Adventure

April
15 cents

MY ADVENTURES WITH YOUR MONEY

Who got it - and how

By George Graham Rice

Beginning this Month with the Rise and Fall of

MAXIM & GAY

(*Sellers of Racing Tips*) Who made and lost $1,500,000 in two years

THE RIDGWAY COMPANY. PUBLISHERS OF EVERYBODY'S MAGAZINE

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ADVENTURE *for* MAY

TWENTY Adventure Stories Fact and Fiction—All Good

George Graham Rice, Master Adventurer in Popular Finance, will continue his startling exposures under the title ***"My Adventures with Your Money—Who Got It and How."*** In the May number he gives you a smashing picture of money-madness, telling how the public fell for the mining-stock game and paid him a quarter of a million dollars for three weeks' work at Goldfield. Every one who ever bought a share of Get-Rich-Quick Mining Stock will want to read this inside story.

Captain George B. Boynton, Master Adventurer in the World's Conspiracies, War-Maker as he has well been called, tells of his effort to kidnap Arabi Pasha from British captivity in Ceylon, and his later share in the Brazilian Revolution, through several dramatic chapters of his life story.

Buffington Phillips writes of ***"The Lost Treasures of the Spanish Main,"*** the gold and jewels still waiting to be found by some modern master adventurer. The article is crowded with facts and is a veritable Baedeker for the rover who might wish to go a-treasure-seeking in the South.

"Skeleton Island" is the name of the complete novel in the May number, by H. de Vere Stacpoole. The story has all the lure of its name, but it is no tale of blood and horror. Instead, a delightful, whimsical romance of adventure off the Florida Coast.

"The Stolen Navy," by Muriel A. Pollexfen, is another "Gray Ghost" story, a brilliant picture of aerial plot and counterplot, with the peace and safety of the world at stake.

"Sir John Hawkwood," Marion Polk Angellotti's stirring serial of the White Company in Italy, moves on its way of romantic adventure veritably like another "Three Musketeers." It is a dramatic picture of a most fascinating career.

In strong contrast appears the big, red-blooded adventure serial of African plot and savagery, ***"Prester John,"*** by John Buchan, a masterly tale of wild life and bravery.

These are the most conspicuous offerings of the next number of ***ADVENTURE.*** But they are not all. Twenty great stories and articles make the magazine.

ADVENTURE *for* MAY

Adventure 1911 April Vol. 1 No. 6

My Adventures with Your Money

Who Got It—and How

1.

by George Graham Rice

The Rise and Fall of Maxim & Gay (Sellers of Racing Tips)

Who Made and Lost $1,500,000 in Two Years on a Capital of $7

EDITOR'S NOTE—The name of George Graham Rice is one that has had infinite publicity given to it of late, and yet not so much as his activities might justify. Do you know the name of B. H. Scheftels & Company, curb-brokers, recently the object of a spectacular raid by the United States Government? Of the *Mining Financial News* of New York? Of Nat C. Goodwin & Company, of Reno and Rawhide? Of Sullivan & Rice of Reno? Of the *Nevada Mining News* of Reno? Of the L. M. Sullivan Trust Company of Goldfield and Tonopah? Of Maxim & Gay, sellers of racing-tips? If any or all of these names are familiar to you, you ought to know George Graham Rice, for Mr. Rice was either president or vice-president and general manager of all these but the first, and from the Scheftels house he received a large salary for his advice in publicity and promotion services.

The enemies of Mr. Rice proclaim him the most malign of influences in the world of

Get-Rich-Quick Finance. His friends go to the other extreme in their admiration. All alike agree, however, that he is a master necromancer in the art of inducing small investors to take long chances.

A true adventurer in money, who has made and lost several fortunes, he is still young—just turned forty, cheerful and optimistic. Friends and enemies alike realize his peculiar intimacy with all the ways of speculation and his thorough understanding of the springs that move men's actions. It is this knowledge of men and of money and of the mining game that makes the material of definite value to our readers.

Mr. Rice does not evade whatever odium may remain from earlier incidents in his life. A few years ago, when a financial and journalistic rival in a Western mining camp proposed to publish the "record" of Mr. Rice, the latter anticipated him by publishing his own record in his own paper, in parallel columns with that of the enemy, a man of national importance, and told the community to take its choice. When a man can thus give the citations against himself—the serving of one term in early youth in a reformatory and another later in State prison, on both occasions at the instance of an irate father of affluence and high business standing, who is now his good friend, and the change of name from that which was his at birth to George Graham Rice—he may surely be credited with a frankness of spirit in his revelations regarding his adventures in Get-Rich-Quick Finance.

In the period prior to the opening of this series of articles, Mr. Rice has been a successful newspaper reporter and editor, and a contributor of prize-winning stories in the *Youth's Companion* with morals to boys that might go wrong. However incongruous and inconsistent with one another all these facts may seem, they must all be credited with a share in the versatility, self-reliance and resourcefulness of the man as he is today, just as truly as that the direction of any motion is the resultant of all the forces acting upon the moving body.

Mr. Rice knows things that ought to be of great service to our readers, and we are glad to have him tell them in the pages of ADVENTURE.

AUTHOR'S FOREWORD: Wake up, you member of a race of gamblers! The instinct to speculate dominates you. You feel that you simply must take a chance. You can't win, yet you are going to continue to speculate—and to lose.

You think you are smart and that you can detect the wiles of the Get-Rich-Quick operator at a glance. You can—one kind of Get-Rich-Quick operator. But not the dangerous kind. Modern Get-Rich-Quick Finance is insidious and unfrenzied. It is practised by the highest, and you are probably one of its easy victims.

There are two classes of Get-Rich-Quick operators.

One uses crude methods, has little standing in the community, operates with comparatively small capital, and caters to those who do not think and have only small resources. He is not very dangerous.

The other uses scientific methods—so scientific, indeed, that only men "on the inside" readily recognize them; occupies a pedestal in the community; is generally a man of financial standing, a member of a stock exchange; employs large capital; appeals to thinkers or those who flatter themselves that they know the difference between a gold bar and a gold brick, and seeks to separate from their money all classes and conditions of men and women with accumulations large or small.

The United States Government during the past half-year has been raiding the little fellow—the crude operator whose power to injure is as nothing compared to the ravages that have been wrought by the activities of his really formidable prototype.

Although I and my associates were recently the subject of such a raid, I do not class myself as a Get-Rich-Quick operator of any sort. I may be permitted during the progress of my story in ADVENTURE to express my views as to the underlying causes which have led up to the Government's action in this instance. This, however, will be only incidental.

I have a message to communicate to every investor and speculator, a story to tell of my experience through the great Goldfield, Bullfrog and Manhattan mining booms in Nevada, in which the public lost upwards of $200,000,000, and of a series of great mining-stock promotions in Wall Street and other American financial centers, in which

the public sank $350,000,000 in 1910. The narration of the facts will demonstrate that while the Government's Get-Rich-Quick crusade is not wholly misdirected, in that it is making it less easy for some of the small offenders to thrive, the Government has ONLY MADE A BEGINNING, for transcendentally greater offenders are at this very moment plucking the public to a fare-you-well.

No man, except a common thief, ever started out to promote a mining company or any other company that he was convinced at the outset had no merit; and the work of common thieves is easily recognized and the offenders are easily apprehended.

The more dangerous malefactors are the men in high places who take a good property, overcapitalize it, appraise its value at many times what it is worth, use artful methods to beguile the thinking public into believing the stock is worth par or more, and foist it on investors at a figure which robs them of great sums of money. There are more than a million victims of this practise in the United States.

After years of experience behind the scenes, the conclusion is forced upon me that the instinct to speculate is so strong in American men and women that they choose to "take a chance" regardless of the fact that at the outset they already half-realize they eventually must lose.

Myself, in boyhood, a victim of the instinct to gamble to so grievous an extent that my own father and my eldest brother were instrumental in having condign punishment visited upon me, I, years afterward, at the age of thirty, learned to cater to the insatiable desire in others. I spent fortunes for advertising and wrote my own advertisements. I constructed on big lines powerful dollar-making machinery that succeeded in getting the money for my enterprises, and I was generally my own manager. Ten years of hard work in a field in which I labored day and night has disclosed to me that the instinct to gamble is all-conquering among women as well as men—the rich and the poor, the young and the old, the wise and the foolish, the successful and the unsuccessful.

Worse, if you have lost some of your hard-earned money in speculation, your case is probably hopeless, because you have a fresh incentive, namely, to get even. Experience, therefore, seems to teach you nothing. The professional gambler's aphorism, "You can't kill a sucker," had its genesis in a recognition of this fact, and now promoters of ventures of national importance subscribe to its truth and on it predicate their operations.

Nearly everybody speculates (gambles); few win. Where does the money go that is lost, and who gets it?

Are you aware that in catering to your instinct to gamble, methods to get you to part with your money are so artfully and deftly applied by the highest powers that they deceive you completely? Could you imagine it to be a fact that in nearly all cases when you find you are ready to embark on a given speculation, ways and means that are almost scientific in their insidiousness have been used upon you?

What are those impalpable yet cunningly devised tricks that are calculated to fool the wisest and which landed YOU? I shall narrate them.

What are your chances of winning in any speculation where you play another man's game? HAVE YOU ANY CHANCE AT ALL?

In playing the races you have only one chance—YOU CAN LOSE.

In margin-trading on the New York Stock Exchange, New York Curb, Boston Stock Exchange, Chicago Board of Trade, Chicago Stock Exchange, New York Cotton Exchange and kindred institutions, experience among stock-brokers proves that if you stick to the game you have only one chance—YOU CAN LOSE.

In railroad, industrial and mining-stock speculation, where you buy the shares outright and hold them, you have two chances: if you are of the average and your operations are continuous—YOU CAN BREAK EVEN IF YOU ARE VERY LUCKY, OR LOSE IF YOU ARE NOT; and in justice to myself I must be allowed to explain that I had a much higher opinion of the public's chances ten years ago than I have now, and that experience alone has taught me this. Successful promoters are born, not made, and the public can't hope to win by following the advice of a promoter, an organizer or a capitalist, who himself loses nine times out of ten, which is the general experience of the men behind all enterprises, honest or dishonest.

It's a subject with a thousand ramifications. The moral to the investor and specu-

lator is "Never Again!" And yet you WILL speculate again! Experience teaches that so long as the chance of speculative gain exists in any enterprise, so long will the American public continue in its efforts to appease its speculative appetite.

My purpose in writing from memory a chronicle of my adventures in years gone by as the head of a race-track information bureau is to open your eyes to the very small chance anybody has to win when he plays another man's game. The story serves as a prelude for the series of personal narratives which will appear in subsequent numbers. If the racing story appeals to the reader it may gain for the articles that follow even a larger audience, such as I crave for my real message, which has to do with the public's stock-market activities.

GEORGE GRAHAM RICE.

THE RISE AND FALL OF MAXIM & GAY

THE place was New York. The time, March, 1901. My age was thirty. My cash capital, tightly placed in my jeans, was $7.30, and I had no other external resources. I was a rover and out of a job.

Since August of the year before I had been loafing. My last position, seven months before, was that of a reporter for a New Orleans newspaper, and my last assignment the great Galveston cyclonic hurricane in which 15,000 lives were lost and $100,000,000 in property was destroyed. I covered that catastrophe for the New York *Herald* and other journals as well as for the New Orleans newspaper. It was a "beat" and I netted $15,000 for a few days' hard work, but the money had all been spent for subsistence.

At the corner of Fortieth Street and Broadway I met an old-time racetrack friend, Dave Campbell. His face wore a hardy, healthful hue, but he bore unmistakable evidence of being down on his luck.

"Buy me a drink," he said.

"I've got thirty cents in change and I must have a cigar," I answered, "and you know I like good ones."

"Well, I'll take a beer," he said, "and that will enable you to buy a perfecto."

No sooner said than done. The cigar and the drink were forthcoming. We sat down. It was a café with the regulation news-ticker near the lunch counter.

"Do you still bet on the horses?" asked Campbell.

"No, I haven't had a bet down in a year," I answered.

"Well, here's a letter I just received from Frank Mead at New Orleans, and it ought to make you some money," he said.

"There's a 'pig' down here named Silver Coin," the letter said, "that has been raced for work recently. I think he's fit and ready and that within the next few days they will place him in a race that he can win, and he will bring home the coonskins at odds of 10 to 1."

I had seen letters like that before, but my interest was aroused. I picked up a copy of the New York *Morning Telegraph* from the table. Turning the pages, I noticed a number of tipsters' advertisements, all claiming they were continually giving the public winners on the races.

"Do these people make money?" I asked Campbell.

"Yes, they must," he answered, "because the ads have been running every day for months and months."

"Well, if poorly written ads like these can make money, what would well-written ads accomplish, and particularly from an information bureau which might give real information?" I queried. A moment later the ticker began its click, click, click.

"Here come the entries," said Campbell.

He went to the tape and ejaculated, "By Jiminy! Here's Silver Coin entered for tomorrow."

"I've got an idea for an advertisement," I said. "Get me a sheet of paper."

It was supplied. I wrote:

Bet Your Last Dollar On
SILVER COIN
To-day
At New Orleans
He Will Win At 10 To 1

And then I faltered. "I must have a name for the signature," I said.

I picked up the newspaper again and turned to the page containing the entries for that day at the New Orleans races. A sire's name was given as St. Maxim.

"Maxim!" I said. "That's a good name. I'll use it. Now for one that will make euphony."

"Gay!" said Campbell. "How's that? It's sporty."

Thereupon I created the firm of Maxim & Gay.

In a postscript to this advertisement I stated that the usual terms for this information were $5 per day and $25 per week, and that the day after next Maxim & Gay would have another selection, which would not be given away free.

"Maxim & Gay" were without an address. Half a block away on Broadway, at a real estate office, we were informed that upstairs they had some rooms to let. I engaged one of these for $15 a month—no pay for a week. Two tin signs were ordered painted, bearing the inscription, "Maxim & Gay." One was placed at the entrance of the building and the other at the door upstairs. The sign-painter extended credit.

Before bidding me adieu, Campbell exclaimed of a sudden:

"By golly! I can't understand that scheme. How can you make any money giving out that Silver Coin tip for nothing?"

"Watch and see!" I said.

Around to the *Morning Telegraph* office, then on Forty-second Street, I went.

"Insert this ad and give me $7 worth of space," I said, as I shelled out my last cent.

When the advertisement appeared the next morning, its aspect was disappointing. The space occupied was only fifty-six agate lines, or four inches, single-column measure. It looked puny. Would people notice it?

That afternoon Campbell and I took possession of the new office of Maxim & Gay. Luckily, a former tenant had left a desk and a chair behind, in lieu of a settlement for rent. In walked a tall Texan.

"Hey there!" he cried. "Here's $5. It's yours. Keep it. Answer my question, and no matter what way you answer it, it don't make any difference. The $5 is yours."

I looked up in astonishment.

"Give me the source of your information on Silver Coin," he said. "I bet big money. If your dope is on the level, I'll bet a gob. If it ain't, your confession will be cheap at $5, which will be all the money I'll lose."

I showed him the letter from Frank Mead.

"That's good enough for me," he said, turning on his heel.

Silver Coin easily won at 10 to 1.

The betting was so heavy in the New York pool-rooms that, at post time, when 10 to 1 was readily obtainable at the race-track, 6 to 1 was the best price that could be obtained in New York. It is history that the New York City pool-rooms at that time controlled by "Jimmy" Mahoney were literally "burned up." Pool-room habitués argued it thus: "If the tip is not 'a good thing,' what object in the world would these people have for publishing the ad? If the horse loses, the cost of the advertisement is certainly lost. The only way they can win is for the horse to win." It was good logic—as far as it went.

But it was really sophistry. If the horse lost, the inserter of the Maxim & Gay advertisement would be out exactly $7. If the $7 was used to bet on the horse, the most that Maxim & Gay could win would be $70. I was taking the same risk as the bettor, with a greater chance for gain. By investing $7 in the advertisement, it was possible for me to win much more money from the public by obtaining their patronage.

I recall that the experimental features of the advertisement appealed to me strongly and struck me as being a splendid test of the possibilities of the business. If the horse won and there were few responses to the advertisement it would be convincing on the point that there was no money in that branch of the horse-racing business. I argued that if the racing public do not believe an Information Bureau is what it cracks itself up to be, in the face of a positive demonstration, how can they be expected to believe the lurid claims of the fakers whose advertisements crowd the morning sporting papers daily and in which they claim *after* the races are run that they named in advance the winners at all sorts of big odds?

THE next morning about ten o'clock, Campbell called at my home and said that he had received another "good thing" by telegraph from Mead and that the name of the horse was Annie Lauretta, with probable odds of 40 to 1.

"Jiminy!" he exclaimed. "If we only get a few people in to-day and this one wins, what will happen?"

Leisurely we walked to the office. "If we get ten customers to-day to start with, we'll make a fine beginning," I said.

As we approached the Hotel Marlborough, which is opposite the building on Broadway in which the Maxim & Gay Company had its modest little office, we were startled by a crowd of people who were being lined up by half a dozen policemen.

"What theater has a sale of seats to-day?" Campbell asked.

"Don't know," I answered.

As we approached the office, we found that the line extended into our own office building. As we ambled up the rickety stairs, we passed the crowd in line, one by one, until we discovered, to our great astonishment, that the line ended at our door.

We turned the key, walked in, locked the door and stood aghast.

Holding up both hands, I cried, "In heaven's name, what have we done?" I was appalled.

"Give 'em Annie Lauretta."

"But suppose Annie don't win, what will they do to us?" I expostulated.

"Smokes!" exclaimed Campbell. "Are you going to turn down all those $5 bills?"

"Let's see that telegram," I faltered.

I perused it over and over again.

"Mead's tip on Silver Coin is good enough reason to warrant advising people to put a wager on another one of his choices," Campbell argued. I agreed.

How to convey the information in merchantable form was the next question. A typist in the Hotel Marlborough was sent for and asked to strike off the name "Annie Lauretta" 500 or 1,000 times on slips of paper. Envelopes were bought and a typed slip was placed in each. The line increased until it was a block and a half long.

When all was ready, the door was opened. Campbell passed the envelopes out as each man handed me $5. I stuffed the money in the right-hand drawer, and when that became choked, I stuffed it in the left-hand drawer. Finally, the money came so thick and fast that I picked up the waste-paper basket from the floor, lifted it to the top of the desk and asked the buyers to throw their money into that receptacle. When a man wanted change, I let him help himself.

For two and a half hours, or until within fifteen minutes of the calling of the first race at New Orleans, the crowd thronged in and out of our office. At the end of the day we counted the money and found the net proceeds were $2,755.

"What will we do next?" asked Campbell. "What's my job, and what do I get?"

"How much do you want?" I asked.

"Ten dollars a day," he said.

Thereupon he got possession of the $10 and he admitted it was more money than he had seen in a month.

"What will we do next?" he repeated.

"A place for safety is advisable," said I. "Lock the office and don't let us think of coming back until after the fourth race, when we see what Annie Lauretta does."

We hied ourselves to a resort in Harlem and stood by the ticker to see what would happen to Annie. It was half an hour since the third race had been reported.

"Fourth race—tick—tick—tick," it came. "A—AL——,"

"We've lost!" I said.

"A—AL—ALPENA first."

There was grim silence.

"Tick—tick——,"

"Here she is!" yelled Campbell.

"ANNIE LAURETTA second—40—20—10" (meaning that the odds were 40 to 1, first; 20 to 1, second, and 10 to 1, third, and that those who had played "across the board" had won second and third money at great odds).

I boarded a Broadway car, rode down to the Stewart building and rented one of the finest suites of offices in its sacred purlieus. I ordered a leading furniture dealer to furnish it sumptuously. At night I walked over to the *Morning Telegraph* office, laid $250 on the counter, ordered inserted a flaring full-page ad. announcing that Maxim & Gay had given Annie Lauretta at 40, 20 and 10, second, and Silver Coin at 10 to 1, won, and were ready for more business.

A telegram was sent to Frank Mead, instructing him to spend money in every direction with a view to getting the very best information that could be obtained from handicappers, clockers, trainers and every other source he could reach. Mead continued to wire daily the name of one horse, which we promptly labeled "The One Best Bet" and thereby originated that expression, so often used in these days.

The success of this enterprise was phenomenal. In the course of two years it earned in excess of $1,500,000. There were some weeks when the business netted over $20,000 profits. At the height of its career,

in the Summer of 1902, at the Saratoga race meeting, when the pool-rooms in New York were open, our net profits for the meeting of a little less than three weeks were in excess of $50,000.

We established an office in Saratoga and our average daily sales there were 300 envelopes at $5 each. In New York the average was just as large, and, in addition, we had a large clientele in distant cities who received the information by telegraph. The wire business, in fact, increased to such an extent that it was necessary to call upon the Western Union and Postal Telegraph companies to furnish our offices in the Stewart building with direct loops.

I spent the money as fast as I made it. I believed in our own information and made the fatal error of plunging on it. My error, as I afterwards concluded, was in not risking the same amount on every selection. Had I done this, I would not have suffered serious losses. The trouble was that every time a horse on which I wagered won, I was encouraged to bet several times as much on the next one, and by doubling and trebling my bets, I played an unequal game.

The expense of gathering this information within a few weeks amounted to upwards of $1,000 a week, and it was not only our boast, but an actuality, that the Bureau did really give more than value received.

Undoubtedly, the evil of the venture was the gambling it incited; but the effort to secure reliable information was honest, and what young man of my age and of my proclivities and experiences, having indulged in a lark of the Silver Coin variety, could withstand the temptation of seeing the thing through?

Among the leading patrons of the Maxim & Gay Company were soon numbered important horse owners on the turf, leading bookmakers and some leaders of both sexes in the Smart Set. We made it a rule to sell no information of any kind to minors and often excluded young men from the offices for this reason.

Our methods of advertising were unique. We used full pages whenever possible, and it was a maxim in the establishment that small type was never intended for commercial uses. We used in our big display advertisements a nomenclature of the turf that had never before been heard except in the vicinity of the stables, and we coined words and phrases to suit almost every occasion. The word "clocker," meaning a man who holds a watch on horses in their exercise gallops, was original with us, and has since come into common use. The phrase, "The One Best Bet," as already mentioned, was also given birth in our office.

It was our aim, in using the language of horsemen, to be technical rather than vulgar, the theory being that, if we could convince professional horsemen that we knew what we were talking about, the general public would quickly fall in line.

One morning we were alarmed to see in the *Morning Telegraph*, on the page opposite our own daily effort, the advertisement of a new tipster who called himself "Dan Smith." Dan went Maxim & Gay "one better" in the use of race-track nomenclature. He evidently employed a number of negro clockers, for the horse lingo which he used in his advertisements smelled of soiled hay and the manure pile. It was awful! But it made a hit with race-goers, and before a week had passed we recognized Smith as a dangerous competitor.

We were loth to believe that the use of this horsy language was entirely responsible for Smith's success, for we knew that his tips were not so good as ours. We investigated. His trick was this: In the tips that he sent out to his customers, for every race he would name at least five horses as having a chance to win. He advised his clients, in varying terms, to bet on every one of them, and if any one of them won, he would print next morning what he had said on the preceding day regarding the winner alone, leading the public to believe that the only horse he had fancied was the actual winner.

I decided to organize a new Bureau to knock out Dan Smith. The intention was "to go" our competitor "one better" in the use of vulgar horse-racing colloquialisms and exaggerated claims, and thus nauseate the public and "put the kibosh" on Dan. We created a fictitious advertiser whom we named "Two Spot," and the next morning there appeared at our instigation in the *Morning Telegraph* a large display advertisement, headed substantially as follows:

TWO SPOT
Turf Info. Merchant
Terms, $2 Daily; $10 Weekly

Following the style which Dan Smith had adopted in his racing sheets, "Two Spot" mentioned in his first advertisement, as a sample of his line of "dope," four or five horses to win each race, each one in more grandiloquent terms than the other, but these were selected because they, in reality, appeared to be the most likely losers of all the entries.

A woman was sent over to the newly-organized office of "Two Spot" to take charge of the salesroom. I was completely taken off my feet the next day when she informed me that the receipts, as a result of the first advertisement, were in excess of $300, and that the public not only did not read between the lines, but had actually fallen for the hoax.

To cap the climax, on the second day one of the "outsiders" which "Two Spot" named derisively as the one best bet "walked in" at 40 to 1!

The next day "Two Spot" did a land-office business, and within a few days we figured that the "Two Spot" venture would net $1,000 a week if continued. "Two Spot" then became serious and endeavored to vie with Dan Smith for the patronage of the unthinking.

The distinctive difference between "Two Spot" and Maxim & Gay was this: Maxim & Gay, except in one instance, which is chronicled herein, never pretended to have selected a winner when it had not, while "Two Spot," enjoying the same sources of information as Maxim & Gay, worded his daily advices to clients so artfully as to be able to claim the next morning in his advertisements, à la Dan Smith, the credit of having said something good about every winner.

The profits of Dan Smith's venture, I was informed, exceeded a quarter of a million dollars the first year, and the profits of "Two Spot," whose career was cut short within a month by a realization on our part that we could not afford to be identified with such an enterprise, was divided among the employees of the "Two Spot" office. "Two Spot" had been brought into being for the purpose of killing opposition and not for profit-making. The scheme failed of its purpose.

To give an idea of the character of some of the raw kind of advertising put out by "Two Spot," and for which the public fell, I recall this excerpt from one of his tipping sheets:

> I am my own clocker. I have slept under horse-blankets for thirty years. I understand the lingo of horses. Last night, when I was taking my forty winks in the barn of Commando, I heard him whinny to Butterfly and tell her to keep out of his way to-day because he was going to "tin-can" it from start to finish, and if Butterfly tried to beat him, he would "savage" her. That makes it a cinch for Commando. Bet the works on him to win!

Maxim & Gay repeated the "Silver Coin" method of advertising only once during the entire career of the company. This happened in the spring of 1902, when John Rogers, trainer for William C. Whitney, sent to the post a mare named Smoke. Our information was that the mare would win, and our selections for the day named her to win—and she did. Two days later, she was again entered, against an inferior class of horses, and the handicap was entirely in her favor. Notwithstanding this, we inserted an advertisement which appeared in the newspapers on the morning of the race, reading substantially as follows:

> "Dont bet on Smoke to-day. She will be favorite, but she will not win. Rockstorm will beat her."

Sure enough, Smoke opened up favorite in the betting. The betting commissioners of Mr. Whitney placed large bets on the horse with the bookmakers. The bulk of the public's money, however, went on Rockstorm, and before the close of the betting much of the "wise" money followed suit.

Rockstorm won the race. Smoke led into the stretch, when up went her tail and she "blew up."

Immediately I was cross-questioned by messengers from the judges' stand. They asked our reason why we were so positive that Smoke would lose. Mr. Whitney, I was informed, was actually suspicious that his mare had been "pulled." The reason for the reversal of form, as I explained at the time, was this:

William Dozier, our chief clocker at the race-track, who had witnessed the preparation Smoke received for the races, was of the opinion that her training had been rushed too fast, and that her first race, instead of putting her on edge, had taken the edge off. Her first race, in fact, had "soured" her. Being a veteran horseman, he was positive that Smoke would lose. I afterwards learned that the training of Smoke had been left to an understrapper, and that Mr. Rogers himself was not responsible for her condition.

The judges were apparently satisfied, but the public could not readily understand the truth, and we didn't point it out, because our policy was always to appear as mysterious as possible as to the source of our information.

MYSTERY played an important rôle in our organization, and it would have been better had we never succeeded in the Smoke coup. Up to this time my personal identity had not been revealed at the race-track, and even the bookmakers did not know who was the guiding spirit of Maxim & Gay. "Jimmy" Rowe, trainer for James R. Keene; Peter Wimmer, trainer for Captain S. S. Brown of Pittsburg, and John Rogers, trainer for William C. Whitney, were at this early period at various times the rumored sponsors for Maxim & Gay. The bookmakers and "talent" generally conceived the idea that nobody but a very competent trainer in the confidence of horse owners could possibly be responsible for so much exact information regarding the horses. Of course, the track officials who made it their business to know everything were wise to my connection with the organization. No sooner, however, did their messengers ask an interview with me than the fact became public property around the race-track and the mask was off.

The effect for a while was very bad, for our business fell off considerably. "Bismarck," the well-known German bookmaker, put it to me this way on the day of the Smoke incident:

"You are the first horse-tout I effer saw dat vore eye-classes, long hair und tailor-made cloding. You look like a musicianer —not like a horseman. You're a vonder!"

Gottfried Walbaum, another old-time bookmaker, chimed in: "Dat vas obdaining money under false bredenses. I gafe your gompany dwendy-fife dollars a veek for two months alreaty. You gif me my money pack! You are a cheater!"

Riley Grannan, the plunger, said, "Got to hand it to you, kid! Any time you can put one over on the Weisenheimers that have been making a living on race-tracks for twenty years you are entitled to medals!"

The attitude of "Bismarck" and Walbaum was amusing, that of Grannan flattering. But it was poor business, because most of these professional race-track people ceased for a while to subscribe for the Maxim & Gay service.

For months I had purposely kept myself in the background, fearing a dénouement of this very description. I recalled that in the late 80's, in a town of northern Vermont, when John L. Sullivan was advertised to appear in a sparring exhibition, his manager met him at the train, and, although it didn't rain and the sun didn't shine, an umbrella was raised to cover John L. while walking from the train to a waiting landau. No sooner did Sullivan enter the vehicle than the blinds were drawn. When the carriage reached the hotel, it stopped before a side door. The manager alighted before Sullivan, again quickly raised the umbrella and whisked the heavy-weight champion past the crowds and up to his room without exposing him to the view of anybody whatever.

Throughout the day Sullivan was confined to his room. His face was not seen by a single citizen of the town until he appeared on the stage that night.

I asked the manager why he was so very careful to shield Sullivan from the public gaze prior to his appearance on the stage. I recall that he said:

"If the public thought John L. was just an ordinary human being with black mustaches and a florid Celtic face, they wouldn't go to see him. The public demand that they be mystified, and to have shown them off the stage that Mr. Sullivan is just a plain, ordinary mortal would disillusion them and keep money out of the house."

That piece of showman's wisdom was fresh in mind during the early career of Maxim & Gay; and so long as Maxim & Gay kept race-track men guessing as to who was gathering the information for its subscribers, the organization was a howling success. Its good periods were mixed with bad periods after the mystery of sponsorship was cleared up by the inquiry of the race-track judges into the Smoke affair.

A few weeks after the Smoke coup, our chief clocker informed us that the entries for a big stake race which would be run on the following Saturday had revealed to him a "soft spot for a sure winner," as he expressed himself, and he said we could advertise the happening in advance with small chance of going wrong. This we proceeded to do.

Money poured in by telegraph from distant cities for the "good thing" on Saturday. Our advertisement on the Thursday previous to the race read like this:

The Hog-Killing of the Year
Will Come Off at Sheepshead Bay on Saturday, at 4 O'clock.
Be Sure to Have a Bet Down. Telegraph Us $5 for the Information.

One of our constant patrons resided in Louisville. He was among the first to whom we telegraphed the information on Saturday morning. The race was run and the horse lost.

About 4:30 P. M. we received a dispatch from our Louisville customer, reading as follows: "The hog-killing came off on schedule time—here in Louisville. I was the hog."

Another message from a different direction reached us, reading: "Good game. Send more money."

We were often in receipt of messages of similar character on occasions when our selections failed to win and our customers lost their money; but they were generally in good spirits.

On one occasion we had what we believed to be first-hand information regarding a horse which was being prepared for a big betting coup by Dave Gideon, one of the cleverest owners in the country. Following our customary method of using vividly glowing advertisements, with the blackest and heaviest gothic type in the print shop, we announced:

A GIGANTIC HOG-KILLING
We have Inside Information of a Long Shot that Should Win To-morrow at 10 to 1 and put Half of the Bookmakers out of Business.
Be Sure to have a Bet Down on This One. Terms $5.

The *argument* of the advertisement, which appeared beneath these display lines, was couched in the most glowing terms, and made it very plain that our information came from a secret source, and, further, that we had spent legitimately a big sum of money to secure the information. We also pointed out that the owner was one of the shrewdest horsemen on the turf and seldom went astray when he put down a "plunge" bet on one of his own horses.

Next day the race was run. The horse did not finish in the money.

The following day we received many letters, as we always did when one of our heavily advertised "good things" lost. One of the most unique of these epistles was from a Philadelphia subscriber. He wrote in this vein:

Dear Sir:—You have been advertising for some days that you would have a gigantic hog-killing today. I was tempted by your advertising bait and fell—and fell heavily with my entire bank roll. My bucolic training should have warned me that "hog-killings" are not customary in the early Spring, but I fell anyway.

Permit me to state, having recovered my composure, that Armour or Swift need have no fear of you as a competitor in the pork-sticking line for, far from making a "hog-killing," you did not even crack an egg. Pardon me, thanks. Good-by. Yours truly, —— ——

In the Summer of the second year of Maxim & Gay's great money-gathering career, the Information Bureau was "out of luck" and the patronage of the Bureau fell away to almost nothing. At this period I was seriously ill and confined to my home. A man in my office decided to take advantage of my absence from the scene to improve business a bit on his own hook.

It was the habit of our track salesmen, dressed in khaki, to appear at the office at noon every day and receive a bundle of envelopes containing the tips on the races, and then immediately to proceed to the race-track, stand outside of the gates and dispose of them at $5 per envelope.

One day these men, without their knowledge, were supplied with envelopes containing blank sheets of paper instead of the mimeographed list of tips. When a handful of local customers reached the office, they were informed that the tips would be late and would be on sale for that day at the track only.

At about half-past one o'clock the 'phone

bell rang, and word came from the track messengers that a mistake had been made, and their envelopes contained blanks. They were being compelled to refund money. They asked what to do.

"Wait," they were told. "We will send a messenger immediately with the tips."

The messenger never reached the track. There were no tips issued.

On that day May J. won at odds of 200 to 1.

The next morning, the newspapers contained full-page advertisements announcing that Maxim & Gay had tipped May J. at 200 to 1 as the day's "One Best Bet." It could not have been done without a "comeback" if any tips had been issued.

I was not present, but I learned as soon as I became convalescent that on the afternoon of the day the advertisement appeared claiming credit for May J. at 200 to 1, the office was thronged with new customers who enrolled for weekly subscriptions at a rate that put new life in the business. A few of the customers expressed some doubt as to whether Maxim & Gay gave out the 200 to 1 shot or not.

That afternoon there appeared on the scene a race player who, laying $5 down on the desk, said, "Give me your good things. I played May J. yesterday at 200 to 1 and I am rolling in money."

"Where did you buy your information?"

"From your man at the entrance to the track," he answered.

"At what time?" he was asked.

"A quarter to two," he replied.

"Say, young man, there were a lot of people who came in here this morning who said they did not believe we gave out that tip at all. Would you make an affidavit that you bought the information from us?"

"You bet I will!" he said; and thereupon a notary public was called in and the caller swore that he had bought the Maxim & Gay tips at the entrance to the race-track and that they contained May J. at 200 to 1.

That affidavit was posted in the office during the remainder of that day. When the man who turned this trick was asked for more information as to how he came to secure such an affidavit, he gave absolute assurance that he did not offer the man the smallest kind of bribe to make it, and that nothing but an innate desire to call himself "on top" had influenced the man to perjure himself.

But I could not tolerate the misleading advertising that had been done as a result of misplaced energy, and the man responsible for it did not remain with the company.

Peculiarly enough, the May J. advertisement was followed by a series of brilliant successes for Maxim & Gay in the selection of winners at big odds, and, within a month our net earnings again reached $20,000 per week. Horse owners, horse trainers and society people who frequented the club-house at the race-track were our steadiest patrons.

The women particularly were most loyal to our bureau. The wife of a young multi-millionaire of international prominence was one of our most ardent followers. She would never think of putting down a bet without first consulting Maxim & Gay's selections. On a notable occasion, this lady arrived at the gate of the Morris Park racetrack with her husband, in their automobile, and took the long stroll to the club house. They were a trifle late for the first race; the horses were already going to the post up the Eclipse chute.

Suddenly the lady discovered she had forgotten to purchase Maxim & Gay's selections. Hastily calling her husband, she gave him a sharp berating for not reminding her to get the tips. They had a short but earnest interview, which was suddenly terminated by the young man doing a sprint of a quarter of a mile down the asphalt walk from the club-house to the main entrance where the tips were sold by the uniformed employees of Maxim & Gay.

Those who witnessed the sprint of the young financier attested to the fact that he never showed as much speed in his early college days; but even his unusual speed failed to get him back on time to acquaint his wife with the name of the horse selected by Maxim & Gay for the first race, the race having been run and the Maxim & Gay selection having won. The gentleman thereupon got a curtain lecture from his better half that astonished and amused the society patrons on the club-house balcony. Thereafter, he never forgot to get the Maxim & Gay selections. In fact, he made assurance doubly sure by engaging the colored attendant in charge of the field-glasses to deliver the selections to him daily immediately upon his arrival at the course.

Our popularity with horse owners was mixed. Among the horse owners with whom

we transacted business was Colonel James E. Pepper, the late noted distiller and owner of a big breeding farm and a stable of runners. He was an ardent lover of horses, and maintained that his native Kentucky knowledge of thoroughbreds afforded him an opportunity to determine winners of horse-races better than any of "them —— faking tipsters." He had great confidence in his judgment for a long while.

After losing a good-sized bank roll, while one of his most intimate friends was "cleaning up" plenty of money on our selections, he finally strolled into our office one morning and sheepishly stated that one of his "fool friends" had asked him to step in and get our "fool selections" for him. We explained that it was against our rule to give out our choices before 12:30 P. M., whereat he grew exceedingly wroth. He finally agreed to our conditions, paid his money and was given an order to get the selections at the track-entrance from one of our messengers.

Nearly all of our choices won that day. Colonel Pepper came in the following morning and paid for another subscription, this time for a week's service. We were "in our stride," the majority of our selections winning from day to day, and Colonel Pepper had cause for exultation. On one of these days we divulged, on our racing sheet, the name of a "sleeper" that we were confident would win at 10 to 1, a big betting coup having been planned by that Napoleon of the turf, John Madden. The horse won at big odds, and Colonel Pepper made "a killing" on the information.

For the next day, our clockers had spotted another horse that had been got ready by the light of the moon, and we spread it pretty strong, in our advertisements, that the horse we would name could just fall down, get up again and then roll home alone. The horse did not fall down; but he won; he "rolled home alone" by about ten lengths. He belonged to Colonel Pepper. It was anticipated that about 20 to 1 would be laid against this fellow, but on account of our strong tip, he opened at 10 to 1 and was played down to 3 to 1. The bookmakers were badly crimped.

The next day, as soon as the office opened, Colonel Pepper, hotter under the collar than even his name would indicate, stamped into the outer room. Slamming his cane down on the big mahogany table, he demanded in stentorian tones: "What in the —— does this —— business mean? Here I come and subscribe my good money to your —— fool tips, and you-all are so low-down mean as to give my hoss for the good thing yesterday! What does it mean, suh; what does it mean?"

The use of considerable diplomacy was necessary to calm down the irate Colonel, who had no compunctions in winning a big bet on Mr. Madden's "sleeper," but "—— it, suh, it is outrageous to treat *me* so."

The Colonel never got over that incident, and while he won a big bet on his own horse, he always claimed that Maxim & Gay had ruined the price for him and that but for the vigilance of our clockers his winnings would have been twice as large. This was true, and we ruined the price for many another owner who thought he was getting away with something on the sly.

Bookmakers as a rule are very much self-satisfied about their knowledge of the mathematics of the game. In order to show them that they didn't know all about it, the Maxim & Gay Company inserted an advertisement one day reading substantially as follows:

YOU PAY US $5
WE REFUND $6

If the Horse We Name as

THE ONE BEST BET

To-day Does Not Win, We Will Not Only Refund Our $5 Fee, Which is Paid Us for the Information, But Will Pay Each Client an

EXTRA DOLLAR

By Way of Forfeit.

Pay Us $5 To-day for Our One Best Bet, and if the Horse Does Not Win We Will Pay You $6 To-morrow.

MAXIM & GAY CO.

Our receipts that day were approximately $5,000. The horse did not win. We refunded $6,000 next day, and in doing so made a considerable sum of money on the operation!

It happened to be a two-horse race and the horse we named to win was at odds of 1 to 6 in the betting. The contending horse ruled at odds of 5 to 1.

The Maxim & Gay Company simply sent to the track $2,000 out of the $5,000 paid in by its customers and wagered the $2,000 on the contending horse at odds of 5 to 1, drawing down $10,000 in profits. From these winnings it paid its clients the thousand-dollar forfeit, netting $9,000 on the operation, of course returning to them their own $5,000.

Had the 1 to 6 shot won, the clients who had received the winning tip would have been happy, while the Maxim & Gay Company would not have been compelled to refund any money and would have been ahead $3,000 on the operation, the $2,000 wagered and in that event lost in the betting ring on the other horse being subtracted from the $5,000 paid in by its customers. Our clients were making what the bookmakers call a "Dutch book" for themselves. Before one of them could win a dollar, he would have to bet $30 at the track, at odds of 1 to 6, to win back the $5 he paid us.

It was a cold case of "we win, no matter what the result;" and yet many of the wise bookmakers could not at first figure it out. Nearly all of them subscribed for the information. As for the public, they did not seem to "tumble" at all.

THE Eastern racing season was about to close and it was decided to remove the entire force of clerks to New Orleans for the Winter and there to depart from the usual practice of selling tips only, and to bet the money of the American public on the horses at the race-track in whatever sums they wished to send. The company employed Sol Lichenstein, then the most noted bookmaker on the American turf, to bet the money, and made him part of the organization, giving him an interest in the profits.

The Maxim & Gay Company at this time had made close to $1,000,000, and recklessly and improvidently I had spent it all. It was "easy come and easy go." As I review that period in my career, I recall that the whole enterprise appeared to me in the light of an experiment. Because of its dazzling success I became so confident of my ability to make money at any time that I didn't care whether I accumulated or not.

The races at New Orleans were advertised to start on Thanksgiving Day. On the 15th of October I borrowed $7,500, and with that ordered $20,000 worth of display advertising to run in thirty leading newspapers in the United States four days a week, until Thanksgiving. Credit was extended to me for the balance of the bill by one of the oldest advertising agencies in America.

The advertisements told the public to send their money to Maxim & Gay, Canal Street, New Orleans. On my arrival there, two days before Thanksgiving, I called at the post-office, and asked if there was any mail for Maxim & Gay. The post-office clerk appeared to be startled. He gazed at me as if he were watching a burglar in the act. His demeanor was almost uncanny. He didn't talk. He didn't even move. He just looked. Finally I asked, "What is the matter?"

"Wait a minute," he muttered.

He left the window. He did not return. Instead, what appeared to me to be a United States Marshal ambled up to my side and said, "See here; the Postmaster wants to see you."

I was escorted into a secluded chamber in the post-office building, and a few minutes later a post-office official, along with three or four assistants, came into the room to view me.

"What's the trouble?" I asked.

"You bring us a recommendation as to who you are and what you are and all about yourself before we will answer any of your questions as to how much mail there is here for you," the official said.

I smiled. The advertising campaign, then, was a success.

Having been employed as a newspaper man in New Orleans a few years before, I knew one of the leading lawyers of the city and several bank officials. Within thirty minutes I had lawyer and bank men before the Postmaster, vouching for my identity. Thereupon I was informed that there were 1,650 pieces of registered mail, evidently containing currency, and, in addition, twelve sacks of first-class mail, which contained many money-orders, checks and inquiries. The official said that in the money-order department they had notices of nearly 2,000 money-orders issued on New Orleans for the Maxim & Gay Company.

I sent a wagon for the mail, and notwithstanding the fact that a force of four men

under me opened the letters and stayed with the job for two days, the task was not completed when the first race was called on Thanksgiving Day. On totaling the receipts, we found a little over $220,000.

The meeting continued 100 days, and our total receipts were $1,300,000.

Maxim & Gay's system of money-making at New Orleans was as follows:

We charged each client $10 per week for the information. We charged 5 per cent. of the net winnings in addition, and we contracted to settle with customers at the closing odds, giving us a profit on the betting that equaled the difference between the opening odds and the closing odds. The profit averaged approximately $7,000 a day for 100 days—to us.

As a guarantee of good faith, the Maxim & Gay Company agreed with its clients that each day it would deposit in the post-office and mail to them a letter bearing a postmark prior to the hour of the running of the race, naming the horse their money was to be wagered on; and this was always done. An honest effort, too, was always made to pick the best horse to win, if possible, because even a child can see that if we wanted to pick losers, all we had to do was to make book in the betting ring at the race-track and not spend thousands of dollars in advertising to corral the money.

Did we always bet the money of our clients on the horse we named?

Yes, always—except once!

THAT incident is not easily forgotten by several. On this day the entry which we selected was one of Durnell & Hertz's string. The horse was known to be partial to a dry track. The "dope" said he could not win in heavy going. It was a beautiful sunshiny morning when we selected this horse to win, and at noon the envelopes containing the name of the horse were mailed in the post-office, as usual.

Something happened.

Half an hour before the race was run it began to rain in torrents and the track became a sea of mud. Durnell & Hertz, realizing that they were tempting fate to expect their horse to win under such conditions, appeared in the judges' stand and asked permission to scratch their entry. The judges refused. I asked Sol Lichenstein, who had the betting of our clients' money in charge, what he proposed to do about betting on this horse under the changed conditions. He exclaimed, "Bet? Do you want to burn the money up?"

"Well, if he wins," I replied, "we will have to pay, because if he wins and you don't bet and we say we changed the selection on account of the rainstorm, they will not believe us and we will have trouble."

"Very well," he said. "You bet my book all the money, and we will, for the first time, book against our own choice. It's fair, because we must pay if we lose, and there is no way out of it. But don't burn up that money." I agreed.

The opening odds against the horse were 2 to 1. Had it been a dry track, he would have opened a hot favorite at 4 to 5 or so. Slowly the odds lengthened to 10 to 1, which was the ruling price at the close. Durnell & Hertz bet on another horse to win. Standing before Sol's book, I said:

"Thirteen thousand on our selection, Sol."

"One hundred and thirty thousand to $13,000," he answered. "Here's your ticket."

Sol and I repaired to the press-stand to see the race. Durnell & Hertz's entry got off in the lead. At the quarter he was in front by two lengths. At the half the gap of daylight was five lengths. At the turn into the stretch the horse was leading by nearly a sixteenth of a mile. Then I heard a noise behind me as if a miniature dynamite bomb had exploded. Sol's heavy field-glasses had dropped to the floor.

Sol did not wait to see the finish. The horse won in a gallop.

At the office of Maxim & Gay accounts were figured and checks signed for the full amount of our obligations, and they were immediately mailed to all subscribers.

At midnight I met Sol in the lobby of the St. Charles Hotel. He looked worn.

"I guess that will hold us!" he moaned.

"Hold us?" I answered. "Nothing better ever happened. It'll make us!"

"You are crazy!" he exclaimed. "Lose $130,000 in a day and it will make you! Are you mad?"

"Listen!" I rejoined. "At an expense of $3,000 for tolls I have telegraphed a full-page ad to fifty leading city newspapers, telling the public that we tipped this horse to-day at 10 to 1 and that we mailed checks to our customers to-night for $130,000. We are going to get that money

back five times over in fresh commissions."

The next day the Western Union Telegraph Company found it necessary to assign three cashiers to the work of issuing checks to the Maxim & Gay Company for money telegraphed by new customers. Some individual remittances were as high as $2,000. The money telegraphed us amounted to about $150,000, and within ten days eighty per cent. of our own certified checks were returned to us by our customers, indorsed back to us with instructions to double their bets, and within two weeks we were able to figure that in the neighborhood of $375,000 was sent us as a result.

DURING the progress of the New Orleans meeting, I purchased a controlling interest in the New York *Daily America*—a newspaper patterned after the *Morning Telegraph*—from a group of members of the Metropolitan Turf Association, who had sunk about $75,000 in the enterprise. The *Morning Telegraph* was in the hands of a receiver. I calculated that, by transferring the Maxim & Gay advertisements from the *Morning Telegraph* to the *Daily America*, I could make the *Daily America* pay and force the *Morning Telegraph* out of the field. Later, William C. Whitney, who was a shining light on the turf as well as in finance, was induced to purchase the *Morning Telegraph*. Then trouble began to brew for me.

One morning I was summoned to the offices of August Belmont on Nassau Street.

"For the good of the turf, you must omit your Maxim & Gay advertisements from the *Daily America* and other newspapers hereafter," declared Mr. Belmont on my entering his room.

"Why?" asked I.

"They flagrantly call attention to betting on the races," he replied.

"But you allow betting at the tracks."

"Yes," he replied, "but public sentiment is beginning to be aroused against betting, and an attack is bound to result."

It occurred to me that at that very time Mr. Whitney was engaged in disposing of his stock in various traction enterprises in New York to Mr. Belmont and his syndicate, and that in all probability Mr. Whitney had sought the assistance of Mr. Belmont to put the *Daily America* out of business in this way. It was apparent that the *Daily America* would lose money fast without the Maxim & Gay advertising. Maxim & Gay, too, would practically be compelled to close up shop if it could not advertise. I promised to consider.

Returning to the *Daily America* office, I decided to pay no attention to Mr. Belmont's request, having become convinced that it was conceived in the interest of the *Morning Telegraph*.

A few days later I was again summoned over the 'phone to Mr. Belmont's office. When I was ushered into Mr. Belmont's presence, he said:

"If you don't quit advertising the Maxim & Gay Company in the *Daily America*, I will see William Travers Jerome, and he will stop you."

Mr. Jerome was then District Attorney, and the idea of doing anything that Mr. Jerome considered illegal appalled me.

"If Mr. Jerome sends word to me that the Maxim & Gay advertising is illegal, I will discontinue it," I said.

I did not hear from Mr. Jerome, and so continued the advertising.

Within a few weeks the Washington race meeting opened at Bennings. When the Maxim & Gay staff reached there, we were all informed that the Postoffice Department was about to begin an investigation into our business affairs, and all of our staff voluntarily appeared before the inspectors and underwent an examination. Our books were also submitted. This investigation, coming on the heels of Mr. Belmont's threat, convinced me that the influence of Mr. Belmont and Mr. Whitney reached all the way to Washington, and I concluded that if I did not discontinue the Maxim & Gay advertising in the *Daily America*, and then, of course, discontinue the *Daily America*, they would "get me" some way. So I hung out the white flag. I announced my retirement from the Maxim & Gay Company and offered to sell my newspaper to Mr. Whitney.

My exchequer was low. Nearly every dollar I had made in the Maxim & Gay enterprise had been squandered by me in plunging on the races myself.

During the following week Mr. Whitney received me at his home on Fifth Avenue just after his breakfast hour. He interviewed me for about an hour, obtained my price on the paper, which was what I had put into it, namely $60,000, and promised to cable to Colonel Harvey, then, as now, the distinguished editor of the Harper publica-

tions, who was in Paris, asking his advice, saying that Colonel Harvey advised him in all newspaper matters. I did not hear from Mr. Whitney again; but I did discover that my employees were in close communication with Mr. Whitney and that the state of my financial condition every evening was being religiously reported to him.

A few weeks later I was compelled to put the paper in the hands of a receiver, and a representative of Mr. Whitney bought it for $6,500, or about 10 cents on the dollar, and put it to sleep, leaving the field to the *Morning Telegraph*. From that moment the *Morning Telegraph*, which for a short period had been refusing all tipster advertising, resumed the acceptance of such business and has continued that policy up to this day.

Race-track tipping came under the ban of the Post-office a year after I retired from Maxim & Gay and those who now advertise tips generally instruct that no money be sent by mail.

Having lost the *Daily America* and having "blown" the Maxim & Gay Company, I was again broke. But my credit was good, particularly among race-track bookmakers. That Summer, 1904, I became a race-track plunger, first on borrowed money and then on my winnings. By June I had accumulated $100,000. In July I was nearly broke again. In August I was flush once more, having recouped to the extent of about $50,000. Early in September I went overboard; that is to say, I quit the track, loser all the cash I had and owing about $8,000 in "markers."

Disgusted with myself, I longed for a change of atmosphere. I stayed around New York a few days, when the yearning to cut away from my moorings and to rid myself of the fever to gamble became overpowering. I bought a ticket for California and, with $200 in my clothes, traveled to a ranch within fifty miles of San Francisco, where I hoed potatoes and did other manual labor calculated to cure race-trackitis. In less than six weeks I felt myself a new man, and decided to stick to the simple life forevermore—away from race-tracks and other forms of gambling. But I didn't.

(In the May number of ADVENTURE Mr. Rice will tell how he got into the mining-stock game at Goldfield.)

THE NECKLACE AND THE BROOCH

by WELLS S. HASTINGS

MY father, poor dear, was, I suppose, the greatest scamp in Europe. I do not mean by this that there was ever anything brutal in his knavery, but simply that he was born a gentleman, and had lived by the devious means of the underworld. And since the time of my mother's death, when I was between eight and nine, until the time of his own sudden demise, six weeks ago, I have been his confederate and companion.

Indeed, it was not until my arrival here, until my pretty Aunt Martha had kissed me, with a kiss that was for me the "open ses-

ame'' to a new and beautiful world, that it ever occurred to me that life as I had been taught to live it was either unpleasant or abnormal. One can not be a thief, to be sure, and never be afraid; but in spite of that constant shadow there is a delicious thrill at every turning of the way in the life of a successful rogue. And even now, I can not find it in my heart to look back with much censure upon that handsome and debonair adventurer, my father.

I have never been sure exactly what it was that launched him on the career which, I suppose, broke my mother's heart. Even a rogue has his reticences, his tender spots of memory, of which he will not speak, but I think he was cashiered out of the army for cheating at cards. That he was an army officer I am certain, for I can remember an old picture of him, standing very straight and handsome, very British and young, in his Major's uniform, a man for any woman to look at twice. And to me, his daughter, he has always been the handsomest man in the world. We have been good comrades, too, and he has always been kind to me, and courteous.

Even at the first, when we were so poor and so unskilful that for months we lived solely by my childish activities—the ill-paid labor of picking pockets, and petty shoplifting—he guarded me carefully from all other evils save the ones necessary to our existence, in which he was my instructor.

And as the years went on and such petty industries were things of the past, whether we were brazening it in some big Continental hotel or lying quiet for a month or so in some out-of-the-way country village, patiently and persistently he kept up a sort of routine of more honest education for me. He was a bookish man himself, and now that I have come to know other girls I find the education he so gave me quite as broad and somewhat more thorough than the average training most of them received at finishing schools.

I think this has been a constant source of surprise to my Aunt Martha. For years she had never known whether we existed or not, and she must have taken her courage in both hands to have answered, "Come," to the cable my father sent her from the Berlin hospital.

It was like my father to think of me even in his last extremity, and like his shrewdness to have foreseen a welcome for me in the home of his American sister-in-law. He had simply cabled, "Dying. Must entrust Alice's child to you." And, as I have said, she had answered, "Come," and he had kissed me, and died with his conscience apparently perfectly at rest. We were in funds at the time, and he was buried as a gentleman should be; and in half a daze I had started for America.

England and the Continent I know well; for ten years they have been our hunting-grounds; but we have crossed to America only three times. So it was almost as a stranger that I came back to my mother's country. This is one of the many reasons why I would cheerfully do anything in the world for Aunt Martha; for she did not even wait until we docked, but in my uncle's yacht came out to meet me at Quarantine.

And she knew me at once. I had gone up to her holding my head very high, as my father had always said became a lady, and with as great a fear in my heart as I had ever known; and she flung her arms about me and kissed me and told me that I looked like my mother. And when we got back here to the house, this beautiful house which is to be always my home, she came with me to my room and gently comforted me through the only hard fit of crying I have had since I can remember. It was she, I think, who had made me acceptable to the rest of the family.

HOW happily these six weeks have gone! My father pledged me that there should be no mourning, and my Aunt Martha has understood, and helped me to take up my new life as if it had been mine from the first; nor, indeed, has she ever questioned me about the old. "Some day, when you care to, my dear," she said early in our acquaintance, "you can tell me what you wish, and I will try to understand. But now you must pretend you have always been with us, that you are my own dear daughter." She is very wonderful.

As I have said, I think I have surprised her. I don't know what she expected, or, for that matter, what any one could expect. She probably knew that my father gained his living by his wits, and that I must have known it, and it is not human to be without curiosity; but she has never asked a question; she has simply been silently grateful to find me not out of place among the circle of her acquaintance. Did she but know it,

education and bearing are the two most necessary tools of the modern adventurer.

Last night she gave a party for me. It was, I think, the diploma of her kindly probation, the visible seal of her confidence and approval, my final endorsement and introduction to her world. It was also, for me, the most racking experience of a rather eventful life. It seems to me as if I were trembling yet. I have learned in these six weeks to love this place and these people so, to prize so above all things this sanctuary from all I have known, this freedom to live in the sheltered happiness that surrounds girls of my own age whom I have lately met and always vaguely envied! Incredible as it may seem, the other life has been growing already dim, and the shock of its last night's intrusion has upset me so that I have had my breakfast in bed, not daring until I have more deliberately faced its happenings, to brave Aunt Martha's unintrusive scrutiny.

I came down-stairs radiant in a new dress, a party dress, a dress in which I could delight simply for the coming pleasure it meant and promised, which I could feel was my very own, and not simply part and parcel of a rogue's equipment. One or two guests had already arrived and in a few moments they began to come in numbers that were almost confusing. I must have been an hour before I saw him.

The nice boy I was dancing with had gone for a glass of water for me, and at last for a moment I had leisure to look about the room. It was wonderful, this great roomful of happy, pleasuring gentlefolk gathered together to honor a little ex-rogue! I felt all at once as if here truly was my birthright—that other world the dream. Then I gasped; for near the door into the hall stood Tom Hildreth, whom I had not seen since I was eleven and he and father and I were all together in Paris on the trail of an Austrian Countess's diamonds! My boy got back with the water to find me still staring.

"What on earth is the matter?" he asked.

"Nothing," I laughed, but everything was the matter. At first I could not believe my own eyes, but, while I made some pretense of conversation I looked and thought.

YES, it was Tom Hildreth right enough; Tom Hildreth seven years older and gray about the temples, but beyond any doubt the same Tom. It was amazing, but after all it was not incredible. My father and I have often spent a week or so in houses like this one as invited guests, nor do I think that more than once or twice were we ever even suspected of various losses that generally followed on our coming. "Exclusiveness," my father used to say, "is an invitation rather than a barrier to a man of brains." There were a hundred ways that Tom Hildreth might have taken to get in, but he had simply been invited.

Suddenly I was maddeningly afraid that he would recognize me. I was sure that he must have come late. Even in the bewildering crush that had bowed before the receiving-line earlier in the evening I should have surely recognized him. And if he had come late was there not every probability that sooner or later he would be brought up to me during the evening? Had he seen me already, I wondered, and did he know or remember who I was? I made up my mind to keep out of his way, if it were at all possible.

"Can't we dance now?" asked the nice boy. "I must make the most of my time, you know, Miss Leicester—I can only keep you such a very little while."

"Very well, then," I laughed, and we started dancing.

As we circled the room we passed Aunt Martha. She smiled and beckoned to me, though ever so slightly; so when the music stopped, the nice boy took me to her.

"Mrs. Trowbridge," said my aunt, "this is my niece, Alice Leicester."

From my aunt's tone Mrs. Trowbridge was evidently some one dear to her, or some one of importance. She was a pretty little thing, scarcely older than I, with that delicately formed, high-bred, patrician face that one sees only in little marble portraits of dead-and-gone French court beauties, or here and there among the better-class Americans. She gave me her hand and smiled at me very sweetly.

"I hope we are to be friends," she said.

It amused me to think she was Mrs. Anybody, she looked so young, and so unworldly-wise. What a sheltered life she must have had, I thought, and how little she could comprehend the complex one that had been mine! I thought ruefully of how, not long ago, my father and I would have admired and—alas!—coveted, the necklace of great square emeralds that became so wonderfully her white and rose and gold. Aunt

Martha moved a little restlessly; I must have been staring.

"I hope we're going to be friends, too," I said. And indeed it was one of the most delightful things in this new world of mine, this making of friends really for friendship's sake. Then some one came for me, and for the next half-hour I was very busy.

SUPPER-TIME came, and still Tom Hildreth had not been near me. I wondered for a while if he had recognized me, and avoided me. And then in the whirl of a heavenly evening I almost forgot him altogether. It must have been after one o'clock when the thought of him was brought appallingly to my memory. I had been dancing very steadily and, a little hot and a little out of breath, I had gone with somebody or other into the comparative cool of the conservatory. I don't remember who it was that took me; some oldish, very correct young man who talked to me very sillily, and who, with my suggestion of the conservatory, seemed bent on finding an obscure corner there.

Now I do not like obscure corners; I have sat in too many of them; nor did I particularly like this young man. So as he hunted vaguely around I decided suddenly upon a compromise. I caught the flash of a sea-green, jeweled slipper peeping from behind a palm, in a very obscure corner indeed.

"Let us sit over there," I said to my partner, and led the way, before he, too, saw that the corner was already occupied. But when we stepped round the palm both of us stopped abruptly, and both of us should have liked to get away. I had meant to sit by somebody else, and should ordinarily have been glad to find that somebody Mrs. Trowbridge; but beside Mrs. Trowbridge, talking evidently with all his old fire and brilliance, sat Tom Hildreth.

Both of them looked up with a little start. What a fool any happily married, sheltered woman is to flirt, even innocently, with any man besides her husband! I am sure for her it must have been the most innocent flirtation in the world, but I think she felt suddenly a little ashamed of herself, and very glad indeed that we had come. My father used to say that Tom Hildreth could make Diana smile, if she would only let him talk.

"Oh, do sit down," said Mrs. Trowbridge, seeing that we hesitated. "Miss Leicester, you've met Mr. Benson, of course?"

"I am not sure," said I.

Tom Hildreth was standing, and bending before me. His engaging eyes met mine, a little puzzled, I thought, but still unremembering.

"I was late," he said; "too late to come up to be presented, and I know only a few people. I have been hoping all the evening that in some way I should be able to pay my respects." He glanced at my partner, who was already talking animatedly with the little Mrs. Trowbridge.

"Listen," he said, "is not that the music and can not we have this dance? I am sure Mrs. Trowbridge will forgive us."

As there was no help for it, "Yes," I said.

How queer it was to find myself dancing with this old friend of my father's, this polished highwayman, whose hunting-place was the world! It was strange to see him from the other side—to imagine myself possible prey, who had so lately hunted. I listened to him critically. Really, he did it very well indeed. Like my father, he must have been once a gentleman.

When we had finished dancing and he stood aside to let me pass before him into the hall I wondered whether he was looking at the diamond brooch that Aunt Martha had lent me. She had offered it to me just before I had come down-stairs. As my maid was fastening the last hook in my new dress it had given way, as hooks so often do when a dress has been finished in a hurry, and Aunt Martha had given me a diamond brooch of hers to take its place. I had been a little worried about it all the evening. It was just out of reach between my shoulders, and of course I could not see it either. Now as I passed through the door I wondered whether Tom Hildreth's eyes were upon it.

"Will you tell me," I asked over my shoulder, "if that brooch is all right? It does not belong to me, and I keep worrying about it."

"I was just about to speak to you about it," he said quite frankly. "The thing is undone, I think. May I fasten it for you?"

"If you please; it is out of my reach," I answered, and thought how my father would have laughed at my cheekiness, the cheekiness that seemed to me the best protection not only for my brooch but for myself.

"There, I think that is all right," he said. "The catch is rather awkward and not very secure, but I imagine that it will

stay where it is for the rest of the evening."

"Thank you very much," I said, and turned to my next partner, who was awaiting me.

And I was very glad to get away. It was all very well to tantalize Tom Hildreth and to play with fire for just a little moment, but for all that I was on pins and needles for fear that some tone or gesture of mine might betray to him the little girl that he had once known. Besides, now that I was so firmly and happily established in my new life, it was very upsetting to have to talk and dance with such a palpable specter from the old.

"I SAY, that's queer now," said my partner.

We had been dancing for some time, and as this was the first word that he had said it rather startled me. "What is queer?" I asked sharply. It was as if the man had read my thoughts.

"Why, Mrs. Trowbridge," he murmured. "Shall we sit down?" For I had stopped dancing.

"Yes," said I, "let's sit over here. Now what is it about Mrs. Trowbridge? Personally I can't see anything queer about her. Where is she?"

"Across the room," he nodded. "Why, of course, there isn't anything queer about Mrs. Trowbridge herself. I did not mean that, and anyhow probably I am an idiot, but I did think that she wore her emeralds to-night."

I looked up as composedly as I could. Mrs. Trowbridge was the center of a laughing group of men that half hid her from my sight, but in a moment one of them moved and there was no longer any doubt about it—the necklace was gone!

"You must have been mistaken," I said quietly. "Either she did not wear them to-night, or else she has taken them off for some reason or other. Why do you think that she had them on in the first place?"

"Didn't you notice them yourself? Well, I suppose that I must have been thinking of some other evening. They are rather famous ones, you know."

"I will ask her about them," I said. "No, you need not come with me. If by any chance she has lost them, we must send some one to look about for them quietly."

Of course he assented politely enough, but I noticed that he was watching us curiously as I bent to whisper to Mrs. Trowbridge.

"You will excuse me, Mrs. Trowbridge," I said, "but may I ask you something?"

"Certainly," she answered and followed me a few steps away. "What is it, my dear?"

I hesitated for a moment, puzzled; for the life of me I couldn't think of a sensible question to ask her. "You will think me very silly," I said at last, "but I have changed my mind. May I come and see you some day and ask you then? It is a question that will keep."

"What a mysterious child you are!" she laughed in a ridiculously grown-up way. "Of course you can come to see me and ask me anything you like."

"Thank you," I whispered in what my father used to call my best baby manner, and crossed the room again to my partner.

"All right?" he asked.

"All right," said I. "Do you think that you could find Mr. Benson for me? He has forgotten, I think, to give back my fan."

We found it very hard to find "Mr. Benson." I was sure that he saw me coming toward him, and equally sure that he tried to escape into the hall, and I found it difficult to go on; for it occurred to me that after all he must have recognized me. He even took refuge in the smoking-room, but my partner dragged him forth for me. "Miss Leicester says that you have her fan," I heard him explaining as he brought him up.

Tom Hildreth laughed. "I should keep it among my treasures, if I had it. You may be sure of that. But, honestly, Miss Leicester, I haven't it."

"Honestly?" I mocked, and looked him squarely in the eyes.

"Honestly."

"Well, at any rate you had it," I said. "And now you must help me find it."

He accepted with rather poor grace, I thought, and I wondered whether he had just been on the point of leaving.

We could not find the an, of course, but I succeeded in keeping him. I should not have been my father's daughter if I could not have done that; but, oh, it was hateful to have to do it! I saw Aunt Martha look for me about the room, and noticed, when her eyes found me, that she frowned. But one has to put oneself out a little to hold a man like Tom Hildreth, especially should

he happen to be carrying somebody's else necklace about in his pocket.

But Aunt Martha's frown almost finished me. After that it seemed as if I simply could not do it. Perhaps, after all, he did not have the necklace.

I LEANED back wearily in my chair to collect myself for a moment. That was all the incentive that I needed; for as my shoulders pressed the chair-back I knew that my brooch—Aunt Martha's brooch—was no longer there! What an innocent, silly little fool I had been to think I could outcheek an old rogue like Tom Hildreth! Well, the mischief was done now and perhaps it was for the best. I might never have got up my courage to go after that necklace, but no man living should go away with that brooch if I could in any way prevent it!

I think that old Tom Hildreth must have imagined he was making a conquest; he was positively idiotic.

And all the while, as he talked, my poor hand, that had not forgotten the old life as quickly as I had, was softly touching pocket after pocket. It took more courage than anything I had ever done; but, as I had done before at the French ambassador's, I let my handkerchief fall from my lap and, as Tom Hildreth stooped to pick it up, my hand was in and out of the pocket of his coat, and with it came—Mrs. Trowbridge's emerald necklace! There was nothing else in the pocket—of that I was quite sure. My brooch was either really lost, or stowed in another pocket. I had to begin all over again. With a sigh I tucked the necklace into my bodice.

I glanced at Tom Hildreth, but he had noticed nothing. In fact, he was no longer paying any attention to me.

"I—I—think I must be—going, Miss Leicester," he said. "I find I am not feeling very well. Old trouble; heart, you know." And even then he tried to smirk a double meaning into his words.

Frightened and angry as I was, I almost admired the nerve of the man; for at the other end of the room pretty little Mrs. Trowbridge was talking with my aunt, all her childlike composure given place to little distracted gestures, and as we looked, her hand went to her neck with an unconscious, but, for us, an all-too-evident meaning.

Hildreth was on his feet now, but I caught him by the sleeve.

"Wait!" I said. "There is something I wish to ask you." Whatever happened, he should not go away with Aunt Martha's brooch.

He tried, almost roughly, to drag away his arm, but I held him. I had some idea of calling across the room to Aunt Martha that it was all right, that I had found the necklace; but then I remembered who I had been, remembered that she probably guessed at least some part of that former life of mine, and because I had been a thief I dared not at the moment be honest now. And while I hesitated the chance was gone; the news of the necklace's loss was out. People were already commencing to hunt about the room. I felt the man beside me tremble.

"Be still!" I said sharply. My uncle crossed over and spoke to the musicians. The music stopped. In the silence he came into the middle of the room.

"Mrs. Trowbridge," he announced, in his clear, business-like voice, "has lost an emerald necklace. It may have been dropped somewhere about the house, or it may have caught in some other dancer's dress. I think that none of us should leave the room until it is found—so that there may be no danger of its being unconsciously carried away. In the meantime, all of us had better join in the search."

For a moment there was not a sound, then some woman said very sharply, "What a pity!" and a buzz of sympathy swept about the room.

If I had not known where the necklace was, I should have thought it all very funny; people are so absurd at a time like that. College boys and club-men were down on their knees peering under every article of furniture; older men paced about, giving directions; women were shaking their skirts and gazing hopefully about the walls, and one very stout old gentleman was trying to pull up the register. Then suddenly I realized that Tom Hildreth and I were the only people in the room who stood aloof from the search.

"We must help them look," I said, and dropped his arm.

To my surprise he assented immediately, and went down on his knees by the nearest chair. Then I understood, for his hand flashed to his pocket. He faced about with

a start, and eyed me suspiciously, but I was too provoked to care. To think that he had to suggest the idea to me! Of course he meant to find it somewhere himself—there are times when it is better to give up gracefully. My one thought now was to get out the necklace and put it where it could be found, but Hildreth's eyes were upon me and I thought I read a growing suspicion in them. The thing was simply not to be done; not, at least, until I could get rid of him. Even then I was afraid to let him out of sight, for I was sure he still had Aunt Martha's brooch.

SUDDENLY the nice boy I had danced with earlier in the evening stepped to the middle of the room and clapped his hands for attention. We all straightened from our tasks.

"As far as I can see," he said, "we have searched the room very thoroughly. Mrs. Trowbridge's necklace has not been found, and it is a very valuable one. I—I should be very happy to have some one search *me*—I think all of us would feel more at ease if we were each proved not to have it. I call for volunteers!"

The nicest boys occasionally make idiotic suggestions. Men and women were already forming in two little groups. I glanced nervously at Hildreth. Little beads of perspiration were standing on his forehead. I felt almost sorry for him, though sorriest yet for myself. "Steady," I whispered, "steady! You're not going to disgrace Aunt Martha, are you, Alice Leicester, because all of a sudden you have lost your nerve?" Then I knew how funny it all was and, as the blood came back to my heart, I knew what I must do. Two French windows opened upon the street, and the sidewalk was only about eight feet below. I beckoned Hildreth to me.

"I will open the window for you," I said, "and stand in front of you while you jump. Quick!"

"Wh—what do you mean?" he stammered.

"There is hardly time to explain, Mr. Hildreth," I answered, and smiled at him.

"'Hildreth?'" he repeated, "'Hildreth?' Are—are you connected with the police?"

I laughed at him in shy acknowledgment, and behind my back turned the window-catch.

"You are very good to let me go," he said. "I shall remember it, believe me!" and he stretched out his hand to the window, but I stood in front of him.

"My brooch first, please," I said.

"Your brooch? Well, I'll——" and he dragged it from an inside pocket.

"Good-by, and jump!" I whispered as I threw open the window.

As Hildreth jumped and took to his heels I saw my Aunt Martha hurrying across the room to me.

"Stop, thief! Stop, thief! Stop, thief!" I called. "Help, he's gone this way."

Two or three young men made for the window in a rush and, as I sank sobbing to the floor, they cleared the sill and I heard the chase die away in the distance.

"There, there, sweetheart!" said my Aunt Martha; "it is too bad, but you were a brave girl to try to stop him. Are you hurt?"

"No, Aunt Martha," I said, "only terribly frightened. Do you think they will catch him?"

"Of course they will, child," she answered.

But they did not—thank heaven, they did not! Soon we heard them coming excitedly back.

"He's a wonderful runner," I heard one of them say in a voice that still struggled for breath. They looked up at us leaning from the windows.

"Couldn't catch him," said that idiot nice boy, coming up first. "Which window did he jump from?"

"This one," I said.

The nice boy looked vaguely at the sidewalk, then bent suddenly and held up the necklace with a whoop of delight. "Here it is!" he shouted, and clambering up to the window, gave it, not to Mrs. Trowbridge, but to me. I could have hugged him for the little courtesy. Tears were coming into my eyes again.

"Mrs. Trowbridge," I said, "here is your necklace, and you can not know how glad I am that the thief did not get away with it!" And for the first time in my life I had the exquisite pleasure of turning over valuable jewels to their rightful owner. It somehow made the world beautiful for me.

"And to think," I heard the nice boy saying, "it must have been lying here all the time we were chasing him!"

Of course it was; for I had dropped it there myself!

From the Book of Fate·

A Tangier Tale, by George E. Holt

What is written must be.
MOORISH PROVERB.

THERE was no reason under the sun why Harding should have become the subject of a tale of Morocco; but is there ever good reason for a man to fall in love? A glance from a pair of dark eyes half-obscured by a filmy veil, a hidden smile that caused delightful little crow's-feet at the corners of those eyes, a fleeting glimpse of a shapely white hand daintily touched with henna, of a slender ankle and tiny foot half-cased in crimson slippers—and Harding was already over half in love with the girl.

The girl was Ayesha, daughter of his Excellency Sid Mohammed bel Rhaji, Basha of Mogador which dignitary had been summoned to Tangier to await the pleasure of his Majesty the Sultan's representative at a time when the permanency of Mulai Abd-ul-Aziz's occupancy of the Shereefian throne was somewhat questionable.

Once in a while, the unusual, as it relates to Moorish girls, does happen, as in the case of Harding. From the results in that instance you will see that the Moorish custom of keeping daughters under lock and key is not always effective.

Harding was an American, of the type which classes the American the world over as a wealthy, healthy, careless and generous fellow who thinks quickly, acts quickly and, if there is occasion, shoots quickly. He had been in Tangier some months, killing time as he informed various inquisitive persons, but in reality getting some valuable information in regard to the political situation, especially as it related to mining concessions. In these months he had lost the air of the stranger, had learned much of Moorish life from books, but more from observation, and had mastered the intricacies of the byways surrounding Tangier.

IT WAS an October afternoon, when to resist the call of the country is almost impossible, and so Harding had strolled away from the dusty town to wander idly along the radiating donkey-trails. A strange thing about these trails is that they change with the changing seasons and, no matter how often one may explore them, there is always some new path to be encountered. After perhaps an hour's walk, Harding came upon one of these, leading from a path he had thought he knew perfectly. And so, with the satisfaction of having a new place to go to, he began his exploration.

In the course of half an hour one of these led him to a Moorish gate of no little beauty. He stopped to admire its spotless white curves and its arabesques. On either side ran a head-high wall.

While he was gazing at the gate there was a cry, and a tiny monkey scrambled on top of the wall, dragging behind him a piece of chain. Leaping lightly to the ground, it

held out a paw to the American, chattering monkey-talk. Harding seized the broken chain and awaited developments. Developments came quickly. There was a grating of bolts, the big gate swung open slowly—and there stood Ayesha.

For a moment she gazed with widening eyes upon a sight she never before had seen—a man of the infidels. Then, with a cry of surprise, she was about to close the gate when she noted the presence of her pet monkey. Ayesha knew as well as any one that in permitting a man—not to think of the fact that he was an infidel!—to look upon her, she was violating one of the most sacred customs of the Moor and, incidentally, laying herself liable to a flogging, despite the fact that she was daughter of a governor.

But—there was the monkey, her pet monkey, and she must have him, infidel or no infidel. So with an imperious gesture she held out one white hand and smiled. Into her hand Harding humbly put the end of the monkey's chain, and was wondering what to do next, when the chattering monkey was jerked unceremoniously through the gate, which promptly closed upon Ayesha, daughter of Sid bel Rhaji.

Had Harding been properly appreciative of the gifts of the gods, instead of gazing ruefully at the closed gate he would have been overwhelmed at the luck which had permitted him to set eyes upon so fair a Moorish lass and to have done so without being made a target for some watchful silver-mounted gun. But ere long his luck began to become more apparent to him, as a result of which the rest of the day and most of the night were taken up in thoughts which never wandered far from the picture of the Moorish girl framed in the old white gateway.

Harding did not hesitate to admit to himself that those dark eyes had gone straight to his heart and would dwell there forevermore. But he was no fool, and he realized that had he fallen in love with the Venus de Milo his chance of possession would have been better than in the actual case. However, the obstacles which he foresaw merely served to stimulate his decision that even the Mohammedan religion should not bar his way to other glances from those eyes of brown.

I doubt whether even Harding would have been able to make any progress had it not been for the kindly interference of Fate. Truly it all was written in "the book"! Among other things, that Harding should utterly fail in the attempt to discover the identity of his Moorish lass; also that he should unexpectedly find it necessary to make a journey to Al Kasar el Kebir in the interests of information relative to mines; and still further that the suspense of Sid Mohammed bel Rhaji should come to an end with his appointment as Basha of Al Kasar el Kebir, with instructions to go there at once and try to impress upon the tribesmen the desirability of being loyal to their lord, Mulai Abd-ul-Aziz.

And so, within twelve hours after Harding and his little caravan left the sandhills of Tangier behind them on their way to Al Kasar el Kebir, Sid Mohammed bel Rhaji with his wives and daughters and guard filed out of the gate where Ayesha had looked for the first time upon a man of the infidels. At the head of the caravan rode Ayesha, and I regret to say that Ayesha was thinking so steadfastly of a certain good-looking American that she knew not whether the road led to Al Kasar or to Paris.

WITH only half a day's journey between them, Ayesha and Harding jogged along the trail oblivious to the somewhat doubtful attractions of the country. When Harding pitched his tent in the unfriendly M'zora, near the queer Druidian shafts older than the Moors themselves, Ayesha and her women dipped their dainty fingers in the *kesk'soo* bowl near the big Sok el Arbia; when, saddle-worn and dust-covered, Harding watched the moon sink behind the hills guarding the old town of Larache, Ayesha's restless little head lay and dreamed within a yard of the spot in the M'zora where his own had rested the night before.

And on the third day, Fate again intervened, using as its humble instrument just a common thrice-depraved Moroccan mule.

Early in the morning this relative of the Evil One had broken loose, evaded with incredible ingenuity the detaining hands of the Moorish servants, tried to kick the head from the shoulders of one who tried to catch the broken halter-rope, and vanished into the surrounding landscape.

Ere this mule was again shackled in camp, the sun's heat was too strong to permit of travel, so Harding gave orders that the road would be taken up in the afternoon, and

settled himself to while away what promised to be a rather monotonous day.

IT WAS a few hours later when the sounds of shots were heard and Harding tumbled out of his tent to see what was the matter. His glasses flung him back along the trail, and there, about two miles away, he saw a cloud of dust, puff upon puff of white smoke, a mixture of brown and white *djellaba*, jumping horses and, in front of it all, a small group of white-robed women, their mules being driven rapidly along the road toward his camp.

As he gazed, a servant was explaining briefly that a band of country Moors, perhaps followers of the notorious Si Ahmed ben Mohammed Er-Raisuli, if indeed not that very person, had apparently attacked the party of the new Basha of Al Kasar. The reason? Probably to get the Basha's women and money.

Harding, enjoying the thrill of a scrimmage of any sort, judged that there was still opportunity to view at closer quarters an interesting sight, and so, strapping on his big Colt and seizing his rifle, he mounted his horse and rode towards the fleeing women. About the same time a maneuver of the attacking party left part of its number engaging the Basha's men, while four of its members sped after the women. Harding galloped on, releasing the safety-pinion of his rifle and loosening his revolver in its holster.

Nothing was visible of the women except their eyes; consequently it was not strange that Harding should fail to recognize the figure which gave a little gasp as he came up. As a matter of fact, Harding had little time to spare. The momentary hesitation on the part of the Moors when they saw that they had a Christian to deal with was promptly overcome, and Harding felt two bullets go whistling past his ears.

It was with real pleasure, therefore, that he heard the snarl and felt the jump of his pet rifle and saw one of the Moors tumble off his horse. Harding was a fairly good shot, as a man will be who has hunted from the Rockies to East Africa, but he was attempting no fancy shooting—pure business seemed to be the order of the moment. And his next two shots caused another of the approaching horsemen to clasp his hand to his side with a howl, turn his horse and gallop off. This was too much for the remaining Moors. They stopped, exchanged a few words while Harding watched them grimly, and then fled.

In the meantime the men of Bel Rhaji had succeeded in defeating their opponents, and that panting *kaid* now came riding full tilt, his still smoking gun in his hand, to ascertain what had occurred to his women. For a moment he was puzzled, but one of the women, who, inadvertently perhaps, permitted her veil to fall from her face, began an explanation which was interrupted by Bel Rhaji, who drove his horse to Harding's side, seized the American's hand, and poured forth his thanks as only an Oriental —or a Frenchman—can.

