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Adventure

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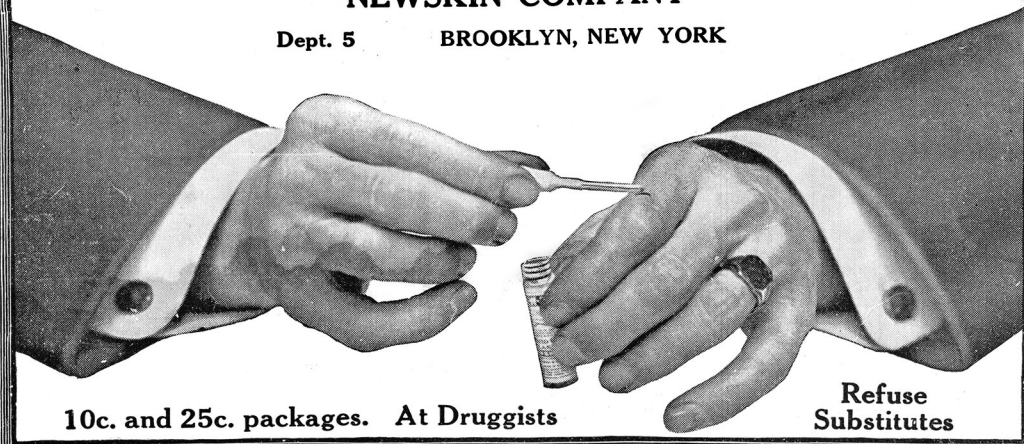

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ADVENTURE

VOL. 2 NO. 5

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ADVENTURE *for* OCTOBER

TRUE ADVENTURERS are men of few words, and generally they say their say quietly. And when the other fellow is doing the talking they prefer having him get to the point quickly. That's what we're going to do here—say our say quietly and in a few words. Just enough to tell you what's coming to you.

Do you remember "The Crook and the Doctor" and "Cupid and the Crook," by John I. Cochrane, M. D., which have already appeared in ADVENTURE? Well, Dr. Cochrane has another short complete novelette in the October number. Title, "*The Freak.*" 'Nuff said.

Also in October begins the first of a new series of tales, each complete in itself. You're going to like them, these adventures in New York City, so watch out for anything labeled "*A Tale of the Adventure Syndicate, Limited.*"

Carolyn Wells? Remember the laughs in what she writes? But—ever read one of her detective stories? Try "*A Point of Testimony*" in October ADVENTURE.

There's one story in that number we particularly want to know whether you like or don't like. It isn't quite the usual kind. "*The Skipper with the Young Eyes.*" When you've read it, tell us what you think.

Another Clarice Vallette McCauley story.

The true stories of two American adventurers, one in China, one in Peru.

And—lots more.

What's that? How much more is there of the excitement and information of George Graham Rice's "My Adventures with Your Money"? Two more numbers; the Wall Street story. And they're corkers!

EDITOR OF ADVENTURE.

Adventure

September 1911 Vol. 2 No. 5

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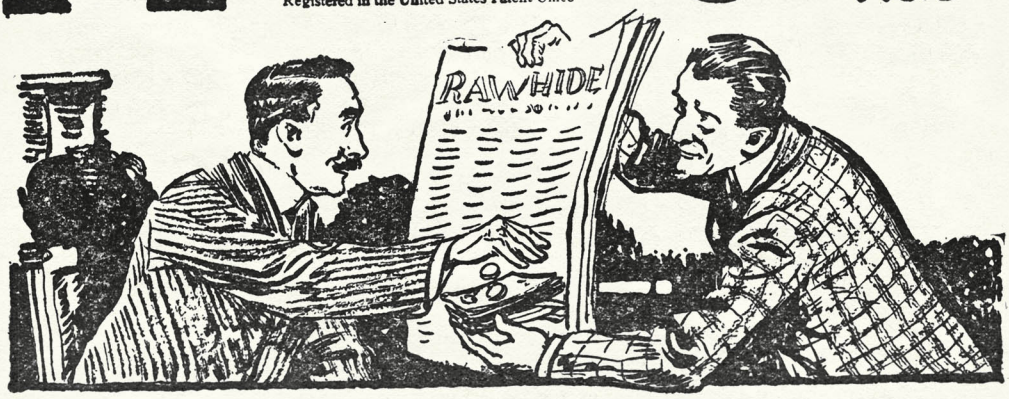

MY ADVENTURES WITH YOUR MONEY

VI Rawhide and Wall Street—The Press-Agent and the Public's Money

by George Graham Rice

EDITOR'S NOTE—In laying before the public a frank and complete picture of the intricate machinery back of the mining-stock game Mr. Rice in the present article takes up a new and particularly interesting phase of his subject—the part played by newspapers and magazines. What he has to say on this subject is of vital interest not only to every investor but to every citizen of the United States. It makes you laugh and—stop to think. From this point of view of print-publicity Mr. Rice sets forth the tale of the Rawhide boom and the raid on B. H. Scheftels & Company. The concluding articles of "My Adventures with Your Money" follow Mr. Rice into Wall Street—into the very heart of mine promotion and financing. You will find that these last two instalments are worth reading.

BECAUSE Rawhide, the new Nevada gold camp, was born during the financial crisis of 1907, I couldn't see any future ahead of it from the promoter's coign of vantage—not "through a pair of field-glasses." It requires capital to develop likely-looking gold "prospects" into dividend-paying mines, and I could not imagine where the money was going to come from. Eastern securities markets were in the doldrums. Time money commanded a big premium. Prices for all descriptions of mining stocks had flattened out to almost nothing. Investors were at their wits' end to protect commitments already made. Financiers everywhere were depressed. A revulsion of sentiment toward speculation had set in, seemingly for keeps. Only a

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hair-brained enthusiast of the wild-eyed order could hope at such a time possibly to succeed in the marketing of new mining issues.

A financial panic has no terrors, however, for gold-seekers. The lure of gold is irresistible. Money stringency serves only to strengthen the natural incentive. By the first week in January, 1908, fully 2,000 people were reported to be in Rawhide. At the end of January the population had grown to 3,000.

The camp easily held the center of the mining stage in Nevada.

Many of the Rawhide pioneers hailed from Tonopah and Goldfield. Without exception the opinion of these veterans appeared to be that the surface showings of the new district excelled those of either of the older camps. Never before in the history of mining in the West had there been discovered a quartz deposit so seemingly rich in the yellow metal at or near the surface which at the same time embraced so large an area of auriferous mineralization. Goldfield, at the same early age, had been a mere collection of prospectors' tents, while Rawhide was a thriving, bustling, populous camp with more than a hundred leasing outfits conducting systematic mining operations.

News was brought to Reno of a phenomenal strike made on Grutt Hill in Rawhide. Specimen rock taken from a seam of ore assayed $300,000 to the ton. The Kearns lease on Balloon Hill reported 15 feet of shipping ore on the 65-foot level which assayed from $300 to $500 to the ton.

There was full verification of this. Also regular shipments were being made to the Goldfield reduction works.

Samples of rock were received in town that were studded with free gold. I was thrilled. Statements made by camp "boosters" that a part of Balloon Hill was "gold with a little rock in it," were not exaggerations, judging from the specimens that were placed in my possession.

My apathy began to melt away. Against my earlier judgment, I now began to change my attitude.

The camp looked like "the real thing," panic or no panic.

Why should not the American public, even in these tough financial times, enthuse about a gold camp with possibilities for money-making such as are offered here, I asked myself. Don't drowning men grasp at straws? Is it not the habit of horse-race players when they lose five races in succession to make a plunge bet on the sixth with a view to getting out even? This panic had impoverished hundreds of thousands. What more natural than that those who were hit hard should now fall over one another to get in on the good things of Rawhide? If the camp makes good, I reasoned, in the same measure that Goldfield did, early investors will roll up millions in profits.

I visited the camp. What I saw electrified me. Soon I was under the magic spell.

REAL GOLD AT RAWHIDE

HALF a day's tramp over the hills seemed sufficient to convince anybody that the best of the practical miners of Nevada had put the stamp of their approval on the district. Most of the hundred or more operating leases of Rawhide were owned by these hard-rock miners. More than half a dozen surface openings on Grutt Hill showed the presence of masses of gold-studded quartz. At the intersection of Rawhide's two principal thoroughfares a round of shots in a bold quartz outcrop revealed gold-silver ore that assayed $2,700 a ton. A gold beribboned dyke of quartz-rhyolite struck boldly through Grutt Hill's towering peak. I walked along its strike and knocked off, with an ordinary prospector's pick, samples worth $2 to $5 a pound.

Across Stingaree Gulch to the south Balloon Hill's rugged hog-back formed a connecting link between Grutt and Consolidated hills. The Kearns Nos. 1 and 2 leases on Balloon Hill were scenes of strikes of such extraordinary richness that they alone would have started a stampede in Alaska. The Murray lease on Consolidated Hill was rated as a veritable bonanza. There I saw quartz that was fully one-third gold.

Along the southern slope of Hooligan Hill several sets of leasers were mining ore so rich that guards were maintained through the night to prevent loss from theft. At the Alexander lease on Hooligan Hill the miners were crushing the richer quartz from their shaft and washing out gold to the value of $20 a pan.

These were the three principal centers of activity, but they by no means embraced

the productive area of the district. Tall, skeleton-like gallows-frames dotted the landscape for miles in every direction. The soughing of gasoline engines suggested the breathing of some spectral Titan in the throes of Herculean effort. I was forcefully impressed, too, with the class of miners at work.

It seemed to me there was no longer any room for cavil as to the fortune-making possibilities of investors who put their money into the camp. Less than a half year old, Rawhide loomed up as the most active mining region I had ever seen at anything like the same age.

It required nearly three years for Goldfield to make as good a showing, I reasoned.

During my earlier efforts at press-agenting Southern Nevada's mining camps I had to conjure in my mind's eye what the reality would be if half the hopes of camp enthusiasts were fulfilled. Here was apparently a fulfillment rather than a promise. At the threshold of the first stage of its development era Rawhide could boast of more actual producers and nearly as many operating properties as Goldfield could claim at the age of three years.

I recalled that Cripple Creek had been panic-born but had lived through the acute period of 1893-96 to take rank with the greatest gold camps of the world.

I was more than convinced. Effervescent enthusiasm succeeded my earlier skepticism. History is about to repeat the record of Cripple Creek, I concluded.

THE RAWHIDE COALITION MINES COMPANY

GRUTT HILL, Hooligan Hill, a part of Balloon Hill, and the intervening ground, forming a compact group of eight claims, 160 acres, were owned by a partnership of eight prospectors. The area formed the heart and backbone of the whole mining district.

I soon "tied up" this property for Nat. C. Goodwin & Company of Reno, with whom I was identified. A company, with 3,000,000 shares of the par value of $1 a share, was incorporated to take title. It was styled the Rawhide Coalition Mines Company.

Of its entire capitalization, 750,000 shares were turned into the treasury of the Rawhide Coalition Mines Company. Nat. C. Goodwin & Company became agents for the sale of treasury stock, and were given an option by the company on 250,000 shares, to net the treasury $57,500 for purposes of administration and mine development. The Goodwin company also purchased 1,850,000 shares of the 2,250,000 shares of ownership stock, amounting to $443,500 more, or at the rate of 23.3 cents per share plus a commission of $12,500 to be paid to a go-between.

The ownership stock that was retained by the original owners, and the residue of treasury stock, amounting in all to 900,000 shares, were placed in pool.

When I made this deal the cash in bank of Nat. C. Goodwin & Company amounted to about $15,000. It was up to me to finance the undertaking. I did.

The contract I made called for only $10,000 in cash and the balance on time payments. Nat. C. Goodwin & Company didn't borrow money from any bank or individual, nor did anybody identified with the concern tax his personal resources to the extent of a single dollar to go through with the deal. The money was raised, first for the Coalition's treasury and later for the vendors, by appealing directly to the speculative instinct of the American investing public. The public, too, paid the expense that was incurred in reaching them. It did this by paying Nat. C. Goodwin & Company an advance in price on Coalition stock purchases, over and above the cost price.

Nat. C. Goodwin & Company had agreed to net a fraction more than 23 cents per share to both the treasury and the vendors without any deductions whatsoever. All of the advertising expense and other outlays of promotion, it was stipulated, must be borne by Nat. C. Goodwin & Company and none by the mining corporation.

What was the system? How was it done?

A RACE OF GAMBLERS

PRIOR to the birth of Rawhide I had for seven years catered to the speculative (gambling) instinct of the American public, chiefly in building mining camps and financing mining enterprises. I now realized that in order to make a success of the undertaking before me, namely, to put the new camp of Rawhide on the investment map, I must again appeal loudly to the country's gambling instinct.

Maybe you think, dear reader, that a man who caters to the gambling instinct of his fellow men, be his intentions honest or dishonest, is a highly immoral person. Is he?

Do you know that the gambling instinct is responsible for the wonderful growth of the mining industry in the United States? Would you believe that without the gambling instinct the development of the great natural resources of this country would be almost impossible?

With rare exceptions every successful mining enterprise in the United States has been financed in the past by appealing directly to the gambling instinct. In the decade antedating this year considerably more than a billion dollars was raised and invested in this way.

Conservative investors who are satisfied with from three to six per cent. on their money do not buy mines or mining stocks. Speculators (gamblers) who are willing to risk part of their fortune in the hope of gaining fivefold or more in a year or a few years—these are the kind who invest in mines and mining stocks.

There are legions of these. Not less than 500,000 men and women in the United States, according to the best statistical information obtainable, are stockholders of mining companies.

In fact, the gambling instinct finds employment in the mining industry long before a property has reached the stage where it can be classed as even a prospect worthy of exploration. The prospector who follows his burro into the mountain fastnesses or across the desert wastes often gambles his very life against the success of his search; those who grub-stake him gamble their money.

The gambling instinct seems bound to continue to play an important rôle in the mining industry for all time, or until either the fortune-hunting instincts of man are eradicated or all the treasures of the world shall have been mined.

Now, if the practise of catering to the gambling instinct is baneful, I'm a malefactor. So, too, would then be such lofty-pinnacled financiers as Messrs. Rothschild, Rockefeller, Morgan, the Guggenheims and others. My own thought is that it is *custom* and the times which are responsible for the maintenance of the great game, and not individuals.

The truth is, we are a race of gamblers and *we allow the captains of industry to deal the game for us.*

NEXT to money and political power, publicity is recognized by all "doers" as the most powerful lever to accomplish big things. Not infrequently publicity will accomplish what neither money nor political power can. Generally, publicity can be secured and controlled by either money or political power.

When Rawhide was born I had neither money nor political power. The camp needed publicity. I had nothing to secure publicity with but my wit. I promptly requisitioned what wit I had, and used all of it.

There is an important difference between owning a series of excellent gold-mine prospects, which have tremendous speculative possibilities, and the public recognizing them to be such. It is one thing for a manufacturer to be himself assured that his article is a better product for the money than that of his competitor. It is another thing for the consumer to be convinced. Therein lies the value of organized publicity.

To focus the attention of the great American investing public on the camp of Rawhide was the proposition before me. How was this to be accomplished? Display advertising in the newspapers is costly and requires large capital; the purchase of reading notices in publications which accept that class of business, even more so.

One major fact stood out from my early experience as a publicity agent in Goldfield. Few news editors have the heart to consign good copy to the waste-paper basket, particularly if it contains nothing which might cause a come-back.

I resolved to "press-agent" the camp.

SOME PRESS-AGENT STUNTS

PROBABLY the most scientifically press-agented camp in Nevada had been Bullfrog. Bullfrog was born two years after Goldfield. The Goldfield publicity bureau by this time had greatly improved its art and its efficiency.

When the Bullfrog boom was still young the late United States Senator Stewart, an octogenarian and out of a job, traveled from Washington, at the expiration of his term, to the Bullfrog camp. There he hung out

his shingle as a practising lawyer. Immediately the press bureau secured a cabinet photo of the venerable lawmaker and composed a story about his fresh start in life on the desert. The yarn appealed so strongly to Sunday editors of the great city dailies throughout the country that Bullfrog secured for nothing scores of pages of priceless advertising in the news columns.

The Senator built a home, the story said, on a spot where, less than a year before, desert wayfarers had died of thirst and coyotes roamed. The interior of the house on the desert was minutely described. Olive-colored chintz curtains protected the bearded patriarch, while at work in his study, from the burning rays of the sun. Old Florentine cabinets, costly Byzantine vases, and matchless specimens of Sèvres, filled his living-rooms. Silk Persian rugs an inch thick decked the floors. Venetian-framed miniature paintings of former Presidents of the United States and champions of liberty of bygone days graced the walls. Costly bronzes and marble statuettes were strewn about in profusion. Visitors could not help deducing that the Senator thought nothing too good for his desert habitat. *The name of Bullfrog exuded from every paragraph of the story; also the name of a mine at the approach to which this desert mansion was reared and in the exploitation of which the press-agent had a selfish interest.*

The remarkable part of this tale, which was printed with pictures of the Senator in one metropolitan newspaper of great circulation and prestige to the extent of a full page on a Sunday and was syndicated by it to a score of others, was that the only truth contained in it happened to be the fact that the Senator had decided to make Bullfrog his home with a view to working up a law practise. But it was a good story from the Bullfrog press-agent's standpoint and from that of the Sunday editor, and even the Senator did not blink at it. He recognized it as camp "publicity" of the highest efficiency, as did other residents of Bullfrog.

DURING the Manhattan boom, which followed that of Bullfrog, the publicity bureau became more ambitious. It made a drive at the news columns of the metropolitan press on week days, and succeeded.

At that time the Sullivan Trust Company of Goldfield was promoting the Jumping Jack-Manhattan Mining Company. James Hopper, the gifted magazinist, wrote a story in which the names "Jumping Jack" and "Sullivan Trust Company" appeared in almost every other line. It was forwarded by mail to a great daily newspaper of New York and promptly published as news. The yarn told how the man in charge of the gasoline engine at the mouth of the Jumping Jack shaft had gone stark mad while at work and how but for the quick intervention of the president of the Sullivan Trust Company, who happened to be on the ground, a tragedy might well have been the result.

The miner, the story said, stepped into the bucket at the head of the shaft and asked the man in the engine-house to lower him to a depth of 300 feet. Quick as a flash the bucket was let down. When the 200-foot point was reached there was a sudden stop. With a rattle and a roar the bucket was jerked back to within 50 feet of the surface. Thereupon it was again lowered and quickly raised again, and the operation constantly repeated until the poor miner became unconscious and fell in a jangled mass to the bottom of the bucket.

Hearing the miner's early cries, Mr. Sullivan had gone to the rescue. He knocked senseless the man in the engine-house and pinioned him. Then he brought up the bucket containing the almost inanimate form of the miner.

Turning to the demon in charge of the engine, who had now recovered consciousness, Mr. Sullivan cried,

"How dare you do a thing like this?"

The man responded, "His name is Jack, ain't it?"

"Well, what of it?" roared Mr. Sullivan.

"Oh, I was just *jumping the jack!*" chuckled the "madman."

This nursery tale was conspicuously printed in a high-class New York newspaper's columns as real news. Undoubtedly the reason why the editors allowed it to pass was that it was believed to be true, but above all was cleverly written.

I WAS too busy during the early part of the Rawhide boom to do any writing of consequence or even to suggest particular subjects for stories. It seemed to me that the exciting events of every-day occurrence during the progress

of the mad rush would furnish the correspondents with enough matter to keep the news-pot constantly boiling. I assembled around me the shining lights of the Reno newspaper fraternity and put them on the pay-roll.

For weeks an average of at least one column of exciting Rawhide stampede news was published on the front pages of the big Coast dailies. The publicity campaign went merrily on. I kept close watch on the character of the news that was being sent out and was pleased in contemplating the fact that very little false coloring, if any, was resorted to. A boisterous mining-camp stampede, second only in intensity to the Klondike excitement of eleven years before, was in progress, and there was plenty of live news to chronicle almost every day.

After returning from one of my trips to Rawhide I became alarmed on reading on the front page of the leading San Francisco newspapers a harrowing two-column story about the manner in which Ed. Hoffman, mine superintendent of the Rawhide Coalition, had been waylaid the day before on a dark desert road and robbed of $10,000 in gold which he was carrying to the mines for the purpose of discharging the pay-roll.

I had just left Mr. Hoffman in Rawhide and he had not been waylaid.

I sent for the man who was responsible for the story.

"Say, Jim," I said, "you're crazy. There is a come-back to that yarn that will cost you your job as correspondent for your San Francisco paper. It is rough work. Cut it out!"

"Gee whillikins!" he replied. "How can I? Here's an order for a two-column follow-up and I have already filed it."

"What did you say in your second story?" I inquired.

"Well, I told how a posse, armed to the teeth, were chasing the robbers and explained that they're within three miles of Walker Lake in hot pursuit."

"You're a madman!" I protested. "Kill those robbers and be quick; do it to-night so that you choke off the demand for more copy, or you're a goner!"

Next day the correspondent wired to his string of newspapers that the posse had chased the robbers into Walker Lake, where they were drowned.

At the point in Walker Lake where the correspondent said the robbers had found a watery grave it was known to some Reno people that for three miles in both directions the lake was shallow and that the deepest water in that vicinity was less than four feet. This caused some snickering in Reno. Still there was no come-back. The newspapers never learned of the deception. The correspondent had been canny enough in sending the story to keep the local correspondents of all other out-of-town newspapers thoroughly informed. They had sent out practically the same story, and therefore did not give the snap away.

In the early days of the Rawhide boom a rumor reached the camp that Death Valley "Scotty," the illustrious personage who had been press-agented from one end of the land to the other as the owner of a secret Golconda, was about to start a stampede into some new diggings. The news bureau decided to kill off opposition. Newspapers of the land were queried as follows:

"Scotty's lair discovered in Death Valley. It is a cache containing a number of empty Wells-Fargo money-chests. Scotty has apparently been looting the loot of old-time stage robbers. How many words?"

The newspapers just ate this one up. Column upon column was telegraphed from Nevada. The source of Scotty's wealth being cleared up to the satisfaction of readers of the "yellows," Scotty's value as a mine promoter became seriously impaired.

WHEN I chided the Reno correspondent for sending out the fake story regarding the robbery of Rawhide Coalition's mine manager, I recall that he argued he had made a blunder in one direction only. He said he should have seen to it that the mine manager was actually robbed! That, he said, would have eliminated the danger of a come-back.

Years ago in New York the public was startled by reading of an actress taking her bath in pure milk. A few weeks later newspaper readers were convulsed by stories of another star in the theatrical firmament performing her morning ablutions in a tub of champagne.

"If you don't believe it," said the lady press-agent to a lady newspaper reporter who was sent to cover the story, "I will give you a chance to see the lady in the act."

This was done and, of course, the newspapers were convinced that it was no idle press-agent's dream. Of course, neither of

these women had been in the habit of bathing in milk or in champagne. A tub of milk costs less than $10 and a tub of champagne less than $200, but you could not have bought this kind of publicity for these performers at anything like such absurdly low figures if you used the display advertising columns of the newspapers. Nor would the advertising have been nearly so effective. The absurd milk story scored a "knockout" with newspaper readers and earned a great fortune for the actress.

PUBLICITY *VIA* ELINOR GLYN

AT THIS early stage in Rawhide's history the reigning literary sensation of two continents was "Three Weeks." Nothing, reasoned the correspondents, would attract more attention to the camp than having Mrs. Elinor Glyn at Rawhide, particularly if she would conduct herself while there in a manner that might challenge the criticism of church members.

Sam Newhouse, the multimillionaire mining operator of Utah, famous on two continents as a charming host, especially when celebrities are his guests, was stopping at the Fairmount Hotel in San Francisco. Mrs. Glyn was in San Francisco at the same time. Mr. Newhouse and Ray Baker, a Reno Beau Brummel, clubman, chum of M. H. De Young, owner and editor of the San Francisco *Chronicle*, and scion of a house that represents the aristocracy of Nevada, were showing Coast hospitality to the distinguished authoress.

A message was sent to Mr. Baker reading substantially as follows: "Please suggest to Mr. Newhouse and Mrs. Glyn the advisability of visiting Rawhide. The lady can get much local color for a new book. If you bag the game, you will be a hero."

Ray was on to his job. Within three days Mrs. Glyn, under escort of Messrs. Newhouse and Baker, arrived in Rawhide after a thirty-eight-hour journey by railroad and auto from San Francisco.

The party having arrived in camp at dusk, it was suggested that they go to a gambling-house and see a real game of stud poker as played on the desert.

They entered a room. Six players were seated around a table. The men were coatless and grimy. Their unshaven mugs, rough as nutmeg-graters, were twisted into strange grimaces. All of them appeared the worse for liquor. Before each man was piled a mound of ivory chips of various hues, and alongside rested a six-shooter. From the rear trousers' pocket of every player another gun protruded. Each man wore a belt filled with cartridges. Although an impromptu sort of game, it was well staged.

A man with bloodshot eyes shuffled and riffled the cards. Then he dealt a hand to each.

"Bet you $10,000," loudly declared the first player.

"Call that and go you $15,000 better," shouted the second as he pushed a stack of yellows toward the center.

"Raise you!" cried two others, almost in unison.

Before the jack-pot was played out $300,000 (in chips) had found its way to the center of the table and four men were standing up in their seats in a frenzy of bravado with the muzzles of their guns viciously pointed at one another. There was enough of the lurking devil in the eyes of the belligerents to give the onlookers a nervous shiver.

When the gun-play started, Mrs. Glyn and Messrs. Newhouse and Baker took to the "tall and uncut."

As the door closed and the vanishing forms of the visitors could be seen disappearing around the opposite street corner, all of the men in the room pointed their guns heavenward and shot at the ceiling, which was of canvas. The sharp report of the revolver-shots rang through the air. This was followed by hollow groans, calculated to freeze the blood of the retreating party, and by a scraping and scuffling sound that conveyed to the imagination a violent struggle between several persons.

Fifteen minutes later two stretchers, carrying the "dead," were taken to the undertaker's shop. Mrs. Glyn and Mr. Newhouse, with drooped chins, stood by and witnessed the dismal spectacle.

Of course, the "murder" of these two gamblers, during the progress of a card-game for sensationally high stakes and in the presence of the authoress of "Three Weeks," made fine front-page newspaper copy. Rawhide suggested itself in every paragraph of the stories as a mining-center that was large enough to attract the attention of a multimillionaire mine magnate of the caliber of Sam Newhouse and of an

authoress of such world-wide repute as Elinor Glyn. The camp got yards of free publicity that was calculated to convince the public it was no flash in the pan, which was exactly what was wanted.

The next night Elinor Glyn, having recovered from the shock of the exciting poker-game, was escorted through Stingaree Gulch. The lane was lined on both sides with dance-halls and brothels for a distance of two thousand feet. Mrs. Glyn "sight-saw" all of these.

Rawhide scribes saw a chance here for some fine writing:

> The wasted cheeks and wasted forms of frail humanity, as seen last night in the jaundiced light that was reflected by the crimson-shaded lamps and curtains of Stingaree Gulch, visibly affected the gifted English authoress. They carried to Mrs. Glyn an affirmative answer to the question, so often propounded recently, whether it is against public morality to make a heroine in "Three Weeks" of a pleasure-palled victim of the upper set. It was made plain to Mrs. Glyn that her heroine differed from the Stingaree Gulch kind only in that her cheeks were less faded than her character.

That's the kind of Laura Jean Libbey comment on Mrs. Glyn's tour of Stingaree Gulch that one of the Rawhide correspondents wired to a "yellow," with a view to pleasing the editor and to insuring positive acceptance of his copy.

Later in the night a fire-alarm was rung in. The local fire-department responded in Wild-Western fashion. The conflagration, which was started for Mrs. Glyn's sole benefit, advanced with the rapidity of a tidal wave. It brought to the scene a mixed throng of the riffraff of the camp. The tumult of voices rose loud and clear. The fire embraced all of the deserted shacks and waste lumber at the foothills of one of the mines. The liberal use of kerosene and a favoring wind caused a fierce blaze. It spouted showers of sparks into the darkness and gleamed like a beacon to desert wayfarers. The fierce yells of the firemen rang far and wide. Of a sudden a wild-haired individual thrust himself out of the crowd and sprang through the door of a blazing shack. He disappeared with the flames. Three feet past the door was a secret passage leading to shelter in the tunnel of an adjoining mine. Mrs. Glyn, of course, did not know this. She acclaimed the act as one of daring heroism.

Water in the camp was scarce, so there was a resort to barreled beer and dynamite. Soon the flames of the devouring fire were extinguished. Again the newspapers throughout the land contained stories, which were telegraphed from the spot, regarding the remarkable experiences of the much-discussed authoress of "Three Weeks" in the new, great, gold camp of Rawhide. The press agent was in his glory.

"AL" MILLER'S SIEGE

ELINOR GLYN'S experiences in Rawhide were by no means the most interesting that newspaper readers of the United States were privileged to read during the course of the press-agenting of the camp.

"Al" Miller was one of the first experienced mining operators to get into Rawhide. He landed in camp in the early part of 1907. After a thorough inspection of the mine showings throughout the district, he hit upon the Hooligan Hill section of the Rawhide Coalition property as a likely-looking spot to develop pay ore. Mr. Miller had been mining for a great many years and had been identified with some important mining projects in Colorado. When he applied for a lease on that section of the Coalition property embracing a good part of Hooligan Hill it was granted to him without parley.

Mr. Miller financed his project right in the camp of Rawhide. He interested five other mining men. A syndicate was formed. Each of these six took an equal interest. All agreed to subscribe to a treasury fund to meet the expenses of development.

A shaft was started on a very rich stringer of gold ore. When it had reached a depth of about 40 feet the Miller lease was regarded as one of the big "comers" of the camp. In fact, a good grade of ore was exposed on all sides and in the bottom of a $4\frac{1}{2} \times 7\frac{1}{2}$ foot shaft. Specimens assayed as high as $2,000 a ton.

At this stage of the enterprise an operating company was formed. Those who had formed the original syndicate divided the ownership stock among themselves. Mr. Miller was given full charge and allowed a salary for his services. Day after day you could see him on the job, sharpening steel, turning a windlass to hoist the muck from the bottom of the shaft after each round of shots had been fired, and making a full hand as mine-manager, blacksmith, mucker and shift-boss.

One day I was sitting in my office at Reno when I received a telephone message that there was a big fight on over the control of the Miller lease. Mr. Miller and a big Swede who was working for him had barricaded themselves at the mine. They threatened death to any one who approached. We had, for a day or two, been hungering and thirsting for some live news of the camp. My journalistic instinct got busy. I queried our Rawhide correspondent. He advised that the situation really looked serious and that a genuine scrap threatened. Mr. Miller had installed a good-sized arsenal at the mine and laid in about three days' provisions. He declared that he was prepared to hold out for an indefinite period.

I wired our correspondent at Rawhide instructions to file a story up to 1,000 or 1,500 words. Naturally excitement ran high in the camp. Soon hundreds of people gathered at points of vantage along the crest of Hooligan Hill and surrounding uplifts. Every one was expectantly awaiting interesting developments. To the casual onlooker it seemed as though possibly a score or more who stood ready to storm the mine might become involved. In fact, no one could tell how soon hostilities would break loose.

Using the telegrams I had received from camp, one of my men dictated a story containing the facts and sent it over to the Reno correspondent of the Associated Press. It was put on the wire without a moment's hesitation.

Mr. Miller had formed a rampart about the collar of the shaft. Sacked ore was piled up to a height of about five feet. The gold-laden stuff surrounded the shaft on all sides but one, the exception being to the northwest. There Hooligan Hill slanted upward at an angle of less than twenty degrees from vertical. It was from this approach that Mr. Miller was forced to guard constantly against attack. He found it necessary, according to our dispatches, to keep a constant vigil in order to preclude the possibility of a surprise. He and his Swede companion alternated in keeping the lookout. Occasionally the fitful soughing of the gasoline engine exhausts from the mining plants on Balloon Hill and Grutt Hill were interspersed by the sharp report of a six-shooter as the besieged parties either actually or mythically observed a threatened approach of the enemy.

Although the principals cast in this little mimic war were limited to perhaps less than a score, every incident or detail was provided to make up a very threatening and keenly interesting situation, with several lives hanging in the balance. There is no doubt that Mr. Miller at least, and perhaps his Swede companion, would have resisted any attempt to take "Fort Miller," as we styled it, even to sacrificing his life, for he was known as a man of action who had been in numerous critical situations without showing the slightest exercise of the primal instinct. The fact that Rawhide was saved from an episode that might have measured up to the tragic importance of a pitched battle and caused the loss of a number of lives was undoubtedly due to the patient willingness of Mr. Miller's partners and their supporters to satisfy themselves with a siege and to starve out the two men in possession of the mine rather than undertake to rout them.

The story went like wildfire and we were besieged for others and for a follow-up on the original story. For three days we kept the yarn alive and the wires burdened with details of the siege and unsuccessful storming of Camp Miller, Hooligan Hill, Nevada.

I venture to say that Mr. Hearst, with his well-known facility for serving up hot stuff to a sensation-loving following, never surpassed in this particular the stories that were scattered broadcast over the United States founded upon this interesting episode in the mining development of Rawhide.

The story promised to be good for at least a week when we were somewhat surprised to hear that Mr. Miller had capitulated. It seems that in storing his fort with provender he had supplied only one gallon of whisky and when this ran low, on the second or third day, he attempted, single-handed, a foraging expedition in search of a further supply of John Barleycorn. During his absence his Swede companion hoisted a flag of truce, and when Miller returned to the scene of action he found his mine in the possession of his enemies.

CHARLES GATES, son of John W. Gates, the noted stock-market plunger, visited Rawhide twice. He spent his time by day inspecting the numerous mine workings, of which there were not less than seventy-five in full blast. At night he was a frequent winner at the

gaming-tables. His advent in Rawhide was telegraphed far and wide and contributed to excite the general interest.

A young woman of dazzling beauty and fine presence was discovered in camp unchaperoned. She had been attracted to the scene by stories of fortunes made in a night. Under a grilling process of questioning by a few leading citizens she divulged the fact that she had run away from her home in Utah to seek single-handed her fortune on the desert. In roguish manner she expressed the opinion that if allowed to go her own way she would soon succeed in her mission. But she would not divulge the manner in which she proposed to operate. She confessed she had no money. There was a serene but settled expression of melancholy in her eyes that captivated everybody who saw her.

Many roving adventurers of the better class in the district who had listened to the call of the wild yet would have felt as much at home in the salon of a Fifth Avenue millionaire as in the boom-camp, pronounced her beauty to be in a class by itself. There was no law in the camp which would warrant the girl's deportation, yet action appeared warranted. Within a few moments $500 was subscribed as a purse to furnish the girl a passage out of camp and for a fresh start in life. The late Riley Grannan, race-track plunger, Nat. C. Goodwin, the noted player, and three others subscribed $100 each. She refused to accept the present. Next day she disappeared.

There was a corking human interest story here. Newspapers far and wide published the tale. Two years later this girl's photograph was sent without her knowledge to the judges of a famous beauty contest in a Far Western State. The judges were on the point of voting her the prize without question when investigation of her antecedents revealed her Rawhide escapade. The award was given to another.

When the camp was four months old and water still commanded from $3 to $4 a barrel, the standard price for a bath being $5, a banquet costing $50 a plate was served to one hundred soldiers of fortune who had been drawn to the spot from nearly every clime. The banqueters to a man played a good knife and fork. The spirit of *camaraderie* permeated the feast. There was much libation, much postprandial speechifying, much unbridled joyousness. *Bon mots* flew from lip to lip. Song and jest were exchanged. The air rang with hilarity. Nat. C. Goodwin warmed up to a witty, odd, racy vein of across-the-table conversation. Then he made a felicitous speech. Others followed him in similar vein. Luxuriant and unrestrained imagination and slashiness of wit marked most of the talks. The festivities ended in a revel.

The correspondents burned up the wires on the subject of that banquet. In the memory of the most ancient prospector no scene like this had ever been enacted in a desert mining camp when it was so young and at a time when the country was just emerging from a panic that seemed for a while to warp its whole financial fabric.

THE FUNERAL ORATION FOR RILEY GRANNAN

IN APRIL, 1908, Riley Grannan, the noted race-track plunger, died of pneumonia in Rawhide, where he was conducting a gambling house. He was ill only a few days and his life went out like the snuff of a candle. When all the gold in Rawhide's towering hills shall have been reduced to bullion and not even a post is left to guide the desert-wayfarer to the spot where was witnessed the greatest stampede in Western mining history, posterity will remember Rawhide for the funeral oration that was pronounced over the bier of Mr. Grannan by H. W. Knickerbocker, wearer of the cloth and mine-promoter.

The oration delivered by Mr. Knickerbocker on this occasion was a remarkable example of sustained eloquence. Pouring out utterances of exquisite thought and brilliant language in utter disregard of the length of his sentences and without using so much as a pencil memorandum, Mr. Knickerbocker with a delicacy of expression pure as poetry urged upon his auditors that the deceased "dead game sport" had not lived his life in vain. Soon the crowd, who listened with rapt attention, was in the melting mood. As Mr. Knickerbocker progressed with his discourse his periods were punctuated with convulsive bursts of sorrow.

Rawhide correspondents recognized the full value of the occasion from the press-agent's standpoint. Mr. Grannan had been a world-famous plunger on the turf, and the correspondents burned the midnight oil in an effort to do their subject justice.

Some other lights and shades of Rawhide press-agenting are contained in the following dispatch, which appeared in a San Francisco newspaper in the early period of the boom:

GOLDFIELD, February 19.—W. H. Scott of the Goldfield brokerage house of Scott & Amann, who returned from Rawhide this morning, expresses the opinion that within a year that camp will be the largest gold-producer in the State. "When a man is broke in Rawhide," said Mr. Scott, "he can always eat. All he has to do is to go to some lease and pan out breakfast money. There is rich ore on every dump, and every man is made welcome."

H. W. Knickerbocker sent this one to a Reno newspaper:

Gold, Gold, Gold! The wise men of old sought an alchemy whereby they could transmute the base metals into gold. It was a fruitless quest then; it is a needless quest now. Rawhide has been discovered! No flowers bloom upon her rock-ribbed bosom. No dimpling streams kiss her soil into verdure, to flash in lamellated silver 'neath the sunbeam's touch. No flowers, nor food, no beauty, nor utility on the surface; but from her desert-covered heart Rawhide is pouring a stream of yellow gold out upon the world which is translatable, not simply into food and houses and comfort, but also into pictures and poetry and music and all those things that minister in an objective way to the development of a full-orbed manhood.

Joseph S. Jordan, the well-known Nevada mining editor, filed this dispatch to the newspapers of his string on the Coast:

Right through what is now the main street of Rawhide, in the days of '49, the makers of California passed on their way to the new Eldorado. They had many hardships through which to pass before reaching the gold which was their lure, and thousands that went through the hills of Rawhide never reached their goal. They were massacred by the Indians, or fell victims to the thirst and heat of the desert, and for many years the way across the plains was marked by the whitening bones of the pathfinders. And here all the while lay the treasures of Captain Kidd, the ransoms of crowns.

Harry Hedrick, the veteran journalist of Far Western mining camps, sent his newspaper this:

To stand on twenty different claims in one day, as I have done; to take the virgin rock from the ledge, to reduce it to pulp and then to watch a string of the saint-seducing dross encircle the pan; to peer over the shoulder of the assayer while he takes the precious button from the crucible—these are the convincing things about this newest and greatest of gold camps. It is not a novelty to have assays run into the thousands. In fact, it is commonplace. To report strikes of a few hundred dollars to the ton seems like an anticlimax.

There were scores of actual happenings in Rawhide that make it possible for me to say in reviewing the vigorous publicity campaign which marked its first year's phenomenal growth, that ninety per cent. of the correspondence, including the special dispatches sent from the camp and from Reno, which was published in newspapers of the United States, was not only based on fact but was literally true in so far as any newspaper reporter can be depended upon accurately to describe events.

ASK any high-class newspaper owner or editor to express his sentiments regarding the "faking" which formed about ten per cent. of the Rawhide press work described herein and he will tell you that such work is a reproach to journalism. Maybe it is, but we are living in times when such work on the part of press-agents is the rule and not the exception. The publicity-agent who can successfully perform this way is generally able to command an annual stipend as big as that of the President of the United States. There was nothing criminal about the performance in Rawhide, because there was no intentional misrepresentation regarding the character or quality of any mine in the Rawhide camp. Correspondents were repeatedly warned to be extremely careful not to overstep the bounds in this regard.

Confessedly there are grades of "faking" which no press-agent would care to stoop to.

Somewhere in De Quincey's "Confessions of an Opium Eater" he describes one of his pipe-dreams as perfect moonshine, and, like the sculptured imagery of the pendulous lamp in "Christabel," *all carved from the carver's brain.* Rawhide and Reno correspondents were guilty of very little work which De Quincey's description would exactly fit. There was a basis for nearly everything they wrote about, even the alleged discovery of Death Valley Scotty's secret storehouse of wealth, that story having been in circulation in Nevada, although not theretofore published, for upward of eighteen months. Unsubstantial, baseless, ungrounded fiction had been resorted to, it is true, during the Manhattan boom, in a single story about the madman in charge of the hoist on the Jumping Jack, but this was an exception to the rule and the story was harmless.

AMONG THE "BIG FELLOWS"

IF YOU don't think the character of the press-agent's work during the Rawhide boom was comparatively high class and harmless, dear reader, you really have another "think" coming. In the August number of ADVENTURE I related how at a time when Goldfield Consolidated was wobbling in price on the New York Curb and the market needed support, just prior to the smash in the market price of the stock from $7 to around $3.50, the New York *Times* printed in a conspicuous position on its financial page a news story to the effect that J. P. Morgan & Company were about to take over the control of that company. That's an example of a *harmful* "fake," the coarse kind that Wall Street occasionally uses to catch suckers.

Here is another:

Thompson, Towle & Company, members of the New York Stock Exchange, issue a weekly newspaper called the *News Letter*. Much of its space is given over to a review of the copper situation, at the mines and in the share markets. W. B. Thompson, head of the firm, he of Nipissing market manipulation fame, is interested to the extent of millions in Inspiration, Utah Copper, Nevada Consolidated, Mason Valley and other copper-mining companies. On January 25, 1911, when both the copper metal and copper share markets were sick, and both the price of the metal and the shares were on the eve of a decline, which temporarily ensued, the *News Letter*, in an article headed "Copper," said:

> Every outcrop in the country has been examined and it is not known where one can look for new properties.

The readers of the *News Letter* were asked to believe that no more copper mines would be discovered in this country and that, because of this and other conditions which it mentioned, the supply of the metal must soon be exhausted and the price of the metal and of copper securities must advance.

The statement in the *News Letter* that every outcrop in the country has been examined and that it is not known where one can look for new properties—well, if the whole population of North America agreed in a body to accept the job of prospecting the Rocky Mountains and Sierra Nevada Mountains alone they could hardly perform the job in a lifetime. There are outcrops in these mountains that have never been seen by man because of their inaccessibility.

The use of the automobile has undoubtedly been responsible in the past few years for an impetus to the discovery of mines which is calculated to double the mineral product of this country in the next two decades, and who shall say what the flying-machine will accomplish in this regard? Further, new smelting processes and improved reduction facilities generally are daily reducing the cost of treatment of ores and are making commercially valuable low-grade ore-bodies heretofore passed up as worthless.

The best opinion of mining men in this country is that our mineral resources have not yet been "skimmed" and that the mining ground of the Western country has not yet been well "scratched."

Therefore, the statement made in a newspaper which is supposedly devoted to the interests of investors, that it need not be expected that more copper mines are going to be discovered, is a snare calculated to trap the unwary.

The foregoing is an example of a very harmful but comparatively crude fake, employed by some promoters in Wall Street of the multimillionaire class when their stocks need market support.

Here is a specimen of the *insidious* brand of get-rich-quick fake. On March 7, 1911, the New York *Sun* printed in the second column of its front page the following dispatch:

> TACOMA, Wash., March 6.—F. Augustus Heinze has struck it rich again; this time it's a fortune in the Porcupine gold fields in Canada.
>
> Charles E. Herron, a Nome mining man, who has just returned from the new gold fields, is authority for the statement that Heinze is "inside the big money." He has bought the Foster group of claims, adjoining the celebrated Dome mine, from which it is estimated that $25,000,000 will be gleaned this year and for the development of which a railroad is now under construction.
>
> The Porcupine gold field, according to Herron, is one of the wonders of the age. One prospector has stripped the vein for a distance of fifty feet and polished it in places, so that gold is visible all along. His trench is three feet deep and he asks $200,000 cash for it as it stands.
>
> A party of Alaskans offered the owner of this claim $50,000 a shot for all the ore that could be blown out with two sticks of dynamite, but he refused.

Press-work like the foregoing is more than likely to separate the public wrongfully from its money.

The item serves as an excellent example of one of 'the impalpable and cunningly devised tricks that fool the wisest and which landed you' that I promised, at the beginning of "My Adventures with Your Money," to lay bare. I said in my foreword in the April number of ADVENTURE:

> 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 where 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?

The New York *Sun* article says it is estimated that $25,000,000 will be gleaned this year from the Dome mine in Porcupine. The truth is, no engineer has ever appraised the ore in sight in the entire mine, according to any statements yet issued, at anything like half of that amount gross, and the mine itself can not possibly produce so much as $100,000 this year.

A mill of 240 tons per diem capacity has been ordered by the management and it is expected will be in operation by October first, but no sooner.* The ore, according to H. P. Davis's *Porcupine Hand Book*, an accepted authority, "has been stated to average from $10 to $12 a ton." The lowest estimated cost of mining and milling is $6. A fair estimate of profits would, therefore, be $5 per ton, not allowing for any expenses of mine-exploration in other directions on the property or other incidental outlay, which will undoubtedly amount to $1 per ton on the production. The production of 240 tons of ore per day at $4 per ton net profit would mean net returns of $28,800 per month. If the mill runs throughout October, November and December of this year the company will "glean" $86,400 during 1911, and not $25,000,000, as the New York *Sun* article suggests.†

How great an exaggeration the New York *Sun's* $25,000,000 estimate is may be gathered from the statement that to glean $25,000,000 in one year from any mine where the ore assays $11 on an average, and the cost of mining, milling and new development is $7, the gross value of the tonnage in the mine that is milled during the one year must be at least $53,571,000. Further, to reduce such a quantity of that quality of ore to bullion in a single year would require the erection of mills of 17,260 tons per day capacity. As mentioned, the actual per diem capacity of the mill now under construction is 240 tons.‡

Undoubtedly the Dome mining company flotation will soon be made and the public will be "allowed" to subscribe for the shares or buy them on the New York Curb at a figure agreeable to the promoters. This seems certain, for otherwise why this raw press-work?

The article says that a number of Alaskans offered money at the rate of $50,000 a shot for all the ore that could be blown out with two sticks of dynamite, but were refused. There never was a statement made by any wild-catter now behind prison bars in any literature I ever saw that could approach this one in flagrant misrepresentation of facts. All the ore that could be displaced in one shot with two sticks of dynamite would not exceed four tons. In order to repay the investor it would be necessary, therefore, that this ore average better than $12,500 per ton. The New York *Sun's* story says that notwithstanding this offer the owner was willing to sell the whole property for $200,000. Imagine this: There are four tons of rock on the property worth $12,500 per ton, for a distance of 50 feet the gold shimmers on the surface, and there are hundreds of thousands of tons of rock in the same kind of formation on the same property, but still the owner is willing to dispose of all of it for $200,000! The statement is preposterous and outrageous. It is the kind described by De Quincey as "all carved from the carver's brain."

THE ATTACK ON B. H. SCHEFTELS & COMPANY

NOW, about the "reverse English" in this line of press-work. Similar ways and means, dear reader, that are just as scientific in their insidiousness have been used upon you to poison your mind *against* the value of mining investments of competing promoters, when it has been found to the interest of powerful men to bring this about.

When the offices of B. H. Scheftels & Company, with which I was identified, were

* The fire of July will delay installation until a later date.

† In arriving at these figures I am more than fair. Recent estimates of the average value of the ores is $8, and I know of some estimates by very competent mining men that are as low as $4. Some engineers say justification is lacking for even a $4 estimate. The Dome is by no means a proved commercial success as yet from the mine standpoint, although the possessor of much ore, because of the uncertain average values.

‡ It has been destroyed by the July fire and must be replaced.

raided in seven cities by Special Agent Scarborough (since forced to resign) of the Department of Justice of the United States Government, in September, 1910, two of the men who had been active in bringing about the raid assembled in the parlor of the Astor House the newspaper men assigned to cover the story by New York and Brooklyn newspapers. There they gave out the information that Ely Central, which I had advised the purchase of at from 50 cents per share up to $4 and down again, was actually under option to me and my associates in large blocks at 5 cents. As a matter of fact, the average price paid over for this option stock in real hard money by my people was in excess of 90 cents per share, without adding a penny to the cost for expenses of mining engineers, publicity or anything else. My people had also partly paid for a block bought at private sale at the rate of $3 a share, besides buying tens of thousands of shares in the open market at $4 and higher. The New York *Times* and the New York *Sun*, two newspapers which make capital of the rectitude of both their news and advertising columns, published this statement, along with forty others that were just as false, if not more so. So did the New York *American* and the other Hearst newspapers of the United States.

The New York *Times* story related how I had personally cleaned up in fifteen months not less than $3,000,000 as the result of my market operations. As a matter of fact, I and my associates had impoverished ourselves trying to support the stock in the open market against the concerted attacks of rival promoters and other powerful interests on whose financial corns we had tread. Every well-informed person in Wall Street knows this.

The New York *Times* stated that every man connected with B. H. Scheftels & Company had tried to obtain membership on the New York Curb and that all of the requests were turned down. No application was ever made for membership because, first, the rules of the Curb forbade corporation memberships and, second, the Scheftels company already employed several members on regular salary and more than a dozen members on a commission basis.

It was also stated that B. H. Scheftels & Company applied to the Boston Curb for membership and that their application was rejected. This was also a lie made out of whole cloth.

In three months, the New York *Times* said, no less than 400,000 letters had been received in reply to circulars sent out by B. H. Scheftels & Company. This is an average of over 5,000 letters for each business day during the period of three months. The exaggeration here was about 5,000 per cent.

All of the properties promoted by the Scheftels company were stated in the New York *Times* article to be "practically worthless." This was utter rubbish and so misleading that had I been accused of pocketpicking the effect could not have been more harmful.

Rawhide Coalition had produced upward of $400,000 in gold bullion, had probably been "high graded" to the extent of nearly as much more, according to the judgment of well-posted men on the ground, and not less than five miles of underground development work had been done on the property. Development work and production had never ceased for a day. Besides, when the Rawhide camp was still in its swaddling-clothes, I had originally purchased the controlling interest for Nat. C. Goodwin & Company at a valuation of $700,000 for the mine.

The control of Ely Central had been taken over by B. H. Scheftels & Company and paid for at a valuation well in excess of a million dollars for the property, and upward of $200,000 had been spent in mine development during the fourteen months of the Scheftels quasi-control. Jumbo Extension was a famous producer of Goldfield. Subsequent to the raid one-twentieth of its acreage was sold to the Goldfield Consolidated for $195,000. On July 15th of the current year the company disbursed to stockholders $95,000 in dividends, being 10 per cent on the par of the issued capitalization. Bovard Consolidated, which was promoted at 10 cents a share as a speculation, had turned out to be a "lemon" after a period of active mine development, the values in the ore pinching out at depth, but B. H. Scheftels & Company had immediately informed stockholders to this effect.

THE New York *Times* stated that B. H. Scheftels & Company sold Ely Central stock to the amount of five or six millions in cash and made a profit

of $3,000,000 on the transactions. The books of the Scheftels company show that the company not only made no money on the sale of Ely Central but actually lost vast sums.

The New York *Times* said that it had been advertised that a carload of ore had been shipped from the Ely Central mine as a sample, but that the Government had not been able to find out to whom this carload of ore was consigned. The truth was that the consignment had been made to the best-known smelter company in the United States, that the ore averaged seven per cent. copper, and that it could not have been shipped out of camp except over a single railroad which has the monopoly—an easy transaction to trace.

B. H. Scheftels & Company were accused by the New York *Times* of clearing up nearly $600,000 in three months on the promotion of the South Quincy Copper Company. The facts were that, after receiving $30,000 in subscriptions and returning every subscription on demand because of the slump in metallic copper, the Scheftels company abandoned the promotion and never even applied for listing of the stock in any market. A large sum was lost by the Scheftels company here.

Even in stating the penalty for misuse of the mails, which was the crime charged by the Government agent who has since been compelled to resign for conduct objectionable to the Government, the New York *Times* stated that the punishment was five years in prison, which was more hop-skip-and-go-merry mistaking. The crime is a misdemeanor and the maximum penalty for an offense is eighteen months.

I have counted not less than five hundred unfounded and misleading statements of this kind regarding myself and associates that have been made in the past year by newspapers and press associations. The shadow has been taken for the substance.

Now, the Scheftels raid, I shall prove in due time, was the culmination of as bitterly waged a campaign of misrepresentation and financial brigandage as has ever been recorded. Chronologically an introduction of the subject is out of place here. The effect, however, of the press-agenting which formed a part of the campaign of destruction is pertinent to the topic under consideration.

The immediate result was that thousands of stockholders in the various mining companies that had been sponsored by the Scheftels company were robbed of an aggregate sum mounting into millions, which represented the ensuing decline in market value of the stocks.

The newspaper campaign of misrepresentation and vilipendage was essential to the plans and purposes of the men who sicked the Government on to me. The final destruction of public confidence in the securities with which I was identified became necessary to justify the whole proceeding in the public mind.

On the surface of the play it was made to appear that the Government of the United States had reached out righteously for the suppression of a dangerous band of criminals. The story in the New York *Times* and other newspapers on the day after the raid was justification made to this end.

The fact that tens of thousands of innocent stockholders might lose their all, as a result of the foul use of powerful maladroit publicity-machinery, did not stop the conspirators for a moment. I had a youthful past and, therefore, the newspapers took little chance in publishing anything without investigation and proof that might be offered. And they went the limit, particularly those newspapers that are in the habit of permitting the use of their news columns from time to time to help along the publicity measures of powerful interests.

Contrasted with the comparatively harmless "faking" that characterized Rawhide's press-agenting, the raw work of the newspapers just described is as different as angel-cake from antimony. If you are not yet convinced, hearken to this:

THE POWER OF THE PUBLIC PRINT

IN THE *Saturday Evening Post* of December 31, 1910, there appeared an article headed, "Launching a Corporation. How the Pirates and Merchantmen of Commerce Set Sail. By Edward Hungerford," from which I quote, without the omission or change of so much as a comma. Referring, in my opinion, to Ely Central, promoted by myself and associates, Mr. Hungerford says:

> Here is a typical case—a mining property recently exploited on the curb market, the shipyard of many of these pirate craft: a prospect located not far from one of the bonanza mines of the West

was capitalized by a number of men who, after they had convinced themselves that it would not pay, dropped it and gave little thought to the company they had organized.

One day they received through a lawyer an offer of four thousand dollars for the even million shares of stock they had prepared to issue at a face value of five dollars a share. They were told that a wealthy young man was willing to take a four-thousand-dollar flier on the property, on the outside chance that it might develop ore. The deal was made. Soon after a well-known man was named as a part owner of the mine, which "promised" to enrich all those interested in it.

That was not the first time that the marketable value of a name that is known had been used to exploit a corporation. Any man of standing has many such offers.

The shares of stock that had been purchased for four cents each were peddled on the curb at fifty cents. Then they were advanced to sixty cents. Soon a "market"—so called—was made and the stock found a ready sale. Point by point it was advanced until it actually was eagerly sought by investors, who were not only willing but eager to pay four dollars a share for it.

Mr. Hungerford states in the foregoing: "This mine was capitalized by a number of men who dropped out after they convinced themselves that it would not pay." The statement is false if it refers to Ely Central, as I believe it does. The chief owners and organizers attempted to promote it through a New York Stock Exchange house on the New York Curb at above $7 per share, or at a valuation of more than $8,000,000 for the mine, but the bankers' panic of 1907–8 intervened, and for *that reason* they quit. The stock sold in 1906 at above $7.50 a share on the New York Curb, two years before I became identified with it.

Mr. Hungerford says that one day these men *received through a lawyer AN OFFER OF $4,000 FOR A MILLION SHARES OF STOCK, and they sold.*

How cruelly false this statement is nobody can feel more than myself. The average price paid by my associates in hard money for the controlling interest in the 1,600,000 shares of capitalization, as already mentioned, was above 90 cents, or considerably more than one million dollars in all. An additional $600,000 or more was used to protect the market for the stock, making our cost, without adding a cent for promotion expenses, about $1.50 per share instead of four cents—more than $2,000,000 for the property and not $5,000.

Line by line and word for word I could analyze the statement of Mr. Hungerford and show that 95 per cent. of it is false both in premise and deduction. But this would be only cumulative on the one point. My excuse for mentioning the item is to give a striking example of the startling force and power which attaches to insidious newspaper publicity of the kind quoted from the New York *Times*. Mr. Hungerford "fell" for it, and innocently lent himself to the purposes of the men who sponsored the story by himself passing it on to the readers of the *Saturday Evening Post*.

In the *World's Work* for March of this year an article appeared headed "The Get-Rich-Quick Game." It cited me as one of the bad men in the business. A list of men classed as get-rich-quick swindlers was presented on the word of the editor of the *Financial World*. All of the mining companies I was ever identified with are mentioned as of that class, numbering sixteen. The editor of the *Financial World* is referred to in the *World's Work* as having consistently fought flotations of this character and watched them more closely than any other editor. The *World's Work* features its financial articles and devotes many pages to financial advertising. It caters to investors.

I have a publication before me dated New York, May 15, 1907, named *The Eye Opener*, which charges Louis Guenther, managing editor of the *Financial World*, first, with being a blackmailer; second, with being connected in a business way with the original 520 per cent. Miller Get-Rich-Quick Syndicate and the E. S. Dean blind-pool swindle. This same issue of the *Eye Opener* quotes an article from the *New York Mining Reporter* which states that the police authorities of New York and Chicago can give Guenther's record in connection with the Miller and Dean affairs, Alfred Goslin, and other swindles and swindlers.

The *Eye Opener* states further that Guenther was prosecuted by a number of Chicago advertisers and that twenty-three affidavits stating that Guenther had endeavored to "hold up" different companies for advertising were lodged with the authorities in Chicago. These affidavits, the *Eye Opener* says, stated that the amount of money demanded by Guenther in order to render the companies immune from the attacks in his publication ranged from $1,000 to $5,000 each. "It is a noticeable fact," the *Eye Opener* goes on, "that various mining companies that advertise through

the Bradford-Guenther Advertising Agency, or that place their advertising with Rudolph Guenther of New York, a brother of Louis Guenther, are absolutely immune from attacks in the *Financial World*, but that scores of similar companies operating along the same lines which do not contribute to the Guenther advertising outfit are made targets for the abuse and vituperation of this human vulture." The *Eye Opener* continues:

> The Guenthers also handled the advertising business of the E. S. Dean "blind-pool" swindle that robbed other dupes of nearly a million dollars. Members of that gang charged the Guenthers with having cheated the syndicate out of tens of thousands of dollars in carrying on the advertising campaign, that they paid in advance for the advertising, and that when the concern was put out of business by the police the Guenthers had about $23,000 of their money which had been paid for advertising, which advertising was never inserted. As the Guenthers have never been able to prove anything to the contrary, the charge is undoubtedly correct. The Guenthers also handled the advertising for three or four other similar get-rich-quick swindles in New York until they were closed up by the authorities, when Louis evidently thought the climate of New York was becoming most too hot for his operations and he moved to Chicago. Soon after going there he took up the sale of Texas oil shares and disposed of a large amount of the stock. The stock proved absolutely worthless, and the suckers who believed the Guenther tales about it lost every dollar they invested. Shortly afterward it was shown that Guenther was connected with a mining company which was a fake and a swindle, and the stock of which was worthless, and that numerous victims lost all of their money by taking Guenther's advice.

How about the insidious character of the kind of publicity I treat of here? Whom would you blame, dear reader—yourself or the *World's Work*—if you happened to fall for some "skin" game that was advertised or boosted in the *Financial World?*

My experience with the Guenther outfit was short and quick. They were doing the advertising for a San Francisco promoter. The Goldfield-Tonopah Advertising Agency, of which I was owner and manager for a period, secured the account. The first move of the Guenthers to get the business back was this: They wrote the advertiser that they would charge only 25 cents a line for advertising on the financial page of the New York *Herald*. At that time the flat rate was 30 cents and there was no deviation. The advertiser promptly inquired of me whether my agency was overcharging him. I wrote the New York *Herald* and asked that the Guenthers be called to account. The *Herald* people acknowledged my letter, said they deprecated such methods and also remarked that they had cautioned the Guenther outfit.

I sent the *Herald's* correspondence to the advertiser and showed up the trick, which was palpably to lose 5 cents a line on the *Herald* business and make it up in other directions.

From that day on, the *Financial World* began to attack me and my associates. My scrap-book holds by actual count clippings containing 230 libelous statements made in the pages of the *Financial World* regarding me and the enterprises with which I have been identified.

The *World's Work* has "fallen" for the *Financial World* and, like the *Saturday Evening Post*, which "fell" for the New York *Times*, has been used to beguile the investing public.

THE purpose here has been to show the imposition on the American public which is being practised every day in the news columns of daily newspapers and other publications, but I have been able to convey to the reader only the barest kind of suggestion as to the depths to which this deception is practised. Limitations of space prohibit further encroachment, or I would fain extend my list of examples indefinitely.

We hear much these days about the abuses of journalism. Much of the criticism is leveled at publishers who lend the use of their columns for "boosting" that is calculated to help their advertisers. But little attention is paid to that other evil, namely, the use of the news columns for the purpose of destroying business rivals, political rivals and enemies generally of men who wield sufficient influence to employ the method.

This ramification of the subject appeals to me as of at least as much consequence to citizens as is the one of inspired puffery. I believe the public is going to hear much more of this feature of newspaper abuse in the future than it has in the past. The community is waking up and is manifesting a desire to learn more about the heinous practise.

RAWHIDE

TO RETURN to Rawhide. As a result of the "scientific" press-agenting which the camp received, a frenzied stampede en-

sued. The rush was of such magnitude that it stands unparalleled in Western mining history. Not less than 60,000 people journeyed across the desolate, wind-swept reaches of Nevada's mountainous desert during the excitement. Not less than 12,000 of these remained on the ground for a period of several months.

Mining-camp records were broken. The maximum population of Goldfield during the height of its boom was approximately 15,000, but it had taken more than three years and the discovery of the world's highest grade gold mine to attract this number of people. Cripple Creek for two years after its discovery was little more than a hamlet. Leadville during its first year was hardly heard of.

The scenes enacted in Rawhide when the boom was at its height beggar description. Real estate advanced in value in half a year in as great degree as Goldfield's did in three years. Corner lots on the Main Street sold as high as $17,000. Ground rent for plots 25x100 feet commanded $300 a month. During the day as well as at night the gaming-tables of the pleasure-palaces were banked with players, and the adventuresome were compelled literally to fight their way through the serried ranks of onlookers to take a hand in the play. The miners were flush. Many assay offices, accessories of "high-graders," were turning out bullion from extraordinarily rich ore easily hypothecated by a certain element among the men working underground.

The opening of "Tex" Rickard's gambling-resort in Rawhide was celebrated by an orgy that cut a new notch for functions of this kind in Southern Nevada. The bar receipts aggregated over $2,000. The games were reported to have won for Mr. Rickard $25,000 on the first day. Champagne was the common beverage. Day was merged into night and night into day. Rouged courtesans of Stingaree Gulch provided the dash of femininity that was a prerequisite to the success of the grand *bal masque* that concluded the festivities. For the nonce social cast was utterly obliterated. Months afterward, when flames wiped out the commercial section of the town, the leading dance-hall of the camp, situated a stone's throw from "Tex" Rickard's saloon, at the foot of Stingaree Gulch, was preëmpted without the slightest hesitation and promptly converted into headquarters for the distribution of relief supplies.

On the densely crowded streets fashionably tailored Easterners, digging-booted prospectors, grimy miners, hustling brokers, promoters, mine operators and mercantile men, with here and there a scattering of "tin horns," jostled one another and formed an ever shifting kaleidoscopic maelstrom of humanity.

In the environing hills could be heard the creak of the windlass, the clank of the chain, and the buzz and chug of the gasoline hoist, punctuated at frequent intervals by sharp detonations of exploding dynamite.

Outgoing ore-laden freighters, hauled by ten-span mule teams, made almost impassable the roads connecting the camp with near-by points of ingress. Coming from the opposite direction, heavily laden wagons carrying lumber and supplies, and automobiles crowded to the guards with human freight, blocked the roadways.

Rawhide's publicity campaign from a press-agent's standpoint was a howling success. From the standpoint of the promoter, however, results were mixed. Nat. C. Goodwin & Company were enabled to make more than a financial stand-off of their promotion of the Rawhide Coalition Mines Company, but they did not profit to the extent they might have, had the times been propitious.

I was not long in discovering that my first deductions, made at the inception of the Rawhide boom, namely, that the country was in no financial mood to consider favorably the claims to recognition of a new mining camp, were right, and that it would have been better had the birth of Rawhide been delayed for a period or until the country could catch its financial breath again. Crowds came to Rawhide, but few with money. Flattering as was the extent of the inrush, it was easy to see that if the publicity campaign had been suppressed for a while, the resultant harvest would have been immeasurably greater. Had financial conditions been right, the effort to give the camp "scientific" publicity would undoubtedly have been crowned with results for "the inside" of a character that would have meant much larger sums of money in the bank.

Nat. C. Goodwin & Company recognized, too, that they had been working at a great disadvantage by attempting to finance a great mining enterprise at so great a dis-

tance from Eastern financial centers as Reno. We were hardly a match for the Eastern promoter who, because of the handy location of his offices, was enabled to keep in close personal contact with his following.

The usual happening in mining took place at Rawhide. The extraordinary rich surface deposits opened up into vast bodies of medium and low-grade ore at depth. Rawhide's one requirement appeared to be a railroad, and a milling plant of 500 or 600 tons a day capacity. It was decided that I should come East and attempt to finance the company for deep mine development, mill and railroad construction, and also to go through with the deal made with the vendors of the controlling interest. The time period for payments had been extended for Nat. C. Goodwin & Company, and the option to purchase was now valued by the Goodwin company at a fortune.

In New York, over the signature of Nat. C. Goodwin the firm for a while, under my direction, conducted a display advertisement newspaper campaign in favor of the issue, which was now listed on the New York Curb. Hayden, Stone & Company, bankers, of Boston and New York, who have since successfully financed the Ray Consolidated and Chino copper companies, undertook to send their engineer to Rawhide to make an examination of the property with a view to financing the company for railroad and milling equipment amounting to upward of a million dollars. Under the impetus of this news and the Nat. C. Goodwin advertising campaign the market price of the shares shot up to $1.46, or a valuation in excess of four million dollars for the property.

A few weeks later a sharp market break occurred. Some one got the news before Nat. C. Goodwin & Company did that the million-dollar financing proposition had been acted upon adversely by the engineer. The company had done no systematic underground development work. An enormous amount of work had been done, but it was accomplished under the leasing system. The leasers, who, because of lack of milling facilities, were unable to dispose at a profit of ore that assayed less than $40 per ton, had bent all of their efforts toward bringing to the surface high-grade shipping ore and had made no effort at all to block out and put into sight the known great tonnages of medium and low-grade. Engineers take nothing for granted and this one reported that the proposition of spending a million dollars should be turned down because a commensurate tonnage had not been blocked out and put in sight.

To this day the camp has struggled along without adequate milling facilities, but has been practically self-sustaining. From a physical standpoint the mines to-day are conceded to be of great promise. The company is honestly and efficiently managed. The president, from the day of incorporation to this hour, has been E. W. King, formerly president of the Montana Society of Mining Engineers, a director of a number of Montana banks, and recognized as one of the ablest gold-mine managers of the West. M. Scheeline, president of the Scheeline Banking & Trust Company of Reno, who ranks as the oldest and most conservative banker in the State of Nevada, has been treasurer from the outset.

The history of Rawhide is still in the making and its final chapter has not yet been written by any manner of means. Nor is it within the pale of possibility that such latent productive potentialities as have been established at Rawhide can long remain in great part dormant.

In Wall Street Nat. C. Goodwin & Company's deal with the vendors of the control of Rawhide Coalition was later financed to a successful finish. It was done by appealing to the speculative instinct of that class of investors who habitually gamble in mining shares. The effort to finance the mining company itself, to a point where it might take rank with the great dividend-paying gold mines of the West, was not so successful.

(What happened to Mr. Rice in New York's great financial mart during a period of two years, in which his activities embraced the financing and promotion of a number of important mining enterprises, will form the subject of the concluding chapters of "My Adventures with Your Money.")

JOSÉ BOBO, CHEERFUL VILLAIN

by John A. Avirette

JAN. 1, 1911—Well this is the day we swear off. Don Natividad Osuna and I swore off this morning, for Benino crawled into the window during the night and stole the last bottle. It is forty miles to Moria, so we took the pledge. The Human Race is a good race—yet it generally loses the race—in Sinaloa.

Don Natividad has sent for José Bobo, and he sends word that he will be here tomorrow. José is a character! In person he is very tall and very dark—sort of a cross between Jack Johnson, the pugilist, and four lengths of stovepipe. He is a full-blooded Indian by descent, being a distant relative of Montezuma. His character is somewhat like "Joseph's coat"—a thing of many colors. Like Joseph, he is envied of his brethren; for he is the most double-dyed, artistic, and remarkable liar on the Pacific Coast.

Jan. 2—José arrived about ten o'clock A. M. with a most engratiating smile. His wife, he said, was sick. This statement shows the inborn skill of José—whose wife is healthier than a brindle cow. Of course, he will now have to have ten or twelve dollars with which to hire a woman to nurse her during his absence. He also came barefooted and hatless. This means that he must be furnished these articles before we start out. It also means that his stories to Don Natividad about the gold-veins are lies, and that he is trying to collect beforehand—knowing that he will get nothing on his return. I have taken Don Natividad out in the orange grove and explained to him my views about José's conduct. He fully agreed with me, but said: "Ah, Don Juan, but I *saw* the *gold* in the rocks that he brought back!" I then gave it up, for Don Natividad is dense between the ears and is as credulous as a stock-buying "tenderfoot." What's the use to convince a man against his will—o' the wisp?

"Very well," said I, "*you* let him have the money and hat and *I* will pay him at the rate of fifty cents a day, all that his time amounts to, in *excess* of that." We went back to the house and there José was given ten dollars, a nine-dollar hat, and a fifty-cent pair of leathern *guarachas* (sandals). He then went away, saying that he was going to take the money to his wife. He will probably bury it under a stone, then hide in the woods until sufficient time has elapsed to cover his pretended trip. He never gave his wife a dollar in all her life, for he is a genuine Mexican peon.

Jan. 3—José is back this morning. He says that his wife is slightly better, although still very ill. I winked at Don Natividad—who looked worried at my temerity. What if I should offend José and cause him to refuse to show the gold-veins? Some people could live thirty years in Washington, D. C., and still trust Mankind. One of these is Don Natividad.

José is a liar and a rascal, but he is an engaging liar and a charming rascal. You see, I am now turning the medal over—to show the other side. José never gets tired. He has the endurance of a deer-hound, and is as good a trailer. He knows every trail and mountain spring within a hundred miles. He can out-nimrod Nimrod himself in hunting, for he is an absolutely dead shot, and knows the habits, tastes and idiosyncrasies of all the "wild things." He never forgets.

He knows all the superstitions, stories and legends of the Indians. In other words, he is an incomparable companion out in the mountains, if you take him as he is and don't try to make him over. There is plenty of big game where we are going, so, vein or no vein, I can get some fine hunting. Don Natividad wants to go, but he can not leave this fine ranch of his while the orange-picking and cane-cutting is going on. He has a splendid ranch; in fact, this "Caña Rancho" is an ideal tropical farm.

Jan. 4—The great Sierra Madre Range comes close to the Pacific Ocean in the State of Sinaloa. North and south, for the whole length of the State, it parallels the ocean. Between the Piaxtla and the Ventanas rivers the range sends out a bold spur, straight toward the ocean. This spur terminates abruptly in a vast mountain that is known as the "Buen Retiro." The great slopes of the Buen Retiro are virgin and untouched forests, habited by jaguars, mountain lion, wildcat, peccary, deer and turkeys. Here is a hunter's paradise, peopled by a thousand breeds of wild-things and little trodden of man. From the western fall of this great dome is born the Quelite River, a romantic and wildly beautiful stream that foams through a hundred canyons, glints down a thousand falls and finally debouches from the hills at the Caña ranch.

It was on the head of this stream, as José averred, that the gold-veins were to be found. Here, said he, while hunting deer, he had come upon the ledges and had broken off a rock—to find it yellow with gold. Well, anyway, I would go and see.

We to-day got in two pack-mules and rigged up two small and tight packs. We are going on foot, for there are no trails in this region and we must cut our way up through the jungles, climb, scramble and sweat, as best we may.

JAN. 5—We started from the Caña ranch at daybreak. We had beans, flour, salt, coffee, sugar and bacon on the red mule. On the gray mule were packed our picks, frying-pan, coffee-pot, blankets and spare ammunition. For two miles above the ranch we had a pack-trail, then we had three miles of cow-trail; then we had a bad deer-trail that soon degenerated into a squirrel-track and finally climbed a tree.

I must here introduce the two mules and the dog. We had two dogs starting out, but our main dog got gay with a large wasp-nest just as we struck the "squirrel-track" and, after some pyro-gymnastics and attempts to imitate Caruso, started home at wireless speed. The other dog was more gentlemanly in his deportment. The red mule is named Anita or Little Annie. The gray mule whinnies (at corn time) to the name of Poche. *Poche* means several things—such as "abbreviated," "bob-tail," "very short," etc., etc. I have arbitrated—and call him "Bob."

Little Annie is like many other ladies—*i. e.*, she keeps you guessing. If you guess wrong, there is something doing. For a while I tried the vaunted power of kindness, but it wouldn't work. "Here," said I, at last, "is the 'eternal feminine,' and a primitive one at that!" After a period of reflection, profanity and repacking, I remembered the touching story of the "Troglodite-Cave-Man." Rising with a fierce cast of countenance, I assumed a terrible "French" air and a club. I smote Little Annie with savage vim and awed her with profanity. She now loves me and will eat out of my hand, as ladies do—who can't work the sucker.

Bob is patient, kind and sturdy—a splendid pack-mule. But he is no gentleman. I have never seen a gentleman strike a lady; hence my inference. Bob kicks Little Annie in the slats on the slightest provocation. He is very ungallant.

We camped under the tree that the trail went up. Camped for lunch and a rest. Afterward we wormed our way up, up, up, hewing and cutting a path through the untrodden jungle. As the sun went down we camped in a steep ravine; too tired to cook, so we ate some cold scraps and fed the dog, "Purpee," some raw bacon.

Jan. 6—We got up at dawn. Hearing some pheasants cluttering in the trees above us, I sneaked over with the 30-30 and killed a fine, fat cock. He made a great breakfast and helped fatten Purpee. We packed up and again tackled the jungle. By noon we had cut and squirmed our way up into a ridge where the going was more open. Here, the "Hot Country" jungle growth gave place to white-oak and madriño. We could now rest our arms and use our legs more speedily. About 4 P. M. a band of white-tail deer jumped up in our front and scuttled away through the tall grass. One of these imitated Lot's Wife—*i. e.*, turned

and looked back. Well, the 30-30 is a great gun. We fried venison steaks galore that night and ate them until José, I and the dog resembled Bill Taft. By the way, that starts me to thinking of "Martyred Presidents." Poor Bill! Everything he does or says is twisted into some kind of serpent by the public print. It is an awful thing to be traduced and vilified "José," said I, "did you ever hear of Bill Taft?"

José was not quite sure. "Was he a tall, slim man with a large head?"

"No, he was a big-in-the-middle and small at both ends."

"No," José said, "I never heard of him."

"Well," said I, "you are safe then, for you will never traduce him."

José seemed much mystified, but as he made no queries we spread our blankets, and were soon sound asleep.

