until the invisible cloak on the ring of Gyges becomes a practical reality instead of a fictional dream, thieves must put up with the most irritating complications of this sort.

But Nellie looked so little like a thief that dear old Lombroso himself would have gladly welcomed her into his household. As for the interpreters, when she turned pale at their query, and declined to name or limn her absent cavalier, they could imagine nothing wickeder than a lovers' tryst, a clandestine adventure, or an elopement.

Their romantic hearts bled to see it so mismanaged. They offered the waif all the hospitality they could afford. They answered such questions of hers as they could understand, and they saw that she had refreshments. Both of them were impelled to submit themselves as substitutes for the missing eloper, and neither quite dared.

The distant town looked fascinatingly attractive to Nellie; it seemed to beckon her to wander the twisted streets among the crazy roofs.

But she refused to be beguiled from that platform. She was sure that the moment she left it Memling would arrive, look about, and, not finding her, disappear forever.

And so she waited hour upon hour, crying a little now and then, swearing a little now and then, and simply perishing for a cigarette all the while.

Eventually the afternoon waned into evening; the gloaming deepened, and the fears that had come with twilight gathered round her. It was lonely on the dock, and even the interpreters had gone to dinner; the refreshment room and the telegraph office were closed.

And then a loping cab horse came scrambling into view, striking sparks from the sharp paving stones. Nellie knew who was in the cab before she saw the dim figure, familiar even in silhouette, standing up and waving frantically.

She ran to meet him, crying: "Doik! Doik!" and nearly embraced the horse. The driver furiously hauled the poor old hack to its bony haunches, and

emitted guttural protests, while Memling leaped to the ground, caught Nellie in his arms, and encouraged her to a few comfortable tears.

III.

"I knew you'd wait for me," Memling murmured. "You always stay put, don't you?"

"Do I?" she asked, sobbing deliciously. "But what on oath detained you, Doik? Did you oversleep as per usual, or just forget, or what?"

"Oversleep! Forget! What made me late was being too early."

"Oily? Yes, for the next boat; but I came on this one."

"I'll never do it again," Memling vowed.

"Do what again?"

"Use forethought and caution, and all that sort of thing. Every time I take old Father Time by the forelock, he knees me in the stomach. Never in my life did I set out extra early to make a train that I didn't get left."

"There's sumpum in what you say, Doik," Nellie philosophized. "Trust to luck and you got a chance—not much, but some. But use your brain and it seems like you was challengin' the Fates to a duel. They feel they gotta show you what a woim you really are."

"I was so afraid that the regular boat express from Paris might be delayed, and you might have to wait here, that I took a train four hours earlier. And so, of course, I ran into a neat bit of sabotage."

"Sabo—what?"

"It's the latest French invention. You see, there's a big railroad strike on, and the strikers do all the damage they can by leaving things undone. They didn't want to upset the boat express, so they chose the train I took. Some track layers took the spikes out of a couple of rails, and just forgot to put them back. My train came along, and turned a somersault at a little village—there's a beautiful old church there, built in the thirteenth century."

"That thoitteen explains it," Nellie in-

terposed. "Weren't you killed or anything?"

"I got a few bumps, that's all; and I stood on my head for twenty minutes till I was pulled out feet first, but I wasn't damaged."

"Maybe you got intoinal injuries!" Nellie gasped, with all of the laity's superstitious dread of that mystic form of damage.

"Maybe," said Memling; "but the main thing is I'm so mad I could whip the entire labor union single-handed. They got the track repaired and the wreckage cleared up just in time to let the boat express go through. I watched it shoot past at sixty-five miles an hour. Then my train got under way, and limped along, stopping at every little village, and pausing to let six expresses go by. I couldn't catch one of them. I got into the main station at Cherbourg a few minutes ago, and took a cab to the dock, hoping against hope that you would have stayed. And you did. God bless you, you did!"

"I've loined that when you say 'Meet me at a soitain spot,' that's the spot I'm supposed to meet you at."

"Weren't you worried sick?"

"Oh, no; I was simply in a Toikish bath, that's all. But the main thing is, we've met up again. Let's get a pair of handcuffs and lock ourselves together, and throw the key away, so we won't lose us any more."

"That's a good idea," said Memling, locking hands with her. "Jump in the cab."

"You're not goin' to drive to Paris in this poor old horse and buggy?"

"Lord, no! We're going to the *gare* in Cherbourg, and take an express to Paris. There's one leaving in a few minutes."

"But what about the dinner question? I could take care of sumpum to eat simply elegant about now."

"We'll eat on the train."

"Do they have dining cars in this country?"

"Now, Nellie, you mustn't think that France is slow. In a thousand ways it makes New York look like the little neck of the backwoods."

"Well, o' course, the only Frenchmen I ever knew were waiters. They weren't any slower than all waiters are. And, then again, I saw Sarah Boinhardt in the moving pitchers, but I couldn't get much of a line on what she said. Still, live and loin is my trade-mark."

They caught the train, and it swept them to Paris at a speed that set Nellie to gasping. She could see little of France but the lights of the cities they sped through, and she saw little of these because she slept most of the way. The sea air and the long vigil on the dock had tired her, and now she felt a drowsy luxury in the protection of Memling.

He hated to waken her, but finally he must, and he woke her with the magic words:

"Paris, Nellie! We're in Paris!"

"My Gawd—or should I say—Moan Doo?"

"They're more apt to understand the former."

IV.

She primped in haste, yawning shamelessly, and stepped from the railroad carriage as if Paris were her very own.

Memling gave the hand luggage to one of the swarming porters, and went with Nellie to the customs officer at the station, where he speedily discovered that Nellie's trunk had been shipped to Paris under a seal. With the aid of Memling's almost perfect French, the trunk was quickly passed, and carried out to a cab.

"They got taxis here, too, haven't they?" said Nellie. "This is really quite a modern little boig."

The taxicab skated along boulevards lined with cafés, and nearly every café crowded.

"They're late upsitters, too, these Parisites," said Nellie.

As soon as the trunk was taken to her room at the hotel Memling had selected, she was all for venturing forth again.

Refreshed by her sleep on the train, and stimulated by the ozone of Paris

air, she had the mood of a summer dawn. And Memling, renewing his acquaintance with the Paris of his young art-student days, felt youth throbbing again in his arteries.

He kept full stride with Nellie's zestful pace, and the sidewalk café, which was such a joyous discovery to her, was a paradise regained to him.

She took an infantile delight in everything, every person, every trick of costume or manner. Her comments were like a child's.

"Say, Doik, the cops wear swords here, don't they? And I haven't seen an Irish-looking one yet. They soive the beer with a saucer under the glass, see? And you get a new saucer with every glass of beer, don't you? And they stack them up, don't they? You're not supposed to take 'em home with you, are you?"

The much-decorated women, drifting decoratively along the streets, interested her immensely.

"I suppose those are demimondes traipsing up and down the bullyvard."

"I suppose they are."

"Is that why you came over on another steamer from mine, so as to watch them go demimonding along?"

"Nellie! You know I thought you would be here ahead of me."

"Well, maybe you did. But you got here foist, didn't you? And you came right along on down to Paris instead of waiting for me at Choiboig, didn't you?"

All she wanted was to be a little jealous, and to be reassured. He did his best.

"I had to arrange the business of the paintings."

"The pictures, that's so! Why haven't you told me about them?"

"Why haven't you asked me?"

"I haven't had time, but I'm askin' you now. How about it?"

Memling looked around to note if he were in earshot or eyeshot of anybody. He could hear nothing but a jabber of French; he could see nobody who looked Anglo-Saxon. English seemed disguise enough. So he bent closer to Nellie, and told his story.

"That old crook of a Max Strubel gave me a letter of introduction to his fellow crook in Paris—Bertrand de Vervins."

"Slip me that again, please."

"Bertrand de Vervins."

"Oh! I get you! Boitrong de Voivang!"

"Exactly."

"Does he deal in pictures, too?"

"Yes; he's a crooked dealer who mixes up genuine and forgery till he can hardly tell where he stands himself. Well, I explained my great invention to him, and at first he was so very polite that I knew he wasn't convinced at all. That made me mad, and I said: '*Pas de cérémonies, monsieur.*'"

"Pa de Sarah who?"

"I said: 'No ceremonies, monsieur. I have invented the greatest scheme ever known for smuggling paintings into America without paying duty on them.' He shrugged his shoulders: 'So many people tell me that, and they are always being caught,' he said, 'and the pictures are taken away from them,' he said. But I told him I had a new way. I told him that I had invented a marvelous method of painting another painting over another painting so that later I could remove the other painting from the other painting without injuring the other painting."

"But what becomes of the other painting?" Nellie queried sarcastically. "Are you talking ragtime? You've got so many 'others' I don't know one other from t'other other."

"That's what *he* said. But I said: 'Look here, Monsieur de Vervins,' I said. 'You give me a valuable masterpiece of modern art, say, a canvas by Cézanne, or Dégas, or Renoir,' I said. 'It is worth, say, a hundred thousand francs.'"

"How much is that in Christian money?"

Memling tossed her the information impatiently: "Twenty thousand dollars."

"It must be a big picture to pull down that much cash!" Nellie mused.

"Nonsense!" said Memling. "Meissonier sold one of his pictures for fifty

thousand dollars while he was alive, and Millet's 'Angelus' was sold to America for over a hundred thousand dollars fourteen years after his death, and a year later it was bought back by a Frenchman for three-quarters of a million francs. The duty on that alone would have been—let me see—at fifteen per cent—he figured on the marble-topped table—"it would have been twenty-two thousand five hundred dollars. And when Millet was young he was so poor that he couldn't afford canvas, and he painted a new picture over an old one, just as I propose to do."

"Art is a good business when it's good," Nellie concluded.

"That's what I told that old fat cook of a Vervins. I explained to him that if he would give me a few paintings by modern masters, worth, say, a hundred thousand dollars, I could save him fifteen thousand dollars duty on them."

"Didn't that put old Voivang into a poispersion?"

"He sweat a little round the collar. But he cooled off with fright. 'But, yes,' he said, 'but how do I assure myself,' he said, 'that when you have painted over them you have not ruined them?' he said. 'It would be small profit to save the fifteen-per-cent duty and destroy the one-hundred-per-cent painting,' he said. I told him I would guarantee him against loss. He smiled very politely, and said: 'Is it that monsieur would permit that I demand what securities he has?'"

"Well, of course, he had me there; so I said I would give him a demonstration. If he could lend me a painting I would paint another over it, and then remove the other painting, leaving the oth—"

"Doik, if you say another 'other,' I'll soitain'y have to moider you with one of these beer saucers."

"Well, he brought out an old canvas, a beautiful, time-mellowed masterpiece. I said: 'It looks like a Rembrandt.' He said: 'It is a Rembrandt.' I hated to risk destroying an old master—the new ones don't count; they can paint more. Still, I didn't want to show him I lacked confidence in my scheme, so I swal-

lowed hard, and said carelessly: 'And if this should be ruined—not that it would or could, but if it should, how much would it cost?' I said.

"'Ten dollars,' he said, or at least, he said 'Fifty francs.' I gasped. 'Fifty francs for a Rembrandt!' He smiled. 'The man who paints these for me would paint me a thousand at that rate.' So I took the Rembrandt to the hotel, covered it with the layer of paint I have specially prepared, then daubed on a rough portrait."

"Who was the model?" Nellie put in hastily.

"You were."

"But I was on that Joiman steamship."

"You were present in my heart," Memling answered with a bow.

"Paris is doin' you good already," Nellie beamed. "Keep right on."

"I painted a portrait of you, and showed it to old Vervins. He said: 'You are a very poor painter, monsieur, but if you can remove what you put on, I shall do myself the honor of calling you a great artist.'"

Nellie was furious. "He's got a noive! Why didn't you smack his fat face off for him?" she demanded. "Telling you you weren't a great painter. Didn't you tell him you were a great sculptor?"

"I wanted to, but I didn't have the courage. I simply asked for another room to work in. He showed me into an empty studio, and I restored the Rembrandt in a jiffy."

"But what became of the portrait of me?" Nellie anxiously demanded.

"Heaven knows! Where are the snows of yesteryear?"

"You hadda rub me off the slate," she pouted.

"I had to. I hated it, but Vervins wanted to see his Rembrandt reappear. I knew he'd try to snoop and steal my secret, so I hung my hat over the keyhole, and worked away till every trace of my portrait of you was gone. I could have hung my hat on his eyeballs when I handed him back the canvas just as it was before. He expressed great admiration of the work, and tried

to steal some of my bottles of mixture. I took them away from him politely, and then he tried to smell the sponges and brushes to see if he could not sniff the secret chemicals."

"The villain!" Nellie fumed. "Trying to steal from a—a—" She began to back pedal, but Memling smiled cynically.

"That's what I told him. 'It is unprofessional to rob the profession,' I said. Then he tried to buy the process, but I made a great mystery of it. I didn't tell him it was all printed in the textbooks on restoring, and that I had simply developed a hint. I did tell him, however, that it would do him no good to know the method, because that was only part of the campaign. I explained that the disguised paintings had to be taken to America, and edged through the customhouse; only a native American could do that, and I told him that I was planning to go back home as a painter returning from foreign studies and bringing with him his canvases. After I floated through the customs, I would unpaint what I had painted, and—*voilà!*"

"Finally, he gave in. He decided to risk the canvases, and he promised me two or three good ones to work on as an experiment. But I stormed at him. 'This experiment can only be worked once,' I said, 'and it must be done on a large scale or not at all.' At last I browbeat him into promising me twenty-five of his best possessions, twenty-five of the most fashionable living artists' chefs-d'œuvre."

"Whyn't you take some of those old masters? They bring fancy premiums."

"Yes, but there is no duty nowadays on foreign paintings over twenty years old. There is no encouragement to the skillful smuggler of the old masters. I've got to try the new. But some of them are all the rage, and their prices are sky high."

"How much do you think the bunch is worth?"

Memling's chest inflated a trifle as he tried to speak carelessly:

"The cash value of the twenty-five he

has promised me will total about two hundred and fifty thousand dollars; fifteen-per-cent duty on that will be thirty-seven thousand five hundred dollars. And we divide the loot into three equal parts. It will net me twelve thousand five hundred dollars, for Strubel and Vervins pay the freight. Not bad, eh, Nellie, considering the fact that we get the trip to France thrown in."

"It's suppoib—simpluh suppoib!" she gasped. "You soitan'y are the greatest genius I ever hoid of."

"We'll get out of Paris and settle down in some quiet place where I can paint undisturbed."

"You needn't hurry out of Paris on my account," said Nellie. "It's distoib-in', but I like it."

They looked about, and saw that the crowd had gradually dispersed, and that they were alone in the restaurant, save for the hideously fatigued waiter, and the cashier asleep at the desk.

A few people on early-morning errands moved drowsily about their tasks, but Paris, as Paris, was asleep.

"Say," said Nellie, "this place looks like Williamsboig on a Sunday night. I hope we're not keeping anybody up."

"We'd better go home."

"But I thought Paris never slept," Nellie complained.

"Oh, Paris is turning respectable. It's Berlin that is the naughty city nowadays. In Berlin people are just beginning their evenings out now."

"I wish we were in Boilin," said Nellie, "for I feel all fussed up by what you've told me."

"To-morrow is another day," Memling said, and gave the waiter a royal tip from his future earnings.

They strolled out to the curb. Memling looked for a taxicab.

"Let's take one of those open-face, low-necked hacks," said Nellie. "Maybe if we gave the driver a job, he'd buy the horse a coupla oats."

Memling assented, and they were soon rolling along the affable streets of after-midnight Paris. The city slumbered like a beautiful siren, reclining in the moonlight, and dreaming of raptures past and future.

"There's only one thing troubling me now," said Memling.

"What's that, Doik? This hat I got on?"

"Of course not. That art dealer said I was a bad painter. Those art dealers always say that of truly great painters at first. What if I should paint so much better than the men whose pictures I'm to disguise, that I should feel it my duty to art not to rub out my own pictures?"

"Well, I should worry!"

V.

In the emerald depths of Fontainebleau Forest, Memling sat painting the portrait of an ancient oak, a veritable grand duke of a tree. Nellie was sitting on the turf, watching him.

"How soon'll it be my toin to pose?" she said.

He mumbled through a mouthful of brush handles: "Lord, I wish you didn't have to pose in that awful studio; if only you could pose out in the open air."

"You want to hand me a nice little case of pneumonia, so's you'll be free to marry somebody else, or floit with some of these French demouselles. I'm wise to your fiendish poipose, you Desprut Desmond."

"Hush!" said Memling. "You know I worship you, Nellie."

"Well, poissons that woishop other poissons have got a right to say so once in a while. You haven't said a woid for thoity minutes."

"If you'd been trying as hard as I have to see just what that tree really looks like, and to express a dry, mossy bark in smeary oil paint, you wouldn't have much to say, either. That tree ought to be carved, not painted."

"I suppose it is hard woik, but it looks lazy; just sitting there dabbing a little brush in some colored goo and flicking it on a canvas."

"Cracking rocks is nothing to it. The artist has to crack rocks inside his skull, and half the time he cracks his own head."

"The woist of it is, you're woikin' as hard as if it was to be poimanent. when

you're going to rub it all off as soon as you get to America. Why don't you just slap on any old thing?"

"A true artist's conscience nags the life out of him, Nellie. It would be dishonest to that noble old oak to fake his portrait. Besides, the painting must look real, or it would excite suspicion. And now, kindly shut up for half an hour, and then we'll go to lunch."

Nellie was silent for what seemed a full hour to her, though the minute hand on Memling's watch had made only ten steps. She sighed heavily under the burden of her thought:

"I was thinking——"

"Go right on thinking, but quit speaking, please."

"I was wondering what becomes of beautiful things like paintings and statues that get rubbed out or boined up or things like that. Seems like there'd ought to be some place to find 'em again."

"You'll find them where Jenny Lind's voice has gone, and the tears of Lady Jane Grey, and—— Oh, please hush your noise."

"I will, but I think it's a pity you can't presoive what you're painting."

"So do I, and it's a pity you can't let me alone long enough to paint it. Come on, we might as well eat."

She smiled contentedly. She was hungry, and she liked what they had to eat at Montigny.

"Insult me as much as you like, Doik, as long as you end up with a dinner bell. A goil will forgive a lotta hard woids as long as a man feeds her good afterward."

They found their bicycles where they had laid them—for the bicycle is still popular round Fontainebleau—and went rolling out of the forest-cool into the sun-beaten roads that led across the levels and down the steep hill to the little village of Montigny on the tiny river Loing, whose name Nellie could never pronounce nearer than a Chinesy "ler-wang."

As Memling unslung his canvas from his back, he bowed to the old artist who lived at their little hotel, a genial patriarch who was so kindly of soul that

Memling felt ashamed of himself for not admiring the veteran's art as much as his heart.

Nellie had quite fallen in love with him. Old Henri la Berthe—which Nellie called "Ornery lar Boit—knew a little English, and enjoyed trying to make Nellie understand it. He even enjoyed trying to comprehend her. It was a sort of game of chess. To-day he insisted on seeing Memling's work, and it evoked his intense enthusiasm. He poured forth a French rhapsody which Memling translated to Nellie in the crevices of the conversation.

"He says it's wonderful—I've got the texture—better than Diaz, he says—no, not the Mexican—Diaz, the immortal painter—he says Diaz's trees were too velvety—too plushy. But he says I ought to get the human note in—just a picture of a tree is not popular—he suggests a nymph or something—a dryad—or a Watteau shepherdess—not a bad idea—fun to do, anyway."

Later, Memling talked it over with Nellie as they rowed a flat-bottomed boat on the flat-topped riverlet.

"I don't want to put any of those dryad things in—or any dressed-up ladies—just a peasant girl or something. Let's go look through the village, and see if we can find a good-looking peasant girl."

"Let's not," said Nellie. "I thought I was brang over here to do any posing that was to be posed. And now you're going gunning for French pheasants."

"But you're not one, my dear. You haven't the clothes, or the wooden shoes, or——"

"There's a wooden-shoe store here, and I bet any of these goils would sell all the duds off her back for a franc and a half. But o' course, if you'd rather sit out there and paint one of these French beauts, go on—*ally voo zong.*"

Memling seized her hand. He laughed, and blamed himself for a numskull. Of course she should pose. She should fit herself out with the costume, and lean against the tree.

She paid dearly for her jealousy as

day after day went by. He posed her leaning against his noble oak, with one foot held back against it. She was knitting; her hands were knitting; her eyes were turned away in some dim reverie.

"Say, Doik, how much longer before I get a rest?"

"Oh, rest any time you say," he snapped, flinging down the brush. "I was just trying to get that foot, and now you've moved it."

"It had went to sleep, and it tingles clear up behind my ears. How'd you like to stand here on one Trilby like a stork forever, and then some? And my back—whew! I think my shoulder blades are grafted into the bark."

As soon as she had shaken her foot awake, she resumed her pose, and he his work. But a moment later she was at him again:

"Did you say you was painting my off hoof, Doik?"

"No!" he snarled. "I said I was trying to."

"Well, say, would you mind slipping me a cigarette? I'm just thoisting to death for a puff. It won't hoit the expression of the foot, will it?"

He rose grimly, lighted a cigarette, and stuck it between her teeth. Then he kissed her cheek roughly, and went back to his post.

"If you speak again till I tell you to, I'll hire another model—the prettiest one I can find."

A little later she wailed: "Say, Doik, can I move my left hand a minute? This smoke's going up me nose, and I'm famished to sneeze."

"Rest!" he growled.

She strolled round behind him, and looked at the picture.

"It's poifect, Doik! O' course, it don't look like me. If I met myself comin' up the street lookin' like that, I'd never reco'nize myself."

"It's not supposed to be a portrait."

"Oh, I'm not casting any aspoisions on the painting. If I looked as handsome as that I'd expect 'em to be namin' cigars and theaters after me."

"You're twice as beautiful as that."

"Oh, Doik, you do bloit out the most gorgeros compliments now and then

when you're not thinking." She kissed his nose, and sat on his knee.

"Say, Doik, what's she thinking of?"

"The girl in the picture?"

"Um-hum."

"How should I know?"

"But she's got such a wonderful expression, so wistful and wondering, and I don't know what all."

"What were you thinking of?"

"A cigarette, or you, or why we're thieves instead of honest, and was it going to rain this afternoon, and how my old poiple skoit would look if I hung a coupla panniers on it—and all sorts of things."

"Maybe that's what she's thinking of."

"No; she's got one of those expressions you read about in novels, where the great artist paints a soul's whole tragedy in one expression that haunts the beholder and tells him her life's story."

Memling sniffed. "Great artists don't try to do that sort of thing, Nellie. Novelists who know as much about art as I know about astronomy—and I can hardly tell the sun from the moon—fool novelists write that way; but great painters don't paint that way. Great painters try to put on canvas what they see and feel, and in their own dialect. I don't know what the girl is thinking about any more than the sculptor knew what the Venus of Melos was thinking about, or Leonardo knew what Mona Lisa was musing about. The main thing is to make the face and body look as if there were a soul alive in them."

Nellie went back to her attitude, and Memling assailed the canvas again. He had his days of triumph, when he cried: "I've got you now! I'm a better painter than I ever was sculptor." And he had his days when he said: "If this canvas were mine, I'd throw it into the River Loing. But it's got another man's masterpiece under this daub of mine."

But he would not give it up, and one day he decided to call it finished, and stop before he ruined it with detail. That day he showed it to La Berthe, and the old man's eyelids pursed with tears. He put his fingers to his lips, as

if to extract a kiss from them, and threw the kiss to the little angel on the canvas. He poured out eulogies, which Memling condensed for Nellie:

"He says it's a masterpiece—it's so immediate—nice word, eh?—a beautiful moment fastened down like a butterfly on a pin—nice idea, eh? He says I ought to send it to the Salon. I told him that I had no acquaintances—no pull; it would be rejected. He says it wouldn't—but of course it would."

He and the artist exchanged rapid-fire chatter that evidently sent Memling into the seventh heaven of pride. Later he said to Nellie:

"The old man's a bad painter, but he's a good judge of what other people do."

"Not knocking your own woik, at all," Nellie had to say. But Memling was soaring too loftily to be brought down by any little shaft of irony.

The next morning he was up with the sun, for artists are Parsees by profession; they must serve in the temple of light while their god is there. By the time Nellie was awake, he had three expensive paintings, by two of the chief artists of France, and one Hungarian master, all blotted out under the first layer of paint.

"I'll give you a day off, Nellie. I've got to get out in the woods and find some more subjects. I can't spend as much time on these as I did on the peasant girl, or I'll never get those twenty-five canvases covered. You go for a row on the river; but first you might pack that peasant girl safely and put her away for the voyage. Be careful; she's wet yet. Good-by."

Nellie watched him trundling his wheel up the sharp hill; then she went about various tasks, pausing to gaze at the peasant girl, and growing more and more fascinated by the mystery of her meditations.

A few hours later she went down to take out the boat. She found La Berthe just finishing his coffee at a table on the water's very edge.

"Why aren't you woiking, mussoo?" she said.

"Valking?" he said. "I am too fatigued to go valking."

"No, not walking—woiking."

"*Je ne com*—I am not under ze standing."

She gave up, and smiled. "Won't you—*voulez vous* come for a row on the *eau*—a row in the—the *bateau*?" He understood her vigorous pantomime, at least.

"*Enchanté!*" he exclaimed, and she helped him in, expecting him to sit on the water any moment. But they embarked without accident, and a few stout strokes took her out of danger of the rush of water over the weir. Soon they were skimming the placid reaches of the exquisite stream, and by and by they just drifted.

"Isn't this the sweetest little immutation river that ever was?" La Berthe knitted his gray brows. "Isn't this—*cela*—the beauest petite rivare doo toot le mong? O' course, in America we'd think it was only a bathtub—a sally de bang—running over, but—you don't get me? Well, you're not losing much!"

La Berthe felt that it would be easier to try to speak her language than to understand it, so he began:

"Mees Nellee, all las^h night I am not sleep. I me remember Monsieur Memleeng his so sharmeeng *painteeng*. He did say to me: 'No, no, I cannot make expose my *painteeng* to the Salon. I do not know nobody not at all. I have not the'—how did he say?—'the pool.' Now me, I am not great painter like Monsieur Memleeng."

"Oh, Mussoo Ornery!" Nellie exclaimed.

"*Pas de cérémonies*, Mees Nellee. I have a nice talent, but not the grand talent. I know. But I have the grand talent for to make frands and to get vat you call the pool. To-morrow morn-eeng I go to Paris to take my *painteengs* for the Salon de l'automne—the late Salon."

"Jer comprong, mussoo," said Nellie.

"I know averybody. If I say: 'Here is *painteeng* by my frand, by my pupil, by my—it imports not,' they say, 'Good! Let us have the honneur to

see it.' And once they see the little paysanne who is so ravissante, they will give her their hommage and a place on the best wall."

"Pertater," said Nellie dubiously.

"*Non, non, pas de peut-être, mais incontestablement, sans aucun doute, sans aucun!*"

"English, silver play!" Nellie gasped. The old man leaned close, and whispered as if he were transmitting a dark plot in a large crowd, instead of unfolding a benevolent scheme on a lonely river:

"Mees Nellee, I am one grand *conspirateur!* Me, I love to *comploter*. I have the inspiration. Monsieur Memleeng is afraid to send his so *belle peinture* to the Salon. You shall geeve it to me. I take it to the jury. Eef they say: 'No, we do not wish,' I bring back the *peecture*, and Monsieur Memleeng does not know his feeling is hurt. Eef they say: 'Yes, we accept!' then I bring back the *trionphe!*"

Nellie's eyes and mouth widened with rapture at the conspiracy. She was so proud of Memling, and so zealous for his glory, that anything in his behalf was thrice welcome.

"Oh, that's poifectly supoib!" she gasped.

"Aha, you like, yes?" beamed the old schemer.

"Like!" said Nellie. "I love it, and I could hug you for thinking of it."

"Please!" was all La Berthe could say, as he leaned forward. And Nellie, leaning forward, took his snowy head in her hands, and kissed his pink old face.

Nellie rowed back to the little hotel, got the painting from its hiding place, and relinquished it to La Berthe.

Memling came back for a hasty luncheon. If his mind had not been absent on thoughts of future paintings, he would have observed with suspicion the curious behavior of La Berthe and Nellie. They were as restless as children trying to keep from giggling in church.

La Berthe said his farewells to Memling, and explained that business took him to Paris for a few days. Memling

bade him an affectionate *au revoir*, and wheeled back to the woods.

Nellie fairly effervesced with hope, and her only dread was that Memling would insist on seeing his painting. A few times he asked for it, but she managed to shunt him to another switch of thought.

Finally, the great day came when a telegram from Paris reached Nellie.

"Who's telegraphing you from Paris?" Memling asked anxiously.

"Oh, a soittain party I been carrying on a little floitation with."

While Memling stared at her aghast, she read the message:

Jury honors theirselves by to accepted Monsieur Memling so charming painting. Make him the compliments. I embrace your hands.

LA BERTHE.

While Nellie was reading, her face underwent so swift a suffusion of crimson delight that Memling flashed pale with jealousy. He snatched the telegram from her, and read the signature first:

"Old La Berthe, eh? He kisses your hands, eh? The old scoundrel!" Then his eyes took in the rest, but it was Greek to him. Nellie explained it in a roundabout way that drove him frantic. When at last he understood, she got herself ready to hear a shout of celebration from him; and she made ready the

meek answers to his profound expressions of gratitude to her. Instead, she saw him drop into a chair, the telegram drifting to the floor like a lonesome autumn leaf. She thought that he was about to have apoplexy over the good news. But he said:

"Nellie, you meant well, but—Jumping Jupiter, how you have put the fat in the fire!"

"How have I?" she pouted.

"Don't you realize that under my miserable daub——"

"It's not a miserable daub; it's a *shay-doiver*."

"Well, whatever it is, it is resting on a thirty-thousand-dollar painting by the great Uzanne. And it's got to come off."

"Well, take it off." Nellie was snippy with the bankruptcy of her great expectations.

"But how can I? It's accepted now. It won't be exhibited for three or four weeks, and it's got to hang there for three months! And somebody might want to buy it for a few hundred dollars. And we're supposed to start back to America in six weeks. Oh, Lord! oh, Lord!"

Nellie was so steeped in France by now that her own despair was voiced in the tragic wail of:

"Moan Doo! Moan Doo! Kesker-say ker jay fay!"

There will be another good story by Rupert Hughes in the January Month-end POPULAR, on sale December 23rd.



BILL TAFT'S BILL

WILLIAM N. TAFT is a Washington newspaper man, and he writes the "N" very much like an "H"—which, according to the latest political returns, is the nearest he will ever get to the White House except in his capacity of correspondent. Not long ago his dentist sent him a bill; and the postman, after looking over the pay rolls of the United States government and several of our leading daily publications, decided that the White House was the softest spot to hit.

The bill, which was for ten dollars and thirty cents, went through the regular channels of the White House offices, received the official O. K., had a lot of red tape tied to it, and was finally paid. One day Bill, the reporter, went in to ask Bill, the president, for some information.

"I'll give you the information," said the president, "and even a document. Here's a receipted voucher showing that I have been paying your dentist. Hand me over that ten dollars and thirty cents."

The Mind Master

By Burton E. Stevenson

Author of "The Marathon Mystery," "The Boule Cabinet," Etc.

You will wonder that such things as are related here could happen in this twentieth century within the boundaries of Greater New York. It is the story of a rich recluse who became a devotee of an Oriental religion and was found strangled in his lonely home in a sparsely settled section of the Bronx. An unusual story, with a strange, uncanny mystery to grip the imagination.

CHAPTER I.

THE FALLING STAR.

I WAS genuinely tired when I got back to the office, that Wednesday afternoon, for it had been a trying day—the last of the series of trying days which had marked the progress of the Minturn case; and my feeling of depression was increased by the fact that our victory had not been nearly so complete as I had hoped it would be. Besides, there was the heat; always, during the past ten days, there had been the heat, unprecedented for June, with the thermometer climbing higher and higher, and breaking a new record every day.

As I threw off coat and hat and dropped into the chair before my desk, I could see the heat waves quivering up past the open windows from the fiery street below. I turned away and closed my eyes, and tried to evoke a vision of white surf falling upon the beach, of tall trees swaying in the breeze, of a brook dropping gently between green banks.

Fountains that frisk and sprinkle
The moss they overspill;
Pools that the breezes crinkle—

and then I stopped, for the door had opened. I unclosed my eyes to see the office boy gazing at me in astonishment.

He was a well-trained boy, and recovered himself in an instant.

"Your mail, sir," he said, laid it at my elbow, and went out.

I turned to the letters with an interest the reverse of lively. The words of Henley's ballade were still running through my head:

Vale lily and periwinkle;
Wet stone crop on the sill;
The look of leaves a-twinkle
With windlets—

Again I stopped, for again the door opened, and again the office boy appeared.

"Mr. Godfrey, sir," he said.

And close upon the words, Jim Godfrey entered, looking as fresh and cool and invigorating as the fountains and brooks and pools I had been thinking of.

"How do you do it, Godfrey?" I asked, as he sat down.

"Do what?"

"Keep so fit."

"By getting a good sleep every night. Do you?"

I groaned, as I thought of the inferno I called my bedroom.

"I haven't really slept for a week," I said.

"Well, you're going to sleep to-night. That's the reason I'm here. I saw you

in court this afternoon—one glance was enough.”

“Yes,” I assented; “one glance would be. But what’s the proposition?”

“I’m staying at a little place I’ve leased for the summer up on the far edge of the Bronx. I’m going to take you up with me to-night, and I’m going to keep you there till Monday. That will give you five nights’ sleep and four days’ rest. Don’t you think you deserve it?”

“Yes,” I agreed, with conviction, “I do,” and I cast my mind rapidly over the affairs of the office. With the Min-turn case ended, there was really no reason why I should not take a few days off.

“You’ll come, then?” said Godfrey, who had been following my thoughts. “Don’t be afraid,” he added, seeing that I still hesitated. “You won’t find it dull.”

I looked at him, for he was smiling slightly, and his eyes were very bright.

“Won’t I?”

“No,” he said, “for I’ve discovered certain phenomena in the neighborhood which I think will interest you.”

When Godfrey spoke in that tone, he could mean only one thing, and my last vestige of hesitation vanished.

“All right,” I said; “I’ll come.”

“Good. I’ll call for you at the Marathon about ten-thirty. That’s the earliest I can get away,” and in another moment he was gone.

So was my fatigue, and I turned with a zest to my letters and to the arrangements necessary for a four days’ absence. Then I went up to my rooms, put a few things into a suit case, got into fresh clothes, mounted to the Astor roof garden for dinner, and a little after ten was back again at the Marathon. I had Higgins bring my luggage down, and sat down in the entrance porch to wait for Godfrey.

Just across the street gleamed the lights of the police station where he and I had had more than one adventure. For Godfrey was the principal police reporter of the *Record*; it was to him that journal owed those brilliant and glowing columns in which the latest

mystery was described and dissected in a way which was a joy alike to the intellect and to the artistic instinct. For the editorial policy of the *Record*, for its attitude toward politics, Wall Street, the trusts, “society,” I had only aversion and disgust; but whenever the town was shaken with a great criminal mystery, I never missed an issue.

Godfrey and I had been thrown together first in the Holladay case, and that was the beginning of a friendship which had strengthened with the years. Then came his brilliant work in solving the Marathon mystery, in which I had also become involved. I had appealed to him for help in connection with that affair in Elizabeth; and he had cleared up the remarkable circumstances surrounding the death of my friend, Philip Vantine, in the affair of the buhl cabinet. So I had come to turn to him instinctively whenever I found myself confronting one of those intricate problems which every lawyer has sometimes to untangle.

Reciprocally, Godfrey sometimes sought my assistance, but, of course, it was only with a very few of his cases that I had any personal connection. The others I had to be content to follow, as the general public did, in the columns of the *Record*, certain that it would be the first to reach the goal. Godfrey had a peculiar advantage over the other police reporters in that he himself, years before, had been a member of the detective force, and had very carefully fostered and extended the friendships made at that time. He was looked on rather as an insider, and he was always scrupulously careful to give the members of the force every bit of credit they deserved—sometimes considerably more than they deserved. In consequence, he had the entrée at times when other reporters were rigorously barred.

It was nearly eleven o’clock before Godfrey arrived that evening, but I was neither surprised nor impatient. I knew how many and unexpected were the demands upon his time; and I always found a lively interest in watching the comings and goings at the station across the way—where, alas, the en-

trances far exceeded the exits! But finally a car swung in from the avenue at a speed that drew my eyes, and I saw that Godfrey was driving it.

"Jump in," he said, pushing out his clutch, and pausing at the curb; and as I grabbed my suit case and sprang to the seat beside him he let the clutch in again, and we were off. "No time to lose," he added, as he changed into high, and turned up Seventh Avenue.

At the park he turned westward to the circle, and then northward again out Amsterdam Avenue. There was little traffic, and we were soon skimming along at a speed which made me watch the cross streets fearfully. In a few minutes we were across the Harlem, and running along the uninteresting streets of that suburb. At this moment, it occurred to me that Godfrey was behaving singularly as though he were hastening to keep an appointment, but I judged it best not to distract his attention from the street before us, and restrained the question which rose to my lips.

At last the built-up portion of the town was left behind; we passed little houses in little yards, then meadows and gardens and strips of woodland, with a house only here and there. We were no longer on a paved street, but on a macadam road—a road apparently little used, for our lamps, sending long streamers of light ahead of us, disclosed far empty stretches, without vehicle of any kind. There was no moon, and the stars were half obscured by a haze of cloud, while along the horizon to the west I caught the occasional glow of distant lightning.

And then the sky was suddenly blotted out, and I saw that we were running along an avenue of lofty trees. The road at the left was bordered by a high stone wall, evidently the boundary of an important estate. We were soon past this, and I felt the speed of the car slacken.

"Hold tight!" said Godfrey, turned sharply through an open gateway, and brought the car to a stop. Then, snatching out his watch, he leaned forward, and held it in the glare of the

side lamp. "Five minutes to twelve," he said. "We can just make it. Come on, Lester."

He sprang from the car, and I followed, realizing that this was no time for questions.

"This way," he said, and held out a hand to me, or I would have lost him in the darkness. We were in a grove of lofty trees, and at the foot of one of these Godfrey paused. "Up with you," he added; "and don't lose any time," and he placed my hand upon the rung of a ladder.

Too amazed to open my lips, I obeyed. The ladder was a long one, and, as I went up and up, I could feel Godfrey mounting after me. I am not expert at climbing ladders, even by daylight, and my progress was not rapid enough to suit my companion, for he kept urging me on. But at last, with a breath of relief, I felt that I had reached the top.

"What now?" I asked.

"Do you see that big straight limb running out to your right?"

"Yes," I said, for my eyes were growing accustomed to the darkness.

"Sit down on it, and hold onto the ladder."

I did so somewhat gingerly, and in a minute Godfrey was beside me.

"Now," he said, in a voice low and tense with excitement, "look out, straight ahead. And remember to hold onto the ladder."

I could see the hazy mist of the open sky, and from the fitful light along the horizon, I knew that we were looking toward the west. Below me was a mass of confused shadows, which I took for clumps of shrubbery.

Then I felt Godfrey's hand close upon my arm.

"Look!" he said.

For an instant I saw nothing; then my eyes caught what seemed to be a new star in the heavens; a star bright, sharp, steel-blue—

"Why, it's moving!" I cried.

He answered with a pressure of the fingers.

The star was indeed moving; not rising, not drifting with the breeze, but

descending; descending slowly, very slowly——

I watched it with parted lips, leaning forward, my eyes straining at that falling light.

"Falling" is not the word; nor is "drifting." It did not fall, and it did not drift. It deliberately descended, in a straight line, at a regular speed, calmly and evenly, as though animated by some definite purpose. Lower and lower it sank; then it seemed to pause, to hover in the air, and the next instant it burst into a shower of sparks and vanished.

And those sparks fell upon the shoulders of two white-robed figures, standing apparently in space, their arms rigidly extended, their faces raised toward the heavens.

CHAPTER II.

A STRANGE NEIGHBOR.

Mechanically I followed Godfrey down the ladder, and, guided by the flaring lights, made my way back to the car. I climbed silently into my seat, while Godfrey started the motor. Then we rolled slowly up the driveway, and stopped before the door of a house standing deep among the trees.

"Wait for me here a minute," Godfrey said, and, when I had got out, handed me my suit case, and then drove the car on past the house, no doubt to its garage.

He was soon back, opened the house door, switched on the lights, and waved me in.

"Here we are," he said. "I'll show you your room," and he led the way up the stairs, opening a door in the hall at the top. "This is it," he added, and switched on the lights here also. "The bathroom is right at the end of the hall. Wash up, if you need to, and then come down, and we will have a good-night smoke."

It was a pleasant room, with the simplest of furniture. The night breeze ruffled the curtains at the windows, and filled the room with the cool odor of the woods—how different it was from

the odor of dirty asphalt! But I was in no mood to linger there—I wanted an explanation of that strange light and of those two white-robed figures. So I paused only to open my grip, change into a lounging coat, and brush off the dust of the journey. Then I hastened downstairs.

Godfrey met me at the stair foot, and led the way into what was evidently a lounging room. A tray containing some cold meat, bread and butter, cheese, and a few other things, stood on a side table, and to this Godfrey added two bottles of Bass.

"No doubt you're hungry after the ride," he said. "I know I am," and he opened the bottles. "Help yourself," and he proceeded to make himself a sandwich. "You see, I live the simple life out here. I've got an old couple to look after the place—Mr. and Mrs. Hargis. Mrs. Hargis is an excellent cook—but to ask her to stay awake till midnight would be fiendish cruelty. So she leaves me a lunch in the ice box, and goes quietly off to bed. I'll give you some berries for breakfast such as you don't often get in New York—and the cream—wait till you try it! Have a cigar?"

"No," I said, sitting down, very content with the world; "I've got my pipe," and I proceeded to fill up.

Godfrey took down his own pipe from the mantelshelf, and sat down opposite me. A moment later two puffs of smoke rose toward the ceiling.

"Now," I said, looking at him, "go ahead and tell me about it."

Godfrey watched a smoke ring whirl and break before he answered.

"About ten days ago," he began, "just at midnight, I happened to glance out of my bedroom window, as I was turning in, and caught a glimpse of a queer light apparently sinking into the tree-tops. I thought nothing of it; but two nights later, at exactly the same time, I saw it again. I watched for it the next night, and again saw it—just for an instant, you understand, as it formed high in the air and started downward. The next night I was up a tree, and saw more of it; but it was not until night

before last that I found the place from which the whole spectacle could be seen. The trees are pretty thick all around here, and I doubt if there is any other place from which those two figures would be visible."

"Then there *were* two figures!" I said, for I had begun to think that my eyes had deceived me.

"There certainly were."

"Standing in space?"

"Oh, no; standing on a very substantial roof."

"But what is it all about?" I questioned. "Why should that light descend every midnight? What is the light, anyway?"

"That's what I've brought you out here to find out. You've got four clear days ahead of you—and I'll be at your disposal from midnight on, if you happen to need me."

"But you must have some sort of idea about it," I persisted. "At least you know whose roof those figures were standing on."

"Yes, I know that. The roof belongs to a man named Worthington Vaughan. Ever hear of him?"

I shook my head.

"Neither had I," said Godfrey, "up to the time I took this place. Even yet I don't know very much. He's the last of an old family, who made their money in real estate, and are supposed to have kept most of it. He's a widower with one daughter. His wife died about ten years ago, and since then he has been a sort of recluse, and has the reputation of being queer. He has been abroad a good deal, and it is only during the last year that he has lived continuously at this place next door, which is called Elmhurst. That's about all I've been able to find out. He certainly lives a retired life, for his place has a twelve-foot wall around it, and no visitors need apply."

"How do you know?"

"I tried to make a neighborly call yesterday, and wasn't admitted. Mr. Vaughan was engaged. Getting ready for his regular midnight hocus-pocus, perhaps."

I took a meditative puff or two.

"Is it hocus-pocus, Godfrey?" I asked at last. "If it is, it's a mighty artistic piece of work."

"And if it isn't hocus-pocus, what is it?" Godfrey retorted. "A spiritual manifestation?"

I confess I had no answer ready. Ideas which seem reasonable enough when put dimly to oneself, become absurd sometimes when definitely clothed with words.

"There are just two possibilities," Godfrey went on. "Either it's hocus-pocus, or it isn't. If it is, it is done for some purpose. Two men don't go out on a roof every night at midnight and fire off a Roman candle and wave their arms around just for the fun of the thing."

"It wasn't a Roman candle," I pointed out. "A Roman candle is visible when it's going up, and bursts and vanishes at the top of its flight. That light didn't behave that way at all. It formed high in the air, remained there stationary for a moment, gradually grew brighter, and then started to descend. It didn't fall; it came down slowly, and at an even rate of speed. And it didn't drift away before the breeze, as it would have done if it had been merely floating in the air. It descended in a straight line. It gave me the impression of moving as though a will actuated it—as though it had a distinct purpose. There was something uncanny about it!"

Godfrey nodded thoughtful agreement.

"I have felt that," he said, "and I admit that the behavior of the light is extraordinary. But that doesn't prove it supernatural. I don't believe in the supernatural. Especially I don't believe that any two mortals could arrange with the heavenly powers to make a demonstration like that every night at midnight for their benefit. That's *too* absurd!"

"It is absurd," I assented, "and yet it isn't much more absurd than to suppose that two men would go out on the roof every night to watch a 'Roman candle,' as you call it, come down. Unless, of course, they're lunatics."

"No," said Godfrey, "I don't believe they're lunatics—at least, not both of them. I have a sort of theory about it; but it's a pretty thin one, and I want you to do a little investigating on your own account before I tell you what it is. It's time we went to bed. Don't get up in the morning till you're ready to. Probably I won't see you till night; I have some work to do that will take me off early. But Mrs. Hargis will make you comfortable, and I'll be back in time to join you in another look at the Roman candle."

He uttered the last words jestingly, but I could see that the jest was a surface one, and that, at heart, he was deeply serious. Evidently the strange star had impressed him even more than it had me—though perhaps in a different manner.

I found that it had impressed me deeply enough, for I dreamed about it that night; dreamed, and woke, only to fall asleep and dream and wake again. I do not remember that I saw any more in the dream than I had seen with my waking eyes, but each time I awoke trembling with apprehension and bathed in perspiration.

As I lay there the second time, staring up into the darkness and telling myself I was a fool, there came a sudden rush of wind among the trees outside; then a vivid flash of lightning and an instant rending crash of thunder, and then a steady downpour of rain.

I could guess how the gasping city welcomed it, and I lay for a long time listening to it, as it dripped from the leaves and beat against the house. A delightful coolness filled the room, an odor fresh and clean; and when, at last, with nerves quieted, I fell asleep again, it was not to awaken until the sun was bright against my curtains.

CHAPTER III.

THE DRAMA IN THE GARDEN.

I glanced at my watch, as soon as I was out of bed, and saw that it was after ten o'clock. All the sleep I had lost during the hot nights of the previous week had been crowded into the

last nine hours; I felt like a new man, and when, half an hour later, I ran downstairs, it was with such an appetite for breakfast as I had not known for a long time.

There was no one in the hall, and I stepped out through the open door to the porch beyond, and stood looking about me. The house was built in the midst of a grove of beautiful old trees, some distance back from the road, of which I could catch only a glimpse. It was a small house, a story and a half in height, evidently designed only as a summer residence.

"Good morning, sir," said a voice behind me, and I turned to find a pleasant-faced, gray-haired woman standing in the doorway.

"Good morning," I responded. "I suppose you are Mrs. Hargis?"

"Yes, sir; and your breakfast's ready."

"Has Mr. Godfrey gone?"

"Yes, sir; he left about an hour ago. He was afraid his machine would waken you."

"It didn't," I said, as I followed her back along the hall. "Nothing short of an earthquake would have wakened me. Ah, this is fine!"

She had shown me into a pleasant room, where a little table was set near an open window. It made quite a picture, with its white cloth and shining dishes and plate of yellow butter, and bowl of crimson berries, and—but I didn't linger to admire it. I don't know when I have enjoyed breakfast so much. Mrs. Hargis, after bringing in the eggs and bacon, and setting a little pot of steaming coffee at my elbow, sensibly left me alone to the enjoyment of it. Ever since that morning I have realized that, to start the day exactly right, a man should breakfast by himself, amid just such surroundings, leisurely and without distraction. A copy of the morning's *Record* was lying on the table, but I did not even open it. I did not care what had happened in the world the day before.

At last, ineffably content, I stepped out upon the driveway at the side of the house, and strolled away among the

trees. At the end of a few minutes, I came to the high stone wall which bounded the estate of the mysterious Worthington Vaughan, and suddenly the wish came to me to see what lay behind it. Without much difficulty, I found the tree with the ladder against it, which we had mounted the night before. It was a long ladder, even in the daytime, but at last I reached the top, and settled myself on the limb against which it rested. Assuring myself that the leaves hid me from any chance observer, I looked down into the grounds beyond the wall.

There was not much to see. The grounds were extensive, and had evidently been laid out with care, but there was an air of neglect about them, as though the attention they received was careless and inadequate. The shrubbery was too dense, grass was invading the walks, here and there a tree showed a dead limb or a broken one. Near the house was a wide lawn, designed, perhaps, as a tennis court or croquet ground, with rustic seats under the trees at the edge.

About the house itself was a screen of magnificent elms, which doubtless gave the place its name, and which shut the house in completely. All I could see of it was one corner of the roof. This, however, stood out clear against the sky, and it was here evidently that the mysterious midnight figures had been stationed. As I looked at it, I realized the truth of Godfrey's remark that probably from no other point of vantage but just this would they be visible.

It did not take me many minutes to exhaust the interest of this empty prospect, more especially since my perch was anything but comfortable, and I was just about to descend, when two white-robed figures appeared at the edge of the open space near the house and walked slowly across it. I settled back into my place with a tightening of interest which made me forget its discomfort, for that these were the two star worshippers I did not doubt.