Harding heard and understood, but his attention was not on the Basha; he was looking with all his heart upon the half-uncovered face of the speaking woman. That woman was Ayesha, who smiled at him. In a moment the smile was lost behind the veil, but the eyes still spoke.

AS WAS natural, Harding became the guest of the Basha, who took charge of all camping arrangements. Harding's heart beat high in the hope that he would have opportunity to exchange at least three words with Ayesha—and well he knew what those three words would be! But the women were placed in a tent, and there they remained until the march was resumed. During the march Harding was obliged to ride by the side of his host, while Ayesha and her women rode far behind.

It was as they were entering the town gates of Al Kasar, in the hot sun of the following day, that Harding's opportunity came. Riding to the rear of the caravan, he found that in the confusion of arrival Ayesha had been left alone for a moment —a motionless white and blue bundle sitting on a tired mule. As Harding approached, her eyes seemed to call him, and a white hand pulled the veil from the face.

Knowing the danger which would be Ayesha's were she seen speaking to him, Harding resorted to stratagem. When but a yard or two from her, he suddenly reined in his horse, leaned over as though examining a buckle, and then dismounted. It was the work of a moment to unfasten enough straps to require several minutes to adjust again, and Harding wasted no time. His Arabic, though scarcely classic, served its

purpose well enough. He interrupted the pretty speech of thanks which was filtering through the replaced veil, and said:

"Tell me who you are. Are you one of the women of Sid bel Rhaji?"

"His daughter," answered Ayesha, with a smile.

"And your name?"

"Ayesha." Harding thought that never had he heard a word so filled with music. He repeated it slowly, and Ayesha blushed.

"You must know," he continued, "that ever since that day—at the gate—I have dreamed only of you and thought only of you! Why did you go so quickly?"

"It was necessary," replied Ayesha. "I do not like beatings."

"Beatings!" growled Harding. "Beatings! But now you go to live in Al Kasar. It is possible that I may never see you again—No! I will see you! You want me to?"

"Yes," answered Ayesha softly, "I want you to, for—perhaps you would like to know that I, too, have had dreams—since that day at the gate!"

It was a difficult task, thought Harding, to remain motionless and look intently at an ugly saddle-buckle while an angel told him such sweet stories.

"You—you care—too!" he exclaimed.

And Ayesha, like all women, answered: "Don't you know?"

"My father is coming now," she continued hastily. "You must go—quickly!"

Harding swung into his saddle, but as he did so he asked:

"How will I see you—hear from you—in Al Kasar? I can not live without——"

"Go quickly! I will send you a message soon. Go, and take with you my heart!"

THROUGH the power of love, Al Kasar, probably the most ill-favored town in Morocco, changed for Harding into a celestial city. If any one had asked Harding where and how he lived, he would probably have replied in an idiotic sort of way: "Live? I don't know—I just live, live, live!" To him each day was more glorious than the preceding one, and each moonlit night more beautiful than its sunny bride. Surely Heaven must be Love!

On the third day a Moorish woman followed Harding unobtrusively until he was in a sequestered spot; then placed a tiny bit of paper in his hand and shuffled away. With trembling fingers he opened the curiously folded paper and read this message:

HEART OF MINE: It has been difficult to send you a message. For two days have I tried, but now it is arranged. Come past the corner of my father's garden at sunset; I go there with my women. I can think and dream only of you, my king!

AYESHA

From that time until sunset Harding existed in a rarefied atmosphere of delight. At the call of the *muezzin* he mounted his horse and rode towards the garden.

TO HER women that day, it seemed that Ayesha had been dissatisfied with everything. She had kept them continually running for one thing or another. Late in the afternoon she had taken a notion to explore the big garden. And now Ayesha was sitting in the far north corner, where the wall sadly needed repair, and was apparently bent upon finding things for her women to do; and finally all save one had been sent away on one pretext or another.

"Do you not think that it is nearly the hour, Fatima?" questioned Ayesha.

"Even now the sun goes from view behind the hills," was the reply.

"And you think he will come?"

"Assuredly he will come. Were I he, should I not come? Even as the rain comes to the thirsty earth, or the shadows follow the sun—so should I come. But, my lady, have you thought of the danger—to you both?"

"I have thought," replied Ayesha, somewhat sadly. "But for myself, one word from him, and the look in his eyes—is worth death! And as for him—he knows, and is not afraid, unless it is for me.

"Hark! I hear the beat of horse's hoofs!"

For a moment two tiny ears were uncovered; then:

"Go; leave me now, Fatima. And, as you love me, be faithful!"

"Be faithful!" answered the girl. "Oh, my queen, you know that my tongue might be torn from my mouth before I would say the word that would cause you harm. I too, you know, once loved—a Christian. But it was written, in the Book was it written, that I was not to be his." The voice softened to a whisper. Who knows the loves which have been blighted by the Koran?

The tattoo of hoofs drew nearer and nearer, then stopped, and were replaced by the soft thud of riding-boots and the faint jingle of spurs. As they approached the opening in the wall there was indecision, and then a low voice called, "Ayesha!"

"Ayesha is waiting," responded the girl almost inaudibly; but the quick ears of Harding caught the sound. In a moment he was beside her in the shelter of the old wall, almost completely hidden by gnarled olive and fig trees. For a moment she let his arms encircle her and gave way to the delirious joy of the kisses which burned upon her lips and her eyes and the hands which tried to hide her blushes. Then she pushed him away.

"We must be careful, very careful, love of mine," she said. "Should that have been seen, it would have meant a flogging for me, perhaps death, and for you"—she shuddered, "a knife in the darkness!"

"I know; forgive me; I must not expose you to danger, but——" A look completed the sentence.

"It was worth it—worth everything!" Ayesha reassured him. "But we must be careful now. Afterwards——"

"Afterwards!" repeated Harding. "But when will that be, heart of mine?"

"When you will. You must take me away. Here all is impossible. You want to take me with you? You are not——"

A hand touched Harding's arm, and the brown eyes appealed to him.

"Now!" he cried. "To-morrow! When you will, my own! I will take you where you wish to go—anywhere! Only tell me!"

"Then I should like to go to your own country. I have heard of it somewhat. It is a good country, is it not?—where people may love as they will?"

"The best country in the world!" replied Harding heartily. "And when will you come with me?"

"When you will; to-morrow. It will be difficult and dangerous for us both," answered the girl.

"But I shall prepare all things. My horses are good; I have trusted servants, and," with a smile, "I know how to shoot—a little."

"Yes—a little," said Ayesha dryly.

"Then it is settled," continued Harding. "To-morrow you can come here after dark?"

"I will come—if I am alive."

"If you are— Don't say that, dear! No one has seen us here."

"Even the trees tell tales in Morocco," answered the girl.

With a laugh, Harding kissed her again, and reassured her. Then with a farewell "Until to-morrow, girl with the brown eyes!" he strode off.

DURING the ensuing twenty-four hours Harding had little time for worry. It is no small task to carry off a high-caste Moorish maiden from beneath the eyes of her father—and he a Basha. But very quietly and very carefully —for he knew that both their lives depended upon him—Harding made his preparations.

Nor was Ayesha idle. There was a long, earnest conversation between her and the faithful Fatima that night, a conversation interspersed with many tears and many kisses. And when, on the following day at sunset, Fatima donned the robes of her mistress and shut herself in her mistress's room, there was a prayer to Allah in her Mohammedan heart that all would be well.

It was at the appointed time, when Fatima knew that Ayesha was waiting with beating heart at the corner of the garden, that a slave came to the room she occupied —that of Ayesha—and said that the master had sent a basket of fruit and requested his daughter's presence in half an hour. Hiding her face in the little window, Fatima murmured a reply, and the slave withdrew, thinking that the mistress who usually welcomed with joy an invitation from her father had greatly changed of late.

The minutes passed. Fatima watched the lengthening shadows and knew that there was not much left of the half-hour. And then, far away on the top of a hill, she saw the tall figure of the American on horseback, accompanied by four stalwart Moors and a figure swathed in blue and white. They were riding fast.

Again the slave knocked upon the door and summoned Ayesha to her father's presence.

"I come now," answered Fatima. With a sob she took from her belt a little photograph, faded and worn, and a tiny vial in which was a drop of liquid that glowed like a diamond. The photograph was of a soldier—a man of the infidels, in the uniform of a British officer. For a moment Fatima regarded it with eyes brimming with tears. "Mine—but not mine!" she whispered. "And now—the end!" The tiny vial

broke between her teeth, and with a sob she threw herself upon the couch. "Ayesha—my queen—will be happy—with him!" she panted. "For me—this!"

Again she kissed the photograph which crumpled slowly in her hand. "For me—this—and a memory. It was written—in the Book—where all—is written. Allah is great—*Allah il Allah—Allah ak*——"

The head fell upon the arm, the muscles relaxed into eternal sleep, and a tear fell upon the little picture.

Swimming into the Service

By Frederick Arthur Dominy

THE Old Point Life-Saving Station, its sides and roof gray and weatherbeaten, hardly distinguishable from the sandy hills that surrounded it, always looked so homelike and comfortable to me that, even though I arrived there early in the morning when on one of my frequent trips through the district and duty told me to push forward, I could never forego the pleasures of at least one night spent beneath its hospitable roof.

Inside and out the perfection of neatness prevailed. In sandy dooryard, boat-room, mess-room and kitchen the same thoroughness and cleanliness reigned. But an odor permeated the whole station, down-stairs and up—an odor that guaranteed the fact that all the occupants of the building were of the stronger sex—tobacco everywhere.

And what clouds of incense would arise to the tobacco god when the meal had been finished and chairs pushed back noisily to the wall! Then I loved to watch them—Keeper Rorke MacLean, broad and thick-chested, grizzled and weather-beaten from the storms of many years; and the crew, seven men who had fought numberless battles with an angry ocean under the leadership of their keeper—men now ready at the first call to man the surf-boat and risk their lives as they had done many times before.

Often have I heard them yarning, going over the happenings of this or that wreck, and joking, as only men who are accustomed to it can, at the escape of some one of their number from the very hands of death. But better yet, I used to inveigle the Keeper into his office, a little room seemingly filled with curios, each with its story attached and, picking out this or that object, lead him gradually up to the point where no questioning was needed to prompt the tale.

He had been born and raised within sight of the surf; had played along its edge as a boy and worked in it daily as a man. Many a ton of fish he had helped haul ashore. Many a wreck had he seen when the storms of Fall and Winter drove vessels from their accustomed course, and yarns he could spin innumerable—yarns full of that in-

terest that can be given only when related by one who has played his part in the scenes.

I remember the first story that I ever prevailed upon him to relate, and then only after my visits had numbered sufficient to put us on a more intimate footing than that of merely subordinate and superior officer. It was a number of months before I could count myself established as one of Keeper Rorke's friends, but, the reserve once broken, it was only before the crew that official dignity was displayed; in the seclusion of the office we sociably exchanged opinions or reminiscences, aided by many pipefuls of the weed. I had asked him for an account of his first experience at a wreck, and for a moment he sat silent, reviewing, no doubt, the multitude of disasters that he had participated in. Finally, as he called up hazy memories of that particular occasion, gradually clarifying them until the whole was clear, he settled himself comfortable in his chair, puffed a few times on his pipe to assure himself that that highly necessary adjunct to yarning was in perfect working order, and fell to.

MY FIRST wreck, you said? To tell the truth, Lieutenant, I've seen so many that I had to stop an' think 'fore I could git my ideas together. The first wreck I can remember seein' was 'way back in the sixties, but as I was consid'able of a boy at that time I can't tell you much 'bout it. I'll tell you 'bout the first one I ever helped in, an' that was 'fore I was in the service as a reg'lar surfman.

Those days the Gov'ment wasn't no ways as partic'lar as it is now, an' a keeper could choose his crew 'thout botherin' them with 'xaminations an' such. Old Cap'n Ruland was keeper here then, an' I had been in the station a couple of months, subbin', as we call it. He was shy one reg'lar, an', though he had half of a notion to take me in, was a mite 'fraid, I guess, that I was too young, bein' only seventeen, but at that nigh as big as I am now. I asked him several times to 'list me, for sixty dollars a month was big money those days, but he kept puttin' me off.

"Wait a bit, bubby," he used to say. "When you git more beef on your bones, an' a year or so more age, we'll consider it. You may be all right, but we'll go slow an' then there won't be no mistakes made."

But I was young an' hopeful, an' I made up my mind that if ever the chance come I'd show him that I was as good a man as any in his crew.

They say every man has one opportunity in his lifetime. If he sees it an' grabs hold, all right, but if he lets it slip 'twill be a long while 'fore he gits another, an' prehaps never. Anyhow, mine come, an' I was jest lucky enough to make fast. 'Tain't much, you think, prehaps, but it put me where I am to-day, an', while there's better jobs, there's better men to hold them, an' I'm satisfied with mine right here.

'Twas well 'long in September when my chance come. We'd had a spell of nasty weather, an' was hopin' that it would clear, for we knew that if it kept up we'd be pretty likely to git a wreck, an' none of us was hankerin' for the job.

We wasn't mistaken, either. A little 'fore seven, 'bout sundown—though the sun hadn't been out in so long that we'd nigh forgotten how it looked—on the eighth day of that fog, Jim Ryder, who hadn't been out on his patrol twenty minutes, comes in the door singin' out, "Somethin' 'shore 'bout quarter of a mile to the west, right off the point! Close in, an' looks like she's layin' easy. Quite a sea, but not too much for the boat."

Everybody jumped for his clothes. Coats an' hats an' hip-boots were got on in a hurry. Then we opened the boat-room doors, manned the ropes on the boat-wagon an' started on the jump for the wreck.

You've never helped pull one of them wagons through ankle-deep sand an' up the beach hill, have you? Well, if you had, you'd find that there ain't nothin' would take the 'thusiasm out of you quicker. First place, the wagon's a load by itself, an' when you come to put a thirty-five-foot surf-boat on it, with all its oars, spars an' cables an' other gear, you'll find mighty soon that a easy walkin' gait's 'bout all you care to do.

That's what we got to 'fore we'd gone far, but we made pretty fair time, at that, an' was soon in sight of the wreck that had struck on that bunch of rocks that prehaps you've noticed. They lay due south of the point an' 'bout four or five hunderd yards off.

That time of the year it stays light for quite a while after sundown, so we had a pretty good chance to see her, spite of the fog, an' Cap'n Ruland wasn't long orderin' the boat off the wagon. It looked like an easy thing—surf high, but nothin' danger-

ous. 'Twas gittin' bigger all the time, though, an' all hands ca'c'lated we'd have them sailors ashore in a hurry.

We got off the beach on the second try an', after a five-minute pull, rounded to under the wreck's lee quarter. She was a three-masted schooner, quite big, an' loaded pretty deep, hold an' deck, with brick. Once in a while a sea'd break over her, but the crew was standin' in the lee of her cabin an' didn't 'pear to be worried none.

One of them throws us a rope an' we hauls up close as possible an' makes fast, then Cap'n Ruland sings out for them to come aboard. They didn't 'pear to be in any hurry an' the Cap'n was 'bout to holler again when we see a couple of men luggin' a feller out of the cabin, an' a woman an' a little girl follerin' them.

"It's the Cap'n," they explains to us, an' afterwards we hears how a block had fell from 'loft an' landed on his head, nigh killin' him, an' lucky it didn't!

We had quite a job gittin' him an' the females aboard, but fin'ly manages it. Then the crew piles in—there was only five of them—an' we casts off an' makes for the beach, landin' 'thout much trouble.

Cap'n sends one of the men up to the Station with the shipwrecked party, an' the rest of us stays behind to pull the surf-boat up an' fix things shipshape for the night.

'BOUT the time we was ready to quit, back comes one of the sailors an' the little gal. "What's the trouble now?" says Cap'n.

"It's jest this, sir," answers the sailor. "Mrs. Andrews—she's my Cap'n's wife—she says that in the hurry she clean forgot the schooner's papers an' some other things that's pretty val'able. She wants me to ask if you'd mind goin' off again an' gittin' them. They're all in a bag in the port locker of her berth. If the schooner breaks up an' they're lost, Cap'n an' her 'd be broke."

"Yes," puts in the gal, "mama says that if she loses that bag her an' papa an' me will have to go to the poorhouse. That's where they send people that don't have any money, ain't it? An', mister,"—she's mighty nigh cryin' now—"please bring Nancy Lee I wouldn't have her drownded for the world!"

"Who the dickens is Nancy Lee?" Cap'n Josh growls, for he don't like the idea of la'nchin' the boat again.

"She's my doll," she says. "The beautifulest doll you ever saw." An' she was goin' on to tell how pretty she was when the Cap'n cuts her short.

"Yes, yes, little gal," he says; "we'll git your doll an' your mama's bag. Come, boys, jump lively now, an' put that boat in the water!"

Well! We goes out to the schooner an' takes the gal 'long with us, as she wants to go so bad, 'count of the doll, an' there wasn't no danger to speak of. 'Sides it would save us huntin' for the things, as she said she knew exactly where they were. Sure enough, she did, an' hands them to the Cap'n. Then she dives back in the cabin to fetch her doll.

I don't know how it happened, but after a while, when some one sings out, "All ready!" we tumbled into our places in the boat an' shoves off. Afterwards Cap'n said he'd thought the gal was up, forred, an' of course the bow-man wasn't payin' much 'tention, thinkin' that she was aft. Anyhow, nobody missed her, 'specially as we had our hands full beachin' the boat. The wind had freshened up consid'able an' the sea was pretty high, makin' a ticklish job.

Cap'n Josh had the drag out over the stern, though, an' we was doin' all right when the drag-rope parted. Jest then an extra big sea come rollin' in, an' mebbe we didn't go up on the beach a-kitin'! The boat come down with a smash on the sand an' all hands lands in a heap in the bottom of her. Nobody hurt though, an' we was thinkin' ourselves lucky, when some one says, "Where's the gal? An' did she git hurt?"

Cap'n looked 'round kinder funny. "Baker,"—he was bow oar,—"wasn't she 'long with you?" he says.

"Nope," says Baker; "I thought you had her aft."

We looked at each other kinder questionin' like, an' it turns out that nobody remembered seein' her. It was clear that she'd been left on the schooner!

"Boys, it means 'nother trip!" says the Cap'n. "I wouldn't dare go up to the Station 'thout the gal, an' it's up to us to hustle out an' git her ashore 'fore her mother mistrusts somethin' an' comes down here an' makes a fuss."

So we that had took off our cork jackets puts them on again, an' then all hands takes hold of the boat an' starts to la'nch her.

As we stand there, holdin' her in water

'bout up to our knees waitin' for the Cap'n to give the word, some one says, "She's leakin'!" Sure enough she was, an' bad at that, for there's nigh a foot of water in her an' gainin' fast.

We hauled her ashore an', lookin' her over, find that she's pretty badly banged up from landin' so hard on the beach—stem cracked an' every butt on it started, an' also there's some timbers busted 'midship. That boat can never be used again till there's been consid'able work done on her, an' 'twould take a good man two or three days, anyhow.

IF IT had been any other time it wouldn't have mattered much, her bein' smashed, for we always had another boat at the Station, but, as it was, that one had been sent to a builder for an overhaulin', an' we was in a nice fix with no boat an' none nearer than six miles on one side an' ten on the other! The first, at Nag's Head Station, couldn't be got to the spot where we was in less than five or six hours, as there had been some bad tides lately an' there was three or four deep gullies 'cross the beach that the crew could never have pulled the wagon through 'thout doin' consid'able diggin', an' that takes lots of time, an' the sea was too rough for them to row her up. The other was at Ditch Plain Station, t'other side of the inlet, and, even if we could have got word to them—we didn't have telephones them days—they couldn't git to us 'count of crossin' the bar, as there was so much sea on it a surf-boat never'd got through.

Somethin' had to be done, though, an' 'fore long at that. The sea was gittin' higher all the time, an' there was danger that the schooner 'd work off the rocks. If she did—an' chances was there was a hole stove in her when she hit—she'd founder in the deep water inside, 'count of her load, an' the gal would be lost, sure as shootin'.

I'd been doin' some pretty fast thinkin', an' finally figgered out a scheme. I didn't tell Cap'n Josh though, till my prep'rations was all made, for I knowed he'd call me a crazy fool an' stop me. So I walks up the beach a ways till I'd got out of sight, then pulls off my coat, pants an' shoes an', with nothin' on but my underclothes, I was ready.

I had fixed up a pretty fair plan, 'cordin' to my way of thinkin'. I knowed, of course, that the little gal wouldn't know nothin' 'bout riggin' up the breeches-buoy, but if I could git aboard an' then have a line shot to her it would be easy gittin' ashore again. The main thing was reachin' her, but those days I was consid'able of a swimmer, an' was willin' to take my chances. 'Sides, somebody had to git there, an' I thought I was 'bout as able to do it as any one. Far as I could see, there was only one bad thing against me, an' that was the danger of losin' my bearin's in the darkness. That I was likely to do, but I decided that in case I did I could git ashore again somehow, 'fore I played out.

Then I sings out. "Hey, Cap'n," I says, "I'm goin' to swim out to that schooner an' I wants you to git the gun an' shoot a line over her when I light a flare that'll give you her bearings."

"That you, Rorke?" Cap'n answers.

"Yes," I says.

"Well," he orders, "you come back here on this beach! I ain't goin' to have you try no such —— fool jobs! You ain't got one show in a thousand of reachin' her! 'Sides, I'm goin' to send word to Ditch Plain to come down with their boat."

But I'd made up my mind to try it an' kept on wadin' out till a wave carried my feet out from under me an' then I struck out in earnest, divin' through the breakers an' grad'ally workin' out to sea. The last I heard, Cap'n Josh was shoutin' at me to come back an' tellin' the crew to grab me, but I was out of their reach long 'fore they had a chance.

'Fore I had gone far, though, I found that I had made consid'able of a mistake in sizin' up the surf. It was 'bout twice as big as I thought it was, an' I had all I could do to keep goin' 'tall. If I hadn't been a pretty husky kind of a lad I'd 'a' been rolled back on the beach half drowned 'fore I'd got fairly started, but I stuck to it an' made headway, —mighty slow, for sure—but I knew I was makin' some, as the poundin' of the waves on the rocks kept gittin' a little plainer all the time. That noise of the sea breakin' on the rocks was all I had to steer by, an' with all the other sounds it was more'n half guesswork. If I hadn't been used to it all, I'd been turned 'round a dozen times, but when a feller has been brought up 'longside of the surf he can pick out the different sounds that a sea'll make in a way that a landsman would be s'prised at.

I guess, though, if there hadn't been a

strong set that favored me, runnin' as it did to the east'ard 'gainst the wind, helpin' me to keep a straight course, I'd never reached the schooner. It was a fairly long swim anyhow, though in calm weather I'd done it easy enough, but now it was even bettin' whether I held out. I was gittin' tired. My arms an' legs didn't 'pear to have a mite of strength in them, an' two or three times when a sea'd come rollin' in it carried me back with it, for I didn't seem to be able to fight through.

But I stuck to it, an' 'fore long, as I raised up on top of a wave, I saw the schooner, not over a hundred feet away, an' 'bout the same distance to le'ward, so I works down till I gits in the smooth water in her lee an' then strikes out hard as I could for her. Pretty soon I see her bobstay over my head an' I grabs it an' rests a minute, then crawls up on the bowsprit careful an' so on aboard.

SHE had canted over till her deckload was slidin' off with every sea, an' it was ticklish business gittin' aft, but I watched my chance an' 'tween seas works 'long till I got close, an' then makes a run for the cabin.

I looks down the companionway, an' there was the little gal, curled up comf'table in a big chair, with the doll that had made all the trouble in her arms.

"Hullo!" I says.

"Hullo," she answers back, as chipper as can be. "This is Nancy Lee, an' why didn't you men wait for me an' her? I s'pose we've got to go ashore now, ain't we?"

I says, "Yes, we're goin' pretty soon."

"All right," she says. "I'm awful sleepy, an' if you'll call me when you're ready I'll be much 'bliged. I don't think I'll try to keep 'wake any longer, now you're here."

I pretty nigh laughed. Here I'd took consid'able chances to reach the schooner, 'spectin' to find the gal cryin' an' scared to death, an' darn if she wasn't sleepy an' askin' to be called when I was ready to go ashore, jest as if it was a pleasure 'scursion, an' not a mite of danger!

There wasn't any use tellin' her different, though, so I hustled round an' breaks up some wood an', pourin' on some kerosene I finds in a can in the galley, soon has a fire goin' in the lee of the cabin.

I 'tends it careful an' in 'bout five minutes I hear the gun. Cap'n Ruland hits the target plum center first time, the line droppin' 'cross the schooner 'tween her fore an' mainmast. I lays hold an' pulls that off, then the whip-line, an' lastly the hawser, which I made fast 'bout half-way up the fo'mast.

Them ashore can tell by the feel when everything's right, so they tauten up on the hawser an' 'fore long the whip-line begins runnin' through the block, an' the breeches-buoy heaves in sight. I goes down in the cabin an' gits the gal, who'd been sound 'sleep, an' her doll, an' climbs up the ratlin's to where I can swing myself in the buoy. I git settled down, then jerks the whip-line once or twice as a signal to haul off.

The gal was tickled to death with the trip! She was the spunkiest child you ever see. Once, when an extra big wave pretty nigh hit us, she laughed an' told me it was lots of fun. Better'n swingin', she said, 'twas so excitin'!

THEY had started a fire goin' on the beach an' as we got near I could see the crowd. Of course the crew of the Station were haulin' on the whip-line, but darn if every one of the sailors from the schooner wasn't there an', worst of all, the woman! I hadn't minded the little girl seein' me half dressed, but I wasn't a bit anxious to have her mother look at me, so, when we get near enough, I hands the child out to one of the sailors, an' while her mother was huggin' an' kissin' her I tumbles out of the buoy an' makes a bee-line for where I had left my clothes. I puts them on an', waitin' till the woman had started back—for I wasn't goin' to give her no chance to thank me 'fore that crowd; like as not she'd kissed me an' I'd never heard the last of that—I goes back an' helps stow the gear.

That's 'bout all there is to tell 'cept that as we was sendin' out the hawser-cutter the schooner lifted clear of the rocks an' sunk out of sight. I was mighty glad she had waited till the gal an' I got ashore.

Cap'n Ruland never said nothin' for a day or so, but one night he called me into the office an' tells me that he had decided to put me on as a reg'lar surfman.

"Jest remember one thing, young feller," he says. "The next time I give you an order an' you don't pay 'tention you'll hear somethin' drop!"

"Yessir," I says, but I 'spect if I'd had another chance like the one I've just told you 'bout he'd hollered his lungs out 'fore I'd stopped, for I was young an' consid'able foolish them days.

Sir John Hawkwood

a Tale of the White Company in Italy

by

Marion Polk Angellotti

EDITOR'S NOTE—While traveling in Italy the author, a California woman, came upon the painting of Sir John Hawkwood in the Duomo at Florence. Impressed by the man's striking face, she became interested in his wonderful history, a part of which is retold in the present story. Sir John Hawkwood was recognized by his contemporaries as not only the ablest and most intrepid, but also the most trustworthy of the *condottieri*, or "free captains," the famous mercenaries of the Middle Ages. His name (also spelled Haccoude, Acuto, Aucud, etc.) figures prominently in Froissart and the Italian chronicles, while the historian Hallam calls him "the first real general of modern times." The "White Company" of the story is the same that, in another period of its history, figures so prominently in Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's romance of that name, in which Sir John Hawkwood himself appears as a minor character.

CHAPTER I

A JEST WITH THE LIPS

"GIOVANNI DELLA GUGLIA!" The words, subdued yet perfectly audible, fell on my ears just as I set my foot on the threshold of the door leading into the palace *loggia*. A titter accompanied them, and a buzz of whispering comment followed. Instantly I swung round on my heel, narrowed my eyes, and glanced keenly about to discover the author of the jest.

My task was like to prove no easy one, for all the busy courtyard was thronged with onlookers who now fixed me with glances of amusement. A group of pert young pages in white and gold livery were gathered round the fountain; the taunt might have come from one of them, but I thought not, for they had learned that I was no safe butt for their tricks. Gorgeous lackeys stood about in troops, soldiers of the Prince's Guard sprawled on the stone pavement and played at dice, and not far from where I stood I perceived a score of my own free companions, each wearing across his left shoulder the white scarf, embroidered in silver, which was the badge of the White Company.

They were dare-devil rogues, fellows from England and France and Spain and all the duchies of Italy; men who would not have feared to jest at the expense of a king, or, what would have been held worse by most, at the Pope himself; but I wasted no time in scanning their faces for signs of guilt,

being well aware that, indifferent as they were to the great of the earth, they one and all entertained a dread of me that kept their tongues civil in my presence, if not always in my absence.

They had heard the taunt even as I had, and were elbowing a way to the front of the throng that they might have a clear view of the turmoil which, they plainly believed, was sure to follow.

Not far from the threshold where I had halted stood a group of different mettle from the other occupants of the court—a half-dozen of the Prince of Verona's own friends and followers, young fops with splendid raiment and empty heads, any of them likely enough to have attempted a jest at the expense of me whom they did not love.

In the center of the circle I saw Ranucio della Torre, Prince Antonio's favorite. Though he was my very bitter enemy and tireless in his efforts to work me harm, I had never felt any wonder that he was so beloved by his royal master, for he was a shrewd man and a brave one, and gifted with a dark beauty of face that made him better worth gazing at than any picture on the palace walls. So sure was I now that the whispered taunt had come from him that I swung about in his direction.

At this instant I felt a hand laid on my arm. It was Michael O'Meara, my Irish lieutenant, the only man in all Verona to whom I gave an absolute trust.

"Whist, now, Sir John, 'tis wrong you are," he whispered in my ear.

And I paused, for I knew well enough that, whatever he wanted, it was not to withhold me from fighting. He was too thorough an Irishman for that—nay, at this very moment his blue eyes were fairly blazing with delighted zest for battle.

"'Twas not Della Torre," he continued, in the same low voice. "'Twas the old rogue beside him, Raimondo del Mayno they call him—blessed saints, 'tis a heathen fashion of name, and enough to break the jaw of the man who says it! Shall I be after taking him by the nose, Sir John, and teaching him manners to fit his station?"

I looked again at the little group of courtiers, all of whom were gazing at me in manifest amusement and exchanging whispers which, it took small wit on my part to guess, were at my expense. The man whom O'Meara had indicated stood at Della Torre's elbow, laughing loudly.

He might have been five-and-fifty years old, and was very fat and pompous, with shrewd, choleric blue eyes half buried in thick pockets of flesh, and a short gray beard carefully cut in a square. I knew him well enough for a rich noble of the Court, a kinsman, in some distant fashion, of Prince Antonio himself, and therefore treated with a flattering attention which there was little about him to warrant.

To speak frankly, I would have given something to have avoided a quarrel with him; for the Prince, under whom I now fought, and whose pay was as generous as his name in Italy was evil, had very high ideas of his royal dignity, and of the dignity of all who belonged to his house. Yet prudence, truth to tell, got little welcome from me at that time of my life.

Moreover, I had so many jealous enemies that my one hope of safety lay in the name I had won of being a man unsafe for meddling and very dangerous when provoked.

Should I turn on my heel and pass on, to-morrow all the city of Verona would know the part I had played. There was but one course for me to pursue, and I did pursue it—by instinct and at once.

STRIDING across the space that separated me from Del Mayno, I halted before him. The crowd gasped in delighted anticipation and surged forward to see. O'Meara followed me so closely that his shoulder almost touched mine—the rogue! The group of courtiers, their mocking laughter still on their lips, stared at me haughtily, and Della Torre scowled as if incensed at my daring in approaching him. As for Del Mayno, he set his head back and roared noisily with mirth. Plainly he thought himself quite safe by virtue of his rank.

For some reason all this merriment suffered a slight check as I paused and looked steadily about the circle. During the moment which I spent in a deliberate survey the laughing faces sobered not a little, and unless I am mistaken some of those present called to mind various tales that had reached their ears of my summary methods of dealing with those who offended me. When the pause had grown strained I spoke.

"My lord," I said to Del Mayno, "you said 'Giovanni della Guglia,' if I am not wrong. The jest is somewhat threadbare by now, it appears to me; none but dull

wits continue to harp on a jibe that has grown old by use. Moreover, at its newest this sobriquet was never particularly to my fancy, as I endeavored to show by killing one gentleman who called me by it, disabling three more, and giving two others such a lesson in sword-play as they will not forget. But come—no doubt you are of a merry turn of mind; I would not be too hard upon you; and then, you are kin to the Prince. Take a warning from me that I do not greatly love jests like this, and the matter shall end here."

My tone infuriated him, as I knew it would. He turned crimson, puffed out his cheeks with rage, and squared his shoulders in fierce determination to crush me. Those about him scowled on me darkly and muttered curses on my insolence.

"I believe," Del Mayno said insolently, "that you are the English *condottiere* who fights the Prince's battles for hire. That is all I know concerning you. As for your name, it may be John Hawkwood or Giovanni della Guglia—do you think I have no better use for my thoughts than the remembering of how you style yourself? What are you doing here before me, pray? Did you think, because you heard me speak your name, that I called you? Not I. Begone, then, and if you must have company, talk to my lackeys yonder—they are nearer your rank than I am!"

"Now the Virgin pity you, me poor fool, and aid ye too—for it's yourself will soon be needing aid most urgent!" I heard my irrepressible Irishman mutter behind me; and a sigh of rapturous anticipation ran about among my mercenaries. Del Mayno heard it, too, and with rage.

"Bid your horse-boys be silent when I speak!" he cried. "Ah, Sir John Hawkwood, you may think to rule tavern loiterers and thieves and bullies, such as this famous Company of yours, but we know you, braggart, drunkard and cutthroat that you are—never dream you can frighten me, Sir Ruffian!"

He stopped, partly from exhaustion and partly in startled horror; for on his last word I had seized my sword-hilt and pulled the weapon out, flashing it under his eyes.

"Del Mayno," I said with brutal directness, "you are an old fool, and badly in want of a lesson! You have called me John of the Needle. Do you not know that a needle is a very sharp thing—not one with which to jest? Then you shall learn it now! This blue blade in my hand is my needle, and I am going to give you some experience of its powers. Why do you stand there staring at me like any imbecile? Get your sword out, unless you desire that I should spit you while you wait!" And I made a pass within an inch of his nose.

I had fancied he would quibble at so far lowering his dignity as to meet me sword in hand—but I had forgotten the power of bare steel. With a wild snort of mingled rage and fear he pulled his sword loose and came at me in a fury. All was as I would have it now.

CHAPTER II

A JEST WITH COLD STEEL.

THE difference in rank which he had forgotten his friends remembered for him. There was a cry of horror from the young courtiers. "Insolence!" shouted Della Torre. "Come, let us cut down this adventurer who would butcher the Prince's kinsman!"

"I'm thinking you do very well where you are, and that there you'll stay, my jewels!" O'Meara remarked blandly. "Here, you rogues, come aid your Captain!" At which my men, having no mind at all to see the sport spoiled, pushed roughly in between the courtiers and myself. In all my life I have met but three swordsmen—by name the Black Prince, Sir John Chandos, and Bertrand du Guesclin—who could best me, and Lord Raimondo was as a babe in my hands.

"Now, my friend," I said pleasantly, as I turned his wild thrusts aside, "I am going to amuse myself. You have had your jest and enjoyed it; now I shall have mine. I shall not kill you—what good would that do me?—but if I do not make you cut a poor figure this day, then let me never besiege a fort or sack a town again! Now, gentlemen, I pray your attention, for the play begins!"

With that I sent him backward, stumbling and panting, wildly defending himself from my attacks; and I followed him, driving him onward relentlessly, and executing a series of thrusts at his fat legs which made him squeal like a frightened pig. Straight across the court I drove him, and

through the gateway into the palace *loggia;* and close on our heels came the soldiers and pages and lackeys, who gave vent to wild outbursts of laughter and cheering, and fairly danced for glee.

The great *loggia* was a fair, sunny place, as I swept into it, with Del Mayno stumbling and cursing at my sword's point; but the hubbub was such that it could not help but rouse the palace—the very end I had in view.

Almost within the moment startled voices sounded indoors, and a great crowd of ladies and courtiers, some frightened, some curious, came quickly out into the gallery to see what was afoot. I had a good audience now—half the Prince's Court above, half his servants in the outer square and packed about the *loggia* gate. Certainly the jest was at present on my side.

PUTTING forth all my skill, I advanced on Del Mayno in such fashion that I believe he thought me turned into the devil in person. Easily parrying all his desperate thrusts, between them I pricked him prettily in whatever spot my fancy suggested to me.

"So there, so there!" I cried, shaking with laughter, but taking good care not to miss a thrust. "To the right, my friend—now to the left—ha, you obey my guidance as prettily as could be wished! *Prime, seconde, coupe*—come, what makes you squeal so like a stuck pig? Did I go too deep? Yes, I see a spreading blood-stain on your fine satin hose. Does my needle please you—my needle concerning which you were so witty? Is it a sharp needle, eh?" I thrust again, and my wretched victim leaped into the air with a yell.

"Sir John! Sir John Hawkwood! Are you mad?" called an angry voice from the gallery, and I knew that Antonio della Scala, Prince of Verona and Vincenza, was now numbered among my audience.

I feigned to have heard nothing, and my pretense was aided by the delighted clamor of the onlookers. O'Meara, who had followed us closely in, stood leaning on the wall, alternately giving war-whoops of delight and pausing to wipe tears of laughter from his eyes. From the upper gallery, where the ladies and courtiers were gathered, came audible and indignant comments on adventurers who dared attack great nobles in this fashion, mingled with irrepressible bursts of merriment as my unlucky victim cut some especially wild caper.

THE chase was growing hotter now. Round and round the *loggia* we went, my quarry scarlet in the face, and so blown that it was plain he must soon fall for very exhaustion. He tripped and stumbled, wheezed noisily, and made wild sounds of mingled rage and anguish.

"Dance, my friend! Dance for this noble assemblage!" I cried, and Del Mayno pranced and curveted in the liveliest fashion possible. "So—you do very creditably, on my word! Turn to the right—to the left—raise your right foot—now your left foot. Higher, or I will prick again——"

I shook with laughter to see the desperate efforts and wild, protruding eyes of my pupil. Flesh and blood could not resist the absurd scene; the *loggia* was now one great roar of mirth, and even those in the gal lery held their sides and wiped their eyes.

"Sir John!" the Prince screamed, in a rage. "Do you hear me? Put up your sword on the instant! Cease your horseplay and let him go!"

This time I was ready to obey him, for I saw that my victim could bear no more. "Once again, one final effort!" I cried, and swung my sword in a hissing circle straight at the feet of Del Mayno, who, with a wild cry and a convulsive spring, leaped high into the air and just cleared the blow. "Well done, my friend! Now rest and get your breath, and take warning by this lesson that needles are too sharp to be spoken of in jest!"

Still roaring with laughter, I thrust my sword into its scabbard. "Let Della Torre and his friends pass in now, O'Meara. The play is ended," I called to the Irishman.

And then I stood waiting, unable to guess what might be the result of my mad whim, but tolerably certain that the next half-hour would prove a stirring one for me.

CHAPTER III

ANTONIO DELLA SCALA

ANTONIO DELLA SCALA came slowly down the staircase from the gallery. He was obviously in a rage, though the fact showed only in his increased pallor and the slight trembling of his hands. For a moment I had an insane desire to treat

him as I had treated Raimondo del Mayno, for, truth to tell, I loved one scarcely better than the other.

He was not to my taste, this last of the Scaligeri, this languid, foppish, sulky man, who painted his cheeks and covered his hands with rings, and wore his blond hair so low that it shaded his pale lack-luster eyes. He came of a bloody race, a family in which the father slew the son and the husband the wife; and, unless report slandered him, he had himself the blood of his only brother on his conscience. More than once I had seen him drop all his airs and graces and rave in a violent fashion that might well chill the blood of any in his power. He accorded me civil treatment, however, for I was not a little useful to him.

Would he choose to be indulgent now, or not? I wondered, as I gazed at his slim, lazy, insolent figure, glittering in violet velvet slashed with gold and sewn with pearls. In a trial of strength I could have broken his neck, and the knowledge gave me a kind of scorn for what he might do.

There was silence for a moment, while the rabble about the gate eyed me with reverence, and the crowd in the gallery gave me looks of scorn. I stood indifferent, staring back at them. No doubt I wore the plainest attire that could have been found that day in all the Scaligeri palace, where even the servants went splendidly dressed. Even O'Meara, clad in the spoil of many a foray, far outshone me. I could feel the scorn in the bright eyes above, and it made me laugh again to think how I had served the splendid and aristocratic Del Mayno.

EVEN as I thought of this gentleman he took the center of the stage. Pulling himself together, he staggered over to where Antonio stood at the foot of the staircase. He was still panting wildly, but breathing wrath and vengeance.

"My lord, my lord! this is beyond bearing!" he wheezed passionately. "Am I, as great a noble as any man in Verona save yourself—yes, and your own kin by marriage—to be put to shame by this adventurer from heaven knows where, and jeered at by his soldiers, and made the laughing-stock of all the city? Never shall I hear the end of this outrage! I have been made a mock of—and oh, my sufferings! Holy saints, I think I shall never walk again!"

He fell on the lowest step, clutching wildly at his bleeding legs. "Will you endure this outrage, my good lord?"

The Prince stood regarding me with a dark frown. "Sir John," he said coldly, "can you explain this whim of yours? Do you choose my kin for your horse-play, and my *loggia* for its scene? Faith, I had thought Francesco Carrara and his Paduans upon us, so great the bedlam you raised!"

This was no time for hesitation; my only hope lay in boldness. I lounged cheerfully across to the stairs and faced Antonio, while Del Mayno, letting out a squeal at my approach, climbed half a dozen steps and took sanctuary behind his master's back.

"Why, my lord," I explained, laughing, "the matter is of the simplest. It appears that various wits among your courtiers are curious as to my birth, and other matters which might be thought no affair of theirs. They have invented various histories to fit me, and the favorite one is that I am the son of a tailor. Therefore, it seems, they have christened me Giovanni della Guglia —John of the Needle. You see? I have done my best to take the point from this jest by dealing roughly with all who cracked it, but it appears I have been somewhat too patient.

"For to-day, as I came into the palace court, this noble called me very audibly by the name I have mentioned. The fancy took me to show him how sharp my needle was and how dangerous, that he might address me more circumspectly in future. I think he has learned his lesson well," I ended, pointing with a roar of laughter to the wretched noble who cowered behind Antonio, still gingerly feeling at his calves.

"AND did you not know, Sir John," said the Prince, with the measured coldness that spelt suppressed fury with him, "that this lord was Raimondo del Mayno, the uncle of my cousin the Princess Giulia, my kinsman in a distant fashion?"

"Indeed, then, my lord, I am sorry both for you and for the Princess!" I cried, and stared again at the noble in question.

The Prince gave me so black a look that I fancied the end was come. Perhaps he did not value me so highly as I had believed —perhaps, much as he longed to worst the Duke of Padua by means of my men and my skill in warfare, he might toss away all such hopes in sheer rage at my presumption.

But, even as I looked, to my utter amaze-

ment he choked back the angry words and banished the dangerous gleam that had come into his half-closed eyes. There was a short silence; then he spoke—angrily, indeed, but to those who had thronged into the *loggia* to watch the conflict.

"Begone, you!" he cried, snarling at them, with his upper lip raised from his teeth in the fashion of a threatening dog. The onlookers filed hastily out, while those in the gallery followed suit.

"Stay, Ranucio," he added to his favorite, Della Torre. "And do you stop also," he added to O'Meara, who indeed had shown no sign of budging.

The Prince crossed the *loggia* slowly and seated himself at a great table covered with cards and dice and gold drinking-cups.

"And now," he said sourly, carefully avoiding my eyes, "if your merry humor is satisfied, Sir John, in the name of heaven let us sit down and talk like men of sense!"

THIS sudden change of front so amazed me that I could find no words, and must have cut a foolish figure enough had not Del Mayno come to my rescue by diverting the attention of the others to himself. Pulling himself up with difficulty from his seat on the stairs, he hurried indignantly over to the Prince.

"Oh, my lord, my lord! am I to have no vengeance?" he cried, shaking his clenched hand at me, but prudently keeping the table between us. "I am your own kinsman, and yet you refuse me redress when I am mocked and outraged! Send the rogue to prison, or banish him forever from Verona! I tell you, my lord, I can hardly stand for pain!" he groaned, and despite my bewilderment I laughed until I was near to choking.

"Oh, you make too much of the matter, my good friend," said Antonio, with a look of humorous tolerance which dazed me—this was not his usual way of dealing with such happenings. "Sir John's wit is of a rough kind, perhaps, and reeks more of the camp than the Court, but we must pardon something in one who is so good a friend to Verona. Besides, it is plain that you brought all this on yourself by an imprudent remark concerning a man who has my favor. Now go get a doctor for your hurts, though indeed I think they are not deep ones."

Del Mayno flung out both his hands in indignant protest and seemed about to favor us with another tirade, but the Prince's patience was exhausted. "Go, Del Mayno, do you hear? I have said that the matter is ended, and what I say I mean!"

Del Mayno, with a gesture of despair, turned and struggled up the staircase.

I heard O'Meara draw his breath and mutter audibly, "Thank the blissed saints for this miracle, then—'tis no less!" Still speechless with astonishment, I sat down slowly, collecting my thoughts while I waited for the Prince to choose his time and speak.

Why he had chosen to brush aside my offense as a matter of no consequence he alone knew. It was not from good-nature; he had none. Was it because he believed that I alone could help him cast down his deadly foe, Francesco Carrara, the Duke of Padua? I had won him a dozen victories over his rival. Yes, I was of value to him, and he knew it—that was surely the cause of his complaisance.

SUDDENLY I became aware that he was watching me maliciously. "You are dreaming, Sir John," he drawled. "Your conduct to-day makes me somewhat doubtful whether you are quite sober. I fear you could scarcely fight a successful battle for me now!"

"Faith, my lord, you show yourself very ignorant of war when you say that," I answered, with a curt laugh—I understood the taunt in his words well enough, but would not show it. "Soldiers never fight so well as when their hearts are warmed with drink. When I stormed the Pont d'Esprit near Avignon not a man in all my force sat his horse without reeling in the saddle, yet they did not fight the less well for that. However, I am sober now, though I could not have said so this morning at sunrise. Reassure yourself — if you want a battle won I am in the mood to do it."

"'This morning at sunrise'!" said Della Torre, repeating my words with a sneer on his darkly handsome face. "Yes, to be sure. It was near dawn this morning when I passed you, I think. You were reeling through the streets. Two of your rogues were holding you up, and you had a bare sword in your hand, with which you were pricking all who came in your path——"

"Bedad, thin, and what was yourself doing in the streets at such an hour, at all,

at all?" broke in O'Meara, before I could speak. His voice was suspiciously sweet, a bright glint danced in his blue eyes, and his head was thrown back a trifle, all of which spelt danger where he was concerned. "God forgive me if I do you wrong, me friend, but 'tis in my mind you're no better than a hypocrite! And for this you may take my word—Sir John Hawkwood will be remembered long after your tomb falls to bits from old age!"

"Hold your tongue, Michael!" I cried. The Prince was chuckling in malicious amusement, and Della Torre had turned on the Irishman a glare of such indignant astonishment as he might have worn had a lackey bearded him. "It matters nothing to those here whether I go drunken through the streets or not. I am hired to win battles, not to chant prayers. The Prince desires to say something to us—give him a moment to word his thoughts, then, and let Della Torre alone."

CHAPTER IV

MISCHIEF AFOOT

ANTONIO was watching me furtively, from beneath lowered lids. "Yes Sir John," he said slowly, "I sent for you to-day to beg your help in a matter of great importance to me. You are not averse to gaining a round sum of money, eh? If you will carry out this business to my satisfaction, I will give you a great bag of golden coins, and fling this diamond atop for good measure." He touched an enormous jewel that sparkled at his throat, then darted a keen glance at me to mark if I appeared dazzled by the offer.

"Why, my lord," I said bluntly, "I do not understand you. I have sold my sword to you for a certain space of time, and am bound to aid you in all your enterprises until the bargain expires. Why should you offer me more gold than is named in our contract? Danger is my trade, and I am content with the pretty penny you have already given me."

Della Torre gave me a look of scorn: "When I march out to battle, I go for love of Verona and love of my Prince. Why do you go? Simply to earn a bag of gold pieces?"

"To be sure!" I said, nodding. "What cause have I, pray, to care a flip of my finger for either Verona or Padua, or any other of your little slices of land, I who come from a great country overseas? Why should I love the Prince here, can you tell me? We are not of one land, or one blood, or one nature, and he has done nothing for me save to pay me a certain amount of gold, for which I have given him full return. No, I do not love him, but during all the time for which he has bought my sword I will be utterly faithful to him, and serve him better than you could do, you that profess such devotion for him! He does not hire me for affection; he hires me that I may fight Padua in his behalf. It is all a matter of buying and selling."

I laughed again, but there was little enough merriment in my heart, for when I paused to consider my trade it sometimes appeared to me that I was but a step above the bravos of the day, men who might be hired for a handful of *scudi* to waylay and murder on the streets.

"A strange life," said Della Torre sourly, "to roam about all Italy, fighting now for one duchy, and now for another, and caring nothing for any, save as self-interest leads you!"

"That is the kernel of the matter in a few words," I assented, undisturbed. "The highest bidder gets me, and I admit it frankly; but, though I have a keen eye to the lining of my pockets, I am honest—there lives no man who dare accuse me of failing to give good measure for my hire. Why, I would fight for the devil if he paid me well!"

"WAS this your mind when you fought at Poictiers under the Black Prince? Did you serve then for hope of gain and nothing else?" asked Della Torre scornfully.

He had put his finger on the one weak spot in my armor, and I make no doubt that I winced at the touch. Nay, I was so moved that for an instant I forgot him and spoke with a gesture of reckless self-scorn. "Ah, you go too far back! In those days I was an English soldier, the friend of the greatest hero this world has ever seen—not a drunken, ruffling *condottiere* whose sword was for sale to any bidder, a besieger and sacker of towns, a man who fights for money with which to get himself wine as a means of forgetfulness! I loved Edward Plantagenet. I think he would not know me

now, and I am as well pleased that he can not see me——"

Coming to my senses, I pulled myself up hastily. "Why, can you wonder if I am changed now, when you consider the difference in the men I serve?" I cried mockingly to Della Torre. "Do you think I would fight for love of the Pope or the Gonfalonieri of Florence, or the Pisans, as I fought for love of the Black Prince?" I let my eyes rest on Antonio as I ended, and such was my black humor that I cared not a *scudo* if he guessed that I included him in the list.

He was determined not to take offense at me to-day, it seemed. "I quarrel with the money-love of no man who can earn his gold as well as you, Sir John," he drawled placidly, "and I know that whether you hold me dear or not, you will fight Francesco Carrara like any demon in my behalf."

"Aye, for the remaining month for which I have sold you my services—and after that, if you choose to renew the contract on terms profitable to us both," I answered, in practical tones. "As for the future, who knows? Stranger things have come to pass than that some day I might enter Francesco Carrara's service and drive the house of Della Scala from Verona!" I laughed loudly. "Why, what's amiss, my lord? Has my jest startled you? I have no thought of going over to Padua while you continue to pay me well."

Antonio had shivered as if in a sudden chill. "Nothing—a twinge," he answered, pouring some wine and drinking it.

"Or a presentiment, maybe," I suggested, filling myself a cup. "Perhaps I am a prophet, though I never guessed it before. In passing, my lord, it appears to me that we are wasting time. You summoned me here for some purpose beyond the discussion of my past life? Your lamented brother, Prince Bartolomeo, was wont to sit with me often for the purpose of listening to my war tales, but I can not recall that you ever showed such curiosity until to-day."

It was believed by all that the death of Bartolomeo, which had taken place scarcely three months before, was the work of the Prince; therefore it was not customary, as may be believed, to mention the murdered man's name at Court. I knew this, but to-day one of my black, reckless fits was driving me to all manner of imprudences at which a calmer man might have shuddered. Della Torre, to whom rumor credited a share in the bloody business, started violently, paled, and favored me with a fierce scowl, but the Prince gave no sign of concern save a slight quiver of the lids.

"IT IS TRUE that I had something to say to you, Sir John," he answered serenely. "Let us come to the point," and he glared suspiciously about the *loggia*.

"Why so much mystery?" I cried. "What can you want of me, my lord, that all the world may not hear? Is it another such enterprise as the taking of Lerino, which I stormed for you last week? I left most of my Company there to hold it, you recall—I shall have to send for them if you are planning a new attempt——"

"It is nothing of the kind. Listen," said the Prince, bending across the table and speaking in a low voice, his eyes never meeting mine. "It is no warlike enterprise, Sir John, and therefore I am willing to reward you richly if you consent to undertake it. The affair concerns my cousin, the Princess Giulia. Ha!—why did you start?"

"In wonder that anything concerning her could concern me also," I answered, mentally cursing his keen sight.

His painted cheeks flushed slightly, and he bit his lip. He was very ill at ease, and, perceiving it, I suspected foul play.

"All Verona knows, I think, that I love my cousin and desire to marry her," he went on, low but resolutely. "As for her, she is very young still, and very foolish. She reads romances and dreams of hero knights, and longs for a perfect cavalier to come and woo her. Well, I am slight of figure and cold of manner and not too handsome of feature, and I do not resemble the fairy-knight of her dreams. She repulses me. Now, Sir John, I have determined to overcome her coldness—I have determined to play a knight's part and win her favor."

I sat staring at him. "Well, what of it, my lord?" I asked bluntly. "This concerns you and the Princess, not me."

Again he hesitated, then bent closer to me. "It shall concern you to the tune of a round sum, if you choose," he muttered. "What I desire is that you and some score of your men should carry off my cousin under pretense of holding her to ransom and

take her to my deserted castle near Vincenza. There I will come at once with fifty horsemen, and after some pretense at resistance you will yield me the castle and the Princess. Such a rescue will leave her far more kindly disposed toward me and my love-suit. Besides, she will be alone and in my power, and I can make what terms I choose. As for you, after some pretense at anger I will pardon you in consideration of your services to Verona, and will privately give you a rich reward. Now, is not that a simple way to earn a bag of coins?"

IN THE SILENCE that followed I clenched my hands till the nails bit into the flesh. The Prince's face was close to mine, and the impulse to strike him full across his painted cheeks and pale, sneering eyes was almost more than I could rule.

It was O'Meara's voice which broke the spell, and saved me, perhaps, from a fatal act. "The divil!" I heard him mutter soulfully, and in sudden fear lest he should do some such thing as I had myself contemplated, I kicked him warningly under the table.

I was calm enough now. "Thank you, my lord," I said, bowing. "Your generosity is indeed great, but I think I will not accept it. I take towns, not ladies; I make treaties, not marriages. Let your friend Della Torre carry out your scheme—he is more fitted to such an affair than I!"

The Prince and his favorite eyed me in a far from loving fashion. "Ah!" said Antonio, and his drawling voice was thick and unpleasant. "You have scruples, then? Forgive me, Sir John, if I say that I had fancied, from the tales that have come to my ears, that you had long since ceased to consider the nice balances of right and custom when a chance of gain hovered before your eyes!"

"I understand," I answered, and my rage was such that I could hardly answer him. "Now hear me for a moment! It is quite true that I am a hireling, a ruffling cutthroat, a bully, a drunkard sometimes! It is true that my men are ruffians, thieves, the scouring of Europe! But in all my life I have never shared in such a business as the one you propose for the gulling of your innocent cousin, and, though I have led my Company on many a rough foray, I have never taken them against a woman! I fight in the open, my lord, and I choose enemies whom I can meet with a high head and without lowered eyes!"

Antonio rose quietly from the table. "Why, you have said enough. It is a matter for your own deciding, and if you prefer hard fighting to an easier way of getting gold, it is all one to me. Come, Ranucio."

He took his favorite's arm, and without another look at me they passed together across the *loggia*, through the gate into the outer court, and so from my sight.

CHAPTER V

O'MEARA'S LADY

FOR a full moment the Irishman and myself sat staring after the departing Italians.

"Well," I growled, "and what do you think of this?"

O'Meara was seldom at a loss for an opinion, whatever the event. "I'm thinking you and I had best be after finding a prince in need of soldiers," he said lucidly, "for that, come one month and the end of your bargain, that son of the divil will be turning us out of Verona and maybe killing us before he does that same," he added, like the Irishman he was.

There was not a little to be said for this view of the case. I knew Antonio too well to be deceived by the blandness of his farewell.

"Faith, and after this I've no doubt at all he killed his brother, as 'tis said he did, bad 'cess to him!" he went on with animation. "And what are you going to do now, Sir John, I should be glad to hear?"

"I am going to reflect seriously over the matter, so pray keep your thoughts to yourself and let me have peace!" I answered rather savagely, though it was impossible for me to feel real irritation against him. And, going across the *loggia*, I flung myself down on a gilded settle hidden behind the marble pillars.

"Faith, with all the pleasure in life," O'Meara rejoined good-naturedly; and by way of obedience he immediately began to walk noisily up and down, his spurs ringing on the pavement. From time to time he paused to rock on his heels, and sang lightheartedly a song marked by a rich brogue and a merry, rollicking lilt, which ran somewhat as follows:

In me childhood I learned from the priest—
And believed it, the more to me shame!—
That the divil, that evil old beast,
Was for all this world's mischief to blame.
Some years later, I learned in one minute
Just be watching a dimple and curl,
That for mischief the divil's not in it
With a sweet little, shy little girl!

I smiled despite myself as I watched him. Far from home as he had traveled in the course of an adventurous career, he had the stamp of his land in every feature and gesture, and must have been known for an Irishman had one met him among the Turks.

There was no better fighter in Europe, yet how boyish he looked and how gay! A mass of red hair curled under his swaggering plumed hat, and his long-lashed Irish blue eyes were merry and twinkling one moment, aggressive the next, and an instant later filled with a coaxing, flattering light if they chanced to rest on a pretty face. Abounding humor and rich joy of living spoke in the wide curves of his mouth, the quick swing of his shoulders, the half-rollicking, half-defiant toss of his head. He was honest and loyal to the bone, for all his flippant ways, and it meant much to me, placed as I was in Italy, to have such a friend.

EVEN as I looked, one of his quick changes of humor came over him, and, abandoning his catch, he paused before the gate and shook his fist savagely in the direction whither the Prince and Della Torre had gone. "May the divil fly away with you, say I, for you're no friends to Sir John, bless him! and I've no manner of use for you——"

He started and wheeled about in surprise, for at this moment his animated tirade was abruptly broken by a great red rose which, striking him lightly in the face, rebounded into his outstretched hands!

The *loggia* was apparently deserted and empty, and nothing rewarded his eager gaze, but he had evidently some suspicion as to the invisible agency responsible for the flower—and no unpleasant suspicion either, to judge from the quick change of his blue eyes from savagery to delight. A second rose, coming from an unexpected quarter, struck the back of his head. Whirling about again, he proved too quick for the strategist above, who had no time to draw back behind the sheltering pillar of the gallery. At the sight O'Meara gave a loud crow of triumph and rejoicing.

"Aha, Madonna Francesca!" he cried, "you, is it, in ambush in the gallery there, and flinging me down roses as pretty as yourself?"

The sight above was indeed a sufficiently charming one to rejoice sourer eyes than those of the impressionable Irishman. Leaning on the rail of the gallery, framed by the gleaming whiteness of the marble walls and pillars and the clinging red masses of the vivid roses, leaned the slender figure of a girl in a pale green gown broidered with scarlet. She had a crown of misty gold hair, a pair of shy, dark eyes fit to witch any unwary heart from the breast of the man who gazed into them, and a soft, coquettish, whimsical red mouth, just now a-curve with the most tempting smile to be imagined. "Good-day, Messer O'Meara," she said demurely, gazing down at the enraptured soldier of fortune below.

O'Meara flung out his hands in an ecstasy of admiration. "Indeed, and you're a vision to make the dead quicken again!" he cried enthusiastically. Then, moderating his voice to a coaxing tone, "Come down, Madonna! Sure, now, this *loggia* down here is a most inviting place—cool, green, flowery, a thousand times fairer than that gallery perched in the air. Come down, then!"

Francesca di Montalto shook her head, though with a laugh. "No. From here I have a better view of you, with your knitted brow and set lips. Ah, how sour you looked when I first came out and saw you! When you look so I should never dare come down to you in all the world, lest you should devour me!"

"Ah, Madonna," cried the Irishman, fatuous with delight, "'tis a grave wrong you do me. Were I the sourest curmudgeon that ever breathed the air, one glimpse of you would set me to beaming, and make me as smooth as a Summer morning!"

"Yet you were out of humor before you saw me," the girl persisted.

"I was that same," admitted O'Meara, scowling slightly. "Foul 'fall their black hearts and their silky tongues! But what for am I raving at the likes of them, when you stand there above me, welcome as flowers in May? Come down, Madonna, come you down!"

FRANCESCA left the gallery and came slowly down the staircase, a witching figure as she moved among the roses. "I must do as you ask me, I suppose. I would not be cruel to you now, when you have but just come home from battle. I hear there was great bloodshed at Lerino."

"There was that, praise be!" O'Meara responded, meeting her at the foot of the stairs and kissing both her hands with fervor. "Ah, Madonna Francesca, if there is anything on earth could give me as great pleasure as gazing into your eyes, 'tis a rousing fracas, a desperate fight, with the odds, maybe, a little against me, just to make the winning sweeter!"

"Fie, you make me shudder with your talk of blood!" she complained, sitting down on a marble bench built in against the stairs. "To fight, to kill men, to see dead bodies all about you—I can not see any pleasure in that, Messer O'Meara!"

"No, truly, I suppose no woman could," he admitted, sitting down beside her with a rueful look. "However," he added, cheering up swiftly, "I'll not say another word about such matters. Instead, we'll talk of you. Ah, mavourneen!"—rapturously—"where did you get your eyes? They're two stars from heaven——"

"You would make me vain if I believed you," Francesca pouted. "To how many other ladies have you said that?"

"A hundred—no less," the Irishman confessed cheerfully.

"Oh!" cried the girl indignantly, and started up from the bench.

O'Meara restrained her. "But never with such fervor as I'm saying it now," he assured her hastily, whereupon she sank back appeased. I suppressed a chuckle. The screen of flowers and marble quite shut me off from the lady's sight. As for O'Meara, if he chose to do his love-making within my hearing, that was his own affair.

"I swear on my soul it's the truth I'm telling you," he was protesting. "Sure, I love you, sweetheart! Say you love me, and bedad I'll be the happiest man the sun shines on! Say it, say it! Is it without mercy you are, that you can take pleasure in the torments of a fellow creature?"

"But I do not love you," Francesca protested demurely. "And my father hates you—it is well he can not see us talking here!"

"Hates me? Heaven bless the old man! But no matter," cried O'Meara. "'Tis easy enough to solve that difficulty—we'll just be marrying without asking his leave. Give me your consent, and 'tis little enough I'll care for his! You'll not starve with me, Madonna, never think it; I'll dress you in silks and hang you with jewels if I have to take Padua to get them for you! Faith, though, for your sake I wish I had the inheritance that will be mine some fine day! Over in blessed Ireland, you know, is a castle that will come to me yet, if I live long enough, and the lands and titles of the grimmest, most cantankerous old uncle the Lord ever made."

"Why, then," the girl exclaimed, between laughter and disapproval, "how comes it you left Ireland?"

"Heaven knows!" said O'Meara. "There are men made like that, Madonna—men who must roam the world. I never yet saw a place so fair it made me forget that there were other places just as fair yet to be seen—and, bedad, it was the same with faces till I saw yours!"

FRANCESCA pursed her lips in an effort to conceal her delight. "If my father knew that you left wealth and comfort to come a-soldiering over here," she said severely, "he would think you even more foolish than he does now."

"It is with your father's daughter I am concerned," rejoined the Irishman. "Ah, but the wooing of a woman is a maddening thing! I have but one thought in my head—to win you; you have a thousand thoughts in yours, and talk of them all! Madonna, I implore you, take pity on me—say yes, or say no!"

"Then—no," Francesca murmured demurely, her eyes on her lap. O'Meara flung away angrily in the direction of the gate, whereupon she started up eagerly and pursued him. "Don't go!" she begged.

"Go! I wasn't going, more black shame to me!" cried O'Meara—thereby losing, it struck me, an opportunity to bring the pretty coquette very quickly to terms. "Had I the spirit of a cat, I'd speak to you no more; but I've no spirit left. Come, be merciful!" he urged, blarneying her. "Take pity on me, won't you, now?"

"Ireland is very far away," she answered dubiously, enticing him back to the abandoned bench. "I should be very lonely

there, without my father and the Princess Giulia."

"The Prince's cousin," said O'Meara absently. He was skilfully attempting to capture her hand, which, with equal skill, she kept out of his reach. "She's a fair lady, yet surely you can learn to live without her!"

Francesca's pretty, coquettish face grew very serious. "The Princess has been my friend since we were both children," she answered, "though her house is royal and mine sunk in poverty."

"I understand—you're poor but proud; sure and I'm like that, too!" broke in the irrepressible Irishman.

"SHE is very dear to me, and I think she would not be happy without me," the girl went on, unheeding him. "Look you,"—she turned on O'Meara a sweet, serious face of confidence, which made him gasp for admiration—"the Princess Giulia is akin both to Prince Antonio and his foe, the Duke of Padua. She is a great heiress, and therefore in her childhood both the Duke of Padua and Can Signorio, Prince Antonio's father, claimed her as their ward. Well, Can Signorio, a shrewder man than his rival, brought her here to his Court, where she has grown up; and now Prince Antonio has his mind settled to wed her." She dropped her head with a heavy sigh of distress.

"Well," said O'Meara, more from a desire to comfort her than from conviction, "surely that is not such an evil fate, to wed with the man who reigns over Verona?"

"Indeed!" Francesca murmured, drawing away from him. "Do you think so? Then I am glad you have not the choosing of my husband!"

"But that is just what I do hope to have!" he assured her, and she dimpled and allowed him to diminish the distance she had put between them.

"But oh, indeed, Messer O'Meara, this Court is no place for a girl like my Princess, a lady who is young and beautiful and rich and good!" she said, growing swiftly serious. "Verona is a place of plotting and evil. The royal throne has blood-stains on it, and for a century now the Della Scala have shed the blood of their own kin. Can Signorio slew two of his brothers who blocked his way to power; and Antonio——"

She bent closer to O'Meara, a look of horror on her face: "Three months ago there were two Princes of Verona, sharing equally in power—Antonio and Bartolomeo. All the city dreaded the first and loved the last. He was like a young god, Bartolomeo della Scala, with his blond hair and laughing eyes and merry mouth. Then came a morning when he was found stabbed in the Street of the Two Moors, near the Palazzo Nogarola. It was said he had gone by night to see old Nogarola's daughter, whom he loved, and that he had been killed by her father and young Malaspina, her betrothed. They were executed, these two men, and the girl died on the rack, protesting her innocence to the end. She spoke truth, Messer O'Meara! Bartolomeo died by the will of his brother, by the hands of bravos hired by Della Torre—he was stabbed in his sleep, lying on a couch in the palace! All the city knows this, yet still Antonio rules, and all fear him too greatly to dare whisper of his guilt."

SHE put her hand over her face, and O'Meara muttered a fierce oath. "There, there, darlint, what for do you think of such things?" he urged soothingly. "'Tis true there are evil men in the world, but, for all that, 'tis none so bad a place. Sun and flowers and love are fitter matters for the brain of a dainty witch like yourself!"

She paid him no heed. "And it is this Prince, this murderer, who dares to say he will wed my Princess!" she cried passionately. "He loves her in some strange, cold, evil fashion of his own; when his eyes rest on her they have a gleam that makes me grow cold. Then, too, he desires her for her great dowry. She has refused to wed him, but he vows he will find a way to force her—and if he does, she will never be happy again. Oh, when I think of all this I tremble for her! Antonio has set spies to watch her comings and goings. He has bidden Della Torre's wife be with her, talk to her of him, learn her mind and tell him how she looks upon him. That is a terrible woman. She was but a merchant's daughter; yet now she bears herself like any queen. Ah, this is an evil land we live in—a sad place for those who are weak and helpless!"

"There, mavourneen, never fret like that, for *you* shall never be weak or helpless while Michael O'Meara has a sword and a hand

to hold it in!" cried the warm-hearted Irishman, quite unmanned at the sight of tears sprinkling in Francesca's pretty eyes. "But you're right in what you say of this country, bad 'cess to it! For plotting and stabbing and lying and all such black-hearted knavery I never saw a spot to match this bright, sunny Italy of yours! Come, say the word, and I'll take you where you need never wrinkle that sweet little brow with pondering over forced marriages and murdered princes. Will you do it, Madonna? Will you mate with a poor good-for-nothing soldier of fortune, who's not fit to touch the top of your finger, and knows he isn't, but loves you more than all the gold the world could give him——"

Francesca had been listening with a shy smile and no sign of displeasure, but at this critical moment she cut him abruptly short.

"Oh, hush, hush, Messer O'Meara!" she whispered urgently. "It is Madonna Violante, Della Torre's wife! She hates Sir John and all his followers, and I would not have her hear your love-making for the world!"

CHAPTER VI

VIOLANTE

FOR a moment O'Meara, thus rudely checked in the full tide of his eloquence, stared about him blankly. Had the intruder been a man I fancy he might have fared somewhat badly, for the Irishman, if meek as a lamb beneath Francesca's caprices, was by no means so angelic toward the members of his own sex. However, he smothered the oath on his lips and indulged instead in a somewhat rueful laugh.

A woman had come out on the upper gallery and was standing at the head of the stairs, gazing down in obvious displeasure at the two below. If Violante della Torre was the daughter of a merchant, there was little about her to suggest such origin; hers was rather the proud, disdainful beauty of one born to a great and noble house. Though the two below were now looking up at her, she did not change her attitude or withdraw her gaze, but stood regarding them with an ominous intentness that verged on insolence.

Francesca stirred, flushed and presently rose, abandoning O'Meara, who, not in the least abashed, was returning the lady's stare with interest. "Good-by," she murmured, with a smile and a sigh and a last witching glance from the corners of her eyes.

"Why, sure you won't be leaving me, Madonna?" cried the Irishman in dismay. "The divil take her, if you go because she appears! Come, stay, if only to show her how little you heed her scowls!"

"I dare not," whispered Francesca. "She would tell my father that I sat here talking with you, and he would be greatly angered. Good-by." With a last alluring glance she left him and ran lightly up the steps, pausing by Violante to drop a courtesy. "Good-day, my lady," she said in greeting.

Violante nodded somewhat curtly. "Thank you, Madonna," she answered, in a voice that was full and rich, but very dominant. "I, too, wish you a good-day, and, though you may not thank me for my solicitude, I take the liberty to wish you also better company."

Francesca half turned as if to retort, then thought better of it and vanished through the gallery door with a defiant toss of her pretty head, while Violante, gazing after her in displeasure for a moment, began slowly to descend the stairs.

IF FRANCESCA had been intimidated by the favorite's wife, however, O'Meara had not. "Faith, the company was good enough a minute since, though now I'll admit 'tis none of the best," he remarked truculently, his gaze directed on no one in particular.

The words had hardly left his lips when he caught sight of Della Torre returning through the *loggia* gate, a sight that seemed to drive away his last remnant of patience. "Worse and worse! I'll be after going into the outer court; this is no place for a peaceable man who doesn't want the crime of murder on his soul!" he growled noisily, passing the favorite and betaking himself out through the gate.

Della Torre's face had changed swiftly at sight of his wife, lighting with a tender glow that surprised me. "Ah, my sweet, is that you? I came here on my way to seek you," he said eagerly.

Violante did not seem to perceive his approach. She had now reached the last step of the staircase, and paused there with her head thrown back slightly and her lip drawn between her teeth. "The insolent knave!"

she said, in low, cutting tones. "How dares he, a hired fighter, address me in words like those! It is unbearable, monstrous!"

"What! The Irish rogue? Did he dare offer you an affront?" cried Della Torre, his dark face flaming into rage. "He shall rue it dearly, Violante! This very instant I will go call my lackeys to beat him from the palace gates——"

I smiled grimly, thinking with pity of the lackeys to whom such a charge might be given. Having no desire to spy on the favorite and his wife, I stretched myself, rose, and was about to emerge from my hiding-place when the lady's next words halted me.

"Wait, listen!" she said swiftly. Instantly he paused, his angry eyes softening unconsciously as they rested on her face. She went on swiftly and angrily, her jeweled hands clenched, her eyes blazing. "What would you do to the Irishman? He is a hireling, beneath your notice! It is his master of whom we have to think, Ranucio—his master who daily shows you such insolence as this man shows me!"

"Yes, Sir John!" said Della Torre gloomily. The rage had died from his face at my name, leaving a kind of sullen dejection in its place. I sank down again on the bench. All was fair in war, and if this worthy couple—my remorseless foes, I knew—were about to discuss me, I was disposed to learn all I might of their plans.

THE woman confronted her husband in a blaze of scornful anger that made her magnificently beautiful. "You acknowledge it, then? And yet you bear it!" she cried fiercely. "Shame! You, a noble of Verona, the Prince's favorite, stand second in this Court to a mercenary, a ruffling bravo, an adventurer, one who treats you with insolence in Antonio's very presence! When the Veronese forces go out to battle you march under this man's orders! Ah, you are a rare noble indeed, you whom any drunken bully dares to bait! Sir John Hawkwood! A tailor's son, knighted by some trickery, and disgracing the name of chivalry by his life! Every tavern in Verona knows him. And you endure his insolence! Are you a man, then, or have I for these years unknowingly been wedded to a coward?"

"I can do nothing, dear wife," said Della Torre gloomily. "He has had the Prince's favor from the first, or I would have made short work of putting him from my way forever. I hate him to the death——"

"And I! I could kill him with my own hand, that he dares hold the power that you should enjoy, my husband, my beloved!" cried his wife, with an outburst of passionate tenderness that transfigured her. At the words Della Torre caught her hands in his and kissed them, and she smiled on him radiantly, but a moment later drew away, the lines of her face hardening again. "Come, listen, Ranucio, for this matter is serious. For months now this Englishman has won great victories for Antonio, and thrust you aside. Antonio has taken a strange fancy to him, humors his wild ways, delights in showing him honor. Last week, when you spoke against him, the Prince silenced you sternly; another month, and he will maybe banish you and set up this rogue instead——"

"I too feared that until to-day, but now I have good news," answered Della Torre, with a look of evil triumph. "Sir John is a fool, and has done that which will not be undone easily. Listen, my beloved. To-day Antonio, in my presence, spoke to the Englishman concerning this affair of the Princess Giulia—I told you of it last night, you recall?"

"Yes, yes," she cried eagerly. "Go on!"

"He refused to play his part. This ruffianly cutthroat has scruples in this matter! I think he is mad! Well, the affair must be carried through without his help. The Prince has determined that it shall be done during the hunt to-morrow. You and I are to draw off the Princess from the others, and then to feign to lose our way. After some wandering we will come upon the little road-inn near the black wood—you know the place?—and alight there for an instant's rest and food. Then a party of the Prince's troopers will come upon us, seize her and carry her off to the castle near Vincenza, declaring their intention to hold her for ransom.

"The next day Antonio will ride out with his men and rescue her, and he trusts she will be sufficiently grateful to love him in return. It is a foolish scheme, eh? Were I in his place I would seize her and force her into marriage, but my lord is mad over her face as well as her money-bags, and he is the master."

CHAPTER VII

THE LAYING OF SOME PLANS

"THE plan is very bold," said Violante thoughtfully. "Unless she is witless she must surely guess that none would dare a thing so desperate without the Prince's connivance. Well, it matters nothing to us. What has this to do with Sir John Hawkwood?"

Della Torre's dark handsome face lit up with a sneering triumph. "This, my sweet—that Antonio is bitterly angered against him for his refusal, and for his rough handling of that old fool Raimondo, and for a hundred other small insolences in the past. He plans to be gracious as ever to Sir John for some ten days more, and allow him to besiege and take one more Paduan town. Then, says my lord, he will need the Englishman no more, and will throw him into prison—and once that is done we need feel small uneasiness, for those who enter a cell in Verona do not often come out!"

Violante threw out her hands in a gesture of fierce delight. "Ah, Ranucio," she cried, "this is surely a happy turn of fate for us! I had thought Sir John Hawkwood a man of sense—not a madman who would fling away all things for some weak scruple! Now you will have none to stand in your way, my lord, my love!"

Her eyes narrowed shrewdly, and she stood for a moment lost in deep thought. "Ranucio," she said slowly, "the Prince is variable, as we have reason to know. In a week he may change his mind and forgive the Englishman, and then what will we have gained from all this? I tell you, now when Antonio is wroth against him is the time to make his downfall quite sure by a final blow!"

"With all my heart!" Della Torre answered. "I would give half my life to ruin him. But how?"

She laid her hand on his arm. "I have thought much over the matter," she told him, "but I had not hoped for so favoring a chance as this. Antonio is angered and suspicious, ready to believe any tale that comes to his ears. Listen—you know that his hatred of Padua is no less than a madness. Now, my friend, what think you he would do to a servant of his who sought to betray him to Padua?"

"We know that already," Della Torre answered, staring at her. "Do you not recall the fate of poor Cagliari, whose treachery was discovered a year ago? They tore his eyes from his head, pulled out his tongue—faugh! I shudder still when I recall it!"

Violante smiled, her resolute red lips curling apart so evilly that I thought she had the look of a sorceress at her incantations. All of this conference was, it must be admitted, no very pleasant hearing for me, and I had a presentiment that worse still was to come. Fortunately, among my very few virtues I numbered courage and coolness, and I now retained sufficient presence of mind to remain motionless behind my flowery screen and lose no word of what was said.

"Well," the woman continued slowly, "do you not understand? Sir John Hawkwood has betrayed us. For a long time he has been plotting with Francesca Carrara. All that we need is to intercept a packet from him to the Duke, containing clear proofs of his treason, and lay it before our lord the Prince!"

SHER plan was clear to me on the instant, and its horrible cunning struck me with a kind of stunned admiration. Small wonder Ranucio della Torre had ruled Verona for years, with a woman such as this to help him cast down his rivals and clear his path! At present he was looking at her stupidly. "But Sir John has not conspired," he muttered, "and there is no such packet, Violante."

"No," she answered, with the same evil smile. "But if you arrested one of Sir John's troopers as he was leaving the city, searched him—yourself, without witnesses, or with witnesses whom you might trust—and then gave Antonio a packet purporting to have been concealed upon him—*what then*, my good friend?"

Della Torre started as the meaning of her words burst on him. For a moment he stood quite silent, reflecting, while she watched him eagerly. "It might be done as you say; the plan is a shrewd one enough," he said presently, in a curiously muffled voice. "But in doing this I doom the Englishman to a frightful death, to sufferings of such horror as your mind could never paint! Antonio has no jot of mercy in him, and an accusation such as this would turn him to a fiend——"

"Well, and what of that?" cried his wife. "Are you so soft-hearted that you care what ill comes to an enemy? Such a chance may never come again! See, you run no risk, you can never be discovered——"

"It would be treachery," said Della Torre. "I am not a good man, not a scrupulous man — you know it. But I have never done such a thing as this."

"THINK!" she urged craftily. "He will be swept from your path forever! You need never again fear that he will get the Prince's favor by his victories. He will never more crack his insolent jests at your expense——"

"But to see him die in torment by my plotting! I do not like it," the favorite muttered. "I would rather fight in the open. Consider——"

"You hesitate?" Violante cried scornfully. "Are you, then, one of these white-faced churchmen who dare not snatch what they dare long for? Are you a coward? Then let this Englishman climb higher, higher, finally take your place as favorite and cause your ruin! Scruples will never hinder *him!* He will form a plot of his own, and carry it out, and conquer! Choose between your fall and his! Since when, Ranucio, have you grown so scrupulous? You were of a different mind when you joined with Antonio in his plot for his brother's death!"

"Hush, Violante! Are you mad?" cried her husband, peering about the *loggia* with startled eyes. "If you were heard to speak such words——"

"You pleased me better in that business!" she swept on passionately. "Then you did not fear to look on flowing blood— then you were a man! Bartolomeo hated you, Antonio favored you, and your fortune hung on which of the two got full power in Verona. You made your choice, and shared in the killing. Well, have you been the worse for it?"

"Indeed, I have never looked back with pleasure to that night," said Della Torre hoarsely. "When I shut my eyes I can see Bartolomeo as he lay at my feet, blood on his blond head, blood running from his scarlet hunting-habit. And what you urge on me is worse. You propose black treachery——"

"Can you put such a name to words of mine?" cried Violante. "Then you scorn me, you despise me! It is natural, I suppose. You are a noble, and I am but the daughter of a merchant; though you wedded me, you do not hold me your equal, but look down on me and my thoughts of honor! Ah, I knew your Court friends made a mock of me, but I had believed *you* held me dear! Now I see the truth——"

"Hush, hush!" cried Della Torre, his face as white as if she had struck him. "When you say such words you tear my heart in two! Why, my sweet, you know you are all the world to me! I love you, Violante! I am as proud to call you wife as if you were a king's daughter; I love you——"

He had caught her in his arms, and she clung to him passionately. "As I love you, my husband, my beloved!" she breathed; then, freeing herself, "but as I shall love you no more if you prove craven now! Do as I entreat you, assure Hawkwood's ruin, or I despise you and despise myself that I have worshiped you! For your sake and for mine, stamp down this adventurer! Every day sees his star more in the ascendant. Soon he will overthrow you, and I shall see you in the dust, and my heart will be broken and my life shattered. Oh, will you hesitate in a desperate case like this?"