Jan. 7—There were doings last night. About 2 A. M. Little Annie and Bob hobbled into camp in terror-stricken haste, while Purpee tried to bore a hole in the ground under my bed. When I sat up José was peering into the outer darkness, rifle in hand.

"What is it, José?" I asked.

For a time he made no reply, then he said, "I think it is a *Tigre.*"

In vain I looked for the jaguar and two "glowing eyeballs" that I had so often read about. I could see nothing and hear nothing, save the snorting mules, the whimpers of Purpee, and a distant owl.

Presently José said: "If it is a *tigre* I will soon know." He now rolled his leather "*moral*" (pouch) into a horn-like shape and proceeded to blow from it three or four short, hoarse notes.

In a few seconds a response came from a nearby ridge—in the sharp "*Hough, hough, hough, huh!*" of the male jaguar. No wonder that Bob and Little Annie were alarmed! José now built up a rousing fire, while I persuaded Purpee that he was still alive. He kept shivering and growling and snuggled up close for the rest of the night. There is something almost human about a dog.

ABOUT noon we camped under a great rock that jutted out over a tiny spring of clear, cold water. The hillsides about us were clothed with magnificent forests of live-oak and pine. Between the great trees the grass grew rank and lush. Now here was an ideal camp, where Bob and Annie (barring jaguars) might bray their blessings upon the giving gods. We were now at an altitude (aneroid) of 8,000 feet. From the top of our rock we could see the Coast-lands, miles below us. Ridge, canyon and plain stretched away into the distance, to meet, on the far horizon, the illimitable ocean. As the sun sank, I drank in the glorious beauty of it all and my soul sang a pæan of gratitude and love to the Great Master Who fashioned it.

Here I was, in the heart of primeval Nature. My stomach was full and my rifle true. I had a friend and a dog—and I pitied the poor, mad, money-crazed insects who rushed about in filthy cities. Then in my soul awoke vague atavistic half-memories, inherited from some hairy ancestor. I needed only to exchange my rifle for a club, and José for a cave-lady, to be perfectly harmonious with my environs. Three thousand years of banal convention fell from me in a trice. I was a male savage, hairy, naked and virile! I would kill a jaguar with my knotted club and drink his blood. I would —— —— a —— fool dog, anyhow! Purpee has knocked over the beanpot and scalded his tail—and now complains to the night of his sufferings! . . . With the stars came the whispering night-winds and as I lay and smoked and thought, the Sand-Man caught me.

Jan. 8—When I woke this morning I found that I had slept in my clothes and hadn't gone decently to bed. José had thoughtfully covered me with a blanket and had considerately let me lie. José improves on acquaintance—sometimes. We are now within a mile of his first gold-vein. I pour a libation to the shades of his great ancestor, Ananias.

THE gold-vein was not a gold-vein. It was simply a large dike impregnated with iron pyrite. Just plain "fools' gold" hidden away in these great mountains. Don Natividad is shy ten dollars and a hat. José is crestfallen and propitiatory, while I am going a-hunting. The game-trails around here all show jaguar tracks, so I will now put José at something that he understands better than mining.

There is no use getting huffy at an Indian, so here goes to grease up the guns and kill a deer for a jaguar-bait. This announcement brightened up José's face. He actu-

ally beamed—and had he preserved the tail of his anthropophagous ancestry, he would have wagged it. Purpee wagged for him, for Purpee likes guns—and deer-meat. Purpee resembles Taft more every day. At first he resembled Joe Cannon (barring whiskers), but now he waxes fuller, more majestic and judicial—with each meal. He is now too full for utterance—loaded with bread, venison and beans. "Purpee," said I, "you are a fine dog, but you sometimes show an error of judgment. Never apply hot beans to your tail; blow on 'em first and then take them internally. Last night you played bum politics—you must change your system." I am sure that Purpee understood me, for he almost smiled—somewhat tenderly, on account of the scald.

We killed a buck and two fawns. We had tied Purpee in camp to keep him from barking at deer. Purpee must have had an Irish ancestry. He chawed the rope and followed us. He showed his good sense and kept quiet, merely cocking his ears up inquiringly at the deer. We let him lick up the blood and increase his girth with the liver and lights. His return home was painful, for he ate grass and was heavy on his feet.

After supper we took the two fawns to a spring where jaguar-tracks were thick, and tied them to trees. José thought that the jaguars would scent them if they came to the spring for a drink. He now had another horn, made of bark. He thought he could imitate the barking cough of a jaguar with this, far better than with his leather pouch. As soon as it grew dark each of us climbed a tree, near a fawn. José now tried the new horn and while it worked like a charm, the jaguars wouldn't answer. About 10 P. M. I got sick of my job and went home. No mine, no jaguar.

Jan. 9—At sun-up we went over to look at our bait. A jaguar had come in the night, pulled down my fawn and had eaten about half of it. José smiled and said, "We get him now. They never go far away from their 'kill.'" Each of us again climbed a tree and José tried his horn once more. This time we got an immediate response, and within two minutes a great spotted cat bounded down the hill, voicing defiance for the truculent robber who dared molest his kill.

When the huge cat stopped, less than fifty yards away, I was trembling with fear lest I might miss. Pressing the 30-30 firmly against a limb, I drew a quick bead and let her go. The jaguar dropped like a stone, gave a convulsive shudder, rolled over and was dead. I was overjoyed, yet prudent enough to let José poke him first—to make sure that he was out. The shot had hit him in the shoulder, shattered his heart and had lodged in the opposite hip-joint.

We skinned him and started for camp. When we got there Bob and Little Annie started for home. It is remarkable how a scared mule can run, with the hobbles on, over a rough country. It took José all day to head them off and bring them back. After they were tied they still snorted and tried to break the ropes. Bob soon gave it up and began to feed, but Little Annie was not to be convinced—you see, she was a lady-mule. Purpee was also very uneasy and kept at my heels, growling and shivering at the smell of the big cat. We took the skin away and spread it on a big, flat rock. Purpee and Little Annie now soon grew quiet. The buck was fat and juicy, so we made jerky out of him.

Jan. 10—José's other vein was better. It was a genuine quartz-vein and carried a little free-gold. I sampled it for assay. He is a much better man than I thought. We start back to-morrow. Little Annie moseyed into camp while we were gone and ate up all the flour. It's the old story of Eve and the apple. Well, a man can't starve on beans and deer-meat. We are going to camp at the lower oak ridge and try to get some turkeys for Don Natividad, who is very fond of gobblers.

Jan. 11—To-day José killed two deer and five turkeys. I got only one deer and one turkey, so I was piqued at being out-hunted. After coming in with my game I left José skinning and making jerky, while I went out for another try. About a mile from camp I saw a commotion in the tall grass and was puzzled to make it out. I crept up close and climbed on a great rock. Peeping over, I saw a jaguar wallowing on the dead body of a doe. He played with it just as a cat plays with a mouse. I waited until he was still a moment, then put a Winchester bullet through his head. I was a proud man when I got back to camp with another beautiful skin. If cats have nine lives they don't have them in the head and heart. I proved that conclusively.

Jan. 12—Going back downhill, over a trail that is already cut, beats coming up all

to shakes. The mules were heavily loaded, but they made it. José's wife was at the ranch to meet us. She was as sound as a Missouri mule. Don Natividad wanted to roast José for lying, but I stopped him. "Let him alone," said I, "he is only a poor, poverty-stricken peon." When I paid José off I gave him twenty dollars and he was speechless with gratified surprise. Never in his whole life before had he held so much real money. Twenty dollars here—ten buried in the woods—*thirty whole dollars!* It was incredible! He hurried out into the woods and dug up the other ten. He now counted them (behind the corral) by the aid of a number of small stones. This time he was convinced. He took on a Morgan-Rockefeller air as he came to announce to us that "important business" carried him at once to Noria.

"Now don't get drunk and blow yourself in, José," said I.

José was indignant at the mere mention of such a thing. He was going to have a look through the stores, etc., etc.

JAN. 13—As I passed through Noria this morning I passed also in front of the iron-grated *calabozo*. A deprecatory voice called to me, "*Oh, patron, por vida de su madre!*"

José had gone to town. The vulture-hawk police had seen his money. The policeman hurriedly saw a stool-pigeon, and José was admired, flattered and treated to mescal. Five minutes later a fight was picked with him; he was battered with a police club, arrested and fined—the size of his wad. Thus poor José was treated to a typical dose of Mexican justice—the kind that breeds revolt. Well, I got him out and cussed the judge.

Feb. 1—The ore assayed well, so I gave José the fifty dollars and the rifle. This time he didn't come to Noria, but vanished, leaving his sick wife—who made a "brush marriage" five days later with another, and whiter, man. I have bought Purpee. His fatness has now spread from his belly-middle to both ends. Purpee has "struck ile."

Bob and Little Annie are again boarding with Don Natividad.

April 2—We sold the mine to-day, to a Tenderfoot. He came very near not buying, for he was afraid to go up into Buen Retiro, as the Mexican rebels are reported thick up there. We put mint in his, so the steam of courage rose in his glass, and he went, bought and paid. I now bought a half-interest in the Caña Ranch for $8,000. All this was quick work—as work should be. We are getting along finely, Purpee and I. He can now take off his collar without unbuttoning it.

April 4—The *Jefe Politico* from Noria to-day sent out ten men to guard the outlet of the Quelite Creek and watch for the rebels. One of these rebels is a crackerjack. He is everywhere and nowhere. He falls on a squad like a bolt, wipes it off the map and then drops out of sight—to repeat this where least expected. The Federals call him "El Rayito" or "Little Lightning." The commander of the ten men, just arrived, is the policeman who beat up José. They went into camp about one-half mile above the house.

April 5—The ten men are all dead. Last night a rebel sneaked on to their sentry and cut his throat with one wicked slash. The rest was easy—all asleep. At daybreak José's wife rushed in, in a terrible state of alarm. "Oh, *patron*," cried she, "José is up there and they are going to *burn a man alive!*" I took a pistol and started. Don Natividad was gibbering with fear, and begged me not to go. I snorted my disgust and started.

Well, now, what do you think? El Rayito is no more and no less than *José Bobo!*

He had the policeman (still alive) trussed up to a green sapling.

"Son of a one-eyed lame woman," said José, "I will now repay thee thy kindness at Noria!" The man screamed, begged, and called on God. Presently his clamor died down into a flame-girdled moan.

José turned around and saw me. He at once smiled the old ingratiating smile and said: "Ah, *patron*, I have fixed the *quiko* (policeman). To-morrow night I get the judge, *con el favor de Dios!* I have 200 men lying hidden in the jungle around Noria. All the roads are watched and picketed, so no one can carry the news. Stay you here—you are safe. If any one bothers you I will cut his heart out! They all know. My men have found a wonderful old Aztec gold-mine—far in the Sierras. When this war is over I will give it to you."

José is a true Indian.

RED MIST

by Winifred Lee Wendell

WITH the peculiar cry of the Arabian horse scenting danger, Holbrooke's mare suddenly broke from her easy canter, shied, and came to a standstill. Her rider's hand crept along the glossy mane with a caressing gesture.

"Little Jewel, what has frightened thee?" he asked in Arabic. She tossed her head, responding to his touch, and thrust a dainty hoof forward, digging the soft earth until a cloud of pale dust rose between the unknown object of her fear and Holbrooke's vision. He dismounted, stood closely beside her and flung an arm protectingly across her neck. He could feel the mare's body quiver against his own. His right hand went to his hip pocket. "Quiet, quiet! It is nothing," he whispered. But his hand lay steadily upon the handle of his revolver; his dark, keen eyes began to search for the hidden menace.

The road lay six hundred feet above the city of Algiers. On one side the villas of Mustapha Superieur gleamed white in their emerald setting of palms. On the right the earth shelved abruptly and ran sheer to the sea. Beyond lay El-Biar, the little village of the wells, dozing silently in the glare of African sunlight. Save the American, no living being was in sight. Save the mare's soft whinny of fear, the nervous pawing of her hoof in the dust, no sound broke the stillness of the early morning.

At first he heard nothing, then a faint sound. The expression in the American's eyes changed as he caught it. A woman's voice, speaking in Arabic, drifted through the scrub. He could not distinguish the words.

There was an instant's silence, then, sharply, came a torrent of harsh masculine tones. They grew louder. The unseen speakers were approaching the road.

Beyond, where the road broke, two forms were silhouetted against the horizon of blue and green. One was a native, an Arab. The other was a woman—not a native. They turned and walked up the road. Holbrooke's astonished eyes followed them. The woman was slender and fair. Her hair was pale gold and covered with a remarkably up-to-date English toque. She wore a smart white linen shirtwaist suit and tan shoes and stockings.

Her companion's costume was a white burnoose and turban. Holbrooke could not see his face, but he recognized in the majestic stride of his sandaled feet, the immovable set of head and shoulders, not the hybrid loafer of the boulevards and bazaars, but the Arab of the desert. The fellow was straight from the Great Tents.

Curiosity, interest, a sense of danger—danger to the girl—filled Holbrooke's mind with conflicting emotions. Should he go forward? Retreat? Make himself known by riding past them? He decided upon the latter course. He would pass them, walking. He would ask for direction to El-Biar.

He would manage to meet the girl's eyes. He would make her understand in that glance that, did she need a protector, she would find one in him.

Slowly, unwillingly, the little mare walked up the El-Biar road. Holbrooke's glance never wavered from the pair ahead. A moment more and he was directly behind them. Another moment and he had passed them. The girl was talking—a soft foreign intonation of Arabic. It gave Holbrooke an unpleasant, an almost repulsive sensation. Suddenly the voice ceased. He turned in his saddle and looked squarely into her eyes. For the fraction of a moment their glances met. The girl turned to her companion and spoke rapidly a brief half-dozen words slurred together. He answered without raising his eyes. The two paused in their walk and, turning toward the west, stared in silence down the slope of blossoming asphodels and daisies which led to the sea.

To Holbrooke it was an open rebuff. His presence was an intrusion. The girl's eyes, her quiet withdrawal, told him that as plainly as could English speech. He felt the blood mount to his cheeks. Then he did a thing strange to himself. He brought the mare to a standstill, turned deliberately again in his saddle and called out in English:

"I beg pardon. Can you direct me to El-Biar?"

Silence answered him. The two stood immovable. But he saw upon the girl's half turned face an unmistakable expression of comprehension. The Arab turned slowly and spoke in French.

"What does monsieur wish?" The words were courteous, but there was that in their tone which made the blood beat thickly in Holbrooke's temples.

"The way to El-Biar," he answered, likewise in French.

The Arab pointed a lean, henna-stained finger. "Straight ahead, or, if monsieur prefers a longer route, there is a road starting from the Hotel Continental—the Chemin Romain." He bowed gravely and turned his back upon the American. The girl still faced the sea. She chose, apparently, to ignore the man who questioned the way to El-Biar.

"Thank you," said Holbrooke. As he spoke a sudden puff of wind from the sea thrust aside the Arab's burnoose, revealing a brilliant flash of gold and scarlet. The simple robe of white woolen hid the uniform of a native soldier—a Spahi of the Sahara. The man caught the truant folds of white together and shot a look into the American's eyes. Then he turned and, with an air of supreme indifference, stared into the west.

Holbrooke touched the mare's quivering flanks with his heel. She sprang forward—a motion of freedom, of release—and up the El-Biar road. The American's brain was in tumult. One question was beating there ceaselessly. What was this girl—undoubtedly English or American—doing at such an hour on a lonely African hill-road in the companionship of an Arab?

IT WAS noon when he reached the Place du Gouvernment. The white square, with its awnings, its shimmering mosque, its great statue of the Duke of Orleans, was alive with midday bustle.

To the casual observer the clean-cut, grave-eyed young American was one of that great moving army of globe-trotters whose chief business in life was the enjoyment of the moment. Yet he was a man with a mission. To spend his days among, yet not with, his fellows was a conditional part of that mission. In short, Holbrooke had, upon an impulse, entered the employ of the French Government. He was a political agent—the eyes and ears of the master he served, to scent danger while it was yet a breath, a whisper. For five years the American had found an absorbing interest in his work. But the mission that now kept him in Algiers he had decided would be his last. America called him with many voices. And, because it was his last adventure in this land of Arabian nights, he went about his task with deepened interest.

For a month a new-old trouble had been stirring. It began in the narrow, sunless alleys of the old town and communicated itself to the boulevards; it leaped across the borders, the sea, the mountains, from the towns to the desert; it communed in the brown tents, beneath the stars, along the camel-trails. It was the old, old cry of native unrest, of rebellion against foreign rule. Sitting one night in a café, Holbrooke learned of the threatened uprising. Day and night he followed up the trail of his discovery until every thread of its weaving, but one, lay gathered in his hands. The

missing thread was the date set for the uprising.

The signal was to be sent from beyond Tangiers to the Algerian confederates by a political agent in the native employ—a man named Carl Muller. He was coming on the little ship *Adria*, owned by the Hungarian company of that name. He would stop at the Hôtel des Fleurs, an old-fashioned hostelry tucked away between the old and new towns, frequented by traveling merchants and the better class of natives. It was, as well, a political center. At the Hôtel des Fleurs, therefore, Holbrooke took up his residence. To the hotel he went directly after his morning ride to resume his watch for Muller.

THAT night as he sat on the terrace before dining, the head clerk stepped jauntily down the narrow aisles of green tiling and paused beside him.

"A telegram for monsieur."

Holbrooke glanced up, took the telegram, waited until the clerk had wheeled upon his high-heeled little boots, then read his message:

Muller via *Adria* Friday night.—X.

A look of deep satisfaction and relief swept the American's face. His last duty as political agent in the employ of the French Consulate was to be crowned with success. His fellow agents along the line had done their work well. Muller would reach the Hôtel des Fleurs unmolested, unsuspecting. But into the white-walled house behind the Street of the Perfumers where his confederates awaited him, he would never enter. In the offices of the Palais Consulaire officials awaited Holbrooke's signal. Muller's arrest would take place quietly, without scandal.

And then? A year's respite—absolute freedom from responsibility, a metamorphosis from the tireless unraveler of conspiracies into the aimless globe-trotter, the idler whose answer to the call of duty is ever the same. He little knew that before the evening was over he should thrust that dream of idleness from him with contempt. Another mystery would beckon him, more fascinating than the making or breaking of empire. A girl with steady gray eyes and gold hair was, without warning, to enter his house of imagination, her presence filling every room, admitting of no other occupant.

Holbrooke looked up from his telegram and with idle eyes watched the clerk trot down the green tiling again. Suddenly their glance veered, became concentrated, alert. A woman was walking leisurely across the terrace alone. She wore a dinner-gown of pure white. The sleeves were long, the neck high. Her hair, a crown of pale gold, was dressed in the prevailing fashion, coiled in soft, loose braids over the low forehead. Her eyes were gray, with straight lashes and thick, delicately lined brows.

A jasmine blossom lay within the lace folds at her neck. Holbrooke's first thought was that the girl and the blossom were symbolically expressive of the same wonder—a perfect, unstained purity. For the rest of his life they were always to be associated thus. Whenever he looked upon exquisite womanhood or saw a white jasmine blossom it would be a reminder of that Algerian night when he first saw them together, lying one against the other like the close-folded wings of a dove. This, his first impression.

She drew nearer, easily within range of recognition. Then Holbrooke's gaze became a stare. Impulsively he leaned forward, then slid back into his chair. It was the girl he had met on the El-Biar road, walking with the Spahi! He felt an absurd impulse to rise, as though a friend were approaching.

She was close by, passing him within a yard. For an instant their eyes met. Then she looked straight before her and passed him without a flicker of recognition!

He waited until she reached the dining-salon entrance, then rose and went deliberately to the visitor's book. Six new names were entered. All save one were of his own sex. The exception read: "Sibyl Pellam, New York, N. Y., U. S. A." The same intuition which told him that the girl who passed him a moment before had consciously ignored him also told him that she and Sibyl Pellam were one and the same. He felt an almost irresistible desire to go directly to the dining-salon and seek her out, although his duty lay in the direction of the Consulate offices to inform the officials of his telegram.

For an instant he hesitated, mentally arguing to himself that it was only Thursday night, that a whole day lay between

the present moment and the time of Muller's arrival; that the morning would do exactly as well. Then he laughingly cursed himself for a fool, and walked swiftly across the square to the Palais Consulaire.

II

EVERY table in the little Moorish dining-salon of the Hôtel des Fleurs was occupied when Holbrooke took his accustomed place. Lighting a cigarette, he leaned back in his little brass-studded chair and looked up and down the tiled aisles for the girl. She was not in the room. The waiter, a huge Soudanese, greeted him in perfect French, took his order and stepped noiselessly forward. There was an air of festivity about the place, a whispered invitation to romance, adventure, to abandonment to pleasure, which filled the American's senses with a thrill of anticipation.

At the next table sat two Englishmen. One was an old-time resident, an exporter of perfume. His name was Germyss Loundes. He was known as a warm friend of the native Arabs and consequently regarded with suspicion by the Consulate. He exchanged a rather cool nod with the American, then turned to his friend and continued his conversation. Through the wavering strains of the hotel orchestra a remark caught Holbrooke's ears and rang there.

"Arabian horses, especially mares, are unusually sensitive to it," Loundes was saying. "They'll break into a dead run and balk like the —— when there isn't a blessed thing on the road or under or above it. And yet, as sure as Allah is great and Mohammed is his prophet, the sign never fails! Something happens to that mare before the day's done."

"You say the natives see it, too?" asked the other Englishman.

Loundes laughed, a half-hearted laugh, as though he were trying to belittle an unpleasant fact which refused to be ignored.

"You've only to say 'Red Mist' to them to be convinced that you're dealing with the devil himself. It's a danger barometer that never fails with them. I'll give you an example." Holbrooke, unconsciously expressing in his attitude and expression the intense interest that gripped him, leaned to catch the Englishman's words. "Mind you, this comes first-hand. The man was one of my first friends in Algiers. He told me that from the day he met with his first misfortune in the death of his son, a warning in the shape of an intangible red mist, floating before his eyes was the never failing presage of a calamity of some sort. The death-warning appeared as an opaque red ball. I saw him the day it appeared to him the last time. Less than twenty-four hours later he was found lying in instalments behind the counters of his shop."

"Good heavens! You mean he knew the full significance of the thing?" murmured the other.

"He was so absolutely sure of it that he made his will, asked me to witness it and bade me good-by," answered Loundes. "It was a political affair, and a mighty nasty one. His murderer was caught——" Loundes broke off abruptly. "I won't go into details, but the fellow's death was a slight improvement on my friend's. His feet, head and torso were neatly laid in opposite corners of his shop; his hands were crossed and tied by the thumbs over the door. His wife was the first one to discover it. As she entered the shop the blood dripping from her spouse's wrists inconsiderately spattered her fresh *haik*." He paused with a peculiar twist to his lips, then wound up irrelevantly with, "I say, try this sherbert. They've a Viennese chef here."

Holbrooke was barely conscious of the Englishman's last words. The story of the murder he listened to with half indifference. It was that first statement that rang in his ears: "*Arabian horses, especially mares, are unusually sensitive to it!*"

Was this the explanation of his mare's strange behavior that morning? Was it the appearance of "Red Mist" upon that lovely African hill-road which told little Jewel of danger ahead? What danger?

There had been but two living objects visible on the road beside himself—the Spahi and the girl. Was it possible that they were in any way connected with Jewel's fear? He wondered and, while he was wondering, the question answered itself so strangely, so abruptly, that Holbrooke found himself damp from head to foot with the sudden chill that bathed him. He felt as though his body had been suddenly dipped into ether. The waiter was addressing him. He strove to answer, but

something seemed to bring his teeth together with a snap and clamp them. Then his tongue began to beat against the ivory bars of its prison, striving to articulate. But no words came.

A girl was walking directly toward him from the corridors beyond the Moorish doorway. She was dressed in white. A jasmine blossom was caught in the lace folds of her gown. Her eyes were gray, her hair pale gold. And between the girl and his straining eyes hung *a fine red mist!* It was without known shape or substance, but it moved when she did, turning her pale hair to a splendid Titian red, the tint wise virgins pray for in vain, and foolish virgins procure at a price—from the chemist.

The waiter was drawing back the chair opposite Holbrooke. The girl, standing directly behind it, looked past the waiter and into Holbrooke's eyes.

"I am sorry to intrude." She spoke in English. "There was no other vacancy."

Holbrooke was on his feet upon the instant, staring at her with eyes that had not time to lose their wildness. Then he pulled himself together. The red demon was gone, thank heaven. But something else equally unexpected flitted across the girl's face—a smile, friendly, cordial, direct. They seated themselves.

"A favor, not an intrusion," he said. "I've been dining alone too long." He felt that the smile justified that informality.

"ONE feels loneliness here." She gave a little shiver. "Two hours of it have been more than enough for me." She lifted her wine-glass to her lips. They shone through the amber like threads of fire. "I expected my people here at six. They've been delayed. And I've the prospect of a lonely evening before me." She gave the explanation simply, as one man would to another, then added directly, "I'm a New Yorker, like yourself."

Holbrooke's perplexed eyes met hers questioningly. "No, it isn't a case of mind-reading," she laughed. "It's much simpler. I asked the clerk if there were any other Americans in the hotel. You, it seems, are the shining example. You see, I was dreadfully lonely. When my father's wire came, saying he couldn't be with me before morning, I felt actually deserted. And so—I asked to be seated at your table." She faltered, looking down in pretty, helpless confusion. "It's awfully unconventional, I know. I'm afraid you think it——"

"Charming of you," interrupted Holbrooke quickly. "I'm only too glad to hear United States spoken again. My name is Arnold Holbrooke. I'm alone, and quite free this evening. If you share my loneliness with me I shall be really, really grateful."

She smiled across the table at him brightly. "I'm going to say—yes. It's because you're an American. Only an American would understand." After an instant's hesitation she added, "My name is Sibyl Pellam."

"You've made me realize another privilege of citizenship, Miss Pellam," he declared. "Now, what shall it be? There's an embassy reception——"

She shook her head protestingly. "And there's an old town somewhere, isn't there?"

"There is," said Holbrooke promptly. "Would you like to be personally conducted?"

"I should love it!" she declared. "I heard the clerk telling some tourists that the feasting season begins to-night. Barium, I believe they call it. Is your chaperonage equal to it?"

"Quite," he replied. He waited an instant, then added casually: "I'm rather sorry you didn't claim my chaperonage this morning."

"This morning?" He felt her eyes upon him, heard the perfect inflection of surprise in the rather careless tone.

"Yes." He met her glance squarely. "When we met on the El-Biar road. You were walking with a—a guide. I suppose the hotel vouched for him. Still, I felt rather concerned about your being alone with the fellow on an unfrequented road."

The gray eyes regarded him wonderingly. "What *do* you mean?" she asked. "I've been here only two hours."

Holbrooke studied his menu. He felt that he must have a moment in which to adjust himself to a new, a complicated situation. He was convinced that Miss Pellam was acting a part. Why? She was pretending childlike ignorance of the national customs. She had declared herself a newcomer and a stranger. And less than twelve hours previous he had seen her familiarly conversing in Arabic with an officer of the native regiment, the Spahis. What did it mean?

"You mean that you weren't walking on the El-Biar road this morning with a native? That you didn't see me when I rode by and stopped to ask the way?" asked Holbrooke slowly. He spoke with lowered eyes. He could not bring himself to meet hers. It was as though he were offering her an affront. And yet he could not help it.

"Of course I mean it," she replied quietly. "I'm afraid you've a touch of the sun. Or I've a double in Algiers." She proceeded calmly to eat an entrée. "Tell me some more about it. I'm awfully interested."

"There isn't anything more to tell." Holbrooke spoke slowly, listlessly. He wanted to believe her. And he couldn't. And she was very lovely, very compelling. She was the most interesting woman he had ever met. The conventional channels through which men and women drift to a mutual understanding or liking of one another were not necessary in this case. She was one of those women who can, without words, simply by their presence, inform us of a personality which puts its indelible imprint upon our consciousness like a warm human touch.

That she was deceiving him deepened Holbrooke's interest in her, and made it a complex one. His professional instinct was roused to its utmost. She fascinated him as a woman; she interested him as a subject. The senses of the man, the training of the detective were enthralled, joined forces. Until that moment the former had the ascendency. With the intrusion of doubt came caution. He would assume belief in her story. He would neither do nor say anything to rouse her suspicions of his mistrust. He looked up, met her glance with an equally direct one.

"Miss Pellam, I ask your pardon. Of course I was mistaken. In fact I might have known, because when I asked the way to El-Biar in English you, or rather, your double, made no reply. She might have been a German, or from North Italy, but she looked like an American. She was so like you that the resemblance is really remarkable. At any rate, her making no reply should have convinced me that it wasn't—you."

"You don't think for a moment that I should have ignored your question? I should have told you the way to El-Biar gladly—if I had known it."

A group of French officers seated near a window were rising to go. They pushed back their chairs and stood, their spurred boots clinking noisily against the legs of the chairs. A voice rang out from the street below—the street of the Old Town. It was a sweet voice, full and inviting. The officers nodded to one another. One of them made a gesture of interrogation toward the window. The others nodded vigorously and together they all trooped down the red and green tiling, their military heels tapping the floor regularly, their brilliant red jackets and mantles flashing arrogantly.

"They're off to the Old Town," observed Holbrooke.

"THERE'S room for us, too, isn't there?" asked Miss Pellam. She looked at a tiny jeweled watch pinned to her gown, just beneath the jasmine blossom. "It's late. And I feel the Old Town calling. It's unlike anything I ever felt before. Africa is going to have a weird effect on me, Mr. Holbrooke. It's all so terribly strange now, so mysterious—repellent, almost." She looked at the frescoed walls, then went on without taking her eyes from them. "And yet, some day, I am going to love it and feel as much at home in it as I do now on Fifth Avenue or Twenty-third Street." She turned, leaned across the table and met Holbrooke's quietly scrutinizing eyes. "Did it affect you that way—at first?"

"No, not at first," he answered. "It had more of a hypnotic effect. It put me to sleep mentally and physically."

"Isn't that rather unusual?" murmured Miss Pellam.

"No," said Holbrooke again. "It's the usual. After we've become acclimated, so to speak, we wake up. We become responsive when we begin to understand. By the way, another strange thing about your double was that she spoke Arabic perfectly."

"Ah, you heard her?" asked Miss Pellam quickly—too quickly. There was an unguarded note of anxiety in her voice.

"I recognized it, but I could not hear what she said."

"You understand Arabic? How odd and—and interesting!"

"A fellow picks up a word here and there," he said carelessly. "Women don't have the same opportunity. That's what

interested me in the girl on the El-Biar road. She spoke it as fluently as you speak English. I dare say she's a missionary's daughter." He beamed on Miss Pellam. "At any rate, she isn't you, so I don't much care."

"Let us go," said Miss Pellam suddenly.

Holbrooke nodded. "Shall we walk? It's only a step. I know of a nice little place, absolutely respectable, where we can see some good dancing. You must get acclimated by degrees, you know."

"Don't be afraid. Please give me the *best* time you can!" she pleaded.

Holbrooke laughed happily. Never had the call of the Old Town sounded so sweet. Her pose charmed him. For a moment he was disarmed. Those gray eyes were very wells of truth.

"Did you ever hear of the Café du Scorpion?" he asked.

The eyes met his, innocently mystified but alight with a naïve curiosity. She shook her head.

"Never. I shall have to trust to your discretion entirely."

"If your father should ever ask?" he began dubiously.

"Trust me! I shall look properly innocent," she laughed.

"As you do now?" asked Holbrooke abruptly. Then he repented. The gray eyes regarded him with the expression of a wounded doe. He could have bitten his tongue out for that gauche remark.

"You don't believe me!" She stated the horrid fact; it was not a question in her mind. And she wished him to know it. "You still think me the girl you met on the El-Biar road!"

"Forgive me," cried Holbrooke humbly. "But you are so disastrously alike——"

"Disastrously?" She intoned the unfortunate word.

He blushed hotly, conscious of a second blunder. "Disastrous to your good opinion of me," was his defense. "And I mustn't lose that!" The note of anxiety in his voice was genuine. Miss Pellam rose, her fingers resting on the table, and looked at him. He also stood, facing her across the disarray of glass and china.

"Do you care for it very much?" The tone in her flexible voice thrilled him. There was something intimate, personal, in it. He was conscious that they were looking at each other not as strangers, not merely as friends, but like a man and woman who have been suddenly thrust into each other's lives roughly, almost violently, by the hands of a fate they did not understand but could only obey.

"Yes," said Holbrooke. "More than I have any right to care; more, perhaps, than I can—understand." She did not answer him except in her smile. Together and in silence they passed down the room.

III

AS THEY reached the door a man, seated at the last table, nodded to Holbrooke, then looked intently, curiously at the girl. She did not see him, but her companion caught the man's look and wondered at it. He was Paul Le Roche, an habitué of the Latin Quarter in Paris; something of an artist and a man whose circle of acquaintances widened to admit all sorts and conditions of his fellows. A moment later, as Holbrooke stood in the corridor while Miss Pellam went to her room for a wrap, a hand was laid on his shoulder. He turned and looked into the Frenchman's inquisitive eyes.

"Le Roche!" They shook hands. "Are you one of the immortals now? The last time we met in Paris that was your ambition."

"Not yet," answered the Frenchman. "But you look as though you had been dwelling with them, even though you haven't been crowned." He lowered his voice and added. "Between ourselves, aren't you keeping rather strange company, my dear fellow?"

"What do you mean?" asked Holbrooke. A sudden, intense excitement clutched him, but he put his question calmly.

"Don't you know with whom you've been dining?"

"Of course. Miss Pellam—a compatriot of mine," Holbrooke answered stiffly. There was a tone in the Frenchman's voice which he resented.

"You are mistaken," said Le Roche quietly. "That is Belle Haas—'La Belle Dame Sans Merci,' as she is called in Government circles, the cleverest and most fascinating woman of her profession."

"You're wrong, Le Roche," Holbrooke cried. "Wrong and—crazy."

Le Roche's answer was a smile of unbelief. Then he looked at Holbrooke sharply.

"My dear fellow, you aren't the first man she's fooled. There isn't a detective on the Continent half so successful. The Pinkertons take off their hats to her."

"Do you know her personally?"

"No," admitted Le Roche, "but I've seen her before. She isn't a woman one forgets easily. I'd know her anywhere. But if she's posing to you as a Miss Sibyl Pellam of New York you may be sure there's mischief afloat—and she's the mischief-maker."

"But she isn't posing," protested Holbrooke, obeying some inward command to defend the girl. "It's simply a case of mistaken identity."

"She is, then, a friend of yours?"

Holbrooke reddened. Then he answered firmly.

"Yes, a friend. You're mistaken this time, Le Roche."

Le Roche shrugged his shoulders, lighted a cigarette and stared at Holbrooke with speculative eyes.

"It seems," he observed, "to be a characteristic of the men of your country to believe a woman simply because she *is* a woman. I confess such credulity is beyond me." He laughed, nodded, and started to go. "If you find you're mistaken, let me know, dear fellow," was his parting shot.

HOLBROOKE, with a sense of relief, watched the Frenchman walk down the corridors and disappear beyond the smoking-room door. He turned his gaze toward the corridor from which the girl would come—and met her smiling eyes.

"Well, it's explained," was his greeting, "my taking you for the girl on the El-Biar road." He wanted her to know what Le Roche had told him. But the same inward impulse that made him defend her against the Frenchman was making him protect her against his own words. He would lead to it gradually. "You've a double in Algiers," he announced.

"Really?" She was looking at him with alert, interested eyes. "You've seen her again?"

"No. But another man who knows of her saw us dining together. Fancy! She's a detective and is known by the highly dramatic title of La Belle Dame Sans Merci." He looked at her as he spoke and saw the red mount her cheeks, saw an instant's trembling of her mobile lips. Then the gray eyes met his, the red lips became a well from which laughter bubbled. It was contagious. He joined in with his deep baritone.

"Me—a detective?" He nodded. "And you believed him?"

"No," said Holbrooke promptly. "I told him he was mistaken."

"And he believed—you?" she asked, a certain persistency in her tone.

For an instant he hung fire. "No," he admitted. "He says the resemblance is too strong."

A look of annoyance crossed the laughter in her eyes. Holbrooke saw the slender figure stiffen. She stared past him with an air of hauteur. It alarmed him.

"I say, Miss Pellam, it isn't worth giving a thought to. Let's forget it."

"Can you forget it?" she asked.

"Yes!" he cried. There was that in her tone, her eyes, which lured him to any amount of committals. "I want to forget everything except that we're going to have the time of our lives to-night. And we haven't a moment to lose!"

The desk clerk was bowing before Holbrooke, offering him a slip of paper upon which was scrawled an address.

"Mohammed ben Ahmed, rue de la Douera," read the American. As he read, the clerk and Miss Pellam exchanged a brief look. Then the former spoke.

"If monsieur wishes to visit the old town, here is an address to one of the most interesting places in Algiers."

"The Street of the Little House," translated Holbrooke.

The clerk bowed and ran back to his post.

"You know it?" asked Miss Pellam.

"The street, but not the man," he answered.

"Then we shall enjoy it together—for the first time!"

He knew it—a quiet, sunless little lane near the ruins of the old wall, enclosed on both sides by high whitewashed houses whose shuttered Andalusian windows gave no hint of the luxury and loveliness within. They were the homes of the high-class Arabs. From their pillared courts, their frescoed, richly furnished rooms, their perfumed, walled gardens came forth the diplomats, scholars, caids—men of power, of ancestral prestige, native rulers of the desert, men who bow outwardly to foreign

jurisdiction but whose souls flame with the unquenchable fires of freedom, who worship Allah, recognize no law save the law of the Koran, pay tribute to no man save Mohammed, the great and only Prophet. The street he knew, but of Mohammed ben Ahmed he had never heard.

"The Street of the Little House," echoed Miss Pellam. "It sounds like a story-book. Let's leave it till the last."

As they stepped into the shadowed ascents of the Moorish Quarter the loud beating of a tom-tom, the harsh unmusical notes of an African hautboy, pierced the silence. Holbrooke felt a slight, then a deepening pressure on his arm. It was the girl's hand. He laughed happily.

Never had the call of the Old Town sounded so sweet in his ears.

IV

AT THE north end of the Street of the Little House stood the Little House itself. It was three stories high, topped with a walled terrace which connected with the terraces of the neighboring houses by a short flight of steps. Unlike the surrounding houses, it had no garden. Its grilled windows faced the street on two sides. They were long and narrow and heavily shuttered. The entrance door was of massive timber studded with brass-headed nails. The bell was indicated by a little hand of Fatma with delicate fingers pointing downward. On either side of the door were lamps encased in latticed wooden brackets. They flickered palely.

Lounging beside the door was a boy in pale amber robes. He wore blue sandals. His socks, likewise of that celestial tint, reached his knees. Behind his ears hung sprigs of rose geraniums. His turban shone like a halo around the oval, girlish face, the languorous eyes, the narrow, sharply pencilled brows. Between the fingers of his left hand he held, loosely, a tiny henna-stained bamboo flute. He stood, very quiet, staring down the street. He was watching for some one. For two hours he had stood thus in seeming idleness, twirling the little flute between his slender fingers, but never putting it to his lips. His name was Hosayn. He was the serving-boy of the owner of the little house, Mohammed ben Ahmed. He was waiting for expected guests.

Two shadows lay across the patch of moonlight barring the intersection of the Street of the Little House and the cross street. A man and a woman passed around the house and came toward Hosayn.

"We are looking for the house of Mohammed ben Ahmed," said Holbrooke in French.

"Sidi, it is here," answered the boy, pointing.

"We wish to enter. You are his boy?"

"And thy servant, Sidi," said Hosayn.

"Do you play?" asked Miss Pellam, pointing to the flute.

Hosayn smiled brightly, lifted the flute to his mouth and fastened his lips to it. A burst of little notes, like the fluttering cries of young birds, escaped from the instrument. Then, as though in echo, they were repeated softly.

"That is the real call of the Old Town," whispered the girl.

The boy released the flute from his lips, bowed, turned toward the house and put his fingers on the bell. There was a faint tinkling sound beyond the brass-studded door. A moment later it opened. Another boy stood in a rosy dimness. His dress was the counterpart of Hosayn's, even to the geranium sprigs behind his well-shaped ears. He was smiling brightly, showing his even little teeth, and bowing with the grace of a young court page.

"Will madame and monsieur enter?" he asked.

Holbrooke handed the clerk's card to the boy.

"Give this to your master. We shall wait here."

"Madame will find a chair within. It will be more comfortable waiting there." Hosayn spoke softly, his languorous eyes on Miss Pellam.

They entered. The door swung silently into place. Both boys disappeared. Holbrooke and the girl were alone with the sound of a plashing fountain from the court at the end of the hallway and the consciousness of each other's presence.

They did not speak—did not even look at each other. They were waiting for something to happen—something unusual.

"What do you think it will be?" Holbrooke asked the question as though they had been discussing it. He looked at her.

She sat very still on the divan to which

Hosayn had escorted her, her hands clasped together in her lap, her head lowered.

"I don't know," she answered in a low voice, without looking at him. "I don't—know," she repeated.

He seated himself beside her, bending forward so that he might see her face. "Are you sorry we came?" he asked.

"No. I am—am glad. Why do you ask?" She looked at him quickly. There was a faint defiance in her voice, as though she were sorry but did not want him to know.

"It isn't too late." He rose, still looking at her. "Let us go."

"Oh, no—not for the world!" There was a little catch in her voice. She straightened, unclasped her hands and smiled up at him. "I am sure we shall see something charming and rare. I wouldn't miss it for the world!"

Hosayn stepped noiselessly from the rosy dimness and bowed before Miss Pellam.

"Will madame and monsieur ascend to the reception-salon? My master is there."

The girl rose. Hosayn was regarding her through his long lashes. She looked at him. For an instant their glances held. The boy waved his left hand, which still held the bamboo flute. The girl stepped down the hall. Holbrooke followed. He heard Hosayn's sandaled feet padding softly behind him. They entered the court. The boy who admitted them was standing on the right before a half opened door. He nodded, smiled and indicated with a sweep of his hand that they were to pass beyond the door.

"Will you go first?" The girl turned to Holbrooke as she put the question. She was extremely nervous. He saw that and once more felt an urgent desire to turn back.

"You are sure you wish to stay?" he asked in English.

She nodded. He turned again. Hosayn stepped quickly past Holbrooke and threw back the door. A stairway faced them. It was like stepping suddenly from night into day, and into a world of gold. The stairs, the enclosing walls, were entirely covered with hammered brass. Above, suspended by chains, were lamps of brass; their tongue-shaped flames were reflected in that golden mirror a thousandfold. It was like being thrust, without warning, into a river of palpitating fire.

Without turning his body, Holbrooke looked over his shoulder at the girl. She was standing back in the court and the boys were standing either side of her. They were waiting for him to go forward. He faced the stairway again and mounted two steps. Then his hands went out quickly and hit against the walls. The little tongue-shaped flames were no longer golden. They looked as though they had been suddenly dipped in blood. And over the walls, the stairs, floating like a scarlet-dyed incense above the swinging lamps, was *a fine red mist!*

Holbrooke backed down the stairs, his hands sliding hotly over the hammered indentations of the walls. Then he came to a sudden and unexpected standstill. He had backed against a closed door! There was a mocking little sound the other side of the door. It came from Hosayn's flute—a burst of short-clipped, high-pitched notes like the impudent laughter of children. Then silence.

Holbrooke was alone in his golden cage.

"Welcome, monsieur! Will monsieur ascend?" said a voice from above. Holbrooke looked up. A figure, tall, majestic, clad in flowing white and scarlet robes, stood at the head of the stairway. Behind the figure was a window, and an open door beyond which the American saw vistas of windowless, tapestried walls. The figure bowed.

It was the Spahi of the El-Biar road.

And then Holbrooke understood. Le Roche was right.

HE WAS not angry at the girl. She had played her game fairly according to its rules, and won. He was angry at his own stupidity in allowing himself to be trapped by a pretty woman. Her object in luring him to the Little House was quite obvious. It removed the only obstacle in Muller's way. The natives knew, apparently, of his, Holbrooke's, association with the Consulate and of his errand to Algiers. He was their enemy. He should, therefore, become their prisoner. And they had chosen a woman to capture him. Clever fellows! He smiled grimly.

Then some unbidden thought gave an ugly twist to the smile. He knew that, unless Providence chose to intervene, he had walked for the last time upon the boulevards of the French Town—that he would never leave the Little House alive. It meant fight—until he could fight no longer. And then, any one of a variety of deaths which his tormentors might choose.

As the thought of death came to him he found himself wondering in a dull, apathetic sort of fashion about the girl's share in the affair. Had she been a man he would have classed her unhesitatingly with the rest of his murderers. But the thought of her in that gruesome rôle struck at him like a knife-thrust. He felt himself mentally recoiling from such an attack.

Then he found it necessary to put from him the thought of her in any rôle. He had first to deal with the Spahi.

The fellow stood with feet slightly apart, his hands folded within his voluminous robes, a smile of mingled invitation and insolence on his dark, burned face. Holbrooke, staring up at him, decided at once that a bullet in that direction would be ammunition wasted and a needless alarm to the man's confrères. He knew a better way to rid himself of that arrogant, brilliantly attired monster. He would, with a deft twist of his arms about the white-socked legs, unbalance the Spahi from his poised equanimity and send him headlong down the brass stairway. This would save one of the six precious bullets reposing in heir shiny cradle in Holbrooke's hip pocket and clear the way for the next attack. He began to mount.

Half-way up he paused and smiled broadly into the face of his host. The Spahi grinned back. Holbrooke mounted again until he stood with his arm-pits on a level with the Spahi's sandaled toes. He bent quickly, grasped the Arab's legs and gave them a violent twist to the left, at the same instant throwing his own doubled body in the same direction. It was a triumphant attack. Like a huge roll of white and red bunting the body of the Spahi swayed, then plunged headlong over the American's shoulders and crashed against the door at the foot of the stairway.

Holbrooke sprang upward, reached the top stair and faced the unknown. It proved to be a great, oblong room, bare save for a quantity of somber-hued rugs thrown in soft confusion across the oiled floors. On either side were placed, alternately, divans and brass incense-jars that gave forth a heavy ever-sweet perfume. The light of one lamp, swung from the center of the ceiling, cast the room in semi-darkness. And it was empty of anything human save the American.

He glanced down the golden stairway at the inert huddled mass of red and white. He saw something, something that made him turn away quickly. The Spahi was lying on his stomach, his legs drawn up under him. But his head was twisted completely about so that Holbrooke looked squarely into an upturned face with staring eyes and a mouth that leered steadily. The fellow's neck was broken.

Holbrooke stepped softly back into the room. Its silence, its shadowed bareness, the dull flare of its one lamp, the heavy odor rising from the incense-jars, oppressed him. He wished intensely for something human to companion him, even though it were an enemy. He wanted to see some sign of life in that tapestried mausoleum of the late master who lay dead at the foot of his golden stairway. A terrible stillness prevailed.

There was no sign of life anywhere, no movement except the padding of the American's reluctant feet across the rugs. Then they, too, ceased to move. He stood beneath the lamp, listening, listening. Silence mocked him. He looked for doors, windows, a distant light. The walls gave back no hint of release. There was no break in the maroon-hued tapestry. It hung in soft, clouded folds, lusterless, shading down to streaks of black, like clotted blood upon a partly-healed wound.

The silence, the emptiness of the room puzzled him. For he knew that somewhere beyond those concealing tapestries enmity was lurking. He knew, too, that it must soon reveal itself. He was prepared to see the shadowed streaks of black widen suddenly and reveal a human presence. He was not mistaken.

The maroon-hued walls began to tremble faintly, like the delicate shivering of leaves in the wind. And then, as though woven by invisible and magic hands, the white, shrouded figures of men were silhouetted against the tapestry. There were fifteen or twenty of them. They stood, absolutely motionless, facing Holbrooke with grave, mystical, searching eyes. In that unrelaxing glance of many eyes the American read one purpose and desire—his death.

SUDDENLY his right arm shot upward. There was a report, a flash, a drift of gray smoke curling upward, and the single lamp in its swinging cradle of brass splintered and fell to the floor.

"One bullet gone!" muttered Holbrooke in the darkness. He ran with swift, noiseless feet in the direction of the stairway. There was a rush of sandaled feet toward the center of the room. He could hear the soft thud of the Arabs' mantled bodies striking one another, the violent outflinging motions of their lean arms reaching to imprison him, the soft panting of their breaths, muttering cries of rage and disappointment.

"Aie! Aie! Dog! Vermin!" The Arabic vituperations sputtered from passion-locked throats. A voice rang out above the whispers, in French:

"Sidi Holbrooke, where art thou?" It was Hosayn's—a terrified whine. "I would save thee!"

"Here am I!" Holbrooke answered, and shot squarely into the huddled mass.

A yell of pain told him that the second bullet had not gone astray. He quickly shifted to the right until his hands touched the walls, then crept softly forward.

"Light! Light! Aie!" The words came jerkily from the wounded Arab's throat. There was a sound of soft, running steps.

Holbrooke paused, flattened himself against the wall, but not soon enough. A bare leg, a flapping burnoose struck him. It was an encounter equally unexpected by the Arab. But he used the moment to good advantage by wrapping his arms violently around Holbrooke's body and holding him.

"I have him!" the Arab cried. Holbrooke strained from him. The movement upset them both and they rolled together on the floor. Holbrooke was uppermost. He managed to free his right hand and brought his revolver down smashingly upon the other's face. He could hear the cheekbone crack and felt a warm spurt of blood against his hand. The Arab's arms relaxed, fell apart. Holbrooke knelt beside him, peering through the darkness. He was waiting for the others. He could hear their choked, sibilant breaths.

"Hast thou killed the Christian?" asked a voice from the darkness.

"Yes," whispered Holbrooke in Arabic. "Get a light!" It was a hazard. He thought for an instant that his ruse had failed. But the voice reassured him.

"Canst thou carry him alone?"

"*Roh!* [go away] Am I a woman? His is a featherweight!" growled Holbrooke contemptuously.

Convinced that their danger was over, the lot broke into a babble of excited chattering. Like the stirring of wind in the tree-tops came the sound of their sandaled feet padding down the room. Holbrooke crept backward until he reached the door at the head of the stairway and leaned against it. Through the tapestries at the opposite end of the room a strip of light shone ruddily upon the crowding Arabs. They pushed eagerly through the doorway, shoulders rubbing shoulders, fighting childishly for right of way. They wanted to put light and distance and barred doors between them and that room of darkness and death.

Above their babble and clatter Holbrooke heard a noise from the brass stairway. It came to him clearly through the door against which he leaned. It was a halting step of some one mounting. Another sound accompanied it—the quick, labored breathing of a person choking. It could not be the Spahi; men with broken necks do not walk.

He pressed closer to the door, listening intently. Something warm whirred through his heart, as though another heart had for one instant beat against it. He was listening to a low, broken sobbing—a woman's sobbing. As the dragging steps reached the top step, the sobbing changed to broken, inarticulate words.

"Oh, God! Oh, God! They've killed him!"

Holbrooke felt a swift faintness wrap him like a mantle from head to foot. The girl loved the Spahi! Only love could prompt that personal, heart-broken note in her grief. Every instinct within him protested, rebelled against, repudiated the hateful fact as something grotesque, abnormal. And he had killed the Spahi. He was the Spahi's murderer. For had he not, with deliberate intent, planned his death?

He decided to open the door and reveal himself to the girl. The window at the head of the staircase was his one chance of escape. She could not prevent his taking it, though she might betray his presence to the others. Perhaps the sight of the dead Spahi and her grief might soften her, make her willing to help him get away. For she was a woman, after all, capable of anguish over the death or suffering of others. Her womanhood would, perhaps, assert itself

and respond to his need. He opened the door softly, thrust himself through it and closed it quickly.

V

THE girl sat with her head bowed upon her knees, her slender body rocking forward and backward. Holbrooke leaned against the door and stared at her. He wondered whether she heard him, for she did not look up. The door at the foot of the stairway was closed. The Spahi lay, as before, staring upward with unseeing eyes.

"I killed him," said Holbrooke in a low voice.

The girl's body stopped rocking and straightened as though it were being forced upright by the violent grasp of invisible hands.

"I killed him," he repeated in the same tone.

She began to rise, grasping at the wall to steady herself. Then she turned toward him, her lips striving to utter words that would not sound. Their eyes met. Holbrooke sprang toward her, for she had swayed suddenly. He caught her in his arms and drew her up until her face lay against his breast. When he bent his head to see whether she had fainted he met the gray eyes again, staring at him with something of terror and something else which baffled and rejoiced him at once. She was smiling, tremulously, as women and children smile just before they cry.

"You—you—you!" She clung to him, whispering the words. Then she hid her face against his coat and Holbrooke felt her body shake with silent, violent sobbing. His arms tightened about her. The brass stairway, the swinging lamps swam before him in a golden swirl. Pure gold, thank heaven, without a tinge of red!

"I thought they—had—killed—you!" she sobbed.

"Me?" asked Holbrooke.

"They promised—he promised that you should be safe. You were to be held for ransom. I had their word. Then, when it was too late, Hosayn told me——" she broke off, clutching him with her little fingers. "The beasts, the *beasts!*"

"Then you're not crying for—*that*?" He nodded in the direction of the inert figure below them.

She raised her head, pushed Holbrooke backward until her hands lay on his arms, her eyes on a level with his. In them he read the truth—truth of many things: her loathing of the Spahi, her horror at the trick he and his creatures had played upon her, and something else—the unassuageable out-going of her spirit to his.

"We are going away from here at once—together! You must lead!" Holbrooke told her.

"There is only one way now," she answered.

He pointed toward the window, but she shook her head.

"The roofs," she replied. "From the second house there is a stairway leading directly to the street."

Turning to the right she pressed her fingers against the hammered brass wall. It separated at her touch, slid the width of a door and revealed a short, steep flight of steps leading upward. The girl stepped in, Holbrooke following her, and the brass wall closed between them and the golden cage where the Spahi lay with his twisted neck. The little space in which they stood was in absolute darkness and cool as a cellar. The girl mounted the steps.

Soon Holbrooke felt a cold wind upon his face and smelled the unmistakable scent of fresh air which passes over the earth just before dawn. He looked up, past the mounting figure of the girl and into a dome of sapphire jeweled with faint stars. A moment later and they stood together upon the roof of the Little House in the silence of the African dawn.

The girl kneeled and with deft, swift fingers barred and bolted the trap-door between them and the enemy. Then she rose and stood beside Holbrooke with a sort of formality as though, with him, she were witnessing a ceremony.

In the east hung a crescent moon in a film of silver mist. Just above it burned the morning star. Below, the Street of the Little House lay in deep shadow. No sound broke that profound stillness. The music from the café had long since ceased to invite the pleasure-seekers. The bells on the dancing-girls' ankles were silent, the bazaars empty. For a few brief hours the traffic of merchandise, of human souls, of jaded appetites seeking new pleasures, had ceased. Even in the heart of that sin-begotten, sin-nourished corner of the

old world God seemed for the moment to stand revealed.

Then a sound broke the stillness. It came from the Little House. It was like the murmur of the sea before a storm, or the wind from distant mountain-tops; a humming, intoning voice, the blending of many voices, growing louder, nearer until it was directly beneath the trap-door, separating itself into many tones, snarls, broken curses, sputters of rage, the inhuman cry of murder-lust. There was a beating of many hands upon the trap, then the blows of some heavy instrument and a sound of splintering wood. Holbrooke caught the girl's hand in his and ran with her across the roof and up the stairway to the neighboring terrace, which was flanked with a parapet of blossoming marigolds and iris.

From the trap-door turbaned heads sprang upward—huge bubbles from a hidden pool. The roof of the Little House was filled with shrouded, swiftly-moving forms like snowflakes driven by the wind. Sighting the man and girl on the next roof, they ran toward the stairway, yelling hideously. Holbrooke shot at them, emptying the four barrels of his revolver with deadly precision. Four Arabs dropped without a cry. The others fell back and huddled like frightened sheep, facing the parapet where Holbrooke and the girl stood. Then, as though obeying an instantaneous command, they flung their right hands upward. The narrow blades of their little Damascus daggers gleamed in the dawn like threads of silver fire.

HOLBROOKE flung his arm about the girl's shoulder and forced her down, flinging himself across her as a shield between her young body and those uplifted shining messengers of death. He bent his head until his cheek touched hers. She was sobbing, great tearless sobs, and from her lips came broken words:

"Forgive—forgive——"

"It's not a half bad way to go—for me," he whispered back. "Dying alone is horribly lonely business. But *you!*" His eyes sought hers. He saw how beautiful she was. What a woman! And to die so! It was ugly and wrong. He cursed the limitations of his Colt repeater. Then he bent closer to hear the whispered words she was sending him through that awful moment of silence and waiting.

"Where are they? What are they waiting for?"

Sure enough. What *were* they waiting for? A full minute had passed between that upflinging motion of the Arab's arms and the girl's question. Holbrooke raised his head and peered through the marigolds upon the silent group on the roof of the Little House. Then, with a pressure of his hand on the girl's arm, he bade her look. A strange thing was happening. The Arabs' bodies were swaying queerly. Their arms had fallen limply to their sides. In the brightening dawn he could see their uplifted faces, their great, brown, staring eyes—not the eyes of conquerors, but of men who are forced against their will to look at something horrible. The girl bent a shining face toward Holbrooke.

"Red Mist!" she whispered excitedly. "They're seeing it! We're—we're saved!"

Holbrooke stared at her with a strange look.

"What do you mean?" His voice was calm, but his eyes burned through the silvering darkness.

"It's a danger sign. It comes as a death-warning," she whispered back. "They won't touch us now. Can't you see? They're afraid—utterly afraid! Why," her voice lifted, "we could stand before them here, now, and they wouldn't raise a finger against us!"

"You believe that?" Doubt and a half-belief were fighting in his tone. Before he could prevent her, she answered his question by standing suddenly upright. With a strangled cry of horror Holbrooke sprang before her. She gave a little laugh and pulled him back until they stood side by side with nothing save the nodding gold and purple heads of the marigold and iris between them and that huddled group of dark faces staring up at them. Leaning forward the girl spoke quickly in Arabic—two words.

With a cry the Arabs hid their faces in the folds of their white mantles and stood motionless, like ivory-tinted figures against the blue and gold of the morning sky. The girl touched Holbrooke's arm lightly.

"Come!" Together they crossed the roof to the west and down the outer stairway leading to the street.

In the half-dawn the roofs began to reveal themselves—jagged, oblique lines cut-

ting sharply into the brightening cobalt. The domes of the mosques hung like little moons in mid-air. Shadowy forms began to mount the spiral stairways of the minarets — the *muezzins* whose first call to prayer would, a moment later, break the silence with golden tones. It was a ghost world of softly moving lights and shadows. Through its separating mists the two walked in silence until they reached the deserted entrance of the Hôtel des Fleurs.

Holbrooke held out his hand.

"I'm going to the Palais Consulaire," he explained. "Shall we breakfast together—say at nine?"

"Delighted," said the girl. "I shall be frightfully hungry by then." She gave him a quick, self-contained little smile, and her finger-tips. Then she walked leisurely up the hotel steps and rang the night bell.

Holbrooke stood, hatless, coatless, watching her with half grave, half humorous eyes. When the door closed upon her retreating form he lighted a cigarette, wheeled with military precision, and walked across the empty square toward the Consulate offices.

THE SUNSHINE SEPARATOR

by Charles Edward Daniell

"IT'S sellin' books for mine, all right," announced "Spider" Mullins, the "Ferret," with a consequential air as he inhaled a mouthful of cigarette smoke and indulgently regarded his two companions seated around a greasy, beer-stained table in the rear of an unsavory barroom on First Avenue. "It's the easiest graft I ever got next to for separatin' the dough——"

"You mean the fountain pens," sneered "Reddy" Burns, the corners of his loose mouth drooping scornfully.

"Or near-junk umbrellas and dinky overcoats," scoffed big Pete, the "strong arm."

"Looks to me like you're tryin' to start up a three balls rag-shop, Ferret."

"Well, I ain't makin' any holler yet," retorted the latter confidently. "I'll take a chance with it against friskin' leathers off the push on Brooklyn Bridge durin' rush hours. Besides, it's a business." He produced a neat red leather case and threw a heavy, gilt-edged card printed in two colors on the table.

"Some pasteboards I got up last week to put 'em wise," he explained airily. "I hand 'em out to my customers. Say, they make a big hit, too!"

His listeners grinned derisively as they

bent their heads over this latest evidence of Spider's inordinate vanity. The card before them read:

ALGERNON TALBOT FAIRWEATHER
Special Agent,
Edwards, Bowers & Bowers
Publishers
412½ Fifth Ave., New York

"You've got your nerve with you all right," observed Reddy Burns testily. "Where'd yer cop them chocolate-caramel names from, anyway?"

"Seen 'em in the society column," replied Spider amiably. "It took the names of three ginks from London up to the Waldorf to mix that dope. Can yer beat it?"

"It'll beat *you*, yet," declared big Pete warningly, "if some fly-mouth puts that book firm wise to your game. What is it, anyhow?"

Spider reached down into a capacious pocket in the lining of his overcoat and brought up a limp, black leather prospectus of the English translation of Balzac's "Comédie Humaine." It represented, by a few selected pages from the text of each novel, the entire range of the master's work. In binding it, the publishers had placed "Père Goriot" at the opening, followed by numerous etchings carefully protected by tissue paper, illustrating the various volumes. "Ain't it a lily?" he exclaimed admiringly.

"What's the name to it?" growled Reddy Burns disapprovingly.

"Perry Goriott," he replied blandly, with a touch of pride.

Big Pete sniggered, "And I s'pose you're on to what it's about."

Spider calmly closed the prospectus and returned it to the yawning pocket of his overcoat, buttoning the latter up with a lofty, self-sufficient air. "Sure. It's about ten bones a day to the good," he replied. He moved toward the door, then halted, a bored expression on his lean, crafty face.

"Honest, fellers," he said wearily, "it's just like takin' it away from Baby Clarence. It's as easy as lookin' for mud after a rain." And with a significant grin he passed out.

Reddy Burns sat staring silently at the door for a moment, a sour, disgusted look overspreading his features. "Hot air!" he sneered contemptuously, pulling a wry face. "Spider makes me sick!"

STILL Spider stated a fact—it *was* easy. And as Big Pete, the strong-arm, jeeringly predicted, he was rapidly accumulating an assortment of wearing apparel and desk furniture sufficient to stock a good sized pawn-shop in the near future if business kept up. For, as it often happened, if he found his customer had stepped down the hall for a moment, or was busily engaged dictating to the stenographer in the private office behind closed doors, or—and it was not infrequent—the office was deserted and the door carelessly left unlocked, Spider would absorb the situation at a glance and with the nimbleness of a berry-picker deftly cull anything that was not nailed securely down or soldered to the ironwork.

Nothing appeared to him too insignificant. But where circumstances forced him to delete objects of some bulk and weight, the commodious pocket in his coat-lining bulged suspiciously and compelled him to return to his room over the rear of Moller's bakery on First Avenue and unload. This seemed to him a waste of time. And so, for the most part, he selected—with such discrimination as he could bring to bear on a feverish cupidity that hated to leave even the safe behind—small and portable accessories so far as possible. Fancy desk-ornaments, of all descriptions, canes, umbrellas, and an assortment of overcoats calculated to fit the most exacting decorated the walls of his room and filled his closet. Only the night before he had contentedly counted thirty-nine stylographic pens his customers along Fourteenth Street had unwittingly contributed.

Scarcely a day passed that he did not discover small sums of loose change and fugitive bills lying casually on tables and desks. At such times he slipped silently out, but if suddenly confronted by an inquiry, he would bow politely and present his business card. Thus far, the customers whom he had actually met appeared to be stonily insensible to their literary opportunities, and in a canvass of two weeks' duration "Perry Goriott" had been shown—not even once.

But this lack of interest did not discourage Spider. Indeed, he was mentally relieved. For, had he owned the truth, this prospectus —the legacy of a drunken book-agent—held between its covers a vague, uncharted world that embarrassed him.

He felt vastly encouraged with his success,

which he compared with heartfelt gratitude to a past of sneaking uncertainty. Still, though very happy in it all, there was one element in the new business that seriously worried Spider —so many things had to be left behind!

This thought rankled in his mind as he sauntered out of old man McPhee's saloon, the back room of which furnished a rendezvous for the First Avenue "bunch," enabling them to meet in quiet retirement to discuss and devise expedients to force the hand of an illiberal public. Thus far, his canvassing experience had shown him the futility of early calls, so he strolled leisurely along, his brain alive with ideas for the advancement of the new business on broader and more profitable lines.

Unbuttoning his overcoat, he drew out a gold watch and consulted it. It was a large open-faced watch with an engraved back, which stated in German script that the First Baptist Sunday-school at Port Holly, N. Y., testified their love and admiration for the Rev. Mr. Dowd by presenting it to him on June 3rd, 1908. It was an inheritance that fell to Spider from the fearless clergyman one bitter cold night in a subway crush. As he glanced at it, he saw it was a quarter after ten.

He quickened his pace and in a few minutes stood hesitating at the corner of Fourteenth Street and University Place, eagerly drinking in the business possibilities that lay dormant in the vicinity. His eye fell on a building across the street—a structure of four stories that looked a veritable harbor of possibilities. Transferring his card-case to a pocket in his overcoat, he crossed the thoroughfare and entered the building. Inside, he halted before the tenants' index, then passed on to the elevator and announced his wish to see Mr. Higley—fourth floor.

II

STEPPING off at the landing, Spider paused, affecting momentary doubt; then as the elevator descended, he walked with an assured, business air the length of the hall, glancing sharply about. At the farther end an office door stood open and he approached it quietly on his rubber heels. Apparently it was deserted, so he stepped softly inside and peered around with a critical eye for movables of requisite size and value.

But the room appeared to be in a cluttered up, dismantled state, for, except an old roll-top desk, two wooden chairs, two typewriters and a cheap table, there was little else to be seen save bundles of tied up paper and a tall screen standing in one corner. Spider's lip curled scornfully as he gazed on this desert of opportunity and he was about to leave in disgust when a deep, cheery voice rang out and a man suddenly stepped from behind the screen.

"Well, neighbor, what's the good word?"

He was a large, full-faced man with a heavy mustache and a generous chin threatening to double. Healthy good-nature fairly oozed from his broad, genial person, and a pair of small blue eyes sheathed in fat lids twinkled invitingly as he spoke, He stood drying his hands on a dirty towel.

Spider, thoroughly startled, quickly recovered his poise and, removing his hat, bowed with a wan, Wintry smile. He had a sudden longing to run or back out, but, selecting a card, he advanced and presented it deferentially. The big man read it carefully with good-natured interest.

"Books, hey?" he inquired casually, still studying the card.

"Yes, sir," replied the Ferret. There was a note of meekness in the tone. Until then he had escaped interrogation, all former customers having disposed of him with a cold, crisp and emphatic "No!" He felt decidedly awkward and stood twirling his hat nervously.

A puzzled expression overspread the features of the big man. His eyes raced from the card to Spider, then back to the card and again to the lean, nondescript little figure with its long, pointed face and shifty eyes. The corners of his mouth twitched.

"Sit down," he said pleasantly, motioning to a chair, and seated himself ponderously by the roll-top desk. His eyes still wandered from the card to Spider with a gleam of suppressed amusement.

Spider lowered himself gingerly to the edge of the proffered chair. A dubious, pensive expression settled on his face. He was a trifle suspicious and profoundly embarrassed.

The big man leaned comfortably back, still scrutinizing the card.

"Mr. Algernon Talbot Fairweather, eh?" he read, emphasizing each vocable glibly.

"Well, I buy books sometimes. Look here," he inquired with a twinkle, "you don't happen now to be any kin to my friends the Fairweathers out in Sunshine, Nebraska, do you?"

Spider shook his head soberly. "I ain't wise to it," he replied bashfully.

The big man gave him a quick humorous glance and laughed pleasantly. "Well, let's see what you've got to show," he said, bending forward encouragingly. "I'm a mark for book-men. What is it?"

Spider produced the prospectus with hesitating reluctance. "Perry Goriott," he announced solemnly, handing it to him.

The man in the chair turned the leaves perfunctorily, with careless indifference. Suddenly his face sobered, and he raised his eyes in a perplexed stare of startled amazement.

"What's that you called it?" he inquired quickly. There was a note of positive horror in the tone.

Spider's forehead wrinkled doubtfully. Bending forward, he pointed to the title page.

"Perry Goriott," he repeated humbly with a troubled look.

For a brief moment his auditor stared blankly. Then suddenly he choked and, throwing back his head, laughed uproariously. "Say," he finally blurted out, mopping his eyes, "you're 'way off on that name, neighbor. You——" he stopped and viewed Spider with amused and suspicious interest. "Guess you're a new hand at peddling books eh?" he inquired quizzically. "How long you been at it?"

Spider squirmed and nervously twirled his hat faster and faster. His face was a picture of embarrassed gloom. "I only got busy with the game this morning," he explained dismally. "I dunno what they call the feller."

The big man laughed; then he suddenly sobered. "Look here, neighbor," he said gravely and with gentle emphasis, "you mustn't be hiking round town talking to folks about 'Perry Goriott.' The author's name is pronounced 'Pee-ree Go-Riot.' See? That's what we call him out in Nebraska, where I come from. And you ought to be able to tell the public something about 'Pee-ree,' too. He's a Spaniard and fought with old man Cervera in the Spanish War. Our men fished him out of the water with a boat-hook after the bombardment, as he was swimming toward Moro Castle, and he was taken up to our barracks at Blossomville, Maine, and held for ransom.

"While staying there, he induced the Government to allow him to start up a chicken-ranch, and he made a barrel of money for himself. He showed the natives up there some new tricks—how to make every chicken lay two eggs a day was one of them. And those books," he waved his hand deprecatingly, "why, he wrote them while he was up there just to kill time."

He stopped, and gazed dreamily out of the window, then his eyes wandered back to Spider. "And what particular walk in life, now, did you previously ornament, neighbor?" he inquired solicitously.

"Who—me?" The Ferret started and stared at him suspiciously.

"Yes, what former profession furnished you with weekly meal-tickets?"

Spider frowned and gazed thoughtfully at the floor. "I—I used to beat it for a laundry," he stammered.

The Nebraskan chuckled. "Both of them good, clean lines—laundry and literature," he remarked sententiously, beaming benevolently on the Ferret. "Sorry I can't patronize you, brother," he said feelingly, "but I'm just getting ready to aviate back to God's own country, Nebraska—that's good enough for me. To own up, I gripped a live wire here that's stung me so bad I'm satisfied to shuffle the cards next time in a country where a Billy-goat can't see over the top of the corn. You see," he waved an informing hand, "most everything is packed up and shipped, but——" his eye fell on the two typewriters and he rose hastily to his feet.

"That reminds me," he remarked, "I haven't notified that Simpson Company to call and get the typewriter I rented of them." He started for the telephone, then stopped suddenly with an apologetic laugh. "I forgot the blamed telephone was cut out yesterday. Well," he concluded, "I can write them that I've left it with the superintendent of the building, I suppose."

Spider gave the typewriters a sharp, critical glance. One was apparently brand new. The other rested on a table, sheathed in its tin cover, but outwardly looked to be in perfect condition. The Ferret rose to his feet and stood hesitating.

"Guess I'll beat it, mister," he said demurely. "But if you want to write a letter

to them people I'll take it to 'em. I'm goin' down past their place."

The big man regarded the little figure indulgently. Then his eyes turned thoughtfully to the typewriter.

"Why, that's a good idea, neighbor!" he said briskly. "If you're willing to bother about it, I'll drop 'em a line." He sat down to the desk and scribbled off a pencilled note.

"There," he said handing it to Spider. "If you'll leave that at their office, it'll oblige me." He dropped a familiar hand on the Ferret's shoulder and smiled graciously. "If you ever happen to strike Sunshine, Nebraska, neighbor, look me up," he said, his eyes twinkling. "They all know me out there—name's Joel Smart. And look here," —he pulled a grave face—"you won't go chasing around any more calling this Spanish writer Perry Goriott, will you, huh? Remember, now, it's pronounced 'Pee-ree Go-Riot.'" He held out his hand, "Good-by," he said genially.

Spider took the proffered hand with a sheepish grin and, murmuring an embarrassed good-by, hurried off. The Westerner dropped into his chair, chuckling softly, and gazed thoughtfully out of the window. Gradually the chuckle increased in volume and finally ripened into a dry, ironical laugh.

III

SPIDER, meanwhile, dashed out of the building, his spindle legs geared up to a break-neck pace. Dodging foot-passengers and worming his way through the traffic, he hurried along through a net-work of back streets, headed for McPhee's saloon on First Avenue, for a consuming idea was burning in his heated brain. In less than ten minutes he had covered the ground and reached the barroom where with a short nod to Dan the bartender, he burst excitedly through into the rear room. Big Pete and Reddy Burns were still there, comfortably harbored, idly waiting the stroke of noon to gather and congest humanity in certain favorite pastures known to be fertile. At Spider's precipitate entrance they both sprang to their feet in terror and scrambled pell-mell toward the back door. A satirical grin on the Ferret's face, however, reassured them.

Reddy Burns thrust out an ugly jaw at the offender.

"You rat-eyed little devil!" he exclaimed uncharitably. "What's the matter with yer? Are yer bug-house?"

Big Pete glared fiercely. "Some day," he said with bitter emphasis, "I'll take that peanut head of your'n between me thumb and finger and—Yer crazy yap!" he suddenly exploded, "didn't I tell yer I had smoker's heart?"

Spider was too full of his project to waste time in vain recrimination. "Say, fellers," he began excitedly, "I've got next the softest frame-up over on Fourteenth Street——" he broke off, overcome by the thought, and crossing his arms piously on his chest, rolled his eyes heavenward. "Honest, yer talk about yer easy hand-me-outs!" he continued feelingly, "It'll be just like cuttin' buttons off a drunk!" He dropped into a chair and graphically described his interview with Mr. Joel Smart of Sunshine, Nebraska. "And there's the order that'll cop the goods! he concluded, displaying the Westerner's letter.

He spread the note on the table, and they bent their heads over it critically. It was very brief. "Please call at once for typewriter," constituted the body of the order, followed by the signed name.

"Huh!" growled Reddy Burns. "What's the good of second-hand typewriters?" He was a short, blocky little man with a tousled red head, and a loose, indeterminate mouth that drooped at the corners in a perpetual sneer. The heavy jaw and vinous blue eyes set a trifle too close together gave the countenance a tough, sinister look. He wore a cheap derby hat, usually cocked over one ear.

"But this is a new one!" declared Spider enthusiastically. "I seen it. It's good for seventy bones. If you put the order up to the guy, Reddy, he'll fall for it. Sure! He's easy. He'll never get wise who you are."

The latter shook his head doubtfully. "How do I know he ain't workin' some fly frame-up?" he said skeptically. "I ain't honin' hard to get pinched."

"I tell yer it's all on the level!" insisted Spider. "And the big stuff is movin' out West to-morrow. It's a cinch!"

"Sure. One of them kind that grips yer round the wrist!" defined Reddy satirically. "I'm wise. I guess I pass. I ain't strong like Pete." He turned to the latter. "You get busy with it, Pete!"

The "strong arm" pulled a small wad of bills deliberately out of his pocket. "I don't have to work any more," he said demurely. "I'm goin' to chase trouble and start up a Dago bank with this."

Burns fished in his trousers pocket and brought up some loose bills. "Oh, I ain't so lonesome!" he said, counting it over. "Seven whole ones to the better myself."

"Tell yer what I'll do, Reddy," proposed Spider magnanimously. "You turn the trick and I'll give yer two-thirds the rake off."

The red-headed man turned a scornful, pitying gaze on the object of such sublime self-sacrifice.

"Why, yer little monkey-face," he scoffed, "did yer think I'd go up against that game fer halves? If I put it over, it'll be three-quarters for mine, and——"

"I'll stand for it, Reddy," Spider broke in anxiously. "It's like findin' it at that. But I'll stand for it."

"And how d'ye think I'm goin' to drag a tin typewriter through the streets? I ain't a horse!" growled the other.