The distance was so great that their faces were the merest blurs; but I could see that one leaned heavily upon the

arm of the other, as much, or so it seemed to me, for moral as for physical support. I could see, too, that the hair of the feebler man was white, while that of his companion was jet black. The younger man's face appeared so dark that I suspected he wore a beard, and his figure was erect and vigorous, in the prime of life, virile and full of power.

He certainly dominated the older man. I watched them attentively as they paced back and forth, and the dependence of the one upon the other was very manifest. Both heads were bent as though in earnest talk, and for perhaps half an hour they walked slowly up and down. Then, at a sign of fatigue from the older figure, the other led him to a garden bench, where both sat down.

The elder man, I told myself, was no doubt Worthington Vaughan. Small wonder he was considered queer if he dressed habitually in a white robe, and worshiped the stars at midnight! There was something monkish about the habits which he and his companion wore, and the thought flashed into my mind that perhaps they were members of some religious order, or some Oriental cult or priesthood. And both of them, I added to myself, must be a little mad!

As I watched, the discussion gradually grew more animated, and the younger man, springing to his feet, paced excitedly up and down, touching his forehead with his fingers from time to time, and raising his hands to heaven, as though calling it as a witness to his words. At last the other made a sign of assent, got to his feet, bent his head reverently as to a spiritual superior, and walked slowly away toward the house. The younger man stood gazing after him until he passed from sight, then resumed his rapid pacing up and down, evidently deeply moved.

At last, from the direction of the house, came the flutter of a white robe. For a moment I thought it was the old man returning; then, as it emerged fully from among the trees, I saw that it was a woman—a young woman, I guessed, from her slimness, and from the mass of dark hair which framed her face.

And then I remembered that Godfrey had told me that Worthington Vaughan had a daughter.

The man was at her side in an instant, held out his hand, and said something, which caused her to shrink away. She half turned, as though to flee, but the other laid his hand upon her arm, speaking earnestly, and, after a moment, she permitted him to lead her to a seat. He remained standing before her, sometimes raising his hands to heaven, sometimes pointing toward the house, sometimes bending close above her, and from time to time making that peculiar gesture of touching his fingers to his forehead, whose meaning I could not guess. But I could guess at the torrent of passionate words which poured from his lips, and at the eager light which was in his eyes.

The woman sat quite still, with bowed head, listening, but making no sign either of consent or refusal. Gradually the man grew more confident, and at last stooped to take her hand; but she drew it quickly away, and, raising her head, said something slowly and with emphasis. He shook his head savagely; then, after a rapid turn up and down, seemed to agree, bowed low to her, and went rapidly away toward the house. The woman sat for some time where he had left her, her face in her hands; then, with a gesture of weariness and discouragement, crossed the lawn and disappeared among the trees.

For a long time I sat there motionless, my eyes on the spot where she had disappeared, trying to understand. What was the meaning of the scene? What was it the younger man had urged so passionately upon her, but at which she had rebelled? What was it for which he had pleaded so earnestly? The obvious answer was that he pleaded for her love, that he had urged her to become his wife; but the answer did not satisfy me. His attitude had been passionate enough, but it had scarcely been loverlike. It had had more of admonition, of warning, even of threat, than of entreaty in it. It was not the attitude of a lover to his mistress, but of a master to his pupil.

And what had been the answer, wrung from her finally by his insistence—the answer to which he had at first violently dissented, and then reluctantly agreed?

No doubt, if these people had been garbed in the clothes of everyday, I should have felt at the outset that all this was none of my business, and have crept down the ladder and gone away. But their strange dress gave to the scene an air at once unreal and theatrical, and not for an instant had I felt myself an intruder. It was as though I were looking at the rehearsal of a drama designed for the public gaze and enacted upon a stage; or, more properly, a pantomime, dim and figurative, but most impressive. Might it not, indeed, be a rehearsal of some sort—private theatricals—make-believe? But that scene at midnight—that could not be make-believe! No, nor was this scene in the garden. It was in earnest—in deadliest earnest; there was about it something sinister and threatening; and it was the realization of this—the realization that there was something here not right, something demanding scrutiny—which kept me chained to my uncomfortable perch, minute after minute.

But nothing further happened, and I realized, at last, that if I was to escape an agonizing cramp in the leg, I must get down. I put my feet on the ladder, and then paused for a last look about the grounds. My eye was caught by a flutter of white among the trees. Some one was walking along one of the paths; in a moment, straining forward, I saw it was the woman, and that she was approaching the wall.

And then, as she came nearer, I saw that she was not a woman at all, but a girl—a girl of eighteen or twenty, to whom the flowing robes gave, at a distance, the effect of age. I caught only a glimpse of her face before it was hidden by a clump of shrubbery, but that glimpse told me that it was a face to set the pulses leaping. I strained still farther forward, waiting until she should come into sight again.

Along the path she came, with the sunlight about her—and the next in-

stant her eyes were staring upward into mine.

I could not move. I could only stare down at her. I saw the hot color sweep across her face; I saw her hand go to her bosom; I saw her turn to flee. Then, to my amazement, she stopped, as though arrested by a sudden thought, turned toward me again, and raised her eyes deliberately to mine.

For fully a minute she stood there, her gaze searching and intent, as though she would read my soul; then her face hardened with sudden resolution. Again she put her hand to her bosom, turned hastily toward the wall, and disappeared behind it.

The next instant something white came flying over it, and fell on the grass beneath my tree. Staring down at it, I saw that it was a letter.

CHAPTER IV.

ENTER FREDDIE SWAIN.

I fell, rather than climbed, down the ladder, snatched the white missive from the grass, and saw that it was indeed a sealed and addressed envelope. I had somehow expected that address to include either Godfrey's name or mine; but it did neither. The envelope bore these words:

"Mr. Frederic Swain, 1010 Fifth Avenue, New York City. If not at this address, please try the Calumet Club."

I sat down on the lowest rung of the ladder, whistling softly to myself. For Freddie Swain's address was no longer 1010 Fifth Avenue, nor was he to be found in the luxurious rooms of the Calumet Club. In fact, it was nearly a year since he had entered either place. For some eight hours of every week day, he labored in the law offices of Royce & Lester; he slept in a little room on the top floor of the Marathon; three hours of every evening—Saturdays, Sundays, and holidays excepted—were spent at the law school of the University of New York; and the remaining hours of the twenty-four in haunts much less conspicuous and expensive than the Calumet Club.

For Freddie Swain had taken one of those toboggan slides down the hill of fortune which sometimes happen to the most deserving. His father, old General Orlando Swain, had, all his life, put up a pompous front, and was supposed to have inherited a fortune from somewhere; but, when he died, this edifice was found to be all façade and no foundation, and Freddie inherited nothing but debts. He had been expensively educated for a career as an "ornament of society," but he found that career cut short, for society suddenly ceased to find him ornamental. I suppose there were too many marriageable daughters about!

I am bound to say that he took the blow well. Instead of attempting to cling to the skirts of society as a vender of champagne or an organizer of fêtes champêtres, he—to use his own words—decided to cut the whole show.

Our firm had been named as the administrators of the Swain estate, and when the storm was over and we were sitting among the ruins, Freddie expressed the intention of going to work.

"What will you do?" Mr. Royce inquired. "Ever had any training in making money?"

"No; only in spending it," retorted Freddie easily. "But I can learn. I was thinking of studying law. That's a good trade, isn't it?"

"Splendid!" assented Mr. Royce warmly. "And there are always so many openings. You see, nobody studies law—lawyers are as scarce as hens' teeth."

"Just the same, I think I'll have a try at it," said Freddie sturdily. "There's always room at the top, you know," he added, with a grin. "I can go to the night school at the university, and I ought to be able to earn enough to live on as a clerk or something. I know how to read and write."

"That will help, of course," agreed Mr. Royce. "But I'm afraid that, right at first, anyway, you can scarcely hope to live in the style to which you have been accustomed."

Freddie turned on him with fire in his eyes.

"Look here," he said, "suppose you give me a job. I'll do my work and earn my wages—try me and see."

There was something in his face that touched me, and I glanced at Mr. Royce. I saw that his gruffness was merely a mantle to cloak his real feelings; and the result was that Freddie Swain was set to work as a copying clerk at a salary of fifteen dollars a week. He applied himself to his work with an energy that surprised me, and I learned that he was taking the night course at the university, as he had planned. Finally, one night, I met him as I was turning in to my rooms at the Marathon, and found that he had rented a cubby-hole on the top floor of the building. After that I saw him occasionally, and, when six months had passed, was forced to acknowledge that he was thoroughly in earnest.

I happened to remark to Mr. Royce one day that Swain seemed to be making good.

"Yes," my partner agreed; "and I didn't think he had it in him. He had a rude awakening from his dream of affluence, but it seems to have done him good."

But somehow I had fancied that it was from more than a dream of affluence he had been awakened; and now, as I sat staring at this letter, I began to understand dimly what the other dream had been.

The first thing was to get the letter into his hands, for I was certain that it was a cry for help. I glanced at my watch, and saw that it was nearly half past twelve. Swain, I knew, would be at lunch, and was not due at the office until one o'clock. Slipping the letter into my pocket, I turned back to the house, and found Mrs. Hargis standing on the front porch.

"I declare, I thought you was lost, Mr. Lester," she said. "I was just going to send William to look for you. Ain't you 'most starved?"

"Scarcely starved, Mrs. Hargis," I said, "but with a very creditable appetite, when you consider that I ate breakfast only two hours ago."

"Well, come right in," she said. "Your lunch is ready."

"I suppose there's a telephone somewhere about?" I asked, as I followed her through the hall.

"Yes, sir; in here," and she opened the door into a little room fitted up as a study. "It's here Mr. Godfrey works sometimes."

"Thank you," I said. "I've got to call up the office. I won't be but a minute."

I found Godfrey's number stamped on the cover of the telephone book, and then called the office. As I had guessed, Swain was not yet back from lunch, and I left word for him to call me as soon as he came in. Then I made my way to the dining room, where Mrs. Hargis was awaiting me.

"How does one get out here from New York, Mrs. Hargis?" I asked, as I sat down. "That is, if one doesn't happen to own a motor car?"

"Why, very easily, sir. Take the Third Avenue Elevated to the end of the line, and then the trolley. It runs along Dryden Road, just two blocks over."

"Where does one get off?"

"At Prospect Street, sir."

"And what is this place called?"

"This is the old Bennett Place, sir."

"Thank you. And let me tell you, Mrs. Hargis," I added, "that I have never tasted a better salad."

Her kindly old face flushed with pleasure.

"It's nice of you to say that, sir," she said. "We have our own garden, and William takes a great pride in it."

"I must go and see it," I said. "I've always fancied I'd like to potter around in a garden. I must see if Mr. Godfrey won't let me in on this."

"He spends an hour in it every morning. Sometimes he can hardly tear himself away. I certainly do like Mr. Godfrey."

"So do I," I agreed heartily. "He's a splendid fellow—one of the nicest, squarest men I ever met—and a friend worth having."

"He's all of that, sir," she agreed, and stood for a moment, clasping and un-

clasping her hands nervously, as though there was something else she wished to say. But she evidently thought better of it. "There's the bell, sir," she added. "Please ring if there's anything else you want," and she left me to myself.

I had pushed back my chair, and was filling my pipe when the telephone rang. It was Swain.

"Swain," I said, "this is Mr. Lester. I'm at a place up here in the Bronx, and I want you to come up right away."

"Very good, sir," said Swain. "How do I get there?"

"Take the Third Avenue Elevated to the end of the line, and then the trolley which runs along Dryden Road. Get off at Prospect Street, walk two blocks west, and ask for the old Bennett Place. I'll have an eye out for you."

"All right, sir," said Swain again. "Do you want me to bring some papers, or anything?"

"No; just come as quickly as you can," I answered, and hung up.

I figured that, even at the best, it would take Swain an hour and a half to make the journey, and I strolled out under the trees again. Then the thought came to me that I might as well make a little exploration of the neighborhood, and I sauntered out to the road. Along it for some distance ran the high wall which bounded Elmhurst, and I saw that the wall had been further fortified by ugly pieces of broken glass set in cement along its top.

I could see a break in the wall, about midway of its length, and, walking past, discovered that this was where the gates were set—heavy gates of wrought iron, very tall, and surmounted by sharp spikes. The whole length of the wall was, I judged, considerably over a city block, but there was no other opening in it.

At the farther end, it was bounded by a crossroad, and, turning along this, I found that the wall extended about the same distance in this direction. There was an opening about midway—a small opening, closed by a heavy, iron-banded door—the servants' entrance, I told myself. The grounds of a row of houses facing the road beyond ran up to the

wall at the back, and I could not follow it without attracting notice, but I could see that there was no break in it. I was almost certain that the wall which closed the estate on Godfrey's side was also unbroken. There were, then, only the two entrances.

I walked back again to the front, and paused for a glance through the gates. But there was nothing to be seen. The driveway parted and curved away out of sight in either direction, and a dense mass of shrubbery opposite the gate shut off any view of the grounds. Even of the house there was nothing to be seen except the chimneys and one gable. Evidently Mr. Vaughan was fond of privacy, and had spared no pains to secure it.

Opposite the Vaughan place, a strip of woodland ran back from the road. It was dense with undergrowth, and, I reflected, would form an admirable hiding place. The road itself seemed little traveled, and I judged that the main artery of traffic was the road along which the trolley ran, two blocks away.

I returned to my starting point, and assured myself that the wall on that side was indeed without a break. Some vines had started up it here and there, but, for the most part, it loomed gray and bleak, crowned along its whole length by that threatening line of broken glass. I judged it to be twelve feet high, so that, even without the glass, it would be impossible for any one to get over it without assistance. As I stood there looking at it, resenting the threat of that broken glass, and pondering the infirmity of character which such a threat revealed, it suddenly struck me that the upper part of the wall differed slightly from the lower part. It was a little lighter in color, a little newer in appearance; and, examining the wall more closely, I discovered that originally it had been only eight or nine feet high, and that the upper part had been added at a later date—and last of all, of course, the broken glass!

As I turned back at last toward the house, I saw some one coming up the drive. In a moment I recognized Swain, and quickened my steps.

"You made good time," I said.

"Yes, sir; I was fortunate in catching an express, and not having to wait for the trolley."

"We'd better go into the house," I added. "I have a message for you—a confidential message."

He glanced at me quickly, but followed silently, as I led the way into Godfrey's study, and carefully closed the door.

"Sit down," I said, and I sat down myself and looked at him.

I had always thought Swain a handsome, thoroughbred-looking fellow; and I saw that, in the past few months, he had grown more thoroughbred-looking than ever. His face was thinner than when he had first gone to work for us, there was a new line between his eyebrows, and the set of his lips told of battles fought and won. A year ago it had seemed natural to call him Freddie, but no one would think of doing so now. His father's creditors had not attempted to take from him his wardrobe—a costly and extensive one—so that he was dressed as carefully, if not quite as fashionably, as ever, in a way that suggested a young millionaire, rather than a fifteen-dollar-a-week clerk.

At this moment his face was clouded, and he drummed the arm of his chair with nervous fingers. Then he shifted uneasily under my gaze, which was, perhaps, more earnest than I realized.

"You said you had a message for me, sir," he reminded me.

"Yes," I said. "Have you ever been out this way before?"

"Yes; I have been out this way a number of times."

"You know this place, then?"

"I have heard it mentioned; but I have never been here before."

"Do you know whose place that is next door to us?"

"Yes," and his voice sank to a lower key. "It belongs to Worthington Vaughan."

"And you know him?"

"At one time I knew him quite well, sir," and his voice was still lower.

"No doubt," I went on, more and

more interested, "you also know his very fascinating daughter."

A wave of color crimsoned his face.

"Why are you asking me these questions, Mr. Lester?" he demanded.

"Because," I said, "the message I have is from that young lady, and is for a man named Frederic Swain."

He was on his feet, staring at me, and all the blood was gone from his cheeks.

"A message!" he cried. "From her! From Marjorie! What is it, Mr. Lester? For God's sake——"

"Here it is," I said, and handed him the letter.

He seized it, took one look at the address, then turned away to the window, and ripped the envelope open. He unfolded the sheet of paper it contained, and as his eyes ran along it his face grew whiter still. At last he raised his eyes and stared at me with the look of a man who felt the world tottering about him.

CHAPTER V.

A CALL FOR HELP.

"For Heaven's sake, Swain," I said, "sit down and pull yourself together."

But he did not seem to hear me. Instead he read the letter through again, then he turned toward me.

"How did you get this, Mr. Lester?" he asked.

"I found it lying under the trees. It had been thrown over the wall."

"But how did you know it was thrown over by Miss Vaughan?"

"That was an easy guess," I said, sparring feebly. "Who else would attempt to conduct a surreptitious correspondence with a handsome young man?"

But he did not smile; the look of intensity in his eyes deepened.

"Come, Mr. Lester," he protested. "Don't play with me. I have a right to know the truth."

"What right?" I queried.

He paused an instant, as though nerv-
ing himself to speak, as though asking himself how much he should tell me. Then he came toward me impulsively.

"Miss Vaughan and I are engaged

to be married," he said. "Some persons may tell you that the engagement has been broken off; more than once I have offered to release her, but she refuses to be released. We love each other."

The word "love" is a difficult one for us Anglo-Saxons to pronounce; the voice in which Swain uttered it brought me to my feet, with outstretched hand.

"If there's anything I can do for you, my boy," I said, "tell me."

"Thank you, Mr. Lester," and he returned my clasp. "You have done a great deal already in giving me this letter so promptly. The only other thing you can do is to permit me to stay here until to-night."

"Until to-night?"

"Miss Vaughan asks me to meet her to-night."

"In her father's grounds?"

"Yes."

"Unknown to him?"

"Yes."

"He is not friendly to you?"

"No."

I had a little struggle with myself.

"See here, Swain," I said, "sit down and let us talk this thing over calmly. Before I promise anything, I should like to know more of the story. From the glimpse I caught of Miss Vaughan I could see that she is very beautiful, and she also seemed to me to be very young."

"She is nineteen," said Swain.

"And her father is wealthy, I suppose?"

"Very wealthy."

"And her mother is dead?"

"Yes."

"Well——" I began, and hesitated, fearing to wound him.

"I know what you are thinking," Swain burst in, "and I do not blame you. You are thinking that she is a young, beautiful, and wealthy girl, while I am a poverty-stricken nonentity, without any profession, and able to earn just enough to live on—perhaps I couldn't do even that if I had to buy my clothes! You are thinking that her father is right to separate us, and that

she ought to be protected from me. Isn't that it?"

"Yes," I admitted; "something like that."

"And I answer, Mr. Lester, by saying that all that is true, that I am not worthy of her, and that nobody knows it better than I do. There are thousands of men who could offer her far more than I can, and who would be eager to offer it. But when I asked her to marry me I thought myself the son of a pauper I wrote at once to release her. She replied that when she wished her release she would ask for it; that it wasn't my money she was in love with. Then I came out here and had a talk with her father. He was kind enough, but pointed out that the affair could not go farther until I had established myself. I agreed, of course; I agreed, too, when he suggested that it would only be fair to her to leave her free—not to see her or write to her, or try to influence her in any way. I wanted to be fair to her. Since then I have not seen her, nor heard from her. But her father's feelings have changed toward me."

"In what way?"

"I thought he might be interested to know what I was doing, and three or four months ago I called and asked to see him. Instead of seeing me, he sent word by a black-faced fellow in a white robe that neither he nor his daughter wished to see me again."

His face was red with the remembered humiliation.

"I wrote to Miss Vaughan once after that," he added; "but my letter was not answered."

"Evidently she didn't get your letter."

"Why do you think so?"

"If she had got it, she would have known that you were no longer living on Fifth Avenue. Her father, no doubt, kept it from her."

He flushed still more deeply, and started to say something, but I held him silent.

"He was justified in keeping it," I said. "You had promised not to write to her. And I don't see that you have

given me any reason why I should assist you against him."

"I haven't," Swain admitted, more calmly, "and under ordinary circumstances, my self-respect would compel me to keep away. I am not a fortune hunter. But I can't keep away; I can't stand on my dignity. When she calls for aid, I *must* go to her, not for my own sake, but for hers, because she needs to be protected from her father far more than from me."

"What do you mean by that?" I demanded.

"Mr. Lester," he said, leaning forward in his chair, and speaking in a lowered voice, and with great earnestness, "her father is mad—I am sure of it. No one but a madman would live and dress as he does; no one but a madman would devote his whole time to the study of the supernatural; no one but a madman would believe in the supernatural as he does."

But I shook my head.

"I'm afraid that won't do, Swain. A good many fairly sane people believe in the supernatural, and devote themselves to its study."

"But they don't dress in flowing robes, and worship the sun, and live with a Hindu mystic."

"No," I smiled, and I thought again of the mysterious light and of the two white-clad figures. "Does he live with a Hindu mystic?"

"Yes," said Swain bitterly. "An adept—or whatever they call it. He's the fellow who kicked me out."

"Does he speak English?"

"Better than I do. He seems a finely educated man."

"Is he a lunatic, too?"

Swain hesitated.

"I don't know," he said finally. "I only saw him once, and I was certainly impressed—I wasn't one, two, three with him. I suppose mysticism comes more or less natural to a Hindu; but I'm convinced that Mr. Vaughan has softening of the brain."

"How old is he?"

"About sixty."

"Has he always been queer?"

"He has always been interested in

telepathy and mental suggestion, and all that sort of thing. But before his wife's death he was fairly normal. It was her death that started him on this supernatural business. He hasn't thought of anything else since."

"Are there any relatives who could be asked to interfere?"

"None that I know of."

I thought over what he had told me.

"Well," I said at last, "I can see no harm in your meeting Miss Vaughan and finding out what the condition of affairs really is. If her father is really mad, he may be a good deal worse now than he was when you saw him last. It would, of course, be possible to have his sanity tested—but his daughter would scarcely wish to do that."

"No, of course not," Swain agreed.

"Her letter tells you nothing?"

"Nothing except that she is in great trouble, and wishes to see me at once."

"You are to go to the house?"

"No; there is an arbor in one corner of the grounds. She says that she will be there at eleven-thirty every night for three nights. After that she says it will be no use for me to come—that it will be too late."

"What does she mean by 'too late'?"

"I have no idea," he answered, and turned to another anxious perusal of the letter.

I turned the situation over in my mind. Evidently Miss Vaughan believed that she had grave cause for alarm, and yet it was quite possible she might be mistaken. She was being urged to consent to something against her will, but perhaps it was for her own good. In any event, I had seen no indication that her consent was being sought by violence. There must be no interference on our part until we were surer of our ground.

"Well, Swain," I said at last, "I will help you on one condition."

"What is that?"

"You will meet Miss Vaughan tonight, and hear her story, but you will take no action until you and I have talked the matter over. She herself says that she has three days," I went on, as he started to protest. "so there is

no necessity for leaping in the dark. Moreover, she must not be compromised. If you persuade her to accompany you to-night, where would you take her? In no case will I be a party to an elopement—I will do all I can to prevent it.”

He took a short turn up and down the room, his hands clenched behind him.

“Mr. Lester,” he said at last, stopping before me, “I want you to believe that I have not even thought of an elopement—that would be too base, too unfair to her. But I see that you are right. She must not be compromised.”

“And you promise to ask my advice?”

“Suppose I make such a promise, what then?”

“If you make such a promise, and I agree with you as to the necessity for Miss Vaughan to leave her father, I think I can arrange for her to stay with Mr. and Mrs. Royce for a time. There she will be safe. Should legal proceedings become necessary, our firm will help you. I want to help you, Swain,” I added warmly, “but I must be convinced that you deserve help. That’s reasonable, isn’t it?”

“Yes,” he agreed, and held out his hand. “And I promise.”

“Good! And now for the arrangements.”

Two twelve-foot ladders were necessary, one for either side of the wall; but, beyond a short stepladder, the place possessed none except the long one by which Godfrey and I had mounted into the tree. Swain suggested that this might do for one, but I felt that it would better stay where it was, and sent Hargis over to Yonkers to buy two new ones, instructing him to bring them back with him.

Then Swain and I reconnoitered the wall, and chose for the crossing a spot where the glass escarpment seemed a little less formidable than elsewhere.

“You can step from one ladder to the other,” I pointed out, “without touching the top of the wall. A mere touch would be dangerous in the dark.”

He nodded his agreement, and finally

we went back to the house. Getting there, we found suddenly that we had nothing more to say. Swain was soon deep in his own thoughts; and, I must confess that, after the first excitement, I began to find the affair a little wearying. Another man’s love affair is usually wearying; and, besides that, the glimpse which I had caught of Marjorie Vaughan made me think that she was worthy of a bigger fish than Swain would ever be. He was right in saying that there were thousands of men who had more to give her, and who would be eager to give.

I examined Swain, as he sat there staring at nothing, with eyes not wholly friendly. He was handsome enough, but in a stereotyped way. And he was only an insignificant clerk, with small prospect of ever being anything much better, for he had started the battle of life too late. Honest, of course, honorable, clean-hearted, but commonplace, with a depth of soul easily fathomed. I know now that I was unjust to Swain, but at the moment my scrutiny of him left me strangely depressed.

A rattle of wheels on the drive brought us both out of our thoughts. It was Hargis returning with the ladders. I had him hang them up against the shed where he kept his gardening implements, for I did not wish him to suspect the invasion we had planned; then, just to kill time and get away from Swain, I spent an hour with Hargis in his garden; and finally came the summons to dinner. An hour later, as we sat on the front porch smoking, and still finding little or nothing to say, Mrs. Hargis came out to bid us good night.

“Mr. Swain can use the bedroom next to yours, Mr. Lester,” she said.

“Perhaps he won’t stay all night,” I said. “If he does, I’ll show him the way to it. And thank you very much, Mrs. Hargis.”

“Is there anything else I can do, sir?”

“No, thank you.”

“Mr. Godfrey will be here a little before midnight—at least, that’s his usual time.”

“We’ll wait up for him,” I said. “Good night, Mrs. Hargis.”

"Good night, sir," and she went back into the house.

I have never passed through a longer or more trying hour than the next one was, and I could tell, by the way Swain twitched about in his chair, that he felt the tedium as much as I. Once or twice I tried to start a conversation, but it soon trickled dry; and we ended by smoking away moodily and staring out into the darkness.

At last Swain sprang to his feet.

"I can't stand this any longer," he said. "I'm going over the wall."

I struck a match and looked at my watch.

"It isn't eleven o'clock yet," I warned him.

"I don't care. Perhaps she'll be ahead of time. Anyway, I might as well wait there as here."

"Come on, then," I agreed, for I myself felt that another such hour would be unendurable.

Together we made our way back to the shed, and took down the ladders. A moment later we were at the wall. Swain placed his ladder against it, and mounted quickly to the top. As he paused there, I handed him up the other one. He caught it from my hands, lifted it over the wall, and lowered it carefully on the other side. As he did so I heard him give a muffled exclamation of mingled pain and annoyance, and knew that he had cut himself.

"Not bad, is it?" I asked.

"No; only a scratch on the wrist," he answered shortly, and the next instant he had swung himself over the wall and disappeared.

CHAPTER VI.

THE SCREAM IN THE NIGHT.

For some moments I stood staring up into the darkness, half expecting that shadowy figure to reappear, descend the ladder, and rejoin me. Then I shook myself together. The fact that our plot was really moving, that Swain was in the enemy's country, so to speak, gave the affair a finality which it had lacked before. It was too late now to hesitate

or turn back; we must press forward. I felt as though, after a long period of uncertainty, war had been declared and the advance definitely begun. So it was with a certain sense of relief that I turned away, walked slowly back to the house, and sat down again upon the porch to wait.

Now, waiting is seldom a pleasant or an easy thing, and I found it that night most unpleasant and uneasy. For, before long, doubts began to crowd upon me—doubts of the wisdom of the course I had subscribed to. It would have been wiser, I told myself, if it had been I, and not Swain, who had gone to the rendezvous; wiser still, perhaps, to have sought an interview openly, and to have made sure of the facts before seeming to encourage what might easily prove to be a girl's more or less romantic illusions. A midnight interview savored too much of melodrama to appeal to a middle-aged lawyer like myself, however great its appeal might be to youthful lovers. At any rate, I would be certain that the need was very great before I consented to meddle further.

Somewhat comforted by this resolution and by the thought that no real harm had as yet been done, I struck a match, and looked at my watch. It was half past eleven. Well, whatever the story was, Swain was hearing it now, and I should hear it before long. And then I caught the hum of an approaching car, and was momentarily blinded by the glare of acetylene lamps.

"Hello, Lester," called Godfrey's voice. "I'll be back in a minute," and he ran the car on toward the rear of the house.

I stood up with a gasp of thankfulness. Here was some one to confide in and advise with. The stretch of lonely waiting was at an end; it had been a trying evening.

I think the warmth of my greeting surprised Godfrey, for he looked at me curiously.

"Sit down, Godfrey," I said. "I've got something to tell you."

"What, discoveries already?" he laughed, but he drew a chair close up

to mine, and sat down. "Well, what are they?"

I began at the beginning, and related the day's adventures. He listened without comment, but I could see how his interest grew.

"So young Swain is over in those grounds now," he said thoughtfully, when I had finished.

"Yes; he's been there three-quarters of an hour."

"Why do you suppose Miss Vaughan named so late an hour?"

"I don't know. Perhaps because she was afraid of being discovered earlier than that—or perhaps merely because she's just a romantic girl."

Godfrey sat with his head bent in thought for a moment.

"I have it!" he said. "At eleven-thirty every night her father and the adept go up to the roof, to remain there till midnight. That is the one time of the whole day when she is absolutely sure to be alone. Come along, Lester!"

He was on his feet now, and his voice was quivering with excitement.

"Where are you going?" I asked.

"Up the ladder. It's nearly twelve. If the star falls as usual, we'll know that everything is all right. If it doesn't—"

He did not finish, but hurried away among the trees. In a moment we were at the ladder; in another we were high among the leaves, straining our eyes through the darkness.

"I'm going to look at my watch," said Godfrey, in a low voice. "Lean back and screen me."

I heard the flash of the match, and saw a little glare of light against the nearest leaves. Then Godfrey's voice spoke again.

"It's three minutes to twelve," he said.

There was a tension in his voice which sent a shiver through me, though I understood but dimly what it was he feared. The stars were shining brightly, and once I fancied that I saw the strange star appear among them; but when I closed my eyes for an instant and looked again, it was gone. Slow minute followed minute, and the hand

with which I clutched the ladder began to tremble. The sight of that mysterious light had shaken me the night before, but not half so deeply as its absence shook me now. At last the suspense grew unendurable.

"It must be long past midnight," I whispered.

"It is," agreed Godfrey gravely. "We may as well go down."

He paused an instant longer to stare out into the darkness, then descended quickly. I followed, and found him waiting, a dark shadow. He put his hand on my arm, and stood a moment, as though in indecision. For myself, I felt as though an intolerable burden had been laid upon my shoulders.

"Well," I asked at last, "what now?"

"We must see if Swain has returned," he answered. "If he has, all right. If he hasn't, we'll have to go and look for him."

"What is it you fear, Godfrey?" I demanded. "Do you think Swain's in danger?"

"I don't know what I fear; but there's something wrong over there. This is the first night for a week that that light hasn't appeared."

"Still," I pointed out, "that may have nothing to do with Swain."

"No; but it's a coincidence that he should be in the grounds—and I'm always afraid of coincidences. Let us see if he is back," and he turned toward the house.

But I held his arm.

"If he's back," I said, "he'll have taken the ladders down from the wall."

"That's true," and together we made our way forward among the trees. Then we reached the wall, and there was the dim white line of the ladder leaning against it. Without a word, Godfrey mounted it, stood an instant at the top, and then came down again.

"The other ladder is still there," he said, and took off his cap and rubbed his head perplexedly. I could not see his face, but I could guess how tense it was. I had been with him in many trying situations, but only once before had I seen him use that gesture.

"It won't do to alarm the house," he

said at last. "Do you know where he was to meet Miss Vaughan?"

"At an arbor in one corner of the grounds," I answered.

"Then we'll start from there, and take a quiet look for him. Wait here for me a minute."

He melted into the darkness, and I stood holding onto the ladder as though in danger of falling, and staring at the top of the wall, where I had last seen Swain. An hour and a half had passed since then—

A touch on the arm brought me around with a start.

"Here, put this pistol in your pocket," said Godfrey's voice, and I felt the weapon pressed into my hand. "And here's an electric torch. Do you feel the button?"

"Yes," I said, and pressed it. A ray of light shot toward the wall, but I released the button instantly.

"You'd better keep it in your hand," he added, "ready for action. No telling what we'll run across. And now come ahead."

He put his foot on the ladder, but I stopped him.

"Look here, Godfrey," I said. "Do you realize that what we're about to do is pretty serious? Swain might have a legal excuse, since the daughter of the house invited him to a meeting; but if we go over the wall, we're trespassers pure and simple. Anybody who runs across us in the darkness has the right to shoot us down without asking any questions—and we'd have no legal right to shoot back."

I could hear Godfrey chuckling, and I felt my cheeks redden.

"You remind me of Tartarin," he said. "The adventurer Tartarin urging you on, the lawyer Tartarin holding you back. My advice is to shake the lawyer, Lester. He's out of his element here to-night. But if he's too strong for you, why, stay here," and he started up the ladder.

Burning with vexation, I started after him, but suddenly he stopped.

"Listen!" he whispered.

I heard something rattle against the

other side of the wall; then a dark figure appeared on the coping.

I felt Godfrey press me back, and descended cautiously. A moment later something slid down the wall, and I knew that the person at the top had lifted the other ladder over. Then the figure descended, and a distorted face stared into the circle of Godfrey's torch.

For a breath I did not recognize it; then I saw that it was Swain's.

I shall never forget the shock it gave me, with its starting eyes and working mouth and smear of blood across the forehead. Godfrey, I knew, was also startled, for the light flashed out for an instant, and then flashed on again.

"What is it, Swain?" I cried, and seized him by the arm; but he shook me off roughly.

"Stand back!" he cried hoarsely. "Who is it? What do you want?"

"It's Lester," I said, and Godfrey flashed his torch into my face, then back to Swain's.

"But you're not alone."

"No; this is Mr. Godfrey."

"Mr. Godfrey?"

"Whose house we're staying at," I explained.

"Ah!" said Swain, and put one hand to his head and leaned heavily against the ladder.

"I think we'd better go to the house," Godfrey suggested soothingly. "We all need a bracer. Then we can talk. Don't you think so, Mr. Swain?"

Swain nodded vacantly, but I could see that he had not understood. His face was still working, and he seemed to be in pain.

"I want to wash," he said thickly. "I cut my wrist on that infernal glass, and I'm blood all over, and my head's wrong, somehow." His voice trailed off into an unintelligible mumble, but he held one hand up into the circle of light, and I saw that his cuff was soaked with blood, and his hand streaked with it.

"Come along, then," said Godfrey peremptorily. "You're right—that cut must be attended to," and he started toward the house.

"Wait!" Swain called after him, with unexpected vigor. "We must take down

the ladders. We mustn't leave them here."

"Why not?"

"If they're found, they'll suspect—they'll know——" He stopped, stammering, and again his voice trailed away into a mumble, as though beyond his control.

Godfrey looked at him for a moment, and I could guess at the surprise and suspicion in his eyes. I myself was ill at ease, for there was something in Swain's face—a sort of vacant horror and dumb shrinking—that filled me with a vague repulsion. And then to see his jaw working as he tried to form articulate words and could not sent a shiver over my scalp.

"Very well," Godfrey agreed at last. "We'll take the ladders, since you think it so important. You take that one, Lester, and I'll take this."

I stooped to raise the ladder to my shoulder, when suddenly, cutting the darkness like a knife, came a scream so piercing, so vibrant with fear, that I stood there crouching, every muscle rigid. Again the scream came, more poignant, more terrible, wrung from a woman's throat by the last extremity of horror; and then a silence, sickening and awful. What was happening in that silence? It fell upon me like a shroud.

I stood erect, gaping, suffocated, rising as from a long submersion. Godfrey's finger had slipped from the button of his torch, and we were in darkness; but suddenly a dim figure hurled itself past us, up the ladder.

With a low cry Godfrey snatched at it, but his hand clutched only the empty air. The next instant the figure poised itself on the coping of the wall, and then plunged forward out of sight. I heard the crash of breaking branches, a scramble, a patter of feet, and all was still.

"It's Swain!" said Godfrey hoarsely. "And that's a twelve-foot drop! Why, the man's mad! Hand me that ladder, Lester!" he added, for he was already at the top of the wall.

I lifted it, as I had done once before

that night, and saw Godfrey slide it over the wall.

"Come on!" he said. "We must save him if we can!" and he, too, disappeared.

The next instant I was scrambling desperately after him. The lawyer Tartarin had vanished!

CHAPTER VII.

THE TRAGEDY.

The wall was masked, on the other side, by a dense growth of shrubbery, and struggling through this I found myself on the graveled path where I had seen Marjorie Vaughan. Before me, along this path, sped a shadow which I knew to be Godfrey, and I followed at top speed. At the end of a moment I caught a flash of light among the frees, and knew that we were nearing the house; but I saw no sign of Swain.

We came to the stretch of open lawn, crossed it, and, guided by the light, found ourselves at the end of a short avenue of trees. At the other end a stream of light poured from an open door, and against that light a running figure was silhouetted. Even as I saw it, it bounded through the open door and vanished.

"It's Swain!" gasped Godfrey, and then we, too, were at that open door.

For an instant I thought the room was empty. Then, from behind the table in the center, a demoniac, blood-stained figure rose into view, holding in its arms a white-robed woman. With a sort of nervous shock, I saw that the man was Swain, and the woman Marjorie Vaughan. A thrill of fear ran through me as I saw how her head fell backward against his shoulder, how her arms hung limp.

Without so much as a glance in our direction, he laid her gently on a couch, fell to his knees beside it, and began to chafe her wrists.

It was Godfrey who mastered himself first, and who stepped forward to Swain's side.

"Is she dead?" he asked.

Swain shook his head impatiently, without looking up.

"How is she hurt?" Godfrey persisted, bending closer above the unconscious girl.

Swain shot him one red glance.

"She's not hurt!" he said. "She has fainted—that's all. Go away!"

But Godfrey did not go away. After one burning glance at Swain's lowering face, he bent again above the still figure on the couch, and touched his fingers to the temples. What he saw or felt seemed to reassure him, for his voice was more composed when he spoke again.

"I think you're right, Swain," he said. "But we'd better call some one."

"Call away!" snarled Swain.

"You mean there's no one here? Surely her father——"

He stopped, for at the words Swain had burst into a hoarse laugh.

"Her father!" he cried. "Oh, yes; he's here! Call him! He's over there!"

He made a wild gesture toward a high-backed easy-chair beside the table, his eyes gleaming with an almost fiendish excitement; then the gleam faded, and he turned back to the girl.

Godfrey cast one astonished glance at him, and strode to the chair. I saw his face quiver with sudden horror, I saw him catch at the table for support, and for an instant he stood staring down. Then he turned stiffly toward me, and motioned me to approach.

In the chair a man sat huddled forward—a gray-haired man, clad in a white robe. His hands were gripping the chair arms as though in agony. His head hung down almost upon his knees.

Silently Godfrey reached down and raised the head. And a cry of horror burst from both of us.

The face was purple with congested blood, the tongue swollen and protruding, the eyes suffused and starting from their sockets. And then, at a motion from Godfrey's finger, I saw that about the neck a cord was tightly knotted. The man had been strangled.

Godfrey, after a breathless moment in which he made sure that the man

was quite dead, let the head fall forward again.

I do not know what was in Godfrey's mind, but by a common impulse we turned and looked at Swain. He was still on his knees beside the couch. Apparently he had forgotten our presence.

"It's plain enough," said Godfrey, his voice thick with emotion. "She came in and found the body. No wonder she screamed like that! But where are the servants? Where is everybody?"

The same thought was in my own mind. The utter silence of the house, the fact that no one came, added, somehow, to the horror of the moment. Those wild screams must have echoed from cellar to garret—and yet no one came.

Godfrey made a rapid scrutiny of the room, which was evidently the library with a double door opening upon the grounds, and another opposite opening into the hall. On the wall beside the inner door, he found an electric button, and he pushed it for some moments, but there was no response. If it rang a bell, the bell was so far away that we could not hear it.

A heavy curtain hung across the doorway. Godfrey pulled it aside, and peered into the hall beyond. The hall was dark and silent. With face decidedly grim, he took his torch from one pocket, and his pistol from another.

"Come along, Lester," he said. "We've got to look into this. Have your torch ready—and your pistol. God knows what further horrors this house contains!"

He pulled back the curtain, so that the hall was lighted to some extent from the open doorway, and then passed through, I after him. The hall was a broad one, running right through the center of the house from front to rear. Godfrey proceeded cautiously, and yet rapidly the whole length of it, flashing his torch into every room. They were all luxuriously furnished, but were empty of human occupants. From the kitchen, which closed the hall at the rear, a flight of stone steps led down into the basement, and Godfrey descended these with a steadiness I could

not but admire. We found ourselves in a square, stone-flagged room, evidently used as a laundry. Two doors opened out of it, but both were secured with heavy padlocks.

"Storerooms or wine cellars, perhaps," Godfrey ventured, mounted the stairs again to the kitchen, and returned to the room whence we had started.

Everything there was as we had left it. The dead man sat huddled forward in his chair; Swain was still on his knees beside the couch; the girl had not stirred. Godfrey went to the side of the couch, and, disregarding Swain's fierce glance, again placed his fingers lightly on the girl's left temple.

"If she doesn't revive pretty soon," he said, "we'll have to try heroic measures. But there must be somebody in the house. Let's look upstairs."

He led the way up the broad stairs, which rose midway of the hall, sending a long ray of light ahead of him. I followed in no very happy frame of mind, for I confess that this midnight exploration of an unknown house, with a murdered man for its only occupant, was getting on my nerves. But Godfrey proceeded calmly and systematically.

The hall above corresponded to that below, with two doors on each side, opening into bedroom suites. The first was probably that of the master of the house. It consisted of bedroom, bath, and dressing room, but there was no one there. The next was evidently Miss Vaughan's. It also had a bath and a daintily furnished boudoir; but these, too, were empty.

Then, as we opened the door across the hall, a strange odor saluted us, an odor suggestive somehow of the East, which, in the first moment, caught the breath from the throat, and in the second seemed to throttle and retard the beating of the heart.

A flash of Godfrey's torch showed that we were in a little entry, closed at the farther end by a heavy drapery. Godfrey strode forward and swept the drapery aside. The rush of perfume was overpowering, and through the opening came a soft glow of light.

It was a moment before I got my breath; then a mist seemed to fall from before my eyes, and a strange sense of exaltation and well-being stole through me. I saw Godfrey standing motionless, transfixed, with one hand holding back the drapery, and his torch hanging unused in the other, and I crept forward and peered over his shoulder at the strangest scene I have ever gazed upon.

Just in front of us, poised in the air some four feet from the floor, hung a sphere of crystal, glowing with a soft radiance which seemed to wax and wane, to quiver almost to darkness, and then to burn more clearly. It was like a dreamer's pulse, fluttering, pausing, leaping, in accord with his vision. And as I gazed at the sphere, I fancied I could see within it strange, elusive shapes, which changed and merged and faded from moment to moment, and yet grew always clearer and more suggestive. I bent forward, straining my eyes to see them better, to fathom their meaning.

Godfrey, turning to speak to me, saw my attitude, and shook me roughly by the arm.

"Don't do that, Lester!" he growled in my ear. "Take your eyes off that crystal!"

I tried to move my eyes, but could not, until Godfrey pulled me around to face him. I stood blinking at him stupidly.

"I was nearly gone myself before I realized the danger," he said. "A sphere like that can hypnotize a man more quickly than anything else on earth, especially when his resistance is lessened, as it is by this heavy perfume."

"It was rather pleasant," I said. "I should like to try it some time."

"Well, you can't try it now. You've got something else to do. Besides, it has two victims already."

"Two victims?"

"Look carefully, but keep your eyes off the sphere," he said, and swung me around toward the room again.

The room was shrouded in impenetrable darkness, except for the faint and

quivering radiance which the sphere emitted, and as I plunged my eyes into its depths in an effort to see what lay there, it seemed to me that I had never seen blackness so black. As I stared into it, with straining eyes, a vague form grew dimly visible beside the glowing sphere; and then I recoiled a little, for suddenly it took shape, and I saw it was a man.

I had a queer fancy, as I stood there, that it was really a picture into which I was gazing—one of Rembrandt's—for gradually one detail after another emerged from the darkness, vague shadows took one shape and meaning, but farther back there were always more shadows, and farther back still more.

The man was sitting cross-legged on a low divan, his hands crossed in front of him, and hanging limply between his knees. His clothing I could see but vaguely, for it was merged into the darkness about him, but his hands stood out white against it. He was staring straight at the crystal, with unwavering and unwinking gaze, and sat as motionless as though carved in stone. The glow from the sphere picked out his profile with a line of light—I could see the high forehead, the strong, curved nose, the full lips shaded by a faint mustache, and the long chin, only partially concealed by a close-clipped beard. It was a wonderful and compelling face, especially as I then saw it, and I gazed at it for a long moment.

"It's the adept, I suppose," said Godfrey, no longer taking care to lower his voice.

It sounded unnaturally loud in the absolute stillness of the room, and I looked at the adept quickly, but he had not moved.

"Can't he hear you?" I asked.

"No—he couldn't hear a clap of thunder. That is, unless he's faking."

I looked again at the impassive figure.

"He's not faking," I said.

"I don't know," and Godfrey shook his head skeptically. "It looks like the real thing—but these fellows are mighty clever. Do you see the other victim? There's no fake about it."

"I see no one else," I said, after a vain scrutiny.

"Look carefully on the other side of the sphere. I could use my torch, but that would spoil the whole effect. Don't you see something there?"

My eyes were smarting under the strain, and for a moment longer I saw nothing; then a strange, gray shape detached itself from the blackness. It was an ugly and repulsive shape, slender below, but swelling hideously at the top, and as I stared at it, it seemed to me that it returned my stare with malignant eyes screened by a pair of white-rimmed glasses. Then, with a sensation of dizziness, I saw that the shape was swaying gently back and forth, in a sort of rhythm. And then, quite suddenly, I saw what it was, and a chill of horror quivered up my back.

It was a cobra.

To and fro it swung, to and fro, its staring eyes fixed upon the sphere, its spectacled hood hideously distended.

The very soul within me trembled as I gazed at those unwinking eyes. What did they see in the sphere? What was passing in that inscrutable brain? Could it, too, reconstruct the past, read the mysteries of the future?

Some awful power, greater than my will, seemed stretching its tentacles from the darkness; I felt them dragging at me, certain, remorseless, growing stronger and stronger.

With something very like a shriek of terror, I tore myself away, out of the entry, into the hall, to the stairs, and down them into the lighted room below.

And as I stood there, gasping for breath, Godfrey followed me, and I saw that his face, too, was livid.

TO BE CONTINUED.

The second part of this story will appear two weeks hence in the Christmas POPULAR, on sale December 23rd.

Lord Bill

By Emerson Hough

Author of "The Mississippi Bubble," "John Rawn," Etc.

In which you will hear of a picturesque race meet in Canada and of the grit of a young Englishman who, whatever he may have been back home, proved himself a real man in "the colonies"

THE best way to do, when you ain't goin' nowhere in particular," said Curly, "is to travel when you feel like it, an' stop when you blame please. Here's grass an' water. What do you say?"

I said nothing, but dismounted. In a few minutes we had offsaddled and unlashed the packs, although the day's march was still young. Our stopping point was at a little stream of sweet water somewhere between the Sweet Grass Hills and the mountains of the St. Mary's country. A wide, gray landscape lay all about, the mountains on the west starting up sharply from the level floor of the plains.

Our horses occupied themselves variously, some wandering down to the little stream to drink, others standing, their sides still wet from the blankets. One or two, State's horses, lay down and rolled, moaning in comfort. There being no shade against the brilliant sun, Curly took the two rifles and a wiping stick, and manufactured a short tripod, over which he hung his coat. He motioned me to lie down, with my face, at least, in the shade. Perhaps I slept. At any rate, after a time I realized that Curly was lying on his back, his head propped up on his arms, and his gaze turned toward the west. In default of anything better in his state of laziness, he gestured with his foot.

"There's the ole St. Marys, Sir Algernon," said he. "Ain't they fine?"

I followed his gaze, taking in the splendid panorama.

"Most everything starts right here

in the St. Marys," said Curly, after a time. "Down there, across the Cut Bank, is the old Kootenai Trail, where the Western Injuns used to come across to fight the Blackfeet. Over the range must be Lake McDonald. Off here to the right there comes down the Bow River, an' the Belly an' the Milk River, an' a lot o' others. Any way you look, she slopes downhill from the ole St. Marys. Over here, back of us, is Whisky Gap; and north of us is Europe."

"You mean Canada, I suppose, Curly?" said I.

"It's the same thing. I oughter know, because I was there onct. O' course, there's a few Americans in there, an' some Mormons, but mostly they are English an' Scotch an' Galicians an' Russians—it's all Europe, I tell you."

"How came you to be up there, Curly?" I asked.

"I don't know. You know, fellers will keep on movin' where they ain't no place particular to go. I used to talk with fellers that run whisky through the gap, yonder, to the Injuns in the old days, an' I allers thought I'd like to see that country up there. I rid along with a bunch of farmers that was leavin' this country to go up there an' raise wheat, not havin' anything else to do they could think of.

"The country looked a good deal like this in here for a ways. Rockies on the left, an' plains on the right, all the way as you went north. There wasn't no cows to speak of. Everybody seemed to be crazy to see how much sod they

could plow under, passin' a given point."

"Why didn't you take the train, Curly?" I asked lazily.