Della Torre made a gesture of surrender. "I will do it! You shall have your way. You know very well that I can refuse you nothing, my beloved," he said, and she cried out triumphantly and swayed toward him with a flushed face and starry eyes.

"In a good hour!" she exclaimed. "All will be well now. Come into the palace, Ranucio, and we will speak further of this and perfect the plan." She put out her hand and took his, and they passed together up the stairs and through the gallery door.

CHAPTER VIII

GIULIA

FOR some time after their departure I made no movement to come out from my hiding-place, but remained motionless, my chin propped in my hands and my thoughts busy with what I had overheard. Long years of peril and tense situations had given me sound nerves, yet I take no shame to confess that at present I felt a trifle blank and not a little at a loss.

Antonio della Scala had shown me favor and indulgence for so long that I had fancied myself necessary to him, and had believed no action on my part could prick him into anger! Well, I was excellently paid for my conceit!

I laughed at the thought, setting my shoulders back and jerking my head. "There is a way out of everything," I reflected, to encourage myself. "In this case, no doubt, the wisest course is to take myself out of Antonio's lands as quickly as may be. There are princes and dukes aplenty who would be glad enough to get me and my lances for friends. I will go find O'Meara, and talk with him concerning the matter——" A slight sound startled me, and I glanced up hastily.

A young and very beautiful girl was slowly descending the staircase, one hand resting lightly on the balustrade, the other gathering up her gown. She might have been seventeen or eighteen years old, not more, yet her obvious youth was counteracted in some sort by a delicate, remote air of pride and aloofness. Her hair was soft and dark, and shaded a low forehead. She had large, lustrous dark eyes that were both sweet and proud, screened by black lashes that fell on her cheeks when she let them droop. Her skin was of the waxen whiteness of a camellia blossom, and her scarlet lips curved in lines that were at once soft and haughty. Her slender figure stood out clearly, marvelously and delicately beautiful, perfect as some flawless painting. All about her breathed a subtle, compelling charm, though she had the air of one too proud to value any homage paid her loveliness.

SHE descended the stairs very slowly, stood for a moment gazing about her, and then seated herself on the marble bench where Francesca and O'Meara had ensconced themselves among the flowers. She did not look happy; her every feature spoke of a vague unrest and trouble, long hidden, revealed for an instant here in solitude as though she had raised a curtain and displayed a hidden window.

It was the Princess Giulia, Antonio della Scala's cousin, known as the proudest and loveliest lady in all Italy. I had seen her a hundred times, but never before had I seen her alone, and never had I seen this look of trouble in her eyes. Always there had been a proud smile on her lips and a serene look on her face. Yet now there was trouble in her eyes; and I, who knew trouble too, and hid it from all under rough laughter or rougher temper, had power to read that it was no passing thing that moved her.

On the instant I forgot my own danger, Della Torre's treachery, the Prince's deadly plot against me. Saints! was I sunk so low that men believed me capable of such a deed as this girl's undoing? And yet why not, since I was known to all for a ruffling bully and brawler, as ungentle as my troopers? I bit my lip savagely and muttered a curse. The best thing I could do was to go hang myself; failing that, to get to horse and speedily take myself away from a city which was like to prove unhealthy for me if I dallied long.

As for this girl, what was she to me? I could not help her even if I desired it. Suppose I warned her of what was in the wind, —would she suspect Antonio della Scala, her own cousin, on the word of one who bore such a name as mine? And it would not be such a bad fate for her to sit by Antonio and rule Verona. I had affairs enough of my own to consider.

INSTEAD of carrying out any sensible resolution, I rose, came out of my flowery screen, and approached the bench.

"Your pardon, Princess," I said, pausing before her, "will you grant me a word on a matter of much import?"

On the instant her mouth hardened and her every feature took on an air of haughty surprise and scorn. "What can you desire of me?" she asked, in the tone she might have used to a lackey. "You mistake, I think; I do not know you—I have never seen you before."

That she should greet me so, roused the slumbering devil that, alas! lay always near the surface with me in those wild days of my life. Nor was I quite without excuse. I flung back my head and laughed, and she stared at me with widening eyes. No doubt I looked dangerous enough, with my rough jerkin and grim, scarred face and black look of mirth.

"You have never seen me before?" I cried, still shaking, though I was far more savage than light-hearted. "What! Have you never seen the White Company march through the streets of Verona under my

command? Then you are the only person in the city who has not! And have you never marked me in all the times I have come to the palace to confer with the Prince? I have passed within touch of you often; and once a jeweled clasp fell from your sleeve as I went by, and I restored it to you and received a cold word of thanks in payment. Oh, yes, Princess, you mistake; you have seen me before to-day!"

I doubt not it was the first time in all her life that such words had fallen on her ears, and they stunned her. At once, however, her amazement passed, and a fierce anger blazed up in her eyes.

"I know not what right you have to speak to me or to approach me or to question my words," she said, watching me through lowered lids and speaking with a contempt that bit me, "but I suppose you know no better. It is true we have seen each other before to-day; and I have not only seen you; I have heard of you, Sir John Hawkwood."

She clenched her hands, still fully meeting my gaze: "I have heard of your tavern revels, your street brawls, your drunken, shameless fashion of life—and I turn cold with rage to think that you dare address me, the Prince's cousin, the first lady of the Court! Learn your proper place, sir; go out yonder in the square and talk to the horse-boys and the pages!"

"YES," I said, unmoved and smiling darkly on her, "you know me for a wild reveler and brawler, do you not? Yet many nobles are that. It is not for my fashion of life that you despise me, but because my birth is less high than yours. If I were blameless as any saint, would you not even then disdain to hold speech with me unless I could show as many quarterings as these Court fops?"

Again she tried to crush me with her scorn. Strangely enough, no thought appeared to come to her of leaving me and so ending our distasteful interview—or perhaps she wished to humble me first.

"It is not my custom," she said haughtily, "to talk with tailors, sir. I have heard that your father was of that profession." Had she accused me of being fathered by the devil her tone could have held no more contempt.

I laughed again, and this time with real amusement. "Those who say that my father was a tailor lie most villainously. He was not. He was a tanner. And I, too, was a tanner's apprentice before I left England and took to soldiering!"

She turned her eyes away from me as if loath to contemplate a thing so mean. The action stung me unreasonably. "Yes, you think I come of very poor stock," I said harshly, "but to my mind my birth is as good as Prince Antonio's."

She looked at me, her anger lost in utter amazement.

"He is descended from a crafty murderer; his father and his grandfather were villains, so were all his race from the beginning!" I went on recklessly. "Look at him, Princess—what do you see in him? A hero, a mighty ruler? I see a smirking, drawling fop with paint on his cheeks, tricked out in silks and jewels, appearing more like a woman than a man! If I engaged with him in a hand-to-hand contest, which of us would win, do you think—the last of all the Scaligeri, or plain John Hawkwood, who has the strength of an ox in his arm and the skill of a fiend with his sword? Faith, I would rather be myself than Antonio della Scala!"

She stared at me in anger mixed with wonder. "I think you are quite mad!" she said indignantly. "How dare you speak so to me concerning my own race?"

"This noble blood, of what use is it?" I demanded bitterly. "How many of your great lords and princes can take towns and win battles, as I can do? I keep them firmly seated on their thrones, I make them great and powerful—it is I who rule their destinies by the winning of their battles! It seems to me, when I pause to reflect, that I am greater and more powerful than those who hold their heads so high and rejoice so loudly over the possession of a few quarterings!"

She laughed with a light scorn more biting than her anger. "It is something to be a prince, to rule and hire others," she said. "You would know that, Sir John Hawkwood, if you were yourself of good birth."

SO YOUNG and lovely was she in her pride, so soft of feature despite her contempt, that I felt the anger die from my heart as I looked at her. I remembered how this cousin, whom she defended, planned to dupe her into marriage, and my face set hard at the thought. "Princess," I said gently, "you defend the

house of Della Scala with great warmth. Do you love it so? You are kin to the house of Carrara too, and Duke Francesco claims you for his ward—do you not wish at times that you might go to him and be quit of this bloody Court ruled by an evil Prince?"

Her blazing eyes sought to shrivel me with their fire. "Are you mad to speak to me in this fashion?" she flashed; and then, passionately, "Prince Antonio is not evil, nor is his Court bloody! I have lived here since my childhood. Can Signorio della Scala was kind to me as any father, and my cousin Antonio has never denied me any indulgence. I am happy here, and your insolence is very great to question me concerning the matter——" She broke off, striving to resume her cold aloofness.

"No, you are not happy at all," I answered, with a directness that was brutal. "You may tell me what you please, but I know very well that you are troubled and distressed, and would be frightened if you had not a higher, braver spirit than is given to most women."

She stared at me, too dazed for words.

"I read you plainly enough," I went on harshly. "You know that Della Scala desires to marry you, and the thought fills you with horror, though you seek to convince yourself that you are wrong. You fear this simpering fool who killed his own brother——"

At the words a blank, staring terror filled her face. She swayed on the marble bench, put out her hands for support, and, with the air of one sick with fear of what she might see, turned her eyes slowly about the *loggia* to discover if I had been overheard. Yes, she had poured scorn and anger on my head, but in that moment her first thought was plainly for my danger. She was a woman, after all, and not without a heart.

"Well, I was right, I see," said I, laughing grimly. "You fear him. And why not? If he will slay a brother, may he not slay a wife too? Were I a fair lady I think I would not choose to wed him, even though he could make me great and powerful. I think his consort will not sleep soundly o' nights for dreaming of steel and poison."

"YOU are surely mad," she murmured, still sick with terror. "Had any heard you then and carried the tale to my cousin, nothing in all the world could have saved you from a terrible death! Have you never seen his wild, savage temper, that you dare tempt him so?" She stiffened, her anger returning. "Indeed, I think you deserve that some one should have heard you," she said proudly, though her breath still came fast. "What you say is a vile invention, a lie! It is an unknightly thing, Sir John Hawkwood, that you should make such foul accusations behind the back of the man in whose service you are employed!"

"I never bound myself to uphold the Prince's doings in my speech; I swore only to defend them with my sword," I answered. "I affirm on my honor that I believe him guilty of his brother's death. As for an accusation made behind his back, if you like, I will go find him now, wherever he may be, and ask him to his face who killed Bartolomeo!" I swung half round on my heel, possessed by a sudden impulse of reckless daring.

Giulia sprang up from the bench. Her gold-broidered scarf, loosened by the sudden movement, fell from her shoulders to the pavement. There was terror in her face. "No, no! Stop, Sir John!" she cried, clutching my arm with fingers that had grown suddenly cold. "He would kill you! Do not go!"

For a long minute I made no answer at all, but stood gazing down into her eyes. "Well, then," I said at last, "I will not." Her fingers dropped from my arm, and she drew away with a slight flush that was half wonder and half relief. I stooped and picked up her shining scarf, and she held out her hand to take it.

"This is a pretty thing," I said, eying it curiously, and keeping it out of her reach. "Such a token is said to work marvels in time of battle for the favored knight who bears it. Will you give me this, Madonna, to knot on the handle of my lance?"

A haughty frown drew her brows together. "Assuredly I will not!" she said coldly. "Return it to me, then!"

"And why?" I asked, smiling and not obeying her.

"Because in all my life I have never given a token, not even to a royal prince!" she answered, her dark eyes flashing angrily into mine. "Return me my scarf, I say!"

I folded it calmly and stored it in my pouch. "I will wind it about my lance," I said, "and it shall inspire me to such valorous deeds as I never did before. I have

heard Prince Antonio say that you love romance. Very good, I will be your knight, and carry your colors to glory and victory!"

A proud anger shook her and dyed her cheeks. "You dare too much!" she cried. "Can you not understand that I am of royal blood, a princess, a great lady? Do you think I will endure the shame of knowing that you wear my scarf? It is beyond bearing! Give it back! Why, you fool, do you not know that I can send the best knights of the Court to take it from you, if I choose?"

I laughed recklessly. "Send them, then, Madonna. I think I may account for any knight you may send against me. And I will keep your scarf, and carry it through all my combats—all my combats till I die!"

WE FACED each other for a long instant, her eyes full of rage and scorn, mine full of mirth. "Ah," she said, under her breath, "ah, how I hate you, Sir John Hawkwood!"

The words hurt me strangely. "No, do not hate me," I said gently, "for I wish you well, Madonna. I sought you here to tell you a thing that concerns you greatly. Will you listen? You may trust what I tell you——"

As I spoke a group of courtiers came out on the gallery, laughing and chattering. At the sight Giulia started, dropped her lashes on her flushed cheeks, and turned quickly from me.

"A moment, Princess—only a moment, for your own sake!" I said, low and urgently.

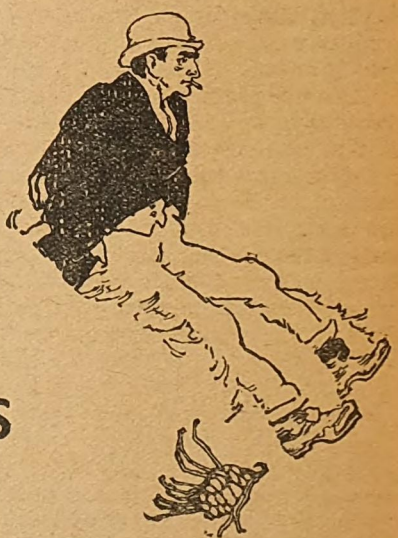
She paid me no heed. Gathering up her dress, she passed me without another glance, went quickly up the stairs and mingled with the group of laughing lords and ladies above.

I had lost my chance to warn her; I had wasted precious moments in foolish changing of words—and to-morrow Antonio della Scala's troopers were to carry her off and hold her prisoner till his coming!

TO BE CONTINUED

IN THE HIGH WOOD

by H. D. Couzens



AT A LONELY spot on the banks of the Truckee, seated on a carpet of pine-needles, his back against a fallen tree, a man sat picking a chicken. Near him a can of water whispered fussily over a small but cheery fire of cones and driftwood, and, close by, the riffles sang their cold, tense, metallic little song. It was a peaceful scene and the man's occupation innocent, even domestic, but when all is said he was not the man a woman trusts her baby with. His cheeks were lean, sallow and unshaven, with drooping lines about a thin, cynical mouth. Heavy brows met in a broad, sinister band over a pair of steel-gray eyes, and his clothes were unkempt and ragged.

In spite of his somewhat forbidding aspect the man was in excellent spirits and whistled jauntily through his teeth as he worked. His task was not so simple as you may suppose, for even in death the chicken seemed loath to part with its plumage. It was a fluffy, well-feathered fowl of the Plymouth Rock variety and, as the man plucked, patches of yellow skin came with the feathers, and an adhesive moisture like thin glue spread over the fingers of both hands. This seemed to gather all the loose feathers, and at intervals the man laid down the chicken and went through the motions of that time-honored farce the properties of which are usually a baby, a saucer of molasses and the contents of a pillow.

For a while he endured this vexatious performance patiently and even endeavored to extract some humor from the situation. "She loves me; she loves me not," said he, as he plucked bits of down from one hand only to have them stick fast to the other. Finally, however, he gave it up and surveyed the chicken ruefully. Save where the purple flesh showed in patches, the bird seemed actually to have accumulated feathers, while his ten fingers had lost all semblance to human digits and become two balls of down. The thin man sighed.

"Denuding chickens," said he, "don't seem to be my long suit. I ought to have swiped one without so many clothes on. Seems to me," he wiped his hands on his trousers and took a small note-book from his pocket, "seems to me I remember something about cooking 'em another way. Ah, here it is!" Thumbing over the leaves he paused at a paragraph closely written with pencil in a neat, delicate hand. This is what he read:

> As a variation of the above, when ordinary cooking utensils are not at hand, try a "Cowboy Roast," as follows: Draw the fowl, but leave on the feathers. Then coat it with clay to the thickness of about two inches; place on a rather hot fire, covering it with embers, and let cook until the clay cracks, a sign that it is done to a turn. On removing the clay, feathers and skin will come with it, leaving the bird clean, white and deliciously juicy and tender——

The thin man hastily picked up the chicken. "Clean, white, and deliciously juicy and tender," he murmured, as he hurriedly plastered it with sticky mud from the bank of the stream. "Um-m! That sounds good! Worth a trial, anyhow. I could pretty near eat the blame thing raw!"

He fed the fire with twigs and driftwood till it snapped and crackled merrily and, when it had burned down to a glowing mass, placed in the center the sad-looking ball of mud, raking the fire well over and about it.

Suddenly he was startled by a scuffling noise and looked up quickly. A fat man was scrambling down the bank toward him, bringing a small avalanche of loose stones and dirt.

"Hi! 'Llo, bo!" he cried cheerfully, as he tobogganed to the foot of the slope. "Look out for the Overland Limited! Whew! That's a steep grade. I pretty near busted something." With comical gravity he explored his clothing for casualties, and, being apparently satisfied with the result, seated himself on the log.

Indeed, it would have been hard to find additional rents in that aggregation of rags and tatters, for the newcomer was very ragged. His trousers were bound about his ample middle with a piece of rope, and the component parts of his whole wardrobe appeared to hang together by a miracle. A week-old red stubble covered his fat cheeks, and a round red nose tilted rakishly upward below a pair of shrewd, twinkling eyes that now turned speculatively on the fire. The hissing ball of mud seemed to fascinate him and he stared.

"Cookin' mud pies?" he asked.

"Nope. Chicken."

"Ah-h!" The fat man sighed unctuously. "Um-m! Chicken! And me starving! God bless our home!" His glance wandered to the thin man, who said nothing and busied himself with the fire. Something manifestly inhospitable in his expression struck the fat man and he looked hungrily at the fire, then back to the thin man a little anxiously. Suddenly his face cleared.

"Oh, here! I 'most forgot," said he, fumbling in his tattered coat. "Here, pal, cheer up and look happy!" He produced a large brown flask and offered it to the thin man.

The latter hesitated, then took it rather reluctantly. He was not fond of raw alcohol, the favorite tipple of the Western hobo, and he drew the cork and sniffed warily; then, with a slight start, elevated the flask and took a long, lingering drink. His grim face relaxed into a wry smile. "That is great stuff!" said he. "Where did you get it?"

The fat man chuckled. "I guess that's poor, eh? Eighteen years in wood!" Without further remark he, too, elevated the flask, drank deeply and wiped his lips on his ragged sleeve. He set the flask on a flat rock and once more turned to the fire. "Say," said he, "that chicken now! When do we feast? And, come to think of it, where *is* the chicken? That thing there don't look the part."

"No, it don't," said the thin man; "but it is. The chicken's inside. It'll be done in half an hour. It's a new wrinkle I'm trying. Bo, that tanglefoot of yours is sure delicious."

The fat man passed the flask and found himself a soft seat among the pine-needles. He looked at the fire and sighed. "Half an hour's a long wait," said he dolefully. "Honest, I'm so hungry I could eat a—yes, sir, I could—a melon!"

"Humph! Show *me* one! I'll eat it quick enough."

"Mebbe so; mebbe so! I could, too, I guess. I never thought I could again, but I'm willin' to be tempted. Still, I dunno. There's mighty few things in this world, pal, except whisky, that a man will go back to for more after once gettin' an overdose. I've been soaked an' saturated an' steeped in melons till I sort of oozed 'em. Ugh! I've had heenous visions of melons dancin' all over me and hollered: 'Take 'em away!' I've sure been haunted with 'em, all along o' me trying to hike out of the State of Colorado one bammy August evenin' about midnight."

The thin man produced straw paper and tobacco and rolled a cigarette. "Go on," said he. "Tell me about it."

"PAL, it's a sad, sad story. I was hittin' gravel on the Colorado desert, alone an' hungry. I was 'most as hungry as I am now, and, bein' by nature sociable an' gregarious, didn't like bein' alone. I never beat it all by my lonesome yet that I didn't have trouble. The last place I had applied, very polite, for a hand-out, the boss of the ranch peppered me with a shot-gun. I think he aimed at the ground, just to make me hike a little faster, but all the same I got three measly little bird-shot in the calf of my leg, an' that made me some peevish an' irritable an' discouraged with walkin'.

"Hence, at the witchin' hour, as the feller says, a large, handsome man might have been observed to sort o' trickle out o' the sage-brush around a water-tank and insert himself in the midst of a side-door Pullman. It was a little jerkwater line, runnin' from the main line down through the farmin' district, an' the car was loaded with crates of Rocky Ford melons. I crawled up near the roof where there was two foot of space and made myself as comfortable as a flea on a setter pup, except for a gnawin' at my inwards remindin' me that the tabble de hoaty was long overdue.

"All of a sudden a delicious perfume steals up an' salutes my nostrils, like the scent of blushful Hippodromes you read about. It's melons; juicy Rocky Ford melons, an' before you could say 'Methusalem!' I had the top off a crate. Them melons were for Denver an' Chi, and were picked ripe an' prime, an' I don't ever expect to taste anything again so excruciatin'ly delicious. That is, the first six or eight.

"I was dozin' off, perfectly peaceful an' contented, when it happened. I woke up flyin'. I wasn't touchin' a thing. I sailed over them crates of melons till my feet hit hard against the end of the car. Then I up-ended, an' the jar drove my head between my shoulder-blades; then I went over an' over, like a loop-the-loop; there was a crash, about fourteen tons of melons flew up an' lit on me, an' my lights went out.

"When I come to I was smothered with melons. I couldn't move an inch, an' the sharp corners of crates was proddin' me full of equilateral triangles.

"What had happened was a mighty excitin' game of 'snap-the-whip.' Roundin' a sharp curve, my car, bein' last an' the lash of the whip, was flicked off into a gully, goin' clear to the bottom and landin' in a clump of mesquite bushes. This horrible catastrophe escapes the notice of the train-crew at the time, an' the balance of the train proceeds on its way, triumphant. They remains ignorant, complete, of the calamity, till the yard-master up at the junction discovers he's shy one carload of melons, invoiced, an' one large, amiable gent, uninvoiced, accordin' to specifications.

"Meantime, I'm busy pickin' melons out of my system, tryin' to get room to bat my eyes an' draw my breath just once more for luck. Most of the crates had busted, an' every move I made, more melons would

come slidin' on to me. I wasn't broke anywhere, but mashed to a pulp, an' it seemed several years before I got one arm free, dug myself out, an inch at a time, an' got a few lungfuls of air. The car was lyin' on its side, considerably lower at one end than the other, an' up under the peak of the upper corner I had plenty of room. I ate a few melons an' made myself comfortable. The car didn't seem to be hurt none, but I wasn't worryin'. I figured there had been a wreck an' pretty soon some hero'd come along an' dig me out with an ax.

"Nobody did. By an' by it got daylight. I could see it perkilatin' through the ventilator slits; but there wasn't any welcome sound to mar the holy peace an' solitude of that ravine except me hollerin' through the slits. I burrowed down to the door that was top-side, but it was locked fast. Did you ever try to carve yourself out of an iron-bound fruit-car, reenforced with two-by-fours, with a jack-knife? Mebbe it *can* be done, but towards evenin' my knife broke an' I hadn't made no headway.

"I ate some more melons, but I hadn't no enthusiasm for 'em. I was beginnin' to sort o' founder on a melon diet. A lot of 'em had got all squashed an' mushy in the melly an', lyin' there in a heap with the hot sun beatin' on the car, it wasn't long before they began to bubble an' ferment, an' by the end of the second day the atmosphere of that car was somethin' stupenjus. After that I spent most of my time with my nose at a ventilator slit, gettin' all the outside air I could.

"Pardner, not to harrow up your feelin's further, I was in that car eight days! I'd got into a sort of catamose condition, full of nightmares of melons, when all at once I heard a long '*snif-f-f!*' at one of the cracks, an' the idea of any one or anythin' wantin' to sniff at the flavor of that car pulled me wide awake with a jump. 'Sufferin' cats!' I yelled, 'lemme out o' this!' But my voice was smothered like a man shoutin' into a pillow.

"It got an answer, though, for I heard the sound of a horse, a man called through the cracks, and then: 'Look out!' says he, 'I'm goin' to shoot!' Then *bang! bang! bang!* the door splintered, an' the staple busted. The door was shoved open, I crawled out, took a long whiff of pure, clear, melonless air, an' collapsed.

"I come to with the whisky an' there was a man an' a pony an' a dog, with long whiskers—the man, I mean. He was one of these hollow-cheeked, long-nosed fellers that allers seem to be on the verge of graspin' an idea an' never connectin' up.

"'Well, I'm dummed!' says he; like that. 'Well, I'm dummed! How'd ye git in thar?'

"'I'll never tell you,' says I, 'it's a secret!'

"He gave me more whisky an' got me on my feet. There was a kind of halo of melon-smell all around that car. 'Friend' says I; 'lead me hence! I'm weak as a kitten an' I can't look at that car without emotions risin' in my boosom. Now,' I says, when he'd helped me out o' sight an' smell of the car, 'now, friend, you've saved my life. There's only one more thing I'll ask of you.'

"'What air that?' says he.

"'Why,' says I, 'I want you to let me take a bite out o' that hoss of yours. Just a mouthful somewheres where it won't show. I need a change of diet,' I says, 'to get rid of the taste of melons.'

"Well, the old buck sat an' cackled for fifteen minutes. He actually thought I was foolin'. Finally, seein' I was really done up, he got me on his horse, took me to his ranch, fed me for a week, an' said my story paid him for it all. He was mighty good to me an' I hated to leave. I haven't been able to look a melon in the face since."

THE fat man paused and reached for the flask. All during the recital he had been watching the thin man shrewdly from between half-closed eyelids. Occasionally the latter chuckled. He was evidently enjoying the narrative. He, too, had been covertly taking stock of the other man, and as the fat man passed him the flask he asked, quietly: "What's your particular line, partner?"

"Oregon Red, gaycat—that's me," replied the fat man. "Do a turn once in a while in the hop-fields, but my monaker's on every water-tank from here to Chi, and then some. Do you reckon, pal—that chicken, now——"

The thin man remembered, and both turned to the fire. The mud had cracked gloriously and together they scattered the fire and rolled the ball away from the embers. Even as they did so the mud disintegrated and fell away, a reeking, pungent

powder, leaving an unspeakably dirty muss of scorched and smoldering feathers and seared flesh that no stretch of the imagination could conceive as edible. "Great Scott!" said the fat man. "What a mess!"

The thin man's jaw dropped and they looked at each other pathetically over the wretched carcass. The distress of Oregon Red was painful to see. He gingerly removed a smoking leg, tasted a portion and immediately spat it out. Some alkaline property of the mud had made it acrid and nauscating. "——!" he said. "Talk about aggravation! I was never so near starvation in my whole life." He seemed on the verge of tears. The thin man's nostrils wrinkled at the odious smell of the carcass, and his hollow cheeks seemed more sunken than ever, but he said nothing.

"I must say, bo, you're a —— of a cook," said Oregon Red, scornfully. "Who ever heard of a hobo torturing a chicken after that fashion? Where'd you learn how to do this?"

"Never *you* mind," said the thin man sulkily. "I'm not your kind of a hobo, friend. When I want this sort of thing done, I usually *pay* for it. Understand?"

The fat man glanced at him again, shrewdly, curiously. "What's *your* line, partner?" he asked.

Without replying, the thin man took from his pocket a piece of brown soap and tossed it on the ground. Oregon Red gazed at it blankly for a moment, then, with a start of comprehension, "Ha!" said he, "a yegg!"

"Yours truly, 'Frisco Slim. Here's the rest of the outfit." He produced, first, a stick of grayish, greasy substance and tossed it beside the soap; then a vial of an oily, yellowish liquid, carefully swathed in cotton. He removed the cotton, shook the vial, and then, to the fat man's horror, tossed it lightly in the air, catching it as it fell. The face of Oregon Red went perfectly livid. "My God, man!" he gasped- "*don't* do that! *Please* don't!"

'Frisco Slim laughed harshly. "When you've handled as much 'soup' as I have, gaycat, you'll learn not to be afraid of it." He restored the cotton wrapping but continued to hold the vial in his hand. "If I dropped this," he continued, "you and I would go up in the form of a fine spray. And now you know who I am, I suppose you can guess why I'm here among the tall timbers?"

"The Canton Springs job!" said Oregon Red. He was gazing at the vial with a fascinated stare, his jaw set hard to keep his teeth from chattering. "Say, put that away, won't you?"

"Presently," said 'Frisco Slim. "Yes, it's the Canton Springs job. You see, it all happened just as the papers said. We'd got the post-office safe all soaped up and poured in the soup. Then we muffled it with a couple of horse-blankets. It was an old, cast-iron rattle-trap, like all those country post-office safes, but we didn't have time to monkey with tools. Blinkey Dougherty, the dummy-chucker, and Slivers Conway were watching outside while Big Tom Leary and I did the inside work. Just as we got the fuse lit who should come in the side door but the postmistress in her night clothes!

"There wasn't any time to be lost. I grabbed her from behind, not before she gave one yell, though; got the strangle-hold on her, with my knee in the small of her back, and Leary smashed her with a blackjack, just as the soup went off. The racket was fierce. We could hear footsteps on the run and a police-whistle, and Slivers hollered: 'Here they come! Beat it, you men!' and we grabbed what was in the safe and slid.

"The bulls got Blinkey in the getaway —shot him in the head, and Tom Leary did for one of the bulls. They got Tom in a wheat-field the next day. Slivers got away north and I'm here waiting for the noise to blow over. *And now, what are you going to do about it?*"

He raised the vial, menacingly, a steely glitter in his hard eyes. The fat man's distress was pitiful. His mouth opened and shut like that of a stranded fish, and he swallowed painfully. He raised one hand imploringly.

"Hold on!" he gasped. "Wait! Let me explain!"

'Frisco Slim glared ominously. "When that car you told about got whipped off, where was the caboose?"

"Th-there w-wasn't any on," chattered Oregon Red.

"I thought not. They're running all their trains that way now, since *you* took to the road!" the other snarled savagely. "Where did you get that whisky? Hoboes

don't carry eighteen-year-old booze in their clothes. And, last of all, Mr. Oregon Red, look at your shoes! They'd give you away anywhere. I know *you*, Oregon Red! You are Jimmie Callahan, the plain-clothes man of San Francisco. Well, here's where you suddenly quit your job! Thought you'd get *me*, did you?"

THE fat man's shoes were the one sound item of his wardrobe. They were broad, flat and comfortable—such shoes as a patrolman or detective might wear who was much on his feet. Oregon Red glanced at them hopelessly.

"See here, Slim!" he spoke rapidly, fairly gabbling in his eagerness, but the slang and absurd grammar fell suddenly out of his speech. "See here; I'm not a detective! I'm Judge Harmsworth, of Los Angeles. Wait—*please* wait! I've been sick—gout—too much high living. Doctors gave me a year to live. Got reading tramp stuff—Josiah Flynt—all that. Doctors said open air *might* save my life. Got talking at the Club about tramps and outdoor life. The boys guyed me to death. Finally I made a bet—foolish moment of my life—bet I could beat my way as a hobo as far as Chicago in two weeks. Read up on slang and hobo talk—got this outfit—all except shoes on account of gout.

"I've lost my bet. I've been put off trains till I'm scared of the sight of one. This is as far as I've got. The whisky is from my private stock at the Club. Brought it for an emergency. I learned the melon-yarn, almost word for word, from a hobo I met at Truckee. I'll promise and swear not to use your story against you. *Now* will you put away your Concentrated Essence of Disaster and let me go?"

With a loud whoop 'Frisco Slim dashed the vial against a rock. The fat man yelled, his cry echoing and reechoing through the lonely hills, but the vial smashed with a harmless tinkle of glass, and the yellow liquid trickled innocently down the face of the rock. 'Frisco Slim whooped again, and the next instant was rolling over and over in the pine-needles, yelling with laughter. The fat man stood petrified with astonishment, but the rich red color stole back into his cheeks.

"Oh, oh, oh!" cried 'Frisco Slim, staggering to his feet and holding his side. "This is too much!" He extended a tremulous hand. "Shake, Red—I mean Judge! Don't look so gallied. Let me introduce myself. My name's Ogden. I do specials on a 'Frisco paper. Break into magazine work occasionally. Sorry I scared you so, but it was worth the money. Ho! Ho! Ho! Hoboes, yeggs and gaycats!" Once again he was shaken with a torrent of mirth. Finally he subsided, the tears rolling down his hollow cheeks.

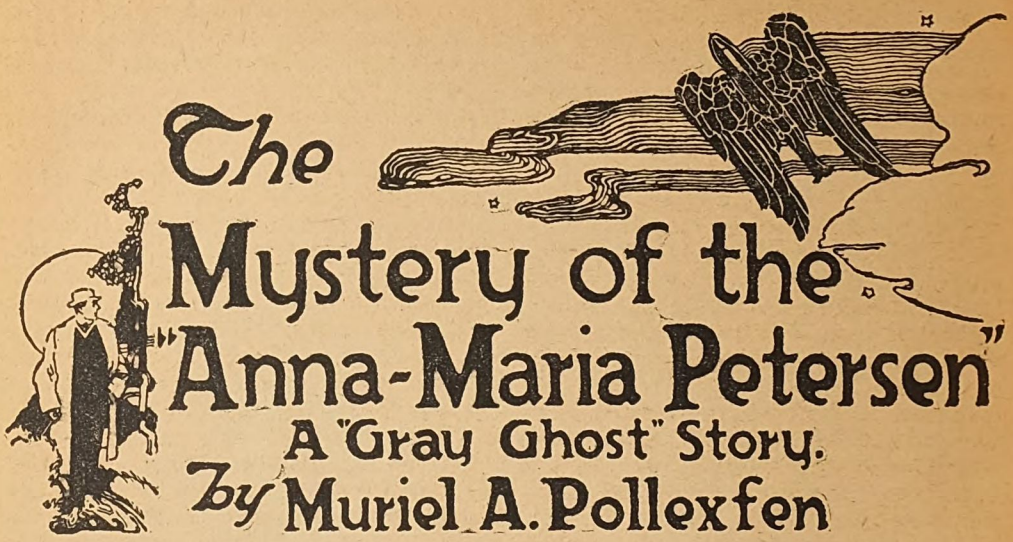
"Judge," said he, "I've been a dyspeptic for years. Got so I couldn't eat, sleep or work, and went after this next-to-Nature thing as a last resort, hoping to run down a story at the same time. I've played hobo before, for the paper, but never thought of personating a yeggman till you came along. Your work was so innocently raw—and then, you know, you had the gall to criticize me. The stuff in the bottle wasn't nitro; it was eucalyptus ointment for mosquito-bites. The 'dynamite' is diachylon plaster, and the soap is to wash with. It came like an inspiration to scare you with them. All I know of the Canton Springs affair I read in the newspapers, and I've never committed a worse crime than lifting that chicken down the road a bit. I guess I'm ready to quit. I'm as hungry as you are, and I've got my story. That melon yarn——"

"Don't!" said the Judge. "You make my mouth water. I'm starving, and, what's more, I'm broke."

"I was going to say," went on Ogden, "that I've got some money. We are going to hike for Truckee right this minute so fast that we'll heat the gravel, and get about ten dollars' worth of chicken and ham and eggs. How does that strike you, Oregon Red?"

The fat man's hand clasped mechanically over the brown flask and his eyes twinkled.

"Pal," said he, "it's eighteen years in wood. Let's drink!"



The Mystery of the "Anna-Maria Petersen"

A "Gray Ghost" Story.

By Muriel A. Pollexfen

I

IT WENT by the name of *Gray Ghost*—partly by reason of its dull coloring and partly because of its elusiveness. It had a trick of appearing and disappearing with a specter-like unexpectedness—emerging from the volumes of a cloud into the sight-range of man with a suddenness that was awesome and alarming—gliding away into the vast regions of the unknown with a rapid ease and eeriness that filled the spectator with chill dread and nameless fears.

Yet there was nothing of the myth about it. Every one knew it was Alsopp Ostermann's air-ship and that he was the keenest flying-man in England, or even on the Continent. It was a solid, substantial, colossal air-ship, and the newspapers were unanimous in declaring it the very last word in flying-machines and prophesied that Ostermann's name and fame would go down the ages engraved deep in the scroll wherein were written the names of those who had subscribed to England's greatness.

And yet, in spite of all this, in spite of the fact that banquets were given and statues erected to his honor, a veil of deep mystery seemed to cling like fog round Ostermann's air-ship, and no amount of newspaper publicity succeeded in dispersing it.

Men wanted to get a nearer view of it than they did with it soaring miles above them in the air. They wanted to touch it, to fathom its marvelous workings, master its miraculous machinery. They wanted to watch it fold its wings and sink to rest upon the earth at their feet so that they might examine for themselves the intricacies of its prodigious interior and feel the pulse of its mighty heart-throb beneath their curious fingers.

Yet the public never had seen it at close quarters, and it was this fact, added to the sudden, unadvertised appearances and disappearances of the machine and the total lack of knowledge as to its destination or starting-point, that gained for it and its master the reputation, especially throughout the British Isles, of being mysterious and not quite straight. The papers always alluded to Alsopp Ostermann as a Britisher and as flying an All-British machine, but nothing was really definitely known of the man's nationality, and no one seemed very clear as to where he lived or what he did when not sailing his monster air-ship. That he had money was obvious and as yet it had not occurred to any one to question the source from whence it came. At present he was hailed by the masses as a jolly good fellow and a sportsman of the first water. It was only the few—a minute few—who were beginning to have a doubt about him—the faintest suspicion of a doubt, but enough to set them on their guard.

The man was no myth. Those who had doubts had but to seek him out to find him quite substantial and a very hearty, daring

sportsman. He had rooms in Jermyn Street and belonged to two or three good clubs, and his name was always before the public. And yet—and yet so few people really seemed *familiar* with him; he was *friends* with no one!

ONE of the men who came to doubt Ostermann's ingenuousness was Algy Brett, a clerk in the War Office with not an overpowering burden of work to get through each day, a minute salary for his tastes, and a fantastic mind. It was the fantastic mind which led to the birth of the doubt.

His people lived midway between Liphook and East Liss in Hampshire, and it was his custom on clear nights to leave the train at Liphook and walk home through Woolmer Forest by a rough track to and from Liss. One evening, even as he lingered for a moment in crossing an arid space, the scene of a last year's military camp, and just as the shades of night were wrapping the heavens in a sable cloak, he saw an air-ship flying high above him in the clouding skies.

The faint whirring had attracted his attention and he looked up with a wild heart-beat of excitement. If there was one interest he possessed besides his delight in reading riddles and poking an inquisitive finger into other people's pies, it was the evolution of the flying-machine, and he was already a decidedly skilful navigator.

For ten minutes he watched. The ship, swooping and diving and leaping out of sight above his head, fascinated him. Once only did it sweep low enough for Algy to make out that it looked like a mammoth vulture, torpedo-shaped, of enormous length, supported by enormous pointed wings modeled almost identically on the construction of a bird's, luminously gray and, somehow, dangerously perfect! There was something villainous in its boastful, flaunting strength, something venomous in its swift spurts, something prophetic in the way it hovered over the world like a gray specter in a grayer sky!

Then, as though seized with a sudden whim, it turned quickly, hovering just for a moment like a bird beating against the wind, and swept away into the murky distance, vanishing with a rapidity which took Brett's breath away.

It looked as if an accident to the machinery had threatened for those short ten minutes and had been overcome as suddenly as it occurred. But, whatever it was, Algy blessed it for the experience it occasioned him.

"Phew!" he muttered excitedly, walking on slowly in the direction of his home. "Phew! There's no experimenting *there!* That chap's as near perfection as can be! That chap could mop 'em all up one after the other if he flew as he's doing to-night! Who on earth is he? Good Lord! I know! He must be Ostermann, and that's his famous *Gray Ghost!* I'll swear it is, though I've never seen it, and I doubt if any one has—at close quarters! Timmock said he'd seen it at Farnham that day he dropped in on Ostermann and surprised him in his shed, yet even he couldn't describe it except that it was gray and sinister-looking and gave him a creepy sensation as though it was something alive and menacing! It must be *Gray Ghost!* I could name every flying-machine in England, I believe, and out of it—known ones! That's either a secret air-ship or else it's *Gray Ghost*—and for all that men have seen of *Gray Ghost*, it might be a secret air-ship too! And if it *is Gray Ghost*, why do the papers say that Ostermann is in America?"

He walked home slowly, pondering on the thing he had seen, puzzling his brain for a solution, trying to force himself to the belief that he was impressed so vividly because it was so utterly unusual to see an air-ship flying casually over Woolmer and that the ten minutes' maneuvering he had witnessed was merely a coincidence.

But his fantastical mind threw out the suggestion. There was a complete and long-standing mastery in the way the unseen aviator handled his ship; and the fact that he flew with all lights out, and, save for the one swoop downwards, well above sight-range, suggested a desire for secrecy which at least was suspicious.

Could he really be Ostermann? If so, why did the papers circulate that he had sailed for New York the week before to fly for a colossal sum of hard cash and the Gold Cup offered by America? Why did he not refute the statements of the newspapers? And what could offer him greater inducements than the securing of the World's Championship and the little fortune in solid cash? For, with a machine so perfect as *Gray Ghost*, there would be nothing to fear from any rival.

Why had Ostermann never raced her? Why did he always attend the meetings with some incompleted machine, oddly ill-constructed, glaringly unpracticable, forever out of order? There always seemed to be so much cry and so little wool about Alsopp Ostermann, and his greatest feats were never performed in public. Yet he was accepted as the cleverest man-bird of the day, and the fame of his *Gray Ghost* had spread far and wide, though wrapped in an impenetrable veil of mystery and secrecy.

"I'll jolly well find out to-morrow whether Ostermann is really in New York, and, if he is, who is the man who possesses the most perfect rival specimen I've ever seen or heard of? I'll look up old Timmock in the morning—if there's anything to be known, he'll know it. Or, should I nip the car out and run up to town and see Uncle Dean at once?

"Was it fancy or did he really look rather queer when he asked me last week whether I had ever met Alsopp Ostermann? By Jove, it's a rummy go! What if there's something crooked afoot? Perhaps Uncle Dean was by way of giving me a gentle hint to keep my eyes skinned! What luck if I could only jump on to something! It would make my fortune and run me up the ladder of Uncle Dean's regard in quick time!"

HIS brain humming with excitement, Algy Brett passed in through the gates of his father's house and walked rapidly up the drive. In the hall he found a telegram awaiting him and, as he ran his finger under the orange flap to open it, he espied a servant at the lower end of the passage. He called to him, still with the flimsy envelope unopened in his hand.

"Smith," he ordered, "tell Kelson I want the car out immediately. If there's anything going I'll have a bite in the library. Will you see to it while I change? Thanks! And, Smith, tell Kelson the Siddeley——"

He opened the wire while speaking and his eyes fell carelessly on the scrawling words.

"And, Smith—bring me an evening paper immediately! Hurry!"

Then when the man had gone, he read, and read again, the message on the slip of pink paper within his fingers and, as he read, his thoughts were chaos.

For the message was from his Uncle Dean and ran thus:

See the finding of the Court of Inquiry into the sinking of the liner *Anna-Maria Petersen*.

DEAN DENSHAM.

Algy had always known his uncle to be a man of very few words, but the message staring up at him from the pink paper was almost curt in its brevity. That the telegram was of serious importance went without saying. Sir Dean was not the man to send a message of such a nature if he had not intended serious notice to be taken of it. And yet what on earth did it mean?

The man returned with the *Evening Standard* and Algy seized it hurriedly, scanning the pages eagerly to find the report he wanted. At last he discovered it tucked away in a corner at the bottom of a page as though of scarcely any material importance to the public.

The Court of Inquiry held at Liverpool into the loss of the liner *Anna-Maria Petersen* found that she had been sunk by something unknown.

Something unknown!

II

WITHIN an hour Algy had packed a suit-case with a few necessaries, eaten a snack of dinner, communicated his departure to his people and was spinning down the drive and out of the lodge gates on his way to the house in Whitehall where his uncle, Sir Dean Densham, lived when in town.

Sir Dean held a high position in the Secret Service, and it was young Brett's ambition to succeed in compelling his uncle to think so well of him that he would pull a string in his favor when the time for promotion came.

If there should be anything in the idea that was buzzing like an imprisoned gnat in his imaginative brain! If there should be anything in the Ostermann air-ship mystery! If! If! Or if his powers of invention were running away with him?

Sir Dean was at home, and Algy was ushered without delay into the book-lined room where his uncle awaited him. It was almost as though he was expected, and his heart leaped.

Sir Dean was a tall man with little beady eyes which saw more than people realized; and he had a trick of uttering short, incompleted sentences which left a great deal to the imagination or the wit of the listener

and which was quite often embarrassing. He came forward now with outstretched hand to greet his nephew, and there was a twinkle in his gray eyes which betokened that he had an inkling of the business which had brought his young kinsman to see him so late in the day and uninvited. For Sir Dean was a much occupied man and no one —especially his relatives—intruded upon him more than was absolutely necessary. Indeed, so unapproachable was he at all times that Algy was more than flattered at his ready admittance to the presence.

"Well, Algy? Come to look up your old uncle or do you want him to pull you out of a mess?"

"I've come to ask you two questions, uncle, but the answers mean an awful lot to me!" said Algy earnestly, his glowing eyes fixed on the elder man's face. "I fancy you gave me a hint the other day, and I want to make sure of it before I go any further. Of course I may be a mad hatter, but I rather fancy not."

"A *hint?* I gave you a *hint?* Did I really, now?"

"Yes, you did—or, rather, I choose to think you did. So I've come to make sure."

"You're a very clever youngster. Always on the lookout for hints?"

"Well, yes, I am, sir, although I've been a week taking this one!"

"Humph! So, when I asked you whether you knew Ostermann——?"

"Quite so. I just hopped in to know whether you still wanted to know whether I knew him?"

Sir Dean clicked an electric appliance and lighted a long cigar. It was a minute and a half by the clock on the littered desk before he answered the question. "Well," he said at last, lingering even then on the words, "suppose I admit that Ostermann still interests me—what then? Will the admission be——?"

"Absolutely satisfactory, uncle, thank you!"

"Ah! And the second question is——?"

"Whether your telegram to me to-night is in any way connected with your interest in Ostermann?" cried Algy, his eyes snapping with excitement and raking the elder man's face as though to read the answer he scarce had patience to wait for. But the face behind the smoke was sphinx-like, and again a minute passed before the austere lips opened.

"The telegram sent to you to-night was a continuation of the—er—the hint you speak of, Algy, but further than that I can not go. Of course——"

"Of course!" cried Algy at random, his face flushing with pleasure. "And now do you think I could take French leave from the office—for, say a week?"

"I really could not say, my boy. I could see——"

"Old Jocelyn in the morning? Thanks awfully! I'll leave that to you then, what? And now good night, sir, and thanks for the job."

"Good night and good luck, and I hope the running will be to your liking, and certainly I hope it won't be too dangerous! I am glad your mother is my sister—it saves a lot of explanations. At one time I began to think you were remarkably like your father—er, shall we say a trifle dense—a trifle, eh?"

"Stupid, I should say if I were you!" said the boy, grinning widely.

"Perhaps you're right—you know him better than I do. You've freshened up wonderfully, my boy. Good-by—er—d'ye think a hundred——?"

"I must confess it would grease things a lot! Can you make it two? Thanks awfully! What a clever chap you are! Good-by, and if I find my friendship with Ostermann any way exciting I'll telegraph to you. By-by!"

HE WAS out of the house and had his car dashing down Whitehall within two seconds at a speed which escaped the eyes of the law only by a miracle. He was thrilling with excitement, and hope ran high in his bosom. A conviction obsessed him that the chance of his life was before him, and he vowed breathlessly that he would fight till he dropped rather than lose this splendid opportunity. For he was a believer in the saying that Opportunity is a rare visitor, and the realization that he had not heard her first faint tap on his door and had let a whole week slip past before awaking to notice of it filled him with frenzy. To make a scoop and earn the commendation of Uncle Dean—and perhaps some one higher up also! If he could only bring it off!

As he flew up the Euston Road he gave rapid instructions to Kelson, the chauffeur, to follow him immediately by road to Liverpool, to drive without stopping through

the night, to make the journey as rapidly as possible and, on arriving at his destination, to put up at the Adelphi Hotel.

Then Euston's great archway towered up before them, the car dashed through, and with just two minutes to spare Algy caught the express to Liverpool.

THE Atlantic liner *Anna-Maria Petersen*, belonging to the Hampzorn Shipping Company and sailing out of Liverpool regularly, had gone down with all hands a mile outside the bar and in perfectly fine weather, though the night was misty and a thin rain fell. She lay in deep water and could be located only at dead low tide, when the tops of her masts became visible. She was in her right course; there had been no collision and it was certain that she could not have been pooped.

All craft sailing out of the Mersey had been accounted for, and not one of them had been in collision—it was that fact which wrapped the liner's fate in deep mystery; for, three days after the accident, the divers announced that the steamer had *certainly* collided with *something* and that the collision was the cause of her foundering. They reported a huge rent in the vessel's side and that there had evidently not been time to close the bulkhead doors or water-tight compartments. One life-boat had been got out, apparently, as the davits were swung outboard and the boat was missing, and although it had not been picked up there was some little hope that at least there might be one or two survivors. But the days had passed and that hope was dying.

Algy Brett had read all there was to read of the accident in the papers and therefore he was well primed when he looked up his friend Halcombe, of the Board of Trade. To Halcombe he confided his desire to view the wreck for himself and, after a lengthy argument, succeeded in getting a promise that if it could be managed it would.

"But, my dear fellow," said Halcombe, "to get into a diver's suit and go down to a wreck like this one needs years of custom and any amount of nerve. Are you prepared for the gruesome sights you may see? Remember, they've not as yet brought up the bodies of the poor wretches."

"I'm quite prepared," said Algy quietly, though he turned paler. "And I only want to see the hole that sunk her. I don't want to go exploring the passengers."

"Just as well you don't!" replied his friend grimly. Then, as though struck by a sudden thought, he added, "But, talking of passengers, see here! This was a fluke for a chap, wasn't it? Listen:

"Mr. Caleb Calthew, the famous American designer of military air-ships, was to have been a passenger on the ill-fated *Anna-Maria Petersen*, but at the last moment changed his mind and sailed for England on his own yacht the *Water Lily*. He is bringing to this country the plans for an aerial warship which he has sold to the British Government for ninety thousand pounds. As only one copy of the plans exists, and this is in Mr. Calthew's possession, it will be seen how doubly fortunate it was that he escaped the terrible fate suffered by the other passengers of the *Anna-Maria Petersen*, etc., etc."

Algy reached out his hand for the paper and, as he did so, his eye fell on a second paragraph beneath the first. It ran:

Since writing the above, the distressing news has come to press that the yacht *Water Lily* was blown up off the Needles early this morning. No lives were saved, Mr. Caleb Calthew thus meeting with a fate perhaps even worse than if he had taken passage on the Hampzorn liner.

The paragraph danced beneath Algy's eyes in letters of blood. He turned suddenly to his friend and his face was like chalk:

"I don't think there is any need now for me to view the wreck, but if you will run me up the river in your launch I would like to speak to the men on the Bar Lightship. Can you oblige me?"

III

THE day was murky and a white sea-fog wrapped the river in a shroud of white.

To the accompaniment of a hundred sirens and fog-horns Algy and Halcombe set off on their voyage of discovery in a little customs launch. Algy hated the sea, and the dismal soundings of the various fog-signals and the wraith-like whiteness of the clinging fog depressed him. The water, after passing the Rock, grew more choppy and the fog denser, and by the time the launch was abreast the bell-buoy Algy was limp and dejected, and even his sleuth-hound intuitions concerning Ostermann dwindled into miserable nothingness.

But at long length they made the Bar Lightship, and the warmth of its snug cabin revived him and he felt the keenness of his quest returning.

He questioned the men closely and patiently, repeating his questions continuously:

"On the night the *Anna-Maria Petersen* was wrecked did you *see* anything or *hear* anything that was extraordinary? Did you feel the presence of something *unknown*, something mysterious, something which in the cold light of morning you persuaded yourself you must have imagined? Did you *hear* nothing? You are stationed within a bare mile of the wreck—did you *hear* nothing?"

He caught a swift glance passed between two of the men and cried out to them: "You two—you know something! Tell me of it! No matter how foolish you may think it, tell me of it! You *heard* something!"

The younger one spoke suddenly. "I did, sir," he said in a husky voice. "I was lookout man, and it was just gone two bells. The night was good, though a bit misty, and it was wet, but there was no wind, which is my point, as you will see in a minute. Two bells had just struck and I was stamping up and down to keep warm, when I could swear I heard wings beating overhead! But wings that must ha' been as belongin' to a giant bird if they was really there at all! It was more like the throb of machinery, though o' course that was impossible.

"Then—even now I don't know whether I didn't dream it or not—something dark and more like a lump of floating fog nor anything else, went clean over my head—as noiseless as a bird! I thought as I was dreaming, and the next day laughed at meself for fancying I'd seen anything at all, and until this minute I've never given it a second thought. But I'd told Bill 'ere, and I could see by his face as he was remembering it, too, so I risked a chaffin' and told yer. D'ye think I *did* see summat?"

"I think you saw an air-ship, my man, and here's drinking good luck to your good eyesight! Spend it when you get your shoreshift. Ah, did you also see something?"

A second man had come up to the table where Algy was sitting, and the sight of the sovereign bestowed upon the sailor who had just given his experience of that fateful night seemed to encourage him to speak also.

"I did not 'ear or see anythink," he said dramatically, "but as I was a-swabbin' the deck next mornin' I found—this 'ere!"

He handed to Brett a small rolled-up bundle, a man's glove, made of thick rubber and lined inside with fur. Inside the gauntlet was the maker's name—Carl Werner und Kaltz, Berlin, and a tiny piece of white tape bore the initials A. O.

A. O.! For what could it stand if not for Alsopp Ostermann? Algy stared at the glove, conjuring up a picture of the man himself drawing on that insulated gauntlet.

Without a comment he handed another sovereign to the man.

"I'm ready now, Halcombe," he said quietly.

With the glove safely tucked away in his pocket he climbed over the lightship's iron bulwark, bade the captain good-day, promised to send out some books for the little library and then took his seat in the launch, Halcombe clambering in after him.

IT WAS striking six when the launch landed them at the stage, and just on half-past when Algy walked up the steps of the Aldelphi Hotel in Lime Street, a rather washed-out edition of the animated young man who had set out so gaily in the morning. Nevertheless, there was also a grim set of the jaws and a relentless look in the youthful eyes.

The awful, hideous story! No wonder that it had blanched the color from Algy Brett's cheeks when he had realized it! No wonder that he shrank with dilating eyes from the observation of the tell-tale glove—the rubber gauntlet which was to be the first link in the chain destined to capture the man whose master mind could engineer such a colossal crime and carry it through without leaving the shadow of a clue save the losing of an insulated glove!

He ordered tea immediately, to be served in his private room, and while he was drinking it the door opened and Kelson came in.

He was looking pale and there was an agitation in his manner entirely foreign to him that riveted Brett's divided attention when he discerned it.

"Had an accident, Kelson?" he asked, motioning him to sit down.

"Yes, sir, I'm sorry to say I have, though it might have been a deal worse!" said the chauffeur.

"Have a cup of tea and stop making faces!" commanded Algy, feeling rather like making faces himself. "When did you arrive?"

"I arrived at eleven o'clock, sir. You were out and I've been hanging about all

day waiting for you. The car went splendidly and I ought to have got here easy by six but for the accident. It was just after I'd passed through Stafford. The road was very dark and there were high hedges on each side. I had one headlight on and was taking every precaution, when suddenly a car dashed out from a narrow crossroad and before I could move a lever I'd slapped clean into it! It wasn't my fault, sir—indeed it wasn't, and the car isn't hurt more than a scratch or so. The stranger never so much as sounded a horn and was running with all lights out!"

"Humph!" grunted Algy, helping himself to more tea. "Any one hurt?"

"Yes, sir. There were two men in the car. One was badly crushed and we left him at the Infirmary at Stafford—I ran back there with him and brought out a constable and a mechanic to bring in the wrecked car. The other man is here."

Algy started.

"Here!" he ejaculated in astonishment. "Whatever for?"

"Well, sir, it's this way. The second man was hurt too, but not very much—at least I thought not much at the time, but I believe he's worse than he lets on, myself. He's a bit queer in his 'ead at times and forgets what's happened. He refused point-blank to see a doctor and then said that if I would do him a favor, seeing as how I'd run him down and smashed his car—which I didn't, sir, it being his fault for not sounding 'is horn and having no lights—would I run him on as far as I could to Liverpool? It appears he has to meet his boss at Formby—which is a place about fifteen miles or so out along the coast from here, I believe—and was on his way when the smash came. So, thinking you would be agreeable to the favor bein' granted, I told him I was going to Liverpool myself and took him on with me."

"Quite right. And where is he now?"

"I lent him my bed, sir, for an hour or so. He was dead beat and I've let him sleep on a bit."

"And it's in your conscience-stricken mind to do what, eh?"

"Well, sir," replied Kelson, with a smirk, "if you weren't wanting me for a hour I thought maybe you wouldn't mind my running him on to Formby. I could be there and back in less than no time, and the poor fellow is really rather bad to be allowed to travel alone. But, of course, sir, if you wanted me or anything this——"

"I'm afraid I do, Kelson. I'm sorry to have to damp your Samaritan generosity, but I shall want the car myself. Still, we can see that the poor chap gets there in comfort and in time. I'll order a car round to drive him out and, if necessary, bring him back."

BRETT strolled over to the telephone and picked off the receiver, then, turning slightly in Kelson's direction he asked carelessly, "What time does he want to get there?"

"I think he said his appointment with Mr. Ostermann was for eight o'clock, sir. —My God, sir! What's the matter? Is anything——"

"Ostermann? Did you say Ostermann? The man has an appointment with *Ostermann?* Kelson, Kelson, are you sure it's *Ostermann?*"

The receiver had been flung from Algy's hand and swung violently to and fro on its length of green cord. If Ostermann had fallen through a hole in the ceiling at his very feet Algy could not have been more astonished. For a man who had been run down in a dark lane by *his* car to be on the way to an appointment with Alsopp Ostermann was the most miraculous thing that could have happened! It was inconceivable!

"It's quite true, sir. Hafner—that's his name, sir—says he's on his way to meet Mr. Alsopp Ostermann, the air-ship man, at Formby at eight to-night."

"Has he said why he is going?" snapped Algy excitedly.

"Well, sir—it's an ugly word, but I believe he's going to sort of blackmail Mr. Ostermann, sir. He says he was the man who almost built *Gray Ghost*—Mr. Ostermann's air-ship, sir—and that, because he began to take a drop too much on occasions, Mr. Ostermann chucked him out without a penny and left him to starve. Then he got work in a motor manufactory and yesterday, from what I can make out, his old master wrote him to come and see him at his bungalow at Formby. That's all I know, sir, except that Hafner seems to think he has suddenly got a hold over Ostermann."

"Go and wake the man and get the car round! I will accompany you to Formby. I, too, have an appointment with Mr. Ostermann. Quick, now!"

IV

THE miles had passed like a flash, and the lights of Formby glimmered through the darkness of the road. Brett himself was at the wheel, and beside him sat Hafner, pale and evidently suffering, breaking now and then into violent invective against Ostermann, then weeping maudlin tears, then relapsing into vacant silence. Behind in the tonneau sat Kelson and two detectives, and they carried a warrant for Alsopp Ostermann's arrest on suspicion of being implicated in the mystery of the *Anna-Maria Petersen.*

Brett watched every mood of the man beside him as a doctor watches the stages of a case. When he was virulent against Ostermann he plied him hard with questions—Did he know this? Did he know that? Did *Gray Ghost* possess a ram that could sink, say, a man-of-war or a liner? It did! No, surely not! Such an invention would paralyze the world!

"*Gray Ghost will* paralyze the world—very soon!" muttered Hafner in a thick mumble. "*Gray Ghost* is my child! I built her—did ye know? Aw, yes, I built her and then that swine flung me off like an old glove! I'd near done my work, I had, an' he wasn't goin' to let me see all 'is secrets, eh? Secrets, ha, ha! I know a secret! I'm going to offer to sell it to him to-night, an' if 'e doesn't buy it, there's those as will! Yah! ye don't come it over Silas Hafner and live to fergit it! Naw! Five thousand o' the best he'll pay me for my secret or I'll wring 'is neck!"

"I know your secret, Hafner. It's my secret, too, and I, too, am going to make him pay! *My secret is how he sank the Anna-Maria Petersen!* Is that yours?"

The man's white face peered up into Algy's from the folds of the dark blanket Kelson had wrapped him in. A red scar cut his pallid cheek, and his lower lip was swelled hideously. The accident had been more serious than he had admitted, and the effects were rapidly becoming more and more definite and apparent. That the man had been drinking hard for a long period previously was nothing in his favor. His shaking fingers clutched at Algy's sleeve. "You know?" he whispered thickly. "*You know?*"

"Yes, I know!" said Algy, his eyes fixed on the narrow road lest the madman at his side should see into them and read the limitation of his knowledge there. "I know!"

"It was *his* invention—that ram—his! But I made it grow from a paper drawing into a reality! I did that! These fingers of mine—all crooked and a-shake now—they gave it life! There's not a steel plate made that it will not penetrate as a needle perforates paper! An' I made it! Aw, when I read of that liner's mysterious sinking I knew it for *Gray Ghost's* work. Ostermann wouldn't let Calthew get ahead of him, he wouldn't! Aw, no!"

Algy felt himself quivering in every nerve. What horror the man in the blanket beside him was confessing! What awful ingenuity if it were true! It couldn't be, and yet—there was the fate of the *Water Lily*—the fate of Caleb Calthew, who was, without doubt, Alsopp Ostermann's most dangerous rival and who had escaped death in the *Anna-Maria Petersen* only to meet it in the *Water Lily!*

He shuddered as though suddenly cold. The man beside him chuckled.

"Aw, makes yer feel sick, don't it, eh? But not me! Me it makes proud and happy to think that it's in my power to understand—to tell whose finger pressed the lever that sent Caleb Calthew and his air-ship to the bottom of the sea! And I'm going to be paid five thousand pounds to-night to hold my tongue! An' with five thousand pounds I can work out a model of Ostermann's air-ship with its ram that'll sink the greatest *Dreadnought* ever built, like a kid's tin toy. An' I can sell it to the Government an' they'll give me ninety thousand for it, as they offered Calthew! Aw, Ostermann did me a good turn in getting rid of Calthew! To the right, sharp! To the right, sir!"

For a moment Algy failed to realize that the man's mind had swerved from his grievance to the matter of directing the right road to take, but Hafner pointed excitedly into the darkness and sharply repeated his direction, and Algy obeyed. The car swerved from the main road into a narrow, rut-marked lane which ran between high banks of white sandhills on either side. Away in the distance the sound of waves breaking on a flat shore came to them over the hills and dunes of tussock grass. And something else floated faintly on the wind to their listening ears—*the beating of mammoth wings!*

"*Gray Ghost!*" whispered Hafner, flinging the blanket from his shoulders and making as though to leap from the car. "*Gray Ghost!*

And where *Gray Ghost* is, there also is Ostermann, my enemy! We'll be face to face—at last!"

It seemed hours to Brett before they came upon a long, low shed all but hidden in the desert wildness of the white, grass-tufted dunes and the beating of *Gray Ghost's* colossal wings thudded in the air above them, invisible, unnatural, menacing.

Hafner seemed to know every inch of the way, desolate waste though it was. The road ran sheer up to the sheds, and Brett pulled up at the first sign of a light. It came from a small cabin, fitted up as a living-room, and a tall shadow moved continuously behind the drawn blind. Hafner caught the edge of Brett's sleeve and his fingers twitched.

"Ostermann!" he said, spitting the word out. "Ostermann!"

He pointed almost deliriously to the moving shadow behind the blind and lurched forward, his eyes red with hate.

THE HAD his finger on the latch and the door half open before the man in the room became aware that anything untoward was happening. But at the sound of the lifting latch he spun round sharply, and he and Hafner were face to face.

Hafner leaped forward, his hands outstretched.

"I came—I came——" he said, and then suddenly leaned back against the wall and seemed to go to bits, only his lips shaking and moving as though still striving to speak the threats which had all day supported him so spuriously. Ostermann looked at him contemptuously.

"Still at your old game, eh, Hafner?" he sneered. "I hoped that you were coming back to me. I want you—but you're still useless, eh?" He threw back his head as though suddenly relieved, but in that instant his eyes went past the limp, shrinking figure of his old workman to the face of Algy Brett framed in the little doorway of the shanty.

"A thousand pardons! I did not see you," he said suavely, coming forward a step. "I have not the honor of your acquaintance, but——"

He was a tall man, thin to emaciation, and the color of gray clay. Only his eyes possessed a tinge of color or suggested life. They were green like a cat's, or a coyote's, or a wolf's in a snow-bound world, and they bulged slightly from their colorless lids. His mouth was wide, and his thin lips were habitually sucked in over his teeth, but it gave one the impression of virile strength and a power of endurance fitted for a superman. Although Hafner had so ruthlessly led a stranger into his lonely fastness, he showed not a flicker of surprise or annoyance, though a doubt must surely have tapped a warning to his vigilant brain.

"You came——" he asked, still in the even voice that betrayed nothing whatever of the emotion he must have felt.

"To return to you your glove, Mr. Ostermann," said Algy in a voice thrilling with meaning, though he tried to make it calm and expressionless. "You lost it. It is yours?"

Ostermann picked the glove from Brett's outstretched hand and looked it over.

"Thanks—very many! I was at a loss to know where I had mislaid it. Where was it?"

His full eyes looked clearly into Algy's, his fingers playing absently with the glove. But a live wire of understanding passed from Ostermann's soul to Algy Brett's.

"I found it on the deck of the Bar Lightship, three days after the ramming of the *Anna-Maria Petersen* by your air-ship *Gray Ghost!*"

The words fell from Algy's lips like pellets, but Ostermann might have been a deaf man for all the heed he took of them. He still played with the glove, and his eyes still bulged at his accuser.

Algy turned to the door. It had swung to behind him and he pulled it open and stepped out into the night, calling to the two detectives who were waiting within a yard of the cabin. They came instantly and followed Brett back into the house to take their prisoner.

But the shanty was empty save for Hafner's body still lying on the floor against the wall, where he had fallen limp and unconscious.

And the silence of the great waste of shore and sandhill was empty also save for the thudding of the sea on the endless shore and save for the flapping of a pair of monster wings whirring through the night.

VAGABONDS OF THE EARTH

by

Arthur D. Howden Smith

And no one shall work for money,
And no one shall work for fame.
KIPLING.

I HAVE often wished that I could bring those six men together, and yet, on the face of it, the wish is impossible of fulfilment. They are scattered to the corners of the earth. Some I have heard from through roundabout channels, but most have passed beyond my ken. All but two were chance acquaintances, with whom I spent an hour or so.

I met them in every conceivable way. In only a couple of instances were their stories related to me by themselves. They seem to belong to a class whose instinct is silence; and when they do speak, it is never about their own affairs. Work to them represents only something for their fierce energy to overcome. Money has no value for them, nor do they care whether the work they undertake is of moment in the world's eyes or not. Sometimes it is; more often it is not. The fact remains, they do not care.

Perhaps the most peculiar thing about the six is that I have not forgotten a single detail of the characteristics of any of them. The impressions they made upon my brain are as clear-cut to-day as they were when I first met each one of them. They stand out sharply from the welter of heterogeneous personalities and commonplaces with whom we come in contact in the daily course of our lives. There was Helmslund, for instance. His line is birds—sea-birds, although, as far as that goes, anything wild and unknown attracts Helmslund. I daresay you never heard of Helmslund. You would soon enough, though, if you undertook to collect rare birds as a hobby. Helmslund is indispensable to scores of collectors in this country and Europe.

I met him one Sunday afternoon at the house of a friend who possesses a really remarkable collection of North American birds. The two were inspecting a splendid specimen of the rosy gull, and as I entered the Bird Room I heard Helmslund talking with evident interest. He spoke with a

slight foreign accent that had the peculiar burr which distinguishes the Scandinavian from the German. "It is wonderfully good," he was saying, almost with enthusiasm. "I have never seen a better. They are so difficult to get. Very rare, and shy. A man must be a good——"

Then he saw me and froze up. I marked him on the instant: a rather undersized, dark-browed man, with a spare, wiry frame that somehow suggested unlimited reserve capacity and endurance, he challenged attention by his very efforts to avoid attracting interest. There was little of the Scandinavian about him. He moved very quietly and with catlike softness, and I noted that he was pigeon-toed like an Indian. Men acquire the trick through walking in single file along a narrow, beaten trail, especially in snow. It is a hall-mark of those who traverse the world's waste places.

We were introduced, and followed our host on his round of the room, examining the many curious specimens. The host did most of the talking. I knew next to nothing about birds, and Helmslund did not seem to care to talk. Every now and then, though, he would throw in a question or a comment that proved him a master of bird-lore. Indeed, his comments were so trenchant that I could not forbear to remark on the fact. Again he froze up abruptly, answering me with monosyllables. I'll admit the man's manner nettled me, and I ignored him during the rest of the time we were together. Only once the veil of reserve dropped off him. That was when we had worked around again to the case containing the magnificent rosy gull. Helmslund stood gazing at it in a rapturous trance. He seemed fascinated by the spectacle of the great bird, mounted with exquisite skill, its wings poised and the ruddy feathers on its breast showing like a huge splotch of blood.

"Wonderful, wonderful!" he murmured. "As good a specimen as I have ever seen." He turned to my friend. "I've never seen a better specimen in Siberia," he said.

"But," I objected, "I thought all of these were North American birds?"

Helmslund looked at me shyly.

"That is true," he said; "but Arctic birds are generally indigenous to both the North American and Asiatic continents."

Then he suddenly realized that he had almost committed himself to being agreeable and retired into his shell. Shortly afterward he excused himself from staying to dinner on the plea that he had some work to finish up, and said good-by. My host laughed as the door closed behind him.

"Odd sort of fellow—Helmslund," he remarked. "I thought for a minute when he spoke that last time that he was going to uncork for your benefit. But that would have been unprecedented. I've known him several years, now, and he's just getting to the point where he gives me a sketchy account of the main incidents of interest in his trips."

"What trips?" I asked.

"After birds," replied my host. "That's Helmslund's work. He gets birds, not for the feather people—he would regard that as sacrilege—but for collectors like myself. He goes everywhere to get them. I don't suppose there's a country he hasn't been to in search of some particular specimen. It isn't a question of money with him; the man risks his life dozens of times a year for an income that probably doesn't average more than twenty-five dollars a week and expenses. Finding rare birds is his passion, his obsession. He is happier suffering untold hardships on the trail of a rare ptarmigan or cockatoo than he would be drawing a comfortable salary as curator of a museum—a post he could secure any time, if he wished to. Why, he had the narrowest escape from going under on this last trip that I think I've ever heard of."

"It seems to me there is a story to be told," I commented.

My friend laughed.

"It's interesting enough," he said. "Let's find some comfortable chairs."

LAND that was how I happened to hear the story of Helmslund's battle for life on the wrathy waters of Lake Kibushka, far up by the Arctic Circle in the grim desolation of the Siberian steppes. It had happened the Summer before, on a trip he had taken to secure some specimens of the rosy gull for a European collector.

With a single companion and a couple of dog-teams, he was working around the country, paying especial attention to the marshy tracts bordering several large lakes, which are the habitat of various species of water-

fowl. There is probably no more desolate country in the world than this portion of the steppes. The inhabitants are few and they seldom travel far from their villages—mere collections of hovels covered over with sticks and skins.

Helmslund soon found that the rosy gulls had deserted the shores of Lake Kibushka, and he determined to cross the lake, which was about twenty miles wide, and try his luck in the country beyond. So he secured a craft which he called a dingey and which was large enough to hold his companion and three of the dogs, besides himself, and the party set out early in the morning. They propelled the craft by paddling, and it was slow work. At first, everything went well. Then a brisk breeze sprang up, agitating the surface of the lake until the waves became as large as those of the open sea. To add to the confusion, the dogs became frightened and started to quarrel among themselves.

Before they realized the danger, the boat had capsized and the two men and three dogs were struggling in the water. Helmslund kept his wits about him and helped his companion to swim to the overturned dingey. The dogs had already clustered about it and were fighting desperately in the water to climb on the bottom, but Helmslund pushed through them ruthlessly and helped the other man to get a seat, before he followed him. Luckily, he had retained possession of his paddle and he used it to beat off the dogs, crazy with fear as they felt the steadily increasing weight of their heavy water-soaked fur. Snarling fiercely, the beasts attacked the boat again and again, snapping at the men's legs and leaping out of the water in wild attempts to seize their throats.

A keen wind was blowing and the water was bitter cold with the cold that cuts to the bone and marrow, the cold of the Arctic. Yet it took the dogs a long time to drown, and to the last they persisted in their attacks on the men—so deep-set is the instinct of self-preservation in all living things. Helmslund remarked simply that it was a good thing they had the dogs against them.

"It helped to keep us warm," he said. "After that we had to beat each other. We would slap each other's faces and hands and hit our bodies with the paddle. Between whiles we tried to paddle, but the wind carried us much faster than our efforts."

Early in the afternoon, Helmslund's companion fainted and dropped off. My friend said that the tears stood in the little man's eyes as he told of this occurrence. He told it quite simply, as he told the whole story, indeed—without any straining for effect. It was only by direct questioning that my friend discovered that Helmslund had fallen off the boat himself in his efforts to save the other man, who had sunk like a stone. When Helmslund gained the boat a second time he was utterly exhausted and barely able to crawl on to its bottom. He had lost his paddle and had no means of directing his progress or even of determining in which direction he was going.

Fortunately for him, the wind was onshore, and late in the afternoon he drifted within sight of land. The sight gave him renewed energy to strip off his shirt and use it to signal to a village of natives. That was another piece of sheer luck. He might have drifted a mile or two one way or the other, and there would have been none to rescue him. As it was, his distress signal was seen and a couple of skin *kyaks* came out and took him off his uncomfortable craft. He admitted that he fainted when he was lifted to safety.

"I suppose he's had enough of the game, for the time being at least," I said, as my friend finished. He laughed.

"Oh, Helmslund didn't really take it seriously, except in the sense that he takes everything seriously," he replied. "He was krissed once by a Malay in the Archipelago, and if you can ever get him to tell you how he escaped being boiled up for medicine by pygmies in the Congo you'll die laughing. These are only samples of his casual adventures. As a matter of fact, he called to see me this afternoon to ask if I had any commissions for him to execute on a trip down the MacKenzie River."

II

WHENEVER I smell the sickly-sweet scent of South American orchids a vision rises before me of another one of the six—a fever-racked specter whom I met toiling down the gang-plank of a fruit-steamer from La Guayra. His name was Grayson, and he belonged to that legion of reckless adventurers, the orchid-hunters. What the tulip mania was in Holland in the Seventeenth Century, the orchid

craze is in these modern times. Grayson was a typical product of it, a lean, lantern-jawed American, hard-fisted and self-reliant, but utterly unpractical in everything pertaining to his profession. Comfort, physical suffering, money—all these factors had no influence upon him when he felt the lure of the *Orchidaceæ*. When he told me this story, he said that he had gone on his last quest, but the man didn't really mean it. In six months he was away again.

Whether the story is true or not, of course I can not say. But Grayson had been to the borders of the Beyond to learn it, and his manner was not that of a liar. How I came to know him is of no moment; it was in the course of daily routine, and I found him a subject well worthy of study. As I have said, he was shaking with fever, although his intellect was perfectly clear. He told me he had been clear-headed most of the time he was sick and that he had suffered more in consequence than ever before. I can believe that. Furthermore, the purser of the steamer, who knew him, corroborated it.

Grayson had gone to Venezuela some months before, with a vague determination to strike into the jungle country in the direction of the Guianas, in the hope of finding good specimens of *Cattleya*. The gentlemen who were backing him, well-known collectors in this country and England, wanted new plants. He had never tried this field, but he had every reason to believe that it might prove prolific in orchids, inasmuch as the climate and the physical conditions were favorable to their growth. In a café in Caracas, however, he heard a tale which caused him to change all his plans.

This tale, or, rather, legend, had filtered into the city through the medium of up-country planters, and had been imparted to them by tame Indians, who in turn, had heard it from their wild brethren of the jungle. It had to do with a mysterious place known as "El Lugar de los Flores Venenosos" (The Place of the Poisonous Flowers), a great clump of weirdly beautiful flowers, exhaling a deadly perfume, which was said to be located in the dense wilderness that lies about the headwaters of the Orinoco. This perfume was noticeable two days off; within a day's march it was sickening; and by the time a man was within sight of the flowers, he was overcome by the intense smell.

With the instinct of the orchid-hunter, Grayson divined that the legend implied the presence of his quarry. He scouted the melodramatic features of the tale, setting them down to the imagination of the countless untutored individuals through whom it had passed, and without more ado he set to work organizing an expedition. Strange to say, he preferred to be the only white man, although he took with him an old half-breed who had been his companion on several other expeditions, and a large train of Indian porters.

AT THE outset, Grayson had only the vaguest notion of the location of "El Lugar de los Flores Venenosos." Men who had heard of it swept their arms in a half circle toward the vast stretches of wilderness that lie between the headwaters of the Orinoco and the Andes. That was the sum of their knowledge. He had his own theory, however, for he had explored portions of this region in the past; and, as things turned out, he was right; for after leaving the river at the point where practical navigation came to an end he struck a village of Indians who were able to tell him that the "The Place," as they termed it mysteriously, was but fifteen days' march ahead. For preposterous reward, they even agreed to furnish him with a guide.

Two weeks passed without incidents out of the ordinary—for that region. To be sure, they were shot at by hostile Indians, wild beasts at times attacked them, the fetid breath of the jungle weakened them. But these things were as nothing to the dread experience that capped the march.

One morning there was a perceptible odor of flowers in the air; by noon it had increased considerably. When they camped that night, the jungle-smells had been entirely supplanted. Their nostrils were filled with the cloying scent. A number of the Indians refused to go any farther, but Grayson, the half-breed and a half dozen of the stanchest porters pushed on in the morning. The perfume grew heavier and heavier as they advanced. It was rankly sweet, musky, oppressive, deadening to the senses. Stand in front of a thick clump of *Cattleya trianea*, in any hothouse, and you will notice the same scent.

Finally, one of the porters collapsed in his tracks. Another went down, and another.

Grayson could feel his senses leaving him, although he struggled on. He said he had never smoked opium, but he imagined that his sensations must have resembled those of an habitual user. He was sure that he could see the flowers, huge, colorous, many-hued clusters of them, the most magnificent collection of orchids in the world, gleaming enticingly through the jungle trees; and then he, himself, collapsed. When he regained consciousness they were back at the camp where they had left the balance of the porters. Two of the men who had accompanied him were dead; another was mad. He and the rest, who had brought him off, were horribly sick.

With the madness of despair, he begged his men to try again with him. But they refused. He admitted, when he was telling the story to me, that they were wise. Even at that distance the musky perfume was sickening. The whole party were unstrung. A number were hysterical. The continued effect of the scent was almost intoxicating, so they turned back.

Their way thither had been fraught with perils. It was a Sunday excursion compared with the march homeward. The baleful influence of the flowers followed close at their heels. It was always with them, like a human vengeance. They were persecuted by fever; jaguars and serpents took their toll; the blow-guns of the Indians, the stunted people of the woods, slew with poisoned arrows. In the end, a handful staggered out on the banks of the Orinoco and sought their way toward the frontier of civilization. Grayson was sick for months after he reached Caracas. He was still sick when he reached New York.

"Yes," he concluded, "I've had enough, I guess. I've taken my last trip. But," he added, wistfully, "it's too bad, for I think I could do it another time. I've got a plan. You see, we approached the flowers with the wind blowing right in our faces. Now, how if we were to circle them and come down on the windward side? We might get close enough to take some."

It was a mad plan, but I'm sure he was equal to trying it. He told me that he was additionally certain it was practicable because an old Indian had told him the flowers frequently shifted their position, according to the direction in which the pollen was blown. At any rate, he disappeared. I had occasion to look him up, in seeking some information, not long ago, and his landlady informed me he had gone. "I think he went to Cuba or Mexico or one of them places," she said.

III

ANOTHER one of the six was Carrière. He was big and quiet, with a deceptive placidity—not at all the sort of man you expected to meet if you had ever heard of him. When I first met him he had just come back from his latest venture, the one which I am going to tell about. It would be impossible to tell the story of his whole life in a single article. He has written several books about his adventures, and I am sure he has not told the half of what he could.

Carrière is a misfit; he was born five centuries too late. In the Middle Ages, he would have been a second Peter the Hermit. To-day he is practically unknown; those who have heard of him put him down for a dreamer and visionary. Sometimes, he tries to preach a crusade, but he seldom succeeds to any degree, and his splendid schemes are invariably knocked on the head. I consider him the apostle of the impracticable. Strictly speaking, he is a failure, a lamentable failure; his store of worldly goods is negligible; he has never been decorated by foreign parliaments; his books have no wide circulation. But I think that I would not mind being his kind of a failure. He has failed gloriously, as a matter of principle, because he has scorned to succeed. You smile. Wait a while.

When Carrière was quite a young man—he is thirty-five or so, I should say—he started roaming. He has been roaming ever since. He is married, now, but that makes no difference, for his wife has the same ideas, the same inspirations, as himself. Her father was a famous Nihilist, and she herself has been outlawed by the Russian Government.

Like many other adventurers, Carrière ran away to sea. Like all who have ever done so, he paid for his fun in sweat and agony. He was a sailor before the mast for several years, on coasting vessels, tramp steamers, trading schooners in the Far East. He was in the Philippines when the war broke out, and he was captured by the insurgents and held prisoner for several months. He was engaged in vague, ill-

formulated revolutionary plots; he joined secret societies that have for their aim the emancipation of British India; and he did many other things in many other places that took him down into the deeps of life.