"We'll hire Johnson's express wagon," replied the resourceful Ferret. "He can take the goods over to my room. Sure, Reddy. That's easy."

Burns lit a cigarette and, inhaling deeply, blew a cloud of smoke thoughtfully over his head. Big Pete sat silently listening, a bored look on his dark, heavy face.

"You two crimps leak gas enough over it to cop a street-car," he remarked wearily. "I'll buy yer some courage." He rose, and tapped lightly on a "speak-easy" in the partition. It was opened by a thick-set, bullet-headed bartender.

"Set the table, Dan," he ordered. "Make it three long suds."

Reddy Burns glanced sourly at Spider.

"It don't look like any candy graft to me," he said glumly. "It's second-hand typewriters for the dump. But I'll tell yer what I'll do, Ferret," he proposed in a surly tone, "I'll make a play to cop it off for eight bucks out of ten in the rake off, d'ye understand? The guy may be dead easy, all right," he added skeptically, "but if he don't fall for the spiel, it's me that's the Jeremiah, and that's no laugh. So you can take it or pass it up. I don't care."

"I'll take it," answered Spider promptly. "I won't grouch if I can pinch a few out of it." He screwed his face up till it resembled a wounded baboon's. "I'm sore on that glug anyway, I am. He's a fresh Mike and tried to kid me, and I'd like to jab it into him good and plenty!" he added spitefully. "You'll see what a big, pink-gilled stuff he is. He leaks hot air out of both ears."

THEY drank their beer hastily and rose from the table. Big Pete announced his intention of awaiting their return, and was directed to meet them at the Ferret's room in an hour's time. The latter, leaving Burns on the curb outside the saloon, stepped over to the corner and, later, a gray, moth-eaten steed, pulling a ramshackle express wagon with a shirt-sleeved negro on the box, rattled down a side street and headed for University Place with instructions to wait there for orders. Reddy and the Ferret followed, hugging the buildings closely, with searching eyes out for plain-clothes men. As they brisked along, Spider kept up an unceasing chatter of comment and advice.

"All yer have to do, Reddy," he explained volubly as they hurried along Thirteenth Street, "is to pass him up the paper. He's wise to it you're comin', all right, and he'll give up easy. And just as I tell yer, he's a big, bossy slob. He looks somethin' like Galligan's bartender, Mick Dolan, crossed by one of them fat settlement workers. He's a strong hand-shaker, too, and you'll see he'll try and throw a kid into yer if he can—he handed me a balloonful of hot air about Spaniards and chickens. He's a sweet-winded guy for fair and he'll talk yer dippy if yer give him half a look-in. But the typewriter's a peach all right and it'll be the easiest graft you ever pulled. I ain't grouchin', though—I'm willin' to give yer the fat end of it, Reddy. Only," Spider frowned darkly, "when yer get next that stiff, I hope you'll jab the gaff into him about nine inches and turn it round twice! Yes, I do. He got my goat, that gink did!"

"Aw, cut it out!" snapped Reddy sourly. "What do I care what he is? If I can cop the goods he can talk till he chokes!"

They reached University Place and, stepping into a doorway, stood for a moment exchanging the last few necessary words. Across the street Johnson's express wagon could be pulled up beside the curb, waiting. Spider gave the negro a short nod of recognition and out of the corner of his

eye indicated a building in the distance over on Fourteenth Street, a block away.

"It's the wooden one, Reddy," he whispered as they both peered up the street. "The one with the taxi in front of it, see? The guy's on the top floor."

"I'm on," returned the other bluntly. "Gimme that paper."

Spider handed him the order and mentioned a rather important point.

"You want to put him wise you come from the Simpson typewriter joint," he cautioned, an indicating finger on the order. "He'll fall for it all right."

"What did yer say the bloke's name was?" scowled Burns.

Spider pointed out the signature. "That's it on the bottom," he said. "His name's Smart."

Reddy folded the letter and pocketed it meditatively.

"Now listen," he said authoritatively, pulling his hat a trifle lower over his eyes, "keep yer lamps on the door of that buildin' and when yer see me come out get Johnson all ready to hustle. I won't be gone ten minutes."

With another tug at his hat he started off, and Spider watched him from the doorway till he was lost in the crowd. He moved along slowly, a vigilant eye sweeping the sidewalks ahead for certain familiar figures attached to the Central Office whom he had no compelling desire to meet.

But as he pursued his way his brain was actively alert to the job in hand. He was none too confident of the result and mentally decided to proceed with caution. Spider's optimistic views and ambitious ideas he was thoroughly familiar with and distrusted, and though there was no gainsaying the fact that the Ferret always landed on his feet, every member of the bunch looked warily askance at his novel methods.

As he approached the building Reddy's eyes narrowed suspiciously and as he slipped cautiously into the entrance he threw one last searching glance up and down the thoroughfare. A minute later found him on the fourth floor scanning the various signs along the corridor. The same open door at the end of the hall that had attracted Spider's attention caught his eye, and he moved toward it with hesitating steps, trying to peer out the name in the distance. As he neared it, however, a large man of genial, expansive presence suddenly appeared on the threshold in his shirt-sleeves, a cigar in his mouth, and his hands deep in his trousers pockets. He glanced at Reddy in an impersonal, half-inquiring way.

"Looking for some one?" he asked in a helpful tone.

"Lookin' for Mr. Smart," replied Reddy, with a startled glance.

The man in the doorway removed his cigar deliberately from his mouth and tendered the speaker a long, quizzical stare.

"Well," he said finally, "I reckon you've struck the right shop, friend. What's on your mind?"

Reddy pulled his hat awkwardly down from over his ear. "The typewriter," he said diffidently. "The boss sent me after it." He produced the order.

The big man smiled enigmatically and, accepting the order, walked back into the room, chuckling softly. "So Perry Goriott really delivered the message, eh?" He surveyed Reddy critically from head to heel with a shrewd glance of amusement and, "Did you see him?" he inquired naïvely.

Reddy shook his tousled head solemnly. "I didn't see no one," he replied stolidly. "Me boss gave me the letter."

Mr. Smart eyed him humorously. "Didn't see him, eh?" he beamed. "Well, you missed it. Perry Goriott is worth seeing all right. He was in here this morning punching me to buy a set of Balzac," he explained, "and offered to deliver this note. He's a slick little book-agent, and talk—say! there's a little man that could talk a Hindoo idol into making faces—he'd sell china eggs to a cigar-store Indian and collect the account in advance! And you didn't see Perry, eh? Well, he's a hummer!" The Westerner blew a cloud of smoke into the air and surveyed Reddy with twinkling eyes.

The latter shook his head with sober emphasis. "I didn't see no book-agent," he said sulkily, fumbling with his hat.

"Well," said the other regretfully, "you missed it, friend. It would have done you lots of good. It would do any young man good to meet Perry. He thrust his hand into his pocket and brought out Spider's card. "I call him Perry Goriott," he said apologetically, "but his real name is Algernon Talbot Fairweather. How's that for a name? Wouldn't just the sound of that name buy diamonds at Tiffany's without the price, brother, what?" He held the card

out at arm's length and surveyed it admiringly. "Isn't that a winner? And Perry's make-up matches the card to a hair.

"It did me good," he went on feelingly, "to meet Perry—a decent, clean little chap like him with a bright honest face and nice manners—after the throw-down they've given me here in this town. I tell you, son, this burg would have had Napoleon Bonaparte riding on the bumpers! It's a live wire all right. I landed here a while back with a straight, honest, little money-making proposition, and they had me hands down on the fly-paper before I had time to learn the names of the streets! I reckon Sunshine, Nebraska, is where I get off. This town's too quick for me!" He eyed Reddy gloomily, then turned to the typewriter. "Here's your machine over here, brother," he said, moving toward it. "This one with the cover. Think you can carry it?"

"Sure!" A look of profound relief sprang into Reddy's eyes. He grasped the typewriter eagerly by the handle and lifted it to the floor. "That's easy," he said gratefully. "I'm used to carryin' 'em."

The Nebraskan shook his head ruefully and his eyes filled with pity. "It's too bad, son," he said sympathetically, "to see such strength and splendid young manhood wasted around here. You ought to emigrate out to Sunshine, Nebraska, my boy! We pay men like you big returns out there for brains and muscle." He moved toward the desk and, dropping heavily into a chair, picked up a pen. "I'll scratch off a receipt," he said amiably, "and I'll give you one for the five dollars deposit I advanced to them."

Reddy stared blankly.

"Another example of New York's genial hand of welcome to the homeless and confiding stranger," he observed bitterly as he scribbled, "this deposit business. Everybody sizes you up here for a second-story climber till you've proved yourself an innocent white lamb. Then they promptly proceed to scientifically skin you so close you're in danger of freezing to death. Nice town!" He swung around in his chair and held out the receipt. "There you are, son," he said amiably. "Trot out the five dollars and the deal is closed."

Reddy Burns stood staring in awkward amazement, his feet and hands moving nervously. A look of dumb chagrin overspread his countenance.

"The boss didn't tell me about any five dollars," he protested in an injured tone.

The Nebraskan's eyebrows lifted sympathetically. "He didn't, eh? That's funny!" he said in a tone of mild surprise, and glanced at the telephone. "They cut me off yesterday, or I'd call him up," he remarked, rising to his feet. "But I'll tell you what we'll do, neighbor," he suggested brightly, "we'll step into the next office and give your boss a call-down!" He dropped a familiar hand on Reddy's shoulder and his blue eyes twinkled. "What d'ye say?"

But Reddy's hand was already irresolutely fumbling the thin wad of seven dollars in his trousers pocket, his brain working to the utmost of its limited capacity. "I guess I better go back and see the boss about it," he suggested weakly.

"Yes, but that isn't necessary," observed the Westerner helpfully. "We can easily telephone and fix it up."

Reddy's forehead wrinkled meditatively. "I s'pose I can pay it myself," he said in an injured tone, "and get it off the boss." He glanced about helplessly, nervously hesitating, then reluctantly drew out the crumpled bills and counted five dollars on to the desk.

Mr. Smart beamed approvingly. "You're all right, neighbor," he applauded, his eyes resting on Reddy with benevolent approbation. "You're made of the stuff we need out in Sunshine—men with your spirit. You'd be interested to see our new industry out there—the Sunshine Separator; it separates the cream from the milk, you know. I came East in the company's interests, but —well, son, it's live and learn, and I reckon this town's a good place to learn in!" he said bitterly. He folded the bills and complacently pocketed them. "And here's your receipt," he added affably, "and you tell that boss of yours he better get busy taking a course of memory lessons by mail!"

But a burning, all-compelling desire to get out of the building obsessed Reddy. He forced a sickly grin in lieu of an answer and, clutching the typewriter by the handle, started for the door. Mr. Smart smiled comprehensively and, crossing the threshold stood watching him hurry down the long corridor.

"Don't forget, son," he called after him cordially as a parting injunction, "let me know if you decide to come. A letter to Sunshine Nebraska'll always reach me.

Address it care of the Sunshine Separator." And he walked back into his office, chuckling.

IV

ON THE lower floor of the building Reddy hesitated at the entrance and glanced cautiously about. Over on University Place the express wagon was plainly visible, and in the doorway where he had left Spider the latter could be seen idly lounging, smoking a cigarette, his eyes fixed in rapt attention on a dog-fight in howling evidence down the street. Hot blood surged into Reddy's face at this indifferent attitude of the Ferret's and an evil glint sprang into his eyes as he started off tugging the unwieldy machine awkwardly across Fourteenth Street. Turning into University Place, he hurried along until he reached the wagon and savagely dumped the typewriter into it. Then, as the negro drove off, he strode angrily across the street to meet Spider, his hands clenched and murder in his heart. But before he reached the curb the latter's eyes suddenly turned full upon him in a startled, wonderstruck gaze.

"For —— sake, Reddy!" he cried brokenly in amazement. "Where did yer—did yer get it?"

Burns glared at him ferociously, showing his teeth, his lips twitching like an angry bull-terrier's.

"Yer pin-headed little yap!" he hissed tensely. "D'ye know what yer steered me up against, huh? Yer don't, hey? O' course yer don't! Yer couldn't tell a Rube from a hold-up man if yer saw 'em lined up!" His features twisted with passion. "And yer had the crust to push me on ter that phoney lay-out—a dead easy cinch, huh? His fists doubled. "For two cents I'd knock that peanut block of yours——"

"What's the matter, Reddy?" Spider broke in excitedly, his eyes popping in innocent bewilderment. "Didn't yer—didn't yer pull it after all?"

Burns fixed him with a gaze of withering contempt, and disdained to answer. He gave a quick furtive glance up and down the street.

"Beat it!" he said with surly emphasis, "and beat it quick! It's some frame-up!"

Spider shot a questioning glance around, and together they started along University Place in nervous haste to Thirteenth Street, where they slunk around the corner and scurried along with eyes anxiously alert. For a long time they were silent and it was not until they were well past Third Avenue that they lessened their pace and the startled look in Spider's eyes gave place to one of eager curiosity.

"But—but you swiped it, didn't yer, Reddy?" he inquired with breathless eagerness.

The latter scowled at him over his shoulder, his upper lip lifted sneeringly. "Sure," he snapped, "I swiped it! And——"

"Then how d'ye know it's a frame-up?" pursued Spider blandly.

Burns stopped short and faced him with a scornful leer.

"How do I know?" he repeated with savage contempt. "How'm I wise you're a pussy-footed little crimp with a nut on yer that's filled with punk, huh? How d'ye s'pose I fell to it that yer easy mark over there was some con-man from out West that's passed us the glad hand and sweet Agnes smile like we was a couple o' husker Rubes just in from Hayville, huh? And how'd I have a pipe-dream that the guy shook me down fer five bones as easy as he'd pinch 'em off'n a Tennessee come-on, what? Because I got er couple o' lamps in my nut and seen him do it!" He thrust a forbidding jaw close to Spider's face and glared ferociously.

"And--and did yer really give up five bones ter the fat gink, Reddy?" stammered Spider in soft amazement.

"Sure, yer little Bowery kike! D'ye s'pose I wanted to pound me ear down in the Twelfth Street growler to-night?"

Spider shook his head dubiously. "It gets past me," he said with a puzzled expression. Then his face brightened. "But yer swiped the typewriter all right, Reddy?" he remarked encouragingly.

"I tell yer, yes!" exclaimed the other venomously. "It's down ter yer joint by now." He moved along again, scratching his head perplexedly. "That guy's got the hook into us all right, though," he observed with conviction. "It's some phoney deal he's sprung on the two of us. I got wise from the jump that he was on to me with his lovin' brother dope and a lot er hot air about some sunshine town. And the kid spiel he rang in——"

"And did he kid yer, Reddy?" interrupted Spider brightly.

"Kid nothin'!" was the scornful rejoinder. "He didn't get gay with me! But he didn't do a thing but kid you and chew the rag about what a slick guy he thought you was. He kept it up till it made me sick. I'm tellin' yer," he added decisively, "it's some stall all right, all right! And you'll come across with them five bucks yer con man mopped me for, too, monkey-face!" he continued malevolently, as he turned the corner of First Avenue. "D'ye understand?"

Spider's brow wrinkled thoughtfully, but he made no answer. Crossing the street hurriedly, they made for the express wagon pulled up at the corner, and, surveying the Avenue up and down suspiciously, Spider lifted the typewriter gingerly to the ground and they scuttled down the block to the security of the Ferret's room. A sense of grim satisfaction possessed Reddy's soul as he watched the swinging, bumping machine collide painfully with the meager underpinning of his fellow craftsman and in his heart he profoundly hoped each encounter left a satisfactory dent. Big Pete stood near the narrow, unsavory doorway of Spider's grimy habitation, patiently waiting, and as they swung into the dark entry and hurried up the dirty stairs his burly figure closed up the dismal passage behind them like a protecting rear-guard.

THEY entered the room on tip-toe and securely locked the door. Spider kicked two wooden chairs together and deposited the typewriter on them with solicitous care. Reddy Burns, scowling at the object of his recent humiliation, stood waiting the dénouement, and Big Pete's eyes lighted with curiosity as the Ferret's hand clutched the handle of the tin cover.

But just as he was about to raise it, something stirred in the outer entry—a soft step it sounded, very faint and scarcely perceptible. Three pairs of terror-stricken eyes focussed on the door, then turned upon each other in tight-lipped, questioning fear. Then were heard four gentle, regular taps on the panel, followed after a short interval by four more—each light, though distinctly insistent. The three held their breath, eying each other frozenly. Then a low, guttural voice, plainly assumed, growled in a commanding tone to be admitted.

Big Pete gave a nervous laugh of relief and, advancing to the door, boldly flung it open. A tall, spare man, smoothly shaven, with keen intellectual eyes and a humorous expression playing about the corners of his mouth, crossed the threshold. Sweeping the room with one quick, comprehensive glance, his eyes fixed quizzically on Spider.

"Why, hello, Algy-non!" he cried jocularly. "How's tricks?" And serenely ignoring the chorus of profane expostulation over the scare he had given them, the "Prince" moved over to the machine and grasped the handle of the cover.

"Gettin' busy in the typewriter business, Ferret?" he inquired dryly, drawing off the tin hood. "Or," his face suddenly changed and he burst into a satirical chuckle, "or is it just old junk you're pinchin' now?"

A dismayed group quickly surrounded the typewriter and gazed in open-mouthed wonder. Seven keys alone stood intact on the ill-fated machine, as if to proclaim a happier past, but the carriage was gone, the type-bars twisted and broken, and one side of the iron frame was completely torn away. In fact and in appearance, it was a total and picturesque wreck, fit only to ornament the top of a scrap-pile. Spider stood staring at it in dumb amazement. Reddy Burns exploded with a sudden oath and stepped back with glaring eyes, his fists clenched.

"There, yer little pin-head!" he cried savagely. "Didn't I tell yer? The guy was a soft mark, hey? Aw, say! you and yer book cinch——" he thrust out an ugly jaw and stepped toward the Ferret menacingly.

Spider faced him accusingly. "Yer pinched the wrong one, I tell yer!" he exclaimed excitedly. "The guy worked yer, Reddy! Sure, he did! It was the other one you ought'r got! It was a peach!"

Burns glowered, speechless with rage. He raised a threatening fist, but the Prince stepped between them. Big Pete dropped on to a chair and laughed uproariously.

The Prince chuckled, eying Spider with a mystified expression. "You're a dead-sure ringer for a captain of industry, Ferret," he observed dryly. "For —— sake, what'd yer bump up against, anyway?"

"I tell yer Reddy pinched the wrong one off'n him!" shouted Spider injuredly. "He's a bloke over on Fourteenth Street—a fat, pink-headed gink named Smart from some place called Sunshine out West. He——"

The Prince suddenly flopped to a chair and broke into a paroxysm of laughter.

Finally he raised his eyes to the twisted, wo-begone face of the late Perry Goriott.

"Oh, my! Oh, my!" he moaned, wagging his head in affected distress. "Where's the baby-carriage?" Then, with a quick change of tone, "For heaven's sake, don't you two dips ever read the newspapers?" he bawled. "Haven't yer heard about this Western fakir they call Sunshine Smart, that's gold-bricked the Universal Insurance Company for $20,000 and they can't get a hook into him? You haven't, hey? Oh, my! Oh, my!" he laughed derisively. "The two of you ought to be buttoned up with safety-pins! He probably thought the Gerrys had sent the infant class down to see him and it was up to him to amuse yer, so he gave yer a lemon to suck! And Reddy, the loafer——" he gazed inquiringly about for the latter. But Reddy had disappeared.

THE THIRD MATE

by Frederick Booth

WHEN the third mate returned from his initial voyage on the *Sharon*, the whole ship, fore and aft, had a great deal to say about what a wonder of a man he was; exaggerations of course, for the affair happened in the night, with no one else there to see—but he had the scars on his body to show what a fight he'd had with the heathen.

There are still a few ancient mariners in New Bedford, and Fairhaven just across the river, who remember this third mate. Benjamin Clough was his name, and he came from somewhere up in Maine; Monmouth, I think. He was counted a queer card among sea-going men, with not much to say; not very popular forward, but always respected and rated a good sailor. He was a powerful fellow, with a pair of arms like the flukes of an anchor, and he had a voice that broke deep in his throat, and resembled nothing so much as the sound of a fog-horn below the horizon—a typical North Coast voice.

The *Sharon* was a square rigger, built for sperm-whaling in the Pacific Ocean, and she left her berth alongside one of the Fairhaven wharves, on this particular voyage, on a

morning in May of 1841. That was in the pioneer days of whaling.

Whale-fishing is not what you would call a sport; there is the long durance of a cruise, the hazard of the chase, the cold and the ice in the north; the pestilential heat of the tropics; and in the early days the innate hostility of the natives at every island water station. Nor is a whaling vessel exactly what you would call a pleasure craft; broad of beam and blunt-nosed they are, black and greasy as an oil-cask when they come into port; as malodorous as Mother Cary's chickens that hover like flies over the cutting—a sort of monster, ugly but efficient, designed to stalk their game across two thousand miles of water, through thrice a dozen months of any kind of weather, and return with a glutted maw—a dingy and draggled bird of prey, to disgorge her pickings at the foot of her master.

Below decks in one of these vessels there is a sort of miasmal squalor, a mean and dismal obscurity, intensified by the narrow quarters and rendered palpable by an indescribably complex odor of unclean garments, bilge-water, oil and foul air. The captain's cabin, the mates' and boat-steerers' quarters, the steerage, all share this ill-favored atmosphere. The forecastle is a black hole. To herd together in those quarters for four years, to sleep in those bunks, to know no home but that—what a life! Life of a rat!

A man who resigns himself to this sort of existence, not for one cruise, but for life, should arm himself with courage as a habit, like his oil-soaked garments—which, perhaps, he does not take off at night. A whale-ship in fact, because of the danger and the irk of long days and unblessed nights, makes two classes of sailors—beasts who are cowards and men who are courageous. As the story of the third mate will show.

THEY manned that ship with a crew of youngsters and a sprinkling of old hands, twenty-nine in all, including a Portuguese lad, Manuel José dos Reis. They gave the command to another youngster, Captain Howes Norris. It was a fair day when they sailed out of New Bedford harbor and some friends on the Fairhaven side sang out the old fare-ye-well, "Greasy luck, mates!"

They ran southward past the Bahamas and Barbados with fair weather and good luck, for wherever they raised a school of whale they lowered for the chase.

But it was a bad pick of a crew and a captain. Hands were scarce in those days, and the *Sharon's* forecastle muster was an ill-favored assortment of green hands, raw to ship work, and old outworn tars, broken by hard years before the mast, with a perpetual snarl at authority and an aching to kick up a row. There was more skylarking forward than was good for discipline, and some fighting, which the Captain, young and overzealous, reprimanded with too heavy a hand.

The youngsters grumbled, kicked on the food, cursed the Captain behind his back. The old hands, with a natural love for nasty weather, egged them on. Gradually the complexion of affairs grew uglier; there was a desertion now and then at various ports, and by the time the *Sharon* had rounded the Horn and was cruising northward a round number of the crew were ready to quit the ship.

The opportunity came October 15, 1842, when the *Sharon* was cruising off the Caroline Islands. On the day mentioned she put in at Ascension for wood and water. Eleven of the crew deserted in a body. It pleased their fancy to live on the island, among the friendly natives there. Captain Norris failing to retake these renegades, sailed from Ascension with the intention of touching at Port Jackson or Bay of Islands for more hands. The crew now numbered but seventeen men, making a short watch and causing two of the whale-boats to hang idle on the davits. And four of these men, it should be said, were islanders coaxed aboard from the King's Mill group. These savages, for they were nothing else, were not worth their salt as sailors, for they could not steer and it was impossible to drive them aloft.

Indifferent to the orders of the officers, sullen and defiant, these heathen day after day perched themselves upon the try-works like birds of ill-omen and cast upon the ship an evil eye.

A month after touching at Ascension, the *Sharon* was cruising near the Line, to the north of it in fact, longitude about 126 degrees west, the sun blazing in the middle of a copper sky, when the lookout aloft raised a school of sperm-whale to the eastward. Cheered by the prospect of a chase after long days of inaction, the men swarmed down the falls into the boats, Third Mate Clough steering the mate's boat. Captain

Norris and the Portuguese lad, with three of the King's Mill natives, stayed aboard to keep ship. The fourth islander was chased overside in a cotton shirt and his breech-clout, to work an oar for the mate.

In less than two hours the mate's boat had caught and gaffed a large whale to windward, and the *Sharon*, running down the wind, took him alongside. The mate immediately put out for another whale.

The Portuguese lad was steering, the King's Mill negroes, perched as usual on the try-works, were gabbling in low tones. Captain Norris, standing at the rail in the waist of the vessel, paid no attention to these fellows. He was looking out to sea at the maneuvers of his depleted crew. The school of whale were moving eastward, and the two boats, slowly coming up on the chase with sails set, showed like white butterflies on the horizon.

Manuel, doing his trick at the wheel, idly taking in these familiar details of the day's work, his eyes half closed, but his instincts alert, became gradually yet poignant y conscious of the immensity and silence of the sea—the still water, stretching flat and stagnant under the torrid sun, the hot sky. Even the creaking of the yards, the *lap-lap* of the water under the counter, served to accentuate a stillness that was at once oppressive and terrifying.

Manuel was superstitious, easily moved, perhaps easily frightened. The unearthly silence got on his nerves. Why couldn't the master say something? It seemed that this silence, which easily became appalling when you had nothing to do, was some intangible menace, rushing upon the ship, from above, below, from all sides. Some threat was in the wind, subtle, yet none the less certain. Manuel himself could not rightly analyze the impression, yet he knew it spoke in all the familiar details, the little and intimate noises of the vessel, which, like the ticking of a clock, from being heard constantly are heard but intermittently.

Manuel José, "Portygee," ignorant and lazy, shook his head. What was the matter with him? Heat going to his head? Had he been dozing, dreaming? He rubbed his eyes. There was the Captain, standing like a wooden man in the waist; there were the boats, crawling like flies along the horizon. There was the deck, black and oily, blistering in the sun. Everything as before.

Everything? Not quite. At last the lad understood the unwonted quiet that had shaken his nerves. For hours and days the South Sea boys had kept the ship noisy with their palaver. Now they had fallen silent, they had disappeared from the try-works. Strange the Captain hadn't noticed it. What was up? Mischief? Looting the galley? Manuel fastened the wheel and went forward to investigate.

THEY were squatting on the deck, just forward of the try-works, all three in a row. They paid no attention to the Portuguese. They were looking at the Captain, and there was something in their gaze that frightened the boy. What followed happened in the space of a second. The largest of the three got up, looked once at his companions, chose a cutting-spade from the rack without making a sound, and ran his finger along its edge. Instantly, as though electrified by the touch of steel, the heathen stiffened into a pose that was so diabolical in its evident intent that poor Manuel's blood turned to water.

Fascinated, unable to cry out, he saw the black's neck contract into his shoulders, then stretch forward like the menacing length of a serpent. The muscles of his chest and abdomen began to creep and crawl under their black covering like a nestful of vipers. For an instant he stood there, balanced on his toes and looking at the master as a cat looks at a mouse. Then with a single leap he cleared the intervening distance, whirled the cutting-spade aloft, and plunged it to the haft in the Captain's neck.

The Portuguese heard the sickening spat of iron against flesh and, leaping into the main rigging, ran shrieking aloft. White-faced, shivering with fear, Manuel clutched the cross-trees and prayed. Once he looked below, at the dread thing lying there on the deck, headless, covered with gore; the ship's pig, mascot and future Christmas dinner, was scuffling aft from the bows, grunting stupidly and sniffing the air. Manuel averted his gaze.

Below him he could see the three negroes, who had stripped themselves naked, running about the deck, yelling to one another in their fiendish glee. They were masters of a craft they could not navigate, but they set about holding it against all comers. Manuel, who by this time had cut the main-top-gallant halyards, could see them collecting billets of wood, cutting-spades, belaying-

pins, and marlinespikes. These they distributed along the deck fore and aft, to be ready at any point of attack. Manuel looked out to sea. His mates must be warned somehow. Instinctively his eyes turned to the colors at the masthead.

Half an hour later some one in the mate's boat saw the flag at half mast, and within ten minutes' time both boats were pulling for the ship. Coming up on her quarter, they were like to run into the trap set for them, when the boy, hailing them from aloft, acquainted the mate with the disaster. The crew rested on their oars, and the mate, taking in the situation at a glance, ordered the boy to cut the main-top-gallant sheets and go forward on the stay and cut the halyards of the head-sails and clear them from the yards.

At this moment the same negro who had killed the Captain leaped upon the taffrail, waving aloft his bloody cutting-spade and showing his teeth. Spying his brother heathen in the mate's boat, he spoke quickly to him in his native tongue, evidently inviting him to join the party, for the other shook his head. Instantly, with the agility and ferocity of a tiger, he leaped upon the deck, seized the cook's ax and threw it with such precision and velocity, though a ship's length distant, that it cut through the fellow's borrowed shirt as he stooped to avoid the blow, and creased his black hide the breadth of his back.

This sally opened hostilities, and for the next few minutes the air was thick with flying missiles from the ship, the belaying-pins striking the boats with such force that they were broken to pieces; but no one was hard hit.

During this fusilade some one was seen to leap over the thwarts of the mate's boat, run forward and pick up a harpoon from the rack. It was the third mate. Standing in the bows, a fair target for the belaying-pins and cooper's hammers that came flying overhead, Clough began throwing the harpoon at the black on the taffrail. Each time the iron fell short, only to be dragged back through the water and thrown again. The savage kept his place without flinching and greeted each attempt with a loud laugh.

"Ease 'er for'ard a bit, mates," begged Clough at last, "just a boat's length, an' I'll spit that nigger an' haul him aboard like a porpoise!" But the boat's crew, cowed and sullen, backed out of range of the missiles. That thin trickle of blood down the side of the ship, where the Captain had first fallen against the rail, had taken the courage out of them.

A parley followed, everybody chipping in. Some one proposed boarding from both sides at once, but the mate balked at that, saying the risk was too great. Then he himself proposed that both crews take one boat and proceed to the *Sharon*, leaving him behind in the other to await the outcome. There was an uproar at this, the second mate showing his disapproval by allowing his boat to drop astern out of hearing. Clearly, to attempt to board from such a low craft as a whaleboat, in the face of such an array of weapons and savage resistance, would be a bloody undertaking. Some of the men clamored to set out for land, five or six days' sail distant. For answer the mate pointed to the water-butt. There was not enough water to last half the way.

The third mate chimed in with another plan. He said he would go aboard over the bows, if the boy aloft would cut the fore-royal stay and let the end fall overboard so he could climb by it to the jib-boom. He would take a lance warp in his teeth and make use of the lance when he got on deck. But it was no go; Manuel was too weak to climb to the royal mast-head.

THE sun went down into the sea. Darkness came at a long stride, and for a little while the moon showed to the westward. Against her pale beams the spars and lines of the *Sharon* stood sharply out. Then the moon followed the sun into the sea.

Oppressed by a common fear, instinctively the two luckless boats drew together for companionship, but at a safe distance. A few of the men fell under the thwarts asleep. Others talked in low tones or sat staring through the darkness at the ship, as though, by the intensity of their gaze, by the strength of their eye-balls, they would pierce the gloom and follow the movements of the savages. The mate sat huddled in the bows, looking at the water. He had quit; he didn't know what to do.

Suddenly Clough was seen standing up in the boat, in the act of stripping off his upper garments.

"What the ——" began the mate.

"Do ye mind," said Clough, "the stabberd window being open this morning? I'm

going overside; I'm going aboard. There's cutlasses and muskets in the Captain's cabin. I'm going to drive them heathen overboard!"

The mate, who was captain now, tried to protest.

"Hist," said Clough, "do ye hear, up aloft there, that moaning in the rigging? 'Tis the Portygee lad. He's saying his prayers. 'Fore morning he'll be dropping off like a ripe coconut. Would ye leave him to the niggers? Would ye leave the *Sharon* struck adrift with them hell-cats aboard? 'Tis a little thing to gaff a heathen in the dark. I'm going aboard!"

"But the sharks, man! There's a million of 'em in the water hereabouts!"

"They'll smell the whale, not me," answered the third mate, but he put his dirk in his teeth.

In another instant he had slipped like an eel into the water. The watchers in the boats, straining their eyes through the gloom, saw, for an instant, the pale blur of his face against the black water; then he was swallowed up in the obscurity.

The blubber-hunters of those days were adorned with a large square window on either side of the stern—port-holes would hardly be the word. To swim the length of the ship, climb the rudder and enter the cabin through one of these windows would, under ordinary conditions, have been the work of a few minutes. But to strike out boldly in the darkness, in those phosphorescent waters, would have been a dead give-away. Therefore Clough turned on his back, submerged himself until only his nose stuck out, and resorted to treading water.

To make headway in this manner, to make no noise, to leave no trail, requires endurance and patience. To run the invisible gauntlet of man-eating sharks, undismayed and deliberately, requires a rare degree of courage. From the outset luck was against the third mate, for the *Sharon*, suddenly taken aback in the light and varying breeze, seemed possessed of an insensate desire to keep abreast of him, to make a mock of his snail-like progress.

Clough was in the water over an hour. At last, chilled, dripping and weary, but undismayed, his dirk still in his teeth, Clough dived under the stern and, coming to the surface, clutched the rudder with both hands. At the same moment a tremor, subtle but terrifying, almost imperceptibly agitated the water, like the muffled and reduced concussion of some submarine explosion, or the vibrations caused by the rapid and convulsive movements of some monster under the sea. Heaving himself up the rudder-stem with a convulsive effort, he swung himself just clear as the snuffle of a shark broke the water so close under his feet that the bubbles struck his toes.

Hooking his hands inside the starboard window, he pulled himself up and in a moment stood on the cabin floor. He held his breath and listened. Not a sound. The beating of his heart made a tumultuous and insistent thunder in his ears that he strove to stifle by pressing his hands against his breast. The trickle of water from his trousers sounded like the ebbing of a tide down a gully. Partly to free himself from this irritation, partly to render himself as slippery in a possible clinch as his black adversaries, he took off his nether garments and stood naked. He tip-toed to the cabin stairs and looked upward. Not a footfall on deck; the ship might have been deserted.

IN THE impenetrable darkness, not daring to strike a light, the impalpable barrier fairly pushing in his eye-balls, the third mate set about discovering weapons for himself. Two cutlasses he found and stood them against the stairs; two muskets also. Were they empty? Were they loaded? He hooked his toe over the hammer of one of them and blew down the barrel. It was empty.

He began fumbling through the Captain's locker for powder and ball. One drawer after another he ransacked. Nothing. At last, in the bottom one, he uncovered what he wanted, the powder tightly corked in a bottle. He pulled the cork with his teeth, poured in enough to have blown a hole through the bottom of the old *Sharon*, rammed the ball down and stood the gun with the cutlasses.

He was in the act of loading the second, was pouring in the powder, when a sound, barely perceptible, so faint that it merged into and was one with the silence, came from the deck above. One would have said that something, some one, was walking on the deck with the velvet tread of a cat. It is possible sometimes to hear what is inaudible. Clough, waiting in the obscurity,

holding his breath, not daring to move, felt that at last an encounter was at hand. Was it one, or three? He set his teeth. Now it came again—in the gangway—it was on the stair—the soft pad of a naked foot on the step!

It would be foolish and extravagant to say that the third mate was unacquainted with fear. But to fight in the open, to see your antagonist, to anticipate in clear daylight the movements of the adversary whom you are to kill, or by whom you are to be killed, is one thing. To crawl into a black hole, with the intention of engaging, not one man but three barbarians; to be, not only outnumbered, but rendered impotent by obscurity; willingly to run the imminent risk of being approached on three sides at once by invisible assassins, every shadow a shape, every sound a menace, yet to turn your back resolutely upon the open way of escape—in a word, to put yourself in the way of being completely and summarily cut into bits without being able to see your assailant—that is quite another matter.

The third mate, when he heard the step on the stair, felt the hair rise on his scalp. Nevertheless he advanced toward the sound.

Before he could reach his weapons they were knocked clattering to the floor. With a grunt of defiance, Clough reached for a cutlass and, thrusting with all his strength into the obscurity, ran the blade through the body of the savage who had ventured below. He heard the Kanaka's cutting-spade drop to the floor; he drew the steel out, would have thrust again, but the heathen, and without making a sound, leaped into a clinch with the ferocity and swiftness of a wild animal. Grappling and clawing at his assailant, the third mate went down under the impact of his body like an ox under the assault of a tiger. There was a fight on the cabin floor.

Writhing in each other's embrace, rolling over and over, clawing at each other's throats, the two, the white man and the savage, fought it out like two beasts. Of the details of that strange fracas Clough could never remember much; but he never forgot the heathen's rank breath in his face, the hot blood that gushed over his body, nor the terrible eyes, like twin emeralds in the dark, like the eyes of a cat, that glared into his face without blinking and were indescribably malignant.

He had come aboard to fight for the ship. He found himself fighting for his life. He was in the clutches of a beast. He himself became a beast. Once the black clutched him by the throat; he thrust his thumb into one of those cat-eyes and forced him to loose his hold. A dozen times the third mate strove to get in a thrust from the side. As often the negro intercepted the blow, seized the weapon by the hilt or clutched the naked steel in his hands and tried to wrest it from his grasp. Always afterward Clough contended that that barbarian could see in the dark.

The fight resolved itself into a struggle for the cutlass. The third mate was becoming tired; the black, on the other hand, was becoming exhausted. At last, he hardly knew how, the white man turned his antagonist, pinned him to the floor and put his knee upon his chest. He felt the fierce body quiver under his weight. He jabbed once with the cutlass, taking out one of his eyes. He pushed the blade against his neck with both hands—tried to cut off his head; the heathen clutched the steel, cutting his hands.

Then at last the negro breathed heavily in the darkness, lay inert; his knuckles struck against the floor. The third mate loosed his weapon, his eyes starting from his head, the breath whistling through his nostrils; covered with gore, he reeled to his feet. It was a ruse—the fellow was on his feet at the same instant, swinging the cutlass. Even as Clough groped for the other cutlass his right arm was slashed to ribbons. In that moment the third mate thought he was lost. But in his turn the Kanaka dropped the weapon. He fell forward on his face, rolled over like a gaffed whale, gagged audibly in the darkness and lay still. The fight was over. It had lasted perhaps five minutes.

"One!" said the third mate aloud, and took in his hands the musket.

ALREADY some one was running along the deck, calling back in the night. As in a dream Clough saw the fellow silhouetted against the light in the gangway in the act of throwing a cutting-spade. He pulled the trigger, and even as the gun roared, the iron tore through the fleshy part of his left arm, bringing a torrent of blood. But in the flash of the discharge he saw the face of the savage, the eyes pro-

truding, the face convulsed on the instant with the agony of sudden death.

The third savage came along after the second, but when he saw his companion lying dead on the deck he took fright, uttered one screech, and ran forward where he skulked in the obscurity.

The white man dragged himself up on deck. He looked at the stars and breathed deeply of the night air. The cool breeze against his naked body felt like a benison from heaven.

He sat cross-legged on the deck and called softly to the lad in the rigging.

"Come down, you Portygee!" he said. "Come down. I've saved your bacon."

There were voices calling back and forth in the night, the Portuguese in a parley with the boats, trying to get the crew to come aboard. Clough, faint and giddy from pain and blood-letting, heard the voices out there on the water, the men cursing the *Sharon*, swearing they would never board her. Only one shot had been fired—there were two niggers left, they averred. That was too many. They were a nice lot of sheep! After half an hour of this sort of thing, after the third mate had lost enough blood to have killed an ordinary man, they came in, fearful, and swarmed over the side.

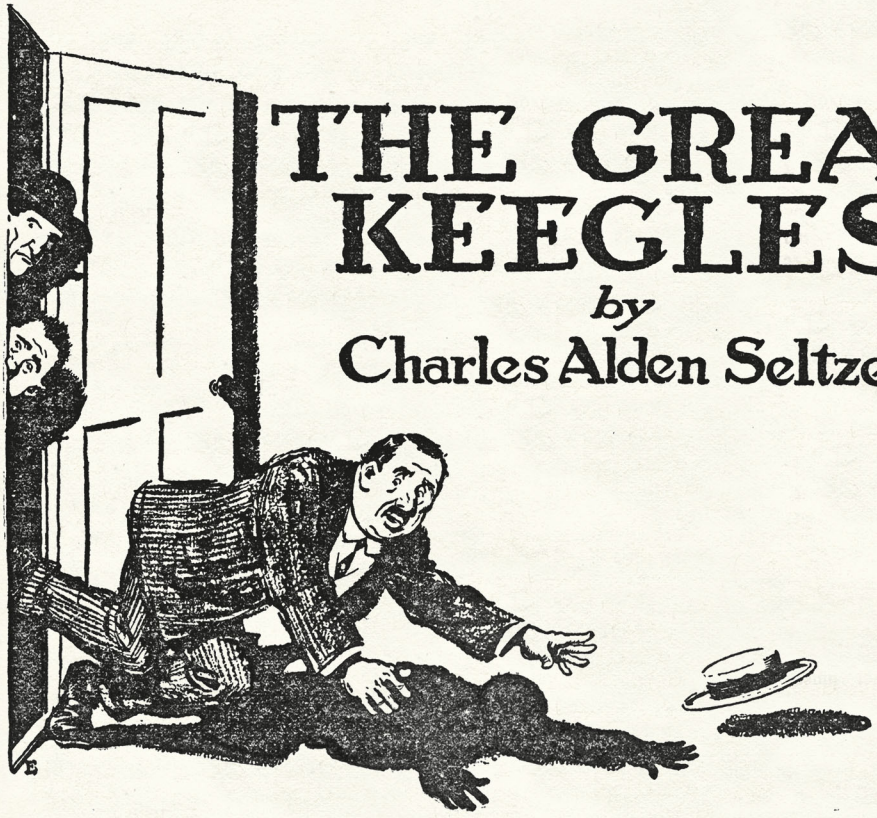
The Portuguese fetched a lantern; they saw what a fight there had been—how the third mate had turned the trick. Their joy was great, their ferocity unbounded. At this exhibition of retaking the ship, the skulker forward jumped into the sea and swam away into the night. Presently he returned under cover of the confusion and hid himself in the forehold. Here his movements attracted attention and he was dragged out and clapped into irons. He was tried afterward in New South Wales for mutiny and murder, and it went hard with him.

They now heard the heathen in the cabin, who had not been quite killed, making a finish of it with a great deal of groaning and rolling about. One of the crew seized a cutting-spade, another possessed himself of a musket, and they ran below. Having inordinately finished a job that had been well enough done in the first place, they dragged the body on deck. The sharks had a feast. The fellow who had met his death at the point of the musket went the same way.

In the morning light the ship showed a ghastly spectacle, the deck and cabin floor all dappled and tracked with blood—the headless body of the Captain.

"Ye're a brave lad, Clough," said the mate, when they laid the third mate in his bunk, "and it'll go in the log."

It was in 1845 that the *Sharon* came back to port. The story of Clough's fidelity went straight to the ears of Gibbs & Jenney, her owners; and the next time the old whaler stuck her stubby forefoot outside of Buzzard's Bay the third mate was her master.



THE GREAT KEEGLES

by

Charles Alden Seltzer

FOR the twentieth time Keegles circled the gurgling fountain in Madison Square. At the beginning of the twenty-first turn he came suddenly to a halt in front of an empty bench, looking vacantly down at it.

He dropped into it disconsolately, his broad shoulders spreading over its back, his muscular arm flung wide in an eloquent and magnificent despair. He was tired—dead tired. But it was only physical. His brain was working, communicating to every vein and sinew of his great body its final conclusions on a situation with which it had been compelled to deal within the past fortnight. These conclusions were brief, but ironical and comprehensive. Summed up in total, they amounted to this: That, without opportunity, a college education is the most worthless thing in the world.

Suddenly his eyes opened wide as the figure of a woman came into view under a flickering arc light near him. She continued to advance, a trim, slender young woman of athletic build, arrayed in a natty suit that betrayed the graceful lines of a healthy figure. For an instant she hesitated, looked rapidly about, and then with sudden resolution turned and came directly toward Keegles.

As she neared him she hesitated again, standing within a few feet of him. Keegles was leg-weary, but weariness had not stolen his gallantry. He rose and stood before her—six feet of brawn and muscle and misfortune, attired in a loose-fitting suit of light gray kersey. She seemed about to flee from him, took a backward step, reconsidered, and faced him.

"I—I am not quite certain that I want you," she said with a queer note of indecision in her voice. "But you look more of a—a gentleman than any of the others, and so I—came."

"So good of you," breathed Keegles, a trifling bit of irony creeping into his speech.

"Pardon me," she returned quickly, catching the note; "I knew you were a gentleman. But it is so easy to make mis-

takes among so many—persons." She nodded toward the other benches.

Keegles' face was only partly revealed in the glare of the electric lamp. The broad brim of his felt hat effectually concealed his eyes from her. But she could see that his lips were wreathing into a smile.

"Might I ask what you require from the gentleman for whom you are searching?" he inquired gravely.

"Why I——" She hesitated, biting her lips. "That would depend a great deal upon the gentleman." She hesitated again and then went on impulsively. "Would you let me see your face?"

He laughed, pushing back his hat and showing her a face with a firm mouth, a good chin and a pair of clear, steady, gray eyes.

She gave a little gasp and stepped forward to peer closer at him. "Keegles!" she said in a low, awed tone. "The great Keegles!"

He laughed quietly. "The great Keegles," he repeated after her, bitterly. "Behold him now a mere atom among four million other atoms, stripped of his football fame and doomed, like Hamlet's ghost, to walk the night—or sleep on a bench."

APPARENTLY the girl had not heard him. She was leaning forward, her eyes alight with joy. "I am so glad it is you!" she said. "I was terribly frightened when I first approached —you looked so big, so grim, sitting there on the bench. And yet"—she stepped close to him and seized his arm, pressing it confidingly—"some subtle sixth sense told me you were a gentleman! It gives me the shivers to think what might have happened if I had passed you to choose one of the others." She pressed his arm again. "Oh, Keegles, I am so glad!"

He felt her hand tremble. Evidently, she was glad. He leaned down, peering into her face. "You are in trouble, Miss Hayden," he said gravely. "Can I help you?"

She looked up at him thankfully. "Oh, I knew you would! But it isn't trouble, Keegles—it's only adventure. You see, I came down here to-night to hire a man who is willing to be kidnapped!" She smiled with a frank delight. "And I find Keegles —the great Keegles!" She watched him a moment, breathlessly.

"Is Keegles going to refuse?" she said with an indescribable appeal in her voice.

He grinned down at her broadly. "Miss Hayden," he said, "Keegles is ready to be kidnapped."

She gave a little exclamation of delight, and he felt the trembling fingers again on his arm. "Isn't it odd that I should find you—of all men?"

"Rather odd," he returned; "but quite in accord with my other experiences of late."

"You have been doing New York?"

"Quite the other way around," he laughed. "New York has been doing me. And now, after being downed within a yard of goal, a certain person of my acquaintance seeks me out with a request that I allow myself to be kidnapped. I am ready. Will there be a scrimmage?"

"There will be no scrimmage," she said, laughing. "It promises to be quite a tame affair."

His face showed a slight disappointment. "I was in hopes that there might be a scrimmage," he said. "New York has been so unkind to me that I shouldn't object to anything short of a riot or an insurrection."

She smiled, consulting the small timepiece that swung from a chatelaine attachment at her waist. "It is one-thirty now," she said. "You will be kidnapped at three. I am going to take you to a certain house on Twenty-fourth Street. We can take a taxi and be there in ten minutes."

They went rapidly to the brightly lighted side of the square, where he hailed a vacant taxicab. He assisted her in, and she gave some instructions to the chauffeur. When the door slammed behind them she turned to him with a smile.

"Now tell me what has befallen the great Keegles," she said. "Have you been looking for a position in New York?"

"Yes, looking. After one or two sad experiences elsewhere. I have been here for two weeks and had found nothing—until yesterday."

"And then?"

"Then I went into the office of the Northwestern Construction Company. The chief engineer told me that I was just the man they had been looking for. They wanted a single man who could go out West in some God-forsaken hole and live for two years like a savage. The chief seemed to think that was just what I was cut out for. But even that isn't certain. I'm to return there at three o'clock to-day to be introduced to the president of the company. After he has looked me over and probed me to ascertain

my mental fitness—I might get the job. The chief told me I was *big* enough to hold it down. That's as far as I've gone. Interesting, isn't it?"

"You'll get it. I am sure you will. There's always a scrimmage here in New York, just the same as there was when you played football. And if you go in with your old courage and vim you will win."

"This is a harder game," he said, looking out of the window.

"You can't tell," she said quietly.

The cab stopped presently at a corner. The chauffeur climbed down and opened the door nearest the curb. Keegles got out and stood beside the door, looking expectantly at Miss Hayden. She motioned him close, whispering.

"That house where the oval light hangs over the doorway," she said, pointing it out to him. "You are to go right in and walk up one flight of stairs. Turn to your left and knock on the first door that you see. You will find a man at home, for he is the only occupant of the house, and you can see a light shining through the window-shade. To make sure he is the right one you are to ask for Mr. Hartley. Give him this card, to show him that you can be trusted, and tell him to come to me. I shall be waiting for him on the next corner—south. If he asks any questions, tell him that you are to sleep in his bed to-night, and that he should not be suspicious, but should trust you implicitly. Tell him to hurry." She hesitated.

"And then——" said Keegles.

"You will sleep there," she continued, "just as though you belonged there. At three o'clock three men will enter your room. They will bind you and stand guard over you until six o'clock. They will not harm you. I shall return with Hartley at six-thirty—to reward you."

"I think I understand," returned Keegles. "I am impersonating some one—your friend. For some reason or other I am to be held until six." He smiled grimly. "Does any of these three men know Hartley?"

"No," she said positively. "The man who arranged to kidnap Mr. Hartley is his cousin. He is an engineer, or something, in the West, and only reached New York this afternoon. There isn't time to tell you any more," she said rapidly. "Go, now. You won't fail—I know you won't. You always did things—and—and my happiness depends upon you!"

As he stepped away from the cab he heard her whisper after him: "The great Keegles!"

He smiled, walking rapidly toward the house with the oval light. He remembered that she always was one of his most enthusiastic admirers and had always persisted in calling him "the great Keegles." She lived at home with her family, somewhere on Fifth Avenue—he could not remember where.

He had reached the stone steps that led up to the door of the house; he climbed them, turned the knob and entered. A long, narrow hallway containing a flight of stairs opened before him. When he reached the upper landing he turned to the left as directed and felt along the hall for a door. He found it presently, and knocked loudly.

II

THERE was a scraping noise, as of a chair being pushed back, a turn of a key in the lock, and the door swung open, a glare of light blinding Keegles. While he stood blinking at a medium-sized man of about twenty-five, the latter inquired:

"Are you looking for some one?"

"Is you name Hartley?" queried Keegles. By this time his eyes had become accustomed to the light. He saw that the young man was clear-eyed, athletic and good-looking. He nodded affirmatively to Keegles' question.

"She told me to give you this card and tell you that she would wait for you at the next corner—south." He passed the card over, smiling.

"Why——" began Hartley.

"She also said," resumed Keegles, "that if you asked any questions, I should tell you that I am going to sleep in your bed to-night and that you should not be suspicious."

Hartley stepped back a little and cast a critical glance up and down Keegles' big frame, ending by gazing squarely into his steady gray eyes. Then he smiled.

"That's deucedly queer!" he said.

"I thought so myself," drawled Keegles. "But you see, I agreed, and there wasn't anything more to be said. I couldn't refuse Miss Hayden."

"Agreed to what?" demanded Hartley.

"To sleep in your bed."

The young man studied Keegles. "Well, by George, this is rummy!" he said then.

"Quixotic, eh?"

"Well, rather!" agreed the young man.

He stepped back again, resolutely. "I suppose it wouldn't do any harm for me to go as far as the corner," he said. "If she isn't there I could call a policeman and come back and get you."

"Quite an idea," said Keegles ironically. "But you have overlooked one thing. While you are gone I could depart with your valuables."

The young man looked straight at Keegles, his lips curving into a smile. "By George, I don't think you are that sort! I rather like you. Of course, since you are going to sleep in my bed, you can't have any objection to telling me your name?"

"Not in the least. It's Keegles."

The young man started and took a step forward, peering close at his visitor. "Not Ned Keegles!" he said. "The great Keegles?"

"There is some doubt about the prefix," grinned Keegles, "but absolutely none about the latter."

The young man grasped his hand warmly. "I've heard Miss Hayden speak of you. Come right in and make yourself at home!"

He jumped over to a closet and secured a hat and coat. Keegles caught his flashing grin as he went out of the door. He heard the clatter of the young man's feet on the stairs and then the slam of the street door.

AND now, for the first time since the beginning of this strange affair, Keegles' face grew serious. Whatever was to be his experience, it was of his own choosing. Yet such was his mental attitude toward all things in New York that the outcome of this affair concerned him very little. He was bitter against the big city that had repulsed him; his soul yearned for a clash with something tangible, something alive that could strike back; every thew and sinew of his big body trembled with a lust to come into violent action.

He stepped over to the bed in a little alcove, looking down at the white counterpane. "Better than a bench," he said. "I wonder if Hartley smokes?" he questioned mentally. He searched in the drawer of the table for cigars. Almost the first thing he saw upon opening it was a heavy, blue-barreled .45 revolver. This he inspected minutely, finally describing it as a "beaut" and placing it on the table top while he continued his search. He found cigars—half a box of them, long, and deliciously fragrant.

He selected one, found a match, pulled a big chair over near a huge center-table and, leaning back, lighted the cigar and drew long at it. "Woof! that's bully!" he exclaimed, with the deep, stirring satisfaction that comes to a man who has long been deprived of good tobacco. For half an hour he smoked in silence, listening to the night noises that steadily diminished. Then, the cigar getting short, he held it up critically. Through the last few white clouds came a conclusion that had been long revolving.

"They're going to bind me—three of them. That will be easy. Then they're going to sit in some chairs and watch me—maybe laugh at me. I suppose they might chuck me into a corner and sit on me. Um-m. That would be fun—for them." He held the cigar up again and took a long look at it. "Toward morning I might want to smoke another of these. And if I were bound, I couldn't do it. I don't think Keegles is in accord with the plan."

He drew a full breath, tossed the cigar away and stood erect, stretching his big frame to its full height. "I'll——" He smiled broadly, his muscles swelling, his nerves thrilling with pure delight over the prospect. "Three men, and they're going to bind me. They're going to maul me and manhandle me, and dump me into a corner and sit on me. But Miss Hayden says they're not going to hurt me. That's been tabooed by the boss villain. And I'm to let them? Am I? Maybe I am, but according to the premises it looks to me as though there were going to be a scrimmage!"

He walked to the table, secured the revolver and placed it in a hip pocket. Then he noiselessly pushed chairs and table away from the center of the room, clearing a considerable space. Then he turned the light down until objects in the room could be seen very dimly, turned back the counterpane of the bed and stretched out in it, fully dressed.

SOMETIME later, when he had come very near dropping off to sleep, he heard a distant tower clock strike three. Simultaneously his now alert ears detected a slight creak on the stairs. He turned slowly over until he lay flat on his back. In that position he lay for a time, listening. Presently he detected a movement at the door, and finally heard a scraping sound as of a key being inserted

in the lock. He smiled derisively. He had neglected to lock the door. Whoever was attempting an entrance by trying to turn a key in the lock was wasting time.

Keegles thought he heard a curse. Then he could plainly hear a key rattle in the lock as though the hand that held it had grown impatient searching for the tumblers. Keegles' grin of derison grew in proportion with the sounds. He had once tried to throw the tumblers of a lock that were already thrown, and he knew something of the profane eloquence that attaches to the operation.

He heard whispers again. Then a sharp, muttered exclamation. Then a hand on the knob and a sharp click. Then the door burst suddenly open, and a man tumbled headlong into the room, turning completely over with the impetus of his fall.

Keegles knew what had happened. The man had been resting his entire weight on the door-knob, possibly leaning against the door itself, when it came open.

Keegles did not move. He had pulled the counterpane up around his face until only his eyes—apparently closed—were visible. He struggled with an inward mirth, and tried to feel grim and blood-thirsty. But it was no use. He saw the man on the floor plainly. He was lying flat on his stomach—a big stomach that kept his knees and chest in air—his head raised, a pair of wide, frightened eyes turned in the direction of the bed. Keegles also saw the heads of two other men, one above the other, sticking around the door-jamb.

For perhaps thirty seconds there was no movement. Then the fat man on the floor got his knees under him and scrambled to his feet, making noise enough to have aroused every sleeping person in a city block. The two other men now came in—one tall and thin, with the graceful proportions of a clothespole; the other a little man, pudgy, wide about the middle, with short legs and a long neck.

These three men, then, were the ones who were to kidnap him. He decided, with a suppressed chuckle of mirth, that the three were going to have the job of their lives.

He saw the fat man tiptoe to the door and close it. Then he took the key from the tall man and locked it, leaving the key in the lock. Then the three held a whispered consultation, and from somewhere about his person the little man produced a prodigious amount of rope. This they proceeded to cut up into lengths. When this was done the fat man came quietly over to the bed and looked down at Keegles' gigantic figure.

"By George!" he ejaculated in a hoarse whisper. "He's grown awful tall! But doesn't a man stretch out when he's lying in bed?"

Keegles distinctly saw the tall man's face grow paler as he looked down at the bed.

"*S-s-h-!*—Don't wake him, for heaven's sake!" he whispered; "We'd have——!"

Keegles heard the fat man chuckle. "No fear of that," he returned hoarsely. "He didn't hear me before, when I came down on the end of that rug, so I guess there isn't any danger now. By George, he must be a healthy cuss—he sleeps like a log!" Keegles thought he detected envy in this last.

"He'd be worse'n a log to carry," observed the little man.

"Pounds, Clothespole, and Pudge," commented Keegles, mentally designating the men in the order of their approach. "Pounds is a bluffer, Clothespole is a coward, and Pudge is lazy."

The man he had designated "Pounds" approached the head of the bed, a piece of rope in hand. "One of you get around to the other side of him," he whispered. "The other tie his feet. I'll take care of the arm on this side."

This latter order was reversed. The arm on Pounds' side took care of him. It shot suddenly out of the bed-clothing, flew up with terrific force, and landed on Pounds' jaw with a noise like a pop-gun. Pounds went down under it as though he had been struck on the head with a mallet. At the same instant Keegles' right foot went out and the heel of his shoe struck Pudge's head—the latter collapsing in his tracks with a half uttered, affrighted curse. Clothespole was still gaping with surprise, his mouth open to an enormous width, when the six feet of brawn and action struck him. Then he, too, selected a soft spot on the carpet.

Throwing off the bed clothing, Keegles went over and turned up the light. Then he went to the desk, selected another cigar, lighted it, and pulled the big chair around to a position that commanded the entire room. He drew the revolver from his hip pocket, laid it beside him on the center-table and, leaning back, puffed contentedly on the cigar.

Very soon Pounds sat up, gazing about him drunkenly.

"What's happened?" he asked of the world in general. Receiving no answer, he turned his head and looked about the room. He saw Keegles in the chair, grinning at him. "Why," he said, "Why——" He started to get up.

"That's an excellent place for you, right where you are," drawled Keegles, reaching over and seizing the revolver and placing it on one knee. "If you try to get up you might have to sit down again. I wouldn't move at all if I were you." He tapped the revolver significantly.

Pounds' face assumed a ghastly pallor. He sagged into a limp heap, his lips working curiously. "W-who are you?" came from him presently.

Keegles took a long pull from his cigar before answering. "My name is Keegles," he said. "What's yours?"

"I'm—I'm—— It's none of your business!" he suddenly blurted. He was silent for a full minute. Then he blurted again: "We've got into the wrong house!"

"Yes," returned Keegles coldly, "you have. You'll discover that before you leave." He fingered the revolver absently. Pounds' eyes were fixed on the weapon with a fascinated stare. He was a prosperous looking man of forty, with a partly bald head, a big nose, and thick, sensuous lips. Keegles had formed a pronounced dislike for him immediately—a dislike tempered with a kind of contemptuous pity.

CLOTHESPOLE and Pudge had reached an erect position simultaneously. Clothespole stuck a mournful visage above the bed—two heavy swollen lips bearing testimony to the terrific force of the blow that had struck him. He turned and he and Pudge exchanged glances across the bed. Neither made any attempt to rise.

"That's right, Clothespole," said Keegles, "sit still. I naturally desire to make an inspection of my nocturnal visitors before disposing of them." He shifted his gaze until it rested upon Pudge, sitting beside the foot of the bed, holding tightly to the post. "You've got a black eye, Pudge," he said, smoking his cigar slowly; "an awfully black eye. Some one must have been mighty careless with you."

Pudge's gaze rested on Keegles for only an instant; now they were fixed on Pounds with a malignant glitter.

"I knowed we was goin' to git it," he said, "soon's I seen him! What'n —— did you tell us he was a little feller fer?"

"He's a devil, that's wot 'e is!" whined Clothespole through his thick lips. "I'll never git mixed up in this kind of a deal ag'in, so 'elp me!"

"We got in the wrong house, mister," said Pounds again, ignoring the plaint of his two confederates. "We apologize for disturbing you, and we'll be going if you don't mind."

"I don't think you'll go," drawled Keegles; "at least, if you do go before I say the word, you'll go out feet first."

Pounds groaned.

"What I want you to do, Clothespole," said Keegles, pointing with the end of his cigar, dagger-like, to the tall man, "is to gather up all the pieces of rope." He waited until the man had collected them. "Now," continued Keegles, "go and bind Pounds' hands and feet."

Pounds sat very rigid, his little round eyes glittering wrathfully. "I won't stand for it!" he almost shouted. "By ——, I won't!"

"We are not going to get excited," drawled Keegles softly. "I'm only giving you a choice. Do you let Clothespole bind you, or do I call the police and turn you over?"

"Call and be ——!" snapped Pounds.

Keegles rose leisurely and walked toward the door. But before he reached it Pounds called him back. "Don't do it!" he pleaded. "I'll let him!" He held out his hands to Clothespole.

"That's gentlemanly of you," returned Keegles, resuming his seat. He watched Clothespole until that gentleman had bound Pounds' hands and feet with yards of rope. "I'm doin' it right for you, you durned four-flusher!" said Clothespole while he bound Pounds. "You told us he was a little feller —an' he's a —— giant, that's wot he is!"

"Now fix Pudge the same way," directed Keegles.

This was accomplished quickly, without any objection on the little man's part.

"Now tie your own feet," directed Keegles. Clothespole turned a mournful, swollen, objecting visage to the adamantine Keegles.

"I didn't do nothin'," he said. "An' I'm hurted; I'm hurted bad."

"It doesn't go, Clothespole," smiled Keegles. "I'm not showing any favors. Get your feet tied—or shall I slug you?"

Clothespole tied his feet. Then he hopped

around, facing Keegles. The latter rose, seized a piece of rope and bound Clothespole's hands. Then he caught him about the middle and carried him over near the bed, depositing him beside Pounds. Then he dragged Pudge to a position next to Clothespole. Then he returned to his chair.

"Now," he said, nodding to Pounds, "let's explain things. Why did you come here?"

"We were looking for a man named Hartley," said Pounds. "We were told he roomed here."

"So he does," returned Keegles.

"Then how in —— do you come to be here?" glared Pounds.

"You're an ill-mannered dog," returned Keegles. "But I don't mind telling you that I came here purposely to get a chance to slug you. I'm rather sorry I didn't hit you a little harder."

Pounds groaned again. "Then Hartley knew we were coming?" he said. "It must have got out some way."

"Obviously," returned Keegles.

"It's all off!" declared Pounds mournfully. "They've got me where I can't squeal."

There followed a bad hour for Pounds. He cursed Clothespole; he made faces at Pudge; he applied to himself one shameful, unprintable epithet after another. And Keegles grinned and smoked. Once Keegles waved the revolver warningly when Pounds' voice reached a high pitch. While Pounds worked himself into a fury, Clothespole and Pudge sagged against the wall and went to sleep.

At five o'clock Pounds began to plead with his imperturbable captor. He cursed, cajoled, threatened. He offered Keegles money—big sums—to let him off. But Keegles grinned and smoked. He was at last enjoying New York.

By five-thirty Pounds had worked himself to the verge of apoplexy, and lay back against the wall, a red-faced, perspiring mass of quivering flesh. Then at six Keegles went over to him and released him. Pounds scrambled to his feet and glowered at Keegles while the latter worked at the bonds of the two others.

"You've played a —— smart game, young man!" declared Pounds a few minutes later, when he stood at the door, his face red and swollen with an impotent rage. "Do you know what you've done? You've euchered me out of a million-dollar contract!"

"Excellent!" smiled Keegles. "You've provided me with that amount of enjoyment. I was in danger of going stale. Are you going to tear yourself away so soon?"

Pounds stopped on the upper platform and looked back at Keegles. His lips worked, but no sound came from them. From the window Keegles saw him as he went down the street, his arms working, making impotent gestures. Then Keegles laughed and threw himself on the bed.

III

AN HOUR later there was a sharp knock on the door. Keegles bounded out of bed and opened it. Hartley stood in the opening, a huge grin on his face. Behind him stood Miss Hayden, also smiling.

"They've gone," said Keegles, waving a big arm toward the corner where the three visitors had lain. "They weren't exactly charmed with the way I treated them, but on the whole I suppose they got as good as they could expect."

"They didn't hurt you?" questioned Miss Hayden, crowding in past Hartley and seizing Keegles' arm.

"Quite the other way around," laughed Keegles.

"You didn't——" began Miss Hayden.

"Of course I did," grinned Keegles. "Especially the fat one."

Miss Hayden cast a glance full of mirth at Hartley. That young man grinned delightedly as he placed one arm about Miss Hayden's waist, drawing her close to him.

"I expect you would like to hear the story?" he said.

"Well, rather!" Keegles grinned. "Pounds —that's the fat man—said I'd beaten him out of a million-dollar contract by keeping him here."

"You did!" declared Hartley. "And here's the story." He dragged Keegles over to the big chair and pushed him into it, arranging two other chairs for himself and Miss Hartley. "You see," he began; "I'm engineer in chief for the Midland Construction Company. We've been figuring on a big job that's to be done out West. This man that you have called Pounds is my cousin. He lives out there.

"About two weeks ago I wrote him a letter—quite a family affair—and in it I accidentally mentioned the job, giving him

the exact figure at which I intended to bid. Two days later I discovered that he was connected with—in fact was president of—a construction company here in New York—quite a recent venture of his. The chairman of the board of directors of the company which has this work in charge was to be in New York for ten minutes this morning to receive the bids. He had been in Washington to confer with some of the big politicians and was on his way West. No bids would be received by him after six o'clock this morning.

"This cousin of mine had discovered that I had not yet placed my bid and, quite accidentally, last night Miss Hayden overheard him in a public place, arranging with some member of his company to hold me prisoner until after the train had left for the West. The rest you know. My bid is in—at a lower figure than the one I gave my cousin." He smiled and reached over for Miss Hayden's hand. "Miss Hayden and I were married at six-thirty o'clock on the strength of my bid. I think that ends it—except your reward. That——"

Miss Hayden leaned forward. "Mr. Keegles," she said, smiling at him, "I want you to meet Mr. Hartley and me at that bench in Madison Square to-night. There we will talk about your reward."

"Why——" began Hartley. But Miss Hayden placed her finger-tips over his lips.

"I engaged Mr. Keegles for this affair," she said, "and I am going to reward him in my own way!"

"That's settled, then," said Hartley with a grimace at Keegles; "I forgot that I was married."

IV

AT FIVE MINUTES to three Keegles entered the office of the Northwestern Construction Company. He was greeted with a smile by the engineer in chief.

"The old man has just come in," said the chief. "I've spoken to him about you, and he wants to see you."

Keegles followed him to a door upon which was the legend in gilt letters: "Private office." The chief opened the door and called: "Doc, here's that engineer I told you about!"

Keegles found himself in a big, luxuriously furnished room. A big man over at a desk had his back toward the door and Keegles was compelled to pass around it. When he had done this he was still behind the man. He found himself fairly shaking with a hope that the president had not changed his mind about employing him. He was just felicitating himself upon his good fortune in getting this chance when the president turned and faced him.

It was Pounds!

For a tense instant the two men stared at each other. Then Pounds' face became poisonously bloated. But, before he could speak, Keegles grinned at him, wheeled and walked toward the door.

Before he reached it Pounds was on his feet. "Hey there!" he said.

Keegles turned, still grinning.

"Are you the man who wanted that job?"

"I did want a job," returned Keegles.

"Come back here!" said Pounds.

Keegles hesitated and then returned a few steps. Was Pounds the sort of man who could forgive and forget?

"I suppose you still want a job?" said Pounds.

Pounds' voice was very smooth, and for the slightest instant Keegles thought he had relented. "You bet!" he answered.

Pounds grinned vindictively. "I just wanted to tell you," he said, "that you can go to ——!"

Keegles laughed, though he felt more like strangling Pounds. "I had that coming," he said mildly; "and more too. You haven't come anywhere near getting even."

He wheeled again and passed out through the other office without looking toward the chief. He was silent during the trip down on the lift, and for some distance down the crowded street. Then pedestrians were astonished to hear a stern faced young man exclaim with unusual bitterness:

"The great Keegles!"

The tone led his hearers to believe that there was grave doubt about the prefix.

FOR the twentieth time Keegles circled the gurgling fountain in Madison Square. At the beginning of the twenty-first turn he halted before a bench and stood looking down at it.

"It's just what you deserve," he said.

He dropped into it, flinging his arms wide with an eloquent despair. Then he heard a rustle of skirts and a woman's voice. "Of course it's he!" said a woman's voice.

Keegles rose from his bench to face Miss Hayden and Hartley. The young lady had caught him by the arm before he could open his lips to speak.

"Mr. Keegles," she said, "did you go to see Pounds?"

"Of course——" he began.

"Did you get the job?" she interrupted.

"You can't slug your way into a job," returned Keegles soberly and with infinite weariness.

"But you can!" declared Miss Hayden, dancing in front of him, emitting delighted giggles. "Show him, Mr. Hartley!" she directed.

Suddenly in the dim light Keegles was looking at a telegram signed by the chairman of the board of directors of the Western company, whom Hartley had met that morning at the train. The telegram was brief, merely announcing that Hartley's concern had secured the contract.

"And I've got a job for you out there," declared Hartley. "Your salary starts from this minute!"

And then Keegles was pushed away from the bench toward the bright lights of the Avenue. A little hand was patting him on the back, and a soft voice was whispering:

"The great Keegles! The great Keegles!"

THE LOST TREASURES OF THE ORIENT

Gold and Jewels Still Waiting to be Found by Some Modern Adventurer

by

Buffington Phillips

THE mind is staggered, the imagination atrophied, in contemplation of the lost treasures of the East—gold, silver and jewels—which lie in the graves of dead emperors, in the ruins of ancient capitals under centuries of desert dust and in the forgotten mountain temples, almost any one of them sufficient in amount to make the true adventurer who finds them amazingly rich. The East to-day is wealthy in gold vessels, ornaments and precious stones, but think what it must have been four thousand or even eight hundred years ago when it was the world's center of wealth!

One of the most elusive clues to any of these very great treasures is what is now called the Spaulding quest, bearing the name of the young American who disappeared, probably forever, three years ago

while trying to retrace a trail with two hillmen to what is undoubtedly the famous mountain of the tombs of the Great Khans of Tartary.

Six years ago news came out of Bokhara that a young American named Spaulding had found two young tribesmen in the market of that city endeavoring to sell handfuls of huge diamonds, rubies and pearls and had learned that the two men had found them in cave-graves in the mountains many miles to the northeast—evidently the lost tombs of the Khans—and that there were tons and tons of the treasure left behind. This first report proved to be inaccurate.

It is a little peculiarity of the native correspondents of English papers that they are rather devoid of imagination and their reports fell infinitely short of satisfying the world-wide demand for more details. The news spread to Morocco, and an English author and traveler, a Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society, who was more interested in the archeological research in that section than in the recovery of the vast treasures, tried through the London papers to get more definite data, but the matter had been forgotten by that time or was treated as a joke.

It was months before the truth was forthcoming. Then it was found that Spaulding, bringing the two tribesmen, had arrived in Bokhara from Samarcand by caravan from Kashgar and that the wonderful find was approximately sixty miles northeast of the Kashmir border instead of Bokhara, on the way to Yarkand in the Chinese portion of Turkestan; in other words, in the heart of almost unexplored and unknown Asia. Bokhara was the first point of touch with the outside world, and Spaulding had come there to raise money and organize an expedition. This he had little trouble in doing, for all that part of the world has been dreaming for centuries of the recovery of the treasures of the Khans. He was last heard from three years ago and it is now believed that he and the men with him died somewhere in the wilds of the Dapsang.

The unadorned tale of the adventure of the two hill-men reads like a chapter from the "Arabian Nights." The two men belonged to a trading caravan and, being dissatisfied, left it and set out for Yarkand, which is a town on the Yarkand River, one of the main tributaries of the Tarim, a mighty stream draining a region twice the size of the State of Texas and emptying into the Lob Nor, which has no visible outlet. They got lost in the mountains and turned into a trail hewn in the rock wide enough for but two men to pass abreast and, traveling for some time along the defile, they came to a great cave with a number of huge images in a row before the door.

The entrance was a square, open portal, and within were a series of tombs each with its pockets in the rock filled with many objects of great value. They said that they saw more than enough precious stones to load sixty camels, yet all that they could bring away with them was what they could put into the receptacles of their clothing, and many of these they lost before they found again the regular route to Yarkand. They made careful observations of the trail and left heaps of stones to mark it to a certainty. Even when they reached the market town they had no idea of the value of their find.

WHEN discovered by Spaulding he had great difficulty in persuading them to go with him. He feared to organize an expedition in Yarkand, as there was danger of his being murdered and robbed by the half-savage men he would have had to employ. There are many persons in the region who believe that he found the tombs, secured a portion of the treasure, went on into the British Indian state of Nepal and was robbed and murdered there, as many very large stones and pieces of Tartar-worked gold have been coming out of that State in the past two years without any adequate source being ascribed to them.

It is just south of the region described that the Karakoram Mountains lie, but where is the lost city of Caracarum or Karakoram, the ancient capital of the great Tartar state? Where are the enormous treasures lost at the time of its destruction? History shows that it was a very large stone-built city, that it stood within sight, at least, of the mountains that bear its name, and that it was the wealthiest of all the cities of Central Asia. Marco Polo visited it on his famous journey about 1292 A. D. and on his return to Europe described it in detail to his chronicler friend, Rusticano.

Eight hundred years ago it was the capital of the Tartar Empire and literally reeked

with wealth, all established under the financial genius of that strange, half-mythical character, Presbyter or Prester John. Marco Polo told of rooms in which the decorations were heavy embossings in gold and silver set with great jewels, and his references show that he was surfeited with the sight of the wealth displayed.

The city fell before the assaults of the wild troops of the ambitious and ruthless Umcan or Um-Khan. Previous to the attack all the treasure that could be assembled was put under the great stairway in the center of the city and when the defenders were driven away they took the secret of the hiding-place with them and later were either made slaves or killed. Umcan collected much treasure and removed it to Ciandu, but he did not get the great hidden store of wealth, though he laid the city in ruins and filled a whole tower with prisoners, whom he roasted alive in vengeance. To-day no man seems competent to say where those ruins lie and no one has gone over the old records to trace out the geographical points that are known and fixed in relation to the unknown site of the lost city whose treasure would run into the hundreds of millions. It is thought to be in Turkestan.

Equally uncertain is the spot where lie the ruins of the splendid Summer capital of Ciandu. Marco Polo even furnished a more or less accurate map of the city proper, which Buell reproduced in his "account of the strange things on the face of the earth, old and new." It was in Cathay and built in the bend of a great river with miles of defenses on the banks and extending toward the mountains behind it. In many ways its description corresponds to the modern town of Khotan in eastern Turkestan on the Khotan River, yet other indications point to Leh in Kashmir on the Indus River, and it may mean Kunduz on the great Amu-Daria River, a stream as long as the Ohio but in so remote a part of the world that it is rarely even heard of.