"That ain't no way to travel," he answered. "My experience is, when a cow-puncher goes on a railroad car he has to soak his saddle to pay the fare. I kep' right on settin' in my saddle an' headin' north, till I got plumb up to that place they call Calgary. Nice town enough; though, of course, it bein' right in the middle of Europe, there wasn't nobody there that could talk human speech. By that time, bein' on the trail quite a time, an' mostly broke, both me an' Pinto was somewhat ga'nt, but we was right happy seein' the sights of Europe, this bein' our first voyage away from home.

"I don't reckon you ever been to Calgary, Sir Algernon? Well, you'd oughter go there onct, just for to see the sights. It's a right thirsty town—they got a couple of breweries an' a siphon or so that runs whisky into the town from the place where whisky is made in car lots. I rather enjoyed myself, goin' down the street. Looked like a sort of county fair to me, with nobody workin' very much.

"Now, these Europeans, like I am tellin' you, Sir Algernon, they can't talk human language, and they don't wear human clothes. Most of the pants I seen had checkers on 'em about the size a lumberjack likes in his mackinaws. Some men, with whiskers, wore pants that was cut off at the knees, an' little caps, an' long stockin's, like children—somethin' I never had saw before that time. A good many, too, they wore these here balloon pants; an' instead o' chaps, they had these little spiral stove-pipe leggin's that goes round and round with a strap, lik' the rag on a sore finger.

"There was a few farmers from down in the States somewhere, an' onct in a while I would manage to converse with one of them. I could tell them by their clothes. Calgary is some cow camp, or was, an' about every other feller I seen on the streets wore a white hat with a stiff brim an' a leather strap

to keep it fast onto him. All the rest wore caps—somethin' you never seen on our part o' the cow range.

"The street had lots of hosses tied along, an' folks was ridin' up and down, busylike, but you couldn't hardly ever see a cow saddle, only onct in a while, nearly everybody havin' them little postage-stamp saddles you may 'a' seen back East.

"One place I seen a couple of cow hosses standin' with the reins down, an' I stopped there an' begun to look aroun'. Natural enough, when I looked up I seen the word 'Bar.' I drifts in then.

"Near the door I met a feller who had a tin star on him about as big as a plate, an' he takin' a careful look at me. I reckon I startled him some, an' maybe he thought I was a wild man from somewhere. Says he: 'Me good man, you cawn't go armed in this town.'

"'Who's armed?' says I.

"Sir Algernon, I am pained to remark, I didn't have no gun, for the very good reason that I had to hock her at the last town before Calgary. I didn't at that time know how I was goin' to eat.

"This party with the tin plate he looks some skeptical. Says he: 'It's no use tryin' to spoof me, me good fellow.'

"What do you reckon he meant by that? I didn't speak to him no more, but pushed on in. The fact is, I seen one or two fellers inside that looked good to me.

"'Hello, Curly,' says one of them, when I started in. It was Press Wilson, from down in the Judith, an' along with him was another puncher, called Petie, both American boys.

"'Hello, Press,' says I. 'How come you up here?'

"'Same as you, Curly,' says he. 'What'll you have?'

"'Some,' says I. Then we had some; an' maybe some more, a little later.

"I looks around in that bar. I don't know as I ever have saw a busier crowd in my life than them fellers was, ladlin' things into their system. Mostly they

drunk this yellow whisky which is made in Scotland. Of course, it ain't real whisky, not bein' red, but it gets some action if you're patient. Press an' Petie an' me was real patient, although I explains to them about my bein' some hungry as well as a good deal thirsty.

"Forget it, Curly," says Press to me. "We'll have plenty of money this time to-morrow!"

"What d' you mean?" says I.

"I am speakin' of money," says he. "Here is where money is made, an' where it comes from original. Petie an' me has came up here from far, far away, just to break off some easy coin."

"An' how are you-all obtainin' such?" says I to him.

"Curly, where you been livin' all this time?" he asts me. "Then you don't know nothin' about the Cochran race meet?"

"I had to admit I never heard o' no such thing, an' he goes on to explain.

"Why, you see," says he, "this here city of Calgary is about the sportin'est town ever was. Lots of money comes in here these days from settlers crazy over anything that looks like land, an' lots of other money comes to be invested in anything that has a resemblance to a mortgage on land. More'n that, there's all kinds of ranch people, cowmen an' hoss ranchers back in these hills, an' some of them has sold their ranches an' others has sold their hosses. Everybody's got money. Now, onct a year everybody comes in here to Calgary to this hoss-racin' meet—they hold it at Cochran, a little station a short way out here on the railroad. On this particular day—which is to-morrow," says he, "all these young Englishmen an' Canadians here in town, they cease in their hard labors of playin' polo an' tennis an' drinkin' tea, and they git right down to the serious business of life, which is to bet all the money they can raise or borrow on these here hoss races."

"Do they have real hosses, Press?" says I.

"Do they?" he answers. "I should say they did! They is hosses here that can run some, an' men that can ride a

few, if you leave it to me. Besides that, they hang up money scandalous. Moreover, they have any kind of a race that you can think of—even races for punchers like you an' me, one hundred yards out an' back, turn round a barrel at each end. This is what Petie an' me is layin' for—three hundred an' fifty hung up. I don't know what we are goin' to do with all that money."

"Don't bother about that none, Press," says I. "We'll go into committee of the whole after we git it, an' perhaps by hard effort we can spend a few of it."

"Then there is other races beside that," he goes on tellin' me; "gentlemen riders, professional jockeys, flat races, hurdle races, short races an' long ones, races for Injuns, races for cow-punchers, races for anybody that wants to enter. Why, three hundred an' fifty dollars," says he, "that ain't nothin'. There'll be a hundred thousand change hands out there on the prairie to-morrow afternoon. I wouldn't miss it fer anything."

"Ner me," says I to him; "not that I'm special hooked up to do business, bein' broke."

"What kind of rollin' stock you got?" he asts.

"Nothin' but old Pinto, out there," says I, "an' he ain't had a square meal in forty days an' forty nights, ner me neither."

"That don't make no difference," says Press. "That'll only git you down to good racin' lines. As to money," says Press, "when we win that barrel race maybe we can git busy somewheres else. Come on now, an' let's go eat."

"Well, him an' me an' Petie went into the dinin' room of the same hotel where the bar was at. It was about the middle of the afternoon, an' there wasn't very many people there. At one table was a tall man with a thin mustache waxed out to a point each side. Didn't need to have no card hung on him sayin' 'English.' He was wearin' balloon pants an' them spiral chaps made out of hard leather, an' he looked horsey all over.

"Next to him was a little dried-up

chap—looked like a perffessional jock, not much bigger'n a monkey, an' not much handsomer. I heard the jock call the other feller 'Captain,' an' they seemed to be talkin' together right close.

"Over at another table was another feller, likewise English if you ast me, but a good-lookin' chap, too! He was disguised as a Western 'rawncher,' an' looked just like most young fellers in England hopes to look when they 'go out to the colonies,' as they say; only I reckon he had been out here in the colonies for some time. He was burned good an' brown, like you an' me, Sir Algernon, but was right fair-haired and thin-skinned. He had sort of blue eyes that popped out, an' he was that bashful that it seemed like he couldn't talk none—just his Adam's apple would work up an' down his throat, an' he'd kind of gasp an' gurgle like he was tryin' to swaller somethin'.

"Press an' me looked round to see what it was made him so bashful like. I see a right handsome young woman dressed in black with a white apron, an' she wore glasses like a schoolma'am—nice-lookin' girl, an' quiet. Evident she waited on the tables.

"That's Annie,' says Press to me.

"You see, Press an' Petie had been in town two days, an' knowed 'most everybody.

"Who's Annie?" says I.

"Annie,' says Press to me, 'is a school-teacher down at Cardston. She come from Newbrasky original, an' she's American, as you can see.'

"Well, what is she doin' shootin' biscuits in this hotel, Press?" says I.

"Why shouldn't she?" says he. 'She's a good, hard-workin' girl, an', like everybody else, has got a quarter section of land to pay for if she has luck. When school ain't keepin' she can make more in a month here than she can teachin' school the same time. Everybody knows Annie, an' likes her.'

"An' some likes her special?" says I.

"Shore! Look at Lord Bill over there. They tell me he eats here regular, an' has right nigh moved in from his ranch, all on account of Annie. Good family, too, over in England, like

enough. An' he's got all kinds of money.'

"Ain't it astonishin', Sir Algernon," asked Curly of me, turnin' over on one side, "how much like human bein's folks is? Now, here's this young Englishman, like enough heir to a lot o' money. He comes out here 'to the colonies,' as he calls it, an' he sees a little Newbrasky schoolma'am, an' he gets all broke up—so bad he can't sight her across the room without tryin' to swaller his Adam's apple! Why, Press said, when she'd ast him what he wanted to eat, he'd go into a trance, an' not be able to make no sort of articerlate speech at all. You have to read the first chapter in the Bible to understand that.

"Well, Press an' me an' Petie we ordered some bacon an' aigs an' potatoes an' things an' coffee, an' we set there an' talked over the race meet. I noticed this here Cap and the jock would look onct in a while over at Lord Bill an' whisper, an' both of them kep' lookin' at Annie. Some folks thinks that all biscuit shooters is free to make a crack at, thataway.

"Annie, she kep' goin' on about her work. I must say she looked a good deal more like a schoolmarm than a biscuit shooter. By an' by the Cap motions her to come over to his table. She stands near by, waitin' respectful. Just about then, little monkey of a jock, he reached out an' takes hold of Annie's arm, an' says something up at her. I seen her face get right red.

"Well, sir, Lord Bill rather beat Press an' me to it. He got up easy an' gentle-like, but prompt. In about two steps he's over to the Cap's table, an' he has little monkey the jock by the lower part of his ear. He leads him around the table, to where his boss is settin', an' says he: 'Captain Kingsdon, you'd better take care of this.'

"Seems like Lord Bill could talk, after all, when the time come. He looks at Annie, an' his face gits so red I was afraid the window curtains would take fire from it. Then he strolls back to his own table, an' goes on tryin' to swaller his Adam's apple again.

"Annie she looks at him, he havin' his

back turned. Fact is, she kep' on lookin' at him.

"Bimeby the Captain an' the little jock got up an' went out. Lord Bill set right on. Annie seems to forget that Press an' Petie an' me is there, an' bimeby she strolls over casual like to Lord Bill's table. Then them two engages in some sort of conversation, private, so far as we was concerned.

" 'Press,' says I, 'he's game.'

" 'Uh, huh!' says Press, his mouth bein' full of aig.

"After while Press an' Petie an' me got up an' went out. We all takes a look at Pinto an' the other hosses. Press allowed that the best thing we could do was to start out that evenin' an' ride along slow an' easy that night an' next mornin' to Cochran—little town on the Bow Valley where the racin' was always held. We laid out that night, but we come in fairly fresh next mornin'.

"Well, sir, next day you'd thought all Europe an' most of America had got off of the jerkwater train that just come out from Calgary—all the men an' women in the whole wide world. Then there was plenty more come out in wagons, an' buggies, an' buckboards, an' otermobiles. Barrin' the punkins, it shore looked like a county fair.

"Press an' Petie an' me was down near the station, lookin' at these folks come in, never havin' saw people like this before, an' wonderin' how they understood each other when they talked. All at once we seen Lord Bill get off the train, an' reach up his hand to help some one else down. He was still dressed in his wide hat with the stiff rim, an' the leather band, an' he had on new accordion pants, an' the south end of his legs was done up in them leather spirals, like sore fingers, an' he was red in the face as ever, an' couldn't talk for his Adam's apple working up an' down his neck, same as it did always. An' who you think was with him? Why, Annie!

"Now, all the ladies in that entire colony of Calgary was there, an' it was easy to see that every one of 'em knowed Lord Bill, an' that every one

wanted Lord Bill to know that she didn't know him; that bein' because of Annie, her bein' a biscuit shooter. I read in a book onct about ladies in waitin'. They may go all right in England, but ladies that waits don't go nowheres else, seems like. Anyhow, they all had it in for Annie, that was shore. She seen it, too, an' I reckon she wished she hadn't 'a' came. Lord Bill he stood pat.

" 'Press,' says I, 'he's game, an' real game.'

" 'Uh, huh!' says Press, his mouth bein' full of terbacker now.

"Right soon we rid on out to where the race track was at, a little ways from the town. Ever been there, Sir Algernon? You know there ain't no race track at all at Cochran—only a track marked out by a rope tied to stakes, an' the hosses run right on the grass.

"There wasn't the sign of a fence nowhere, an' there wasn't no entrance money, because there wasn't no gate, an' no place to put one. One side the track was a little sort of band stand, 'bout as big as you'd see in a baseball park in a little town. Here was where the band was goin' to play, an' where the ladies and gentlemen was goin' to set, an' where the judges was at. Right out in front of that, you looked out across the open prairie—sort of a little rim around it, of foothills, there was, an' beyond that on one side, the white tops o' the Rockies showin' in a line for a hunderd miles. Finest place you ever seen in your whole life.

"Now, like I told you, everybody from all Europe an' 'most everybody from America was there, an' I reckon they was the most mixed-up lot you ever seen. There was folks with plug hats an' white gaiters, an' single-barrel eyeglasses with strings to 'em, an' ladies dressed fit to kill. I don't suppose you ever have saw a red silk parasol out here on the plains, either, have you, Sir Algernon? Well, there was plenty, all colors. There was lots of men wearin' wide stripes an' caps, an' some had short pants, an' a good many wore corduroys.

"Mixed in with them was some American farmers, an' Mormons, with just human clothes on. Mixed in again, was lots of folks they called 'ranchers,' the same bein' English people come West to be cowmen in the colonies. They was all dressed just like Lord Bill, with wide hats, an' balloon pants, an' sore-finger leggin's.

"There was a good many farm women settin' around on the seats of the wagons that was drawed up near to the race track, an' in here, too, was quite a number of otermobiles, that had come out from Calgary, with folks all togged out with leather clothes, veils, and black goggles. Around in the bunch onct in a while you'd see a good old American cow-punch, with the trimmin's of such. Then, all around over the ground, there was right smart of Injuns, blanket Injuns, too, with their hair done in braids down their back, and brass wire and pieces of lookin'-glass tied on, like in such cases made an' pervided.

"These Injuns was Stonies, and Sarcees, from the reservation, a little farther over in the foothills, in the Rockies. It was great fun for them to git in a otermobile, an' take a ride 'round the track. I don't know if I ever seen fifteen or twenty blanket bucks in a otermobile before.

"Take it all in all, crowd like that, out there on the prairie, with the Rockies lookin' on, an' every one feelin' gaylike, I don't know as I ever seen a sight just like that whole layout. I was plumb happy, for all the world seemed gay an' younglike. Didn't seem to me as there was anything like trouble nowhere, an' as for hoss races, why, Press an' Petie an' me, we just knowed we couldn't lose, that was all. Which was just the way everybody else in that crowd felt. This here air is shore in-spirin'.

"Now, as to hosses, we seen right soon we was up against a plumb sporty game. These colonists back here in the Alberta 'ranches,' they wasn't raisin' bronks, but roadsters an' saddlers, an' race stock. You ever been in Kaintucky, Sir Algernon? Same kind of hosses was here—greyhound built, skin so thin you

could see the veins in 'em, and every one of 'em polished like a new stove. There wasn't a buck from the Sarcee reservation that didn't have his own racer along, too, an' some of 'em looked right fast. All us punchers had our best string on hand. I taken a look at Pinto, and, believe me, Sir Algernon, he was the sorriest-lookin' hoss on that ground.

"She was a gay crowd, for shore, everybody perfectly happy, walkin' around an' visitin', an' all of them people knowin' each other, 'cept none of 'em knowin' Lord Bill an' Annie. Press an' Petie an' me had a right good time, because we had about eight dollars left between us, not mentionin' the three hunderd an' fifty we was goin' to win, an' there was kinder a lunch counter around under the band stand, where you couldn't get cocktails, but could get that yellor stuff they call whisky up there, which I told you done you some good if you was patient. Well, we was still patient.

"We had taken several drinks, an' every time we done so, we wished Pinto didn't look like the way he did. 'But, pshaw!' says Press, 'way I feel to-day, we can't lose, nohow—we got to win, or else how'll we get back home?' Which was shore convincin' argyment.

"'Long 'bout now another train come in, an' off of that there got eighteen people that they allowed was human bein's, although they didn't look like it to me at first, me never havin' saw any like 'em before. They was the band, an' they carried things to play on such as I never have saw. At first I thought they might get arrested, because, let alone cuttin' their pants off at the knees, none of 'em had on no pants at all; only stockin's and a sort of skirt, an' a horsetail apern, an' a wide sash, an' a little black, folded hat with no rim, an' a black ribbon on it.

"'Petie,' says I, when I seen the band, 'have I been drinkin', or is this real?'

"'Danged if I know,' says Petie. 'But let's wait an' see. I'm feelin' kind o' jumpy myself over this.'

"Now, Sir Algernon, you wouldn't

think folks like them could play real music, would you—special when they didn't have no bass drum, an' no cymbals, an' no oompah horn—but what them pantless people done was to play the only real music I ever did hear in my life.

"They filed by, in front o' the band stand, an' touched their hats to the lord mayor an' the judges, an' come up on the seats, an' they begun to play, and they kep' on a-playin'. But it was the sort of music that don't bother you much. It was just soft an' low, didn't interfere with the game nohow. They played old Scotch an' Irish an' English tunes—'Robin Adair,' an' 'Oft in the Stilly Night,' an' 'Killarney,' an' 'Annie Laurie'—all them old tunes that makes yore hair kind of crawl when you hear 'em, an' makes you stop talkin', an' think of the folks back home. Sir Algernon, maybe I hadn't understood that crowd before, but when that music begun, spite o' the fact them fellers didn't have on pants, I begun to understand them.

"Press an' me an' Petie begun to look over the bill of fare that was printed for the races. There certainly was any kind o' game you wanted, an' good money up all along the line. There was races for gentleman riders, any horse, an' for gentlemen ridin' horses of their own breedin', an' races for professional jockeys, an' hurdle races, an' flat races, quarter-mile, half-mile, mile, two-mile, an' four-mile flat races, cowboy races, Injun races, free-for-all races, handicap races—every kind of race that was ever knew, any place in the world.

"Press an' Petie an' me sort of kep' our eye on that barrel race—hunderd yards out an' back, turnin' a barrel at each end an' repeat ten times. 'I reckon here's where we git our three-fifty, or else maybe we don't git it at all,' says Press to me, an' he taken a last look at Pinto, which we reckoned was maybe the best cow horse on our string.

"There wasn't no county officers with blue ribbons on 'em or them things, or no sheriff, or nothin', 'cept one little feller in a red coat, white hat with a

stiff brim, an' high yeller boots—mounted police he was—a boy about twenty years old, maybe, with two hairs in his mustache. He didn't have on no gun, just carried a little, thin ridin' whip. He didn't look hooked up right to me to boss a race meet in Arizony, with mixed greaser an' Texas entry, but the English is great for law, an' I reckon he was the law.

"Well, after a while, somebody blowed a bugle, an' the head judge called the first race, which was for gentlemen jockeys, mile an' a half flat, two hurdles in the last furlong—hurdles up for the last lap.

"'Press,' says I, 'there's that little monkey an' his boss talkin' together.'

"'Uh, huh!' says Press, his mouth full o' chewin' gum. 'They call that feller Captain Kingsdon. English army, he was, an' he's rid all over the world. Looks as if he dropped in here for some easy amachure money, but if he ain't professional, I don't know.'

"That case I'd have to back him fer this race,' says Petie, 'but I'd have to need money mighty bad 'fore I'd back him fer anything.'

"Well, whether we backed him or not, the Captain he went out an' win that race against eight other riders, hands down. He had some sort of connection with a ranch back in the foothills where they kep' a private race track. He could ride, all right, an' his hoss was trained. Me, I'd fall off one of them little candy saddles of theirs, but the Captain rode like a jock, an' went over the hurdle jumps like a bird. I seen him look over at Lord Bill an' kinder grin. He had a hard kind of a face, dry, like leather. I know personal that whisky didn't take no hold on him at all.

"Well, sir, we three punchers stood around an' had some fun watchin' the next few races, which was mostly between professional riders, jockeys, an' didn't mean much to us, 'cause we didn't know the boys or the hosses. The little monkey, he win 'em all easy.

"Most fun was the Injun race, four-mile flat. Now, you know what Injuns will do—they'll bet their last

blanket an' pair of moccasins on a hoss race. There was four hosses here, but the big plunge was made on little old Red Crow, a wizened, dried-up little Sarcee, 'bout a hunderd an' fifty years old, who had a long, low, rakish hoss, 'bout ten feet long, with a leg on each corner, which didn't look as if he could run enough to keep warm in the sunshine.

"'Press,' says I, 'there's somethin' doin' on that hoss.' I seen the Sarcees pilin' up their blankets an' money, an' makin' signs that invited all comers. I found a Mormon who had a good-lookin' six-shooter in his wagon—'gainst rules an' regulations—an' I bet him my pair of chaps against his gun that this here long-coupled Sarcee hoss would win.

"Well, sir, ole Red Crow he win that race from the start—he just begun to lick old Mr. Long-horse right from the jump, an' he hammered him around an' around, never lookin' behind him, an' never crackin' a smile when the judges handed him two hunderd an' forty dollars. He walks over an' begins to sort out blankets an' things he'd won, an' I saunters over to my Mormon an' says I: 'Looks as if I don't lose my chaps.' He grinned, but he paid.

"Race after that was gentlemen riders, four-year-olds, owners' breedin', two miles, with six hurdles. An', believe me, them was real hurdles, too. We lit up over this race some, 'cause we seen Lord Bill go out an' get on top of one of his own hosses. The 'Cap' was ridin' in that race, too—as he did in most o' the others—an' I seen him sort of grin at Lord Bill. I knowed it was for blood, an' no love lost between 'em. There was fifty guineas up, whatever that is.

"That was a right pretty race, an' we seen that Lord Bill was a rider, too, all right. He hadn't anything on Cap Kingsdon at that, for the Cap was shore professional. They left their field, an' rid for each other, both takin' their hurdles clean. At the stretch, they come down neck an' neck, an' at the last hurdle I seen the Cap ride deliberate

into Lord Bill with his big, bony sorrel. It knocked Lord Bill's hoss to his knees when he come over, an' the Cap finished half a length ahead.

"Lord Bill, he didn't make no protest, but got redder, an' his Adam's apple become more active. The Cap he grinned, an' took his money, which he hands to his side partner, the little jock.

"'Press an' Petie an' me, we was watchin' all them hosses close, an' there wasn't no race for us till it came to the barrel race. Now, this was marked down as a cowboy race. The judges was some surprised when Cap'n Kingsdon comes up an' declares himself in on this race, too. He'd won steady, ridin' every race he could get into, him or his jockey, all day, an' winnin' two-thirds of what had been won, not always too clean. The judge, he kinder raised his eyebrows, an' says he:

"'Captain, I say, now how can you declare yourself in as a cowboy?'

"'That describes the race only, and not those who enter for it,' says the Captain. 'But I can qualify, because you know I'm a rawncher, and I ride my own stock. If I'm not a cowboy, what am I?'

"Well, Press an' me knowed he wasn't either a cowboy or a gentleman, but we knowed he was a rider. From things we had saw, we didn't want him in our race, because we was layin' hard fer that three-fifty. We knowed there was only about eight entries, Canadian an' American punchers, an' though we figured Pinto to win it, we was all three goin' to ride our best. We took a look at that big chestnut which the Captain was goin' to ride, an' says I to Press: 'Let him come in. He can't turn around more than twice a hour in a forty-acre field on that hoss. Pinto, he's been a cuttin' hoss for ten years to my knowledge, an' he can turn on a pocket handkerchief—if he couldn't I wouldn't be here,' says I.

"'Press an' Petie, they said all right. So we never kicked on the Captain.

"Well, sir, that was a right good bunch of people up there on the prairie. When us punchers come out, in full regalia, with woolly chaps an' silk han'-

kerchiefs, all of us ridin' easy, kinder on one laig, them fellers lined up an' give us a cheer, an' the band played 'Yankee Doodle' just for luck, because they knowed 'most all of us was from south of the line. Lord Bill comes up an' wishes each of us boys luck, in about two words—still havin' trouble with his talker. Seemed like he wanted to say something to us, but he didn't or couldn't.

"Well, we all lined up, eight punchers an' a English army officer, an' they give us a six-shooter start, same as we used to do to start our quarter races on the lower range, Sir Algernon, with a rope thrown on the ground for the score. We socked in the steel, an' made for that first barrel.

"Pinto was plumb happy, same as me. He kicked a couple of other cow hosses, before the start, an' at the crack of the gun he jumped about forty feet straight out, an' lit runnin'. This didn't suit me so much, because I wanted to see what was goin' to happen at the turns.

"Well, I seen, all right. The Captain, on his big sorrel, he pulls wide, off the course, at a big angle. Then, just as them punchers bunches to turn around at the barrel, he rides right down into 'em with his big hoss. Result: two punchers throwed an' out of the race, an' one hoss a'most crippled.

"I could hear the crowd yell when they seen this, but I had pulled Pinto back just in time. The big sorrel swung wide, but, bein' fas' on his laigs, was really ahead of us other fellers on the turn back.

"I seen his game, now, an' so did the other fellers, but he worked the same trick at the home turn. He upset Petie there, an' he, bein' throwed on the barrel, had two ribs broke, an' didn't finish. The crowd was still yellin', but not because they enjoyed this. Nothin' couldn't stop us now, an' me bein' some riled by now, I set down on Pinto and allowed to ride a few.

"The other fellers hadn't got on any too well, with this big hoss plugin' through 'em a couple of times, an' at the third time at the outside barrels, it

came down to pretty near me an' the Captain. I hugged the barrel twicet, and slapped it on top with my hat as I went by. In he came at me onct more, from outside. You see, a man an' a hoss makin' a turn like that is on a slant like a bicycle, an' it don't take much to push 'em over at the right time. But I didn't have to watch Pinto none—he was a cuttin' hoss from a American cow camp, him, an' that's enough said. He swerved an' straightened just in time. Then I pulled him up an' let the big sorrel pass.

"It wasn't a race so much as a fight. He tried to cut me down every turn. At the fifth turn, Pinto, which was runnin' with his ears flat, an' mad as a hornet, he didn't stop for instructions. When the sorrel comes toward him, he swerves in with his feet, but reaches out his neck, with his ears down, an' he bites a piece out of old Sorrel's neck even bigger'n we'd bite out of a ham sandwich, if we was hungry, Sir Algernon.

"Now, all through that race—though us fellers didn't ask no baby work, an' claimed to be full-growed men—this feller hadn't rode fair, an' we knowed it. He hadn't lost a chance to slash my hoss, an' he'd done his best to ride us down. But after that Mr. Sorrel didn't seem to want to mingle so much with ole Pinto. I set down an' touched the old boy up a bit, an' he sailed around the barrels after that, with the hair on my chaps brushin' the dust off the barrel every turn.

"The Captain, he pulled over off the course. He seen he was beat. Ole Pinto come in, one ear down an' the other pointin' forward, lookin' ca'm now.

"Well, what do you know about it? When I come up to the judges' table at the foot of the band stand folks waved their hands at me an' Pinto, an' they was groanin' and callin' out mean words to this Captain Kingsdon, though I was only a cow-punch and him a' officer in the army. At least *he* said he was; I don't know. And blame me if he didn't protest that race!

"'Look here, men,' says he to the judges; and points out his old sorrel's

neck, where Pinto bit out a sandwich. 'I've been fouled deliberately! As we were the only two to finish, the race is mine as a matter of course.'

"I set sideways on Pinto, with my new gun in my scabbard—they let me wear the gun as clothes, to look the part in the cowboy race. What I wanted to do was to take a shot at the Captain, of course, but what I really done was to set sideways an' chaw tobaccer.

"Right then Lord Bill, who was settin' kinder lonesome with Annie, in one corner of the band stand, he gets up quiet, an' goes to the judges. Seems like now his Adam's apple had got quiet, an' he could talk.

"Gentlemen,' says he, 'I'm one of the subscribers for the Cochran Association, an' you know I'm raisin' hosses out here. Also, I am interested in clean sport. Captain Kingsdon's ridin' at this meet has been a disgrace; he ought to have been protested himself in more than one race before this. As to his protest here, it's nonsense—it ought to be quite the other way about, as you know very well. We all saw what happened. It is a disgrace to our meetin', I'll not have it.'

"The judges looks uncomfortable. One of 'em turns to me, an' says he: 'Do you wish to protest the race, sir?'

"Not by a danged sight,' says I. 'But there's lots of other things I'd like mighty well to do.'

"You'd better go back to your kitchen wench, my lord,' says Captain Kingsdon, savage, to Lord Bill.

"That's where the Cochran Race Meet ended that year. Right at that time Lord Bill fetched the Captain a peach under the chin. The crowd pushed in through all the Injuns an' punchers an' farmers an' Mormons, an' fellers with plug hats, an' everybody else. The ladies stood up on the seats of the band stand an' hollered; and the band, just to show that nobody was rattled, begun to play 'Shall Old Acquaintance be Fergot.'

"Little Red Coat, with two hairs for his mustache, rides in now, an' touches Lord Bill on the shoulder with his ridin' whip.

"It's all right, my man,' says Lord Bill, quiet, an' then he turns to the judges.

"I know this man,' says he, noddin' toward Captain Kingsdon, who was bein' fanned by his jockey. 'I knew him back home very well, an' he's a sharper of the worst sort. He doesn't belong in the army, he doesn't belong here, and he doesn't belong among sportsmen. Because of certain matters I couldn't very well object to his entry, an' I didn't like to make a disturbance, though it's plain he was here to gobble the meet, fair or foul. It's all right about his cuttin' me down—it's in the game—and I'll take care of myself. I'm not objectin' to that.'

"Same here, brother,' says I.

"No, it's not the same,' says Lord Bill. 'You're on a different footin' here, because you came in as a stranger, an' are entitled to fair play; an' you've all given us good sport, you boys, in your own sort of game. But this fellow wanted the money, an' he didn't want to play the game square. Gentlemen, he'll ride no more at this meet.'

"Well, didn't nobody ride no more at that meet. While we was talkin', little monkey the jock, he disappears in the crowd. All at once, I heard somebody yell, an' then a lot of the crowd broke off toward the field, away from the judges.

"Now, you see, this was a right fancy kind of a race meet. They didn't pay off in checks, or bills, or due bills, but they had real gold money for the purse of each stake. An' just to make it look right sporty, the ladies, some of them, had made nice little silk bags with embroidery on 'em, to hold this gold money. So, jus' to make it kind o' the real thing, you know, each winner's money was set in a little sack, on the table at the end of the grand stand.

"I had plumb fergot all about the three-fifty that Press an' Petie an' me needed, an' so had ever'body else, exceptin' this little jockey. Right quiet, he slips back of the crowd, grabs the bag off'n the table, an' makes for his fastest hoss.

"Little Red Coat, he's got plenty

things on his hands right now, an' him settin' there with no gun—which shows how foolish them Europeans is. Captain Kingsdon, he makes off the other way, for his fastest hoss, too. Band keeps on playin' 'Old Lang Syne,' but people starts to runnin' every way.

"'Son,' says I to little Red Coat, with the two hairs in his mustache—he was lookin' red and right embarrassed by now—'you've got two or three prisoners here, an' all of 'em is tryin' to escape.' You see, I was thinkin' of the way sheriffs do down Southwest when prisoners tries to escape that orto be hung; an' here was two, both of which orto been hung.

"Little Willie Red Coat, he starts off after the jock, who by now has got on his hoss. See'n' as he had our three-fifty with him, I swing in, an' ride along with Red Coat. We line out across the prairie, little jockey ridin' now like a scared cat, an' us po'ndin' along some, but not doin' much toward ketchin' up.

"'Halt!' hollers little Red Coat several times. But the harder he hollers 'Halt!' the faster the jockey rides.

"'Why in glory don't you shoot him?' inquires I, ridin' along beside him.

"'I've no gun,' says he.

"'Take mine,' says I, an' I hauls out my new gun I win from the Mormon.

"'I cawn't hit anything,' admits Willie.

"'Do you give me leave at him?' says I, balancin' her up in my hand.

"'I summons you—posse—name of the law!' gasps Willie. An' about then I cut loose with my new gun.

"'Sir Algernon, if I do say it, that was a peach of a shot—especially as I hadn't ever shot her onct before! He must have been sixty yards ahead of us, but, as luck would have it, all of us ridin' the best we knowed, I busted his left heel fer him, and he come out of the saddle all in one motion.

"'Leave him alone!' I hollers to Willie then, and grabbed his bridle. I seen the jock set up an' grab his heel. I allowed we had him anchored all right, so we turned and rid across lots to where Captain Kingsdon was spurrin' out of the crowd.

"'Halt!' says Willie to him, an' he halted, jus' in time. I was gettin' right fond of that posse work in them circumstances, an' seen I was goin' to like the new gun with a little more practice.

"Well, sir, the judges goes out and collects the jockey, an' also my three hundred an' fifty, an' then Willie the Red Coat begun to collect his prisoners. He left his hoss for some one to take care of, an' he loaded the jock, an' the Captain, an' Lord Bill all in a otermobile—I heard him say something about 'assizes,' whatever sizes them is. An' he put Petie in the same wagon to take him to the hospital. Wonder was he didn't arrest me for carryin' concealed weapons. Why on earth he arrested Lord Bill I never could find out, fer he hadn't done nothin' but punch a son of a gun that needed it.

"The crowd begun to go home right soon after that, but Press an' me we went around behind the grand stand to try some more of that yeller whisky, me havin' divided the three-fifty into three pockets in our chaps, one for Petie, who was like to be laid up a few days with his slats.

"Sir Algernon, that was a right pleasant afternoon, all around, come to think of it. Folks begun to scatter in their wagons, an' buckboards, on foot an' on hossback, like the wind had blowed 'em off the race grounds. Out yonder the Sarcees an' Stonies was still sortin' out their blankets an' moccasins an' ponies. Some of the men standin' around in blankets, bright-colored, an' the squaws was settin' round in circles here an' there, all singin', right happy.

"At the lunch counter under the band stand was a few fellers from the ranches, an' some from town with plug hats an' long coats, an' a occasional Mormon, an' off on one side some Galicians in sheepskin coats, wonderin' what it was all about. By an' by, the band come down in their bare laigs, and proceeded to have somethin', all in a row; an' then to have somethin' more. Us bein' rich, Press and me had somethin'. By 'n' by, everybody got friendly like, an' we all had somethin'.

"One feller in the band began to play

somethin' on a machine that looked like a bellows, with a clarinet fastened in it—funniest thing I ever heard—he squeezed the grief out'n it with his elbows. The last thing I remember of it all was the leader of the band, six foot, with yeller mustaches, an' blue eyes, playin' a A-flat cornet. He was solemn drunk, but it only made him play better'n ever. He stood out there in the sunshine, on the prairie, with the white Rockies back o' him, an' the wind blowin' his white horsehair apron, an' he played. When a Scotchman gits drunk, he gets melancholy an' thoughtful. This feller was playin' 'Robin Adair.'

"Sir Algernon, I can hear it yet, an' I can see it all, too—the flat prairie, an' the Rockies raisin' back of it, white on top. The West still seemed kind o' young that day.

"I went around the corner of the band stand, an' there, all by herself, I seen a girl settin'. It was Annie. She sort o' smiled.

"'Why, how d'y'do, ma'am,' says I. 'Have you been havin' a right good time?'

"'Yes,' says she, kinder shylike. 'Have you?'

"'I shore have, ma'am,' says I. 'Look at me.'

"'I seen her kinder lookin' over my shoulder, toward the houses where this little station of Cochran was. When I turned round, I seen why. There was Lord Bill comin', on foot, walkin' up toward us. I reckon they had seen a J. P. at the town, or, at any rate, somehow they had left him off from them assizes, seein' how he had important business on hand. So I went around the corner again to where Press was.

"'Press,' says I, 'Lord Bill's game, and he's all right, too.'

"'Uh, huh!' says Press, fer his mouth was full o' pie now."

Curly sat up at this point of his narrative, and began to throw little pebbles at his feet. "Sir Algernon," he said, after a while, "that tells how I visited Europe. It's right long, but it ain't much of a story, exceptin' 'way it shows how much like human bein's

people is sometimes, all over the world. Now, I don't know who Lord Bill was, an' I don't know who Captain Kingsdon was, an' I don't know who Annie was really. Question ain't *who* they was, but *what* they was. I reckon whoever Lord Bill was back home, he was a real man out here. Now, he allowed Annie was a real woman out here, too. That's the sort that comes to stay, an' my idea is they make real people, too, even if they do live in Canada. Canady is where bars close at seven o'clock Saturday night, right when they orto to begin to open. I ain't particular about annexin' Mexico, but I'm strong for takin' Canada, peaceful if possible, so's to reform that Saturday-night law. But besides, Lord Bill an' Annie like enough lives up there now. I liked 'em both, an' they orto be feller citizens to you an' me.

"An' say, I can see it all again, from where we're settin' now. Here's the prairie layin' out in the sunshine, with the wind blowin' over it, an' the Rockies standin' white an' tall beyond. Sun's sinkin' a little by now. Over yonder, back of the band stand, playin' soft and low, is Mr. Scotchman, loaded to the guards, an' playin' 'Robin Adair,' with no pants on. Over beyond, toward the Rockies, I reckon, must have been Lord Bill's ranch. Maybe he wanted to show it to Annie. Last I seen of them they was walkin' together, leanin' toward each other like two tired oxens, walkin' straight on out inter the sort of red light of the evenin' sun, you know. They didn't seem to think there was any one else in all the world. An' he was lookin' down at her, an' she was lookin' up at him. It ain't much of a story, of course, Sir Algernon, but there ain't no story nohow much better'n just Annie an' Lord Bill, walkin' there. It sort o' made you think about the unendin' youngness o' the world. I shore wish 'em well.

"Ain't it funny, Sir Algernon," added Curly irrelevantly after a time, throwing a pebble at old Pinto's nose, "what makes them State's hosses lay down an' roll when you take the saddles off'n 'em?"

The Green Hour

BEING AN EXPLOIT OF YORKE NORROY, DIPLOMATIC AGENT, WHILE
IN QUEST OF THE SIX JADE PLATES

By George Bronson-Howard

Author of "The Norroy Stories," "Snobs," Etc.

(A Two-part Story)

CHAPTER I.

MR. VAN GRUENBERG LUYTIES; HIS PAR-
ENTAGE AND HIS NAME.

THERE were four and twenty clerks in the office of Popson & Co.; but only one had any imagination. His name was not pretty. He had inherited the patronymic of Luyties from some forgotten Dutch ancestor, and his parents additionally insulted him with Van Gruenberg—although they did not know it was an insult, remembering in a vague sort of way something of red-billed, black-tailed storks standing on stone-thatched, moss-grown roofs, with a foot tucked under a wing, and looking over long, silver-threaded countries of brown marsh, where the houses had eaves ~~that~~ overhung the low-browed doors, and where white ducks and noisy yellow-billed ducklings paddled in the canals.

Van's parents inherited these memories from an old grandmother who, sitting around the kitchen stove in winter, had told them tales of the Low Countries; and the name Van Gruenberg Luyties seemed to suggest to Van's mother one of the heavy-handed lords who had wandered restlessly through gran'mère's fragmentary narratives. Van was an only child, and his parents wanted to do their best by him, but they were very poor people, their name and their memories being all their inheritance.

Now, as they had no hopes for themselves, being accustomed to very hard work and very little food, such stunted imagination as they were capable of was given to Van's future—the boy with the aristocratic but ugly name. Falling into the common error of laboring folk, whose hands are coarse and red, they kept Van's smooth and white, and sent him to school in shirts and cuffs as spotless as those Mrs. Luyties washed in the Popsons' back kitchen on Mondays and Tuesdays. Indeed, they were of the same material and make, for Mrs. Luyties' lady employer had a little boy about Van's age, and, as her servants were too lazy to count the pieces, and her little boy had so *much* fine linen, who was to tell if a little was missing! As for worn knickerbockers and soiled jackets, Mrs. Popson was only too glad to sell them to Van's mother for more than the old-clothes man would have given her.

So Van grew up, a trifle frayed, perhaps, but always smartly dressed and spotlessly clean. He did not know that his mother was a washerwoman; he thought she was a seamstress. His father's occupation—he was a digger of graves—was dignified by the name of "sexton"—which name Van afterward saw upon little gilt-lettered boards on the gray ivy-covered walls of churches, and just beneath the name of rector or priest; so there was some dignity to that, and Van tried to pretend it did not mean the same as "jan-

itor." If he had known the truth, his father was no sexton at all, but only a laborer employed by a sexton.

His parents died from overwork and underfeeding before Van was fifteen, so he never discovered their deception. Van was left as a legacy in a note his mother wrote with infinite care and much misgiving just before her death to the lady whose washerwoman she had been. This note, which Mrs. Popson would have preserved as a curio, had she been other than kind-hearted, contained, beside an infinite variety of phonetic spelling and awkward phrasing, an impassioned request that her employer should not allow Van to know, what to him would have been, his mother's shamefully low occupation.

Mrs. Popson found something in the note that she called "pathos" when she told her husband of it, requesting that a place be made for Van in Mr. Popson's warehouse. So Van went to work as an office boy; and now he was twenty-one, and a shipping clerk, receiving eighteen dollars a week, most of which he spent for clothes as nearly copies of those of the gorgeous young Mr. Popson as the difference in their means would allow.

He discovered Mr. Popson's tailor, and from him bought one suit each year; all he could afford, when the price was equal to a month of his salary. Young Mr. Popson's bootmaker, too, was requisitioned for a pair of tan boots each Christmas when Mr. Popson, senior, gave each of his employees a remembrance of the season.

For socks, shirts, neckties, and hats, Van did his best; but never on any occasion had the young shipping clerk felt more than half dressed; for when his suit was new, his boots were cracking; when the boots came home, fragrant of fine tanning, the suit was wearing shiny at the elbows and the cuffs of his trousers were fraying; and at no time had he ever possessed a complete outfit of collar, tie, shirt, and hat that was worthy to companion the work of his tailor or his bootmaker.

To make matters worse, it frequently

happened that he had just put by enough lunch money and bought a certain style of collar, hat, or tie that the gorgeous young Mr. Popson was wearing, when the wholesale manufacturers of collars, hats, or ties who advertise largely in public places, put out a cheap imitation of the article, and the gorgeous Mr. Popson discarded it. Poor Van would have liked to discard it, too, but he could not afford to do so, and what is bitterer than wearing an article that has cost four times as much as the thing your bootblack is wearing, yet which seems exactly the same, and which—also—seems to put you in a class with your bootblack?

Van was a boy, and such things seemed important to him.

The worst of it all was that, when he was dressed as nearly as possible to his ideal, he was welcome in none of the places befitting such dressing.

If he wished to see depicted for him on the stage the manners and customs of the people he admired, he must hasten through his meager dinner at some inexpensive eating house, and take up his place outside the entrance to a theater at an early hour, to wait until the gallery doors should be opened, a fair mark for the jests of rougher and simpler folk with similar incomes, but less imagination and pretensions in attire. Waiting, then, again close onto another hour on the hard seats of a bleak and cheerless balcony, while fine ladies and gentlemen lingered over their dinners, their motors and carriages ready to whisk them magic-carpetlike to soft seats below held ready for them.

When the curtain was up, Van leaned his chin on the rail of the gallery, and, no matter how bad play or actors might be, they were so much better than the life and people he knew, that he lost himself among them, lived their lives, hoped, dreamed, and mingled with them, courtly, witty, admired. But with the curtain down, he dared not leave his seat for fear one of the orange-eating ladies or their loud-voiced escorts would preempt it; so he must stay, rudely brought out of that other land by inept criticisms and com-

ments, and the insistent cries of those who peddled fruit, candy, and gum along the aisles. So, after a while he took to going seldom, seeing but one performance for a price he had hitherto paid for three.

He had a dog, as lonely as himself, that he had bought from a street vender because it seemed so cold and pitiable, and this dog had come to be his only companion. It had grown up somewhat long-legged for a fox terrier, but with large, intelligent eyes, and a well-shaped head; with Fox at his heels, Van tramped around the Westchester Hills and the Berkshires on Sundays, and had his dinner at some fashionable inn to which motorists drove up in great, swift cars, with engines pounding and thumping under them.

He was satisfied that no one took exception to his presence; that no one lifted eyebrows and thought it was strange he should be there. No one ever spoke to him except the waiters, but he heard the men and women talking among themselves about horses, dogs, European travel, polo, theaters, and the stock market. Through this eavesdropping, the witnessing of plays, and the reading of books, he developed a vocabulary and a diction not unlike, if not superior to, that of the gorgeous young Mr. Popson's.

For the other days in the week, he hunted around through the old quarters of New York for table d'hôte dinners in foreign languages; where complete meals were served, from horse-radish to cheese, and sometimes with some stuff in a bottle euphemistically dubbed Chianti, *compris*, for a price that has passed into American slang as a derisive simile for cheapness. In these places, too, he was undisturbed, for English is not spoken in the restaurants that lie just south of Washington Square, or along Houston and Grand Streets, where, half a century ago, New York's fast life was led.

In the warehouse, only, did he have much need for speech; and, in Mr. Popson's warehouse, despite "old Pop's" unromantic name, and the proverbial prosaic nature of business, and the

twenty-three unimaginative clerks, were many things to lull Van into dreaming.

For Mr. Popson was an importer of teas, and sugars, and spices, and Van's days were spent in an atmosphere as aromatic as any Eastern potentate's. The very things he handled had been handled by adventurous and highly colored peoples six thousand miles or more away. Tea from Ceylon, where the men wear sunflower hats and trot ahead of little pony gigs they call jinrikishas; where the pearly boats go out and bring in great masses of shell, and the merchants sit around in their robes, their turbans, and their caftans, and bid for it; turning their servants, on their purchase, to hack it to pieces with great shining knives that flash the sun's burning rays onto their brown, naked bodies; and they gut the shell, and pour its tiny treasures—pink, yellow, black, and white—at the feet of their masters. Tea from the banks of the Irawadi, where the dacoits worship a hideous blind goddess of the jungle, and carry a strangling cord to kill victims in her name.

Russian tea, too, that has crossed the great desert of Gobi on the backs of humped camels, who have kind eyes, and whose masters jog along atop the tea, with guns inlaid in mother-of-pearl lying across their knees, one hand shielding their eyes from the sun that they may search the golden sand for the approach of fierce Tartar robbers on shaggy little horses that kill their riders if they can.

More tea that floated down the Pearl River with an armed guard aboard it in blue coats with red letters upon them, passing the crystal boats of mandarins who lie asleep and have twenty beautiful, golden-skinned, slant-eyed wives to wave off the flies and the gnats with fans made of the long tail feathers of the ostrich; past the boats where fifty slaves are imprisoned inside a wheel like squirrels in a cage, jumping on its spokes and making it go round and round until the boat ripples swiftly through the water; past the boats of the opium smugglers that steal warily

through the shadows, a gun near every bale of the gum; perhaps narrowly missing the swift, terrible pirate junks.

These were the things Van thought of as he sat in his cool, airy cellar near the docks, below the hum of the street, seeing nothing but the great bales of tea, and wondering about their adventures before they reached Popson's. He wrote his figures and added up his columns as a machine does, and all the while he was in company with drowsy, nodding mandarins and lucky pearl fishers, with bearded Russian merchants and Tartar robbers who had straggly whiskers floating in the desert wind, with singsong girls of the river boats and the pigtailed gamblers of gilded Macao.

It was only when he stepped from his tea cellar that he stepped back to the unromantic ugliness that confronts an eighteen-dollar-a-week clerk who must do without lunches for a week to afford the theater.

But when he got home sometimes of a dark winter evening, and went to his room and to bed, letting up the blind so that the moon could fill the room with its light—he loved the moon, she was such a great traveler—he liked to hark back to the exploits of his forefathers, the vikings, who swept down from their pines and cedars to take what they wanted from the sunny countries of the vine and the olive, and carry it back to their great blazing fires of the North. Or of those Dutch freebooters, his other ancestors, who conquered the Islands of Spice in the names of their good housewives, who remained at home in their spotlessly clean red-brick houses with their windmills and their tulips. For was he not a Van Gruenberg and a Luyties?

"Well, I was somebody in *those* days, anyhow," he would murmur sleepily; and then he would pass into a dominion where the poorest clerk may have the strangest and most surprising adventures.

So his parents had done something for him, after all, by giving him an ugly aristocratic name, and calling themselves sexton and seamstress, when

they were really laborer and washer-woman. Distinguished ancestors and great tradition, satin-lined clothes and an education had accomplished his parents' purpose. In attire, in speech, in deportment, Van would have passed anywhere as that exotic bird—a gentleman. He had made himself one—which shows, really, how very easy it is.

CHAPTER II.

"THE NIGHT OF THE GREAT ADVENTURE."

It certainly was a snowy winter. Van seldom remembered the city so white as it had been during the past few months. He joyed in the fall of the snow, for he had been born in the winter, and all his grandmère's tales had been of frozen dikes and armies marching over snowy rivers; of great wood fires at which stalwart men at arms in sober, buff uniforms stood warming themselves, with the firelight finding their shining breast plates; of ships caught in the ice and beating off the coasts of the Norse countries, with the northern lights steel-blue and ghastly upon the faces of their crews.

Great falls of snow and great blazing fires—Van loved the thought of them, and, as he could not have the fires himself, he often wandered all about the vicinity of North Washington Square and lower Fifth Avenue, where some of the great families still keep to ancient ways and customs, and the windowpanes were stained a ruddy hue by the dancing of the red horses of the grate.

He smiled gleefully this night as he came up toward the square from Bleecker Street; and he thought of François Villon wandering over such a virgin foothold as this, afraid of the watch carrying lanterns full of orange light. Van was always pretending to be somebody; so to-night he pretended he was Villon, and shivered at the possibility of the wolves entering Paris; peering suspiciously into the faces of perfectly dull, plodding passers-by, as though he feared they were bent on some errand that had to do with his undoing.