FINALLY, he drifted to the Balkans, about the time Macedonia was in the throes of the terrible revolt against Turkish rule. Carrière became intensely interested in this blind struggle of a Christian people for freedom, and he determined to let the world know some of the inside details of prevailing conditions. He believed, too, that he could be of help to the revolutionary chiefs in perfecting their organization in the villages and towns of the five *vilayets*.

But he understood perfectly that he would be of no use to the Macedonians as an interpreter of their sorrows until he knew their language and their ideals thoroughly and at first hand.

It was the woman who afterward became his wife who convinced him of this. She was living out her exile in a little Bulgarian town, and it was she who taught him to speak Bulgarian and helped him to secure the sincere regard of the leaders of the insurrection.

She saw to it that before he crossed the Turkish frontier he knew the Bulgarians as few other Westerners have come to know them. And if you ever visit the Balkans, you will find, as I found when I followed him there a few years later, that he was known from Sofia to Salonika, by old men and young men, women and children, doctors, lawyers, priests and peasants. They know him and they worship his memory. Carrière has been to the Macedonians, in some measure, what Byron was to the Greeks.

Altogether, Carrière gave up four years of his life to the cause of Macedonia, and I know he never grudged the time, although when he abandoned his unequal struggle he was discouraged and cast down. The trust of the people he won from the start. Their principal chiefs, the members of the dreaded Committee of Three in Sofia, accepted him as an equal and admitted him to their secrets.

He was made a *voivode* and held a special commission as *redacteur*, or inspector, with power only less than that of the Committee. Those years of his life were sheer romance, as much so as anything Stevenson ever wrote. He fought with the *comitajiis* against the Turks; he helped save villages from rapine and massacre; he visited garrison towns with the secret agents, and plotted in attics and back yards with the local committees.

BUT the great end he sought to attain, the end toward which all his energies were directed, he could not reach. He had realized at the beginning of his efforts that the one salvation of the revolt lay in the construction of an adequate organization, with leaders who could be absolutely depended upon. As usual with secret revolutionary bodies, the organization, whose ramifications extended throughout Macedonia, had its weak spots, some of them pitiably weak. It had its weak brethren, also. Betrayals were more frequent than was pleasant, for the Turkish rewards for information were large.

Carrière just missed success. Link by link, patiently, with almost unbelievable toil, he built up his structure. He did not know what rest meant. From one village he would hurry to another, traveling always by night, in order to avoid the *askare* patrols which were constantly on the watch for him. Occasionally he was caught and hemmed in, and then a hurry call would be sent the rounds of the district, the *chetas* would mobilize and Carrière and his comrades would fight their way through.

These battles served their turn, along with all the other experiences he had to undergo. They showed which men could be trusted and how far. Carrière was always looking for reliable men to advance to power, and in this way he made himself many enemies—which may have had something to do with the last act of his drama. In the course of nearly two years' work he had carried out his entire plan of organization, except in Salonika and some of the territory around that city. He left that to the last, because it was the most difficult task, and he thought that, with the prestige of what he had accomplished, success would be more easy. The chief of the local committee in Salonika had rather a sinister reputation. It had never been proved against him, but there were rumors of blackmail.

For several weeks, Carrière lay in hiding in one of the suburbs of the city, receiving prominent members of the committee and

talking over the new schemes he advocated. He had no suspicions at first, although he did not like the local *voivode*, and it came as a wholly unexpected shock when his secretary was shot down on the streets at night, after he had ventured out for a brief walk. The local committee claimed that a Greek had done it, but Carrière was suspicious.

Two nights passed, and then the old woman in whose house he was hiding came to him with a scared look on her face. She had heard two men talking in her garden about *askares* and the approaches of the house. One of these men was the local *voivode*. That was enough for Carrière.

He left the house in broad daylight, trusting entirely to luck; and on his way out of the city he met detachments of troops marching to surround his hiding-place. They halted him, but a Bulgarian girl, a friend of his future wife, who was standing near by, claimed him as her brother, and he was allowed to go.

Fortunately she was too wise to let him stay in the city, for that night the Turks, acting on information supplied by the traitorous chief, arrested all the men who had been Carrière's friends in his fight for better organization. They struck simultaneously throughout the *vilayet*, and by morning the machine which Carrière had constructed with such toil and patience was utterly wrecked. A small clique of selfish chiefs had preferred to betray their compatriots rather than lose their power.

Can you blame him for being utterly discouraged? He decided that Macedonia was not ready for him. Perhaps it was as well, he reasoned—there were other things he could do. So he and his few faithful comrades fought their way through the mountains to the Bulgarian frontier, winning safety from their pursuers by the skin of their teeth. In Bulgaria he married the Russian girl who had been his principal helper and incentive, and cast about for some new task.

He had been leading an entirely futile, useless existence, barren of outstanding achievements or material success. But he knew men. Great heavens, how he knew men! Suddenly he realized this fact, and decided to return to New York and turn his knowledge to account. He would be a second Kipling. Well, he came back to New York and got a job at twenty dollars a week on the staff of a newspaper. He was fired a week later, because he refused to write a story laudatory of a steal some big interests were attempting to put through. Then he got a job as a street-car conductor, but after a few months he and his wife disappeared. Perhaps, they are trying to free some other unenlightened race!

IV

YOUNG Ford was as different from Carrière or the others as a man well could be. I have known Ford for some years, and I think he is, without exception, the cheekiest man I have ever encountered. For one thing, he is a newspaper man—when he is anything, that is. Ford never works unless he has to, and he always makes sure that any position he accepts does not entail undue effort, mental or physical.

This is the story of what I consider to be his greatest exploit. It is not by any means the only instance of his sublime impudence. Indeed, the man is never happier than when he is chucking the world under the chin or throwing loaded dice with Fate. It is not ordinary laziness that keeps him from working. He plays a game with Destiny to see whether he must work or not. When he works, Destiny holds trumps; but when he can lie at his ease, then he takes the rubber.

It was several years ago that Ford came to me and said he was going to South America. By means unknown he had got together about two thousand dollars, and he fancied that he could make at least as much as he spent by doing special descriptive articles of his travels.

His one mistake was in electing to go by way of Europe, more especially, by way of Paris. I knew the hold Paris had on Ford, so I was not surprised at the outcome—although I did not hear the full story of his wanderings for many months. We knew he had sailed from England for Rio in the cabin de luxe of an English packet-boat. From week to week, for possibly two months, we received letters from him. Then came the silence.

The silence continued for six months, until one morning I received a note written on American Line paper and postmarked Southampton. It was signed by Ford.

Shall arrive on Philadelphia, within forty-eight hours after you receive this. Short of cash. Do you remember that ten dollars you owe me?

That was impudence for you! I should have known who wrote that note, without a signature. However, I clapped a ten-dollar bill in an envelope and mailed it promptly. A week later Ford dropped in to see me.

"Much obliged for the cash, old man," he said. "It came in handy. You see, they trimmed me beautifully in Paris, and I started out for Rio with my steamship ticket and barely enough coin to last me three weeks. In fact, when I got to the Chilean frontier town across the Andes, I was strapped. That made me sick of the whole job, and I decided it was time to head for home. There was a prince of a British consul there, who loaned me a ten-spot and got me a pass for donkey transportation across the mountains to the Argentine railhead.

"Just by blind luck, I'd chipped acquaintance with the chief engineer of the construction gang on the Argentine side, and so when I hit him for a pass to Buenos Ayres, he ponied up like a good one. I remember I showed him a couple of the latest wrinkles in bridge a fellow on the boat to Rio had taught me. Well, that brought me to a seaport, but I had to live; so I got a week's job on an English newspaper in Buenos Ayres, filling in for a chap who was sick. At the end of the week they cut me loose with fifty dollars paper and a thirst.

"I was feeling pretty disconsolate and I went into a café near the water front to forget myself for an hour or two. That was the time when Brazil and the Argentine were seeing which could build warships quickest, you know, and there was a big Braziliano sitting in the place, with his feet up, passing remarks to the occupants in general. As soon as he saw me, he concentrated his attention, apparently on the supposition that because I was small I must be easy. I stood about two sentences and then I went for him. We were rolling promiscuously around the restaurant, and I was getting a bit the worst of it, when a little man with an arm like a steam-flail came through the door. After he got through with my Brazilian friend there were no scraps to be picked up.

"Well, we shook hands and told each other we'd always been longing to meet, and afterwards we had a drink. The little man was a Britisher, captain of a tramp steamer due to sail the next afternoon, and when I told him of my troubles he clapped me on the back and offered me free passage to Rotterdam. 'I'll have to put you down on the books as cabin-boy or steward,' he said. 'But you'll do no work. Come as my guest; I'll be glad to have you.' He was a prince, that skipper. Fed me at his own table, gave me his own cigars and wine, and when we reached Rotterdam he staked me to Paris.

"Aunt Jane was in Paris, fortunately for me, and I think she was so glad at the prospect of getting me back to America that she divied up without any side-remarks. Owing to the munificence of yourself and a number of others, I was able upon landing to go to a good hotel, where I am at present stopping. But in a very few days I am afraid that I shall be compelled to seek work. Do you know any one who can use a clever, resourceful young man?"

V

I NEVER really knew Chatton, the fifth of my vagabonds. I had been dining at a club in Piccadilly with an engineering friend, and as we were passing out through the club parlors my friend drew me aside to make room for a big, broad-shouldered man wearing blue spectacles. "That's Chatton," he whispered. The name meant nothing to me, but I felt an inclination to be introduced. We chatted trivialities for a moment or two, and then the big man felt his way toward the dining-room, and my friend and I passed out into the sunlight and bustle of the street.

"Pray, who is Chatton?" I asked. "You spoke as if he were some celebrity I ought to know."

"No," said my friend, "scarcely that. I took it for granted you had heard me speak of him. Chatton was one of the principal assistants in the construction of the new trans-Andean line. He's always had bad eyes, and the doctors told him he ought not to work above the snow-line, but that wouldn't do for Chatton. He wants to be where the fun is. You see, engineering as a science means little to him. It's the game he likes—the fight to overmaster some problem. Poor Chatton! Whenever there was a desperate job to be done, he was bound to be on it—and all for a beggarly six or seven pounds a week, I suppose."

"Why do you say 'poor Chatton'?" I asked.

"Because he'll never get over this latest

eye-trouble. He got it from the snow-glare, just as the doctors said he would."

"But what will the man do?" I exclaimed. "How is he going to live?"

"He'll live—survive, rather," rejoined my friend bitterly. "His people have money. But he'll never work again. Every one who knows him is awfully cut up. And he feels it, too, although he's deuced plucky about it."

VI

IF YOU have been in the habit of frequenting police-courts or cheap lodging-houses it is possible that you have met John Kelly. His name may not have been John Kelly when he favored you with his acquaintance, but that would not matter, for his personality is unchangeable. The thought of him always brings to my mind the sight of the hypodermic needle and twitching fingers. He was an unconscionable rogue. Of that I have no doubt. And I am sure he would readily have stabbed me in the back for the price of a few ounces of drugs. Yet, for all that, the man had a certain whimsical impracticality that lifted him above his kind.

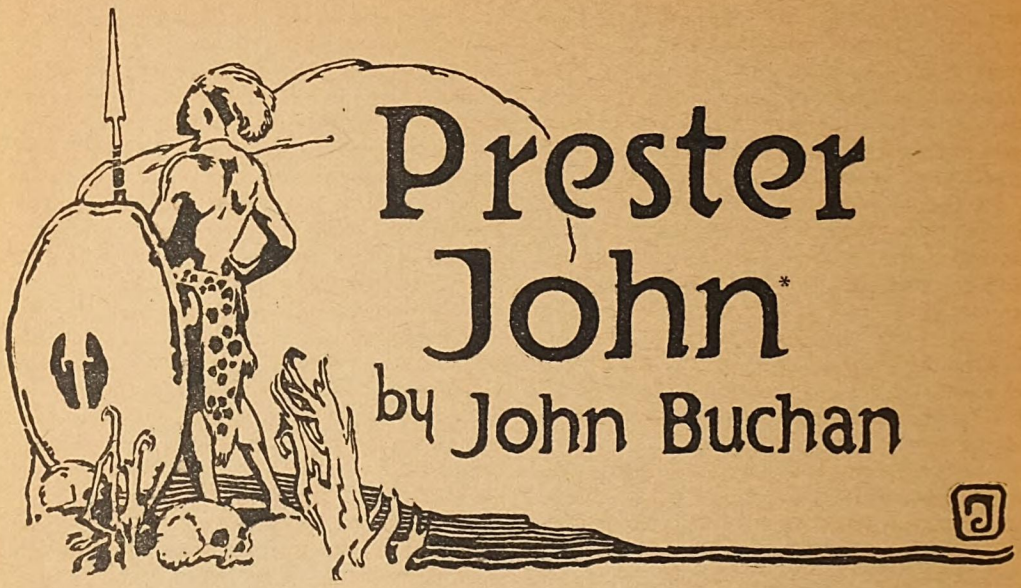
He was small and shifty-eyed, sodden of face, with straggling hair and deep-cut lines, altogether unprepossessing—a man you would have avoided on a dark night. When he spoke he startled you, for he had the precise accent of an educated man; and if he was given just enough dope to keep his intellect spurred, he would talk almost brilliantly. Literature, of a kind, he knew better than most men. With Oscar Wilde, Poe, De Quincey and the writers of the decadent school he was thoroughly conversant.

Just who he was, I don't know. I don't believe anybody ever knew. A probation officer introduced him to me as an interesting human specimen, admitting that he knew nothing concerning him save that he could be reached by messages to a particular saloon and that he seemed to understand the underworld almost as well as Josiah Flynt.

As near as I could make out, from stray admissions Kelly made to me, he gave up a reputable position in life to undertake a study of the psychology of tramps and thieves. He used to speak with genuine pride of his researches, and he was particularly proud of what he termed "his life-work"—the compilation of a dictionary of thieves' slang, together with a compendium of the rules of house-breaking and safe-cracking. Nobody was ever permitted to get an extended view of this. For a dollar or two, now and then, when the man was hard up, he would permit one to copy out a few stray phrases; but he was very suspicious, as a rule, and believed that every one was in a conspiracy to tear the fruit of his years of labor away from him.

Several times newspapers and publishing houses made him offers for his manuscript—a bundle of greasy papers that had been through the evils of scores of different lodging-houses, but he would consider none of them, because he regarded all as being of insufficient importance. He thought that his work should be handled by one of the foremost firms in the country, and that it should be received and treated with all the reverence due to such a masterpiece. He meant it, too. Money would charm him up to a certain point; but after that he was adamant.

What became of him I never heard. He drifted away, his manuscript with him, to the end steadfastly refusing the propositions that he regarded as little less than insulting. You can't blame the man, for, aside from the fact that his brain was a little unhinged by his excesses, he fully realized the awful price he had paid for his unique knowledge. Of all vagabonds who failed to count the cost, I think he paid the steepest price.



Prester John*

by John Buchan

SYNOPSIS: David Crawfurd and two other lads surprise in a pagan incantation a black man who has come to a Scotch village as a wandering Christian minister. At nineteen Crawfurd goes to South Africa to be the trade-agent at Blaauwildebeestefontein. On the voyage he again meets the black man, the Rev. John Laputa, in company with Henriques, a Portuguese. His vague suspicions become stronger at Blaauwildebeestefontein and point to a native uprising headed by Laputa, who claims descent from the great African emperor, Prester John, and holds the necklace called the Sacred Snake. In his explorations he catches sight of a mysterious and aged native in the Rooirand, a place said by the natives to be haunted. Arcoll, captain in the British Secret Service, arrives and Crawfurd goes to Umvelos', where Laputa and Henriques are to meet, to learn what he can, leaving his drunken superior Japp and the schoolmaster Wardlaw with Arcoll, who has secretly organized measures for armed defense. He meets Laputa and pretends to be a fool.

CHAPTER XII

THE STORE AT UMVELOS'

I SAT down on a chair and labored to collect my thoughts. Laputa had gone and would return sooner or later with Henriques. If I was to remain alive till morning, both of them must be convinced that I was harmless. Laputa was probably of this opinion, but Henriques would recognize me, and I had no wish to have that yellow miscreant investigating my character. There was only one way out of it—I must appear incapably drunk. I found only an old bottle half full of methylated spirits, and for the rest I must trust to my meager gifts as an actor.

Supposing I escaped suspicion, Laputa and Henriques would meet in the outhouse, and I must find some means of overhearing them. Here I was fairly baffled.

Suddenly I thought of the cellar which we had built below the store. There was an entrance by a trap-door behind the counter, and another in the outhouse. My hope was that the second was among the barrels stored there. I shut the outer door, prized up the trap and dropped into the vault. Lighting match after match, I crawled to the other end and tried to lift the door. It would not stir, so I guessed that the barrels were on the top of it. Back to the outhouse I went and found that, sure enough, a heavy packing-case was standing in a corner. I fixed it slightly open, so as to let me hear, and so arranged the odds and ends round about it that no one looking from the floor of the outhouse would guess at its existence.

This done I went back to the store. The cellar had made me pretty dirty, and I added some new daubs to my face. Then I cunningly disposed the methylated spirits in the places most likely to smell—I burned a little on the floor, I spilt some on the counter

and on my hands, and I let it dribble over my coat. In five minutes I had made the room stink like a shebeen. I loosened the collar of my shirt, and when I looked at myself in the cover of my watch I saw a specimen of debauchery which would have done credit to a Saturday night's police cell.

By this time the sun had gone down, but I thought it better to kindle no light. I sat on the counter while the minutes passed, and I confess I found the time of waiting very trying for my courage. Presently it seemed to me that a sound came from behind the store—the sound of horses' feet, and then I heard human voices. The riders had tied up their horses to a tree and were coming nearer.

I sprawled gracefully on the counter, the empty bottle in my hand, and my eyes fixed anxiously on the square of the door which was filled with the blue glimmer of the late twilight. The square darkened, and two men peered in. Colin growled from below the counter, but with one hand I held the scruff of his neck.

"Hullo," I said, "isn't that my black friend? Awf'ly shorry, old man, but I've f'nish'd th' whisky. The ba-o-ottle 'sh empty," and I waved it upside down with an imbecile giggle.

Henriques laughed an ugly laugh. "We had better make certain of him," he said.

The two argued for a minute, and then Laputa seemed to prevail. The door was shut, and the key, which I had left in the lock, turned on me.

I GAVE them five minutes to get to the outhouse and settle to business. Then I opened the trap, got into the cellar and crawled to the other end. A ray of light was coming through the partially-raised door, and through a gap I had left I could see the two men sitting on the two cases I had provided for them, a lantern set between them.

"I let Sikitola's men draw first blood," Henriques was saying. "They needed it to screw up their courage. Now they are as wild as Umbooni's."

Laputa asked a question.

"It was the Dutchmen, who were out on the Koodoo flats with their cattle. Man, it's no good being squeamish! If we had not done it, the best of their horses would now be over the Berg to give warning. I did for the old swine, Coetzee, with my own hands. Once he set his dogs at me, and I don't forget an injury."

Laputa must have disapproved, for Henriques' voice grew high. "Run the show the way you please," he cried, "but don't blame me if you make a hash of it! Do you think you are going to work a revolution on skim milk? If I had my will, I would go in and stick a knife in the drunken hog next door!"

"He is safe enough," Laputa replied. "He won't get far on his road home."

This was pleasant hearing for me, but I scarcely thought of myself. I was consumed with a passion of fury against the murdering yellow devil. With Laputa I was not angry; he was an open enemy, playing a fair game. But as I thought of my kindly old friends, lying butchered with their kinsfolk out in the bush, hot tears of rage came to my eyes. I prayed for one thing only, that God in His mercy would give me the chance of settling with Henriques!

Maps were spread beside them, and Laputa's delicate forefinger was tracing a route. Apparently they were to keep in the plains till they had crossed the Klein Labongo and the Letaba. I thought I caught the name of the ford of the latter—it sounded like Dupree's Drift. The force would leave the bush, ascend the Berg by the glen of the Groot Letaba, and the first halt would be called at a place called Inanda's Kraal.

"Meantime," said Laputa, "there is the gathering at the Ntabakaikonjwa. It will take us three hours' hard riding to get there."

WHERE on earth was the Ntabakaikonjwa? It must be the native name for the Rooirand, for, after all, Laputa was not likely to use the Dutch for his own sacred place.

"Nothing has been forgotten. The men are massed below the cliffs, and only the chiefs and the great *indunas* will enter the Place of the Snake. The door will be guarded, and only the password will get a man through. That word is 'Immanuel,' which means, 'God with us.'"

"Well, when we get there, what happens?" Henriques asked with a laugh. "What kind of magic will you spring on us?"

There was a strong contrast between the flippant tone of the Portuguese and the grave voice which answered him:

"The Keeper of the Snake will open the holy place, and bring forth the *Isetembiso*

sami [the very sacred thing]. As the leader of my people I will assume the collar of Umkulunkulu in the name of our God and the spirits of the great dead."

"But you don't propose to lead the march in a necklace of rubies!" said Henriques, with a sudden eagerness in his voice.

Again Laputa spoke gravely and, as it were, abstractedly. I heard the voice of one whose mind was fixed on a far horizon:

"When I am acclaimed king, I restore the Snake to its Keeper, and swear never to clasp it on my neck till I have led my people to victory."

"I see," said Henriques. "What about the Purification you mentioned?"

I had missed this before and listened earnestly.

"The vows we take in the Holy Place bind us till we are purged of them at Inanda's Kraal. Till then no blood must be shed and no flesh eaten. It was the fashion of our forefathers."

"Well, I think you've taken on a pretty risky job," Henriques said. "You propose to travel a hundred miles, binding yourself not to strike a blow. It is simply putting yourself at the mercy of any police patrol."

"There will be no patrol," Laputa replied. "Our march will be as secret and as swift as death. I have made my preparations."

"But suppose you met with opposition," the Portuguese persisted. "Would the rule hold?"

"If any try to stop us, we shall tie them hand and foot and carry them with us. Their fate will be worse than if they had been slain in battle."

"I see," said Henriques, whistling through his teeth. "Well, before we start this vow business, I think I'll go back and settle that storekeeper."

Laputa shook his head. "Will you be serious and hear me? We have no time to knife harmless fools. Before we start for Ntabakaikonjwa I must have from you the figures of the arming in the south. That is the one thing which remains to be settled."

I am certain these figures would have been most interesting, but I never heard them. My feet were getting cramped with standing on some loose bricks, and I inadvertently moved them. The bricks came down with a rattle, and I, unfortunately, in slipping clutched at the trap. This was too much for my frail prop, and the door slammed down with a great noise!

HERE was a nice business for the eavesdropper! I scurried along the passage as stealthily as I could and clambered back into the store, while I heard the sound of Laputa and Henriques ferreting among the barrels. I managed to throttle Colin and prevent his barking, but I could not get the confounded trap to close behind me. Something had jammed in it, and it remained half a foot open.

I heard the two approaching the door, and I did the best thing that occurred to me. I pulled Colin over the trap, rolled on the top of him, and began to snore heavily as if in a drunken slumber.

The key was turned and the gleam of a lantern was thrown on the wall.

"By ——, he's gone!" I heard Henriques say.

"He is here." Laputa said. "That's his snoring behind the counter."

I felt that a lantern was flashed on me, and that the two men were peering down at the heap on the half-opened trap. I think that was the worst minute I ever spent.

"He is safe enough," Laputa said, after what seemed to me an eternity. "The noise was only the rats among the barrels."

I thanked my Maker that they had not noticed the other trap door!

"All the same, I think I'll make him safer," said Henriques.

Laputa seemed to have caught him by the arm. "Come back and get to business!" he said. "I've told you I'll have no more murder. You will do as I tell you, Mr. Henriques!"

I did not catch the answer, but the two went out and locked the door. I patted the outraged Colin, and got to my feet with an aching side where the confounded lid of the trap had been pressing. There was no time to lose, for the two in the outhouse would soon be setting out, and I must be before them.

I wrote a message on a leaf from my pocketbook. I told of the plans I had overheard, and especially I mentioned Dupree's Drift on the Letaba. I added that I was going to the Rooirand to find the secret of the cave, and in one final sentence implored Arcoll to do justice on the Portuguese. I carefully tied the paper with string below the collar of the dog.

My horse was stabled in the shed, close to the outhouse, and the sound of leading him out would most certainly bring Laputa and Henriques to the door. I thought of slipping back to the outhouse and trying to shoot the two men as they came out. But I reflected that, before I could get them both, one or the other would probably shoot me. Besides, I had a queer sort of compunction about killing Laputa. I understood, now, why Arcoll had stayed his hand.

Then I remembered the horses tied up in the bush. I ran round the end of the store and into the thicket. There, tied up to a merula-tree, were two of the finest beasts I had seen in Africa. I selected the better, an Africander stallion of the *blaauw-schimmel* or blue roan type, which is famous for speed and endurance.

Then I spoke to Colin. "Home with you!" I said. "Home, old man, as if you were running down a *tsessebe!*"

The dog seemed puzzled. "Home!" I said again, pointing west in the direction of the Berg. "Home, you brute!"

And then he understood. He gave one low whine, and cast a reproachful eye on me and the blue roan. Then he turned, and with his head down set off with great lopes on the tracks of the road I had ridden in the morning.

A second later and I was in the saddle, riding hell-for-leather for the north.

CHAPTER XIII

I GO TREASURE-HUNTING

I HAD looked at my watch before I started and seen that it was just after eight o'clock. I had a great horse under me and less than fifty miles to cover. Midnight should see me at the cave. With the password I would gain admittance, and would wait there for Laputa and Henriques. Then, if my luck held, I should see the inner workings of the mystery which had puzzled me ever since the Kirkcaple shore. No doubt I should be roughly treated, tied up prisoner and carried with the army when the march began. But till Inanda's Kraal my life was safe, and before that came the ford of the Letaba. Colin would carry my message to Arcoll, and at the Drift the tables would be turned on Laputa's men.

Looking back in cold blood it seems the craziest chain of accidents to count on for preservation. A dozen possibilities might have shattered any link of it. Yet it was in no discomfort of mind that I swung along the moonlit path to the north. The first honors in the game had fallen to me. I knew more about Laputa than any man living, save Henriques; I had my finger on the central pulse of the rebellion. There was hidden treasure ahead of me—a great necklace of rubies, Henriques had said. Nay, there must be more, I argued. This cave of the Rooirand was the headquarters of the rising, and there must be stored their funds —diamonds and the gold they had been bartered for. Once I had been high-minded and thought of my duty to my country, but in that night ride I fear that what I thought of was my duty to enrich David Crawfurd. One other purpose simmered in my head. Indeed, I think that was the strongest motive for my escapade. I think I would rather have had the Portuguese's throat in my hands than the collar of Prester John!

But behind my thoughts was one master-feeling, that Providence had given me my chance and I must make the most of it. Perhaps the Calvinism of my father's preaching had unconsciously taken grip of my soul.

Gradually a hazy wall of purple began to shimmer before me, apparently very far off. I knew the ramparts of the Rooirand, and let my *schimmel* feel my knees in his ribs. Within an hour I should be at the cliff's foot.

I had trusted for safety to the password, but, as it turned out, I owed my life mainly to my horse; for, a mile or so from the cliffs I came to the fringes of a great army. The bush was teeming with men, and I saw horses picketed in bunches, and a multitude of Cape carts and light wagons. It was like a colossal gathering for *naachtmaal* at a Dutch *dorp*, but every man was black.

I saw through a corner of my eye that they were armed with guns, though many carried in addition their spears and shields. Their first impulse was to stop me. I saw guns fly to shoulders, and a rush towards the path. The boldest game was the safest, so I dug my heels into the *schimmel* and shouted for a passage.

"Make way!" I cried in Kaffir. "I bear a message from the Inkulu! Clear out, you dogs!"

They recognized the horse and fell back with a salute. Had I but known it, the beast was famed from the Zambesi to the

Cape. It was their king's own charger I rode, and who dared question such a warrant? I heard the word pass through the bush, and all down the road I got the salute. In that moment I fervently thanked my stars that I had got away first, for there would have been no coming second for me.

AT THE cliff-foot I found a double line of warriors who had the appearance of a royal guard, for all were tall men with leopard-skin cloaks. Their rifle-barrels glinted in the moonlight, and the sight sent a cold shiver down my back. Above them among the scrub and along the lower slopes of the *kranzes* I could see further lines with the same gleaming weapons. The Place of the Snake was in strong hands that night!

I dismounted and called for a man to take my horse. Two of the guards stepped forward in silence and took the bridle. This left the track to the cave open, and with as stiff a back as I could command, but a sadly fluttering heart, I marched through the ranks.

The track was lined with guards, all silent and rigid as graven images. My appearance scarcely fitted the dignity of a royal messenger, and my mind was no better than my body, for, now that I had arrived, I found my courage gone. Had it been possible I would have turned tail and fled. My knees rubbed against each other, and I thought that no man had ever been in more deadly danger.

At the entrance to the gorge the guards ceased and I went on alone. Here there was no moonlight, and I had to feel my way by the sides. I moved very slowly, wondering how soon I should find the end my folly demanded.

Suddenly a hand was laid on my breast and a voice demanded, "The word?"

"Immanuel," I said hoarsely.

Then unseen hands took both my arms, and I was led farther into the darkness.

In the darkness I could see nothing, but I judged that we stopped before the stone slab which, as I remembered, filled the extreme end of the gorge. My guide did something with the right-hand wall, and I felt myself being drawn into a kind of passage. It was so narrow that two could not go abreast, and so low that the creepers above scraped my hair.

Then we began to ascend steps, still in utter darkness, and a great booming fell on my ear. It was the falling river which had scared me on my former visit, and I marveled that I had not heard it sooner. Presently we came out into a gleam of moonlight, and I saw that we were inside the gorge and far above the slab. We followed a narrow shelf on its left side (or "true right," as mountaineers would call it) until we could go no farther.

Then we did a terrible thing. Across the gorge, which here was at its narrowest, stretched a slab of stone. Far, far below I caught the moonlight on a mass of hurrying waters. This was our bridge, and though I have a good head for crags, I confess I grew dizzy as we turned to cross it. Perhaps it was broader than it looked; at any rate, my guides seemed to have no fear, and strode over it as if it were a highway, while I followed in a sweat of fright. Once on the other side I was handed over to a second pair of guides, who led me down a high passage, running into the heart of the mountain.

THE boom of the river sank and rose as the passage twined. Soon I saw a gleam of light ahead which was not the moon. It grew larger, until suddenly the roof rose and I found myself in a gigantic chamber. The place was brightly lighted with torches stuck round the wall, and a great fire burned at the farther end.

But the wonder was on the left side where the floor ceased in a chasm. The left wall was one sheet of water, where the river fell from the heights into the infinite depth below. The torches and the fire made the sheer stream glow and sparkle like the battlements of the Heavenly City. I have never seen any sight so beautiful or so strange, and for a second my breath stopped in admiration.

There were two hundred men or more in the chamber, but so huge was the place that they seemed only a little company. They sat on the ground in a circle, with their eyes fixed on the fire and on a figure which stood before it. The glow revealed the old man I had seen, on that morning a month before, moving toward the cave. He stood as if in a trance, straight as a tree, with his arms crossed on his breast. A robe of some shining white stuff fell from his shoulders and was clasped round his middle by a broad circle of gold. His head was shaven, and on

his forehead was bound a disc of carved gold. I saw from his gaze that his old eyes were blind.

"Who comes?" he asked as I entered.

"A messenger from the Inkulu," I spoke up boldly. "He follows soon with the white man, Henriques."

Then I sat down in the back row of the circle to await events. I noticed that my neighbor was the fellow 'Mwanga whom I had kicked out of the store. Happily I was so dusty that he could scarcely recognize me, but I kept my face turned away from him. What with the light and the warmth, the drone of the water, the silence of the folk, and my mental and physical stress, I grew drowsy and all but slept.

CHAPTER XIV

THE CAVE OF THE ROOIRAND

I WAS roused by a sudden movement. The whole assembly stood up, and each man clapped his right hand to his brow and then raised it high. A low murmur of "Inkulu!" rose above the din of the water. Laputa strode down the hall with Henriques limping behind him. They certainly did not suspect my presence in the cave, nor did Laputa show any ruffling of his calm.

The old man whom I took to be the Priest advanced toward Laputa with his hands raised over his head. A pace before they met he halted, and Laputa went on his knees before him. He placed his hands on his head and spoke some words which I could not understand. I think I had forgotten my own peril and was enthralled by the majesty of the place.

Laputa stripped off his leopard-skin till he stood stark, a noble form of a man. Then the Priest sprinkled some herbs on the fire, and a thin smoke rose to the roof. The smell was the same I had smelled on the Kirkcaple shore, sweet, sharp and strange enough to chill the marrow. And round the fire went the Priest in widening and contracting circles just as on that Sabbath evening in Spring.

Once more we were sitting on the ground, all except Laputa and the Keeper. Henriques was squatting in the front row, a tiny creature among so many burly savages. Laputa stood with bent head in the centre.

Then a song began, a wild incantation, in which all joined. The old Priest would speak some words, and the reply came in barbaric music. The words meant nothing to me; they must have been in some tongue long since dead; but the music told its own tale. It spoke of old kings and great battles, of splendid palaces and strong battlements, of queens white as ivory, of death and life, love and hate, joy and sorrow. It spoke, too, of desperate things, mysteries of horror long shut to the world. No Kaffir ever forged that ritual. It must have come straight from Prester John or Sheba's Queen or whoever ruled in Africa when time was young.

I was horribly impressed. Devouring curiosity and a lurking, nameless fear filled my mind. My old dread had gone. I was not afraid now of Kaffir guns, but of the black magic of which Laputa had the key.

The incantation died away, but still herbs were flung on the fire, till the smoke rose in a great cloud through which the Priest loomed misty and huge. Out of the smoke-wreaths his voice came high and strange.

He was asking Laputa questions to which came answers in that rich voice which on board the liner had preached the gospel of Christ. The tongue I did not know, and I doubt whether my neighbors were in better case. It must have been some old sacred language, Phenician, Sabæan, I know not what, which had survived in the rite of the Snake.

Then came silence, while the fire died down and the smoke eddied away in wreaths toward the river. The Priest's lips moved as if in prayer: of Laputa I saw only the back, and his head was bared.

SUDDENLY a rapt cry broke from the Keeper. "God has spoken!" he cried. "The path is clear! The Snake, the Ndhlondhlo, returns to the house of its birth!"

An attendant led forward a black goat, which bleated feebly. With a huge antique knife the old man slit its throat, catching the blood in a stone ewer. Some was flung on the fire, which had burned small and low.

"Even so," cried the Priest, "will the King quench in blood the hearth-fires of his foes!"

Then on Laputa's forehead and bare breast he drew a bloody cross.

"I seal thee," said the voice, "Priest and King of God's people!"

The ewer was carried round the assembly,

and each dipped his finger in it and marked his forehead. I got a dab to add to the other marks on my face.

"Priest and King of God's people," said the voice again, "I call thee to the inheritance of John! Priest and King was he, King of Kings, Lord of Hosts, Master of the Earth. When he ascended on high he left to his son the Sacred Snake, the ark of his valor, to be God's dower and pledge to the people whom He has chosen."

I could not make out what followed. It seemed to be a long roll of the kings who had borne the Snake. None of them I knew, but at the end I thought I caught the name of Chaka the Terrible, and I remembered Arcoll's tale.

The Keeper held in his arms a box of curiously wrought ivory, about two feet long and one broad. He was standing beyond the ashes, from which, in spite of the blood, thin streams of smoke still ascended. He opened it and drew out something which swung from his hand like a cascade of red fire.

"Behold the Snake!" cried the Keeper, and every man in the assembly, excepting Laputa and including me, bowed his head to the ground and cried, "Ow!"

"Ye who have seen the Snake," came the voice, "on you is the vow of silence and peace. No blood shall ye shed of man or beast; no flesh shall ye eat till the vow is taken from you. From the hour of midnight till sunrise on the second day ye are bound to God. Whoever shall break the vow, on him shall the curse fall! His blood shall dry in his veins, and his flesh shrink on his bones! He shall be an outlaw and accursed, and there shall follow him through life and death the Avengers of the Snake! Choose ye, my people! Upon you is the vow!"

By this time we were all flat on our faces, and a great cry of assent went up. I lifted my head as much as I dared to see what would happen next.

The Priest raised the great necklace till it shone above his head like a halo of blood. I have never seen such a jewel, and I think there has never been another such on earth. Later I was to have the handling of it, and could examine it closely, though now I had only a glimpse. There were fifty-five rubies in it, the largest as big as a pigeon's egg and the least not smaller than my thumbnail. In shape they were oval, cut on both sides *en cabochon*, and on each certain characters were engraved.

I knew enough to see that here was wealth beyond human computation. At each end of the string was a great pearl and a golden clasp. The sight absorbed me to the exclusion of all fear. I, David Crawfurd, nineteen years of age and assistant storekeeper in a back-veld *dorp*, was privileged to see a sight to which no Portuguese adventurer had ever attained! There, floating on the smoke-wreaths, was the jewel which may once have burned in Sheba's hair!

CHAPTER XV

THE COLLAR OF PRESTER JOHN

AS THE Priest held the collar aloft, the assembly rocked with a strange passion. Foreheads were rubbed in the dust, and then adoring eyes would be raised, while a kind of sobbing shook the worshipers. In that moment I learned something of the secret of Africa, of Prester John's Empire and Chaka's victories.

"In the name of God," came the voice, "I deliver to the heir of John, the Snake of John!"

Laputa took the necklet and twined it in two loops round his neck till the clasp hung down over his breast. The position changed. The priest knelt before him and received his hands on his head. Then I knew that, to the confusion of all talk about Equality, God had ordained some men to be kings and others to serve. Laputa stood, naked as when he was born. The rubies were dulled against the background of his skin, but they still shone with a dusky fire. Above the blood-red collar his face had the passive pride of a Roman Emperor. Only his great eyes gloomed and burned as he looked on his followers.

"I, Heir of John," he said, "stand before you as Priest and King. My kingship is for the morrow. Now I am the priest to make intercession for my people."

He prayed—prayed as I never heard man pray before—and to the God of Israel! It was no heathen fetish he was invoking, but the God of whom he had often preached in Christian kirks. He plead with God to forget the sins of His people, to recall the bondage of Zion. It was amazing to hear these bloodthirsty savages consecrated by their leader to the meek service of Christ. An

enthusiast may deceive himself, and I did not question his sincerity. I knew his heart black with all the lusts of paganism. I knew that his purpose was to deluge the land with blood. But I knew also that in his eyes his mission was divine and that he felt behind him all the armies of Heaven.

"*Thou hast been a strength to the poor,*" said the voice, "*a refuge from the storm, a shadow from the heat, when the blast of the Terrible Ones is as a storm against a wall.*

"*Thou shalt bring down the noise of strangers, as the heat in a dry place; the branch of the Terrible Ones shall be brought low.*

"*And in this mountain shall the Lord of Hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow.*

"*And He will destroy in this mountain the face of the covering cast over all people, and the veil that is brought over all nations.*

"*And the rebuke of His people shall He take away from off all the earth; for the Lord hath spoken it.*"

I listened, spellbound, as he prayed. I heard the phrases familiar to me in my schooldays at Kirkcaple. So much he had got from his apprenticeship to the ministry. I wondered vaguely what the good folk who had listened to him in churches and halls at home would think of him now. But there was in the prayer more than the supplications of the quondam preacher. There was a tone of arrogant pride, the pride of the man to whom the Almighty is only another and greater Lord of Hosts. He prayed less as a suppliant than as an ally. A strange emotion tingled in my blood, half awe, half sympathy. As I have said, I understood that there are men born to kingship.

He ceased with a benediction. Then he put on his leopard-skin cloak and kilt, and received from a kneeling chief a spear and shield. Now he was more king than priest, more barbarian than Christian. It was as a king that he now spoke.

I had heard him on board the liner, and had thought his voice the most wonderful I had ever met with. But now in the great resonant hall the magic of it was doubled. He played upon the souls of his hearers as on a musical instrument. At will he struck the chords of pride, fury, hate, and mad joy. Now they would be hushed in breathless quiet and now the place would echo with savage assent. I remember that the face of my neighbor was running with tears.

HE SPOKE of the great days of Prester John, and a hundred names I had never heard of. He pictured the heroic age of his nation, when every man was a warrior and hunter, and rich *kraals* stood in the spots now desecrated by the white man, and cattle wandered on a thousand hills. Then he told tales of white infamy, lands snatched from their rightful possessors, unjust laws which forced the Ethiopian to the bondage of a despised caste, the finger of scorn everywhere and the mocking word. If it be the part of an orator to rouse the passion of his hearers, Laputa was of the greatest.

"What have ye gained from the white man?" he cried. "A bastard civilization which has sapped your manhood, a false religion which would rivet on you the chains of the slave! Ye, the old masters of the land, are now the servants of the oppressor. And yet the oppressors are few, and the fear of you is in their hearts! They feast in their great cities, but they see the writing on the wall, and their eyes are anxiously turning lest the enemy be at their gates."

He concluded, I remember, with a picture of the overthrow of the alien, and the golden age which should dawn for the oppressed. Another Ethiopian empire should arise, so majestic that the white man everywhere would dread its name, so righteous that all men under it would live in ease and peace.

By rights, I suppose, my blood should have been boiling at this treason. I am ashamed to confess that it did nothing of the sort. My mind was mesmerized by this amazing man. I could not refrain from shouting with the rest. I had a mad desire to be of Laputa's party.

As the voice ceased there was a deep silence. The hearers were in a sort of trance, their eyes fixed glassily on Laputa's face. It was the quiet of tense nerves and imagination at white heat. I had to struggle with a spell which gripped me equally with the wildest savage. I forced myself to look round at the strained faces, the wall of the cascade, the line of torches.

It was the sight of Henriques that broke the charm. Here was one who had no part in the emotion. I caught his eye fixed on the rubies, and in it I read only a devouring greed. It flashed through my mind that Laputa had a foe in his own camp, and the Prester's Collar a votary whose passion was not that of worship.

THE next thing I remember was a movement among the first ranks. The chiefs were swearing fealty. Laputa took off the collar and called God to witness that it should never again encircle his neck till he had led his people to victory. Then one by one the great chiefs and their *indunas* advanced and swore allegiance with their forehead on the ivory box. Such a collection of races has never been seen. There were tall Zulus and Swazis with *ring-kops* and feather head-dresses. There were men from the north with heavy brass collars and anklets; men with quills in their ears and earrings and nose-rings; shaven heads and heads with wonderfully twisted hair; bodies naked or all but naked, and bodies adorned with skins and necklets. Some were light in color; and some were black as coal; some had squat negro features, and some the high-boned Arab faces. But in all there was the air of mad enthusiasm. For a day they were forsworn from blood, but their wild eyes and twitching hands told their future purpose.

Suddenly my absorption was shattered, for I saw that my time to swear was coming. I sat in the extreme back row at the end nearest the entrance, and therefore I should naturally be the last to go forward. The crisis was near when I should be discovered, for there was no question of my shirking the oath.

Then for the first time since I entered the cave I realized the frightful danger in which I stood. In that moment I suffered the worst terror of my life. I felt every limb shaking as 'Mwanga went forward. The cave swam before my eyes, heads were multiplied giddily, and I was only dimly conscious when he rose to return.

Nothing would have made me advance, had I not feared Laputa less than my neighbors. They might rend me to pieces, but to him the oath was inviolable. I staggered crazily to my feet and shambled forwards. My eye was fixed on the ivory box, and it seemed to dance before me and retreat.

Suddenly I heard a voice—the voice of Henriques—cry, "By ——, a spy!" I felt my throat caught, but I was beyond resisting.

It was released, and I was pinned by the arms. I must have stood vacantly, with a foolish smile, while unchained fury raged round me. I seemed to hear Laputa's voice saying, "It is the storekeeper!" His face was all that I could see, and it was unperturbed. There was a mocking ghost of a smile about his lips.

Myriad hands seemed to grip me and crush my breath, but above the clamor I heard a fierce word of command.

After that I fainted.

CHAPTER XVI

CAPTAIN ARCOLL SENDS A MESSAGE

I WAS trussed up tight, carried out to the open and left in the care of the guards. But when my senses returned I felt as if I had been cruelly beaten in every part. The raw-hide bonds chafed my wrists and ankles and shoulders, but they were the least part of my aches. To be handled by a multitude of Kaffirs is like being shaken by some wild animal. Their skins are insensible to pain, and I have seen a Zulu stand on a piece of red-hot iron without noticing it till he was warned by the smell of burning hide. Anyhow, after I had been bound by Kaffir hands and tossed on Kaffir shoulders I felt as if I had been in a scrimmage of mad bulls.

I found myself lying looking up at the moon. It was the edge of the bush, and all around was the stir of the army getting ready for the road. You know how a native babbles and chatters over any work he has to do. It says much for Laputa's iron hand that now everything was done in silence.

I was in the second stage of panic, which is next door to collapse. I tried to cry, but could only raise a squeak like a bat. A wheel started to run round in my head, and, when I looked at the moon I saw that it was rotating in time. Things were very bad with me.

It was 'Mwanga who saved me from lunacy. He had been appointed my keeper, and the first I knew of it was a violent kick in the ribs. I rolled over on the grass down a short slope. The brute squatted beside me and prodded me with his gun-barrel.

"Ha, *baas!*" he said in his queer English, "once you ordered me out of your store and treated me like a dog. It is 'Mwanga's turn now! You are 'Mwanga's dog, and he will skin you with a *sjambok* soon!"

My wandering wits were coming back to me. I looked into his bloodshot eyes and saw what I had to expect. The cheerful savage went on to discuss just the kind of

beating I should get from him. My bones were to be uncovered till the lash curled round my heart. Then the jackals would get the rest of me!

This was ordinary Kaffir brag and it made me angry. But I thought it best to go cannily.

"If I am to be your slave," I managed to say, "it would be a pity to beat me so hard. You would get no more work out of me."

'Mwanga grinned wickedly. "You are my slave for a day and a night. After that we kill you—slowly! You will burn till your knees are on the ground, and then you will be chopped small with knives!"

Thank God, my courage and common sense were coming back to me!

"What happens to me to-morrow," I said, "is the Inkulu's business, not yours. I am *his* prisoner. But if you lift your hand on me to-day so as to draw one drop of blood, the Inkulu will make short work of you! The vow is upon you, and if you break it you know what happens!" And I repeated in a fair imitation of the Priest's voice the terrible curse he had pronounced in the cave.

You should have seen the change in that cur's face! I had guessed he was a coward, as he was most cer ainly a bully, and now I knew it. He shivered and drew his hand over his eyes.

"Nay, *baas*," he pleaded, "it was but a joke. No harm shall come on you to-day. But to-morrow——" and hi ugly face grew more cheerful.

"To-morrow we shall see what we shall see," I said stoically, and a loud drumbeat sounded through the camp. It was the signal for moving, for in the east a thin pale line of gold was beginning to show over the trees.

THE bonds at my knees and ankles were cut, and I was bundled on to the back of a horse. Then my feet were strapped firmly below its belly. The bridle of my beast was tied to 'Mwanga's, so that there was little chance of escape, even if I had been unshackled. In this condition I started on the great march which was to overthrow the white man's rule in a continent.

My thoughts were very gloomy, but the dolor of my mind was surpassed by the discomfort of my body. I was broken with pains and weariness, and I had a desperate headache. Also, before we had gone a mile I began to think that I should split in two. The paces of my beast were uneven, to say the best of it, and the bump-bump was like being on the rack. When I hear of a man doing a brave deed I always want to discover whether at the time he was well and comfortable in body. That, I am certain, is the biggest ingredient in courage, and those who plan and execute great deeds in bodily weakness have my homage as truly heroic. For myself, I had not the spirit of chicken as I jogged along at 'Mwanga's side. I wished he would begin to insult me if only to distract my mind, but he kept obstinately silent. He was sulky, and, I think, rather afraid of me.

As the sun got up I could see something of the host around me. I am no hand at guessing numbers, but I should put the fighting men I saw at not less than twenty thousand. Every man of them was on this side his prime, and all were armed with good ifles and bandoleers. There were none of your old *roers* and decrepit Enfields, which I had seen signs of in Kaffir *kraals*. These guns were new, serviceable Mausers, and the men who bore them looked as if they knew how to handle them. There must have been long months of training behind this show, and I marveled at the man who had organized it. We did not travel in ranks like an orthodox column, but we kept wonderfully well together, and when we mounted a knoll the whole army seemed to move in one piece.

I could see nothing of Laputa, who was probably with the van, but in the very heart of the force I saw the old Priest of the Snake with his treasure carried in the kind of litter which the Portuguese call *machilla*, between rows of guards. A white man rode beside him, whom I judged to be Henriques. Laputa trusted this fellow, and I wondered why. I had not forgotten the look on his face while he had stared at the rubies in the cave. I had a notion that the Portuguese might be an unsuspected ally of mine, though for blackguard reasons.

Soon the blue line of the Berg rose in the west, and through the corner of my eye as I rode I could see the gap of the Klein Labongo. I wondered whether Arcoll and his men were up there watching us.

About this time I began to be so wretched in body that I ceased to think of the future. I had had no food for seventeen hours, and

I was dropping from lack of sleep. The ache of my bones was so great that I found myself crying like a baby. I should have fainted dead away if a halt had not been called, but about midday, after we had crossed the track from Blaauwildebeeste-fontein to the Portuguese frontier, we came to the broad, shallow drift of the Klein Labongo. It is the way of the Kaffirs to rest at noon, and on the other side of the drift we encamped. It seemed an age after we stopped before my feet were loosed and I was allowed to fall over on the ground. I lay like a log where I fell, and was asleep in ten seconds.

I AWOKE two hours later, much refreshed, and with a raging hunger. My ankles and knees had been tied again, but the sleep had taken the worst stiffness out of my joints. The natives were squatting in groups round their fires, but no one came near me. I satisfied myself by straining at my bonds that this solitude gave no chance of escape. I wanted food and I shouted for 'Mwanga, but he never came. Then I rolled over into the shadow of a *wacht-en-beetje* bush to get out of the glare.

I saw a Kaffir on the other side of the bush, who seemed to be grinning at me. Slowly he moved round to my side, and stood regarding me with interest.

"For God's sake, get me some food!" I said.

"*Ja, baas,*" was the answer, and he disappeared for a minute and returned with a wooden bowl of hot mealie-meal porridge.

I could not use my hands, so he fed me with the blade of his knife. Such porridge without salt or cream is beastly food, but my hunger was so great that I could have eaten a vat of it.

Suddenly it appeared that the Kaffir had something to say to me. As he fed me he began to speak in a low voice in English. "*Baas,*" he said, "I come from Ratitswan, and I have a message for you."

I guessed that Ratitswan was the native name for Arcoll. There was no one else likely to send a message.

"Ratitswan says," he went on, "look out for Dupree's Drift. I will be near you and cut your bonds. Then you must swim across when Ratitswan begins to shoot."

The news took all the weight of care from my mind. Colin had got home, and my friends were out for rescue. So volatile is the mood of nineteen that I veered round from black despair to an unwarranted optimism. I saw myself already safe, and Laputa's rising scattered. I saw my hands on the treasure and Henriques' ugly neck below my heel. "I don't know your name," I said to the Kaffir, "but you are a good fellow. When I get out of this business I won't forget you."

"There is another message, *baas,*" he said. "It is written on paper in a strange tongue. Turn your head to the bush and see, I will hold it inside the bowl that you may read it."

I did as I was told, and found myself looking at a dirty half-sheet of note-paper, marked by the Kaffir's thumbs. Some words were written on it in Wardlaw's hand and, characteristically, in Latin, which was not a bad cypher, I read:

Henricus de Letaba transeunda apud Duprei vada jam nos certiores fecit. [Henriques has already told us about crossing the Letaba at Dupree's Drift.

I had guessed rightly. Henriques was a traitor to the cause he had espoused. Arcoll's message had given me new heart, but Wardlaw's gave me information of tremendous value. I repented that I had ever underrated the schoolmaster's sense. He did not come out of Aberdeen for nothing!

I asked the Kaffir how far it was to Dupree's Drift, and was told three hours' march. We should get there after the darkening. It seemed he had permission to ride with me instead of 'Mwanga, who had no love for the job. How he managed this I do not know, but Arcoll's men had their own ways of doing things. He undertook to set me free when the first shot was fired at the ford. Meantime I bade him leave me to avert suspicion.

CHAPTER XVII

MR. HENRIQUES TALKS WITH ME

HENRIQUES was after the rubies, as I had fancied; he had never been after anything else. He had found out about Arcoll's preparations, and had sent him a warning, hoping, no doubt, that if Laputa's force were scattered on the Letaba, he would have a chance of getting off with the necklace in the confusion. I determined

that he should fail, but how to manage it I could not see. Had I had a pistol I think I should have shot him, but I had no weapon of any kind. I could not warn Laputa, for that would seal my own fate, even if I were believed. It was clear that Laputa must go to Dupree's Drift, for otherwise I could not escape, and it was equally clear that I must find the means of spoiling the Portuguese's game.

A shadow fell across the sunlight and I looked up to see the man I was thinking of standing before me. He had a cigarette in his mouth, and his hands in the pockets of his riding-breeches. He stood eyeing me with a curious smile on his face.

"Well, Mr. Storekeeper," he said, "you and I have met before under pleasanter circumstances."

I said nothing, my mind being busy with what to do at the Drift.

"We were shipmates, if I am not mistaken," he said. "I dare say you found it nicer work smoking on the after-deck than lying here in the sun."

Still I said nothing. If the man had come to mock me, he would get no change out of David Crawfurd.

"Tut, tut, don't be sulky! You have no quarrel with me. Between ourselves," and he dropped his voice, "I tried to save you, but you had seen rather too much to be safe. What devil prompted you to steal a horse and go to the Cave? I don't blame you for overhearing us, but if you had had the sense of a louse you would have gone off to the Berg with your news. By the way, how did you manage it? A cellar, I suppose. Our friend Laputa was a fool not to take better precautions, but I must say you acted the drunkard pretty well."

The vanity of nineteen is an incalculable thing. I rose to the fly.

"I know the kind of precaution you wanted to take," I muttered.

"You heard that too? Well, I confess I am in favor of doing a job thoroughly when I take it up."

"In the Koodoo's Flat, for example," I said.

He sat down beside me and laughed softly. "You heard my little story? You are clever, Mr. Storekeeper, but not quite clever enough. What if I can act a part as well as yourself?" And he thrust his yellow face close to mine.

I saw his meaning, and did not for a second believe him. But I had the sense to temporize.

"Do you mean to say that you did not kill the Dutchmen and did not mean to knife me?"

"I mean to say that I am not a fool," he said, lighting another cigarette. "I am a white man, Mr. Storekeeper, and I play the white man's game. Why do you think I am here? Simply because I was the only man in Africa who had the pluck to get to the heart of this business. I am here to dish Laputa, and by ——, I am going to do it!"

I was scarcely prepared for such incredible bluff. I knew that every word was a lie, but I wanted to hear more, for the man fascinated me.

"I suppose you know what will happen to you," he said, flicking the ashes from his cigarette. "To-morrow at Inanda's Kraal, when the Vow is over, they will give you a taste of Kaffir habits. Not death, my friend—that would be simple enough,—but a slow death with every refinement of horror. You have broken into their sacred places, and you will be sacrificed to Laputa's god. I have seen native torture before, and his own mother would run away shrieking from a man who has endured it!"

I said nothing, but the thought made my flesh creep.

"Well," he went on, "you're in an awkward plight, but I think I can help you. What if I can save your life, Mr. Storekeeper? I am the only man alive who can help you. I am willing to do it, too—on my own terms."

I did not wait to hear those terms, for I had a shrewd guess what they would be. My hatred of Henriques rose and choked me.

"Now listen, Mr. Portuguese!" I cried. "You tell me you are a spy. What if I shout that through the camp? There will be short shrift for you if Laputa hears it!"

He laughed loudly. "You are a bigger fool than I took you for. Who would believe you, my friend? Not Laputa. Not any man in this army. It would only mean tighter bonds for those long legs of yours."

BY THIS time I had given up all thought of diplomacy. "Very well, you yellow-faced devil, you will hear my answer! I would not take my freedom from you, though I were to be boiled alive! I know you for a traitor to the white man's

cause, a dirty I. D. B. swindler, whose name is a byword among honest men! By your own confession you are a traitor to this idiot rising. You murdered the Dutchmen and God knows how many more, and you would fain have murdered me. I pray to heaven that the men whose cause you have betrayed and the men whose cause you would betray may join to stamp the life out of you and send your soul to hell! I know the game you would have me join in, and I fling your offer in your face! But I tell you one thing —you are damned yourself! The white men are out, and from black or white you will get justice before many hours, and your carcass will be left to rot in the bush. Get out of my sight, you swine!"

Henriques heard me out, but his smile changed to a scowl, and a flush rose on his sallow cheek.

"Stew in your own juice!" he said, and spat in my face. Then he shouted in Kaffir that I had insulted him, and demanded that I should be bound tighter and gagged.

It was Arcoll's messenger who answered his summons. That admirable fellow rushed at me with a great appearance of savagery. He made a pretense of swathing me up in fresh rawhide ropes, but his knots were loose and the thing was a farce. He gagged me with what looked like a piece of wood but was in reality a chunk of dry banana. And all the while, till Henriques was out of hearing, he cursed me with a noble gift of tongues.

The drums beat for the advance, and once more I was hoisted on my horse, while Arcoll's Kaffir tied my bridle to his own. A Kaffir can not wink, but he has a way of slanting his eyes which does as well.

Henriques wanted me to help him get the rubies—that, I presumed, was the offer he had meant to make. Well, thought I, I will perish before the jewel reaches the Portuguese's hands. He hoped for a stampede when Arcoll opposed the crossing of the river, and in the confusion intended to steal the casket. My plan must be to get as near the old Priest as possible before we reached the ford.

I spoke to my warder and told him what I wanted. He nodded, and in the first mile we managed to edge a good way forward. In a couple of hours we were so near the Priest's litter that I could have easily tossed a cricket-ball on the head of Henriques who rode beside it.

Very soon the twilight of the Winter day began to fall. The far hills grew pink and mulberry in the sunset, and strange shadows stole over the bush. Still creeping forward, we found ourselves not twenty yards behind the litter, while far ahead I saw a broad glimmering space of water with a high woody bank beyond.

"Dupree's Drift!" whispered my warder. "Courage, *inkoos!* in an hour's time you will be free!"

CHAPTER XVIII

THE DRIFT OF THE LETABA

THE dusk was gathering fast as we neared the stream. From the stagnant reaches above and below a fine white mist was rising, but the long shallows of the ford were clear. My heart was beginning to flutter wildly, but I kept a tight grip on myself and prayed for patience. As I stared into the evening my hopes sank. I had expected, foolishly enough, to see on the far bank some sign of my friends, but the tall bush was dead and silent.

The drift slants across the river at an acute angle. I did not know this at the time, and was amazed to see the van of the march turn apparently up-stream. Laputa's great voice rang out in some order which was repeated down the column, and the wide flanks of the force converged on the narrow cart-track which entered the water. We had come to a standstill while the front ranks began the passage.

I sat shaking with excitement, my eyes straining into the gloom. The leading horsemen rode into the stream with Laputa in front. Then came some of the infantry of the flanks, who crossed with the water to their waists, their guns held high above their heads. They made a portentous splashing, but not a sound came from their throats. I shall never know how Laputa imposed silence on the most noisy race on earth. Several thousand footmen must have followed the riders and disappeared into the far bush. But not a shot came from the bluffs in front.

I watched with a sinking heart. Arcoll had failed, and there was to be no check at the Drift. There remained for me only the horrors at Inanda's Kraal. I resolved to make a dash for freedom, at all costs, and was in the act of telling Arcoll's man to cut

my bonds, when a thought occurred to me.

Henriques was after the rubies, and it was his interest to get Laputa across the river before the attack began. It was Arcoll's business to split the force, and above all to hold up the leader. Henriques would tell him, and for that matter he must have assumed, himself, that Laputa would ride in the center of the force. Therefore there would be no check till the time came for the Priest's litter to cross.

It was well that I had not had my bonds cut. Henriques came riding toward me, his face sharp and bright as a ferret's. He pulled up and asked if I were safe. My Kaffir showed my strapped elbows and feet, and tugged at the cords to prove their tightness.

"Keep him safe," said Henriques, "or you will answer to Inkulu. Forward with him now and get him through the water!" Then he turned and rode back.

My warder, apparently obeying orders, led me out of the column and into the bush on the right hand. Soon we were abreast of the litter and some twenty yards to the west of it. I could see the masses of infantry emerging on the Drift, and the churning like a cascade which they made in the passage.

Suddenly from the far bank came an order. It was Laputa's voice, thin and high-pitched, as the Kaffir cries when he wishes his words to carry a great distance. Henriques repeated it, and the infantry halted. The riders of the column in front of the litter began to move into the stream.

We should have gone with them, but instead we pulled our horses back into the darkness of the bush. It seemed to me that odd things were happening around the Priest's litter. Henriques had left it, and dashed past me so close that I could have touched him. From somewhere among the trees a pistol-shot cracked into the air.

As if in answer to a signal the high bluff across the stream burst into a sheet of fire. I saw that my friends were using shotguns and firing with black powder into the mob in the water. It was humane and it was good tactics, for the flame in the gray dusk had the appearance of a heavy battery of ordnance.

Once again I heard Henriques' voice. He was turning the column to the right. He shouted to them to get into cover and take the water higher up. I thought, too, that from far away I heard Laputa.

These were maddening seconds. We had left the business of cutting my bonds almost too late. In the darkness of the bush the strips of hide could only be felt for, and my Kaffir had a wofully blunt knife. Reins are always tough to sever, and mine had to be sawed through. Soon my arms were free, and I was plucking at my other bonds. The worst were those on my ankles below the horse's belly. The Kaffir fumbled away in the dark, and pricked my beast so that he reared and struck out. And all the while I was choking with impatience and gabbling prayers to myself.

The men on the other side had begun to use ball cartridge. I could see through a gap the center of the river, and it was filled with a mass of struggling men and horses. I remember that it amazed me that no shot was fired in return. Then I remembered the Vow, and was still more amazed at the power of a ritual on that savage horde.

The column was moving past me to the right. It was a disorderly rabble which obeyed Henriques' orders. Bullets began to sing through the trees, and one rider was hit in the shoulder and came down with a crash. This increased the confusion, for most of them dismounted and tried to lead their horses in the cover. The infantry, coming in from the wings, collided with them and there was a struggle of excited beasts and men in the thickets of thorn and *mopani*. And still my Kaffir was trying to get my ankles loose as fast as a plunging horse would let him.

AT LAST I was free and dropped stiffly to the ground. I fell prone on my face with cramp, and when I got up I rolled like a drunken man. Here I made a great blunder. I should have left my horse with my Kaffir, and bidden him follow me. But I was too eager to be cautious, so I let it go and, crying to the Kaffir to await me, I ran toward the litter.

Henriques had laid his plans well. The column had abandoned the Priest, and by the litter were only the two bearers. As I caught sight of them one fell with a bullet in his chest. The other, wild with fright, kept turning his head to every quarter of the compass. Another bullet passed close to his head. This was too much for him, and with a yell he ran away.

As I broke through the thicket I looked to the quarter whence the bullets had come.

These, I could have taken my oath, were not fired by my friends on the farther bank. It was close-quarter shooting, and I knew who had done it, but I saw nobody. The last few yards of the road were clear, and only out in the water was the struggling, shouting mass of humanity. I saw a tall man on a big horse plunge into the river on his way back. It must have been Laputa returning to command the panic.

My business was not with Laputa, but with Henriques. The old Priest in the litter, who had been sleeping, had roused himself and was looking vacantly round him. He did not look long. A third bullet, fired from a dozen yards away, drilled a hole in his forehead. He fell back dead, and the ivory box, which lay on his lap, tilted forward on the ground.

I had no weapon of any kind, and I did not want the fourth bullet for myself. Henriques was too pretty a shot to trifle with. I waited quietly on the edge of the shade till the Portuguese came out of the thicket. I saw him running forward with a rifle in his hand. A whinny from a horse told me that his beast was tied up somewhere near. It was all but dark, yet it seemed to me that I could see the lust of greed in his eyes, as he rushed to the litter.

Very softly I stole behind him. He tore off the lid of the box and pulled out the great necklace. For a second it hung in his hands, but only for a second. So absorbed was he that he did not notice me standing full before him. Nay, he lifted his head and gave me the finest chance of my life. I was something of a boxer, and all my accumulated fury went into the blow. It caught him on the point of the chin, and his neck cricked like the bolt of a rifle. He fell limply on the ground and the jewels dropped from his hand.

I picked them up and stuffed them into my breeches' pocket.

Then I pulled the pistol out of his belt. It was six-chambered, and I knew that only one had been emptied. I remember feeling extraordinarily cool and composed, and yet my wits must have been wandering or I would never have taken the course I did.

The right thing to do—on Arcoll's instructions—was to make for the river and swim across to my friends, but Laputa was coming back, and I dreaded meeting him. Laputa seemed, to my heated fancy, omnipresent. I thought of him as covering the whole bank of the river, whereas I might easily have crossed a little farther down and made my way up the other bank to my friends. It was plain that Laputa intended to evade the patrol, not to capture it, and there, consequently, I should be safe. The next best thing was to find Arcoll's Kaffir, who was not twenty yards away, get some sort of horse and break for the bush. Long before morning we should have been over the Berg and in safety. Nay, if I wanted a mount, there was Henriques' whinnying a few paces off.

Instead, I did the craziest thing of all. With the jewels in one pocket, and the Portuguese's pistol in the other, I started running back the road we had come.

CHAPTER XIX

I CARRY THE COLLAR OF PRESTER JOHN

I RAN till my breath grew short, for some kind of swift motion I had to have or choke. The events of the last few minutes had inflamed my brain. For the first time in my life I had seen men die by violence—nay, by brutal murder. I had put my soul into the blow which laid out Henriques, and I was still hot with the pride of it. Also I had in my pocket the fetish of the whole black world; I had taken their Ark of the Covenant, and soon Laputa would be on my trail. Fear, pride and a blind exultation all throbbed in my veins. I must have run three miles before I came to my sober senses.

I put my ear to the ground, but heard no sound of pursuit. Laputa, I argued, would have enough to do for a little, shepherding his flock over the water. He might surround and capture the patrol, or he might evade it; the vow prevented him from fighting it. On the whole I was clear that he would ignore it and push on for the rendezvous. All this would take time, and the business of the Priest would have to wait. When Henriques came to he would, no doubt, have a story to tell, and the scouts would be on my trail. I wished I had shot the Portuguese while I was at the business. It would have been no murder, but a righteous execution.

Meanwhile, I must get off the road, for Laputa would guess I had fled back the way to Blaauwildebeestefontein. I turned into the bush, which here was thin and sparse

like whins on a common. The Berg must be my goal. Once on the plateau, I would be inside the white man's lines.

I think that even at the start of that night's work I realized the exceeding precariousness of my chances. Some thirty miles of bush and swamp separated me from the foot of the mountains. After that there was the climbing of them. I had a start of an hour or so, but before dawn I had to traverse forty miles of unknown and difficult country. Behind me would follow the best trackers of Africa, who knew every foot of the wilderness. It was a wild hazard, but it was my only hope.

I took the rubies and stowed them below my shirt and next my skin. I remember taking stock of my equipment and laughing at the humor of it. The whole ragged outfit would have been dear at five shillings, or seven-and-six with the belt thrown in. Then there was the Portuguese's pistol, costing, say, a guinea. And, last, the Prester's Collar, worth several millions.

What was more important than my clothing was my bodily strength. I was still very sore from the bonds and the jog of that accursed horse, but exercise was rapidly suppling my joints. About five hours ago I had eaten a filling, though not very sustaining, meal, and I thought I could go on very well till morning. But I was still badly in arrears with my sleep, and there was no chance of my snatching a minute till I was over the Berg. It was going to be a race against time, and I swore that I should drive my body to the last ounce of strength.

It was very eerie moving, a tiny fragment of mortality in that great, wide, silent wilderness, with the starry vault, like an impassive celestial audience, watching with many eyes. They cheered me, those stars. In my hurry and fear and passion they spoke of the old calm dignities of man. I felt less alone when I turned my face to the lights which were slanting alike on this eerie bush and on the homely streets of Kirkcaple.

The silence did not last long. First came the long-drawn howl of a wolf, to be answered by others from every quarter of the compass. This serenade went on for a bit, till the jackals chimed in with their harsh bark. I had been caught by darkness before this when hunting on the Berg, and I was not afraid of wild beasts. That is one terror of the bush which travelers' tales have put too high. It was true that I might meet a hungry lion, but the chance was remote, and I had my pistol. Once, indeed, a huge animal bounded across the road a little in front of me. For a moment I took him for a lion, but on reflection I was inclined to think him a very large bush-pig.

BY THIS time I was out of the thickest bush and the moon was coming up. I could hear and feel around me the rustling of animals. Once or twice a big buck—an eland or a *koodoo*—broke cover, and at the sight of me went off snorting down the slope. Also there were droves of smaller game—*shebok* and *springbok* and *duikers*—which brushed past at full gallop without even noticing me.

The sight was so novel that it set me thinking. That shy wild things should stampede like this could mean only that they had been thoroughly scared. Now obviously the thing that scared them must be on this side of the Letaba. This must mean that Laputa's army, or a large part of it, had not crossed at Dupree's Drift, but had gone up the stream to some higher ford. If that was so, I must alter my course, so I bore away to the right for a mile or two, making a line due northwest.

In about an hour's time the ground descended steeply and I saw before me the shining reaches of the Little Letaba, and I must cross it if I would get to the mountains. I remembered that Majinje's *kraal* stood on its right bank, and higher up in its valley in the Berg Mpofu lived. At all costs the *kraals* must be avoided. Once across it, I must make for the Letsitela, and by keeping the far bank of that stream I should cross the mountains to the place on the plateau of the Wood Bush which Arcoll had told me would be his headquarters.

The stream ran yellow and sluggish under the clear moon. I have rarely faced a job I liked so little. On the near side a thick growth of bush clothed the bank, but on the far side I made out a swamp with tall bulrushes. The distance across was no more than fifty yards, but I would have swum a mile more readily in deep waters. The place spoke of crocodiles. There was no ripple to break the oily flow except where a derelict branch swayed with the current. Something in the stillness, the eerie light on the water, and the rotting smell of the swamp made that stream seem unhallowed and deadly.

I sat down and considered the matter. Crocodiles had always terrified me more than any created thing, and to be dragged by iron jaws to death in that hideous stream seemed to me the most awful of endings. Yet cross it I must if I were to get rid of my human enemies.

The veld-craft I had mastered had taught me a few things. One was that wild animals drink at night and that they have regular drinking-places. I thought that the likeliest place for crocodiles was at, or around, such spots, and therefore I resolved to take the water away from a drinking-place. I went up the bank, noting where the narrow bush-paths emerged on the waterside, and came at last to a reach where the undergrowth was unbroken and the water looked deeper.

Suddenly—I fear I must use this adverb often, for all the happenings on that night were sudden—I saw a biggish animal break through the reeds on the far side and enter the water. I saw that it was a big wart-hog, and began to think. Pig, unlike other beasts, drink not at night but in the daytime. The hog had therefore not come to drink, but to swim across. Now, I argued, he would choose a safe place, for the wart-hog, hideous though he is, is a wise beast. What was safe for him would, therefore, in all likelihood be safe for me.

With this hope to comfort me I prepared to enter. My first care was the jewels, so, feeling them precarious in my shirt, I twined the collar round my neck and clasped it. The snake-clasp was no flimsy device of modern jewelry, and I had no fear but that it would hold. I held the pistol between my teeth and, with a prayer to God, slipped into the muddy waters.

I swam in the feverish way of a beginner who fears cramp. The current was light and the water moderately warm, but I seemed to go very slowly and I was cold with apprehension. In the middle it suddenly shallowed, and my breast came against a mudshoal. I thought it was a crocodile, and in my confusion the pistol dropped from my mouth and disappeared.

I waded a few steps and then plunged into deep water again. Almost before I knew, I was among the bulrushes, with my feet in the slime of the bank. With feverish haste I scrambled through the reeds and up through roots and undergrowth to the hard soil. I was across, but alas! I had lost my only weapon.

CHAPTER XX

I MEET AN OLD FRIEND

THE swim and the anxiety had tired me considerably and, though it meant delay, I did not dare to continue with the weight of water-logged clothes to impede me. I found a dry, sheltered place in the bush and stripped to the skin. I emptied my boots and wrung out my shirt and breeches, while the Prester's jewels were blazing on my neck. Here was a queer counterpart to Laputa in the cave!

The change revived me, and I continued my way in better form. So far there had been no sign of pursuit. I kept running till I felt my shirt getting dry on my back. The country was getting more broken as I advanced. Little *kopjes* with thickets of wild bananas took the place of the dead levels. I crossed the Letsitela almost dry-shod on the boulders above a little fall, stopping for a moment to drink and lave my heated brow.

The wood was now getting like that which clothed the sides of the Berg. The sight gave me my first earnest of safety—I was approaching my own country. Behind me were heathendom and the black fever flats. In front were the cool mountains and bright streams, and the guns of my own folk.

As I struggled on—for I was getting very footsore and weary—I became aware of an odd sound to my rear. It was as if something were following me. I stopped and listened with a sudden dread. Could Laputa's trackers have got up with me already? But the sound was not of human feet. It was as if some heavy animal were plunging through the undergrowth. At intervals came the soft pad of its feet on the grass.

It must be the hungry lion of my nightmare, and Henriques' pistol was in the mud of the Klein Letaba! The only thing was a tree, and I had sprung for one and scrambled wearily into the first branches when a great yellow animal came into the moonlight.

Providence had done kindly in robbing me of my pistol. The next minute I was on the ground with Colin leaping on me and baying with joy! I hugged that blessed hound and buried my head in his shaggy

neck, sobbing like a child. How he had traced me I can never tell. That secret belongs only to the Maker of good and faithful dogs.

With him by my side I was a new man. The awesome loneliness had gone. I felt as if he were a message from my own people to take me safely home. He clearly knew the business afoot, for he padded beside me with never a glance to right or left. Another time he would have been snowking in every thicket. But now he was on duty, a serious, conscientious dog, with no eye but for business.

THE moon went down and the thick gloom which brooded over the landscape pointed to the night's being far gone. In a little while the foreground began to clear, and there before me, with their heads still muffled with vapor, were the mountains!

Once again my weariness was eased. I cried to Colin and together we ran down into the wide shallow trough which lies at the foot of the hills. As the sun rose above the horizon, the black masses changed to emerald and rich umber, and the fleecy mists of the summits opened and revealed beyond shining spaces of green. Up there among the clouds was my salvation. Like the Psalmist, I lifted my eyes to the hills from whence came my aid.

Hope is a wonderful restorative. Colin saw my mood, and spared a moment now and then to inspect a hole or a covert. Down in the shallow trough I saw the links of a burn, the Machudi, which flows down the glen it was my purpose to ascend. I was not free, but I was on the threshold of freedom. If I could only reach my friends with the Prester's Collar in my shirt, I would have performed a feat which would never be forgotten! I would have made history by my glorious folly. Breakfastless and footsore, I was yet a proud man as I crossed the hollow to the mouth of Machudi's glen.

MY CHICKENS had been counted too soon, and there was to be no hatching. Colin grew uneasy, and began to sniff up wind. I was maybe a quarter of a mile from the glen foot, plodding through the long grass of the hollow, when the behavior of the dog made me stop and listen. In that still air sounds carry far, and I seemed to hear the noise of feet brushing through cover. The noise came both from north and south—from the forest and from the lower course of the Machudi.

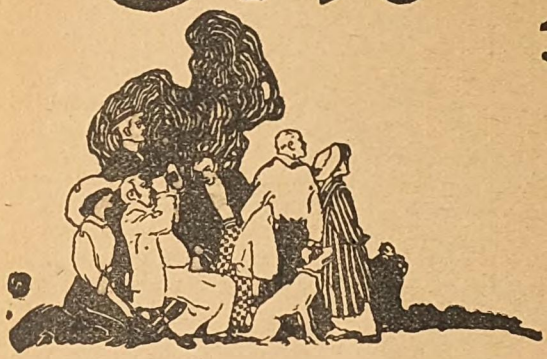
I dropped into shelter and, running with bent back, got to the summit of a little bush-clad knoll. It was Colin who first caught sight of my pursuers. He was staring at a rift in the trees, and suddenly gave a short bark.

I looked and saw two men, running hard, cross the grass and dip into the bed of the stream. A moment later I had a glimpse of figures on the edge of the forest, moving fast to the mouth of the glen. The pursuit had not followed me—it had waited to cut me off! Fool that I was, I had forgotten the wonders of Kaffir telegraphy. It had been easy for Laputa to send word forty miles ahead to stop any white man who tried to cross the Berg!

And then I knew that I was very weary.

TO BE CONTINUED

The Last Drop



by VINCENT OSWALD

SITTING on the top step of the Summer kitchen at the rear of the house, mother gazed down at them with a wistful, half sad expression as they gambolled and frolicked on the plat of soft, clean grass in the middle of the ample yard.

Yet the look on her face was tinged with pride, too, as she watched the play of the magnificent muscles on her husband's bare arms while he leaped about with the swift agility and lithe grace of a panther, mercilessly mauling the wee, pink-fleshed form, tumbling it off its feet with a lightning charge, sending it head over heels on the velvet turf and then fleeing in mock consternation from the mad rush of the excited, shrieking pursuer.

Ever since little Ben had been able to clutch father's fingers, father had exercised and trained the little pink body. So, now, when father, seizing a broom-handle, held it firmly just above Ben's head, and the wrestling bout was succeeded by thrilling trapeze maneuvers, she sighed.

Father, himself a practised athlete, had always justified this gymnastic education of Ben on the ground that it would not only safeguard and increase the child's health but undoubtedly save his parents from the mortification of seeing him grow up a "mollycoddle." Even now, at five, Ben was a physical marvel to the whole neighborhood. But mother always had a harassing dread in her heart—a lurking fear that all this would lead to Ben's falling into his father's occupation.

For father was a professional aeronaut; and all of mother's ceaseless importunities—doubled in fervor since Ben's arrival—seemed to have had no effect in bringing Dick to any real willingness to abandon his perilous calling. And mother herself *dared* not try to understand just *how* perilous it was—for he was an extremely successful exhibitor, making ascensions from parks and fairs during the Summer and doing the "Double Parachute Act" for the edification of the multitudes.

"You see," he would say, "there aren't very many of us who do 'the double.' When you get to the top of any profession, it's not easy to begin at the bottom in something you know nothing about. At the present rate, we'll soon be independent; so, Polly, I'd rather just hang on until I can retire."

"That's what they all *think*, Dick, but it never happens—something *else* always occurs first," she would reply gloomily.

However, this year's work was nearly over; in fact, the following day, Saturday, was to witness his last flight of the season. Only this morning she had reminded him of Uncle Matthew's offer, and had tried to extort from Dick a promise that he would accept it and enter the big sporting goods business as a junior partner.

She did no more than sigh when Ben, clinging with the tenacity of a monkey to the improvised trapeze, was whirled de-

lightedly through space at the full reach of his father's arms. It was only when the broomstick was discarded for even riskier feats that she demurred.

"Surely, Dick, you're not going to have him do any more of that roof jumping?"

"Just once, Polly,—to keep his eye and nerve in practise. *That's* not foolish!"

So, stepping upon the hand that his father laid on the ground palm upward, and standing there, steadied by the grip of the other hand at the back of his sturdy calves, Ben, hurled suddenly aloft to the full extent of father's vertical reach, crooked his strong little fingers over the roof-edge of the one-story Summer kitchen, and the next moment had drawn himself up and was laughing down into Dick's gleeful face.

"Ready?" shouted Dick.

Ben, poised carefully on the edge of the roof and spreading his arms outward and upward, gazed fixedly into the eyes beneath, while his father extended a muscular right arm horizontally from the shoulder.

"*Drop!*"

At the word of command, Ben, without an instant's hesitation, stepped off the edge and shot downward as inertly as a sack of potatoes. The extended arm circled his waist like a steel hoop, swung in a wide curve to break the shock of impact, and then deposited him sprawling on the grass.

"Now, go ask mother to forgive us!" said Dick as, catching Ben's heels, he coerced the embryo athlete into a back handspring and faced him toward the kitchen steps.

Then, following, he seated himself also at mother's side. She laid her hand on the muscular shoulder.

"It's *your* drop to-morrow that I'm thinking of, Dick," she whispered. "Do you know, I'm *afraid* of it—more so than I've ever been before! I hope nothing's going to happen."

"Now, Polly, remember, I've done the trick hundreds of times, and I never take any chances. You know I look after everything myself, even down to kindling the fire and overseeing the inflation. No one ever bundles and ties that second parachute but *me!* I fasten it to the first and connect the first to the balloon with my own hands. So, there you are! Now, stop worrying."

"Yes, dear, I know you couldn't be more careful; but—oh, Dick, give me that promise!"

"Oh, let's snow that matter under for a while, Polly! To-morrow will close the season, and then we'll have plenty of time to think things out carefully."

"I'm going to take Ben to the park to-morrow, Dick. It's likely to be your last ascension, you know; so I want him to see it."

"Good!" agreed Dick, without, however, committing himself upon the point implied.

"Are *we* going to see fahver fly?" inquired Ben eagerly.

"Yes, dear."

"And won't fahver fly no more?"

"Maybe not."

Ben turned questioningly from her anxious face to his father's thoughtful countenance; but, as Dick's lips remained silent, the child dropped the matter.