Genghis Khan, which means chief of all chiefs, was Temudjin, a Mongol and chieftain of the Golden Hordes. His domain in 1203 comprised all of China, Turkestan, Persia and Kaptchak or southern Russia, and it was about this time that he established his Summer capital at Ciandu. Here it was that he instituted the peculiar system of fiat money which made gold-pieces plaything for the children of the poor. Round pieces of the inner bark of the mulberry tree were stamped with the royal mark and so passed current as money. Within the bounds of the country all trading was done with these pieces of bark, backed by the force of imperial arms instead of by a treasury reserve.

Merchants came in caravans from all western Asia, bringing gold, jewels and merchandise of all sorts, and all these they exchanged for mulberry-bark fiat money and with it bought freight for their caravans. The result was that finally all the gold and jewels of all Tartary drifted in thin but steady streams to Ciandu and stagnated there, decreasing in value till they were useless. They were stored in vaults and buried in great caches in tens of million dollars' worth. When the empire fell the fiat money became useless. The possessors of the gold were being slaughtered and driven off as slaves, leaving the treasure behind them in quantities too great for the mind to comprehend. Where is it now? In what dust-drifted valley? What student of Oriental literature and European accounts will trace out the location of Ciandu and recover the vast hidden fortunes?

TREASURE MYSTERIES OF ARABIA

SOME one will doubtless uncover a very large treasure in the natural course of events in or about the strange gigantic castle of Marid at El Jowf, Arabia. Every new advance made by the antiquarians and the Biblical scholars makes it a little more clear and certain that here lies a hoard that is one of the richest in the world.

In a large oasis supporting the largest population of Northern Arabia, El Jowf is a peculiarly isolated spot, best reached by riding from the Mecca pilgrimage railway or by caravan from Ithera. The castle stands to the north, a monster pile of ruined sandstone, now utterly deserted and feared and shunned by the Jofees of the region. They say strange sights and sounds are to be seen and heard there at night, and that once a year, before the Feast of Ramazan, all the blood that has been spilt about it oozes up from the ground, making a great red pool around the fortress and dripping from the walls till daylight.

The early Arabian chieftains were great looters, hunters and hiders of treasure, and the traditions are that El Hadj, one of the build-

ers of the castle, during a life that extended over more than one hundred years, spent his entire time not only in robbing all the rich caravans within striking distance of El Jowf and in warring on his neighbors but in tracing out the traditions of all the tribes. And in this work, guided by dreams and visions, he recovered vast quantities of treasure, bringing it all to El Jowf and hiding it in the castle.

Twenty-five years ago this tale was put in the same category with the entertaining yarns of the Arabian Nights. But each year of study of the relics of the ancient peoples of Egypt, Arabia and Palestine produces corroborative evidence in carvings, writings and traditions that El Hadj was a great treasure-collector, that the supposed fabulous hoards he is supposed to have found once existed and that so far there is nothing to show that El Hadj was ever despoiled or that his treasures were found and dissipated by his successors.

For instance, as early as the Fourth Egyptian Dynasty, 4500 years ago, rich, turquoise mines had been found and worked at Meghara, south of Elim, and to-day there are still to be seen the signs of vast workings there. The story is that at the time of the fall of the Pharaohs there was a great store of the green malachite jewels at the mines and when the slaves fled, during the panic of their masters, the jewels by the ton were hidden in a drift in one of the workings. The Jofee tradition is that El Hadj, learning of the Meghara tradition, went there with a great force, hunted for and found the mines and the jewels, and conveyed the wealth to the castle at Marid. Egyptologists "discovered" the mines nearly a thousand years later.

Likewise the discovery of the rock city of Petra, one of the most marvelous ruins of the world, is said to have been subsequent, by a similar length of time, to the Arabs' descent upon it. It stands in a canyon with two very narrow entrances, once paved and arched, and the buildings of the town are hewn out of solid rock. As a stronghold it was unassailable. One of the most beautiful buildings to-day is Pharaoh's Treasury, with an exquisitely carved entrance and three great chambers cut deep in the rock. History and tradition are confused and at variance as to the time of the removal of the vast wealth hidden in this strange bank, but in the separate tribal traditions, found uniformly reliable in other matters, the last word is that El Hadj, the terrible chieftain of El Jowf, got it ultimately. Petra stands in the land of Edom south of Moab, and not far away is the route over which the gold of Ophir traveled to Solomon. There are bare hints in the ancient writings that many caravan loads of this were buried to prevent capture, and there are traditions that the seers of El Jowf found these by supernatural guidance, but these statements are unreliable.

It is reasonably certain, however, that the castle of Marid or its vicinity conceals a staggering amount of wealth. There are three obstacles to its recovery: the necessity of securing the permission of the Turkish Government; guarding against Bedouin robbers, and inducing the Jofees to assist in the searching of the castle and environs.

A CLUE IN THE ACROPOLIS

CARROLL NEIDE BROWN, in 1896 or 1897, discovered nineteen Greek inscriptions built into the outer face of the Acropolis at Athens, in that corner where there are evidences of Turkish or Roman repairs. These inscriptions have been translated, after a great deal of study of the older languages, and they tell of the stowing away of many gold and silver vessels and in many cases give the location and the date of the burial of them. There are the troves of Nineveh, Babylon, Tyre and Sidon; the gold of Ophir, of Solomon and of the Eastern emperors. In eleven cases the dates of caches, location and the value are given, and there is inscribed a note of a treasure which is interred with a vase dedicated to Athena, near the Erectheum. Twenty years before the finding of this tablet by Carroll Neide Brown the vase referred to was found, but the treasure was not. It is expected that great discoveries will be made at Hessaelek and Elalea by following out the directions of the ancient Greeks.

A TREASURE THAT CAN BE SEEN

IN THE China Sea is a reef well known to mariners called Sycee Reef. The word "sycee" is the name given in the Orient to the fine soft silver ingots that are the basis of the Chinese currency system. Just when nobody seems to know, some junks heavily laden with silver were driven on this reef and wrecked and the vessels broken and battered till the great piles of silver were

left exposed to the waves. In later years some subterranean upheaval raised the reef into plainer view till now at low tide any one going near it sees long, low glittering masses amid the breaking waves. Those are the bars of silver kept bright by the fine sand in the water that forever pours and tumbles over the millions of dollars' worth of treasure lying in open daylight.

It has long been a favorite diversion of the hardy and reckless Chinese pirates to put their junks in as close as they dare to the reef, which is surrounded by treacherous waters. Strong swimmers leap overboard and make for the piles of silver and each endeavors to bring away a bar tied to a cord about his neck. It is figured that it costs about one life to get three bars, as the swimmers are tossed about by the waves and battered against the rocks. Once they are crippled, they are doomed, for no boat dares go near to rescue them. So far no one seems to have thought of trying to plant a pillar or stanchion on the reefs to which a trolley could be rigged and the silver taken aboard ship in baskets.

THE "MADAGASCAR'S" LOST $11,000,000

SOMEWHERE in the East lies the wreck of the *Madagascar*. There must be men living who can remember her wreck in 1853, and if such there be and they can point out the spot where she sank there is a strong likelihood that $11,000,000 may be recovered. She sailed from Melbourne, Australia, and was driven far out of her course by storms. At the time of her wreck it was kept secret that this big sum in Australian gold was aboard her. This secret was maintained for many years. Now, when helmet diving-apparatus with air-supply has been invented, no one seems to know where she sank and the official records have been mislaid. Her loss was accounted a great disaster in those days and surely some one who reads these words will remember the wreck or may have a clipping concerning it in an old scrap-book, and so be able to produce the needed clue.

CHINA'S VANISHED IMPERIAL JADES

IF THE whole story were in hand and could be written in full detail there would be disclosed a tale concerning the loot of the imperial jades of China which rivals the most lurid fiction. The principal actor is now the commandant of the armed guard of a gold pack-train in Korea and is one of the best known of the Oriental adventurers. Another prominent character is an American naval officer, now in command of one of this country's greatest battleships. The jewels at stake were priceless and—but this is as much of the story as is told in the East.

When the Allies entered Pekin, the presence of so many kinds of troops divided the responsibility for looting and there was depredation of the boldest sort. The royal family in its flight to the Ming Tombs was able to remove only a part of the valuables of the dynasty, and in the Summer Palace, adroitly concealed, were the royal jades, a set of the most exquisite pieces to be found in the world and of incalculable value. These jewels were sacred and had come down through all the centuries of Manchu reign, and were held in superstitious awe among the nobles and court dignitaries.

Probably the most amazing feature about their disappearance is that China does not yet know that they were looted. The news would have an effect on the nation similar to that of a party of Japanese soldiers painting caricatures of George Washington on the walls of the Capitol.

The American naval and marine officers and men are said to have done more looting than did the army, because they had ships to which to return their plunder. One officer located the box in which were the jades and other jewels. He secured it and got aboard an American vessel lying in the harbor at Ta-Ka in the Gulf of Pechili. When the jades were missed the diplomatic representatives of the Powers foresaw the terrific effect of the news on the Chinese public and set about recovering them.

More than one hundred spies were at work trying to find them and at last they were traced to the officer mentioned and to the wardroom of the American ship. To take them by warrant would bring disclosure of this particular piece of loot, and then of looting in general, and would discredit the whole expedition. A canvass of the spies was made and one particularly bold adventurer was selected to steal them back and was paid handsomely in advance.

He succeeded in getting aboard the American vessel. At a given signal a junk was to go adrift, seemingly by accident, and bear

down on the ship at anchor. In the excitement the adventurer was to steal the box containing the jades, lug it to the ship's side and get it aboard the junk at the moment of collision.

In the execution of this plan all went as planned up to the moment of collision. Then, unfortunately, the junk moved away too quickly and, clasping the box in his arms, the man dived from the American ship under a hail of revolver-fire and tried to swim to the junk. In the water, however, he was compelled to let go of the precious box to keep it from dragging him down to death. The swimmer made his escape, but the jades of the ancient Emperors of China lie in the mud in the bottom of the harbor and nobody as yet dares dredge for them openly, though the spot is carefully marked officially and by every adventurer in the East as well.

HOARDS IN THE DUTCH EAST INDIES

IT HAS been said that the life of the Dutch soldier of to-day consists of three periods: "Anxiety over and enthusiasm concerning the Life of Inundation; dreams of the buried treasure of Soerabayan temples; figuring off the days till pension time." One portion of this is literally true so far as it pertains to the troopers sent out to Sumatra, Java and the other islands, after they have been properly drilled and seasoned in Holland. Over one hundred thousand men are maintained in the Dutch possessions in the East Indies, where there has been constant warfare for over one hundred years, though the world pays it no attention whatsoever, unless a post gets wiped out and then there are a few lines in the world's morning cable news and that is all.

On the way out the soldier will begin to hear aboard ship of concealed treasures in the strange land to which he goes, and never an hour of the time he serves in the tropics will he be free from the sense that at any moment he may pick up the clue to vast wealth. Many men have gone home wealthy as the result of smaller finds and always, always there is the possibility just in front of their noses.

Strictly speaking, the treasure-haunted temples are not those near Soerabaya alone, for from Acheen in Sumatra to Kupang in Timor one is never sure when one is not walking over the site of a cache from some temple or shrine not far away. The mountains are a continuous ridge in the center of the long narrow islands, and in the dense growth of the sides stand old buildings of uncertain age, though it is now believed that they were built some twelve hundred years ago at the time of the conquest of the islands by people of Aryan blood and Buddhist belief from India. A great and prosperous empire once existed there, falling at last before disease and insular wars.

When the final calamity was at hand and raiding piratical bands, according to the old Sanskrit records, were devastating the realm, the priests in each locality were compelled to despoil every temple and shrine of the great wealth of jewels, gold and silver and hide it in the earth in caves in the mountains. Then came the Moslem raiders and that was the end of all hope of ever restoring to the temples the gold and silver overlaid work, and to the eyes, ears and fingers of the idols the beautiful jewels taken from them. Gradually the secret of each cache has perished, save in one or two localities where Buddhist priests have been able to remain continuously and pass the secrets on from generation to generation.

One renegade who knew where the vast hoard from an old temple near Soerabaya was concealed persuaded a Dutch colonel to help him exhume the treasure and then get him out of the country, but by some mysterious means the plot became known and the colonel was found dead at his breakfast-table in his bungalow one morning, choked to death by a great ruby set in jade. It had been thrust far down his throat. Though the place was surrounded by sentries they had seen no native come or go. The story created some excitement in Holland, so now to the stay-at-home Dutch all East Indian temple treasures are Soerabayan.

All through the East Indies are places where pirates have hidden treasure. One of these is on the island of Celebes, on the Macassar Strait side, where the great Dyak robber Sauk-Bulan put in with his *proas* and *pintas* and, according to the British Admirality records, took all of his wealth ashore and came boldly out to fight the sloop-of-war *Nestor* only to be blown out of the water by her guns. As nearly as this can be traced it was at the mouth of a little river that runs down to the sea between Macassar and Palos.

TREASURE GUARDED BY HEAD-HUNTERS

THE most definite of the treasure-traditions in Polynesia has to do with the lost wealth of the ancient Javanese empire and centers in a small island south of the Caroline group. It has cost a number of hardy seekers their lives and very nearly was the cause of the death of the famous adventurer, Col. Etienne Bazin, a few years ago. His clue was the clearest and best obtained so far.

The great treasure handed down by the ancient imperial rulers of Marharwapah (supposed to have been in Java), who emigrated from their native land many centuries in the past, had descended to a certain Buddhist emperor, one of whose capitals was on the island of Ponapé. Being hard pressed by the Moslem raiders, he was compelled to abandon his kingdom and seek new lands. With him he bore the ancestral treasure and eventually buried it on the island referred to above. It seems to have no name, but it is well known to navigators.

The traditions of the treasure's hiding-place were carefully preserved among the elders in the Carolines. Then the Spanish raided these islands and carried many thousand slaves to South America. The Peruvians followed the same practise and, while serving in a Peruvian revolution with Gen. Elsoy Alfaro the Elder, Colonel Bazin saved the life of one of these slaves who had been forced into military service. In his gratitude the Polynesian offered to lead the adventurer to the exact spot of the Caroline treasure.

Now any man who has ever been in Polynesia has heard of this treasure in a general way, the tradition being that it was buried on a certain island but that the exact spot was to be located by directions depending on the length of the walls of a certain building in the ruins of a certain city on a second island. But the names of building, city and both islands were lost to the knowledge of man. Naturally the Polynesian's offer made Bazin eager for the quest.

He returned the Polynesian to his native island, where some time was spent in trying to trace the location of the island having on it the ruined city. It was decided that it must be the island of Ponapé and, sure enough, they discovered there, built around lagoons at the water's edge and covered with jungle growth, huge buildings with walls of basalt prisms fifteen and twenty feet thick. These buildings have since become well known to archeologists.

Bazin measured the one wall of greatest length and took the bearings according to the word of mouth traditions. Then the party sailed due south and found the island answering the desired description of the one containing the treasure. The marks were a mountain with a cliff facing north over which a large stream fell and the treasure is buried at the foot of the cliff, as far to the left of the stream as the exact length of the longest wall in Ponapé.

Bazin and his companions located the spot but were attacked by head-hunting islanders and, after a bitter fight in which several men were killed and Bazin wounded, were compelled to withdraw. The adventurer's party was quite small and as the island is near no others and three days' sail straight south from Ponapé there should be little difficulty encountered by a fairly strong party in recovering the treasure. If it includes all the wealth reputed to have been assembled in the city Bazin discovered, it should be worth many millions.

THE SKULKERS

by Stuart B. Stone

SOMETHING was moving among the coconut-palms—a Something that lurked, noiseless, cunning, erect on two feet like a chimpanzee, a gorilla, or worse, like a man. Mayland, who had cursed his solitude through the dragging weeks during which he had been marooned on the island, shuddered now at the prospect of its ending. He had seen the Thing peering out at him as he had craned for the thousandth time from beneath his fluttering calico-shirt signal for his ship that never came home.

It had seen him also and had drawn back into the thick tropic tangle. This drawing back was a bad sign. Mayland was willing to take his chances with anything that crawled or crept on four legs. At the thought he patted his crude bow with the grapevine string and his clumsy stone ax. But in the South Pacific men lived in tribes, and he could not fight a tribe.

Fearing the hurl of spear or the flight of poisoned dart, he crept into the edge of the jungle. Crouching there, ready for instant retreat, he strained his vision through the thick web of spike and frond and listened to the abnormal pounding of his heart.

He had not long to wait. From behind the trunk of a stately tamanu tree farther up the slope a human head moved cautiously. The flutter of intervening leaf and blossom prevented any certainty of impression, but Mayland saw that It wore a wreath or bonnet of plaited dry leaves of the coco-tree, that It was draped in more of the same primitive apparel than a South Sea islander usually troubles to wear, and that It carried a formidable bludgeon. Mayland pushed aside a big leaf for better view, then regretted his action. The leafy bonnet disappeared. The underbrush crackled.

Mayland, unable longer to withstand the pressure, bounded to his feet, emitted a long, hoarse war-whoop and gave chase. For a quarter of an hour he tore his way through the luxuriant jungle. Once he glimpsed his quarry speeding across an open strip of beach. It was going like a greyhound. Nothing short of gunpowder could have brought It down.

Mayland, scratched, bruised and panting, trudged recklessly back to the jungle's edge and sat down in the half-light of the forest to think the matter out. He had forgotten the first fright of the discovery. He would have relished a sudden coming together, a fierce combat, and an end of things, one way or the other. It was the future he dreaded, the long, dark, creeping hours when he could no longer feel safe from human spying and scheming. Yes, it would have been better had a dozen of them seized him unawares. By now he would have been simmering in the kettle. All would have been over.

Swiftly he ran over in his mind the events of the past few months. The failure of the Sierra Exploitation Corporation, leaving him penniless and prospectless in San Francisco, had been the beginning of the adventure. Then came his sudden determination to try trader's luck in the Tuamotu or Marquesas group, the impaling of the *Cycle of Cathay* on the sunken reef, his preservation, alone of the passengers and crew of the ill-fated ship, and the drifting on his wrenched spar to the shores of the rich and supposedly uninhabited islet.

It was a long, dreary, waiting game; but he assured himself with the sound reasoning that sooner or later some tramp of the ocean highways, blown out of her course, must see the signal, and that he could and would keep off claw, fang and fever until the allotted time. But now—well, it was no longer a mere question of time. Another factor had entered into the problem. He drooped his head upon his arms and wondered whether he had lost the art of weeping.

WHEN he broke off his gloomy reverie it was late. He had never dared to remain outside his rock lair after the swift, gorgeous sunset of that latitude. And now the last yellow-purple-pink rays had almost faded from the western sky. Clutching firmly his stone ax, he began to force his way through the rich tangle along the half-path he had made from the signal on the promontory. Within the jungle it was already quite dark. Before he had reached the lair he was merely groping his way.

The den in which he had kept his long, black night-watches was merely a fissure in the cliff, dry, elevated, and with a single way of ingress, which he effectually closed each night by moving a huge, round, well-balanced stone. Into the recess now not even a ray of starlight penetrated. He was able from much practise, however, to feel his way around the stone into the cleft. Once inside, he began the hard tug necessary to close the entrance.

As he put forward his immense strength against the big rock he fancied he heard a slight sound behind him as of a tensely-drawn breathing. He desisted and, clutching the stone ax with his back against the rock wall of the cavern, waited. The breathing was not resumed, but he sensed something stealing upon him, slowly, cautiously. A pebble, dislodged, trickled in the gloom—there was a patter of bare feet—then a rush.

He struck blindly with the ax, missed, collided with an erect form, which slipped away easily. Dropping the clumsy ax, he felt with his strong hands. He would have bolted through the unclosed passage and trusted his life to a run amuck through the forest, but he knew that the blow would fall before he could reach the entrance. A Berserker rage came upon him. He emitted the defiant whoop of the evening's chase and flung himself at the shuffling noise in front. This time his arms closed upon something soft which twisted and squirmed like a boa-constrictor.

A jagged point, suddenly upthrust, tore into his neck just under the chin. As he jerked his head back sharp teeth bit deep into his cheek. His brain swirling, beaten for the first time, he relaxed his grip. A shrill cry sounded in his ears, a form bounded past, and as he pulled himself together, wondering why he had not ceased to live, he heard the receding patter of the Wild Thing in the wood.

AT SUNRISE he bestirred himself. There was one grim, fixed purpose in his mind. He must kill this wild man of the island—for he had come to believe that the creature was solitary like himself—or be killed. He could not go on this way, waiting, dreading, fearing.

His torn neck and bitten cheek were very sore and painful and he limped rather forlornly from the cleft; but as he stalked the forest with his primeval weapons once more in his clutch, the blood-lust mounted in his veins. He could not understand how he had put up so puny a struggle the night before. Now his one great desire was to fight, to conquer, to kill. Nothing else mattered—not even that half-forgotten world beyond the purple rim of sea and sky.

He ran down his quarry sooner than he had hoped. Preparing to descend into a wide ravine, he checked himself just in time to avoid scrambling down the steep descent almost upon the head of his prey. The savage sat upon the trunk of a fallen tree, his leaf-tufted head drooped forward upon his arms. The pose suggested to Mayland his own utter loneliness and solitude. In spite of the barbaric half-dress, the wild thing appealed to him more as an object of

pity than an evil force to be pitted against his own life.

He allowed his taut bow-string to relax. He couldn't shoot at the thing while it remained in that position. He must give it a chance for its life. That was the White Man's Burden.

With his mouth open for a warning "Halloa!" Mayland grew suddenly cautious once more. The savage, sensing something foreign to the air of the forest, had turned his head and was looking behind him, away from Mayland on the cliff. His attitude was suggestive of a puma or leopard crouching for the fatal spring. What lithe trimness must lie beneath the fibrous raiment! What latent speed and strength! What wonderful hair the creature possessed—blue-black, coiled upon his head, looped and fastened with briars like a woman's—— Mayland let the bow-string fall from his limp grasp. He had fought for his life against a *woman!*

Parting the foliage, he uttered the only appropriate South Sea phrase he could call to his spinning mind, a phrase he had read in a book: "*Manuia oe!*" (Bless you).

She turned like a startled gazelle. The face, nearly hidden by the coco-leaves, was not brown or yellow or olive. It was white!

For an instant they faced each other, then the woman bounded nimbly into the jungle, disappearing before his unbelieving eyes. Mayland fell, bumped, rolled down the steep incline, shouting incoherently as he came. Scrambling to his feet, he plunged into the tangle that had swallowed his game. As he ran he called and yelped shrilly. On he ran, madly, blindly, senselessly, tearing his fragile raiment on branch and spine, leaping high above the bright, crawling things in his path, hardly realizing what he did.

Then, as suddenly, he stopped short to curse his lack of judgment. The fact had dawned upon him that he had not uttered one word of coherent English, that he had given her no opportunity to see that beneath the uncouth head-dress was a white face. He had frightened her so outrageously that by this time she might have plunged from some jutting headland into the sea. Fool—ass—idiot! He danced a wild fling of rage upon the shingle.

His frenzy of rage, however, was followed by a mood of wild exultation, in which he laughed and shouted and clapped his hands like a child. He had frightened her with his silly behavior, of course; but the woman who had survived the chase in the forest and the fight in the rock lair would survive this latest folly. He would find a way to tame her. He would go about with his hair combed and his face clean and uncovered. He would carry a white flag of truce, if he could find one—or sing the Doxology or build a peace memorial on the beach. Ah, he would find a way!

He hurried to a spring he had found and subjected his sun-browned skin to a thorough scrubbing. His face was covered with a silken yellow beard and he had no means of shaving, but he combed his long hair with his fingers and he removed the leafy garland that had concealed his features. After that, he strutted up and down an exposed portion of the beach. Nothing happened.

THE next three days Mayland spent in enacting a weird drama designed to show his civilization and gentility to a possible concealed, ultra-timid and suspicious feminine audience of one. He had never used his deep bass voice in musical endeavor, but now he sang, or yodeled, loudly and barbarously, fragments of the few things he could remember—"Rock of Ages," "Yankee Doodle," "Last Rose of Summer." After singing himself hoarse, he used the remnants of his tattered voice in a series of bellowed sermonettes. Standing on a knoll and making a megaphone of his hands, he would bawl into the forest:

"My name is Jim Mayland; thirty-two years old; born in Beverley, Massachusetts. My father was Amos Mayland, a lawyer and a direct descendant of John Alden. He married Martha Anne Quinby, a tea merchant's daughter, in 1866."

Next he strode through the jungle shouting his name and accomplishments and crying out that he would not harm her for the good, green world. But nothing answered save the forest whispering and the sea a-moaning, and he fell upon his knees and prayed—a kind of feverish, impassioned, semi-grotesque medley of "Now-I-lay-me" and the Lord's Prayer mingled with sundry improvisations. Finally he conceived a new idea. Selecting a smooth area. he traced these words in the sand:

I am James Andrew Mayland, of San Francisco, New York and Massachusetts—white—sane—

thirty-two—a castaway from the *Cycle of Cathay*. I would not hurt a fly. For God's sake don't hide out this way!

Then he retreated to his rock lair and found that he could weep like a child.

The next morning he came suddenly upon her in the ravine where he had first discovered her identity. She was combing her luxuriant blue-black tresses with a bit of jagged tortoise-shell. In some manner she had managed to rejuvenate her leaf-and-fiber raiment. She reminded him of a woodland nymph. He marveled at her fresh beauty. Her eyes were violet, hazel, chestnut—some half-dark shade which he could not distinguish at this distance.

For a full minute he regarded her before the impropriety of his position came to him. Then he stepped from the cover of foliage and held out his hands.

"Madam — woman — lady!" he called hoarsely. "I won't hurt——"

She was in the underbrush before he could finish the reassuring sentence. This time he did not chase her, but dropped limply to the ground and groaned. After a bit he went down to the beach and wrote in a huge square beside his previous inscription:

I am a graduate of Harvard, '00. Can read Livy, figure logarithms, write driveling sonnets. I wear this infernal coconut dress because I haven't succeeded in finding tailors on this island. Be reasonable.

The next two weeks he spent in impatient but not unpleasant reverie and conjecture. He whiled away the long, dark hours of the rock lair in the weaving of dreams and the constructing of air-castles. She was a fairy, a beggar's daughter, a nymph, a siren, a Cinderella, a princess out of old Carcassonne. Some day they would be rescued—or build a boat and turn pirates—or found them a city under the sea. Always, always the story ended with a living happily ever afterward.

Twice he managed to catch fleeting glimpses of her. Once she was cracking a coconut; the other time she stood upon a jutting rock and gazed out to sea. Both times he called pleadingly, but the distance was too great. She would speed away before he could make her understand.

He continued steadily at his sand-writing. Reflection had convinced him that ultimately she would be bound to discover it. Whether she would be reasonable after discovery he could not say; she was a woman.

He wrote his antecedents, his brief autobiography, his terse, clean creed and philosophy of life. He traced long inscriptions in Latin and shorter ones in his best Greek. He outlined his purpose in visiting the South Seas, gave the story of the wreck of the *Cycle of Cathay*, and told her the latest world news at the time he had left San Francisco. His messages were the weirdest of human documents. Once, in peevish mood, he wrote:

"Silence is golden"—like ——!

Another time he traced these words:

I'm a gentleman now. Have to advertise the fact because I sure don't look the part. But if you don't give some sign soon, I may turn South Sea Islander. I know you're bound to be reading these.

The next day, in contrition, he wrote:

Only show yourself at any distance—and talk or sign to me. I'll bow down and worship as I would to my God.

Then one day, coming down for his daily writing, he spied her stooping over the line of inscriptions. He lurked in the foliage, fearful lest he cause her to desist before she had read them through. How beautiful she was! With what unconscious grace she bent above the sprawling message. Suddenly he became conscious of a new feeling in his torn breast, the feeling that here was the One Woman, even should they be sudddenly transported beyond the hemming purple rim.

Next day he found, traced in a delicate cuneiform after the latest of his inscriptions, this question:

Why do you act so positively heathenish at times?

Calming his surging heart, striving to repress the very paganish manifestations that had alarmed her, he wrote:

If an angel had come suddenly to old Robbie Crusoe—or to the rich man in hell—would anybody have cut up heathenishly? For the love of heaven, come down and let's talk it over!

From the jungle's fringe, he watched her trace the answer:

Yesterday I saw you kill that pig-looking thing with your bare hands. I am but a woman.

P. S. Don't think for a minute that I am defenseless.

He smiled grimly over this, then hastened to reassure her:

This morning I could have surprised you. I can give no pledge but my word. But test me.

Within an hour she had traced answer:

I have decided to put you on probation. For thirty days you are not to attempt to communicate with me in any manner whatsoever. I will make known my wants. If you restrain yourself for this time, I promise an interview.

Mayland accepted philosophically the delay. To occupy his mind, he set at the construction of a habitation for her use against the day when she should become reasonable. This was of branches and timbers set in a huge tree in the jungle, plaited with vine and creeper, softened and refined with leaf and fiber, and reached by a wonderful rope ladder. This work interested him keenly.

Every day he went down to the beach for his written orders. If there was request for food, raiment or other South Sea convenience, he worked feverishly until he had procured it. If there was no word from her, he trudged back to the rock lair to worry himself almost into fever.

THE period of probation was half complete when, coming out upon the shingle with a load of nuts, he encountered her face to face.

"I beg pardon!" he stammered; then remembering his promise not to attempt to communicate with her, he dropped his supplies upon the sand and retreated.

"Oh, Mr. Mayland!" came a soft voice. He realized that his probation was ended.

She had settled herself upon a high rock jutting over the placid sea. He sat upon the sand at a respectful distance. For full three minutes there was silence.

"Shall we ever get away from here?" she asked finally.

"It doesn't look like it. I've had that signal flapping from the spit ever since the day I landed. I've never seen the smoke of a steamer or anything on the face of the water to indicate there's been anything here since the Flood. We're 'way off the beaten track, you know."

"I'm a castaway myself," she explained. "I was washed ashore clinging unconsciously to the bottom of an upturned boat into which a great many women and children and a few seamen from the liner *Polynesia*, bound from Hawaii to San Francisco, had crowded. She ran into a derelict and drifted."

She paused to shiver slightly at the recollection.

"That was thirteen weeks ago. The light clothing I had on when thrown ashore gave out and I made these. I've lived on nuts and fruit. I can't go those fishy things I see you take out of the sea. I have a snuggly sleeping-place—not so high and dry as yours that I stumbled into that night—but safe."

Mayland involuntarily put his hand to his wounded neck. The girl flushed.

"When I first saw you down here that day, I thought you were at least a cannibal and a head hunter," she resumed. "And then you chased me—and we fought in the cave—and I almost died from fright! That day in the ravine I could not see your face was white and you yelled South Sea talk at me and chased me again. And after that—after I had seen your white face—you acted so outrageously, dancing, singing and preaching, that I feared you were crazy."

Mayland nodded. "Of all the blithering idiots!"

"After you began to write in the sand, I became gradually reassured. Still, I did not care to place myself wholly in your power until—until I had found you to be what you are. After all, I'm a woman. Of late, however, I have seen you more frequently—more than you know—and I've—I've decided to put myself under your protection."

She sighed and settled back against her rock, it seemed to him almost contentedly. "Now you may talk," she indicated.

Mayland blurted out the dread possibility that had just come to him for the first time. "You're not married, are you?"

For a moment her dark hazel eyes showed alarm. Then she shook her head. For a while Mayland did not avail himself of his opportunity to talk. For him this basking in the early morning sun alone with the exquisite creature upon the rock, with no jarring note within thousands of miles, was the essence of bliss pure and unalloyed.

"For my part," he said finally, "I shouldn't care if we never went back—back to the old world with its cruel, false standards of failure and success. Here I'm king—or rather, you're queen. Queen of the Islands of Spice, with me for your Grand Vizier or Major Domo or High Muck-a-Muck or whatever you call it. Just to keep on serving you and ministering unto you and doing things for you and——"

"Oh!" she interrupted nervously. His tones had become very ardent.

"You needn't be afraid," he assured her.

"I'm not going to make love to you. So long as I'm the only man in your world, I'm honor bound. So long as you're under my protection, I can't say a word. But——"

He hesitated. She was digging a pink toe into the moss of the rock.

"If we ever get back to civilization——"

"I'm not quite sure that I wish to get back to civilization!" she broke in impulsively.

"But if we do return," persisted Jim Mayland, "I file my proposal here and now for your hand. That's all I can do at present."

"But you don't even know my name!" she said archly.

"I don't know your name, nor your station. What does it matter here? That's the glory of life in the uncharted places!"

"My name is Bertram," she informed him. "I think now, if you please, we had better talk about—about the weather."

MAYLAND smiled, whistled out of tune and twirled his bare toes blissfully. She turned and looked out upon the expanse of gray water, hidden from him by the great rock. There was a mist, a cloud, a shadow away to the north. At first she gave it no attention. But the cloud became larger, began to take definite shape. It was coming this way. It was——

"Oh!" she cried softly at the discovery.

"What is it, O Queen?" asked Mayland, with mock courtesy.

"N-n-nothing," she answered.

The cloud, which had resolved itself into a hull and a trail of smoke, came steadily nearer. The directness of the course showed that they must have observed the signal flapping from the headland. She watched it in silence. Mayland was humming rapturously and barbarously some misquoted snatches from "The Isle of Spice." On—on—on came the ship of rescue. Nearer, nearer, with its trim, rakish lines ever plainer. Suddenly she gave another little gasp.

"What on earth are you looking at?" demanded Mayland. He scrambled up beside her. "Great day in the morning!" he cried. "Did that yacht drop from the clouds?"

He turned and looked steadily at her flushed, bewildered countenance. "Rescue—civilization!" he murmured. "Back to the world of untrue standards—and filed proposals!"

A puff of smoke ascended from the yacht. The brass signal-gun stirred the echoes. The yacht, in close now, swung to port.

"Ha!" exclaimed Mayland. "I've seen that pretty toy somewhere! Let's see." Straining his eyes, he puzzled out the name, "*Vanessa*, of New York."

"Why, it's old Bertram's yacht! I've seen her many a time at the New York Yacht Club docks. Old Bertram, you know—the pressed steel magnate. What in thunder is he doing out here?"

With a sudden sensation of choking, he turned to the girl at his side. Her look of consciousness answered his half-formed question.

"Hang it all!" he groaned. "'*Bertram!*' I might have known. An hour ago, grand vizier and major domo to the Queen of Equator—now, a world's-failure once more!"

The girl, paler now, was silently observing the incoming yacht.

"I say—Miss Bertram," Mayland went on. "Of course, you know, I—that is, I couldn't know I was proposing to—er, I mean I don't wish to embarrass you with any foolish proposition I may have uttered a bit ago. Forget what I said, won't you?"

"No," she answered without hesitation. "I sha'n't forget."

"No!" repeated Mayland. "No—you mean——"

"I mean that a woman who had just listened to a proposal of marriage under circumstances in which her position in the world counts not the slightest, doesn't care to have it withdrawn the moment position begins to count!"

For a few blissful moments Jim Mayland forgot that he stood upon a rocky headland, clothed in the dried leaves of the coco-tree and embracing a lady arrayed in kind, with a whole ship's crew to gape at the spectacle. He did not remember until the roar of J. Richard Bertram came from the bow of an incoming launch:

"Elinor—Elinor Bertram! What in the name of heck is that you're hugging—a man or a bear?"

The girl pulled away from Mayland's strong arms.

"Neither, dad," she called. "It's just *the* man!"

FORBIDDEN TREASURE

by Beatrix Demarest Lloyd and Esher Martin

SYNOPSIS: Mark Stuart, on a geological expedition to Iceland, finds there an American yacht with its millionaire invalid owner Mr. Lee, his daughter Nora, and his physician Dr. Berwind. At Haldr's inn Nora treats Stuart with undue haughtiness, and keen hostility arises between them. A treasure bloodily stolen by ancient Vikings from a Sicilian abbey had been cursed by the dying Abbot so that when brought to Iceland the curse made an ice-desert of a once fertile part of the island (a phenomenon unexplained by science). An Icelandic family, the Olafsens, murdered the surviving Vikings and the curse falls on them, the last of them dying of small-pox in the ruined "Olaf's Tower" shortly after Stuart's arrival. Stuart climbs the tower and throws down the ancient bell.

CHAPTER IX

"SUPPOSE IT'S ALL TRUE!"

BERWIND, with his characteristic thoroughness, fumigated the tower, but he also vaccinated Stuart, much to that gentleman's disgust. He had brought Healy to carry his apparatus—a task the man might have been disinclined to accept, in his new position as mate, had he not been moved by some curiosity himself to learn more of the Forbidden Treasure. Healy looked at the bell partly with interest and partly with fury as he considered the probable trip back to the club-house with the trophy, while Stuart sat munching biscuits and nursing his lame arms and legs.

When Berwind was satisfied with his job, they slung the bell on a stout cane of his and started homeward. He had had little time up to now to consider the treasure-trove, though he had given Stuart an angry lecture on his foolhardiness. "But it occurs to me," he said, as they went warily down hill, "that we are committing highway robbery."

"That's all right," said Stuart. "I met a portly old politician in a wadmol gown this morning hereabouts. Calls himself a sysleman, whatever that is, and can undoubtedly be squared for a modest consideration."

"Of course it may be an imprudent question," said Berwind, "but what on earth do you want with the thing?"

"I had an inspiration, old man. Several of them. First I wondered if it wouldn't be a rather interesting old bell anyway, being the original from Archangel Michael's place. Then I wondered if the Olafsens might not have inscribed it with their sufferings and penitential prayers. And then I bethought me that Mr. Lee could probably tell us all about it. You can see that it is covered with——"

"Dirt," said Berwind.

"Inscriptions," returned Stuart, laughing.

"It may be a God-send," said the Doctor, half wearily. "Let's shift a minute—so." He swung the heavy cane to his other shoulder. "It might serve to wake Mr. Lee to his old self. I'd carry it all my life, if it would."

"You think," interrupted Stuart, "he could decipher this?"

The Doctor hesitated. "I am quite posi-

tive he could have done so a year or so ago," he answered, "and it may be that he can now. We can't do him any harm, in any event, by trying. You see, this illness has pretty well bowled him over. Nervous collapse, with spinal neurosis threatening in the background—overwork, nothing else. Why, the mere fact of his being an authority on such matters as these gives you an idea why he went to smash—he, the president of one of the largest railroad systems in the country, burning the midnight oil when he should have been playing bumble-puppy or going to bed."

This was the first clue that had as yet been offered to Stuart on the personality of any of his new acquaintances. In spite of his dislike of appearing curious, he could not resist the question:

"So Mr. Lee is a railroad man?"

"Was," corrected Berwind regretfully. "That's where he made his millions—President of the C. L. & Q., David R. Lee—it was he who engineered that big consolidation deal with the Eastern Shore five years ago and played horse with Wall Street."

Mark nodded. "Yes," he said, "I remember reading of it. If I had heard his full name, I should have recognized it, of course."

"Then," continued the other man, "he came home and crumpled up like a Japanese lantern. His wife was dead, and everything came on poor little Miss Nora. If you could imagine what she has been through!" His weather-beaten face sparkled with a sudden generous enthusiasm. "By the Lord Harry, Stuart, that little girl's a brick!"

Stuart suddenly halted. "I say," he said, "I'm going on to Hecla to-day. I'd forgotten about it."

Perhaps Berwind caught the connection, perhaps not. But he laughed cheerfully. "You can't go away from observation now, old man, with virus in your arm. It's a mean advantage to take of you, but you can't deny you have plenty to interest you here."

"There's not a dull moment in the piece," said Stuart. "But I really must go."

"I was quite professionally serious when I said you should not," said Berwind sharply.

"Really? Good heavens, man!" Stuart started forward. "Really," he repeated stupidly. "Good heavens!"

LATER, when he found that Miss Lee had gone back to the yacht, he was immeasurably relieved, and when they had given the bell an antiseptic and sandy bath, and the three of them were deep in its amazing revelations, he forgot her completely and was quite happy.

Mr. Lee was in high spirits. He had gone to find a stronger pair of glasses in his ulster pocket, and Stuart and Berwind with the bell before them on the table were lunching in hearty boy-fashion as they bent eager heads together over the heavy lump of metal-work. "See!" said Stuart excitedly, "here about the rim, in this beautiful gold-inlaid chasing, is the original dedication of the monastery itself. It is as plain as print. So much of the old lady's story is true, at all events!"

Berwind traced the ancient letters with his finger. "*Carolus magnus*—yes, old Charlemagne himself, just as she said. *Dei*—*Archangeli*—to the glory of God and the Archangel. Upon my word it begins to look as though there were something in that Viking tale, for who else could have brought old Charlemagne himself all the way up here to Iceland?"

"Here is another bit that I have managed to make out," said Stuart breathlessly. "These lines cut deep in the transverse of this hollow cross—good church Latin, it seems to me, though I will own that Latin is not my strong point. But see if we agree. What do you make of this?"

Again their heads bent together. "*Cum*—*judi*—what letter is that?"

"C," answered Stuart, "I make it, and an 'a'."

"*Judicatur.* That is it! cried Berwind with quickening interest. "And the next? *Exeat*—"

"*Condem.*," prompted Stuart eagerly.

Their eyes met. "Whe-ew!" whistled Berwind.

Stuart nodded. "The identical words of the curse we heard last night!" said he. "Begins to look as though we might be warm, doesn't it? And see, as it goes on, what do you make of these next words? *Et—oratio*—isn't that *oratio*, prayer?"

Berwind nodded. "*Ejus—fiat—in—pecc.—peccatum*, that stands for, eh?"

"'Let his very prayer become sin!'" said Stuart in a low voice. "Look here, you can call me a romantic donkey if you like, but

isn't there something in those words that sends the goose-flesh over you? No place of repentance for these poor chaps, you see. Every word they uttered in petition for pardon simply added to the original sin! That's what I call a subtle refinement in the way of curses!"

"Then very likely," said Berwind, "that is why they tolled their bell with such regularity, morning and evening through the centuries, and cut the words into their bell. It was the only way they dared to pray, poor devils! Well, they were heard, I hope. Certainly all their calamities and superstitions and horrors are wiped out at last, in that poor little dead bit of deformity that lies in the church down yonder."

"Now this next line," said Stuart. "*Aedes* —yes, that is *aedes*. And *del—del—*, can you make it out?"

"*Deleatur*," said Berwind, puzzling, "isn't it? Yes, those were the words that struck us so particularly—'let his habitation be made desolate!'"

"That would be the Vatna," answered Stuart slowly. "The moon-country, with its dead craters and silent stretches of ice."

Berwind jerked his head toward the tower above them. "Or even the empty pile of stones up there," he said, "where that poor little wretch died all alone. What a death—and what a life, Stuart! A kind of everlasting coventry. Fancy the family life that has gone on there, from generation to generation! Yet never one of those unlucky men, so long as he had a straight back, but could find a woman ready to share his unhappiness for the sake of being his wife!" For an instant a curious shade passed over Berwind's dark face and Mark's thoughts flew back to his fanciful imaginings of the night before.

"Well," Berwind caught himself up with a determined cheerfulness, "the point is, Stuart, that your clever idea of the bell has established the truth of the story in two particulars; so very probably the third——"

"The treasure!" cried Stuart. "Yes, that is all very well—but look here, just try to read it, if you can!"

Berwind bent with searching finger and eye over the roughened surface of the bell, chased, like an Egyptian tablet, with a wilderness of undecipherable inscription. His disappointment showed itself in the slow shaking of his head. 'That is what I call tough luck," he said slowly. "Yes, the Latin dedication, of course, was carved in Italy, and the Latin words of the curses were taken straight out of the Olafsens' breviary. But when they came to the original narrative, of course, they cut it in their own tongue. It is not modern Icelandic either, I can tell you that much." He leaned to study the unknown characters afresh. "Just look here, Stuart. What do you think of that? A man with a child on his shoulder?"

Stuart took a look, and then his hand closed on his friend's shoulder, excitedly. "You remember Madame Haldr's tale of last night," he said quickly, "of the two that came ashore from the treasure ship alive?"

"The monkey! Yes, by Jove, you're right! Look again. You can see the tail, the long tail curved like the loop of an S!"

Stuart drew breath. "Good heavens, Berwind, suppose it's all true?"

CHAPTER X

AN EMBARRASSING SITUATION

BEFORE he could answer, Mr. Lee came back excitedly. He dropped into a chair, put on his glasses and clawed the bell toward him in one movement.

"We made out some of the Latin," said Stuart modestly. "But the rest of it——"

"It's Gothic!" sighed Mr. Lee, like a man who has finished dinner. "It's Gothic!" His face was serene and yet filled with excitement. The ardor of the archeologist was upon him. "It's taken years, years," he said, peering close, "to cut this. Two letters a day would be as much as a man could do with such tools as he evidently had."

Berwind glanced up with sudden seriousness. "Then what they took so much labor to record," he said, "should be of great value in itself, should it not?"

"If it should be the history of the treasure we heard of last night," responded Mr. Lee with the stately smile which occasionally lit his querulous features, "then I condition my friends for one chalice out of the treasure when we find it. Otherwise, I consider myself in your debt, Mr. Stuart, for affording me the rare pleasure of inspecting these inscriptions. It will take me some time, I am afraid. This Gothic seems

obscure and corrupt, and an invalid, as you must know, works slowly."

"That is all right, sir," retorted Stuart; "if it will take some days, so much the better. Dr. Berwind tells me that, after the experience of last night and my vaccination, I must not think of going off into the wilderness till a few days have elapsed. So if you would let me be present at some of the consultations——"

"You shall be our guest on the yacht," said Mr. Lee. "Nora will be delighted. Berwind, where is Nora?"

"She is coming in about now from the yacht," said the Doctor. "She said she would lunch out there, but wanted to come in about three. Her boat can take us back if we go down now."

"About three?" said the older man suspiciously. "She isn't coming in to go to that man's funeral, is she, eh?"

"She said," said Berwind gravely, "it seemed as if some one of us should go—he died so far from home."

Mr. Lee rubbed his nose petulantly, but his voice softened. "She has a good heart, that girl," he said. "See here, Berwind, you've had enough lunch! I want to go off to the yacht at once. We'll miss the launch." Again his nervous manner was in evidence. "We'll send a couple of men up for the bell and your luggage and yourself, Mr. Stuart. I want to get a really powerful glass on this at once."

He was off into the hall as he was speaking and Berwind could merely dash after him with a shouted "See you later!"

Stuart had risen, and was standing rather flushed and with his mouth partly open. Then he shrugged his shoulders and sat down. "One sometimes has a chance to accept or refuse an invitation," he said.

BUT the chance was given him fifteen minutes or so later when he heard the door open behind him, and, turning, he saw Nora enter the room. He rose to his feet with a formal bow, to which she vouchsafed the barest hint of a nod.

"Katie," she said to the cheerful little maid behind her, "go and find out from Haldr whether he knows where the funeral is to be held. I will wait here."

She walked to the window as she spoke, and stood looking out, her back to him. Katie disappeared and closed the door. Stuart returned silently to his bread and cheese. In spite of the chilling dignity of the girl's manner, it was impossible, looking upon her, to take her seriously. In her short sailor dress of white wool, with her fur coat and cap of knitted silk, she looked like a little girl. Her cheeks were whipped to a crimson by the sea-wind, her hair was roughed in dark curling strands about her face. He leisurely observed her as he went on with his luncheon, and she became aware of it, and of perhaps a certain lack of dignity in her position, for she could not deny to her inmost soul that she had come in because she knew that he was there. Katie was longer in returning, however, than even she had anticipated and, realizing that the situation was becoming farcically ridiculous, she finally wheeled about, as if with a remark repressed since her entrance.

Mark rose and met her look calmly. "Your coming is very opportune, Miss Lee," he said. "I was at the moment wondering how I should get a message to your father. He was good enough to ask me to be his guest during the days which the Doctor insists must be spent in this neighborhood. I regret that in the hurry of his departure I did not make him understand that I had declined his invitation. Much as I appreciate his cordiality, it is naturally quite impossible for me to accept. I am sorry he misunderstood me. Will you kindly explain the matter to him when you return to the yacht this afternoon? I will send Oddi down with the bell, so that the men can take it with them to your father when you go."

She glanced fleetingly at it, and, remembering she had not until now seen it, he added politely: "It is the bell of the Olafsen tower which I bought to-day. Your father wishes to examine it. Pray tell him I am deeply grateful to him for the labor he has undertaken and for his courtesy to me." If he accented the word courtesy it was no more than human.

"I met my father at the wharf," she said, a fine color in her cheeks. "He said you were to join us. I beg you will not change your mind because of any antipathy that exists between us."

"I am afraid you do not understand. There is no question of my changing my mind," he said. "Your father actually gave me no time to reply. I could not have accepted under any conditions. Perhaps

you'll be kind enough to explain and give him my cordial thanks."

He bowed again and left her.

CHAPTER XI

THE INSCRIPTION ON THE BELL

FOR three days after, Stuart saw no one from the *Blessed Damozel*. A blinding drift of rain had come on the urgency of a southeast gale, and Stuart, housed by bad weather and a swollen and painful arm, was not in the best of tempers. It seemed to him that he was fated to be trapped in Reykjavik, for now Haldr told him that the roads to Hecla were rendered impassable by the flooding waters. This time it was no question of boots. Haldr's gesture was not at his girth but in the vicinity of his yellow hair.

"Then by heaven," said Stuart, "I'll get a boat! I'll go by sea. Is there a man in this country that owns a boat?"

Haldr stared listlessly down the road. He was in no mind to lose his guest, but since detention seemed useless—"Svéatur got boat," he said; "rotten boat, no good."

"Good enough for me!" said Stuart promptly. "Now will you go and see this Svéatur for me and make terms with him for a two weeks' cruise along the coast?"

Haldr shifted to his other foot. "Oddi not go—no sailor. Need Svéatur, need two more men. Coast rough, bad sailing."

"Drat you!" cried Stuart again, half-laughing but determined to balk the national apathy of this place which from the moment of his arrival had so irritated him. "I know what the sea is and I know what a bad coast-line is. I'm not afraid. I want that boat and I want those men. I can't speak their language to make arrangements with them, so you must do it for me."

Haldr nodded. At least it was a relief to see him do something other than shake his head. "Boat cost high," he said. "Three men, three pounds the day."

Stuart turned. "Three pounds—fifteen dollars? That's absurd. But make it ten dollars, all found, and I'll agree."

Haldr assented heavily. "I go see Svéatur now. What time you start?"

Stuart shrugged his shoulders. "My spirits have been taken down since I came to this country. I don't say when I want to start. I say I will start when I can."

The Icelander let this thrust pass unconsidered. "Get boat ready," he said, "men say good-by—to-morrow morning for start?"

"To-morrow morning!" said Stuart blithely. That was as early as he could reasonably expect. It would, moreover, give him time to hear the result of Mr. Lee's labors with the bell and to say good-by to that extremely nice chap Berwind. Suppose the result of the inscriptions yielded anything tangible, why then he could use his boat—but at the gate of the golden wonderland this opened before him, imagination faltered. "Have my boxes put aboard," he said—"my box of canned things—ready to-morrow morning."

"To-morrow morning—all right," repeated Haldr, turning away on his heels. Then with a gesture toward the blue waters of the harbor, "Boat from yacht," he said, "come ashore."

Stuart turned in pleasure, for these last days had been lonely and, moreover, his curiosity flamed high. And not even the dread of meeting the girl who so recently had flouted him could prevent him from hurrying down to the strand.

Dr. Berwind was alone, however, and called a greeting to him from his place in the stern. "I've worried about you, my boy," said Berwind kindly. "Tell me, has that scratch of mine taken all right?"

Stuart moved his arm stiffly. "It has—no doubt about that."

"Thank heaven!" said Berwind devoutly. "That was a nasty risk for you, but it's past now. However, I can assure you that your waiting hasn't been for nothing. I have news for you!"

"The bell?"

Berwind nodded. "Mr. Lee has been plugging away ever since we brought it to him. It's been a tremendous job, without any reference books or anything. But didn't I tell you? He's a regular cracker-jack at that sort of thing!"

"He has made out something?" asked Stuart excitedly.

"Jump in; you're to come aboard and see for yourself. It is plain that some special bait is needed to catch you, young man!"

Stuart laughed in momentary embarrassment. How far, he asked himself, had Berwind divined the situation? But such idle speculations were driven from his mind

by the present necessities of embarkation from a wave-swept pier of slippery lava-blocks, and ten minutes later they stood together on the white deck of the yacht. She was a two-hundred footer, steel-hulled, brigantine-rigged, with the twin funnels and high freeboard of the sea-spanner. On the forecastle deck a smartly clad officer, whose high shoulders and long shambling legs were to Stuart quite familiar, was putting a double line of blue-clad jackies through a kind of marine drill. About the deck were various other seamen in white overalls, rubbing vigorously at the bright work that made so brave a show of glitter in the Arctic sunshine. As Berwind led the way down the companion, the sound of a sweet mezzo-soprano voice came up to them, and the Doctor paused on the upper steps, holding up a cautionary hand. "I love to hear her sing," he said simply.

Stuart stood still on the step above him and listened as Nora Lee went on, unconscious of their approach, with the little song he had first heard her maid singing in the hall of Haldr's house:

> "Down she came as white as milk,
> A rose in her bosom as soft as silk."

Capriciously she stopped in the middle of the chorus and wandered away from the piano, and, there being no further reason for their remaining where they were, the two men descended the rest of the stairs together.

The cabin, though luxurious, had escaped being decorated in what has been termed the Pullman-Palace-Car style. Around the better half of it ran a wide, comfortable seat, and the baby-grand piano, clamped to the wall and the floor, fitted one corner. There were books and comfortable chairs, and many cushions. At a large sideboard a moonfaced Chinese boy was setting forth hospitable siphons and decanters.

At the long center-table sat Mr. Lee with the bell at his elbow and a confused litter of papers spread all about him. In the farther corner Nora silently turned to greet the newcomer. Her hand was unfriendly, her smile was enigmatic, but from the necessity of studying her present mood Mark was relieved by an enthusiastic outburst from Mr. Lee.

"See here, I have done it!" he cried. "Has Berwind told you? I have my finger on your treasure, young man!"

"No!" gasped Stuart. "Where?"

Mr. Lee pushed him into a chair and thrust the papers beneath his eyes, talking excitedly all the time.

"See," he said, "here are the pencil-rubbings we took of the inscriptions, first of all. Nora made them. Look! Quite perfect. So on these I set to work. It has been a task; but upon my soul, it has given me new life! Look now, here is the translation I have made. Do you understand Gothic at all—well enough to follow?"

Stuart turned from the black, pencil-rubbed sheets to the jagged papers of Mr. Lee's manuscript. "This will do for me," he said breathlessly. "For the Gothic, I assure you I shall have to trust to your erudition."

Mr. Lee beamed on him. Indeed, his delight in this momentary return to his old interests and in the young man's homage to his learning was hardly short of pathetic.

"AS YOU SAY," he said pompously, "it is not worth while my giving you the exact words. The Gothic is obscure and corrupt, but this is what I make of these words that run about the rim above these chased Latin words that were evidently the work of the original bell-founder." The speaker paused.

"'To God and to the Archangel Michael,'" he read aloud impressively, "'this gold—this treasure'—literally, 'this earth-born wealth—we render back with our prayers and our great grief.'"

Stuart moved in his seat like an excited child.

"I will not bother you with the exact idiom," said Mr. Lee; "the gist of the matter is, they are putting away the treasure against the Judgment Day, which they are evidently expecting in a year or two. And—here we come to the root of the matter—they give here explicit directions concerning the location of the treasure; so that on the Last Day the Archangel may have no difficulty in finding his own."

Stuart took in a long breath. "So that's the game! Offering the treasure back to Heaven in the hope that the curse may be lifted off their shoulders, poor devils! Fancy how disgusted they must have been when the end of the world did not come after all! Excuse me for interrupting, Mr. Lee. And please go on!"

Mr. Lee went on importantly. "Now

we pass to the inscription on the transverse of this hollow cross—you observe it?"

Stuart nodded. "And the diagram beneath it, what is that?"

Mr. Lee shook his head. "It is a rough kind of hieroglyphic," he said. "You may have noticed these others. This winged shape was a familiar symbol of the Vikings. The others seem to be drawings of the chalices—you can even see the handle of this cup on the left."

"You're right again, sir!" said Stuart heartily. "But now the inscription—what does the inscription say?"

Mr. Lee screwed his gold eye-glass upon it in obvious enjoyment. "The directions are all to be taken in the land of Olaf, below—yes, that is the name that German woman gave to the range, and it is a literal translation: 'below the High-gone-Hills.' Listen! 'Where the river of Snorr flows into the river of Halpa.' Wait a moment—'flowing between the Mountain of the Bull and the Mountain of Sigurda, from the oak tree at the base of the hill of Sigurda, one hundred paces upward.' The classic pace was five feet, so I suppose," interjected Mr. Lee, glancing up, "we may be safe in assuming the distance here to be five hundred feet to the rock—to the 'Red Rock of Half.' That, I should say, clearly means one-half way up the mountain-side. And then there is a word here that is a bit difficult to render in English. It is literally 'beak.' It is probable that the rock in question juts out like a beak from the flat surface of the cliff. I will translate freely: 'In the cave behind the jutting promontory of the Red Rock of Half, we bury thy gold to thee, O most Holy One'—Could directions, I ask you, be more specific?"

"You are a wonder, sir," said Stuart simply. "I haven't words to express my admiration for your cleverness. I might have had the bell a hundred years without getting from it what you have found in less than a week. But one thing I want to say. Of course, if all this should come to anything, of course it must be share and share alike among us all."

Mr. Lee, though obviously pleased with the young man's generosity, waived the question. "Nonsense, nonsense! The bell is yours, the treasure is yours. However, I do not say that we will altogether refuse a chalice or two. When shall we start?"

Stuart turned with a laugh. "This is rather a joke, sir. You see, only this morning I engaged a boat and men of my own for a cruise around that very Vatna peninsula."

"Countermand them," said Mr. Lee abruptly. "Countermand them and come with us. We will engage to make you more comfortable, hey, Berwind?"

Stuart smiled at him. "Naturally, I can not hesitate, especially as the Icelandic seamanship seems doubtful. I accept your kindness, sir, with pleasure."

"And we'll give up our cruise to the Northwestern peninsula," cried Mr. Lee, rubbing his nose delightedly. "Upon my soul, this business makes me feel a boy again. Treasure, inscriptions, that no eyes but ours have read since the day they were cut here for us! And specific directions for finding the spot, names given and all! Nora, darling, isn't it a glorious experience?"

CHAPTER XII

THE WRECKING OF PLANS

BUT before she could answer, Stuart had dropped back in his chair with an unfeigned groan, and they all turned amazedly to face him.

"What on earth is the matter?" cried Berwind blankly. "Stuart, what is the matter?"

Stuart burst into a hoot of dismal laughter. "Do you happen to remember, any of you, the present condition of that Vatna country?"

Berwind's jaw dropped. Mr. Lee's face became fireless. Nora stared. "Upon my soul!" said Mr. Lee slowly.

The change in their demeanors had come as suddenly as if some one had thrown cold water upon their flaming hopes. There was quite a long, an eloquent silence.

"The joke is on us," said Mark grimly. "The place has been the abomination of desolation these hundreds of years. Within living memory no man has so much as crossed it. We might as well seek Sigurda herself, as try to identify her mountain. And as for our rivers, for hundreds of miles the glaciers came down to the sea. We will find the stream that watered Eden, my friends, before we discover where the River of Snorr flows into the River of Halpa."

Mr. Lee, his face fixed in lines of bitter

disappointment, turned the great bell heavily in his hand over the velvet cover of the table. Berwind hung his head dejectedly. He, too, for one sweet day had dreamed his dream.

"You are right, Stuart," he said quietly, lifting his face at last. "It is odd we did not think of that before. We knew the simple fact, surely. Yes, it did not occur to me that the place had changed from a garden to a desert since the location of the treasure was cut upon the bell. It would be of course impossible in a wilderness of ice and snow to locate the spot. Oak tree, indeed! I don't suppose there is a twig anywhere about the place!"

So still had they all become that it added intensity to the natural shock when Mr. Lee suddenly flung the bell from him on the table and turned on them violently. "I have been made a fool of, a fool!" he cried furiously. "Before you set me to work on that six-day contract, young man, I really think you might have taken the trouble to consider a little! You might have considered me, if nothing else! A capital geologist you make, indeed! Don't bother me now, Nora!" He flung off the hand she laid in a soothing, appealing caress upon his shoulder. And in spite of his own good reasons for resentment, Stuart felt a pang of pity for the girl which almost disarmed the bitter keenness of his own chagrin and disappointment.

Still in his angry mood, Mr. Lee berated them all. "Berwind, you might have spared me this! A fine sort of guardian you are to shield an invalid from annoyance! I am going to my cabin at once, and I will thank you to attend on me!" He had half turned to the door when he flung back at Stuart with another thought. "The Vatna cruise is off," he said briefly. "We start for the northwest this very afternoon. I am sorry to disappoint you, young man, but I can assure you I am disappointing you no more than you have disappointed me!"

"I will be back in a moment, Stuart," put in Berwind, as with his strange patient he vanished behind the curtains.

STUART, impatiently awaiting the Doctor's reappearance, resolved upon an immediate return to the shore as the one solution to an intolerable situation. His hopes, which only a moment before had soared so high, lay about him in ruin, which in itself was hard enough to face, without the consciousness that he lingered where his presence was distinctly unwelcome. Then, to his amazement, he heard Nora's voice, addressing him with a new gentleness.

"I regret very much, Mr. Stuart," she said with some hesitation, "that here, as our guest, you should have met with discourtesy. But perhaps Dr. Berwind has explained to you that my poor father is still suffering from the effects of a very severe illness——"

The little catch in her voice dispelled Stuart's resentment at once. In pity for her obvious distress, he bowed his acknowledgments and his sympathy.

In the mournful concentration of her thought, Nora seemed to have forgotten the hostile terms on which they stood. "It is so discouraging," she said helplessly. "Why doesn't he get better? I can not understand it. What can there be that would alter his very nature?"

In her face, Stuart read the stinging recollection of her late rebuff at her father's side. His one thought was to find words of comfort for her and yet it was with some self-consciousness that he said cheerfully: "Your father will soon be better in this air. They tell me it is famous for its bracing quality. Why, even I can see an improvement in him since that day I met him first last week."

His reward for this stupendous falsehood was a glance of wistful gratitude from the hazel eyes, more in accordance, it seemed to him, with the hauntingly sweet impression which the girl left always behind her than with her actual bodily presence as he had hitherto found it. He was distracted from this contemplation of her contradictions by the cheerful tones of the returning Berwind.

"Your father's lying down, Miss Nora," he said pleasantly. "It was the working over that bell, and the sudden disappointment, that did him up for a minute. Now, as to you, Stuart."

"As to you," retorted the other, "you are coming ashore with me."

Nora looked up with a little startled glance. "Oh, but surely," she said, "you won't leave until after luncheon?"

Stuart shook his head pleasantly but seriously. Their hospitality might be very

magnificent, but the erratic quality thereof made him decidedly unwilling to put his head into the lion's jaws again. "Thank you, Miss Lee," he said in a tone of polite finality, "Madame Haldr understands that I am coming back to my luncheon. Besides that, as my vaccination seems to be taking properly, Dr. Berwind tells me I shall be safe in starting on my trip very shortly, and I have much to do in the way of preparation. So thank you, and good-by, Miss Lee."

She cast an uncertain look toward the table. "But your bell? You are forgetting your bell, Mr. Stuart."

Mark shrugged his shoulders. "What should I do with a lump of metal like that on such a trip as mine? It is not a thing to pack conveniently in a suit-case! With your permission, I will leave the thing with you." He gathered the sheets of paper together as he spoke. "You will allow me? These pencil-rubbings, you see, are quite as interesting to me as the bell itself, and much easier to carry about—especially if I may be allowed to take the translation also."

"But certainly," answered the girl in obvious perplexity. "My father made the translation for you, Mr. Stuart. But the bell—I am afraid it is much too valuable. My father would never accept it!"

Stuart could not resist his opportunity. "Then it becomes plain that you, Miss Lee, must be the one to accept it—a souvenir, not of me, believe me, but of Iceland." He put aside her objections with a slight gesture.

"And now," he said, "if you will allow me, I will go."

Berwind followed him sadly out on deck, and on the trip shoreward urged him to remain with them. But Stuart was not to be caught again. "Good-by," he said, holding on to Berwind's hand in a short, close grip. "You have been most kind. I appreciate it."

"Here is my card," said Berwind with eager friendliness; "look me up when you come to New York if you can spare the time for a struggling and obscure practitioner." He laughed suddenly. "In spite of all the stuff I have been saying, I wish I were going with you, upon my soul I do!"

"So do I!" said Stuart heartily. "I suppose it would be quite impossible?"

The other nodded and sighed, with a backward glance toward the yacht. The curiously desolate look in his eyes seemed to Stuart the final and fitting epilogue to the chapter of these three unhappy people with whom he had been forced into so brief and curious an intimacy and whom he was now quitting forever.

"If the treasure had come true," said Berwind below his breath, "—but it didn't! Dreams don't, you know. Well, so long, old chap! Good-by, and the best of volcanoes and geysers to you!"

Stuart smiled at him. "And the best of microbes to you!"

CHAPTER XIII

A MUTINOUS CREW

DESPITE Stuart's high heart, there were in the next two weeks moments when he asked himself whether, after all, his ardent probing of Nature's secrets had not this time led him on too far. The open boat to which he had entrusted himself seemed no more than a chip on the face of the waters. Her build was primitive and awkward, her sails clumsily cut and bent. With a fair wind they could squeeze perhaps forty miles from her in the twenty-four hours; when the breeze headed, they lay to or nosed for a harbor. The thoughts of the possible gale which might at any moment descend upon them made even Stuart's stout spirit confess its own foolhardiness.

The journey to the Vatna peninsula became an affair not of days but of weeks—weeks which the monotony of the stores and the difficult communication with his men served to fill, in spite of the environing magic of the sea, with a growing and infinite weariness. More than once, as Mark served his trick at the clumsy tiller or lay coiled in his sleeping-bag in the evil-smelling cuddy, he found his thoughts wandering back to the yacht which now lay so many miles away from him on the green arctic water.

As the voyage proceeded, however, the necessities of his present case left him continually less and less time for these backward flights of meditation. His men were becoming unmistakably surly. His geological investigations, on the occasion of their making harbor, plainly inspired them with distrust. With the ever-ready excuse of

not understanding his limited Icelandic, they avoided on all occasions the duty of carrying his bag of mineral specimens or of accompanying him on his short landward trips. As the days went on and the coast-line on their port-hand loomed increasingly wild, black and fantastic, their unwillingness to proceed with so much as their duties as seamen became more and more evident.

Trouble first came to a definite head on the occasion when, after the laborious rounding of a gigantic and foam-girdled promontory, Stuart caught distant sight of a far-off peak, from whose black tip issued a spiral of thin, wavering smoke. At this, the first open sign of those mysterious volcanic forces which he had come so far to study, his exultations leaped in his throat. Fire and snow—where else in the world, indeed, could one find that mingling of the hostile elements, save in that land of enthralling desolation which now loomed before him as the goal of his hopes? What secrets might he not wring from its reluctant fastnesses, to add to the sum of the earth-knowledge which he loved? From those kindling dreams he was awakened by the guttural whispers of his men.

Still plainer in their significance were the sidelong surly glances, the grim rebellious eyes, the slow hands upon the sheets. The words of Madame Haldr struck upon Stuart's brain with the freshness of realization. The dread of the Vatna desert he could no longer slight as an interesting fable. The fear it inspired was a living thing, staring out at him from the grudging eyes of his men.

His situation, had he stopped to consider it, was indeed perilous enough. Behind lay two hundred miles of stormy and uncharted coastline; beneath his feet a few clumsily constructed planks of drift-oak. His sole companions were ignorant men whose language he did not speak and who obeyed his commands with glances of lowering mutiny whipped up by superstitious fear.

Indeed, the next day, when they set out from the wave-swept shingle where they had made their camp, Mark amazedly found his boat's nose pointed, not on to the eastward but backward toward the west. Svéatur, a bullet-headed, flaxen-cropped Goth, with a skin burned black by the sun, grunted reluctantly as Mark took the tiller from his hand and pointed the laboring craft about. Three gold-pieces, dropped in their hard and grimy palms, served to set the boat onward on her course.

All day long that thin wavering finger of smoke beckoned Stuart on. By evening it was perceptibly nearer. Through the twilight of that night they sailed along. Stuart, mistrustful of his men's good faith, slept only in cat-naps. The icy wind that blew off the shore, however, together with the excitement of his nearing goal, served to keep his faculties alertly at his service.

He had need of them. The men, sullen almost to the point of open revolt, opposed to all his words and gestures a thick and obtrusive incomprehension. In almost the whole of this third day by the Vatna, they remained huddled together in the bow, as if for mutual protection. Had Stuart had any leisure to spare from his single-handed navigation of a cranky craft, he might have felt sorry for the poor wretches whom he thus forced onward into the fog of their own superstitious terrors. As it was, the obstinacy of their demeanor served to rouse an ordinary human rage rather than any extraordinary pity.

TOWARD the afternoon the wind drew to the southward and the sea fell. Through the straw-yellow sunbeams Stuart now had leisure to observe the wild coast he was skirting—a dreary stretch of high black lava cliffs, twisted at their summits into a fantastic mass of pinnacles, columns and towering obelisks. Beyond stretched a spectral background of white snow-peaks, culminating in the black-tipped cone of the smoking volcano. Of vegetation, as of human life, there was no sign; the white guano stains of the eider, the red scars of prehistoric fires, were the sole marks that natural forces had been able to imprint on the stony surface of this wilderness.

In the southeast clouds were gathering, and by evening the question of landing became a pressing one. The heavy surf, swarming up the sides of the cliff and swirling through its fissures, indicated peculiar difficulties of landing. Finally, a deeply gorged inlet in the jagged coast suggesting the possibility of a lee, Stuart, whose eyes and muscles were now strained to a pitch dangerously near the breaking-point, gibed his clumsy craft, at the imminent risk of

dismasting her, and made toward the inhospitable shore. "Here, Svéatur," he shouted through the clanging air, "take this oar! Go to the bow!"

The man shook his head in thick and sullen incomprehension, till with his free hand Stuart thrust the oar into the fellow's grasp. For the moment, so invincible seemed the Icelander's reluctance to land, it appeared possible that a struggle might ensue. Svéatur, however, moved obediently, albeit sullenly, to the bow with his two companions, but it was not until the steersman, putting the boat's nose through the long rollers that swung obliquely about the lee side of the shallow headland, forced the seamen to flight for their lives that they condescended to understand his orders.

Beneath the cloud of scared and screaming eiders, dislodged by their coming, they dragged their flat-bottomed boat up over the black lava-grit into the shelter of the overhanging gully. This work, together with the furling of the sails and the pitching of the tent, was performed by the men with so black and open an unreadiness that Stuart's tingling hand went back more than once to the pocket beneath his oilers, where lay the irrefutable argument of his revolver. To-night he shared his dainties with his men instead of leaving them to the strips of dried fish and slabs of *hangi* which formed their usual fare. They swallowed the unusual luxuries with voracity, and Stuart, smiling at his own unaccustomed subtlety, prayed that this primitive womanly persuasion to which he had reverted might find its effect in a renewed docility in the morning.

The men, still whispering together, huddled in their sheepskin bags. The driftwood supply was scanty, the fire burned low. The roar of the pounding rollers seemed only to make articulate the deathlike silence of the place. To the eastward the glare of the volcanic vent flamed like a blast-furnace. Behind their campingplace, below the lava-ridge of the beach, bubbled the cauldron of a gigantic mud-puff. Though its sulphurous steam had a far from agreeable odor, its yellow-gray mire exhaled a comfortable warmth.

Stuart, dabbling his half-frozen fingers back to life, considered the shadowy and gigantic outlines before him with a triumph oddly mingled with awe. Was this desolate place perhaps the very spot on whose once verdant slopes the Olafsens had plucked their grapes? Was this perhaps the length of shore on which the Viking ship with her cargo of accursed treasure had been dashed to her fore-prayed destruction? And that treasure itself, with its legendary quality like that of the upas-tree of blasting all life and growth within its radius—was it possible that even now, by some stray whim of chance, it lay unknown and undiscoverable within reach of his hand?

CHAPTER XIV

ALONE ON THE VATNA JÖKULL

THOROUGHLY exhausted as he had been by the unusual amount of labor he had been forced to undertake the previous day, Mark Stuart woke slowly the following morning. He lay with his eyes open, the flap of the sleeping-bag pushed from his face, staring at the sky and wondering at the cold. Then slowly the memory of what had happened stirred in his drowsy brain, itself like a sleepy thing in a warm nest.

He was on the shore of the Vatna—and had had some difficulty in getting there as well!

The cold air on his face had hastened the process known as the collecting of wits, and he became conscious as well of the awakening of a dormant but undeniably healthy appetite. Pulling his arms free of the enveloping bag, he sat himself up.

He looked at the glittering, pale, icy sea, washing more placidly between the black walls of the fiord. He looked to the left of him where the fire had been built. He looked to the right where his box of provisions had been opened for the unusual feast of the night before. With a sudden wild wrench of his body he tore himself free of his sleeping-bag and leaped to his feet. A loud call burst from his mouth and throat.

The cry was taken up and echoed back and forth between the high barren cliffs which hemmed in the inlet. The surf pounded monotonously on the lava beach, and the slow, fat bubbles of the mud-puff burst with a comfortable sound as of steaming porridge. Beyond these sounds there was silence—blank and utter silence!

Stuart was not the man given to frantic and useless doings in the moment of crisis. He did not call aloud again. But a sudden

weakness in the knees made it easier to sit down on the sleeping-bag again in the collapse of astonishment.

There was no box of provisions to the right of him; there was no fire to the left of him. Before him, on the pale glittering sea, there was no boat. Within the most Titanic call, there was no man to answer him.

If he needed anything to tell him what it all meant, the rough bundle lying beside him half open, containing a few strips of dried fish, would have done so. But in the silence that followed his shout he had realized the situation in detail.

Convulsed with another attack of superstitious terror, the men had stampeded, deserted. He was alone on the Vatna Jökull which no man could cross! He was alone on "the surface of the moon!"

He laughed shortly and took up the bundle of dried fish. There was enough, perhaps, he decided, turning the strips of leathery stuff over in his fingers, to last a week, with very careful economy. It was curious to hold in one's hands all that stood between one and death! It was strange that a man, young and stalwart, should be dependent upon a handful of such matter for his breath of life!

He found it hard, as he stood there just where he had slept in the unconsciousness that had made their desertion possible, not to allow himself to hope that they would return. It was hard not to permit himself to speculate upon the possibilities of escape, to doubt the experience of other explorers who had attempted the overland journey, to contemplate the chance of a vessel passing within signal.

The sense of security, so long as one is upon the solid earth, is so rudimentary an emotion that it was difficult to realize he could and probably would starve to death slowly sitting there in the cage of the Vatna.

There was not even coarse grass to feed on. There was not palatable water to drink. The eiderducks and the seals would require a strong, armed adversary, and Stuart's pistols had disappeared with his provisions and his boat. It was so very complete in all details that he laughed again.

He thought of Svéatur and the men, now with violent hatred and now with a tolerant amusement. Had he been bestially abandoned, or had he been an ass to expect thoroughly frightened, thoroughly superstitious men to accompany him on a terrifying cruise to an accursed place? He was so uncertain of the answer that he left it a question.

One notion that persistently annoyed him was that it was going to be a terrible bore. "Bored to death," he said aloud with a grin. "And the question is, Shall I eat all of this delicate viand to-day and so accomplish my lame and impotent conclusion more expeditiously?" He examined the dried fish again with the same wondering interest as before. "I seem to remember that they pound it into a consistency that might pass for a crude imitation of human food. I dare say that with a few hours' labor I can so reduce this." He spoke aloud cheerfully, but he looked upon his sole article of diet with a dull eye.

Naturally he had no intention of sitting on the shingle watching for the grizzly phantom to come riding over the waves. He rolled the remains of the fish carefully in a handkerchief and stowed it away. In the other pocket of his coat was his tobacco-pouch, as lean as Cassius, and a few matches and his pipe. "It was pretty low down to go off with the stuff," said Stuart, as ever aloud. "I notice the superstitious fear of the Vatna Jökull was not so overpowering as to render them insensible to the merits of my tobacco and brandy, and the infinite superiority of canned tomato as compared to dried stock." He put a miserly pinch of tobacco into the pipe and lighted it. "One match gone!" he said with a laugh as he tossed it away.