It was a bright night, as well as a white one. A winter moon, like half a golden melon, swung uncertainly in a halo of trembling white sky gauze; and the snowflakes danced about its face, playing little games, like baby-white hornets just out of a hive, and stringing together like white popcorn occasionally to assault some helpless pedestrian. They were dancing merrily enough over the golden cross of "St." Judson, and covering up the gnarled branches of the trees hastily, as though, with averted faces, they found the wintry nakedness of those branches shameless. Also, they had filigreed the tinier offshoots of the trees after intricate silver patterns known only to the Snow Queen, and quaint snow flowers hung like stars and gilded swords upon them.

A lady's white-gloved hand rested on the outside of her limousine car as Van came up; it was the one touch necessary to complete the picture. He stood in rapt admiration of it, watching the drifting snow, the golden-melon moon, and the winking balls of crystal light that studded the trees of the square as they do in the forests of France and the parks of Paris.

He stood there so long, and had so many adventures—as Villon—that he did not realize he was half frozen until, actually, he was. When he set off to walk again at a brisk trot, his feet pained him; but, in spite of that, he stopped again to have a last look at the square before he turned into University Place, and to fashion another adventure for the character he was playing.

Frequently, thereafter, he alternately cursed and blessed Master Francis of Paris for leading him into temptation; for had Van not been translating himself into sixteenth-century French, and venturing into taverns of the Fir Cone, and the Jibing Ass, the sight of the French tavern that lay in his path up University Place would not have affected him so compellingly as to force him to enter it.

He had no business in such places as this in the middle of the week—that was his Sunday luxury; but the

phrases, "stoup of ale" and "flagon of wine" were running through his head, and he was summoning up pictures of gentlemen in jerkin and hose stamping themselves free of snow and striding to the fire, calling for drink in quantities.

Now, the tavern just ahead of him was indubitably French—a bit of the boulevards set down in the midst of the old and crumbling dwellings of dead aristocrats. It had been there when all the wit and fashion of Manhattan centered about the lordly square to the south of it; and it remained the same, unaffected by neighborhood changes, for Paris was Paris, and here only in all New York could it be found.

Van found excuse enough in his half-frozen feet and hands to enter, and to stride to the blazing fire at one end of the cabaret, as his character would have done. Many men, with their hair clipped close to their heads, with pointed beards and small, upturned mustaches, sat at small tables playing dominoes, or reading last week's news from the Grande Boulevards. There were women, too, little gay women, who smiled at what the men said, but themselves spoke little. Here and there were Messieurs the Artists—painters, poets, playwrights, fictioneers—who came here to lose for the moment the depressing haste found elsewhere that ill accorded with lives of meditation.

On the tables, before each and every one of the assembled party, stood a greenish-yellow drink that showed all the other colors of opal and rainbow when the lights fell transversely upon it. Van looked in vain for the lowly beer which it had been his intention to purchase. On no table was there a glass of anything except the opalescent drink that gleamed and glittered. And he noted also, that in carrying this drink to their mouths, the gentlemen of the tavern observed a certain courtesy toward it, taking it sip after sip, and apparently finding each thimbleful full-flavored. And, Van noted, those whose glasses were closest to emptiness were the merriest; but an elegant sort of merriness it was, in which one did

courtly things and invented graceful turns of speech.

"Here's to the 'Green Hour,'" said Fifibert Coney, who sat near the fire. "May it grow to be sixty-five minutes long."

"Why so parsimonious?" asked his neighbor, a poet.

"Because I am a realist, and deal in possibilities," returned Mr. Coney, and he called for bottle, glass, and sugar, and Van saw whence the drink came. Its preparation by Coney consumed a lengthy time of breathless suspense on his part; as the water dripped from the white lump into the black liqueur, and caused little waves of cloudy milk to form, waves that curled and swayed until they had caught the colors of the night's lights.

"The Green Hour—*vive l'heure vert*," he said.

Van looked at the clock. It was nearing seven, and dinner; which was not to be purchased in such a place as this, where prices were for those who dined, not for those who merely ate to satisfy hunger. But the fascinating riddle of the colored hour and the curious drink held him, and he sat down and called the waiter, asking for its like; when it came, handling its ingredients in slavish imitation of Mr. Coney, whom he had watched narrowly.

He did not find the taste of the mixture to his liking; so he sat long over the drinking of it; and, as he sat, he began to forget that he was hungry, and that this place was not for him. He became as bold as any habitué, and even exchanged a glance or two over the pages of *Le Rire* with a lady who had young pomegranate blossoms in her hat, and who smiled to herself and thought he was a nice boy, for there was nothing in his glances except excited curiosity.

The pictures of the flâneurs, with their little glasses in their eyes, and their bulging bosoms of snow-white shirt, watching gauzy-garbed maidens of the ballet, set him to pondering on what performance he should witness that night, not considering that he could afford to attend none, for his room for

the week was unpaid for, and his laundry yet to come. But his ability to pay he questioned not at all. He arose and went back to the snowy streets, humming a gay little air, an air he would hear again to-night. He had forgotten all about his dinner, and was as light and carefree as any young man of millions.

The moon looked cheerful, and the snow was piling up under it like little white hills in a frozen meadow. Van, when he thought no one was looking, ran a little, and then slid as far as the impetus of his start would take him. Occasionally, when people passed, he would remember he was Villon, and look at them shiftily.

Trotting on in this wise, he came to a pawnbroker's shop in a side street, near where he lived, whose windows always fascinated him, because there were so many stories one could read in the curious articles exposed for sale. Van had bought a strangely beautiful plate there only a few weeks ago—beautiful to him, that is, so bizarre was it—of a vivid green stone oddly carved with Chinese letters, that resembled little pagoda-roofed tea houses running away. He stopped now before the window where he had first seen his plate—six sisters they had been, all green and all carved so. He was thinking how well that one plate looked on his mantel, and how much better two of them would look. Of course, he could not afford to buy it now, but he would ask the pawnbroker to set it aside and keep it until he could economize on some things he did not really want so much; for that plate helped vivify his dearly beloved China, where his tea came from, and where his mandarins nodded, and their servants beat on gongs.

Van saw the old pawnbroker moving uncertainly through the shop; the folds of an old and tattered dressing gown falling back from a skinny yellow wrist as he held up a candle that flickered in the drafty ramshackle old depository of yesterdays' goods. He was grumbling and whining over his rheumatism, as usual, and he snarled at his visitant;

snarled until Van stated the object of his visit in an imperious tone, according with the character of Master François of Paris; and then the pawnbroker opened his rheumy eyes a little wider, and the candle dipped like a ship in a heavy sea.

"You bought a plate?" he said. "A green plate with Chinese marks on it—funny little Chinese pictures?"

"One of six," said Van; "and I want to buy another."

The old man did not seem to hear, he was so busy winking his eyes and swallowing something in his throat. He made Van go ahead of him through the cluttered-up shop to his little back parlor, where a small fire of red-hot coals swung in an iron basket held up with chains; and this, you may be sure, pleased Master Van mightily, for he was very fond of real fires, and would have had one himself if he could have afforded it. The very loud-ticking clock in a mahogany case, with a mirror on which was painted a blue seascape, stood between some pots of dried fern and grasses, and it struck seven very loudly and importantly as Van warmed his hands.

"What do you want?" asked Van. "It is late, and I am going to the theater, and I must eat and put on my dress clothes."

He said all this very casually, as though putting on dress clothes and going to the theater were the sort of thing he did each night. It was the stuff he had drunk during the Green Hour that made him so careless; which was well for him, since it gave the old pawnbroker an idea that money was plentiful with him, and that he did not need any. The old pawnbroker was still finding some difficulty in speaking—he talked, when he did talk, as though he had died like a sucking pig with a whole round apple in his throat.

"The lady who sold those plates—she wants them back again—which is unforchunat; me having sold them. I got heirlooms myself and I got feelings. If she'd told me, I wouldn't sell—not me—not old Daddy Durand. He ain't

that sort, Daddy ain't. So I'll buy your plate back, young gentleman."

"Not you," said Van. "I like it myself. I want another like it."

"Which is unforchunat," said the old man, rubbing his yellow hands that looked like the ivories in his show case. "Very unforchunat, young gentleman. And you're not the sort of young gentleman not to oblige a lady? So sell me the-plate back, and I'll give you twice what you paid."

Van remembered the pictures he could summon up by the aid of the queer little tea-house letters, and he shook his head.

"I'm not going to sell it at all," he said, and doggedly repeated: "I want to buy another."

For the first time the old pawnbroker viewed him quickly and with suspicion.

"Somebody's been calling on you trying to buy that plate," he affirmed. "The stranger who was here the other night—who made out a list of all I sold the plates to—and then burned my ledger so I wouldn't give it to anybody else."

And he went off suddenly into strange and terrible oaths that betrayed the Whitechapel and Seven Dials ancestry of him, invoking weird paralyses of mind and limb upon the stranger and those of his third and fourth generation; but quieted down just as suddenly, and cringed and fawned on Van as before, while the basket of live coals swung a livid light athwart his yellow nostrils that were pinched into a point with rage.

"I'm old and I'm poor, but a gentleman at 'art," he said, in his wheedling way, trying to paw Van's shoulder. "And I'd give them plates to that poor little gal, yes, if fifty million duchesses of poor men's sweat was to come tapping on my winders with thousand-dollar gold pieces, and wanting them for their marble 'alls—so I would. And you ain't going to be less the gentleman than a poor tradesman—not a fine young gentleman like you. A hundred dollars!"

He spoke of the money sharply and quickly as he saw the shadow of some

one about to enter the shop door lying on the floor in the light of the single shop candle.

A hundred dollars was to Van a new and complete outfit of the clothes he loved so well; he saw himself arrayed in a piece of goods—a tweed that had caught his eye in the exclusive tailors months ago. He knew of a tie that would bring out its colors to perfection; and there was a sale of shifts, wonderful silken bargains, at his haberdasher's. He took so long to accept, consequent upon picturing himself in this brave array seated in Woodmansten Inn of a Sunday, that the old man snapped out again quickly:

"Hunner' an' fifty——"

Van turned and saw him, a vulture-like old figure, with an evil, anxious leer about him, and hands like unclean talons. He had read too much in books of valuable curios sold by mistake to fortunate individuals to speculate any longer over the pawnbroker's ignorance; and the wickedness of the old man's leer drove away any belief in his benevolence toward the mythical young lady of his tale.

Van was a dreamer of great dreams. He had waited many years for the portal of Romance to be lifted for him, and now that it was, he should dig his fingers into a treasure chest of golden doubloons, not of copper-penny bits. Some men do not know the face of Romance when her cheek is turned to them, but Van recognized her in that old back parlor, swinging to and fro a basket of fiery-red rubies. He would be worthy of her; in the colloquy of his day, "no piker."

"A thousand wouldn't buy it," he said lightly.

The old pawnbroker's face became shocking to behold, and his language terse and terrible.

"You know, then?" he asked with a wicked oath.

Van knew well enough by all the rules of such a situation that he must nod, and pretend largely that he did; and he did so, and smiled, and reached for a cigarette which he lighted with

a live coal, a thing he had read about and had often longed to do.

"You leave it to me," said the old pawnbroker, nodding as the great Sphinx of the Desert might nod—as one who knows a sufficiency of all things. "We'll share, you and I. You get me the plate back. I'll sell it for you, and we'll divide it like an apple, you and I? Eh?"

"Like a crab apple," agreed Van.

Now, as everybody knows, a crab apple generally splits into four quarters.

"You'll get twenty-five per cent," said Van, explaining. "And I'll be at the sale and bring my plate, then. There's my address, uncle, and you can send for me when you're ready."

He saw himself leaning over the rail of a tea ship bound for the land where the mandarins nod, and up the river where the pirate junks spread their bamboo sails. But outwardly he was calm and self-possessed as one worthy of Fortune's smiling; although the smell of the East was in his nostrils, and Mister Rudyard was ringing special temple bells to call him, and his heart was ringing a response.

"I'll take something on account, now," he said. This was the night of nights—the goddess Fortune must have her altar candles and her punk sticks burned to her.

"Say, a hundred," he went on coolly.

He had often wondered how it felt to jump carelessly into vehicles and bid drivers take him to places where the priceless fruits, and games, and wines of all countries were to be had; and to order of these same as much as the occasion demanded, without so much as a glance at the price of them. To loll back luxuriously in a chair in a velvet-draped stage box, and exchange personal glances with young ladies of beauty and charm, who diversified a dull life of dancing and singing in unison by occasionally accepting the invitations of young men in stage boxes to sup in gorgeous restaurants—or, at least, so Van had heard. Fortune should find him no hoarding, scraping

bourgeois knave. Her gifts should be well distributed.

"Yes—about a hundred," he said again. "Otherwise I'll do business direct, and leave you in the cold. But I imagine you could get me a better price, you old rogue! Do I get the hundred?"

It is improbable that he would have found speech such a ready servant to him if he had not drunken at the Green Hour. Here was he, a modest shipping clerk at eighteen dollars per week, coolly asking for more than a month's wages, and on security of which he knew nothing. Surely, it was a "Villonery" worthy of Francis himself. Van was beginning to take pride in his portrayal.

"And what do I know but that you'll never turn your toes this way again?" demanded the old pawnbroker morosely.

"You heard me, uncle," said Van lightly, and prepared to go back to the snowy streets; but the old man caught him by the shoulder, wheedling, fawning, and cringing as at first—though distrust was at his vitals, and the fear of being cozened of that "century" frosted his stomach and made him faint and ill. In the end, however, he counted it out in odds and ends and scraps of coin, and Van stowed them away blithely, whistling as though such sums sagged his pockets more than infrequently.

"To-morrow morning—at nine o'clock," said the old man, rubbing his misgiving stomach, and smelling thim- blerigging with his peaked fox's nose. He stood in the door, holding his candle, smiling in wintry fashion with a mouth that was never meant for mirth.

"At noon, uncle," yawned Van. "Merry Christmas to you"—and he went off, winking at the golden-melon moon, and, at the next corner, was so mightily amused at the jest he shared with the man up there, that he laughed loudly, and slapped a freezing leg.

"Ho—there—you," said he to a tramp taximan, who was nursing a disgruntled face as he stood near his bat-

tered car. "Take me home," said Mr. Van Gruenberg Luyties.

CHAPTER III.

ENTER DELILAH IN LAMB'S FLEECE.

Now picture, if you can, the thoughts that were crowding in upon Van as he stood before a mirror attending deftly and adroitly to the needs of evening dress. There was between him and any millionaire of great Babylon on the Hudson no difference on this night of nights; for spending, as should a gentleman, and not asking too much in return, his hundred dollars was adequate, and to-morrow his plate and he would part company to the tune of a score of hundreds, perhaps, and he knew of a tea ship sailing late in the afternoon for the Cathay of Marco Polo, which was what the country of Confucius meant to him. To-morrow, while his fellow clerks arose betimes, to hasten to the docks, he would lie awake, but peaceful, smoking his matutinal cigarette, and, arising, dress in leisurely fashion befitting one who was that day to become intimately acquainted with coin of the realm in large quantities.

He had completed his toilet, and now, fearing to leave the plate that had, written upon it in pagodaed tea houses his whole future, he opened the bosom of his stiff dress shirt—for, alas! although he knew fashion now decreed a soft one of ruffles and pleats, he had these others, and must, perforce, wear them until they frayed—and placed the precious thing within it, so that the waistband of his trousers held it in place; and, then, as he was about to extinguish his single jet of gas light, a tap came to his door, and, when he opened it, there was standing in the hall quite the most beautiful girl he had ever observed at close range; and, moreover, she was dressed in soft silks and nestling furs, and a chain showed upon her bare neck that would indicate the presence of a precious pendant hanging below it.

Now, the house where Van lived was of decent appearance, and of some age, and in it were the studios of artists and

the rooms of old bachelors who disliked change and had stayed there before the neighborhood fell on evil ways, so that there was something picturesque to it, and living there did not necessitate poverty. Van had the smallest of small hall rooms for his all, but on its walls hung pictures of his beloved tea countries and draperies of Japanese design, which, though cheaply bought, looked mysterious and expensive in half lights.

As for Van, in his courtly clothes, he must needs pretend that this chamber was only his sleeping closet, and that he had other and various rooms on either side of it. All this he explained before he thought to consider why this young lady with the young and beautiful face, and the soft and expensive clothes, should come a-tapping at his door; but when one has drunken at the Green Hour and is living in imagination, no gift of Lady Fortune seems strange or incredible.

"You are Mr. Van Gruenberg Luyties?" asked the young lady.

"I am," he said, placing a chair for her, and pushing the Japanese screen before his bed so that it was hidden.

"I am Miss Holly Lea," she said, acknowledging his bow with a little courtly one of her own. "I have a list here"—and she took it out and showed it to him. It was a fair copy in carbon, and his own name and address were written there plainly.

"Some time ago I was very, very poor, and I sold some plates to a pawnbroker. He has sold them to different people, now, and I am trying to get them back. The other night a list of the buyers was made by a friend of mine from the pawnshop ledger, and your name is among them. Believe me, sir," and she stretched forward two thin, girlish arms in long white mousquetaire gloves, "it is not for myself I want these plates. There is a terrible thing written on them—a very terrible thing that endangers the lives and happiness of many people. So I am buying them back to destroy them. If they fall into the hands of another person who wants them, many, many people will suffer.

So I want you to sell me yours. You will, won't you? Oh, I know you will!"

Now, could a dream be more satisfying than was this one? He was successfully portraying the young aristocratic clubman in his chambers at night, visited by the unhappy, but beautiful, young lady with a secret; and she was crying him mercy. So he fell, straightway, into the spirit of his part, and wished he had a short upturned mustache to stroke, as he lounged, perfectly at his ease, in impeccable evening dress, and surveyed her tolerantly—yes, even with a certain air of patronage. He had, by the magic of a few well-told lies, metamorphosed his humble hall room into the sleeping closet of a luxurious studio apartment such as Blankinship—who had painted royalty—had upstairs; and now, quite surely, he was in no way related to a shipping clerk dreaming of Chfna, but was a young man of money inclined to accede in a gentlemanly, courteous way to the solicitations of beauty in distress.

"You may have the plate—of course—dear lady," he returned, stroking the place where the mustache should have been.

"And how much can I have it for?" she asked, fumbling with a bag of gold mesh.

"Dear lady!" he protested quickly. It was what a gentleman in his position *must* say—there was no alternative.

"Oh, you must take *something*," she urged.

Now, what would a young, well-groomed clubman, who knew his book of Romance, say? Money? The thought was repulsive. But it *was* permitted that some fanciful graceful favor be asked, as homage to sovereign Beauty's Charm. He considered his position—here he was, a young gentleman of taste and means, attired for the evening, and about to take the usual pleasures of the town. Among such pleasures, there was one to be welcomed even by the most blasé member of the Racquet Club—the society of a lady so young, so tastefully attired, so beautiful.

"Perhaps my request will smack of impertinence, Miss Lea," he rejoined pleasantly. "But, for an odd thing, I have no engagements to-night—I was to have dined alone at my club, where I hoped to pick up some good friend to take to theater and supper. To substitute you for that friend would be a reward beyond my wildest hopes—"

She blushed painfully, and turned her head away from him; so, discreetly and in well-bred fashion, he turned the conversation quickly, and asked if he might smoke.

"Confound Tiffany," he said, perturbed. "I sent them my cigarette case two days ago to be repaired, and they've not sent it back."

He knew gentlemen, such as he was at that moment, carried little flat and curved boxes of gold with jeweled monograms and crests worked upon them.

"One of the brilliants fell out of my crest," he explained, smacking over the words as over some dainty morsel, as he went behind the bed screen and drew the plate from under the bosom of his dress shirt. There was no thought of the rail of a tea ship and a rapidly receding Manhattan sky line in his mind; those were the dreams of Van, the lucky shipping clerk, and the man who handed the plate to the young lady with an eighteenth-century bow was the young aristocrat, Van Gruenberg Luyties, standing in his studio apartment, and off to dine at his club.

"As you will, dear lady," he said; "that is the only payment I can accept."

"I will go with you," she cried in a warm burst of gratitude, and hugged the plate close to her. "Wait for me," she added, and ran out of the room. He could hear her pitpattering down the stairs.

At the curb stood a motor car, whose driver wore livery, and within sat a

man whose elegancies of dress were the despair even of well-dressed kings. She gave him the plate, and she whispered long and earnestly until he nodded a somewhat unwilling assent; and then she ran back into the house, and back to Van Gruenberg Luyties again.

The man in the motor car got out and closed the door behind his tall, lean, and clear-cut form. He had hidden the plate in the same place on his own person that Van had found for it on his, and he walked several steps away from the house and stood out of view; from where he saw a slim youth and a slender girl emerge from Van's house and enter the motor, and heard the driver given instructions to take them to a great theater, where a Parisian revue, ballet, and spectacle lasted from eight to twelve.

The house caretaker, a woman with rough red arms that she held akimbo, watched them enter the motor with a look which, on her native heath, would have indicated that she had seen a thundering big hobgoblin; a look that endured until a taxicab throbbed to a standstill before the house, and another man in evening dress, seeing her there, propounded an excited question.

"Faith and the young gentleman's gone in a car the like of your own to one of them theaters with a miss the like of which I've never laid me out eyes upon, and him with the rint of his room not paid at all at all," she said.

With the name of the theater on his mind, her questioner leaped back to his cab and bade his driver be off; and the silent watcher, the gentleman of the elegancies of dress, lighted a thin paper tube crested in gold, and, hearing trouble whistling like the wind in a ship's rigging, prepared to follow. But there was no hint of anything except an ample leisure in his movements, and he walked some distance before he hailed a taxicab.

TO BE CONCLUDED.

The second and concluding part of this story will appear two weeks hence in the January Month-end POPULAR, on sale December 23rd.

A Hole in the Make-up

By Robert Welles Ritchie

Author of "The Spirit Jerkers," "The Cat and the King," Etc.

The newspaper staff starts hustling when the order goes forth that "unless they pull a regular old-fashioned scream of a story some time while the Big Boss is in town, the blue envelope for theirs"

YES, I'm in town," came the high, shrill whine over the phone, "and I think you and I will have a little talk in your office some time this afternoon.

"Eh? Oh, you'll be there"—a wire-drawn note of sarcasm split the querulous falsetto. "Yes, I thought you would. Good-by."

McFadden, the new managing editor of the *Trumpet*—every managing editor of the *Trumpet* is a new one; he never has a chance to get stale—snapped the receiver on the hook, and wheeled about to his desk. His cigar was tipped to a truculent, fighting angle. He squeezed a blue pencil between his fingers until it cracked. His thumb searched for a push button on his desk, somewhere under the litter of inky proofs and discarded edition "dummies." McFadden swung his chair around to the door in the little cubby-hole that was his office, savagely expectant.

Holmes, the city editor, slouched in. Holmes always walked with one shoulder braced against an imaginary wall; so long had he "covered" police stations on the South Side, and braced up doorways in the Courts Building as "station man" and "swing man" on the *Record-Chronicle*, that his habit of easing himself against a perpendicular rest clung with him in his time of precarious *Trumpet* prosperity. But Holmes' brain had no such ease-hunting slant. In the profession he was "a live wire"; no man in the whole city

was quite as quick in smelling out a real live story and getting it into type.

McFadden began to bark at him before Holmes was inside the door. "It's true," he said. "That tip we got from the New York office! The Old Man's here, and he's coming over to rake us some time this afternoon—probably just about the time I'm making up the three o'clock."

"Well, what about it?" Holmes was a man who steadfastly refused to get excited. They said of him that when the Iroquois fire came along he gave out his assignments to his reporters as if he were sending them to cover a church trustees' row.

"Listen here, son." The managing editor had dropped his fighting voice, and he was speaking slowly, seriously, like a man who weighs the ultimate chance of success and failure in a big venture. "The Old Man's here for just one purpose. He wants the yellow stuff—more—more! He wants this new little pet of his to yelp so hard that the old conservative sheets of this town will have to fall in line or be left at the post. He's always ringing in the comparison with the *Inquirer* back in New York—and we suffer every time he does it."

"Uh-huh." Holmes started to roll a cigarette, his eyes out on the tangle of wires over near-by roofs.

"That's what he sent me out from New York for," McFadden continued, "to shoot the yellow into the *Trumpet*. I haven't given him enough of it. Remember that great Michigan Avenue

mystery we blew up on ten days ago; it was a Swede scrubwoman, and not 'a beautiful society debutante.' Another flimferdy like that, and the Old Man'll send you and me to the boneyard."

Holmes had no opinion to vouchsafe. "Well, there you are!" McFadden rasped, the familiar slave-driving roar, which is the accepted speech of the *Trumpet* shop, returning to displace the confidential note in his voice. "I get the wire currycomb from the Old Man some time soon, and you—why, man, if you don't pull a reg'lar old-fashioned scream of a story some time while the Big Boss is in town, the blue envelope for yours."

Just forty-five minutes later the supreme power from New York blew into McFadden's office unannounced. And the session began right there.

"But I'm telling you, Mr. Wrandolph," McFadden was saying in his silkiest voice, "Chicago isn't like New York. They simply won't do the live stuff—the sensational act here."

"Bosh!" The young Old Man, owner of a string of papers from ocean to ocean, and of ideas which made those papers startling as a string of Italian fireworks on a saint's day, smiled sardonically.

"They find a woman in the river here," McFadden wailed, "and in her pocket is the address of a cabman down in the stockyards. Pick a girl out of East River back home, and you'll locate Willie Van Studibilt's private check book and the locket of a fair-haired tot in her hand bag. Why, Pittsburgh millionaires never come to Chicago to put chorus girls under a pie crust!"

"I think, Mr. McFadden, that I'll have to look around and find some one with a little more sense of the dramatic." Mr. Wrandolph's smile was almost angelic. "You're going a little stale out here, where the salt air can't blow on your brow, Mr. McFadden. Now——"

Holmes coughed at the door. He made as if to retire when he saw who was the managing editor's visitor.

Mr. Wrandolph himself held up a delectable finger. "Don't go away, Mr.

Holmes; you might come in and hear what Mr. McFadden and I were discussing."

"Well, there's a pretty good little story——" Holmes stopped and cleared his throat deferentially. "I wanted to tip McFadden off to it."

"Story? Story?" Mr. Wrandolph chirped up perceptibly. "Well, let's have it."

The city editor managed to flash the highbinders' sign of caution to McFadden before he spoke.

"Man just came in here with the tip that there's a woman's body in Silver Lake—out near Brentwood, you know—swell suburb, where the top-notchers play golf and ride to hounds. Says he saw it when he was coming over on the ferry this morning—swell clothes, he says—body lying on a rock about twenty feet below the surface—water so clear he could even see the face and long hair straggling out behind. He didn't tip the coroner, but trotted right around here to give us the story. Listens good."

The newspaper magnate had followed Holmes' syncopated narrative with increasing attention. At the end he burst forth with towering enthusiasm.

"There's a story now! There's what I call a live one—front page with a layout of about five columns of cuts. Interviews with shocked residents—scandal of some rich young son of Brentwood's aristocracy hinted at—*Trumpet's* exclusive discovery of body and all that. Hey, McFadden?"

He turned on the managing editor with shining eyes. McFadden hurriedly tuned up an emergency show of enthusiasm, and reached for his phone.

"We'll send our best man down there to dig out the story," he exclaimed, "and an artist to make the sketches—photographer, too, if it won't be too dark."

"What!" There was a treble screech in Mr. Wrandolph's falsetto. "A diver—that's what we want. Aren't there any divers in Chicago? Diver appearing above the surface of the lake, with the fair young woman in his arms—strong hands reaching down from a

boat to take his burden from him—there's your picture!"

Holmes made a discreet retreat to the city room, Mr. Wrandolph trailing him to hang over his desk while he picked out the master word necromancer on his assignment sheet to do the story.

"We want a man who can see the heart interest in this thing, Mr. Holmes," came the excited pur over the city editor's shoulder. "We want a word picture—still waters of the lake there on the edge of the golf grounds—move the lake over to the golf grounds if it don't happen to be too far away; residents of palatial homes all about out on the lake in their motor boats unsuspecting the tragedy under limpid waves—grim copper head of diver reflecting rays of setting sun as it pushes above the water! You get me?"

Holmes nodded his head and called Meacham to the desk. To the dazed reporter the owner of the *Trumpet* went all over again the burnished points of the story he wanted, pounding emphasis with his lean forefinger against the edge of the city editor's desk. McFadden came out from his office to say that he had engaged a diver over the telephone. The diver would be at the Northwestern station with his outfit at five o'clock.

"Five o'clock!" Mr. Wrandolph lifted his voice in outraged protest. "Why, it's only two o'clock now. Why five?"

"First train to Silver Lake is at five, you see, Mr. Wrandolph," came McFadden's soothing interjection. "It's an hour's run out to the place."

"Can't wait for a regular train then," snapped the owner of newspaper playthings. "Dig up a special—engine and flat car, or engine and baggage car—to get out of Northwestern depot in an hour. Don't you know how to get a story, Mr. McFadden?"

"But, sir, our last edition goes down at six o'clock. We can't get it in time for that, even with a special train, I'm afraid. And if we have a diver fooling around that lake in broad daylight, and don't make the story in time for the last edition this afternoon, the morning

bunch will get tipped off and land the story themselves."

"Send that train," came the order peremptorily. "Diver gets there at four—body recovered in an hour—your reporter telephones the story in if he can't put it on the telegraph wire quick enough, and you make over the last edition and get an extra on the street just as soon as you can. Now, how's that?"

Mr. Wrandolph turned a beaming smile on his editors. But they did not see it. Holmes already had the Northwestern on the wire, and was clinching the order for the special train to Silver Lake. McFadden called up the diver and added a bonus of fifty dollars if he would have his air pump and his rubber suit down at the Northwestern yards by three o'clock. A photographer came tumbling down from the art rooms with his camera and his plate case dangling from his shoulder. A rapid-fire sketch artist accompanied him. Meacham, the luckless reporter chosen to go out on this assignment of the Old Man's, was cramming his pocket with copy paper as he frantically thumbed the pages of a railroad guide.

In five minutes the tornado had passed. The little machines of news were racing for the Northwestern station in a taxicab, the Old Man had departed for his hotel, and McFadden and Holmes were exchanging quizzical glances over the top of the city desk.

"I hope the story stands up for us," Holmes sighed.

"Glory be if it does," was McFadden's heartfelt prayer. "Oh, by the way, whereabouts in that Silver Lake did the tipster say the body was?"

Holmes very carefully licked the edge of a cigarette, patted down the tip, stuck it in his mouth, and lit it.

"Now that I come to think about it, he didn't say," was the city editor's reply, delivered with a cloud of blue smoke.

McFadden sat down hard on the edge of the desk.

"Well, for the love of—say, how big is this Silver Lake?"

"Search me, brother," the city editor murmured. "But I know if Meacham

don't land that body we're all out on the street."

Five o'clock came, then six, then seven. All the staff except two rewrite men had departed; there was an emergency mechanical force downstairs by the idle linotypes and matrix ovens. McFadden and Holmes, not daring to leave, were playing pinochle on the city desk. The telephone bell by Holmes' elbow tinkled. McFadden grabbed the receiver.

"No, Mr. Wrandolph, we haven't run off a special because we have nothing to put in it yet. What's that, Mr. Wrandolph? No, we haven't heard a peep from Meacham yet. Still searching, I guess. How's that? Oh, surely, I'll stay until ten o'clock to rush out the edition if we get the story. Yes, I'll call you up at the hotel when we get it."

The pinochle game was renewed. A half hour later the telephone bell rang again. Again McFadden put his ear to the little rubber cup.

"Huh? Yes—yes, what about it? The diver—what? Well, why can't he dive? Four feet of—say, wait a minute, Meacham."

McFadden turned a blank face to Holmes.

"Meacham says that Silver Lake's a bum pond—four feet in the deepest place. The diver can't dive because he's got nothing to dive into. Says there isn't any golf club anywhere around—lake's half a mile from the nearest swell residence, and there's four men from a slaughterhouse standing on the shore guying 'em. That's the kind of a swell sheet of water Silver Lake is. Wait a bit—"

He swung around to the phone again.

"Hey, Meacham! How big d'you say that lake was? Uh-huh, and you haven't found any body yet? Well, you listen to me. You get a flash light of that diver! I don't give a damn if he has to sit down on the bottom of the lake to make his head show over the surface, you get him coming up from the bottom of that lake in your picture. Rush the plates on to the office for a fake story of the search for the body

in the morning, even if we don't have a story about finding it.

"And, listen here, Meacham, you find some kind of a body in that lake or—don't come back!"

It was ten o'clock when the Old Man called up again.

"Yes, Mr. Wrandolph, Meacham says they're going over the lake," was McFadden's cheering bulletin. "Says a motor boat has her searchlight directed on the scene of the diving—yes, wealthy man volunteered to assist with his motor boat. Yes, he's sent flash lights of the diver on the way to the office already. We'll get up a story for the noon edition to-morrow to go around the pictures. Don't wait for anything more to-night? All right, Mr. Wrandolph."

Thereupon McFadden set one of the rewrite men to work.

"Dream out a story to carry the pictures," was his order. "Put a lot of the mystery stuff in it, play up the weird scene of the *Trumpet's* diving boat, and all that; but, say—go easy on describing what kind of a lake it is. And, say—don't make it too positive that there's any body in the lake. Probably your story won't get printed at all, but put your soul into it."

With those cheerful directions McFadden left the office. Holmes also went. There was nobody to give countenance to the hapless young man who was to put his soul into a trick box of modern journalism's conjuring.

McFadden beat the clock by twenty minutes the next morning; he was in his chair an hour before the first edition was scheduled for the press. He saw the rewrite man's story set up under a snappy head, which he wrote himself; he followed the cuts of the diver, sitting on the lake's bottom so that his head might sprout like an onion above the surface, from the art room to the forms, and finally to the stereotypers. Everything was ready to shoot out the big story from the presses, unless the thousand-armed god Chance, who rules the metropolitan afternoon newspaper, should sneeze and "pi" the make-up.

Mr. Wrandolph trotted in just twenty minutes before edition time. He went straight to the city desk, where Holmes and McFadden awaited the shock of his coming.

"Well—body found yet?" he queried briskly.

"Not yet, Mr. Wrandolph," McFadden answered, "but we're running a good live story of the search in the first edition, and we can easily claim the story as exclusive even if no body shows up."

"Heard from your reporter?" The Old Man's words were hardly spoken when the telephone bell sounded. Holmes had the receiver to his ear in an instant.

"Yes, Meacham——"

Mr. Wrandolph snatched the receiver from his hand and clapped his mouth to the transmitter.

"This is Mr. Wrandolph; you may give what you have to me."

For half a minute there was not a ripple of emotion on the bland face of the newspaper king. Then a little pucker appeared about the corners of his eyes, and his mouth twitched as if a smile was piling up high pressure behind his lips.

"You've been over every foot, you say? Uh-huh, and there's not a chance of your having overlooked any spot? And what did you say you found? Oh, so that is what it was. Well, you may report at the office now."

Mr. Wrandolph hung up the receiver.

"Mr. McFadden, I guess you may kill that Silver Lake story from the front page," he said, in his suavest tone. "If it leaves a big hole in the make-up, why, throw in that knock on the police you were holding over for a later edition;

knocks on the police are always good display stories. And, Mr. McFadden, you might slip that diver an extra fifty to keep his mouth shut."

Mr. Wrandolph went back to his hotel. Two hours later Meacham came in. Holmes had him by the lapels of his coat before he was three feet from the office door, and was dragging him into McFadden's cubby-hole.

"Now tell us," said he, when the startled reporter had regained his breath. "It's some wheeze on the Old Man—we know that."

"Why, didn't he tell you?" The reporter's eyes were gazellelike.

"Of course he didn't," McFadden snorted, shaking Meacham until his hat went askew. "What d'you suppose?"

"Well, listen," Meacham gurgled. "I bribed the diver to get into his rig and squat in four feet of water for his picture. You've got that, and a dandy picture it must be. And then he climbed out and helped me and the photographer to drag the lake."

"Drag it!" This from Holmes. "You were ordered to make the diver dive all over the lake."

"Listen, please." Meacham was now fanning for wind. "The lake was four boat's lengths long and four across, and the water was from two inches to four feet deep. So we dragged it—with a rake. Oh, yes, we dragged it all right. And at four o'clock this morning we found a body."

The two editors by common impulse brought their faces within six inches of Meacham's.

"What kind of a body?" whispered McFadden.

"A molly cat's," answered the reporter.



THE COSTUME OF A CONGRESSMAN

NOT every sight in Washington is seen by the average tourist. Take, for instance, Representative Stanley, of Kentucky, the chairman of the committee which investigated the steel trust. In the summer time he lives at the Y. M. C. A. building, and every morning, when he goes to take a plunge in the pool, he strides down the corridors clothed in a panama hat, an ornate dressing gown, and high black shoes—accomplishing an appearance which connects all the dignity of Julius Cæsar with all the Oriental gorgeousness of the Emperor of Japan.

Precious Water

By A. M. Chisholm

Author of "The Boss of Wind River," "The Winning Game," Etc.

CHAPTER XXVI.

JUST before utter blackness shut down on the land, Sandy McCrae dismounted and stripped saddle and pack from his horses. He looked up at the sky, shook his head, and, taking a light ax, cut two picket pins; after which he staked the horses out in the abundant pasture at the bottom of the draw, driving the pins in solidly beyond the possibility of pulling. Then he set about making a hasty camp.

Beside him a little spring bubbled out of the bottom of the draw and seeped away under tangled roots and fallen brush. A thirst-parched stranger might have ridden past twenty times on the bench above without suspecting its presence. The faint cattle trail leading to it entered the draw a quarter of a mile away, and led along under low but almost perpendicular banks.

Sandy's camp preparations were simple, but much more elaborate than if the night had been clear. Then he would have made his fire, boiled coffee, spread his bed, and gone to sleep beneath the stars; but because of the ominous storm cloud he constructed a lean-to by driving two forked stakes and joining them with a crosspiece. From these he slanted two poles to the ground, and on the poles laid a tarp, lashing it in place. The mouth of the lean-to faced away from the cloud bank. In addition it had the partial shelter of cottonwoods in full leaf. In this lean-to he collected his outfit. Next he made a fire and cooked supper. Afterward he smoked, squatting in the

mouth of his shelter, staring silently at the dying embers, listening to the rising wind sighing above him sweeping across the bare grasslands, but scarcely fanning the coals in his protected camp.

He felt no loneliness whatever. Solitary camps and the love of them were his by right of inheritance. He neither required nor desired companionship. Fire, food, tobacco, and solitude satisfied his inmost soul. This was the life he loved. The fact that he was a fugitive from the law did not trouble him at all; it merely gave an added zest to the situation. Just once he chuckled grimly as he recalled the faces of Glass and Pugh, when he had whirled on them, gun in hand. Glass had interpreted his intentions very correctly; he would have shot either or both on the slightest provocation. He was of the breed of the wolf, accustomed from childhood to deadly weapons, brought up in tradition of their use, and, like many outlaws who have bulked large in the history of the West, young enough to act on impulse without counting the ultimate cost.

As his little fire burned down he stepped out and regarded the darkened heavens. A heavy drop of rain struck his face and a flash of lightning ripped the black curtain, outlining bare banks, trees, and grazing horses for a brief instant. Sandy shrugged his shoulders philosophically. His shelter was good enough. He unrolled his bed, and by the simple process of removing moccasins and gun belt, was ready to retire. He got into his blankets, taking his gun with him, and rolled them around him, leaving his face exposed until the last.

"Now, then, rain!" he muttered. With which "now-I-lay-me" he drew the blanket completely over his head as a protection against mosquitoes, and, heedless of the smothering effect of it, which would have been insupportable to a city youth, was asleep in ten seconds.

He slept for, perhaps, an hour. At the end of that time he suddenly became broad awake. He could not have told what had aroused him, but he was sure something had. He threw back the smothering blanket from his head and lay listening.

Overhead the wind thrashed the tops of the trees, and roared hollowly as it rebounded from the farther side of the gulch. Rain, driven by the wind, slashed through the foliage and pattered against his primitive shelter. Thunder rolled in an endless fusillade, punctuated by flashes of lightning. But Sandy, without considering the matter, was quite sure that none of these things had awakened him. In a momentary lull of the storm, as he lay with his ear close to the ground, he thought he could hear the sound of hoofs coming up the draw, along the hard-beaten cattle trail.

It was barely possible that some wandering stock, drifting with the storm, were seeking the shelter of it; but it was more likely that range stock would have found cover to suit them before dark, and would stay in it till morning. Now, there is a difference between the tread of ridden and riderless animals, and Sandy thought that he had heard the former. Also, they were coming as he had come.

His route led from the settlements back to the hills where there was nobody and nothing. There was no road, no trail. Few people went there, not even Indians, and they not until the fall hunt, after the first snow. Therefore, it was suspicious that, on such a night, a rider or riders should be in his vicinity. His mind leaped to the conclusion that Glass had been released, had secured the services of somebody who knew the country, and had somehow made a good guess at the location of his first night's camp; for which they

were now searching in the darkness, hoping that the remains of his fire would betray him.

As he reached this conclusion, Sandy rolled out of his blankets, buckled his belt around his lean waist, slipped on his moccasins, and stepped out into the darkness.

Not a red spark showed where his fire had been, and Sandy smiled grimly. He would do all the surprising himself. He did not intend to be taken. Once more he heard the sound of hoofs, nearer. They seemed to approach a few yards, then to stop. He heard the sound of a breath blown from a horse's nostrils.

The storm, which had lulled momentarily, began again. The wind hit the draw viciously, with spatters of rain. Other sounds were indistinguishable. Sandy, crouching low to get any advancing object against what sky line there was, made out the shape of a mounted man. Horse and man stood like an equestrian statue, barely distinguishable, though but a few yards away.

The rider disappeared from the saddle. Sandy heard his feet crashing in the low bushes, heard him stumble and swear.

"Ought to be about here," words came faintly to Sandy's ears. "If ever I try to find—on a night like this—"

"Looking for me, sure," thought Sandy. "Maybe it's Glass; maybe it isn't. Wonder how many there are. Anyway, I'll fix this one."

Soft-footed as a great cat, he crept toward the voice. The man loomed in front of him; his back was turned. Sandy rose soundlessly behind him. With a sudden vicious sweep his left arm shot across the stranger's left shoulder and around his throat. His right hand shoved the muzzle of his gun beneath the man's right ear.

"Don't move or let one yip out of you!" he hissed tensely.

After one convulsive start the stranger stood motionless. "Nary move nor yip," he whispered confidentially into the night. "And if that gun's a light pull, be mighty careful of the trigger!"

"Talk and talk quiet," said Sandy. "How many are there of you?"

"Be mighty careful of that gun if you're seein' double that way!" the stranger admonished again nervously. "Was you expectin' twins or some-thin'?"

"You alone?"

"Yep."

"What's your name?"

"Smith."

"What you doing here?"

"Lookin' for the spring to camp by."

"Where you heading for?"

"Into the hills, prospectin'."

"Where's Glass?" Sandy asked suddenly.

"Search me. I got nothin' to do with that durn fool."

The tone and the words gave Sandy the surprise of his life. His arm dropped away from the stranger's throat, and his gun ceased to threaten the base of his skull.

"Tom McHale!" he cried.

"You sound some like a *cultus* young devil named McCrae," said McHale, peering at him in the dark. "Say, what in the flarin' blazes you doin' here?"

"Take some yourself," Sandy responded. "Are they after you, too?"

McHale shook his head sadly. "Sonny," said he, "you're too young to be havin' them cute little visions of things bein' after you. I reckon maybe we're pullin' two ways on one rope. Also, we ain't gettin' no dryer standin' here chewin' about it. Maybe you got a camp somewheres. S'pose you find the latchstring. Then we'll have a talk."

Thus admonished, Sandy led the way to his lean-to, rekindled the fire, helped picket McHale's horses, and set the coffeepot to boil. They drank coffee and smoked, going into details of their experiences of the preceding day. McHale was amazed to hear of Sandy's arrest by Glass, whom he had held in contempt. Sandy was jubilant over the shooting of Cross, regretful that he had not had a hand in it.

"You won't be so durn stuck on a gun fight after you've been in one or two," said McHale grimly. "Now let's see how she stacks up. I'm goin' to hide

out for a spell, but if I was you I'd go back and stand the racket."

"I guess *not*," said Sandy positively. "I don't want to do time if they've got me with the goods. And then some darn lawyer might make me give somebody else away by accident. You can't tell. I'll stay out with you. Where are you heading for?"

"I was aimin' to hit Bull's Pass, drop over the summit into the valley of the Klimminchuck, and camp somewheres. There was two trappers in there winter before last, and they told me they built them a right good cabin."

"That suits me."

"This will fix us up with water for the next two weeks," said McHale as he listened to the rain. "I'll bet Casey's got a grin on him a yard wide." He yawned. "Well, kid, we've got all that's comin' to us out of this one day. Let's hit them blankets. We better make an early start."

They were up in the early dawn, breakfasted, saddled, and packed, and headed for the hills. At noon they reached the foot of the pass. A narrow trail, often choked by fallen timber and small landslides, led them upward, winding in and out, sometimes near the bottom of an always ascending gorge, sometimes forsaking it for broad, flat benches parklike with stately trees, sometimes clinging precariously to shoulders of bare rock where a slip would have been fatal.

They camped that night near the summit, and next day dropped down into a valley, narrow, wooded, picturesque, where the Klimminchuck raced southward; and, following its course, camped that night at the edge of a beaver meadow, feasting on trout fresh caught from a deep pool beneath a short fall. And in the morning, still following the stream, they came to the trappers' cabin, set in a grove of young spruce.

It was built of small logs chinked with moss and clay, and most of the chinking had fallen out. Its roof was of poles covered with earth. A two-man bunk occupied much of the interior. The remainder was taken up

by a rough table, a bench, and a rusty wreck of a little sheet-iron stove. There was room to get in and stay in, and that was all. And yet two men had lived in that pen all winter, and emerged healthy and fairly good-tempered in the spring.

The companions peered through the door at the uninviting interior. The floor was a litter of rubbish, old clothes in a state of decomposition, leaves, bones, and rusty cans and pans. Young McCrae wrinkled an outraged nose.

"Pfaugh!" he snorted. "The shack's filthy. We can't use it."

"The smell is some obvious," McHale agreed. "Which bein' so, I reckon we build us a wikiup several nose lengths off."

They found a suitable spot, and there they built an elaborate lean-to. Having established themselves, they rested, smoked, and slept. In the evening they caught trout for supper and breakfast. There was absolutely nothing to do unless they created employment for themselves.

At the end of another day Sandy became restless; his capacity for loafing was exhausted.

"Let's go get a bear," he proposed.

"Deer's better meat," said McHale; "also easier to get. I won't climb after no bear."

Nevertheless, he accompanied Sandy down the valley. They saw no bear; but they shot a young buck, and returned to camp with the carcass lashed behind Sandy's saddle. Although it was close season, they needed the meat, and game wardens were not likely to intrude.

But when they came in sight of their camp they saw old Simon reclining in grandeur on their blankets, smoking.

"The nerve of that buck!" snorted McHale. "Get off of that bed, you old copperskin."

Simon obeyed, but he drew a letter from his pocket.

"Papah," said he. "Casey."

McHale read Casey's warning as to Dade, and whistled softly, passing the letter to Sandy.

"So this here Dade makes it a feud,

does he?" he said meditatively. "All right, he can have it that way. Same time, I'm goin' to keep out of trouble long as I can. I'll stay cached mighty close, and I'll run like blazes before I'll fight. Simon, how'd you find this camp?"

"Find um easy," said Simon scornfully. He pointed to the carcass of the deer. "S'pose you *mamook* cook um."

CHAPTER XXVII.

In the morning Sheila awoke, stiff and sore, but rested. Her strong young body, hard and well conditioned by a life in the open, and much healthy exercise, refused to indulge in the luxury of after effects of shock. Looking around, she found that her clothes were gone. But spread ready for her was a dainty morning costume, which she knew for Clyde Burnaby's. Dressing quickly, she entered the breakfast room.

Clyde, sitting by the window, rose, smiling, as she entered.

"I hope they fit," she said. "How do you feel, Miss McCrae?"

"They fit very well, and I feel first rate," said Sheila. "I'm sore in spots, but I'll limber up wher I get moving. Where is Mrs. Wade? I suppose Casey has gone to Talapus."

"Kitty's busy cleaning your riding clothes," Clyde replied. "Casey has gone; I haven't seen him."

It was the first time she had used his given name to a third person. It slipped out naturally, and she colored a trifle, but Sheila did not appear to notice. They breakfasted together, and later sat on the veranda enjoying the perfect morning after the storm. Naturally, they spoke of the events of the preceding day and night. Sheila took a practical view.

"It was lucky Tom McHale wasn't here," she said. "Somebody would have been hurt. That's what I was afraid of."

"It was very brave of you," said Clyde. "I admire you more than I can say. I want you to know it, Miss McCrae."

"Oh, that"—Sheila dismissed the

warm praise with a wave of her brown hand—"why, it wasn't anything; only a wet ride in the dark. If my horse had kept his feet it would have been all right. I simply had to come. Don't try to make me think myself a heroine. You'd do the same thing yourself for a friend."

"I'm afraid I couldn't. I'm not much of a rider, and I couldn't have found my way in the dark."

"Well, that's no credit to me. I've been riding all my life, and I know every foot of this country. Of course, I'd do anything for Casey or Tom."

"Yes," said Clyde, "they both think a great deal of you, I know."

"No more than I think of them—especially Casey. Some day I suppose he'll get married, and then I'll have to call him 'Mr. Dunne.'"

"That won't be necessary."

"Oh, yes, it will. His wife wouldn't stand for 'Casey.'"

"Yes, she will," said Clyde. Sheila turned and looked at her keenly. "We are going to be married," Clyde added.