II

THAT Saturday, the park was packed with a throng of people, many of them drawn thither by the fact that it was the closing day of the season, still more of them by the lure of the delightful September weather, and most of them by the chance of beholding Dick Wetherill make one of his thrilling balloon ascensions and dare-devil parachute drops—leaving the balloon by one parachute, and the latter by yet another.

In order to accomplish this feat, the first parachute, the large one, was attached at the center of its umbrella-shaped canvas to the bottom of the balloon in such a manner that the numerous long, thin ropes of the parachute would hang in a vertical cluster. To the assembled ends of these ropes a second parachute was fastened. This second one, much smaller than the first, was tied by strong cords into a close, tight package from which the steel trapeze bar hung down to receive the performer.

A long, light cord, with a finger-ring on the lower end of it, communicated with the attachment that held the first parachute to the balloon. When the operator pulled this ring, which hung within his reach as he sat upon the trapeze, the first parachute was disconnected from the balloon—provided, of course, everything worked properly, and the sudden fall through the atmosphere was finally interrupted by the air spreading and supporting the parachute.

When another similar ring was pulled, the second parachute was detached from the

first—with a similar proviso—while at the same time an automatic knife-blade cut the bonds that confined it, permitting it to spread in the same way as it shot earthward. As the first parachute was unconfined, and therefore opened readily to the wind, the second fall was of course more critical, and consequently more sensational.

DRIPPING with perspiration from hours of preparatory work under the warm sun, arranging the tackle, Dick at last turned his attention to the task of inflating the balloon, a gigantic hot-air bag designed to make only an instant upward dash of perhaps a mile.

All through those hours of preparation, Polly sat on a tree-stump—waiting; while the sturdy Ben, dressed in his best clothes, was ever at Dick's side, if not between his legs, an eager and willing, if unuseful helper, bubbling over with intense interest.

But, at last—after the roaring blast from the gasoline-soaked wood had, for more than half an hour, belched flame and smoke from the underground furnace up the round, brick chimney into the immense bag—the balloon was as full and tight as a football. Then, at a word from one of Dick's assistants, dozens of eager spectators ranged themselves in a big circle and, clinging to the short hand-ropes or to the canvas itself, held the straining giant while the poles and tackle that confined it were released.

Everything was now in readiness. The parachutes had been carefully attached, their cords and ropes lying in a long, straight, unconfined line upon the ground and terminating in the steel trapeze-bar.

"You go over there with mother, Ben," commanded Dick, as he stepped towards the bar.

A little unwillingly, Ben obeyed.

Dick buckled an inflated rubber belt around his waist and, stepping between the two short ropes to which the bar was attached, raised the latter, grasping it with a hand at either end, and holding it under him in a position that would leave him sitting upon it when the upward rush of the balloon carried everything clear of the earth.

A stout, elderly man was standing beside Polly with a field-glass to his eyes, alertly prepared to follow the aeronaut to the summit of his flight and miss no detail of the daring performance.

"*Look*, muvver!" cried Ben insistently. "Look, quick! Fahver's going to fly!"

For "muvver's" head was turned away. She was gazing in the opposite direction, across the park—out over the wide expanse of the shining river towards which she knew the breeze was blowing. Ben didn't understand why father had put that big life-belt about his waist; but she knew that it was because he calculated upon being dropped into those glimmering depths. Muvver's handkerchief was held before her mouth, and her lips were moving inaudibly.

Dick's voice rang out in long, warning inflection, terminating in sudden, snappy command:

"Let g—o, *everybody!*"

"Muvver, *look!*" begged Ben, clawing at the handkerchief in uncontrollable excitement.

It came out of her grasp under the sweep of his waving hand, and, caught by a sudden, capricious puff of wind, drifted toward the balloon.

Instantly repentant, Ben flew swiftly after it.

It floated above the cluster of parachute ropes arranged systematically upon the ground; and, across these, sprawling face downward, Ben, tripped by a tangle of tough grass, fell violently, just as the crowd released the monster.

Had he not been stunningly jarred by the fall, he might have had sense enough to roll off the ropes. As it was, feeling them rise, he clung to them with an instinctive sense of self-preservation.

Dick, immediately after giving forth that shout of command, had suddenly turned his head to his chief assistant, Barclay, who stood directly behind him, and yelled an after-thought:

"Have the boys keep an eye on the river for me!"

Before the last word was out of his mouth, he was swept from the ground and careening wildly in the air.

Thus it happened that he knew nothing of what had occurred so swiftly to Ben, though he wondered at the strange silence of the multitude, for he usually rose amid encouraging cheers.

Suddenly, as the earth seemed to fall away from him, the wild, piercing scream of a woman floated upward from that intense stillness, and smote upon his ear with chilling effect. Surely, there was something

familiar in that tone! He darted a quick glance down, and beheld Polly on her knees beside the old stump, her hands clasped, her face turned frantically skyward. Then he looked up.

At first, he could see nothing beyond the bulk of the bundled parachute directly over his head. But the upward rush of the balloon, as it lifted the first parachute from the ground, dragging the long ropes behind it, had imparted to the latter a wide, swinging motion; and, as the oscillation carried him far out of the vertical line, his straining gaze was shocked by the spectacle of Ben's wee form—up there, half-way between the first and second parachutes—clinging in voiceless desperation to a handful of the thin, taut ropes!

Already the people below were like specks; and, in fact, from down there, only one pair of eyes could now clearly discern the exact situation above. Those were the eyes of the stout, elderly man with the field-glass; and upon his excited words of information the hushed crowd hung with breathless attention!

Up in the sky, Dick gulped and tried to speak encouragement, but no sound came from his choking throat. He pulled himself up and, clinging to the ropes, stood erect on the steel bar.

"Hello, fahver!" floated down to him in a plaintive voice, as his head came within the vision of the watchful eyes above.

"Hello, Ben!" was all that Dick could say immediately.

"I'm waiting for you, fahver," reminded Ben, a shade of anxiety creeping into the childish tone.

"That's right! Hang on there like a bulldog!"

"I'm hangin', fahver," assured Ben gratuitously.

Craning his body around the projection of the bundled parachute, Dick laid hold of the upper ropes with his left hand preparatory to swinging himself above the interfering pack.

He knew that, of itself, the mere attempt to climb over that mass of carefully adjusted canvas and tackle was a difficult feat; while with Ben's little fingers growing every moment more fatigued, there was the imminent risk, even with the utmost caution, of shaking him from his hold on the wildly swaying ropes. Nevertheless, the thing must be ventured.

"THE kid's sticking to the middle of the main-parachute ropes like a sparrow to a telegraph-wire!" announced the man with the field-glass. "And, by the Lord, the man's making ready to climb after him!"

"It can't be done!" emphatically exclaimed a tall, thin youth who, while following with deep interest the preparations for the ascension, had regaled a group of listeners with thrilling descriptions of feats he had seen performed by a professional exhibitor who, only two weeks previously, had fallen more than a mile to his death in attempting "the double," his second parachute failing to open when cut loose.

"Well, it looks as if the fellow's going to do the impossible!" insisted the elderly man.

BUT, as Dick took that preliminary grip with his left hand, two unexpected things happened. First, he realized, with a start of dismay, that the balloon was cooling and, having attained its maximum height, was probably beginning to fall. The first parachute should have been cut loose ere this!

And then, almost at the same instant, came a strange, timid cry from above:

"*Fahver!* I can't 'hang on' no more! I —I'm *scared!*"

That settled it! And Dick, lifting the latch to an idea that had begun to knock gently at the back entrance of his brain, threw wide the door and permitted the opportune guest to rush in and take full possession of the situation.

He planted his feet at both ends of the steel bar and steadied his legs against the stout hempen ropes that supported it. Then he took a fresh grip on the upper ropes with his left hand, extended his right arm horizontally and, fixing his gaze on the white little face above, shouted cheerily:

"Ready?"

A gleam of understanding leaped into Ben's intelligent eyes and, as they focused themselves on the intent orbs beneath, there came the tart, rasping command:

"*Drop!*"

DOWN below, the tall, slim youth was gazing eagerly at the stout elderly man.

"He can't get past the pack of that second parachute, can he?" inquired the young fellow challengingly.

But the other did not answer.

Instead, his face blanched, and he groaned chokingly:

"Great heaven!—the kid's *dropped!*"

Again came that wild, piercing scream in a woman's voice; and a shiver ran through the tense crowd.

But the next moment, a cry of ringing triumph burst amazedly from behind the field-glasses:

"I'm —— if the fellow didn't catch the baby on the fly!"

The woman didn't hear it. She had fallen unconscious on the ground beside the old tree-stump.

"He's cut loose!" yelled some one, as the main parachute darted downward, then filled and floated majestically in the air.

"With the kid straddled across his lap and hanging round his neck with both hands!" added the stout man, his glass shaking so that it rattled against his spectacles with a tattoo that threatened to shiver the crystals in the gold rims.

A frantic cheer went up from the blubbering throng; and Barclay headed a mad rush for the river, far above which the parachute was sailing.

The elderly man fitted his field-glasses carefully into the leather case strapped over his shoulder; then, calling several to his aid, tenderly carried the woman's inanimate form across the field to the big Ferris-wheel and deposited her gently on a rough cot in the engineer's room.

AND, just as the gold-spectacled man, who happened to be a doctor, was bending over her to bathe her face with the cool water which the engineer had brought in a blackened tin cup, Dick, up there against the sky, was reaching for the ring that should liberate the second parachute, while he whispered into Ben's ear:

"Hang *awful* tight now, kid, for we're going to drop like a load of coal going down a chute!"

"I'm hangin', fahver," replied Ben, interlocking his strong little fingers at the back of Dick's neck and jamming his head close to the brawny shoulder.

Instantly Dick jerked the cord, for he wanted to cut loose as high as possible, since the second parachute, being small and pretty closely adjusted to his own weight, was likely to be seriously affected by the addition of even Ben's modest avoirdupois, especially as the upper air was none too favorable that day for parachute work.

Down they shot, with such fearful velocity and for such an appalling distance, that Dick was just beginning to fear the parachute had failed to open, when he felt the pull of it and their speed diminished.

But they were descending much too rapidly. It wouldn't do to strike *terra firma* at such a pace as that. Yet, at the prevailing rate of drift, they would surely be deposited on the other side of the river. The stream itself was the only salvation in the face of such momentum as that of the overweighted parachute.

So, with another caution to Ben, Dick rocked the trapeze into long swings which finally reached almost a horizontal climax, and with each of which the parachute collapsed and took an earthward dash that nearly deprived them of breath.

When they came within a few hundred feet of the water, about midstream, Dick ceased hurrying the descent and prepared for the submersion.

"Now, Bennie, just you shift yourself round behind me, piggy-back. There, that's it! Put your legs around my waist and keep your hands locked about my neck. But hook your chin on my shoulder so as to hold yourself up high and be able to keep your grip low down, off my throat, because we're going into the river, and you've got to leave me free to swim and breathe. Understand?"

"Yes, fahver."

"And, as soon as we touch water, we'll go away down under the river. So you must hold your breath until we come up again, or you'll choke. See?"

"All right, fahver."

"And, no matter *what* happens—whether you choke or drown or *never* come up again—hang on! *Stick* to me! Here we go! *Stick*, kid!"

Ben had only time to catch his breath when the river closed over their heads with a great roar, and they went down, down, like leaden weights.

Clinging with desperate strength, Ben could feel that father was working arms and legs like the pistons of a steam engine under full pressure. Just as Ben was beginning to think his lungs would burst, their two bodies shot into the delicious air.

"Are you all right, kid?" panted Dick as, settling into a powerful overhand stroke,

he laid his course for the nearest launch, in the bow of which he made out Barclay, standing erect and waving his arms like a crazy man.

The only answer was a fit of spluttering and coughing that made Dick smile in grim content.

"Fahver!"

"What's the matter?"

"I'm all wet!"

"Gosh, kid! So am I; but that won't hurt us—the water's warm."

"No, fahver, it don't *hurt* me; but—but I'm all mussed up!"

"Lord, boy!" grunted Dick happily, as he came within reach of the boat, "you're almighty lucky to be *mussed* no worse than that!"

THE howling crowd, gone mad with joy, was waiting for them on the shore; but Barclay and a couple of his helpers fought a path through the surging mob and led Dick, with Ben still piggy-back, straight to the little engine-room beside the Ferris-wheel, where somebody, white-faced and gasping, was lying on a cot, with the engineer and the stout man smiling down at her, trying to explain.

"Say, muvver, fahver and me got *awful* wet! And I'm all mussed up," complained Ben ruefully, as he caught sight of her and remembered his best clothes.

But "muvver" only stretched out two trembling arms, into which Dick dropped the dripping plaintiff; while he himself fell upon one knee and, gathering mother's head close to him, whispered, into her ear:

"Polly, dear, I—I *promise!* Drop Uncle Matthew a line, won't you? Tell him I'm going to accept his offer and will talk it over with him next week."

But she only squeezed Ben till she choked him as badly as the river had, and, pushing her tear-stained face into Dick's neck, sobbed softly:

"Oh, Dick, Dick, thank God! Thank the good God, Dick!"

FROM THE DEAD PAST

An International Entr'acte

by Mark A. Daly

COLONEL JACK BAINTREE decided to spend his leave in London, which was, of itself, a matter of little importance. But the fact that he received a note at his hotel, three days after his arrival, when he did not suppose he was known to one person in the English Capital, was a matter for, let us say, speculation; and Colonel Jack was nothing if not speculative. When the clerk, with the inimitable clerk's nonchalance, handed him the missive, he turned it over and over curiously, stroking his grizzled mustache reflectively. Then he bet himself an American cocktail that a German wrote the address. He opened it and, characteristically, paid more attention to finding out who was watching him read it than he did to the note itself.

It was in French, dated Belgrade, signed "Fritz von Korpff, Chancellor," and requested the honor of receiving the American gentleman at his convenience on a matter of pressing business. Colonel Jack said, "Well, I swan!" Which was cabalistic but expressive. That night he left for Belgrade.

HE WAS not at all surprised, on alighting from the train, when a blond young giant in uniform inquired in English if he had the honor of addressing Colonel John Baintree. Colonel Jack admitted it, whereat the blond young giant grinned delightedly and said he was glad to know him. Colonel Jack intimated that he was flattered and wondered whether he ought to know the person upon whom he conferred so much joy. Thereupon he was informed that the young gentleman of the uniform, grin and joy was none other than Colonel O'Farrell of the King's Guard.

"Irish, eh?" said Colonel Jack.

"No, bedad," returned the other, his grin broadening, "Scandinavian."

"Behave!" admonished Colonel Jack, his own genial grin breaking forth as he held out his hand. "Where is the gentleman with the name like a bad cough?"

"I'm thinkin' ye mean Von Korpff. Well, he sent me afther ye. Climb up and I'll have ye there in a jiffy. Ye're a soldier, I think. Where did ye serve?"

Colonel Jack gravely mentioned every country in the world except Greenland, Iceland and Patagonia. Colonel O'Farrell disgustedly said, "Oh, ——!" Then, with a twinkle in his blue eyes, he looked full at his companion.

"Well," said he, "maybe it's th' truth. Ye look old enough."

"Bull's-eye," granted Colonel Jack. "Now, sonny, pick up your books and trot off to school."

The American was shown up a dark, narrow stairway. O'Farrell rapped at a door and a deliberate bass voice told them to come in.

His Excellency's cabinet was the holy of holies of the Chancellery. His Excellency was a soldier—a former mercenary turned diplomat. His distinguishing features were his eyes—twin sword-points of steel-gray. He waved Colonel Jack to a seat and waved Colonel O'Farrell out.

Count von Korpff drummed on the edge of his desk and looked keenly at the other.

"Servia is in the midst of big things, Colonel Baintree, which will either make or unmake it as a nation. It is being annoyed by a gnat. It is our desire to remove the gnat and——"

"Pardon me, Excellency; you are laboring under an erroneous impression. It is brawn, not brains, that you must hire. I am not a murderer."

Steel-gray eyes met steel-gray eyes in a stillness so ominous that it shrieked. His Excellency still drummed on the desk.

"I was about to say," he resumed, his voice caressingly soft, "that it is our desire to remove the gnat, and, as recourse to brawn is inexpedient, we desired to purchase the best brains obtainable. Hearing that you were in London, and remembering certain things, we ventured to hope that we might secure capability combined with singular —I might say, providential, fitness. Hence, Maître Homme d'Epée (you see I do remember you), I caused you to be notified in London. I understand the object of your assumed—ah—*grossièreté*, and bear you no ill will. Perhaps we even owe you something in courtesy—in that little matter years ago. But you repaid us for all that we did to you—or attempted to do. Can you not forget, if we, who suffered injury, can forget?"

"I ask your pardon, Count von Korpff. Queen Draga was my friend, as she was yours, and I never could understand—but that doesn't matter. Let the dead lie. You have a mission; give me its import and I will give you my answer immediately."

HIS EXCELLENCY turned to his desk and extracted a sheaf of papers. He arose and started to walk toward the window; turning suddenly he confronted Colonel Jack.

"Do you remember Kharkoff?"

The deep bass voice was a harsh growl. Colonel Jack Baintree stiffened, the lips beneath the grizzled mustache drew taut over his teeth and his eyes narrowed to slits. All color left his face only to rush back with a flood that purpled him beneath the bronze of his weather-beaten skin.

"If you have asked that question wantonly you'll wish that God had sent you into the world dumb!" he said.

At the tense, even tone his Excellency blanched; but the hand that toyed with the bell-rope remained steady. That was his Excellency's training.

"Great God!" he murmured, even while his iron will conjured the half smile, "now I know why they feared him in the old days!" Then aloud, in a voice that trembled ever so slightly despite his best efforts: "I beg of you, Colonel, calm yourself. I am not baiting you. It is of Kharkoff that we have to do; he is the gnat I spoke of."

"I am listening, Excellency."

"I will be brief. Ehrstein, one of our Foreign Office men, left two weeks ago for London, with papers to be delivered to our Ambassador. He reported his safe arrival in London. Since then he has not been heard from. The papers are—that is, they would be—well, they would put us in a false light if they fell into the hands of any save the English Foreign Office. You understand that at the present time we must remain on good terms with the Czar. Kharkoff suspects us of double-dealing—entirely groundless, Colonel—and his suspicions have been communicated to St. Petersburg, as we have reason to know, and have been given an entirely uncalled-for credence. Kharkoff's antipathy, I might say antagonism, is due to personal reasons; he would distort every little incident to serve his ends. Those papers must reach their destination, Baintree. My God, man! the very fate of the kingdom hinges upon them! If they can not be delivered they must be lost—irrevocably. And anything standing in the way must be——"

His Excellency's earnestness was real; Colonel Jack's interest was equally real.

"Sit down, Count," said he sharply, and his Excellency involuntarily dropped into his chair. "You have not been frank with me, but I'll pass that. I am not interested in your petty kingdom now. What I want to know is: What is Kharkoff's stake?"

His Excellency's eyes flashed with an inward joy; and he thanked kind Providence that Kharkoff was what he was, and that he, Count von Korpff, knew that Kharkoff had done what he had done.

"Kharkoff's stake!" he echoed. "Governor-general of Monorabia."

"You mean it will be ceded?" unbelievingly.

"I mean it will be acquired. That is Russia's stake."

Colonel Jack leaned across the desk and when he spoke his voice was hoarse:

"You are old in the game, Von Korpff, even as I am, and you know some of the things that happened years ago which had best be forgotten. Once there was a Kharkoff who—you know, tell me."

His Excellency, too, leaned across the desk and for several moments his voice was but an indistinct, rumbling murmur. Finally he sat back and raised his voice to a conversational tone again.

"These things I know from the Colonel-Baron himself," said he. "They were told in confidence; if I break faith with him it is only for the sake of my unfortunate country. *Loyauté m'oblige. Voilà tout.*"

It seemed a long time to his Excellency before Colonel Jack spoke.

"It is the beginning of the end, monsieur," said he, finally. "Let us return to our muttons."

And when he rose to go his Excellency held the door for him.

"He is the Devil in the flesh!" said the Chancellor, watching the erect, powerful figure as it strode across the square. "*God help you, Kharkoff!*"

II

GENERAL IVAN KHARKOFF was entertaining. The purlieu of his London mansion was a jungle of motor-cars and softly rumbling carriages. General Kharkoff was a figure of note. Ostensibly attached to the Russian Embassy, he was in reality the eddy about which the maelstrom of diplomatic undercurrents swirled. His reputed intimacy with the Balkan muddle drew to his house this night the flower of European diplomacy. The hour was nine; the lights burned brilliantly; the wit and wisdom of the world's diplomatic corps waxed and waned. A ponderous Premier had delivered himself of an exquisitely worded ultimatum, the scarred edges of which were smoothed with masterly small talk, and he had subsided amid admiring murmurs of beautiful women's voices. The ponderous Premier was pleased with himself. So, too, was General Kharkoff pleased with the Premier. To-morrow would see the *dénouement* of his *coup d'état*—Servia's exposure.

From a little distance down the table a near-sighted Ambassador so misjudged propinquity that his question, addressed to a gentleman seated two farther down, attracted a circle of well-bred disinterested interest.

"Your knowledge of the Far East is purely theoretical, Mr. Albright?" was the thin, sharp query sped along the line; the Servian Ambassador thirsted for knowledge.

"On the contrary, Excellency," replied Mr. Albright, his full, deep voice in marked contrast to that of the diplomat, "not only have I first-hand knowledge, but I am now

engaged in writing the memoirs of one who knows more about China than any living man. That is, unless it happens that a certain Russian gentleman is alive yet. He has been reported dead on several occasions but somehow returns to life opportunely. I can assure you, Excellency, that these memoirs will throw such light on China as your dry diplomatic records never could collate."

"That sounds most interesting, Mr. Albright," said a brilliantly gowned young woman, before his Excellency could respond. Mr. Albright nodded almost imperceptibly; the young woman's keen eyes noted and she went on, the half tentative quality in her voice giving place to well-modulated decision: "I am sure his Excellency is masking his curiosity at the expense of his temper. And General Kharkoff should be interested, too, in anything that touches his beloved Russia."

General Kharkoff, recalled from the badinage of the lady at his elbow, bowed vaguely down the table. His hawk's eyes winked in the endeavor to pierce the wall of brilliance between him and the speaker.

"I am sure that anything touching Russia would be interesting," said he, his smile launched haphazard into the world at large, with hope attached.

"It touches not so much Russia as it does China—at about the time of the China-Japan war, General," boomed the deep voice of Mr. Albright. General Kharkoff started, his tense hand grasping the cloth. That voice—! The attention of the guests now centered on the host. "I am not sure, however," Mr. Albright was indifferent, "that it would interest you—your guests."

"But, Mr. Albright," the woman's soft tones were fraught with wonderful carrying power, "will you not let us be judges of that? We have listened to wisdom—and wit. But think of a formal dinner in the live present enlivened by an anecdote from the dead past!"

"By Jove, y' know, deah fellah," ejaculated a monocled scion of diplomacy, to whom politics was an unmitigated bore, "that would be perfectly ripping. I say, couldn't you tell us a tale out of your past—or was it some other fellah's past? Something about this chap in—India, wasn't it?—or wherever it bally-well was?"

"It was China, Lord Robert," said the lady beside him petulantly. "Where are your ears?"

"Where are my ears? Oh, I say, now, Margaret, don't wig me."

"Perhaps General Kharkoff might prevail on Mr. Albright when our prayers have failed," insinuated the woman's voice.

General Kharkoff had recovered his *sang-froid*. He raised his hand in smiling protest at the appeal of many women's voices.

" 'Pon my word, sir," he spoke again into the vague distance, "you have twanged a responsive chord. If you will but consent to still this clamor for anecdote I will arrange a more fitting setting. An anecdote from the dead past"— again he bowed in the general direction of the brilliantly gowned young woman—"should be told only in a dim, religious light. *Garçon!*"

"Clever dog!" muttered Mr. Albright, into his beard.

"I beg your pardon! I didn't hear," from his neighbor.

"I was merely rehearsing, mademoiselle. Can you not feel the glow of the spotlight?"

"Monsieur jests."

"One act does not constitute a custom, mademoiselle."

"That goes without saying, monsieur."

"The stage is set, sir," said General Kharkoff, when the servants had left nothing save the hundreds of candles flickering in their sconces. "Upon pain of the disfavor of the ladies, see that your tale falls not short of the mark."

"You shall be the judge, General," replied Mr. Albright, an indefinite grimness in the tone.

"Monsieur does *not* jest," murmured mademoiselle demurely.

III

"I PRESUME the incident in mind would pr perly open in Tokyo," began Mr. Albright, his deep voice compelling attention, "in a pretty little teahouse conducted, strangely enough, by a Frenchwoman—called Fleurette."

General Kharkoff, reaching for his wineglass, started so violently when the name followed the slight pause of the *raconteur* that the glass overturned. Guests nearest him were shocked at his sudden pallor. A young diplomat pushed a glass of water toward the host.

"Indigestion, General?" he queried, in a whisper. "Deucedly inconvenient!" And, like the good diplomat that he was, he immediately turned to the narrator. Mr. Albright's beard quivered for an instant; he raised his hand to his face.

"Score!" murmured the brilliantly gowned young woman; her eyes now rivaled the brilliance of her gown.

General Kharkoff's eyes were like points of fire as he gazed at Mr. Albright. He was distraught. In an instant, however, when he realized, he pulled himself together; the eyes dulled. He sat erect, reached for the glass of water and, with steady hand, raised it to his lips. Then he laughed softly.

"I ask your pardon, sir," he said, addressing Mr. Albright. "It was only a momentary indisposition caused, as Sir Charles guessed, by prosaic indigestion. Continue, I pray you."

Mr. Albright bowed, muttering into his beard something that sounded like "Kharkoff's courage."

"Advantage out, monsieur," whispered mademoiselle slyly. Mademoiselle was learning English tennis—among other things.

Mr. Albright turned to her, surprise and interest in his gaze. He promised himself that he would see more of mademoiselle.

"Mademoiselle Fleurette," he continued, "was instrumental in bringing together the actors of this little—ah, comedy, shall I say?—though eventually it will be a tragedy. The tragedy may culminate to-night. That is one of the interesting things of the tale to me—the uncertainty of the end."

"Your story is still without an end then, sir?"

General Kharkoff's voice was steady; there was, in fact, a note of sardonic challenge in it. Mr. Albright's gaze was reluctantly admiring.

"Like all such stories from the Far East, General, it ends only in death."

The men there who were trained in observation faintly evinced a puzzled surprise; their attention focused. A chance word, sometimes, is vital.

"Whose death?" General Kharkoff's interest was palpable.

"Naturally, the death of—but I anticipate. If you will but listen, General, it may be that you will have some inkling. The story is short."

"Pardon me, sir; I will not interrupt again."

"Mademoiselle Fleurette, with your permission, ladies and gentlemen, was, presumably, in love with a Russian gentleman, an out-at-elbows soldier of fortune who accepted the woman's favor. The other, he whose memoirs I am writing, also was a soldier of fortune, but his services to China had been recognized by rank and wealth. At this time he was engaged in a diplomatic mission in Tokyo which, had it been successful, would have averted the China-Japan war. This would have meant that Japanese ascendency in the Far East would have—but I digress.

"The prosperous adventurer—he was an American, by the way—and the needy Russian adventurer met one day at the tea-house of Mademoiselle Fleurette and the American liked the Russian. He took him up, gave him place in his suite and promised him honorable work in China. You will understand that China was preparing for the struggle soon to come and was modernizing the army where it was possible. Thus it was that the adventurers of the world drifted eastward.

"The American was a man of some prominence in his profession (despite the fact that you would call him a 'mercenary' in your reports, gentlemen of the diplomatic corps), and there were those who said that had he been given another year it would have been China, not Japan, who would have been returned a victor in that memorable struggle. Even as it was, there might have been a different tale had it not been for the treachery of— Again I anticipate; pardon me. The beauty of mademoiselle, and she *was* beautiful—*was she not, General?*"

"Indeed she was, sir," replied the Russian unguardedly; then, when his guests laughed aloud at what was deemed his inattentive abstraction, he trembled slightly, flushed to the roots of his white hair and laughed a bit shakily.

"Well played, sir!" he continued, gazing into the openly scornful eyes of Mr. Albright. "Please continue; I promise you I will not allow preoccupation to make a jest of me again."

But keen-eyed diplomats noted the telltale lines at the corners of his eyes and saw, too, that when the color left his face it did not return. They gazed curiously at the calm, deep-voiced *raconteur* and wondered —which is a diplomatic perquisite.

"IT MAY have been that mademoiselle, like many of her race," continued Mr. Albright, "found solace in the American's power; solace enough to mitigate the loss of her lover. Or it is possible that she may have grown to love the American more than the Russian. In any event she returned to Pekin in the train of the American.

"The Russian professed to have tired of her. He appeared in Pekin and sought preferment of the American. With a half-defined idea of justice the American, who was the undisputed (though not official) head of the army, gave him a colonelcy. War followed soon thereafter, and for a few months, if you will remember, gentlemen, the Chinese forces played havoc with the Japanese troops. Then one day the American Fox—that was what they called this American—disappeared. It spread consternation throughout the Chinese army. The other foreign officers tried to hold the forces together and succeeded admirably until, in a pitched battle one day, a whole Chinese regiment suddenly turned its guns on men who, a few moments before, were comrades. Needless to say, this regiment was commanded by Mademoiselle's former lover.

"The American Fox, as you probably have guessed, was on his way to Tokyo under heavy guard, having been sold to Japan by the man he had befriended, wronged and befriended again. A few months later the Russian visited Colonel—visited the American in his prison and took pleasure in mocking him. That very night the American disappeared from the prison as if the ground had swallowed him, leaving nothing save a torn scrap of paper on which were written—in his own blood with a chip of stone from the wall—these words:

I dedicate my life to one sword-thrust.

"The significance of the words struck home to the heart of the Russian. Early in the following year the consulates and embassies of the world were notified of the death of—of the Russian, an honored foreign officer in the army of Japan. The American feared a hoax; he searched Japan from end to end, carrying his life in his hand the while and many times his grip of it was—well, not secure. Thereafter he drifted about the world, plying his trade wherever Dame Chance willed, and eventually, because of his intense hatred for Japan, he sought and found employment in the Russian army in Manchuria. After Mukden, Fate forced his presence in Tokyo. Or, at least, he called it Fate then, because his life was sought by the very man to whom he had been sold in the old days in China. There was a blunder and his innocent friend was killed at his side.

"During all this no thought of his old enemy entered his head. He believed him dead until—well, one month ago, gentlemen, only one month ago, the American learned of the whereabouts of the Russian. Also, he learned that it was the Russian who had betrayed him again in Manchuria.

"Times have changed since the early day, men have changed; but the American was the same. He started in search of his enemy. To-morrow I will write the final chapter of these memoirs—for to-morrow I shall know the end."

A TREMULOUS, expectant stillness hung over the erstwhile merry diners. General Kharkoff's carefully modulated voice sounded overloud when he finally broke the silence.

"And monsieur has said that the story ends only in death?" said he.

"Even so, General; but in nothing so easy as a sword-thrust."

Astonishment gleamed in every eye. Mr. Albright's voice was trenchant with rage suppressed, even while the smile on his lips was so naturally genial that mademoiselle, when she noted it, involuntarily smiled herself—then shivered violently. General Kharkoff's ringing laugh was electrical.

"Fie, fie! monsieur!" he cried, "there is something ghoulish in your tale! I crave the privilege of finishing it as, thank heaven, the Twentieth Century dictates. What say you, ladies and gentlemen?"

When the clamor of assent died to an excited murmur, the deep voice of Mr. Albright again thrilled the banqueters.

"It is eminently fitting that General Kharkoff should finish the story," said he.

IV

MEN nervously plucked at the table linen or tugged at collars; women, knowing their lords, felt the anomalous tensity and leaned forward with flushed cheeks. General Kharkoff and Mr.

Albright, of the entire assemblage, seemed least concerned. A dark-browed servant, answering General Kharkoff's nod, came forward softly and whispered in the host's ear. The Russian's pallor deepened as he rose, but his voice was steady and he smiled.

"Let us assume, with the permission of Mr. — ah — of the gentleman who began the tale," said he, with a courtly bow in Mr. Albright's direction, "that I am writing the memoirs of the Russian. As the gentleman said, it is eminently fitting. We will go back to the tea-house in Tokyo and to Fleurette.

"The Russian's love for the Frenchwoman —we will also assume this, to make it interesting—was not —your pardon, monsieur, —a matter of food and drink and lodging. We will say he loved her because she was beautiful. We will admit he was out at elbows, but not penniless. Let us say that back in Russia there was a ravaged estate that still furnished a small income.

"The Russian was no weakling. He was first of all a soldier and had won his rank in battle. That will invest him with character —the character of courage at least. And we will say that he came to Tokyo with his sword for sale, whether to the Japanese or the Chinese mattered to him not at all. He was for hire to the highest bidder and he had, as the Americans say, 'the goods to deliver.' The Frenchwoman's kindness and beauty kept him in dalliance. He had not yet presented his credentials; starvation was not far off.

"You, ladies and gentlemen, will have no idea of the brutal hardness of that period in China's, or Japan's, history. The adventurers of the world were drawn there, men of dare-devil courage and merciless selfishness. The man who would succeed needs must be the very essence of cruelty and tenacity.

"So you will not be much surprised when I say that the American my friend speaks of was a very devil of a man, daring beyond reason, resourceful as a Machiavelli, laughing at death and seemingly impervious to it; and, mark this, ladies and gentlemen, so terribly vindictive under a wrong, real or fancied, that he once followed an Englishman twelve hundred miles into the heart of Asia only that he might wreak a vengeance upon him!

"He took what he willed by right of might. He had, even then, forced kings to his way of thinking. He had founded dynasties only to wreck them again for his own amusement—to pander to his fighting lust. He was pitiless among men, yet the Russian once saw him carry a dog for miles that he might properly mend the animal's broken leg. In a word, he was a man born several hundred years after his time. In medieval times he would have been a ruler of note. Opposed to this was a man of temperament, a soldier, to be sure, yet, withal, a dreamer.

"The American did not sue for the love of Fleurette; he demanded it. And she was not strong enough to withstand him. From this point the story goes on even as it has been told. Then came the time in China when the Russian, by the favor of the American Fox, was in command of a regiment. The Russian will subscribe to all that has been said anent the soldierly qualities of the American. He was one of the greatest soldiers of his time and, given the opportunity, would have proved to the world a truth which will now take centuries to unfold. I refer to the greatness of China; not the potential greatness, if you please, but the living, breathing greatness of the Empire to-day.

"OPPORTUNITY was kind to the Russian. The shrewdest minds of Japan had decreed the death or imprisonment of the Fox; and through the Russian's instrumentality he was seized one night and spirited away to Japan. Alas, however, for the Russian's hopes! For a few weeks only was he at ease. Then, even as was told, he went to the prison where the Fox was confined and taunted him. It was a puny revenge, but the Russian lacked the qualities of greatness then; he had not realized the value of silence.

"Knowing the man, there was some excuse for the terror that flooded his soul when he heard that the Fox was again at large. The Japanese leaders were also content to have the Fox remain away from the country and, fearing that the Russian might be the magnet to draw him thither, they advised, and the Russian consented, that he disappear and allow himself to be gazetted dead. So he took another name and went back to his own country and remained there in seclusion for many years. Then came word of the death of Maître Homme d'Epée while fighting in a holy war in Africa. The Russian once more assumed his own name

and won some fame and some fortune.

"But the American Fox was not dead. One day he appeared in St. Petersburg, and, upon presentation of his credentials, was offered a post of high honor. He refused it, saying that his usefulness to Russia and his effectiveness against the Japanese would lie along quieter lines. He was given the post he desired and went to Manchuria. The Russian, in his office in the Capital, knew nothing of this until he read a report from the front which contained information known only to two people—himself and the American Fox. He began inquiry and found that his enemy was still alive.

"The old terror possessed him, but this time he could not die; he had acquired too much prominence. He communicated with a friend in Japan—who, by the way, was the very man who counseled his playing dead in the old days—with the result that you have heard. He was apprised of the failure to kill the Fox and he has since lived in the fear of an indefinite vengeance, something unusually cruel and devilish, as befitted the man. Now, ladies and gentlemen, comes the crucial part of my tale."

General Kharkoff moistened his lips from the glass of wine and gazed grimly about the board. The stillness of death prevailed.

"THE inevitable happened. Maître Homme d'Epée discovered the whereabouts of the Russian and set about his vengeance. It was as unusual as might be expected. For weeks the Russian was hounded by spies, armies of spies, but never was there one untoward act. His nerves were shattered; the very food he ate was a source of terror. Then, one day, something of his old courage returned.

"He was a man of some note. His favor was solicited in high places. So, when he sent invitations to a great feast, the cream of the nations attended. At the last moment one of the great men was called away. His place was taken by one of his countrymen, a man unknown to diplomatic circles. It was all perfectly regular; no blame could be attached to the dignitary, for he acted in good faith. But, ladies and gentlemen, the substitute guest was—ah, you have anticipated me—it was the American Fox!"

There was a stifled gasp of horror, and covert glances were exchanged by the guests. General Kharkoff smiled wearily.

"The Russian was not surprised. He had felt that the end would come in just such a spectacular manner. So, when the *dénouement* came he arose in his place, even as I am standing before you now, and signaled to a servant."

General Kharkoff raised his hand and the dark-browed servant came.

"Fill the glass, Gurff," the Russian said.

General Kharkoff held forth his glass. Then he turned again to his guests while the servant stood mute beside him.

"Even as I address you now, ladies and gentlemen, so did the Russian address his guests. 'For a quarter of a century,' he said, 'I have lived in terror. I have grown old before my time because I have been hounded by a devil in the guise of a man. I am tired. It is but a little way to the end; I will shorten it. Fill, Gurff!"

Before Mr. Albright could jump to his feet with a muffled, grumbling roar, the servant had emptied the contents of a small vial into the wine. General Kharkoff raised it to his lips and drank. He laughed—a mirthless chortle. Mr. Albright remained standing near his chair, his eyes gleaming balefully at his host.

For an instant General Kharkoff remained erect. Then he tottered, grasped at his throat with thin, talon-like fingers, laughed again until the laugh changed to a rattle, and then pitched forward against the table.

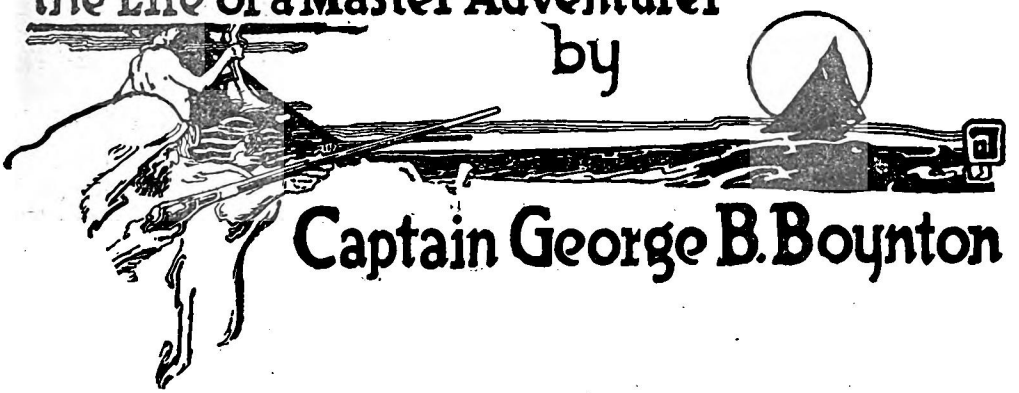
Mademoiselle sobbed. The brilliantly gowned young woman gazed fascinated at the brooding figure of Mr. Albright. Men and women sat in wide-eyed, breathless stillness. The American was recalled to himself by a touch upon his sleeve.

"Ladies," he said, his voice even and steady, "and you, gentlemen of the diplomatic corps, *the Balkan crisis has passed!* My homage to you, ladies,—the homage of Colonel Jack Baintree, formerly of the army of his Imperial Majesty, the Emperor of China! Come, Miss Hargreaves."

LOOKING FOR TROUBLE

Being Some Real Stories from the Life of a Master Adventurer

by



Captain George B. Boynton

AUSTRALIA

A PRISONER BY PROXY

IN THE old days, when I was cavorting with contraband throughout the West Indies and South America I ran into one unpleasant incident which left me with a large moral—or immoral, according to the point of view—obligation on my hands. During a quiet spell I had bought, at a bargain, a little schooner at St. Thomas, loaded her with mahogany at Santo Domingo and started for Liverpool to see what was going on in that part of the world. We were caught in a heavy gale and were forced to run into Yarmouth, Nova Scotia, where we arrived in a sinking condition.

On the false charge that my papers were forged, the agent for Lloyds', with whom the ship was insured, seized the vessel as I was having her repaired and had me arrested for barratry. I was taken to Halifax, where I was put to considerable inconvenience in securing bail.

I pleaded my own case and, as soon as I could get a hearing, was released, but in the meantime the agent for the underwriters had libeled my ship and sold her at auction, and her new owners had sent her away to South America. It was a downright steal, but I did not consider it worth my while to stay there and fight the case, so I simply

EDITOR'S NOTE—In the New York daily papers of January 20th appeared a notice of the death of the author of these autobiographical articles, the hero of their adventures. In the articles that followed was set forth a summary of the life-history given our readers more fully in the present series. Quoting the New York *Sun:*

"George B. Boynton, soldier of fortune, died at a private hospital at 154 West Seventy-fourth Street, yesterday morning at five o'clock. His death was due to a general breakdown, the result of years of exposure in nearly every known land and sea. Up to the time he entered the hospital he had been living with his wife and niece at 501 West One Hundred Twenty-fourth Street. Boynton was not his right name. He adopted many names in different revolutions, insurrections and adventures, but usually fell back on the name under which he died. He rarely talked of his remarkable life, and no one has been able to ascertain his original name. He admitted that he was born in Fifth Avenue not far north of Fourteenth Street, on May 1, 1842, and that his father was a distinguished surgeon, with an estate on Lake Champlain."

Fortunately Captain Boynton was able, shortly before his death, to complete the full narrative of his adventures. This is now in our hands and will continue through several numbers of the magazine.

In a chapter omitted between this instalment and the preceeding, Captain Boynton described his experiences in the African slave-trade, ending with the sinking of the *Leckwith* in the Red Sea, and his adventures in blockade-running in Montenegro, and at Callao, when Peru and Bolivia were at war with Chile. This material, with certain other omitted matter, will be published in full in the volume of reminiscences which will be issued after the completion of our magazine series.

swore some day to make Lloyds' pay dearly for the loss of my ship, and let it go at that for the time being.

My last real adventure had ended with the burial of the *Leckwith*, and I was hungry for some new excitement—the very essence and sole enjoyment of my life. While casting about for something to satisfy my appetite, the recollection of the Yarmouth outrage came over me and I decided to steal a ship and let the underwriters pay for her, as partial compensation for the one they had stolen from me.

After a survey of the available supply, following my return to London from Peru, late in the Summer of 1879, I hit on the *Ferret*, a handsome and fairly fast little passenger steamer belonging to the Highland Railway Company, which was lying at Gourock Bay on the Clyde. They would not let her out on a general charter, which was what I wanted, so I concluded to charter her for a year for a cruise in the Mediterranean, with the option of purchase for fourteen thousand pounds at the end of that time. All of the negotiations were conducted and the deal closed by Joe Wilson, my trusted aide, and I was careful to impress him with the necessity for the insertion of the option-of-purchase clause. I had so much confidence in him that I did not closely examine the charter papers and not until it was too late did I discover that he had neglected the one vital point.

My plan was to go back out East and dig up the guns Frank Norton and I had buried on a little island when we left the China Sea, and perhaps—if I found that I could stand it—to revisit the scenes of the supreme joy and sadness which had come to me with the discovery of the "Beautiful White Devil" and resume the unholy occupation of preying on the pirates between Singapore and Hong Kong. I wanted the option-of-purchase clause inserted in the charter partly as a sop to my conscience and partly with the idea that if we were, by any remote chance, apprehended before we reached the China Sea I could announce that I had exercised my option and was prepared to pay for the ship.

With the delivery of the charter, in proper form, as I supposed, I made a great show of fitting the ship out for a yachting cruise, at the same time smuggling on board two small cannon and a lot of rifles and ammunition. Lorensen, my old captain, was seriously ill, so I took on as sailing-master a man named Watkins. He was well recommended, but it later developed that he had a strain of negro blood and a well-defined streak of yellow. Tom Leigh, one of my old men, was first officer, and next to him was George Ross, another new one.

WE COALED at Cardiff and cleared for Malaga. We passed Gibraltar late in the afternoon, as was intended, and signaled "All well" to the observer for Lloyds'. As soon as it was dark we headed over toward the other shore for twelve or fifteen miles and then stood straight out to sea again. As we made the second change in our course we stove in a couple of our boats and threw them overboard, along with a lot of life-preservers. I wanted to make it appear that the *Ferret* had foundered, and we ran into a heavy blow which dovetailed beautifully into my scheme. At daylight we were well clear of Gibraltar but within sight of the Moroccan coast. I called the crew aft and addressed them to this effect:

"Taking advantage of the option-of-purchase clause in the charter I now declare myself the owner of this ship and will pay for her, as stipulated, at the end of the period for which she is chartered. We are going on a very different trip from that for which you signed. It will be attended by some danger but, probably, by profits which will more than compensate you for the risk you run. Those of you who wish to go with me will receive double pay, a bonus of fifty dollars for signing new papers, and a share of the profits from the trip. Those who do not care to go may take a boat and go ashore."

Every man agreed to stay with me. I thereupon rechristened the ship the *India*—a name legitimately held by a vessel on the other side of the world, as was indicated by Lloyds' register—fired a gun and dipped the flag and declared her in commission. At the same time I rechristened myself, a ceremony to which I was equally accustomed, and took the name of James Stuart Henderson. I presented the ship with a new log and certificate of registry and other necessary papers from the counterfeit blanks I always carried, and all of the men signed the new articles. We then headed for Santos, Brazil, with the idea of keeping clear of British waters until the loss of the *Ferret* had become an established fact.

On the way the brass plate on the main beam, showing that the engines were built for the *Ferret*, was removed and the new name took the place of the old one everywhere about the ship. The chart-room and wheel-house were taken off the bridge and rebuilt over the wheel amidships. Some of the upper works were stripped away and the whole appearance of the vessel was changed to such an extent that even her builders would hardly have recognized her.

At Santos I bought outright a cargo of coffee and headed for Cape Town, South Africa, where I consigned it to Wm. G. Anderson & Son, with instructions to sell it for cash, and quickly. On the trip across the Atlantic, Ross, the second officer, who had been one of the boldest at first, all at once became very anxious regarding the outcome of the trip and his future welfare. Watkins, the sailing-master, who had shown a domineering nature that I did not like, also hoisted the white feather. Griffin, too, the chief engineer, displayed some symptoms of cold feet, but he was a brave man at heart and his trouble was easily cured. I allowed Ross to return to England from Cape Town, and Watkins caught the gold fever and started for Pretoria. I had no fear that either of them would engage in any unwise talk, for both had signed forged articles with their eyes wide open.

I MADE Leigh sailing-master, and we cleared light for Australia, with a short stop at the Mauritius for coal. We coaled again at Albany, West Australia. From there we went to Port Adelaide, South Australia, and then on to Melbourne, where we came to grief. Off Fort Philip Head we signaled for a pilot and a canny Scot came aboard. He seemed suspicious of us from the first and I noticed that he was studying the ship closely as we steamed up to an anchorage off Williamstown. Two young royal princes had just arrived on a British fleet and there were gala goings-on when we entered the harbor.

I landed at once and went to the Civil Service Club Hotel to recuperate from a bad case of malaria which I had contracted at the Mauritius. While not alarmed by the apparent suspicion of the pilot I was impressed by it and gave strict orders to Leigh to allow no one to come aboard. Leigh's one weakness was drink, and to guard against his becoming helplessly intoxicated I instructed Wilson either to remain on board or visit the ship every day.

My fever grew worse after I went ashore, and in two or three days the doctor decided that I should have a nurse, as I was all alone. The doctor was with me when the nurse arrived, and as the latter entered the door the doctor made a quick movement as though something had startled him, looking in amazement from one of us to the other. I could not imagine what had happened until he said:

"That man looks enough like you to be your twin brother! I never have seen such a resemblance between two men!"

I surveyed the nurse more critically and saw that we did look strangely alike, even to the scarred face. He had a scar on his left cheek, whereas mine is on my right, and it was shorter than mine, but it served to heighten our resemblance. We could not have been more alike in build if we had been cast from the same mold, and any one who did not know us intimately could easily have been excused for taking one of us for the other. The nurse said his name was William Nourse and that he had arrived in Melbourne only two or three days before from Tasmania, where he had worked in the Hobartstown hospital. As we got better acquainted he told me he had had a run of hard luck in Hobartstown; that his wife had deserted him and he had taken to drink and lost his position, and that he had come to Australia to make a fresh start.

While I was recovering at the hotel, events were transpiring in connection with the ship. Wilson, it developed, soon relaxed his vigilance and gave himself up to pleasures ashore, but without coming near me, whereupon old Leigh blithely betook himself to his beloved bottle. After a few days the shrewd Scotch pilot paid the ship a friendly visit, found Leigh full three sheets in the wind, encouraged him to proceed with his potations until he fell asleep and then went over the ship at his leisure, taking measurements and making observations.

Naturally, his measurements corresponded exactly with those of the *Ferret*, which had been reported as missing with a probability that she had gone down in the Mediterranean; and he reported his suspicions and the result of his investigation to the authorities.

The ship was promptly seized for some technical violation of the port regulations,

which gave the officials an opportunity to make a detailed inspection and take all of her measurements, and Leigh and the few members of the crew who were on board when the seizure was made were detained there. Leigh refused to say a word, but one or two of the crew, believing the fat was in the fire and wishing to save their own bacon, told enough to confirm all suspicions. Leigh was then formally placed under arrest and search was instituted for Wilson and me.

I WAS greatly surprised when, late one afternoon about ten days after our arrival at Melbourne, I received word from Joe that the ship had been recognized as the *Ferret* and seized; that he had taken to the bush and that I had better disappear as quickly and quietly as possible if I wished to escape arrest, for the officers were looking for both of us. Fearful, for the first time, that Joe had made a mistake, and cursing my carelessness, I dug into my papers and discovered that the charter contained no option-of-purchase clause. That made it serious business, and I understood why Joe had taken such precipitate flight.

I knew if I stayed at the hotel my arrest was only a matter of a few hours, and that, if I sought to escape, the chances were that I should be caught, but I determined to make a try for it. By that time I was able to be up and walk around my room, though I had not left it, but I had Nourse pass the word around the hotel that I had had a serious relapse and was in such a precarious condition that I must not be disturbed by visitors nor by any noise near my rooms.

I told Nourse that a warrant was out for my arrest on some technical violation of the port regulations, and that, while I had no fear of the result of a trial, I did not feel strong enough to go through with it, and therefore I intended to leave at once, and secretly, and stay away until the trouble blew over. He agreed to go with me, and soon after dark we left the hotel quietly by a rear entrance which opened on an alley. I left behind all of my luggage except a bag in which I carried about 5,500 pounds in gold and Bank of England notes, and a few articles of clothing.

We engaged a carriage and drove to a suburb on the railroad running to Sydney, where we stayed all night, as all of the evening trains had left. My idea was to get to Sydney or Newcastle, where I hoped to bribe the captain of some outgoing ship to take me on board as a stowaway. We took the morning train and rode as far as Seymour, about seventy-five miles from Melbourne. There we hired a rig and drove across country to Longwood, where we picked up the railroad after it had passed an important junction point which I wished to avoid, as I feared the officers would be watching for us there.

On the long drive to Longwood I became convinced that my capture was certain, for the country was so thinly settled that we were sure to attract attention and be easily followed, while if I stuck to the railroad I was sure to be apprehended. In seeking some new way out of the dilemma I conceived the idea of having Nourse take my place. There was no reason that money could not remove to prevent him from doing so, for neither of us was known, and a physical description, such as the police would have, would fit either of us. I was becoming more and more apprehensive of danger, and as we neared Longwood I put the proposition up to him.

"What do you say, Nourse, to changing places with me and letting yourself be arrested, if it comes to that? I will engage a good lawyer to defend you, and even if you should be convicted, which I doubt, you would not have to spend more than a few months in jail, at the most. You are strong and could stand the confinement, while it would about put me under the turf. According to your own story there is no one who cares what trouble you get into, and even if you went to jail you probably would be as happy there as anywhere. How much will you take to do it?"

"I had been thinking of that very thing," he replied. "I don't care much what happens to me, but I am not exactly hungry for a long term in Pentridge. If this thing is no worse than you say it is, though, I'll swap places with you and see it through for two hundred pounds."

I accepted his terms without argument. He already knew enough about me so that he could adopt my identity without fear of detection except under a searching inquiry, but I quickly framed up a life history for him and told him the full and true story of the *Ferret*. I cautioned him, however, if he was arrested, to make no statement of any kind until he had talked with the lawyer I would send to him.

As soon as we reached Longwood we exchanged clothing, even down to our underwear, socks and shoes. Nourse was transformed into James Stuart Henderson, dressed by Poole of London, and I became a rather shabbily attired nurse. I paid Nourse his money, which relieved me of the weight of most of my load of gold, and carefully concealed the rest of my money in my rough and roomy shoes and under and in my more or less dirty garments.

WE HAD just finished dinner and were sitting alone in the hotel office, rehearsing the part Nourse was to play, when a sergeant and two officers, who had got track of us at Seymour, rode up on horseback. We saw them through the window and I moved back into the shadow, for, though I did not look greatly like Nourse in our changed garb, I did not wish the officers to notice our facial resemblance. With only a glance at me they walked right up to Nourse and placed him under arrest. He professed amazement, but readily admitted that he was James Stuart Henderson. He said he was driving through the country, with a nurse, for his health, having just recovered from the fever.

The orders of the officers called for the arrest of only one man, so I was not interfered with. They were after big game and, much to my satisfaction, considered me hardly worthy of their notice. Still, anxious to avoid close-range comparison with Nourse, I did not return to Melbourne on the same train with them the next morning, but went down by the one that followed it. I kept well clear of the jail to which the bogus Henderson had been hustled and went to a little hotel on Swanston Street, kept by a German named Hellwig. The first thing I heard was that Joe, who had taken the train ahead of me, had been captured at Albury, where the railroad crosses the Murray River, which divides Victoria from New South Wales, and was on his way back, in charge of an officer, to join Leigh and my counterfeit presentment behind the bars.

I at once engaged Purvis, the best barrister in Australia, to defend them, and later employed Gillot & Snowden, another high-class firm, to assist him. I told them, of course, the real facts, and had them instruct Leigh and Joe to coach Nourse in the part he was to play and to maintain the proper attitude toward him. The moment Leigh saw "Henderson" he knew there was something wrong somewhere, but he was too shrewd to indicate it and greeted the newcomer cordially. I had described Leigh to Nourse and he walked right up to him and shook hands. When Joe joined them in jail Leigh got to him first and posted him. They were charged with conspiracy and barratry and were indicted on seven counts.

NOURSE was as game as a hornet and played his part well, yet he was not born a gentleman and he was altogether lacking in that *savoir-faire* which is regarded as a necessary make-up of the typical soldier of fortune, which Henderson was supposed to be. George Smyth, the prosecuting attorney, was a shrewd chap, as well as a gilt-edged sea lawyer, and it was not long until he began to suspect that he had a bogus Henderson in limbo and that the real ravisher of maritime law was still at liberty.

Some of the other officials came to doubt that they had the right man, and this suspicion became so strong by the time the trial came on that they had detectives out quietly searching for the real Henderson. This information reached the lawyers whom I had employed, but whom I saw infrequently as I remained discreetly in the background, and they insisted that I go away until the case was concluded.

"This case is much more serious than you realize," said Gillot, as he again urged me to leave Melbourne for my own protection, or go into close hiding and stay there.

"Unfortunately, Nourse is not nearly so clever as you. You are —— clever, but you are not clever enough to avoid being nabbed if you stay around here while the trial is on!"

"I think you're wrong," I told him, "but I'm paying you for your advice, and if it is good enough to buy, it ought to be good enough to take. I'll go out and bury myself."

"Right," he said. "See that you make a good job of it."

"I will," I replied. "I am going to bury myself in a real tomb."

The lawyer looked up, a bit startled. "You don't mean that you intend to kill yourself?" he asked with some apparent anxiety.

I laughed at him. "Not much!" I told him. "I like to explore strange lands, but I

always want to come back. If there really are any detectives on my trail the last place they will look for me is the cemetery, and I will go out there and cache myself away in Sir William Clark's tomb. It is an ideal hiding-place, so far as security is concerned, and you can devote all of your thought to the trial, without any fear that I will be discovered and disarrange things."

"But people are buried in there!" he exclaimed with a show of horror which evidenced great reverence for the dead.

"So much the better for my purpose," I said, as I walked out of his office. "I'm off for my tomb!"

THE idea of using the Clark tomb, which I had previously noticed while walking through the cemetery, as a hiding-place, had come to me while the lawyer was urgently renewing his advice to me to get under cover until the conclusion of the trial. The mausoleum was in an out-of-the-way corner of the dead city, and I knew that if I could get inside of it I would be safe from intrusion. It was about twelve by sixteen feet in size and was closed with a solid iron door, but above it was a grating which would furnish plenty of ventilation.

The landlord of the hotel where I was stopping had a delightful Dutch daughter, with whom I had become very friendly, and when I returned there after my talk with the lawyer, she informed me that two men had been around making guarded inquiries regarding a man answering my description. She took them for detectives, she said, and, without knowing or suspecting why they were looking for me, she had thrown them off the scent. This convinced me that there was a chase on, after all, and that it was getting so hot that I had no time to lose.

With a blanket wrapped about the upper part of my body, and with the pockets of Nourse's dirty old white overcoat stuffed with pilot-bread, canned meats, candles, a dark lantern and books, I went out to the cemetery that evening. I had some doubt about being able to get into the tomb, but I succeeded in picking the lock with a piece of heavy wire and proceeded to take up my abode with the departed Clarks. There were three of them, and from the size of the caskets I took them to be father, mother and child. There was one unoccupied niche, and in that I arranged my bed with my blanket and Nourse's overcoat.

I lived in the tomb for three weeks without arousing the slightest suspicion that it was occupied. My surroundings did not worry me at all—in fact, I never had such quiet and orderly companions, and after I had adapted myself to them I was fairly comfortable. My meals were simple to a degree that would have delighted a social-settlement worker, and I was accustomed to softer beds, but the change did me no harm. I did most of my sleeping during the day, when I could not smoke without fear of being discovered, and every night, between midnight and dawn, I took a walk through the cemetery.

Twice a week, at an appointed rendezvous, I met the landlord's daughter, who brought me a fresh supply of canned stuff, bread and reading matter, and the latest news of the trial. Twice, toward the last of it, when I was very hungry, I ventured into the outskirts of the city and filled up at a cheap eating-house. During the early morning and evening I read by the light of the dark-lantern, which was so placed, with the blanket as a screen, that its rays could not be seen through the grating over the door.

By the time the trial was well over and I was free to come out I had fallen into the routine of my new hotel and was so well situated that, if I could have been assured of about three square meals a week, I would not have complained greatly if I had been forced to stay there six months.

THE trial was held before Judge Williams and resulted in a conviction. I had expected no other verdict, for, with the option-of-purchase clause missing from the charter, it was a clear case. The lawyers for the defense contended, of course, that Henderson had announced that he had purchased the ship and that only his illness had prevented him from so advising her owners, but they could not satisfactorily explain why he and Wilson had taken to the bush when the vessel was seized. Nourse was subjected to a most severe examination by the prosecuting attorney in an effort to prove that he was not the real Henderson, but he had been thoroughly coached by Joe and Leigh, and acquitted himself so well that much of the suspicion which had been entertained that he was playing a part was removed, but not all of it.

The crucial moment came when the clerk of the court called out: "James Stuart Hen-

derson, stand up!" and Judge Williams asked him if he knew of any reason why sentence should not be passed upon him. According to the lawyers the situation was intensely dramatic. The judge, the prosecuting attorney, and all of the more or less skeptical officials were boring holes through poor Nourse's head with their eyes. He had but to open his mouth to clear himself and start every officer in Australia on a hunt for me from which I would have found it hard to escape, but he was true blue. He looked back at the judge bravely and simply said, "No, sir."

Nourse and Wilson were sentenced to seven years and Leigh to three and one-half years in Pentridge Prison. With the time deducted for good behavior this meant five years and three months for Nourse and Joe and less than three years for Leigh. When the case assumed a more serious aspect than I had believed it would when I bargained with Nourse to take my place I sent word to him that I would pay him well if he would "play the string out," and as soon as I left the tomb I deposited $5,000 which was to be paid to him when he was released. I spent some time and considerable money in an effort to secure a pardon for my companions, but when I found that was impossible I returned to England, with a promise to be back in Australia by the time their terms expired.

On the long trip back to London I spent a lot of time in reproaching myself for the result of the unfortunate cruise. It was the first mistake I had ever made and, while I was not primarily to blame, the responsibility was mine, for I was at fault in not having seen that all of the papers were in proper form. That experience taught me a lesson, and I never again fell into a blunder of that sort. The Highland Railway subsequently sold the *Ferret* to run between Albany and Adelaide.

THE CARIBBEAN SEA

PLOTTING IN VENEZUELA

WITH my return to London in the early eighties the old lure of the West Indies, with their continuous riot of revolutions, came over me so strongly that I could not hold out against it, nor did I try.

I was much interested in reports which reached me, through contraband channels, that a new revolution was shaping up in Costa Rica and that there was a prospect of trouble in Hayti and even in Venezuela.

I took the first ship for Halifax and went from there to St. John, New Brunswick, where I bought the fore-and-aft schooner *George V. Richards*. She was a trim-looking craft of about one hundred and eighty tons, and stanch, but, as I discovered later, as faddish as an old maid. We never could trim her to suit her, and she never behaved twice the same under similar conditions. In the same weather she would settle back on her stern like a balky mule or sail like a racing-yacht, just as the spirit moved her. Yet I was fond of her, for she was a great deal like myself—she had her wits about her all of the time and was at her best in an emergency. I took her to Bridgeport, Connecticut, where I loaded up with old Sharp's and Remington rifles and a lot of ammunition and, after burying them under sixty tons of coal, sailed for Venezuela to see what was going on in Guzman's absence.

Instead of going direct to La Guayra, where I was well known, I headed for Maracaibo, the city that gave Venezuela its name. Alonzo de Ojeda, who followed Columbus, sailed westward along the coast which the Great Discoverer had spoken of as "the most beautiful lands in the world," to the Gulf of Maracaibo. There he found several Indian villages built on piles and, prompted by this suggestion, he named the land Venezuela, or "Little Venice."

The collector of customs at Maracaibo "borrowed" a fine rifle from me, which is one of the South American varieties of graft, and put me up at the club, where I was thrown in friendly contact with the people I wished to meet. I found that General Alcantara was acting as dummy President, while Guzman was enjoying himself in Europe, and I soon satisfied myself, from remarks dropped by his friends in response to my guarded inquiries, that he was ambitious to become the ruler of Venezuela in fact as well as in name.

The movement to overthrow Guzman was, in fact, taking definite form, and I sold a part of my arms to Alcantara's friends. They wanted to buy the entire cargo, but I refused to part with it, on the ground that the bulk of it had been contracted for elsewhere. It was apparent that serious trouble was brewing for Guzman and, instead of proceeding to Costa

Rica, I sailed for La Guayra, intending to visit Caracas and look the situation over at close range.

At the capital there was the same undercurrent of revolt against the dictatorship of Guzman, which was being gently fanned by the partizans of the acting President. I called at the Yellow House to pay my respects to Alcantara, whom I had known in Guzman's army, and in the course of our conversation he suggested that I remain in Caracas and become his friend, as I had been Guzman's. He did not tell me of his real ambition in so many words, but I needed no binoculars to see what was in his mind. I at once wrote Guzman fully, telling him of Alcantara's treachery and describing the situation as I had found it, and then sailed for Costa Rica.

Guzman had heard of what was going on through other sources also and, as I subsequently learned, he returned to Venezuela a few months later, before the revolt that was being hatched had broken its shell. The Government was promptly turned over to him by Alcantara, who at once started to leave the country, evidently fearing that if he remained he would be summarily sent to San Carlos, then, as now, the unhappy home of political prisoners. He started for La Guayra by the old post-road, along which were a number of public-houses. In one of these he met a party of politicians and while with them he died suddenly.

It was charged by Alcantara's friends that he was poisoned by order of Guzman, who suspected that he was going away to launch a revolution, but the friends of Guzman claimed that he ate heartily from rich salads while in a heated condition and died from acute indigestion. The latter version of it has always been my view, for Guzman was not the man to have an enemy, nor even a friend who had played him false, put out of the way in such fashion. Guzman was a dictator to his finger-tips, but he was nothing of a murderer.

THE IRON HAND IN COSTA RICA

THE Costa Ricans were, I found, in the midst of one of their periodical but always quite futile efforts to depose their President, General Tomaso Guardia, and I had no difficulty in disposing of my arms and ammunition, which I exchanged for a cargo of coffee. I might have joined the revolution had I not become convinced that it had no more chance of success than those which had preceded it. General Guardia, who ruled until he died, was one of the few strong men Central America has produced. He was the Diaz of Costa Rica and as much of a dictator as Guzman Blanco, whom he greatly resembled in his friendship for foreigners and his supreme contempt for the natives.

When he heard of a political leader, so called, who was trying to stir up trouble, General Guardia would send for him and say: "Your health has not been good for some time. I see that you are failing. You need a long trip. Go to Europe and stay a year,"—or two years or five, according to circumstances. A couple of trusted lieutenants were assigned to stay with the politely condemned exile, "to see that he wanted for nothing," and he never failed to take the next ship for foreign shores. Another Presidential method was to summon some discontented one, who was planning an insurrection, and make him a member of the Cabinet. Flattered by this honor, the new Minister was easily tempted to come out with exaggerated expressions of confidence in General Guardia and his Government. Thereupon the President would kick him into the street. "There," he would say to the natives, "you see, all that man wanted was money. He is nothing of a patriot."

Guardia always smiled, whether he was sentencing a man to exile or ejecting him from his shifting Cabinet; he regarded the natives as only children. By such methods as these he made himself master of the country, and the little rebellions which sprang up from time to time were quickly suppressed.

I suspected that the coffee I received had been stolen from planters who were loyal to the Government, and that the rebels had "levied" on it as a war tax, but as they charged me three cents less a pound than the market price, while I charged them four or five times as much for the arms and ammunition as they cost me, I had no compunctions of conscience about taking it. It was a waste of good time and precious protoplasm to sympathize with Central or South Americans who are pillaged by rebels, for in the next uprising the victims of the previous one will, in their turn, be the plunderers.

WITH the cargo of loyalist coffee we headed for New Orleans. We made bad weather of it all of the way. The faddish ship wouldn't sail or heave to and was as cranky as an old man in his dotage. Some days we actually went backward, and it was a long time before we raised South Pass light and were picked up by a tug. The moment the hawser tightened the old ship threw herself back on her haunches and refused to budge. The captain of the towboat, after struggling strenuously to get under way, dropped back and screamed at me: "What in —— is the matter with that —— old hooker?"

"You don't know how to tow and she knows it!" I retorted.

"One would think you had all the anchors in the United States down!" he shouted.

I assured him that we didn't have even one down, and he tried it again and finally got us to going. We were off quarantine soon after sundown and discovered that an embargo of forty days against Central American ports had been raised only an hour before. The balkiness of the *Richards* had prevented us from having to ride at anchor for days or weeks and be subjected to casual inspection and gossip which might have caused trouble.

While the delay had been of service to us in that respect, it provoked some anxiety on another point. I had an idea that the Costa Rican Government might try to have the ship seized, and our trip had been such a long one that no time was to be lost in selling our cargo and getting away. I took samples of the coffee to New Orleans on a tug and placed them in the hands of old Peter Stevens, of the Produce Exchange, who sold the whole cargo in an hour.

SHIPWRECK AND A SAVIOR CAT

WHILE the coffee was coming out stores were swiftly going in, and we were out of the river again and on our way to Hayti in record-breaking time. Though I had good cause to remember Santo Domingo I never had been in the "Black Republic," and, as I had heard there was a probability of some lively times there, I determined to visit it before I returned to New York.

But the crankiness of the *Richards* interfered with my plans. When we were about one hundred miles west of Key West the old ship committed suicide by burning herself to death. The fire started in the hold amidships, but we could not even imagine what might have caused it. It was so unexpected that it had a good start before we discovered it. We fought it, of course, but we might as well have tried to quench a volcano in eruption. The strange craft had made up her mind to go under, and there was nothing for us to do but take to the whaleboat, which was large enough for all of us, as I had only a small crew.

After we had shoved off we returned at considerable risk to rescue a big black cat which was on the ship when I bought her. We had christened him "John Croix" and every man on board undertook to teach him all he knew about navigation, with the result that he had become so highly educated that he could do everything about the ship but use the sextant.

Our humanity was well rewarded, for John saved our lives, or at least saved us from a lot of suffering. A stiff norther came up before we sighted land and for several days we were tossed about without any clear idea as to the direction in which we were being blown, for not once did we get a glimpse of sun or moon by which to take a reckoning. Eventually we drifted among the islands to the westward of Key West and we headed for the largest one in sight. In the heavy sea that was running we made a bad mess of the landing. Our boat was overturned and stove in, the bung came out of the water-cask and all of our supplies and most of our instruments were lost.

We got ashore all right, and John Croix with us, but we had neither food nor water, and when a search of the little island failed to reveal so much as a sign of a spring of fresh water we began to give some thought to what our chances would be in the hereafter. We bivouacked gloomily that night on the beach.

Early in the morning the cat awakened me by rubbing against my face. At first I thought he was only depressed, like the rest of us, and wanted company, but he pestered around until I got up and followed him. Calling to me over his shoulder, he led the way to a clump of mangrove trees, whose roots overhung the bank three feet above high tide. John trotted under the mass of roots and began to purr loudly. I started to follow him and then backed out, but the cat yowled so loudly that I got down on

all fours again and followed him. I crawled along for ten or twelve feet until I found John standing over a rivulet of fresh water about as big as my finger.

I drank my fill from it and then awakened the others and told them of John's discovery. They hailed him as our savior, and when he came trotting into camp a couple of hours later with an oyster in his mouth they were ready to beatify him. Until John had shown us the way to food, as he had led us to water, we had not thought of looking for oysters, of which there were millions around the roots of the mangrove trees.

Strengthened and encouraged, we patched up our boat and, when the storm had blown itself out, put to sea again and encountered a little schooner from St. Johns, Fla., which took us to Key West, where we soon got a ship for New York. On the way north we put in at Charleston, where I had enjoyed much excitement as a blockade-runner, and there I presented John Croix to a Methodist minister who promised to give him a good home.

IN HAYTI, HOT-BED OF REVOLUTIONS

I WAS still anxious to pay a visit to Hayti, that dark land of mystery and murder, and, in the guise of an English planter, I went there on a West Indian steamer. Hayti has had more internal troubles and more presidents than any other of the revolutionary republics, and her domestic disorders will continue until they are stopped by some powerful outside influences, for the blacks and mulattoes are eternal enemies.

It did not take me long to make up my mind that Hayti was the warmest hotbed of intrigue I had ever run across, and I felt that I was among friends and in a thoroughly congenial atmosphere. The very air seemed to breed revolutions—perhaps because it was peopled with the spirits of the old buccaneers, who had their headquarters at the western end of the island in the entrancing early days.

There were many plotters for the Presidency, but there were two great rival camps, one headed by General F. D. Légitime and the other by General Florville Hippolyte. Légitime was planning to overturn the Government at once, but it was the scheme of Hippolyte, who was more cunning and willing to wait, to continue President Salomon in power until the election of 1886, when he expected to secure his own election as constitutional President. All of the plots and counterplots were laid in secret, of course, yet all men of influence knew in a general way what the others were doing and where they stood, with due allowance for the treachery always found in Latin countries, which creates a delightful element of uncertainty.

Hippolyte was one of the ugliest negroes I have ever known—and my estimate of him as here set down is in no way influenced by the fact that some years later he arranged to have me carefully murdered.

Brutal and bloodthirsty, he was at the same time a forceful old villain and possessed of much native shrewdness. Like all of the blacks, he was a devout voodoo worshiper and, with the aid of the *papalois*—the priesthood of the cannibalistic creed—he played on the superstitions of the ignorant negroes. We became well acquainted during the year or more that I loafed around Port au Prince, reveling in the oddly warlike surroundings and watching the budding plots, and at times I found him interesting.

Légitime was the opposite of Hippolyte in all of his qualities. He was a bright, intelligent, progressive mulatto; well educated for a Haytien and with a good address and the manners of a gentleman. Intense loyalty was one of his strongest characteristics. No one questioned his bravery and, while he to some extent lacked firmness and strength of character, I believed he would develop these vital traits with age, for he was then a comparatively young man. He had the elements of a first-class president, and had he ever become firmly established in that office Hayti would today be a very different country and a much more agreeable neighbor.

In the end I allied myself with Légitime, and in so doing incurred the bitter enmity of Hippolyte, who had told me something of his plans and had even gone so far as to suggest, without going into details, that I cooperate with him when the time for action arrived. The result was that when I went over to his hated rival he took it as a deadly insult, and the chances are that we would have taken a few shots at each other if my stay in the country had not been cut short.

I was negotiating with Légitime to supply him with arms and take a commission

in his army and we were getting along famously toward a real revolution, when suddenly, in the latter part of 1884, President Salomon ordered that he be expelled from the country for plotting against him. If Légitime had been less popular he would have been unceremoniously shot, but Salomon's influence was already beginning to wane and he did not care to add largely to his enemies. At the same time, through the instrumentality of Hippolyte, the suggestion was gently conveyed to me that the climate of Hayti was not exactly suited to my health.

Légitime boarded a ship for Jamaica, which was conveniently in the harbor when his expulsion was announced, and I accompanied him. He told me the time was not ripe for his revolt and that he proposed to wait until the conditions were more favorable to him. As a matter of fact, he waited four years, and while he succeeded in overthrowing Salomon in the end, his rule was short-lived. I remained with him in Kingston for some time, and then, as I saw no prospect of quick action, returned to Australia, by way of London, where I once more resumed my British name of George MacFarlane.

AUSTRALIA AGAIN

SELLING CHINAMEN AGAINST THE LAW

I REACHED Melbourne in 1885, after an absence of about four years, and went to Menzies' Hotel, which was not the one I had stopped at before—when I was James Stuart Henderson. Of my three companions who had been sent to prison for stealing the *Ferret*, Leigh, the sailing-master, had recently completed his term, while Nourse, who impersonated me, and Joe Wilson, had still nearly two years to serve. I located Leigh and put him to work for Nevins, a sail-maker, and sent word to the others that I was there and would wait around until they came out.

Then, fearing that I might be recognized by some of the officers who had suspected, during the trial, that Nourse was playing a part, with the probable result that I would be forced again to change places with him, I went on to Sydney. There I met Montfort & Co., merchants and speculators, through whom I became financially interested in a group of silver properties known as the Sunny Corner Mines, in the Broken Hills district in New South Wales.

We also laid claim to Mount Morgan, deceptively described as "A Mountain of Gold," which was partly in Queensland. We plunged heavily on a question of title, which was in litigation, and stood, as we thought, to make many millions. When the decision of the highest court was finally announced the bottom fell out of our scheme, for we were knocked out at every point, and there was a void in my bank-account which represented considerably more than $100,000.

From the time of my first visit to Australia the laboring men had been conducting an anti-Chinese agitation, to perpetuate and strengthen their power over capital. There were not then, nor are there now, nearly enough workers in the country to supply the demand. The native blacks are without question the laziest people under the sun. The notoriously indolent West Indian negro is an enterprising and ambitious citizen by comparison with them, for there is no power on earth by which they can be made to work. The Chinese, always on the lookout for a labor market, soon heard of the rich field and invaded it in droves, whereupon the white workmen of all grades set up a great hullabaloo; it was there I first heard the cry of the "Yellow Peril."

The employers, fearful of antagonizing their employees, either joined with them or let them have their own way. They urged England to put a stop to the importation of Chinese, and when the mother country—which was extending its "sphere of influence" (meaning thereby the acquisition of territory) farther and farther into the Celestial Empire—declined to act, Victoria and New South Wales took the matter into their own hands and passed a Chinese exclusion law.

It provided that any ship captain who brought Chinese into these provinces should be compelled to return them, forfeit his certificate, and pay a fine of not more than three hundred pounds for each "Chinkie," and he might also be sent to jail. Chinese were further prohibited from entering the restricted districts by the overland route, and, while it was impossible to shut them out entirely, it was thought the new law would greatly reduce the number that entered the country.

IT OCCURRED to me that I might recoup my mining losses by importing Chinamen without running any considerable risk of arrest, and I went into the business. It promised to be profitable, for the natural effect of the exclusion law was to intensify the desire of the "Chinkies" to get into the two provinces, where the demand for them was the greater on account of their restricted number.

I bought the old mission ship *Southern Cross*, which took Bishop Selwyn to Australia, a fore-and-aft schooner of about two hundred tons, and sent her across the bay to Balmain to be overhauled and put in shape for her new purpose. I had her fitted up as a private yacht, but all of her fittings below decks were so arranged that they could be knocked down and stored away, leaving the hold open. On the first trip to China I had tiers and rows of berths built on the same quickly removable principle, giving enough space to carry more than two hundred passengers without discomfort.

I brought Leigh up from Melbourne, made him sailing-master and again began preying on the Chinkies, but in a more friendly way than when I was plundering their pirate junks in the China Sea. The Chinamen furnished their own food, and Quong Tart, a rich Chinese merchant of Sydney, paid me one hundred and fifty dollars for every one I landed in Victoria or New South Wales. He arranged for their shipment, so when I arrived at Amoy or Shanghai, where they all came from, I had only to wait for the requisite number to come on board. He also took charge of them when they were put ashore.

In a spirit of daredeviltry I landed the first shipload less than five miles north of Newcastle, the second largest city in New South Wales. The subsequent cargoes I unloaded on the beach north of Newcastle or south of Sydney, without ever feeling that I was in any serious danger of being discovered. Each time I sent word to Quong Tart where the next load would be put ashore, and about the time I was expected he sent spies to the spot to see if any officers were hanging around and signal to me if there was danger of running into a trap. Two cargoes were never landed at the same place and only Quong Tart knew where to look for me on the next trip.

When Nourse and Wilson were released from prison the former scurried across Bass Strait to his old Tasmanian home with the money I had paid him for so successfully impersonating me. He considered that he had been well compensated and expected to invest his capital in some small business, to which affluent position, under ordinary conditions, he never could have aspired with any degree of confidence.

Wilson's disposition was to go back to the sea with me, so I bought the *Nettie H.*, a handy little steamer, and put her into the Chinese smuggling trade. I took command of the steamer, with Leigh as sailing-master, and put Wilson in charge of the schooner, as I could trust him with less anxiety. He had none of Leigh's love for liquor, and the result of his carelessness with the *Ferret* had made him as careful as a Scot. While the *Nettie H.* was being fitted out the authorities warned me that they knew what I was up to and it would go hard with me if they secured proof of their suspicions, but, knowing they were only shooting in the air, I laughed at them.

IF THIS business of carrying Chinese under cover had been as productive of adventure as it was of profits I would have stuck to it indefinitely, but it was so absolutely devoid of excitement that it palled on me. After eight or nine trips, which more than repaid my losses ashore, I withdrew from the trade, with the idea of returning to the West Indies, where I imagined there were more thrilling times to be found.

While I was disposing of my ships and finally closing up Australian affairs I was in Sydney for several weeks and stopped at the Imperial Hotel, where I met and became well acquainted with Guy Boothby, the English novelist. Though he dreamed away his inborn love of adventure, while I industriously practised mine and made it my life, he was a good deal of a kindred spirit, and in the course of our numerous long talks I told him something about my experience with the "Beautiful White Devil," without going into any of the detailed and intimate facts which have been told in these confessions, so that he subsequently wove a romance about her, using her sobriquet as a title for the story.

(Other Adventures of Captain Boynton will appear in the next number.)

In Harness

by Carl M. Chapin

"WELL, what's your trouble?" I had found my friend, the old Chief, in an unprecedented conditionof dumps. Slouched deep in his leather chair he paid no attention to my greeting, but stared at his green and yellow carpet slippers.

"What's the trouble, anyhow?" I asked.

"It ain't my funeral," said the Chief sullenly. "It's Joe Perkins's."

"What's old False Alarm been doing now?"

"We-ell," he said, growing more serious, "he's been putting his foot in it again, and the Commissioner told him this morning he'd got to go on pension, January first. He's been up here telling me his troubles."

"Is that all?" I demanded. "You can't open up the tear-tap with that one. I've wept so often over old Perk's retirement, both personally and in the public prints, that the tears simply won't come and the topic is absolutely taboo in the office. I wouldn't dare spring it with the Commissioner's affidavit attached; I'd lose my job."

The Chief looked at me so long and so soberly that I began to fear I had carried my levity too far. Finally he said slowly:

"I wonder why it is you reporters never seem to have human feelings like other folks! You're about as sympathetic as one of those Igorrote head-hunters you read about."

In Department vernacular every individual connected with a newspaper, from publisher to devil, is a "reporter." The term is an execration and a byword.

"You reporters," the Chief went on, with an unspeakable accent on the opprobrious word, "talk a lot and write a lot about how you look into people's minds and see the tragedy and the comedy and the heart-throbs—and all you can see in Joe Perkins is a joke! Why, you don't know any more about human nature than you do about fires, and the Lord knows you ain't paying excess baggage on that!"

"Hush," I said. "Don't overtax your strength! What I want to hear about is False Alarm Perkins's latest."