He rolled his sleeping bag into its smallest possible compass and, with his leather belt fastened over one shoulder and under the other, managed to wear the burden on his back like a knapsack, leaving his hands free. Then he set forward upon the beach, climbing the moraine of the glacier.

"I feel largely defrauded," said Mark Stuart to Mark Stuart. "In all the tales I've read of this sort of thing a man is usually given some sort of show to prove his ingenuity. He is allowed to botanize a bit about edible roots and plants. He is encouraged to weave mattresses of soft fibers and build him a little house of logs and leaves. He is provided with a catchable, tamable goat or pigeon as a companion. He is led on to discover sweet mussels and to catch fish in a net made from the leavings of the mattress. He

contrives to make life thoroughly endurable and placid, and to warm himself in the glow of his own cleverness."

He stood a moment on the arduous ascent and threw back his shoulders with a deep breath. "But given nothing but sand and rock and snow and ice, and I defy a man to weave garments and cook chafing-dish suppers! There's a pretty prospect for a solitary traveler!"

THE prospect in question was the immense expanse of dirty ice that looked like stone, spreading as far as he could see, itself creating hills and valleys among the twisted, blackened, smoking mountains. He needed no lost explorers to assure him that the place was impassable. To toil along the torturous shore and so at least meet Death standing was the most that he could hope for, and even that alternative presented such difficulties that nothing but the stark, staring need of doing something would have made it seem anything but impossible.

Arm after arm of black rock stretched out into the sea, as bare as a brick of any growing thing. He was like a fly without wings stranded in an abandoned stone-quarry, dragging an infinitesimal body from fissure to fissure.

The last puff of the precious pinch of tobacco was blown into the air and he pocketed the pipe. "There's another grievance I'd like to mention," he remarked, "while I am having my say about this enchanted spot. I hate to seem peevish, but really, the hero of a castaway tale is never left alone on his desert island. It's not done. And where, I ask you, is the brave, beautiful girl that is my due under the circumstances? The whole affair has been badly mismanaged. I should have her here clinging to my arm and telling me how strong I am!" And he laughed as he let himself down from ledge to ledge of the wall of the fiord, and when he had reached the shingle beach he picked out two convenient stones for the pounding of the first strip of dried fish—the first of the seven strips.

"Waiter," he said, "bring me a Martini cocktail." And with the brave words a sudden picture of New York rose in his mind.

He leaned against the rock a moment and dreamed of it. Broadway, with the noise and the light and the life and the cafés; Fifth Avenue with the carriages and shops and clubs and pretty women walking in all directions—was there really such a place, and everything in it going on as usual? Or rather was he not asleep there at the Beta Kappa Phi club, merely dreaming of this implacable wilderness that was like the surface of the moon?

There was one phase of the situation that every now and then, during the day and the days following, recurred to his mind to awake an almost passionate satisfaction in there being no one behind him at home to endure heart-breaking agonies of suspense until the tardiest hope was dead. His parents were dead, and with his father's only brother he had had differences of opinion that made the existence of the other in any sphere of little importance to the one. His "chief," as he affectionately termed the venerable Caleb Huntingdon, would worry a while and grieve a while, but even that would come to its timely end, engulfed in the many interests of his direction of the Smithsonian. There were three or four men, he was glad to say, that would refer to his death with emphatic—perhaps even profane—protest, and he hoped one or two of the gentler sex would be sorry not to see him in their world again. But there was no mother, sweetheart, wife or child to be tortured by the silence and uncertainty or to be flung into an abysmal desolation when that uncertainty was over.

No one was going to suffer but himself. And if he could not do a little suffering and keep a stiff underlip, why then he deserved even more than he was getting!

CHAPTER XV

THE COLD HAND OF DEATH

WHAT he began to notice first of the change in him was a physical and mental lassitude. The interest he had sincerely felt, even under the pall of a compulsory companionship with them, in the wild features of the wilderness about him, began to fail. He had progressed at weary labor to the eastward about four fiords; or it might have been five—he could not remember. But he found now that the sixth and seventh arm of the sea afforded him not the slightest pleasurable anticipation, and he was strangely content to sit still.

He felt the cold more keenly, too, as the

pulses of his body fluttered less and less determinedly, and he had frequently to crawl into the sleeping-bag to keep from freezing to death. There he invariably went to sleep—it was almost falling into a swoon, so overpowering was the sudden unconsciousness. At times he became conscious that though he had been talking aloud to himself he could not remember what he had said and had been practically delirious. It gave him a hideous twinge of apprehension.

The dried fish was eaten to the very last shred, and so the barrier between himself and death was down. Snow-water, while one may acquire a taste for it, is not particularly nourishing, nor is it in the least calculated to allay pain in the stomach. And to attack an able-bodied denizen of an animal kingdom when one's fingers loosen their hold weakly on the unresisting stem of an empty pipe without any volition on the part of the holder is what might easily be termed cowardly suicide.

To keep track of the days when one is half the time stumbling over the snow in a delirious fever and half the time falling into a stupor of sleep is out of the question, even in a land where the sun keeps more or less respectable hours. But here where the chariot of Phœbus was bowling along at nearly midnight it was quite impossible. Besides it made no particle of difference. Whether he died at high noon of a Sunday or in the middle of a Wednesday night, he would be dead and his grave-stone would be under him, not over him, and would never bear a date.

As the days went by, the desire to keep on the heights of the coast became a mania. He could not contemplate the lower beach without a repugnance that amounted to nausea. To lie down there dead like a rat in a hole seemed far worse than to die on the summit of the great cliffs with the icy wind sweeping free across his face.

AND so did this frenzy grow in importance that on a certain day, when his knees showed a decided tendency to fold like a carpenter's rule, he sat down on the peak of a miniature peninsula and wondered how it was going to seem to die there. Behind him lay the accursed wilderness of ice and stone whose chilling breath swept past him like a storm of death. Before him lay the implacable sea.

The waves curled and crashed at his feet and he watched them with a dull interest. He had a feeling of being dead already. Surely his body was cold and stiff and helpless enough to suggest it, and if the divorce of life and body was to be so gradual, who could say just when the final schism came? He felt certain that if some one were to come now to where he lay, half propped up in a sitting posture against a shoulder of rough, black rock, and were to look down at him and comment upon his being dead, he would be in no wise capable of contradiction. They might even pick him up and carry him to the Bursting Sands and fling him in. And he could be not a whit more dead in such a grave than here with the wind of the Vatna sweeping icily across his face.

His eyes closed drowsily. The look of emaciation on his face was enhanced by the dropping of the lids. Eloquent of that absolute fatigue for which there is no rest but death, his white, half-frozen flesh seemed but a thin veil spread upon the cold, bony structure of the wornout frame. His half comprehended effort to get into his sleeping-bag had been unsuccessful, and it lay partly under him with its edge hanging over the cliff, the white binding of the flap waving a ghoulish farewell in the wind of the Vatna Jökull.

All of the hundred threads that bound him to the earth were cut asunder, except one frail filament that Atropos seemed disposed to watch a bit longer as it spun out like the gossamer silk of a spider's weaving, until perhaps it fell apart of its own wasting weight. The heart that fluttered its three feeble beats to the second could hardly have been felt by a hand on his breast. And the breath that he drew so painfully seemed not to reach his throat indeed before it was as painfully and hurriedly expelled. It made a sound as of the filing of a bar of iron, a determined rapid sound as if there were grave need of haste. When the last stroke of the file sounded and the bar fell apart, how very silent everything would be! Only the sound made by the glacier in the sunlight, the whistle of the wind, and the lonely cry of the eiders would break that silence, and yet leave it ever unbroken.

Once again the lids of his eyes fluttered open. The sun was just coming up over

the ocean again and bringing with it his last look at the sky. From where he sat he could see the waters of the great fiord and the vista of the greater waters yet beyond. That the last word to heave itself upward from the confusion of his brain should be the name of Nora was no more surprising than that the last vision of his haunted eyes should be the white hull of the *Blessed Damozel* riding at anchor in the bay. He was gone past all surprise and idle wondering. His eyes looked at the place where he thought he saw this phantom ship, where he imagined a small boat putting off from her side, and then they closed again wearily. The edge of the sleeping-bag flapped in the cold wind from the Vatna.

CHAPTER XVI

ON BOARD THE YACHT

IN THE cabin of the *Blessed Damozel*, where for two days of storm the party had been confined, Mr. Lee and Dr. Berwind were sitting at table, and their faces were very grave. Mr. Lee, with his thin white hands nervously clasped one about the other, his elbows on the table, sat frowning down at them as if his whole displeasure were centered in his inability to control their twitching and trembling. Berwind, with a cigar, sat in silence.

The northeast hurricane, which for the last two days had pounded them, was by this time subsiding to a moderate gale. The seas, however, still ran almost mast-high. The ship's nose plunged with dizzying monotony up and down. Every now and then on the downward pitch of the stem, the humming thrill of the exposed screws ran through the yacht's steel hull. The piping of the wind, the thud of the waves, the infinite rattle of the vessel's whole tortured frame combined in a bedlam of noise, against which Mr. Lee's voice rose in a shrill shout:

"But all the boats gone, Berwind, all the boats, you say? What disgraceful management!"

Berwind looked at him. For the first time Mr. Lee noticed something odd in the expression of the other's face. "What is it, Berwind? What are you keeping from me?" he asked sharply.

Berwind leaned forward. For a moment, as the vessel's shoulders plunged into a wall of sea, the cabin's portholes were darkened with a sweeping veil of green.

"Healy is coming below as soon as he can be spared, sir," he said, "to report the business to you. Captain Cramer is missing."

The sick man's face was chalky white. "Gone!" he gasped.

"Lost," replied Berwind gravely. "Captain Healy is coming down to give you the story in detail. I am very sorry that we have such news to give you."

"My God!"murmured Mr. Lee. "Cramer —lost—gone!"

In the rattle of the vessel under the violent impact of the seas, Berwind could not hear the words. But he saw the lips move and the blanched expression settle on the face. Death had a piercing horror for this man. "You must not be too cast down, Mr. Lee," he said, raising his voice. "It was a fearful storm and we are lucky to have come out of it alive ourselves. Remember, Mr. Lee, the yacht is safe, the naphtha launch at the stern is unharmed and we are all here at least. Poor Cramer is lost, but luckily we have another man qualified and ready to step into his place. Take heart, sir—remember how infinitely worse it might have been."

Mr. Lee, seemingly unmoved by this laborious consolation, twisted his ear in his hand and continued to form words with his lips whose sound did not reach the Doctor. Berwind's expression changed to a less resolute braveness as he said sadly: "Of course you had to be told, sir, but I wish with all my heart we could keep this from Miss Nora. She will grieve over it deeply. You remember when Anderson died in Reykjavik how poignantly she felt the pity of his end, in a strange land so far from all his kin."

As he finished speaking, Captain Healy appeared in the doorway. He was dressed in oilers, whose glistening yellow wetness seemed to match the bloodless leather of his pock-marked face. He saluted respectfully. Again the racing seas darkened the ports to a green twilight, and the screws, flung high out of the water, throbbed throughout the bones of the ship.

"This is an unfortunate business, Mr. Lee," said Captain Healy solemnly.

Mr. Lee glared at him, then struck the table with a nervous gesture.

Healy moved forward into the cabin,

where he stood steadying himself by one of the leather chairs.

"I hev to report to you, sir, that this morning at the first change o' watch, Cap'n Cramer was swep' overboard and lost," he said. "Cap'n Cramer hed hed the graveyard watch, 'n' I was to relieve him. Cap'n Cramer come down the ladder from the bridge, hangin' on fur dear life. Them waves was goin' past like fire-engines 'n' landin' on our deck like a dump o' bricks each time. I got up on the bridge, fightin' all the way, 'n' then a sea come, *bif, bang!* I was thrown agin the railing o' the bridge. Down below me there warn't no deck, jes' a sluice o' green foam, 'n' the yacht goin' on down 'n' down. W'en she come up agin, sir, Cap'n Cramer he was gone."

Mr. Lee shuddered and moved again in his chair. His eyes were fixed upon his nervously clasped hands. Berwind, knowing his patient's aversion to the contemplation of death, took the story beyond that point. "Who was on deck besides yourself, Mr. Healy?"

"First quartermaster, Svenson, at the wheel, sir. Forward watch had jest gone aloft to the crow's-nest. Stern watch saved himself by gittin' jammed agin the rail."

"Did any of those men see the accident?"

"No, sir."

"Well, well, what then?" asked Mr. Lee, his voice at the breaking point of nervousness. "Could any attempt at rescue be made?"

The Captain's long sheeplike face was turned to his employer with a tolerant superiority. "What could be done, sir? We hed no boats left 'n' couldn't 'a' launched one if we hed. 'N' a man hed as much chance as a kitten to swim in sech a sea."

There was no denying the saneness of that. Yet Berwind continued to look at the man in silence. The story was straight enough. It was the accident likely of all others to have happened under such conditions. Why should he, Berwind, a man trained to deal with exact and undeniable truths, in the face of this plausible, most probable tale, be assailed with the conviction that the man was lying? Why should he feel sure, against all testimony and likelihood, that Cramer's life had been forfeited through the treachery, active or passive, of this man?

MR. LEE moved again in his chair and looked up. "We must attend to his family, Berwind, when we return. Make a note of a pension for the wife, will you, Berwind?"

Berwind brightened, as he did invariably when his patient showed himself to this advantage, thoughtful of others, generous and courteous. "I will indeed attend to it with pleasure," he said.

After Captain Healy had left them, Mr. Lee turned almost fiercely upon the Doctor. He had taken out his watch and now snapped the lid open and shut as he spoke. "I tell you, Berwind, I am getting sick of this!" he said fiercely. "What is the use of cruising along this coast trying to get ourselves killed? I think it's high time we went back to New York, don't you? I'm sick of this!" he repeated fretfully.

Dr. Berwind regarded his patient almost wistfully. "I am sorry to hear you say that, Mr. Lee. You know when I asked you if you would be willing to cruise up this way, I told you about the wonderful air—more ozone to the square inch than you can find anywhere else. And you offered to help me by giving it a fair trial."

"A pig in a poke, Berwind! How did I know it was going to be like this? We are hoodooed with ill luck, that's what we are!"

Berwind laughed shortly. "Perhaps it would be better to throw that silver bell overboard. It may be our Jonah." He knew by the very snap of the watchcase that another nervous change was on the way. Nor did he have long to wait for it.

Mr. Lee suddenly sat up, clearing his throat. "I say, Berwind, it wants half an hour to the time for my medicine," he said hurriedly, "but I am not feeling quite myself to-day. This business about Cramer has upset me. I wish you would get it for me now."

Dr. Berwind took a deep breath. He turned at the first word, one steadying hand against the wall, regarding his patient fixedly. But now his eyes were on the toes of his boots, and one hand was rammed stiffly down into his pocket. "I am sorry, Mr. Lee," he said painfully; "I can not agree to do that as your physician."

"The half-hour makes no difference!" said the other, in a voice that had begun to shake. "I mean, to you! I promise not to ask again."

Berwind shook his head slowly. A look

of genuine distress had come into his face. "I really can not," he said.

"Just this once, Berwind! Just this once? You can see that I am not myself. I promise never to ask again. It is only a half-hour. But I can't wait! I can't wait!" To Berwind's horror, he came toward him, his hands outstretched and tears in his eyes. "Just this once!" he pleaded again, his voice becoming almost maudlin.

The Doctor put a firm hand on his shoulder as the two swayed face to face. "Nonsense, Mr. Lee!" he said sharply. "It would be simply to undo all that we have done at so much pain and patience. For heaven's sake, Mr. Lee," he went on miserably, "think of your daughter! Think how we are fighting for your future for her sake! And give me a little help. I will not jeopardize your advancement by yielding one tick of the clock!"

His suppliant remained silent before him, balancing himself with difficulty on the see-sawing floor, while the Doctor waited, half expecting the old violent irritability to succeed this miserable weakness. But in a moment or two more Mr. Lee turned away and went to his own stateroom with the shambling step of a feeble-minded old man. Berwind watched him to the last, but he never turned or changed in any way. As the door of his stateroom closed upon him, the Doctor put his hands to his forehead like a man in pain.

"And I believed I was succeeding!" he said bitterly. "I hoped—like a fool—that he was getting well!" He sat down heavily on the cushioned seat that ran along the walls, and leaned forward, his elbows on his knees and his eyes on the ground.

CHAPTER XVII

NORA SUGGESTS

IT WAS in this position of dejection that Nora found him a few minutes later, but as she hesitated in the doorway he became aware of her presence and rose. As his eyes lifted to her own, the smile that so transformed his ugliness came slowly to his rescue. "It is rather tiresome business, this being shut up below hatches, isn't it?" he said. "But I think we may get out to-morrow surely."

The girl came to him, her eyes intent upon him. "You were not thinking of just that when I came in," she said. "Oh, I am sure you were not! And, Dr. Berwind, you must grant me the right to know the truth about everything. Are you hiding anything from me about my father? Are you telling me the truth when you say he is getting better?"

Her hands fairly twisted together as she asked him her fervid questions. The eyes of her were alight with anxiety. "I have wanted to ask you this so often of late. And yet I was such a coward that I could not bear to. But just now, seeing you like that, it came to me that I must know, that I have no right to be in ignorance. Because, if I knew, I might help him. And I must help him, if I can, Doctor! You know that."

"WHY have you had this on your mind of late?" he asked her. As he stood before her he was conscious of little but an insane desire to put his arms about her—she was so very beloved and in such deep distress.

"Because—it hurts me to the heart to admit it, but I must face it bravely now while I can—because I have seen a change in him. He is more irritable, more irrational." Her face lifted in a wistfulness. "But invalids—convalescents—are often like that, aren't they?"

Again he forced himself to smile at her. "It is true that we are not getting along as fast as I could wish, Miss Nora," he admitted. "The trouble is that there is nothing to amuse him—to take him out of himself, as the phrase is. Yet he seems to dislike having people about and I don't want to take him to any gay place that will excite him and wear him out. I so firmly believe he will get well here in this climate if we can only keep him contented. If there were only something that would interest him! You know I thought last week he was going to take an interest in our amateur geology, but you saw yourself how that petered out. He watched the first little blast we made and after that it bored him. There's all that dynamite and giant powder that I brought along going to waste." He smiled whimsically.

"If we could only find another silver bell, now," he said after a pause. "You remember how he waked up over that? I verily believe the interest he took in de-

ciphering those Gothic inscriptions did him more good than all my care has done for him in months. But then the disappointment at the end of the labor, the impossibility of following out the instructions and going treasure-hunting, set him back again. And what with that and the incarceration of these last few days, he is bored to death and insists that he wants to go back to New York at once."

"That would be very bad for him?" Her upturned face had seemed to mirror his every word.

"Nothing could be worse," said Berwind.

Her eyes wandered from his and lingered on the silver bell. And then she turned and walked the width of the cabin away from him. He almost smiled to see how seamanlike was her gracefulness in accommodating her step to the harsh pitching of the ship.

When at last she turned and came back to him she had a new color in her cheeks. "You will think this a very silly suggestion, I am sure," she said. And he thought it was in anticipation of his amusement that she flushed. "But since you do think it important father should stay up here, and since there is nothing in this direction to interest him, why don't we——" she broke off with a little nervous laugh. "You will think that I am an idiot!" she said.

"Do go on," said Berwind, watching her.

"Well, he was so interested in the bell, as you say. And he did seem so like his old self. Do you think, Dr. Berwind, that I can see flashes of that old self, which was so fine and so dear to me, and not catch at every impossible suggestion of a way to keep it always with him?"

"But go on!" said Berwind again.

"Then why not put about and go to the Vatna ourselves? After all, we only gave up the idea because—because Mr. Stuart said the place was changed. I think I would vastly rather see the 'accursed place' as it is now, turning slowly to solid ice, than when it was blooming like any Westchester farm. And it might interest father, might it not? He could study over the silver bell some more and, perhaps, when we get there we could stay a week or so and egg him on to hunt for the place where they buried the treasure. It would keep him out in the air and exercising." She hesitated a moment, and her color was not fading in the least. "Do you think it a very stupid idea? Surely it would be better than this?"

Berwind took her hand unexpectedly and shook it manfully. "I think it is a capital notion!" he said. "As you say, it is certainly more sensible than boring him to death. Shall I suggest it to him? Or will you?"

She turned away a little again. "Oh, I would rather you spoke to him about it," she said.

"It is a capital notion," repeated Berwind, pulling out his watch. "I will talk with him about it now. He is in his cabin and it wants just ten minutes to the hour for his medicine." He made his way, lurching, to the door as he was speaking. But there he turned back with his wonderful smile. "Another pleasing part of it is that Stuart went on to the Vatna and though I don't know just how much chance of it there is, we might encounter him. I don't know where I've met a man I liked so well as Stuart."

"Really?" said Nora Lee indifferently. But her unusual color was even a trifle higher and she remained standing with her back turned to him, intently examining the surface of the bell.

TO BE CONTINUED

WHEN THE RAIN WAS RED

by Captain Fritz Duquesne

NO ROMAN ruler was ever more capable of a mighty *coup d'état* than Lobengula, King of the Matabele, the warrior nation which inhabits a piece of territory situated in central South Africa. It is bounded on the north by the Congo and sleeping sickness, on the south by the Transvaal and British oppression, on the east by Mozambique and black-water fever, on the west by the Portuguese and the "curse of hell."

The only present infliction on Matabeleland, notwithstanding its evil surroundings, is the name of Rhodesia, which the master exporter of both black and white alike, Cecil Rhodes, with monumental modesty, has called after himself. The capital of Matabeleland this same self-glorified hero endeavored to have changed to Ceciltown, with all the vanity of a boastful boy who cuts his name into every soft piece of timber in the woods. Luckily the true name remained, with its historic significance, and it is to-day Bulawayo. It was then, at the time when the rain was red, Gubulawayo—"The place of him that they wanted to kill," the "him" in the name meaning Lobengula.

Unfortunately for Lobengula, there was no written language, and no Homer among the Matabeles to record his many epic deeds, one of which I here place on paper while many of the witnesses of the great drama of the jungle have still its tableaux visual in their memories.

There were not a great many of us in Matabeleland at the time. Not more than a hundred Boer families and a few English hunters, who, like the Boers, were after the elephants that abounded in that country. All with the exception of the Englishmen had their families with them, which is the Boer habit in hunting.

We had trekked from Potchefstroon, picking up different members of the party as we

went north, and we crossed the Limpopo River with a fine equipment of wagons and oxen as well as a supply of mealies and other food. We also carried the latest arms and ammunition, which included a number of four-bore elephant-guns and light breech-loading, long-range Remingtons, and also a supply of trade guns for the King, whose permission we had to buy to hunt elephants in the territory under his control. We drove with us a large flock of sheep and goats and a herd of cattle owned in about equal shares by the members of the trek.

Every necessity to start a settlement, should it be found advisable, is taken on a Boer hunt even into the heart of the wildest jungle. Children are born, families grow up, getting their schooling from the women, who teach them to read and write, generally using the Bible as a text-book. Anything is likely to happen before one of these treks returns again to the soft life of civilization. Some terrible disease might come along and wipe every one out, or a bloody fight with the natives might result in annihilation.

As we wanted to hunt through the full season from May to December, we sent a runner ahead to save time. To our surprise Lobengula refused to give us permission; the runner we sent returned, saying that the King would not answer and had threatened him with an assegai. I knew that something must be wrong, for the King was generally courteous. Fearing danger, we laagered our wagons and loaded every weapon for instant use. All the livestock was put inside the square of wagons, and I then set out for the royal *kraal* to see what was the matter.

On my arrival at Bulawayo I was taken before the King, who advanced from his circle of royal huts to receive me. He was a magnificent specimen of black manhood, five feet eleven in height, with muscles so conspicuous under his glistening skin that they suggested the work of a master sculptor. His proportions were perfect as he stood nude before me, looking what he was, the mighty ruler of a barbarous people. Behind him stretched his town of thousands of huts, yellow under the glare of the mid-day sun.

HE SPOKE first. A smile of recognition drove the sadness from his face. "White hunter," he said, "at first I would not see you; now I am pleased you have come." He turned and roughly ordered the body of chiefs that were standing at a respectful distance from him to fall back out of hearing, waiting until they were far enough away before he again addressed me.

"White hunter, I do not want you to go to the hunting veld, for war is likely to come and my friends must not be endangered."

"What! War? With whom?"

"With my own blood, for I know that some of my best warriors are sharpening their spears in their huts. I have heard mumblings that the son of M'Silicatse, my father who founded this nation, is not of pure blood. They say that my mother was tainted with Swazi blood. White hunter, when a man has the wisdom to found a nation, the courage to take them to a fair land, and the generalship to win their wars, should he not, O white hunter, have a right to pick the woman, be her blood even a slave's, who is to mother his heirs? White hunter, you have the wisdom of many lands beyond the sunrise and sunset; answer me."

"He has the right."

"White hunter, I have proven that I am entitled to inherit my father's greatness, for I am the unbeaten warrior of many battles. I am just and uncruel; I love my people and I have sat in sadness in the darkness of my hut, yet some are against me."

"Why do you not fall upon your enemies and destroy them?"

"White hunter, I would then be destroying the worthiest men of my nation and its bravest warriors. Should I destroy them the snake in the breasts of the Rainmakers would still live."

"Ah!" I said. "The priesthood is against you?"

"Not against me, white hunter, but for another who is a suckling in their hands, which is worse. They are breathing sedition into the hearts of the people; sedition, which if not stopped, must end in the victory of made thoughts over thinking thoughts, and the Matabele then must become slaves.

"White hunter, I know in my heart that your people have more wisdom than even the Rainmakers. With my people their religion is the breath of their hearts, it is their life; when they speak, it speaks; when they think, it thinks; when they fight, it fights; and behind it all is the brain of the Rainmakers, directing without a voice, commanding in silence. Your people carry

their religion in a leather fold, which is opened only when you have no one to war on and no one to cheat in trade. You pray for mercy, but give it not; you pray for truth, but speak it not. Your God is falsity, and yet some spirit has given you the power to devise all the wonderful things that have come into our land, which we want more than slaves. White hunter, what would a white king do? What is in the leather fold that is carried by the masters of the heavens' wonders?"

I could see it all—it was the same old struggle of Church and State that was going on then all through the white men's lands as it is now. I opened my Bible and read "an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth."

"But, white hunter," said the King, "they have not yet taken either an eye or a tooth."

"No," said I, "but you think they are going to take them, and our Bible says nothing about waiting till they do, and then, if you get the other's eye first he is fighting at a disadvantage."

"White hunter, great is the wisdom of your leather fold. You may not hunt until I give you notice, for to-morrow there might be a new king, and the Rainmakers hate you, would destroy you, and bring by their folly the white warriors of the south [Boers] with their terrible guns to tear us to shreds. Keep your women and friends on the frontier and soon you shall know who rules the Matabele, Lobengula or the Rainmakers!"

IT HAPPENED that there had been an unusually long drought in Matabeleland. Such droughts always brought great suffering and loss of cattle, the wealth of the Matabele. The cattle had already been moved to Amachee Maschopay, a good grass country which they ate clean to the ground in a few weeks. There was no sign of rain, not a cloud broke the azure monotony of the sky, and the sun, glaring like the mouth of a furnace, poured its dancing rays on the earth and burned it to its heart. The scanty grass powdered under foot, and the ground, hard and cracked, sounded back the tread with the hollowness of a warrior's shield. The hot silence was broken only by the supplications and prayers of the Rainmakers, who made medicine on the tops of the kopjes.

Lobengula called the *indunas* (headmen) to him. From every *kraal* in the land they came. The King knew that among them he had many enemies who were under the influence of the Rainmakers. A war-drum called them to attention around the mighty Lobengula, the *indunas* stood listening to his words.

"Indunas," he cried, in a voice of smooth thunder, "the land is hungry and athirst. The Rainmakers, who commune with the powers of night and day and the changing heavens, who have always lived on the favors of our land, have not given us anything but promises, which will not fill the bellies of our cattle. The earth is as dull as a sick eye; they alone can make the medicine that will brighten it. If they can not, they are not true Rainmakers, and those who impose on my beloved people suffer death! Shall we call the Rainmakers?"

"Thou shalt, O King! Thy words shall be our wisdom! Call upon the Rainmakers!" the *indunas* responded, crouching low before the King, who physically and mentally towered over them.

"Your will is law!" thundered the King. "Let the Rainmakers come before me!"

The Rainmakers appeared before the King and were told that they had to make the rain fall, and that, if they could not, they were impostors and knew that the penalty for such a crime in the kingdom of Lobengula was death.

The Rainmakers were very crafty and masters of involved equivocation. Their statements, for ambiguity, would have done credit to the Delphian oracle. What they really meant was impossible to know even on the closest analysis. They would promise that rain would fall at a certain time; if it did not they would show that it was the fault of the people who had no faith in them.

There was a ring in the voice of the King that they knew meant evil; they seemed to feel that he knew they opposed him and that this was the opening of hostilities. Gathering in a bunch, they discussed every loophole possible. At last, bowing before Lobengula, they demanded that a full-grown male lion, without a wound or injury of any kind, be brought to them. Once in possession of this lion, they promised, they could make medicine that would without fail bring rain.

By the laws of the nation the Rainmakers could demand almost anything of which to make their medicine. As a result they had collected a considerable amount of the nation's wealth. Now they demanded the

impossible—an unwounded, full-grown male lion to be delivered to them alive! The killing of a lion is child's play compared with his capture unhurt.

But Lobengula could not well refuse their demand. He called the Insukamena, a regiment of young warriors whose name signified "always ready," to the royal *kraal*. These young warriors were a boastful lot of hot-blooded dandies always clamoring for war with the whites and believing themselves invincible.

When they arrived before the King he received them with grand ceremony. The young warriors spread their shoulders with pride, and a cry of approval passed over the admiring onlookers. The King's hand rose in a token of silence and, when all was still, he said in a smooth, deep voice:

"Invincible Insukamena, we have at last found a deed worthy of your prowess. Your dauntless courage can save the country from its worst enemy. Are you ready?"

"We are, O King!"

"Then we shall confer upon you the honor of obtaining the medicine for the Rainmakers, who will then save the land from burning up."

"They shall have a white man's heart!" cried the *induna* of the Insukamena.

"Not that is wanted," said the King. "The Rainmakers must have a full-grown, live, male lion, unhurt and unscratched. Go to the Samabula forest and bring back our need!"

This command took the enthusiasm out of the "Invincibles," and the King, who hated pretense, showed his glistening teeth in a smile. There was nothing for the young warriors to do but thank their ruler and depart on the commission.

Many *endabas* (councils) were held and every possible scheme by which the capture could be made without the destruction of half their number was suggested. Baits and traps were orally devised by the score, but to no avail, for the Matabele knew nothing of capturing live game.

At last the chief was struck by a brilliant idea. "We will capture the lion," he cried, "without the slightest danger to one of us!"

He then put his plan before them, and they cried in admiration: "You are a great *induna*, worthy chief of the invincible Insukamena!" They took their shields and assegais, and with joyful hearts went to carry out the royal command.

ON THE fringe of the Samabula forest were the *kraals* of many Mashonas, an enslaved and tributary people. The killing of a few thousand or of all of them was of no importance economically or politically to the Matabele, and was looked on as a suitable amusement for male children. So one night when a white moon lit the earth, the Insukamena, bedecked in their flowing ostrich-feather war-dress, emerged in silence from their *kraal* and sped like ghosts through the rock-topped kopjes that silhouetted like castle battlements against the silver sky. When morning came the Mashonas were horrified to see surrounding their *kraal* a wall of beplumed and savage-looking Matabeles, whose name alone filled their peaceful hearts with terror.

"More taxes?" cried an old chief. "Will they never cease?"

"More taxes," answered the chief of the Insukamena, "but Death will be collector. We are here to kill you."

"Yes! Here to kill you!" echoed the warriors, raising the cruel assegais that glistened blindly in the early sunlight.

Cries of wo rose in the *kraal*, men rushed hither and thither in frantic alarm, and the women threw their trembling bodies over their children to protect them in a last despairing effort from the blades of the Matabele.

"O chief," cried the withered old headman of the *kraal*, "finish us quickly so that our suffering shall be short!"

"Poor filth that you are," answered the chief, "our proud blades were made for warriors, not cringing slaves! The iron tongues of the Insukamena disdain to taste your blood!"

"We are as brave as any, but unskilled in arms," cried the old man. "We are lovers of cattle, not of conquest. Loving the arts of peace, we neglected those of war, and fell before the flying iron of the Matabele."

"Slave! Boastful slave!" cried the young chief. "We shall put your courage to the test. We shall show you mercy if you make good your boast. You are as brave as any, you say; then do what such men as the Insukamena do as children; catch a full-grown, living lion unscratched and unhurt, and deliver him into our hands! If you fail, we will slaughter you to a man; if you succeed, you shall be spared."

A cry of relief passed over the prostrate

forms of the slaves who were resigned to their expected fate. The women screeched maniacally and embraced one child after another in frenzy, and the men stepped forward and offered to capture the lion.

The morning was spent making nets and preparing various makeshift implements for the capture as they suggested themselves, for catching lions was as foreign to the Mashona as it was to the Matabele. By midday everything was prepared and a thousand hunters set off, followed by the Insukamena in military file. The avowed mission of the latter was to give moral strength to the slaves and see that they kept their promise, for on the success of the expedition depended their own reputation.

There were many lions' dens in the country, and the lions were exceptionally large and strong, as there were plenty of Mashona cattle in the country for them to prey upon. It was not long before the hunters came to a den which was situated in such a place as one would expect it, amongst huge boulders on the sides of a barren hill. The den was so placed that by going to the top of the hill it was possible to get a clear view, almost a bird's-eye view of its interior.

About a quarter of a mile from the den the hunters stopped and held a consultation in which it was decided to make a huge living circle around the lions' lair and draw it in until the animals were within reaching distance. A powerfully built young Mashona, who was proud of his strength and courage, crept up to the den to make sure that their quarry was there. Every eye watched him advance unarmed right into the rocks. A moment later there was a mighty roar and then all was still. After waiting some time and seeing that the youth who entered the den did not return it was decided that he must have been killed and that there was at least one lion in the den.

By this time the circle was complete, the unarmed Mashona on the inside and the armed Matabele warriors on the outside. At a signal from one of the headmen the advance was begun at a jog-trot until the line was within a hundred yards of the den. To get a good view of the capture I took up a position on the hill over the lair. The circle of Mashonas became thicker as it got smaller, thus making a curtain of living beings between danger and the "invincible" Matebeles, whose belief in their own powers was not strong enough for them to risk losing their right to the flattering appellation by coming into personal contact with a lion.

Two half-grown cubs, scenting strange life in the vicinity of their home, came out and examined the ring of hunters with bewildered curiosity. They had evidently been feeding on the body of the young Mashona who had entered the den, for their muzzles and paws were red. They must have returned to their parents with a message of alarm, for a moment later a huge lion and his mate, both with gory mouths, stood with twitching tails in full view among the rocks.

A HEAVY growl and the beasts started off in the opposite direction, followed by the cubs, only to meet the solid mass of Mashonas who confronted them on all sides. Slowly the hunters closed in, the strong and courageous men in front, all making mighty efforts to overcome their trembling fear. The lions knew they were at bay. The cubs crouched in fright behind the rocks as the lion and his mate crept uneasily from place to place, their tails whipping the air and their faces grimacing in anger.

An additional surprise awaited the unhappy Mashona. They were about to make a desperate rush when another lion and two lionesses emerged from the mouth of the cave.

With a terrific growl the male bounded over the rocks like a springbok, followed by the females. They fell back when they saw their human enemies had cut off all possibility of retreat. All the enraged beasts set up a thunderous roaring, running nervously around the boulders but never taking their eyes off the hunters. The scene called up pictures of the Roman arena.

An old Mashona, seeing such a formidable array of the terrible animals before them, cried out in a trembling voice. "Why attack these? Let us go to another den where we can get one alone."

"Let us allow all but one of these to escape and throw all our effort against him," cried another.

"Yes, let us fall back! Let us fall back!" chorused the others, as they made an effort to retire, turning from the terror before them to face a worse one, for there was the wall of long, leveled spears, pointing at the hearts of the outer circle! As an example of what they could expect if their courage

failed them, the chief of the Insukamena buried his broad assegai in the heart of a Mashona youth and then hurled the quivering body into the midst of his people.

Seeing that there was no escape, the hunters prepared for the struggle. The armed warriors closed in on them, forcing them to advance. The lions roared in chorus, singing, it seemed, a terrible song of war. The warriors beat their shields in impatience, making the sound of three thousand drums, and the Mashonas set up a howl as much to relieve their own fear as to scare the fight out of the lions. The din was frightful.

With a cry of despair a Mashona youth ran and threw himself, in sacrifice, as it were, among the lions, seizing the tangled mane of the largest with his teeth and hands. For a moment there was a desperate struggle; then the brave fellow fell bleeding to the earth, struck dead by a blow of the mighty beast's paw. The lion roared and stood with his forefeet on the body of his victim. The cubs, not knowing exactly what to make of the unusual commotion, crept up and licked the wounds of the dead man.

"Advance or we'll kill you all!" cried the chief warrior as his troops closed in. With a wild cry the terrified wretches rushed upon the five full-grown lions. For a moment the brutes crouched in fear, and then, realizing their predicament, they turned on the hunters in bloodthirsty fury, frightful in its might. As a cat would crush a sparrow the lions crushed one miserable Mashona after another while wild screeches of pain and despair filled the air. It was a bite and the blow of a paw and the victim fell unconscious or dead. Bleeding and broken, they trembled in heaps as the spears behind them kept urging them on.

The lions, seeing with what ease they were killing their enemies, commenced to enjoy the fight. Even the cubs joined in grabbing an already dying man by the throat and finishing him. The boulders were splashed with red and the lions looked as though they had been painted, the hair of their manes sticking and clogging against their skins. The fight went madly on, neither beasts nor humans being able to retain a foothold on the slippery rocks. So quickly did the hunters fall that the den was soon floored with dead.

At last, overcome by exhaustion, a lion retreated up the rocks where a powerful young man had climbed with a noose. Before he was aware of his danger the lion was on him. He turned and seized it by the throat in a fierce struggle for life. Both man and beast fell to a rocky ledge below, the lion beneath and badly hurt, for it lay still and quivering. The young man was no sooner on his feet to defend himself than a spear flew from the hands of one of the Insukamena above him and pierced his back. He died beside the lion and a cry went up from the warriors: "Alive! Alive! They must be alive and unhurt!" For they feared that the Mashona would kill the beasts.

A dozen young men held a hurried consultation and a moment later rushed as one on the remaining lion, who was thrown off his feet. He rose and closed his jaws on the shoulder of a man who had succeeded in placing a noose around his neck. It was the poor fellow's last act. Five of the men seized the beast by the mane; half exhausted as he was, he shook them off with difficulty, but not before a noose was placed on his back feet. This was drawn tight and he fell. Before he recovered himself another loop settled over his front feet. He roared and struggled in vain. Half a dozen men at the ends of the ropes, drawing them taut, placed the red monster at the mercy of the hunters.

Five minutes later he was bound to a stout pole, and a cry of triumph rose above the groans of the maimed and the wails of those who had lost friend or relative. The Insukamena, seeing that danger was past and that the great act was accomplished, rushed in and stabbed the lionesses and the cubs to death amid cries of admiration from their comrades. With many chants of self-praise the "invincibles" had the captured lion carried to their *kraal* on the Gwelo River, where it was washed clean of the stains of the combat.

THE pleasure of the King was unbounded when a messenger arrived with the news that a lion had been captured. He ordered a great rejoicing and a gala reception for the Insukamena, and all the villages were signaled that the Rainmakers and the warriors were to gather at the royal *kraal* and receive the medicine, the uninjured full-grown lion that the priests had demanded to break the drought.

Suddenly a breeze came up bringing with

it the smoke of forest fires from the north on one of the higher strata of the air, placing, it seemed, a veil of gold over a sun that shone like incandescent copper. On the smoke-burdened breeze came also the drumming of warriors' shields and the wailing song of the Matabele, who, in answer to the King's signal, were marching in from all directions to the royal *kraal*. As each new column arrived a song of war and praise rose from those who had already gathered.

All seemed to be in high spirits, for was not the drought to be broken, now that the uninjured lion was to be delivered to the priests who made the rain? The Rainmakers themselves did not betray any facial evidences of the anticipatory happiness of the populace. "Rain! Rain! Rain!" was cried on every side, and every time the word was uttered the scowl on the faces of the Rainmakers grew deeper.

It was a barbarously gorgeous spectacle, this gathering of the Matabele. Warriors whose towering ostrich-plumed head-dresses danced in the wind like a storm-tossed forest stood in a huge soldierly circle around the *kraal*, each with his red and white ox-hide shield beside him and his polished spear in his hand. At their elbows and knees hung tassels of silky hair, while on their shoulders, like a lion's mane, rested an ostrich-feather cape. From their waists hung leopard, lion and monkey tails in a profusion of dull but contrasting color. The chiefs who stood at the head of their regiments used leopard-skin decorations and wore a strip of otter skin which supported gracefully curved crane-feathers tied around their heads above the eyes. They stood at attention, big, muscular, ideal warriors, conscious of their physical grandeur, under the admiring eyes of the non-fighting part of the race.

From the outside of the *kraal* rose the cry, "The Insukamena! The Insukamena! They come, our preservers, they come!"

Inside the *kraal* the cry was taken up, running from mouth to mouth with the roar of a torrent. The Insukamena entered the *kraal* and their ranks opened, revealing half a dozen slaves carrying a pole to which was bound the lion. At a signal the circle of warriors with a cadenced cry of welcome raised their shields and beat them with the butts of their spears, making the noise of rolling thunder. With bent shoulders and worried faces the Rainmakers looked on the lion and then at the big red sun that glared mercilessly through the smoke-yellowed air. One by one they took their charms and fetishes and slipped to a secluded part of the *kraal*, where they held a hurried council.

The captured lion was placed in the great human circle lined with a cordon of warriors six deep. Suddenly, through the gaps that separated each two companies of warriors, broke a host of young and graceful girls, unclad but for the strips of brilliantly colored calicos that hung half to the knees from a cord that caught them at the hips. As they formed a ring around the helpless lion the warriors set up a low musical chant, bringing their right feet down in a measured beat on the ground. Round and round the lion in wild abandon the nymph-like maidens danced in an ecstasy of physical delight, showing their white teeth in smiles, swinging their arms, and throwing their lithe bodies backward and forward in graceful contortions.

All at once the girls left as quickly as they had come and their places were taken by warriors who gave their war-dance and the song of their exploits in battle, thrusting their spears down every time they spoke of an enemy's death, to which the surrounding braves cried of one accord, "*Jee!*" As a warrior became fatigued his place was taken by another, and so the dance went on for an hour.

A signal stopped the dance, and the King, dressed in beautiful ostrich feathers and monkey skins, majestic and powerful, danced into the center of the circle. In his hand he held an assegai which he hurled toward the lion. As he did so the warriors struck their shields with their assegais and rushed forward, retiring when he recovered his weapon. He then regarded his warriors with the proud eye of ownership, throwing a challenge into the eyes of warrior, chief and Rainmaker at a glance.

"Fellow Matabele! Warrior Matabele, hear me!" he cried in a thunderous but clear voice. "You are here to feast, for the Rainmakers shall make rain; the rivers shall run; the grass shall grow and the land that has withered in despair shall once more smile in abundance upon us! The Rainmakers asked the impossible—that a lion, full-grown and uninjured, be delivered into their hands so that they could call upon the heavens to have mercy on our cattle, our people, our slaves, and our country. At last they have the right medicine and we

shall have the promised rain. If they can not make rain, they have for years imposed upon us. What is the fate of a false priest?"

"Death!" cried ten thousand voices.

"Death!" answered the King. "If the priests do not rescue our land with white rain, I shall become priest and king, and at my command it shall even rain red, and red rain shall free the land of its curse forever!"

HE TURNED to the Rainmakers and pointed to the sky. "Come! Dance and pray and let your charms make a wet sky of that and show how truly great you are, O holy men! Come into the circle; your King commands you!" he cried as the priests did not show any great activity in coming forward.

At last all the Rainmakers stood inside the circle and Lobengula commanded them to commence their incantations and succeed in bringing rain. The chief Rainmaker started to object:

"We shall have to get some other medicine, for the lion alone will not suffice. We need——"

"Hold!" cried the King in a voice of anger. "You need nothing; you want time! Tell us now when we can have rain! Now! At once! Or as impostors die!"

"I can not!" cried the head priest. "To-morrow——"

"Then die!" answered the King, as he buried his assegai in the priest's heart.

"Where are our friends?" cried the Rainmakers. Half a dozen chiefs ran out, calling their regiments to protect the Rainmakers. A moment later fifty men who were under the priests' influence fell pierced by the spears of the loyal warriors.

Then commenced a scene that would have made a setting for some mighty opera. All it needed was a master singer. Lobengula with his tossing ostrich plumes, trembling in every muscle under the excitement of his terrible anger, glistening with perspiration, darted with the agility of a faun from place to place in the circle of warriors, calling upon them for loyalty and support and cursing the false Rainmakers who had angered heaven by their impostures. In the flowery and picturesque language of the Matabele he chanted his indictment of the priests who had deceived them, giving them false happiness. Under the influence of his oratory the warriors commenced to tremble. They followed his every movement with their eyes. Physically and mentally they were under the domination of Lobengula. The priests saw that they were doomed, that their power had been destroyed, and they turned their eyes toward the big red sun that rolled toward the horizon.

The King approached them. "O Rainmakers!" he cried, pointing with his spear to the west, "when the red eye of heaven closes, you shall die if you do not bring relief!"

All eyes turned quickly to the setting sun, which they gazed on in silence. Down behind the hills it fell out of sight, leaving a red glow behind it. The King raised his hands high in the air and cried, "Death to the false priests!" And, as one, the populace answered, "Death!"

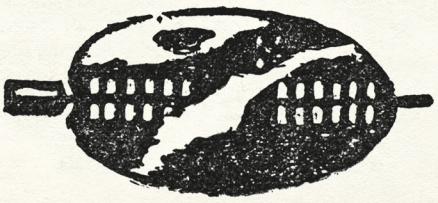
"Now, I shall be a true Rainmaker and it shall rain red!" cried the King.

On a command the executioners rushed into the circle and seized the priests. Then they stabbed them with assegais and held them high in the air on their points till they bled to death over the lion.

"I promised you red rain. The curse is washed out of our land! Henceforth I shall be your king and your priest, O Matabele! Have I spoken true? Am I not the King of Kings?"

Down on their faces like worshipers fell the thousands, crying: "Thou hast, O Blackest One! Thou hast, O Black Elephant! Thou hast, O Conqueror! O son of the Black Cow, thou art our King, our Priest!"

With a look of triumph, towering over the chanting, prostrate hosts as night fell on the land, stood Lobengula, the Church and State of the Matabele.



NEXT IN COMMAND

by D.E. Dermody

EXCEPT in strategic necessity, the American bluejacket is kept informed of what is doing and about to be done. Five minutes after a spluttering spell had ceased in the wireless room of the gunboat *Memphis* this message from the Navy Department was posted on the crew's bulletin board:

Commanding Officer *U. S. S. Memphis*, Travaganza Bay, Panama: Proceed immediately Verdecaya, Oronagua. Lie outside. Intercept any armed vessel either revolutionary or Azurpan Government attempting to enter. Engage if necessary.

The scuttle-butt board of strategy, the galley gossips and the underground savages were gleefully discussing the situation, when the welcome word was passed, "All hands up anchor." Ghastly indeed must have been the diversion that would not have been welcomed by the crew, if only it led them out of the lonely Panama lagoon they had been surveying for the last two months.

As the vessel nosed her way through the new-charted channel of the lagoon, "Ace-of-Spades" Atterly, wardroom cook (in this instance cook for all the seven commissioned officers attached to the baby man-of-war), was grating horse-radish at the galley sink, rolling his eyes weirdly, and descanting wildly to the Jap steward and messboys concerning the imminent bloody breach that the *Memphis* was to make in Central American history. In his excitement, reaching for horse-radish, he got hold of raw potatoes, discarded grape-fruit hulls and other undesirable ingredients, which he blindly grated into the pan.

The wizen-faced Japanese steward, jabbering unintelligibly, sprang forward and plucked up a handful of the misappropriated vegetables.

"Whadumatta you? Belong muh!" he grunted, pointing a long-nailed finger at his stomach.

"Hi-yah!" gloated the cook. "Yo'-all yaller boys'll need stomach when we all goes ag'in them Spiggoty wa'ships! Huccome you'-all hab veg'tables ub yo' own?"

The Jap's eyes turned inward and watery. "Sig," he explained, applying an open palm to the affected region. "Bime-by my think explose down here."

"Egsplode—hi-yah!" chuckled the Ace. "Wait'll them Spiggoty shells start 'splodin' in this hyar galley and yo' all 'll be proper sick in yo' in'ards! Hah-ah-yah!"

And that was all the thought he gave, at the time, to the Jap and his private vegetables.

Ace-of-Spades was not the only one obsessed with the battle-lust. The war-witch was weaving in the brain of "Lookyhere" Lally, seaman, as he emerged later from the forward hatch, like a jack-in-the-box on rusty springs, and sauntered toward the port bridge ladder. On the bridge he relieved the man at the wheel with a wobegone air and a mournful, "Looky here, shrimp, what's the course?"

"Steady aport—steady on east-nor'-east

—nothing east—two points to go—no wobblin','' singsonged the alleged shrimp.

Looky droned the course after his shipmate, repeating "No wobblin'" three times, like a charm; tenderly placed his hands palms-up under two spokes of the wheel, as if he were a nurse whose turn it was to hold the baby; and fixed spiritless, speculative eyes on the slowly revolving compass-card.

"Looky here, Binoculars," he whispered to the quartermaster, without looking up, as Ensign Mann, the watch officer, who had also just come from lunch, paced to the starboard end of the bridge, "how far is it to Birdycagey? When'll we git there?"

"Before sundown," answered "Binoculars." "It's only about fifty miles to Verdecaya from Perrito light just ahead of us."

"How many ships has the Orapronobis navy got, and what class are they?" Looky further inquired. "Has this here floatin' dry-dock gate got to lick 'em all?"

"Sure! They've only got five ships and a coal-barge, and the ships are all in the *Memphis* class, maybe some bigger and more modern, except one cruiser of our old *Albany* type."

"'S that all?" sighed Looky in relief. "Huh! We'll lambast 'em quicker 'n they can lash and carry! Thought maybe they had a battleship or two, though even then——"

He glanced up apprehensively, anticipating a rebuke for talking at the wheel, having heard the voice of Ensign Mann. But that dandified young officer was still at the end of the bridge, standing with one foot to fore, his right hand thrust into the front of his white service-coat, his head pitched slightly forward, his handsome face set in profound and melancholy thought.

"THE lonely rocks!" he was muttering. "Hard, hard St. Helena, whence I look back toward the hecatombs I left behind!"

The quartermaster and the helmsman looked at each other and grinned. Time and circumstance considered, this was the most extraordinary pastime they had ever seen an officer permit himself. Lieutenant Treater, the navigator, came up the ladder.

"Sighted the enemy yet, Mr. Mann?" he inquired in high good humor.

Mr. Mann poised more firmly on his illusory isle, a deeper shadow of melancholy darkening his countenance. "Vex not the fallen Titan!" he hoarsely remonstrated.

The navigator stared, walked to the end of the bridge and comprehensively inspected the living statue, which refused to flinch under the scrutiny.

"I—ah—I say, Mann," began the lieutenant. He stopped suddenly, dropped to his knees and groped about the deck.

"Lose something, sir?" solicitously inquired Quartermaster Quinlan.

"I dropped my purse, and it wasn't snapped shut. Didn't you hear the pieces rolling *clinkity-clack?*" Mr. Treater looked up sidewise from his hands and knees. "Fool! Why don't you get down and help find it?"

Thunderstruck, but thoroughly disciplined, the petty officer sagged to his knees.

"Say, Binoculars, he didn't drop no mazuma," boldly spoke up Lookyhere out of the binnacle into which his face was thrust. "Don't you see the whole bridge is as bald as Admiral Hornswizzle? He's gone batty, and the other 'n, too! Give 'em the slip and report to the Captain or somebody!"

The quartermaster acted on the advice instantaneously and reached the maindeck in two leaps, the navigator looking after him in reproachful amazement. Ensign Mann, unheeding these petty by-plays, remained rooted in tragic silence on the rocks of St. Helena. Near the wardroom hatch Binoculars met Midshipman Shea, who grasped the lapel of his muslin jumper.

"The way to spell Spanish is with an 'h,'" dogmatically asserted young Mr. Shea. "I mean, Spanish words with an 'h' are a 'j'—Merry Exmas! Why can't I ever get that straight? What I wish to say is that if there is an 'h'——"

The quartermaster gave the demented middy one large, in nowise lingering look, wrenched himself free and darted down the ladder into the wardroom. The midshipman strode toward the bridge, a hand flung aloft to signal the helmsman, who was perspiring in the effort to steer a straight course while watching the navigator on his knees circling Napoleon on the rocks.

"The 'j' is obsolete!" yelled the middy. "That is, it's there, but the 'h'——"

Lookyhere, glancing astoundedly over his shoulder at this new disturber of the peace of the Seven Seas, lost control of himself.

"You stay 'way from here!" he howled.

"Or else tell it to Napoleon and the other nutty one! By the light that never lit on Moses or the sea, you've all gone daft as Daniel! I wonder," he finished wanly, "is the gang gettin' it, or is it only catchin' among off'cers?"

Another glance aft nearly cost Looky his own sanity. Lieutenant Deeswah, the adipose engineer officer, was coming puffingly out of the wardroom hatch, Binoculars and the Captain, Commander Peppiter, trailing grim-faced after him. Mr. Deeswah, immediately he had cleared the hatch-combing, stooped down, put his palms to the deck, lowered his massive head between them and executed a slow, clumsy somersault. He arose, gravely examined the spot where he had floundered, and proceeded to repeat the performance indefinitely, working forward, his evident intention being to make the engine-room hatch by progressive somersaulting.

Captain Peppiter, impassively observing these awkward antics, despatched his orderly for the ship's doctor and the chief master-at-arms. When these functionaries appeared, the master-at-arms, one "Dopey" Desmond, proceeded promptly and effectively to obey orders, which were to conduct the engineer to the sick-bay. The surgeon, however, listening abstractedly to the Captain's statement of the case, carefully picked a hair from his lovelock, scrutinized it minutely, tossed it into air, caught at it, and began dog-trotting about the deck, plucking imaginary hairs out of the sunlight.

At this juncture Ensign Boies came on deck and started shrieking with laughter. Hands on legs, he leaned backward and laughed so violently as to precipitate himself across the wardroom skylight, where he lay like a bug on its back, arms and legs threshing the air, laughing more convulsively than ever. He got to his feet, laughed until his knees gave way, and slumped down cross-legged on the deck, where he rocked back and forth, laughing. He continued to laugh until, in the hospital quarters half an hour later, he succumbed to a fainting spell.

Under the Captain's direction, the two masters-at-arms that the ship rated, assisted by a dozen hastily designated deputies, now hustled the doctor, Ensign Boies and Midshipman Shea, as well as the navigator and Napoleon, who were still holding the bridge, to the sick-bay, where they were locked in with the hospital steward and his apprentice assistant, under the protection of a squad of husky sailors and coal-passers.

AS CAPTAIN PEPPITER ascended the bridge ladder the helmsman greeted him with a salivary gurgle and pointed aft. The Captain looked back and saw Junior Lieutenant Lytemose, the last officer to be accounted for, sitting astride the skylight, a huge soup-tureen in front of him, the contents of which he was solemnly and methodically ladling into his service-cap. His soulful employment was gently interrupted by two additional deputies, who led him below.

The Captain, after doffing his cap to wipe the sweatband and his moist brow, approached the helmsman and peered into the binnacle. Bidding the befuddled Looky stand aside, he took the wheel himself and set the helm hard aport. In less than a minute the *Memphis* was leaping porpoise-like in a circle the diameter of which was scarcely more than twice the ship's length.

Looky sat down on the after side of the bridge with his legs hanging over the edge.

"Hey! what you doin' there, Looky?" inquired chief master-at-arms Desmond, poking his head out of the forward hatch.

"Just stayin' here," whined Looky despondently. "The world's turned turtle, and there ain't nowhere left to swim for!"

He pointed to the Commander, who, inclined to the careening of the ship like a child on a merry-go-round, was watching the bone in her port teeth with eyes of insane exultation. A few minutes later he was with the other prisoners in the hospital compartments, and the gunboat was on her chartered course, Looky at the wheel, visibly relieved, and Quartermaster Quinlan doing duty as watch officer.

A hasty council of war, held behind closed doors in the pilot-house, was participated in by the senior petty officers of the various branches of the service except Quinlan, who as a student navigator, the only one on the ship, objected to leaving the bridge. When the members came out of the council-chamber, all were wearing side-arms and things began to happen.

Chief boatswain's mate Frank Gerlack piped to quarters, and immediately afterward sonorously passed the word for a general muster. When the divisions had marched from their respective parts of the ship to the quarterdeck the assembled crew

was confronted by chief master-at-arms Joseph "Dopey" Desmond, whom chance and the navy regulations designated as the man of the hour.

"Boys, there's somethin' gone wrong aft," he announced succinctly. "Looks like all the officers had been dosed with laughin' gas or somethin'. They're all out of their heads and dangerously sick. They may all die, but not if Howard Berwyn knows his business, and he's one of the hospital stewards that does. With no warrant officers aboard and the commissioned ones all out of commission, I'm next in command, and you'll understand that I'm goin' to be a real commander, a warranted six-ply, wire-hawser captain!"

"Spoof! Get the hook!"

The utterer of this sedition, from his covert in the thick of the company, flattered himself that he was safeguarding himself from detection by the calm eye and sober face with which he was watching the new captain. The words were hardly out, however, before a man of his own rating, but detailed as acting master-at-arms, caught him by the collar from behind. Desmond nodded approval.

"Take him to the brig, Mason!" he ordered, and turned to Gerlack: "Bo'sun, give Dugan solitary B. and W. until further notice!"

Dugan was struggling to break away, but another deputy came to Mason's aid and the malcontent was hurled roughly to the deck, jerked violently to his feet again, and rushed forward, his quick vanishing down the screw's hatch being followed by a thud and an oath from below.

"Trouble-breeders will be handled without gloves on this packet while I'm It," went on Desmond. "If I smash the regulations with corporal punishments, I'll be excused on the ground of ignorance, which Captain Peppiter wouldn't be. I know there ain't many like Dugan among you, but if there's anybody else wants to be a hard guy, he'll get the same as Dugan and then some. It's up to us to make good, boys, and we won't shoot any hot air about it. We know what Captain Peppiter's orders are and we'll carry 'em out! Doc Berwynd is the medicine man and he'll look out for the sick folks. Nauheim is the engineer officer now, and him and the black gang 'll run the underground works without a hitch. Quinlan's the navigator, and he can navigate all right. Gerlack's first-luff—don't forget that particular item; and Spyle's ordnance officer, and you gunner's mates mustn't kick if there's a little work-out of watches with the batteries while we're in this game, considerin' there might be somethin' doin' with the guns before we're through, you know. That's all; pipe down, Gerly."

The six-ply commander at once repaired to the bridge, where his chief concern rested, but he took heart from the nonchalant air with which Quinlan was pacing the bridge.

"I told 'em you's a navigator, Quinny," he confessed in a low voice, an eye on the helmsman, "but I dunno. You're a sort of one, ain't you?"

Quinlan smiled. "I'm a paper one," he modestly admitted; "corespondence school and not yet graduated. But don't you worry. If I can't navigate this ark of lunatics fifty miles up the coast, even if I've never been in the port we're bound for, I'll —well, I'll follow the Old Man's lead and navigate her in a circle until something busts!"

If the quartermaster had made oath in legal phrases as to his capability for the work in hand, the master-at-arms would have had his doubts. As it was, he was completely reassured, and returned to the maindeck with a heavy burden lifted from his mind.

"Nothing to the east'ard, helmsman," directed Quinlan, peering through a telescope at the misty headlands off the starboard beam.

"Nothin' to the east'ard, sir," precisely pronounced Looky, in whose disciplined mind, as a result of recent events, the quartermaster had suddenly evoluted from frivolous "Binoculars" to awesome "sir."

WHILE Quinlan did not doubt his own ability to take the ship to the desired port by pure navigation, he was wisely purposing to keep the coast in sight. After comparing the trend of the shore-line with the compass course that Lieutenant Treater had penciled on the chart and calculating the distance made by the patent log readings, he brought the rough log-book out of the pilot-house and started entering therein a concise record of weather conditions, ship's work done and events that had occurred since meridian.

At the master-at-arms' desk on the berth-deck, Desmond, Gerlack and Spyles held

another brief consultation; then repaired to the maindeck, where Gerlack blew his whistle and passed the awakening word: "All hands clear ship for action!"

In the wink of an eye the seemingly somnolent little vessel was transformed into a hint of pandemonium, but not unmethodically, for within half an hour the upper decks were bare of everything movable. Railings, stanchions and ladders were taken down and stored below; the iron hatch-covers were brought up and battened down; small boats were sheathed in canvas and swung free at their davits, ready to be cut away at a second's notice and dropped into the sea, no woodwork being left exposed on board a ship in action. All guns were cast loose and provided with accessories and ammunition.

However remote the chances of a sea combat, the rawest "rookie" on the gunboat understood that this warlike preparation was not a grandstand play on the part of the petty officers in temporary charge. There was a possibility of the need, and Desmond was simply following the primary fixed policy of the service, that the faintest shadow of a need justifies the fullest details of preparedness.

About half after four o'clock the "wire hawser" captain went on the bridge and was informed by the tyro navigator that another half-hour ought to bring the port of Verdecaya off the beam. Desmond was still on the bridge when the lookout man in the crow's-nest hailed the deck.

"Smoke-O!"

"Where away?" sang back Quinlan.

"One point off the port bow, sir."

"Better sheer inshore a little more, Quinny," suggested the commander. "If by any chance it's one of 'em we're lookin' for, we'll want to edge in between her and the harbor mouth."

"Right enough," agreed Quinlan. "Steady aport, helmsman!"

"Steady aport, sir!" echoed Looky, teetering on toes and heels as the blood began tingling in remote corners of his anatomy.

"Sail-O!" sang down the lookout man.

"Where away?"

"Same point as last, sir; there's two ships in company."

"Jeeminy!" whistled Quinlan. "I bet it's them!"

"A hundred-to-one shot!" avowed Desmond. "What else but warboats would be travelin' close in and in company at such a place as this?"

Lookyhere's heels grew so light that they stayed in air while he noiselessly danced on his toes, his glance alternating between the binnacle and the oncoming smoke-cloud.

"By the light that never lit on Moses or the sea!" he began.

"Shut up, Lally!" snapped Quinlan. "Mind your steering! You con this craft and I'll do the leathernecking of the others. Steady a little faster!"

"Ay, ay, sir; steady a little faster, sir!" seconded Looky submissively; adding under his breath: "But you'll pay for the refreshments, old souse, next liberty we make together!"

Commander Desmond, an orderly and the captain's yeoman, the latter impressed into emergency duty as a messenger, clattered down to the maindeck, the voice of Quinlan following them from the bridge:

"Verdecaya in sight, sir. Harbor's nothing but a wide-open cove a mile or so across at the mouth."

"All right, Quinlan. Try to keep in the main channel at the entrance; we'll lay-to there if we get in ahead of the others."

"Ship's are turnin' in toward the harbor, sir," reported the lookout man.

"Can't you make 'em out?" called Quinlan.

The man aloft knelt down and steadied his telescope on the railing of the crow's-nest. "Three slantin' stripes, red, on a white field, flyin' at both peaks, sir," he announced.

"That's the Oronaguan ensign, sir!" cried Quinlan.

The captain spoke to Gerlack, whose whistle shrilled in the sunshine. "Battle stations!" he bellowed.

Quickly and without words the gun-crews gathered around the batteries, each man on the exact spot assigned for his special duty.

"Holler down to Nauheim to have the engine and fire-room gang hump themselves!" ordered Desmond. "Beat 'em to it, if you can, Quinny! Get in hail, anyway."

"Ay, ay, sir! Port a point and a half, Lally."

"Portapoint 'n' alfsir," spluttered Looky, beside himself. "Don't I wish," he complained to the compass, "that I could shoot straight instead of steerin' straight? Then I'd be down on deck with the bunch, shootin'

at somethin', and not up here with nothin' to do but be shot at."

"Is there anybody aboard speaks Spiggoty Spanish?" Desmond demanded of the world at large.

"I can do a little Mex., sir," volunteered a boy from Los Angeles.

"Then stand by to come and do it when I call you."

A HALF hour passed in the silence of expectancy, by which time the *Memphis* and the other gunboats were steaming almost beam-abeam but still converging toward the central harbor channel, about three-quarters of a mile apart. Desmond returned to the bridge, calling the Los Angeles boy after him. Ten minutes later the Oronaguans, less than a quarter of a mile away, were hailed by the boy through a megaphone. Three successive hails finally elicited a faint reply. There followed two murky cross-currents of molten Latin word-roots.

"All I can get out of them is that they can't savvy my *habla*," asserted the boy in reply to Desmond's anxious inquiries; "but darn 'em, I know they do!"

"Da—uh—quit your swearin'!" reprimanded Desmond. "Spyles, fire a blank three-pounder!"

The little rifle barked instantly. Looking through his binoculars, Desmond fumed in undertones. Wild excitement was perceptible on board the Central Americans, but renewed volumes of smoke from their funnels indicated that the warning had only incited them to a fresh burst of speed. Desmond hurried back to the maindeck.

"Send a six-pounder solid shot across the leader's bow, Spyles!" he shouted angrily.

On the word the six-pounder belched, much louder than its predecessor, and a singing shell struck the water a hundred yards ahead of the foremost Oronaguan and a quarter of a mile beyond it, ricocheting on to the lowlands to the northeast. But both vessels held their course and speed.

"Another!" snarled Desmond.

The shell this time struck directly under the leading ship's forefeet, its spray mixing indistinguishably with the curling forefoam. But there was no halting.

Desmond's jaws snapped. "Who's the best gun-pointer on the ship?"

"I am, sir," calmly asseverated a slender, sleepy-eyed ordinary seaman.

"Train Number One four-inch on that fool's figurehead and blow it off! Spyles, have the boys stand by for—to break loose! If them blockheads are bent on goin' in, they're only waitin' for justifiable provokin' to slam us with a double broadside, but there ain't no halfway place for us to get off at now. Gun-pointer, take all the time you like aimin' and fire when you're ready. At point-blank range like this you ought to be able to wing that yellow eagle easily."

"Course I can, sir," drawled the sleepy-eyed one.

With the confident words a thunderous detonation jarred the tubby little gunboat, and the four-inch shell leaped out of the surf a mile away. Incidentally, the gilded eagle was seen to be as extinct as the dodo, not so much as a golden feather remaining to glitter in the rays of the sinking sun.

Everybody on the *Memphis* involuntarily shrank back except the helmsman—Looky was too busy—and Desmond, who instead made himself especially conspicuous by mounting a chain bit and flourishing his sword seaward, a bit of theatrical bathos which meant more than a mere attempt at bravado, being sensibly designed to impress the very impressionable people with whom he was playing at cross-purposes.

"All right, fellows," he shortly announced, "they ain't goin' to fire no salvos in our honor. We might have known the Spiggoties are too foxy to strike back when their Uncle Sam has to give 'em a box on the ear!"

Both Oronaguans had stopped almost in their own lengths, the reversed propellers churning the current into froth under their sterns. A gig was lowered on the run from the foremost ship.

"Jee-whizzakers!" suddenly ejaculated the victorious Captain Desmond; and running forward, he disappeared dizzily down the crew's hatch.

Below he beat on the door of the sick-bay. "Is any of the officers come to their senses and able so as to stir about?" he breathlessly inquired when the door had been opened.

"Mr. Boies and Mr. Shea are tolerably right," stated Berwynd, "but hardly in condition to knock around yet."

"Mr. Boies, sir," pleaded the master-at-arms, "we've gone and shot away their figurehead, and their Captain's comin' over to call in his gig. What we goin' to do, with no officer to receive him?"

"I'll be right up, Desmond," weakly vol-

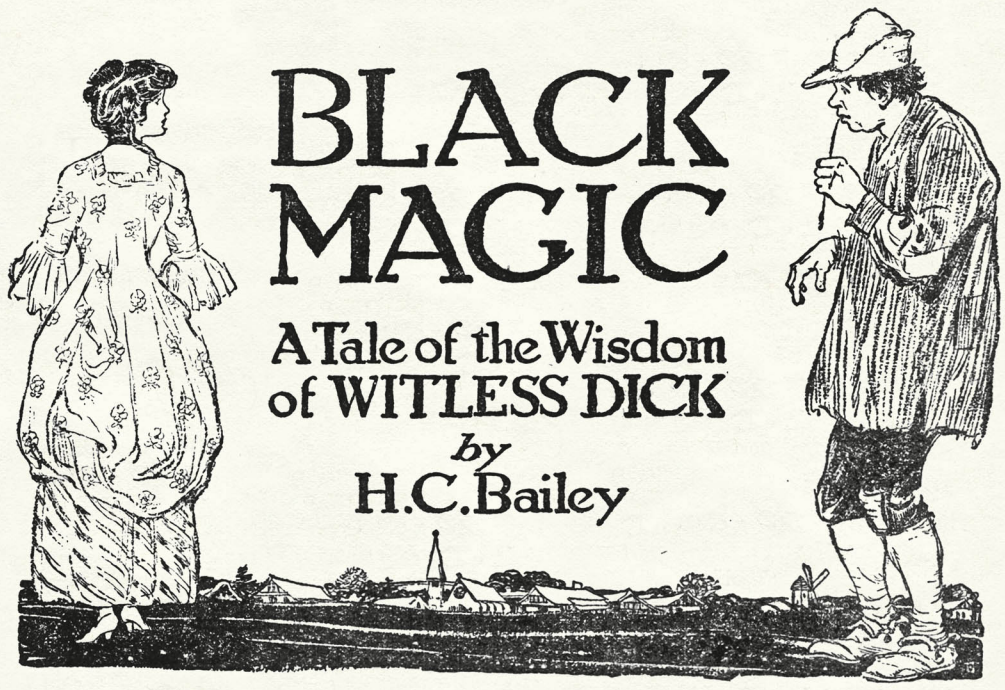
unteered Ensign Boies, who had revived from his swoon with no ghost of the laughter that had caused it left in him.

A FEW days later, Commander Peppiter, still an invalid, with the assistance of his writer, Ensign Boies and Desmond, prepared his official report to the Navy Department of the affair at Verdecaya, which ended as follows:

Attention is invited to the satisfactory demonstration afforded by this incident that the average highly trained crew of an American warship, left unofficered, would still be able and disposed to fight their ship, in which connection it is respectfully recommended that all the enlisted men whose names appear in this report be promoted or commended as the Department sees fit.

Much later, Ensign Mann—henceforth known in service circles as "Stoney Boney" and last of the now famous "Brainstorm Bunch" to let go his mania and recover his heart-action, read with absorbed interest the Department's circular record of the court-martial proceedings, which exonerated all concerned and redounded to the glory of everybody except Ace-of-Spades Atterly.

"If the Jap steward's testimony was true," observed Stoney Boney, "that cloudy-faced food-spoiler must have ground enough Chinese herb remedies—mostly raw henbane roots, the medicine men say—into the horse-radish to make the whole ship's personnel stand on its head and howl so as to be heard in the Hermit Kingdom!"



BLACK MAGIC

A Tale of the Wisdom of WITLESS DICK

by

H. C. Bailey

THERE is a portrait of him. The Elizabethan artist, as usual, makes him without complexion and very respectable. But I do not believe in that. He is a lean, lumbering weight of a man. His brow would be too big for his head if he had not such a mass of jaw. Under the shade of the brow there is a stabbing gray glint of uncommon eyes. There he sits with hands prosperously folded, prosperously ordinary in his white ruff and black velvet and gold chain. There's his wife, sedate in the placid beauty of her St. Martin's Summer, tender and gentle and pure. But—but, she has a smile. I protest he was not respectable. Hear how he began:

HE EARNED, I suppose, a pound by the year, with all the mutton and beer he could swallow; with gray frieze enough to keep him warm; with a mat of rushes and a

log by the kitchen fire to make him bed and pillow when he slept indoors. He was a Berkshire shepherd when Mary who burnt the heretics was Queen. He had no name but Dick, like his father, the swineherd, before him. The maids called him "silly shepherd," because they found him a heavy lout and dull.

Close upon Assynton village the downs stand bluff and gray. The murmur and light of a swift stream are about its church and there alone the rolling acres of bare land allow trees. From the old manor-house—what's left of it now is a barn—Mistress Mary Rymingtowne was pleased to come and walk there.

She was a child of fifteen, but girls were swiftly women in her day. From her bearing you might have guessed her father emperor of the world, not merely lord of a decent Berkshire manor. Her face was ivory pale and thin. She was tall and of a long-limbed grace. She had about her a rare delicacy, as of a creature aloof from all things ugly or unclean. So you see her coming, a daintily haughty child, straight and slight in her silver blue dress.

She heard heavy steps and turned to look. The silly shepherd, loose-limbed and bent, was shambling after her. His heavy face gave no sign of sense. His head rolled to and fro. On a sudden she checked and stood still and drew aside, waiting for him to pass. But Dick, the shepherd, stopped, too, and lounged against a tree and plucked grass and began to chew it. After a moment, she turned to look for him and saw him so at his ease, staring. With her broad brow puckered, she swept down upon him: "What are you doing, sirrah?"

He spat out his grass carefully. He put a big finger to his forehead. "Nought, nought," he drawled and began to scratch his shoulder against the tree, but he did not remove the steady, curious stare of his dull gray eyes.

"I do not desire to have you gape at me!" she cried.

Whereat he did gape. With the fall of the big jaw, he was all stupid surprise.

She exclaimed at him. She swept past him and back the way she had come. Then the shepherd gathered himself together and slouched after her.

The child heard his heavy steps again and hated the instinct that bade her be afraid and hurried on. So they came at speed toward the church, the dainty child with a heavy lout shambling fast on her track.

The sight startled the pious features of a black-gowned priest coming from his prayers, and he stood still to watch. You are introduced to the child's cousin, the rector of the parish, called after the respectful fashion of the time, Sir Ralph Rymingtowne. He was large and plump, and vivacious eyes made his smug, full face look like a mask. As the child came up, she slackened speed, crying, breathless, "Good morrow, Sir Ralph!"

He turned to walk with her: "You are in a heat, Mary."

"I hate that shepherd!" she panted. "I will have him whipped—only my father will never whip any one!"

"Your father's gentleness should be an ensample to us all," said the priest demurely. "What has the shepherd done?"

"He—he— prowls!" she exploded. "He is always about me. And I hate his wooden face!"

"Pho, child, the poor lad means no ill. 'Tis the purest simpleton. But I will school him." Sir Ralph turned and hailed. "Diccon, lad! Away with you! Get back to the farm."

The shepherd stared and stood still and put up a forefinger.

"I will give you company home, Mary. But I do not like to see you thus timid. Diccon is meek as a lamb."

She tossed her head. A red spot burnt on her cheek. Sir Ralph paced placidly beside her, talking smooth morality. She broke into the midst of it with a cry: "I knew! Oh, he is a masterless rogue!" She turned and pointed. The shepherd was shambling close behind them still.

Sir Ralph frowned. "The poor lad hath but half his wits," he explained and called out: "Come hither, sirrah!" The silly shepherd slouched up and stood limp and bent, staring. "Sirrah, I bade thee away!"

"I thought as you was a-wanting to speak to me," the shepherd drawled.

Sir Ralph burst out laughing at so fatuous an answer. "Faith, the fellow is all but idiot," he confided to Mary. Then, "Look thee, Diccon, if I wanted speech with thee, I should not drive thee off. So——"

The heavy face was twisted into a cunning smile. "Eh, but there's reasons!" The shepherd nodded and winked. "We knows each other for sure."