"You don't mean it!" Sheila exclaimed. "Well, you are a lucky girl, if you don't mind my saying so. Casey's *white*. I congratulate you with all my heart. And he's lucky, too; yes, he is."

"You—you don't mind?" Clyde ventured. She thought it quite possible that Sheila might care for Casey, although convinced that he did not love her.

"Mind! Why should I mind?"

"You know I thought once"—Clyde hesitated—"you see you were such great friends—"

"You thought I might be fond of him? Why, so I am. Not in that way, though. I might have been if he had tried to make love to me, but he never did. You see, Miss Burnaby—"

"I wish you'd call me Clyde."

"If you'll call me Sheila. You see, Clyde, Casey and I are too much two of a kind. We'd never get on. You'll idealize him; I'd call him down. He'll talk out of his heart to you; he'd talk irrigation, and crops, and horses to me. You'll accept his judgment in most things as final; I'd want him to take

my opinion instead of his own. Oh, we'd make an awful mess of it! And so, my dear, don't you think that I'd want his love, even if I could get it. But at that he's the whitest man I know, and the best friend I ever had. You're lucky. I don't wonder that he fell in love with you, either. I wish to goodness I were as pretty."

"I'm glad," said Clyde, "that you haven't said anything about money. Thank you."

"It's not because I didn't think of it," Sheila admitted frankly. "But I know it makes no difference to Casey. Fact is, I wonder, knowing him as I do, that he hadn't some absurd scruples on that point."

"He had. He says we can't be married if he loses this ranch and the other lands."

"Nonsense," said Sheila practically. "He won't stay with that if you coax him; he couldn't."

Clyde laughed happily. "That's the nicest compliment I ever had. You're absolutely the first person I've told."

"Well, I'm much flattered," said Sheila. "When did it happen?"

"Last night."

"Everything happened last night. Was he—er—convincing in the part?"

But Clyde, laughing and blushing, refused details. Sheila wished to go home at once, but Clyde prevailed on her to wait for Casey. It was his wish.

"And that settles it from your point of view, of course," said Sheila. "Well, I'll wait."

Casey returned at noon. Clyde met him halfway between the stable and the house, bareheaded, the fresh wind fluttering her skirts and spinning little tendrils of coppery gold across her forehead. He would have taken both her hands, but she put them behind her, laughing.

"Not here, sir!"

"It's my ranch and my girl."

"In order of merit?"

"My girl and my ranch, then. But tell me: How is Sheila?"

"Quite well, except for her bruises. What a plucky girl she is, Casey!"

"I should say she is," he agreed

heartily. "You must be friends. Somehow you never seemed to like her."

"I understand her better now. I've told her about—us."

"Fine! And Kitty Wade?"

"Yes. Come in and face the music yourself."

But Casey got off lightly. They lunched without Wade, who had gone to town for mail; but as they were finishing the meal he entered.

"Casey," he cried, "I hope to Heaven I haven't foundered your horse, but I have all kinds of news for you!"

Casey's mouth tightened a little. "Let it go, Wade. Maybe it's all for the best."

"Part of this is, anyway. Don't look so glum; it's all right, I tell you. Now, this was the way of it: When I got my papers at the post office I saw that Western Air stock, which had been playing antics before, had gone clean crazy. It's been boosted sky-high. All sorts of rumors, the chief being that the Hess System people were responsible. So I wired for the latest. Got a reply that it was impossible to confirm rumors. Then, just as I was leaving, in comes a wire for Clyde which I herewith produce and put in as Exhibit A; and which, I strongly suspect, throws light on the situation. Open it, Clyde, for Heaven's sake, and put us out of our misery!"

Clyde tore the envelope with fingers which trembled slightly. She read the message and handed it to Casey.

"Aloud?" he asked, and she nodded. He read:

"Sending you power of attorney and proxy to vote shares recently purchased by your brokers. We now control corporation. Advise friends to drop lawsuit. They will get a square deal.
JIM."

Casey looked up. He did not understand. Wade struck him a violent blow on the back.

"Hooray!" he shouted. "It's blamed unprofessional, but I was never so glad to discontinue an action in my life. Clyde, you're a darling!" He caught her in his arms and whirled her around the room.

"Harrison!" Kitty cried, "have you gone crazy?"

Wade released Clyde, breathless, and sank into a chair.

"Bring me an expensive drink!" he commanded. "This needs celebrating."

"Will somebody tell me what's the matter with him?" Casey asked.

"What!" exclaimed the lawyer. "Don't you see it?"

"Not yet," Casey admitted.

"Why, you old dūb," cried Wade, "the wire is from Jim Hess, Clyde's uncle. His interests control Western Air. He promises you a square deal."

"Eh!" Casey ejaculated, staring at him.

"You blamed idiot!" snapped the lawyer, "why don't you thank Clyde? She started the old chief on the war-path after York's scalp."

Casey turned to her. "Tell me he isn't raving mad! Is it so?"

"It's so," she said, "but I——" He interrupted by catching her in his arms.

"Here, hold on, old man!" Wade protested. "Gratitude's a fine thing, but you're too——"

His wife took him by the arm. "Come on, Harrison, you stupid! You're worse than he is. Can't you understand anything?" Sheila's skirts were already fluttering through the door.

"Great Scott!" Wade exclaimed, "you don't mean——"

"You—you *bonehead!*" she cried, exasperated, and hustled him outside.

Careless of them, Casey held Clyde, looking down into her eyes. "Sweetheart," he said, "you never told me!"

"I was afraid."

"Of raising false hopes?"

"Not that, so much. But you wouldn't let me help you with money. And I was afraid that if you knew you'd consider yourself under an obligation and wouldn't—wouldn't——"

"Wouldn't what?"

"Wouldn't be sensible and tell me you loved me," she said softly. "You're so funny about such things, Casey. You aren't angry now, are you?"

"Angry?" he said. "Dear, I'd put

the savings of years into this land—years when I'd worked like a very slave to get enough cash together to swing some good deal when I should see it. That was my stake. And the others! Why, girl, you've saved Talapus to the McCraes, and their ranches for the others. We can't repay you."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

"Excuse *me*," said Wade, who had anticipated his entrance by many preliminary noises, "excuse me, my dear young friends, and, incidentally, accept my sincerest congratulations, felicitations, and—er—jubilations. Kindly listen to the following observations. Ahem! Far be it from me to horn in where I am as welcome as a wet dog. Nothing is farther from my desire than to short circuit two hearts——"

"Come right in, old man," said Casey. "What's the trouble?"

"I want my dinner," said Wade plaintively. "I Paul Revered on a shoe string. I Sheridaned without a commissariat. I brought the good news to Ghent on an empty tummy. Is thy servant a dog, that he should eat with a Chinaman? And I'd do that willingly; but, Casey, you know as well as I do that the only thing fit to drink Clyde's health in is in this room, and I warn you that if there is much more delay in doing so nothing which may occur hereafter will be either lucky or legal. While it is possibly true that a dinner of herbs where love is has a porterhouse, rare, and hashed brown spuds backed clean off the board, I submit, not being in love myself——"

"What's that?" cried Kitty Wade from the door.

"Why, it's a shame!" said Clyde. "He must be starving. It's all Casey's fault, too."

"Wouldn't he break away?" asked Wade. "I remember——"

"Harrison!" cried Kitty warningly.

"Well, then, do I eat?" he demanded.

"Yes. Anything to keep you quiet. I'll get your dinner myself."

Half an hour later Wade pushed back his chair with a sigh of satisfaction, lit a cigar, and joined the others.

"I feel better," he announced. "A child could play with me in comparative safety. Now let me tell you what else I discovered. In the first place, Cross is dead. I was talking to Shiller. He says that Tom wasn't to blame—corroborates his story, in fact, in every material particular. So Tom's all right on that score. My advice to him would be to come in and have his trial over."

"That isn't what's bothering him so much. It's these friends of Cross'. I don't blame him. Some sheriffs are mighty weak-kneed about such things."

"Well, I'm told that officers will be after him. Now as to your brother, Miss McCrae: Glass and Pugh are starting out to find him as soon as they get an outfit. Likely they've got started now."

"But they don't know where he is. That Glass—I should think he'd get lost if he left a trail."

"Pugh is different. They may get another man or two."

"I hope they don't find him," said Sheila gravely.

"So do I," Wade concurred. "I don't suppose a prosecution would be pushed now; but he resisted an officer, and anyway I wouldn't like to see him under arrest."

"You don't understand. Sandy wouldn't submit quietly."

"You think he'd try to bluff them again?"

"He isn't a bluff," said Casey. "The kid is serious-minded. That's the trouble. However, I've sent Tom word about Dade. Sandy may be with him, and Tom is cool. When Simon comes in we'll know more, and send him out again if he knows where the boy is."

Sheila declared that she must be going home. She refused Casey's offer to drive her over. She wanted to take the edge off Beaver Boy. His actions rankled in her mind. He needed a lesson, and she was going to give him one. And she refused absolutely to allow Casey to ride with her.

He had her horse saddled, and was giving a final pull at the latigos when she came out in her riding clothes.

"Cinch him up tight," she commanded. "Take a good pull at it; he's getting too foxy."

Beaver Boy grunted as Casey put his strength on the strap and the broad cinch bit into his glossy skin.

"And that's loose a-plenty," said his mistress. "He blows himself up like a turkey gobbler. I need a block and tackle to cinch him right." She shaded her eyes with her hand. "Somebody coming. I'll wait and see who it is."

Much to their surprise, it was none other than Farwell. He rode briskly, head up, shoulders back, with the air of a man whose mind is made up. But he refused to get off his horse, asking Sheila's permission to ride with her.

"I wanted to tell you," he said, "that you'll have water for the summer anyway. I've just had a wire from headquarters to shut down, and to turn the normal flow of the river back into its old channel." He smiled grimly. "They didn't know that the elements had attended to that. Thought you'd like to know. Might save you worry. Don't know the company's reason, and it's none of my business. I'm paying off the whole outfit to-night, including the men we were speaking of. Tomorrow I'll pull out myself. Glad to do it."

"Sorry to have you go," said Casey.

"You say it all right, but I know better," said Farwell bluntly. "I don't want to keep Miss McCrae waiting. Will you shake hands?"

Casey put out his hand. It was caught, thumb crotch to thumb crotch, in a grip of steel. He laughed as he threw every ounce of strength into his own fingers.

"Good man," said Farwell. "I like a man with a handgrip, and you've got it. Any time you're ready, Miss McCrae?"

Sheila went up as lightly as a boy. Beaver Boy was off as she touched the saddle. Farwell followed. They melted into the distance, galloping side by side, the dust, in spite of the night's rain, puffing up from the flying hoofs.

At the end of a mile Beaver Boy's exuberance had not subsided. He thrashed out with his heels, and gave

a tentative pitch. Farwell, who had been riding slightly behind, ranged up alongside.

"I should think you'd get a quiet horse," he said.

"I'll make this one quiet!" snapped Sheila, for she was still sore, and the hard pace had told on her temper through her bruises. "He's actually beginning to think he can do as he likes with *me*." Beaver Boy shied to show his independence, and she slashed him mercilessly with the quirt, setting her teeth as he plunged. "You would, would you, you brute? I'll show you!"

Farwell, riding in, grabbed for the headstall.

"Get away!" she flamed. "I'll fight this out with him now."

The question of supremacy took five minutes to settle. At the end of that time Beaver Boy relapsed ignominiously into servitude, smarting from the quirt and dripping sweat. Sheila put all her strength into a final cut. The big bay took it meekly with what was almost a sigh and a trembling quiver.

Farwell had watched the struggle with anxiety. "You won't have any more trouble with him for a while. He's afraid of you now."

"He'd better be. He's been obstinate for months, getting worse all the time. He had some notion in his head that he was merely *allowing* me to ride him. He did what he liked for a while last night when I was shaken up, and he had to have his lesson. No use letting any one else give it to him. He had to be shown that *I* was able to do it."

"That's so," said Farwell, "that's sense. The idea of you going out in the storm last night on that brute. No other girl would have done it. It was fine; but it was foolish."

"Nonsense! I'm not afraid of rain or a horse. Could I do anything else? It was up to me."

"Maybe. Well, you heard what I told Dunne about the water. That ought to be satisfactory to all you people."

"Naturally I'm glad."

"I'm going away," he continued. "Also, I'm chucking up my job. I'm

sorry I ever took it. It was sheer waste of time. I'm going to work for myself, now. I hoped I would catch you at Dunne's place. I wanted to say good-by."

"I am sorry you are going."

"That's what Dunne said—and he didn't mean it. Do you?"

"I usually mean what I say."

"Well, I didn't know. I wouldn't blame you if you were glad. I behaved like a—well, like a blackguard once."

"We needn't talk about that," said Sheila quietly. "That's over; I don't think of it."

"But I do. I'm rough, but I'm not that kind—usually. You let me down easy. If I could undo it I would; but I can't."

"No, it can't be undone. Why talk about it?"

"Because I keep thinking about it. I've kept away, as you wanted me to—and because I was ashamed of myself. Honestly, I've tried to do the best I could for your people—for your father. I tried my best to be a friend. And the end of it was that I started gossip, and you told me to keep away. That was pretty hard lines. It made me angry. And then I was jealous of Dunne."

"He is going to marry Miss Burnaby."

"Lucky devil!" growled Farwell dejectedly. "Things run smooth for *him*. I'll bet he doesn't think half as much of her as I do of you."

Sheila smiled for the first time. "You wouldn't tell her that."

"I'd tell it to anybody. It's a fact. Why, look here: I'm a practical man; I've no more imagination than a stump. And yet I've lain awake nights pretending to myself that you had let me kiss you willingly. How's that?"

Sheila laughed softly. "That's certainly going some, Mr. Farwell!"

"Well, it's what I do, anyway. It's about all the consolation I've got."

"Is it? Couldn't you get something better than that?"

"I could if you'd give me half a chance," he declared. "You turned me down hard and cold. There's a fine show for consolation, isn't there?"

"Perhaps some other girl——?" she suggested demurely.

"No!" Farwell rapped out bluntly. "I don't want any other girl. I don't like other girls. They make me tired. I'd rather work than fuss with them. It's easier. If I can't have you I don't want anybody."

Sheila laughed again. The color was high in her cheeks, and a strange light was shining in her clear eyes. She shot a glance at him, half amused, half serious.

"And if you had me you'd be tired of me in no time. I'm just plain girl."

"Plain girl nothing! You're the prettiest——"

"I'm not; I'm not even average."

"And the best and the most sensible and the pluckiest one I ever saw," he pursued, unheeding. "Don't tell me; I know. I've seen whole rafts of women. Dolls! Flirts! Gigglers! Fainters! Talking slush and thinking'slop! Soft, too, like dough. Eating filthy colored and flavored glucose by the pound. Yah! Not a sane idea, or a sound digestion, or a healthy body in the bunch. And as for dress, the average woman piles a lot of truck on her like a *klootch* at a potlatch, and cinches herself up in a——"

"Hush!" said Sheila.

"Huh!" said Farwell. "Why shouldn't I call things by their names? I never could see——"

"You aren't supposed to see. That's plenty. I won't be lectured on the follies of my sex."

"You're different from the others," said Farwell. "That's just it. You've got ideas apart from dress and gossip, the same as a man has. You're in good hard condition physically. You don't giggle, and titter, and make eyes, and expect a man to talk like a da—er—ah—that is, you don't expect a lot of silly compliments. I've never seen anybody like you. Talk of another girl! Bah! I couldn't stand one in the same house. It's you or no one."

"I don't think I'd wear well, Mr. Farwell. You'd get tired of me."

"No, I wouldn't, no, I wouldn't. I know what I'm talking about. I tell

you, I love you, Sheila. Do you think it's easy to say good-by and leave you? It's the hardest job I ever had. It's—it's—oh, it's hell, that's what it is. I used to love work just for the work's sake. But now, to think of grubbing away year after year, to get money that I can't use, that I don't want—that can't get me what I want! Oh, Lord! the hopeless years ahead! What's the good of them? What's the use? I wish I'd never seen this place—or you."

His deep voice rose, and fell, and rumbled uncertainly, shaken by feeling. He slouched dejectedly in his saddle, looking straight ahead as if his eyes beheld the emptiness of the years to come.

"Then why do you say good-by?" said Sheila.

Farwell started, half turning in the saddle. "Why? Because it's best. What's the use of hanging around? I have to take my medicine, don't I? I can take it easier away from here."

"I'm not so sure," she said hesitatingly, "that there will be any medicine to take."

Farwell's eyes opened wide as he stared at her.

"What do you mean by that? Don't fool with me, Sheila, for Heaven's sake. It's too serious a matter."

"Yes, it's serious," she agreed. She faced him frankly, the rich blood mounting beneath the tan of her cheeks. "What's the use of beating around the bush? When you kissed me I hated you. I struck you. But when Sandy came—and afterward—you seemed a good deal of a man. And so—I don't know—but it need not be good-by for good."

CHAPTER XXIX.

In the evening a stranger drove up to Chakchak. He was long and lean, and his hair was flecked with gray. His eyes were blue and clear, set rather wide apart, holding a calm, disconcerting stare. His clothes were much worn, frayed, and dusty. His movements were quiet and deliberate, and so was his speech.

"I am lookin'," he said, "for Mr. Dunne."

"That's my name," said Casey.

"Then I'd like a little private talk with you. My name is Dove; I'm actin' sheriff of this county while Fuller's sick." Evidently Acting Sheriff Dove was a man of direct speech.

"Glad to meet you, sheriff," said Casey. "Come right into my quarters. I've guests at the house, and I'm bunking here. Have a cigar, and tell me what I can do for you."

The sheriff lit a cigar very deliberately, and carefully pinched out the flame of the match with his fingers, surest of signs of one accustomed to the plains and woods. He removed the cigar, eyed it with approval, replaced it, and turned to his host.

"That's a right good smoke. I come to see you about this killin'. This here McHale worked for you, I'm told."

"He's my foreman."

"Where is he now?"

"I don't know."

"He come back here after the killin', collected up his outfit, got a pack horse, and made his get-away?"

"Yes."

"Told you about it, maybe?"

"Yes."

"But not where he was goin'?"

"No."

"Still, you can make a tol'able guess."

"I'm not guessing," Casey replied. "That killing was square, sheriff."

"I don't say it wasn't," Dove admitted. "I got nothing to do with that. My rule is, when there's a killin', to bring in the man who done it, and let the law 'tend to his case."

"Good rule, theoretically."

"And so," Sheriff Dove continued, with calm finality, "I'm out to bring in this here McHale."

Casey thereupon gave Tom's reasons for leaving, and expressed his opinion that he would come in and give himself up within a short time. The sheriff listened, smoking impassively.

"I dunno but what McHale acted pretty sensible," he commented. "He needn't worry about my not protectin'

him. I've give a prisoner a gun and let him help stand off a mob before now. Likewise, I've got lead in my system doin' it. However, that ain't the point. I can't wait 'round for him to come in. I got to get him. There's been quite a bunch of things happenin' down in this country, far as I can hear, that ain't none too law-abidin'."

Casey merely smiled genially.

"Mind you, I ain't no busybody," said the sheriff. "I get trouble enough in a regular way without huntin' for it. I've been hearin' things, but there bein' no complaint I've sat tight. Up to this Cross killin' nobody's been hurt. But that's serious and brings me in to take a hand. One of my deputies, Jack Pugh, is after a young feller named McCrae. There's lots of things don't speak well for respect for the law down here. I represent the law, and what hits it hits me."

"I understand. You've been straight with me, sheriff, and I appreciate it. I don't know exactly where McHale is, but I think if you found him and gave him a straight, decent talk he'd come in without any trouble. He doesn't want any. And I think you'll find him somewhere in the hills. That's all I can tell you now."

"Him and this young McCrae is tillikums, they tell me," the sheriff suggested. "You think maybe they've met up?"

"They may. There's a chance of it."

The sheriff considered. "This McCrae is a leetle mite headstrong, I'm told. Sorter apt to act rash."

"I'm afraid so."

The sheriff shook his head regretfully. "I'd ruther deal with a sure 'nough bad man than with a young feller like that," he observed. "They lack judgment, as a rule. I'm told he savvies a gun right well?"

"He's a center shot and quick," said Casey. "And, remember this, sheriff, if you run across him: he doesn't bluff. When he goes after a gun he goes after it to shoot with. I tell you this because I don't want to see anybody hurt. There's no harm in him, handled right,

but he's a kid, and you want to make allowances."

"I'm obliged to you, and I'll do it. Jack Pugh and Glass has started out after him already. They allow to prospect 'round in the hills till they find him. That's what I'll do with McHale."

Casey considered, and suddenly came to a decision.

"Anybody going with you?"

"No."

"Don't you want a deputy?"

"Any time I got to pack a deputy 'round with me to bring in one man there'll be a job open," the sheriff returned grimly. "I don't keep no corral full of deputies. I got Pugh and another, and they're both busy. I allow not to get lost. I've been out by myself before now."

"The reason I ask," said Casey, "is that I'd like to go with you myself. The boys might listen to me, and not to you. Mind, I'm not offering to guide you to them. You find your own trail. But I'll make all the peace talk I can if you do find them. Besides, there's this Dade. If he goes after Tom, there will be trouble. It's a feud. I declare myself in on it."

"I hate trouble and I love peace," said the sheriff. "No feuds is goin' to flourish around where I am. But you come along. You're actin' right. I'm glad to have you. Can you start in the mornin'?"

"Make it afternoon; I've things to see to first. How are you fixed for a horse?"

"I've got my own hoss back yonder in town. I hated to use him till I had to. That's why I hired a team."

"I have a pack horse. That's all we'll need. Bring your own outfit. I've plenty of grub here."

"That's mighty kind," said the sheriff. "The county will pay for your hoss and the grub."

"I don't want pay. This is my shout. I'm doing it for my friends."

"Well, your friends ought to be right obliged. I'll remember it. You won't find me makin' things harder. And now I'll pike along back to town."

They shook hands, and the sheriff

climbed back into the sagging buckboard and departed. Casey returned to his quarters and began to gather an outfit by the only practical method; that is to say, by piling everything he wanted in a heap. He was engaged in this occupation when Clyde knocked and entered.

"Why, Casey, whatever are you doing?"

He told her, and she approved his plan. She began to examine the heap he had thrown together on the table—knife, cartridges, fishhooks and line, compass, matches, sweater, poncho—with a girl's interest in such masculine possessions. But she exclaimed at the lack of toilet articles. Where were his razors, his hairbrushes?

"I'll get along without them."

"My goodness, boy, you'll be scrubby. Aren't you going to take even a—a toothbrush?"

"Yes, I'll do that," he laughed. "There, that's enough for to-night. Feng will put up grub in the morning. What have you done with Kitty Wade and her husband? Hadn't we better look them up? They may be making love on the sly."

"Do you need a chaperon so badly?" She slipped her arm in his. "Come on, then. They've gone for a walk up the ditch. We'll meet them and come back together. Only I want to impress upon you, Casey, that they must walk ahead of us—unless it gets very dark, indeed."

"I think I get you," he laughed. "We'll arrange that detail. Kitty Wade is a most sympathetic young matron."

They found the Wades, and their evening stroll became an inspection of the ranch. The effects of the rain were already visible in the color of the grain. It was darker, more vigorous, sending forth new shoots. The grasslands, where the network of roots had retained the earlier moisture, were lush and knee deep. Soon it would be ready to cut.

The beauty of the evening held them out of doors. It was good to idle in the twilight with the scent of clover in the nostrils, to walk among the grow-

ing things. It was sweet to exchange confidences, to plan for the future as man and woman have from the beginning; painting it brightly, draping it in rose and gold, a perfect picture wherein all the colors harmonized.

It was the time of dreams. They gazed into the future as children might look across an unknown sea, seeing in fancy its stately galleons, its tall treasure ships, its white-winged pleasure craft, its wondrous, palm-fringed islands, where summer abode always; but they had no eyes for leaden skies and sullen, shouldering swells spouting on hidden reefs, the great, gray bergs fog-hidden in the ship track, the drifting derelicts whose hopes were once as fair as their own. For God has mercifully arranged that these things shall be hidden from our eyes until the proper time.

Even when they reached the house they were not inclined to go indoors. They sat in the darkness, in pairs, apart, conversing in low tones, and so another hour slipped away. Back of them the house was dark; not a lamp was lighted. Only from Feng's kitchen a path of light streamed from the door. But as they were about to leave the veranda they heard the sound of hoofs approaching.

"Who on earth is coming at this time of night?" Wade asked.

"Sit quiet and we'll see," said Casey. His hand closed on the butt of a gun in his pocket, which he now carried constantly.

The hoofs slowed to a walk, and a shadowy horse and rider halted a few yards away. In the darkness of the veranda, with the deeper background of the building, they were invisible.

"Be th' mortal! but they've all gone to bed," muttered a disgusted voice. "An' what do yez know about that? 'Airly to bed an' airly to rise,' as the kids' dope books has it. Maybe ut makes a man healthy, but all the wealthy wise guys iver I knowed wint on th' well-known principle that home was the last place to close up. Faix, a man'll go home whin he's in no state f'r anny other place. Whoa! Howld still,

there's a good harrse, till I see what's best to do. Don't be so onaisy. Whoa, darlin'! Bad cess to ye, ye roach-backed Prodestan', kape off iv thim flower beds! Have yez no manners at all, at all? Be all th' saints in glory I'll larrup th' head off iv yez—or I w'u'd if I wasn't afraid ye'd buck me onto the roof. Yez have me crippled intirely as ut is."

"Not a word, for your life!" Wade whispered. "That's a star monologue!"

Feng, attracted by the voice, came to the door.

"Hallo! What wanchee?" he demanded.

"The country's overrun wid them yelly divils!" Mr. Quilty muttered. "What wanchee? Th' nerve iv him! Ye weathered-ivory monkey face, I've business wid yer betters!"

"You keepee hossee off flowah bed," commanded Feng. "What foh you lidee him all oveh?"

"Ask th' harrse!" Quilty retorted. "The sight iv yez onsettles him, low-grade baste as he is. Dom a Chinaman dead or alive, anyway!"

"You no good!" retorted Feng. "Me savvy you. You fool Ilishman, all same mick, all same flannel mout', all same bogtlotteh! You bum lailway man! You get dlunk, fo'get switch, t'lain lun off tack; you swingee lante'n, yellee 'All aboa'd'; you say, 'Jim Kli! what keepee Numbeh Eight?' You sellee ticket, knockeè down change. No good, lailway man! Me savvy you, all light."

"Ye cross iv a limon peel and a case iv jandhers!" cried Mr. Quilty in wrath at these aspersions on an honorable calling, "I'm a notion to get down an' slug the head off iv yez! Faix, ut's no murder to kill a Chinaman, but a bright jewel in me starry crown, ye long-nailed, rat-eatin', harrse-haired, pipe-hittin' slave iv th' black pill! I'll make yez think I'm a Hip Sing tong or a runaway freight on th' big hill. I'll slaughter yez, mind, if I get off. Do yez know where yez will go whin yez die at my hands?"

"Me go to heaven," said Feng, with comfortable conviction.

"Th' — ye say!" ejaculated Mr.

Quilty, in shocked amazement. "I think I see yè there!"

"You no see me," said Feng. "No Ilish lailway man stop in heaven. Me catchee heaven all light. Missionally say so."

"Is ut mish-naries they send to waste time on the loikes iv yeez?" snorted Mr. Quilty. "Hivin! Fine comp'ny ye'd be f'r the holy men and blessid saints an' martyrs an' pure, snow-white angels! Be th' Rock iv Cashel! I'll l'arn yez to insult th' heav'nly throng!"

So saying, he dropped ungracefully from his horse and made a rush for Feng, who retreated, slammed the screen door, and, from inside, threatened the storming party with a formidable butcher knife.

"Whurroo!" shouted Mr. Quilty, dancing on the steps. "Come out, ye yelly plague, knife and all, an' l'ave me knock the stuffin' out iv yez! Anyways, I'll tell ye what ye are. Ye're a——"

But Casey, fearful of Mr. Quilty's descriptive powers, saw fit to interrupt.

"Hello! What's all the row? That you, Corney?"

"Yer owner has saved yer life," Mr. Quilty informed Feng. "Sure ut's me, Casey. I'm after l'arnin' this Oriental curse iv the wurruld how to talk to his betters." He mounted the steps, peering suspiciously at the occupants of the veranda. "Who's these?" he demanded. "I can't see in the dark. Miss Burnaby, is ut, an' Misther Wade an' his leddy? I believe yez were here all the time!"

"We just came in from the other side," Casey lied manfully.

"Yes, ye did! I can see yez laughin', and I don't blame yez. 'Twas funny how scared the chink was. Well, ut does thim lower races good to be bawled out wanst in a while by their superiors."

Casey led the way indoors, and lighted the lamps. He established Mr. Quilty in a comfortable chair, with a cigar and a cold drink.

"Th' health and inclinations iv all here," said Mr. Quilty, waving his glass gracefully. "I'm glad to see yez all

lookin' so well, more partic'larly the leddies."

"Thank you, Mr. Quilty," said Clyde.

"It's very nice of you, Mr. Quilty," said Kitty Wade.

"It's not often I have the good fortune to be in leddies' society," Mr. Quilty continued. "Me tongue has lost th' right twist for compliments; but, sure, if ut hadn't ut wouldn't begin to do th' pair iv yez justice. Oh, divil th' bit iv soodher am I givin' yez. It's two pretty women yez are. Well, well, I'm an old felly who's had his day. Ye won't mind me. Annyways, wan iv yez has a man, an' th' other is spoken for, belike. Now whatever makes Casey, there, blush? I didn't think he knowed how. An' Miss Burnaby, too! What'll yez do whin they's rice lodged in yer clothes and yer hats, an' white ribbons on yer trunks, an' th' waiters grin whin ye go into the diner? Let me tell ye, now——"

"Please, please, Mr. Quilty!" Clyde pleaded.

"Have I rung th' bell?" he demanded.

"Bull's-eye," said Wade. "Own up to it, you two. It's obvious."

"Oh, is it?" said Clyde. "Well, if we're half as bad as you and Kitty were——"

"Don't mind him; he was in love with me once," said Kitty.

"He is yet," said Clyde.

"Faix, I don't wonder at ut," said Mr. Quilty gallantly.

"Very skillful shift of topic," said Wade. "I admit everything. I guess we were bad enough; but you and Casey are the limit."

"But look at th' fine excuse both iv thim has," said Mr. Quilty, beaming. "Here's long life an' happiness, an' may yer only troubles be—well, well, niver mind th' troubles. There's time enough to think iv them whin they come. Which puts me in mind that I do be forgettin' what I come for. Ut's about Tom. D'ye know where he's at?"

"Not exactly. Why?"

"Mebbe ye heard that th' water comp'ny is payin' off its men an' shuttin' down. Well then, there's all iv thim hard-faced tillikums iv Cross, deceased, paid off; an' instid iv gittin' dhrunk like dacint Christians, what do they do but outfit thimselves an' start back fer th' hills, six iv thim—an' a divil iv a harrd bunch, savin' th' leddies' presence. Wan iv thim made a brag that they'd get Tom. So I come out to tell yez, in case ye had word from him. An' they's officers out afther that young divil iv a brother iv Miss Sheila's. Somebody ought to tell the boys to skin their eyes, if so be they're hangin' around."

TO BE CONCLUDED.

The concluding chapters of this story will appear two weeks hence in the January Month-end POPULAR, on sale December 23rd.



A PARLIAMENTARY PLEASANTRY

THERE is throughout this fair land of ours a widespread impression that the noble gentlemen who occupy seats in the national House of Representatives are very careful about the language they use on the floor of the House. You hear a lot of talk about parliamentary language and the necessity for quiet and calm converse when that august body is in session.

You can judge whether or not this is true.

Victor Berger, the only Socialist who is a member of Congress, had flapped the wings of his eloquence and sailed into the empyrean blue. Just as he had reached the zenith of his oratorical course, he let out this flutelike song:

"When we look around us, we have to admit that the celebrated band of outlaws who operated under Robin Hood had nothing on the gang now supporting Roosevelt."

The Social Status of Coxswain Wells

By Robert A. Bachmann

Author of "The Failure of Fireroom Four," "The Boat That Wasn't," Etc.

A humorous and somewhat romantic story of the navy. How a coxswain disregarded the discrimination against a man in uniform and, with the quartermaster, broke into society

I WAS on the volunteer committee to show the crews of the visiting fleet what entertainments the city had provided, and I was proud of all that had been done. Thus, two men from the U. S. S. *Arizona* had become my special friends—a tall, red-haired quartermaster, with the frame of Cellini's Perseus, and blue eyes the color of the sea, such as I imagine it to be around the shallows of some Pacific coral island—and a dapper gunner's mate who wore what I learned later was a "tailor-made" uniform, the snug fit of which rather concealed the concentrated strength of him.

Aristides Black and Andrew Halligan were their names, but from the numerous salutations they received I discovered that in reality they were known as Risty and Bos. It was in connection with the city's pleasure to show hospitality to so fine a lot of men that I said:

"I don't understand the unjust discrimination that so many places of amusement make on the other coast against men in uniform; you never meet that sort of thing here."

"But you can't blame them in a way," said Halligan, "a queer lot get into the navy and slip through the net at the training stations."

I agreed with him, but the number to me seemed inconsiderable. "That is true of any college or institution where a large number of men are gathered together. Some bad ones are bound to happen in a crowd—even in a theological seminary."

I looked toward Risty for support.

"You're both right. All ships have their star members, their crooks, and the in-betweens. During the fleet's tour of the world they had a university club organized among the crews. You could never tell whether you were talking to a coalheaver freshman from Harvard or a jack-of-the-dust senior from Yale. On the other hand, I took a cruise to the Fijis once with the worst gang of yeggmen and second-story artists I ever hope to run across. One of them stabbed a water tender at Suva, and another clubbed the master-at-arms of the berth deck at Samoa. Of course, a general court cleaned them up in a short time. A great safeguard for these crooks is the fact that the uniform makes all of us men look an awful lot alike. It takes a long while to spot the black sheep, and even then you can't be too sure."

"To the untrained eye, perhaps, but not to an officer or shipmate," I suggested.

"To anybody. I was fooled myself once."

"You were?" said I shortly, but with a great deal of interrogation in my tone. I awaited his response placidly, though inwardly eager, for my brief knowledge of him had taught me to expect, under the present conditions, either total silence or a well-expanded experience from his eventful past.

"He fooled the whole ship's company," Risty went on, to my delight, as we turned off Market Street into Ellis, where two blocks up a row of automo-

biles awaited us. He talked as we continued our way. This is Risty's story:

There wasn't a salt-crusted, horny-handed one of us who got the true bearings of Mr. Johnny Wells, recently coxswain, U. S. N., and now—but I'm skipping the important interval of this. You ought to get it gradual—very gradual—like I did, and at that I was the first to find out, but only because he, understand, he, for no real accountable reason, tipped me off to it himself.

When I shipped over at Kansas City—this is my second cruise, you know, and there's only two years and a butt left of that—sitting in the recruiting office waiting for my transportation to be made out, a nice-looking, well-dressed young chap dropped in, who appeared to have everything in the world except a desire to work.

The recruiting officer assisted him to fill out his application blank, and there seemed to be no hitch for a while, then the proceedings came to a halt, and I heard the young lieutenant say: "Well, were you ever arrested before?"

Just at this highly interesting moment the yeoman finished my papers and called me over to his desk. I could barely hear the rookie admit that he had been, and then no more because the yeoman began explaining this and that till I couldn't catch a word of what the other two said. I filed out when my business was finished, and in twenty minutes the incident was forgotten.

Now I'm going to shift the scenes on you. We are no longer in the wind-swept—and I hate to say only wind-swept—streets of Kansas City. We have cruised some, and at present the good ship *Arizona* is back from fleet maneuvers off Santa Barbara Channel, lying at the foot of Folsom Street in San Francisco Bay.

One Sunday afternoon, shortly after I was coming off quartermaster watch, and had nothing to do but watch the gangways for excitement, I saw a big decked-over gasoline launch standing out for us. She wasn't a passenger shore boat by the rugs and cushions in her and the brass rails that shone

like streaks of yellow flame in the afternoon sun.

When she came closer I saw there were some people in the stern—several elderly persons and a young girl.

I've cruised around some—a good deal in those countries that boast of their women, and I've seen them all, from the highly ornamented porcelain-faced dolls of China to the long-lashed languorous beauties of Samoa, but this child of twenty just threw the rest of the atlas, including the major portion of the United States, into the wastebasket. And, of course, I wasn't the only one with good eyes on the ship.

When they stepped aboard, the officer of the deck, four side boys, both messengers, the executive officer's yeoman, and the captain's marine just naturally gravitated around her as close as they could, without having it appear noticeable.

Enters Johnny Wells now, clean uniform, good-looking, and soft-pedal voice. What I or anybody knew about Johnny up to this time was very little. He came with a draft from the *Pensacola*, was one of my shell men at target practice four months later, showed that somewhere he had picked up a lot of theoretical knowledge about mechanics, and hated to distribute information about his past.

I had one little experience with him. At Valparaiso I was matched to box some renegade American claiming to be a fighter, and as sometimes these fellows turn out to be ex-champions picking up easy money, I trained for the fight.

I worked out daily with any one who wanted the exercise, and one afternoon up steps Johnny Wells. I wore pillows in these exercise gallops to save my hands, but I tell you, at the close of the third round I knew I had been going with a man who could sting you through a mattress.

At the finish we pulled off our gloves and shook hands.

"You mussed me up a little, but I'll be ready for another little go in a few days," he said.

"Sorry if I jolted you too hard," I

replied, wiping the blood from a split lip, "but you know there's a little bit of a kick in your own wallop."

Both of us laughed, and he came down daily after that for a few minutes. But even after that I couldn't break through the ice of his character. He behaved well enough, almost too nice, in fact, which at times gave him a somewhat superior manner that I didn't like at all, and, naturally, when a man withholds all information about his previous life you get suspicious of him.

Getting back to the girl that came off in the launch—when she stepped on the deck and threw everybody into a trance, Johnny Wells came forward from having dressed the captain's ladder for a tea party, and when he saw this girl he stopped dead still as if some one had shot him suddenly through the head. But just for a second or two. Then he stepped up quickly, as though the captain of the ship was merely second in command, and with the most polite confidence I ever saw, invited the party to inspect the ship under his personal supervision. And what is more important, he got away with it so neatly, a cat stealing a chop would have looked like a rheumatic hippopotamus in comparison.

I saw all this and determined to watch developments. Accordingly, I made a quick change and planted myself on the forward bridge by the Ardois signal box, knowing they would probably pass there. Sure enough, they appeared as expected, Johnny talking away like a locoed Chinaman.

When he saw me he broke into a smile, grabbed me by the arm, and dragged me over to the girl.

"Allow me to present Mr. Black, Miss Armitage. This is the man who is responsible for most of the athletic trophies I have shown you this afternoon."

You should have heard the tone of voice he did it in. He put on all the manners of a midshipman when the admiral's wife comes aboard. He looked like a totally different person, and for the first time since I knew him

I fancied that somewhere I had met him before.

The girl was great—all silk and lace, and as trim as a ship cleared for action. She had no jewelry visible, excepting a rope of pearls—I'd hate to tell a poor man what they were worth. I've been to Sulu and the Fijis and I know a pearl down to the quarter of a dollar. And it seemed to me that to anybody who knew pearls that rope must have looked like the Bank of England. I fancied, too, that Johnny Wells had carefully logged that half a fathom of crystallized rainbow, for he couldn't keep from looking at them every time the girl's head was momentarily turned away.

I'm frank to admit there was too much guesswork about Johnny's record to make me very easy about him, and I wondered if meeting this girl would produce any results.

It did. We stayed with them till they stepped off the gangway platform onto the deck of their yacht, and when we returned aboard Johnny grabbed me by the arm and dragged me back to our hang-out, by the barber shop, on the gun deck.

"Now," he said, "now, what do you think of her for a girl?"

"I hate to expose my ignorance of the English language or I'd try and tell you," said I.

"I was beginning to believe there weren't any like that," he mumbled, "and to think I had to come into the navy to find her!"

"Well, old pal," I cautioned him, "pay off a little and forget it. Men like you and me are not for her kind. It's like passing by a Fifth Avenue jewelry shop. We stop, attracted by the brilliancy of the window display and we admire. Some of us with a lot of imagination might even dream that we could possess the jewels, but after that we pass on. They're not for us. We are lucky to ever see them again."

He turned sharply on me. "Do you think I'm satisfied never to see her again—to give her up completely as though I didn't know she existed? Why, Risty, she's one girl in ten thousand,

and it would take a harder beating than you ever gave me to drive it out of my head not to try and become better acquainted with her."

Well, that didn't strike me as particularly emphatic because all the beating I had ever been able to give him could be handed to a canary bird without spraining his wing.

"But think of her," I said. "She couldn't accept attentions from you. She'd be looked down upon by everybody in her social circle—if not actually disgraced by being seen with a man in a bluejacket's uniform."

He looked at me a minute and then broke into an odd kind of laugh that didn't have any more fun in it than a piece of crape.

"Why, you poor flatfoot, you! What do you know about social circles? And as far as the uniform goes—this is as straight as the will of God—the uniform never disgraced anybody. It's the uniform that gets disgraced, in and out of the service, that I know. I know, too, the kind of man you think she ought to have paying her attentions, and because I've done the only good work I ever did in my life——"

Here he spluttered and broke off just as I thought he would let go something concerning himself, but he knocked off being serious all at once, and smiled good-naturedly again.

"Then I suppose you made some headway with her?" I asked.

"I hope I have," he replied uncertainly. "I asked her to let me send her some small souvenirs of the ship—cap ribbons and a C. P. O. pin, and she told me I might."

Three days later he came back from liberty, and after swearing me to secrecy, he pulled a small package from his blouse all tied up with cap ribbons, which he proceeded to unfasten. After it was undone he gave it to me and stood back to watch the effect. I took the lid off, and there was a regulation C. P. O. cap pin stuck into a velvet pad—just a plain pin, costing one dollar, but say, it was fixed up so a year's pay wouldn't buy it—gold-plated and platinum filigree filling, and

in the anchor just inside each fluke were set two pearls—two pink pearls—having the real delicate rose pink, of which there aren't but a few hundred in the world. I couldn't choke down a gasp. In an instant it flashed through me that Johnny was playing a big game for all there was in it—a clear case of rich girl and poor adventurer.

"She likes pearls," was his brief remark, when I passed him the box in silence.

"Yes, I noticed that myself," was all I could say, but at the same time I made a resolve to do all I could to break up his little game, though as to how I could prove useful to the girl I didn't know.

A week passed, and Wells went about his duties as usual, so quietly I was beginning to think his mind was getting off the subject, when one day he rushes up to me with a lavender envelope in his hand and acts like a crazy man, asking me to read it.

It was an invitation to dinner, not only for Wells, but also for me, written in the most charming cordial way possible. I was so surprised I couldn't say anything, but just looked blankly into Johnny's beaming face.

"Well?" says he, and I coughed. "You're going, aren't you?"

"I don't know," I told him. "These shore dinners ruin your appetite for salt horse and prunes; besides, what kind of a rig are we supposed to have on?"

"You have a full-dress suit, haven't you?" he asked.

"A what?" I gasped, stunned by the nerve of him—me in a full-dress suit!

"A full-dress suit—evening clothes—a spike tail," he went on to explain.

"Cut out the footnotes," I said. "I got your signal all right, but you know private baths and moth-proof wardrobes are fearfully scarce on this ocean liner, so I sold my outfit, including a fur coat and an opera hat, to Harry Lehr, and now I have to poke around in my uniform like a common, ordinary sailor."

He was too serious to mind that in the least.

"Very well, I'll see that you are properly fitted out. I'll have everything for you at the Palace Hotel; and by the way, you will be my guest that night."

That was going a little too strong for me even from Johnny Wells, but it showed me that he was not going to overlook a thing in throwing this bluff of his, and I saw the necessity of being more careful of Miss Armitage's welfare than ever, so I accepted his invitation and agreed to wear the suit if it fitted.

The night of the dinner I found a note at the hotel desk from Johnny, telling me to get ready and wait for him. I went to my room and crawled into a stack of joy clothes I found piled up for me on the bed. When I finished I felt like apologizing to the waiters and sneaking out of the place by the kitchen gangway.

As I stood there tempted to call it all off, the door flies open and in steps Johnny Wells—all flags and pennants. I turn out best in a uniform myself, but I know real "cit's" clothes when I see them, and Johnny Wells was regulation from the white flower in his lapel to the dull leather pumps on his feet.

But the instant I saw him dressed like that, a veil was raised from my eyes and I remembered clear as day just exactly where and when I had seen him before—Johnny Wells was the same smooth lad I had met in the recruiting office in Kansas City! After being turned down there he was probably more careful in the next place, and avoided any unpleasant references to his previous career. At any rate, he had enlisted somewhere, and here he was looking as honest as an uncut watermelon, making love to the best and most beautiful girl in San Francisco!

I couldn't help feeling a tinge of regret as I looked at him, dressed that way, for Johnny had a great face, and I thought what a pity it was that such a man should be so rotten and criminal in his interior. He broke into my sentimental streak with a hearty laugh that sounded darn poor coming from him.

"You look great, Risty—Ned Greenway will have you on his list—we'll have a cocktail and then make a start. Time's nearly up."

I didn't know anything about Greenway, but the cocktail talk was good sense, and as it was nearly half past seven by this time, I agreed to anything as long as it traveled the gastric route.

Well, we had one more, and then Johnny led the way to the street. I thought all along the coat he carried was rather heavy for ordinary use, and when we got to the sidewalk I saw why he had it. Drawn up alongside the curb was a big blue and yellow automobile, around which a crowd of people stood gaping in wonder. Johnny pushed through, cranked her up, and made me pile after him into the front seat. I didn't know whether it was the engine or my brain that was racing around like mad. There was a shifting of a lever, the click of a throttle, the screech of a diabolical horn, and I felt ourselves getting into the middle of the street. He steered the machine like a true helmsman, never off his course a quarter point, whether we were dodging the traffic or running free over asphalt.

"What do you think of this little cart?" he asked, after we had crawled up a hill that looked like the side of a house.

"She seems to be there with the kick," I replied, "and the nickel-plated finish isn't altogether displeasing."

I wondered whose chauffeur he had been to become so expert with an automobile.

"She's a ninety-horse-power Honfleur, with an American body. If I want her to, she'll waltz. Here we are."

We drove into the carriage way of a big dreadnaught kind of a house, and he came to an accurate halt in front of the door.

Then my troubles began. I tried to be sociable with a refined-looking elderly man who met us in the hall, but Johnny kicked me and whispered: "Chop it—it's the butler," and when I

met the family I cut the old man dead, thinking he was another one of the same kind, for of the two, the butler's clothes fitted him best.

Old lady Armitage made it plain that she had nothing to do with the present affair; that the girl and her dad had combined forces against her, and that as far as she was concerned she felt the disgrace of it so bitterly that even our borrowed dress suits couldn't square in the least the outrage of having a couple of sailors in for dinner.

Johnny Wells, I could see, was on trial for his life. There evidently had been an eruption in the family over him, the girl, to my sorrow, probably liking him very much, and asserting her American independence in pleasing herself regarding affairs of the heart. The mother, on the other hand, very justly drew the social line, and realized that her daughter's case was only one of temporary blind love. The dinner was a sort of compromise. Miss Armitage feeling confident that Johnny would prove himself a gentleman, and the mother hoping that he would prove so impossible that even her daughter would have to acknowledge him hopeless. I was allowed in to make the humiliation complete, and the old man was the official referee.

Miss Armitage was wonderful. She never betrayed in the slightest manner the anxiety she must have felt, and inwardly I was heartbroken for fear that Johnny Wells would make good and lead her into making a very dangerous step. I didn't even see how I could do much to prevent it, for, after all, I was dealing only on surmise.

When we sat down to the dinner table I found that I had drawn the old lady. That was a blow. What could I say to her, she not being particularly interested in target practice, boat racing, football, or other sports, and I being a huge deficit in bridge, female clothes, and suffragettes? It was awful. Her conversation at the start was as plentiful as the words of a moving-picture play. I didn't care much, only a little talk would have kept her from hearing me splash the

soup. At last she opened up with the following:

"What opportunities have sailors for becoming officers?" I saw Johnny looking at me from the other side of the table.

"Very good," said I. "They take ten men from the ranks every year, but at that most of us don't try for the promotion."

"What!" she exclaimed. "You mean to say you lack ambition enough to raise yourself from your present surroundings to become a gentleman?"

I caught sight of Johnny's face getting a tint more pink as he caught the remark across the table. "I'll tell you, Mrs. Armitage," he said, very sweetly, however. "I wouldn't have a commission for anything—it utterly ruins your social status."

"I must say, Mr. Wells, I don't quite follow you," she replied, and the expression on her face was most puzzled.

"It's a peculiar state of affairs," he explained. "As a sailor, for instance, I can run all the motor boats and automobiles I want, do as I like with them, and not be interfered with. As an officer, if the *Skipperina* ever passed the captain's gig I'd do ten days under the hatches—suspension—whereas now I can cut rings around the admiral's barge, make faces at his coxswain, and all I get is an unofficial cussing out from the old man and his crew."

"But what's the *Skipperina*?" she asked.

"Oh," said he, "that's my new hydroplane, on the way now from New York. Tallavin got her for me. He also sent my motor on—you may have seen it as we drove up."

"What Tallavin is that?" asked Mrs. Armitage, losing the kinks in her spine at the mention of the name.

"Why, Jack Tallavin—old Cooper Tallavin's son—you must know the name surely. Mrs. Cooper Tallavin's a great friend of mother's."

Well, I thought the whites of old lady Armitage's eyes would crack. Miss Armitage was looking at Johnny as though he was a stranger at the table,

and the old man's head threatened to sink beneath his collar.

"Your family is intimate with the Cooper Tallavin's?" says the old lady, unable to get it correct into her head.