"Well," said the Chief, evidently approaching the subject with some reluctance, "you remember a little blaze they had in Wilbur's drug-store out at Highwood about a month ago? Joe was in charge of the district that night. Do you know the answer?"

"I think I do," I said. "Second alarm and nothing doing."

"Just so; exactly! It wasn't anything but a little excelsior and some boxes 'way back in the cellar. Joe could have handled it all right and he knew he could. But it made a lot of smoke and it took 'em a long time to get at it. One of Joe's men caved in and some of the rest were getting a little groggy, I guess. And then young Keeler, his lieutenant, began to burble in his ear—I've got my suspicions of Bill Keeler, like I have of a lot of men that started under Joe and finished by climbing over his head. Anyhow, Keeler began to sing his little song about chemicals and explosions and how far they were from the city and what the Boss would say if it got away from them. That little touch about the Boss caught Joe where the hair's short and he hot-footed over to the box and yanked in a second. About two minutes after that they got in and located the blaze, and one good belt with a stream turned her black as your hat.

"You know how far it is out to that blazing suburb. It's a good three-mile run for the nearest company in the city here. And when they got there Joe was all made up and just climbing into the buggy to go home.

"They've had Joe up a good many times before, as you say, and he's always managed to get around 'em. But this time, they laid

it right into him. He was a wreck when he got up here. They must have counted up all the times he'd pulled needless alarms in the last ten years and figured how much money he'd cost the city and all the rest of the crimes he'd committed—and wound up by telling him his pension was waiting and he'd got to end the misery. Oh, old Joe's down and out. It's a joke to you, but somehow I can't dig up a laugh."

"Chief," I said contritely, "I'm sorry. I didn't know——"

"Cut it!" he broke in. "I know you, and your gabble never keeps me awake nights."

"But I can't understand old Perk," I said. "What ails him, anyway? He's a good fireman——"

"You're dead right he's a good fireman!" snapped the Chief. "There never was a better in this Department or any other. It's born in him. He's got an instinct for fires that 'ld make your flesh creep, sometimes. He can feel 'em a mile away. Why, I've known that man to jump up in the middle of the night and jam his feet into his turnouts and sit on the edge of his bunk, waiting. And before you could get your eyes shut again the old bell 'ld hit and off we'd go. And I don't care how blind a fire is, he'll dig it out of a smudge that 'ld keep the best man you ever saw guessing half an hour. He's a wonder, Joe is."

"What *is* the matter with him then?"

"He simply ain't got any confidence in Joe Perkins, that's all. Just as long as there's somebody over him to take the responsibility, he'll handle fires that 'ld make the Big Chief sick to look at—and never turn a hair. But just as soon as he's left alone, without anybody to lean on, he begins to get goose-pimples all over him, and when his instinct tells him he can handle a fire—like that one out to Wilbur's—the little yellow streak pokes him in the ribs and says, 'Supposin' she gets away from you, Joe; there'll be —— to pay!' And just about then, like as not, somebody like Keeler or Murphy—Murphy's chief out there now because he knew enough to keep his mouth shut and do what Joe told him, though he don't know any more about putting out fires than you do—some one with an ax to grind—jogs Joe on his tender spot and] bing! in goes a bell for help.

"There's nothing yellow about Joe. He's got a bunch of medals that 'ld make a jewelry-store look like a tin-shop—and he's earned every one of them, and more. But he's so meek and sensitive he goes all to pieces when any one calls him down. That's what he's afraid of—being laughed at and blamed. That's why this 'False Alarm' thing that's got going about him hurts him so. He don't want to quit with that on him. He's been hanging on and hanging on, hoping he'd 'get a chance,' as he calls it and make good, and maybe get his promotion. He's been Captain of that same old engine company all of twenty years anyhow, and most of the time he's been acting chief out there. Naturally he'd expect to get the regular job when there was a vacancy, but there's half a dozen men gone over his head. They've talked of taking even this job away from him, but I guess they didn't quite have the heart. And all he wants is just to be the boss in that little old backwoods district and wear crossed trumpets and a white hat!

"Oh, he ain't given up hope yet. It's six months from now to New Year's, and he figures he may get a chance. Chance! Chances don't come crawling up and beg you to take 'em. He says if he can't get his promotion he wants to die in harness, and Lord knows what fool fit he may throw! But what's the use! It ain't my funeral."

II

THE Chief's fears had a startling realization. The "Big Lumber Fire" that befell a few evenings after our talk of Joe Perkins has long ago taken its appointed place in Department annals. Six swift alarms in the early Summer evening called all but a few scattered "covering" companies to fight a conflagration that leaped from lumber-yard to planing-mill and, reaching out, engulfed other yards and other mills, tenements, stores and saloons, and burned even to the walls of Fire Headquarters where the fire-alarm operators, gagging in the dense pine smoke, stuck to their instruments all night long, behind the protecting veil of the water-curtain. From surrounding towns, answering the city's call for help, fire-fighters of every known genus came straggling in, just in time to tackle a small blaze in a down-town loft which, despite their willing ministrations, developed into a three-alarm fire that called for help from the hard-pressed regulars in the lumber district.

Six miles away, in the Headquarters of the Highwood District, Perkins and Murphy, the District Chief, sat by a window in the latter's office and watched the rolling crimson that marked the battleground. Murphy, as the Chief had hinted, was one of those who had battened on Perkins's skill, pandered to his besetting weakness and passed him in the race. He hated and feared his subordinate as heartily as Perkins despised him, and ordinarily they had little in common. But the magnitude of the night's events insensibly drew them together and they talked of them in low tones, pausing frequently to count the abortive alarms that tinkled off on the tapper downstairs. Murphy's telephone bell rang and he turned to answer. Perkins could hear an excited voice pouring out its message, though he could not distinguish the words. It seemed an age before the District Chief snapped "All right!" and swung back to him.

"I'm goin' in town," he jerked out. "Don't answer nuthin' outside th' District 'thout yuh git orders; an' fer God's sake don't pull no seconds! Yuh got 43, 'n' 56 'n' th' truck 'n' th' chimical. Th'ain't nuthin' else this side 'v th' fire 'n' they kin use all they got, right there."

PERKINS began a weak protest, but the District Chief was gone. He heard the pounding of hoofs, the rattle of the buggy over the cobble runway, and then the bustle subsided as the men went back to their points of vantage and resumed their cursing at the fate that kept them inactive. The Captain was again staring out of the window when Keeler, the lieutenant, stuck his head in the doorway.

"Hey, Cap," he challenged, in the tone he might have used to a probationer, "dey jest 'phoned fer 56! She's went in town t' cover. Mebbe we'll git a wallup at sumthin' 'fore mornin', wot?"

The Captain had other things than his dignity to worry him and he disregarded Keeler's style of address.

"Then all we've got is this engine and the truck and the chemical," he said querulously. "What we going to do if we get a fire out here, Bill?"

Keeler was a typical product of the city streets, tough and two-fisted, without imagination and consequently without fear, physical or moral. He had long despised the Captain for his weakness—the more because he had fed it and profited by it—and if discipline had formerly imposed some restraint upon him, the knowledge of Perkins's impending downfall had dissipated it.

"Do? Wot 'n—*ken* we do?" he shouted. "Pull a second, I s'pose, like we allus do!"

The door slammed, and jeering laughter floated back through the transom. The old Captain's heart must have been bitter as he sat there with his subordinate's jibe ringing in his ears, conscious of his failure in life, yet craven with dread of the one thing that might give him opportunity to retrieve it. Perhaps the thought came to him that at least he might make Keeler pay for his insult before the power was wrested from him. Perhaps there was no room for revenge in a heart filled with sorrow and with forebodings which, even as he framed them, were fulfilled in the patter of the tapper, the resounding thunder of the house gong and the rush of the cool night air on his face as he clung to the firebox of his engine, leaning out beyond the boiler to peer down the dark street ahead. And behind him, obscured in the smoke and sparks from the funnel above his head, trailed the tender, bearing Keeler and his hilarious crew, drunk with excitement and delirious with happiness at the prospect of something to do.

WHEN Captain Perkins and his three pieces of apparatus rolled up to the box from which the alarm had come, smoke was once more oozing and puffing from every crevice of the basement windows of Wilbur's drug-store, on the ground floor of the four-story brick block opposite. The coincidence was not a pleasant one, though present indications promised no repetition of his former easy victory. The big show-windows were opaque with the yellow mass that writhed and rolled against the glass inside, and wisps of smoke were already beginning to curl from the windows of the lofts above.

Even Keeler, whose gospel of life was to attend strictly to his own business and let his superiors mind theirs—with an eye ever to the main chance, if they came to grief—was moved to approach his Captain as he came up with the tender, stretching in the first line of hose. Whatever was in his mind to say, the Captain forestalled him.

"Get your line inside!" he snapped gruff-

ly. "Work her down those stairs—fire's in the rear. Come, get a move on!" he yelled, as Keeler hung back.

"Say, Cap, y' ain't goin' t' tackle dis alone, are yuh? Y' can't do nuttin' wit' dis fire wit' d' bunch y' got! We gotta hev some help fer dis fire. She'll——"

"Shut up!" snapped the Captain. "And get to work. What's the matter with you—afraid?"

Afraid! It is the insult that goes straightest home to the Keeler type. He saw red and his throat contracted so that he could not articulate the words that stormed for utterance. He tried, once and again, choked and turned on his heel.

"Well, by ——! afraid!" he managed to gasp as he dashed toward the belching doorway which the axmen had opened up for him. "Afraid!" he gulped again as he grasped a pair of hosemen and sent them reeling ahead of him into the smother, dragging their limp line.

Outside, the truck-crew, wondering at the bellowed orders of the usually mild Perkins, smashed in the basement windows and the plate-glass corner of the drug-store. They ripped up the iron doors of the sidewalk hatchway and lowered a short ladder to the cellar bottom. With a life-line under his arms and the pipe of the second hose-line dangling over his shoulders, Dolan, the truck captain, started down, ducking his head when he met the billow of smoke, as a surf swimmer ducks through a wave. Before a fireman could follow, the life-line tightened with a jerk and they hauled Dolan out and stretched him helpless on the curb. When he revived, half a dozen of his men had been laid out beside him. He sat up, looked blankly at their forms, then climbed slowly to his feet and reeled over to the acting chief. Clinging about Perkins' neck he gasped and gurgled in his ear.

"Look a' that," he croaked, waving an unsteady arm toward the row of recumbent figures. "*Look* a' that! We ain't got th' men t' handle no cellar fire that way, Joe. Why don't y' git some help here—huh?"

Perkins thrust him off and cursed him viciously. "I'm running this fire!" he yelled. "And I won't take orders from you! You're trying to queer me, you and Keeler and the whole bunch. I've pulled my last second, d'you hear? You get in there and get to work!"

The men stared through the smoke in bewilderment at the crazy figure that shook the truck captain by the shoulders and screamed abuse into his face. For a minute Dolan thought Perkins meant to strike him. He made up his mind that the old man had in reality gone crazy, and he was debating whether duty did not require him to take charge by force, when Keeler and his crew came staggering from the doorway, supporting one of the hosemen whose head dangled on his chest, and dragging their useless line behind them.

As they reached the sidewalk there came a muffled explosion from the basement, then a rumbling detonation that buckled the floor and brought a shower of glass tinkling down about their heads from the windows above. Out through basement windows and hatchway surged a belch of flame that drove them all to the middle of the street, with hands tight clasped over stinging faces, while a wall of fire enveloped both fronts of the store and licked into the windows of the second story.

"Wa-ater! Sta-art your wa-ater!"

A dozen voices took up the shout in unison as the men dragged their hose from the threatening flames and regained the abandoned nozzles, now almost too hot to touch. The engineer across the street had already jumped to his throttle and the cries were drowned in the rising throb of the exhaust, while the two lines of hose writhed like snakes, then stiffened as the pumps made their full strength felt. With helmets reversed, Keeler and Dolan and their crews fought toward the roaring furnace and sent their streams smashing into the fire. It was their whole battery of offense, and it was as unavailing as an air-rifle against a dreadnought.

"Spit on it, boys!" croaked Keeler derisively, and tried vainly to spit from lips as black and dry as charcoal.

Perkins stood motionless for a moment, staring at the catastrophe that had come upon him. Then he turned and walked across the street to where Murphy's driver, who had come down with the tender, stood clinging to the red alarm-box, his eyes wide and his knees trembling. He was young and inexperienced and his nerves were all a-twitter.

"Tell headquarters we need help and need it quick, and plenty of it!"

The boy marveled at his coolness. He still talks with awe of the gray-bearded

man who came to him out of that hell of fire and asked for help as he might have asked the time of day; who put a steady hand on his quivering shoulder and smiled down reassuringly when his palsied fingers on the key made stuttering foolishness of the Morse code.

"Steady, youngster," Old Perkins said. "Keep your nerve. We're depending on you and we've got to have help. Make 'em understand."

And they did understand. What the boy's terror and excitement might have omitted, the gibbering of the key told to the overwrought operators at headquarters, and the message which they relayed to the Big Chief's driver at his post by the red box down in the heat and turmoil of the lumber district and which he bore to his wild-eyed commander sent that veteran off into a frenzy of classic profanity that none of us who were privileged to hear it will ever forget.

AS SOON as Perkins was certain that the boy had made his message understood he strode back across the street. Already Dolan and three of the men had succumbed and been borne away by the police and bystanders. This reduced his force to barely half a score, and his officers to Keeler and the lieutenant who commanded the chemical engine. The interior of the drug-store was a mass of flame, and the smoke was beginning to glow red in the second story as the fire ate through.

The situation of the burning block was a fortunate one. Standing on a corner, it fronted on two sides upon broad streets where the danger of the fire's extending was practically negligible. On a third side it abutted on vacant land. The fourth was guarded by a heavy brick fire-wall, a monument to some builder whose conscience transcended the bare letter of the building laws. On this side a row of low, wooden blocks extended away down the main street, unbroken, except by narrow cross streets, until it reached the closely built-up section of dwelling-houses. As though to atone for the slip of virtue which had inspired the fire-wall, the builder of the brick block had, at a subsequent date, abolished the stairway from the ground to the second floor and, to give entrance to the upper floors, had cut an archway through his wall into the wooden building next door.

It was here that the danger lay, and the Captain knew it well, for every building in his district was as familiar to him as the dog's-eared books in his den. The wall, towering two stories above the frame building and projecting many feet in the rear, was an ample safeguard; one stream, well handled, would prevent the fire lapping around in front; the real fight must be made in that narrow, smoke-choked hallway. With a footing once gained there, the fire would have full swing for miles, and by the time help could arrive from the city not all the help in twenty leagues could save Highwood from being wiped off the map.

The flames had now gained full control of the second floor. The Captain bent over and shouted in Keeler's ear:

"Don't let her jump across in front there! I'll hold her inside. Stick till your pipe melts! If she gets by you, we'll be goners up inside!"

It is seldom necessary to remind a fireman that a slip on his part may mean death to his comrades. As he relies on them to guard him to the death, so will he "stick till he drops" to keep them safe. Though Keeler might scheme by all methods, fair or foul, to compass his superior's downfall in the Department, he would have given his life for him as unthinkingly as for his closest pal. It was not necessary for either to reason this out; it was part of their creed, unwritten, unspoken, unthought-of, purely instinctive. And so the Captain accepted Keeler's grunt of assent at its face value and went his way, fearing no treachery where his life was at stake.

With all the men he could gather, Perkins led the second line to the doorway at the far end of the wooden block. As they turned the angle into the hall the fire was already sweeping through the archway and taking hold of the wooden sheathing. The Captain opened up the pipe and sent the stream battering down the corridor. For a few minutes it seemed that he was too late, for the stream from the ancient engine was not of the strongest and the fire engulfed it hungrily, stretching a myriad heads forward, roaring as though for more.

Then, slowly, sullenly, it yielded and drew back into its lair, still making impotent dashes at the enemy, but ever giving ground. When it had retired through the yawning archway and came forth no more the Captain groaned with relief. With

reasonable luck it could be held until help came or the fire burned itself out—providing only that men could live in that atmosphere of hell. But he meant it should be held.

He sent all the men but two back to the street to aid Keeler. Then they worked down the hall so that the power of their stream might reach the blaze. The heat blistered their skins, and the smoke that drifted down upon them with every eddy of draft from a new opening in the burning building tore at their eyeballs like powdered glass and gripped and cut their throats like knives. The Captain pushed his men down to their knees and jabbed the spike of the pipe-holder into a door-jamb. This took the strain of the bucking hose off their shoulders and brought them down into the clearer air-currents found near the floor.

But even so it was telling heavily on the men, one of whom was "rusticating" after a tour in hospital. He was still weak and lacked the vitality to keep his tormented lungs up to their work. Presently his head dropped forward and the stream drew blood from his forehead. The chill of the water brought him up with a jerk, but his head still wobbled unsteadily.

The Captain bent over and tried to speak. The smoke made articulation impossible, but the man understood and shook his head in weak negation of any suggestion that he should quit. But even as he wagged it he went down again and lay motionless. Perkins rolled him to one side and stretched himself along the hose, motioning the other man to take his comrade out. He demurred at leaving the old man alone, but finally started, crawling painfully along and dragging the unconscious man beside him. At the head of the stairs he struggled to his feet and hitched the limp body over his shoulder, took a step downward, caught his foot in the hose and pitched to the bottom, where he lay in a huddled heap against the doorpost, motionless, his burden across his head.

Above, the old Captain, lying full length along the throbbing hose, wrapped his arms about the pipe and laid his burning cheek against its cool surface, gasping weakly at the scant supply of air the swishing stream surrendered in its unerring flight to the glowering red chasm that yawned before it.

III

THE chain of events that brought the Big Chief, Murphy and myself upon the ground at Highwood are no part of this story. Your citizen of average veracity in his every-day existence is transformed into a demoniac liar by the sight of a "working" fire, and the telephonic tales of disaster that filtered to the Big Chief through the medium of the headquarters operators finally convinced him that the lumber-yard blaze, now well hemmed in, was of secondary importance to the fiery cataclasm that was overwhelming Highwood. He had already despatched relief as rapidly as he could detach it, and had sent Murphy in his buggy to supersede Perkins. In the Chief's "Red Flyer" we passed the District Chief, dragging along behind his weary horse, and most of the apparatus, guided by a veritable pillar of flame that reduced the Big Chief's tattered nerves to a condition bordering on frenzy.

When we drew up in front of the Wilbur block, now a great torch from cellar to roof and rapidly settling down into a blazing pile in the basement, Keeler and his crew had just surrendered their line to the first squad of reenforcements. The lieutenant had been faithful to his trust. The front of the wooden block showed black and charred where billows of flame had broken against it from the windows of the burning structure, but Keeler's stream, powerless against the body of the fire, had sufficed to keep it from getting a hold on the flimsy material next door.

The Big Chief looked about for Perkins. Then, sighting Keeler and his staggering crew, black as coal and with the skin already peeling from blistered hands and faces, he swooped down, drawn by the white vizor on the lieutenant's helmet.

"What in—who—where's——"

He broke off, speechless and rumbling in his throat.

"I dunno," said Keeler in answer to any possible question.

The Chief swallowed hard and began again. "Where's Perkins?" he managed to say.

"Dunno," mumbled Keeler. "Up inside, I guess. Ain't see'd him f'r 'n hour."

"Door through that wall?" snapped the Chief, instinctively divining the critical points of the situation.

Keeler was gingerly pressing, with a smutty forefinger, the blisters on the back of his stinging hand.

"Dunno," he growled, without raising his eyes.

"'Dunno'!" yelped the Chief, and then he broke loose. To repeat here what he said would avail nothing. Moreover, ink and paper would do scant justice to the magnificence of his vocal performances that night. Suffice it that he has since expressed shame and contrition. It was a night to try men's souls, and the language it evoked has become a tradition among men whose hardships and vicissitudes do not conduce to mildness of speech under the most favorable circumstances. As one newspaper bard rhymed it, mangling a well-known couplet:

Men cussed that night what never cussed before;
And them what always cussed, just cussed the more.

What the Big Chief said to Keeler, Keeler remembers. He says it makes him proud to this day to think he served under a man who could swear like that!

Just as Keeler was hovering between personal combat and flight, Murphy's evil genius brought him upon the scene, and the Chief dragged him bodily from his buggy and gripped him like a bulldog, cutting off the voluble flow of words with which the District Chief attempted to guard himself from any possible criticism.

"Is there a door through there?" he bellowed, jerking his hand toward where the old Captain lay with his face against the cool pipe.

"I—I dunno," stammered Murphy.

The Chief grasped him by the shoulders and shook him. "F'r Gawd's sake," he demanded, "is that the only word you know out here? Don't nobody know nothin' about this —— district? Come on an' see if you can't learn somethin'!"

FOLLOWING the line of Perkins's hose, he dragged the bewildered Murphy to the door and swung his lantern inside. The light fell on the huddled bodies of the two hose-men. The Chief stooped and dragged one of them to the sidewalk. Murphy laid the other beside him. I think all three of us sensed the tragedy then.

"Who are they?" the Chief asked, and there was a new note in his voice.

"Dun—they're new men," said Murphy.

The Chief made no reply, but jumped through the doorway. Up the stairs we followed, the lantern growing dimmer in the increasing smoke. In the hallway it was almost impossible to breathe, though the reek was as nothing compared to what it must have been before the falling roof opened a vertical flue. Blindly we felt our way along the hose, down the corridor, and then, suddenly, the light fell upon a dim form lying prone upon the surging pipe whose stream still threw its guardian veil across the red opening.

The old Captain's head was on the floor now, but his cheek still pressed lovingly against the pipe. The Chief looked down for a moment, then turned and pointed silently to the archway beyond which tongues of flame were still dimly visible shooting up from the wreckage. He dropped to his knees and lifted the white head.

"Joe!" he called in a hoarse whisper into the unheeding ear. "Joe!"

For a moment he waited with his ear close to the blackened lips. Then he straightened up. Several firemen had followed us and he motioned to them to take the line. Murphy stooped, but the Chief pushed him roughly aside and gently swung the old man to his shoulder. Murphy took the lantern and, picking up the old Captain's helmet, I followed them to the open air. The Chief laid his burden along the curb and, kneeling again, fumbled for the Captain's heart. Murphy, seeking the right thing to say for his own advantage, cleared his throat noisily.

"Well, Chief," he said, "Old False Alarm's made his last break, I guess."

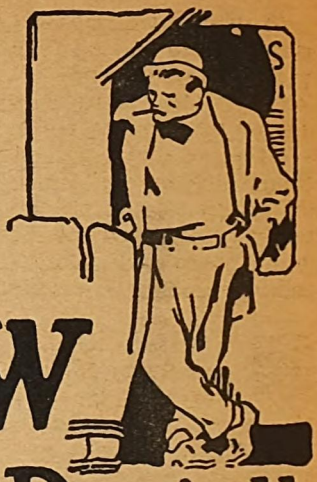
The Chief, staring down at the face below him, on which still lingered the smile that had come with the first whistle of the rescuing engines, seemed not to have heard.

"If I'd been in charge, Chief——"

But the Chief had heard. He straightened to his feet with a leap and thrust his face close to Murphy's.

"If you'd been in charge, you muttonhead, this fire'd been out to th' city limits by now! You keep your mouth shut, you hear? And that means you!" he snapped, turning to me. "There's no kick coming on the handling of this fire, from anybody! See? Murphy, get them men an ambulance!"

The Cat's Paw



by Charles Edward Daniell

COOGAN of the Central office lounged in the doorway of an unsavory building on River Street, idly surveying the passers-by, with hat tip-tilted on the back of his big red head. His ponderous frame rested lazily against the grimy entrance, a long black cigar protruding from his wide, good-natured mouth. As he indolently scanned each passing face, he might have been likened to a weary fisherman, placidly impassive though languidly watchful, his pugnacious features proclaiming a patient tenaciousness, yet the serene blue eyes, apparently indifferent to his surroundings, were nevertheless warily alert to each and every unit that floated along the human current. And in truth such he was—a fisher of men.

But on this humid June evening, as he lethargically loitered in the doorway, now and again mopping his hot head as he gazed down the stream in search of his prey, it was not so much a desire to employ a hook that engaged Coogan's attention, as to investigate a new and—to him—rather surprising form of bait.

And this bait? Only the night before he had caught a glimpse of it. And, what was still more puzzling he had watched a fish nibble it—a smooth, radiant fish, of sleek, agile habit and ingratiating manner, that brought a quick frown to the detective's brow and an involuntary exclamation to his lips as he observed the encounter from the shadow of a building where he lurked for twenty minutes. From a vivid description that seemed to have burned itself into his brain, he was quite positive that he recognized this strange fish.

About a week prior to this, the Chief had called the detective into his office.

"Word comes from Denver headquarters, Coogan," he announced, "that Mr. Lawrence Laflin, sometime bank sneak, and all-time crook, is paying us a visit. His club friends out there call him 'Laughing Larry,' so he's probably a humorist. If you happen to butt into him tell him a funny story. Entertain him. Understand?"

"Sure, Chief. I'll show him the Tombs," suggested Coogan brightly. "Perhaps it'll make him laugh."

"Yes, that might amuse him. But listen—here is his description. Get busy and memorize it. The letter says, 'tall, thin, fashionably dressed, clean shaven; flat, square features, on which a broken nose shines like the red bull's-eye on a target; laughs a good deal, and very active. Quick gun man. Dangerous!' There you have it," concluded the Chief. "If you run across him, ask him down to one of my afternoon teas. Perhaps he knows some new jokes."

So Coogan went about his business, and the Chief's detailed description floated in the back of his mind in a vapory mist, but out of the haze there loomed with vivid insistency a flat, square face on which a broken nose shone like the red bull's-eye on a

target. It came to him again and again in the course of the day.

And then, quite unexpectedly, he almost ran into this droll suspect. Returning home late the previous evening, he had unquestionably recognized this absurd figure standing in the glare of an electric light talking to another man. There was no denying that flat, square, mask-like face, and the comical red nose. The vivid image of the target and bull's-eye was instantly flashed from some seat of memory, and he involuntarily paused from the sudden shock. But another look caused him abruptly to turn and cross the street. In the shadow of a building he mopped his head and wonder-struck eyes as he gazed across at the two men in puzzled astonishment.

Literally to fall upon this comic "yegg" was an acute surprise, but in the latter's companion Coogan discovered an enigma that was painfully startling. What business had this bank sneak with Harry Calvert, cashier for the millionaire fruit concern of Brown & Budd? What possible connection could exist between a Western criminal and the boy whom he had known since the time Judy Daley, now his wife, rolled the future cashier over Officer Coogan's beat and finally over Detective Coogan's heart?

Presently, as he watched, the pair, with linked arms, turned down a side street in earnest conversation, and the detective, dumbly gaping, allowed them to go; for in Coogan's perplexed consciousness the seed of a plan was already forming. He would test it to-morrow.

AND so to-night, his mind swayed between curiosity and alarm, he patiently awaited the solution of this mysterious riddle.

Finally, in the distance he perceived a slim, jaunty figure swinging along, and his lounging attitude became more obviously indolent and unconcerned. A moment more and a young man in a light suit was abreast the doorway, and two surprised brown eyes fell upon the detective. He stepped up and punched the latter playfully on the chest.

"Hello, Coogie, old scout! What's the matter with you—lost?"

"You needn't put the neighborhood wise to it if I am!" growled the detective with a significant glance at a group of longshoremen on the corner. "Cut out the megaphone. The Bartholdi statue may get on to it."

"Oh!" breathed the other, with a furtive glance at the corner loafers. "Piping off some sailor, Coogie?"

The latter replied evasively. "What's the matter with you to-night?" he questioned. "Kept after school?"

"Oh, no; it's just the seventh of the month," was the weary answer. "We always unload two banana freighters on the seventh, you know, and as half the cargo sells on the dock for cash, I have to stay and take care of the dough. Say! but there's a bundle of it down there to-night, Pat," he added confidentially.

Coogan rolled his cigar thoughtfully over a protruding lower lip.

"D'ye mean to tell me," he inquired testily, "that that firm of yours lets a big bunch of money stay in that hen-coop of an office over night?"

"Once a month they're obliged to," was the calm assurance. "You see it comes in after banking hours."

"And how big a wad are you temptin' the public with to-night?" pursued the detective.

The young man laughed tolerantly. "Oh, about twenty thousand dollars. But what of it?" There was a hint of irritation in the tone. "The firm thinks it safe enough."

"Sure!" the detective smiled grimly. "Safe as the Bank of England till some fly yegg gets wise to it and slices off the top of your old-fashioned bread-box with a can-opener!" He grunted contempt.

"You've got crooks and yeggmen on the brain, Coog," remarked the cashier airily. "That's your line, so I suppose it's natural. But I hope your yeggs don't get busy to-night," he added meaningly. "Two friends of mine asked me to place a package of valuable bonds in the safe yesterday."

Coogan was puffing his cigar reflectively.

"That so?" he said with apparent unconcern.

"Yes. They're bonds of a big Colorado silver mine," explained the other with a touch of pride.

A rebus formed instantly in the mind of the detective, in which he mentally struggled to fit a silver mine, a young cashier, and an old-fashioned safe successfully with a man distinguished by a broken nose that shone like the red bull's-eye on a target.

His reverie was interrupted by a burst of confidence.

"Look here, Pat, I want to tell you something." An appealing note crept into the voice, albeit the tone was aggressively confident. "You and Judy are both mighty old friends of mine, and I want you to know about it. I'm going to chuck my job down there next week. Yes, I am. Nothing to it. I'm sick of the blamed snail's pace! It's just one ceaseless grind, grind, grind—a deadly mechanical dog-trot day in and day out, that leads to nothing and nowhere. I'm only a cog in one wheel of a machine that starts at nine o'clock and runs automatically till five-thirty. I'm sick of the game, Coog—tired out. I'm built for better things than a cashier's job at eighteen per, and I've—well, I've struck a fortune. That's right!"

The assertion rang defiantly. "Two friends of mine have let me into a big mining proposition out in Heddon, Colorado, and next week I'm going out there on a big salary. They want me to act as treasurer. I've got stock enough to pull down one hundred thousand dollars in a year's time. It's the Purple Gulch Silver Mine, and it's going to be a big winner." The young man finished flushed and radiant, an eager light glowing in his fervent eyes.

COOGAN listened passively, rolling his cigar thoughtfully between his teeth, his mind keenly analyzing each bit of information, and adjusting it to its proper niche. At the conclusion a quick smile broke over his features, the reflection of a sudden illuminating thought. He clapped an approving hand on the shoulder of his enthusiastic friend.

"You're all right, Harry!" he said encouragingly. "Go in and win, me boy. It was only the other day I was tellin' Judy somethin' like that. 'Keep your eye on Harry,' I says to her. 'Those people won't hold his nose to the grindstone much longer. He's got the stuff in him to do big things if he gets the chance,' says I, 'and if the chance don't come he'll soon make it come.' Who's your friends, Harry?"

"A Mr. Rathburn and a Mr. Studley," explained the latter. "Mr. Studley is president of the mine and lives here; Mr. Rathburn is the manager and belongs out in Denver."

"Mr. Rathburn?" repeated the detective meditatively. "Sure, I've heard of him." The eyebrows raised inquiringly. "Ain't he the big minin' operator—the Denver millionaire? A tall feller like, with a face on him——"

The cashier laughed pleasantly. "You've struck it, Coog," he anticipated. "Mr. Rathburn got into a mine accident years ago and had his nose broken. He isn't very good to look at, but he's got the stuff all right."

"Sure he has," indorsed the officer. "I've heard about Rathburn. He's a big gun out West. But how did you happen to get in with him, Harry?"

"Well, to tell the truth, Pat,"—there was a hint of apology in the attitude,—"I ran into them both in 'Tommy's.' I suppose some people would call them bar-room acquaintances, but——"

Coogan waved a reassuring hand. "That's all right," he said indulgently; "plenty of good people go into 'Tommy's.' I wish I had the dough of some of 'em. And so you'll be the treasurer, hey?"

"That's the understanding. They need a bookeeping expert, they say."

"And you're the boy that'll fill that bill!" was the flattering tribute. "Where's the Company's offices?"

"We haven't hired them yet," explained the embryo capitalist. "We are looking at a suite now in a big Wall Street building where there are safe-deposit vaults. It's a lily-cooler, though, Pat—all fitted up in mahogany and brass, you know."

"I'll bet it is, if Rathburn has a hand in it," affirmed the detective, tossing his cigar away. "And that's the reason, I s'pose, you're keepin' the bonds for 'em?"

"Yes, but it won't be for long," was the confident reply. "It wouldn't surprise me if Mr. Rathburn had already clinched the deal for those offices." He pulled out his watch. "I've an engagement to dine with him and Mr. Studley to-night at the Café de Paris at nine o'clock. Guess I'll have to be going, Coog."

He started off, but Coogan caught him by the sleeve. "Hold on a second, me boy," he said, casting a wary eye up and down the street. "Perhaps I'll be goin' along, too." They linked arms and moved off in the growing dusk of the evening, the detective's mind blindly groping in an endeavor to arrange his scattered ideas in orderly sequence. At the corner of Wall Street he

halted indeterminately and passed a handkerchief over his hot face.

"Faith, this night work's a crime against heaven, Harry," he remarked wearily. And then casually, "I s'pose your friends knew you had to work to-night?" he ventured.

"Oh, yes; Rathburn knew all about it a month ago. He laughs a good deal about the seventh of the month—calls it our Dago Day. Say, Coog!" beamed the clerk, "there's a man to handle big things! You ought to hear him go on about the push-cart methods of Brown & Budd! He says he'd be ashamed to pay a cashier less than three thousand a year, and he's right—it's worth it." The lip corners dropped sourly. "Rathburn agrees with me that there's no future with a two-cent crowd like that," he added bitterly. "Maybe I won't be glad to give the whole outfit a merry good-by next week!"

The detective was gazing abstractedly up at the roof of an adjacent building.

"Well, Harry," he said, "I wouldn't wonder if you'd struck it rich, me boy." He held out a brawny fist. "Here's luck, and come and say good-by to us before you go. And Judy," he chuckled,—"well, Judy'll have a fit when I tell her about this."

A wistful look crept into the eyes of the other. He placed his hand affectionately on the shoulder of the detective.

"Listen, Pat," he said earnestly, "if things go big with me, you've got to let me do something for—for Judy, you know. Judy's like a second mother to me, almost. She's—she's—" he stammered fervently, "just like one of the family, you know, Coog, and I want to——"

Coogan interrupted with a hearty laugh, then his mouth settled in an enigmatic smile. "Sure thing," he agreed, a shade of irony in the tone. "When you and Rathburn get busy with that silver mine, Harry, I s'pose Judy'll be wearin' diamonds." He laughed good-humoredly and, grasping the cashier's hand again, pressed it warmly. They exchanged waving good-bys as the latter moved briskly up Wall Street, the detective gazing after the retreating figure till it was a white blur in the distance, a compassionate light glowing in his eyes.

He crossed the street slowly in deep meditation, removing his hat frequently, as he sauntered along, pondering upon the subject. On the farther corner he stopped and, leaning against the lamp-post, stared abstractedly across at the ferry-house for some time, rolling a fresh cigar the while thoughtfully in his mouth, a cloud of smoke enveloping his big red head.

Finally with sudden resolution he turned abruptly and passed into the corner saloon. Snatching up the telephone on the end of the bar, he stood for fifteen minutes ringing up various numbers. The last on his list proved to be troublesome, and he called up "Information." "I want the house number of Mr. Budd," he yelled petulantly. "Yes. B-U-D-D. Budd! It's in Murray Hill district somewhere. Mr. George Budd, of Brown & Budd, fruit merchants."

II

THE young man in the light suit pursued his way up Wall Street to Broadway, where he stood for a time on the corner, searching the thoroughfare for a taxicab. A month since, a surface car would have sufficed, but to-night they rolled by unheeded. Presently he was whirling uptown. Silently, in the gloomy dusk of the lower city, the grim, dead blocks swept by him, gray and wavery, till at Union Square the cab plunged into a sea of flaring light. Harry Calvert leaned luxuriously back and gave himself up to the peculiar ecstasy of the moment. This sudden uplift in a flat, prosaic existence, so brilliant, so alluring, fired his imagination, and his brain swam as he speculated on the golden future. He reflected that, after all, water will always find its level, and he was merely taking from life what rightly belonged to him—grasping his own at last. And how hazy now and far away seemed the office desk and all its hated concomitants; the sordid grind; the cheap and questionable jokes of the fellows; and the ever-pervading odor of decaying fruit!

The cab presently drew up before a brilliantly lighted building, and the young cashier dismissed the conveyance and passed quickly inside. Albeit a favorite supper resort of the midnight contingent, the Café de Paris was already filled with belated diners. All was gaiety, dreamy music, light laughter. The atmosphere was charged with flashy ostentation—a glaring, vitiated illusion that appeared almost to float and shimmer above the elaborately coiffured heads of the women, accentuating the florid, self-indulgent features of the men. Harry

Calvert blinked bewilderingly in the unfamiliar environment as he gazed about him, and his heart grew warm within him. Here at last was the life that he instinctively recognized to be his kind.

"M'sieur!" He turned to confront the deferential head-waiter.

"I am looking——" he began, and then his eyes rested on a large, bulky individual with a heavy red face and a glistening black mustache, who had risen from a table in a corner of the café and stood beckoning.

"Thought I knew that white suit of yours," said the big man heavily, holding out a fat hand. "Sit down. Rathburn hasn't come yet. Said he might be late, and for us not to wait for him." Then to the waiter, "Bring a couple of Martinis." He leaned ponderously back and fitted a napkin elaborately under his chin, his eyes gloating on the showy scene.

"Great town, New York!" he observed unctuously. "She's the live wire of 'em all."

"Yes, sir!" agreed the clerk with a wise air, drinking in the scene with approving eyes. "And I guess right here is where you can see the typical life of the city. Has Mr. Rathburn been pretty busy to-day?"

"Up to his neck," assured the other. "Superintendent got into town to-day with good news about the mine, and he's been trailin' him all day. He hired those offices this afternoon, too."

"Oh, he did?" The cashier's face flushed with pleasure. "That's a dandy suite of offices, Mr. Studley."

"So-so," replied the big man tolerantly. "Ain't a bit better than the proposition deserves, though." He chuckled thickly. "Rather makes faces at that back tenement of yours, hey? 'Pon my soul, I can't see how that firm of yours can think much of 'emselves down in that cattle-pen by the docks. And the salaries!" He shook his head dubiously. "I was vice-president of a bank once. We used to pay the messengers twelve hundred a year."

The waiter served cocktails. The ex-vice-president raised his to the light and regarded it approvingly. "Here's luck!" he said, and in a single motion tossed it down his throat.

THE dinner had advanced to the roast, and the bottom of the second bottle of champagne was in sight, when a messenger boy entered the café and handed a note to the head waiter. In a moment more it was laid deferentially beside the big man's plate.

The latter reluctantly laid down his knife and fork and tore it open with a grunt. After glancing it through, he tossed it to the clerk.

"About what I thought," he remarked prophetically. "Rathburn's too busy to get here. Says he'll meet us at the Royal at eleven o'clock." He pulled out his watch. "Well, that gives us three-quarters of an hour," he added with satisfaction, and attacked the work in hand with renewed hostility.

It was evident the guardian of Brown & Budd's cash-drawer was enjoying to the full the life of his typical New Yorker. Flushed and radiant, he beamed indulgently on his gilded surroundings, his brown eyes glistening with pleasurable excitement, and the champagne and cocktail already exchanging confidences, whispered seductively of that dream of bliss in which fair women and motor-cars held no inconspicuous part. To this world of enchantment the Purple Gulch Mine would soon prove the medium of introduction.

The ex-vice-president finished his coffee and, dashing off a chaser, rose heavily to his feet. Harry Calvert followed reluctantly, and they passed out into the electric brilliance of New York's Great White Way. Crossing the turbulent square, they turned into a street that yawned like a gloomy, ill-lighted tunnel after the glare of Broadway. Half way down the block a man stepped abruptly from the shadow of a building, and the pale rays from a neighboring lamp-post fell dully on a face distinguished by flat, square features, on which a broken nose shone red, like the bull's-eye on a target.

"Well," he said, shaking hands, "I was just walkin' up to meet you." He was a tall, strongly built man, quick in speech and movement, with stony gray eyes set in a square, hard face. But, aside from the glistening red nose, a wide mouth filled with prominent white teeth appeared to be the dominant feature of his face. After each remark he flashed these white and shining symbols of his amiability like a startled bull-dog.

"Busy day? Well, just a trifle!" was the quick, nervous reply to a question of Calvert's. "Superintendent of the mine's here. I've just left him. He had to——"

"Mr. Studley says he brought good

news," interrupted the prospective treasurer.

"Good news!" An enthusiastic hand fell on the clerk's shoulder and the teeth flashed exultantly, "Good news! Well, say! are we in it? We've struck a new vein, my boy! It's a wonder! It's just another Leadville, Klondike, Bonanza!" The voice steadied and grew tense. "It'll pan out the biggest strike Colorado ever seen, Calvert! Yes, sir; it'll run into millions! How much stock now did I put in your name?" he inquired solicitously.

The cashier mentioned the amount. Mr. Rathburn of Denver threw up his hands. "There you have it!" he exclaimed. "You're worth just four hundred thousand dollars as you stand there now in your boots!"

A look of amazement, closely allied to horror, swept over the features of Brown & Budd's clerk. "Honest, Mr. Rathburn," he said eagerly, "you don't really mean——"

"Yes, I do mean! I mean you're just as good for four hundred thousand dollars as if you had it right now in your pants pocket!" He grinned exultantly. "Purple Gulch stock has jumped clean out o' sight in Denver. And that reminds me. I'm goin' West to-morrow mornin' at six-thirty, and I've got to get those bonds to-night."

"You mean those bonds you——"

"Yes, the bonds you put in your safe."

Lines of doubt and perplexity deepened on the young man's face. "But, Mr. Rathburn——"

THE manager of Purple Gulch shook his head impatiently. "Now look here, Calvert," he said in a wheedling voice, "this ain't boys' play. It's business. It means big money if I get those bonds out to Denver. They've got to come out of that safe to-night—somehow. D'ye know the combination?"

"Yes. I told you that the other day."

"Well, that's all there is to it. The rest is easy. We'll just slip down there and you open the safe. Have you got a key to the office?"

"No." There was a note of relief in the tone. "I was thinking about that, Mr. Rathburn. We can't get in."

The Westerner scratched his nose thoughtfully. "Ain't it an old-fashioned lock?" he inquired.

"It isn't a Yale lock," explained the other. "It's one of the kind that——"

"Yes, I know," interrupted the manager. "We'll tackle that when we get there. How about the watchman? Didn't you say the firm were too mean to keep one?"

"Yes, they've never kept a watchman. But, Mr. Rathburn," protested the cashier, "it's so late now. It looks—it looks kind of queer, don't it?"

The target-faced man placed his hand ingratiatingly on the shoulder of the skeptic. "Now listen to me," he said soberly. "I reckon you'll allow I've done pretty well by you, Calvert. I got a hunch on you the first time I ever seen you. I says to myself, There's a young feller with a head on him, smart as a steel trap at figures, and just the man I want out West with me as treasurer of Purple Gulch at a salary of five thousand dollars. Then I fixed you up with some bonds, that, now the big strike has come, makes you independently rich, and a long stride toward becomin' a millionaire in two years' time. I know it looks queer, tappin' that safe as late as this, but if we know it's on the level, what's the difference? But nobody could tell me in a thousand years," he concluded in a burst of admiration, "that a man with your brains would go to playing the monkey and get cold feet at the very time I needed your help. No, sir! I know you too well."

Pride quickly dissolved the lingering cloud of doubt in the clerk's mind. "I don't mean to raise objections, Mr. Rathburn," he protested. "I was only thinking of the lateness of the hour. But we ought to be careful and not be seen," he advised.

"Sure. We'll be careful," assured the Denverite with a conciliatory display of teeth. Then the head tipped back and he laughed merrily. "And what d'ye know about this!" he exclaimed in the jargon of the hour. "Denver white-hot to pay twenty prices for Purple Gulch, and the three of us standin' here in the dark, arguin'! But old Stud ain't sayin' a word," he added with an admiring glance at the ex-vice-president. "You can't get him excited. Stud just smokes, and thinks, and saws wood."

The plethoric Mr. Studley had been sturdily maintaining the curbstone securely in position, stolidly engrossed in blowing smoke wreaths into the night air.

"No use my buttin' in," he observed thickly," against you two talkin'-machines.

I s'pose you'll thrash it out some time."

"He's all right, Stud is," was the amiable tribute. "Just works with his head instead of his mouth." The Westerner stepped over to him. "Say, Stud, old man, do me a favor," he importuned. "Hike up to the corner and call a taxi. I wouldn't ask you, but, honest, my feet are giving me the devil to-night from rheumatism."

The latter grunted assent and moved off heavily, and in a few minutes interrupted a spirited conversation, in which millions were being handled with reckless indifference, by rolling up in a large motor-car. In a moment more the three were whirling through the night toward lower Broadway, and headed for Wall Street.

AS THE cab bounded through the silent, deserted streets, disquietude gripped the incipient treasurer as he leaned back, smoking cigarettes furiously. He became suddenly nervously apprehensive of this untimely midnight excursion. A certain misgiving crept into his mind that was difficult to banish, and though feeling no actual distrust, there was yet a qualm of anxiety, a lurking subconscious sense of fear that clutched him and shook the hand that held the cigarette. Mr. Studley, ponderously comfortable, monotonously sucked his cigar in silence. The broken-nosed man, however, relieved the situation by a fire of comment and advice.

"That's what we'll do," he declared conclusively. "Just leave the cab at the corner of Wall and Broadway and walk down to the river. It won't be noticed so much."

The cashier leaned forward with startled eyes. "How about the policeman?" he inquired anxiously. "The one on the beat, you know. We've got to dodge him, Mr. Rathburn. He wouldn't understand."

The Westerner smiled tolerantly. "D'ye know the cop?" he questioned.

"No."

"Well, don't worry, Calvert," the attitude was consolingly indulgent. "Old Stud knows him. He's an old pal of his. Stud ran into him a week ago, and they renewed friendship. That right, sport?"

"Sure thing!" puffed the ex-vice-president. "Used to be watchman in my bank. Good feller!"

"So if we bump into the cop," explained the manager, "Stud'll hand him out a line of talk and jolly him while we get busy in the office, eh, Stud?"

"That's right. Hold him over on the next corner talkin' about old times," affirmed the latter.

III

BUT this expedient was found unnecessary, for presently, leaving the car on Broadway, the three men passed the length of Wall Street without encountering a soul, and finally reached the river, where they searched warily up and down the dimly lighted thoroughfare for the glint of a brass button.

"It's all right, I reckon," commented the Westerner, peering sharply about. "Let's step lively now, as if we were chasin' that last boat to Staten Island."

They moved along briskly, the ex-vice-president deploying heavily in the rear, and three blocks down halted before an old-fashioned, weather-beaten brick building gray with age and closely shuttered. The upper stories were apparently used for a warehouse, but above the ground floor windows there hung a time-worn, battered sign announcing obscurely the firm of Brown & Budd.

Something jumped suddenly in Harry Calvert's throat. He felt a momentary relief.

"We forgot about the outside door!" he whispered excitedly. "We can't get in, Mr. Rathburn."

The latter stepped briskly up, and holding his body closely against the iron door, there was heard a sharp, grating sound and he flung it wide open.

"No trouble about that," he said, exchanging a knowing glance with Mr. Studley. "Now let's have a try at the other."

They entered a dark, narrow entry, and he clutched the knob of the wooden door. Something came out of his pocket, and there was rasping of metal on metal. Finally a click sounded, and Mr. Rathburn straightened up with a grunt of satisfaction and passed through into Brown & Budd's office.

"Easy as slippin' off an old shoe, if you only know how," he remarked lightly. "Used to be my old trade—locksmith. Now get busy with that combination, Harry. We want to make time."

The amiable Mr. Studley carefully closed both doors, and the dingy shuttered office

was as black as a pocket. The Denver man struck a match. By the flickering light the cashier stooped before the large, old-fashioned safe standing between the windows, his temples throbbing painfully as he grasped the combination knob with a trembling hand. For a brief second he hesitated, then a prolonged squeal cut the perfect silence. Round once; back twice; half a turn forward; and then— He straightened up unsteadily, and gazed dumbly before him.

The target-faced man took a nervous step forward and struck another match. "What's the matter?" he inquired in a tense whisper. "Don't it work?"

"No!" The clerk passed a shaking hand over his flushed and palpitating features. "It acts queer, somehow," he said in a broken voice. "I never knew it to—I'll try again."

The mask-like face set hard and grim in the faint, glimmering light, and the eyes glared suspiciously down at the stooping figure. Again the combination knob squealed whiningly in the painful silence, and once more the cashier staggered to his feet, dismay shooting from his bewildered eyes.

"Something is wrong with it!" he gasped helplessly. "It won't work!"

The Westerner sprang forward and gripped the shoulder of the other with a powerful hand.

"So that's your little game!" he flashed, facing him with flaming eyes. "Goin' to hold out on us, hey?" The lips parted savagely. "But those bonds come out of that safe to-night, by ——, and *you'll* get 'em!" he declared fiercely and, drawing an automatic pistol from his pocket, he exhibited it to the startled gaze of the trembling clerk.

The ex-bank-officer stepped hastily forward.

"Hold on, Larry," he said unguardedly. "Boy's nervous. Let him try it again. Better put your gun up."

"I'm willing to get the bonds!" choked Calvert. "Trouble is, my hand trembles."

The manager regarded him keenly by the flickering light of another match. "Go ahead, then," he said sternly. "And hurry up."

The revolver dropped back into his pocket.

This time the cashier sank to his knees and, clutching the knob with his right hand, carefully steadied his wrist with the other. Slowly he revolved it, and with exceeding caution, and presently his efforts were rewarded by a sharp click as the tumbler of the lock fell. He wrenched back the handle of the door and flung it wide open.

THE others stepped eagerly forward and peered into the interior with greedy eyes. Heaped in tempting piles were seen bundle upon bundle of greenbacks, neatly stacked up at the back of the safe. Calvert secured the package of bonds and passed it to Mr. Studley. Then suddenly, and quite unexpectedly, his foot slipped and he lurched over, sprawlingly at full length; a handkerchief was crammed roughly into his mouth, and his wrists and ankles securely strapped. Then a voice growled in a sneering undertone:

"Tie the little 'mark' on to a chair, Jake, and give him his bottle. Perhaps he'll take a nap now."

They seated him on a chair and secured his arms tightly to the frame. His eyes bulged painfully in his swollen, perspiring face, as he sat convulsively choking and with stupid fascination watched his former colleagues imperturbably gut the safe.

The cold-blooded suddenness of the attack overwhelmed him so bewilderingly that in a stunned, apathetic way he felt his brain had detached itself and was whirling through foggy, limitless space. Vainly his distracted mind groped in a feeble endeavor to adjust and piece together the atoms of his scattered wits, but he fell to staring dumbly with a torpid, animal-like consciousness at his erstwhile partners as they coolly, yet diligently, worked with their backs toward him, by the glimmer of repeated matches.

Then a sense of suffocation oppressed him. He labored to breathe and grew sickeningly faint. The room moved abruptly off—slipped elusively far away—and he seemed to be viewing it from a great distance, dim, hazy, fantastic and remotely grotesque in a wavery blur. His chin sank wearily on his breast.

Then suddenly a hand fell upon his arm and, raising his eyes, he vaguely realized that a man was crouching back of the long desk near him, and beyond in the dim, uncertain light were the shadowy forms of two more, and still beyond them another, and then——

A shot rang out. Instantly the room fell pitchy black. A furious scuffling followed. Passionate curses mingled with the resounding impact of falling clubs. Bodies fell heavily to the floor, struggling breathlessly, and a scrambling riot was in mad force, in which overturned chairs mixed freely with snarling, gasping men rolling between the desks and fighting desperately.

Suddenly the gas flared up, and a large man with a big red head rose to his feet and stood gazing down on a handcuffed figure whose upturned face revealed flat, square features, on which a broken nose shone like the red bull's-eye on a target.

"Let him up, Flynn," said the red-headed man. "We can handle him now." He turned to an elderly gentleman standing in the doorway. "Hot work, sir! It took three of us to do it."

Together they moved over to the unfortunate cashier and, cutting away his bonds, removed the handkerchief gag.

"A fine night's work, Harry!" Coogan applauded, with a warning glint in his eye, as he grasped the hand of the clerk. "You did the trick to a turn. I told Mr. Budd I knew you'd bring it off. Faith, me boy,"—he patted approvingly the arm of the wonder-struck youth—"the Chief ought to give you a detective's badge for this." He laughed lightly.

The cashier sat staring blankly.

"Yes, Calvert," affirmed the fruit merchant, "you've certainly shown wonderful pluck to-night, and I'm doubtful whether the Chief of Police or Brown & Budd should be most grateful to you. But,"—he cordially took the hand of the bewildered hero,—"I'll say this, Calvert," he threw him a meaning glance, "Brown & Budd won't forget in a hurry your courageous loyalty. No, sir!"—he pressed the hand with added warmth—"they won't forget it, Calvert, they won't forget it!"

The amazed clerk stared stupidly, with dilated eyes.

"But, Mr. Budd," he began weakly, "I——"

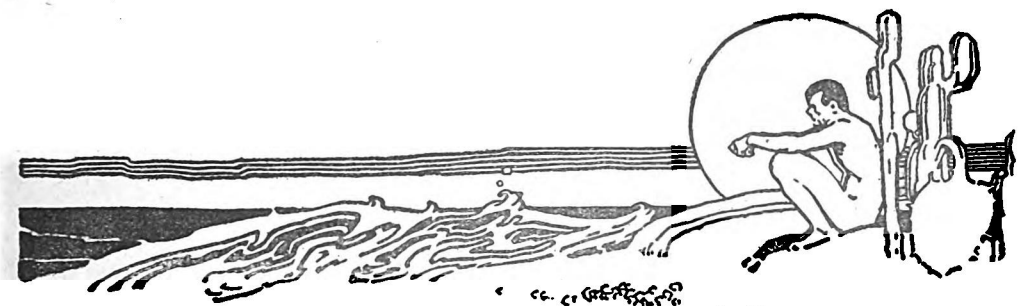
"It's all right, Harry," interrupted Coogan, moving between them. "You don't have to explain. What you need is a good wide bed, me boy. Yes, sir,"—the detective accepted Mr. Budd's outstretched hand—"I'll take charge of him, sir. Good-night, sir." And the banana merchant passed out.

Coogan turned to the late promoters of Purple Gulch, who, handcuffed and ludicrously disheveled, sat staring about in amazed defiance.

"Upon me soul!" he exclaimed tauntingly to the Denverite, "the Chief was wise to you all right. You look the part, no less. 'That yegg from Denver they call "Laughing Larry" is most likely a humorist, Coogan,' the Chief says to me. 'When you butt into him, show him some kind of a new joke, Pat—entertain him.' So I had to make good." The detective smiled grimly. "Take 'em down to the Old Slip Station, Flynn," he added to the officer, "and tell Cap. Cassidy to show 'em somethin' funny to keep 'em in good humor—let 'em look in the glass!"

He laughed ironically, and linking his arm into that of the late treasurer of Purple Gulch, they passed out.

"You're goin' up-town with me, Harry," he said. "Sure, Judy is wise to it all, me boy. She's waitin' up for us with a pot of hot coffee."



BILL BOWSUN'S BARE ESCAPE

by J.W. Muller

THE *Flying Squid* came to rest in a coral sea of emerald and turquoise. A mile away, plumed with palms, and sappy green with tropical growth, swam the island bought by the philanthropic Nutt. The Experimental Colony of Thinkers expressed its admiration with loud noises.

Miss Bisket hastily recited her famous lines:

"Life is an ocean, and we, with brains profound,
Are clams in which the pearls of thought are found."

Miss Grool applauded, and announced to the Wrongs of Humanity that here they would be righted. Miss Honora Pip, the apostle of raw food, proclaimed a menu of palm-oil and fruits. Professor Gickel quoted some apt lines from his great article on "Colossal Thoughts." Mr. Dacksund and Mr. Porki also spoke. The general effect was striking, though not so entirely illuminating as it might have been if the Thinkers had not all uttered their thoughts at the same moment.

Mr. C. I. Nutt listened with the kindly gratification of a patron. With his right hand adjusted carefully in the breast of his coat, he gazed in majestic revery at the land that was to have a model government for the nations to copy.

Miss Grool unfurled a green banner whose device was a figure, worked in purple, of Liberty defending a happy, grateful multitude from a fierce rain with an umbrella that had on it, in gold, the letters "E. C. of T." The male Thinkers uncovered their heads reverently and the female Thinkers cried, "Hurrah!" With the banner waving, they went ashore in the ship's boats to take formal possession.

Henry, whose texture was tender from a rigorous diet of pastry, viewed the limestone humps and valleys of the island with a calculating eye and slyly remained behind. It was a shock to his self-respect when, a few moments afterward, Captain Moses and the entire crew followed in boats laden with portable houses and other supplies, leaving Mr. Bowsun, his ancient persecutor, in sole charge of the schooner. It made the awning-shaded deck of the *Flying Squid* seem suddenly undesirable.

Henry saw Mr. Bowsun's face undergo strange changes. First it lighted with a joy that could be called only savage. Then it changed to harassed reflection, and finally its expressive lines settled into a resignation that evidently was extremely painful.

"See here, Henery!" he said, clenching his expansive hands. "See here! You can call yourself that there Miss Gruel's secretary, or anything else you please; but you're the cabin-boy of the *Flying Squid*, and a deserter, and nothin' else. Howsomever, and for the sake of peace, and on account o' them—them—" Mr. Bowsun reflected earnestly,—"them barnacle geeses o' passengers," he continued, greatly relieved, "I been lettin' the matter rest. But I warn

you now, solemn, and in all Christian kindness, don't presume. Don't presume. Don't you do nothin' to annoy me, nor say nothin', nor yet look nothin', or I'll——"

He left his sentence unfinished and walked to the stern, choking.

Henry strolled away with his hands in his pockets and plunged headlong into his favorite dissipation of doing nothing till it palled upon him. He yawned and tiptoed below for fishing-tackle. A furtive raid on the pantry provided salt-pork for bait. He settled himself at the rail.

Presently the tide turned and began to flow out. The ship's sacred dingey, moored alongside, swung around and interfered with his line. He untied the painter, hauled it farther aft and made it fast to the schooner's rail. As he fumbled with the knot, he became aware of a great shape bearing down on him at full speed.

Henry had no time to lose. He slid down the rope into the little boat. He jumped impetuously on the ends of the oars and they bounced up and overboard. Before he could snatch at them, Bill Bowsun slid into the dingey.

He tumbled head over heels, for Henry's hasty knot came away and left the rope in Mr. Bowsun's hands. He clutched at the schooner, but the slippery sides offered no purchase.

With a little flirt and a prance, the dingey swung away, reared to a wave, and drifted, impelled by the brisk offshore wind and hauled by the swift outrunning tide.

Mr. Bowsun tore up the bottom-grating and paddled. It was a fine exhibition of strength. The dingey continued to drift out to sea with a steadiness that was almost scornful.

When Mr. Bowsun had curdled the sea and broken the grating, he ceased his labors and cast passionate glances toward Henry, who sat in the bow, as far withdrawn as the sixteen-foot boat permitted. The choppy sea forbade satisfactory personal intercourse. The Mate was constrained to sit motionless in the pitching boat and relieve his mind through the refined but unsatisfactory medium of human speech.

Henry had heard most of the remarks before, but the dingey was small, Mr. Bowsun was unpleasantly near, and he paid him the tribute of polite, almost eager, attention. This, instead of assuaging the Mate's grief, only inspired the unreasonable mariner to fresh efforts. When he ceased at last, it was not because the subject was exhausted, but because he despaired of doing justice to it. He shook his fist at Henry and ended with a magnificent peroration.

The dingey drifted around the farther extremity of the island. A current swung it in toward a point, Mr. Bowsun paddled madly with the remnants of the grating, and to his infinite delight succeeded in missing the island by about a hundred yards. The little boat swung wide and drifted on.

It was almost dusk when the dingey drifted near another island. Mr. Bowsun became a human side-wheel propeller and managed, at the imminent risk of bursting himself, to drive the boat in.

"Tumble out! Tumble out! And haul her up!" he yelled as the dingey rode into the surf.

Henry tumbled out, but he did not haul her up. Over his shoulder he saw a roaring roller coming. He perceived clearly what was best to do. He floundered ashore without meddling with the tossing dingey.

Mr. Bowsun outroared the roaring roller, but mere words, however grand, were in vain. The dingey, weighted heavily in the stern by his honest solidity, gyrated in the rush of water and foam with its empty bow high in air. It turned its side to the arching breaker. There was a bubbling thunder, and the dingey, with Mr. Bowsun in it, rolled over and over.

The breaker rolled Mr. Bowsun toward the beach like an indignant barrel, dropped him jocosely on some picturesquely jagged limestone, streamed over him, smashed against the beach and sucked back, taking him along. Another roller arrived and slid him up again. He held on with hands and feet and crawled ashore, spitting sand. He snatched at the boat that sagged heavily in and hauled it up. Then he started up the beach.

He paused only for a brief instant to gouge sand and gravel out of his ears, before he threw his arms around Henry Moses with a sob of unutterable joy.

For a long, long time he and Henry lingered in intimate companionship. Several times Mr. Bowsun seemed about to tear himself away, but he always thought better of it and renewed his attentions with undiminished zeal for detail. When his patient ministrations ended at last, Henry Moses

was in a healthful glow that precluded the slightest danger of catching cold from exposure.

"There!" sighed Mr. Bowsun finally, arising and breathing hard; "I feel better now!"

HENRY glared at him, and hitched himself away. Anxiously, tenderly, he felt himself. Mr. Bowson shook his head sadly. "There you go again," said he, "thinkin' of yourself, instead o' thinking how to do something to help. Now you just stop makin' believe that you're hurt, and run along the beach to gather firewood, so as I can dry my clothes before the night-wind comes on!"

Henry Moses, thinking vast thoughts, bowed to brute force. Under the direction of Mr. Bowsun, he piled wood till the exacting Mate was satisfied. Then Mr. Bowsun planted poles in the ground, divested himself of his garments, and hung them carefully where they would receive the heat. With immense precautions he unscrewed his water-proof match-box and lit the fire.

"Now," said he, when the bonfire was blazing to his liking, "you grub along the beach and see if you can find any mussels or crabs or anything. I'm goin' into the bush to look for something as I can whittle into oars to take the place of them as you chucked overboard."

Henry went down to the beach and stumbled straight into a little nest of rock where there clung dozens of little shell-fish. He made sure that Mr. Bowsun was out of sight, and gobbled the find as fast as he could open the shells.

While he was devouring them, his eyes saw a sea-snail being washed ashore, and he decided that it would do nicely for Mr. Bowsun. As soon as he had gorged all the shell-fish, he picked the great thing up and hurried back to the fire.

Mr. Bowsun's clothes were drying nicely. The rising evening wind distended them gently into forms that multiplied the visible supply of Bill Bowsuns to a degree insupportable to Henry Moses. He looked around. The owner of the garments was not in view. He pushed the poles over, and Mr. Bowsun's entire supply of wearing apparel sank gently into the fire.

Henry watched them with the solicitous care of a chef trying an important piece of cookery. As soon as he thought that they were sufficiently done, he seized a stick and began raking, raising his voice aloud for help.

Mr. Bowsun burst from the bush, saw what had happened and with a loud, unseemly clamor snatched another stick and raked desperately. A few smoking, tindery wisps came from the flames. The naked man held up his hands and complained till a flock of herons arose from the far interior of the island in hopeless despair and flew away to seek another sleeping-place.

"I came along just as the wind blew 'em in," said Henry compassionately. "I ran like everything, but it was too late."

The Mate looked at him with insulting suspicion. "For five cents," he began, "I'd take you and—and——" He walked away, overcome. He tried to put his hands into his pockets, and his grief became poignant.

With a delicacy ordinarily foreign to him, Henry retired into the palm scrub to leave Mr. Bowsun alone with his sacred sorrow.

Henry remained in seclusion till it was dark. Then the squat, bristling palmettos of the jungle began to assume hideous forms, alarmingly like pirates of the Spanish Main. There were unpleasant rustlings in the gloomy thickets. Things of the night hurried about with startling noises. Henry felt imperative need for companionship.

He ventured out. Mr. Bowsun was sitting gloomily by the fire. He had covered himself with a modest veil of beach grass, and was whittling a piece of wood into a rude oar.

Henry coughed. Mr. Bowsun looked up with an unfriendly, morose eye.

"There's something that I got for you to eat," said Henry, picking up the sea-snail.

Mr. Bowsun stared at it ungratefully. "Is that the best you could get, you mass of lard, you?" he inquired.

Henry nodded sadly. Mr. Bowsun smashed the shell and drew forth the shapeless white creature. For a moment he held it poised to throw it into the fire. Then hunger overcame him. He whetted his knife and began to saw at it. It gave, springily, like rubber.

He put a tiny piece into his mouth and chewed it with eloquent disapprobation. "Here! Have a piece yourself!" said he, handing it to Henry.

Henry bit into it reluctantly. His teeth bounced back from the elastic toughness. For a moment he almost pitied Mr. Bow-

sun; but the next moment he was glad again, for the Mate said, rudely:

"You're about as much good as that there snail. I ain't a-going to poison myself. I'm a-going to get some sleep. You sit up and watch the fire, and don't let it go out. If I wake up cold, I'll show you! Wake me up the minute it's daylight. We're a-going to row back as soon as I can see my way."

IT WAS a long night for Henry, rendered endurable to him only by mental pictures of what he would like to do to the brutal sailor, whose snores vied with the snoring surf. Mr. Bowsun awoke long before dawn and cheerily made Henry clean the sand and mud out of the dingey. Then they set forth, heading for their island which lay, a dim line, in the distance.

The sun was broiling hot within an hour, and Mr. Bowsun's unclad body suffered. He gave way to unmanly rage and pain long before the schooner came into sight. Then, suddenly, he was struck by a realization that made him more heated than ever.

"I can't go aboard like this!" he cried, after a preamble that was fiery but incoherent. "We'll round the island and I'll lay up in the scrub, and you hurry acrost and bring me back clothes—and grub, too—and a pipe and tobaccer—and a pair of oars—and—that's all, exceptin' that you'd better not tell anybody about me except Cap'n Moses. If you do, I'll skin you and stuff you with seaweed and sell you to a mooseum for a special nasty new kind o' monkey!"

Slowly, and not without fervent discourse about the heat, the discomforts of being nude, Henry's criminal depravity in the matter of knots and the general uselessness of his entire existence, Mr. Bowsun rowed the dingey around the point and to the farthest part of the island opposite where the *Flying Squid* lay. He had tried the easier method of making Henry row, but the lack of speed produced by this device had been too complete for endurance by a naked man who craved nothing so much as shade.

"Now, you hurry!" he said to Henry when the dingey was beached at last. "You hurry!—do you hear?" He twisted Henry's ear, apparently with a dim idea that it would be an aid to memory, like tying a knot in a handkerchief. "And don't you forget any of them things I told you about." He tapped Henry on the head with his mallet-like hand. "And don't you dare to tell anybody about my—about my—circumstances, exceptin' Cap'n Moses, do ye hear?" He gave Henry's ear a final twist and started him off with a shove. Then he hid himself coyly in a sand hollow.

Henry walked briskly till he reached a spot where Mr. Bowsun could not see him. There he sat down and pondered. His pondering was long and earnest, but not complex, for his subject was simple. Mr. William Bowsun, bereft of shirt and trousers, was in an ideal condition of primeval helplessness. Henry's sole problem was how to keep him that way the longest possible time with the utmost suffering to him and the least possible danger of subsequent suffering to himself.

Suddenly a thought came like a clear, bright light. Mr. Bowsun's most impressive injunction had been that he must not betray him to any one except Captain Julius Moses. Henry's face shone ecstatically. He smiled a sunny smile. Slowly, mysteriously, he winked a wink that took the whole subtropical landscape into his confidence.

He arose, faced in the direction where he had left Mr. Bowsun, shook his fist, and said aloud: "Oh, joy! All I need to do is not to see Cap'n. Say, Bill, but you're a fine old mud-turtle, you are!"

In his enthusiasm about not seeing Captain Moses, Henry nearly returned to Mr. Bowsun without first going through the formality of visiting the other side of the island. He reflected in time, however, that the longer he stayed away, the longer would Mr. Bowsun be left in anguish. There came to him, too, the temptations of food, for which he had a weakness at all times, and never so much as now.

He ventured cautiously through the bush, till he could spy out the little camp. He saw a couple of portable houses partly erected, a tent, and a pile of tarpaulins covering a mass of unloaded cargo. The only person in sight was a sailor, sleeping in the shade of the tent. He looked over to the schooner and saw the passengers on deck under the awning. It came to him with a pang that probably they were just digesting their luncheons.

He stole to the camp. In five minutes he had discovered the place where the party

had lunched the day before. In ten minutes more he was sneaking back into the bush with a bag full of remnants.

Henry sat down in the heart of the thicket and gorged. He devoured ham, biscuits, jam, cold beef, pickles, pie, beans and other tidbits as they came to hand, paying regard less to artistic succession of dishes than to filling all available space solidly. The Thinkers were persons who believed in fortifying their bodies that their minds might work effectively. They had taken care to celebrate their first landing on the island with a sufficiency of food. When Henry realized at last that he could contain no more there still remained a generous amount of victuals in the bag, a little mixed, but all tempting.

He studied the heterogeneous contents carefully. After much thought, he extracted a ham-bone again and scraped the clinging fragments of ham off till only a few reminiscent tatters remained. Then, with the edited bone in his pocket, he started across the island, in a very leisurely manner, to take the glad news to Mr. Bowsun.

"IT'S all I could find!" he explained to the Mate, when the unfortunate man held the bone at arm's length and bellowed. "I couldn't find a scrap except that, and I ain't had a bite."

"Nor you won't get one!" said Mr. Bowsun reassuringly. "Any boy as can't do even the littlest errand no better than you can, he can go hungry." He gnawed at the bone with desperate ardor, beautifully illustrative of the fine old line about the eternal spring of hope.

While he tantalized himself, Henry explained to him that all the boats were gone, and that the passengers were distributed, some of them on shore and others on the schooner.

"Cap'n Moses, I s'pose, and Hawser and most of the crew," growled Mr. Bowsun, "are out cruisin' for us. Very well. You'll row around the island and go aboard and get me clothes!"

He sat down under the inadequate shade furnished by a little limestone ledge, and gazed moodily out to sea with the useless ham-bone in his fist.

Henry surveyed the dingey and the clumsy oars. His intelligent mind dismissed any thought of wearing himself out by such a journey as the inconsiderate Mate had planned for him. He pulled slowly along the beach till he was certain that the castaway could not see him. Then he turned into a calm cove behind a reef, scrambled ashore and shoved the dingey back into the water. It floated off serenely, and Henry returned very slowly to Mr. Bowsun's rural retreat, to report that the boat had been capsized and lost.

He had the forethought to address Mr. Bowsun from a safe distance. This was exceedingly fortunate for him in the thrilling foot-race that followed immediately on the conclusion of his short tale. Mr. Bowsun was handicapped further by Henry's malicious ingenuity in dodging behind Spanish bayonet plants and cactus. At last the Mate charged blindly into a magnificent spiny agave. Almost immediately he forgot all about Henry and sat down to extract thorns from himself.

THE undertaking required patience, and Mr. Bowsun was an impatient man. He rendered free and utterly original renditions of the Book of Job, interspersed with flights of fancy about Henry. It was a full hour before he could collect himself sufficiently to return to ordinary worldly matters. Then he arose and spoke.

"We're going across," said he, "and I'm going to hide in one of them houses, and you'll meet the first man as comes ashore in the morning and go back to the schooner with him and get me clothes."

"You can't sleep there," said Henry, with ready art. "I heard Miss Grool and Miss Bisket talkin' whilst I was hidin' near 'em, and they were sayin' that they was going to sleep ashore because it was cool."

"Cool!" shrieked Mr. Bowsun, quite losing his self-control. "Cool! I blame near froze to death last night. I ain't a-goin' to put in no second night like that, for nobody, Miss Grool or nobody else!"

He started as if to walk boldly into camp. But he did not go far. He was a modest man, and he felt himself blush hotly from his feet to his scalp at the thought of venturing anywhere near Miss Grool and Miss Bisket. He was a proud man, and he shook with rage at the vision of the smirking crew if the sailors ever saw him in his undignified condition. Impulsively he made a little run at Henry; but he reflected in time that

the wretched youth was the only link between himself and clothes. Overwhelmed by the horror of his situation, he sat down.

Presently Henry was treated to a vast surprise. Mr. Bowsun beckoned to him with a kindly smile and said: "Henery!" He swallowed hard, and continued, his voice trembling with sudden fondness: "Henery, my lad, I've been thinkin' about you, and I've came to the conclusion to forgive you. Boys will be boys, and I'll overlook them—them little accidents that you done." He swallowed harder than before. "So now, you just trot acrost the island and hide near camp, and soon as somebody comes ashore from the schooner in the mornin', why, you get aboard and get them clothes for me, hey?"

Henry was not as deep as a well, but the transparency of Mr. Bowsun's behavior aroused his contempt. He looked coldly at the unworthy man and nodded. Then he made his way to the hiding-place of the bag of food. After a hearty meal, spiced by considerations of a hungry and shivering naked man not far away, he crept into a portable house and slept sweetly, huddled under a tarpaulin.

THE NEXT morning he watched from his hiding-place and saw Captain Moses and Mr. Hawser set off at dawn with all the ship's boats excepting one, putting out to sea evidently in renewed search. The remaining boat came ashore after a while with most of the members of the Colony of Thinkers. Henry lingered in the bush till the sun was high, beguiling the time with the food-bag, which held out excellently. When he set out to return to Mr. Bowsun, his thoughtful nature impelled him to carry along a sardine-can that still held a considerable quantity of oil, with an entire and rather large sardine swimming in it.

Mr. Bowsun failed to accept this peace-offering with the spirit in which it was given. He wolfed oil and sardine in one mouthful, licked the can, and inquired boisterously about his clothes.

"I couldn't work it," said Henry. "All the boats went away this mornin' early, lookin' for us. Ain't no way to get aboard, Mr. Bowsun."

Momentarily speechless, Mr. Bowsun hurled the empty can at Henry. Then speech returned to him.

In mid career his voice froze. He turned pale and dived headlong into the bush. Female voices had struck his affrighted ear. The next moment Miss Grool and Miss Bisket appeared, armed with guns, peering into every thicket that might possibly hide game.

"Didn't you hear something, Bisket?" inquired Miss Grool. "It sounded almost like somebody talking."

"I heard something, but I guess it was the waves. We've come right out on the beach. There!" cried Miss Bisket, pointing. "Something just moved in there!"

The unhappy Mate, lying flat, wiggled and wriggled and wormed himself farther into the jungle. He heard sounds that told him that Miss Bisket and Miss Grool were plunging in. Spines, thorns, prickles, vegetable saw-teeth, pincers and fish-hooks reached out for him affectionately and tried to hold him. He disengaged himself curtly and wriggled on.

It was an exciting race, and though several times, when something hooked him extra well, it seemed hopeless, Mr. Bowsun won. He heard the Dianas tearing and striding away in another direction at last, and lay panting, to take account of the losses of cuticle and flesh that he had sustained.

He was unpleasantly surprised at the sum total. His bitterness was increased when he discovered the extraordinary number of thorns and spines that had accompanied him. He was busy for an hour plucking himself.

WHEN at last he ventured to stir again, he was a desperate, madly determined man. Hastily he sought a little spring, and drank. Then he started blindly across the island. His sufferings had driven from his consciousness all sense of modesty or shame. He felt that his once powerful brain was being undermined. He could bear no more.

Just as he began to climb a little limestone ledge, he stopped short. His eyes gleamed with savage delight. He crouched and waited.

Somebody was coming. Somebody wore a buttoned-up frock coat, and walked with massive tread, his hands before him, with the finger-tips touching gently. Somebody was declaiming to himself, so rapt in contemplation of his great thoughts that he

was blind to all else. Somebody was Professor Gickel.

Professor Gickel never was able to give a clear statement of the episodes of the next few moments. He had only a bewildered, delirious series of terrible impressions. Something vast had bounded from the bushes with a fearful roar. He had been thrown down, tugged at, pulled this way and that. Once at least, he remembered clearly, he had stood on his head, while the vast creature that held him tore at his garments. When Mr. Gickel returned to reason again, he found himself in a lonely subtropical landscape with nothing on, and nothing that had belonged to him in sight, except his frock coat, which lay in an attitude indicating that the vast creature had tossed it there in flight.

Mechanically Professor Gickel put the frock coat on, buttoned it up and thrust his hand into his breast. Then he laughed a harsh laugh as he gazed down at his legs.

Meanwhile the vast form that had despoiled him was rushing across the island, wearing Professor Gickel's trousers and shirt. Most of the seams had burst in the process of trying on, and those that remained were bursting one by one. When Mr. Bowsun bounded into camp, he was nearly disintegrated.

He swept the scene with one glance, saw the boat on the beach, howled to a sailor and rushed toward the craft. On the way to the schooner he recovered his sanity sufficiently to inquire: "Has this boat been ashore all the time?" And when the sailor replied: "Ever since early this morning, sir," Mr. Bowsun looked silently toward heaven.

THE FORT WHERE-THE-DEAD-GO-BY

by Coningsby William Dawson

ON THE right bank of the river, which cuts across the unexplored territory of Keewatin eastward to the ocean, there stands a Fort which, since the happening of the events I am about to relate, has changed its name and has come to be called the Fort Where-The-Dead-Go-By. Here there once dwelt a Factor whose name was Joseph Dawn. It was a small Fort, and he had dwelt there silently through many years, nursing an old sorrow and opening his heart to none. Consequently the sap of kindness within him had soured; he had come to be feared for his harshness, and was left very much alone.

In such a narrow community the head man creates the atmosphere which the men placed under him must breathe; therefore the tenants of this solitary outpost could hardly be described as fortunate.

Yet, for all his sternness, though he never allowed his most intimate associates to know it, there was one soft spot in the hard man's heart. He acquired it in this wise:

He had already been in Keewatin twenty-four years when a man died in England, leaving him sole guardian of a four-year-old daughter, by the name of Florence Laud. The child's mother had been a woman with whom Dawn had once been desperately in love. The child's father had been his dearest friend, and had won the affections of the woman by telling her a mean untruth.

Dawn, at the time, had been overwhelmed in misery. Life had seemed to hold no further promises for him. His one remaining ambition had been to hide his calamity from curious eyes. He left England forever, taking service under the Hudson Bay Company, came out to Keewatin, and buried himself in its obscurity.

One day there arrived a funeral-card announcing a double message—the death of the woman and the belated birth of her first and only child. Four years more had passed in silence; then he received a legal document informing him of the death of his friend; also of the fact that he, of all men, had been appointed guardian to the child! That Laud should have made this choice shows that there still remained in him a rude sense of justice. Inasmuch as he had robbed Dawn of a wife, he had bequeathed to him her child.

At the time the Factor had considered the legacy as rather a bore; later he had come to find in it a joy. Being strictly punctilious in business matters, he had undertaken his duties with seriousness. Without returning to the Old Country, he had arranged, through lawyers, that his ward should be placed in a good school, and had corresponded with her at regular intervals.

Regarding the affair at the first as an unpleasant and unavoidable task, he had received her baby scrawls carelessly, and had answered them bruskly in as few lines as would suffice. By and by he had been surprised to discover tnat he was taking a more than official interest in his charge. In the second year of his guardianship, when the child was six years of age, with the last mail to come down-river before the country froze up, her customary letter failed to arrive. This meant that before he could hear from her again there must be at least two months' delay. He consoled himself by saying that the letter had been sent, but had got lost in the mail. The opportunities for such an occurrence are manifold on the journey between London and Keewatin.

When the day came round for another letter, and the first Winter runners came in across the ice, there was still no news of her. Later on, his anxiety was added to by a message which came from the schoolmistress, notifying him that the child was ill. He tried to persuade himself that he did not care; that, if she died, his world would be the same, and, if she lived, to him it would make no difference.

The stupid farce was abandoned when he found himself waking up at night and weeping because of the thought that she might be already dead. In a fit of repentance, he sat down and wrote her a lot of baby language which he despatched with the haste of an official message, by his swiftest Indian. After he had done so, he grew ashamed of his weakness, and sent a second runner after the first to get the letter back; but he was too late.

The answer which his flash of tenderness called forth gave him reason to be ashamed of his shame. Thus it ran, in part:

> Dear Papa Dawn: I didn't fink that you loved me. I am so glad you have told me to call you Papa, although my own Papa is dead. I was so lonely because I fought that nobody loved me, and that was why I was ill. Now that you love me I shall soon get well. I shall pray for you just the same as I used, only better.

Once to have uttered his heart set up the habit. He whispered to himself that he had done it against his will; nevertheless, he continued to write in the new, fond strain. Soon this secret interchange of affection, across half the world, with a little girl-child whom he had never seen, grew for him into a passionate delight. He spent his days in planning surprises for her in what he should say next, and in repeating over and over to himself the simple love-words which she had most recently written him.

DAWN was a man past fifty and had no wife, no children, no friends—no one to be even sorry for him when he was gone. Fifty is a critical age. By then a man should have accomplished his best work, have exhausted his best strength, and pauses to reckon up how much he has gained from and given to life. He remembers with a sudden pang that he is born into this world but once; then it is that he begins wistfully to wonder what lies beyond.

Dawn's life had been anything but satisfactory. He knew it. The intoxication of love he had only hinted at, never gratified. The opportunity for fame, which he had once sought, had long gone by. His religion was unemotional, of little use to him, mainly occupied with Destiny and Fate.