"Oh! Oh, I leave you to your friend, Sir Ralph!" the child cried fiercely and sped away.

SIR RALPH gave the shepherd a glance like a blow and turned and called after her. She did not stop. He turned back angrily with a growl: "Hast no wit at all in thy chuckle head?"

The shepherd giggled stupidly: "If I had, you'd have no use for me, master."

Sir Ralph frowned at him a moment, then with a mutter of "Follow!" led the way toward a dark copse. On the way he talked over his shoulder: "Why must you show Mistress Mary you are my man?"

"Bless me, why not, now?" the shepherd cried. They faced each other in the shade of the hazels. "And besides, I thought you was a-making up to her, and she as sweet as you please. Might ha' been a-courting, you might."

"Go to, fool, I am a priest!"

The shepherd giggled again. "So you be for sure. And can't have never a wife. That's a pity, too, that is."

Sir Ralph demanded truculently what he meant and could get nothing out of him but a stupid leer. Sir Ralph reviled him for a grinning jackass.

The shepherd scratched his head. "Mother Meg Blackavice said as you had some'ut to say. Be that all of it?"

Sir Ralph controlled himself. "Have you forgot what I said to you a month since, Diccon?"

"Oh dear, oh dear, that I ha' not!" the shepherd cried. "Why, you was to give me five gold pound when Squire Gabriel dies and you be lord of the manor."

Sir Ralph came nearer. "Well, Dick, well?"

"Well, I hope he will die soon, to be sure," the shepherd giggled.

Sir Ralph laid his hand on the heavy shoulder. "Diccon lad, why is he not dead? When he walks alone on the down by night, star-gazing, is there no chalk-pit that would break his neck, or no dew-pond where he could drown?"

The shepherd gaped and stared and then: "There—there——" he quavered. "I was afeared you meant me to stick un." And all his big frame began to shiver and shake.

"Why, what has given you the palsy?"

"Oh, but he's a ready man, is Squire Gabriel, and a man of his hands and a soldier-man he was! And he is a conjuror too, and he hath devils and sprites."

"Therefore is he the enemy of every Christian man," said Sir Ralph piously. The shepherd crossed himself in a hurry and stood gaping. "Look you, Diccon. They tell me he goes up o' nights to the old windmill, to the chamber he hath made himself there, to work his magic and conjure with the stars."

"And so he doth," the shepherd cried. "I ha' seen him catching star-magic in a pipe."

"Why, then, from the manor to the down he must cross the Avon by the plank bridge. What's easier for a bold fellow who would be rich than to shift the mid planks o' some dark night?"

The shepherd drew back. His heavy face was contorted with coarse cunning. "You'm minded to do such, Sir Ralph?" he asked.

"I see a way for a bold fellow that I know to come by five pounds. And there might be a crown or two in hand for him beside," the priest smiled genially. "And if he were careful to put back the planks—after, no man were ever the wiser."

The shepherd grinned and held out his hand.

LIKE that, if I have made anything of the masses of queer papers at Assynton Towers, Dick the shepherd began the profitable business of his life. They digress to a large description of Assynton manor and Gabriel Rymingtowne, its lord. For the first, what matters to us is that it could be inherited only by males. Therefore on Gabriel Rymingtowne's death it must pass, not to his daughter Mary, but to his cousin the priest. You can sympathize now with the anxieties of Sir Ralph. You will see the reason why Gabriel Rymingtowne did not love him.

Mr. Gabriel Rymingtowne, as I read the Assynton papers, hated no man, finding every one too comical. He had soldiered in Italy and brought back a very complete understanding of the ways of the world and a liking for astrology, alchemy and Greek. Therefore he built for himself a library and laboratory in the old manor-house and made an observatory out of the haunted windmill on the crest of the down.

II

IT WAS as late as ten o'clock on the May night and Assynton village had been long abed. There was no moon, but the stars were bright in a clear, dark sky. From the gardens of the manor-house Mr. Gabriel Rymingtowne came crossing the home meadow to the river. He was slight and erect, light of foot for a man whose beard was white. He crossed the plank bridge and took the upward path.

When he was out of sight round the shoulder of the down the shepherd came from the hazel copse. For a little while he was on the middle of the bridge, on hands and knees, looming in the dark like a huge uncouth beast. A gap yawned over the swift eddying water, there was a dull clatter of wood, and the planks were set to yield to the first step. He rose and tried them with his foot; then turned and followed Mr. Rymingtowne. And now, for all his clumsy bulk he moved very quickly and without a sound.

Flat on his stomach on the close turf of the down he looked up at the windmill. The sails of it were gone and it stood a bare tower. Mr. Rymingtowne had put a flat roof on it and there he sat, a cloaked, shapeless figure in the dark, his telescope pointed at the red gleam of Mars. The shepherd plucked a sprig of thyme to chew and composed himself for waiting.

Midnight had sounded from the church in the valley before Mr. Rymingtowne came back to earth and went homeward. The shepherd lay still and waited a while before he followed. As they went down the steep path the shepherd's feet sent a flint bouncing on ahead. Mr. Rymingtowne turned and cried out: "Who goes there?" The shepherd jumped aside, fell on hands and knees and tried to hide among the little juniper bushes. He made much noise.

Interested in this strange beast, Mr. Rymingtowne came placidly up the hill again. He saw the clumsy creature crouching in the shelter of the bushes and delivered a kick where it was invited. A ridiculous grunt repaid him. The shepherd staggered to his feet, rubbing the damaged part. "It's a pleasure to see you, sir," said Mr. Rymingtowne, "but why should I?"

The shepherd, with one hand guarding his rear, with the other pulling his forelock, retired backwards. "Be a-looking for a strayed ewe," he muttered.

"Do they nest in the junipers?" said Mr. Rymingtowne pleasantly. "Sir, am I like a ewe?"

"No, if it please God," the shepherd said humbly. "Being as you've a beard."

Mr. Rymingtowne took him by the shoulder and, as he wriggled away, took him by the ear. "Diccon, my friend, you are magnificently a fool. And is it possible that you think I am? Do me the honor to walk with me." By the ear he led the shepherd on and rebuked a whine of pain with: "Hush, hush! I know that you yearn for my society. In fact, Diccon, you are but too interested in me and my family. My daughter," he took a firmer grip of the ear, "my daughter complains that you prowl after her. Now, I resent that."

"I never done her no harm," the shepherd whined.

"My friend," Mr. Rymingtowne's voice was more genial than ever, "if you did, there would be one shepherd the less in Assynton." He twisted the ear and took the shepherd down the hill faster. "But you puzzle me and I do not like it. First you prowl after her and then you prowl after me. Why?"

"'You ha' been a-talking to Sir Ralph now," the shepherd complained.

Mr. Rymingtowne was naturally surprised. "Sir Ralph? Why, what's my good cousin to do with this?"

"He said I was idiot. He said it before Mistress Mary," the shepherd complained. "And if I be a fool, why, I would not have it spoke of neither."

Mr. Rymingtowne laughed. "At last I find a modest man. But why did he call thee idiot, Diccon?"

The shepherd gave a queer, grumbling snigger. "Being as I was more a fool than he needed, belike—or not so much. What's a fool, to be sure? 'Tis a fox that goes to ground." He muttered to himself and edged away. They were down upon level ground and drew near the bridge.

MR. RYMINGTOWNE went on laughing. "Why, sir, you philosophize. But I think you do not explain why you prowl."

The shepherd jerked himself free, crying: "No, no, I will not go over the bridge!"

Mr. Rymingtowne, with an Italian exclamation, snatched his ear again: "Sir, you are a very treasury of mysteries! And why,

so please your worship, will you not go over the bridge?"

"I'm a poor Christian," the shepherd whined and crossed himself.

"I believe you are a very poor Christian," Mr. Rymingtowne agreed, and peered at his face through the gloom. "Do you think the bridge leads to—heaven?"

The shepherd began to shiver. "No, no, no!" his teeth chattered. "You'm a conjuror and I will not go over the bridge!"

"Sir, you deceive yourself," said Mr. Rymingtowne firmly and took him firmly by the ear and hauled him on to the planks. "It is very likely that you deceive me. Nevertheless——" And he continued to haul. So they proceeded to cross the bridge, the shepherd shuffling and hanging back and squealing and clasping anguished hands about the hand that held his ear.

When they came close to the pier on which the mid planks hung perilous, the shepherd, gripping Mr. Rymingtowne's hand, flung all his weight back and checked. There was a moment of sway and struggle. Then the shepherd's clumsy feet dislodged the planks. They slipped and fell with a splash. The two men drew back together from the swift eddying water.

Mr. Rymingtowne kept his hold of the ear. "Ah! So you did not altogether deceive me, my friend!" he said quietly. "And how did you know that the bridge had been made ready for me to cross?"

"Oh dear, oh dear!" the shepherd whined. "Sir Ralph said as I was idiot!"

"Sir Ralph?" Mr. Rymingtowne repeated. For the first time something of anger came into his voice. "Ay, and I think Sir Ralph will say that if you were not an idiot you had never blundered into my hands and blundered into warning me!"

"Dearie me," said the shepherd sadly. "And so it is, to be sure, and an idiot I be, or I would not have let you lead me by the ear,"—suddenly he freed himself—"or ever let you find me when I was a-hiding, neither!" As he spoke he sped away with hardly a sound of footfall and was lost in the dark.

He was too sudden, too swift for Mr. Rymingtowne, who, after a futile spring at him, stood still, staring. It was some time before Mr. Rymingtowne walked slowly back down stream to the bridge in the village. He was gay with thought. He found the shepherd interesting.

He had often looked in the eyes of death. On the peril escaped he wasted little thought. He had no doubt that he was in debt to Sir Ralph. Who but his reverend cousin could gain anything by killing him? Sir Ralph's part was plain enough—as plain as that there was no proof against him. For what proof of anything in a loose plank? So of Sir Ralph Mr. Rymingtowne's mind made short work. He had seen too much of life in Italy to be excited by any villainy.

But the shepherd entertained him. Either the lad was a very sublime fool, or—or he was beyond understanding. But if he were a fool, how had he managed so neat an escape at the first moment he chose? And if he were not a fool, what in the world was he at? The more Mr. Rymingtowne thought, the more he was delighted by enigmas. He went to sleep upon them.

III

EARLY in the morning, Sir Ralph was up. The piety of his temper compelled him to go sing matins before he attended to business. It is instructive to imagine his sensations as he knelt in prayer. From the church he hurried breathless up the river-bank. Sure enough, there in the middle of the bridge the planks were gone. He peered down into the clear gray-green water with hope and horror. He was disappointed.

Thereafter he felt faint and sought his rectory for food and drink. He could not eat, but a long draught of double ale stopped his shivering. Also it excited him, so that he must needs find out at once whether his man were dead or no. He hurried away to the manor-house.

As he came round the yew hedge of the herb-garden he met Mr. Rymingtowne face to face. He started back fairly into the hedge, clutching at it with nervous hands. He flushed purple and his veins knotted in his temples. Mr. Rymingtowne laughed genially. But in a moment the priest had command of his voice if not of his complexion: "God bless thee with a good day," he said kindly.

"Well done!" Mr. Rymingtowne applauded. "Piety should ever bear ill luck bravely."

The priest had quite recovered himself. He put on a puzzled frown. "Your jests are too cunning for me, cousin."

"Why, would you have a ghost talk plainly?"

"Ghost?" the priest echoed.

Mr. Rymingtowne made a clutch at his shoulder: "Will you make oath I am flesh and blood?" he said in a hollow voice.

"Are you mad?" Sir Ralph cried and started away.

Mr. Rymingtowne laughed. "Cousin, you have ever amused me. But never so much as now that you are a murderer."

"Mr. Rymingtowne!" the priest exclaimed with dignity. "Sir, you exceed the license of a jest! You wrong not me but the whole church. This is blasphemy!"

"Oh, brave!" Mr. Rymingtowne laughed. And then with a sudden ferocity: "Man, look at your hands!" The priest started and glanced nervously this way and that. "Good cousin, a man of your supersititions will never enjoy his murders. And I give you warning I'll take care that you shall never manage mine!" He turned on his heel.

Sir Ralph cried out, "I protest you are mad!" and as the back contemptuously receded: "Sir, it does not become my office to listen to such insolence!" Then he departed with much magnificence of gait.

Mr. Rymingtowne went smiling to breakfast and his daughter. "Mary," said he, "you will not walk beyond the garden unless I am with you."

The child's broad brow frowned. "Because of the shepherd?" she asked angrily. "I hate him."

"Of course," said Mr. Rymingtowne. and considered her with grave interest.

THE shepherd's flock was on the lower slopes of the down, watched by his dog. The shepherd lay in the shade of a gnarled old blackthorn, and Sir Ralph, as he saw him from far, fancied that he had a book under his nose. But it was impossible that the silly shepherd should know how to read, and indeed there was no sign of his studying anything but bread and cheese when Sir Ralph came up.

The shepherd grinned broadly, with his mouth full. "Have you brought my five pound?" said he.

"Sirrah, what befell last night?" the priest snapped.

The shepherd laughed. "They planks was loosed. Squire, he come down in the dark. There was a gurt splash, there was. And you do owe a poor boy five pound."

"Fool, the man is alive and well!"

The shepherd's face was contorted with fear. He crossed himself again and again and shivered. "That is witchcraft, that is!" he mumbled. "I told 'e he was a gurt conjuror. That is black witchcraft, to be sure! Oh dear, oh dear, his devils still be riding of I!" And he rolled on the turf and writhed.

A moment Sir Ralph stood over him, watching with alarm not wholly contemptuous. Then he turned and walked slowly away. The silly shepherd had provided him with an idea.

Witchcraft was felony. Nay, it was close akin to heresy and might well be taken for heresy, when the man who practised it was of free thought and speech. The bishops were very zealous after heretics. All across England the fires were glowing. A man could win favor and place by finding fresh victims. And what victim would burn more justly than Mr. Rymingtowne with his magic of alchemy and astrology and his mockery of Holy Church? It was the sacred duty of a faithful priest to send him to the stake. With joyous excitement Sir Ralph beheld the law of man and God arranging the death that he needed.

IV

IN THE golden twilight of a showery day two men rode up to the rectory. They were soberly, somberly dressed and so much alike that the younger seemed to be wearing the elder's old clothes. The elder was a heavy man with a keen, tired face; the younger, slim and stolid.

Sir Ralph hurried out to meet them and was greeted with precise formality: "I am Dr. Oscott, the bishop's commissioner. My secretary, Thomas Saunders." Sir Ralph was much honored, and welcomed them effusively into his parlor. Dr. Oscott fell wearily into a chair and looked Sir Ralph over. Mr. Saunders sat on the edge of a stool and stared at the hangings of faded red and green saye.

"His lordship commends your zeal, Sir Ralph. It is of high import that the lurking enemies of the faith should be sought out and destroyed. One heretic in secret may do more harm than twenty bold professors. Therefore, my lord thanks you."

Sir Ralph was eloquently grateful and

pressed upon them generous entertainment. They ate and drank like gentlemen who found good appetite in heretic-hunting. Not till they were full and content did Sir Ralph approach his business.

He expounded vigorously the iniquities of Mr. Rymingtowne: how he practised white magic and black; how he had built himself secret places in which to conceal his ugly mysteries; how all the people cowered before him as a man of more than human power; and how he used his ascendancy to make them heretics by ever casting scorn on the Catholic faith and Holy Church.

"Such a man is of all infidels most dangerous and devilish," said Dr. Oscott, and looked at his secretary.

"I think the man is his reverence's cousin?" said Mr. Saunders meekly.

"Therefore I have hesitated long to inform against him. Perhaps too long. And now it is with a heavy heart."

"Your words, sir, do you honor," said Dr. Oscott.

Sir Ralph bowed. "Even while we speak he is to be seen in his observatory seeking magical aid of the stars."

"I might perhaps see him, sir." Mr. Saunders rose.

"Nay, gentlemen, but I fear you are too weary. On another night were better. I——"

"We will go," Dr. Oscott said.

Sir Ralph led them on to the down, not without anxieties. Mr. Rymingtowne might choose that night to stay at home. Such callousness was in his character. But a light twinkled from the windmill. As they came up, they saw a man move between them and the pale crescent of the new moon. Mr. Rymingtowne was on the roof with his telescope.

"So," Sir Ralph pointed and whispered, "so he will sit with his magic glass and then go in and all night through work out his spells by what it hath shown him."

Dr. Oscott peered up at the motionless astrologer. "I like it not when a man would see more than is granted to men's eyes," he said severely.

Sir Ralph shook his head sadly. "The very spirit of Satan."

"Oh dear, oh dear, you make me crawl all over!" The whine seemed to come out of the ground. The good gentlemen started aside to see the silly shepherd heave up his ungainly bulk. "Oh, you shouldn't, you shouldn't! And me just dreaming of rabbit-pie and all!"

Sir Ralph explained in rapid undertones. "A shepherd lad, a very simple, honest fellow. If you would know how the man is feared, no better witness."

Dr. Oscott nodded. "Come, my lad, why so frightened?"

The shepherd giggled. "Why now, I ben't sure what his reverence be wanting me to say."

"The truth," said Mr. Saunders.

"Speak out, Diccon lad. What does Mr. Rymingtowne do there?"

The shepherd gaped. "I dunno."

"Nay, then why do you fear him?"

"Aw, Sir Ralph, you know that, to be sure."

"Come, my lad, tell us!" Dr. Oscott insisted.

"Why, Sir Ralph here wants to be rid of him."

Mr. Saunders, the stolid secretary, put his hand on his master's arm. There was a moment's silence. Then Sir Ralph cried angrily: "Come, sirrah, what was it you said to me of magic and devils?"

"Magical devils?" the shepherd drawled stupidly. "Devils, says you to I?"

"Beshrew thee for a fool!" cried Sir Ralph. "Come, gentlemen, the poor lad is dazed! But you have seen," he waved his hand at the astrologer.

"Quite," said Mr. Saunders. They went back to the rectory and Sir Ralph was voluble.

NOW when they were gone the shepherd lay down again and with his chin on his hands, chewing a scrap of thyme, waited wakeful till Mr. Rymingtowne came down the hill homeward, stout stick in hand, sword at side. In a little while the silly shepherd rose up and made for the windmill. The door was on the latch—there were no locks on Assynton doors then—he entered and climbed the ladder to the upper room, moving in the dark with an assured ease that proved him no stranger there. He put his hand on the tinder-box and lit a candle. In a moment's glance he found papers covered with figures and signs. He stuffed them into his bosom, blew out the light and was gone, swift and adroit as he had come. Then he slept happily till dawn.

In the early morning he left his dog with his sheep and came down the hill whistling

merrily "Lady Greensleeves." From behind a hedge he watched Sir Ralph take the two strange gentlemen down to the church for matins. While they were gone he slipped into the hall of the rectory. He dropped two of his stolen papers by the table where the inkhorn stood. He thrust the rest into most obvious concealment among the books above.

Then he lounged down toward the church. The two strange gentlemen came out first and strolled up to the rectory while Sir Ralph was taking off his surplice. The shepherd waited for Sir Ralph.

Shambling, shuffling, grinning, plucking his forelock, he waited. "What is it, sirrah? Hast found thy wits?"

"You'm cruel hard on a poor lad," the shepherd whined plaintively. "Oh dear, and if as you had not made me so afeard I would ha' said whate'er your reverence pleased!"

"I wanted you to say the truth," said Sir Ralph with dignity.

The shepherd stared at him with stupid, puzzled eyes. "Oh, magic and devils!" he muttered. "Oh, but you shouldn't ask me! I be afeard. Take the gentlemen into the windmill for to see for theirselves. Squire do never use to be there till two hour after sundown. You could go by twilight like I did and none the wiser."

"What did you see, Diccon?"

"Oh, dear, 'tis hideous indeed. There's glass and there's gold and all. And I took and ran."

Sir Ralph reflected. "Hideous with glass and gold"—that spelt black magic plainly enough. But he wanted more than magic. He wanted heresy. "Hark thee, Diccon. Didst see any books there?"

The shepherd shook his head. "No books for sure. Only a mort of papers."

And again Sir Ralph reflected. "Diccon, lad, could you put some books there for me?"

The shepherd stared lack of understanding. It was repeated and explained—explained at last with a crown-piece. The shepherd chuckled.

"Go on to the rectory, sirrah, and the cook-maid shall give thee breakfast."

Meanwhile Dr. Oscott and his secretary had come into the rectory hall to wait their host. The secretary, crossing to look at Sir Ralph's books, saw before him those papers covered with strange figures, pentagons and pentagrams and cabalistic signs. He held them out to Dr. Oscott: "It seems, sir, that our good Sir Ralph also does something in astrology."

Dr. Oscott bent his brows upon them, while Mr. Saunders pulled out the bundle of papers clumsily thrust among the books. "He would seem to have a great appetite for it," said Mr. Saunders, and held out these, too.

Dr. Oscott turned them over. "He goes something beyond me," he frowned. Mr. Saunders agreed.

Sir Ralph came in, and his geniality was surprised by Dr. Oscott's questioning stare. "You are yourself an astrologer, Sir Ralph?"

"I?" Sir Ralph stared. "Nay, God forbid!"

Dr. Oscott held out the papers. "You keep these on your desk."

Sir Ralph turned them over with astonishment unfeigned. "This is Mr. Rymingtowne's hand!" he cried. "Why, gentlemen, here is such evidence of his ill practise as we need!"

Dr. Oscott and his secretary exchanged glances. "How came the evidence here?" said Mr. Saunders.

"I profess I know no more than you." Sir Ralph was honestly amazed. "Unless—unless that silly shepherd——" he left the room in a hurry.

"That shepherd," said Mr. Saunders, "seems to occur conveniently."

Sir Ralph found him on the kitchen settle with his nose deep in a tankard of double ale. Sir Ralph hauled him out spluttering. "Rogue, what work were you at in my hall?" The shepherd gaped a dribbling mouth at him. "Those papers of my cousin's!" Sir Ralph tried to shake sense into him. "Come, sirrah, I know you must have brought them."

"Dearie me," the shepherd whined, "and me as thought you would like them!"

"Like them! Beshrew thee for a fool! I like them well enough, but why i' God's name could you not tell me of them? Faith, thou art a marvelous ass. If thou doest a good thing thou must needs turn it into a bad."

THE shepherd began to whimper and sob grotesquely, so that Sir Ralph had much ado to soothe him. After a while he was persuaded, reluctant, to face the gentlemen and tell his tale, but

as soon as Sir Ralph had him at the door of the hall, as soon as he saw the grave faces within, he began to howl once more. "Come, Diccon, come!" Sir Ralph cried. "No harm's meant thee. Tell the gentlemen how the papers came here." Diccon sobbed and whimpered still. "Booby, speak out!"

The shepherd shrank away and trembled. "Sir Ralph—Sir Ralph bids me say as I brought they papers," he gasped.

Mr. Saunders changed a glance with Dr. Oscott. "Where didst find them, my lad?" said he.

The shepherd looked at Sir Ralph for inspiration. Sir Ralph made an impatient gesture.

"In squire's windmill," the shepherd cried in a hurry.

"But who bade thee seek them?" said Mr. Saunders sharply.

The shepherd shuffled back and gaped at him. In mute, stupid fear he made clumsy signs at Sir Ralph.

Sir Ralph laughed. "'Tis an honest lad, gentlemen, but the dullest simpleton."

"I see that," Mr. Saunders said. Sir Ralph waved the silly shepherd out.

Thereafter, at breakfast, he found the good gentlemen something reserved. It is probable that they were themselves not sure what they thought of him. Their natural desire to believe a priest and see heretics everywhere had been much impeded by the silly shepherd. Yet the priest was plausible and excellently devout. Moreover, if the mysterious papers were indeed Mr. Rymingtowne's, the priest was plainly right to charge him with magic. When the priest advised that they should visit the observatory and see for themselves what evidence of evil it held, they began to be pleased with him. Such a plan savored of bold honesty. It agreed also with their official habits. Secret search of suspected houses was part of the regular order of the hunt for heresy.

That day they spent in talk here and there with country-folk to discover how Mr. Rymingtowne was commonly regarded. They found him with a reputation for kindliness and uncanny powers and were the more inclined to believe in Sir Ralph.

He was in the best of spirits. Some copies of the New Testament in English, seized from the pack of a wicked pedler, he had thrust upon the shepherd and sworn him to get them into the windmill room before sunset. English testaments among the tools of magic must be enough to send any man to the stake.

V

THE morning was hot. The swift gray-green river allured Mary Rymingtowne, who sat down among the kingcups. A shadow fell across the water. She looked up into the face of the silly shepherd. "You'm no right to go wandering without your father," he drawled. Her look was as fierce as a flogging, but did not disturb the shepherd, who continued to stare down at her with dull, heavy curiosity.

She blushed richly, sprang up and rushed away. The shepherd slouched after her. They came upon Mr. Rymingtowne, benign, under a tree with Theocritus.

"Father, this knave——" the girl began.

The shepherd turned his back on her. "I wants you, master," he drawled.

"Oh, sir, at your service!" Mr. Rymingtowne laughed. "What has the gentleman done, Mary?"

The girl was in a difficulty. "He—he looked," she stammered and blushed painfully again.

Mr. Rymingtowne rose and, beckoning to the shepherd, walked down stream. Out of sight of the girl, he turned. "Understand me, sir. I'll not have you prowl and peep."

The silly shepherd stared. It is upon record that Mr. Rymingtowne saw something remarkable in his deep-set eyes. "You'm a heretic," he drawled.

"Now God ha' mercy!" Mr. Rymingtowne burst out laughing.

"There be they as will burn you for such. Sir Ralph, he hath got two catchpolls after you. 'Tis a Dr. Oscott and a Mr. Saunders. They'm minded to search your windmill to-night for the magic there. Do 'e go and hide it before sunset if you ha' no mind to try a fire."

Mr. Rymingtowne was amazed into silence for a moment. For a moment the gleaming dark eyes of the silly shepherd stared into his. Then he found himself looking at nothing. The hazels were swaying behind the shepherd's back. Mr. Rymingtowne called after him in vain.

But he had told enough. Mr. Rymingtowne knew his world well enough to know that a taste for astrology might condemn a man to death. That his cousin was zealous

to procure his death he had seen. If Dr. Oscott were come to Assynton—Dr. Oscott who had hunted heretics down all over the diocese—the danger was imminent. He knew how to act. In a moment he was climbing the down to the windmill. He saw his way. He would abolish all evidence of his science. He would let the good gentlemen come and search and, when they had found nothing, break in upon them. It would be hard if he could not make the fanatic doctor believe his cousin a knave.

In the whirl of his own concerns he paused again and again to wonder at the silly shepherd. Who could have dreamed that the dull, heavy lout had such a clear brain in him? Why had he chosen to hide it? Why was he pleased to reveal it now for the service of Mr. Rymingtowne? They were questions that could wait for an answer, but questions that insisted on being heard. And Mr. Rymingtowne would have found them more insistent if he had known all, the plan on which the brain in that heavy head was working placidly.

VI

THROUGH the twilight Sir Ralph led his guests up to the windmill. They were in a good humor with him, having persuaded themselves that they were on the track of guilt. But as they came to the door the shepherd rose out of the ground, grinning and pulling his forelock, and Mr. Saunders, a suspicious mind, was disturbed. He did not understand why the shepherd had always to assist, and moreover it seemed to him that Sir Ralph made signs at the shepherd and certainly the shepherd nodded and gave a silly laugh.

Sir Ralph opened the door. "Oh dear, you'm bold, you'm bold!" said the shepherd, and they came into darkness. Lanterns were lit and they found themselves inside an empty shell of stone. The mill had been all dismantled. All the timbers were gone, and the stones and wheels. Only a ladder reached up through the darkness to the room beneath the roof. Sir Ralph began to climb and the shepherd came last.

Before he was at the top he heard exclamations. When he came through the trap-door he found them hunting nervously about a room "bare as your hand." It had in it no more than two wooden chairs and a table, and on the table a little book.

Dr. Oscott turned, flushing, upon Sir Ralph: "It seems you have deceived yourself, sir! At least you have sought to deceive us!"

Sir Ralph, who was pale and unsteady, stammered out: "I—I am amazed! The man is certainly a sorcerer! Perhaps this is sorcery. I——"

Mr. Saunders had been looking at the book on the table. "Perhaps this is heresy," he suggested and held it out. It was a breviary printed at Rome.

Sir Ralph recoiled from it, saw the silly shepherd stand gaping and sprang at him. "What is this, knave? You told me the place——"

"No, no!" the shepherd cried. "It was you as told I! You told I to——"

Sir Ralph struck him aside. "Must you prate, rogue? Get you gone, I say!" and tried to drive him to the ladder.

"What was he going to say?" said Mr. Saunders.

Sir Ralph turned and forced a laugh. "Oh, 'tis a dull fool! Come, gentlemen, I doubt we must search more cunningly. Doubtless there is some secret place." He pointed them into the corners of the room and himself made a bustle of searching. At the worst he hoped for the Testaments.

The shepherd began to whimper. "You ha' come too soon," he whined.

Sir Ralph started round. "What dost mean by that?" he cried. "Come, Diccon!" He took the shepherd's arm and began to draw him aside. "The Testaments, lad!" he whispered.

Mr. Saunders, who had been affecting an interest in the walls, laid a finger on Dr. Oscott and swung round. "Certainly. What does he mean?" said he.

"And why do you whisper, sir?" Dr. Oscott cried and advanced upon them.

The shepherd shuffled back, whining: "'Tiddn't my fault! I hadn't no time. You come too soon!"

Sir Ralph cried out: "Nay, doctor, 'tis an innocent, a natural! He knows not what he says. You must not heed him!" And he made frenzied signs to the shepherd.

"I know not who is innocent, sir, nor why you fear the lad so!" Dr. Oscott said sternly. "Come, lad, tell me the truth and thou'lt have no harm. Why did we come too soon?"

"Sir Ralph he bade me put they little

books here for you to find un," the shepherd whined. "And I hads't no time!"

"He is mad—he——" Sir Ralph screamed, and was checked by Mr. Saunders's hand heavy on his shoulder.

"You do not forget that you are your cousin's heir, sir!" said Mr. Saunders, and Sir Ralph stared at him and muttered.

Dr. Oscott glanced aside and turned again to the shepherd. "Sir Ralph bade you put books here for us to find. What books, my lad?"

"I ha' not stole they!" the shepherd whined. "Here a' be." He fumbled in his bosom and plucked out the English Testaments.

With some wild cry Sir Ralph started forward to seize them. Mr. Saunders held him. Dr. Oscott opened the books and one look was enough. "So, sir, this is the mystery!" he cried. "You contrive false evidence to compass your cousin's death!"

"It is a lie!" Sir Ralph screamed. "The fool is mad! He is possessed of the devil! You are mad to heed him! You are besotted! You——"

"Thou miserable knave!" Oscott advanced upon him, white with a fanatic's anger.

Sir Ralph drew back, but screaming still, and as he drew back the shepherd thrust out a foot. Sir Ralph stumbled over it, staggered and fell backward through the trapdoor down the dark shaft. There was a scream and a thud and silence.

"Oh dear, oh dear, you ha' killed un!" the shepherd cried.

The two gentlemen looked at each other, and, gathering up their lanterns, began to descend the ladder. On the stones below they found only death.

As they knelt together Mr. Rymingtowne opened the door. "Why! Why, you are guests unasked, gentlemen!" he said. "And pray, which of you am I to charge with my cousin's death?" Silent and swift the shepherd slunk out.

Dr. Oscott rose. "Mr. Gabriel Rymingtowne?" Mr. Rymingtowne bowed. "I give you joy on a great deliverance. The man who lies there would have contrived false evidence to convict you of heresy. He lies stricken by the hand of God."

"I have your word for it," said Mr. Rymingtowne.

Dr. Oscott told who he was and all the tale as he knew it.

"It is not for me to question Dr. Oscott's word," said Mr. Rymingtowne gravely. "Nevertheless, as the man was my cousin, I must needs ask that you give me your story in hand of writ." Dr. Oscott bowed. They passed out into the night.

MARY RYMINGTOWNE was walking all white in her rose garden. She turned from a sweetbriar upon the silly shepherd. She grew pale. "My father has sought you everywhere," she said in a low voice. The shepherd laughed. "He says that you saved him from—from terrible things," her voice fell lower still.

"You'm not to mind that," the shepherd said.

There was a moment's silence while she looked away from the gleam of his deep-set eyes. "You must go speak with him," she said.

"Nay, I be going away," the shepherd laughed.

"Going away?" He saw the blue eyes round in her pale face.

"I could not be going afore," he apologized. "You was not safe. Now 'tis all well."

The pale face was white, but her eyes met his without fear. "Why are you going away?"

"For to come back," he said, and was gone.

WRECKS OF THE LONG ISLAND COAST

Heroic Battles of the Life-saving Service

by Percy M. Cushing

FROM the door of the harbor of New York, reaching northeast into the Atlantic for one hundred and twenty miles, lies the narrow finger of Long Island. On the south side of this Island, running perhaps two-thirds its length and separated from it by shallow bays, crawls a series of sand-ribbed beaches that are the graveyards of ships and men. These beaches bulwark Long Island proper from the fury of the sea in Winter, and since the early days of Atlantic commerce they have been the final resting-places of countless craft and crews.

Walking along the wind-searched barriers to-day one comes often upon testimony of the toll they have taken. Frequently it is in a twisted stern-post, a shattered keelson, a rotten spar; or off shore, lifting dark above the green swells, with the sea moss festooned about it, an iron mass of sunken engines and boilers. Again, it is in a surf-whitened human bone half hidden in the shifting sand.

To protect the lives of seafaring men from the treachery of this coast the United States Government has built and manned thirty-three life-saving stations along its length. The crews of these number two hundred and sixty-four men, seven men and a keeper, or captain, to each station. Nine months out of every year the crews of the service patrol the beaches, watching for disaster, succoring the shipwrecked and lending aid whenever possible in safeguarding craft and sailors. They are wagers of a grim battle against wind and weather.

Mainly they are descendants of men who preceded them in the service, so they are of a stock that has grown hardened fighting the elements for half a century and more. Courage with them is a business proposition—it is what they are paid for. If they wavered in the face of peril they would be dismissed. At times when ships come ashore their hardships equal, if not exceed, those of the shipwrecked themselves. They are strong men who do brave deeds carelessly.

THE WRECK OF THE "LOUIS V. PLACE"

ON THE eighth day of February, 1895, the thermometer at the Weather Bureau in New York City stood at zero. In Florida the temperature was the lowest ever recorded there. It was the coldest day of the year from the Gulf to Maine, and a screaming hurricane was raging along the entire Atlantic seaboard. The wind-gauges at Sandy Hook showed a velocity of fifty-six miles an hour; at Wood's Hole the gale reached seventy-two miles. Snow fell during the day and night as far south as Carolina.

The *Louis V. Place,* a three-masted schooner, sailed from Baltimore for New York on January 28th. On board were Captain William Squires and seven men.

The *Place* left the mouth of Chesapeake Bay Monday, February 4th. The wind was strong from the southwest and a heavy swell was running. An hour after reaching the open sea the gale hauled to the northward and freshened alarmingly, while the sky became overcast and all signs of a storm were evident. At daybreak the storm had become a reality, and the sails of the

Place were close reefed, with the exception of the foresail, which was so stiff with ice that it could not be handled by the sailors. The thermometer on one of the deck-houses at this time registered two degrees below zero.

As the heavy seas drenched over the forward part of the schooner they froze to everything they touched, clogging sheets and halyards with ice, freezing anchors and cables solid, and hampering the steerage-way of the vessel by forming great masses on her bows which made it almost impossible to control her.

Through the day and night all hands were kept on watch ready for emergency, while the vessel labored nearly helpless in the bitter tempest. On the morning of the sixth she was discovered to be leaking, and Captain Squires realized that the situation was grave. He held the craft as well as possible to her course, and on the next day she met the full fury of the hurricane, which added the last touches to her desperate condition.

Mist shut in thick and snow began to drive along the wind in blinding sheets. Under the merest rag of a sail the vessel pitched before the gale until early on the morning of the eighth. By this time her crew were in a helpless condition, tottering about the decks, worn out from sleepless watching and dulled by the fearful cold. With no observations in four days, Captain Squires had lost all track of his whereabouts, and was holding the vessel before the wind, trusting to fate to keep her clear of trouble.

The black hours of early morning gave way to a wild dawn of wind-lashed seas and intense cold and revealed the *Place* a helpless hulk, ice-covered from topmasts to waterline, her rigging frozen solid, her sails like sheets of iron, as she drove soggily at the mercy of the blast.

There was but one thing left to do. Captain Squires believed his ship to be near Sandy Hook. If the water was not too deep he could anchor and chance riding out the storm. He cast the lead and found eight fathoms. Then he called the crew aft, told them his intention, gave each a double portion of grog, and sent them forward to the cables.

But the ice had bound the anchors so deep that, try as they might in their weakened condition, the men could not chop them out, and after futile attempts the Captain called them aft again. Realizing now that the prospect was hopeless, he told them to shift for themselves, and each man made what few preparations he could to meet the disaster which all knew could not be far distant.

THEY had not long to wait. Lifting above the rush of the gale, the crash of breakers soon came from ahead, and the sound told all that their fate was at hand. A moment later the *Place* lay hammering across the bar just east of the Lone Hill Life-Saving Station on Great South Beach, Long Island Coast. Gigantic waves combed her decks from stem to stern, and her crew fled to the shrouds for their lives.

The life-savers of the Lone Hill Station had gone eastward earlier in the morning to assist the men of the Blue Point Station in landing the crew from another schooner which had stranded during the night. Consequently there was no one at Lone Hill save one man, Surfman Saunders, who had been left on guard. Hardly had the *Place* struck, when she was discovered by Saunders. He telephoned the Blue Point Station immediately, then called the Point o' Woods Station to the west.

In five minutes the Lone Hill and Blue Point crews, having finished with the wreck of the first schooner, were fighting their way back westward in the face of the hurricane, making every effort to reach the scene of the latest disaster as soon as possible. From the west the Point o' Woods crew, helped by the gale behind them, were hurrying eastward with their gun and life-boat on sleds.

The *Place* lay three hundred yards from the beach on the outer bar, giant gray seas sweeping half way up her masts as they broke astern of her. At times she was invisible in the scud and the leaden rush of the snow. Through lulls in the storm the life-savers on the beach could occasionally catch glimpses of her crew in the port mizzen rigging where they were clinging for their lives. There appeared to be eight in all. Two stood on the crosstrees, six in the shrouds.

The three life-saving crews faced a critical situation. Two of them were well nigh worn out by hours of battling in the terrible weather at the first wreck. The dragging of heavy surf-boats and beach apparatus

five miles to Blue Point and five miles back in the teeth of the storm had exhausted the Lone Hill men. The Blue Point crew were in scarcely better condition. All had been under the severest strain of cold and toil for eight hours. Their faces were cut and bleeding where the driven sand had gnawed into the flesh. Some had their hands frozen. The Point o' Woods crew was fresher, but, even had all been in good condition, the launching of a boat in the terrific sea that boiled along the beach would have been beyond any human power.

Porridge ice, a foot in depth, reached offshore in the breakers a hundred feet and huge cakes of ice ground with wreckage in the swells. The surf reached to the foot of the beach hills. To attempt to launch a boat in that maelstrom of crashing wreck and water would have been sheer suicide. The only salvation of those on the schooner lay in the breeches-buoy.

The three life-saving crews at once grasped this desperate chance. A surf-gun was placed in position, but before it could be fired, a cry of horror went up from those on shore. Through a rift in the whirling storm, the two men lowest in the shrouds of the doomed vessel were seen to have vanished in a mountainous sea that swept her fore and aft.

An instant later the gun was fired, carrying a line across the fore-topmast stay out of reach of the men who remained in the mizzen rigging. Other lines were at once fired, falling almost within arm's reach of the shipwrecked sailors, but they made no effort to secure them. Evidently they were so stiffened from the intense cold that they were unable to move from their positions, and those on shore realized that the situation was almost hopeless.

Noon came. The snow flung along the beach in blinding sheets. So heavy was the wind that the crews of the life-saving stations were forced to crouch down at times to keep from being blown from their feet. Half blinded by the stinging sand, so exhausted that they could hardly stagger, they held to the task that now seemed futile. Sometimes for periods of half an hour or more they could see nothing of the stranded schooner, on account of the thickness of the weather and the flying spray as the water was torn in solid sheets from the face of the ocean and whirled away by the wind.

At one o'clock in the afternoon another shot was fired, but the line did not fall aboard the vessel. Almost immediately the storm shut in closely, concealing the *Place* from view till late afternoon. When the next lull came it was seen that there were only four men left in the rigging. Two of the six last seen had gone to join those who had perished before them. It was growing dark by this time and the life-savers realized that if aid came to the shipwrecked men it must come at once. In a desperate effort the gun was fired for the last time and the line fell over the mizzen rigging; for a fleeting moment hope surged strong to the stout hearts on shore, for it seemed certain that the four survivors must reach it. But at that instant, as though premeditated by fate, the snow closed in thicker than ever, night was upon the beach, and—the shot line parted.

HOPE of a rescue before morning was gone. The lives of the four men who still remained were in the hands of God. Could they live through the frightful night? None might say. The watchers on shore at intervals burned signal-lights to let the miserable wretches on the *Place* know they had not been abandoned. As the night advanced, the wind increased. It piled the seas through gullies in the beach hills and choked the shore with huge cakes of ice. It tore tons of sand from the hills and swept it into other hills. It snatched at the huddled heaps of men crouched on the beach waiting for the dawn while their fingers and feet slowly froze. And it tumbled countless worlds of crashing water over the decks of the stranded schooner, opening seams, racking timbers, wrenching rib from rib.

At last day came. Twenty-four hours had elapsed since the schooner stranded, and those on shore strained their eyes in the ragged light to learn the toll the night had taken.

It was soon apparent. But two men remained alive. Two others had been claimed by the storm. One had lashed himself to the shrouds close to the crosstrees. He had frozen to death, and in the storm-riven dawn could be seen hanging head downward, held by the lashings around his legs and swinging stiffly from side to side, the terrible plaything of the winds. The other was lower down, also in the shrouds. He

stood erect, one foot above the other, where death had caught him quickly as he had tried to climb higher toward his companions.

The two survivors were in the crosstrees. They were standing, and had drawn the fragments of the tattered topsail about them in pitiful effort to bar the knife of the wind. It was probably the shelter of the sail that saved their lives.

The life-savers were themselves in a sad plight. For more than thirty hours they had been on the beach in clothes that were little more than masses of ice, without food save pails of coffee that were occasionally hurried from the station, with faces and fingers frost-bitten, and without having had a moment's rest from constant exposure and extreme exertion. However, with the grim fortitude and the steel determination that is bred of their mode of life they at once began operations to save the last two lives that fate had left them to save. Often they tottered unsteadily in their frozen oilskins as they went about their duties. But reeling, staggering, they placed the surf-gun and fired a shot which fell within a few feet of the two poor fellows in the rigging of the schooner. But the men made no effort to get the line.

Still hopeful, another shot was fired, laying its line across the hull of the ship. And then the men in the rigging appeared to give heed for the first time to the efforts that were being made to rescue them. Very feebly and slowly one man descended the shrouds. The tide had fallen off, and the section of the ship where the line lay was above water. Working his way to the line, the man pulled on it weakly, but his efforts were futile. He lacked the strength to haul it off. In a few moments he crawled back to the shrouds.

The breeches-buoy was then abandoned. The short daylight died. Night came on again and the gale abated slightly. There was nothing left but the surf-boat. The feat was at least possible now, for the sea was lower. The life-savers wheeled their boat to the breakers; a picked crew was chosen; Keeper Baker of Lone Hill took the helm. With almost certain death facing them, the rescuers drove their cockleshell into the furious sea.

It was a splendid battle and a fearful one. But grim nerve triumphed. Half swamped, the surf-boat lay alongside the shattered schooner; the two men in the rigging reeled to the rail of the stranded vessel and toppled lifelessly into it. The curtain fell on one of the grimmest tragedies of the Service.

THE rescued men were William Stevens and Soren Nelson. They were nearly dead. Nelson's feet were frozen solid in his boots. During the forty-eight hours they clung to the rigging of the ill-fated craft, while the life-savers battled to save them, they had fought death by beating each other's faces with their fists to shake off the lethargy of the cold. Stevens recovered, but poor Nelson died after having his legs amputated and lingering miserably for six months.

It is good to know that the Government took cognizance of that terrible struggle made by the men of the service in the performance of duty and that the Legislature passed resolutions which contained this reference: "The gallant crews of the Lone Hill and Blue Point stations who for over forty-eight hours of continuous effort, without rest or sleep, night and day, labored through gloom and gale and bitter frost to save the lives of men. . . . "

A HEROIC RESCUE IN THE ICY SURF

THE wreck of the schooner *Place* is a typical example of what the men in the United States Life-Saving Service are called upon to face, and the attitude of the men of the life-saving stations above mentioned represents pretty well the manner in which those who cast their lot with the watchers of the beaches meet crucial tests of stress and storm. The twenty-four men who battled with the elements at the wreck of the *Place* did not look on each other as heroes. Their struggle through two days of appalling peril and hardship was in their eyes merely a matter of everyday duty. There have been cases in the service, however, where men have done acts that the code of duty did not demand—that no code of any service, no matter how harsh, would compel.

The night of February 21, 1904, was memorable because of its extreme cold and wildness. During the height of the storm, shortly before midnight, the schooner *Benjamin C. Cromwell* of Portland, Maine, stranded just east of the Bellport Life-Saving

Station, Great South Beach. Three crews of life-saving stations hurried to the scene to take seven men from the rigging of the wrecked vessel. All efforts to accomplish this, however, failed, and at noon of the day following the night of stranding, the vessels's masts went by the board, with the exception of the foremast, in which all the crew save one had taken refuge.

This single man who had not followed the example of his comrades was washed overboard when the after masts fell, and caught and clung to a piece of wreckage that was swept away simultaneously with himself.

A remarkably furious surf was running, and to add to the peril of the situation, the breakers were full of floating timber and planks with which the *Cromwell* was laden and which had been washed from her decks. The beach was fringed with skim ice, sharp as knife-blades, that cut through the rubber boots and clothing of the life-savers as though they were putty. Heavy ice-cakes a foot thick heaved in the breakers, lifted twenty feet in the air by the incoming monstrous seas and crashed down on one another with sounds like the clash of distant thunder. And over all, the snow and sleet whirled in scimitar sweeps, tearing the skin on men's faces raw, and ripping the inrushing waves into tatters of foam and spindrift.

At the best, the chance of the wretched sailor who had been washed away on the floating wreckage was almost hopeless. The life-savers clustered on the shore, powerless to aid, watching with eyes of horror for the moment his lifeless body should be crushed on the beach or ground to pulp in the grinding wreckage. At this critical moment when the hearts of strong men stood still, a figure sprang from the huddle of men on the beach, wrapped a line about its waist and ran to the edge of the surf. Surfman Frank Raynor of the Blue Point Station was about to do what no keeper in the Life-Saving Service would have been authorized to ask him to risk. The Service demands courage, but it does not demand suicide. Keeper Rorke of the Blue Point Station might have ordered Raynor back to the beach, but the venture was too heroic, too splendid; the keeper could not find it in his heart.

For a moment Raynor stood in the edge of the foaming whirl of icy spray, waiting his chance, half naked, for he had thrown off his outer clothing. Then it came. As the bit of wreckage to which the sailor clung plunged into the mass of crashing débris in the breakers, Raynor dashed forward, fighting his way inch by inch through the roaring maelstrom of water and timbers, dodging plunging beams, diving beneath shattered spars that, rising on giant combers, threatened to crush him. At times he was hidden from view for minutes.

At last he was almost within reach of the drowning sailor and in that instant he was swept beneath the wreckage by a ponderous sea. It looked as though he were lost, but at the crucial moment Albert Latham, also of the Blue Point Station, went to the aid of his comrade. Before Latham could reach him, Raynor came to the surface just in time to seize the now unconscious man. The next second Latham, tearing wildly through the surf, was at his side and rendering assistance. Together the two hauled the exhausted man to the beach, while a cheer went up from their comrades on shore.

IN THE brief ten minutes consumed in this rescue the ill-fated *Cromwell* had broken to pieces, her foremast falling into the sea with the six remaining men upon it. The life-savers flew to their gun and tried to shoot a line across the wreck of the mast, but failed, and one by one the men, save one, fell exhausted from it and were drowned before their eyes.

The lone survivor held his place in miraculous fashion while the gale and current swept him down the shore at the edge of the breakers. Hope for him was given up, when again Raynor and Latham dashed to the front. Though exhausted and numbed, they plunged into the sea once more in time to reach the man just as he was torn from his grasp on the mast.

But now, enfeebled by their terrible efforts and the fearful cold, they faced a grave task to reach the shore with their rescue. For twenty minutes they battled with the surf, never relaxing their grip on the man who nearly drowned them in his frenzied struggles. Had it not been for a kindly green comber that, lifting beneath them, shouldered them close to shore, it is certain all three would have died. When the life-savers on the beach, rushing into the foaming sea, shoulder-deep, hauled them to safety, all were in a state of collapse.

Raynor and Latham had probably performed one of the most courageous feats of

life-saving in the annals of the Service, and their conduct reached the ears of authority at Washington. Both were presented with gold medals by the Treasury Department, but Latham lay weak and ill for weeks, and Raynor never performed duty again.

WOMEN JOIN IN THE WORK OF RESCUE

IN MANY instances the hardihood of the life-savers seems to be shared by the women of their families. When the bark *Martha P. Tucker* went ashore off the Point Lookout Station, Long Island, at dawn of August 29, 1893, the crews of the coast stations had not yet gone on duty for the season.

But Keeper Rhodes had come over to the Point Lookout Station with his daughter Jennie to make advance preparations. With Miss Rhodes were two other women, Mrs. Celia Raynor, a name that has been known in the Service for years, and Mrs Rene Southard.

Keeper Rhodes saw the *Tucker* just as she struck, and telephoned the Long Beach Station for aid, only to find that the keeper was the only man there with the exception of a telephone lineman. While these two men were hurrying to the scene of the wreck, Rhodes found a watchman from a nearby hotel, and together they got out the beach-cart and apparatus and hauled it towards the sand hills beyond which lay the beach.

At the foot of the hills the cart stuck, and the two men could not budge it. Just as they were about to give up, Jennie Rhodes and the two other women arrived on the scene. Laying hold of the wheels, they toiled like men until the cart was extracted and pulled to the edge of the surf. There, with the rain pouring in torrents and a hurricane sweeping the beach, they helped place the surf-gun and fire it.

That shot was executed as well as though a drilled crew had been on the ground, and it laid a line across the bowsprit of the bark on which twelve men clung for their lives. By the time the line was made fast and the whip hauled out, the keeper of the Long Beach Station and the telephone lineman arrived, and the three nervy women and four men hauled out the hawser and breeches-buoy.

One by one, with great labor, eleven of the twelve shipwrecked sailors were brought ashore in the buoy, the women heaving on the tackle with the strength and hardihood of men. The twelfth man was lost, having fallen from the rigging when the masts of the ship toppled into the sea.

When all the shipwrecked were at last safe on shore the women helped carry them to the station and then took charge of the work of resuscitation, which resulted in every one's recovering.

SAVING THE "AJACE'S" SOLE SURVIVOR

TWO of the most tragic wrecks that ever occurred on the Long Island coast took place within four years of each other, one at the extreme outward end of the Island, the other far to the westward.

The loss of the Italian bark *Ajace* on Rockaway Shoals, March 4, 1881, with all her ship's company save one, cost thirteen lives, and brought to light the story of a despair so terrible that it had driven hardened sailors to suicide. The other wreck, that of the full-rigged ship *Circassian*, which took place December 29, 1876, involved a loss of twenty-eight lives and was one of the saddest in the history of the Service.

The only report of the actual wrecking of the *Ajace* was that obtained from the lips of her sole survivor, Pietro Sala, who reached shore only after a miraculous escape.

It appears that the bark, bound from Antwerp to New York, ran into a heavy gale off Long Island on the night of March 3, 1881. All along the coast the wind had been tearing the heart out of shipping for twenty-four hours. In Raritan Bay large craft were snapped from their moorings and flung up into the meadows. At Long Branch a twenty-five-hundred-pound girder was wrenched from a pier and carried far up on the beach. The water-front at Coney Island was wrecked. Hotels were demolished, piers were knocked to pieces by the giant seas, and vessels were driven shattered ashore.

On the morning of the fourth, the crew of the Rockaway Station saw a bark standing head on the beach under close reefs. Rain and sleet were driving in from sea and the outline of the vessel was indistinct, and, soon after the first glimpse, was hidden. A few minutes later another lull in the storm revealed her again, this time heading out to sea as though her master had suddenly discovered her proximity to shore.

Twenty minutes afterward she was discovered again and hardly had she become visible when her foremast was seen to fall, indicating that she had struck on Rockaway Shoals. Without hesitation the life-savers launched a boat and stood down the inlet, hoping that they might get out to the wreck, but the tremendous sea foaming over the bar stopped them. They waited on their oars an hour, but saw nothing more of the ship and finally turned back.

MEANTIME a terrible tragedy was being enacted out under the blanket of the storm. Sala, the only one to survive the disaster, told of it afterward. According to his story, it appears that the instant the ship struck she was covered by a torrent of foaming seas that crushed in over her stern, sweeping her decks and tearing at her hull. Her crew gathered near the bowsprit, all of them giving way to despair and praying and cursing by turns. In the midst of the confusion of the storm and the crash of falling spars and splitting timbers, one of the crew suddenly drew a knife and cut his throat. As though moved by a frenzy of despair, three others also drew knives and slashed at their throats, screaming prayers as they fell bleeding to the reeling deck.

"I had gone into the cabin," Sala said afterward at the investigation into the wreck. "As I turned to come out, I felt a tremendous shock as though the ship had been lifted and hurled on the reef by a mighty hand. The next instant I found myself among fragments of planking and timbers. Instinctively I leaped to the air-hole of the cabin to climb out on the roof, as the companionway had been demolished. I succeeded in getting out.

"As I reached the air I saw that the cabin had been torn from the hull and was floating amid a tremendous sea that broke momentarily over it. A broken timber was sticking through the roof. I clung to it. The ship was gone. Only wreckage littered the water. Suddenly I saw the third officer and the body of one of the men who had cut his throat come to the surface. The man was not yet dead. Both clutched at the cabin, but fell back as their strength gave out. I closed my eyes and held tight, while giant waves washed me I knew not where."

Down at Coney Island the life-savers from the station there were lending aid to stranded boats along shore. Keeper Bebensee was in charge. He had just rescued a man and woman who had been washed away in a house that had gone adrift, when through the spindrift offshore he perceived a piece of wreckage, seemingly the top of a ship's cabin, with a man clinging to it. The keeper lost no time. Though the sea was tremendous, he ordered the surf-boat out. Amidst thunderous cheers from the crowds that had come to the water-front to witness the storm, the launch was made successfully though at great peril, and a desperate battle with the surf was begun. The life-saving reports for 1881 speak of the struggle of Keeper Bebensee and his men as follows:

"It seemed impossible that any boat could live, still less make headway, against the enormous bursts of surf that barred the way, and it was literally inch by inch that the passage through the breakers was effected. It was only by the sternest toil of the oarsmen that any advance could be made against the heavy inshore rush of the combers. Each moment of the contest was big with peril; and when the breakers were at length passed and the boat was rising and falling like a chip on the vast toppling swells of the outer sea, this peril seemed so much increased that the crowd on shore, who had long maintained their cheers of enthusiasm and cries of encouragement, gradually grew still and watched mutely, with pale faces, the gallant crew, as they strained their oars with desperate courage against the surge, steadily aiming for the fragment of the wreck on which lay the half-inanimate seaman.

"Although this waif was only about a mile and a half from land when first discerned, the perils and difficulties of the passage were so great that it took a full hour for the boat to come within hailing distance. By combined management and daring, the keeper and his men shot up alongside and snatched off the benumbed and exhausted sailor."

The appreciation of the grit of the men of the Life-Saving Service was manifested on this occasion by the fact that as the boat reached the beach the crowd rushed down, lifted the daring men and their rescue bodily, and carried them on the shoulders of the throng to the station.

THE ESCAPE OF FOUR FROM THE "CIRCASSIAN"

THE wreck of the *Circassian* was unique in the fact that at the time of her stranding her crew of forty-nine was landed without the loss of a single life, the twenty-eight who perished in her losing their lives two weeks later.

She was an English ship, 280 feet long. Formerly she had been a steamer and was captured as a blockade-runner during the Civil War. Her entire career had been ill-fated. Three times within a year she had gone ashore, and each time she had been floated, twice at the cost of life. Her bones still lie beneath sand and water at Bridgehampton, Long Island.

A southeast gale drove the ship ashore on the night of December 11, 1876. Her crew was landed in surf-boats by life-savers the next day, and arrangements were at once made with a wrecking company to float her. With this in view thirty-two men, including her officers and four engineers from New York, went on board her to remove her cargo. She was an iron ship, and lay across the bar several hundred yards offshore, her bow and stern afloat—a dangerous position in heavy weather, as vessels often break in two under such circumstances.

Heavy anchors and cables were warped offshore of the ship. Steady strain was put on these, and with the aid of the high tides, the vessel was slowly worked outward until, on the 29th, those in charge thought that she would float on the next high water, which was due about midnight. By afternoon a strong easterly gale was blowing.

All day the lighters had been taking cargoes ashore from the ship, and as the wind increased, those on shore wanted to run a line aboard the vessel so that in case of emergency the thirty-two men aboard her might be taken off. But the wrecking company refused to allow this, fearing that the men on the ship might become frightened in the event of a storm and come ashore on the line just as the moment arrived for floating the vessel. This refusal to run the line was the cause of the disaster.

As the afternoon advanced, snow set in, and those on shore could see the great hulk of the ship pounding heavily on the bar. It was also seen that the hawsers to the offshore anchors had been slacked, and it was then realized that those on board recognized danger and had slacked the cables hoping that the ship would drift nearer in, where their position would be less perilous if the storm increased.

But the *Circassian* did not drift in, and toward nightfall it was noticed that she had settled in the water and the hawsers still remained slack. It was not until seven o'clock at night, however, that she displayed distress-signals. Preparations were then made to do what could be done for those on board.

By this time the beach was an awe-inspiring sight. The waves were sluicing over the sand hills in seething reaches. The chimney of a lantern on the beach was converted into an excellent example of ground glass by the driven sand which swept pitilessly along the level distances. Men crept on hands and knees to keep from being blown prostrate. The surf-gun was brought out and an attempt was made to shoot a line aboard the vessel, but it was evident that no gun could carry a line the distance to the vessel in the teeth of such a hurricane.

All night the life-savers struggled while thousands of tons of water crashed over the hull of the doomed vessel. Dawn revealed a terrible spectacle. All but the mizzen mast had gone by the board and the ship had broken in two, her forward section almost covered by breakers, the after section careening to one side with the mizzen mast tottering above it. And the mizzen mast was full of men.

Occasionally cries for assistance were picked up by the wind and carried to those on shore. At two o'clock in the afternoon the mizzen mast with its human freight began to sag toward the water to leeward. Very slowly it moved. By three o'clock a marked change in its position could be noted. By four it had reached the water. Ten minutes later it sank from view, carrying its cargo of poor wretches with it. At that instant hardened men on shore turned away their faces from the horrible picture.

The life-savers organized a lantern squad to search the surf in the hope that some of those who had gone down might come ashore safe. And the hope was not wholly in vain. Four men did come ashore. They were the first and second officers of the ship and two seamen. The others came ashore too, but they were all dead. Twenty-eight had perished.

THE escape of these four men from the fate of their comrades was little short of a miracle. The life-saving reports for 1876 say of it:

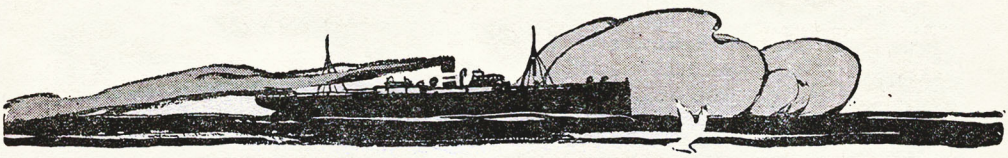
"The persons rescued were the first and second officers of the ship, the carpenter and a seaman in the employ of the wrecking company. It appears that the two first named had obtained possession of a cylindrical piece of cork five feet long and eleven inches in diameter, fitted it with straps and beckets, and arranged between themselves to cling to it for their last chance of life. When the mast slipped into the sea these two had sprung together, as far forward as possible. They were at once immersed in the raging flood, and came to the surface clinging to the buoy. In a moment the seaman employed by the wrecking company clutched hold of the buoy, and then the carpenter, coming up near them, was seized and helped to a place beside them.

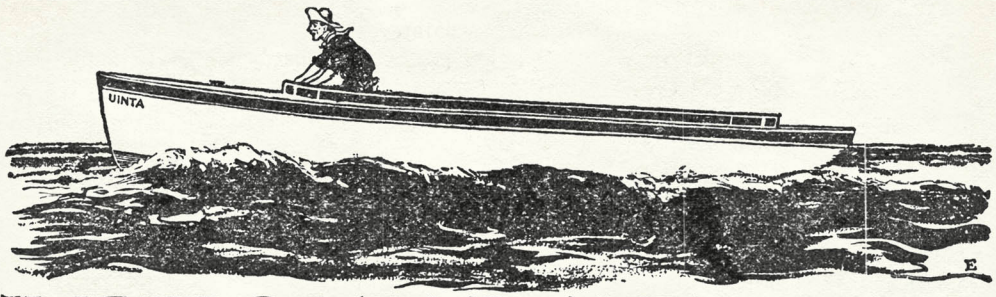
"Their salvation now was mainly owing to the perfect coolness, judgment and resolution of the first officer of the ship, under whose management the escape was accomplished. This brave and steady man under such circumstances actually schooled his comrades in the course they were to pursue, and took command of their strange craft as composedly as though he was assuming charge of the stanchest sea boat.

"Under his direction the four men, side by side, locked legs with one another. This quadruple intertwining of their lower limbs bound them together and served to steady the buoy to whose ropes they clung. They were now one mass in quaternion, tossed to and fro in the immense wash of the sea. Every other instant in the thick darkness they were flooded by the surge. At these times, under their gallant captain's word of command, they held their breaths and gripped the buoy ropes hard till their momentary release from the wave. In the refluence of the surge, his order bade them relax their hold a little for rest and breath.

"There was but a bare chance for life, but these maneuvers economized their strength and breath till, swept eastward by the current and forward by the surf, the moment came which flung them into the shoaling breakers. Then, under his last shout of command, in the furious welter of the surf and undertow, they gave all their reserved force to the desperate plunge ahead for the beach, and in the midst of their convulsive struggle, half on their feet and half dragged down by the waves, the men of the life-saving service rushed in upon them and tore them from the sea."

Long Island is but a tiny speck on the vast ribbon of sea and lake coast patrolled by the Life-Saving Service and its wrecks compose a correspondingly small proportion of those that the life-saving crews are called upon to face each year. Some of the most tragic struggles that the Service has won and lost have occurred along the Jersey and Massachusetts coasts, and the lives that went out on the storm-winds in these battles have not always been those of the shipwrecked. In Washington there is a long list of the watchers of the beaches who died with their hip-boots on in the performance of duty.





IMPERSONATING MURIEL

by George Frederic Stratton

THE conductor of the Omaha Limited dropped into a seat alongside Buck Plimsoll, cattleman of the Fuzzy H ranch, who had swung on at Cheyenne.

"Thickening up through here," he observed lazily. "'Tisn't but a few years since we'd check off the mileage on this run by the ranch-houses we passed, instead of the towns. Is it settling up much in your section?"

"Some rapid," answered Mr. Plimsoll. "Civilization's spreadin' over us like water on a new irrigation project. It's in spots, of course; but they're sure frequent an' obtrusive. Poncho Platt, of the Flying U, has got a buzz-wagon, an' they're runnin' juice along the barb-wire fences for telephones. Down on the Conejos River they've got motor-boats that make as much racket as automatic repeaters. With all them things, an' elopements, it isn't the good ole West any more—not so you'd notice it."

"Seems as if I'd heard of elopements in the old range country," demurred the conductor; "even among the Indians."

"Some," agreed Buck. "But they were sure regular an' orthodox. A man an' a girl an' a couple of ponies would turn up missing. Then the girl's father or brother, an' a friend who could sure ride would follow; an' after an interval, solemn an' excitin', they'd get back, either with the widow or without, accordin' to luck. But now they run 'em off with frills an' frivolousness that makes 'em more like moving-picture shows than real elopements. They meander out with suit-cases while the old man's peekin' through a knot-hole in the hoss-shed, smilin' some urbane an' felicitous; an' the next day, all the eloping team's got to do is to look in the papers an' see the ad—'Come back—All is forgiven.' Which the same doesn't always happen. The last I was mixed up in was sure unique an' satisfying."

The conductor looked at his watch and then said eagerly:

"It'll be forty minutes before we reach Vernal, and I'd like first rate to hear how you handle elopements up your way, Buck."

The cattleman rolled a cigarette and commenced:

It was after the last round-up an' I was squandering a few days in recreation at Lariat City, piroutin' around with Charlie Bansford, who's got a buzz-wagon an' a motor-boat, an' we sure meandered up an' down the face of nature, promiscuous. One afternoon we'd been fishing in a row-boat about four miles down the river, an' as we rounded Bald Hill, prospectin' for country where the fishes would nachully eat the hook instead of the bait, we saw a motor-boat roped in the middle of the stream. There were a man an' a girl in it, an' as we came in sight the man shouted an' beckoned real peevish.

"Broke down, I guess," said Charlie; an' as we got near enough to recognize brands, the two men hollered "Hello, Gus!" and "Hello, Charlie!" an' Charlie lifted his hat to the girl.

"What's wrong?" asked Charlie.

"No gasoline!" muttered Gus; an' I'll bet if the girl hadn't been there he'd have gurgled out free an' abandoned language, as impressive as Greaser Pete of the Four B.

We'd got alongside the motor-boat, which was branded *Fayette* in gold letters, some gorgeous, an' Gus went on:

"It's bull-head luck to see you, Charlie! Just the very man to help, and I've got to have help, I sure have. The fact is—er—" an' he gave a quick glance at the girl—"Muriel and I were going down to Larrinta to—er—get married!"

Charlie whistled about as long an' as steady as that ole loco of yours when she wants brakes, an' I looked, casual, at the girl. She was sure pretty an' enticin' an' was wearing a color as red as the knitted jacket she wore—sweaters, they call 'em.

Charlie says, "We'll row back, Gus, and get you some gasoline." But Gus was peering through a double-barrelled spy-glass. "There's the *Uinta!*" he growled; and up the river we saw another motor-boat. "It'll be here before you could row a half-mile. We must do something else!"

"We'll take Miss Langford ashore," said Charlie. "She can slip up to old Hinckley's farm and hide there till her father's done all the poking around here he wants to. Then we'll go after gasoline."

Gus looked at the girl an' she nodded her head, an' we shoved our boat round to the other side of the *Fayette*, where it would be out of sight of the *Uinta*, and she slipped over the side as pretty an' easy as a kitten settling down on a coyote rug.

"You'd better snuggle down as low as you can, Muriel," said Gus. "They're too far off yet to see you, if you keep low. Take your hat off, too!"

"No!" cried Charlie. "Sit right up, Miss Langford, and keep your hat on. Leave this to me, Gus! I've got an idea, all right, that'll throw the *Uinta* clear off the track! Now, Buck, you snuggle down out of sight. Quick, old cow-punch! There mustn't be more than one man seen. Hold! Give me that little canvas cover, Gus. All right!"

So I dropped on to the bottom of the boat, crowding over on to my left side, so as to have my Colt handy if there was any gun-play, an' Charlie slipped the oars over an' rowed away, leaving Gus on the *Fayette*.

THERE was a bay just below, an' Charlie made for that. As soon as we'd got round the point he jammed the boat ashore, because we were then out of sight of the *Uinta*, although we could hear her rattle like a Gatling gun that was on a stampede.

"Now, Miss Langford!" he cried. "Let me have your hat and sweater. I'm going to impersonate you, and Buck's going to impersonate me. You can slip up through that young peach orchard to Hinckley's and then you're safe. We'll lead the pursuers up to the head of the bay, and if we have luck we'll take them ashore for a score of miles or so."

Great Socorro! but she was pretty as she stood on the bank and smiled at Charlie, an' as he wriggled into the red sweater an' put the little round straw hat on his head, she rippled out a laugh that sounded like the Silver Canyon Falls, only lighter.

"You're so kind and so resourceful!" she gurgled. "But poor Gus! What will he do?"

"Gus will be all right," laughed Charlie, "now that you are safe. Gus can bluff as well as the next man, and some better. Besides, they won't bother with him; it's you they're looking for, and you they'll come after, and we'll make their search interesting. Lay close at Hinckley's and we'll be back before long. Take the oars, Buck!"

He settled back on the rear seat, just as the girl had sat, an' I scrambled on to the seat he'd left an' pushed the oars into the water. I've handled most everything that ever was hitched to a hoss, from a trotting sulky to the Bighorn six-hoss stage, an' I've been on bronchos that were some explosive an' elusive, but handlin' that boat was nachully the cussedest experience I'd ever had. I was hittin' the scenery—meanin' the floor—about as prompt an' frequent as if I'd been arguing with that blaze-face sorrel broncho that had a record for bucking, clean and impressive, an' Charlie sat an' laughed an' fired off advice, real impartial.

But I got the outfit up to the head of the bay an' headed it into the bank just as the *Uinta* shot round the upper point. Charlie looked round at her an' said:

"Give me that canvas, Buck. Quick! Hold it down low. That's it!"

He wriggled it underneath him an' pulled it up around his waist, an' stepped out on the bank. He was impersonatin' the girl all right, even to the skirts. They looked sort of bunchy in spots an' plumb flat in others, same as the foothills of ole Bald-

head Mountain. He wasn't impressive—not so you'd notice it; but the *Uinta* was half a mile away, an' I guess it looked all right to them.

Then we slipped into the brush an' ran like coyotes over to the county road; an' as we reached it Charlie howled in joy.

"Look, you bandy-legged old cow-puncher! There's Luck an' Salvation—the finest team ever!"

Plumb sure! Close to us was a wagon with a smart looking team an' a young fellow drivin'. Charlie sprang into the road. "I've got to ride!" he yelled. "Got to! It's life or death! I'll pay you well, my boy!"

But the boy was too plumb overcome with paralysis an' amazement at Charlie's hat an' skirts to buck, even if he'd wanted to, an' Charlie sprang on to the seat an' called back to me:

"Work the little boat back to Gus as soon as you can, Buck. He can use it to go after gasoline. He'll have lots of time. I'll lead these fellows over to Mill Gulch." An' as Mill Gulch was fourteen miles up the road, I knew that his "plenty of time" was plumb correct an' effective.

The team jumped into their collars just as the rattle of the *Uinta* stopped down at the place where we had landed. I stayed up at the road, so as to enjoy what was coming, an' it came. Puffin' an' blowin' through the brush came a man as round as that steer of Wes. Calner's, that took the prize at Omaha last year; an' with him was a young fellow in a uniform same as magnates of finance decorate their buzz-wagon drivers with.

"Are you the man who brought that row-boat over?" gasped Langford; an' I allowed that I was.

"Where's the young lady you brought?" he snapped again, glaring like a locoed cow.

I pointed down the road. "She's takin' a ride on that wagon," I murmured sweetly. "I surmise she's bound for Mill Gulch."

He glared down the road, an' I glared, too, an' I felt sure admireful of Charlie. He was a light-weight an' looked real natural an' sweet, snuggling close to the driver, as if he was afraid he might fall off; an' his head was tipped on one side, girlish an' captivatin', so what with the hat an' the red sweater, the sleek Mr. Langford would plumb sure have sworn on a carload of Bibles that his daughter was headed for Mill Gulch.

Anyway, he only wanted one look; then he turned to the shaffer an' yelled: "Go over to that house an' hire a team! Pay anything they ask! Buy it if you have to—but *get* it!"

I waited to see if the overfed gent was pinin' for any more conversation with me, but he was on a rock, tryin' to shut off his carburetter, or whatever it was that made him puff like his motor-boat, so I meandered back to the river-bank.

Then I sat down an' rolled a cigarette an' cogitated about rowing that boat back to Gus. It wasn't tempting—not so you'd notice it; an' I'd rather have bunched cows for twenty-four hours without a meal than started on that job. Then I looked at the *Uinta*.

She was roped an' tied to a big cotton-wood, an' I meandered over to her. She was some like Charlie's motor-boat that we'd been riding in the day before, only much bigger. I saw the same sort of wheel that spun around an' made such a rattle, an' there was the same steering-affair that they use on buzz-wagons, an' I concluded, plumb conscientious, that I'd rather work her back to Gus than have any more horse-play with that row-boat.

I UNROPED her, shoved her front end out from the bank, an' stepped in. I took hold of the wheel as I'd seen Charlie do it, an' gave it a whirl, an' there was gun-play at once, as good an' plenty as the ole Flying U outfit celebratin' Pioneer Day in Cheyenne. She jumped out so quick that I took a seat real prompt, without gettin' peevish where it was. But I clawed at the steering-wheel an' got her straightened out just as she was startin' to follow the girl up through the peach orchard to ole Hinckley's. She was sure tender-bitted, an' real handy on the lines.

I looked back at the bank an' saw the prize Langford an' his shaffer waving arms, free an' impulsive. They'd stampeded down when they heard the rattle of their motor an' were probably making remarks, but the noise cut it all out; so I pointed to the row-boat an' waved my hand, friendly. The next minute I was around the point an' in a minute more I was close by the *Fayette*. Gus was standin' up staring.

Then it came to me, real embarrassin', that if the *Uinta* was a cinch to manage

when running, she was sure an absorbin' proposition to stop. I couldn't see any way to do it, an' I hollered to Gus to tell me the secret, but couldn't hear his answer. I circled round him ten or fifteen times an' then I saw him jump into the water an'swim out to my trail. I'd worn it about as plain as a sheep-run. As I ambled past him for the twelfth or fourteenth time, he grabbed the edge of the boat an' I hauled him in. He touched his finger on something, an' the firin' stopped. Then he worked her alongside the *Fayette*, an' turned to me.

"How is it all, Mr. Plimsoll? Where is Miss Langford?"

I told him what was done, plain an' truthful, an' he went over on to the *Fayette* an' laid down an' laughed—laughed till I kicked him in the ribs an' told him that he was shakin' the engine loose an' he'd better stop if he ever wanted to use her again.

"Use her!" he gurgled. "Not much! You've brought me the boat I'm going to use. I don't know how I'll ever get a chance to even up with you for all this, Buck—excuse me calling you Buck; I feel as if we were good old long-lost friends, just got back to each other!"

Then we got back into the *Uinta* an' he whirled the wheel again an' steered over to the bank, an' said:

"I'll go up and get Miss Langford now. You'll wait here until we come down, I suppose?"

"Surest thing you know," I agreed. Then he stepped back to a little locker an', after fussin' some, came out with a bottle.

"Guess you'll appreciate a little refreshment after your seafaring experiences," he gurgled, an' without waitin' to take any himself he sprang up the bank toward Hinckley's.

Appreciate! Well, I'm sure talkin'! I was so arid that the Great Salt Lake Desert would seem like a swamp in comparison. I "appreciated" to the good-luck of Gus and the girl. Then I "appreciated" to the welfare of that cute little impersonator Charlie; an' after a cigarette, I thought of Langford an' the shaffer meanderin' along that hot dusty trail toward Mill Gulch, an' I "appreciated" once more to sympathize with them.

Then Gus an' the girl came down the bank. Her eyes were full of twinklin' sauciness as she rippled up to me an' slipped her little hand into mine an' let it lie there while she said:

"You ought to join our motor club, Mr. Plimsoll. Gus has told me of your masterly work, and you'd be welcome among us—oh, so welcome!"