"Surely there is nothing strange about that," says Johnny. "They are fully the equal of our family socially, and, besides, Mrs. Tallavin is a most attractive woman otherwise."

Miss Armitage's eyes remained fixed on Johnny. What she thought no one could tell accurately, but it's a safe bet that she had never heard Johnny tell any family history like that before. As for myself I kept my opinion in check till we could straighten out a little matter of previous arrest which he had on his record, according to my memory, and which wasn't being mentioned in the slightest so far.

"Why, I don't quite understand!" exclaimed Mrs. Armitage. "A son of one of the best New York families in the navy? It's too absurd——"

Johnny smiled, and before he could say anything the butler came in and told Mrs. Armitage she was wanted on the telephone.

Johnny turned to the old man as Mrs. Armitage excused herself.

"You have a military bearing, sir. Have you ever belonged to any organization?"

Up came the old man's shoulders, and his lips puckered proudly.

"Young man, I was with Grant at Appomattox. I didn't see any fighting, but I wore the uniform, and I still have it, I'm proud to say."

It was beginning to look like a landslide for Johnny when Mrs. Armitage returned. I never before or since saw such a change of expression on a person's face.

"How remarkable!" she beamed. "Mrs. DeHaven just called up to speak to me about you, Mr. Wells. She

knows your family well. I'm terribly sorry. Why didn't you tell me who you were before?"

Johnny looked at his watch. "Mrs. DeHaven is very kind and prompt. She told me she would call you up at nine so that there could be no mistake. You see, Helen and I had decided, in case this dinner came off satisfactorily, to announce our engagement, and Mrs. DeHaven promised to assist us. She was on the dot."

The old man jumped to his feet with a glass of champagne in his hand. "I'm glad you're the son of your dad, my boy, but just the same, here's to the army and navy, and to both of you!"

Mrs. Armitage, for an instant, cast a disapproving glance at her patriotic husband; then she, too, raised a glass to her lips and smiled at the couple. I blushed.

Now, at this stage of the game, I couldn't stand the pressure any longer. When we got up from dinner I drew Johnny Wells to one side and demanded an explanation.

"You may be all you claim, but at Kansas City you were turned down for having been arrested before. Is that true?"

"Every word," he said, "excepting that I wasn't turned down. I was shipped all right."

"But you were arrested?"

"Twice," he replied. "Once in a rube town near Albany, and once on Fifth Avenue, New York; both times I was speeding my automobile. Will you come to my wedding on the twenty-seventh of next month?"

"Great Scott!" I groaned. "If you won't let this get out on me, I will. But you are going to buy your way out, aren't you?"

"Not much," says he. "I like it and I'll finish my cruise. That's in the contract. Old lady Armitage has agreed."



A GENEALOGICAL JUMPER

De Wolf Hopper, the comedian, says his genealogy, through his mother, goes back as far as the eleventh century, when the founder of the family was Olaf, the Sharp-eyed—which is some jujutsu, long-jumping, gyrating genealogy.

The Inn of the Seven Sins

By Captain Hector Orme Blanding

Author of "In Defense of Honor," "Bill Wilson, Renegade," Etc.

SYNOPSIS OF FIRST PART.

Kirby Rae, a young American constabulary lieutenant in the Philippines, rescues the rich and beautiful Señorita Ynes Ybarra from death in a runaway. During the drive to her home he falls in love with the girl. When leaving her she discovers a birthmark upon his brow in the shape of an inverted cross, a sign by which the notorious freebooter, El Diablo Dagorro, is known throughout the islands. She warns him to keep the mark covered, and also invites him to call upon her the following day. He uses this opportunity to declare his passion, which she as ardently reciprocates. But she swears that she cannot marry him unless he turns traitor to his country and helps her to free the Philippines from American dominion. Scornfully Rae rejects this proposition, and thereupon Señorita Ybarra pretends that she loves Captain Greenough, a scheming Briton, who has followed her from Europe. In reality Greenough is plotting with her evil cousin, Ambrosino de Rufelo, to obtain her fortune by enlisting her sympathies in a trumped-up patriotic cause. Rae and Greenough fight, and though the young lieutenant is victorious he broken-heartedly leaves Ynes in company with the scoundrelly captain. Ynes is then forced to repel the advances of the latter. Rae had hardly left her ere she realizes the nobility of his character and her own folly. Impulsively she rushes to a lawyer, Redmond Morrison, and makes over her immense property to Kirby Rae, so that he may know she will not use her wealth to foment a revolution against his native land. She apprises her cousin Ambrosino and Captain Greenough of her extraordinary action. They are dumfounded, but Ambrosino concealing his chagrin, proposes a toast to her and the young American lover; her cousin then drugs her wine, and when she becomes unconscious plans to get her away from Manila to their country estate on an adjacent island, where she will be in his power. He furthermore plots to gain ascendancy over Kirby Rae and the lawyer who drew up the transfer of the Ybarra property.

(A Two-part Story—Part II.)

CHAPTER I.

THE señor is not in his room," said the Visayan constabulario who acted as orderly to Kirby Rae.

"Not in?" questioned Redmond Morrison, in Spanish.

"No, señor. An hour past I go to summon him to dinner with the mess, but I get no answer. I try to enter the room, and the door is locked."

"That's all right, picture of joy," Mr. Morrison assured him, forgetting his Spanish. "I guess you'd better go upstairs and fly some more signals. I've simply got to see Señor Rae, and that's all there is to it."

Pushing the orderly ahead of him, he ascended to the upper floor, where the officers' rooms opened off a long, stone-paved corridor.

"Which is his room?" asked Morrison.

The Visayan, protesting, indicated a door. Mr. Morrison raised a heavy-handed stick and beat upon it.

"Oh, for Heaven's sake," came from the inner room, in a voice utterly hopeless and despairing, "for Heaven's sake go away. I don't want any dinner. I can't see any one. Go away—go away."

"The Señor Teniente is sick," suggested the orderly.

"Yes, the Señor Lieutenant *is* sick—I know the brand," chuckled Mr. Morrison, and, raising his voice:

"See here, Mr. Rae, I've got to have a word with you. I have been sent here by the Señorita Ybarra, and I've got to see you in two winks of a cat's eye. So fling wide the portals."

The door was opened before he had finished, and a haggard white face showed in the half light from windows and corridor.

"What did you say?" asked Rae, in a hoarse whisper.

"I've been sent by the Señorita Ybarra," replied Morrison. "I'll let you in for the rest of the story when you let me into the room."

"I wish to have no communication with the lady," said Kirby Rae, trying to speak stiffly, but succeeding only in being pitiful.

"Nonsense!" Morrison pushed the lieutenant out of the way, and closed the door in the Visayan's face. "Now, sonny, you and your Uncle Fuller are going to have a heart-to-pocketbook talk on the subject, 'The Various Kinds of Asses a Man Is When in Love,' author Redmond Curtis Morrison, remembered for those truly remarkable works, 'Shows I Have Backed; or, The Disappearing Case Notes,' 'Acting the Angel; or, Morrison the Mark,' and other literature familiar to the frequenters of Forty-second Street."

Rae went over to the window and stared dully into the blue haze of the tropical night.

"I don't know you," he said, but there was no resentment in his tone, only the expression of the utterly dejected. "I don't know you, and I want you to leave me alone. I want you to go away. You understand?"

"Old man," said Morrison, putting a hand on Kirby's shoulder, "brace up and get wise. When you hear what I've got to tell you, you'll come off the roof as quick as a rat on a rafter. Get wise. Your face is as long as a Missouri search warrant. I know the dope. Want to die, don't you? Sure. I felt like that once. That was my second Yale year. Got nutty over the most beautiful woman this world has ever seen—at least I thought so. And what happened? She threw me down—hard! The stars fell from heaven. The sun was obscured. Night gathered around me. Then—me for a gun and no obstruction between it and my head. But did I do it? Echo answers: 'Don't ask the strange gentleman silly questions.' No, I did not. But I had all the exquisite pleasure of having done it. I saw all my relatives and friends pre-

serving my cold, lifeless body with the briny; and I got together a bunch of words to the lovely lady, telling her she had driven me to it. But just about that time another fairylike creature flitted across my disordered horizon, and I— Well, I didn't die."

There was nothing particularly humorous in what Mr. Morrison said; but he had a style of narration peculiar to himself, and a method of emitting most of his words from one corner of his mouth, which made even the dejected Kirby Rae forget his woes for the time being, and grin appreciatively.

"That's right, son," advised Mr. Morrison, lighting the lamp uninvited. "Have a cigarette?" extending one of Kirby's own from a heap on the table. "Will I have one? Well, I should like to see myself refuse! I should be very severe with myself if I caught myself doing anything like that. Now I'm all up in the air about this case. I don't know a bloomin' thing about it except that I've just turned a pretty profitable job for little Redmond. Look here, you're getting back into the dumps again! Read this letter from the Señorita Ybarra, and then I'll show you what she told me to show you, and await your orders. Will I have a drink? Oh, that's all right; I forgive you for not asking me. Echo answers: 'Yes, I *will* have a drink.' What's that? Don't drink? Haven't ever drank—"

Mr. Morrison extended pathetic hands to the ceiling.

"Heavens!" he expostulated. "Is this justice? Is this fair? A fortune to the man who gets no joy from the grape, the rye, or the hop! Look here, my young friend—"

But his flow of language ceased, for he saw that young Rae had broken the seal, and was eagerly perusing the note. He watched Kirby's eagerness change to wonderment, then to incredulity, and finally to dazed happiness. The letter dropped from the boy's hands, and he turned his eyes slowly to the lawyer.

"Sure it's so," replied Redmond Morrison, answering the question, and putting the legal form of transfer into Kirby Rae's hands. "If you want to

know something, you're worth just about two million dollars, gold—about four million three hundred thousand Mex. It doesn't sound any realer to me than it does to you, but I've seen the deeds and titles, and I know they're good. More than that, I telephoned over to the Crédit Lyonnais office here, and the bank balance is more than she said it was. And now it's up to you, Mr. Millionaire Kid!"

"I'm not thinking of the money," said Kirby Rae softly. He dropped the legal form, and picked up Ynes' letter, his eyes seeking the last paragraph:

I have done this, my sweetheart, to prove to you that I love you so much that I give into your keeping all of my fortune save only a few thousands a year, so that you will know that it will not be used against the welfare of your country. It is yours to do with as you like. If you do not love me any more, it is yours nevertheless. But if you love me (and oh! dear, silly boy, I know you do) you will come for me to-night at the Hotel Oriente, where I will have gone with my trunks when I have packed them; and you will have dinner with me, and after dinner we will be married.

He almost bruised his lips, so fiercely did he carry the paper to them. Mr. Morrison watched him in amused concern.

"I remember once," he began, "there was a little girl——"

"Never mind, Mr. Morrison," shouted Kirby Rae excitedly. "I can't listen to anything; I've got to hurry, hurry——"

He had caught up a straight collar, and was fastening it as he spoke. His khaki tunic was flung into a ball in the middle of the floor. He grabbed it, and tried to put it on with the seams outward, swore mildly, and readjusted it, fastening the hooks into the wrong eyelets. Ensued a frantic search for his cap, which he had forgotten to take from the girl's house; and, not finding it, he pulled his corded Stetson over his forehead.

"Want to come, Mr. Morrison?" he asked, remembering his visitor, and pausing at the door.

"Well, guess I'd better be on hand to say 'God bless you, my children,'" agreed Redmond Morrison. "But, say,"

he added, in protest, as the boy raced down the hall, "remember I'm not the Twentieth Century Limited, won't you?"

There was a forlorn-looking carromata motionless before the barracks, and into this Kirby waved the lawyer. "Hotel Oriente, cochero—hurry, hurry!" he directed.

The cochero, whipping up his horse, soon brought them to the entrance of Manila's big hotel, where men and women in evening dress lounged on the balcony over their after-dinner coffee, and before which in the public plaza the military band played.

Leaving Morrison to settle with the driver, Kirby Rae plunged into the hotel, and rushed to the desk.

"Tell Miss Ybarra that Mr. Rae is here," he said.

"Miss who?" asked the American clerk.

"Miss Ybarra—the Señorita Ynes Ybarra. Tell her that Mr. Rae—Lieutenant Rae—is waiting."

"No such person here," returned the clerk laconically, readjusting the diamond horseshoe in his necktie and resuming his conversation with a whisky drummer, who wore a pin even more resplendent.

"But," persisted Kirby Rae, somewhat dazed, "you must be wrong. I had an appointment——"

Now, in the Philippines a second lieutenant of constabulary is not permitted to worry a hotel clerk; and the personage at the desk decided to ignore him. Kirby Rae looked at the register which the clerk deigned to push toward him. Ynes was not registered there.

Morrison entering at that moment, Kirby Rae turned somewhat helplessly to him, explaining. The lawyer laid a hand on the clerk's arm, putting an end to his conversation.

"Say, you," said Mr. Morrison. "Fly some distress signals to some of those worthless muchachos of yours, and send 'em around to find Señorita Ybarra. We've got good reasons to think she's here now, and we are coining our minutes just about now. Wake up, little stranger! Does the management pay

you to pick out their select stock of rye? Why, hello, Bill!" and he grabbed the hand of the whisky drummer. "I haven't got your name and number, but if you weren't with Rita Delmony and her bunch playing the ponies at Gravesend the day Reina won the Brooklyn Handicap, I can't tell a quail from a chicken wing. What's that, Mr. Caravansary Bureau of Information?" as he turned away from the drummer. "Not in the hotel at all? Well, if she comes in just tell her to wait, and say that Mr. Rae and Mr. Redmond Morrison have gone to her house, and will be right back if they don't find her."

"You might settle up that chit bill of yours, Mr. Redmond C. Morrison," suggested the clerk, as they turned to go.

"Yes," agreed Mr. Morrison, "I *might* do a great many things, Mr. Elihu P. Hopkins, and among them, Mr. Hopkins, is the standing broad jump across a hotel desk, to be followed by the catch-as-catch-can hold upon a seventy-nine-cent necktie marked down from fifty-three. But will I do it? Echo answers——"

"Come on, if you're coming with me," urged Kirby Rae, interrupting the lawyer's harangue by a tug at his coat sleeve, and dragging him forward by sheer impatient impetus.

Mr. Morrison did not catch his breath until they were in another carromata, and bowling rapidly toward the Calle Santa Aña. Morrison tried to enliven the journey with more anecdotes of personal experience, but Kirby Rae stared ahead with expectant eyes, his lips tense, his body stiff, not hearing. Arriving in the patio of the Ybarra house, Kirby slid from the vehicle, and bounded up the marble steps, Morrison following him as closely as was possible.

A light shone behind the closed shutters of a window almost facing the hanging garden. Kirby Rae rapped sharply with his knuckles. There was a shuffle of feet within, and a man crossed the room and opened the door.

It was Greenough, and in the rush of yellow light from the reading table to the balcony the two men faced each

other, glowering wrath on the face of the Briton, penitence on that of the young American.

"I'm sorry, sir," said Rae. "I'm sorry—for what I did this afternoon. You had a perfect right to shoot me if you thought——"

Another voice broke in on his halting apology, and the sinister face of Ambrosino de Rufelo looked over Greenough's shoulder.

"Your friend is——"

"My name is Kirby Rae, señor"—he turned to Ambrosino—"and this afternoon I was unfortunate enough to be placed in a position which made me look rather a cad. This gentleman"—indicating Greenough—"quite properly came to the assistance of a lady who appeared to be in distress, and in my anger I insulted and struck him. I hope he will accept my apologies—although I hardly dare ask him to do so."

"Come within, señores both," said Don Ambrosino suavely. "I am quite sure my friend Captain Greenough will overlook any misunderstanding for which an apology is so gallantly made. You came to make the apology, Señor Teniente?"

Ambrosino regretted the knowledge shown of Kirby Rae's rank immediately he had spoken; and Redmond Morrison, standing behind, saw the swift expression that chased across his face. When the lawyer followed Kirby Rae within, it was with some misgiving.

"Your friend?" questioned Don Ambrosino.

Kirby presented Morrison to the lean Spaniard and the uncertain Greenough, who stood silent, trying to master his facial expression and twist it into some appearance of geniality. Redmond Morrison caught a frown from Ambrosino and a perceptible brightening on the part of Greenough as he extended his hand.

"And now, señores, permit me to offer you the hospitality of this poor house," said Ambrosino, waving his guests to a chair. "I have Madeira, Oporto, Canary, and Tokay——"

He indicated the various decanters on the sideboard.

"Your preference, señores?"

"A little of the ~~te~~deye for mine," said Mr. Morrison; "that is," he translated, "whisky."

"I am sorry, señor," apologized Don Ambrosino, "we have no whisky. But when you call again"—Redmond Morrison did not like his smile—"we will see that we are provided with it."

He turned his back on them, and, as he passed to the sideboard, picked up the candelabrum and carried it with him. He put it down in front of him, and his body blocked the light, leaving the rest of the room in shadows, and himself almost obscured. Again his hand went to his waistcoat pocket, slipped out the vial, and dropped some of its contents into two glasses. He turned.

"You have not said which wine you will have, señores," he explained, holding up a decanter. "Now, this Tokay I can recommend."

"Anything will do if you haven't the redeye," said Mr. Morrison.

"Anything at all for me," said Rae, "because we can't stop more than a minute. I didn't come exactly to make an apology to Captain Greenough, although I suppose I should have done so. I really came to see the Señorita Ynes. You are her cousin, sir?"

He addressed Don Ambrosino, who nodded.

"I have that honor, señor," agreed the Spaniard, coming forward with the silver tray. "If you will favor me."

He extended the tray in such a manner that one of the drugged glasses was nearest Redmond Morrison; but the lawyer, reaching across the tray, took from the far side the two glasses not drugged, and put one before Kirby Rae, the other at his left hand.

"Shocking manners I have, haven't I?" he said pleasantly. "That comes from eating in free-lunch outfits. You get so that the things on the far side always look best to you, and you grab them."

Ambrosino had too long lived by his wits, had suffered too many disappointments, been in too many dangerous games of chance, to exhibit much of

his lack of mental tranquillity in his face. Greenough, however, more the soldier than the diplomat, the fighter rather than the plotter, all but told Redmond Morrison of his anger.

"Be careful, sir," urged the lawyer; "you might spill some of that precious fluid!"

Greenough gave him a hard, cold stare; but Redmond Morrison, who had noted the movement of Ambrosino toward his waistcoat pocket, and had surmised drugs, was now beginning to enjoy the situation, and took upon himself the offices of toastmaster.

"Here's to the badger, the creeper, and the hi-low games," he said, raising up his glass and his voice. "Also to Lady Lil, queen of the Knock-out-drops Gang, who could dope your wine when you were looking straight into her peepers, and never blink an eyelash. Here's to Lil and to all her rank imitators, the double cross. Gentlemen, you're not drinking!"

He had half drained his own glass, and so had Kirby Rae, but Greenough and Ambrosino, while they had raised their glasses to their lips, had been careful not to swallow any of the wine.

"What's this?" vociferated Redmond Morrison, with a fine bluster. "You invite us to drink with you, and then don't drink. This is an insult, gentlemen, do you realize that? An insult to me, gentleman—an insult to my friend, Lieutenant Rae. Up with your glasses and drink!"

"I do not find the wine to my liking," explained Ambrosino, rising. "I have a very delicate palate, and it seems to me that I detect a tang of sourness. I crave pardon of my guests for having offered them such sorry wine. I will give you some of the Oporto."

"No, no, *we* like it," grinned Redmond Morrison. "We like it very much. And since we have liked it enough to drink it, surely you as the host should finish the toast with us. I ask that you drink to Lady Lil——"

"In another wine, I will willingly pledge the lady——"

Ambrosino reached out his hand for Greenough's glass.

"Sit down!" thundered Redmond Morrison. "And drink. She was as much of a lady as are you a gentleman—which was none at all. She was the leader of a bunch of crooks that used to rope in the suckers and fix their drinks with sleepy drops; but she didn't pose as the lady of the manor. She was a crook, and she played like a crook, while you——"

Greenough jumped to his feet, his revolver in his hand. "Why, you low rotter!" he shouted. "Take back that insinuation, or I'll——"

Redmond Morrison's left hand shot out and plucked Greenough's weapon from his hand almost at the moment it appeared.

"Oh, you're the bad man, are you?" he sneered. "You're bad, are you? Is that so?" He prodded the Briton in the side with the point of the revolver at each question. "Bad, are you—bad, eh? Now, you listen to me, you pikers! By the wall-eyed Jeremiah, I've got something to say to you! That wine is going to be drunk by the two of you, or something is due to happen that will make those lizards on the wall laugh out loud. Take up your glass, quick—yes, you, too." He included Ambrosino in the wave of his weapon. "And drink down that dope, or the bullets in this gun will be playing 'Hearts and Flowers' on your pipes before you can clear the frog out of your throat. Get in action, you phony pals, you!"

With an extra dig in the ribs for Greenough, and another wave of the gun for Ambrosino, he stood silent, watching them.

"What does this mean, Morrison?" asked Kirby Rae excitedly.

"Your dark friend over there tried to put us asleep with some drugged wine—to get down to a vocabulary that will bring light to your unsophisticated mind," said Mr. Morrison. "What's that? You infant Machiavellis haven't taken the Borgia draft yet? That's a pity, now. Still *bad*?"

He turned to Greenough, who, with a sullen glance, raised the glass to his lips. Ambrosino, shrugging his shoulders in apparent compliance, reached out his

arm for his own, but in doing so struck the candelabrum with his elbow, and sent it to the floor, leaving the room in total darkness. Immediately there was a spurt of flame, and the smell of acrid smoke as Morrison fired.

"The windows—quick!" shouted Morrison. "They may have a bunch of bad ones here. Open the windows."

Kirby Rae sprang for the faint light, but Greenough caught his shoulders. Rae did not try to shake him off, but threw open the windows and stumbled out to the balcony, taking the Briton with him. Morrison followed quickly, bringing the butt of the revolver down on Greenough's head. Greenough released his hold, and sprang back into the room, slamming the window and bolting it from the inside.

"Beat it!" said Morrison, catching Rae's shoulder and urging him down the steps.

"What?" shouted the boy, resisting the impetus, and clinging to the balcony balustrade. "Go and leave Ynes behind with those blackguards? No! I say *no*! We were fools to come out at all. Now we'll go back and get her and take her with us."

"Well, you'll go by yourself then; because I'll not be come-on enough to stick my nose back into a joint like that. You can go back if you like, but I'm going to chase myself down to police headquarters and bring a squad up here to search the house. Come on! Be sensible! You can't do any good by going in there and risking your life. What they want to do is put you out of the way, anyhow. I guess they're sore because she's deeded over her property to you. So long as you're alive they can't do anything—don't you see? She's not in any danger. It's *you* they're after, and if they do for you, why, that's the end of it. Come on! Get your nut screwed on straight. Don't act like the hero of a ten-twenty-thirty play. Come on, you blithering ass!"

All the while he had been speaking he had pulled Kirby Rae down step by step to the courtyard, where gaping muchachos stared at the lean, copper-haired man with the smoking revolver,

who had his arm about the boy in the constabulary uniform. Morrison shoved Kirby into the carromata, and then sprang in himself, giving directions for the cocher to drive swiftly to the headquarters of the municipal police.

"We'll give 'em a run for their money, all right," said Mr. Morrison grimly.

"Money?" said Rae, in disgust. "I don't care about the money—the money's nothing."

"List to the infant gurgle! Son, don't speak so disrespectfully of the nuggets. The money is everything, because it will buy everything."

"It won't buy love."

Morrison laughed. "Well, it'll buy a pretty close imitation of it. You look in at Rector's some night, and——"

"Oh, for God's sake," protested Kirby Rae, "don't tell me any more of New York and its fast life! That is different. Women who can be bought and paid for are not the kind I have been taught to know; not the kind that are wives and mothers and true, brave sweethearts. There is no love in that great delirium of a city. You probably do not understand. You don't know what love really means. But"—and there was a deep seriousness in his voice—"I want you to remember, Morrison, that my love for Ynes Ybarra is the greatest thing that has come into my life, and I will not have it insulted by comparison with your soulless women of the Great White Way."

For the first time in many years Redmond Morrison had no answer forthcoming. Rae had spoken fiercely, directly, and from his heart; and his companion felt suddenly ashamed. When he spoke his voice had lost its facetious ring.

"My boy," he said, "if I had met a girl like that, a girl who made me see the greatness of love, instead of the pitiful meanness of women, I guess, maybe, I wouldn't be out here, exiled from my family, and trying to scrape along on bluff and hot air. It's good to find a clean-minded chap like you, and it's better still to know that he's found a girl who's worthy of him, instead of one

who will use his innocence to get all she can from him, and then hand him the double cross. But there's the high sign, son"—he caught Kirby's hand—"and that says I'm going to stick by you, and see you out of this mess. But don't you worry about the girl. They're not going to kill the goose that lays the golden egg. And here's our worthy police chief's office. Hop!"

They clambered out of the carromata, ignoring the cocher's appeal for payment, and entered the headquarters of the municipal police department, threading corridors until they came to the chief's office. The chief himself was not there, but his assistant, on recognizing Redmond Morrison, gave him the information that some one had been telephoning for him for the past ten minutes, and was now holding the wire.

Morrison picked up the receiver.

"Hello!" he said.

"Mr. Morrison?" came in Greenough's agitated tones.

"The same. Who are you?"

"Captain Greenough. Understand you're going to bring the police up here?"

"Your understanding is good. That's just what I'm about to do."

"I wouldn't if I were you. This thing can be arranged amicably. I will meet you at the English Hotel, and go over the matter with you. Then, if you wish to bring the police, do so. But one thing I warn you: The Señorita Ybarra is with us. If you bring down the police, Mr. Rae will never see her again."

"You've got an ace there, old skull and crossbones. Yes, I guess we can settle that all right. Now, listen to me! I won't meet you at the English Hotel. I'll come straight back to your house. But I'll leave Mr. Rae here, and if I'm not back in half an hour he'll tell the whole story to the chief, and you'll have a hornets' nest about your ears. Now, when I come to the house, I expect to see the señorita, and to bring her away with me. Any arrangements you may make other than that won't go down at all. Is that understood?"

"Quite! You've really got much the

better of us. Then we shall expect you here in, say, half an hour, or better make it an hour. The señorita has been confined to her room, and she will have to dress and pack some of her effects. Of course you may come at once and wait. That's just as you like."

"Oh, we'll make it an hour," said Redmond, easily triumphant. "And there won't be any more gun play, I hope, because I warn you I'm packing a canister on each hip in case of trouble. Not bad any more, are you?"

What Greenough evidently intended for a laugh, but which resulted in little more than a hoarse cackle, came over the wire.

"No," he replied; "I fancy I'll try to keep my temper this time."

"And your wine—you may keep that, too," added Mr. Morrison. "Good-by old skull and crossbones. In an hour, then."

"An hour."

Morrison put the receiver down, and stared at the assistant chief of police.

"Well, Red," said Mr. Burleigh Saunders, who held that exalted position along with the equally exalted one of Redmond Morrison's friend, "what sort of a lay are you on now?"

"Very mysterious, Bur-leigh, de-ah," replied Mr. Morrison, taking Mr. Saunders' cigarette case from that gentleman's breast pocket, and offering it to Kirby Rae, who shook his head.

"Sorry. Burry smokes good ones. Has taste, has Burry. Wouldn't think so, and him an assistant chief of police, would you? No, Burry, de-ah, I can't let you in on this game. It is a mystery, and we haven't guessed the answer yet. As Sherlock Holmes says, it is too good for the police. It is a de-rama in four acts, and we're only in the middle of the second just now. But, as I haven't had any dinner, and Lieutenant Rae here hasn't, and as I'm sure you, Burry, haven't had a drink for at least ten minutes, suppose we make a festive little body over at the Hotel Oriente until my appointed hour is up."

Mr. Saunders declined on the plea of work; and Mr. Morrison, after expressing his opinion of any one who allowed

work to interfere with pleasure, departed, taking with him Kirby Rae. When they faced each the other across table at the Oriente, the young constabulary officer declined food and drink, and looked continually at his watch.

"Now, listen to me," said Morrison. "We've practically got this affair right between our hands now, and if you don't cut out the gloomy face I'm going to quit right here and leave you alone. You're going to eat some soup, some fish, a *plat du jour*, some salad, and a dessert, also drink some wine, some coffee, and cognac, and by the time you've finished it I'll stroll in here with the little señorita, and we'll have 'Lohengrin' performed up in the ballroom, even if we can only get a mandolin, and a couple of concertinas to do it. But first we will have two cocktails."

He carried the day, and when they had finished the salad he looked at his watch and got up.

"Time for me to start," he said.

Kirby Rae rose, too. Morrison forced him back into his seat.

"Don't you understand," he argued, almost tearfully, "that you are the only hold we've got on them? If they could put you out of the way, and me out of the way, the documents transferring that property to you wouldn't be worth the paper they're written on. And the fact that we've got those papers, and are alive makes the safety of the little señorita a certainty, because there wouldn't be any use in putting her out of the way when those documents were in existence with our knowledge. Now you sit at that table, and order as many drinks as you want, and just about the time that life is beginning to look one glorious, rosy dream to you I'll complete the dream by appearing with the lady. Until then, adios and so long."

But unfortunately Kirby Rae took no sort of interest in the different blends. Instead, he studied the face of his watch, and wondered how it was he had not noted that a second was not a swift passage of time. After ten minutes of waiting, he watched every carromata,

quilez, or vehicle of any sort that drew up in front of the hotel, scrutinizing eagerly the faces of those alighting. After fifteen minutes he gave up all hope of seeing Mr. Morrison again, and indulged in grim and melancholy imaginative flights which represented the lawyer in pools of blood, his hand clutching a bit of paper, with Ynes Ybarra's white face peering out of a dark corner, her hands tied behind her back.

Before the half hour was well out he could stand sitting at the table no longer, and rose, going to the balcony. The band outside struck up the overture to "William Tell," and his hands clenched. All about him were laughing men and women. From the balcony he passed to the sidewalk, and paced up and down, starting at every footstep and the rattling of every carriage wheel.

And then, when he had given up all hope of Morrison, a somewhat subdued resemblance to that gentleman touched him on the shoulder, and stared at him.

"The señorita—Ynes?"

Kirby Rae caught his shoulders.

"Sssh!" warned Morrison. "Remember we are in front of the Oriente, and there are about two hundred people looking at us. Son, I'm a come-on, a lobster, a snail, a lamb, and a cross-eyed duck. I ought to give up being a lawyer, and get a berth in a sanitarium for the crazy. Great cats! How that bunch must be giving me the laugh!"

Rae's fingers fastened on his shoulder with such tentaclelike ferocity that Morrison emitted a squeak of pain. He looked up to see the boy's jaw set in a cruel line, his eyes hard.

"I want to know where Ynes Ybarra is!"

"Jumping Jeremiah! Let go my shoulder!" begged Mr. Morrison. "You've got a grip like a dance-hall bouncer. Say, son, I'm your friend. Save that exhibition of athletic prowess for your enemies. You'll have plenty chance of using it. Come in the hotel, and I'll tell you the whole story; and then, let me tell you, son, we'll have to do some tall hopping if we want to come out of this game and save our faces."

At a secluded table on the balcony Morrison told his story.

"Now, son," he began, "make up your mind first of all that we've been flim-flammed. I was a mark to fall for that waiting game; but I fell, and I fell hard, and there's no use in going into that. This is what happened: I drove over to the house on the Calle Santa Aña, and when I got there I found the courtyard gates barred, and not a light in the house. I used the knocker, but there was nothing doing. Well, I knew you were back here waiting, so I wasn't afraid of having my block knocked off, and consequently I shinned over the wall and dropped in the patio. Everything dark. Horses gone, stables locked up, heavy, iron-barred shutters before the glass ones on the balcony. Not a sign of man, beast, or Filipino.

"Did I try to get in? Let me tell you, son, I hammered, I knocked, I yelled, I whistled, I did a clog dance on the balcony. But was there anything doing? Echo answers: 'Time alone will heal that scar of memory.' Finally I made up my mind that I'd do a little gentlemanly burgling, so I spat upon my hands, and mounted one of the shutters to a little oriel window. I smashed the glass with the gun butt, and after smoothing it off all around so that it wouldn't bite me, I gave an imitation of a snake going into a hole backward. It was a tight fit, but I was used to wearing English clothes, so that experience triumphed, and I made a long drop to the floor.

"Then I took a good firm hold of that young gun I took from the captain, struck a match, and began to do a little Sherlocking. I found a candle, lit it, and searched the house, with the lizards on the walls following me from room to room giving me the merry ha-ha. There had evidently been some strenuous packing done, though, for drawers were open, and all kinds of clothes strewn on the beds, the dressers, and the chairs. After searching the house I went down into the cellar, and all I found there was joy water and rats. And that, son, is the way we've been handed the sour flavor of a good punch,

and it's up to us to dope out a move that will land them so high and dry and full of sand that——"

He stopped short as the singsong of a muchacho's voice calling a name distracted him.

"Señor Teniente R-a-e," sang the muchacho threading the rows of tables. "Señor Teniente R-a-e!"

"*Aquí, aquí, muchacho!*" shouted Redmond Morrison, rising from his seat and waving frantically. As the boy approached, Mr. Morrison ran to meet him, snatching the note from his hand. Kirby was also on his feet, and as quickly took the note from Redmond; with a muttered pardon he tore it open.

"It's—from—her!" gasped Rae, as his eyes took in the few scrawled lines. "Look! Just that!"

Do not try to follow me. It is dangerous. And do not take the matter to the police or I will never live to see you again.

There was a long splotch of ink here; evidently the girl had reconsidered.

I think they are taking me to Melangete. Follow me there, but do not warn the police. Go to the Inn of the Seven Sins. I will send you a message there.

Then another splotch, and:

I am in the house still, but they are coming to me now. The muchacho Anselmo is waiting in the courtyard to take this. Do not harm him. He knows nothing, and is faithful.

YNES.

"Quick, Morrison!" shouted Kirby Rae. "Into the hotel, and find out what boats are leaving Manila to-night. They have abducted her. Quick!"

He followed Morrison, and heard what the hotel clerk had to say as he consulted the schedule:

"For Iloilo, just one, *Don Juan de Austria*. Left half an hour ago."

"Half an hour!" groaned Rae.

"But the next one?" shouted Morrison.

"For Iloilo?"

"Yes."

"Compania Maritima's boat, *Tres Hermanos*, to-morrow morning at ten."

Kirby Rae turned to Morrison.

"You will go with me?"

"Yes—but your commission?"

"I have no commission but to find the girl I love!"

CHAPTER II.

Good Filipinos and even indifferent Spaniards had always shunned the Inn of the Seven Sins. There were tales of ghosts and vampires to frighten away the ignorant; grim hintings of ever-ready knives and silent thrusts in the back for those not afflicted by superstition. Cortez el Cuchillo had built it in the early days of the nineteenth century, and it had ever been a menace to law and order on the coast of Minegnay; but then Minegnay was too small an island to matter to Spanish rulers, and they were apt to leave the enforcement of the law there to the great hacienda owners, the Ybarras and the De Rufelos. The latter, on the other hand, cared nothing for the enforcement of the law so long as there were no deprivations upon their own estates, and it was tacitly understood that there might be any amount of smuggling done without hindrance from the lords of the manors, if the property rights of Ybarras and De Rufelos were held sacred.

So Minegnay had been, in its time, the smuggling center of the southern islands, from which opium, hashish, arms, and ammunition had been distributed. Ybarras and De Rufelos suffered for their dereliction of duty when the Katipunan's banner was raised, for, from smuggling, the desperadoes of the Inn of the Seven Sins turned readily to plundering now that they knew Spanish supremacy was tottering, and could no longer support the great hacendados.

With the advent of the Americans, a young ensign in charge of a gunboat had met defiance from the leader of the smugglers, the grandson of the first Cortez el Cuchillo, and in a battle on Melangete Beach had nearly put an end to the smuggling band, destroyed their village on the sands, and burned their shipping—half a dozen lorchas, three cascos, and a prao. So that since American occupation, the Inn of the Seven Sins had appeared to stand only as a monument to past misdeeds.

It was not an easy task to reach the

inn, approached as it was on one side by a goat path up an almost sheer rock leading from the beach, while to reach it from the interior one must cross the Swamp of the Evil One, so called because of the crocodile, supposed to be many thousand years old, which made its home there and snapped always at the unwary. He was not a very active crocodile, it was true, but several men had lost single legs and feet in crossing the swamp to testify to the fact that although the Evil One moved his body slowly, there was still virtue in his teeth. Consequently, those who went to the Inn of the Seven Sins preferred to take the rocky path, and as the path in question was known to very few except the smugglers, the inn was able to keep its patronage of the most select rascal variety.

There had always been a Cortez el Cuchillo at the inn, which translated means simply "Cortez the Knife"; and the Knife who held the inn on the particular night in question was the brother of that one who had died on the beach of Melangete when he measured arms against the Americans. He was a short, hairy fellow with bowed legs, his lower lip slashed away on the left side, and showing one long canine tooth, very white. He claimed to be a Spaniard, and perhaps the original Cortez had so been; but it was doubtful that there had been aught but Filipino blood in the family since. The present Knife had the usual blacking-brush bristle hair, pop eyes, flat nose, and thick lips of the lower order of Visayan.

Up there on the spur of peak the tropic night brought chill breezes; and the windows of the inn had been barred and shuttered. The inn itself was built of stone and teakwood, and stood a squat, menacing structure, its lights blinking balefully at Melangete, three miles away. It was not visible from the beach, for it was built behind a cluster of dragon trees; but the simple taos passing along the road to Melangete on the other side of the swamp saw the lights aloft, and crossed themselves.

Whispers of its ill fame had reached the customs' inspector and the constabulary

officer at Melangete, and they had organized a party to visit it several months before; but on reaching the inn they found only Cortez the Knife, his mother, his wife, and his child; and a comprehensive search of the place had revealed nothing contraband. So they passed down the rocky path again, at great peril of their lives, and thereafter when Filipinos hinted of evil doings at the Inn of the Seven Sins they shrugged their shoulders, and took more Scotch.

At seven o'clock on an evening a week after Ynes Ybarra disappeared from Manila, Cortez el Cuchillo sat in the sala of the inn, a cigar between his teeth, a bottle of absinth at his elbow, and a frown on his face. It was evident, from the frequent and anxious glances which he cast toward the door, that he was expecting some one. Quite evident also it was that the Knife looked upon the prospective visitor with more respect than he was apt to accord his average acquaintance. Across the table from him sat a toothless, haggard old woman, her face disfigured by a livid scar across the left cheek.

In the far corner of the room crouched a sullen, scarlet-lipped girl, barely eighteen at the most, clasping and unclasping her long, slender fingers. There was no trace of white blood in her face. She was of the purest unmixed Malay type, and had not even that dash of Chinese which is evident in most Filipinos. Her hair was long and glossy black, hanging loose about her ears, and tied carelessly at the back of her head with a scarlet ribbon. Her eyes were large and round, with very short, almost pin-prick lashes, which gave a child's look of eternal wonderment to her face, while the warm blood of the tropics surged under her satiny brown skin. She wore a Japanese kimono of crêpe silk, cherry-colored, belted with an obi of the same color.

This was the Knife's wife, a girl he had taken by force from her own father; and whom, to procure, he had justified his title, and left the father in seven feet of sand half a mile up the beach.

The girl had not then known of the murder—only that, when her father disappeared, the kind Cortez el Cuchillo had taken her to his own home. But his kindness had not lasted long. She early discovered that it was a merciless brute who was now her master. Save while in his cups, when he could be maudlinly affectionate, he treated her with the utmost cruelty. On one occasion she had attempted escape, and on being recaptured had spent a week in a stone vault under the Inn of the Seven Sins, with only bread and water for her meals, and a visit from Cortez each day, which meant also the laying of a cowhide whip over her back. When she came into the daylight again she had learned to wait and to hate so deeply that she could hug her hatred to her heart as another woman might hug a secret love.

"The Señor Don Ambrosino, he comes to-night?" asked the old woman.

Cortez scowled, not answering her, and drank more absinth. The girl in the corner watched him hopefully. She had counted the glasses he had taken—four. It required six to put him in a fiendish good temper, when he sought to caress and fondle her; seven to make him good-natured, and to lavish upon her jewelry and money as tokens of his affection; eight to tell her his inmost secrets and then to fall asleep. It was seldom he drank more than four, therefore her eyes lighted up when she saw him immediately replenish his glass for a fifth.

"The two friends of the Señor Don Ambrosino—the American señores—were they not to come to-night?" babbled on the old woman. "Is it for them that you wait?"

"Be silent!" muttered the Knife, adding a vile epithet, and glowering at her from under his brows.

Outside a window shutter came loose and banged against the door, bringing Cortez to his feet, terror written on his countenance. The girl in the corner viewed him with astonishment. She had never seen him afraid; and yet to-night since he had received the note from Melangete he had been as uneasy

and troubled as any of his own henchmen under ban of his displeasure. And now in his eyes was the sullen, frightened stare of one completely controlled. The shutter banged again, and he realized the nature of the noise. With a growl to the toothless one to fasten the shutter, he hastily poured himself another glass of absinth, and drained it.

"Six," counted the girl in the corner.

"Emilia," said Cortez, turning to her, "come here, my pretty one."

The girl obeyed, standing before him.

"Ah, my jewel," he croaked, stretching out his hands, and drawing her down to his knees, "my jewel, my pet among women, there is no one as beautiful as you."

She stared away from him.

"Bonita!" he shouted to the other woman, "take yourself off. To your room, ancient one."

When she had gone—

"Listen, my lovely one," said Cortez, whispering hoarsely in Emilia's ear. "Soon we will leave behind us that withered palm tree and this gloomy house, and you will go with me to Singapore, where I shall buy you the dresses befitting a beautiful señora; and we will go to the dances and the great gambling houses and the cafés, and all will envy Cortez el Cuchillo his beautiful wife."

He poured himself another glass of absinth, and offered it to her. She barely put her lips to it, leaving it for him to drink off in greedy fashion.

"But the money, Luis," she crooned; "the money for this?"

"Ah—h," he said, his features twisted into a cunning leer, "that is not for beautiful ones to know."

He kissed her. Repressing her inward shudder, she refilled his glass.

"You will tell me nothing," she pouted, handing him the absinth.

He tossed it off as so much water, and put his arms about her.

"Tell me," she whispered. "The money?"

"I have it safe," he cackled, "safe in the iron box in the stone vault below. In the stone vault, where I am to put the two American friends of the Señor

Don Ambrosino, and for which I am to receive two thousand pesos. But I will receive more than that from the Señor Don Ambrosino. He does not remember years ago, when he kicked Luis Cortez out of his path like a pig, the day when he was the great haciennero. I have not forgotten—I, Luis Cortez—el Cuchillo. I have not forgotten.”

“You will tell your querida how you mean to avenge this insult?” pleaded the girl. “How the brave, strong Luis will avenge the insult?”

Cortez, his eyes holding the staring, dreamy look of one under the influence of absinth, smiled at the prospect.

“Señor Don Ambrosino and his friend the Ingles have in the Casa de Ybarra ten thousand rifles, and many thousand rounds of ammunition, which they are to sell to the ladrones. You remember the ship that crept into the cove two nights past, and to which I sent my boat and my men. That ship carried arms, and those arms we removed to the Casa de Ybarra. The Señor Don Ambrosino depends upon me and my men. He has in his house only servants. The Americanos will not aid him or protect him, for it is against their laws to smuggle arms, and they are there to be sold to the enemies of the Americanos. I had not thought of my revenge upon the Señor Don Ambrosino then. I would have taken the money he gave me for my services and thanked him. But upon the following morning I received from Singapore a letter, which said that El Diablo Dagorro was returning to the islands, and that he would again organize the pulahanos on Samar. For this he needed arms and ammunition, for which he was willing to pay. To-night he comes to the Inn of the Seven Sins, for this night I have received another letter from him, which a muchacho brought from Melangete. I will tell him of the arms at the Casa de Ybarra, put my men at his disposal, and take the arms by force. We will pay nothing for them, and for my information and the services of my men Dagorro will pay me what I ask. And with that price, and the two thousand pesos I am to be paid by Don Am-

brosino, and that which already is mine, we will have enough to leave this inn forever, my beautiful one.”

His head drooped. Several times he blinked his eyes.

“This El Diablo Dagorro!” she whispered, “he is the man who killed the American women and children at Capiz.”

Cortez nodded drowsily.

“Is it as they say then,” she asked, “that he has the horns of the devil?”

His tone was sleepy and impatient as he answered her:

“I have never seen him. But in the days of the Katipunan we procured for him many arms. They say that the devil put a mark on him at birth—the black cross upon his forehead—upside down—the devil’s mark—the devil’s mark.”

There was some return of his fear as he crossed himself, then his eyes closed, and as his head sank back his body slid forward. Again he shivered slightly, for, rascal, thief, and murderer though he was, he had never the courage for the revolting and spectacular cruelty of the ladrone leader, with whose name mothers of Samar scared disobedient children into submissiveness.

“El Diablo Dagorro!” muttered the girl. “Ah! If I could see him first. If he would but take a fancy to me, and kill this beast, and set me free. Ah!”

She slid from his knee, and squatted down on the floor, rocking herself to and fro, her arms clasped, her eyes gleaming hatred at the sprawled-out figure in the chair, crooning meanwhile to herself in a whining monotone.

She abruptly stiffened as she heard the sound of men’s voices outside, then arose and crouched near the door. At the sound of the knock she stepped back, fear in her eyes. The knock was repeated. She stole a glance at the sleeping figure. The eyelids did not flutter, the snoring continued. Slowly, with a backward glance, she sidled to the door, and released the bar, allowing two men to enter. At the sight of the first one—tall, bronzed, slender, with closely cropped hair, she stepped back, regarding him in dazed awe.

"El Diablo Dagorro," she murmured, noting the birthmark on his forehead, an inverted cross that in the dim light from the swinging coco lamp showed sometimes dull crimson, sometimes black. The man addressed turned an irritated look to his companion, a thin, copper-haired man, also bronzed of complexion; but was silenced by a wave of his hand and a lifting of his eyebrows.

"You recognize my friend, señorita?" asked the one who had waved his hand.

"He was expected, señor," she returned, curtsying low, "and Luis"—she turned a disgusted face to the sleeping El Cuchillo—"told me of the devil's cross."

She pointed to the birthmark.

"He was to know you by that," she added.

"Then he"—the copper-haired man indicated El Cuchillo—"had never seen my friend before?"

"Oh, no, señor. But as you—you know, he has smuggled many arms for you."

The man with the birthmark seemed impatiently desirous of speech; but the other had him tightly by the wrist, restraining him.

"There is some famous French brandy in the cellar, señores," said the girl, turning timid eyes upon the man with the birthmark.

"Fetch it immediately," said the other man.

Emilia went hastily out, and the one who had spoken loosed his grip on the wrist of the man with the birthmark.

"Holy cats; but you came near to queering the game," he said, "and it looks as though we'd stumbled into the biggest kind of luck. El Diablo Dagorro! Well, this must be a sweet young place if they're expecting him. We were fools to come here without a bunch of constabularios at our heels."

"Not when we put Ynes in danger by calling in assistance," replied Kirby Rae.

"Well, we could have called in assistance without shouting it all over town," returned Redmond Morrison. "It's a wonder to me that you even allowed

yourself to be disguised as a Spaniard. I wonder if that stain will come off, anyhow. It goes all right with that curly mop of yours, but it doesn't match my auburn locks. I look sweet in this get-up—not. But if we'd come here as Americans, I'm very much afraid we'd have gone away dead ones. But clipping your hair was the greatest piece of work. I nearly laughed myself to death when they spotted that strawberry mark in Iloilo, and nabbed you for El Diablo Dagorro."

"It isn't very pleasant to be taken for the greatest scoundrel unhung," answered Kirby Rae hotly. "The man who was responsible for the Capiz massacre—"

"Now, son, you hold your horses, and go slow. You're in a place that looks like a thieves' den, and if they take you for the big scream you play the part until further notice. They'd cough up a lot of information for El Diablo Dagorro that we couldn't get out of them with a suction pump. Now all you've got to do is to look stern and unyielding, and I'll conduct the gentle art of cross-examination with the lady. By the bye, wonder who this fat beast is?"

He crossed over, and poked Cortez el Cuchillo in the ribs; but the only answer forthcoming was a prolonged snore. As he was about to repeat the operation, the girl Emilia entered with a cobwebby bottle of brandy on a tray, and several glasses.

"Do not awaken him, señor," she entreated, and there was an anxious entreaty in her voice that made Morrison desist.

"But," said he, pointing with infinite respect to Rae, "my captain had an appointment with him, and he is a bad man to antagonize."

Crossing over to Rae, he spoke to him softly:

"Fold your arms, scowl like a fiend, and go over and sit moodily in that corner. I'll do the rest."

Kirby Rae followed instructions, and theatrically stalked across the room, sitting down and looking intently at nothing in particular. The girl poured out

the brandy into the two glasses, and started across the room to him. Morrison put a hand on her arm.

"Do not venture to speak to him when he is in his black moods. He may strike you to the floor and trample upon you. Do not forget he is El Diablo Dagorro."

The girl put down the brandy.

"And you, señor?"

Redmond, who had finished his own brandy, now drank from the glass intended for Rae.

"I am his lieutenant, Miguel del Raya. He is not accustomed to making appointments with drunken men, and he is justly incensed. I fear for the life of this fellow if he does not awaken speedily."

Redmond's Morrison's various experiences with theatricals were coming to his assistance in his portrayal of the part of the ladrone lieutenant, which was, with all justice to Redmond, a cross between a comic-opera jester and a melodramatic "heavy." His Spanish was fluent enough for the lines, and the construction he borrowed from such portions of "Don Quixote" and "Gil Blas" as he could remember. It was not difficult to convince the girl of his false identity, as she had no reason to believe him other than the person he claimed to be. The inverted cross was on the forehead of the other man, and this was the sign by which El Diablo Dagorro was known from Cebu to Leyte. Dagorro had been expected that night. No question of another devil-marked person was even suggested to her mind.