If from life he had gained little, he had given less.

Now the last remaining hope for men in such a plight is a possible visit from the world's great vagabond—Chance. Upon such, as a rule, he does ultimately call, only, being an irrepressible vagabond, he frequently arrives too late. In addition to being a wanderer he is a satirist—one who delights to visit paralytics, because they can no longer rise to admit him. He is a mocker, whose pleasure it is to hammer on closed doors.

Joseph Dawn was not a paralytic; he opened his door and admitted his chance. He strove in secret to redeem his past by his newly recovered tenderness. The correspondence which he conducted with his ward read like a romance, of which she was the heroine. He wrote to her the kind of things which he had once hoped to say to her mother face to face.

She asked him for a description of himself. He answered her with a word picture, not of what he was, but of what he would like to be. He was young, righteous, beautiful, and brave—so he said. He was captain of a band of Indian warriors who were equally beautiful and brave. His profession was to seek out the unhappy and unprotected, and to make them glad—to do good in every way, and always with the thought of her in mind. In his account of himself he borrowed pretty freely, I fancy, from the traditions of Sir Galahad. She asked for a description of Keewatin. To this his reply was equally medieval and fascinating. Even as a child, she must have known that this was only play and fable-making. Nevertheless, as you will see, the memory of the description remained.

One little lie led to another; so through a fifteen years' course of letter-writing the deception had to be maintained.

Flo, on her side, kept all this wonderful knowledge about her King in the Far Land to herself. It was the more charming to her because it was unshared. She was only an orphan. She belonged to nobody. Her holidays were spent in an empty schoolhouse. Her mistress was an old maid who did not wish to understand her. Through the lonely years of her childhood the focus-point of her dreams was Keewatin, and the man which it contained. The dreams seemed real.

If Dawn romanced, she embellished. He became for her the Shining One, and his country was the Beulah Land, where she would join him one day. Given a young girl of her upbringing and temperament, there was only one effect which could result from such a cause—love.

On her sixteenth birthday she tried to make this known to him by means of a more than usually devoted letter, and a request for his portrait. On receipt of it, he slurred over the marriage meaning, treating it as an incident in the novel which they had been writing together all these years; the request for his portrait worried him.

He was now past sixty and, though robust and powerful in body, showed his age. To her he had always depicted himself as still young. Had she reckoned the years, she could have undeceived herself on this point. He couldn't bear to undeceive her; so he borrowed the photograph of a handsome young trapper of his Fort, named David Drule, and sent her that. She wrote her thanks enthusiastically, declaring that it realized all her desires. This hardly pleased the Factor. Also she stated that she kissed and prayed over it by night, and slept with it beneath her pillow. Also, that she kept it near her by day.

Time passed, and he forgot the incident, and she, perceiving that reference to it unaccountably grieved him, made no further mention of her adorations; but maintained them none the less.

TWO years later it occurred to him that she must be a woman now, and that it was high time that she should leave the school. He wrote and asked her what she proposed. After much maidenly talk about her unprotectedness and the pity of it that they should be separated, she invited herself to come out and live with him. Dawn was badly scared. After the way in which he had taught her to regard him, the only basis upon which they could live together was that of marriage; her words implied that she hoped for as much. As soon as he had grown accustomed to the idea, he was willing enough, more than willing—anxious to take her as his wife. Having been robbed of the mother, it appealed to him as eminently just that he should win the mother's child.

Nevertheless, he was frightened by what she might expect—for fifteen years he had

decorated her chamber of imagery with word-painting. Now, for the first time, he set himself the bitter task of telling her the ironic truth: that he lived in a vacant land of lakes and rivers, and snow and ice, and forests and wolves. He spoke to her of its unromance, its brooding despair, and its strange genius for unmanning men and degrading them into something beastlike. He detailed to her his manner of life through the long, slow-creeping years—the silent Indians, the absence of white women, the hundreds of miles of journey that must be made to any town, the poverty of interest, the idle loneliness, and, over all, the great gray skies. If she could endure this, and yet be happy because of her nearness to him, he bade her come.

One thing he omitted, because it had happened two years since, which in Keewatin is an eternity ago. He forgot to deny the authenticity of the lying photograph.

When a woman is anxious to arrive at the object of her love, especially if she has nothing to leave behind, she contrives to construe loneliness as adventure, and unwillingness on the man's part to lure her within the circle of his fate as heroic self-effacement. At the age of nineteen, with the portrait of David Drule hidden in her heart, she prepared herself for marriage with Joseph Dawn, and set out from England on her five thousand miles of travel to the Fort Where-The-Dead-Go-By.

Across the ocean she kept her courage up by thoughts of her beloved, with whom she held imaginary and tender conversations.

At Montreal she began to feel disappointment in the land of her dreaming; moreover, she missed Dawn from the quay. A suspicion began to take root within her that there was no Shining One nor any Beulah. Be that as it may, she kept herself from crying by believing that his land of promise lay ahead. On arrival at Winnipeg, when she found him still absent, she did give way to tears. But she soon excused him, saying that he must be ill, and cheered herself by taking out and furtively gazing on the portrait and praying for his quick recovery.

Once embarked on the first great lake, her spirits revived; she had no eye for disappointment because of the joy of her ever-growing nearness to his presence. She spent her days in rereading his letters, and so forgot to notice the weariness of the landscape through which she traveled.

Dawn, for his part, had been too nervous to go forward to welcome her. He had intended to make the effort, but had been dissuaded just before starting, when he had looked into the glass and caught a glimpse of his gray hair and wrinkled face. Then he suddenly realized that he was old; worse still, that the man whom the eyes of others discerned was not the man who had written those letters—that man was the hidden, would-be self.

Forty years he had waited to attain love; he had won it under false pretenses—now that he was old. The thought became a nightmare to him. From that day forth until her arrival, he sat before the mirror like a young and foolish girl, pitying and despising what was reflected there. It was the harsh, rugged face of an old-time pioneer, unloving and unbeloved; the face of a man who for forty years had cultivated bitterness as though it were a lovely and exotic plant. As he gazed, he grew frightened; the thing condemned him. So it came about that he determined to await her at the Fort.

ON A SUNSHINY June morning, a canoe manned by Indians swung round the bend of the river, and in it sat a girl. When it had drawn in at the jetty, she was helped out by a surly, rough old man, who said he was the Factor.

She looked round with searching eyes, and inquired anxiously, "But where is Mr. Dawn?"

"He will be here by and by," answered the old man gruffly.

"Tell me, is he ill?" she persisted, clasping her nervous hands.

"He will return before night," he said.

To avoid further questioning, the Factor led her into his house and showed her to her room.

She expressed no pleasure when she saw it. It looked poor and bare to her eyes. The wall-paper seemed mean and cheap; the strip of carpet badly worn; the furniture, what there was of it, very much repaired. Had she known it, all these things had been laboriously prepared, clumsily perhaps, by anxious hands which were unskilled in woman's ways.

When she came down again she found the gray man waiting for her. She thought

him a grim old fellow, and wondered playfully whether her lover would ever become like that.

The Factor noticed with pain that she was timid in his presence, so he fought against his long years of unused kindness in an effort to make her feel at home.

In the afternoon he conducted her about the neighborhood. He showed her the little garden which he had planted (she thought it looked new); the tall wooden pen where the huskies were kept in Winter; the low shingled house where they stored their furs; the sled she was to have for her use when the ice came, and a trim little canoe for Summer waters. To none of these things did she pay more than a polite attention. On the contrary, she kept on interrupting with the interminable question: "But where is Mr. Dawn?"

At last, that he might interest her, he would point to something and say: "That belongs to Dawn;" or to a husky, and say: "He is one of Dawn's favorites." Then her face would brighten and she would ask questions about Dawn and become voluble in his praise. She was annoyed when she discovered that the Factor's appreciation of him fell short of her own. When the evening darkened and her future husband had not returned, her companion of the day proposed that they should sit up and await him.

She was anxious to know why her lover had not met her, and began tearfully to confide to the Factor her sorrow at having been so neglected.

Then he commenced to excuse "his friend's" remissness and to take the blame of his absence on himself. This sympathy on the part of the gray man prompted her to confess to him the major facts of her young romance. She was chagrined when he listened to her unamazed. She consoled herself by thinking, "He is too old to understand."

When the hour drew toward midnight, and the Fort was all abed, the Factor grew silent; so much so that, when she questioned him, he returned no answer. A horrible suspicion grew up in her that her lover had died; they were afraid to tell her.

"Little girl," said the Factor, "it is time you were asleep. He will not come tonight."

He said this while they were sitting alone in his private room. It was one o'clock, and the world would soon be light. She started at the endearment; it was one which had been a favorite in those letters which she carried. But she was restrained from questioning it; for another interrogation was already hovering upon her lips.

"Oh, tell me!" she sobbed, kneeling before him—"oh, tell me, is he dead?"

"Dead, and yet living," he replied. "Not dead in the way you mean."

Seeing the horror in her eyes, the old man raised her gently and supported her in his arms to a table, and seated himself beside her.

Taking a pen he wrote upon a sheet of paper these words, and handed them to her, "*You have not yet asked me my name.*"

She lifted her face to his, and asked in a hoarse whisper, "Who are you?"

He answered, "I am Joseph Dawn."

OF WHAT followed, and the shrinking, and the loathing, and the pity, and the repentance, it is not needful to speak. It is sufficient to state that she was a good girl, and married him. Maybe for even this she does not deserve much credit. Her world had been her dreams. Her world was shattered. He was her sole protector. She could not turn back; she had come five thousand miles to meet him. Nevertheless, despite her being dazed, I think she must have acted from good motives. When he had explained to her the genesis of his fancy portraits and imaginary landscapes, how he had wrought them in his loneliness to cheer a lonely girl, perhaps she understood. Her disillusionment was bitter —too bitter to hide.

However, they made their hundred-mile journey to the nearest missionary station and returned as man and wife.

On this trip her eyes were not blind to disappointment, as they had been on the down-river journey. She remarked to the full the bleak, lone level of the land, the haunting sense of dreary homelessness which glides through its shadows and its skies, which, if apprehended too keenly, and eked out by fond remembrance, makes white men crazy.

Dawn tried to compel his would-be-self, the self which had penned those letters, to become articulate. By reason of her unresponsiveness, and his own habit of sternness, he most miserably failed. What a man has become at fifty in his outward expres-

sion, he will probably remain till he touches the grave. Having passed midlife, men do not often change. This man was on the borderland of seventy. For forty years it had been his pride to freeze; threescore years and ten is too late in the day to attempt a thaw.

For the girl's unresponsiveness there was ample cause—that she was persistent as a dreamer. In their common confessions no mention had been made of that photograph which he had sent her three years before; now all her energies were bent on loving the owner of that face. Who he was, she had never dared inquire. Stealthily she kissed the pasteboard lips at night as she lay at her husband's side, and clasped her treasure beneath the pillow while she slept. She was loyal to the man whom her husband had taught her to admire.

Try as she would, she could not submit her heart to Dawn. Nearness to him filled her with repulsion and made her afraid. So she formed the habit of wandering away by herself along the river and through the forest, starting in the early morning and returning late at night. Thus she fashioned for herself a way of escape.

On these excursions she would still hold imaginary conversations with the man she had never met; would reread the old letters and repeat softly aloud the words of affection they contained, disassociating them entirely from the husband who had actually written them, always fancying them as spoken by the man whose photo she carried—the one whom she had come to seek.

She had been at the Fort two months when a strange thing happened.

In the golden twilight of an August evening she was sitting by the river bank, on the edge of the forest, thinking of this stranger who was always away, when she was aware of a canoe traveling up-stream.

So silently did it approach and so concentrated had been her thought, that it seemed only part of her dream. Of late, especially in the waning light when she had been telling herself tales, her eyesight had played her false.

The man in the canoe drew level with her and was about to pass. She stood up. He turned his head slowly, and she recognized him.

Please remember that David Drule had never seen her before; nor did she know his rightful name. When, three years back, the Factor had asked him for his photograph, there had been no mention of the reason for the asking. Drule had smiled and forgotten the gift. Before the arrival of Florence Laud, he had set out on a trip to the coast to look after Company business; he was now returning. This was what he saw: A beautiful girl, tall and slim, with a mass of braided golden hair (therefore a white woman), standing in the shadow of the trees, leaning out over the river-bank and stretching her arms toward him.

This was what she saw—the man whom she had sought.

He heard her speaking, "Oh, you have come at last! I have waited so long! Take me away! Oh, take me away!"

Now I ask you to consider these three facts: That David Drule was a young man; that he had been five years in the North; that, consequently, the glamour of dog-teams, and Indians had worn off; that the dreary, drab reality yet remained, while the heroism was gone, and that he was not happy. Lastly, that though in the Northland as a rule nothing happens, yet everything is possible and expected.

Drule did what most young men of spirit would have done under like circumstances; he turned aside, landed, took her in his arms, kissed her, and then remembered to ask for an explanation. By this time the damage had been accomplished.

She drew his photograph from her breast, showed it to him and told her story.

Of course he was surprised—also frightened. It is not the custom of young subordinates in Keewatin to embrace their Factor's wife; very often there is no reason why they should, the wives being only squaws. In this particular case, however, the subordinate fell instantly and rapturously in love.

Thus began a novel edition of an old tale which has for its excuse, "I did but taste a little honey with the end of the rod that was in mine hand, and lo, I must die." But the excuse comes later. The first meeting and confession being over, they planned to meet again, parted and went home their separate ways. Throughout her return journey she was riotously glad.

THERE is no happiness like that of wrong-doing—at first. There is nothing immoral about this statement; it is just that the joy of sinning and the joy to be derived from virtue are

not the same—they are proportionate to the cost. Also I say "at first," because the joy of doing wrong does not last. Transgressors throughout the ages, despite the persuasion of facts, have always argued that it will last—until they are damned, when true knowledge arrives too late; or suddenly and tragically dead, when they don't care either way.

As yet these two particular sinners had only sipped of the honey that was on the end of the rod; but they thought that they had found it pleasant to the taste. Next morning the Factor introduced his trapper to his wife. He must have noticed the sly look of veiled recognition that was in her eyes, for he added, "Yes, Florence, it was Drule's photo that I sent you three years ago."

Then he turned ashy gray and tried to laugh, because a thought had struck him. He went out, leaving them alone.

They looked at each other with the faces of bad children discovered; then they laughed also, and seized the favorable opportunity for arranging their second secret courting.

From the day of Drule's coming, Keewatin became a different country to her. It was no longer dull and gray; she called it quiet and reposeful. Also she became compassionately kind to Dawn, which is always a bad sign.

Now Dawn was no imbecile. Having recalled the photograph incident and by accident discovered Drule's portrait beneath his wife's pillow, he had her history complete. Her companionship, even though it was grudged, had wrought a change in his life. The thought of losing her stirred him with horror. Moreover, her presence had roused dormant memories of youth and her mother; he loved her doubly—for her own and for his dead love's sake. Yet he was a righteous man; he recognized that he, and he alone, was the contriver of her folly. He believed in destiny, and refused to interfere. God had worked marvelously in sending her to him at all. He left the future to God.

It would have been easy for him to have rid himself of his trouble by exercising his authority and having Drule removed. But he folded his arms in silence, that God might have His way. Finding themselves unmolested, the honey-tasters grew bold. They courted more and more openly, until they two were the only folk left in the Fort who supposed that their love-making was unsuspected.

Still Dawn said nothing.

Florence, when she considered her husband's astonishing lack of anger, accounted for it by telling herself that the icy chill of age had crept through his veins and robbed every passion of its fervor. By means of this fiction she excused herself; if her conduct brought her pleasure and gave him no pain, surely it was justified.

Beneath the deck of the marriage-vessel in which she sailed a fire of surprising fury was blazing; of this she had no knowledge. Old wood burns more hotly than green timber.

One day, late in September, she dared too far; the flames leaped aboveboard and the vessel sank. It happened in this way:

TWO Indians got to fighting, and David Drule went to separate them. It was evening; in their anger they failed to notice that he was a white man. Finding some one trying to interfere, and thinking him to be a man of their own race, they struck him so that he fell to the ground stunned. They stooped down, saw his face, grew frightened, and fled. The Factor's wife, hearing a commotion, came upon the scene a moment later. She was on her way to a tryst with David. She met the Indians escaping, and, finding her lover motionless, supposed him to be dead. She did what ninety-nine women out of a hundred would have done; despised risk, grew suddenly careless of her good name, flung herself down at his side with an extravagant display of grief, and openly declared her love for him.

Then came the Factor, to whom she paid no heed; witnessed her words, had Drule carried into the Fort, and took her forcibly away with him.

What he said to her is scarcely worth repeating. It was what any other man would have said long before. He was outwardly a bitter man, for all the tenderness that lay hidden within him. Whatever he spoke in anger must have been scathing. He was sorry for it afterward. Sorry, for many reasons, later on; at the time, more especially because he had broken his vow to leave all the arranging of his affairs to God. His life had been solitary; therefore he was superstitious.

The immediate result of what he said was

that within a week both the honey-tasters had vanished.

Now Keewatin possesses no Paris to which other women's husbands may escape with other men's wives and wherein they may stitch themselves aprons of fig-leaves and shout to the world that they are not naked. It is one of the few places remaining where, as soon as crime is committed, the criminal hears God pacing in His Garden in the cool of the day, and knows that he is not clothed. He has no opportunity to forget; the forest betrays him and is full of reminders.

This is true in two senses. Wherever feet tread they leave a trail which may be followed—in Summer through the underbrush, in Winter across the snow. So much for the human end of it.

Wherever feet tread they ripple the silence; which is the sound of God walking and His accusing voice. So much for the divine.

Dawn did not pursue or attempt to slay them. It would seem that God did both.

They did not flee to another Fort. Had they done so, this story would never have been written. They fled into the wilderness, which was sheer madness at that season of the year with the Winter coming on. I suppose their reason for this was a desire to avoid questioning at the hands of white men by whom they might be entertained—in other words, a desire to hide their nakedness.

The Indians, more curious than their Factor, discovered the direction and guessed at the place to which they had gone. A canoe was missing, which they found thirty miles up-stream, drawn on to the bank. From that point the tracks of a man and woman led on to an empty cave, sixty miles distant, known as "The Hole." No one touched the canoe; such was the Factor's command.

What this Paola and Francesca of the North did throughout the Winter, and how far they succeeded in stitching themselves aprons, no one knows. They knew. They could have told; but they are dead.

Various well-meaning people strove to persuade Dawn to follow them. He always refused, saying, "She will come back. God sent her to me. She will come back."

Throughout the dark days they waited; but nothing happened until the thaw.

EARLY one morning, in the Spring of the year, when the ice was grinding and tearing its way down-river, and the land was overshadowed by a cold damp haze, the Factor was standing on the jetty, when he saw a canoe coming down-stream, racing through the mist. In the stern sat a ragged scarecrow of a man, grasping a paddle, which he did not use, and, stretched out along the floor, lay another tattered thing which fluttered in the breeze.

The canoe drew near and was sweeping by, when the Factor grabbed it with a hook and dragged it ashore.

Both passengers were wasted to skeletons. The reason for the man's idleness was evident; he was rigid and had ceased to breathe. The other traveler had been a woman; and she had golden hair. She had been dead some months. It would appear that the man was bringing her body back when he himself had died.

These were the honey-tasters, and this was the manner of their home-coming.

Dawn gazed down at them awhile; then said quietly, "I knew she would come back. I would have received her had she come alone."

It was the last whisper of the voice of God, declaring even to her starveling body that it was naked.

Then he pushed the canoe again into the stream and watched it hurry away as if ashamed, hindered and jostled this way and that by the screaming blocks of ice.

THE Indians who witnessed this last act of the tragedy have fashioned therefrom a legend, which has changed the name of the Fort.

They say that once a year, in the season of Spring, early in the morning, when the river is gray with mist and shrieking beneath its burden of ice, the two sinners drift back in their canoe, and pause for a moment in mute appeal before the Fort, asking that they may be taken in.

When there is no reply, they again float out into midstream, and are quickly lost to sight.

Therefore, by reason of the honey-tasters, this place has changed its name, and is now called, in the Cree dialect, *The-Fort-Where-The-Dead-Go-By.*

PIG-STICKING IN INDIA

by TALBOT MUNDY

Youth's daring spirit, manhood's fire,
Firm hand and eagle eye,
Must he acquire who would aspire
To see the gray boar die.

THE above verse forms the chorus of the finest hunting-song in all the world. After dinner in India, when the day's sport is over and the decanters are going round the same way as the sun, men sing it who have met the gray boar in his majesty and seen him die fighting. Other men may join in the chorus, and think that they understand; but real understanding is denied them, for only those who have ridden straight to pig "may comprehend its mystery."

It is the finest sport on earth, and the song, with its thundering, crashing chorus, does it honor. It is an education to listen to that song, but it is a foretaste of Valhalla to ride to pig at the break of a golden morning in India.

There are less expensive sports, though none more worth the while; and polo and fox-hunting—the only two which are even in the same street with pig-sticking—are very much dearer. The physical equipment you will require is much the same for all three, but in pig-sticking you have the added excitement of a fight to the death at the finish, with no crowd to watch you and no field of overdressed incompetents to get in the way and spoil your sport.

To see genuine pig-sticking you must go all the way to India, and there you will find it at its best in Guzerat in the North of Bombay Presidency. There are tent-clubs in Morocco and Algeria, run by enthusiastic sportsmen whom business keeps away from India; but though they hunt the wild boar religiously in the only way in which he should be hunted—on horseback with a spear, they know that the real sport is to be obtained only in the home of it—India—where the boars are bravest and the other fellows understand. So much always depends on the other fellow!

Pig-sticking consists in riding down the male of the wild boar on horseback, armed with a spear and no other weapon. A tent-club is a small club formed for the purpose, in order to reduce expenses. The tents are comfortable, sometimes even luxurious, but they can be shifted from place to place so as to be close to the scene of operations. Everywhere in India there are plenty of well-trained and willing servants, and there is no discomfort about the tent-life other than the midday heat, which, after all, is not unendurable.

The spear used in Western India, and consequently in Guzerat, is practically the same as the cavalry lance—that is to say, it is long, though it is usually a little lighter than the lance, and it is held in the same way that a lance is held—with the back of the hand turned downwards. In Central and Eastern India they use a short spear, with a weight on one end of it. It is held at the top, close under the weight, with the knuckles turned to the front; and to use it you have to lean forward a little in the saddle. You are considered eccentric if you

use a short spear in Western India, and in Eastern India if you use a long one you are a *jungli*. Interpreted into pure United States American, a *jungli* is a "rube."

The best practise in the use of either spear is tent-pegging; not one peg at a time taken at a canter on a quiet horse, but a succession of pegs taken one after the other at full gallop on an almost unmanageable horse. You will learn to manage your spear that way, and when your time comes to use it on a pig you will be less likely to hurt yourself, or the man next to you. The practise will also teach you to manage your horse with one hand, which is exceedingly useful.

IF YOU have the other qualifications laid down in the song, the two things you will need in India are money and introductions—not so very much money, but introductions of the best. Get a letter to the right man from some one who is also right, and the whole of India is open to you, from one end to the other. Go without it, and you will wish you had stayed at home.

All your minor worries you can quite comfortably leave to your servant, who will look after you like a nurse for a wage that a white man would think ridiculous. But the horses, of course, you must bargain for yourself. You will need at least six. One or two to start with will be sufficient, because in India, where distances are immense, men who are transferred from one station to another usually sell their horses, and you will have plenty of opportunities to pick up good ones up-country.

In Bombay you can usually have your pick of from five to six hundred horses and ponies of almost every breed to be found in the East, at Abdul Rahman Mirza's stables, and the prices range from about a hundred dollars, or even less for a country-bred, to five hundred or more for a first-class polo pony with a turn of speed. From first to last your six horses ought not to cost you more than the equivalent of eight or nine hundred American dollars. Many a good sportsman gets along with two mounts.

You will need a native groom for each horse, and because you are new to the country and therefore somebody to plunder, you will probably have to pay them a matter of five dollars each per month, out of which they will find themselves in food. Each man will sleep with his horse, and travel with him in the horse-box, and though they will assure you that your honor is their honor, and that the service of the heaven-born —you are the heaven-born—is the height of their ambition, you will have to watch them pretty closely if you do not want them to steal and sell your horses' food. But they are not bad grooms, and once they grasp the fact that you know what to expect from them, your horses will be well turned out.

It is hard to lay down a general rule, for horses vary as much as men, but, taking one thing with another, country-bred horses are the best for your purpose. Besides being generally cheaper, they stand the hard going better than Arabs or Walers. The kind they breed in Kathiawar are often exceptionally good, though not always up to weight. If you are a particularly heavy man your choice will be limited to Walers—the imported Australian horses. In that case choose mares, because they are more likely to be savage, though the merits of a horse that has been cast from the army for vice are not to be lightly overlooked. Other things being equal, the more vicious your mount is, the better. Arabs are often too heavy in the shoulder and too light in the leg, and they are always likely to strain themselves badly when you gallop them over hard ground. Their chief merits are their looks, but as there will not be a crowd of women to applaud you, the looks of your mount need not concern you.

If you have to blindfold your horse before he will let you get near enough to mount him, there is little likelihood of his being afraid of the pig. Some horses will even try to savage the pig with their fore feet, and lash out at him with their hind legs as he passes, and although that will not help you in the least to hold your spear true and steady when the boar charges, it is infinitely better than being bolted with, or having to spur a frightened beast up to the pig, with the probable mortification of seeing another man "wipe your eye" for you. Choose savage horses rather than timid ones, remember that broken knees are not always a bad sign, and above all things don't pay more than half what the dealer asks you.

THERE are practically no rules to learn. All sports in India are based on the assumption that those taking part in them are gentlemen. So, assuming that you are a gentleman, and are

therefore incapable of foul riding, almost the only rule you must learn is never to ride after a sow. It is often extremely difficult to tell an old sow from a boar, expecially from behind, until you get quite close. But the moment that you know it is a sow you must rein up. There is no exception to the rule.

Other rules would be difficult to frame, because the pig himself is such an unruly beast. If you made a set of rules, he would break them and you would have to follow suit. He is the most independent and fearless animal that breathes, and he doesn't give a hang for anybody or anything, tigers not excepted. The only thing which you can really depend on him to do is to put up a terrific fight and to charge as long as there is breath left in him.

And when a wild boar charges he is likely to make history. He doesn't look active in the least, but he can jump obstacles that will tax your horse's powers to the utmost, and for the first mile or so, when he has left the sounder behind and once gets going, it will puzzle the best horse you have got to come up with him. And for all this stocky build of his, he can turn on the proverbial sixpence.

His only weapons are a pair of so-called tushes—wicked little white tusks that he polishes in time of peace by grubbing up roots with them. The longest tushes measure scarcely over four inches from base to tip, yet he can disembowel a horse with them, or rip up a leather riding-boot like so much paper. If he gets you on the ground he can, and will, carve you up as neatly and thoroughly with them as a butcher could with a sharp knife. He would no more think of giving quarter than he would of asking it.

There is nothing in the jungle that does not give the right of way to a full-grown boar. A young and very inexperienced tiger might tackle him, and might inflict such wounds that the boar would bleed to death, but the tiger would not live to talk about it. He would be disemboweled and dead before the boar died.

At Poona, in the officer's mess of one of the regiments quartered there they have the skeletons of a boar and a tiger that were found locked together. It was a small boar and a large tiger, and from the position in which they were found it is easy to see what happened. Tigers almost always spring on their quarry in the same way. Their hind feet are seldom off the ground at the moment of impact, but one forepaw tears the animal's off shoulder while he seizes its snout with the other one, trying to break its neck. He secures an additional hold by fixing his teeth in the top part of the animal's neck near where it joins the shoulder. He kills by breaking the animal's neck, and not by biting.

But the hide on the upper part of a boar's neck is rather too tough for even the average tiger's teeth, and on this occasion friend tiger did not get much of a hold and, setting aside his prodigious strength, which lies principally in his neck and shoulders, a boar's neck is too short and thick to be broken easily. Besides, a boar does not run on blindly when he is attacked, as most animals do, until he blunders into something and falls—he turns and fights; and on this occasion he must have turned and rushed in underneath the tiger and gored him to death. No doubt he died himself from loss of blood.

The skin along the upper part of a pig's neck and back and flanks is so tough as to make him almost invulnerable and, though his belly is unprotected, he is too low on the ground, and withal too active, for any other animal to gore him successfully. His rear isn't protected either, but that is offset by his natural predilection for keeping his business end—the end with the tushes and the little red eyes—toward the enemy.

Encountered on foot and alone it would be difficult to imagine a more unprofitable proposition, because he doesn't need to be asked to fight before he begins. He fights first and does the quarreling afterwards—with his tushes in the stomach of his foe. On horseback, and armed with a spear, the odds are a little in your favor—but that is all. You must take no liberties.

Of course you could take down his number with a rifle, but a man who shoots pig in India is exactly on a par with a man who shoots foxes in England. They won't hang you for doing it, because that would be much too merciful. But they will treat you like a pariah and cut you dead—which is infinitely worse than hanging.

It is a fact that a point which is usually overlooked by a beginner at the game is the point of his spear. Owing to the toughness of the boar's hide the spear-point should be as sharp as filing can make it, and it is as

well to have a slight groove in the blade, near the tip. Nine-tenths of the stock of the average merchant who deals in spears have the so-called diamond points, than which in the whole world of pig-sticking there is nothing more undesirable except a timid horse. If the diamond point happens to be sharp and you do drive it into the pig, it will almost certainly get stuck between his ribs and stay there, in spite of your utmost efforts to pull it out again. In addition to spraining your wrist, you will probably incur the scorn and hatred of the man that follows you, for when the pig charges him and rises to try and gore his horse, he will receive the shaft of your spear in his teeth. You can not expect a man to be good-tempered or even civil under those circumstances.

However many members there happen to be in residence in a tent-club, they always divide up into parties of five or less for the purpose of pig-sticking. The different parties, if there are more than one, go in different directions so as not to interfere with one another's sport. There are plenty of men who will tell you that five is a crowd, and that three members to a party are plenty. However that may be, five men are the most that ever ride out together, and one of the party is always in command. He is usually the oldest and most experienced man present, and whatever he says is law—just as in fox-hunting the word of the master is law, and for the same reason—the sake of good hunting.

YOU are out, of course, to kill the pig—several pigs for that matter if you have the luck, although you take them on one at a time and all ride after the same pig—but what you ride for is "first spear." In that respect it is a race, and if you can show the first blood on the end of your spear—even if it is only a speck—the pig is yours, and when he is dead the tushes are yours, whoever kills him. That is the reason for having the little groove on the end of your spear-point; it holds the blood. In long grass or jungle of any kind the blood will often be wiped off a plain point, and you have nothing to show for it; and it is one of the very few rules of the game that if your claim is challenged you *must* be able to show the blood; that prevents any argument.

Of course, in this matter of "first spear" there is a certain element of luck, as there is in every decent sport, but in far the greater majority of cases it falls to the boldest rider. As a general rule it would be next to impossible to say who actually killed the pig, although it occasionally happens that the first man that comes up with him runs him through and kills him on the spot. More usually the first wound is nothing but a prick, and a fight follows in the course of which he takes such an extraordinary amount of punishment that no one could say which of his many wounds was the fatal one. So you all ride for the honor of "first spear," and each man helps at the killing because as a rule he has to, if he doesn't want to run away or get killed himself.

As the tents are always pitched close to where you expect to find your pig, you have never far to ride before the fun begins. This is one of several advantages that pig-sticking has over fox-hunting, with its interminable rides to the meet and its still more interminable rides home again.

You start out the moment the sun is up, in order to get your sport in the cool of the day. Over night the natives, of whom there will be a tremendous number attached to the camp, will have watched down a sounder of pig, and before daybreak they will bring you what is called *kubber*, that is to say, information. So, knowing where the sounder is—a herd or flock of wild pig is called a sounder, and a sounder may number anything from ten to a hundred, though an average number would be between forty and fifty—you take up your station all together, down wind and under cover, where you can see without being seen—behind a clump of low trees, for instance.

Your *sais* hands you your spear and you are ready. If your horse has ever been out pig-sticking before, he knows by this time what is in store for him, and in all probability you will have your hands full for the next few minutes preventing him from kicking the others or being kicked. However, one member of the party will generally stand clear of the rest to watch the sounder away.

About fifty, or even a hundred, natives go into the long grass or low bushes or whatever cover it is where the sounder has been marked down, and contrive to kick up a most infernal din with old tin cans and native drums and such-like instruments of music, and presently there will be a snort and a grunt and the whole sounder will

break cover, crashing through the undergrowth with the old great-great-grandfather boar in the lead and his youngest great-great-grandson squealing in the rear.

Just at that psychological moment you will probably discover that your girth needs tightening. If that's the case you had better hurry up and tighten it, for things will be happening in a minute.

We will say the sounder is a good one, half a hundred strong. The old boar in the lead makes for some near-by cover that he knows of, where he can stow his enormous family in safety. He is awfully angry at being disturbed, and is simply spoiling for a fight already. But he is a cunning fighter as well as brave, and he wants to reconnoiter before commencing hostilities. If he could have his way he would lead the sounder into the new cover and leave it there while he returned to peer about from the outside edge of it. But more natives have been stationed to head him off and prevent that maneuver, so he makes for the open country with the whole tribe behind him, and all at once the leader of your party calls out "Ride!"

In a moment you are off in full pursuit, with your spear slanting across you out of harm's way. You will probably not need it for the next ten minutes.

THE moment you are off, the old boar sees you, and grunts, and the rest of the sounder turns immediately and bolts back to cover. He goes on with the object of drawing you away from his wives and family, and after him you go as fast as your horse can lay foot to the ground. You are hunting by eye and can not afford to lose sight of him for a second; and you are each of you riding for "first spear" and can not afford to give away a single point to the others.

It is each man for himself now, and the devil take the hindermost. The boar knows it and you know it and it is your own fault if your horse doesn't know it. Over slippery sheet-rock, through the densest jungle he can find, over fallen trees and blind banks and dry water-courses, through long grass where neither you nor your horse can possibly see what is in front of you, he will lead you the race of your life—ever mindful of the sounder, and ever drawing you away.

The race is to the swift, and you must ride like a fiend. The man who rides for a fall will surely get what he is looking for. Leave the going to your horse and trust to luck, or whatever else it is that you trust to; forget, if you can, that such things as nerves exist; ram in your spurs and *ride*—and watch the boar!

As you go, if the country is open enough, you spread out a little to give one another spear-room. You know that the boar will turn, though you do not know in which direction or when. That is where the element of luck comes in. You may, by dint of bold riding, be ahead of the other men and yet miss the "first spear," because he may take it into his head to tackle one of the other men first. They call it "jinking" when he turns, because no ordinary word could properly describe the sudden ferocious rush with which he does it. He has to have a word all to himself.

As you begin to gain on him you will notice his wicked little red eye as he glances from time to time over his shoulder to watch his chance. He is not going quite so fast now, not because he is tired—he isn't in the least, but because he means to fight and thinks that you are far enough away from the sounder for safety. He is an utterly fearless fighter, but cunning as a devil, and he will choose the moment, if he can, when he can take you at a disadvantage.

If he can catch you in trouble with your horse he won't let slip the opportunity. There will be a grunt and a rush, and over you will go—horse and rider together. If you are up close to him and your horse is timid and shies at him, as many horses will, he will charge suddenly into the horse's legs, ripping wherever he can reach, usually trying for the stomach, but he is not particular so long as he can rip something. If one of the other men does not happen to be near you, you will be lucky to get away with your life. He is a past master at choosing places where there is no room for you to use your spear, and when he does charge, your only chance is to meet him with the spear-point.

Just as at polo or football, you must "keep on the ball." Never give him a chance to come at you while you are standing still. In other words, don't stand still. He won't stand still for a second to give you a chance, and don't you either, for you can no more afford to take liberties than he can.

THIS activity will astonish you, The domestic pig, his first cousin. could not be described as an active animal, but the wild boar of India is more active than a dog. Few dogs could turn so quickly, and none of them could use their natural weapons with half his deadly accuracy. He grunts, and the foam flies from his mouth, and his wicked little eyes glare hatred and defiance at you—anything, in fact, but fear, and he charges, and "jinks," and charges, and rips viciously at everything within reach.

The more the fight goes against him, the more determined he becomes to do some real damage before he breathes his last. And his last rush, when he seems almost too weak to stand, is often more dangerous than his first. He is game right up to the very end, and it is small wonder that the men who hunt him sing a wild inspired song in his honor.

To tackle the wild boar you must learn to adopt his tactics of rush. Ride at him all the time, with your spear-point ready to receive his charge. Never thrust with your spear. If you do, it will run all down his back for a certainty without doing more than scratch his skin, and he will rush in under it and send you and your horse rolling over together. There are more enviable positions than under a kicking horse, with a broken bone or two and a furious devil of a boar seeking to gore you and the horse to death. So hold the spear steady, and the pace you are going and the pace he is coming will drive the spear right into him.

But don't believe that because you have driven your spear right through him he is necessarily out of action. With ten such wounds in him he can charge home and rip a horse dead. When his blood is up, what little pain he is able to feel serves only to make him more furious, for there is not a grain of cowardice in his whole system. He is not done for until he is dead, and he is quite clever enough to pretend that he is weaker than he is if he thinks that by doing so he can trap you into making a mistake.

He has no idea of quarter for either himself or you. You started the fight, but he'll make you finish it. If you draw off he will follow you and make you fight.

At Mhow, and at some other places in India, they sometimes turn live panthers loose on the plain, and hunt them in the same way. But the sport is not one-tenth so good, although the actual risk of life is possibly greater, because a panther, when he does turn, can spring on the horse, and one blow of his paw is sufficient to break a man's skull. But the panther is a coward at heart, which the pig is not. A panther runs for his life when he is charged by a mounted man, and only when he is wounded and hard pressed and sees escape is quite impossible does he make any attempt to fight.

When they hunt panthers in that way nine out of every ten of them are killed outright by a spear-wound in the back as they are trying to run away. Once he has made up his obstinate mind to give battle, a pig never attempts to run away. Over and over again he could probably escape, at all events for a time, if he tried to, but he doesn't try to. The idea never seems to enter his head. He means fighting, and he fights with every ounce of courage and fury and cunning there is in him.

IF YOU are reckoned a bold rider to pig, you are a good man indeed, and may hold your chin high. When you talk, you will find that other men will listen. But India is a land of bold riders, both native and foreign-born, and you will need to be something super-excellent in order to attract their notice. In a country where men are made familiar with death in some form or other almost every day of their lives, personal courage is taken much as a matter of course, and it is only the coward who excites comment.

If you can not afford polo under Western conditions, and fox-hunting has lost its zest, go out to India for a spell, join a tent-club and hunt pig. It's a better game than either of them. You've not only got to ride a squealing devil of a horse at full gallop across a country you would ordinarily hesitate to walk him over, but you've got to fight the pig at the other end of it. Yours will be the true spirit of adventure, for you will carry your life in your hand from start to finish. If you flinch, you're done for—hurt at the least, possibly killed. It's either you or the pig, and if you hesitate for a moment the pig gets you.

You will have to ride hard and straight, and keep on riding, and the hand that holds your spear must be steady, like the eye that directs it—steady from clean living.

If only once in your life you have seen the finish of an old gray boar in the early

golden morning of India, you may truly say that you have not lived in vain. And as for trophies—one pair of three-inch tushes will give more satisfaction in the days to come than a dozen tiger-skins, for you will remember that you had to ride for them and fight for them and that it took every ounce of manhood that there was in you. They are not much to look at, but they will inspire memories of the finest, cleanest, manliest sport that is to be found anywhere in the whole wide world.

PIG-STICKING is one of the most democratic sports in the world, for this reason—that India, though a hotbed of autocracy and a tremendous stickler for good-breeding, will welcome you, whoever your parents were, if you are a good man to pig.

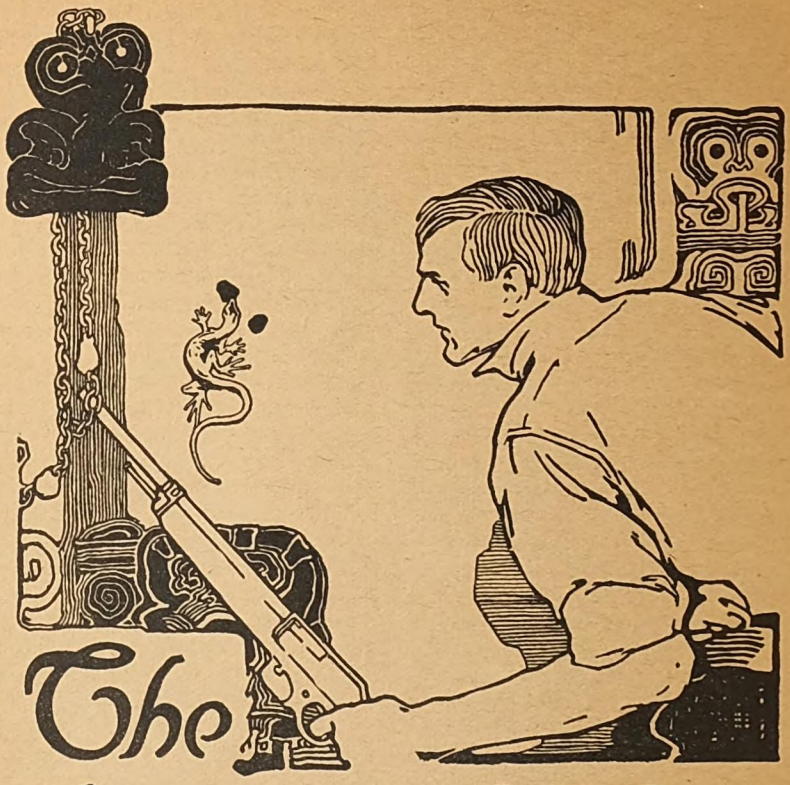
There are two other phases of this sport of pig-sticking that serve to place it on a plane by itself—its usefulness, and its entire lack of cruelty. A boar is no ordinary beast. In the first place, he is so quarrelsome by nature that fighting comes natural to him. He would much rather fight than run away; and in the ordinary course of his existence he fights anything and everything that refuses to give way to him. He revels in a fight in much the same way that the old vikings used to, and he will, generally speaking, go out of his way to look for a fight.

Supposing that he were not hunted by man, his death would come about in much the same way. As soon as some male member of his family imagined himself strong enough to get the better of him in mortal combat, there would be a pitched battle; and sooner or later, as he grew older and lost a little of his tremendous strength, he would die fighting. Instead of being speared, he would be gored to death by a member of his own family. Probably the death that comes to him at the hands of man, while he is yet in his prime and before the edge of his fighting enthusiasm has been dulled by stiffness and old age, is the more merciful death of the two. And it is certainly better to kill him outright with a spear than to wound him with a bullet and let him escape to die a lingering and miserable death in the jungle. Fighting is the natural end of a wild boar, and probably if he were able to speak it is the end that he would ask for.

You may say "Why kill him at all? Why not leave him to the tender mercies of his own offspring?" The answer is that always where wild boars are hunted with the spear, there are villagers who are the poorest of the poor, whose scanty crops the boars play havoc with. Their numbers must be kept down, or the very existence of the natives would be at stake. By reducing the number of full-grown boars the size of sounders is kept within reasonable limits.

"Then why not exterminate them altogether?" The answer to that is, "Go ask the natives." Ask them how they would like to get along without the occasional employment and consequent hard cash that the sport of pig-sticking brings them. Ask the corn-sellers and grass-cutters. Ask the beaters who go into the long grass and drive out the boar. Ask the carriers who help to shift the camp. And ask the low-bred Mussulmans who gorge themselves on boar-meat when there has been a kill. You would receive an answer that would convince you, however great your unbelief.

So pack up your goods and chattels, and get an introduction from your friend, and, taking your courage and ambition with you, go and hunt pig for a spell in India. You will not regret it.



The Jades of Toi

by Frank W. Stanton

CHAPTER I

A GAME OF POKER

THE long blue-nosed barrel rose above the table edge. The five men under the black eye of the muzzle seemed frozen for a bare instant in just the attitudes in which the advent of its menace found them. Their eyes flitted from the magazine pistol to the eyes of the brown-cheeked, brown-handed stranger who shoved it on the table. A few seconds before, with an unalarming sweeping gesture, he had brushed the cigar-ashes from his coat-front, then his thigh and—the careless hand had returned bringing the gun into the game.

The eyes of the stranger, however, were dwelling on the cards in the hands of Nelson, the marine hospital service doctor, who was dealing the fifth hand of the big jackpot in which the limit had been twice doubled by successive fours in the two preceding pots. His face was still, untroubled and unintelligible, so Ralph Langdon, the gentleman globe-trotter, had finished lighting his drop pipe; Quan Foy, the Chinese importer, continued twiddling his expectant index fingers; Hogan, the dock-work contractor, dropped naturally the hand that had been rubbing his sleepy eyes; Dixie McCool, the horse trader, snapped shut the case of his watch and looked out at the coming dawn evolving blurred masses of land, islands, buildings, masts and water

from the darkness that had smothered San Francisco Bay; Smith, the hotel man, completed his scarcely interrupted yawn. Things were as they had been before.

Why not? Any gentleman may lay a gun on a poker table if it has grown heavy in his pocket during a hot night of hard, high play. Of course it was perfectly true that Nelson and Hogan had met in Hong Kong by their own statement across the board and that Nelson in the last few minutes had dealt Hogan four tens and then dropped out of the hand. Also Hogan, on his deal, had given Nelson four queens and stayed for only the first raise. All this in the home stretch of the game.

Nelson's hands fluttered perceptibly under the steady gaze of the stranger and the pointless eye of the gun, in fact so much so that he laid the deck on the green cloth of the club table and with deliberation gave the cards a thorough riffle, then passed for the cut, and dealt steadily, carefully, openly, a little sneer under his yellow mustache.

Quan Foy opened. Only Nelson and Hardy, the stranger, stayed. While the Chinese took two cards, the two others took three each. In a moment Quan Foy was playing alone against Hardy, as the dealer had dropped out. Quan Foy called on the third raise and laid down his useless aces on nines against Hardy's three tens.

"Thirtieth Street always wins," said Hardy, slipping the gun, muzzle down, in the breast of his jacket, then pulling the huge pot toward him and stacking for the cashing in.

"You seemed doubtful a moment ago," said Nelson malevolently, laying the banker's drawer with several thousand dollars in gold and checks on the table.

"Yes," drawled the big man with a rising inflection, "I should have felt rather badly if through *carelessness* I had lost my chance at five million and seen four years of hellish hard work go away merely for the enrichment of some gentleman who was more *careful*"

Slowly the blood rose to Nelson's neck and face till he was livid, but he chose to swallow the covert insult.

"Five millions, brother?" queried the hotel man placatingly. "That is too much. Any more room on that creek?"

"Maybe so, maybe not," responded Hardy good-naturedly, turning his back on Nelson. "Six years ago I was growing cantaloups in Colorado. That is about all I know even now, but a 'lunger' professor who stopped at my ranch persuaded me to try going to Java with him to root around some of those old deserted cities of the ancient Malay empire and I went and stuck by him two years, bossing his diggers. Then he came home to die, and I have been back here for four years below the Springs growing cantaloups to beat ——. Now I am on my way back with what I could pull out of them, for I *saw* something out there, boys—I got a glimpse of something *big!* To put it in plain words I was a *leetle* behind until that last pot, and I did not care to head back to Denver to-morrow through my own *carelessness*."

"You saw something?" asked Smith dully, with polite interest. Langdon was leaning forward with keen curiosity openly shown on his clean-cut, almost boyish face.

"Yes, brother, I saw something, only, to be more correct, I should say I saw the beginnings of something—the first of a trail made by an old king called Toi who got in a fretful frame of mind once on a time some hundreds or thousands of years ago and hiked off into Polynesia with a lot of his people, taking with him the great gold-and jewel-set jades of Maharwapa. This Professor Trimble said they would be worth millions to-day, maybe forty millions, but I have capitalized them mentally at five—five and no more, for, as I said, all I know anything about is cantaloups."

"And the rudiments of poker," grinned Smith, blotting the check for his losses.

Hardy bowed smilelessly and rose, stretching his long, powerful arms above his head and stamping his feet to let the blood get started in his cramped legs.

As the party left the club-house Langdon approached him at the door and would have spoken to him, but desisted when Hardy did not notice him, and turned back and went up to his room to bed.

CHAPTER II

WESTWARD HO!

THE next afternoon the cantaloup-grower stood watching his crated outfit being lowered into Number Two hold of the *Maharanee* while the fourth officer cursed at the checker concerning the old topic of late freight, giving vent to bitter

jokes about the "Blue Peter" having become a three weeks' notice in this line of ships, instead of the time-honored sailing-signal flag. Just then Hardy looked up and his eye alighted on a familiar figure in the mixing, hurrying throng on the dock below—Langdon, sauntering down with a dressing-case in his hand and a massive new book under his arm.

"Umph!" said Hardy to himself, "that looks like a bound copy of the journals of the Polynesian Society. By George, it is! What is in the wind?"

Soon he was duly informed, for Langdon strolled aboard and in a few minutes came forward and edged along by Hardy's side at the rail.

"Good afternoon, Mr. Hardy. We do not sail till five, I believe."

"*We* sail!"

"Yes, you are going to have company. I could not go to sleep this morning for thinking about this Toi person, and I got up and took a whirl through a few books, seeking more information concerning him. I noticed a squib in the early editions of the *Evening Bulletin* saying that one of the passengers on the *Maharanee* to-day was a Mr. Hardy of Colorado, bound for the South Sea to hunt up the traces of the migration of the great King Toi, and so I thought I would come down and go along. I don't want any of the money, or the glory, in this hunt, but I do want the work and the fun. Nothing so good has turned up in a long time. I don't know when I have ever run across anything quite so interesting—it beats tiger-hunting in India, gold-trekking in Africa and dabbling with the Italian Camorra. For instance, Eldson Best has this to say——"

He opened the big volume at a marked page and read aloud:

Shrouded in tradition and romance is the exact location of the Hawaiki or Awaiki from which the great canoes of the various migrations to New Zealand and the other islands set sail, but it is certain that the same people departed to populate New Zealand, the Chatham Islands, Rarotonga, the Sandwich or Hawaiian islands and many others. They are all of the original Maori stock, and the strongest proof that they are the offspring of some tropical people is the fact that every canoe brought the *kumara* or sweet potato, a plant indigenous to the tropics and cultivated in the colder climates only with extreme difficulty. Some have supposed that Hawaii was Hawaiki, but the more reasonable belief is that Hawaii was named for the homeland. For instance, Toi, the great king of the Maoris of Rarotonga, was undoubtedly named for some still greater Toi, a monarch of the parent people.

Hardy was sneering openly.

"Since you are such a very smart man, suppose you go on and finish this job while I go back to the cantaloup country!" said he.

Langdon refused to take offense and, closing the book, said smilingly:

"There is no use talking that way. Since you do not open up and ask me to go, I must ask myself, I suppose. Now bear in mind that I can take my share in any hard game. I don't want the money, as I have said, if there is to be any, for I have got more than I know what to do with, and I brought along a little to pool with that cantaloup stake of yours, if you need it."

He drew out a thick packet of thousand-dollar gold-certificates and slapped them on the flat of the book.

"You make me feel ashamed of myself, Langdon," said Hardy. "Just forget what I said a minute ago. But don't think I now ask you to join with me because you have a pile to back us. My little stake would probably do the work, but I don't hesitate to say that I *am* glad to have a good game man with me, for there is going to be some rough going. Shake!"

They shook hands as men of their sort do shake hands, and then they turned to business-like talk of the outfit and the quest. They were engaged thus when the great whistle of the trans-Pacific liner boomed out its final warning and the vessel drew away from the pier.

SHE was not two boat lengths into the stream when Langdon and Hardy, in common with many others noticed a commotion at the head of the pier, heard some one shouting and looked to see a taxi-cab careering madly down to the water-front, the driver yelling lustily, apparently bringing a belated passenger. A hundred pairs of glasses were turned on the cab from the decks, and the two adventurers saw the head and shoulders of a woman appear at the window—a young woman of great beauty, with a faint brownish coloring in her creamy skin.

It was plain that she was bent on getting aboard the *Maharanee* and was greatly disappointed when she saw that she was one minute, one insurmountable minute, too

late. Some of the dock people, apparently of the line's passenger department, hurried to the cab, but after a very brief conversation with them she leaned out and ordered the cab to return up the hill into the city.

"Too bad, too bad!" said Langdon. "From what little I saw of the young lady I am very sorry she is not to be with us these three weeks of the quiet Pacific."

Hardy looked at him steadily a moment before he replied.

"If my eyes did not deceive me, you can be —— glad she missed the boat. That was Miss Mauna-Maranga, the most dangerous heart-breaker of Oceania. I know."

"Well!" said Langdon.

Hardy shrugged his shoulders.

CHAPTER III

THE LOST EMPIRE OF TOI

THAT evening after dinner, as the two sat in the smoking-room Langdon said: "Since we are off, old man, do you mind telling me where I am going? I only took a ticket to Auckland."

"You did very well on a guess," laughed Hardy, showing his fine, broad, strong teeth in one of his unusual smiles.

"I figured that your chase was a Maori chase and that you would be going to the heart of the Maori region."

"Yes, but not because I wished to do so. This steamer will pass our hunting-grounds many hundred miles to the westward. When we leave Honolulu we head southwest one point south for a four-thousand-mile sail with but one change in the track, at Apia, in the Samoan group. We will have passed Palmyra and the Tokelau archipelago before we strike the Navigators, and then we will swing through the Friendly cluster and on by the Minervas, North and South, passing west of the Kermadec Islands to make landfall early next month of Mount Hobson on Great Barrier Island before we enter the Hauraki Gulf and bear down on Auckland.

"Now, if this ship were all my own, she would turn due southeast at Apia and drop anchor nearly one thousand miles out of the steamer track among the nominally British Herveys, but it is the difference between riding in a street-car and having your own automobile. You go where the car goes until you are as near to your final stopping-place as the car will take you. I would take a schooner at Apia if I could get one, but the safest chartering market is Auckland, so to Auckland we go."

"Well, I'll be jiggered!" cried Langdon. "The best thing would have been to take a cruising yacht from 'Frisco. Why didn't you tell me?"

"You didn't ask me," said Hardy.

"Well, we may be able to get a blackbirder at Samoa."

"I don't care for ghosts and there is no place that ought to be so full of them as an old blackbirder."

"Well, we will find the ways and means when the time comes. Now what have we got to use as scent to the dogs, figuratively speaking?"

"Perhaps you will be sorry that you came when you hear how slender a clue we are following. It is merely a bit of putting two and two together.

"EVERYBODY knows that the nearly priceless royal treasures of China, of Anam and Siam, are the jade heirlooms. Sections of royal jades in the great European museums are held in high figures. In the past twenty-five years the Dutch savants have made out from the fragments of records of the old Javanese empire that in its oldest dynasty there existed a wonderful collection of green stone ornaments so extensive that it required seven princes to wear them and bear up under their weight.

"There is also much mention of the fact that this collection, called the Jades of Maharwapa, was taken away by a Cæsarian sort of emperor called Toe or Toa, who set out to find the golden bed from which the sun rose every day. In this vainglorious quest he enlisted the finest warriors and sailors of the empire and they set out in a fleet of huge double canoes, carrying more than one hundred persons to each craft. In the canoe in which the emperor traveled were carried the royal jades. According to the *known* records his party was never heard from thereafter.

"But here is the interesting thing to us. I brought in to the Professor one day some inscriptions I had found in a room in the ruins we were exploring back of Djokjokerra. When he had figured them out he said they stated that a traveler had returned from the islands of the region to-

ward the rising sun and that there he had seen the new empire of Toe, or, according to this record, of Toi. The ruler then reigning was the tenth in descent from the original voyager who had aspired to find the home of the sun. His capital was in a great stone and wood city on an island that was the central one of five, and a great highway ran all about the island.

"That was all, but it occurred to me that, if Toi had arrived, so had the jades. That was a fair presumption. If the dynasty had run ten generations, the colony was a fixed institution and only a war of conquest among the islanders of Polynesia would have destroyed or removed the jades.

"The probability was that the schismatic empire had declined, as all isolated colonies will decline, until the people would be found to be no more than simple islanders such as people that part of the world to-day. The jades would be lost or buried or treasured by the priests, who would be ignorant of their true history and value. The great task would be to find the island on which the migratory emperor set up his new capital and laid the foundations for his new empire.

"Bearing in mind that he had set out with a well-equipped party to find the home of the sun, and not to find some more enticing land in which to settle, he would go entirely around the world if stopped by no untoward circumstances. Annihilation by savage islanders, devastation by a typhoon, or being compelled to voyage so far that his supplies gave out, these things would halt him.

"The fact that he had reached some point with a sufficiently large party to set up a new kingdom showed that the reason he had halted was because he had gone as far as he could go. In other words, to use a naval phrase, he had reached the limit of his cruising-radius.

"Taking a chart, it was easy to see that, moving east, he would traverse a region that must have been familiar to his people —by Sumbawa, Flores, Sumba, Arnhem Land, Cape York Peninsula, perhaps New Guinea, and then into strange waters. No doubt he passed by the New Hebrides, by Viti and Vanua Levu, through the south Tongas and on, renewing his food supplies as he went, paying friendly visits to the natives until he came to the Herveys. He then would be at the outpost of the islands of the South Sea.

"He might possibly have gone on to Paumotu, Dulcie or Pitcairn, or, if he struck farther north, which I think was unlikely, considering the current, he might have reached the Marquesas. Many of the islands there to-day were not then in existence, and some that did appear above the water have now dropped out of sight, no doubt. My best guess, however, is that the Emperor Toi brought up sharp in the Herveys and set up a new capital there because he was ashamed to go back home after his vainglorious departure.

"Now, if he had landed on an island as large as Cuba or Newfoundland, his party would have increased and made a nation, and the transplanted civilization would have been sustained—in fact, would have progressed. As it was, it was smothered by the smallness of the new dominion. That is what I believe. That is the theory on which I am proceeding. Do you agree with me, Langdon, or do you think my logic is at fault?"

"Four thousand miles is pretty long theorization," said Langdon significantly. "Honest Injun, Hardy, haven't you some little stronger clue than that?"

Hardy chuckled.

"Yes, of course I have, my boy, of course I have—the old story that every traveler in the East will hear, that a Captain George Bartolemy, a gin-trader and a blackbirder, found strange things that had to do with the Kanaka religion on some island in that region and, when he got drunk and talked about it in Honolulu, the *kahunas* warned him first and then killed him by *willing* him to die. You know the United States Government has stopped that mysterious practise, or at least very nearly stopped it. However, I am not interested in his religious discoveries, but in the island, where there was something to discover. One of the things he and his men swore they found were some ruins in which a Malay arch in stone was still standing. That was only forty years ago. That arch marks the influence of the kingdom of Toi!"

"Hardy," said Langdon in a quiet, intense manner, his eyes shining, "I am mighty glad I sat in that poker game the other night!"

"Last night," corrected Hardy.

"It seems much longer."

CHAPTER IV

THE WARNING OF THE HOTO SPEAR

DURING the succeeding days of quiet plowing westward they spent much time over Hardy's maps and charts, and more time in improving their knowledge of the basic language, which is spoken with different inflections, slight changes, added local words, and so forth, in all the South Sea where the islanders are of the kindred blood of the Hawaiians and the Maoris—the language that is the basis of the theory that once there was a great continent there called Lemuria, on which the population spoke the same tongue and which was submerged at the time of the flood of Noah, only the highlands and mountain tops remaining above water, peopled by refugees.

It was when the *Maharanee* lay in the harbor at Honolulu that the first mysterious incident of the journey befell. The two men were preparing to go ashore when, on the side of the ship away from the city, appeared a native dugout canoe driven by two brawny young men. In the bow squatted an old man, a ceremonial *lei* about his neck, a leaf-wrapped parcel across his knees.

The majority of the passengers, who had never seen such a sight, crowded first from one side of the vessel to the other as the canoe rounded the stern to the gangway. Every one was on deck, waiting to go ashore as soon as permitted, and there was great curiosity as the old man rose, stepped from the canoe and ascended to the deck. As he was plainly a personage and no common vender, the sailor on watch made no effort to stop him.

Once on deck the old Hawaiian looked about slowly until his eyes fell on Hardy and Langdon and then he advanced toward them, their fellow passengers in wonderment clearing the way for his progress. When he was so near he could have touched them he stopped, fixed first one and then the other with his eye, and with a slow genuflexion laid the leaf-wrapped parcel at their feet, turned before they could speak, made his way to the gangway and, a moment later, they saw him bobbing away in the bow of the canoe.

"What is it? What did that fellow want?' cried a young ship's officer, hurrying up.

Hardy had stooped and picked up the thing with great care.

"Oh, just a little gift from a friend of mine on shore," said Hardy, turning on his heel and walking toward his stateroom with a sign to Langdon to follow.

When the door was closed Hardy laid the thing on the berth as if glad to get rid of it.

"This is a funny proposition! What is it?" asked Langdon eagerly.

"Well, it is not a snake, for there are none on the islands. It does not feel like a bomb, but what it is you know as well as I know. Did you notice the shape of the donor's hair—that close-cut place? He is a high *kahuna*."

"But what does he mean by bringing this thing to us? He has made some mistake. It is the funniest thing I ever heard of!"

Hardy slipped out a long-bladed hunting-knife that hung at the foot of the berth in its sheath and gently, carefully slit the green vine binding the leaves. They opened slowly with the natural elasticity of their ribs and disclosed the obsidian head and about six inches of the staff of a very old spear. The shaft had been broken short off so long ago that the fracture showed old. Around the base of the obsidian head were the time-hardened lances of the sting-ray—each a vicious, dangerous point. Tied to the shaft with a single vegetable fiber was a live blow-fly, struggling to get loose.

Langdon gazed in helpless bewilderment from the face of Hardy to the queer object and back again.

"No," said Hardy, "the old man knew what he was doing perfectly. He made no mistake whatsoever. When he came on board he knew for whom he was looking, and—why, Langdon, old fellow, we have our first taste of the queer things we are going up against——"

There was a sharp rap on the door and Hardy paused and opened it, took a cablegram from the steward's tray and handed it to Langdon, who ripped it open and read aloud:

RALPH LANGDON, *Maharanee*, Honolulu,

Chronicle reporter called, investigating your queer departure. Some one saw you leaving with a man named Hardy. After *Chronicle* printed item, unknown woman called up, advising me to cable you to come back and have nothing to do with Hardy. Got her 'phone from central; found she was a Miss Maranga. She would not talk and sailed next day in chartered yacht, unknown destination. Old times' sake, be careful.

JOHN DELMAR

The two looked at each other silently a few seconds.

"If this keeps up, my curiosity will be aroused pretty soon!" said Hardy grimly. "Aren't you afraid of me by this time?"

"Oh, shucks, old man! Don't think I pay any attention to such a thing as this cablegram! Jack Delmar was a fool always, even in college. There is something on foot, however, in connection with the lady, and we must find that out later. In the meantime, pray tell me what that thing is on the bed."

"The head of an old war-spear—a *tao* of manuka-wood, and the blow-fly is an omen of death in battle. Unknown enemies have sent us the Kanga Tuhuri—the terrible Warning of the Spear!"

CHAPTER V

THE HIBISCUS GIRL

STRANGELY enough, in the days that followed, the long days that were all the same, Langdon found Hardy growing more and more reticent in their discussions of the quest and the queer things that had befallen so early. It was as if traveling west to come to the East were having a slowly cumulative effect on the cantaloup-grower. It seemed that, having known the spell of the East in the years he had spent there, it was now returning to him and eliminating the Occidental freedom and frankness of his nature.

When the palms of the shores about Apia wafted the proud ship her welcome one morning, Hardy was a changed man, his courage and force unabated, his good humor and optimism quite the same, but a veiled restraint on his words and his acts, and a new light in his eyes. Langdon had heard of this thing that comes over Western men when once habituated to the East, but he had never seen it.

From the steamer's bow they watched the native pilot-boat bringing aboard the brown giant to guide the ship to her anchorage, and Langdon, having spied a little white craft anchored in a cove half hidden by the trees, hastened to question the native as to its identity and at the same time try his learning of the language.

He found he understood the native perfectly, as the man told him that the white craft was a trading-schooner that had been built for trading in the Celebes and Sulu seas, where it was often necessary to show a clean pair of heels to Moro *praus* and *pintas*. When her owner, Captain Mackenzie, came to the eastern Micronesian trade the schooner was found not to be roomy enough for profit, so that she was now for sale. The pilot wondered why his questioner darted away and rushed forward to point out the *Lydia* to a tall white man, who nodded vigorously, and then both rushed away together aft.

In the first boat that went ashore was Langdon, while Hardy sat on deck, his glasses raised now and then to his eyes as he watched the landing, the call at the low building where the American flag floated, the summoning of a heavy, ponderous, red-bearded man in ducks, and a little later the putting out of a boat to the *Lydia* with Langdon sitting beside the red-bearded man and slapping him on the knee as they talked.

A few minutes after they had gone aboard the schooner the bright folds of the flag broke out from the stern, a green branch was stuck on the bow, and from the peak floated the blue square with its blocked-out center of white, the old-time traders' signals of a cruise among the islands within twenty-four hours. Hardy shut up his glasses and hurried aft, shouting to a steward to open up Number Two and get out the outfit. The continuance of the passage to Auckland was canceled.

As he came up from his cabin, after seeing the steward started above with the last of the personal luggage, he heard the clatter of the donkey-engine at Number Two and saw the familiar cases appearing above deck in the cradle. Already a lighter was alongside and they were being lowered to it, while the red-bearded man in ducks, who had come with it, swore roundly at every heave, with his whistle between his teeth.

WHEN, a half-hour later, he stepped aboard the *Lydia* and with an approving eye noted her holystoning, her taut lines and her shining brasses, he stopped short. A sight of something extraordinary forward caught his eye. In the bow, crouched as if it had no right to be there, was a gleaming rapid-fire gun with the lashings of its gummed jacket thrown aside as if Langdon had been inspecting it. Now beside it, eying it curiously, stood an old man clad from the waist in a scanty piece of trader's cloth, on his broad straight

back three ridged scars without the coloring of *moxa*, and, as he stood, his bare legs showed that one was a little shorter than the other, perhaps by reason of some unusual wound in the thigh.

At his side, her eyes bent in gentle curiosity, was a girl. From her shoulders there fell below her knees the beautiful *kakahu* mat, or cloak, finely woven of the Maori flax and dyed a dull reddish-brown bordered with a *hinau*-black, undecorated, simple, modest and with lines of grace that no Parisian designer may ever hope to equal.

Her face, throat, bare arms and ankles were of the soft, creamy, white-olive shade of the opening Anam lily, and her bronze light brown hair fell over her shoulders and far below her waist, bound back only with a filament of browned silver, while just behind her ear blazed a blossom of the flaming hibiscus.

She was watching the bright gun intently as the old man talked of it, but at the sound of Hardy's step she turned and he checked involuntarily before the calm measurement of her great purple eyes. A bare second she held him, then she turned to the gun once more, and Hardy found himself awkwardly contemplating the two, wondering what their presence might mean; why they were aboard the *Lydia*, and whether or not he was expected to take cognizance of their presence.

> It's cruel to be a native
> And before the white man stand,
> But the white man's way is harder
> Would he know the native's land.

Hardy blinked, faltered and went below to see the quarters.

Hardly had he assured himself that there was a sufficient cabin-space and the essential ventilation when there was a native boatman's call at the side and the tramp of feet overhead, and he went above to meet Langdon coming on board with the red-bearded man in ducks.

"I got her, Hardy!" cried Langdon. "Captain Mackenzie, permit me to make you acquainted with my partner, Mr. Hardy."

With his eye on the lighter towing in on the seaward side, the master put out his hand and mumbled something to Hardy about being glad to make his acquaintance. As he took the extended hand, Hardy noticed what a great red, hairy, stubby thing it was and tried its resistance with a powerful grip, but the owner never turned his real attention away from the lighter drawing on.

"Captain Mackenzie, I saw you on the *Maharance* a little while ago, but I did not know then that you were the master and owner of the *Lydia*," said Hardy.

"I am not that same," said the Captain without turning his head, and then he walked to the side to bawl something to the boats that had the lighter in tow. Hardy and Langdon exchanged looks, and Langdon jerked his head toward the companionway. Without a word they went below and Langdon, entering the cabin first, threw open a bag and drew out a silver-mounted flask of Bourbon, pouring a drink quickly into the cup top and extending it to Hardy while the latter fixed him with questioning eyes.

"HARDY, drink to our luck!" said Langdon earnestly. "Isn't she great? Say, the instant I got her lines from the ship I said to myself that the *Lydia* was going to be mine if I had to buy her for double her value! I did not have much trouble in finding Mackenzie in Apia —in fact, I would like to find the white man who could hide himself in Apia. He is certainly the queerest card I ever saw. He would not talk sale or anything, but merely said for me to come out and look the schooner over. I told him four of the best stories that ever sprang from the Lambs' Club, and that is saying a very great deal, but he never cracked a smile. Merely remarked that they were funny, though how he knew it I don't know.

"After I had seen her I asked his figure, and when I drew out the money and handed it to him you would have laughed yourself sick the way the Scotch in him arose in rebuke. I thought he was going to give it back to me! After thirty years in the bartering and haggling business, the immediate acceptance of an asking-price nearly stopped his heart. I am afraid he will always hate me for it. There was only one method to take to soothe him. I asked him to come with me as skipper, and we haggled a little over a few dollars a month more or less pay. While we were dickering, I could see that he was feeling better every minute. Then, too, I let him give orders for the stores, and of course he will make a month's pay off the buying of them.

"To cap the climax I told him that he

might hire the crew from mate to cook. Then a funny look came in his red eyes. He wanted to know if we were after labor or copra stations, and when I told him that we were hunting an island on which an old Polynesian emperor had left some millions of dollars' worth of jeweled jades and other relics and that we did not care who knew it, he crushed his red beard in his hand and stood looking at me a full half-minute without a word. Then he emitted a genuine Scotch grunt, and that was all.

"Coming aboard, now, he tells me that his old crew has reshipped elsewhere to a man, so that we must take all natives before the mast and, unless we wait until one or more of the seasonable traders arrive with officers looking for new berths, that we must take an old native master as mate. Some of the crew are already aboard."

Hardy, who had been listening intently, tossed down his drink, refilled the cup and passed it to Langdon, saying:

"All right, old man. But who is the girl?"

"The girl?"

"Yes, didn't you see that one standing forward just now by the fo'c'sle companionway? A red hibiscus flower in her hair?"

"What! *That* girl? Is she aboard? Well, I'll be——"

His words trailed off into the silence of amazement and the two stood looking at each other.

"Why do you say *that* girl? Some old acquaintance?" asked Hardy, a little hardly.

"Nonsense, of course not! But I had a shock on shore a little while ago all on account of a girl with a red flower in her hair. Now, you know, Hardy, I have seen them in every land and I knew May Kalimanaka in Honolulu five years ago, and she was the beauty of them all, but this red hibiscus girl —well, Hardy, I simply stood still on the steps of the Consulate and stared like a college student on Broadway! She came by, walking slowly like a queen, and walking in the way that only these women can walk, and I noticed that the natives stepped aside for her while she never heeded the insolent stares of the white men, mine included. She walked down to the beach and got into a canoe with four men and put out from shore. I asked the clerk who she was, but he did not know, saying she was some girl from some of the islands hereabout. With her was an old man with scars on his back——"

"And did she have a silver filament on her head?"

"Yes."

"Well, my boy, she is aboard the *Lydia*."

On the steps of the companionway sounded the heavy footfall of Mackenzie and he came in, carefully nursing his chronometer, looking up to find the two men facing him.

"Captain, who is the—young lady aboard?"

"The cook."

"The cook!" cried Langdon.

"Yes," answered the Scotchman. "I hope you don't object?"

"But see here—are female sea-cooks customary in these trades?"

"Yes, Langdon, not alone cooks, but very often women will be found on small vessels as supernumeraries, and I have seen whole crews of women manning a big *pinta* with not more than one or two men aboard," answered Hardy, trying to read behind the mask of the master's face as he spoke.

"But where did you get one so handsome?" persisted Langdon.

"I hope she is not over winnin', sir. I got her with old Takarangi. She is his niece and her name is Newa-reka, but that same last half is taboo this season of the year, sir, and if you calls her aft, say 'Newa.'"

"Newa-reka," Hardy repeated slowly and gently; "Newa-reka—Infinite Delight."

"Is that what it means?" exclaimed Langdon. "I thought only chiefs' names ever became tabooed."

"Yes, Mackenzie, I notice she wears a *kaitaka* mat.

"No doubt, no doubt," said Mackenzie, looking out the port. Then, half turning to look at the two, he concluded, "When you gentlemen have been among them as long as I have, you will take 'em as they come and make no bones. You will never know all there is to know and never understand anything so well about 'em that you feel sure of it."

He put his chronometer carefully in its resting-place, slammed the door of his chart case and went up.

Langdon poured out a drink for each of them and, raising his glass, said with a queer look on his face:

"Well, Hardy, here's to the red hibiscus girl, Newa, sea-cook of the good ship *Lydia!*"

"It's —— queer, to say the least," said Hardy, as he put away the flask.

CHAPTER VI

A LOVE-SONG

STRAIGHT for Manua was pointed the bowsprit of the schooner when, as the purple evening was drawing on, she beat slowly out of the harbor, passing the big *Maharanee* waiting for the offcoming of the mails to proceed the remaining hundreds of miles to Auckland. The passengers on the liner, knowing that their erstwhile fellow travelers were aboard the schooner and off on some romantic quest, crowded to the rail as the trim craft swept by, waving their hats and handkerchiefs and calling out wishes of good fortune.

Forward, the six brown sailors were grouped on the fo'c's'le head, watching the scene with a calm dignity. Amidships, the scullery-boy, or cook's mate, leaned from the galley, paring-knife in hand, but Newa, who was busy within, did not show herself, for which Langdon, standing aft with Mackenzie and Hardy, was glad without stopping to think why. At the wheel, a stern frown on his brow, stood the old mate, his crippled leg braced awkwardly, his eyes never leaving the schooner and her course as long as she was within the harbor. At hand stood the man to relieve him when the *Lydia* should be beyond the reefs.

It was with a strange heaviness at his heart that Langdon saw the island drop astern, saw the lengthening space of gloom swallow the lights—even the brightest one at the peak of the liner's wireless rigging. They marked the last symbols of the white man's civilization, the last evidences of the steamer-track, the last post of connection with the great outside world. Four bells clanged slowly and from forward broke out the sonorous, full-throated Polynesian chant to the night:

O Rangi maru! O Tai haruru!
O shaded heavens! O sounding sea!

The sweet melody, the weirdness of it, the very vibration of it booming forth from the great brown sea-seasoned chests caused him to thrill strangely.

"Mr. Langdon! Oh, Mr. Langdon!"

It was Mackenzie roaring from the cabin, and, going below, Langdon found Hardy and the skipper seated at the cabin table, the belated dinner set before them on a snowy cloth while behind the Captain's chair stood the boy from the galley, agonizing in a white jacket, but proudly on station to do service during the meal. There were four places set, and as Mackenzie signed to Langdon to take one Hardy said:

"You may be wondering who the guest is to be, Langdon, so I'll explain. Mackenzie has a fine joke on me. I told the boy to make room for old Takarangi who sits here as his right, being mate. I have been talking to him and he is a fine old man, and I am sure he could sit there without making a mess of his table manners. But when I sent Billy to call him he was eating his supper with Newa in the storeroom and they have fixed up their pallets in the compartment next the galley and mean to bunk there, apparently. I said to Mackenzie that no doubt it was native shyness that would not permit him to join us here, and you should have heard him laugh! Now tell him why, Captain."

"Well," said the skipper, "for him to sit down and eat with us without everything having been made *noa* or non-*taboo* by a *kahuna* or priest, he would be a ruined man. We ain't good enough for him, Mr. Langdon—not him that ain't good enough for us, and me the master and you the owner! He-haw-haw-a-whee, oh, my eye!"

"I was wondering if the girl was going to the fo'c's'le," said Langdon when the laugh had subsided.

"She certainly knows how to cook," said Hardy after the next mouthful.

"All of them do," observed Mackenzie, executing a scooping motion with a big spoon that swept into the yawning cavity in his beard a portion of food as large as a man's fist, silencing him for a full minute thereafter.

In a truly remarkable way the standard heavy sea food had been mingled with the fowl and fresh green food of the islands, making a meal that, for all its simplicity, was a work of art. There was one thing that puzzled Langdon greatly, but he said nothing to Hardy, who did not seem to notice it. When the boy, Billy Tama, had cleared away the dishes, and Mackenzie, thrusting his legs under the table, was jamming his black Leyte into his pipe, the lad produced three dishes of the fleshy flowers of the *kickie*, with every particle crisp and inviting, while at the side was a bit of perfect mayonnaise.

"Well, I'll be swingled!" said Mackenzie, and laboriously drew up to an eating posture, laid down his pipe and—cleaned his plate!

"Gentlemen, I know naught of this yellow stuff, but I am saying that, though I ain't no blackbirder, that sweet cook ain't never going to get away from the *Lydia* while I sail her!" he said, as he sank back and drew a match across his broad thigh.

FOR an hour they sat and talked, and for the first time Hardy went into details of the quest with Mackenzie, spreading the skipper's charts, with the skipper's own pencil markings of the inaccuracies of the Governmental surveyors on them, across the cabin table. In a little while the Scotchman's eyes were glowing between his contracted lids and when Hardy turned to Langdon and said:

"Now, Langdon, I think we need Captain Mackenzie's hearty cooperation in this matter. You and I are partners. Suppose we delegate to him one-fifth of the share of each of us if we lay our hands on the jades. What do you say?"

"Why, that goes with me," said Langdon.

"Lor' man, that would be a cool million!" cried the skipper.

"Or more—very likely more," said Hardy quietly.

"Listen to me, lads!" cried Mackenzie. "I'd take hell and rub the devil's nose in it for that. Lead on, lead on, MacDuff, and show me the way to 'em! I'm your hearty, and hurroo for King Tye!"

Suddenly a flashing light seemed to cross the faces of the three. The cabin was illumined only by the swinging oil lamp above the table, and they had turned it low because it made the place insufferably hot if the wick was kept turned to full height.

"What the deuce is that?" cried Langdon.

"I say, let's have a look!" cried Mackenzie and bolted for the companionway.

Just as they emerged on deck they caught the last glimpse of a waving flame along the schooner's side forward, then all was darkness and silence. It was as if some one had been flourishing a fiery signal. All three ran forward, but the deck was deserted and all the crew seemed to be sleeping peacefully below. The man on watch at the bow said he had seen a gleam apparently from the port on the starboard side of the fo'c's'le, but that was all. If there was anything else he had been looking the other way.

Astern there was a glow in the water, but it was impossible to tell if it was part of a floating, burning piece of paper that had been used as a torch or merely a variation of the phosphorescent glow in the wake.

Slowly retracing their steps, they saw that there was no one on deck save the old mate, squatting beside Newa amidships by the door of the galley. On her lap was a guitar of the sort the Spaniards have made common among the islands and she was singing softly, strumming its strings with a faint touch, while the old man sat with his head bowed in his hands, listening to the chants of his vanishing people set to the simple melodies of the race that was effacing them from Chatham to Marquesas.

Tang-Tang! Tang! Tang!

Four bells of the first watch of the night went sharply forward and the helmsman droned his monotonous cry.

The old mate rose slowly from his repose and lurched aft to take his watch. Mackenzie caught him by the arm to ask him vainly concerning the mysterious flashing lights, and Hardy passed on aft to listen.

LANGDON, caught by the dim picture of the girl sitting in the gloom with the guitar on her lap, paused. The footsteps of the three men died away, and the only sounds left were the creaking of the cordage overhead, the whisper of the wind vibrating the edge of the mainsail and the swish of parted water at the bow.

THERE was an interval of minutes when Langdon stood very still by the rail, absurdly conscious of the girl behind him. Then he heard the strings lightly, airily singing, broken once by the sullen throb of the heavy brass bass, and, poising his words carefully before he essayed the native speech, he turned toward her and remarked:

"You play very well. Where did you learn?"

"Our people love music even as children, but I got my first guitar at the mission in Suava."

"You have been to Suava?"

She laughed softly, as if amused.

"Yes, we are wanderers; it is all that is

left to us. I have been to Suava and to the school there."

In the dim light Langdon was conscious that she was looking up to him as he towered above her. The metal of her instrument gleamed dully on her lap, while some vagrant ray was thrown back from the silver filament in her hair. Scarcely knowing why he did so, he dropped down on the deck beside her, unconsciously yielding to the subtle charm of the woman and the night.

"Of course I know very little of the songs and poetry of your people, and I am sure that you are familiar with all of it. Will you sing some for me? I shall be very glad if you do."

She ran her lithe fingers over the strings and seemed to be thinking of what would please him. It startled him to note that he was keenly aware of the fragrance of the flower in her hair, of the cameo-like clearness of her beautiful face against the glow from the binnacle lamps far aft, behind which he knew was the grim visage of the old mate.

Gradually the improvization increased in tempo and in volume, and modulated from key to key while he thrilled with the beauty of it till her low rich voice broke into the "Man's Tattooing Song":

"We are sitting eating together,
Tangaroa!
Watching the marks, nose and eyes
Of Tutetawha.
They twist here and there,
These marks made with care,
Like the coils of a reptile
Marked faint with the chisel
Of Mataora.

"Oh, stay! Nor send for your mate
Who plucks leaves of *wharawhara*.
I am the one who will decorate
The man who will pay in *maora*,
Tangaroa,
With beautiful tattooing.