An' although she was bubbling with fun, I knew that she meant just that, an' I told her that if she an' Gus would come out to the Fuzzy H ranch after their honeymoon, my bunch of riders would show 'em things about the real ole unvarnished West, an' she promised to come. That's what I'm going over to little ole Omaha for—to buy some real furniture an' one of them patent music-rustlers with a horn to it.

Gus had been writing on a slip of paper, an' he explained:

"I'm going to leave this on the *Fayette*, so that our old friend Buck will not be accused of stealing the *Uinta*. Then he read it off:

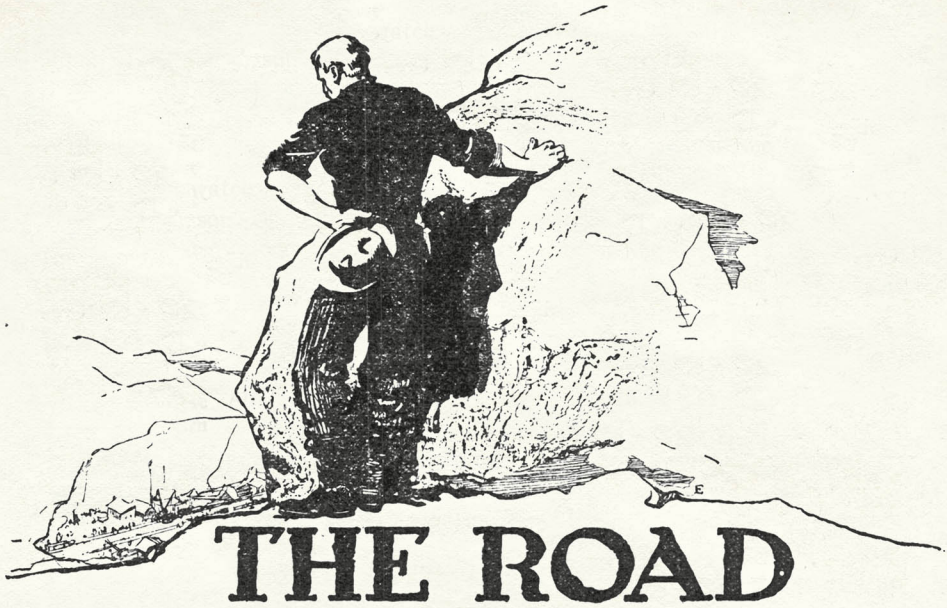
"DEAREST PAPA: Thanks for the loan of the *Uinta*. She will come in very handy, as after our wedding this afternoon at Larrinta we shall use her for a honeymoon tour down the river. Make yourself at home with the *Fayette* until we return. All she needs is gasoline. With love,

GUS and MURIEL."

Then they boarded the *Uinta*, bid me good-by as if I was a brother, an' went off to Larrinta.

The conductor sprang to his feet, watch in hand. "Three minutes to Vernal!" he announced. "What became of the old man and the chaffeur?"

"Meandered clear into Mill Gulch!" grinned Buck. "An' found the girl's hat an' coat at the tavern, with a note explainin' just how they got there. When I came through Lariat City the other day I met Charlie an' ole Langford on the street. Charlie introduced me, an' although the ole man looked solemn at first, he said that the turn I made with the *Uinta* at the head of the bay was the most spectacular he'd ever seen. Then he made us go into the Golden Pioneer Café an' have a lunch an' the usual etceteras, which we done, effective an' joyous."



THE ROAD

A Romance of Americans in the Balkans

by Frank Savile

SYNOPSIS: Gervase Agnew, civil engineer, saves the life of Katrine Gresham, daughter of his employer, an American railroad president. The latter's partner, Gordon Glaisher, engaged to Katrine in a formal way and jealous of Agnew, half forces Gresham to put Agnew in charge of building the Bir Railway in the Balkans. Agnew, learning of Katrine's engagement, accepts. In the muddle of international politics centering about the Bir Railway he finds its construction covertly opposed by Italian secret societies, with Gessi, a sectional engineer, as leader. Jovan and other Balkan patriots are working on the road itself. Thring, Agnew's assistant, explains that the former engineer, Sanders, who died a victim to Lucia Gessi's wiles, must have had a secret plan for overcoming an unbridgeable break in the road. Gresham goes to the Balkans to protect his interests, accompanied by Katrine, who has broken her half-hearted engagement to Glaisher. Vilip, their courier, is, like Jovan, a gentleman-patriot in disguise. Uiko, a fisherman, at Agnew's instigation, finds that the Turk, Esuli Bey, has been tampering with the underground outlet of a lake to obstruct the railroad construction. To get Lucia to tell Agnew Sanders' secret plan Jovan persuades Katrine to intensify the Italian girl's passion for the engineer. Several attempts are made to assassinate the Americans and Albanians.

CHAPTER XV

ESULI IS EXPLICIT

ESULI BEY sat back in his deck-chair, lighted one of the cigarettes which he kept for moments of special contemplation and suffered his gaze to rest benignantly on the reed-girt stretch of water at his feet. He and his companion, Chevalier Silvio Sarrasco, late Commandante of the Italian Navy, were enjoying the pleasures of idleness after a satisfactory mid-day meal. They had taken their chairs to the border of the lake where a weeping willow gave shelter from the rays of the already high risen sun.

A log, the center of a collection of floating débris, swam slowly into the orbit of the Bey's vision, and as he watched it he smiled. It was a dazzling smile—the perfect teeth shone gloriously white below the exactly trimmed mustache, and the Commandante, as it was turned upon him, responded to it with confident affability.

"Your Excellency finds amusing—what?" he hazarded.

Esuli extended an index finger. "That log," he explained complacently. "That log, which the current now brings slowly

down the fiord. A week ago—and during those five unnerving minutes of the landslide yesterday—it would have gone *up*."

The Italian moved his hand with a little deferential flourish. "In whatever your Excellency undertakes your success is limitless," he flattered. "And in nothing has it been more absolute than in your recently acquired capabilities as hydraulic engineer." He laughed softly, purringly, over the conclusion of his sentence. He was pleased, it was obvious, to jest.

The Turk shrugged his shoulders. "Now that is where I find your own great powers at fault," he deprecated. "You overestimate my capabilities and, I fear, my influence. That is a mistake."

Sarrasco's gesture implied dissent. "My friends and I can not help thinking that you may make them as wide as you desire, Excellency," he suggested. "At the moment the Governorship of the Jeka seems to us spacious in possibilities."

"As a geologist and hydraulic expert I discover new talents in myself which a few days back I entirely failed to recognize," grinned Esuli. "But it was you who probed, and found employment for them. The credit is yours and yours only."

"Your inventiveness, supplemented by my technical knowledge, may carry us to greater heights—literally," assented Sarrasco. "It depends upon these good Americans at the other end of the lake. We may have to interfere with Nature's scheme from other elevations. For the moment I submit that we have done enough. The Signor Proprietor—whose name I unfortunately find myself still unable to pronounce—has had a week to survey his difficulties. May we not hope to find him in a chastened mood? Recollect that the proposal we have to—hint at—is to him, not an entirely novel one."

"I understood that he found time to propel violently from his New York office the person of your representative in that great city," agreed Esuli blandly. "The suggestions made to him on that occasion resembled, did they not, those you purpose making to him to-day?"

The Italian smiled. "He was a German—that one," he allowed, with a deprecating little wag of the head. "He was, I fear, crude. He bluntly told the eminent Signor Gressim—do I approach anywhere near the right inflection?—that the Campania Daregno were willing to relieve him of all responsibilities and liabilities in connection with the Bir Railway for a sum representing five per cent. less than the up-to-date cost of the works accomplished—say five million dollars. Merely that, and no more. Such a display of tactlessness! One deplores it!"

"But, at the same time, we hope to repeat the offer—or its equivalent—no later than the hour of sunset on this particularly pleasant afternoon?"

Sarrasco made a vaguely assenting gesture. "The offer, but not, dearest friend, the indiscretion. And please let us recollect that this energetic and unpronounceable cavalier has received further proofs that our proposal is one for which to thank the Good God. These little matters of the ravine and the lake will entail an expenditure not far below another twenty per cent. of his original tender. And this time my company's project will have the independent and locally authoritative support of no less a person than the Governor of the district. I presume to believe that, as an American undertaking, the Bir Railway will cease to exist—within a month."

THE Bey made a little sound which seemed to interpret affability but, at the same time, doubt. His eyes wandered across the green expanse of the beech grove to search slowly the unrippled azures of the lake. For a matter of half a minute he remained silent.

"I think you and your Company—you must pardon the bluntness of the suggestion—have neglected one or two important factors in this case," he argued. "You pit yourselves against the Signor Gresham and him only. He is merely the focus of the various influences which are determined that this line shall be built. To begin with—there is my own country—Turkey."

The Italian made an exceedingly startled movement. "Turkey!" he cried, and the softness in his voice was entirely muffled by the surprise. "Turkey? Turkey—in these matters—means his Majesty the Sultan. And he—you will in your turn pardon my show of bluntness—is in—our pocket."

Esuli nodded calmly. "Precisely," he agreed. "But his Majesty—whom Allah preserve!—is not the preponderant person, I grieve to say, that the traditions of our

Faith decreed him to be. There is a new Turkey, crouching in disguise below the huddled garments of the old one. When will She arise? My friend, I can not possibly say. To-morrow? The next day? It is quite within the possible decrees of Destiny. Your time is short. That I firmly believe."

Sarrasco looked plainly incredulous. "What have we to reckon with?" he demanded. "Revolution?"

The Bey nodded again. "Possibly," he said. "But not one which will last. The Progressive party may triumph, but their time will not be forever. For them the building of this line is an absolute necessity. Should the hour of their predominance coincide with the present situation on the Bir Railway, they will insist on its completion if they have to find the labor—the money is beyond them—by the establishment of a *corvée*.

"The men of whom I speak are American in heart themselves. With American colleagues and American knowledge at their back they will push that line to Bir if a thousand ravines and morasses stand in the way. No, good friend, this is not a delusion. If Austria, masquerading in your name, is to control this railway, let her be mistress of the situation within a month. Otherwise we may have to put back the clock of German predominance in the Balkans by a matter of years. That is the plain pith of the matter."

Sarrasco sat up stiffly in his chair. The placidity of his features was marred by a frown. He twisted his lithe fingers one within the other. He looked at his companion with the aspect of a man to whom arguments have been put which he has found—unconvincing.

No doubt Esuli recognized this. He, too, altered his position to one of energy. He leaned forward. "Listen, my dear sir," he said. "In this matter I am with you absolutely. The generosity with which your employers—or you yourself—have treated me makes me a faithful ally. I have done all that I have been asked to do. I have made my own suggestions. I have carried them out. This matter of the landslide which I arranged to limit or close the exit from the lake, of which I alone was aware, is proof of that. My duty is to keep you fully informed of the situation as I see it. I tell you, then, frankly that you can not have it all your own way without difficulty!

"The national sentiment and the national pride of all the peoples between Bir and Antigno is involved in the building of this line. You will have to walk warily. You must even discount the possibility of failure. An American, when he is roused, can reach a pitch of obstinacy which you—pardon me if I seem blunt again—have had no experience in probing. Supposing this Mr. Gresham refuses to listen to your very proper proposals. Are you prepared to go very much further?"

The Italian's eyebrows rose. "To any limits, Excellency!" he said briefly. "But in the region of—what?"

"Risk!" said the other tersely. "We have to destroy this line. Do you care—how?"

Sarrasco smiled. "The Society of which I am an inconspicuous agent never cares—how," he answered. "Give us a target, and the weapon with which it is reached is a matter of indifference."

Esuli rose to his feet and threw away the stub of his cigarette. "Then, my friend," he said urbanely, "we are at one, and the sooner we clear for action the better! That black smoke which you see defiling the immaculate day informs me that my engineer has got up steam upon the launch. Forward!"

HE POINTED smilingly down the path between the beech trunks, through which appeared the blue vista of the lake. Sarrasco rose with a little sigh of satisfaction. "You have a specific plan?" he asked quietly.

"None," said the Turk. "But I have—I fear I seem to boast a little—an imagination which has served me well in the past and which has, indeed, brought me here. I came because the railway came. As a source of profit and activity it has not disappointed me. Why else, best of friends, do you find in these surroundings—*me?*"

There was something almost vindictive in the glance he bestowed upon the acres of gray desolation. "My apprenticeship was served at the Embassy in Paris," he explained.

Sarrasco's shrug seemed to give evidence of entire comprehension and assent as he passed on softly at his companion's side toward the waiting launch.

"To revert to the illustration which opened our conversation," he said affably. "The log went *down* the fiord—in spite of yesterday's landslide. Well, in spite of political landslides, while your Excellency retains your seat in the Castle of the Jeka, I shall confidently expect no log to go *up!*"

As things go, an unfortunate simile, this. For as the two companions stepped aboard the waiting launch and passed with her out into the broader expanse of the lake, the log moved—*against the current.* Perhaps something which had held it in position moved—something which swam softly as a water-rat swims, up into the rushes and through them to where a beech spinney linked them with foliage to the slope of the hill—something which crept ashore into this ambush, shaking water from eyes that were certainly those of Uiko the fisherman.

CHAPTER XVI

SARRASCO HAS AN INSPIRATION

A TINY crowd had gathered around the embankment end as the launch fussed across the lagoon and slowed beside the block of unhewn stone that took the place of a wharf. Curiosity drew Mr. Gresham from the shade of the little veranda of his hut where he had been immersed in plans and specifications. Agnew, who had been at his side, followed his chief as a matter of course. Gessi, with a gesture to a couple of his underlings, bade them assist the mooring and followed to see that it was efficiently done. Katrine left on her easel an unfinished sketch of the distant hills fronted by the marshes, and strolled slowly forward to join her father. Behind her Vilip and Jovan made a respectful escort.

The launch came to a standstill. Esuli Bey's brilliant smile was flashed upward and his hand rose in an elaborate salute. He climbed the slope of the embankment with haste but without loss of dignity and stood at attention.

"The Signor Gresham?" he hazarded politely and in English. Gresham came forward with a hand outstretched. "Here," he said gravely. "And you, signor, are—?"

"Murad Esuli, at your service, signor. I am responsible for the Governorship of these poor acres of the Vodra district. I come to offer to you my homage and the assurance of my desire to serve you in any way you may command. May I present the Commandante Sarrasco, who is doing me the honor of visiting me in my seclusion?"

Sarrasco bowed profoundly. Gresham, waiting gravely till this display of deference was completed, held out his hand and in his turn presented his daughter and the engineer.

The Turk raised his eyes to Katrine with that undefinable but at the same time recognizable expresson of—guilt (I search vainly for any other word which approaches my meaning) that the Oriental, in spite of Western training, continues to use when confronted by the unveiled woman. And his bow emulated Sarrasco's in lithe deference.

"Signorina?" he said. "A very surprising pleasure this. You are actually daring the discomforts of our wilds in the pursuit of—art?" He made a little inquiring gesture toward the deserted easel.

A flush deepened on her cheek. In spite of herself she half glanced in Agnew's direction.

"No, Excellency," she smiled. "Art is my distraction. I came to inform myself—to be educated. To us in America the Balkan is a sealed book. Now to me a seal is always a challenge. So I have come to break it." He lifted his hands to express amazement. The Italian imitated him.

"An American lady—on the Vodra!" they deprecated in chorus. "I credit my eyes—with delight, but with difficulty," added the Commandante.

She bowed demurely—she laughed. "You overwhelm me," she said. "How can I answer you. By an offer of refreshment? There is *raki* here—in some abundance, I fear, judging by the energy displayed by some of our workmen an evening back. Is a knife-point the *only* permissible conclusion to an argument in your dominions, Excellency?"

The smile on Esuli's lips hardened. "At your dictation, signorina," he said slowly, "I will make *any* form of argument unpopular among these—cattle! Is it worth your concern to point out to me the ringleaders?"

She looked a little startled. "I had no thought of being serious," she protested, "except in my invitation. And we are not limited to *raki.* There is even whisky among our resources. And wine."

She turned as if she sought something. "Vilip!" she cried. "See what we can do in the way of refreshments!"

But Vilip had vanished. From the footplate of a construction engine which stood a few yards away a stoker heard the call but did not respond to it. He was industriously engaged in building up briquettes of coal-dust on the tender and seemed to have accumulated more grime on his clothes and features than the nature of even this employment merited. From the corner of his eye he watched the party file slowly across the mud piazza. As they disappeared in the shadow of the veranda he desisted from his toil.

JOVAN VACO strolled toward him, grinning. "Why?" he asked laconically, eying the portentous stains on the valet's clothing.

"Abdul, the engine-driver, is my friend," Vilip answered.

"I see that you have reasons for hurriedly disguising yourself," said the Albanian bluntly. "Be thankful that Gessi's attention was elsewhere. These things are not usually done under *his* nose!"

"I had choice of two evils," said Vilip quietly. "I chose the lesser. Gessi may suspect me—possibly does so already. But he does not *know* me, my good Jovan."

"And Esuli Bey?"

"Was two years in the Paris Embassy as my co-secretary," said Vilip. "I had no wish to revive old memories."

The Albanian shrugged his shoulders. "But you wish to see—more of him?" he hazarded, and the new-made stoker nodded affirmatively.

Jovan raised his voice: "Abdul!" he roared resoundingly.

From one of the huts a coal-grimed figure shambled hurriedly and got upon the footplate. His teeth shone white amid the grime as he inspected his newly appointed underling. He turned with a chuckle to his lever. "Stoke, son of unspeakable dirt!" he commanded, as he opened the whistle and began to back slowly down upon a row of waiting trucks. "Stoke, oh, witless and defiled one! Understand, too, that there is due to me a commission of two and a half piasters per day for having allowed this appointment. This is the invariable custom—on the 'Endless Road'!" He chuckled again loudly, as Vilip rose sharply from his pile of briquettes and confronted him alertly.

"Do not stare at your superiors, child of dishonor!" commanded Abdul loudly. "Stoke! And see that there be no obstacles on the road. These be the duties of a tried assistant!"

With a shrug and a smile Vilip did as he was told. The engine fussed and rattled between the embankment and the cutting. Trucks were tipped, returned empty, filled, and tipped again. Vilip obeyed his superior's direction with stolid promptness, and the engine-driver assumed lordly airs of mastership. The stoker, however, amid the complications of coupling and uncoupling trucks, managed to keep an eye on the veranda in the square.

IT WAS Esuli Bey who appeared first of the visitors—Esuli escorting Miss Gresham. Agnew walked slowly behind them, his head held high with a certain air of sardonic contempt. And then Vilip, as he watched, gave a little sigh of content. The door of Gessi's hut opened and Lucia passed out into the sunlit square. She stepped with a sort of regal indolence toward Agnew and stayed, facing him.

It was Vilip now who assumed airs of command and Abdul who obeyed. "Forward!" said the stoker in a tone that did not invite comment. "Advance to the far end of the embankment!" Abdul, with a cheerful grin, clanged forward at a foot's-pace. Vilip, carrying his disconnecting pole, preceded the engine.

He eyed the Turk narrowly. Esuli's attention, it was obvious, was no longer given entirely to Katrine. He was staring furtively over her shoulder at Agnew's companion. And she? Her eyes were focussed on Agnew and on him alone. Vilip saw the Turk halt at Agnew's side; he saw Katrine's sudden recognition and greeting of Lucia; he saw the gesture by which Esuli asked for an introduction and the obsequious bow with which he received it. He saw, also, the impatience with which Lucia turned back from this new admirer toward Agnew.

"Will dog eat dog?" soliloquized Vilip as he thrust with his pole at a coupling. "In Allah's time we shall see."

At the sound of approaching voices he looked around. It was Gresham who had

joined the group now—Gresham, to whom Sarrasco was still talking with animation punctuated by little gestures. The American looked at him with polite attention and a smile which expressed absolute nonchalance. Vilip was near enough to recognize this now—the engine, with its load of trucks, was passing the group.

The Italian looked round and then, with a half humorous gesture of resignation, took half a step in the direction of the launch. But in the very act of turning some thought seemed to strike him. He wheeled suddenly, impetuously toward Mr. Gresham again, colliding with him violently. The American stumbled, failed to recover himself, and fell sideways across the track. There was a shriek from Katrine—a savage curse from Vilip—and the grinding sound of brakes crammed fiercely on.

But the strength of Abdul's arm would have availed little. The buffers of the engine actually shadowed Mr. Gresham's face as Agnew stooped with a swift clutching movement and whirled him bodily aside. Rescued and rescuer rolled together on the embankment slope, dust stained, breathless, but, thanks to Agnew's swift energy, unharmed.

The clamor of excited voices broke out. Esuli's voice was uplifted in sudden quick anger directed at the "almost criminal awkwardness" which his guest had shown.

And the Italian?

He flung out his hands imploringly—he abased himself—he fell upon his knees—tears streamed down his cheeks. They might forgive him, but he could forgive himself—never! Finally he and his effusiveness were disposed of in the stern of the launch, which shot out upon the bosom of the lake.

Esuli remained silent for a minute while he rolled and thoughtfully lighted a cigarette. "Excellently conceived and not badly attempted!" he conceded. "Who would have thought that there was such strength and quickness in that giant's limbs?"

Sarrasco sighed. "It was an inspiration—and inspirations are too much the children of Chance," he admitted. "Well, well! Many a skirmish is lost to the victors before the battle is joined in earnest."

Esuli looked at him keenly. "It is to be joined then?" he asked.

"The sooner the better!" said Sarrasco energetically. "*Dominiddio!* the crass stolidity of the man! And I was tactful—heaven knows I was tactful as a doctor at the deathbed of his first patient!"

"Which, in fact, you nearly were," said Esuli with a smile. "However, let us look forward to another capital operation, where your rival will not be present to defeat us—your rival who, if I am not mistaken, let the significance of your display of imagination escape him."

BUT if Esuli could have heard a conversation which was taking place on the wharfside he had just left, he would have understood that he did Agnew injustice. Gresham had drawn the Canadian aside.

"You pile up your obligations, my friend!" he said. "First my daughter and then me. How am I to thank you?"

The other frowned and shrugged his shoulders. "By saying no more about either incident, sir," he answered, "and by letting me know how you met that assassin's proposals."

Gresham made a startled movement. "Assassin?" he demurred. "Eh, Agnew, that's hardly fair!"

"Heavens above us! As if there was room for mistake!" cried his companion impatiently. "He did it deliberately, calculatingly. He tried to murder you! You had refused his terms, I take it, whatever they were?"

Gresham looked at him with a sudden new emotion born in his eyes. "He tried—he *tried* to kill me?" he questioned.

"He tried his very best! And failed. What did he ask?"

Gresham hesitated. "The Campania Daregno—he only hinted it—he is not their paid agent, he informs me—might take over our liabilities here at cost, less five per cent. I refused to take him seriously. But I wonder——"

"You wonder?" Agnew's voice held the core of impatience. "You wonder when you meet villainy unashamed—here?"

Gresham shook his head. "I was wondering if I had the *right* to risk a fight with such as Sarrasco," he said quietly. "If he is what you think, what of his employers? And what of my employees? What of Thring and you?"

"And what of the nations—the little peoples of the Balkan who are trusting to

an American's word?" cried Agnew. "What of them? What of your own honor?"

Gresham's face flushed slowly. "I don't know that I'd given them a thought," he admitted. "No—I've never gone back on my word, Agnew. Perhaps I'd hardly better begin."

A deprecating cough echoed at his shoulder. He wheeled. Vilip, clean and reclothed, was confronting him.

"I was wondering if I might suggest a little ointment for the signor's bruises?" explained the valet. "The signor fell heavily."

Gresham nodded. "But not so heavily as he—might have fallen, Vilip," he answered, "if Mr. Agnew had not—spoken."

Vilip looked interrogative. "Spoken?" he repeated with a slight air of bewilderment. "Spoken?"

"He acted—magnificently," said Gresham, "but I was in danger of falling again, it seems. And he spoke. Now it's up to *me* to act!"

CHAPTER XVII

THE THREAT OF THE HILLS

"IT IS TO be noted," said Vilip, "that we are not the first to visit these highlands within the week." Gresham looked round. Accompanied by Agnew and assisted by the iron thews of Jovan and Vilip, he had ascended the ridge which overlooks the ravine of the Slivnitz. Three thousand feet below, the river roared over the remains of the wrecked bridge. A tiny spider-like object which passed to and fro showed where the cradle ran across the void the bridge had left.

Agnew made a gesture in assent to Vilip's remark and pointed to a snowdrift—a remnant of the past Winter's wrath. Across it ran the imprint of footsteps. There had been heavy rains not three days before. The traveler, whoever he was, had passed since then.

"What of it?" asked Gresham. "The hills are free to all."

"Free, but not attractive, signor," said Vilip deferentially. "What should bring a man here? It is peculiar, signor. But I offer no explanation. I only mention the fact."

He withdrew into the background, favored by a tiny nod of approval from Jovan. Gresham and Agnew advanced across the sloping plateau which led to the edge of the crag.

As they reached it Gresham turned and looked back. For a full minute he was silent as the echoes. Then he flung up his hand and pointed toward the tiered terraces of stone.

"There is our difficulty and there is its cure!" he cried. "Avalanches? Could one expect anything else? We have built our bridge beneath the rubbish-shoot of the mountain!"

Agnew's eyes followed the direction of his employer's finger and for the first time became aware of a pregnant fact. The surrounding acres of rock sloped from their feet by increasing gradients to the yet steeper slope of the mountainside. But their formation—and this was what he had not noted before—was that of a huge triangle. Gresham and he stood at a point which corresponded to the handle of a Titanic fan. But the gradient was so barely perceptible, the spread of the widening slopes so gradual, that the point might have escaped notice but for the peculiar shadow flung by the early morning light. It was indeed as Gresham said. To where they stood the forces of gravity would slowly and uninterruptedly propel fifty per cent. of the Winter's collection of snow. It was a great shoot and the valley below was the ash-pit. The bridge, incidentally, hung directly in the path of the fall.

Gresham began to laugh with enjoyment. Agnew's face was a study in self-contempt, yet, at the same time, was lit with relief. He made a little sound of disgust.

"And I called myself an engineer and this escaped me!" he cried. "We have to move the bridge on, say a quarter of a mile, and we avoid the danger! That is what you mean?"

"That is why Sanders did not trouble to elaborate the point to me," said Gresham. "The solution was easy. The deviation was merely a matter of yards, rather than miles. Other avalanches may fall—may even fall upon the bridge after it is moved. But they will be merely offshoots, and of snow, not of the ice packed under pressure by its concentration in this groove. Well—there is one of our difficulties, and a great one, passed!"

He walked on another fifty or sixty yards. He halted and pointed below him.

"The matter and its solution emphasize themselves. Look here, Agnew! How did this escape you?"

Agnew gave a puzzled frown. A yet deeper groove had been cut in the lip of the crag—one which would draw to a yet narrower point the collected masses of rubble, ice or snow which the slopes would concentrate upon it. It was obvious that it overhung exactly the site of the ruined bridge.

Agnew's frown grew darker. "This is new, Mr. Gresham!" he cried. "When I first ascended here the snows were deeper, I allow, but this could not have been buried. And look here! It is artificial—it has been lately engineered!"

THE four men lowered themselves carefully into the trench, for the snows, melting and refreezing, freez- and remelting, had covered the surface of the rock with *verglas*. A single false step and the stumbler would have ended his stumble three thousand feet below. The simile of the shoot here was only too exact. The glazed surface ended upon the cliff's utmost rim.

They looked about them curiously. The ice covered the center of the great ditch in the stone, but at the sides, where the sun's rays had exerted their strength, the rock was uncovered. And it bore the marks of recent tamping—here and there, indeed, was the grime of exploded blasting-powder. Art had been brought in to perfect Nature's scheme.

Jovan swore softly below his breath. "It is a question not only of ingenuity but of insolence! They could not expect this to remain undiscovered. Is this a threat? I read it so."

The others looked at him. "A threat?" they questioned. "A threat?"

The Albanian shrugged his shoulders. "They have placed this menace above the site of the bridge to warn us that it is commanded and can not be rebuilt. What is to prevent them from blasting another such above each or any of the other sites we may choose? A little dynamite, a little more ingenuity, and the thing is done. Nay, this is a warning! They have not troubled to disguise it. They do it with a smile and a high head!"

"No other spot is so favored by the slope of the hill," objected Gresham. "At other points the collecting of avalanches would not be so much a matter of inevitability."

"The matter, to me, appears to be one of skill and dynamite and that alone," said Jovan pessimistically. "I am open to contradiction, but it seems to me that any and every point of this cliff-head can be made to command any and every point in the ravine below. Am I wrong, signors?"

They shook their heads. It was true enough. Wherever the bridge was built, the impending menace could be directed upon it by hostile hands.

"A guard-house must be built and a guard maintained," said Agnew doggedly.

The Albanian made an ironic gesture at the surroundings. "Your guard-house and its contents would be the first offering made by the Winter snows to the river below. Where could you place it that it would not be a target for avalanches?"

They were silent. The light of satisfaction that had illuminated Gresham's face a few moments before had vanished. Into the silence of their meditation broke a sudden exclamation of warning. It was Vilip's voice that was raised and Vilip's hand that was pointing to one of the terraces of stone which cut the hillside immediately above them.

"Who are these and what do they do?" he asked sharply.

A couple of men had come into view. They halted and looked down. And then still silently, but with great swiftness, they bent as if with a common but unexpressed impulse and rolled a couple of boulders over the terrace edge. With incredible rapidity they repeated the operation once, twice, a third time. Before Gresham and his companions had fully realized the trap in which they were caught the white wave of avalanche was thundering down upon them, its crest only a few hundred yards away!

Jovan called loudly upon the One God and His Prophet and seized Gresham's arm. He took a flying leap which dragged him and his companion straight forward, as it seemed, into the path of the coming destruction. Without halting to reason, and governed by instinct alone, Vilip and Agnew followed. The four leaped forward, stumbled and fell against a wall of soft and melting snow which lay in the full blaze of the new risen sun at the foot of a great

step in the slope of the gully. The din from above grew louder, pealed up to thunder notes, shrilled in their very ears, and then swallowed them, as it were, in a very torrent of sound. And other torrents were let loose. Foam-white as a falling cataract, the huge billow of snow and stone shot out over the protecting lip of stone above them and spouted through the narrows of rock into the void of the ravine.

For a matter of seconds the white veil hung roaring between the four men and the blue of the sky, and then was gone. Its speed had been their salvation. Flung far out from the lip of the drop above them, the avalanche had leaped, as it were, over their bodies into the freedom of the void. Dazed, incredulous of their own safety, they lay at the foot of the wall of rock, and blinked at the dawn-lit day.

GRESHAM made an incoherent exclamation and struggled to rise. Jovan's heavy hand fell upon his shoulder.

"Not yet, signor!" he said vehemently. "They may set other icefalls moving or, if Allah favor us, may descend to see if their work is fully done. Lie still, all of you! This hand is, perhaps, not yet played, nor this trick in our game taken!"

Vilip looked at him earnestly and then nodded. He leaned across and began to whisper in the Albanian's ear. The latter made a quick gesture of assent.

"If your Excellencies will consent to remain motionless for a matter of five minutes," said Vilip, "we shall be greatly helped. Will your Excellencies consent?"

Gresham and Agnew exchanged glances. The latter gave a little shrug. "Ten minutes," he agreed. "But, if you can manage it, make haste. A snowdrift is not the pleasantest of beds, and another avalanche——" He finished by lifting his shoulders again significantly.

"I have to thank your Excellencies for your trust," said the courier amiably. "Ten minutes, if things go as one may expect, will amply suffice. Excuse us, signors."

As he spoke the two seemed to vanish, Jovan on the left, Vilip on the right. The torn snowdrifts received them. Gresham and Agnew were left to cool and cheerless meditation below the rock wall which cut off all view of the terraced hillside above.

For a minute or two complete silence, save for the purr of the river far below, surrounded them. And then the stillness was broken by the sound of a human voice. A man called to his fellow in Turkish.

The sounds continued and came nearer. Agnew, indeed, whose knowledge of the local vernacular had increased by leaps and bounds during the last two months, was enabled to distinguish words.

"To God be acclamation!" said one of the unseen. "The gully has been smoothed as a plane smoothes a plank! There is not a trace of the accursed!"

There was a chuckle of satisfaction. "It remains to find out who and what we have disposed of. He is not one to accept a story lacking substantiation."

Agnew, looking up, saw the half of a sandaled foot project over the edge of rock above him. The next instant two eyes were staring directly into his own—brown, dilated, horrified eyes these, meeting his with incredulous wrath.

An exclamation rang out into the echoes. A couple of brown hands, appearing from nowhere in particular, snaked out and locked beneath the sunken chin. A yard or two to the left another shout and the sound of stumbling feet told its own tale. With a muffled thud, descending, as it seemed, from the core of a snow-cloud which their struggles set astir, two bulky objects fell beside Gresham and Agnew.

They discovered themselves as two tunic-clad men, immovably locked about the elbows by Jovan and Vilip respectively. They made frenzied but ineffectual efforts at release.

"If your Excellency would concern yourself to shackle this fellow's legs," said Vilip's voice, proceeding from behind his captive's ear, "much time and strength would be saved."

Agnew laughed. The humor of the situation appealed to him. The matter-of-factness in the courier's voice and demeanor had its comic side. He whipped off his own belt and tightened it about the prisoner's knees. Gresham, meanwhile, was offering Jovan the solid assistance of his weight which he had brought into action by disposing his person upon the other captive's struggling limbs. Within the space of two minutes the men were very completely at their captors' mercy.

THEY were placed side by side upon the snow. Gresham inspected them gravely. They blinked up at him with sullen, frightened eyes. They poured out torrents of appeal and explanation. With the satisfied affability of colleagues who have dealt with a situation in complete accord and with full success, Vilip and the Albanian shared a single match to light twin cigarettes.

"I doubt if there is any object in—in keeping them, Excellency," said the latter indifferently. "In their present mood they would say anything, and implicate anybody."

Gresham showed surprise. "You would release them—you would not bring them to justice?" he cried.

Jovan laughed grimly. "Justice?" He made a gesture of contempt. "Here our justice is administered by the master of these men—the man who has used them to set this trap—whose rewards they hoped to gain by springing it! Is it to Esuli Bey that you would bring your complaint against them, signor?"

"The Bey? *He* is responsible for this?" Gresham's voice was resonant with surprise.

Jovan shrugged his shoulders. "Who else, signor? They are *zaptiehs*—men of his guard and used for all or any of his purposes. What wisdom would there be in bringing them to him?"

Gresham looked at Agnew. The engineer made a gesture of careless acquiescence. "True, most probably," he agreed. "It is all part of the same state of—of war in which we find ourselves."

Gresham hesitated. "But that being so, to—to release them, as you suggest? Is not that beyond all reason?"

Jovan lifted up his head and laughed again—loudly, savagely, the echoes magnifying the sound and the cruel cadence. He whipped a revolver from his belt and cocked it.

"I would release them—thus!" he cried, turning to the captive pair with menacing deliberation.

The men screamed and struggled frantically. And at the same time Agnew's hand fell upon the Albanian's arm.

But the two frenzied prisoners either did not see or did not recognize his merciful intention. They twisted themselves round, they collided with each other in their agony of desperation. One, the one nearest the cliff-head, began to slide upon the glazed surface. He shrieked. Shackled as he was at wrist and ankle, he gripped at his comrade's torn tunic with his teeth. He merely completed the disaster. The other began to slide in his turn—brought the impact of his weight upon the already moving body. Both yelled despairingly, hideously.

Agnew released his grip upon Jovan's arm and made an impetuous dash at the human avalanche. Vilip gave a warning cry, snatched at a crevice with one hand and with the other found and maintained purchase on the engineer's collar. Agnew, clutching unavailingly at the ice-smooth surface, sprawled at full length, supported by Vilip's grasp alone. He saw the two prisoners add speed to speed, and then, seized with sudden nausea, he averted his eyes.

But his ears were open, and the despair of the last cry which reached him rang in them for many a day. That, and the cruel cadence of Jovan's laugh.

For as the two bodies flashed out from the cliff-edge into the abyss the Albanian laughed for the third time—cheerfully, amiably, with the whole-hearted satisfaction of one whose sense of the ridiculous has been amply fed.

"Your Excellency's pardon!" he cried. "After all and in spite of your Excellency's objection, they have found—release!"

CHAPTER XVIII

A STAB IN THE BACK

THE rays of the westering sun lit the interior of Mr. Gresham's frame hut on the Vodra embankment, lit the open square of trampled mud, lit most effectively the waving masses of hair that crowned Katrine's forehead and fell, in a light foam of ringlets, to the level of her eyes. And these last were bent earnestly on a cable-form which lay upon the table before her. She frowned.

At the sound of a footstep she looked up through the open door and her face showed relief. It was her father who was coming toward her.

She handed him the paper. "I opened it—not knowing what answer might be required," she explained. "I am no wiser for having read it. What does Gordon mean?"

Gresham shrugged his shoulders silently and went into the room behind him. He returned, holding a small leather-bound book. He passed his hand down the printed columns, still holding the form while he translated it from the code. A moment later he gave a slight exclamation and his daughter noted that the new-burnt tan on his face could not hide the fact that the blood had ebbed from his cheeks.

She sprang to her feet. "What is it? Oh, what is it?" she cried anxiously.

Her father made a reassuring gesture and stood still without speaking, staring at the half-dozen words on the yellow form as if he would read another meaning to them than the bald statement the code had supplied. His color returned; he squared back his shoulders; he stood very upright with the carriage of a man who confronts Destiny unshaken by her blows. He gave the ghost of a laugh, opened his cigar-case, struck a match, and sat down slowly. He sent a great cloud of smoke spinning up among the rafters before he enunciated an articulate word.

"Glaisher has side-tracked us," he said quietly at last.

"Gordon has—has deserted you?" she asked. "Is that the meaning of this?" She pointed to the yellow paper which an errant gust of air had sent fluttering to the earthen floor.

Gresham nodded, picked up the paper and read aloud:

"Impossible to do as you wish. Money very tight. A bear movement against you. Suggest an arrangement. Am taking holiday."

Gresham laughed again—dryly, sardonically. "You were not nice to Gordon, Katrine," he said.

She clutched her hand to her neck as if a sense of suffocation overcame her. She looked down at her father with a suddenly horrified throb of foreboding.

"What is it—plainly?" she asked. "Don't play with me, father! What is Gordon doing?"

"I cabled him as my partner, very fully, to get out the issue of ten thousand debentures of a hundred dollars each, first mortgage on the Bir Railway. Full details of the security offered are at his disposal—he can lay his hand on them in the office. He is perfectly aware—I have never given him any reason to think otherwise—that it is a sound venture worthy of support from a reasonable market. He and his uncle, I suppose, have seen to it that the market is an unreasonable and ignorant one. They have beared it for me in advance. My own partner has done this!"

When at last she spoke it was with self-accusation in every cadence of her voice. "I am responsible," she said. She gave a little gasp. "Can I make amends?" she added hoarsely.

Gresham turned his eyes to hers with a startled, incredulous air. "You?" He lifted his shoulders in the impatient shrug of a man whose nerves are a-jangle. "How?" he demanded tersely.

"I could—ask his pardon for my—my instability," she murmured. "I could ask him to—overlook it." Her glance did not meet his—it was resolutely turned away.

Gresham, usually the most clean-mouthed of men, swore fiercely. "By ——, Katrine!" he snarled. "I'd as soon see you in your coffin as Gordon Glaisher's wife—*now!* Marry *him?* The hound!"

She swerved again to confront him. There was ineffable relief in the glance she gave him—relief, inquiry, gratitude.

"Thank you," she said simply. "It seemed possible that it was my duty, but I don't know, even then, if I could have done it. But what is to be the end of it all, father? How does it affect the road?"

"IT MEANS," he said, "that I am tied to my original capital and contracts—that I have no resources to help me to—to alterations and additions. It means that—in America, at any rate—further help is closed to me. Glaisher and Blakstein will have seen to that. And they—instinct tells me this—will get this bear movement on the run till Bir shares are down to ditch-bottom level. They think they have me in a cleft stick."

Her eyes asked for more. "Yes?" she said quietly. "Yes?"

"Birs will be discredited. Birs will fall. They will buy in—or they think they will—Birs at bed-rock prices. They hope to buy me out eventually at their own wrecker's valuation!" He wheeled savagely—he brought down his heel with a stamp. "No doubt they have had their price, but they've not got me fixed yet!" he rapped. "They think my capital is all in Birs and that I'll sell Birs to realize. What isn't in, *will* be

in! I'll cable my broker to buy every Bir in the market that touches ten below par!"

He shook himself. "And make a fortune at it!" he said grimly. "Esuli and his cutthroats haven't frightened me, Katrine. A little cur dog like Gordon isn't going to hurt me with his yapping! It's up to me to see this through and, the thicker the hail, the wider I'll open the old umbrella. But there's one thing, daughter. I don't think I can stand to have you in it."

She cried out in protest.

He shook his head gravely. "It's the real thing we're up against, sweetheart," he said. "It's war, no less. It's war with Nature, with man, with Luck. I don't want to have to think of you, daughter. I want to know that my cares are limited to my men, my road, and myself. Isn't that reasonable? Why am I to endanger as well what I value most in this world?"

She put her hand upon his with a tender little caress of gratitude. "But you must value most in the world—your honor! And there I can help you—at least, I think so, if I stay. If I can help you to build the road—*without* alterations and additions? If I can get—Mr. Sanders' original plan?"

He looked at her with a queer intensity. "This place has got on your nerves, Katrine," he said soothingly.

Her sense of humor mastered her. Her eyes danced—she laughed with wholehearted enjoyment. Then, suddenly, "I'm perfectly sane, father. And I have been shown a way to help. I must stay. You must put up with me."

HE LOOKED at her thoughtfully. The scene at the breakfast table scarcely three months before recurred to him. It was then he had told himself that he was discovering his daughter. Would Katrine reveal herself as something more? The debating poise of his mind betrayed itself by a little unconscious shrug. "Am I to share your confidence?" he asked, almost humbly.

Again she laid her hand upon his arm. "I think perhaps you wouldn't altogether understand, father," she answered. "It is so entirely a woman's business, though it was suggested by a man."

"Who?" he asked, looking at her with sudden keenness.

"I don't know that I need conceal the name of my collaborator," she said. "Jovan—if you must know. He is a very trustworthy gentleman and—has been married twice!" she added with a little laugh of enjoyment.

"I won't pry," he said simply. "I have perfect trust in you, Katrine. I am naturally anxious, that is all. I may ask one thing? Your plan does not take you into any danger?"

"None, so far as I can see possibilities," she said. "It is a woman's work. Are you satisfied?"

He sat down again at his table and pulled a mass of papers toward him. He gave her a cheerful little nod. "Satisfied—and interested," he said. "Perhaps your little plan will be betrayed?"

"By whom?" she asked.

Her father's eyes surveyed her with a twinkle. "By—yourself," he said, and glued his eyes resolutely on the diagrams. "Perhaps you would ask Agnew to join me?"

"Am I likely to see him?" she asked.

"I think so," he said gravely. "In fact, I rather gathered that you intended doing so."

His face was still averted, but there was something in the set of his shoulders that told her that a spasm of humor was shaking him. She looked at him, hesitating, for a moment and then without another word went out into the square. And she herself laughed. It was, in fact, quite possible that her father had a certain amount of intuition surprising in one of his sex.

She looked round to discover—Agnew.

CHAPTER XIX

UIKO AIDS FATE

AGNEW was standing at the wharf-edge and till she had taken half a dozen steps forward Katrine was unable to see what engaged his attention. It revealed itself as Uiko, standing erect in his deplorable boat and speaking in vociferous whispers. Agnew listened impassively till the oration appeared to come to a dramatic halt. Then he tossed a coin upon the planks at the fisherman's feet.

Uiko stooped, picked it up, and made a gesture of obsequious gratitude. As he did so he recognized and saluted Katrine. He turned eagerly back to Agnew.

"The signorina would find pleasure in

exploring the recesses of the marsh and lake? Let me put myself at the signorina's service."

Agnew wheeled to face Katrine, and for the first time since her arrival she saw in his regard a slackening of the rigidity with which he had continued to meet her.

She looked at Uiko. The fisherman grinned cheerfully back. "Speak to the signorina," he said to Agnew. "Let her hear my proposal."

Briefly Agnew translated. "Would you care to go for a row?" he asked.

For a moment astonishment kept her silent, for she had not grasped his meaning as referring to Uiko. Was this the first sign of relenting?

"Aren't you too busy?" she returned. "I should enjoy it immensely, but my father has just been asking for you. Perhaps, if it is still light, when you have finished your talk——?"

This time it was he who showed surprise. No, it certainly had not been in his mind that *he* was to spend an hour's leisure in poling Katrine from lagoon to lagoon in Uiko's dilapidated ark. And then, on the heels of that thought came another. Why not? Was he afraid? A sense of irritation stung him. Of course he was not afraid! He had had his lesson—he had thoroughly benefited by it. He would prove it. "Very well," he said quietly. "If you can wait, I will borrow this apology for a boat and take you across to the Albanian shore. Your father is not likely to detain me long."

She looked at him gratefully.

"Thank you," she said. "I'll wait." For the first time he had not shunned her—the outer wall, at any rate, of his antipathy was down. She sat down upon a block beside the edge of the wharf to meditate the possibilities of an hour's companionship.

Her meditations had no time to crystallize into purpose. She looked up at the sound of a step to see Jovan approaching. The Albanian saluted her respectfully and immediately plunged into conversation with Uiko. The latter had watched Agnew's departure with an inquiring and somewhat discomfited glance.

"I asked the Excellency to persuade the signorina to enter my boat," he explained to Jovan. "They spoke together and then the Excellency merely bade me wait."

Jovan looked at Katrine. "Will you not accept his offer to go for a little voyage?" he asked in Italian. "Did not the Signor Agnew pass it on to you?"

She understood at once. She flushed and then the sudden sense of humiliation died. No, Agnew had not relented. She had misunderstood him. But the results of the misunderstanding were still hers to make use of. Had she not set herself doggedly to follow Jovan's advice? This expedition could be made to fit in with it.

"I am waiting for Signor Agnew," she said quietly. "It is he who is going to take me on the lake."

THE Albanian made her a little bow of comprehension. "It is this child of dirt who did not get the Signor Agnew's meaning," he deprecated. "The Signor Agnew will return immediately." He grew thoughtful. "There is no time, then, to lose," he added suddenly. "Could the signorina oblige me by the temporary loan of her handkerchief?"

For a moment her surprise kept her hesitating. Then, "Here," she said. "But after all, you are a little startling, are you not?"

The Albanian bowed again. "If the signorina will condescend to wait a bare five minutes—or less?"

He walked steadily away to the row of huts that ringed the mud piazza. He halted at Gessi's door. She saw him knock and enter. Two minutes later he returned with a complacent air. He handed her back the handkerchief with a courtly gesture.

"The handkerchief is undoubtedly yours, signorina," he said dryly. "The Signorina Gessi does not claim it. I informed her that Signor Agnew had picked it up and sent me with it and his compliments. I was able to inform her, thus, that Signor Agnew was shortly to be found upon the embankment. She is on the point of coming to thank him for his consideration."

Katrine's eyes had grown wider and wider during this short but amazing revelation. A twinkle of enjoyment shone in Jovan's usually somber eyes.

"I thought it as well that the Signorina Gessi should be present to watch your embarkation with Signor Agnew," he said. "I do not think that, up to the present, she has taken seriously the possibilities in your presence here."

Katrine was nearly hysterical with laugh-

ter. The assurance and the—the impudence with which Jovan had carried through his little stratagem was, to her Western ideas, a revelation of the ease and imagination employed by a master of intrigue.

Agnew was coming across the square with long, determined strides. "Now—if you are ready?" he said simply. He spoke to Uiko in Turkish, motioning him to land. With an air of acquiescent surprise the fisherman scrambled ashore.

Katrine rose, looking questioningly at Jovan. And he wheeled to meet her gaze with eyes which had been fastened on Gessi's still unopened door. He shook his head slightly. His glance plead eloquently for delay.

She looked back at him, at a loss. Where was she to find a cause of delay? Agnew she saw waiting for her—waiting with evidences of growing surprise. Jovan suddenly blew his nose with a resounding blast. Over the top of a vast square of silk he looked significantly at Katrine's pocket. Comprehension—or inspiration—came. She began to fumble for her own handkerchief.

"I have lost it," she announced. "If you will wait one minute——" She made a step in the direction of the hut. And then Lucia Gessi strolled slowly out into the piazza.

Katrine smiled and suddenly produced a ridiculous square of linen and lace.

"How stupid of me—it was there all the time!" She walked quickly toward the wharf-edge and held out her hand. Agnew, after an inappreciable moment of delay, seized the proffered fingers and handed her to her seat. He sat down, put the oars in the rowlocks, and pulled slowly and strongly toward the open water.

LUCIA GESSI appeared at the wharf-edge. She reviewed the scene without comment. Katrine's back was toward her. An obstruction—a mud-bank or mass of weeds—appeared to impede the boat's progress and the rower stood up to use the pole. His height, the massive power expressed in the swell of his thews and muscles, the ease with which he thrust the boat over or through the obstacle, these things all spoke eloquently to the three watchers. A little murmur of admiration escaped the lips of Uiko and the Albanian.

The latter spoke, deferentially. "They are full of power—the American cavaliers. Nothing stops them—nothing holds them, signorina."

Lucia turned and looked at him. "Where is his business taking him?" she demanded. "To the Albanian shore?"

Jovan smiled significantly. "This is not his hour for business, signorina. It is his way of seeking—relaxation. The signor Proprietor's daughter, as you see, is with him." He continued to smile, the complacent smile of the man who desires to hint more than his words convey.

She nodded. "I have eyes," she answered. "A servant always does well to pleasure a master's daughter. His own relaxation?" She smiled, in her turn, with a sort of indolent confidence. "That is another matter," she concluded.

Jovan shrugged his shoulders. "Possibly you are right, signorina," he allowed. "But if it is business he conducts it with very convincing effect."

Agnew, indeed, had leaned forward and was arranging his coat about Katrine's knees. The fisherman chuckled. "A love-affair conducted in my *londra!*" he commented. "I have confronted a strange matter or two within the last few weeks, but this comes nearest to surprising me—who am never surprised."

Lucia darted a look at the fisherman, suddenly, suspiciously. "What does he say?" she demanded.

Jovan smiled again. "He is simple enough to see in this *business* a love-episode, signorina," he answered. "He is not a man of education—this. He jumps at conclusions."

She stared at him, her brows meeting in the fierceness of her frown. With childlike directness the Albanian stared back. Then the passion in her face relaxed into mere contempt. She turned her shoulder toward the lake and strolled indolently, carelessly back across the piazza. She reentered her father's house without a backward look.

Jovan's smile followed her with ample self-complacence.

CHAPTER XX

AMONG THE RUSHES

IF JOVAN and Uiko could have overheard as well as seen, their interpretation of a simple incident would have been less satisfying to their self-confidence. Agnew had

taken off his jacket for coolness. The courtly instinct to use it as a protection of Katrine's skirt from Uiko's unlovely boards had been wanting. Katrine herself had made the suggestion—bluntly she had asked for it.

But she realized the value the incident might be made to have in Lucia Gessi's eyes and she had seen to it that the incident was made the most of. It was at her bidding that Agnew had folded the jacket this way and that with sedulous precision; it was she who had taken care that their hands met more than once during this process; it was she, again, who had expressed her thanks with gestures and smiles which were well within eye-range from the wharf.

She settled back upon the apology for a seat, well content. She had begun well. It gave her courage to continue.

Agnew, for the next few minutes, remained silent. He rowed strongly, with leisured strokes, away from the morass and out across the open center of the lake toward the farther shore. Stillness, calm, and a sense of expectancy seemed to hold the evening hours for their own.

An instinct that she was seeking his eyes suddenly possessed Agnew's mind. The quick desire to prove himself strong to meet her glance, to meet it with imperturbability, rose within him. He looked up.

"I wished to speak to you—without a chance of being overheard," she said slowly. "That was why I accepted your invitation—which you never meant to give!" she added, with the faint echo of a laugh.

The color mounted into his cheek. "I'm afraid I'm tactless," he confessed. "It was Uiko who suggested the row, with himself as oarsman. But I was—was glad to take his place."

"No, I think that last is not true," she said gravely. "But even that did not prevent my holding you to your word. As I say, I wanted to speak to you—alone."

He frowned. "I meant that your—your treatment of me would not prevent my behaving myself toward you with—with politeness, I hope."

For a moment she was silent. "And how have I treated you?" she asked.

He rowed with a jerkiness that implied irritation. "We might agree not to discuss that," he said frigidly. "Perhaps my simple-mindedness is to blame. You had need of an interview with me—away from possible eavesdroppers?"

She nodded. "Judgment has gone forth and there is no appeal?" she answered. "I thought men—as opposed to women—prided themselves on their justice?"

"Yes," he said, "and also on their power to weigh evidence. Some scarcely needs weighing—it is conclusive."

"No!" she cried quickly. "Evidence, circumstantial evidence, is never conclusive, because other evidence may modify or destroy its value. You should hear all—or nothing."

"Can't we be satisfied to differ?" he asked doggedly.

"No; because I have a favor to ask you—one which implies so intimate a situation between us that I can not afford to risk your—your dislike."

His expression was puzzled—and interested. She took her courage in her hands. "You must learn—to pay me attentions," she said, meeting his eyes frankly.

HE STARTED and nearly missed a stroke. His silence was the silence of amazement.

"You must learn that lesson, and learn to act upon it with naturalness. You will be under a supervision which will not easily be deceived."

Surprise still lit his face, but, at her last sentence, it softened at the touch of some hidden emotion—perhaps remembrance. "Learn?" he said quietly. "Or relearn? That last is hardest." He hesitated—and then the lines of his face grew grim again. "Am I suddenly become necessary to your—pleasure? Has this place bored you to such a point as that? Why not leave it?"

Her heart gave a queer throb—of pain, of humiliation, but of hope as well. For she had read his eyes—heard the relenting in his voice. "Relearn," he had said, dwelling upon the word with a reminiscent note that touched somewhere near to—tenderness? His pride had stifled it in a moment, but it was there! Could she blow upon those dying embers and light again the flame which Fate and circumstance had conspired to stifle?

"I am asking nothing for myself," she said. "I am asking much for my father, for the road, for—for you."

He drew himself together with a gesture that seemed like wincing. The passing glint of emotion had vanished from his face.

"Please be quite specific," he said. "What do you want?"

She made a gesture of acquiescence. "We are here, you and I, in a land of intrigue. One vital secret is withheld from you. Gessi and his daughter have possibly destroyed, but have learned the contents of, Mr. Sanders' plans. You are endeavoring to acquire an influence over Signorina Gessi—one which will result in her yielding up this information?"

He flushed. "I—I am endeavoring to make her my friend."

She laughed lightly. "And her—her friendship is to have this saving result? As one woman discussing another, let me assure you that friendship from Lucia Gessi is not to be won by surrender," she said. "You are endeavoring to win a victory—by running away."

"I do not run away," he protested. "I see her constantly—every evening. I make time to see her."

She laughed again and this time with genuine enjoyment. The tone of his voice gladdened her. Jealousy? Had a taint of that been in her mind? Possibly. That shadow, at any rate, was now lifted from her plans. "Out of your own mouth I convict you, you—you *man!*" she derided. "Does a woman yearn for the thing she is offered? Withhold a prize if you wish to have it coveted. Avoid Lucia Gessi, and she will seek *you*. Don't probe for her confidences—evade them. Flout her, and win from her all you want by—jealousy!"

He drew a deep breath.

"Using you as my instrument?" he asked, wonderingly.

"Using me," she said quietly.

And then, for a full half-minute, the silence was unbroken, except for the plash and ripple of his oar-blades.

"And you do not find the position—degrading?" he asked slowly.

She did not flush. Her face was untroubled. "No," she said. "What I can do for the road appears to me very well worth doing. As far as I am concerned you have nothing to look askance at. *You* are the factor vital to the situation."

HE ROWED on silently. As they approached the Albanian shore of the lake the breath of the evening breeze again sent a long shivering whisper through the rushes. Yet the breeze failed to fan Katrine's cheek. The notion struck her for the first time. *Was* there a breeze? Why did not the ripple break the calm? Or else——

Agnew turned his head. And then Katrine, looking over his shoulder, cried aloud warningly. Something had risen behind Agnew's back—something that lifted head and shoulders out of the clinging water-plants and held itself menacingly.

She flung herself forward, bearing Agnew down. A sheen, like the distant glimmer of lantern-light, flitted across the dusk, the point of its ray, as it were, culminating on Katrine's shoulder. She cried out for the second time—with a sudden twinge of pain.

Something splashed and rustled with a vengeance from the hidden depths of green. Something fought through the clinging mud, the suck of limbs withdrawn from its grip sounding harshly in the stillness. Agnew swung himself up from the bottom of the boat, his hand searching his hip pocket. The nickel barrel of his revolver shone against the darkness and was swallowed by the sudden flame of red.

Close upon the sound of the shot a shriek echoed from the reeds, but the churning feet fought on. Agnew fired again, but this time without any answer to prove how true or how false had been his aim. The rustling ceased, but the muffled pad of string-covered shoes flying across the turf showed that the would-be assassin had fled. The proofs of his determination and his failure lay in the bottom of the boat—a long-bladed Albanian knife and the deep rivulet of crimson which welled from Katrine's arm.

A cry broke from Agnew's lips—a queer, incoherent sound, filled with wrath, remorse, almost with supplication.

His arm closed upon Katrine—he lifted her, held her to him while he pressed his handkerchief to the wound. His eyes were brimmed with an agony of anxious pain. "You took it—from me!" he muttered. "You saved *me*—and risked yourself!"

She smiled and lay still, looking up at him with a curiously shy and diffident glance. "I—I did my best," she murmured. "There was—no time."

He groaned. "We can't have you among us to take these risks!" he cried. His fingers trembled as he bound the linen about her shoulder. "Can you stand it—can you stand the pain? Are you faint?" he whispered. His voice shook.

She rose to a sitting posture. Gently she disembarrassed herself of his arm. "It is nothing," she said firmly. "A little cut —a flesh-wound. There is no cause for anxiety."

He looked at her incredulously yet hopefully. He muttered—his thoughts finding unconscious issue in words: "If she had been killed! Merciful God! If she had been killed!"

A curiously maternal feeling seized her. He was so unstrung—his need of comfort was so abject—his bewilderment of anxiety so childishly pathetic.

She smiled again. "Row!" she suggested. "Take me back and then we'll see what a bandage and cold water will do. There is nothing to be alarmed at. Row! Row! Can't have me with you? Doesn't this prove that—I have my uses? I have helped to save your skin, perhaps. Are you going to deny me my chance to save your reputation—and the road?"

He dashed the oars into the water and began to row with great wrenching strokes which sent them skimming across the lagoon. "No I can't bear it!" he repeated. "How can I work with you in danger—*you!*"

The smile had left her eyes. She was grave now. "And I myself?" she asked. "What of me, sent away to leave you in these same dangers—*you?*"

"Me?" he repeated wonderingly.

"Just—you," she said quietly, and then the dusk, to her fading senses, became night itself. Nature intervened with her merciful hand, and, with a faint sigh, Katrine fainted.

CHAPTER XXI

AGNEW PLAYS HIS PART

DR. PELLIGRINO, medical inspector of the advanced section of the Bir Railway, bowed himself out of Mr. Gresham's veranda with a certain reluctance. Stationed as he was in the center of his section, away from intercourse with his intellectual compeers, his visit to civilization had proved a break of color in the drab background of his life. His sudden call to Vodra to attend a lady of such distinction as the daughter of the Signor Proprietor was a matter for elation. True it was no more than a flesh-wound from which she suffered, but it had been necessary to put in a stitch or two. She had smiled, had scouted the idea of anesthetics and had made no trouble by wincing. And now, with promises of return on the following morning, he was leaving her to the attentions of her father—and her lover?

He shook his head a little doubtfully over the last proposition. They were cold, these Americans. And then, as he walked down the piazza to where the gang and trolley awaited him, his theories received a check. Perhaps there was a reason for the Signor Agnew's stolidity? Perhaps it was coming toward him?

A lady strolled slowly across the open square in the direction of the Signor Proprietor's veranda, and Pelligrino immediately recognized a compatriot. Lucia Gessi's coloring, the suave lines of her body, the careless perfection of her dress and adornment, told him this. Moved by the courtly instinct of his race he uncovered as she passed.

Her eyes reviewed him with a certain indifference and then woke with interest. She acknowledged his salutation by a bow. She came to a halt.

"The Signor Doctor?" she suggested.

"The same, signorina," he answered. "At your service."

"You have been visiting the Signorina Gresham?"

He bowed again. "Yes, signorina."

"And you find her—how?" There was certainly anxiety in the tone, he told himself. And yet it was discounted by a certain hardness.

"I find her doing excellently well, I am glad to say, signorina. The wound is merely superficial and the loss of blood will, I have reason to hope, be quickly recovered. We have no cause for real anxiety."

"Ah!" Her eyes grew somber, the alertness left her face. She bowed slightly, murmured a word of thanks, and passed on. "It will not be out of place to make my own inquiries," she suggested, more to herself, he thought, than to him. He watched her for a moment, with a significant smile, before he wheeled in his turn toward the waiting trolley.

THE three who sat in the veranda looked up as Lucia approached. The two men rose to their feet. Katrine saluted her visitor with a smile and a wave of the hand and the Italian

girl bowed as only one of her race can bow. She looked down at the invalid in the deck-chair with an air that spoke more of exultation than of sympathy.

"Signorina!" she said gravely. "What an escape has been yours! In God's mercy you do not suffer greatly—that I sincerely trust!"

Katrine nodded affirmatively. She made a motion toward the chair her father had relinquished. "Thank you, I have no pain," she answered, "but it is good of you to trouble to inquire. Won't you sit down?"

Lucia shook her head. "But no, signorina!" she said. "My anxiety brought me to disturb you. My care for your quick recovery must take me immediately away. Rest is your need now—rest and quiet. I only wished to see how you stand. I have seen."

She wheeled toward Agnew as she spoke. The last two sentences had the air of being addressed to him and him alone.

He remained silent, looking at her with grave, unmoved eyes. Gresham began to murmur polite nothings. Her anxiety was most kind—her inquiries most appreciated. But for the moment she was right. The patient must not have too much of any company, however sympathetic.

"Yes," she agreed quietly. "I must take you away, Signor Intendente. I come opportunely. Your presence shows that you have little experience of pain and weakness. You must not tire our patient."

Agnew moved with a startled gesture of surprise. He stood hesitating and irresolute, looking first at Lucia Gessi and then, with inquiry, at the white face in the invalid chair.

Katrine smiled again. She looked at Agnew—possessively.

"The Signor Intendente is always welcome," she said gaily. "There is something of a tonic to weakness in the neighborhood of great strength. I think you exude vigor, Samson."

Her tone was familiar, arch, playful. Was it convincing? Her glance was directed at Agnew, but for a barely perceptible moment she flashed inquiry toward Lucia. Had this barb gone home? Had it even reached the target?

The Italian made no sign. Her features were thoughtful, her air reminiscent. "Samson?" she repeated meditatively. "Padre Antonio used to inform me of his history and of those of other ancient holy men when I was a child. If I rightly remember he was a Saint of small education and little intelligence. For he was betrayed—by a woman."

For a moment there was a queer little silence. Then Katrine laughed.

"Does that touch you, Signor Agnew?" she cried. "While your strength has waxed has your intellect wasted? Are you at the mercy of the eternal feminine?"

He shrugged his shoulders lightly. He took the same tone of persiflage and answered her smile, keeping the hint of intimacy intact. "All ladies find me at their feet, I hope," he answered. "But Signorina Gessi is probably right in taking me away from yours. I have wearied you—my anxiety has outrun my discretion. For the moment let me say *a riverderla!*"

She looked at him approvingly. It was excellently done. His pose—that of one who offered tenderness under the veil of mere courtesy—was convincing. A little pulse of admiration leaped in Katrine, to be stifled by a sigh. If these had been the true terms on which they stood? If the three past months could have been wiped out and those three short weeks of intimacy revived?

Her lips grew suddenly hard with determination. She would win this game—she would win it! For the road? Perhaps. For herself? Yes—for herself! The primeval passion gripped. There was the male. Beside him, desiring him, stood—a rival. Jealousy throbbed in Katrine Gresham. The crude—the animal—rose in her. Her fingers closed on the arm of the chair as, a hundred generations ago, the hands of some ancestress grasped the weapons of the age of stone—a club, an ax of flint, a common pebble from the river's bed.

BUT in her aspect her emotion was entirely controlled. She made a gracious gesture of dismissal.

"*A riverderla!*" she repeated. "*A riverderla*, Signor Agnew, and, if your good-nature permits, *a riverderla*, signorina. Come again. Always you will be welcome. My best thanks for this visit and hopes for a longer one to-morrow."

She waved her hand to them as they withdrew and settled back languidly on her chair. Lucia, with a deep bow of

acknowledgment, strolled slowly away at Agnew's right hand.

She looked up at him as they passed out of earshot of the veranda. "I have heard various rumors, signor," she said. "What are the rights of this affair?"

"There are no rights—only wrongs, signorina," he smiled. "For reasons best known to himself, some knave, ambushed in the rushes, flung a knife at me last night. In protecting me the lady we have just left received a hurt herself. She saved my life in all probability."

She frowned. "Who attacked you, and why?" she asked moodily.

He shrugged his shoulders. "Those are questions to which an answer is lacking as yet," he said. "But this we know. There is a ceaseless conspiracy against the building of this road and so against its builders. Mr. Gresham, Mr. Thring and I walk under a constant menace of assassination—so it seems."

Her face changed. Her eyes grew wondering—scared—wrathful. "You?" she cried sharply. "They threaten *you?*"

"Naturally. I represent all that they wish to destroy. Is that news to you?"

"Yes!" she said breathlessly. "I—I did not know." Her agitation was marked—her hands trembled against her side. "Can't you give it up?" she asked suddenly. "Can't you—come away?"

He looked at her blankly. "Come?" he echoed.

The color flamed into her cheeks. She met his glance with a sort of defiance. "I said—come!" she whispered.

He halted. He smiled with deference, with tolerance—the smile one offers to an unreasoning child. "This thing has upset you, signorina," he said. "You must not dwell upon it. Believe me, I take all the precautions necessary. And I am well guarded."

"Guarded!" Her scorn was dramatic. "There is no guard can stand between you and—*that!* Escape from it—while you can!"

His stolidity increased as the note of her passion rose. And he smiled patronizingly, aggravatingly. "This place—the dreariness, the monotony—makes you fanciful, signorina."

She laid her hand upon his arm with a passionate gesture. "I know!" she cried. "I tell you, I know!"

He released himself with a bow.

"Perhaps," he agreed. "And I, too, know. Some day we might see if our knowledge dovetails—if we share many secrets. It might be amusing."

She beat her hands together with a sudden wrathful gesture. "Don't play with me!" she said. "Don't speak to me as if I were a child! My knowledge? I could give you all you want—and more! I who laugh at your efforts to succeed without it!"

He looked at her gravely. "Then I count you, too, among my enemies?" he asked.

"I?" she wondered. "I—among your enemies? You know well that is not so!"

"How can I think otherwise?" he suggested. "Your own mouth convicts you. You laugh at me and my efforts. My pride is to stand at my post here till my duty is done. And you laugh at me, Signorina. In your eyes I am something to be mocked and set aside!"

She looked at him fiercely, resentfully. "You still play with me! You twist my words!" she declared.

He drew back from her a pace, bowing. "No, signorina. I see what our late intimacy has led to. I have been your amusement—your butt. I find the position a degrading one. I beg to resign it. I have the felicity of wishing you a very good evening."

He lifted his hat, bowed yet more elaborately, and was gone. And Lucia stood, watching him depart, bewildered, tongue-tied, seeking as one in a maze for the entrance in their conversation through which the sudden quarrel had entered. Her self-confidence? It was in the dust.

Mentally Agnew patted himself on the back as he walked down the embankment with rapid strides. Crudely done, he told himself, but, so far as his inexperienced eyes could judge, with effectiveness. Lucia Gessi would not find his favor a gift any longer. It was merchandise, and the price was rising.

TO BE CONTINUED

A DAY ON RAZORBACK

by Lynn R. Meekins

WE, BOGGS and I—found him at the prong of the road. After our nine thousand miles of rambling we had grown accustomed to desolation, but this well-knit figure with a cackling laugh seemed unique. We were glad to see him; not only because he looked interesting but because we were lost.

He stood in front of his blacksmith shop and when we stopped the machine he called:

"Howdy!"

Boggs returned the greeting and asked: "Why do you run a blacksmith shop in this forsaken place?"

"Why do ye run that thing ye're in to this forsaken place?" he returned with a cackle.

"Chance and accident," said Boggs.

"Maybe it's some of the same here. Ef there's an accident I gits the chance to do

the job. There ain't much crowdin' long this road, but what smithin' there is, I gits it, and ef a man ain't satisfied with gittin' all there is, he oughtn't to git nothin'," and he cackled again—a dry cackle, as though he had cackled much to himself in his loneliness.

"We want to get across the mountains," said Boggs. "How about the roads?"

"This here fork on the left goes fifty miles 'round—all pretty bad but not onpossible. This here fork on the right is the Razorback road, ten miles over and meaner than sin. No autermobile has never gone over it."

"That settles it!" said Boggs, his insatiate ambition suddenly fired. "We'll go Razorback way."

"Ye're plumb crazy," said the blacksmith.

But Boggs was uplifted by a new interest in life and his zeal was contagious. We had crossed the continent, motored California, made our way, much of it over deserts and desolation, to the Gulf of Mexico, turned northward and reached the wilderness of the Southern mountains, where nature makes the sunshine and man the moonshine, where they still vote for Andrew Jackson and the hickory tree and where the simple life knows no surcease—and everywhere we went we found that everything possible for an automobile to do had been done.

In short we were taking home nothing of primary value. Our record was as barren as a trip to the suburbs.

So Boggs, with firm faith in his 60 H. P. Nameless—the "Old Lady," we called her—gloated that at last he had found in Razorback road an opportunity to be first.

"Ye're crazy to try it," repeated the blacksmith.

"All right, my friend," said Boggs, "if we break down you'll have the job of fixing us up."

So Boggs drove the Nameless to the right.

Razorback road soon began to justify its fame. If ever a name fitted, it was that same and particular designation of thinness, angularity and cragginess. It slipped and it slanted; it was knotty, scabrous, churlish and altogether impolite and unrefined. It was a choppy-sea road, a turned-in and tucked-under road, a gruff, tempestuous, nutmeg-grater road, a fretful and tormenting road that——

Well, we got so far, by main strength and awkwardness, by pushing and pulling and helping the Old Lady up, that we were in it for fair.

"It stands to reason," said Boggs, as if there could possibly be any reason in such imbecility, "that it can't be worse forward than it is back there. Then, too, the blacksmith told us there is some kind of a hotel about midway the mountain, and we'll keep on."

Keep on we did. That is, on and off. We made the next mile in seventy-three minutes—a mile stretched out; counting ups and downs, it seemed a hundred.

FIVE hours had put us a little over as many miles and then we struck a plateau whereon trees grew and we slipped gently over a pine-carpeted floor of odorous joy and in a bower of foliage we beheld happiness. It was the hotel, and back of it a mountain stream was singing sweet music. A funny kind of hotel—an old shed, time-stained, weather-beaten, unkempt, with a sort of wooden awning that passed for a porch.

Standing by the doorway, with a long gun in easy reach, was a lank mountaineer, a corncob pipe in his mouth, a single suspender holding him together, and a lonesome look in his inexorable face. The automobile brought no surprise. He was a stoic, a statue. The only sign of emotion was an extra puff of smoke.

"Can we have dinner?" asked Boggs.

He took the pipe from his mouth, gazed at us deliberately and finally replied: "I reckon you can git a snack. Dinner or supper jist the same—same as breakfast. "Mary 'Liza!" he called.

"Well?" came a shrill voice.

"Two on 'em wants a bite."

"Ain't got much," said the voice.

"Well, gin it to 'em."

"There is no other hotel hereabouts?" Boggs asked.

"Ye're just right in that statement—ain't no other in twenty miles. Ef there was, I mightn't be eatin' here."

Over his features stole the suggestion of a smile and he came forward and looked closely at the automobile.

We refreshed ourselves in the stream and then sat down to eat positively the worst meal that ever passed for hotel food. But the air of those mountains is marvelous and we had sharpened our appetites on Razor-

back travel and hard work. We ate and were not critical.

At the end of a half-hour we emerged and found our host still smoking his pipe, still deep in absorption.

"Like it?" he asked.

"Fine," Boggs said.

We noticed that he looked at us keenly, seriously, suspiciously.

"How much is the damage?" we asked.

"Dollar," he said; "fifty cents for you two and fifty for the two horses."

Boggs explained the motor-car.

"Don't care," he said. "I guess you got animules of some kind runnin' 'round inside there and turnin' the wheels. From the smell of the thing I kinder believe it's a swarm of polecats."

We laughed and Boggs chortled, "All right, old man. We'll not quarrel over the charge. Here's a dollar. It's worth it."

He took the note and shook his head. "I don't know what kind of a show ye're runnin' but the last party that came this way stuck me with a Confederate bill. I'll have to look into this a little."

"But we want to get on our way——"

"Wantin' and gittin' is two things, and ye'll not move 'till I give the word!"

Boggs looked at me and I looked at Boggs. The same thought came to us both: Were we in the hands of a lunatic?

He spoke again, slowly and with emphasis.

"When you said you enjyed that food," he said, "I knowed you were about the worst liars that ever struck these parts. The food weren't no good and Mary 'Liza can't cook worth a darn, and I ain't got no business runnin' a hotel. Consequently, when anybody says they like it here I know right off they're tryin' to skin me. It's for me to do the skinnin' or there wouldn't be a hotel. Fact is, my friends, the hotel business is so plagued unsartin' up here on Razorback that I always hold up the vehicle till I find everything is all right."

We moved to the machine and saw that it was firmly attached to a tree. We used our diplomacy; we offered more money; we wore out our eloquence. It was useless. He sat on a stump in front of the house, smoked his pipe and bade us be patient while he thought it out.

We also smoked and tried to be philosophical, but the day was going. The mountains never seemed so lonesome. The great pines sang nothing but dirges. Melancholy settled over everything. Not many miles beyond we knew there was a busy, bustling world with banks and friends and aid. But here in the bosom of the wilderness we were helpless and desolate.

Suddenly we saw our lank host straighten up and his hand unconsciously move toward his gun. His sharp ears had detected the approach of some one minutes before we caught the sounds—and then we beheld the blacksmith coming around the turn of the road. He stopped short and looked at the tableau. Boggs arose and met him and poured forth our tale of wo. The blacksmith laughed, but made no remark except:

"I kinder expected ye to break down, so I toddled along to git the job of fixin' ye up."

"Howdy, Sam," said our host.

"Howdy, Bill," said the blacksmith.

They walked away so that we could not hear what they said and plunged into a conference which seemed to last an hour but which really continued about ten or fifteen minutes. Their occasional glances at us showed plainly what they were talking about. Finally the blacksmith approached.

"There is peculiar circumstances 'round here just now and there's reasons why ye can't git off the mountains without havin' some kind of company. I tell Bill here that I think ye're all right, and ef ye *are* all right ye won't mind him and me goin' the rest of the way with ye and stoppin' when we tell ye to stop. Ef ye'll give Bill and me your word ye'll obey orders till we git down there to the valley, all right. Ef ye won't, ye'll have to stay awhile."

Boggs and I discussed the proposition and agreed. Mary 'Liza was left in charge of the hotel. Bill stepped into the machine as though it was going to explode, and Sam took his seat beside him. It was ridiculous to see their emotions and their uncertainties, but the road down was much better than the first half and we got along rather well.

In a bosky dell where the trees overlapped and nature was wildest Bill shouted, "Whoa!"

Boggs brought the machine to a stop. Bill arose, placed his fingers to his mouth and gave the most piercing whistle mortal ever heard—a thin, penetrating, carrying shrill like that of a whippoorwill. A moment later came the answer from afar up the hill.