"Do you think he would kill Luis?" asked the girl, her scarlet lips parting, her eyes burning. "Do you think he would kill him?"

"Kill him?" laughed Morrison. "If the idea occurred to Dagorro that it would be better for that sot to be dead, he'd kill him as readily as you or I would tread upon an ant!"

"Then," said the girl, "listen to me! I can do for you all that Luis can, and you need pay me nothing. All I ask is that you kill him, so that I will be free

to go away from this hateful Inn of the Seven Sins—go away and try to forget that hideous beast who murdered my father, and made me marry him. When I tried to run away, he kept me in the stone vault below for a week upon bread and water, and lashed me every day with a great whip. See, I have the scars still."

With a quick gesture she pushed back the kimono. Across her rounded shoulders were the thin, red, cruel lines of wounds long healed, each line running parallel with the other, as though laid on with mathematical precision. Rae had raised his eyes to look as she spoke in spite of Morrison's expostulatory wave of the hand; and as his eyes fell upon the shoulders of the girl revealed in the light of the swinging coco lamp, he got to his feet with an exclamation of horror.

"He did that?" asked Kirby Rae.

Emilia turned her eyes to him. She had hardly dared look at the terrible Dagorro since she noted the devil mark on his forehead. Now her young and primitive instincts told her that, savage devil though he might be, Dagorro was quite the most attractive man it had hitherto been her fortune to see. Tall and slender, with well-shaped head, small hands and feet, immaculate in his pongee clothes, and loose tie under the wide collar of his silk shirt, with red cummerbund about his waist, Kirby Rae presented the appearance of a young Byron rather than that of a notorious murderer. Her eyes fluttered, her gaze fell, and her heart beat rapidly. She did not know that the concern in his eyes was for a woman who had been ill-treated—any woman!

His eyes wandered back to the scars, and for the moment nothing was said; then Kirby Rae's teeth ground hard together.

He said nothing, crossing to Luis Cortez and taking him roughly by the shoulders. The girl, with a little cry, laid a timorous hand on Kirby's arm.

"Do not awaken him," she begged. "Let me tell you of the plan he has in mind. And when I have told you, we will put him into the stone vault below

where he kept me, and where he was to put the American señores."

"The American señores?" jerked out Redmond Morrison. "There are no Americans come to the Inn of the Seven Sins. Answer me, girl!"

He caught her roughly, nor were gesture, tone, and action simulated.

"They come by orders of the Señor Don Ambrosino de Rufelo," replied the girl, shrinking back. "Luis was to have two thousand pesos for keeping them in the stone vault until they— Oh, I know not what."

"And they were to come—when?"

"I do not know, señor. Luis has been expecting them these two nights past."

"Their names?"

"Oh, señor, I do not know their names!"

It was apparent that she was sincere. Morrison loosed his grip on her arm, and turned inquiring eyes to Rae, who nodded understandingly.

"Go into that far corner, girl," said Morrison; "my captain and I wish to speak privately together."

Emilia obeyed. On the wooden settle by the window, Redmond produced cigarettes, lighting Kirby's and his own.

"I think," he whispered, "that we are up against it, son. It seems to me that only a very fortunate dispensation of Providence saved us both to-night—that strawberry mark on your forehead. I wanted you to put the constabulary wise to this racket before you came up here; but of course you knew too much, didn't you?"

"It was a question of Ynes' safety," replied Kirby, "and I don't see what else we could have done."

Morrison looked at him pityingly.

"Listen, son, I've been a mark myself I'll confess; but if somebody turns the Röntgen rays on a millstone, I guess even I can see through it. I don't believe that the señorita wrote that letter at all. It was some medicine doped out by this lovely cousin of hers to get us into this thieves' hole. You don't think the Señorita Ynes, knowing the reputation of this place as she must, would tell you to come here without assistance. Not much. Ambrosino, however, doped

it out that you'd bob up here if she sent for you; also that if she asked you to keep the thing quiet to save her life, you'd be likely to do it. Then he made some sort of a deal with that pretty gentleman over there to have you locked up until you came to terms, signed over your rights, and so forth. After that, well, he might give you his word you'd go free, but I very much doubt that you would. Are you on?"

"I guess so," said Kirby somberly.

"All right, then. Leave it to little Redmond and he'll pull you through this with flying colors. This girl has handed us about seven aces, and if we can't win out with that hand we ought to blow out the gas. Now, in the first place, she takes you for this Dagorro person, who has a reputation for refined cruelty that would make Nero's fiddling sound like bum incidental music. This souse here"—he pointed to the snoring Luis Cortez—"has got some sort of a deal framed up with the young Caligula. The thing to do is to play the hand out as Dagorro, and on his reputation make a grand-stand play to Ambrosino. Of course, the real Dagorro is liable to cut in here at any minute, and if he does it's up to you. You've got two good-looking young cannon packed on your hips, and the minute you see this Double D man let him have a couple of wads that'll give him a chance to make the acquaintance of his namesake, and see if he is really as much of a devil as he thinks. Understand?"

"You mean to shoot down this Dagorro in cold—"

"Son," said Mr. Morrison, with a resigned air, "you weary me to the point of unendurable lassitude. You suffocate me almost to asphyxiation. This Dagorro was the man who was responsible for the Capiz massacre—who killed American women and children, and crucified American men. I hate to suggest your shooting him. I think he ought to be roasted over a slow fire for at least seven hours before being allowed to descend. But we are not the official punishers. We've simply got to get Dagorro out of the way. Now, it's up to you to do it. You're the holy ter-

ror, not I, and you've got to act like a terror, not the hero of a Sunday-school story. You're *bad*, understand—*bad*! You're a *malo hombre*, a two-gun man, and a souvenir goes with every corpse. You've got a cemetery of your own, that has swelled to the proportions of a town. For Heaven's sake, scowl! That's better. Now you promise me, do you, that the moment this Dagorro shows his ugly face in here you will shoot him?"

"I did not know he was the man responsible for the Capiz massacre," said Kirby Rae slowly, "else I would not have hesitated. Yes, I *will* shoot him. Now try to find out from the girl how we are to find Ynes, and get her to Melangete."

"You leave it to me."

Morrison went back to the girl's side. "Now," said he, "my captain has lost his patience. He wishes to know immediately why he should not awaken Luis, and in what way you can aid him."

"El Diablo Dagorro wrote to Luis for arms and ammunition when he was in Singapore, as you know," began the girl.

"I myself dispatched the letter," agreed Redmond.

"Then Luis was approached by the Señor Ambrosino and his friend the Englishman. They have smuggled to Minegnay many thousands of arms, and Luis and his men conveyed them to the Casa Ybarra, the great house upon the other side of the cove. The Señor Ambrosino and his friend had arranged to sell these to Benito Alvarado and the other bands of ladrones in Negros. They were to send their own boats to procure them. But when Luis had the letter from your captain saying that you wished arms to organize the pulahanes on Samar, he intended to put his men and his lorchas at your disposal, march to the Casa Ybarra, seize the arms by force, and convey them to Samar. For the services of himself and his men, and for the information given, he would charge you only half the price of the arms; while I—I will charge you nothing if you will kill him.

Now wake Luis, tell him that you agree to his proposal, accept the services of his men, and procure the arms, and when you have made an end to his services *kill* him as he killed my father, as he would have killed the American señores, and give me a few pesos that I may go clear of this hateful island and have him to fear no more."

"Well, I'll be hornswoggled!" murmured Redmond Morrison. "Did I say seven aces? I made a mistake—I should have said ten!"

CHAPTER III.

"Is everything ready, Antonio?" asked Ynes Ybarra.

The old major-domo, his hands trembling, nodded, while his eyes wandered furtively to windows and door.

"The señores they play monte. They say: 'Antonio, has the señorita retired?' I say: '*Si, Señor Don*, she has.' And the Señor Don say: 'You are sure the door to her room it is locked, and the doors to the casa they are locked?' And I say: '*Si, Señor Don*.' Then the Señor Ingles, he say: 'Then get out, you brown devil!' and so there is no more. Vincento is asleep, and his wife and the babies they are asleep, too. Juan he sits up reading José Rizal, and when he reads José Rizal he is dumb and deaf. The taos have a baile in the outhouses, and the other muchachos and their queridas have gone to dance the rigodon. None is left save old Antonio, and the Señor Don he believe Antonio afraid of him. But Antonio love the great and good father of the señorita who save him from the Igdrötes, and the señorita is his only child. But he pretend, oh, very much, to be slave and coward to Señor Don Ambrosino, and to keep the señorita prisoner, and be cold to her, only waiting for the time to come when he could set her free. And to-night is the time, and Antonio takes the señorita to Melangete, and to her safety from the Señor Don Ambrosino."

He opened the door, and listened, then with a cautious gesture of the hand, he tiptoed out of the room. Ynes

Ybarra hooked the black silk cloak at her throat, and wound the lace mantilla about neck and shoulders. The two candles on either side of the long, gilt-framed mirror threw their light on the picture of a tragic actress, as she stood in the dead-black garments, the color gone out of her cheeks, her eyes glowing with desperate courage and unflinching hatred.

The room in which she stood had been her prison for the past three days. She remembered nothing of the trip to Iloilo, nor the subsequent journey on the lorchá to Melangete. Her remembrance was only of a stupefied awakening to find herself being transported in a small boat from Melangete to the landing stage at the foot of the bluff on which the Casa Ybarra stood. The drugs used upon her to produce unconsciousness, and repeated to continue that state, had left her dulled to realization for the first day; but as happenings had slowly recurred to her, she realized the nature of her cousin and his determined resolve that the money should not pass from his hands. He had spoken with her, had been as suave and courteous as ever, had listened to her impassioned torrents of rage, and been unmoved. What he intended to do she had no idea. He told her nothing of the forged letter he had left behind, nor the ambush he had arranged at the Inn of the Seven Sins.

This room had been, in the old days, the place of incarceration for mutinous taos, a little stone outhouse built as a left wing to the Casa Ybarra. Ambrosino had had it cleaned for her occupancy, had provided the usual furniture and accessories of a woman's bedroom; but the bare stone walls and slitlike interstices were there to tell her she was a prisoner; while the heavy-barred iron door offered no chance for an exit.

At first she had been hopeless, for the old major-domo, Antonio, had seemed to give credence to Ambrosino's story that the Señorita Ynes was mad, and must be kept in the strictest confinement lest she take her own life. But Ambrosino had forgotten the devotion of the old servant to Ynes' father—pos-

sibly it had also escaped him that Ynes had been the charge of Antonio when a baby. Antonio was an Oriental, and his nature was to acquiesce always with those in power, seemingly at least.

When Ambrosino had told him of the señorita's sad condition, Antonio had listened, dumfoundedly convinced, and had given the strictest vows to guard her carefully. He had also accepted money from Ambrosino, a bribe for so doing. But at the first opportunity he heard the señorita's story, and promised that she should go free.

Now he came back, still tiptoeing, cloaked as was she, and carrying a small bag. He did not think it necessary to inform her that the bag contained all the money, jewelry, and small articles of value which he had been able to pilfer from the rooms of Greenough and Ambrosino. To Antonio it was as natural to steal from an enemy as it was to aid a friend; but he knew that Spaniards and Filipinos did not always have the same viewpoint in this regard, and he did not seek an argument with the señorita.

"Come," he said, and held open the iron-barred door for her. She passed out into the sweet-smelling night; and he locked the door behind them.

"Señorita," he said, "we may not go by water, for there are two to guard the boats. Nor may we pass down by the main road to Melangete, for to compass that we must pass the outhouses where the taos are making merry. There is but one safe way to reach Melangete with you, and that is by the caribao trail to the little stream, the footbridge across, and the path through the Swamp of the Evil One."

He crossed himself devoutly as he spoke.

"Have no fear, señorita," he added, taking her arm and guiding her through the tangle of wild lime and orchids. "The Evil One is a very old beast now, and I know the path well, for did I not lead the Spanish caballeros through it many times when we warred with the Katipunan. Only once did we see the beast which the Spanish call alligator and the Americans crocodile, but we of

Minegnay term 'the Evil One.' And that one time a caballero threw at him a bolo, and blinded him in one eye, so that his vision is short. He is fat and clumsy, and I have a nose for his smell and a weapon with which to shoot his other eye if he appears. Besides, it is probable we shall not see him. He swims about the great black pool of the swamp and there sleeps, and that pool is far from the path. So fear not, señorita."

The girl hardly heard what the old man said. Her eyes were alert, her ears strained for possible pursuit. From the outhouses came the strumming of stringed instruments, and an occasional wild burst of laughter; behind, a single light burned in the Casa Ybarra.

Even had she understood the purport of Antonio's words, the mere mention of the dreaded saurian would not have brought fear to her. She was thinking only of Kirby Rae. When last she had seen him there had been in his eyes only hatred of a woman who sought to make a renegade of an honest man. She did not even know if he still loved her; perhaps nothing she could do would ever bring back the love she had so wantonly thrown away in the desire to bend her lover to her will. The lawyer? Was he honest? Had he gone to Kirby Rae with the papers and the letters, or had he betrayed her to her cousin for a money consideration?

She groaned. Everything was so nebulous, so uncertain. She must get to Manila speedily, and find out what she wished to know from the lawyer. Or, better still, when she reached Melangete she would cable him. She had forgotten his address, but she knew his name—Morrison; knew also that he was on the Escolta. That address would surely reach him, and then she would know how Kirby Rae had taken her act of sacrifice. Even if he refused to accept or listen to a message from her, that at least would be news, and anything was better than this dreadful, racking uncertainty.

She took no count of time as Antonio led the way through the fields, skirting

the rice paddy, and passing into the forest of coco palms, carefully keeping from under the trees lest one of the ripe nuts fall and put an end to farther journeying on their part. There was a land breeze that blew about the palm fronds, and the odors of the Orient came sickly sweet to her nostrils. There was no moon. It was a night of brilliant stars in a clear sky, and they winked at her through the swaying treetops. On such a night as this she had first seen Kirby Rae, and the band had played the languorous waltz tune on the Luneta. Tears started to her eyes. Things had been so clean and so beautiful that night. She had not been content to keep them so. She clenched her hands, blinking away the tears.

Now they were passing from the firm-beaten path to ground that was springy to the tread; the trees grew thicker here, shutting out the blazing Southern Cross. The wind blew moist, warm, clammy; and there was the scent of odorous marsh blossoms in it. For all the heat, there was something of a chill here, too; and she drew about her more closely the black cloak.

Now the ground was clogging her little French-heeled shoes, and she was walking with toes hard forward to prevent the shoes from coming off and remaining behind in the morass. Antonio had taken her arm, and was guiding her carefully, his catlike eyes avoiding the worst places. Finally they reached the path. Antonio walked ahead of the girl, directing that she place both hands on his shoulders and keep directly behind him, the path not being wide enough to permit them walking abreast. An occasional arrowlike star gleam shot through the interlaced tree branches, and showed dead-black slime over which dragged a few inches of dirty water, or a bank of black mud through which the water bubbled up, the whole mass quaking and quivering like a great animal afraid. The insects of the night buzzed a long, inharmonious monotone, the lizards croaked, some late birds squawked sleepily.

"Have we much farther to go, Antonio?" she asked.

"No, señorita," he soothed her. Suddenly he stopped, and, turning, caught her arm. A noisome smell came to her nostrils. Antonio's hand went to his revolver. As the girl's eyes followed his, a great shapeless something lifted itself from the slime, and dragged itself to the footpath. Antonio saw a glimmering something against the black, and fired six times. With a queer, angry noise the black something shook itself free of the slime, and lumbered after them.

"Run, señorita, run," almost screamed the major-domo, and set her the example by fleeing along the path, his speed increasing with each step. Blindly the girl followed him, but her high-heeled shoes had been built for beauty and shapeliness rather than speed, and she could do little more than stumble along. She had no knowledge of the ribbon of a path, and once her foot slipped into the quaking mud alongside, and when she drew out her foot she left the shoe behind her. The long cloak hampered her, and she stumbled; a stone cut her stockinged foot, and she limped; and behind her she still heard the lumbering, snorting beast. Then a splash, and she looked back to see that at this point in the swamp the path became the bank of a lagoon, and into this lagoon the huge saurian had sprawled and was swimming along, its great, ugly head lifted from the water, the one swollen eye raised at her as though in mockery.

It was abreast of her, now ahead of her, and again its clumsy paws went to the path and it crawled up. A glint of starlight showed it crouching, waiting, its ugly, scaly body glistening, and beating against the ground. Now it raised that great, ugly eye, and saw her motionless. Slowly it began to crawl forward. From the girl escaped a wail of utter hopelessness. Behind her lay the path by which she had come. She could not find her way in that dark morass. Besides, she was exhausted, panting for breath, her stockinged foot torn and bruised.

"Antonio!" she screamed. "Antonio! Antonio!"

She did not seem to be able to move, but stood standing, wide-eyed, cold, sick with horror at the approach of the monster. The odor of musk came to her nostrils.

"Antonio, for God's sake, Antonio!"

And as a man's figure emerged from the gloom at the farther side, she called again:

"For God's sake——"

A bullet sang its way toward one of the hind feet of the enormous beast, and the saurian, snorting, turned clumsily to face this new enemy. The man stood quiet, and when the beast presented its front fired deliberately at its eye. The bullet glanced off the shiny armor, and the beast advanced; but the man, with more deliberation, fired again. The second advance was quicker than the first, and the beast came within snapping distance, distending its wicked jaws. In that moment, the man, still motionless, swung a cocobolo-wood stick from left hand to right, and struck the beast across the nostrils. Bellowing with astonishment and pain, the saurian backed, and its hinder part slipped into the water.

The man shifted his revolver back to his right hand, and fired again; but without preventing the beast from dragging itself to the path. This time the advance was made with angry determination, the jaws kept closed, and the head down; and for the first time the man moved backward, dropped to one knee, and waited until the beast was almost upon him before giving him another shot.

Ynes watched in terrified admiration. The man seemed to totally lack fear of this hideous, slimy monster, whose proximity had reduced her to a shrinking, cowering bundle of nerves. He had moved but once during the entire encounter, and that only to take more careful aim; and now, as he knelt on one knee, steadying the black barrel of his Colt, there was a pale, evil smile about his mouth, and his eyes were narrowed wickedly. With the beast's immediate approach, the revolver steadied to motionlessness, and spurted red, and the man rose to his feet and looked at

the shaking mass of scales that rolled helplessly back to the lagoon to sink from sight beneath its waters.

He did not immediately come forward, taking first six cartridges from his belt, and refilling the black revolver. When he had tested it, he shoved it into the holster under the flap of his drill jacket, and strode forward, removing his hat.

"Señorita, the Evil One is dead."

He laughed slightly as he spoke.

"But it takes a devil to kill the Evil One, señorita," he added; "and instead of falling on your knees, as you are doing now, and giving thanks to some one on high, look down into the depths of the lagoon, and thank the powers of darkness for your life."

She glanced at him, afraid. In the glimmering starlight she saw his yellow, pockmarked face, with its thin, cruel-lipped mouth, its triangular chin, and tiny-pointed ears, set so low that they seemed about his jaws. His hair was clipped close to a bony skull, and on his forehead was a piece of flesh-colored sticking plaster that might have concealed a wound.

"You then, señor, are a—devil?" she asked, with some attempt at lightness.

"I have been called so, señorita," he replied, his eyes feasting on the beauty of the girl before him. "But to you I could be nothing except a devoted servant, a slave, if you like."

His black eyes looked his admiration, but there was something in them that made her shiver.

"Antonio," she said. "Where is Antonio?"

"If you mean the old man who fled past me yelling at the top of his voice, I should reply that before now he is in Melangete. He had little thought for you, señorita, I fear."

"I—I must get to Melangete tonight," she said, "will you, señor, conduct me?"

"I should be pleased beyond measure, señorita," he replied, "but unfortunately I have an engagement for which I am now late. I must go the other way. And you must come with me."

"I—must?"

"I cannot allow you to go to Melangete alone. I may not go with you now. You must therefore come with me. The reasoning is simple, señorita. Perhaps," he added, "you may not wish to go to Melangete after you have——"

"Señor," she said, "I understand your look, your meaning. I am in love with one whom I now go to meet. I have given up my country, my sympathies, my estates, my relatives, everything for him. I am not one with whom you may coquet lightly. I am Ynes de Ybarra, señor."

She turned, pointing the way she had come.

"Go your way, and leave me to go mine. I thank you for my life. I wish you had not spoken as you have just done. But I will try to remember only that I owe you my life. Give me your name, and then *adios y muy gracias, señor.*"

He smiled and looked at her. In the silence that followed she understood her helplessness and his evil power. He kept his eyes steadily on her, advancing almost imperceptibly until his face was close to hers. Then his hands touched hers, his grasp fastened about her wrists.

"You are the most beautiful woman I have ever seen," he said slowly, "and you owe me your life."

With one violent heave of her muscles she shook him free, and struck him across the face with the palm of her hand.

"You dog of a Filipino," she breathed heavily. "You yellow beast! You touched me!"

She shivered as though she had felt some foul thing.

Fire leaped to his eyes, his shoulders trembled.

"Go!" she said.

For the moment he stood almost cowed, for she had spoken as a Ybarra might speak to a slave, a plantation tao. It was the voice of the master, and all the Filipino blood in him cringed before it. He muttered something apologetic, and following the gesture of her hand had almost turned away. But

the indecision lasted for a moment, and the man came back to his cruel, ruling self. With one swift movement he caught her in his arms as one might have caught a child.

"Dog of a Filipino, eh?" he said, smiling slowly. "But for all that you must suffer his touch. You will come with me, little beauty; come with me to the Inn of the Seven Sins, where they have a place to lock up little beauties who show their teeth when they should smile. Struggle if you like, little one. It is pleasant to feel you struggling in my arms, knowing that some time that struggling will cease, and you will love me—love me because I am stronger than you, because no one can take you away from me, because I fear neither God, man, or devil, the Americans, the Spaniards, or the Katipunans, because soldiers, constabulary, or police cannot bring me to terms, because I am a king in my own land, and that land whatever I choose to make it. Perhaps you have heard of me, little Spanish beauty. See the plaster upon my head? Under that is an inverted black cross which the devil put upon me at birth to set me down as his own. Ah, you have heard of me—eh, *señorita?*"

"*El Diablo Dagorro!*" shrieked the girl, and he found he was carrying a dead weight. Still smiling, he strode along as though unconscious of his burden, and soon came in sight of the Inn of the Seven Sins.

CHAPTER IV.

In the Inn of the Seven Sins Luis Cortez still slumbered when Redmond Morrison arose from his seat by the girl's side with the full details of the various plots and counterplots woven about the person of the snoring Luis.

"Go fetch some wine," he said to the girl, "and I will talk to my captain."

Before meeting Kirby Rae's eyes, he prodded El Cuchillo in the ribs, but Cortez only snored.

"Morrison," said Kirby, coming across and putting a hand on the lawyer's shoulder, "I've been doing a lit-

tle thinking myself since that girl has been talking, and it seems to me I have unwittingly been given a chance not only to rescue Ynes, but to help the government in a way I had never hoped to. By playing El Diablo Dagorro I can get the assistance of Luis Cortez and his men to rescue Ynes, to make Ambrosino and Greenough prisoners, and to confiscate the arms and ammunition which would have been used against the United States. Meanwhile, you will leave here speedily, and get back to Melangete. Tell the constabulary just what has happened, and have them come circuitously to the Casa Ybarra. Then all they will have to do is to put this murdering, smuggling gang out of commission. In other words, I can play two enemies against each other for the benefit of my country, and we may be lucky enough also to meet this El Diablo Dagorro—"

"Lucky!" shouted Morrison. "Why, if he comes here, and finds you masquerading—"

"I shall kill him," said Kirby quietly, "just as I would kill a snake."

He put his hand to the Colt under his tunic.

"Now, Morrison," he continued, "there is no time to be lost. Go immediately, and wake up the constabulary. By the time they reach the Casa Ybarra I will have been there before, will have made the two men prisoners—and saved Ynes!" He sighed heavily. "Ynes! Ah, Morrison, what she must have gone through! It's been hell for me—just that. But for her! Well, never mind about that now. Hurry to Melangete, and, if I don't see you again, good-by!"

The two men clasped hands.

"Boy," said Redmond Morrison, "I — By the gods! if we both pull out of this, I want you for a pal. Will you?"

"You bet!" said Kirby, and took his other hand. Then, with no further word, Morrison opened the door and went out.

Kirby Rae wasted no time, but, taking his revolver from his belt, looked down the barrel. If he was to play

El Diablo Dagorro convincingly, he could no longer appear to be a gentlemanly fellow. He strove to remember some actor he had seen in a Western play, who had played the part of a typical villain; and after swallowing half a tumblerful of the brandy, he dug the point of his revolver into the side of Luiz Cortez. It provoked only a squeal. Kirby, remembering the tales of his cruelty, stuck the gun a little harder into the innkeeper's ribs, and repeated the operation until El Cuchillo, blind with rage, jumped to his feet, cursing horribly, and reaching for a weapon. Emilia, entering with the wine, shrank back against the door.

Kirby pushed the revolver into the stomach of Cortez, reseating him, and then stood over him, brandishing the revolver.

"You are Luis Cortez, you ugly son of Satan!" he roared. "Answer me? Are you that hound that calls itself 'El Cuchillo,' eh? Answer me!"

Cortez, not quite shaken out of his absinth daze, looked at his interlocutor.

"I say answer me!" yelled Kirby, smashing down the butt of his revolver on Cortez's hand. "Answer me quick, or I'll bend this gun into a curve over your nose, and straighten it out on the back of your head. You write and tell me to come here, and I come and find you drunk. Speak, caribao! Beast!"

"El Diablo Dagorro!"

Luis Cortez had suddenly come to his senses, and staggered to his feet. His attitude was cringing, his words apologetic.

"I am at fault," he said.

"At fault!" continued Kirby, in a roaring voice. "You withered, seedless orange—you rat—you swine-faced one! You dare to have an appointment with me, and then appear before me drunk? I wrote you asking for arms and ammunition. You write me that you have a plan to procure them, and that I am to come to you to-night. When I come—I, Dagorro—I find you drunk. Beast, what have you to say to me?"

Luis Cortez had not failed to note the inverted cross on Kirby Rae's forehead, the mark by which El Diablo Dagorro

had been known and feared the length of the islands; and had there existed in his mind any doubt regarding the identity of his companion, Kirby's forceful manner of expression and careless cruelty in handling his weapon would have reassured him. Bullies ever cringe before other bullies of a greater degree, and the Knife was afraid of the Devil.

Rubbing his bleeding hand behind his back, Luis Cortez in excited sentences told Kirby Rae of his plan for filching from Ambrosino de Rufelo the arms which the Spaniard had imported for sale to Benito's ladrones; and Rae, listening, was pleased to emit certain grunts of approval. To the terms which the Knife suggested for his information and the services of his men, Kirby agreed without hesitancy; and as El Diablo Dagorro, scoundrel that he was, had a reputation for keeping good his word once passed, Luis Cortez forgot his bleeding hand, and beamed with satisfaction.

"Get together your men," said Rae, "and we will make haste to the Casa Ybarra. You have a vessel to place at my disposal to convey these arms and myself to Samar?"

"The *Tres Virtudes*, Señor Don—my own lorchá—two hundred tons—which lies at anchor below, and is ready at any moment. She has had an excellent record. There is no fear of the coast-guard boat suspecting her—a fisher, and, if hired, a pearler simply."

"Call your men together. See that they are well armed. Give them instructions to follow me and to obey me. One sign of mutiny, and a man is dead. You know me?"

"Si, Señor Don. There will be only obedience. They fear and respect your name."

Cortez turned to the frightened Emilia, who still crouched by the door, the wine bottle shaking upon the tray.

"Put down the wine, pretty one," he said, "and come to me. My wife, Señor Don, my jewel, my Emilia. You know this gentleman, Emilia? You have heard of him? El Diablo Dagorro? Ah, you shrink? But he will not harm

you, life of my eyes. He is my friend."

He put an arm about her, and stood before Kirby Rae. As she moved away, her eyes sought the promise that he had made her. Kirby, sick at the thought of this slim, graceful girl in the hands of the lowering beast who grinned at him, could hardly for the moment restrain his disgust and remember the part he was playing.

"Go to the edge of the bluff, pretty one," continued Luis, "and blow three blasts upon the horn." He turned to Kirby. "That is the signal, Señor Don, by which my men know that they are needed for my work. There are not many now—but ten—and they eke out a bare living with such work as may come their way in fishing or pearl diving. But once they were to be feared, these men of mine, all that are left since the American lieutenant threw his forces upon my brother."

Kirby Rae, still in his character part, professed to hear nothing of what the Knife said, and knocked off the neck of the wine bottle with the barrel of his revolver, so that the wine gushed to the table. He poured some hastily into a tin cup, and drank it off at a gulp. The strong fumes of the old wine in conjunction with the brandy he had already taken fired him to a sterner resolve and a firm course of action. When he arose he had almost forgotten he was Kirby Rae.

"*Aprisa, niña mia,*" he said carelessly to the girl, and put an arm about her waist.

"*Si, Señor Don,*" she replied, smiling up at him and sending the ugly features of the Knife into a dark scowl, which he was careful to banish as Kirby Rae looked his way. The girl passed out, and Kirby poured himself a second cupful of wine, listening indifferently to what Luis Cortez saw fit to tell him about the glorious days in which the Inn of the Seven Sins had been the smuggling headquarters of the Visayans.

El Cuchillo's reminiscences continued for the length of time that elapsed between the departure of Emilia and her

return escorted by three quaintly attired Filipinos of countenances that matched Luis' for brutality, but lacked his cunning. Others straggled in one at a time, nine in all. About none of them was there anything to mark attention except the same lack of intelligence. Some had rope sandals, some buckskin zapatos, some even rejoiced in American shoes. Their attire was a combination of American and Filipino garments worn without any regard for harmonious effect. One man had a pair of black dress trousers with a wide braid stripe along the sides, and over this he wore a white tunic giving him the appearance of a barber. Another had the red tunic of a Spanish captain, and wore khaki riding breeches buttoned over his bare legs, and no boots. The others rivaled the two mentioned for bizarre sartorial effects; but in one respect all were similar—about the waist of each was strapped a cartridge belt, and each carried a Krag-Jorgensen rifle.

Not waiting for a presentation, Kirby Rae turned sharply to them, giving a military command. They straightened and presented arms. Luis hastily interposed, and in grandiloquent style informed his tatterdemalions of the identity of the distinguished visitor. It was apparent, however, that Emilia had been beforehand with the information, for while the words of Luis were accorded the utmost respect, there was no surprise shown on their faces.

"And now are you ready?" asked Kirby.

Before an answer was forthcoming there came from outside the prolonged scream of a woman. They listened intently, then Luis Cortez ran to the door, and threw it open. The scream was repeated. Kirby Rae, following Luis to the door, saw in the semidarkness two people struggling on the slope of the hill; then the one picked up the other, and ran forward to the opened door. As Kirby and the Knife made way for their entrance, El Diablo Dagorro staggered in with Ynes Ybarra in his arms, depositing her on the settle by the door. The girl shrouded her face in her mantilla. El Diablo Dagorro stood panting

and viewing the armed men who stood about the room.

"You are Cortez el Cuchillo?" he asked of Luis.

"I am," replied the Knife coldly, and closed the door. "Who are you, and why do you come here?"

"I am Dagorro," the other responded shortly.

In the silence that followed Ynes saw the face of her lover, and, with a wild, inarticulate sob of joy, threw herself into his arms.

"My own, my own," she cried.

And Kirby Rae, looking down, and hardly believing, saw her eyes alight with love; and he caught her fiercely to him, kissing her many times.

CHAPTER V.

At the action of the girl the face of Dagorro blazed into scarlet, and his eyes snapped. His hand went to his revolver, and jerked it out. But Kirby Rae's had not left his hand since he first heard the scream of the woman, and now, looking up to see Dagorro draw, he leveled his own revolver at the outlaw.

"Speak softly, my own," he whispered to Ynes, "and tell me who this man may be, and why you are with him?"

He had not taken his eyes from Dagorro, although he bent his head to whisper to the girl.

"I was escaping to join you. He saved me from the beast in the swamp, then forced me to come with him. He is El Diablo Dagorro."

She had spoken only loud enough for Kirby to hear. He released her.

"Go to the far corner and sit down," said Kirby. "I will attend to him."

Luis Cortez and his men, not understanding, had remained silent. Dagorro, considerably puzzled at the lack of respect with which the announcement of his name had been received, was evidently trying to reason out the whys and wherefores of the case. But although his revolver was leveled at Kirby, Kirby's was leveled at him. As yet he had no reason to believe this

youth an enemy; and until he found that he was there was little use in raising a hornets' nest about his ears by killing one of a band of cutthroats on whose good offices he was to a certain extent dependent while incognito on the island of Minegnay.

He knew the Knife from description, and to him he turned an inquiring eye, not, however, losing his drop on Kirby.

"What does this mean, El Cuchillo?" he wished to know. "You have received my two letters, the one from Singapore asking for arms, the second from Melangete apprising you of my visit to you to-night. I require certain supplies which you have assured me you have to sell."

"And who may you be, señor?" asked Cortez.

"I am Dagorro," replied the ladrone leader, his eyebrows lifting in surprise.

"El Diablo Dagorro?"

"Who else?"

"You lie, señor."

The fury for which Dagorro was famous danced in the ladrone's eyes.

"Lie!" he foamed. "Lie! You call me liar!"

He had hardly seemed to raise his weapon; but after the staccato crack and the puff of acrid smoke that blew upward Luis Cortez lay on the floor under the coco-oil lamp, a hole in his head.

Kirby Rae shoved his revolver into Dagorro's face.

"I am El Diablo Dagorro," he said. "You see the mark on my forehead? So much as move, you hound, and I'll send you to perdition."

Dagorro's eyes went mechanically to the black cross on the brow of the other man. In the presence of something that he did not understand, he lost his fury, and stared.

"Drop that gun!" said Kirby.

But Dagorro, surprised and dazed, was not the man to obey such a command. He saw himself among enemies, one of whose number he had just killed. His reputation held no fear for these men, since they believed this stripling who faced him to be the man whom all

Samar and Leyte feared. His revolver alone gave him protection.

He looked steadily into the eyes of Kirby Rae, and saw there a determination to kill; saw, too, that Kirby was watching him, and that the slightest movement of his finger on his trigger would elicit an immediate discharge of the other man's weapon. Even if he killed this young stranger, he would have little chance with the nine rascals who stood, rifles in hands, glowering at him. He made up his mind quickly.

"Put your revolver on the table, and I will put mine beside it. Give me your promise that your men will not fire on me until we have spoken at length."

"I promise," said Rae, and turned his head slightly, speaking to the others, but watching Dagorro from the tail of his eye. The men sullenly responded. Dagorro and Kirby placed their weapons on the little table.

"Now," said Dagorro, "you have claimed to be El Diablo Dagorro. I say that you lie. See!"

He tore the sticking plaster from his forehead, revealing just such another inverted cross as was on the left temple of Kirby Rae.

"I have here letters from Luis Cortez, the man dead there because he gave me the lie."

He produced them for the others to see.

"If you are anxious to prove your identity, I am willing to leave it to a fair and open fight," continued the ladrone leader. "The man who wins will be entitled to use the name—the loser will be dead. There is room for only one El Diablo Dagorro in the Philippines. And if you are stronger than I, I am willing that you should be he. Come! A test of strength. My muscles against yours. Are you willing?"

"I am willing," answered Rae.

He threw off his pongee coat, unfastened his cummerbund, took off his holsters, and laid his second revolver on the table by the first. Two of the Knife's men picked up the body of the innkeeper, and carried it to a far corner of the room. Emilia bent over it,

her features twisted into an affectation of grief.

Dagorro had also thrown off his coat, and the two men faced each the other; Dagorro the heavier and stockier of the two, Kirby Rae lithe and active, his splendid physique unmarred by the dissipation which had played havoc with the ladrone leader. But to all appearances the real Dagorro had the better of it against the apparently slender boy.

They wasted no time in preliminaries, Dagorro rushing into Kirby's reach, his head lowered, bull-like, his arms outstretched. Kirby side-stepped, and struck him heavily under the ear. The ladrone leader, somewhat staggered, fell back, and Kirby followed up his advantage by another blow delivered in the chest. But this time he overreached himself, and stumbled, and Dagorro caught him about the waist, and lifted him high in air, bringing him down hard on his feet, and exerting enormous pressure upon his back. Kirby released one arm, and threw it about the other's neck, forcing it down, and drawing out his left pounded Dagorro's jaw with sledge-hammer blows.

The Filipino thrust out a foot suddenly, and the two went over on the floor, Dagorro rolling on top, and getting his hands about Kirby's throat, half rising as he did so, and gripping the throat in such a way that he raised the head and banged it against the teak-wood floor.

Kirby choked and sputtered, and his head buzzed; but his daze lasted only for the second. Then he turned over on his side, unbalancing Dagorro, and bringing him down on top of him again. Kirby gripped his own left hand with his right, and swung both against the grip on his throat, leverlike. The force of the trick broke Dagorro's hold, and as both men sprang to their feet Kirby smashed his fist against the point of Dagorro's jaw, sending the Filipino flat on his back.

Fighting fair, and according to the ethics of the Anglo-Saxon, he allowed the other man to rise before following up his advantage; and Dagorro, his faith in his physical supremacy over the

youth who claimed his name weakened, kicked heavily into Kirby's stomach. The boy's hands went to his sides, his face contorted with awful agony, gasping for air, sick, weak, staggering; and while in that condition Daborro again gripped him. But he had aroused the devil in the boy now, and Rae no longer fought like a human being, but like a beast. With the touch of Daborro's arms his eyes blazed, his teeth snapped, and he, too, kicked, and kicked hard for Daborro's shins.

The pain loosened Daborro's hold, and Kirby caught him in the chest, sending him staggering against the wall. Quick to follow his advantage, the boy caught Daborro's throat with one hand, and, holding him pinned, delivered blow after blow full in the ladrone's face until the blood of his enemy ran from mouth, ears, and nose, and stained Kirby's hands red.

Daborro lashed out with his feet, and Kirby jumped out of his way. Immediately the ladrone leader sprang for the table, and picked up his revolver. There was a flash that came before he could fire, however, and the revolver dropped from Daborro's hands. He sank to the floor beside it, and lay there, a sprawled-up heap, while over him stood Ynes Ybarra, a smoking revolver in her hand, her eyes turned to Kirby Rae.

Kirby knelt and felt his heart. El Diablo Daborro would never again throw the coasts of Samar and Leyte into a panic by any of his raids.

"Ynes," said Kirby Rae, and turned his eyes to her with the light of a great love in them, "Ynes!"

She shook her head. "Not yet, my own," she said. "You have other work to do. Wait! Have them take away his body."

She shuddered slightly. Rae turned to the men, and gave them directions. Two passed out, carrying the body between them; then he faced the remainder.

"You have seen the fate of the impostor," he said, "and now that Luis Cortez is dead are you willing to acknowledge me as your leader, to march upon the Casa Ybarra and seize the

arms hidden there, and to follow me to Samar and enroll yourselves as members of my company?"

The man wearing the red tunic stepped forward.

"It is an honor to fight under so distinguished a leader," he said, trembling slightly. "We thank you for the opportunity. Luis Cortez—he killed, but he did not fight. But we had been his father's men and his brother's men before him, and we stayed here and acknowledged him our leader. With El Diablo Daborro we will be men again."

A knock came to the door. The scound was repeated twice, then the door was flung open, and Ambrosino de Rufelo and Guy Greenough entered angrily.

Rae caught his revolvers from the table, and leveled one at each.

"Hands up!" he said briefly.

Instinctively they obeyed, not recognizing him.

"You," said Kirby, indicating the man in the red tunic, "go through them and take away their weapons, their papers, and their money."

Greenough flashed him a look of recognition. He also saw Ynes. The shock was written large upon his face.

"Perhaps," said Rae, anticipating his words, "you do not know me. Look at the black cross on my forehead, and then ask these men of mine who I am."

Neither Greenough nor Ambrosino spoke, and Rae addressed the question himself. The answer came with a certain triumphant viciousness:

"El Diablo Daborro!"

The man with the red tunic had thrown two revolvers, some jewelry, money, and papers on the table.

"Enough," said Kirby Rae. "Now bind them. If you speak a word, either of you, I'll shoot. I have no reason to look on you kindly. Remember!"

He was a somewhat different Kirby Rae from the one they had seen before, blood-besmeared as he was, his eyes wild, his silk shirt hanging in tatters about his scratched and bleeding arms, and the two black Colts that faced them held by ominously steady hands. They submitted to the lashing of their wrists

and feet with as good a grace as was possible. Struggle they knew was useless. They were completely in the dark as to the manner in which Rae had convinced these ruffians of his identity with the ladrone leader, but it was evident that they believed him. Any words from them on the subject of his real identity would most likely be checked by a lump of lead from the black mouth of one of the Colts he held before them.

"Now," said Rae to the man in the red tunic, "your name?"

"Gonzales."

"I appoint you, Gonzales, my lieutenant. I will remain here and talk with these señores. You take the men to the Casa Ybarra, seize the arms and ammunition concealed there, and carry them down to the *Tres Virtudes*. When you have done so, and made the vessel ready for sailing, return and report to me. We sail for Samar to-night. Go now and get through your business. My presence on this island is already suspected, as witness the impostor who assumed my name. I fear to remain until morning. What there is to be done must be accomplished to-night. Go!"

Gonzales saluted, and turning to the others issued a few commands. They shouldered their rifles and trailed out of the room, each saluting Kirby Rae. When the door had closed behind them, Kirby turned to the two bound men, and, smiling, put his arms about Ynes, and kissed her.

"Now, gentlemen," he said, "what about the stone vault you so kindly prepared for me—eh?"

CHAPTER VI.

Greenough showed plainly the shock that the words gave him, and his eyes wandered to the impassive face of Ambrosino de Rufelo. The Briton tried to imitate the Spaniard's blank expression, but succeeded only in making his face insolently defiant. Kirby took from his pocket a folded, creased bit of paper, and gave it to Ynes Ybarra. It was the note he had received after her abduction, which bade him follow her to the Inn of the Seven Sins.

"You did not write that, dear one?"

She glanced from the note to her cousin, and her eyes glowed.

"It is Ambrosino's," she said, trying to speak quietly.

"I imagined so," agreed Kirby. Now he noted that the girl Emilia still crouched in a far corner of the room, and beckoned her to come forward. The girl obeyed, looking about her with frightened, hunted eyes, but the kindly smile of the young man reassured her, and she approached him. He put a hand on her shoulder.

"Ynes," he said, turning to her, "if it had not been for this girl, I am afraid I should never have seen you again. She saw the mark on my forehead, and mistook me for El Diablo Dagorro. She wished to enlist my sympathies to rid her of the vile fellow whom Dagorro killed, the man who forced her to marry him. Redmond Morrison, the lawyer you sent to me, realized the value of the deception, and, pretending I was Dagorro, discovered a number of valuable bits of information. The innkeeper was to imprison Morrison and myself in a stone vault below this house, awaiting your cousin's pleasure. Incidentally, the innkeeper was as false as your cousin. De Rufelo had smuggled arms to be sold to ladrones. Cortez had made a bargain by mail with Dagorro to seize these arms, and make way with your cousin. By playing Dagorro, I have achieved a number of good ends. Those rascals I sent to take the arms will be found with them in their possession by the constabulary, which Morrison has gone to fetch. Dagorro, a menace to our peace, is dead. And, sitting there, I have two conspirators against the United States, whom I shall hand over to justice and to Bilibid Prison."

Ynes took his hands. Emilia, not understanding the spoken English, looked on dazedly.

"Sweetheart," said Ynes Ybarra, and the little scented head brushed against his cheek, "I have found you again, and will never leave you. All that I have is yours. I have given up all for you, and will go where you go and do what you say. But I have one thing to ask. Let

these two men go! One is my cousin, the other has been my friend. It would be a shadow upon our happiness to think of them in a tropical prison. They will not plot against your country again, for they no longer have the money. All this land about here—even that on which this inn stands—is yours now, for it was once mine. And we will rule this island as wisely as we may, and there will be no room for plotters. There should be no cloud upon our happiness. We have everything—they have nothing now—not even honor.”

For answer Kirby Rae turned to Emilia.

“There is a lorcha moored off the beach?” he asked.

“Yes, Señor Don.”

“There are men aboard?”

“Two old men, Señor Don.”

He looked from her to the bound men.

“You are able to handle boats?”

Ambrosino nodded.

“Take these men down to the lorcha. When they are aboard cut their bonds. Tell the two old men to hoist sail, and carry these señores to Capiz.”

Emilia turned to him a hopeful glance.

“And I, Señor Don, may I go to Capiz also? I have an uncle there.”

Kirby was first surprised; then, glad of this easy manner of solution, assented; and, taking a sovereign case of some size from his pocket, he placed it in her hand, along with one of his cards.

“If you need more money,” he said, “you may always receive it by writing to that gentleman.”

He indicated the card.

“And now, gentlemen,” said Rae, addressing Greenough and Ambrosino, “I give you just three days to be quit of the Philippines. To-morrow I shall wire a banking agent in Capiz to provide you passage to Singapore. If I find you have not gone, I shall lay your case before the authorities.”

Crossing over, he cut the bonds that bound their legs, and handed the knife

to Emilia. He stopped the words that rose to the lips of the two conspirators.

“I am doing this,” he said, in a cold, hard tone, “because the señorita asks it. You have not me to thank.”

Greenough came forward to Ynes. Deliberately the girl turned her back. Emilia went to the door, and Kirby pointed to her, looking significantly at the two men. Ambrosino passed out in his impassive fashion. Greenough shrugged his shoulders, lifted his eyebrows, and followed.

As the lovers turned to face each other, the inn door rattled, and Kirby took his revolver from his holster. Going to the door, he placed his shoulder against it, and felt a heavy pressure.

“Señor, señor, for the love of Heaven!” pleaded a pitiful voice, and Kirby, realizing that no danger might come from one so abject, stood back. The door slammed to the wall, and a man stumbled in, nearly falling. Kirby recognized him as one of the Cortez gang. Blood was on his clothes, and his face was smoke-blackened.

“Run, señor, run!” he urged. “I have come to warn you. I fly to the lorcha. The constabulary fell on us at the Casa Ybarra!”

He wasted no time in further abjurations, but, following his own advice, scurried through the door at the back, and disappeared. As Kirby Rae listened, he heard the distant shouting of men and the shrill whistle of some one nearer. Ynes came to him, and his arm went about her waist, while his eyes remained on the door.

“Sweetheart,” she said softly, “before they come?”

She raised her flowerlike face to him, and he, forgetting time and place, remembered only the girl.

And the two constabulary officers, who in company with Redmond Morrison appeared at the open door, shrank back in the shadows and held up their hands for silence, that the others who followed on their heels might not spoil the picture.

The Awakening of Jean Baptiste

By Morris McDougall

The curious case of a big, strong-muscled lumberman who unflinchingly risked his life in jams on the brink of seething cataracts and yet was dubbed a coward by the other members of McQuarrie's raft gang on the St. Maurice. That was before "the awakening"

JEAN BAPTISTE had no heart. Of course, in the absence of any proof to the contrary, we must assume that he possessed the organ that goes by that name; indeed, he must have had a mighty powerful one to keep alive such a massive body. What Jean Baptiste lacked was the vital electric spark of true manhood, the courage and energy to meet great issues boldly and creditably. At least that was the verdict of the other members of McQuarrie's raft gang on the St. Maurice River.

It must be said in Jean Baptiste's behalf that it was with reluctance and under strenuous protest that he entered the contest which gave him his undeniable reputation. He cannot, therefore, be held entirely to blame for the outcome. He joined McQuarrie's raft gang on the supposition that he was to do simply the ordinary work of a riverman, to "drive" the river, to free the logs stranded on the shores and imprisoned in eddies, to help break the log jams, and to aid in bringing the lumber raft safely to the mill at Petit Castor.

No inkling was given to him of the main cause of his employment. He did not guess that he filled the place of a riverman who had been nearly murdered in a drunken row between the rival raft gangs of Du Rocher and McQuarrie, and that the wily Scot had hired him principally because he saw in his prodigious bulk and iron strength a means of ultimately wiping out the stigma of defeat.

The news was broken to Jean Bap-

tiste when the raft was floating on the broad breast of the river, four days after it had left Calabogie, where, up to this time, he had been living the quiet, uneventful life of a habitant.

"I am a peacefu', God-fearin' man by nature," said the Scot, in a quiet, insinuating tone, as the two sat together in the boss' tent. "But ye see this, do ye?" and he pointed to a livid scar on his cheek. "Du Rocher's heels cut there. But that's o' little account. It's o' poor Du Moulin I'm thinking." He paused and his brow darkened. "He may die, mon, he may die—and it was this low, dirty, murdering black-guard of a Frenchman that did it. Dinna misunderstand me. There are guid Frenchmen, seein' that ye're French yoursel'—though the Lord will na hold ye to account for that. But, mon, if ye had seen the poor fellow, as I did, lyin' there in the road, unconscious, wi' his body covered wi' bruises, and his face bleedin', ye'd feel the same as I do. When the poor mon was down and unable to defend himsel' Du Rocher jumped on his body wi' his calked heels. I saw it mysel' but couldna' prevent it, seein' that I was lyin' under two of Du Rocher's gang at the time, and they were makin' it mighty hot for me. Mon, mon, how I wish I could trounce Du Rocher mysel', but I havena' the strength or the cleverness. He is the maist darin'—ay, and the maist powerful fichter on the river."

He paused and for a moment regarded his companion with an admiring smile, running his hand over the

broad shoulders at the same time, before he quietly divulged his scheme of retaliation.