"But the man who will not pay
Crooked and wide be his tattooing
And the *moko* his undoing!
Strike up the music!
Tangaroa, arise!
Rise up, Tangaroa!"

The sullen throb of the guitar and the wild cadence of the girl's voice seemed to Langdon to set his soul tingling resentfully, rebelliously, but he crouched beside her silently and listened as she passed from song to song till she came to the immortal ballad of the "Wooing of Ponga":

"Beneath Mount Eden's forests ancient
Came the young chief, poor chief, Ponga,
'Mid the suitors of the daughter
Of the noble Taroronga.
She was fair as blooming *kauri*,
And her soul a crystal fount,
But she grieved at sight of Ponga,
Humble traveler to the mount.

"Fain they would have talked together
She so noble, he so poor,
But by day her suitors thronged her,
Keeping Ponga from her door.
Yet no guest of Taroronga
Asked in vain his comfort's need;
Ponga cries at night for water
While his slave seems not to heed.
'Rise, my child,' calls Taroronga,
'For some guest is choked with thirst.'
Calabash in hand she leaves the doorway;
Ponga finds the fountain first.

"'Thou, my love, thou art the waters
That my thirsty soul doth seek!'
Whispered Ponga, while the full moon
Lit the crimson of her cheek.
'Poor and humble, yet a chieftain,
All my heart cries out for thee!
Lift thine eyes, oh, Puhi-huia!
Does thy heart's love turn to me?'

"Thus beneath the trees of Eden
Was their troth pledged in the night,
And her suitors sought her vainly
In the tell-tale morning light.
For she did her father's bidding,
Brought the cup to Ponga's side,
Then amid the household's slumbers
Stole away to be his bride.

"Do mine eyes enthrall thee, sweetheart,
As thy gaze my soul doth wake?
Think of Ponga and his wooing!
Love, extend thine arms and take!"

Conscious of the wild, powerful appeal of the music and the words, Langdon clenched his hands as the song ceased and she kept on playing a low, thrilling minor improvization. What was it that moved him so strangely, so mightily? He looked at her suddenly, but her lashes were drooping and her lips were parted in a gentle smile. She raised her eyes and saw the look in his. Her fingers faltered on the strings. With a swift determination Langdon sprang to his feet and stood over her.

"You have sung exquisitely—you have moved me wonderfully!" he managed to say. "I thank you. I have never enjoyed an hour more in all my life. Goodnight, Newa, goodnight."

"Goodnight, sir," she answered gently, and he strode aft to lean over the taffrail, watch the swirling waters of the wake and think. After a time he turned back. The

deck was empty except for the watch on the bow and the old man at the wheel.

"The little siren! The —— little siren!" he said between his teeth, and went below to his bunk.

CHAPTER VII

A WOMAN'S WARNING

PAST atolls and past islands the schooner fled the next day across the face of the trades and, aside from unpacking, inspecting and testing the arms and instruments from Hardy's outfit, the two men did nothing but lounge under the awning of the after deck, luxuriating in the balm of the wind, the salt tang of the spray and the long, slow swing of the schooner's motion.

Toward evening the sky became overcast and at dark a drenching rain was falling, but the morning of the third day broke bright and clear. As Hardy came on deck Mackenzie beckoned to him and pointed off to the north. There was a tiny black smudge to be seen there, and the glasses showed that it was certainly smoke. Some steamer was moving slowly eastward, but she was more than hull down, and nothing of her character could be made out.

"Well, what of it?" asked Langdon when it was shown to him.

"I don't say," remarked Mackenzie, "but she was astern of us last night, near enough to see her lights, and now she has changed her course and gone around us. She may be a steam trader or a tramp with a crazy drunken navigator aboard, but if I was in a ship like that I think I'd be takin' better care of my course and my coal."

Before noon she was far ahead and the last sign of smoke had disappeared from the horizon, but Langdon noticed that Mackenzie never left the deck and constantly scanned the sky-line on both bows.

That evening the new moon was in its third night and thin, though it shed a spectral light on the deck that made it possible to distinguish everything from stem to stern of the schooner. After dinner Mackenzie led the way above to the chairs on the after deck and, when they were seated, began to inquire just what Hardy and Langdon proposed to do on the day following, when they would sight the first of the group among which must lie the island of Toi, according to Hardy's preconceived theory.

"Well," said Hardy, "we have had abundant grounds to believe that our purpose in coming out here was suspected by some one who was desirous of preventing us. The only prevention can come through hostile native action now, as nearly as I can see, and the best way to prevent that is not to incur the unfriendliness of the natives. We can not approach the islands as traders, but we can as collecting scientists. They have had enough experience with hydrographers, fish, animal and plant collectors, searchers for wrecks sent out by insurance companies, and so on, to be suspicious of us in no way if we pretend to be in quest of things which they hold of no value. When we find what we want, then there will be a different story.

"The only way to locate our treasure-trove accurately will be by obtaining the confidence of the natives, who can give us pointers from their traditions, or by determining that the jades are on some particular island that we can go over foot by foot. Therefore I take it that the first thing to do is to get on good terms with the natives of the group, locate the island and then the treasure."

"You speak like a wise man," said Mackenzie, nodding his big head like a sleepy ox.

From amidships came the low twang of Newa's guitar, and Langdon found that he was absurdly conscious of it, despite the intense interest he should have held in the conversation, and when at last the pointed part of the discussion had passed he began walking up and down aft of the deck-house and then down the port side past the place where Newa sat, though she was on the other side of the vessel. He was unconsciously fighting an impulse to extend his track so that he would come near her.

AT LAST, yielding to his inclination, he swung around on the starboard side and saw her in the moonlight before the galley door. The hibiscus was gone, but a white flower that she had preserved by some unknown means adorned her tresses. The mat of rank she had laid aside as well, and was clad in a simple cotton fabric such as the native girls in the civilized islands wear. The conformity of this to the lines of her figure

served to enhance her beauty. She seemed to be unaware that he was near, and continued playing softly, singing in a low voice to herself, till he stood before her looking down.

"I heard you playing and came to listen," he said simply and would have taken his place facing her, sitting on a bitt, but she looked up with a pleased little smile at his words and made room for him beside her on the mat she had spread before the door. Within, the boy Billy was still at work cleaning up the utensils she had used in the preparation of the dinner. For the first time Langdon looked at her hands closely and saw that they bore no signs of her labors in the galley nor did they have the appearance of having ever done much of the labor common to the women of her race.

This night there was a new tone to her music. The second evening it had been wild, free, romantic; now there was something restrained, ominous and mournful about it. She played many European things, carrying the air, in a way peculiar to Oriental musicians, in the middle register. To an uninformed man it might have seemed strange that she should know European operas and American popular airs, but Langdon in his previous travels had learned that both among the music-loving negroes and the Malay and Polynesian peoples the white man's music has spread far more rapidly than anything else the white man has to scatter, save arms and liquor.

The sadness in her music made Langdon restive, and then, too, she seemed little inclined to sing and less to talk. In deep throbbing majors she began, after running through a number of things, to play Tosti's "Good-by." Half under his breath Langdon took up the words in English. The key was nicely suited to his barytone voice. Leaning a little toward him, she followed carefully, sweetly nodding her head with simple approval when he had finished, and repeating after him in English:

"'And all the to-morrows shall be as to-day!' That is spoken in truth of some of us," she added in her own tongue.

"I did not know you understood English," said Langdon.

"I understand a little," she answered, but not in English.

"Are your to-morrows likely to be as your to-day?" he inquired. "That would make me more unhappy than anything of which I could think—if I were condemned to live in the same way day after day for all the future."

"You never fear what a to-morrow may bring to you?" said she.

"No, I will confess that the fact that there is some risk, some uncertainty, in every coming day makes life worth living to me."

"You should be very happy then,"—there was an odd significance in her tone.

"What do you mean, Newa? Tell me what you mean."

She looked down silently at her guitar a moment, and again he pressed the question. Raising her head, she pointed off to the sky-line, two points off the starboard bow.

A thin flickering yellow flame glowed there!

"There is danger enough for you there, Langdon. You will be there to-morrow."

"Danger? Tell me, Newa, tell me!"

"Ah, I have told you too much! But the women of my people often feel things that are to come. I implore you not to go——"

She checked herself, and from her throat came a little sound as if she were choking a sob.

Langdon caught the hand she had thrust out toward him, and felt her fingers close around his own. The touch thrilled him and he did not release them, nor were they withdrawn. A momentary silence fell and then he said in a low tone:

"I thank you, dear child, for your interest in my worthless life. Can't you tell me more of my danger? Can't you trust me?"

For an instant her face dropped until her cheek touched his hand and he felt a warm tear crushed upon it. Then she sprang to her feet and, extending her arm toward the flame, answered him tensely:

"Yonder is the island of Toi! The island of Toi!"

CHAPTER VIII

A MYSTERY AND A RESCUE

AT DAYBREAK Hardy and Langdon heard the rattle of the anchor-chains in the chocks and hurriedly dressed and went on deck. The growing morning light spread out in fan-like rays centering behind

a huge mountain directly before them, the truncated top of which showed its volcanic nature. The island was not more than ten or twelve miles in length, for they could see to the ends. On either side extended islets and atolls, all very low, some of them with such slight elevation that in heavy weather the seas must sweep entirely over them. There was a deep horseshoe of them, with an opening on the west, and into this Mackenzie and Takarangi had sailed the *Lydia*, bringing her to anchor within a half-mile of the beach of the natural harbor.

"Well, here we are!" cried the skipper.

"So, I see," said Hardy, "and, if we have found the proper spot, our search will be confined to the main island, I am glad to say. There must be twenty of the little fellows, and all of them could be inhabited—in fact, I see huts on lots of them; but none of them would be the likely place for depositing the sort of things we are after."

"Yes," said Mackenzie slowly, "on there, some place, they be, no doubt. I see two towns, one big one and one little one. There is the main peak and two spurs, and if one of them spurs ain't terraced like Ponapi then I be a goat!"

Langdon clapped his glasses to his eyes and closely scanned the face of the northern spur with its odd summit strewn with basalt prisms ranging from the size of a stick of wood to that of a marine boiler.

"Look, Hardy, look! The Captain is right. Some time that place has been terraced down nicely!"

"Well, so has the one on the south, and if that is not a hand-built cairn on the south slope of the main peak close to the top, then I never saw one."

"Here come the bully-boys from shore already. I have cast an extra tarpaulin over the gun, and if you will put your guns out of sight, we can let a few canoe-loads aboard if they want to come. They can sooner see we are not as worth looting as if we were traders, and it's just as well to let them think we are peaceable."

"Well, we are, aren't we?" asked Hardy with a quiet laugh.

"If we are lucky," answered the skipper grimly.

"None of our boys have any idea what we are after, and so they can not tell any tales, I suppose," remarked Hardy.

Sharply there came to Langdon Newa's significant words of the night before, but it seemed to him too slight a thing to mention. Smoke was ascending from the volcano—perhaps the light they had seen was merely some fire about a vent. It was really a wonder that there had not been several spots of flame, so he said nothing.

In a little while the canoes were circling the schooner and, as they had come out to trade and carried no weapons, Mackenzie asked the occupants to come aboard. Among them he found one or two men who had been laborers on islands thousands of miles to the west and who knew him in the old days. He explained the purpose of the schooner's visit—that he had brought two gentlemen who wished to look for plants and animals, and the morning passed in a pleasant visit aboard the ship, the islanders going freely to all parts of the craft save into the after cabins.

Billy Tama was instructed to give them delicacies like salt-horse and mustard, and they heaped the deck before the galley door with fruits, fowls and nuts. There were one or two women in the canoes, and they did not come aboard. Langdon noticed that, though they were not so dark as the Hawaiians, still they were much darker than Newa, who, by the way, remained secluded in her quarters. It was noticeable also that old Takarangi remained severely aloof from the informal reception, though he did not leave the deck, and stood carefully aft of the wheel surveying the islands and the surrounding sea with eyes that, for all his age, seemed not to need the artificial help of glasses.

Almost at the exact moment that the sun reached the meridian, not thirty seconds before eight bells, the visitors took their leave as if by signal, though the ship's people saw or heard none. With friendly farewells and invitations they put out for shore.

"Now, this afternoon we will go on shore and see the chief. There are no missionaries here, which is lucky for us."

There spoke the old animosity between the missionary and the trader, something ineradicable.

WHEN the heat of the day was passing, Langdon and Hardy got out their rifles and the extra arms and, save for those that were to be taken ashore, put them in readiness at the after companionway, just out of sight, but within ready reach under a tarpaulin, with abun-

dant ammunition. The gun forward was made ready so that it could be put to use in twenty seconds after an alarm. The anchor was weighed and the schooner allowed to drift in while Takarangi stood in the chains, hand-lead swinging, as he felt out the approach to a close anchorage. The spot chosen was directly opposite the town, which was composed of a hundred huts clustered about two palm groves, in the center of one of which stood the ceremonial house, or hall of amusement, and in the other the extended connected huts of the chief, while to the rear of the village was the odd square enclosure erected for the *kahunas*, or *tohungas*, the priests and their helpers.

"Some one of us had better stay here and stand by that gun," said Mackenzie. "I am willing to, but I believe it is better if one of you chaps do it, as I know more about the ceremonies and all the flubdub we must go through with Nenanalua, as I hear his name be."

"Heads or tails, Langdon?" cried Hardy, tossing a coin and catching it, then extending his closed palm.

"Heads," said Langdon.

"Tails it is! You lose. If I don't come back, you win!"

Langdon saw the boat depart, old Takarangi in charge, Mackenzie and Hardy in the stern-sheets, each with a repeating rifle in hand and a brace of magazine guns on hip. Counting noses, he found that he was left on board with Billy Tama, Newa and one sailor who was already curled up on a coil of rope, sound asleep. Billy was busy in the galley, and Newa was nowhere to be seen.

He did not need glasses to see the landing, the advancing friendly delegation, the procession to the audience with the chief, the time-honored ceremonies, and the beginning of the long talk after the exchange of presents and the shy emergings of the bashful women and children. He could see the girls dancing before the chief's guests, the exhibitions of spear-throwing and *patu*-play by some of the young men, and the bringing and eating of the long-drawn-out meal of island delicacies. Plainly, things were going very smoothly indeed. The only striking thing he had noticed was that, as they were approaching the chief's house, Hardy had stopped short and pointed to the ground right and left as he clutched Mackenzie's arm with the other. Langdon found himself vastly curious as to what Hardy had seen.

GROWING weary of his vigil he sauntered forward and, glancing down, saw Newa sitting there carefully dressed, her hair smoothly rolled at the sides, her face bowed on her rounded arms crossed on her knees. There was something so sad and pathetic in her posture that it touched him.

"Newa," he said softly.

Instantly she raised her head, and it had its wonted proud poise. Before her look his sympathetic question failed of utterance, and, instead, he stammered some commonplace, as he stooped by the door.

"I thought that you, too, had gone on shore, Langdon," she said with a faint smile and a smooth ambiguous tone.

"Perhaps I am heeding your warning," said Langdon banteringly.

"No, not that. You must not pay any heed to my foolish words. I had fears for you, yet I could not say what you should fear."

"You are right. There is nothing to fear."

"Yes, Langdon, there is nothing to fear."

Her eyes were fixed very steadily on his face as she said this, and it seemed to him that they were peculiarly bright and perhaps a little hard in their gaze. It puzzled him.

"I can not leave the deck. Will you come and talk to me?"

"If you command me, yes. Is it fitting that I should?"

A world of meaning, all that they had in common, all that intervened between them was subtly expressed in these words, largely by tone and inflexion.

"Since you speak in that way, Newa, I want to talk to you more than ever. Come only if you wish. I do not care to be a man who commands women."

"White women?" The bitter pride of her question stung him. He thought carefully, measuring her, measuring himself, measuring the conventions of Europe and America, and then he answered:

"Yes, white women and their equals."

Either she misunderstood or pretended to misunderstand, for she dropped her face on her arms once more, and, after a moment of mortified silence, Langdon rose and turned away. Behind his back she flung up her head and stretched out her arms toward him, but in her eyes was the wild fierce look of one who would kill and kill gladly.

WAS LANGDON walked to the rail he saw that the ceremonies were concluded and that the party was moving about the village and its environs, this being the chief's compliment to his guests, the displaying of them to his people. In a little while they gathered at the beach and the boat put out. As Hardy came over the side just at sunset, his face was glowing with a radiance greater than the lowering sun flung upon it.

"Langdon, Langdon!" he cried in a hushed way. "We have the chief's permission to go where we will on the island as often and as long as we wish. We found in front of the village, running all along the shore—and they say that it runs all the way around the island—a road, a splendid stone-built road! Do you get that Langdon? A road of stone built by Toi!"

"Lads, we are on the spot, we are on the spot!" said Mackenzie with what show of enthusiasm he could make.

Before Hardy went below he held out to Langdon a large wet leaf neatly folded into a package enclosing something. Through a tiny aperture Langdon caught the flash of the petals of the red hibiscus. A look of understanding flashed between the two men and a slow color climbed into Langdon's cheeks. He tried to show his appreciation in words as he took the flowers, but Hardy laughed in his quiet way and passed on.

For a moment Langdon stood still, hesitating, then he went forward and sought Newa.

"Here is something that you may like to have, Newa."

Over her face was drawn the mask of a composure that hid her real feelings as she took the package with a well-turned phrase of thanks, but when she opened it and saw the wet, fresh blossoms, a swift transition took place. Tears sprang to her eyes and she turned to look up in his face with her fine lips quivering.

"You are very good to me in a very beautiful way," she said and, taking one of the blossoms, seemed about to bestow it upon him, but not to know just how. An instant she hesitated, then came near, put one hand on his shoulder and thrust the flower into the upper pocket of his white jacket, crushing the petals. It seemed to him, as he turned away a moment later, that the spot fairly glowed and burned.

Everything was got in readiness for setting out at dawn the next morning, and it was decided that, as long as the *Lydia* lay off the islands, at least one of the three white men should be on watch on deck every night, dividing the night between an alternating two of them. As Mackenzie was to stay with the ship the next day, he took the whole night for the first shift. All of the crew were sent to bed, except one man who was allowed to sleep on the anchor watch.

IT WAS still dark when Hardy felt himself shaken roughly and, as he raised up in the darkened cabin, he heard Mackenzie saying in a low voice to Langdon:

"Bring your guns and come on deck!"

Hastily drawing on some clothing, they hurried up the companionway into the half-light of the sinking moon. It was still two hours at least till dawn. Forward, the brown sailor was curled up asleep on a long coil of rope. On shore not a light showed, and there was not a sound in the great empty night save the snores of the sleeping man, the low rumble of the surf on the coral reefs, and an odd faint splashing off the port bow. Mackenzie, his rifle in hand, was crouched behind the after deck-house, peering around the corner.

"What is it?" whispered Hardy, tiptoeing up behind the skipper, with Langdon at his elbow.

"'Bout an hour after you went below I was sitting there, smoking, when I hears a splash forward. I takes a look alongside, but don't see nothing, and I can't hear nothing more, but when I gets the wood just right between me and the moon I sees that the dew has been mussed up by somebody's hand or arm that was coming in ship or going off. I don't see no one in the water and takes a look over the crew. Everybody in the fo'c's'le, and old Takarangi snorin' in the storeroom. I goes back and sits down to wait, expectin' a spear over the side any minute, but nothing happens the whole four hours. Then suddenly I sees a head in the water just off the starboard bow, but it gets out of sight quick, and now for ten minutes there has been a little splashing on the port side. I am fair to say I can make naught of it."

They listened, and in the stillness could hear the splashing and even a forcibly expelled breath every now and then.

"Cover me, and I will creep up and see," said Langdon.

On his hands and knees he advanced under cover of the gunwale until he was directly opposite the point from whence the sounds came. He was rising to peer over, when there was a heavier splash, the dripping of water, a slight scraping against the ship's side and a wet arm was thrown over the rail. He heard the click of the bolt of Mackenzie's rifle. With a finely muscular and agile upward spring there came over the side, clothed in a simple skirt-cloth—Newa!

Langdon, crouched with his pistol in readiness, had been on the point of firing, and now, realizing her danger from Mackenzie, since he could not make out her identity in the light such as it was, Langdon cried out to her and, rushing on her, hurled her back in the water just as the rifle cracked. The bullet cut the wood where it was wet from her thigh as she had poised before swinging inboard, and, as Langdon moved, he found that it had pinned the front of his pajama coat on the splinters.

"It is Newa—Newa! Don't fire again!" he cried.

Leaping on the side, he swung down and caught her wrist as she rose, her astonishment still plain in her wet face. She seemed inclined to resist his assistance, but when he said:

"You poor child, we almost killed you!" she yielded and in a second more was standing on the deck, drawn up to her full height as the water ran in rivulets from her splendid body. She took in the situation as Mackenzie and Hardy came hurrying forward—the arms, the hurried dress of the men, the track of the heavy rifle-ball, the fragment of Langdon's jacket still there.

"What the —— do you mean by going overboard——" Mackenzie began to roar, but Langdon thrust him back roughly.

"Oh, well, it's *your* affair!" he sneered.

"None of that, Mackenzie!" snapped Langdon.

"Well, she nearly got her —— fool self shot to bits!"

"Very true. But how did she know that three men were waiting for her with guns?"

"I am very sorry. I had gone in for a swim, for I love the water," she said, bending her head a little. "You risked your life for me, Langdon. I shall not forget. May I go to my room?"

Proudly as any daughter of Neptune she moved aft as Mackenzie and Hardy made way for her. The three of them watched her in silence.

"I pretty near made a bad mistake, sir," said Mackenzie in a changed tone.

"Yes, but you are not to blame, Captain. Nor is she."

"Mr. Langdon, it may not have been her that splashed about four bells and that mussed up the dew, but if it was, I just want to observe that four hours is a —— of a long bath in this sharky water!"

"There may be something in that," said Hardy, and they went aft.

CHAPTER IX

THE GHOSTS IN THE PA

IT WAS not worth while turning in, so they began to make ready at once to go ashore, and at the first streaks of day the boat set out. In addition to a small supply of food for seven men, the two whites and five sailors, and arms for each, they carried glasses, one set of digging tools and light insect-catching nets. It was thought best to have Takarangi take charge of the sailors, and he carried only his rifle and a long heavy slasher, or bushman's knife, for use in case the way had to be cut through undergrowth.

"The Polynesian never kept anything worth having close to shore," Hardy had often said, so they landed below the village before the people were astir and, picking out a foothill that gave the easiest approach to the south spur, they moved through the cultivated ground behind the village till they came to the rough face of the rocks, where the advance was extremely difficult. It was not only necessary to climb hand over hand much of the time, but frequently Takarangi took the lead to slash away the interwoven vines and bushes.

Suddenly they came out on a wide trail—a perfectly cut and graded road!

With consummate engineering skill it had been built to climb the foothill and, following the crest, ascend gradually to the mid-slope of the spur. At least sixty feet wide, its material was such and its drainage so well planned that the rains had kept the hard basalt washed clean of soil in which plants might cling, and it was only here and there that it had been gullied out or had

broken down and the vegetation encroached upon it. The size of the trees in such spots showed that it must have been hundreds, perhaps thousands of years, since it had fallen into disuse save as a footpath.

Both Hardy and Langdon marveled at the faintness of the foot-trail. Neither could understand why so excellent a thoroughfare had not been made the regular route for the ascent of the mountain, by the bird-hunters at least.

For three miles they advanced, constantly ascending, the dense forest all about them, silent and unpeopled save by its feathered denizens, now and then cutting their way where the vegetation had mastered the skill of the ancient builders. Then they came to the point where they understood the lack of use of the road. Just where it swung to the main spur, half way to the top, was an enormous natural crevasse. The volcano, in some throe of its existence, had bulged and split the surface of the earth, leaving a gap several hundred feet deep that narrowed to the bottom, but was fully sixty feet wide at the top. This had existed before the building of the road, for on either side of the abyss there was to be seen the handiwork of the builders. They had cut niches for placing great timbers to support a bridge. Not even a rotten fragment of the wood remained, but the face of the rocks seemed to have been eroded by fire.

PROGRESS was stopped. It would take a day to cut a path that would permit a détour either to the right or left. It would be easier to make a direct ascent either farther north or farther south. Langdon swore softly, but Hardy, after studying the lay of the land carefully for a few minutes, said:

"Langdon, see that big tree? It must be one hundred feet high, and it is not more than twenty feet from the edge. I believe we can drop it across to the other bank by cutting on the side nearest the chasm. If she does not reach, she will go down like a shot, but get the axes and let's try it."

In a minute more the forest rang with the blows of the American ax-blades against the soft wood. The brown men stood by in wonder to see the manner in which the Americans wielded the simple tools. It was a pleasing picture to watch Hardy's long body and long arms in action. One of the sailors begged permission to relieve Langdon, but after a few minutes gave the ax back, weary with the unfamiliar effort. In less than an hour the Coloradoan's practised eye discerned that the fall was imminent and, taking advantage of the next gust of wind as the others stood back to safety, he drove the ax home and the mighty thing wavered, then sank across the gulf with a resounding crash, making a practical but extremely hazardous footbridge some forty feet to the right of the road.

Takarangi marched over in silence, erect and without seeming to realize the horrible death beneath his feet. The others followed slowly. On the other side they found, among the trees and the undergrowth, stone-works that showed plainly that the bridge had been fortified. As the morning was advancing, they stayed not to examine these, but hurried on. Another mile would put them at the summit of the south peak. Either the elevation or the effect of the gases from the volcano, or the volcanic character of the soil began to lessen the density of the vegetation, and at last the road rounded a shoulder of a cliff and yielded an open view of the islet-bound harbor below, the reaches of sea to the west and the *Lydia* lying at anchor.

Drawing a smoke-rocket from his pocket, Langdon lit it and ran back and forth across the road to give the smoke a breadth that might catch Mackenzie's eye. A minute passed and then the watchers saw a pennant run up as an answering signal.

THE road from this point executed a great S through a beautifully wooded section of the south slope of the spur until at last it ended abruptly against the face of a blank basalt cliff thirty feet in height. To right and left was a sheer descent over impassable rocks. If the road had been graded up to the top of the cliff it must have been done with wooden trestling or earth-work long since vanished. A further advance seemed impossible at first glance.

"Shucks! let's make a Malay ladder," said Langdon and, cutting two saplings of the right length, they left parts of the boughs on one side of each, paralleled the trunks and bound the boughs with strips of bark, quickly completing a means of ascent. Langdon went up first and, as he topped the cliff, he looked about and let out a wild cheer. Hardy hurried up after him and the

others followed. The scene before their eyes amazed the Americans, but seemed to give rise to a strange, subtle terror among the others.

The summit of the spur was a plateau that had the appearance of having been a sub-crater filled and leveled by hand. It had been made the building site of an immense *pa* or fort town. In the foreground were the stone defenses, basalt prisms laid as cut wood is piled, with small prisms filling the interstices of the large, the whole covered with a sort of mortar, which had fallen away in great patches. A wall, twenty feet in height and fifteen feet in thickness, ran around the edge of the cliff. Great totem-faced, graven images, such as those found in abundance on Easter Island, flanked a roadway two hundred feet wide leading to the rear of the plateau, where stood a group of several buildings, the wooden roofs of which had long since vanished. Their walls were built like the wall of defense, but they were thinner and taller, and the apertures had hewn stone lintels.

There were four buildings to the right and four to the left, facing a broad plaza, at the back of which was the largest of all the buildings with three grand portals beside which loomed great sandstone images, each showing three terrible, grotesque faces, one above the other.

"Hardy, Hardy, I am glad I sat in that poker-game!" said Langdon softly.

"I think we are going to find something else, old man. I am growing impatient. Also, these fellows are always afraid of ruins, because they appeal to their fear of their ancestors, the greatest power in their religious superstitions. Suppose we go on before they have time to think."

At the first step he took forward, a low rumbling, throbbing sound broke out, that grew in volume seemingly from the central building. The very air was filled with the noise.

Behind them wild screams of terror sounded. The last of the sailors sprang for the ladder, but in his haste he knocked it aside and it fell. The prospect of the sheer leap was all that kept every one of them from flight, save Takarangi. While they clung together, some lying prone, some kneeling, the others half standing, half crouching in the gateway of the wall, the old man stood with eyes half closed and arms folded, facing the terrible sounds.

"*Kehui! Kehui!*" some of the men were crying.

"What the —— does this mean?" said Langdon, his hand on his revolver. Before Hardy could speak Takarangi answered:

"We have done wrong to come here. The ghosts of the ancestors of our people warn us. We must go or die. The great drums of the ghosts, the Pahu Kehua! Come away, for this is the place of death!"

"I think I will go take a look," said Langdon.

"Suppose we advance under cover of the stone men?" suggested Hardy.

CHAPTER X

THE SECRET PASSAGE

ARMS in readiness, they went cautiously ahead, moving one before the other and keeping at all times in line with one of the big images of the left-hand row. Seeing the Americans advancing unafraid, the terror-stricken men, not being able to retreat, found an interest in watching the proceeding. When the pair had gone some little distance, Langdon glanced back and saw that Takarangi was coming along behind them, walking in the open in the center of the way, his rifle at trail. It seemed a very strange thing indeed, but it was not long before both understood.

Three-fourths of the distance they had traversed, when, just as they had exposed themselves in rounding an image, there was a soft twang somewhere to the front, a whistling streak in the air, and an arrow shattered against the graven face behind them. Hardy coolly picked up the broken shaft and looked at it critically.

"My boy, there is no ghost about *that!* It is very close kin to the *tuhuri* that came aboard at Honolulu. Now, we do want to look out!"

Before they had gone another hundred feet another arrow fled by between them, and this time Langdon guessed its source and, raising his rifle while Hardy joined with him, they raked the doorways of the main building with a shower of steel-jacketed bullets that bit off chunks of stone and, ricochetting within, must have made the place seem untenable to its mysterious defender or defenders.

At last they were crouched behind the very last bit of shelter and, looking back,

noticed that Takarangi was standing still, arms extended toward the main portal, making odd gestures as if in invocation. At Hardy's word both leaped into the open and darted for the building, securing the shelter of the wall without a single shot being fired at them and, skirting it rapidly, they made their way to the main portal and darted inside.

If they expected to come face to face with the enemy they were grievously disappointed, for in the great main court and in the two side courts there was not a living soul or any sign of life save the lizards scurrying about. Not only that, but, search the place as they would, there was no sign of exit save the portals which had been under their eyes. Whoever had shot the arrows had vanished into thin air, for the walls were too high to scale.

"Well, this does look spooky!" said Hardy.

When both were sure that no enemy lurked anywhere within, they passed out into the plaza, and a cry went up from the men huddled at the farther end of it when they saw the two Americans unhurt. Hardy waved to them to come on and, the bolder leading the way, they did so. An hour was spent in examining the *pa*.

There was little room for doubt that two of the buildings on the right had been used for the *Whare-kauri*, or university, as the emplacements for seats were still plain, but the others were merely bare enclosures with two feet of volcanic dust on the stone floor in such places as it had fallen and the wind had not swept it away. A little search showed that there was no hope of finding anything under the dust. Every implement, every small detached thing of any interest or value, had been removed long since in the continuous inhabitancy of the island since the days of the ascendancy of the people who built and dwelt in the *pa*. The great vacant space of the enclosure represented, of course, the former positions of the wooden houses which had been consumed by fire or the elements.

THE sailors seemed to have lost much of their fear in curiosity, and Takarangi went about viewing every significant stone with apparent absorption. Suddenly, as they were in the main building, Langdon saw him start as his keen eyes fell on something—a few drops of blood, fresh blood, on a stone underfoot. Takarangi said nothing, but Langdon sprang to his side and called Hardy. They looked farther and found more toward the north wall, but that was all till Hardy pointed a long finger at a spot on the north wall in the bright sunshine.

"Will you look at that!"

A lizard was rapidly running his tongue over what had been two finger-prints in living red.

Striding forward, the two Americans examined the stone closely as it bulged in a sort of reenforcement of the wall, a massive basalt slab several feet in height and at least three feet in width. Laying his hand where the one that had borne the fresh blood must have been laid, Hardy pressed in and the stone turned on a pivot, revealing the black opening to a narrow passage that led into the wall and turned sharply to the left. A cold blast blew out into their faces.

At the sight of this discovery the sailors cowered back once more, and Takarangi stood with his deeply lined face stolid and impassive.

"This is a bad place into which to pursue an enemy, Langdon," said Hardy when they had recovered from their mutual astonishment; "but we are treading on the heels of some great mystery and I didn't put in those four years growing cantaloups to be bluffed out by the sight of a cellar-hole! I am going in!"

"So am I. Shall we leave the boys here, or try to take them?"

"'Try' is a good word! We have about as much chance of getting them inside as we have of getting them to qualify in Sanscrit. Matter of fact is, I have formed the opinion that one of us had best stay here, judging from something we both saw a few minutes ago."

"I think I know what you mean," replied Langdon.

"I'll take a run in and see what I can."

"All right; I will be with you if I hear a shot."

Hardy stooped and entered the hole, drawing from his jacket a little electric storage lamp.

TEN, fifteen, twenty minutes went by and then he reappeared, blinking his eyes at the sunlight, a radiant smile on his face.

"The passage goes straight down under

the wall and straight away to the north. I have walked a quarter of a mile along it, I am sure. There are no side passages or chambers that I saw, save one. Not ten feet on the other side of the wall there is a descending passage that goes down about twenty feet and ends at the brink of a black hole, a round well, perfectly dry, but I could swear that down in it, some place, I could hear running water. I dropped a cartridge, the largest thing I had to throw away, but I never heard it strike. But look what I found not a foot from the edge of the hole!"

A little cone of green stone, a bit of worked jade! It seemed to be a pendant torn from something larger, and its base was set in dull, heavy gold!

"Hardy, you have been so close you have almost burned your fingers!" cried Langdon. "Say, old man, this is great!"

Dead and unemotionless as was the face of Takarangi, his eyes glowed like coals as they rested on the bit of relic. He looked away to the west, where the sun was getting low, to hide what he might think or know. Perhaps, realizing that Langdon's eyes were on him, he meant by the act to call attention to the hour. If he did, he was successful.

"Yes, we have hit the right trail—and they say the Polynesians knew nothing about the use of metals! Look at the hammered gold!"

"We had better make up our minds quickly what we are going to do, for we would have to hurry if we got down the mountain before dark, and we are so close in our hunt—as that bit of jade testifies—that I do not feel like going away to leave the trail to cool. I would give a hundred thousand dollars for ten good white men here this minute! Come over here, Hardy, it is time we had a little understanding on a few things, and if you do not believe it is time, take a look off there to the northeast."

There was a growing smoke at the skyline around a group of islets. As they leveled their glasses they saw emerging from the grouping of green palms above the white surf a low, long, white steam craft that had been hidden there. She was getting under way, coming out of her tiny reef-bound harbor with great care, and when she was fully out she headed directly for the main island with a growing speed. The sun, now at the horizon, struck her white sides and upper works, and as nearly as they could see there was a large group of men aboard forward.

HARDY, after looking hard, walked to one side out of ear-shot of the natives, and Langdon followed him. Langdon was first to speak:

"We can no longer take the queer things that have been happening as matters for granted. You said that we would find difficulties among these people and in this quest, and I have said nothing, done nothing, made no inquiries and offered no suggestions, feeling sure that when the time came we could meet all underhand play aboveboard, but I do not like our situation.

"Now, first, a woman who must be clever and wealthy, though a Polynesian, makes some queer moves in San Francisco, and goes to sea in a hurriedly chartered yacht. Second, we get a warning at Honolulu. Many other little things happen, but the third big thing is that I believe we have been followed here and that the flash we saw on board the other night was a signal to our trailers. Fourth, some one tries to scare us away when we find this ancient *pa* and, failing, they try to kill us. Lastly, a strange yacht that has been hiding off the archipelago is hurrying to make a landing. Now do you understand it? Can we afford to go ahead, ignoring the peculiar things that happen around us? Is there anything we can do? Am I presuming in questioning your superior knowledge of the ways of these people?"

Hardy laughed shortly and unpleasantly.

"I never like to scare myself by talking about the big bears out in the dark. I have not talked over this thing, because I did not know what to say. I don't know what the slightest thing of it means and I don't know what course to pursue. It is either turn back or go on, and I am here to go on against all the moderns and ancients of Oceania! You can do as you —— please."

"Well, I am with you, of course, but war is half strategy, you know, and this looks like war to me. If there is anything we could do besides butting up against the unknown enemy and having it out with them, it is just as well that we think it out now."

"Our situation is a simple one, Langdon. We can not get down out of this fort except

by jumping. Your thin clothing and mine would not make a strip strong enough to lower any one of us, and goodness knows there is no cordage material on the boys! Suppose we make camp here, and as soon as it is a little darker I will rig up a torch and use the trader's wigwag for a little talk with Mackenzie. Then we will leave the boys here while we have another look into that tunnel. I hate to separate the party if there is going to be a fight, but I am not going to waste words asking them to go in the dark where they would not set foot in daylight."

IN THE distance they could make out the advancing yacht. It would be at least an hour before she could get off the shore, lower a boat and make a landing if that was her purpose. The spliced shafts of the two arrows made a wigwag stick; a bottle of gun-oil tied on the end, with a handful of rags tied around the open top, made the torch.

Climbing to the top of the outer wall of the *pa* on the west side, where he knew he would be in view because he could make out the lights of the schooner, Hardy began waving to attract the attention of Mackenzie. In a moment a rocket soared in the air and then came the answer with a signaling torch. In short, sharp dots and dashes Hardy told the story of the day and their present situation, and announced that they would not make any effort to return to the ship at once. Just as Mackenzie had acknowledged this, something hurtled by Hardy's face, struck the torch and, tearing it from his hand, fell with it inside the *pa*. Langdon ran to it, threw the electric lamp on it and showed a long war *tao*, a beautiful lance of polished hardwood. It was impossible to tell the source of it save that it came from the right, and, hearing a slight sound in that direction, Hardy fired several shots with his pistol before descending. The sole effect of this incident was to rouse a certain amount of fighting blood among the men. Fear had had its reaction with them. Attack of a kind that they understood wakened their resentful anger, and the two Americans saw the signs with pleasure.

After having eaten a hearty meal by the little fire kindled on the stones, orders were given that Takarangi and his men should hold the *pa*, defend the entrance and guard the hole in the wall through which Langdon and Hardy were about to go. The old man made no response, but Tom Kaula, a massive Savaii man, answered:

"You go; sure we stay and do 'em good and right!"

CHAPTER XI

THE WELL OF DARKNESS

TAKING the lamp, Hardy led the way into the entrance of the tunnel. At first there was a sharp descent, then a square turn to the left, and, walking rapidly along the smooth gallery cut from the solid rock, they passed the side passage leading to the well and pushed on straight ahead to the north, as Langdon's pocket compass showed.

Five minutes' walking and the tunnel began to ascend and the air to grow warmer, till suddenly the two emerged through a masking clump of rocks to find themselves on the eastern slope of the main peak at a level with the *pa* on the spur behind them. To the right, mighty precipices dropped away to the sea, absolutely prohibitive to any climber; to the left rose the rocky wall to the peak; directly before them ran a path, at times along a ledge, at times cut in the face of the rock, and in many places, where it was not protected from above, drifted full of volcanic dust. They could see it running far on to the north as if it rounded the peak and reached the northern spur.

Wind-packed dust all about the entrance showed no sign of having been disturbed. There were no footprints or other signs that the mysterious archers in the *pa* that afternoon had escaped in this direction.

Turning back, after making sure that any man who entered or left the tunnel at this end must traverse the path along the face of the peak if he would pass at all, the two Americans hurried to the side passage that led to the well of blackness and turning into it wound down to the hand-wrought chamber about the mouth of the well.

Without a doubt this had been a natural vent of the old crater, which had become walled with basalt prisms at the time the crater cooled and, being covered later with an igneous hood, had been opened up by the builders of the *pa*. The opening at the top was not over four feet in width, and the breaks in the crystals were of such frequency

on all sides that both men saw it was possible to descend by bracing oneself against the sides. It would be a perilous feat, however, even for an agile and barefooted native.

"Listen!" said Hardy. "Does that sound like running water to you?"

Langdon bent over the opening and listened; then, taking the lamp, turned it straight down into the depths. There came back a reflection—perhaps from forty feet, perhaps from a thousand.

"Yes, there is water there."

"Stand back; I am going to drop this lighted rag," said Hardy.

Both of them watched as he released a bit of the same material that had made the torch, and it floated rapidly down into the gloom only to be caught suddenly and drawn to one side by an invisible force.

"If you will hold the light and notify my second cousin, Ad Jones, in Crystal Butte, if need be, I am going down there!" said Hardy. And before Langdon could protest or stay him, the big, powerful body of the cantaloup-grower was working down the well.

He had gone not more than twenty feet when the whole place was filled with the terrible roar of some mighty noise. In the pulsations they recognized the same sound that had come from the walls within the *pa* a few hours before—the sound the men had called the "Drums of the Kehau."

Just then Hardy gave a shout and disappeared, but his voice came floating back:

"Come on, Langdon! Come on, Langdon! Come on!"

Langdon thrust for his pocket with the lamp, but some gentle movement of a hand put forward from behind him sent the lamp spinning out of his fingers and down into the well of blackness. With a fleeting, chilling sense of ghostly power near him, and a sudden horror of making a misstep and following the lamp, Langdon drew back from the brink. A woman's soft arms closed around him, and at his side was the pressure of a woman's soft body and the odor of red hibiscus!

"Newa!" he cried, yielding to the restraint.

"If you would live, come with me back to the open air! Your friend is doomed. You can do nothing."

She clung to him only enough to keep him from moving toward the well, and, as she had turned him slightly, he was not sure just where it lay, so feared to thrust her away, dreading lest he should hurl both of them to death.

She spoke very low, almost in a whisper, but her voice seemed to echo in the inky blackness.

"Langdon! Langdon!" Hardy's voice crying his name came from below, far and faint, and, reaching up her arms to her wrists on either side of his neck he caught them in a powerful grip and said between his teeth:

"Let a pal die alone? Let me go or I'll kill you!"

"Langdon, you are too brave a man to die—but I love so brave a man too well to stop you. I came here to save you. I have been in that niche over your head for hours. Now I will light your way."

There was a strange, unfamiliar ring in her voice. He swept one hand over her hair. There was no filament there. If she thought the gesture a caress she was not insensible to it, for there was a little lingering response, and then there was a crackle, and Langdon saw before him a jeweled silver pocket-lamp with gas attachment, a beautifully molded hand and arm holding it up and—the face and form of the girl in the cab on the dock at San Francisco—Miss Maranga!

THERE was a flashing, archly mischievous light in her eyes when she saw his surprise, but just then Hardy's cry came from below, farther and fainter than before, and Langdon almost plunged into the well, working his way rapidly down, till suddenly the girl above him cried in English:

"Now to the right, Mr. Langdon!"

There was a gap there, and with a half plunge, half fall, he found himself on a secure footing in the entrance of a tunnel perhaps thirty feet down from the mouth of the well. There were sounds in the blackness before him and, extending his arms, he half ran toward them, coming suddenly to a turn. A light shone farther on and he could hear a choking sound and heavy breathing. A struggle was in progress. Twenty more paces and he burst into a great natural chamber—a huge gas-bubble in the lava of the mountain. A dozen naked dark men were tangled in a heap like a football scrimmage, and in the dull flame from

a heap of burning nut-shells he could not at first see that the monster heaving, struggling thing underneath was the Coloradoan. Langdon reached for his gun. It was gone! The girl!

Without pausing, he flung himself on the mass, dealing terrific swinging blows, aiming mostly for necks and soft spots in abdomens, and so effective was his work that four or five of the recipients of his fistic favors released their holds, unconscious or groaning with pain, and, with an effort worthy of a demi-god, Hardy got to his feet.

Weapons were lying about in abundance, and one or two of the enemy clutched short native knives, but the work had been too fast, furious and close in the gloom for the use of them to be at all safe for the users' friends.

Langdon's foot struck Hardy's pistol just as he caught the grim smile of welcome to the fray on Hardy's face, and he was stooping to pick it up, knowing the execution the gun would deal in the space of seconds, when there was clapped to his nostrils, by a hand thrust over his shoulder, a quantity of crushed leaves. Instantly terrible pains filled his eyes, nose and throat, and a feeling of sickness and weakness overcame him. His knees gave beneath him.

He felt the pistol torn away and his hands bound; and as the pain passed and his vision cleared he found himself huddled beside the prone cantaloup-grower. Both were tied beyond peradventure of any success in struggling. Standing over them, his breath coming hard but his face still calm and unimpassioned, was old Takarangi.

"You have come to the end of fools! You shall reap the reward of the covetous, but the honor of your bravery shall take you to the Unseen World as brave men should go!"

A silence fell as the men who had been struggling composed themselves, examined their hurts and lessened the heaving of their broad brown chests. Hardy, looking up, saw several faces that he had noted when visiting the chief with Mackenzie. Langdon, rising to a sitting posture, looked about and gave a little cry, and Hardy, following his eyes, beheld the object of the quest—a great dull-green heap of jade through which ran broad rivulets of faintly-glimmering gold—the famous royal jewels of Maharwapa!

CHAPTER XII

SENTENCE OF DEATH

AT LAST the crackling of the oily nut-shells became louder than all other sounds as the men ceased their panting and squatted silently behind Takarangi, who knelt side by side with another old man as like him as a twin, save that his skin was even lighter and he had the cut of the priest-mark in his hair.

With a few mystic genuflections the *tohunga* bent his head to the ground and then raised his face, looking away into the gloom over and beyond the Americans; the muscles of his throat grew tense and his eyes took on the rapt look of high ceremonial as he half chanted:

"Hear the truth, and let him who can deny it!"

Another long and impressive pause.

"Hear the truth, and let him who can deny it! Whanua Temarereti speaks, son of Takurua, son of Korua——"

And in rapid recitation he gave his genealogy for forty or more generations. The two Americans noted that nearly midway he mentioned the name of the lesser Toi, and then, after another nine names, the name of the greater Toi, and they realized with awe that their accuser was a lineal descendant of the heroic visionary voyager, and from his pride of race was reading back through the traditions of dynasties to confirm his right.

Imminent as was their fate, they exchanged a glance of marveling comprehension. Now the old man recited the traditions of the voyage of the canoes of the greater Toi, told of the final settlement in this archipelago, told of the conquering of the darker men who inhabited it and of their enslavement to build two great *pa* and cut the tunnels and the passage between them along the face of the peak. There was a certain pathos in the history of the gradual decline of the dynasty and the scattering of the subjects of the kingdom through emigration to other islands due to overcrowding of the home kingdom, which had dropped into decay through the bringing of a scourge of sickness among red men made captive in lands to the east.

The time had come after the plague had

passed when the *pa* were so filled with ghosts that none could live in them and only the priests repaired there on the great ceremonial occasions, until, after many generations had passed, only the great lineally descended chiefs and priests knew of the secrets that lay at the top of the mountain where the ruined *pa* stood as reminders to the islanders of what their forebears had been. Entrusted to the knowledge of the men and women of his blood alone, the housing-place of the sacred relics of the Great Migration of Toi were safe forever as long as his children lived, except that the rapacity of the white man had now intervened.

"HAVE we not sent sons and daughters for generations to the white man's schools? Do we not know the heart of the white man from his own teaching? See we not in his books that no grave is sacred and no relic to remain undefiled so long as it feeds his curiosity and makes the finder and marauder great in the eyes of other white men? Always he has taken our islands when they were worth his while. Always he has driven our people to his service and robbed them in his trade. Could he not have spared our sacred and long-transmitted belongings of the Toi?

"He picks a whisper from a wind three thousand Summers old and, keen as a bird with gashing beak, swoops into the heart of our best loved to rend, dig and, when he has found, carry away. In his ignorance all the power of our blessed *kehua* avails naught, but what is it that descries his object, runs faithful at his heels and trips him when he would despoil? The loyalty of the blood of Toi, and the might of the *tohunga* of his people! The mind of Taewa-a-Rangi, who came from the Unseen World to teach but once in every year; the eyes of Nagatoro-i-Rangi, who, sitting still, saw every day all things that he would, in any island of our people; the arms of Tama-te-kapua, who taught us to kill far off by the wish that the one to die should die; the feet of Mana-Moana who leaped in the air and went where he would—these have been our heritage in the knowledge of the Whare-kura! By it we triumph in our duty this night, but we are but humble and weak and in us no good or strong thing is to be found save through our sacred blood!"

While he had been speaking, Hardy had been resting, and now he sat up and took his place as well as he could, considering his bonds, beside Langdon, who had been listening with rapt attention.

"What say our people against these white men, O eminent Pua?" cried Takarangi in continuation of the ancient ceremony of trial.

"The daughter Mauna Maranga, in the land of these men, saw their printed boast that they would despoil the grave of Toi.

"To the Tohunga Ara she sent a message by the wires that run under the sea, and in Honolulu he warned them by the Kanga Tuhuri, and they, knowing more than other white men of its power, still came on.

"The Tohunga Ara sent his mind to tell thee, Takarangi, and me, Whanua Temarereti, and all of those who know the knowledge of the Whare-kura of Toi. The daughter Mauna Maranga followed close behind them. Takarangi put the *kaitaka* mats on the fatherless daughter Newa and on himself, and took their ship in hand that the daughter in degrading humility might soften their hearts to her and bring them to ruin, or that thou might lead them into our hands. The daughter has failed because of the poison of the white man's learning in her mind, but thou hast done thy share, O Takarangi. They have fallen as they would despoil, and close to the stomach of Hardy lies a fragment of the sacred things of Toi."

"Keen eyesight, or else he felt it in the fight!" muttered Hardy. Takarangi with slow dignity leaned forward, rose and, coming over, drew the jade pendant from Hardy's jacket pocket.

"They have defiled the sacred!" cried the old *tohunga*. "And they die by the sacred! Oh, white men, prepare your hearts to meet the *miramata* of the *tohunga* of Toi! Thine it is to wield, Takarangi, in the day and in the hour when the great Kehua bid thee."

"The same *kehua* that sounded the drums that scared us so," sneered Hardy, grown weary of the words.

Like a flash the old man raised the short obsidian-flake cutting instrument, hooked to rip out the hearts of human sacrifices, which he had drawn from beneath his mat, and, raising it high over his head, held it steady there while the whole chamber echoed with the deafening sound of countless drums. In the air all about them the two Americans heard the terrific clangor and strangely ominous roar, but the drums and

the hands that beat them were invisible.

"I knew some of the old priests a generation or two ago could do that, but I just wanted to see if you could," laughed Hardy.

AGAIN the obsidian instrument ascended with an incredibly swift movement until the point was leveled at their eyes, then, as the *tohunga* raised it slowly, Hardy and Langdon felt themselves raised slowly off the stone floor by an invisible force until they were a foot in the air. The priest lowered the knife and they fell back with heavy jars that rattled their teeth in their heads.

"I'll get him for that!" whispered Hardy, spitting out the blood where he had bitten his tongue.

"Oh, Whanua Temarereti, is it forbidden for one who is about to die, but who loves the pursuit of knowledge and respects the power of all truth, to ask of these things?" Langdon put the question in a voice of such fearless, gentle gravity that for a moment the eyes of the *tohunga* opened wider, glowed on him in a kindly way, then resumed their half-closed appearance.

"In the Whare-kura the undefiled learn as I have told you of the learning of Taewa-a-Rangi and the sacred men of knowledge who rest now in Reinga. Thou canst not know, and never can, save thou wert born to the knowledge. It is the use of the power by which Tane, Rongo and Tu made and keep the world. Seek farther in Reinga when thou comest to dwell before them!"

With a long wave of the crooked stone-flake knife he passed it to Takarangi, who took it as if it were touched with the fire of heaven, but, after poising it a moment before his eyes while the two victims marked for its cruelty watched it helplessly, he put it inside his own mat. The *tohunga* thereupon cried:

"Arise and do the bidding of our ancestors! Arise and restore the secrecy of the knowledge of the things of Toi!"

He rose, and the islanders behind came to their feet slowly, as if in a dazed and drunken state.

"Excellent examples of passive religious hypnotic exaltation," whispered Hardy.

With eager eyes they saw the work of arranging the heaps of chains, necklaces, connected plates, armlets, fronts of headdresses and other articles of the exquisite old jades. It was easy to see that there were but three costumes in the chamber and that they had been taken hurriedly from their stone receptacles for removal in huge bags filled with leaves of the sacred purifying *temiki* bush. Four stone receptacles stood empty. The remainder of the seven costumes of the tradition had been borne away to some new hiding-place, no doubt, and the entrance of Hardy had interrupted the workers.

When all was ready the bags were lifted, two men to a bag, and Hardy and Langdon, having had their feet loosened, were placed in the center of the procession formed. With their own pistols at their backs in the hands of Takarangi, they saw that they were to be well looked after during their transportation to the place of their execution, wherever it was to be.

Stepping briskly, the *tohunga* led the way out of the chamber along the passage and, instead of turning to the left toward the well, he stopped, gave a shrill call and then moved to the right into absolute blackness.

Down, down, down the two prisoners felt their steps tending till, after they had gone a hundred yards or more, suddenly they no longer felt tunnel walls on either side of them. They were in a larger space where there was a moving current of fresh air. The way under foot, though clear, was no longer a smooth hand-cut slope. It was like unlevel ground, but the slant was still sharply down.

After they had followed for an hour, solely by sound, a white light showed in front of them, greatly enhanced to their eyes by the darkness through which they had been passing. As they drew near they saw it was a beam of moonlight coming through some rift over their heads and illuminating the surroundings sufficiently to show that they were following the dry bed of an ancient underground water-course which had worn its way along an inner fissure of the mountain.

It was yet another hour before a growing warmth in the air and a lessening of the grade warned them of a change before them. Slowly more light grew ahead, and in a few added steps they found themselves emerging in the forest on the eastern shore not far from the water's edge. Looking through the little gaps in the trees as they drew near the beach, they saw that in a coral cove lay the yacht, and one of her boats, entirely empty and with no sign of a crew in attend-

ance, was drawn up on the beach. Footprints in the sand, however, showed that many persons had been about the spot, and a deep crease marked a previous landing of the boat. It was plain to the prisoners that the same party, or another party, had brought the four sections of the jades to this landing-place and that they had apparently been taken aboard the yacht.

CHAPTER XIII

THE WILL TO DIE

THE bags were laid carefully on a heap of basalt prisms at high-water-mark and the *tohunga* seated himself among them, exchanging a few low words with Takarangi as he did so, with the result that the islanders were turned about and started inland again, leaving the priest alone with the prisoners and the late mate of the *Lydia*. When the last sounds of their departure had died away, Takarangi looked carefully at the moon and the stage of the tide and, marking with his heel the spot to which he expected the water to rise he said:

"Come with me!" and moved to lead the two bound men to the sand over which the sea would sweep before morning.

"What does this mean?" asked Hardy.

"The white man kills when a white man is killed, and no one but those who must should know when you die, where you die or how. You have come to a boat on the shore, and those who have seen you believe you leave the island in a ship. Those on the ship will never see you. And thus there shall be no one to tell."

Constantly keeping them covered and remaining well out of reach of a disabling kick or of being tripped, he had them quite at his mercy and both realized that the situation was desperate. The old *tohunga* sat quietly by, awaiting the execution of the sentence. Hardy advanced to the desired spot on the moonlit beach, and Langdon followed, thinking madly of some device, some ruse, to outwit the merciless old chieftain.

"Lie down and face the moon!" commanded Takarangi, drawing the crooked obsidian knife.

"Langdon," said Hardy, without turning to look at the face of the man to whom he spoke, "I guess we have come to the dealer's final turn. Now, I believe I prefer that stone knife to being torn up by those steel-jacketed bullets, and, to say the least, it is more dramatic; I am going to lie down. By Jiminy, I hate to give up!"

He threw himself full length on his side on the sand and turned over sharply. His great chest bulged up splendidly and Takarangi, with an eye on Langdon, stepped quickly to his side, knelt, ripped back the clothing with the ends of the fingers that clutched the knife, and then, without taking his eyes from the standing man, swung the blade up for the downward plunge.

But he had to look before he struck, and the shade of an instant that his eyes turned to the spot over Hardy's heart, Langdon threw his bound body forward, striking the kneeling chieftain with his shoulder as a tackler strikes a runner with the ball and hurling him backward on the sand. Knife and pistol flew free, but with a cry of rage Takarangi snatched the other pistol from his belt and was leveling it on the two men struggling to disentangle themselves and rise, when something dark came hurtling from the bushes and struck him full in the face.

He staggered back and the missile fell to the sand. It was a black stone *okewa* and had been thrown with wonderful aim and dexterity.

Both Langdon and Hardy had now regained their feet, but their pitiable helplessness, with their hands tied, left them still at the mercy of the *tohunga* who, leaving his perch, dashed forward to seize a weapon and complete the task of the staggering and blinded Takarangi. With a bound Hardy met him and, swinging his right foot, caught the old man in the pit of the stomach and doubled him up. Langdon was rushing Takarangi, striving to get near enough to drive his foot or knee into the chieftain's groin, when there was a swift rush behind them, he felt his bonds cut with deft strokes and turned to see the eyes of Newa shining up into his face!

"I have paid the debt of life I owe you, Langdon! Go! Go there!"

She cried this in quick, imperative tones, pointing to the south.

"Good girl!" exclaimed Hardy. "There is a boat coming ashore, Langdon! Cut me loose, quick!"

Langdon stooped and picked up the stone blade from the trodden beach, but his arms were too numb to use it and he turned to Newa to ask her to help, but with her arms

half drawn up as if to shield her heart, her eyes fixed in awful terror, the delicate features of her face twitching pitifully, she was facing Whanua Temarereti, the *tohunga*. He had risen to one knee and his aged body seemed scarcely able to hold itself erect.

"Newa-reka, I, Whanua Temarereti, will that you should die before the night of the new moon!"

"Oh, not that! Not *that!* Kill me now! Kill me now!"

Moaning, quivering, she shrank back, threw her arms up toward the moon and fell, but Hardy and Langdon caught her between them.

Mingling with the singing of bullets about them came sharp reports and flashes of fire from the advancing boat. Relinquishing the girl to Langdon, Hardy caught up the pistols and turned, crying:

"We must run to cover! She must have known best, so let us go down the shore!"

"Hardy—Hardy, old man, I can't leave her here!" answered Langdon, holding the unconscious form in his arms closely while a wild tumult of emotions raged in his breast.

"All right, pal! Over our shoulders she goes! You in front. Count step and run steady. Maybe we can make it. She's worth trying for!"

Though both were big men, Newa was no light burden, and her limp state made her the more difficult to carry, but once they had caught step together they made steady progress along the hard-packed beach. The boat was cutting down the shore to head them off and, though neither could look back, the increasing excellence of the marksmen's aim and the nearer sound of the shots told the story.

Not five hundred feet had they gone when they struck a trail inland so broad and open that they made a quick decision to follow it. In five minutes they were safe under cover and only under the necessity of getting out of the way of any party that might land from the boat.

A STRANGE gong-like sound smote their ears. It came from the beach where the disabled *tohunga* and Takarangi had been left. Plainly it was an alarm sounded to raise up enemies about the fugitives on all that side of the island.

"Langdon, we must get this girl on her feet! It is foolishness to try this climb before us while carrying her. Say, haven't you some sort of a restorative in the little medicine-wallet I put in your jacket when we left the schooner?"

"Yes, but all the little glass bottles were broken in the fight to-night."

"Take a look at them, anyhow."

Drawing out the little leather thing, no larger than the palm of his hand, Langdon opened it. Every vial was crushed and the tablets hopelessly mixed.

"Well, suppose we try the Hopi Indian way. Lay her across this rock so that her head and feet will hang down. There, that is right—face up. Now bring her to a sitting position. Now drop her back quickly, but don't jar her."

The third or fourth time they did this a tremor ran through her lithe frame and, desisting, Langdon held her in his arms as her great eyes opened slowly and she began to breathe deeply and fully. A slow smile of happiness parted her lips as she saw whose was the face so near above her and she weakly laid an arm about his neck.

"I am so glad, so glad!" she quavered. "I don't mind dying—now."

"Newa! Listen!" said Langdon. "You are *not* going to die! I shall not let you, for I want you—I want you to live!"

"I will live—a little while, as long as I can, and will you—let every hour of it be with you?"

"Yes, my own love—every hour of every day for long, long years."

"No, no! Much as I love you, it is not strong enough against the power—the power of the will—the will that I should die."

"Well, if we do not move soon we will all of us be walking in the clouds shortly," said Hardy, bruskly, in an effort to hide his real feelings.

With a surprisingly rapid return of her strength Newa now led the way, slowly at first and then at greater speed, guiding them not inland but still farther south, till after an hour's travel they reached the southern shore and came out where a number of canoes were drawn up on the beach. The barking of a dog near-by located the village to which they belonged. Hurriedly selecting one of these she signed for the two Americans to help her get it into the water and to lie down in it while she took the paddleman's seat.

Without hesitation she laid off her mat, turned up her hair in the fashion of the poor girls of the islands, and drove the canoe out

to sea. Not a thousand yards had they gone when a launch from the yacht, manned by a half dozen armed men, apparently islanders of the type found in the more civilized islands, came bearing down upon them.

When they were near she called out gaily to them some little flirtatious coquetry, and having stopped their engine they laughed and answered back, making an appointment to return to meet her later on a wooded point inshore. They asked if she had seen the fugitives and she vowed she had not. Again the engine was started and they plowed on their way around the southern shore. Making as good speed as she was able and keeping near enough to the shore to avoid being suspected of keeping away from it, she brought them at dawn to the reefs south of the anchorage of the *Lydia*.

There was no sign of life aboard her and, fearing that Mackenzie had landed and been captured or killed or that he had been boarded and done for, they decided to hide themselves in the growth on the little islet and await developments. Their pursuers would expect the two white men to make for the schooner, and what more natural than to think of reaching the schooner first, let them find their way aboard and then rise up and kill them?

While they lay in hiding Langdon for the first time told Hardy of what had befallen him before he came down the well to his rescue. When, in his narrative, he came to the point that it was Mauna Maranga who had tried to prevent his descent, he noticed that Hardy, usually so self-controlled, was rather shaken by this disclosure—more so, it seemed to Langdon, than even the unexpectedness of the girl's appearance on the scene would warrant.

CHAPTER XIV

LOVE AND DEATH

THE sun was just rising when cries broke out in the village and there was a sharp fusillade of shots. Parting the young plants of the brake, Hardy looked out with what was left of his battered glasses.

A boat, apparently the one from the *Lydia* in which they had gone ashore, was putting out and men in it were firing at others on shore and the fire was being returned. The reports soon died away, however, as the boat came swinging on, and as the fuller light coming over the mountain touched it the watcher saw with pleasure that it was manned by four of the men who had gone up to the *pa*, and that Mackenzie sat in the stern, rifle in hand. Across the bow hung a sixth man, either dead or desperately wounded.

It was easy to see that in some way the alarm had reached Mackenzie the night before, after Newa had left the schooner and slipped ashore to make her effort to find Langdon and shield him from danger. Mackenzie had succeeded in rejoining his men either on the mountain or when they hurried down, and now all of them were trying to get back to the schooner.

As the boat approached the *Lydia* a dark head appeared above her gunwale and Langdon called to Hardy softly. Lying at the very edge of the cover on that side of the islet, they were within difficult but possible pistol-range of the schooner. Langdon took the glasses.

"They are lying on the deck, waiting for whoever comes near the schooner," he whispered. "See, there is a fellow creeping forward! I believe he is going to try to work the machine-gun. By George! it is Takarangi! I just got a look at his head. He must have come around in some of the small boats last night. See, he is reaching up and taking the cover off! It is all loaded, but he will have to stand up to start firing. I will bet you a dinner I get him first! The instant he lays a hand on the feeding-lever, let him have it!"

But the old Scotch trader was very wary. When the boat was coming within range of the schooner he stowed the rowers and scanned her narrowly. The watchers now could see that his collar was bloody and that his left hand seemed to be hurt. Slowly the rowers resumed their work, putting around to the opposite side, taking a careful look, and then coming back to a point dead ahead of the craft, thus forcing any possible marksmen aboard her either to fire over the bow or expose themselves. The narrow bow would not accommodate more than two or three.

With his rifle poised in readiness, Mackenzie gave the signal to pull ahead, and on the fifth stroke there leaped into view the grim figure of the old chieftain, and his hands sought the feeding and firing mechanism.

Br-r-ring—ring—ga-ring-ring-ring! the gun spoke harshly, and its missiles tore

through the air all about the little boat. An oar was hurled high in the air and fell astern.

Bang! bang! sounded Mackenzie's rifle as Hardy and Langdon, coming down with careful aim, pulled trigger together. The tarpaulin at one side jumped, but Takarangi was untouched. A full dozen cotton-clad islanders, evidently partly from shore and partly from the yacht, rushed forward to the fray.

"Never mind them! Get the mate!" yelled Hardy.

Twice, thrice they missed him; then Hardy, rising on one knee just as the first oarsman was literally hurled out of the boat by a shot that struck at the base of the neck, threw his gun around to his left hip and swept it back in a circle to fire. Takarangi spun around as if he had tripped on something and plunged aft, face down on the deck.

No other man tried the gun, but the rifle-fire over the schooner's side was deadly.

"I think I dine with you, Langdon," said Hardy quietly. "Now, let's muss up the others!"

The boat was coming ahead in most determined fashion and Mackenzie was pumping away with his rifle in fine style, while from the two revolvers on shore poured a veritable stream of fire. It was too much for the native heart, far too much, and when one man rose and ran aft to leap into the sea two others followed and then all of them took to the water. They were striking out for the islet, not seeming to have been aware of the fire from that point, owing to the smokeless powder and their excitement, but when Hardy appeared on the beach they turned and struck out for the northern reefs.

At sight of Hardy the old trader waved his rifle and shouted wildly, then sank back and his head dropped on his chest. Hardy called to the boat to put on to the schooner hurriedly if Mackenzie was wounded, and he and Langdon quickly launched the canoe. As they turned to Newa they saw she was standing in an attitude of proud aloofness.

"Won't you come now?" said Langdon gently.

"I am the first princess of my generation, which is the forty-fourth. Even my sister Mauna is not my equal. I cooked for you to accomplish your undoing. I have little care to be reminded of my humiliation."

Hardy laughed loud and long.

"That's the woman for you, Langdon! Say, if you will go aboard *I* will do the cooking. And I am some cook, girl!"

The rough humor was the thing that won. She dropped her beautiful head from its proud poise and Langdon assisted her deferentially into the canoe.

POOR Mackenzie was wounded in three places. His hand was pierced, his neck was torn, and there was a rifle-bullet under the skin of his right shoulder where it had gone entirely through to that point. Fortunately the surgical skill of the two Americans was sufficient to put him in his berth at ease in half an hour, while Newa helped them. They worked on deck with arms at hand, fearing a further attack from shore.

When he was safely below—with Newa in attendance, to the old man's intense gratification, Hardy and Langdon turned their attention to the other men. The man who had been stretched in the bow of the boat was shot through the lungs and was dying, but the four others were not even scratched. Of the enemy there lay dead on the deck, beside the old chieftain, two men whom Hardy pronounced to be Tahitians of the sailor class who will enlist for smuggling, blackbirding, raiding, piracy or anything of the sort. They made out the name of the yacht on their clothing and were able to conjecture that Mauna Maranga had put out from San Francisco with a white crew and, reaching Suavu or some other port, had substituted for them men of this sort whom she could control in a fight against white men.

The dead were prepared for immediate burial in the waters of the harbor—all save Takarangi. Something in the fierce dignity of his face even in death demanded that nothing so unceremonious should mark his passing. Langdon went aft and approached Newa. She was sitting by the cabin table, where she could view the berth in which the skipper tossed in restless slumber under the opiate given him. Her mat was stained and torn, her ankles and arms were scratched with the wild dash she had made over the mountain trails to reach the eastern side where she knew the two men would be prisoners if taken alive, having learned all plans the night she swam ashore. In the excitement of their escape in the canoe and in the morning's fight she had forgotten herself, but now that she had been left alone, her terror had come back to her.

She looked up and smiled sadly as she heard him enter, and, seeing her hurts, her disarray that she could not remedy, and her profound melancholy, he knelt down beside her, kissed the places on her arms and, smoothing her hair, talked to her gently, bidding her look to the future and painting the life to which he meant to lead her in the great outside world. She laughed a little bitterly.

"I was in school in Berlin till I was sixteen," she said.

IN REPLY to Langdon's astounded question she explained that her high-born family had received the *ariki*, or chief's portion, in all the payments made to natives for lands by the British and German Governments, and that there was a very large commonwealth sum in which both her father and mother had participated; that her mother was educated in Boston, but had lived her life and died in the islands, preferring their honest decency and freedom to the artificialities she found in Europe and America. Both the daughters preferred to pass the greater part of every year in various groups of Polynesia.

"I have always been happy and satisfied, loving the water, our music, our native feats of grace and skill quite as well as I love the ways of New York and London, and though I have had my share of attention from worthy men I have always held aloof through something within me that restrained you. It is an old custom among our people that our women may circumvent an enemy by womanly wiles, and highly honored in our traditions is the woman who does so. My sister, who had known Mr. Hardy, sought him out again in San Francisco when he sailed, and if she had traveled on the *Maharanee* with him I am sure he would not be here to-day, nor would you.

"I was summoned by the *tohunga* and went to Apia to meet you with Takarangi, who is a chief in a lesser family and who, through his understanding of navigation, might find a way to get into your employ if it happened that you did set out in your own vessel from Apia, as the priests prophesied that you would. I was commanded by the *tohunga* to steal the heart out of either of you, and I tried.

"It was my undoing. First I pretended and then I began to—to feel, and now—and now—for love of you—of which I am proud, proud before my own people even—I have done that which has brought down on my head the curse of the *tohunga!* You know they use telepathy among themselves, and have for as long as the traditions relate, and from every quarter of these thousands of miles of islands comes to my poor brain the pressure of the telepathic suggestion that death is coming. Before the night of the new moon—just twenty days away now—I must die!"

Langdon sprang to his feet in horror. He had thought her an ignorant, superstitious native girl, but now he saw that it was he who was ignorant compared with her understanding of the psychology of the *tohunga*, or *kahunas*, of the Polynesians. Her certain knowledge that she must die came not from fear of the supernatural but from remembrance of the veracious traditions of thousands who had perished in this manner, and from a scientific knowledge of the workings of mental suggestion.

Mackenzie seemed to hear. He raised on his elbow, and his dull, drugged eyes tried to focus on the pair in the cabin, but he could not seem to see them clearly.

"Langdon, you love the girl, and you don't want her to die. Believe me, she will, she will! I have seen 'em often—the best of them. Even big white men like me. But keep me alive, Langdon, keep me alive now, boy, and when I can steer straight in my head agin just say to me 'The Doddington woman, Mackenzie, the Doddington woman,' and we will see about it! Aye, boy, we will see about it!"

He settled back on his elbow, then on his pillow, and was asleep.

"You see, my beloved," she said, "it kills, my own it kills—and there is no help, no flight, no escape! Keep me with you every hour now, for I am all yours henceforth, and when the circling white birds of Rangi have watched me long enough and my soul is ready for their escort to Reinga, hold me in your arms, my husband, hold me tightly in your arms, and then I shall not be unhappy, for it is the best way after all."

Choked with the grief of realization and stunned with the knowledge that, white man as he was, with millions to command the limit of the white man's skill and learning, he was helpless to save her, Langdon held her to him and a long silence fell.

CHAPTER XV

LOVE AND LIFE

THERE was a cry on deck and the hurrying of feet, and, drawing Newa with him, Langdon went up. Hardy greeted him with a look of impatience and pointed to the body of Takarangi, then to a boat coming off from shore.

"I thought you were going to adjust the matter of our late friend over there. Now it looks as if we are going to have our hands too full to pay any attention to him. Do you realize that we have barely enough crew to weigh anchor and make sail and that we have no navigator to get away from this hole?"

"I hold a master's ticket under the British Board of Trade at Suavu," said Newa simply.

"Langdon, I have been deferring congratulating you till I could make a clean job of it, but I am afraid if I don't start in soon I will never get it done!"

The boat was now within possible rifle-range and, suddenly there rose from a low seat in the bow, making a sweeping gesture with her arm—Mauna Maranga!

Hardy, gazing, started suddenly, but said no word.

"They come on a sacred peace mission," said Newa.

It was plain that it was a ceremonial party composed wholly of the islanders and the girl, none of the Tahiti men being present. So, arraying their little handful at the schooner's side, Hardy and Langdon received the boat at the gangway and assisted Mauna Maranga to the deck; she was dressed in a simple mat with the *heinau* border bearing the *ariki* cut and coloring and marking her as of the very highest birth. Her grace and dignity were marvelous, while her beauty was quite equal to that of Newa, save that Mauna Maranga was dark of hair, heavier of figure and a little taller. She looked like the older sister of the two.

In a soft, gentle voice she stated her mission:

"The chief of the island clan is dead, and his sons are away. I alone of the blood remain among our people of the island. It is said that a dead chief lies here, and I have come to bear his body to the *tohunga* that he may rest among those sacred things which he died to defend. He was true and loyal to his blood, and his blood entreats the privilege of doing him honor."

From the boatmen waiting below broke out a brief wailing *tangi.*

> "Go thou, Takarangi!
> Depart, depart,
> And we shall follow also!"

A bitter sob burst from Newa, who had stood, uncertain, close to Langdon and a little behind him.

"Weep not, my sister! Why weep? Thou hast taken no life; thou hast been a true woman and kept life, though thou must soon die for it. I envy thee for thy love—both that given and that received. Weep not, sister dear, for there is no blame even among the *tohunga*, and they grieve that the laws of the sacred things must pay thee out. We shall talk when we have done honor to the brave and loyal dead."

Hardy, reluctantly enough and with a hesitation foreign to him, but seeing that Langdon was still less in a state of mind to take the initiative, advanced a pace and said:

"No man honors the brave and loyal dead more than the white man, Mauna Maranga, and I am sorry that I, being a white man, can not respond in the right words of ceremony. Will you lead the way in what should be done?"

With a courteous acknowledgment she turned to the islanders and gave her instructions. Carefully these were carried out, and in a few minutes the body rested in the boat among the sacred fern leaves they had brought, and, winding the bits of fern in their hair, the boatmen began their weird chant.

Then, her lips smiling and a strange new light shining in her eyes, she turned to Hardy.

"Will you come with me? I should like you to bring me back if you will be so kind," she said, looking him full in the eyes in such a way that he could not refuse.

Hardy stood looking straight into her eyes for one long moment, then, unhooking his gun, he gave it to Langdon and stepped into the boat quietly, without speaking a word.

Sobbing with an abandon of heart-break which Langdon could not solace, Newa reclined in his arms as the boat moved to shore, while seaward rolled the heavy melody of the singing voices:

"Look thy last upon the waves,
Thou art going, Takarangi!
Look thy last upon the sea,
Thou art going, Takarangi!
In the farther unknown land
Where our fathers all have gone
Bid the gods reward our sea
For the wonders it has done—
Kindnesses to us, poor children,
Beauties that our eyes may see.
Look thy last, O Takarangi!
Take its memory on with thee!
Thou are going, Takarangi;
Soon we'll follow, Takarangi!"

Gradually the singing died away in the distance and, watching the shore, they saw the landing, saw the *tohunga* and assistants taking charge, and then Hardy and Mauna Maranga talked together a moment and vanished inland.

An hour went by, two hours, and the entire morning was done. By midafternoon Langdon was pacing the deck in great anxiety. The fears he held for Hardy's safety he could not repress, but Newa resented them, and his own reason told him they were unjustified.

JUST at sunset a boat put out from the shore, and the occupants of it were hardly visible for the encumbrances piled forward and aft of the rowers. Langdon took the necessary precautions to meet an unfriendly move, but when he saw that Mauna Maranga and Hardy were the sole passengers he was greatly relieved and called Newa from her watch over Mackenzie.

As the boat came alongside he was amazed to see two large bags, of the sort used to convey the jades to the eastern shore, and three modern steamer-trunks.

Concealing his curiosity, he received the girl as she came up the gangway and passed her on to Newa. The two sisters flew into each other's arms and Hardy drew Langdon aside to say:

"I hope you won't object to what I have done, Langdon. I feel as if I had made a fool of myself or was about to do so, but you know I never did have any experience with women. I'll make a clean breast of it. I knew Mauna Maranga long before we started on this expedition. I was among those who fell victims to her beauty, and when I'd got my dismissal, or thought I had, I went off and tried to bury myself among my cantaloups. To-day, when we got on shore and saw the old chief's funeral properly started, she said she wanted to talk to me. A burnt child dreads the fire, and I wasn't very strong on going, but I couldn't help myself, somehow, and we went off by ourselves and she opened up and said she knew she could trust me and that she needed my help.

"First of all, would I take her aboard the *Lydia* and take her back to civilization, as she had no other means of leaving the island? That was all right, and I said yes—that I was sure you'd be willing. Then she tells me that old Whanua Temarereti and one or two other very high *tohunga* had gone off this morning, taking the Jades of Toi with them, and that in a few weeks a grand council of the high chiefs of the people and the *tohunga* is to be held to see if it is not the wisest thing to place the jades in some Pacific museum where the people of the race have become modernized to such an extent that the relics will be treasured and be safe and still need not be hidden away in a mountain cavern.

"I am afraid that I began to cuss a little bit and talk about the time I put in growing cantaloups to get a stake that I might have a chance at something really big. She laughed at me—and what does she do? We are sitting in the ferns up there behind the town, and she puts her two hands on my shoulders and says:

"'Sometimes we have a treasure when we don't know it.'

"'What?' I said, being upset a bit by the touch of her hands.

"'You have many treasures already,' she went on, her voice going softer than ever. 'Strong arms, a good heart, ready laughter'—aw ——, Langdon, I can't talk that kind of thing! Then she goes on: 'Perhaps you don't appreciate these treasures. I didn't—once!'

"Well, I don't know much about women, but that was enough for me! It wasn't any time till I'd—aw, —— it, Langdon, you know what happened! And say, it's great, isn't it? I never—well, let me see, what was I talking about?

"Oh, yes, she called some of the men from the town and led me toward the mountain till we came to a tunnel like the one we went in last night. After we had traveled up till we must have been near the *pa*, she turned into a place where there were about ten thousand stone gods, as well as I could see, and out of a hole in the rocks she pulled

four stone boxes. What those boxes held is now lying behind you in those bags. There is about a thousand pounds of pure volcanic gold, Langdon, about a thousand pounds, and when we had it before us she turned to me and said:

"'This is not sacred, and those who stored it held it of little worth. It is mine by right of gift from the *tohunga* and, big man that I love, I give it to you!'

"Now, what do you think of that?"

THE schooner *Lydia* was within two days of the Port of Panama. It was midnight and a great brooding stillness lay over the ocean, while the stars seemed to be hung half-way between the true vault of the sky and the waste of waters. Steadily the trades swept the craft along, but the wheel was lashed and the weary sailors forward slept on deck on the watch.

In the coolest place of the heated vessel, the after-deck beside the cabin companion-way, on a pallet lay what was once Newareka. Thin and wan of face and form, her great dark eyes looked unseeing to the sky, and, crouched beside her, with his face buried in his hands, sat Langdon.

It was the last night of the dark of the moon, and the hour of the end had come.

Below, he could hear the regular pacing of Hardy's tramp of vigil up and down the cabin, while Mauna Maranga slept near by, exhausted, and in the stillness the terrible curses of the raving skipper seemed like a hideous blasphemy that invited death. He had talked all day of his voyages and his desperate deeds, and once he had spoken of Doddington. They had all been listening for that, for, remembering what he had said in his first delirium of drugs and wound-fever, Langdon had clung to it with a certain desperation. There was nothing else to which to cling.

After the mention of the name he had sprung to the wounded man's side and clutched the emaciated wrists as he strove to calm him and get into the seething brain the question:

"What did Doddington's woman do, Mackenzie? What did Doddington's woman do?"

But Mackenzie only laughed and haw-hawed about the time that he and Bully Hayes cleaned three hundred people off of one island and sent them as slaves to Tahiti.

Langdon shuddered as he heard him shouting, thinking he was at the gates of hell and they would not let him in. It was horrible, soul-rending, and feebly the girl under the starlight on the pallet moved her drawn lips, fluttered her wan fingers and strove to see the face of the man she loved.

"Ah-raw-ha-ough!" roared Mackenzie. "Kill the nigger before he sticks me! Good boy, Ben, good boy, Ben! Ouch! Oh, ——, they got me! They got me! Ye ho, for the Shining River, oh ho! —— that parrot! I'll lay six casks of flakes they heard him and they won't come aboard at all! To —— with them! To —— with them! Fire, Jenks, fire! Ah-roo, what a smasher! Look at the arms and legs fly! Too bad to waste such good working flesh!"

"My love, my love!" whispered the girl, striving to wet her lips, "it will be very soon. Forget not—that—you—will follow!"

"Hardy—Hardy!"

It was Mackenzie's voice, calling weakly.

"What is it, Mac, poor old scout? What can I do for you?"

"Why, I am afraid I am going to be pretty sick, and in case anything happens to me don't forget to tell Langdon how to save the girl. I know it positively, for I heard of it—often—often, but I seen it once. It was Doddington's woman—Doddington, —— him! Doddington! Whar-ro—Yeo-ow! Doddington, I'm glad you got killed too, —— you!"

"Mac, what did they do to Doddington's woman?" Hardy's voice was quiet and soothing.

"The priests willed her to die, and she was dying, and they gave her some sleeping dope so she could not think. Think! *Think!* THINK! *That's the thing that kills,* THINKING! Ha-ha-ha-haw-he—ow! and she got well and had six childurn, by Judas!"

Langdon heard the click of the medicine-case and Hardy's foot on the stair, and he slipped forward with his face on his outstretched arm and sobbed with joy as if his soul were adrift within him.