"Noo, ye understand," he concluded. "This is to be a peaceful encounter—just a bit wrestlin' bout. It can be easily arranged. He will accept the challenge willingly, he's so vera proud o' his prowess at wrestlin'. Let me warn ye of one thing now: Be on your guard. He uses many tricks that are not fair. But ye can crush him. Ay, man, ye could crush five o' the likes o' him. But dinna hurt him seriously, ye understand—that is, unless there's nae other way oot o' it." He dropped his voice to a confidential whisper. "I promised ye twenty-five dollars a month. I'll make it thirty, if I ha'e to pay the difference out o' my ain pocket, if ye ~~love~~ give him a trouncin' that he'll remember to his dyin' day."

The steady gaze of the big, simple-minded habitant, while giving no sign of cowardice, displayed considerable bewilderment.

It was in vain he protested that he was hired as a lumberman, and not as a professional wrestler; that he had no skill, and that while he regretted the fate of Du Moulin, he could see no reason why he should be chosen as the champion of the unfortunate man. To an unbiased judge the habitant's arguments might have appeared sound. But McQuarrie was obdurate. All Jean Baptiste's protests were waved aside, and the Scot proceeded to make arrangements for the two men to meet.

On a bright Sunday morning, while the rafts lay close to the river bank at L'Ange Gardien, and the bells from the village church were sounding clear on the water, the bout took place.

There was a keen interest, as well as an ill-curbed animosity, displayed by the members of the rival gangs as they formed a ring about the contestants. But the result was not long in doubt in the minds of any one. Even McQuarrie had within the last few days lost confidence in his raft's champion.

Jean Baptiste's body was huge, elastic, and virile; his muscles were strung like whipcords; but he lacked

the spirit that should have been allied to such a magnificent physique. True, he had turned out to be a capable riverman. He could run booms dexterously, dislodge logs from almost inextricable positions on the river banks, where they had been cast by early spring floods, and carry tremendous loads on his back across the portages. But these feats were accomplished only under compulsion. He seemed lazy, apathetic, and as simple-minded as a child. His main aim in life seemed to be to eat prodigiously and to lie about on the raft listlessly basking in the sun.

McQuarrie's sharp commands aroused him temporarily from his lethargy into a man of action. But unfortunately all the Scotchman's wheedling, coaxing, and bullying failed to stir in him any spark of enthusiasm for the approaching bout, so that it was with a sad lack of spirit that he finally entered the contest.

Du Rocher stepped into the circle with the insolent air of one certain of victory. He was a spare, straight-limbed, agile, keen-eyed riverman, whose life from boyhood had been passed on the raft and in the lumber shanties. Countless hazards on land and water had sharpened his senses and adjusted his muscles to a delicate balance. His thin lips, which had a cruel curve at the corners, now bore a smirk, and his head a defiant poise that seemed to issue a challenge. His general air was one of bravado and disdain.

There were only a few moments of indecision, of eager, silent expectancy as the two faced each other, the one confident, smiling, alert, and the other diffident and sluggish. In the twinkling of an eye there was a rush, a swirl of bodies; then the great bulk of the habitant described a parabola backward and fell with a crash, his head striking heavily against the knotted surface of a log.

Du Rocher, with a cry, leaped forward, but McQuarrie, moving suddenly, received the impact of the rush squarely.

"Fair play, Du Rocher. You will

no' treat him like you did Du Moulin. Give him a chance."

The riverman, brought to a sudden halt, laughed shortly, and with a sneering watchfulness eyed his opponent's movements as the big habitant rose heavily, his head shaking in a dazed way.

"It was a foul. Keel heem, Jean Baptiste," cried the men of McQuarrie's raft who had discerned the swift motion of Du Rocher's heel.

But to their amazement and chagrin Jean Baptiste failed to respond to the call. He shook his head slowly, his hands hanging listlessly at his sides.

"I no fight heem more to-day," he murmured. "I no fight heem more to-day."

It was in vain that McQuarrie pleaded and swore. Although almost beyond belief, it was clearly true that the contest was already over and his champion ingloriously worsted.

The derisive laughter of Du Rocher and his men acted like a torch to tinder. The rival gangs closed together like a sea wave. A general mêlée ensued, and in an instant the raft was a bedlam of hoarse cries, a battle ground of writhing, struggling bodies.

When at last, blowing from fatigue and smarting from cuts and bruises, the gangs drew apart, McQuarrie felt that the disgrace was in part eradicated. Only in part, though; for as he wiped the blood from his swollen lip, after Du Rocher and his lumber gang had clambered into their boat and rowed away, he turned loose the torrent of his wrath and indignation upon the offender, Jean Baptiste.

The habitant, since his own inglorious defeat, had been the only non-combatant who had watched the general affray in gloomy silence. McQuarrie's anathema was too full of highly tinted expletives to bear repetition; but the extent of his indignation, however, may be gathered from by his last vitriolic remark:

"Ye're a worm, Jean Baptiste, aye, a low, crawling, wriggling worm."

McQuarrie and his gang thus passed judgment upon Baptiste, and his life

thenceforth became a burden. Any other weakness, mental, moral, or physical, could be forgiven, but cowardice, never; and Baptiste had proved himself a coward. He was treated with contempt, and became the butt of their coarse, bitter jests. One raftsman with the power of mimicry simulated the wail of a child when Jean Baptiste was there, and this joke never failed to raise a chorus of raucous laughter. Another composed, to the tune of a well-known river song, a ballad gross in tone as it was crude in structure, commemorating the ill-starred wrestling bout, and sang it on all occasions to the huge delight of his mates.

These were the least offensive of the various types of persecution inflicted upon the unhappy habitant. He even had to undergo severe bodily discomfort.

In a shaded cleft of a hill beside a stream's course some of the lumbermen found ice that the spring sun had not yet thawed and secretly filled the habitant's blankets with it. That night, and for several nights after, he was forced to lie uncovered and shivering in the chill air on the logs.

For a while Jean Baptiste bore the contempt and hatred with unconcern; and this the lumbermen accepted as a further evidence of his lack of heart. But it was not long before the isolation and ridicule commenced to have its effect. He began to realize more and more clearly that while he had been in part misjudged, the rôle he had played in the wrestling contest was anything but a creditable one; and with this realization was bred a sullen hatred of Du Rocher and a fervent resolution to redeem himself in the eyes of his fellows.

As the raft swung down the silent stretches of the river between the forest-clad banks, he worked with untiring zeal and energy. He no longer required to be driven by sharp orders. He was always among the first to leap ashore and, cant dog in hand, roll the stranded logs into the river, where they would loll in the current like sleepy sea monsters.

He never hesitated to take his place

in the great shanty boat on its perilous trips, and as it swung into the turbulent rapids he would unflinchingly stand erect and steer the imprisoned logs from the whirling eddies. He often risked his life in jams on the brink of seething cataracts; but while the lumbermen marveled at his prowess and apparent bravery, the wrestling bout was still too green in their memory to be easily forgotten. It was long before the ban of their ridicule was even in part removed, and then only after such events as those which occurred at Shawinigan Falls, which tested his courage to the utmost.

McQuarrie, whose contempt was most galling to Jean Baptiste, was the first to show any friendly advances toward the habitant. As the boss daily witnessed his feats of hardihood, he began to wonder if he had not misjudged him. There seemed to be a substratum of genuine grit in the habitant's heart. His spirit seemed simply to have been asleep and to be now gradually awakening.

This conclusion was at least partially confirmed by an incident which occurred one starlit night, while the raft was moored in the river before a village, and most of the lumbermen were rioting ashore on the streets.

In the most silent watches McQuarrie was startled from sound sleep by a long-drawn cry. He rose on his elbow and listened intently. Again the cry seemed to shiver to the stars. It was weird, almost unearthly, not the cry of a man; McQuarrie felt certain of that as the noise was repeated.

The boss rushed from his tent and stumbled, cursing, across the uneven logs, when he came to a sudden halt. It suddenly occurred to him that this was no child in distress; that it was simply the playful mimic, drunk, no doubt, who was enjoying himself at the expense of Jean Baptiste.

There is a time for all things, and McQuarrie, returning to his tent, was inwardly consigning the mimic and all others who chose midnight as the season of merrymaking to a place of everlasting torment, when a dim figure is-

suings from one of the tents rushed past him and leaped ashore.

"Does na the fule see that they are makin' game o' him?" muttered the boss in disgust; but as he again lay in his tent he heard in the distance an exclamation of anger, followed by two splashes. He never learned whether Jean Baptiste recognized the mimic's voice from the first or believed that a child was actually drowning somewhere along the shore; but now to his intense amazement McQuarrie, peering from his tent, discovered the habitant returning like a Roman conqueror with two dejected dripping figures at his heels.

"You say that is joke, hey?" came the sullen question of Jean Baptiste in the darkness. "You play treeck once more and *sacré*, eet weel not be one leetle crack of de head togedder and one leetle dip in de water. *Non!* you weel be var', var' sorry, I tell you dat. You call me always babe and fool, you make de noise lak de babe with your hand to de mout'; oh, well, I say to myself, eef eet geeve you pleshaire an' not harm me, what ees de difference? But eet has gone too far now, mooch too far. It ees all done. 'Member dat."

McQuarrie chuckled softly to himself as no answer came from the dripping figures.

"The worm has turned at last," he said to himself. "I only wish one of these had been Du Rocher." He did not guess that at that moment a similar wish was uppermost in the habitant's mind.

It might be said with some degree of reason that the friendship of McQuarrie and Jean Baptiste dated from that night. Certain it is that while in the Scotchman's mind there existed an ingrained feeling of contempt which it would take long to eradicate, there was created between these two from this time forward a bond which slowly grew into a close comradeship. The friendship was cemented in part by an event which happened shortly afterward.

It must be explained that at certain periods Sandy McQuarrie suffered from drought. At such times his throat and mouth became an arid desert, and it was his sole, all-absorbing object in life to irrigate this desert profusely.

One evening he succeeded in his mission so perfectly that his brain became hopelessly befuddled, and after vainly striving to reach the raft he fell asleep in a pasture at the outskirts of the village at whose water front the raft was moored.

It did not occur to him that swampy ground was not a suitable sleeping couch at any time and particularly on a night when there is frost in the air. Happily a kindly providence ordained that Jean Baptiste should find him there, shake life into the chilled limbs, and carry the inert body on his broad shoulders to the raft.

When McQuarrie later came to his senses and realized that at least rheumatism or pneumonia would have fallen to his lot, had he spent the whole night in his strange resting place, a warm spot for Jean Baptiste was fostered in his heart.

The Scotchman at length made up his mind that if possible Baptiste should have a chance to redeem himself, for he felt that another contest would tell a different tale. He knew that the habitant eagerly desired to meet the arrogant river boss again and wipe out the disgrace of his former defeat. He understood the meaning of the set expression on Jean Baptiste's face, as the habitant at night would gaze at the lights reflected from Du Rocher's raft far ahead on the dark water and listen to the faint echo of his raftsmen's songs.

It was not on Jean Baptiste's account alone that the Scotchman resolved that Du Rocher and the habitant should be brought face to face again. One of McQuarrie's booms had been broken, and his logs had scattered on the broad surface of the river. While there was no proof, the suspicion was strong in McQuarrie's mind that the rival river boss was the author of the outrage.

Such an injury certainly could not go unpunished. But it was fate and not the Scotchman that gave Jean Baptiste the opportunity to put himself on an honorable footing before his fellows.

For hours the dull thunder of a fall had been in their ears, and as they passed a precipitous peak that jutted into the river they were confronted with the vision of spray and dancing foam. Many of the lumbermen recognized the Shawinigan Falls, with their low, steep cliffs on the right that flung back the tumultuous voices of the cataract, and on the left the slide—one of those smooth, but swift-flowing canals, which enabled logs and rafts to pass by the most riotous cataracts unscathed.

The lumbermen, however, were not prepared for the sight that now met their eyes. On the brink of the fall was a mighty jam of logs. The raftsmen were filled with some dismay, for while it is child's play to a skillful riverman to break a dam at the head of an ordinary rapid, it is a dangerous enterprise to loosen logs on the very crest of such a turbulent cataract as the Shawinigan Falls. There was this other fact to add to the surprise of the rivermen: At the mouth of the slide Du Rocher's raft was moored!

As McQuarrie's raft, guided by the two great sweeping oars at the stern, swung in to the shore, Du Rocher came aboard. He came alone, either simply from insolent assurance or a belief that the news he was about to impart guaranteed his safe conduct.

When his figure first appeared along the river bank, McQuarrie, seeing Jean Baptiste's face light with expectancy, bade him remember that the man was defenseless, and therefore not to be molested.

Jean Baptiste shook his great head doubtfully, but said nothing.

Du Rocher retained his arrogant bearing. He recognized Baptiste with a little smile that brought a hot flush to the habitant's brow. Apparently oblivious to the sullenness of his welcome, the river boss contemptuously delivered his message:

He had been moored for some little

time in his position, he said, but had as yet made no attempt to break the jam. Many of his logs were in the pile, but he had also seen some bearing the double X brand of McQuarrie's firm, and certainly he would not endanger the lives of himself and his men in work in which McQuarrie should rightfully take part.

"We mus' work togedder, m'sieur," he concluded. "Dat ees eef you are willing?"

"I ha'e nae objection," snapped on McQuarrie promptly.

On the crest of the cliff, on the right of the fall, the lumbermen from both rafts congregated, and from this point of vantage examined the jam with great care. To dislodge such a pile would be a dangerous task. The mass was huge, and situated right on the brink of the tumbling waves; the swiftly flowing water seethed, bubbled, and whirled about its base. In view of the unusual danger of the work, it was finally decided, upon McQuarrie's suggestion, that the bosses should ask for volunteers.

Among the first to answer the call was Jean Baptiste. This evoked a spontaneous burst of laughter from Du Rocher's men.

"We need beeg, strong men, not leetle babe girl for dis work; it ees dangerous," said Du Rocher, joining in the laugh.

McQuarrie, glancing quickly at Baptiste, saw the anger flame in the eyes of the big habitant, saw the heavy eyebrows draw together in an ominous frown.

"Nae mair o' that talk, Du Rocher," he said sharply. "Leave quarreling until after. Perhaps then you will get your fill o' it—mair than you expect. We ha'e a hard task noo before us. We will tak' Jean Baptiste. He is the best mon on my raft." So, after further debate, Baptiste was among those chosen.

About fifteen men, with Du Rocher at their head, were rowed across the swift current to the jam, while the other lumbermen, with McQuarrie in their

midst, watched from the cliff the progress of the work with keen interest.

The rivermen swarmed upon the pile, and worked like demons, rolling the logs one by one with their cant dogs into the dark current beneath. At intervals, the shrill cries of Du Rocher, who stood in the shanty boat alongside the jam, could be heard above the thunder of the fall.

It was a gigantic struggle, one of the manly tasks that have molded the French-Canadian rivermen into a self-reliant, energetic race. Baptiste was in the thick of it, working with untiring vigor. Whether by chance, choice, or Du Rocher's command, he was farthest from the boat and closest to the brink of the cataract.

After hours of toil, the great pile suddenly seemed to shake and crumble slowly before the eyes of the watchers. The key logs had been reached and dislodged. The men on the cliff set up a cry of warning, but already the lumbermen had leaped into the waiting boat, and Du Rocher, driving his pike pole into the side of the crumbling avalanche, shoved the boat far into the current.

McQuarrie, from the shore, waved his arms frantically, and shouted "Jean Baptiste!" for the habitant stood alone on the jam, deserted. It may have been that Du Rocher imagined that an instant's delay might have endangered the lives of all, but the dastardly act aroused a spirit of resentment in the minds of even his own followers.

Jean Baptiste called loudly to Du Rocher to return, but as he saw the boat answering Du Rocher's command, continuing on its way toward the shore, an oath at the treachery was ripped from his throat.

But no time could be lost in idle vituperation. He cast away his cant dog, which was instantly swallowed by the dark water. In the heat of the work he had been oblivious to the hungry cries of the rapid, but now all the tumult broke upon his ears with a terrifying uproar.

The logs began to sink beneath his feet; the whole fabric was melting like a great wave. From the edges of the

jam the logs were falling, and being whirled into the cataract, and the center of the pile was straining and grinding in a great upheaval. He rushed frantically forward, his calked soles gripping and spurning the logs. He felt that any instant he might be submerged in the general ruin, or cast back into the boiling tempest. Once, as he stumbled, a log swept over him; but fortunately his head was guarded, or it would have cracked like an eggshell.

There was a cry of encouragement from the water. He recognized McQuarrie's voice, and saw from the corner of his eye a boat being rowed frantically toward him. Would it reach him in time? Would he be able to remain long enough on the crest of the logs, which were sinking rapidly beneath him? He was now near the end of the jam farthest from the rapid. He realized, though he did not dare or wish to look back, that the great body of the jam had disintegrated, and that the liberated atoms were being tossed through the waves. Only a small portion remained beneath him, and this seemed poised for the mad rush into the cataract.

Every instant logs loosed from its sides floated away, tiny islands on the swift current. Now he was on a level with the water, and he leaped from log to log, which sank and whirled beneath his weight; but presently the shadow of the boat was on the water, and, with a supreme effort, he leaped across an open span, landing safe and sound among his rescuers. All the lumbermen had watched his struggle with keen excitement. Now the boatmen's cheer was echoed from the shore.

"Weel done, Jean Baptiste," said McQuarrie, in a kindly voice which showed traces of deep emotion. The glad shouts of welcome told Jean that his manly strife with death had effaced forever from his comrades' minds the belief that he was a coward.

But one bitter thought overshadowed Jean's relief at his rescue and the joy of congratulations. That he had been in the very clutches of death was due to the cowardly treachery of one man—

and that man was the one who had put him to shame before his fellow raftsmen in the wrestling bout!

All the forces of his nature were stirred into a storm of anger. He forgot the dangers he had passed; he did not hear the voices about him; he did not know that McQuarrie was watching him narrowly, with a half smile on his lips. His eyes were bent upon the cliff, seeking Du Rocher. Before the boat grounded, he had leaped ashore, and now rushed up the slope toward the group of lumbermen on its crest. They parted as he came, for his face bore a look that brooked no restraint. Only a few dared to block his passage, but he brushed them aside.

At last he faced Du Rocher.

At the sight of Jean Baptiste's face, a momentary look of fear leaped to the riverman's eyes, and he stepped back quickly. He struck out furiously, and the blood stained Baptiste's cheek, but the blow only momentarily checked the rush. With a cry of rage deep in his throat, the habitant clasped Du Rocher in the circle of his powerful arms, and dragged him toward the edge of the cliff.

Now the lumbermen, in fascinated silence, witnessed a short, fierce struggle on the ledge of rock above the rushing waters. The underbrush was crushed beneath the trampling feet. Once the combatants slipped on the moss, and almost rolled together over the edge of the cliff, the stones loosened by their falling bodies rattling down the face of the rock. But the contest was brief. Du Rocher was no match for his powerful opponent, incensed, as the habitant was, with hate. The lumbermen saw Jean Baptiste smash away restraining fingers, and his body heave as he half shoved, half threw Du Rocher over the ledge. There was a faint splash as the body struck the water.

From the crest of the cliff the habitant, panting and shaken, but silent and unrelenting, watched his enemy struggling in the water, as one watches a drowning animal. Du Rocher was swimming strongly, but the swift cur-

rent was drawing him rapidly toward the fall. But now, when hope seemed lost, he had clutched a ledge of rock and was clinging desperately.

The lumbermen, who had been clamoring along the narrow base of the cliff, at last reached him, and strong arms drew him from the water, a cowed, bedraggled figure.

Jean Baptiste watched the rescue

without emotion. He felt no elation over his victory, as he quietly watched Du Rocher and his men enter their boat, and row toward their raft on the other bank of the river. But it might have been noticed that as he took his place in McQuarrie's boat the boss, with grave face, instinctively made way for him, and as the boat passed Du Rocher's raft, a silence fell.



PRESERVING THE LANDMARKS

OVER the city of Alexandria, in the historic State of Virginia, there hangs the charm of rumination and quiet and calm. Seldom does an alien foot disturb its sacred dust. Rarely is there the unseemly rush of modernity. A poet, living on one of its shaded streets, could tear the very heart out of inspiration and dash off an epic to perfect peace.

The natives of the town prize this atmosphere of contemplation. On one occasion at a meeting of the town council somebody, misguided and irreverent, sprang to his feet, kicked tradition in the face, and made a motion that all the streets be laid with asphalt. Shades of antiquity! Sacrilege unspeakable! Tragedy was impending.

But at that critical moment a patriot rose slowly to his feet, extended his arm in a slow and commanding gesture, carefully left the drawl in his voice, and said:

"The cobblestones in this town were good enough for George Washington, and they ought to be good enough for us!"

And again the atmosphere of eternal rest was unprofaned.



POINTS ON POPULATION

MRS. CHAMP CLARK, who is as well known for her brilliancy in conversation as her husband, the speaker of the House of Representatives, is for his fame in politics, tells this story:

The late Bishop Potter of New York had a most unclerical relish for practical jokes and pointed anecdotes. His cosmopolitan spirit loved men and things, and nothing pleased him better than to gather a group of congenial spirits about him and swap jokes.

One day he met a friend, a distinguished Jewish rabbi, and said to him in great seriousness:

"Rabbi, I am greatly worried about a dream I had the other night. I dreamed I died and went to the Jewish heaven. And who do you suppose were the only occupants?"

"I don't know, I'm sure," said the rabbi.

"Pawnbrokers and secondhand clothing men," laughed the bishop.

The rabbi said nothing.

Shortly after, however, he met the bishop. "Why, bishop," he said, "I had a dream myself the other night."

"Yes," said the bishop uneasily; "and what did you dream?"

"I dreamed I went to the Christian heaven."

"Well," pursued Potter, bracing himself, "whom did you find there?"

"Nobody," answered the rabbi.

A Chat With You

WHEN you read THE POPULAR you probably do it just because you like it. You probably don't pose as a highbrow, and don't try to give the impression that you are a consumer of high-class literature. At the same time your instincts are sound enough in choosing the story that deals with outdoors and adventure—as Stevenson says, “the open road, and the bright eyes of danger.” We ourselves hope that we are free from all literary affectation. Never yet have we taken a story because of the name of the writer. Never yet have we let anything but the interest and charm of a narrative count with us. We cheerfully leave the problem stories and psychological studies to others. And still we feel that we are on the right track, that if you read THE POPULAR you are getting the best. The type of fiction we publish has a good tradition behind it. In the past it has proved itself to be the type that stood best the acid test of time. Most of the great masterpieces have been our kind of a story.



JUST to show that we have the facts with us let us go back and take a few examples—a few of the real world books that have outlasted the centuries. Take Homer's great narrative poem, the Odyssey. In it the author relates the adventures of one Ulysses. Had this individual been alive to-day he would doubtless now be busied somewhere on the frontiers of civilization. He was a

man of great prudence and forethought, and yet he was such a lover of the wide, open spaces, that he left a throne and wife and child to travel over the face of the earth, a wanderer, engaged in a thousand perilous adventures, a discoverer of new islands, a sailor, and a hunter. No library is complete without the tale of his adventures; it is one of the universally acknowledged classics.



VERGIL and later Dante wrote stories of adventure and incident. The whole literature of the Italian Renaissance is largely composed of fiction of the same sort. All the great literature of the Middle Ages was the tale of the adventurer in various guises, King Arthur and his knights, Charlemagne and Roland, Don Quixote himself, all fighters and adventurers and wayfarers by land and sea. Perhaps the first great English novel was “Robinson Crusoe.” It is surely a tale of the outdoors, and of the man who could not bide quietly at home. “Tom Jones,” by Fielding, the father of all modern English and French novels, is not a tale of psychology, but of incident and adventure. Eugene Sue's “Wandering Jew” is of the same class, and we have a whole shelf of Dumas to point to.



IF the story of action were not the best sort of literature, we would not remember Sir Walter Scott, for he told no other sort of tale. The best part of

A CHAT WITH YOU—Continued.

Dickens would be lost to us, we would have forgotten all about Fenimore Cooper, we would banish Robert Louis Stevenson from the library if we did not class the adventure story as the best and truest of all. We have heard writers talk of abandoning the romance and writing a novel of character. We think that the depiction of human character is the highest function of the author, but we think the proper way to show it is in action. Sculpture and painting can show things truly enough when they are standing still, literature alone can show them as they act and move. The real picture of a man's soul is found in what he does or fails to do. We don't want to have a man described to us. We want to see him living and moving and doing things. We know him better that way, for it is the way in which we come to know each other in real life.



WE suppose that the most important work of the world is done by those who stay at home, who raise families, and build houses, who combine together to form municipalities and states. At the same time the wanderer will always be the more interesting and engaging figure. Some ancient instinct still dwells with all of us to make us wonder what lies over the brow of the next hill, and the next one beyond that, and still onward. We were nomads before we were farmers or city dwellers, and if we cannot wander still in search of personal adventure we can do it by proxy. It seems that all the best fairy tales began with three brothers, each of whom set out down the highway into the world to seek his fortune. We wish

we could all follow them in fact, and find the treasure and the enchanted princess. We can do it, however, in fancy. It seems to be true that romance never dies. As Mr. Kipling has pointed out, the cave man said that all the romance had gone out of life when they invented bows and arrows and stone hatchets, the knight bade farewell to it at the invention of gunpowder, the traveler, when trains came to be propelled by steam. But still it stays with it. We are trying to give you some part of your share of it every two weeks. Sometimes we may succeed better than others, but always we think you will find some touch of it in *THE POPULAR*. We think that we are giving you better diversion than if we tried to publish realistic stories, or studies in character analysis. We think the whole history of literature shows that we are right.



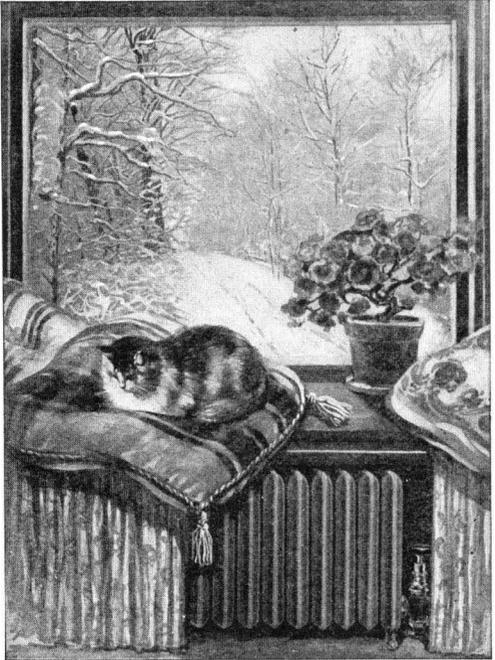
WE want to remind you that the next issue appears on the twenty-third of December, and is a real, sure-enough Christmas number. As a rule, the average Christmas story is a disappointment. It is generally written to order and lacks vitality. This time, however, we have the real thing in Christmas stories. We haven't had a Christmas number in some time, we wouldn't try to bring one out now if we had not the proper stories. They are written by such authors as Richard Washburn Child, who wrote "The Blue Wall," Francis Lynde, Fred R. Bechdolt, Ralph D. Paine, Rupert Hughes, Daniel Steele, Charles E. Van Loan, and Courtney Ryley Cooper. Also, in the same number, you will find an announcement of our plans for the New Year.

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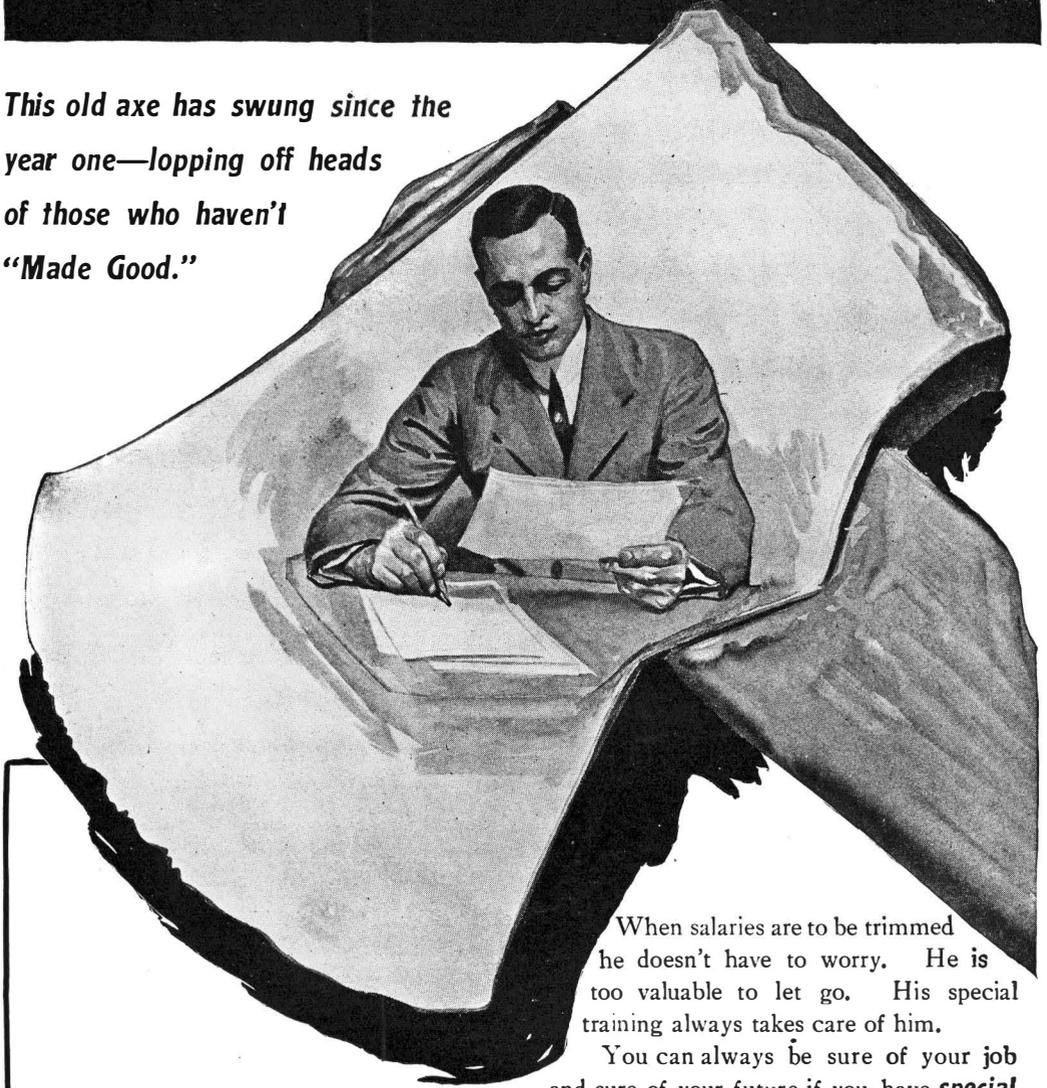
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Structural Engineer	Salesman
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Mechanical Draftsman	Commercial Law
Refrigeration Engineer	Teacher
Civil Engineer	English Branches
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THE HOLIDAY AINSLEE'S

¶ "Pretty fair," an editor will say, "and Christmas stuff is always hard to get."

¶ That's the trouble with most Christmas stories—allowances are made for them because they *are* Christmas stories.

¶ In planning this coming holiday number of ours we resolved to let no story hide its faults behind a set of Santa Claus false whiskers.

¶ Almost a year ago we asked ten of the most successful authors of entertaining fiction to submit holiday stories for the January 1913 AINSLEE'S. We were most fortunate. Of nine stories received six were up to the high standard we had set. They are:

The Saving of Cynthia . . . Kate Jordan

The Common Children . . . Marion Hill

**The Story of the Somnambulist and the Boy
Thomas P. Byron**

A Conscript Saint . . . Wells Hastings

A Night Off . . . Frank Condon

**Queen Cophetua and the Beggar Man
Julie M. Lippmann**

¶ In addition to these distinctly Christmas and New Year's features you will find in the January number a most unusual novelette by I. A. R. Wylie, who wrote "The Paupers of Portman Square," and fascinating short stories by

Nalbro Bartley . . . Richard Le Gallienne

Horace Fish . . . Thomas Addison

Anna Alice Chapin

The Holiday Ainslee's

On sale December 13th.

15 cents the copy

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Let us send you this beautiful new Fashion Catalogue, containing all the advance styles in wearing apparel for Spring, 1913, as well as our wonderful bargains in dainty waists and underwear.

Just drop us a postal today and say you want catalogue No. 57. It will be sent by return mail.

We pay all Mail or Express Charges on anything you buy from us, and if you are not satisfied with your purchase, it may be returned at our expense and your money will be refunded without argument or delay. **WE TAKE ALL THE RISK.**

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TODAY



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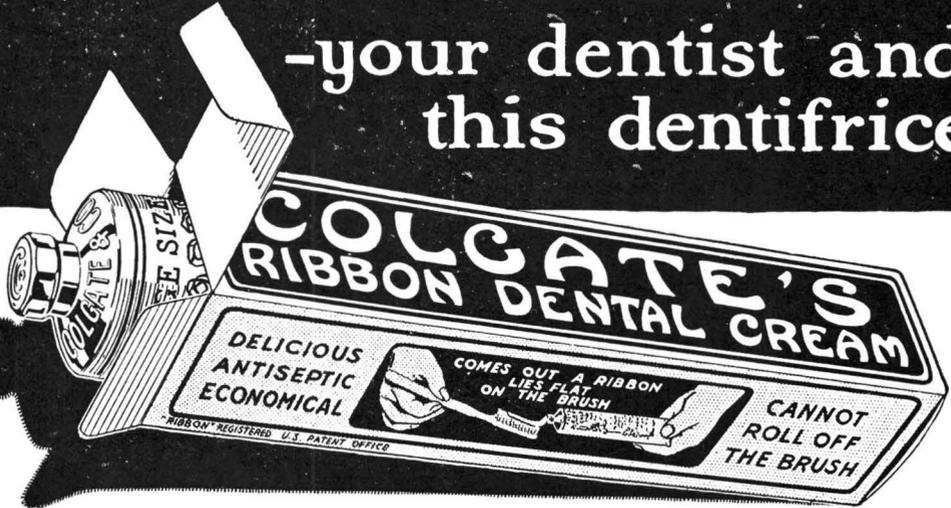
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-your dentist and
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TAKE care of your teeth—you profit largely in better digestion and better health. This is a proved fact. You enjoy taking care of them, too, if you make it your habit to use

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TRADE MARK

The delicious flavor makes its use a real pleasure—it has no “druggy” taste.

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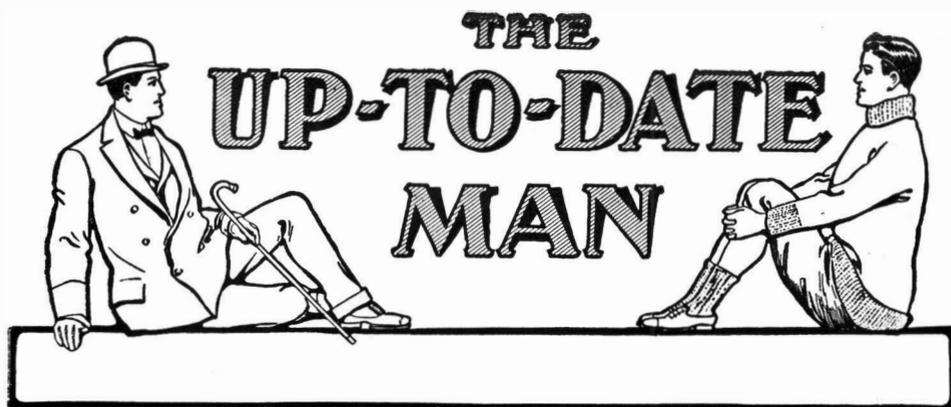
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COLGATE & CO., Dept. B, 199 Fulton Street, New York

Makers of Cashmere Bouquet Toilet Soap—luxurious, lasting, refined.



The readers of the magazine may write to this department about any problem of dress. Every question will be promptly answered, provided that a stamped, self-addressed envelope is enclosed.

THE modish Londoner, in his Bond Street "kit," is addicted just now to the double-breasted lounge jacket, cut so as to resemble a single-breasted jacket, and without the square, "stubby" look characteristic of the old-fashioned double-breasted garment.

On "Tailors' Row" it is believed that the double-breasted jacket will come into its own next spring, and that, indeed, it will be the "smartest" cut in lounge suits.

Heretofore, the objection-in-chief to the double-breasted jacket has been that it was becoming only to tallish figures, and gave the man below normal height a thickset, "boxy" aspect, while the fashionable figure of the day is soldier-slim.

At Palm Beach and throughout the Southland, where the best-dressed set makes an idol of polite idling in winter, one sees many of these double-breasted jackets, with their low-lying lapels, narrowish shoulders, tapering sleeves, and arched sides.

In the modish single-breasted jacket the lapels are higher and blunter than hitherto, but the double-breasted jacket, to look well, must have deep-spanning lapels.

Mellow browns, winsome grays, two-tint stuffs, deep and light

blues, even a sprinkling of green and purplish shades, are high caste, though, to be sure, the color of one's jacket suit is not dictated by fashion, but by becomingness.

Belts of canvas or silk webbing, with a buckle molded into the semblance of a snake, are the standard among English sportsmen. Many prefer this belt to leather, as it has more "give-and-take," and is less prone to compress the waist.

We are inching toward complete comfort in day dress. Next summer fewer men will wear the heavy, heating, and impossible woolens.

Silks, mohairs, nun's cloths, linens, silk-and-linens, pongees, and like flimsy stuffs will have a wider vogue, because both season and reason are on their side.

Manufacturers are now making them up for next season.

The increasing trickle of tourists to Panama, Cuba, and the tropics, where clothes must conform to climate and season, has shown Americans that we are behind "the untutored savage" in dressing naturally.

Of course, white ducks are stiff and heavy, and scarcely suited to everyday wear, but the softer silks and mohairs are the beau-ideal of fabrics for summer.



The Back-Bow Soft Hat.



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are "open"
to
Happytown**

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Nothing like a good, fat fascinating Queen Quality hand-made cigarette to "oil you up" and make things run smoothly.

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**Save the labels of
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CUT OUT! Name
Street
City State.....
"Please introduce me to the Queen"

Abbreviated underwear, silk shirts, soft collars, turned-up trousers—all these are hard-won steps up the ladder of comfort, and many men wear them the year round, and right in the thick of winter.

Patent-leather boots with gray cloth uppers are again in fashion. Some have a center strip of patent leather which extends all the way to the top. For some years it was the mode to cut after-



Mackinaw Jacket for Skating.

noon boots with heavy, clumsy, projecting soles on the theory that this rough look was "athletic." It was nothing of the kind, but an awkward abomination.

The correct boot should conform to the shape of the foot, tapering toward the toe, though not pointedly. The sole should be thin, rather than thick, to allow comfortable bending when one walks. Tan uppers have never been countenanced, probably because they look effeminate.

No man should attempt to wear boots with gray tops unless he is dressed impeccably—unless every detail of his costume breathes elegance and distinction. For "the last cry" in fashion always renders the wearer a target for scrutinizing glances, and it takes only a single incongruity to turn from commendation into condemnation.

Among winter sack coats, the favored

Curfew Will Not Ring Tonight—No!

*To the Sleeper who hasn't
Savage Protection:*

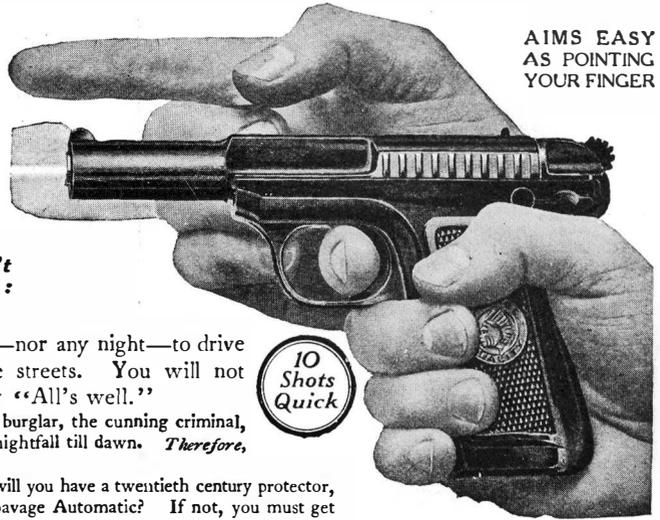
CURFEW will not ring tonight—nor any night—to drive loiterers and criminals off the streets. You will not hear the policeman calling out hourly “All’s well.”

All is not well. The twentieth century burglar, the cunning criminal, and the vicious ex-convict are abroad from nightfall till dawn. *Therefore, you must protect your home from within.*

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The Savage is the only ten-shot automatic pistol. Without practice you can aim and shoot it like a crack shot. Shoots only one shot each time you pull the trigger, yet all ten can be fired in less than three seconds. Reloads, and recocks itself automatically.

Booklet about what to do if a burglar is in your home sent for 6 cents in stamps. This advice is gathered from detectives and police authorities.



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AS POINTING
YOUR FINGER

A NEW SAVAGE RIFLE

Send also for our handsome free rifle catalogue explaining the new Savage 20-shot repeater (.22 cal.), 20-inch barrel, military bolt action, weight 4 lbs., \$6.50. Savage Arms Company, 941 Savage Ave., Utica, New York.

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Just to show you what it’s like, we will send you **The National Sportsman** magazine for three months and your choice of a handsome **National Sportsman Brotherhood** emblem in the form of a Lapel Button, a Scarf Pin, or a Watch Fob, as here shown, on receipt of 25c. in stamps or coin.

Don’t delay,—join our great big Hunting, fishing, Camping, Nature-loving Brotherhood to-day.

NATIONAL SPORTSMAN MAGAZINE,
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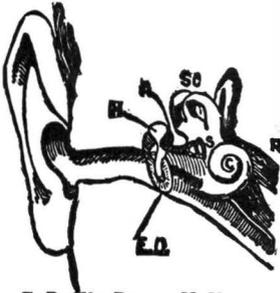
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fashion has lapels that are soft and rolled, the waistcoat protrudes above the coat opening, and there is no breast pocket. To be sure, this is not the only approved mode, and the omission of the breast pocket is a matter of fancy, rather than fashion.

The reason for leaving off the breast pocket is simply that carrying the handkerchief makes a "lump" and spoils the smooth drape of the coat.

For the poke or wing collar, preferred by Americans, with afternoon dress a double-fold collar is sometimes substituted, and accompanying it is a simple black four-in-hand, pierced with a pearl pin. The effect is "chic."

Morning (cutaway) coats are figure-flexing and curve-chumming, with natural shoulders and free, flowing lapels as on evening and lounge coats. They are either braided or braidless.

One describes a dawning revival of plain-color scarfs, and black especially seems to be marked for fashionable favor this season. Chamois gloves and a yellow chrysanthemum are pleasant partners, and lend a bit of spice to afternoon dress.

Cloth hats have become so very common, on account of the deluge of "fuzzy-wuzzy" absurdities, that the simple felt hat, with a high crown, is edging into vogue.

This style, in soft grays, mellow browns, and deep greens, is seen on the best-dressed men, who have a distaste for the kind of cloth hat which hints of the soap "drummer."

The "favored few" now wintering in the tropics and semi-tropics to ambush themselves from Northland chills, set the modes in lounge clothes for the forthcoming spring and summer.

The "smartest" innovations in summer dress are first seen at Palm Beach and thereabouts. Here sashes, white silk hose, and white dinner suits were launched. Here the panama hat is king. Here idle-hour clothes are worn as they should be worn—with that "carefully careless" or "carelessly careful" air which chimes with climate and environment.

For the Southland trip one should, of course, choose flannels, serges, tweeds, or homespuns cut very soft and with the minimum of lining.

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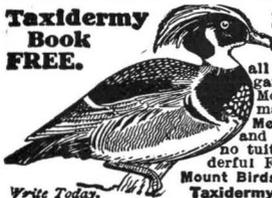
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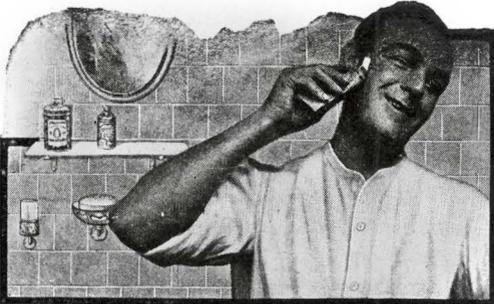
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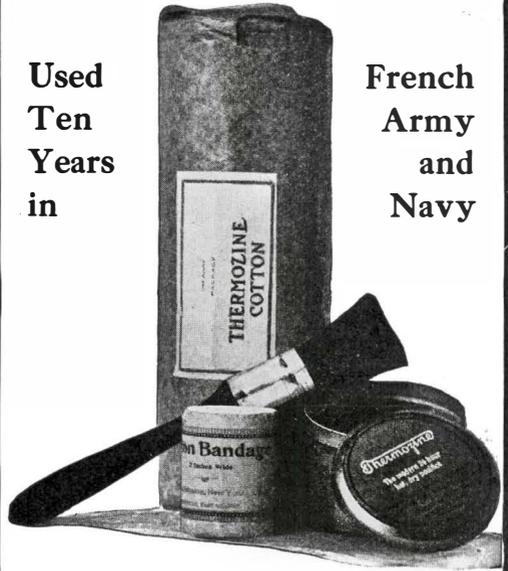
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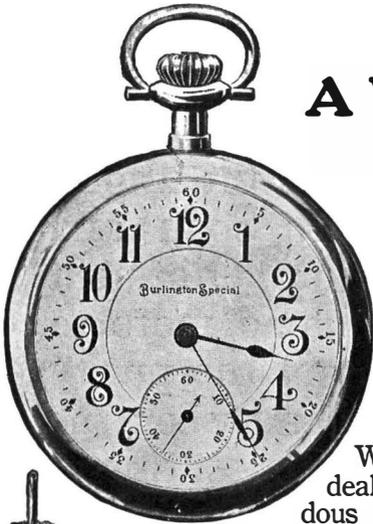
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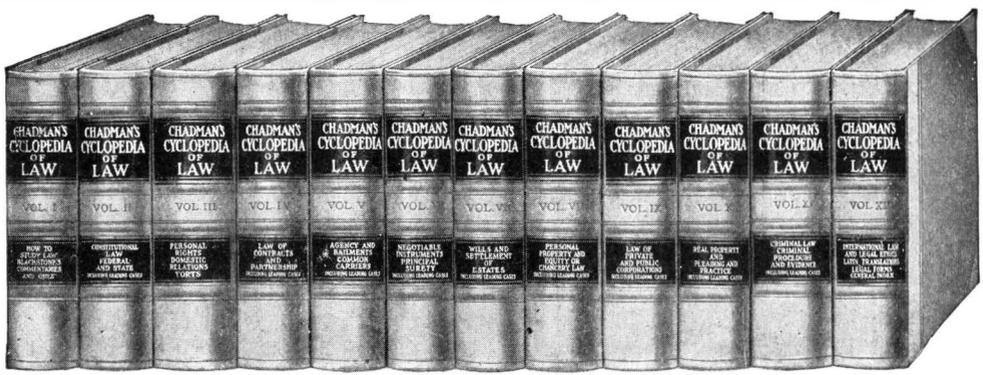
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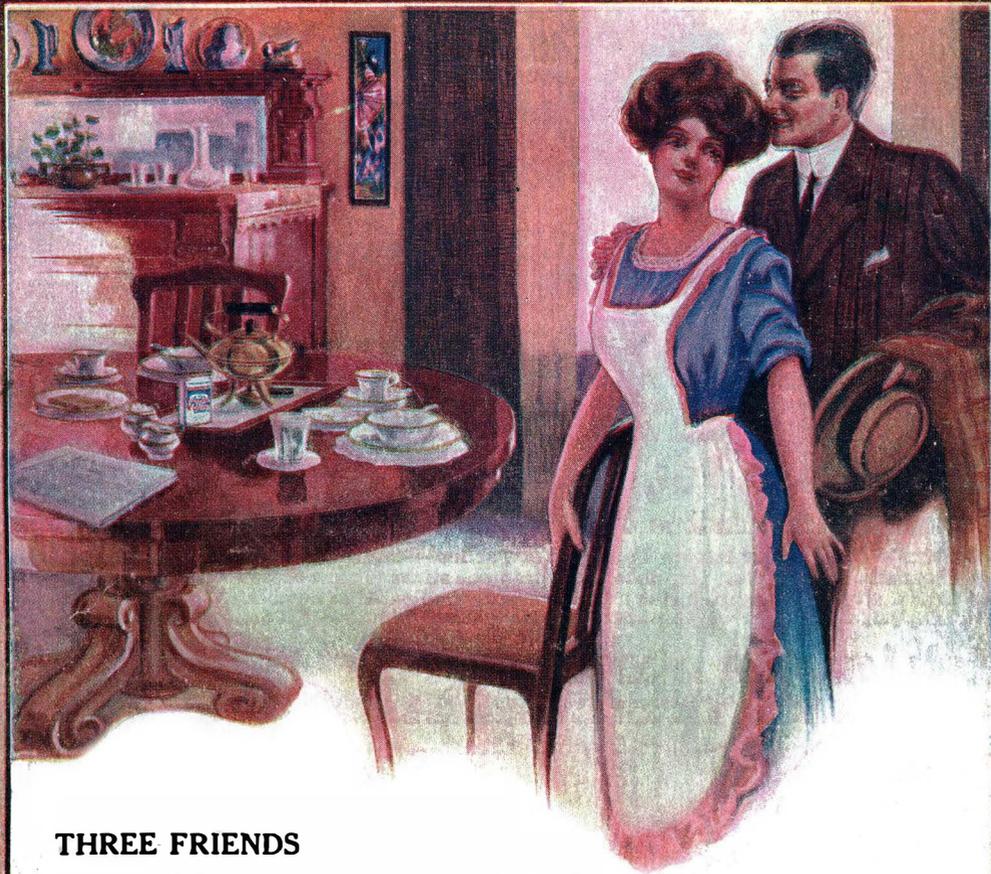
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