Sam and Bill whispered and Bill pointed

out the way to Sam. The blacksmith dismounted and disappeared into the thick of the woods. Bill gave another whistle, a sharp variation from his first, which was also answered, and then he turned to us:

"Jest make yerselves to home. It won't be long." And he kept his hand on his gun as if to add that it would be well for us to accept the situation gracefully.

IN THE course of time the blacksmith reappeared and with him was a man of Bill's tallness but bigger—a giant of a man who investigated us keenly from beneath his shaggy eyebrows. He asked a few questions and Boggs answered promptly—something about our travels and why we had wanted to come over Razorback road; also a little information about our machine. For a moment he stood in silence like a rural magistrate about to announce sentence.

"I reckon ye're all right," he said, "but of all the blamed fools I ever seen ye're the goldarndest. Ef ye call ridin' over Razorback spote"—he meant sport—"ye're plumb easy to please. Fact is, we thought ye crazy, and we don't want no lunatics on this mountain."

We laughed and they laughed with us, Sam most heartily of all. "That's what I told 'em," he exclaimed. "I tell ye," he said to us, "ye ought to be glad Bill or somebody didn't shoot ye on sight!"

We invited all to go with us the rest of the journey, but they declined. However, as we were about to start, Sam called to us:

"Likely as not ye'll git on the wrong road. I'll show ye the way fer a dollar."

"Done!" said Boggs. "Jump in."

"Bill," called Sam to our hotel friend, "if anybody's goin' down, tell 'em to leave word at the shop that I won't be back till late."

"All right, Sam. 'Bliged to ye for helpin' us out."

"Welcome. Glad to do it."

Sam nestled down in the seat and we waved our adieus. Nothing was said for several minutes and as the road improved we made good progress. Boggs and I were steeped in silence, but presently we were aroused by chuckles which came from the rear seat.

"Sam," said Boggs, growing familiar, "let us into your joke. After what we have been through we'd like to laugh."

"Whole thing's funny," said Sam. "Whole crowd's funny. Ye're the funniest part of it. Reckon ye don't know why really and truly they spied on ye. Well, they thought ye were revenue agents! They don't want nobody on these mountains unless they know all about 'em. Why, they even didn't want me to come—me who has been blacksmithin' down there for over a year and not hurtin' a soul. Fact is, it's the first time I ever got over—and then it was because I was helpin' 'em find out who ye were. Bill didn't even want to send me up the mountain to bring down his brother, but he had to, 'cause he was holdin' to his gun and watchin' ye two. I reckon ye'll never forgit Razorback."

"Never," said Boggs, "and we'll never forget you."

"Pleased to have met ye," said Sam and when he took the dollar that Boggs gave him he asked for a card, "so's I'll have something to recollect ye by," he said pleasantly. And a few minutes after we left him we were bowling over a good road and seeking supper and a night's rest.

FOUR months later I happened in Boggs' office in the city skyscraper and we fell to talking of our trip and Razorback—of the queer people and the blacksmith. The secretary brought in a card: "L. Q. Poytrew, United States Internal Revenue."

"I don't know him, but show him in," said Boggs.

The door opened and in came a man dressed faultlessly in the mode and carrying himself with fine grace and confidence. The suggestion of a smile was around his lips. He approached Boggs and laid a dollar upon the desk.

"I wanted to return it before, but——"

"Bless my soul!" exclaimed Boggs, jumping up and grasping his hand, "if it isn't the blacksmith!"

"*Was* the blacksmith," said the caller with a cackle. "We've just finished breaking up the biggest moonshine still in the State and putting the whole gang in the penitentiary. They ought to have been hanged, for they killed one of our men and wounded two others. That's why I was sent down there—why I ran that blacksmith stunt for over a year—until you came along and gave me my chance to locate the plant. But—it sure *was* lonesome!"

THE FOX'S EARTH

A "Gray Ghost" Story

by

Muriel A. Pollexfen

THERE were three words ringing in Algy Brett's head, and even in the excitement of his narrow escape from *Gray Ghost* he repeated them over and over again as the car which had befriended him took him swiftly back to town.

"Phelps, Carmichael Chambers. Phelps, Carmichael Chambers."

It was the address given by Ostermann to his lieutenant, Berne, and to which he had been instructed to go to get the code-chart for the entrance to "the cove."

Where was the cove? And what secret did it hold which was such a great one that even the Emperor Maximilian intended visiting it in person, and which Ostermann boasted the British Government would give all the gold in its coffers to be able to buy? Did the man called Phelps know? Or was he merely a tool employed to trace code-charts?

Carmichael Chambers were in Jermyn Street, and the number, he remembered, was thirteen. He would go himself and interview Phelps, and if Lieutenant Berne recovered sufficiently quickly and completely to be able also to call upon the gentleman at Carmichael Chambers—well, there was plenty of room for two everywhere!

The "cove"? Where was it? What was it?

Although he still felt ill and shaky, he determined to go to Jermyn Street then and there, brooking no interference from the motorists who had driven him in, though they protested he was mad to undertake such a business instead of going home to bed. But Algy had said Jermyn Street, and he meant it; and accordingly the car was switched round and headed for that direction.

Carmichael Chambers was a large block of flats near the Regent Street end of the narrow thoroughfare, and within five minutes Algy was being deposited at the big main entrance and assisted to alight by the gold-laced commissionaire.

Yes, he thought Mr. Phelps was in; in fact, Mr. Phelps very rarely went out, but an uncommon number of gentlemen visited him at odd intervals—mostly foreigners, too, they looked. But then Mr. Phelps himself was a foreigner, in spite of his English name, so there wasn't much to wonder at in that. No. 13 was on the third floor, and as the elevator was broken he would have to walk up.

The light was switched on in the hall of No. 13 as Algy Brett pressed the bell, and a heavy footfall sounded on the tiled floor.

"I shall get *in* anyway!" chuckled Algy excitedly as he watched a massive shadow of a hand silhouetted against the ground glass of the door panel. "I shall get in, and I'll be a fool if I can't pick up *some* little scrap of information concerning this secret 'cove' I've heard so much about to-day! What luck not having to turn burglar!"

The man who opened the door was an enormous creature with a heavy, stupid-looking face and narrow, cunning eyes filled now with a dull suspicion. If Algy had not been informed that his name was "Mr. Phelps," he would have instantly taken him for a foreign subject—probably Russian or Low Dutch. As soon as the man opened his mouth it was very evident that the English name had been assumed.

Algy asked to see Mr. Ostermann, who, he understood, was sometimes to be found at the flat. He had not taken the risk of

Lieutenant Berne's being unknown to Phelps, and had formed a hasty little concoction in his quick-working mind that he would pose as the secretary of a mythical aero club wanting the great Mr. Ostermann's support and patronage.

"Mr. Ostermann? Mr. Ostermann is in America. He vill not be 'ome till a long time. But I am his secretary and I vill forward however any letters through. Eh?"

"Awfully sorry, but I can't wait so long for a reply. But I dare say, Mr. Phelps, that you will be able to help me. May I come in?"

"You know my name, eh? You perhaps know Mr. Ostermann? *Hein?* But vot you want him for?"

"Why, of course I know Mr. Ostermann! What flying-man doesn't? My name's Marcus Hambledon, and I'm the secretary for the greatest aviation meeting ever held yet. America won't be in it! I want Mr. Ostermann to enter for it. May I show you the papers so that you can the better—ah, thanks!"

The fervently expressed gratitude was caused by the man holding open the door and inviting him to enter. And Algy accepted the invitation with alacrity. He was shown into a small study on the left of the door. There was a strong smell of tobacco in the air, and a tall tumbler with a drink mixed in it stood upon the center-table side by side with a pile of letters and a mass of papers. It was very evident that the man was alone in the flat, and that he had been occupying this room perusing the letters and papers when Algy's ring at the bell disturbed him.

It was an error of judgment that he should have ushered his visitor into this special room, but he was flustered, probably, by the sudden advent of Brett when he doubtless was expecting some one else, and subconsciously led the way back to the apartment he had just vacated. But Algy was hugely delighted. It was the very thing he most desired. He had not expected such luck to befall him as to be taken right in to the holy of holies, the secretary's—and more than probably the master's also—own room.

Gleefully he raked the place with his keen, expectant eyes, although to the mere observer he appeared rather a shy, stupid young man who had come to ask a favor of a very great man and who was apprehensively nervous at the magnitude of his daring.

THE walls were hung with numerous maps and sections of maps—mostly, Algy noticed, of the most sparsely-populated spaces of the world. One section, printed in a light pink coloring, particularly attracted him, and more especially so inasmuch as it had been taken down from its place on the wall and was erected on the table, supported by a pile of books, directly facing Phelps, as though he had been studying it. It was a map of Pennydale Moor, a vast tract of bogland in the extreme northeast of Northumberland and spreading to the coast. Below the map, on the blotter at which the secretary had been at work, was a square of thin tracing paper, and Algy could see the lines and tracings of either a plan or a chart.

As it happened, Algy knew the part of the country depicted on the pink-colored map very well, having an uncle—his father's brother—living at Carter Fell Castle, a place situated in the wildest part of the country and well over the border-line of the moor itself. His heart beat faster as he recognized the wild and lonely spot and realized the possibilities of the place. Could it be that he had so easily discovered the heart of the mystery? Surely not.

And yet in all England where could a man find a more desolate patch of country? Not even Dartmoor could boast of such a continuous stretch of desolation. The isolation of Carter Fell Castle had eaten into his heart when, as a boy, he had spent interminable holidays there, and even now the memory of the bleak and lonely house on the edge of the bog chilled the warm blood in his veins and sent a shoot of nameless dislike through his soul.

And yet a thrill of triumph accompanied the dislike when he realized that perhaps those very holidays of bitter memory were now to prove of the utmost value to him.

What if the "cove" spoken of by Ostermann were somewhere on that wild and barren coast? What more probable? What spot of England more inaccessible? The wild, waste moors stretching away for miles on one side and girt by miles of cliffs and barrenness on the other?

What if Ostermann had a secret haven for *Gray Ghost* in the very heart of Pennydale Moor? Who would be one whit the wiser? No one. Not in years did a man cross the arid waste of bog and fen; no track

indented the miles of desolation; nothing grew save the rank marsh grasses and sedge and black fungus; nothing lived save the croaking marsh-fowl and in the Summer the myriads of mosquitoes and the little blue moths which fluttered continuously above the sedge. The very place in which to hide a secret! Invulnerable! Inaccessible! Silent as the grave! Untrodden!

And then the nearness of the rugged coast! The nearness of the coast! Had he found the secret? Was it there the "cove" was? Should he try and gain possession of the tracing-paper on the blotter and rest content with that?

Phelps's voice speaking in his ear recalled Algy from his brief reverie.

"Iss it a subscription vot you vant, or just Mr. Ostermann's promise to vly? I haf his orders to give subscriptions if I think so good, and I haf power to enter his name to vly if the meeting is recognizable by the Club. If you will give to me particulars I vill take them down and inform you the result within a day or two."

He sat down heavily at the table and picked up a pen. Out of the side of his eye Algy saw that he surreptitiously covered over with a piece of blotting-paper the tracing-drawing upon which he had so evidently been at work at the moment of Algy's unwelcome intrusion.

That Ostermann should employ such an obviously slow-thinking and stupid man as Phelps for his confidant was surprising to Brett, and he found himself wondering whether the notorious aviator really confided in the man or simply and daringly employed him as a draftsman. And yet the fellow had called himself "Mr. Ostermann's private secretary."

Leisurely he gave the man a mass of information concerning an entirely fictitious meeting to be held at a place to be selected later, supplied him with a number of well-known names as references, and begged him to use his influence with his employer to consent to permit his name to appear as a competitor—all of which the secretary carefully wrote down in laborious long-hand.

Then Algy rose to take his leave, and, as he did so, swayed for a moment, uttered a sharp cry, and staggered back into his seat, pressing his hand over his heart as though in sudden pain.

In an instant the secretary was fussing over him, muttering thickly, a look of annoyance on his heavy, stupid face.

"Brandy, brandy!" murmured Algy from behind clenched teeth, hoping fervently that there was none in the room and that the man would fall into the trap and leave him alone for even a moment while he fetched some. But, to his immense disgust, the fat, self-styled secretary shuffled over to a little side-table in a far corner and Algy could hear the clink of glass as he removed the stopper from the decanter.

He gave a swift look round. The table with the bit of tracing-paper he was so anxious to get hold of was almost within an arm's-length; the secretary's back was toward him. He had but to reach over the table from where he sat and slip the coveted paper from beneath the blotter, and the secret he so urgently desired to discover would be his—he was sure of it! But was it possible to move without the fellow becoming suspicious and turning round? Was it?

He braced himself up for the try; he heard the trickle of the spirit pouring from the decanter to the glass; stealthily he leaned over the table; farther—farther; he heard the man replace the stopper; his finger touched the blotter and moved it an inch aside. The edge of the gray transparent tracing-paper jutted out from under; his fingers closed on it, drawing it swiftly, noiselessly, to him.

As the secretary turned from the side-table, glass in hand, Algy staggered to his feet with a groaning sigh, declaring that he was better and that the air would be the best thing for him, and profuse in his apologies and thanks.

He left the flat with his hand still clenched over his heart, but it held the tracing Phelps had been so anxious to hide, and Algy could scarce control the triumph he felt.

It was blazing out from his eyes as he ran down the steps and sprang into the car which still waited for him.

Looking at his watch, he found there was just time to catch the North Mail.

II

SIX hours later Algy Brett was standing on the tiny platform of Tarnside station. Such utter darkness reigned that, having turned his back on the feeble light shed by the oil-lamps on

the station, Algy felt as though he were about to step off the edge of the world into a limitless abyss.

He had not apprised his uncle of his intended visit and was therefore immensely relieved to find that he could get a lift in a farmer's cart to within a couple of miles of the lodge gates of Carter Fell Castle.

It was a bitter night, and as the chill hours passed he felt his enthusiasm fading and dwindling away as he grew colder and colder. It was a three hours' drive from the station to the castle, and he found himself wishing vainly that he had not been in such a hurry, but had taken the thing more slowly and come north in his car.

He was positively glad when the moment came to alight, and he commenced the long walk to the castle with a feeling of thankfulness that at last he would be able to revive the circulation in his frozen veins and regain a semblance of life in his leaden feet. Yet, at the same time, it was with a distinct sense of dismay that he said good-night to the farmer and heard him drive away, urging his horses through the heavy, rutted mud, and he stood still for a moment watching, till finally the curtain of mist and rain blotted them from his view.

"At least he was company—some one to speak to!" muttered Brett dismally as the farmer's tuneless whistle sounded down the wind. "I wish I'd not been in such a hurry to leave London. It would have been better to have waited and told old Schlesinger my plans and asked for some one to accompany me. I shall wire for some one from the Yard the first thing in the morning. I don't hope for the luck to find the cove and be present at his August Majesty Maximilian's interview with Ostermann at midnight to-night; but the secret will still be there, I suppose. If I locate the place by this time to-morrow it will be as much as I can do, and by this time to-morrow I'll take care to have a couple of the biggest fellows from the Yard to back me up. My stars, what a country! Not fit for beasts in this weather!"

It was almost an hour later when he sighted the towering bulk of the castle rising densely against the sky, its numerous towers and thick buttresses protruding grotesquely into the ebony night. Late though it was, a thin strip of light glimmered faintly through the narrow slit of window beside the solid, inhospitable-looking, fast-closed door. It was unlike his uncle to keep such—for that part of the world—late hours. Algy had counted upon having to rouse old Jacobs to admit him and get him supper. The old servant always slept in a little room to the right of the hall-door, and Algy had been about to make for that window when he espied the light shining through the hall.

Observing mentally that his uncle must have become giddy in his old age, Algy rang the bell and waited expectantly.

Nothing happened.

He rang again, the bell sounding like an army of clangorous demons shrieking through the stillness of the night. Still nothing happened and he rang a third time. It seemed an age before he heard a movement on the other side of the door, and he rapped impatiently with his knuckles. Then the noise of heavy chains being removed came to him, and finally the great door opened slowly and as though reluctantly, and a thin, yellow, wrinkled face peered through the narrow space. It was his uncle himself, but so cadaverous, so aged, so hideous with the weight of years, so changed from the hale and hearty man he had known in his boyhood that Algy could scarce repress a cry of astonishment.

"Uncle!" he cried, thrusting out his hand and stepping forward as though to enter. "Uncle, don't you remember me—Algy?"

The old man's foot shuffled against Algy's intruding one as though he would force him to retire, and his little eyes, enveloped in a roll of wrinkles, glared maliciously up at him.

"What do you want? Where have you come from, eh? You can't come in at this time of night!"

He made as though to shut the door, but Algy forced it wider open and stepped inside, patting his uncle affectionately on the arm as he did so.

"Why, Uncle Stephen, you wouldn't turn your own nephew out into that awful night again, would you? Come, come, Uncle! Why, I don't believe you remembered me for a moment, did you?"

"No, no—that's it! I did not remember you, boy! You see, I was expecting some one else—not you at all—at least, I was expecting some one else in the morning, not to-night. You frightened me—ringing at the bell like that. Yes, that's it—I wasn't expecting my friend till the morning, and you frightened me. You must not heed an old man's tantrums, Algy. Come into the

library. Now you are here you had better have some food. Sit there and tell me what has brought you here."

"Why, I came to see you, Uncle Stephen!" cried Algy, marveling at the tremendous change that had come over the old man, and resenting, though trying to fathom, the air of deep suspicion with which he so evidently regarded him.

"To see me, eh? What for? You—you haven't heard anything, eh?"

"Heard anything? What on earth do you mean, sir?" asked Algy, a doubt as to the old man's sanity becoming a certainty in his mind. "What is there to hear?" he repeated.

"Oh, nothing, nothing!" muttered his uncle, though his crafty eyes still shot looks of suspicion, and an uneasy nervousness was momentarily becoming more and more pronounced. "Nothing—but Jacobs talked—Jacobs became very unsatisfactory and unsettled the whole house. I've been much easier in my mind since I sent them all away."

"DO YOU mean that you've sacked old Jacobs?" cried Algy, remembering suddenly that he had not so much as seen or heard a sound or footfall in the great silent house since he had entered. Could his uncle be in earnest when he said that he had sent all the servants away? And old Jacobs too! Surely not old Jacobs who had been his uncle's right hand?

"I've not exactly dismissed him altogether," explained the old man hesitatingly. "I've packed him out of the house, and he lives in a little cottage behind the stables. He was very prying—very."

"And you're all alone at night? Quite alone? I don't think that's right for an old gentleman like you, sir, do you?"

"I like it; it suits me better. Jacobs did nothing but pry, pry, pry all day and all night long, and Mr. Ostermann and I objected very strongly—very strongly indeed. What did you say?"

What Algy had said was merely one word. But the emphasis with which he said it attracted the old man's attention. Ostermann! *Ostermann!* Here!

"What did you say?" he queried, peering into Algy's face. "Eh?"

"I'm horrified to think that you are living in this enormous place all alone!" explained Algy. "It's not right. If you had a friend it would be different. I must speak to my father to come and remonstrate with you," he added, speaking with design to try and make the old man repeat the name he had uttered a moment since. For Algy could scarcely bring himself to believe that fate—or luck—had so played into his hands as to bring him and the man he so keenly desired to trace under one roof so early in the search. And the ruse worked successfully, for his uncle started up in a quick agitation, his face working convulsively and a wild excitement chasing the doubt and suspicion from his eyes.

"No, no!" he cried quickly, his words tumbling one on top of the other. "No, no, don't bring John up here. I'm all right, and Jacobs is very comfortable where he is. Every old man has his likes and dislikes, and I'm saving money—much, much money by doing without a lot of useless servants. No, don't tell John. Besides—besides, I *have* a friend with me. He's gone to London to-day, but he'll be back to-morrow or the day after, and then I shall not be alone again. He's a very clever man, and we amuse ourselves pottering about with experiments—and we read books together."

"And Jacobs pryed upon you, eh? Too bad of him!"

"That's what my friend said. It was really most danger—most uncomfortable. So we sent him off. You see, boy, there is no need to worry John about me, after all. Besides, you're here now—for how long did you say? Till morning?"

"Well, sir," returned Algy slowly, preferring not to notice the old man's unflattering desire to get rid of him at the speediest possible moment, "I could stay with you until your friend—Mr. Foster, did you say?—returns. Did you say his name was Foster, uncle?"

"Yes, yes—Foster. Alsopp Foster is his name; he's a peculiar man, but a genius, and he likes to be alone a good deal, so you will see that I can not have you here after he comes back. You quite see that, don't you, my boy?"

"Quite uncle, quite!" said Algy, meekness in his voice, but triumph trumpeting in his breast. "I shall stay until Mr.—er—Foster returns, then. Now shall we have some supper and then get to bed? It's late."

He went to his room with his head in a whirl.

His uncle had lied to him! Ostermann,

that beast Ostermann, the man of mystery, the man he had come north to hound down, the man the War Office wanted, had been staying for months past at Carter Fell Castle!

The proximity of that waste of moor and fen to the castle—did it mean anything? The proximity of the sea—the coast—the towering cliffs—did that mean aught?

The fact that Alsopp Ostermann was living in penurious discomfort with the master of the castle—did that mean aught?

The mysterious paper tracing which the secretary, Phelps, had been to some pains to cover lest it should tell its secret to inquisitive eyes—the paper Algy Brett had stolen but could make nothing of—was that paper the outcome, one of the results of Alsopp Ostermann's residence at Carter Fell?

Was Stephen Brett in collusion, in conspiracy with Ostermann? Could he divulge the secret traced so finely, with such exactitude, with such simple lines and yet such complicated results upon that paper which now reposed in Algy's pocketbook?

Surely where Ostermann had lived for months, was still living, there also was his secret!

III

ALGY BRETT could not have been asleep for more than an hour when he was awakened by a hand shaking him gently and cautiously, and was aware at the same moment of a second hand placed over his mouth.

He struggled up in bed in quick alarm and amazement, staring into the dim gloom to see the face of the man who thus awakened him.

"Jacobs!" he ejaculated under the smothering hand. "Jacobs!"

"Yes, Mr. Algy, it's Jacobs!"

Algy threw off the hand from over his mouth and sat up straight, wide awake and ready for the adventure that seemed promised.

"What's the matter, Jacobs, and how on earth did you know I was here?"

"It is my habit, since the master took the freak into his head that I should not sleep in the house, to take a last look round every night before going to bed. Leastways, sometimes I go to bed and then gets up in the small hours and prowls round the castle. I happened to be on the veranda under the library window and heard you talking to your uncle. Lad, I was glad to know you'd come! Did my letter surprise you?"

"Letter? I got no letter from you, Jacobs. What did you write for?"

"The old master worries me—and that sneaking foreign gentleman he has here. They—he worries me, Master Algy! He's up to no good, though I can't find out what it is. It's all so mysterious! Everything all so open and aboveboard in the daytime, and Mr. Ostermann so polite and affable. But when it gets dark—then the mystery begins, and it's so great a mystery that I sometimes feel like I was mad! So I wrote for you to come. I wrote two days ago, and addressed the letter to your club."

"I never got it—probably waiting for me now. Anyway, I'm here now, so that's good! As a matter of fact I came to make inquiries regarding this same Mr. Ostermann of whom you speak, but I was never more surprised in my life than when I discovered he was staying with my uncle. Do you think——"

"Master Algy, I'll speak to you as plainly as if you were a youngster once again and myself your humble friend and ally, as I used to be when you spent your holidays here. But it'll be plain speaking, and I want you to give me your word you won't be offended with anything I say."

"Fire away, Jacobs! I promise you I won't get angry even though you tell me my uncle is an unmitigated blackguard and miser and——"

"And that he and this fellow Ostermann, as they call him, are brother-conspirators in some horrible plot!" finished the servant quickly. "I felt a strong dislike against Mr. Ostermann the first day he came here, and the dislike grew every day. Then I got suspicious, somehow. He and the master were forever hiding things and prowling about at night, and they had at one time a lot of strange workmen here—all foreigners they were, and not a word of English among them."

"Workmen?" interrupted Algy excitedly. "What did they do?"

"That's what I couldn't make out for the life of me. They made an alteration in the chapel wing—put in a colored window and repaired the fireplace—but that was all I could ever see they'd done. They were here six months on and off, and a lazier set of chaps I never set eyes on. Six months in

the chapel wing, and only doing odd jobs as a couple of men from Tarnside could have done in a month!"

"How long have they been gone?"

"That's the mystery, sir," whispered Jacobs in a voice thick with excitement, his faded eyes alive with the fire of enthusiasm. "That's why I sent for you! *I don't believe they have gone!*"

"What? They're here still and yet you don't know it? Impossible!" cried Algy, though his eyes belied the incredulity of his words. "It's impossible, Jacobs!"

"Impossible or not, sir, I have reason to suspect that the varmints are *still here!* Let me tell you all. It was soon after they arrived with all their traps and bags and vanloads of stuff—what stuff it was and what they used it on beats me—that the master grew more stingy than ever, and then one day dismissed every servant in the place except me. When there was any cleaning to be done extra he got in old Mrs. Simpson from the village. He even sent the Cains away from the lodge and put in one of those foreign beasts.

"I was astonished that he still kept me on, but I'd been with him for so long that I think he disliked the idea of not having me to make him comfortable. But I knew my day was coming, and coming soon, for Ostermann hated the very sight of me. He said I pryed on him, and perhaps I was a bit curious to know what he and the master were after, and at first I thought it my duty to keep an eye on the workmen. Well, very soon he influenced the master to get rid of me; they had quite an argument over it, and it was finally settled that I could stay here in the daytime and sleep out at nights, and there was nothing for it but to obey.

"A month ago the master told me that the workmen had gone away, and he and Mr. Ostermann seemed to allow me a little more freedom than they had done during the past six months, and I began to hope that the old state of things was coming back. But I was wrong.

"Two days after the master had told me that all the men had left I saw one of them crossing the shrubbery beneath my pantry window. A week after that I met another in the disused chapel wing, and the day I wrote to you I saw no less than *five* of them coming down the moor track, which, as you remember, Master Algy, leads nowhere but to the edge of the moor. Well, I remember how fond you were of that unhealthy spot, where the track ends in swamp——"

"And where the finest specimens of moths were to be caught. I remember it too, Jacobs, and the nets and cases you used to be everlastingly making for me, like the good old sport you were. But go on!"

"THERE isn't much more to tell, save that I overheard that Mr. Ostermann was to go to London and was to be away for a day or two. It was then that the idea came to me of sending for you. With him away and the coast fairly clear I thought we might probe the mystery of those infer—I beg your pardon, sir—those foreign workmen who appear and disappear like jumping jack-rabbits! Where are they? Not in the castle, I'll take my oath; not in the village, that goes without saying; and not in any village within twenty miles of us, as I've taken pains to find out. And yet, where are they hidden? Where do they get food? How do they live?"

Even in his excitement Algy could not help laughing at Jacobs's puzzled expression and awed voice. "You speak as though you had been seeing ghosts, Jacobs," he said with a subdued laugh.

"Ghosts, sir?" said the man seriously. "I've seen *one* ghost! Don't think I mean those men—they're real enough in all conscience. The ghost I saw was a rushing, flying, noiseless gray thing that swept past me in the darkness a week ago! It was a huge gray cloud—a monster bird—a ghoul! I told the master of it, and he laughed and said it was one of these new-fangled airships or something. I don't believe it was, all the same. It was more like a giant. I was taking a midnight look round when I saw it. It scared me above a bit, I can tell you!"

"*Gray Ghost!*" murmured Brett softly, triumphantly. "*Gray Ghost!* Oh, if I could but unravel it all! In what direction was the thing you saw traveling, Jacobs? Do you remember?"

"I remember well. It disappeared over in that direction—going toward Berwick and the sea. It was more like a sea-wraith than anything else, and I remember thinking at the time that it would have passed at a little distance for a clump of floating fog—a fog like you get in seaport towns, thick and white and oddly-shaped. Do you say it was a ghost, sir?"

"It's Ostermann's airship; *Gray Ghost* is

the name it goes by—and it was to discover where he kept the thing that brought me here. By the way, Jacobs, have a look at this paper; it's a plan of something or other, but I can't make out what. I think it concerns Ostermann, and thought it might—Good gracious, Jacobs, what's the matter?"

"It's a plan of the chapel wing, sir!" said Jacobs slowly, raising his head till his age-dimmed eyes stared straight into Algy's keen blue ones. "So that's what the villains were so busy about, is it? And yet—and yet I don't understand it quite, do you, Master Algy?"

"The plan of the chapel wing? What on earth do you mean, Jacobs?"

"Look—the staircase leading up from the oval landing and the big turret? It's the chapel wing, sure enough, sir!"

"You're right, I believe. And I couldn't make head or tail of it!"

"What gave me the clue to it, sir, was seeing a torn plan which had been left or dropped in the oval landing, and Sir Stephen told me that it was merely a builder's plan which must have been dropped by one of the workmen. What I don't understand is all this part of it"—indicating a more elaborate portion of the traced plan. "Such a staircase as this one here doesn't exist! The chapel wing ends here."

At Jacobs's words Algy took the plan out of his hand and, drawing the candle to his side, studied the intricate tracing with the deepest attention. That portion of it which Jacobs had so easily recognized as being the *facsimile* of the incomplete one he had found some time since was simple enough, and a child could easily understand it. But the second half was indeed a thing of intricacy and bewilderment, and Algy's heart sank lower and lower as he tried in vain again and again to solve the mystery.

Certainly till this moment he had not had the clue given him by Jacobs to guide him, and he bent over the flimsy paper now with a grim earnestness which boded ill for his enemy should he be fortunate enough to read the riddle.

IV

IT WAS more than half an hour later that he pushed the flickering candle away from him and sat back.

"I've guessed it!" he whispered exultantly. "I've guessed it!"

He slipped off the bed and began to dress silently and hastily. When he was ready he handed a pistol to Jacobs and slipped a second one into his own pocket. "Follow me!" he said in a tense whisper, and turned toward the door.

But before he could reach it a sound as of gravel being thrown against the window arrested them, and they half turned, looking anxiously into each other's faces.

What was it? Who was out there on the lawn tossing gravel at their dimly-lighted window as a signal? Could it be Ostermann? No, surely not. Impossible! Ostermann had the run of the house and kept his own set of keys. Who, then, could it be?

Brett ventured to the casement and threw it open.

"Who is there?" he asked softly, and saw as he spoke, a dark, slouching, sinister figure of a man hiding in the shadow of a bush.

"Who is there?" he called again, still in the same soft but carrying voice. And this time the man in the garden answered.

"It's me, Hafner!" he whispered sibilantly and clearly. "It's me! Come down; I want yer!"

"However did you get here?" asked Algy in intense astonishment when they were face to face on the soft turf of the lawn. "Have you also tracked Ostermann here?"

"No, I 'aven't. 'Ive 'ad enough to do tracking you. Call it fair giving me the slip like this 'ere when yer promised me yer solemn word yer'd let me do 'im in? Didn't I let *you* know when I had 'im copped in that 'ouse at Dartford? And now yer give me the slip and do yer 'unting alone."

"But I didn't give you the slip, Hafner——"

"No, 'cause why? I saw yer visiting the rooms where Ostermann stays sometimes, and knew yer was up to something—pumping old Phelps, no doubt. So when yer come out I followed yer—and 'ere I am."

"And jolly glad I am of your company, old chap!" cried Algy, shaking the man's hand in spite of his sulkiness. "You're a stout fellow, and just the man to help us to-night when we meet Ostermann!"

Hafner's mad eyes lighted up with a delirious gladness at this announcement.

"Meet 'im to-night? Where? 'Ere?"

"At a place not very far from here. At midnight he has an appointment with a very great personage indeed, and if you care to

come also, you can be present at the interview. Come?"

"Come? I'd come if I was dead! An' mark my words, it will be the last interview 'e'll ever 'old this side of ——!"

V

DOWN! Down! Down!

It seemed ages since they had found the secret spring in the bogusly-repaired fireplace in the half-ruined chapel wing and had commenced to descend the long, long, seemingly unending flights of rough-hewn steps which had been cut out of solid rock foundation and which had yawned beneath them when the little hidden door in the chimney had opened silently as their fingers touched the spring.

After an eternity of time they stopped to rest on a slab of stone wider than the others.

"Shall we ever stop, think you, Master Algy?" whispered Jacobs, gasping for breath and thankful for the brief rest.

"Yes, yes, we're nearly at the end now. Do your poor old bones ache? Here, take a pull at this—and you, too, Hafner. You both need it. And when we reach the bottom see to it that your revolvers are where you can easily lay a hand on them! What? You have not got one, Hafner? Good gracious, man, why didn't you say that up there, and I could have given you one? What have you got?"

Hafner grinned in reply—a grin which made the blood freeze in Algy's veins and made old Jacobs shudder.

"I've got this, thank yer! It will do my business all right, I'll take my oath on that!"

He turned back the flap of his ragged coat and showed the hilt of a heavy knife bulging up out of his leather belt—a great curved knife sheathed in a stitched case shaped to the blade like an Indian Ghurka knife.

Algy turned away, a feeling of horror and realization making him suddenly sick.

It came to him in that swift moment when he turned his eyes and looked at Hafner's weapon that he was actually leading a murderer to his victim. And yet—and yet Ostermann was doubly, trebly a murderer, and he himself would have been an unrecognizable victim now but for a fortunate escape. It was impossible that such men should be allowed to live, and to save thousands, to save a nation, it was necessary for some one to lead the van.

So he turned away his eyes from the knife of menace and spoke in a whisper to Jacobs. "How many miles do you think it is from here to the sea, Jacobs—to Berwick, say?"

"To Berwick about three miles as the crow flies," replied the old man, commencing the descent again as he spoke. "Yes, just about three miles. But to Watershole it's barely one. Nay, indeed, it can only be three-quarters or so. I can sometimes hear of a night the sound of the sea and sometimes—by heavens, sir, the caves, the smuggler's caves! Why didn't I think of them before! They say as how there's a clear passage right from Watershole into the old part of the castle. Is that the secret, sir? Smuggling? The old master?"

"No, no Jacobs; you've guessed only half the secret, I'm afraid, old man. At least, I think so. That plan I showed you traces a direct passage from the blocked-up cellars under the old keep and the chapel wing to the smuggler's caves at Watershole. For reasons of his own Uncle Stephen has had a new entrance made to the tunnel through the fireplace in the monks' room—probably because the old one is some distance away and inconvenient for all hours of the day and night. The story is too long a one to tell you now, but if you're game to come with us to the cove at Watershole you'll be in at the finish. And I don't think the finish is going to be half so tame a game as smuggling—not by a long chalk! We're going to fathom a secret to-night that to-morrow might betray England into the hands of her enemies! Are you game to come on?"

"As long as you don't think the finish will be *my* finish, too, Master Algy, I'd like well to come," said the old fellow with grim humor. "But you and—you and yon chap anticipate danger, eh?"

"To speak the plain, blunt truth, Jacobs, we do! We are tracking down a murderer, a man who has sworn he won't be satisfied until he has murdered me, a man who has it in his power this moment to sell England for two million pounds! Think of that and realize what danger there's likely to be."

"Danger for Alsopp Ostermann—not for us!" growled Hafner deeply, his fingers feeling for his knife, his lips twitching at the vision the words conjured up before his darkly burning eyes. "Danger for 'im and more—death for 'im—death! 'E's mine at last; I feel it 'ere!"

He smote his breast with his free hand,

and they could hear his heavy breathing as he crept along beside them in the darkness, and the constantly repeated mutterings of his twisted lips.

What an endless journey that bare mile seemed to them as they crept slowly, silently along, groping their way as best they could with but the faint rays of a horn lantern to light them; with water dropping at intervals with startling, icy unexpectedness upon them; with rats racing and scurrying and swarming beneath them as they trod, with fingers that clutched at slime and dank and filth-grown walls, and felt strange creatures crawl and squirm and dart from beneath their groping palms! A journey which was as a lifetime to them all, a time of horror and imagination and torture. Till quite suddenly a dull, far-off roar sounded in their straining ears and a fresh, wet breath of new air filled their nostrils and acted like an elixir to their quivering nerves.

"The sea!" cried Algy, gasping his relief. "The sea, Jacobs! The sea, Hafner! And at the sea the cove and Ostermann! We must be nearly there. Have your revolver ready, Jacobs, in case of surprise, and, Hafner, stay close beside me and keep quiet! Ah!"

They had come to a great wall that was not rock, a great dividing wall, and, directly facing them, a little door in it, left ajar.

VI

IN SPITE of Brett's restraining hand Hafner stepped through it, and instantly his arm beckoned them after him.

One after the other they stepped in his wake through the tiny door and realized that Ostermann's great secret lay bare under their gazing eyes, the message of it plain for all to read who viewed.

The great secret! The secret Ostermann had boasted of! The secret he had sold for two millions, and which was to be used in vengeance against England within a week!

The great secret, the great mystery was stored in a mighty arena—the huge workshop of Ostermann's inventions, where his genius held pitiless sway and fashioned things of evil and death and destruction and red murder out of the depths of his tremendous brain.

The vast subterranean workshop was quite empty and unguarded, and Brett and Hafner and the old man stood stock-still by the door, looking like pygmies in the colossal bigness—three parasites clinging to one another for some promise of protection and strength, awed to the soul by the enormity of the thing revealed to them and the unveiling of a superman's inventions.

A flood of light poured down from numerous floats of electric bulbs run across the natural roof of the rock, and under its vivid brilliance everything stood out with startling distinctness and assumed even a greater magnitude than it in reality possessed.

A monster—long, gray, sinuous and sinister—lay in the center of the vast place, reaching from end to end of it, and bulging out like a giant at rest after a surfeit of success.

It was *Gray Ghost.*

Gray Ghost! Algy shivered and reeled as he recognized her and remembered his ordeal of not twelve hours ago. *Gray Ghost*, still armed to the teeth, ready and cleared for action, should action be signaled; ready for war at a moment's notice, ready for more feats of stupendous magnitude the instant the master's fingers pressed the levers which would send her rearing and soaring into the limitless heavens!

But that was not all.

On all sides, in every stage of construction, some scarce commenced, some ready to fly out into the night equipped with full complements of machine-guns and bulks of ammunition; some abandoned in the making, some broken in their trials, and others scarred and patched and weather-beaten and bearing all the marks of victorious, strenuous battle with the elements, were numberless airships, duplicates of *Gray Ghost!* Children of a wonderful parent, a fleet of them, sixty or seventy at least, each and all armed with the appliances of war, and each a messenger of death!

It was like a nightmare. A perfected fleet of aerial ships of war secreted in the bowels of the earth in England—in England, and yet the fleet of another country! In England, and not a soul dreamed of it or would believe it when they heard of it! Only that brave man, Sir Dean Densham, had ever admitted the possibility of such a thing, and even he had not anticipated such a colossal discovery as this. Surely it was beyond a man's conception! It was unbelievable, a monster hallucination, and yet the truth—and Algy was face to face with

it in stern reality. No impossibility, no hallucination—but true!

"What does it mean, sir?" whimpered Jacobs, his ruddy face gray in the glaring light.

"Treachery!" hissed Algy through his clenched teeth. "Treachery—base, black treachery, Jacobs! Uncle Stephen a traitor, a servant to Ostermann, selling his soul for money! A secret airship-base controlled by a foreign country *here!* Think of it!"

"I don't understand," said Jacobs, but his mouth was quivering and there was fear in his eyes. "What are those things—those monsters?"

"Battleships, Jacobs. Aerial battleships. Financed by Uncle Stephen, built by Ostermann, bought by aliens! When there is war—but it will be no war; it will be a holocaust! *S-s-h!* Stand behind this stack! Some one is coming! Listen!"

With straining ears they caught the sound of heavy metal folding and sliding back, and Algy craned his neck to see what was happening. He all but cried out in amazement at what he saw.

The whole of the end wall, which he had noticed was made of armor-plates, was gliding back, folding into sections as it moved. And as it rolled away there was revealed a space of inky blackness filled with the ceaseless boom of breaking surf.

And from the ebony darkness, into the white light of the electric radiance which flooded the giant workshop, stepped Alsopp Ostermann.

For a brief moment he scanned the place with his eyes, and then, satisfied that it was empty of workmen, stood to one side and bowed obeisance to a short, stout man wrapped to the eyes in a black cloak who followed close upon his heels.

"The whole fleet is here, your Majesty," said Ostermann, a proud ring in his voice, and triumph lighting up his eyes. "The whole fleet, even to *Gray Ghost*, as these English call her, and she is, of course, the largest and most perfect of them all. *Fifty* are ready for service immediately. They could be manned and out of this workshop within twenty minutes. Ten more will be ready in time for your business next week. That makes sixty, your Majesty.

"Each can carry ten men and at least eight tons of ammunition—not counting the weight of the four guns allotted each ship. When you signal me the word *'Go!'* I guarantee to send *at least* sixty—perhaps seventy—of my little pigeons to your aid. Certainly fifty, even if the call comes sooner than you have arranged for. Best of all news is that, in spite of the escape of that young Brett and the knowledge that he is still at large, there has not been the slightest trace of a leakage. The secret has been magnificently kept by our men. A splendid specimen of what can be done under the very noses of our enemies, eh?"

"And Sir Stephen Brett? Quite safe still?"

"Quite, your Majesty. At one time he was inclined to back out and die in the odor of honesty, but your check for fifty thousand pounds quieted him wonderfully."

"AND in case of surprises? You've allowed for them? We could get out from here if the entrance to the cove were discovered and we were trapped? Remember that, although Phelps swears young Brett did not get the chart of the cove, he admits he did get another paper, though he professes ignorance of what it was. Are we safe?"

"Quite safe, your Majesty. I would not invite your Majesty into a place where there was danger of being caught like rats in a trap. I have a loophole of escape in Pennydale Moor, and that passage on the other side of that little door there leads into the castle. So you see, your Majesty, we are fairly well safeguarded."

"It does you credit, Ostermann, and I will see you are remembered for it, perhaps even beyond the two millions we owe you! And now show me the new motor you think such a lot about. Is it really so very, very wonderful?"

"So wonderful, indeed, your Majesty, that I have been able even to improve on the powers of the birds of the air. I have mastered their art with such completeness and success that now they appear clumsy and incapable beside me. See, here is one!"

They stooped low over the machine, Ostermann engrossed in explaining the mechanism, the other listening intently to the story of its marvelous powers.

They were not twenty yards from the three men crouching behind the stack of girders. Algy was so intent on watching them that for a moment he did not notice that Hafner had slipped away from him and was gliding like a snake along the floor

toward them. Old Jacobs' touch on his arm directed his attention to him, and together, breathless and horror-stricken, they watched him, Brett knowing what was about to happen, the servant realizing nothing till the last moment when it was too late.

The gliding man approached them nearer and nearer, creeping along the floor like an animal to the bending body of Alsopp Ostermann and the stout, clumsy figure of the stranger stooping over the revolving, whirring motor. Then a sudden leap into the air—a black, sinewy body crouching on Ostermann's back; an arm raised high in the air and striking downward with terrible force; raised again and again and again, and still descending with the same unnatural force!

A long, smothered, coughing sob from Ostermann, and he turned round with a last final effort of desperate, dying strength to look his enemy in the face. His own face, always the color of gray chalk, now took on a death whiteness, and his green coyote's eyes fixed themselves on Hafner with a strange, menacing glitter. His thin, bloodless lips drew in over his teeth in a venomous snarl.

Even as he looked he tried to spring at Hafner, but the work had been done too well, and he fell back against the engine he had the minute before been extolling. The glitter went out of his eyes with the rapidity of an extinguished light, yet leaving them green and menacing still and still wide open, bulging from their sockets as they habitually did, and staring, continuously staring, till the end.

Silas Hafner had waited a long while, had suffered many defeats, but he had revenged himself at last.

The stout man stood looking on like one in a trance till Brett ran up to him.

"Go—go at once!" Algy commanded unceremoniously, and pushed him toward the ladder up which he had climbed barely half an hour since. "Go at once, and remember —*I know everything!* Everything! Remember that the secret of this cave is England's and she will use her new-gotten power without mercy if there is need of it! There will be no quarter given. If you so much as advance one step with ill-intent, we act! Remember! And also remember that I know you, your Majesty!"

Algy bowed mockingly as the man stepped backward down the steep ladder and disappeared slowly from his view into the deep abysmal darkness in which the only sound was the beating of the waves and the rushes of gusty wind. He remained watching until he heard the stout man whistle a short, shrill signal, heard the *puff-puff* of a launch ride up to the ladder's foot, and, after a moment's wait, puff away again out to sea.

Seizing the enormous lever which was close to the little landing on to which Ostermann and his visitor had emerged from the depths below, Algy Brett worked it downward with all the strength he possessed, and uttered a gratified whoop of joy as the great plates of steel unrolled, the sections glided back into place piece by piece, and within three minutes the armor-wall was once again in place and not a crevice left. Before the space had quite filled up, Brett had removed the handle from the outside lever, and, after the last plate had locked into position, he unfastened the one from the inside.

"Just to make sure that our friend wouldn't gain anything if he changed his mind and brought back an army with him to seize what I suppose he thinks rightfully belongs to him.

Then he raced back to Jacobs and Hafner and caught them both by the arms, trying to rush them into the passage through which they had come from the castle.

"We ought to get back as fast as we can!" he panted, exhausted by his energy. "They may come back again, and I don't guarantee that the trick I've played them will work, and if it doesn't, we'd be done for! Come on, Hafner!"

But Hafner hung back, clinging to *Gray Ghost.*

"*Gray Ghost?*" he asked wildly. "*Gray Ghost*—I want 'er! She's mine now! I've won 'er; I've wrung 'er back from 'im—she's mine! I won't leave 'er! I killed 'im for 'er, and I'm the only man of you what understands 'er! I know why yer want me to follow yer; you're going to give me in charge for a murderer, you are! I know the law as well as you do, and yer don't catch me that way. No, yer don't! I stay 'ere with *Gray Ghost,* and if yer try and take me, I'll destroy 'er, so 'elp me God, I mean it!"

Algy stepped back to him and laid a hand on his arm. He realized instantly that the man's brain was hovering in the balance of utter and complete lunacy, that the excite-

ment of his attack on Ostermann was still seething in his veins, buoying him up. He saw that he must succeed in cajoling him away from the scene of the tragedy, from the dramatic surroundings and the hideous, compelling magnet of the murdered man's still staring, menacing eyes. Otherwise, the scale would tip down the wrong side, and England would lose the one man who could be trusted to initiate and educate her airmen in the mysteries and colossal powers of *Gray Ghost* and her seventy duplicates. The one man who was cognizant of Alsopp Ostermann's methods, of numberless secrets, of an amount of dangerous knowledge which would automatically become more dangerous if left to chance discovery!

"My dear Hafner, you've got to come back with Jacobs and me for your own sake!" he said soothingly, patting the man's arm as he spoke. "I know as well as you do that you're the only man who is capable of being the future skipper of *Gray Ghost*, and the Government will be the first to realize the fact and appoint you. Why, they will want you to act as instructor probably! It's not likely they'll risk wrecking *Gray Ghost* by giving her into the charge of some fellow who doesn't know the first thing about her!

"No, no, they'll want you, Hafner, and I'll see to it they treat you well. After all, they're no fools, and it would be cutting off their noses to spite their faces if they tried to do without you. As to what has happened to that fiend Ostermann—well, the only thing that can be said about it is that it's a very fortunate and desirable thing for us all that it did happen! And now I have persuaded you that I am only asking you to come back to the castle as a temporary precaution? It is madness for us to stay here and run the risk of Sir Stephen or the workmen returning. Will you come?"

Hafner's eyes were still sullen and suspicious, but he suffered Algy to lead him away into the passage.

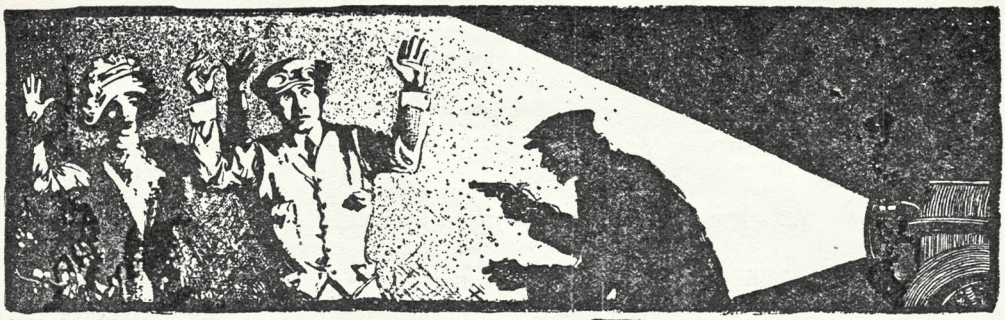
"Oh, I'll come with yer now—but, remember, if they don't hush up this 'ere little deal of mine with Ostermann and let me go free they'll regret it! I'll see to it, mind that! If they don't let me show 'em how it's me, and me alone, can manage *Gray Ghost*, I'll be revenged on them the same as I was on 'im! Mind that! You talk about their payin' me well an' being obliged an' all that, but 'ow do I know it's right? If it ain't, mind yer, I'll get at *Gray Ghost* the same as I got at 'im, no matter where you hide 'er, and if I do they'll be left sucking a dry orange! Tell 'em that from me! Tell that, young sir, and tell 'em I mean it! I can destroy *Gray Ghost* within a minute, and I'd do it and die happy with 'er rather than leave 'er! So that's plain, ain't it?"

THE discovery was the talk of the world. They tried their utmost to keep it quiet and did all they could to hush the thing up. There was such a lot to explain, and explanations were obviously awkward, and they were afraid that the Jingo element might lead the cry for war, which was the last thing that was wanted—even with such weapons—by the Government. But, in spite of all precautions, things leaked out. The wildest reports got abroad and the presence of men-o'-war keeping ceaseless, vigilant guard over the entrance to the caves, the posse of police ever scouring the moors and searching the castle, and the gangs of foreign workmen and mechanics who were daily beaten from cover and taken away in custody, confirmed and strengthened them.

Then on the top of the rumors came the news of Sir Stephen Brett's suicide, and, to crown all, there came a day in which all England rushed out of doors to watch a stately fleet of seventy giant-winged airships of war sail through the heavens in two long, unswerving lines. Seventy cloud-gray torpedo-nosed airships manned by crews, every man of whom had been trained and drilled by Silas Hafner! And that he had done his work well was evident in the way the two long lines of ships kept to their course and rose and fell at the word of command. The fleet of aerial warships which now belonged to England and made her omnipotent, all-powerful, safe against the world!

To Sir Dean Densham they raised a mighty monument, and it reared its height into the skies in memory of a man who gave his life for his country.

Of Algy Brett they made a hero, and on the day he and poor Carlile Darien's sister, Eva, were married they cheered him to the echo, and presented him with a little model of a luminously gray, cigar-shaped airship in full flight, and bearing in letters of gold on the base the little name, *Gray Ghost*.



THE BENEFICENT BURGLAR

by Charles Neville Buck

CHAPTER I

A CALL FOR HELP

THE agitated transit of Mr. Lewis Copewell through the anteroom of the Honorable Alexander Hamilton Burrow created a certain stir. With all the lawless magnificence of a comet that runs amuck through the heavens, he burst upon the somewhat promiscuous assemblage already seated there. The assemblage sat in dumb and patient expectancy. Quite obviously it was a waiting-list, already weary with enforced procrastination. Its many eyes were anxiously focussed on the door that sequestered the great man in the aloofness of his sanctum.

A young woman gazed across her typewriter at the supplicants seeking audience, with a calm hauteur which seemed to say, "Wait, varlets, wait! The great do not hurry."

They returned her gaze sullenly but in silence. None ventured to penetrate beyond her desk to the portal forbiddingly placarded, "Private." None, that is, until Mr. Copewell arrived.

"Where's Aleck?" demanded that gentleman, mopping his perspiring brow with a silk handkerchief. "I want to see him quick!"

The young woman looked up blankly. She knew that Mr. Copewell and her employer were, in their private capacities, on terms of intimacy, but duty is duty, and law is impartial. Many persons wanted to see him quick. Since the triumph of civic reform had converted the attorney who paid her salary from a mere Aleck, who was even as other Alecks, into Alexander the Great, she felt that his friends in private life must adapt themselves to the altered condition of affairs.

Accordingly her reply came with frigid dignity. "Mr. Burrow instructed that he was not to be, on any account, interrupted."

"Huh?" Into Mr. Copewell's surprised voice crept the raucous note that the poet describes as "like the growl of the fierce watch-dog." "Huh?"

The young woman became glacial. "Mr. Burrow can't see you."

The glance which Mr. Copewell bent on this deterring female for a moment threatened to thaw her cold reserve into hot confusion. The waiting assemblage shuffled its feet, scenting war.

At the same moment the private door swung open and Mr. Burrow himself stood on the threshold. At the sight of him several gentlemen who were patriotically willing to serve their city in the police and fire departments came respectfully to their feet. One contractor, who had for sale a new paving-block, saluted in military fashion. Mr. Lewis Copewell took a belligerent stride toward the door as though he meant to win through by force of assault.

But Mr. Burrow made violence unnecessary. His smile revealed a welcoming row of teeth, which in modern America means "dee-lighted." "Trot right in, old chap," he supplemented.

The young woman looked crestfallen. She felt that her chief had failed to hold up her hands in the stern requirements of discipline.

"Good morning, everybody!" rushed on Mr. Burrow, with a genial wave of his hand and a smile of benediction for the waiting minions. This second Alexander the Great knew that you can abuse a man's patience if you are a person of importance and smile blandly enough. Some of the Cæsars could even massacre and remain popular—but they had to smile very winningly. "Terribly busy! Must make all interviews brief this morning," went on the new dictator. "Must get over to the City Hall!" Then in view of congealing acidity on the visages of three newspaper men, he added, since no man is great enough to offend a reporter: "I'll have a big story for you boys to-morrow. You know I'm your friend." He swept Mr. Copewell into the private office and the door slammed on his smile.

"I haf been sedding here for an hour alretty," confided Alderman Grotz to his next neighbor. The Alderman's heavy lids blinked with a stolid, bovine disapproval. "Der more I vait, der more I do not see him. Id iss nod right!" Alderman Grotz was reported to carry the lager and bratwurst vote about in the pocket of his ample, plaid waistcoat. Such discrimination against him was venturesome politics.

"That guy that went in there ain't like us," explained Tommy Deveran, whose florid oratory had been the machine's prized asset until the drift of political straws had guided him toward reform. "He wears silk half-hose where you an' me wears cotton socks. This here is a classy, high-brow administration. Myself not bein' no cotillion-leader, I'm goin' to beat it!" The Hon. Thomas rose and beat it in all the majesty of affronted dignity.

INSIDE, Mr. Copewell threw his hat and stick on the desk and himself into a chair. He commenced to speak and suddenly stopped. A fine flow of high-pressure language was arrested by the sight of Chief-of-Police Swager, sitting just across the room. The Chief rose and took up his gold-trimmed cap. The new administration had added to the pulchritude of its police officials by more jaunty uniforms. The Colonel felt conscious of a distinguished and military bearing.

"I'm going to shift Captain McGarvey from the Tenderloin—if you don't object," he announced.

Mr. Burrow did not object. He did not know who Captain McGarvey was, but that fact he did not mention. "What for, Chief, what for?" he inquired brightly. His air was that of a field-marshal for whom no little thing is too small to merit consideration.

"Well," thoughtfully pursued Colonel Swager, "I doubt if he's on the level, though I haven't got him dead to rights yet—can't prefer charges. McGarvey's a machine hold-over and he's likely to be a little blind in one eye where some of the thieves and yeggs that used to buy protection are concerned. 'Rat' Connors was seen last night, down at Corkhill's place. You know 'Rat' Connors?"

Mr. Burrow had not that honor. The name was not on the membership books of his clubs. "Let's see—" he repeated carefully, "Rat Connors, Rat Connors. I don't, at the moment, seem to place him."

"Second-story man, drum-snuffer, stone-pincher, porch-climber—general all-round expert," illuminatingly itemized the Chief, "variously wanted for a large assortment of felonies. McGarvey ought to have ditched him."

"Ah, yes, quite so," agreed Mr. Burrow. Mr. Copewell petulantly shifted in his chair. These matters seemed to him extremely trivial in view of his own more engrossing affairs.

"This Connors party," enlarged the Chief, halting a moment by the door and inspecting with pride the gold oak-leaves that went around his cap like a garland of greatness, "he's a solemn little runt with one front tooth broke and one finger gone off the left hand. He's got straight black hair and a face like a rat. He looks like a half-witted kid, but he's there with the goods."

Mr. Burrow nodded. "Go right after him, Chief," he authorized, "I give you *carte blanche*."

Exit the Chief, and in his wake appears at the door the accusing face of the young woman stenographer.

"Alderman Grotz insists——" she began.

"Impossible!" sighed Mr. Burrow dropping into an easy chair. "I'm rushed to death just now." He gazed off across the roofs and searched his pockets for a cigarette. "Let him wait—let 'em all wait," he murmured restfully. "That's good politics." Then, turning to Copewell, whose

frantic pacing of the floor disturbed his composure, he demanded:

"What's your trouble?"

"Trouble!" exploded the visitor. "Trouble! Why it's plural multiplied by many, then squared and cubed and——"

"Well, just for a starter, give us one or two and build up from that," suggested Mr. Burrow placidly. "Another girl, I'll bet."

"Another girl!" snorted Mr. Copewell. "There isn't any other girl! All the rest are counterfeits! There never was but one girl, and I'm going to lose her!" This with deep stress of tragedy. "You must help me."

"Certainly, I'll help you." Mr. Burrow waved his cigarette with airy assurance. "But what's the matter? Can't you lose her yourself?"

On the facetious and Honorable Alexander Mr. Copewell permitted the withering blight of his scorn to beat for one awful moment in silence, then he proceeded to enlighten. "I've got to steal this girl, or it's all off. You've got to help steal her!"

Mr. Burrow appeared shocked. "But my dear lad," he demurred, "I'm supervising a police force and a city administration in the interests of Righteousness with a large R. I doubt if it would be just exactly appropriate for me to go into the girl-stealing business on the side."

"All politicians steal," dogmatized Mr. Copewell, who had failed to be properly impressed with the piety of the new administration. "It's time you were learning your new trade."

"If it comes to that," explained Mr. Burrow with a smile, "I have subordinates who——"

"I tell you this is serious!" interrupted the other tempestuously. "It's desperate! It's——"

"I'm very —— busy," evasively suggested the new political power.

"If you're too —— busy to help an old friend who needs you," stormed Mr. Copewell, "you can eternally go to ——"

"Hold on! Hold on!" placated the other before Mr. Copewell had enjoyed the opportunity of designating the locality to which Mr. Burrow had his permission to go. "I merely meant to point out that when you want something done, it is well to go to a busy man. The other kind never have time."

CHAPTER II

THE PLOT OF AN ELOPEMENT

MR. COPEWELL crossed and stood tensely before Mr. Burrow. When he spoke it was with the hushed voice of a man who divulges an unthinkable conspiracy:

"They are going to send her to Europe!"

"You don't tell me?" observed Mr. Burrow pleasantly. "Well, what's the matter with Europe?"

Mr. Copewell looked as much astonished as though he had been suddenly called on for proof that Purgatory is not pleasant in August. His voice almost broke.

"They are sending her—so that she may forget me!"

"You can send a girl to Europe," reassured his friend, "but you can't make her—sane."

"They don't have to make her sane—she is perfectly sane now!" retorted Lewis with commendable heat.

"Then why," inquired the lawyer logically, "should it be necessary to send her to Europe?"

"It's not necessary. It's hideous!" Emotion strangled Mr. Copewell. "They are packing her off—because she loves *me!*"

"Oh!" Mr. Burrow's voice was apologetic. "I thought you said she was sane."

Mr. Copewell's reply may be omitted. In fact the Editor insists upon its being omitted. The following is an inadequate indication of its tenor: "——!——!!——!!! ——!!!!——!!!!!"

"Going to send her to Europe," mused Mr. Burrow as though he had not heard. Then he inquiringly raised his brows and added, "Who?"

"Who? What?" repeated Mr. Copewell, bewildered.

"Who are they going to send to Europe?"

"You are insufferable! That's precisely what I've been telling you—the One Girl—Mary, of course—Mary Asheton."

The Honorable Alexander Hamilton spoke soothingly: "You just said the only lady in the world. You didn't say which only one. Statistics show that in America alone there are perhaps twenty millions."

"Mary!" breathed Mr. Copewell with fervor.

"'Mary is a grand old name,'" recitatively acknowledged Mr. Burrow. "Who objects to this match between you and this young person, Mary?"

"Her family—fathers, mothers, uncles, aunts—everybody like that."

"Then I gather from your somewhat disjointed statement," Mr. Burrow summarized with concise, court-room clarity, "that the situation is this: It is practically a unanimous verdict that the marriage is undesirable, ill-advised and impossible."

"On the contrary, both Mary and I know——"

Mr. Burrow raised a deprecating hand and interrupted. "I said *practically* unanimous. I admit, of course, that you and the young woman hold dissenting opinions. There is always a minority report."

"I'm not trying to marry the majority. I'm not a Turk."

"How long have you known this particular Only One?"

"A year."

"How long an interval elapsed between introduction and proposal?"

"A month."

Mr. Burrow groaned.

"Abject surrender! No brave defense of your heart, no decently stern resistance! Why, Stoessel held Port Arthur a hundred days and more—though he was hungry!" After a momentary pause he inquired sternly, "If you proposed eleven months ago, why in thunder are you just now planning this abduction?"

Mr. Copewell blushed. "It took her some time to decide."

"It didn't take you long, poor creature!" Mr. Burrow studied a stick of sealing-wax with a judicially wrinkled brow. "Mind you," he generously acceded, "I'm not censuring the young woman. It's the female vocation to lure men. Can't blame 'em. Can't blame spiders for weaving filmy traps, but I am very, very sorry for flies and fools that rush in where angels fear the web."

"I DON'T need your sympathy. It's merely crass ignorance," snapped Mr. Copewell. "If you only knew her!"

"I don't," snapped Mr. Burrow back at him, "but I know her sex. I know that women differ from other birds of prey in only one particular and the distinction is in favor of the other birds of prey."

"That's a lie, of course, but I haven't time to argue it."

"The difference is," calmly pursued Mr. Burrow, "that the others wear their own feathers. Women wear those of the others."

The office door opened. The head of the young woman stenographer appeared. Her voice was chilling. "Alderman Grotz says——"

"Say to Mr. Grotz," replied the Hon. Alexander Hamilton in a voice loud enough to carry, "that it is very good of him to wait. If he'll indulge me—just ten minutes longer——" His voice trailed off ingratiatingly as the door closed, and he turned again on his visitor. "No woman in the world could reduce me to so maudlin a condition in a month! No, nor in a century. Now, having warned you in behalf of friendship, I'm entirely ready to help you ruin yourself. What's the idea?"

This was the moment for which Mr. Copewell had waited. He began with promptness.

"Mary has telephoned me. She lives in Perryville, two hundred and fifty miles away. They won't let me see her."

"They won't let him see her!" commiserated Mr. Burrow with melancholy.

"This trip to Europe was planned on the spur of the moment. It was meant to surprise us. It did. She starts to-morrow, unless——"

"Unless you interfere to-day," prompted Mr. Burrow. Mr. Copewell became intense. "She slipped away from home when she learned it, and we planned it all by 'phone. I can't go to Perryville—they would watch us both. I must stay here till the last minute and establish an alibi. Mary leaves there this evening on the train that reaches here about midnight, which makes no regular stops between. She starts unaccompanied, but is to be met at the station here in Mercerville by her aunt, Mrs. Stone, who is to chaperone the European trip. It is to be strictly and personally conducted."

"I know Mrs. Stone," grinned Mr. Burrow. "I can recommend her as a reliable duenna."

"But I leave here on a train that starts west at the same time hers starts east. Those trains pass each other about half-way. Both are through expresses and neither makes any regular stop between Mercerville and Perryville."

"I am following you." Once the plan involved action, the Hon. Alexander Hamilton Burrow became interested.

"I have got, quite secretly of course, an

order from the train-despatcher's office. In pursuance, my train stops at Jaffa Junction, which it reaches at ten o'clock to-night. Her train also stops at Jaffa Junction, forty minutes later. We both disembark. When aunty goes to the Mercerville station there will be no Mary there!"

"Almost you had persuaded me," said Mr. Burrow sadly, "but if any additional shred of evidence were necessary to establish the lunacy of this enterprise, it is the selection of Jaffa Junction as an objective point for elopement. Were you ever in Jaffa Junction? A tank, a post-office and a streak of mud!"

"It may lack certain advantages," defended Mr. Copewell, "but it is a strategic position. You don't seem to grasp the strenuousness of this undertaking —or the peril. Mary is sent across the ocean on twenty-four hours' notice. She is put on the train at Perryville by her family. The train does not, so it is presumed, stop till it reaches here. Here a grim relentless aunt catches her on the fly and keeps her bouncing! Good Heavens, man, the only chance I have is train-robbery in between—and Jaffa Junction is gloriously in between!"

"What part do I play in this praiseworthy enterprise? Do you want my police to lock aunty up, so that she can't telephone to mama?"

"Worse than that. When we drop off that train at Jaffa Junction, unless we have some way to beat it quick, our last predicament will be worse than our first. We will need an automobile and a trustworthy chauffeur. He can also be best man, and officiate at swearing to things when we get the license. You and your six-cylinder car have been elected."

"Are you quite sure," inquired Mr. Burrow in a chastened voice, "that you don't overestimate my merits?"

"I am willing to give you a try," was the generous response. "It would be nice and considerate if we could get it all finished up in time to wire aunty that we are perfectly well married before she grows hysterical about Mary. Mary is very fond of her family and would appreciate a little attention like that."

"And have you considered the time it takes to drive one hundred and twenty miles over those infernal, hog-backed roads?" queried Mr. Burrow with suspicious politeness.

"Really, I can't say, but it's only ten o'clock now. You can start as soon as you're ready, you know. You have about thirteen hours."

"I salaam before your unparalleled nerve! Do you realize that I have public duties to perform?"

Mr. Copewell shrugged his shoulders.

The stenographer's brown head was thrust into the door.

"Alderman Grotz says——" she began.

"Send him right in," exclaimed Mr. Burrow energetically. "Ah, Mr. Grotz, I'm very sorry indeed to have kept you waiting! Miss Farrish, tell the other gentlemen I have just received urgent news that will call me out of town until to-morrow. 'Phone over to the City Hall and make my apologies to the Mayor. Call up the garage and have my car ready for a long trip in a half-hour; telephone to my rooms and have my man pack a suit-case and rush it over to the garage. Let's see—yes, I believe that's all, thank you."

CHAPTER III

ON THE WAY TO JAFFA JUNCTION

THE allegation that Love laughs at locksmiths has become more generally accepted than verity warrants. In point of fact the locksmith has never been altogether without the honors of war, and during the last century or two he has made commendable progress in the matter of bolts and tumblers and burglar-proof devices.

Love was supervising the packing of Mary Asheton's steamer-trunks and was particularly interested in the single suit-case surreptiously intended for the Jaffa Junction trousseau. Love giggled as he looked on, but the giggle was rather hysterical. "*He* likes that black gown," said Mary, alone in her room with Love. "I wore it the evening he proposed the last time—no, it was the third from the last time."

The small god, Love, approved of Mary. Her red-brown hair, hanging in braids, was very thick and long. About her temples were soft, tendril-like curls of the variety that is most valuable to Love in his business, because they are more enmeshing and binding than some of the other links he is sup-

posed to forge with the aid of his stout smith, Hymen. He approved of her deep violet eyes, liquid with the electric potency of personality. He approved of her willowy slenderness and the grace of her carriage.

Love made an inventory of these assets, for like Napoleon Bonaparte he was arraying his forces against all Europe. As he realized the enormity of the proposition he sternly set his chubby features and clasped his hands at his back in a truly Corsican attitude. There was no room in the suitcase for his favorite gown! Mary Asheton sighed deeply as she acknowledged it. She felt that, in the unfortunate matter of paucity of raiment, the late Miss Flora McFlimsy of Madison Square had nothing on her.

There was a hazardous point ahead which the god was gravely considering. Mary would be entrusted to the personal care of the conductor, and that functionary might feel warranted in asking questions when his fair young charge desired to leave the train late at night, unchaperoned and unescorted. Mary was thinking of that, too. Now if "Captain" McDonald was in command of this run, all might yet be well. "Captain" McDonald knew her very well and liked her very well and was gifted with susceptibility and kindliness. But if "Captain" Fallow was in charge, peril loomed large ahead.

"Captain" Fallow spelled Duty with heavy, black, capital letters. Had he lived in the old Salem days, his hymn-singing basso would have boomed loud and devout over all lesser sounds whensoever there was a scold-ducking or a witch-burning. Mary had never run away with a man before. She felt poignantly sensible of her inexperience. The fact that she was running away with an absent man made it even harder.

Finally, she was on the train. Looking through dark windows she found herself taking a dark view of life. She was frightened. If a woman is not frightened on her first elopement, she is likely to be unfeminine. Presently the conductor came and dropped to the arm of the next chair. Providentially it was "Captain" McDonald.

"So you're going to take a tour, Miss Mary?" was his original remark.

Mary smiled. She wanted to cry, but she had to win the "Captain," and she had found that her smile was usually an effective way to begin. If that failed, she could cry later.

"You know, Miss Mary," the conductor's eyes grew reflective, "I've thought now and again it's strange you don't get married." He hastened to add with gallantry, "I'm sure it ain't for lack of opportunity."

Mary gasped, then she leaned forward and laid her hand on the conductor's arm.

"Are you a really-truly friend of mine?" she demanded in a catchy, half-sobbing voice.

"Any time you ain't got a ticket you can ride with me," the official assured her. "But I guess you'll marry one of them markeeses or dooks and after that you'll ride on them dinky European trains with tin engines."

There are times when good men swear, merely because polite language fails of forcefulness. At such crises vigorous young women, being denied that form of superlative, have recourse to slang.

"You've got another guess coming," said Mary stoutly.

"I'm pleased to hear you say so," commended "Captain" McDonald. "There's plenty of good young men in America."

"I'm—I'm going to marry the best of them to-night," confided Mary. "I'm running away this very minute! He's going to meet me at Jaffa Junction!"

The trainman's face clouded dubiously. The girl's heart began beating panic time. The dice of Fate were rolling.

"Your folks don't know about this?" he inquired.

She shook her head. "They—they drove me to it!"

"Who's your young man?" asked the "Captain." She informed him.

"Captain" McDonald sat pondering inscrutably for a long while. The girl's breast heaved convulsively in suspense. The small god stood by in Napoleonic posture, but whether it was the posture of Austerlitz or Waterloo he did not himself know.

"I don't see nothing the matter with Mr. Copewell, ma'am," the man at last adjudicated, "but I promised to see you safe to Mercerville. It's apt to look kind of careless-like to lose a young lady that's put in your charge."

"But I'm of age!"

The conductor's face brightened. It was a new situation and he was willing to avail himself of technical defenses. "Then I guess you can do what you like, but I wish you hadn't told me in advance."

"I was afraid," naïvely explained Mary

Asheton, "you wouldn't let me get off at Jaffa Junction."

Again the train director thought deeply. Finally he announced himself. "I'm ordered to stop my train at Jaffa Junction. I don't know who gets off there, see? But the brakeman will open up the vestibule door and—may you never regret it, ma'am!"

CHAPTER IV

A TRAGEDY OF ERRORS

WHILE these matters were transpiring, the sister express was rushing west. On the west-bound train "Captain" Fallow chanced to be in command, and "Captain" Fallow was peeved. Sundry irritating delays had marred his run from Pittsburg. His firemen had been hefting coal into the engine's cavernous maw in a Titanic effort to mend the time-losses. The locomotive had been roaring along with a streaming wake of black smoke lying level from its stack. At Mercerville only twenty minutes were left standing in the way of a perfect score, and at Mercerville the conductor had received orders to stop at an ungodly and forlorn tank-town in the midst of emptiness, known by the opprobrious name of Jaffa Junction!

"Captain" Fallow was fully prepared to be irascible with the Jaffa Junction party. Accordingly, when he discovered Mr. Lewis Copewell in the last seat of the last coach he eyed him without enthusiasm.

"I believe, Captain," commented Mr. Copewell pleasantly, "you have instructions to drop me at Jaffa Junction?"

The "Captain's" glance became flinty.

"So you are that Jaffa Junction party?" The manner of saying it indicated that the designation carried black opprobrium. Mr. Copewell nodded complacently. "Captain" Fallow's stern visage became more granite-like.

"My train is twenty minutes late now," he accused, "and that jay town is one of them places where a lot of lame old ladies tries to board the train every time you stop there. It takes a Jaffa Junction prominent citizen five minutes to climb into a coach!" Mr. Copewell politely attempted to simulate an interest in the characteristics of Jaffa Junction's prominent citizens. "Indeed?" he said.

"Captain" Fallow went on curtly. "I ask you as a favor to hop off quick when we get there. I'll have the rear vestibule open and you can fly out as soon as you feel the train slowing down. Your place will be our only stop this side of Perryville, see? If you can jump down without our coming to a dead stop, it will save time."

Mr. Copewell smiled. "My dear Captain," he reassured, "I hold various championships for getting off trains. To-night I mean to break all my past records. I'm in a hurry myself."

"Captain" Fallow's face softened. "Remember," he emphasized, "first stop is your destination."

In view of the fact that he was on his way to meet the one lady of his heart and to foil Fate and Family, Mr. Copewell might have been presumed to be wide awake. In point of actuality, the reverse was true.

Last night, anxiety and indignation had murdered sleep. To-day, action and preparation had assaulted his vitality. Now, with success at his elbow, a delightful languor stole upon him. Gradually his rosy dreams became rosier, more somnolent! His head fell on his chest. Behold, the bridegroom fell snoring!

SOME time later the conductor passed through the train and, arriving at the front vestibule of the front coach, made a discovery.

There, crouching very modestly in the shaded corner next to the rear end of the baggage-car, was a somewhat undersized youth with straight, black hair and an expression of innocence which somehow did not seem to sit naturally on his rat-like countenance.

The conductor eyed him accusingly. "Where's your ticket?" he inquired without preamble.

The youth smiled with a disarming candor.

"Honest, pal," he confided, "you kin search me! I was just goin' through me clothes fer it when you come out. I was just sayin' ter meself, 'Son,' says I, 'where in —— *is* dat ducket?'"

"Ducket, eh!" repeated "Captain" Fallow. There was a pitiless, inquisitorial note in his voice, which the young man construed as ominous.

The young man bit his lip in annoyance. It was borne in upon him that he had made a most unfortunate choice of words. In

police glossaries the term "ducket" is defined as thief and hobo vernacular for a railroad-ticket.

"You come up front with me," suggested the conductor, pushing the youth ahead of him. In the baggage-coach ahead Mr. "Rat" Connors, for it was none other than he, was treated to a very creditable amateur production of the Third Degree. But Mr. Connors had made his one mistake and they wrung from him no further self-incrimination. He was unaccustomed to the ways of travel, he said, because he had to stay at home and work very hard to support a widowed mother and several small brothers and sisters. He had lost his ticket. He had no more money. He was sorry, extremely sorry—but what could he do?

He could get off, the conductor assured him, and to emphasize the suggestion he reached for the cord and signalled to the engineer. Mr. Connors stood supinely near the open door of the baggage-coach while the baggage-man and a brakeman ranged themselves at his back to assist him in alighting.

The train slowed down with a jarring wrench which startled Mr. Copewell out of a halcyon dream into a disturbed sense of being almost too late. Wildly seizing his hat and grip, he made a lunge through the open vestibule door. It was a highly creditable lunge. It carried him from a flat-footed nap out into the darkness in something like two seconds and a quarter.

He was not yet really awake. He acted subconsciously and in obedience to a sense of imperative haste. When he landed, blinking, on the side of the track and saw about him, instead of village lights, only inky silhouettes of the forest primeval, he felt that he had made a mistake. Already the tail-lights were receding. Mr. Copewell rubbed his eyes and inquired of his subjective self whether he were still dreaming. His subjective self said "No." Thereupon Mr. Copewell sprinted after the tail-lights. Mr. Copewell was going some, but the shriek of the whistle drowned his shouting, and the rear-end lanterns were whisked like runaway comets from before his outstretched hands. He stumbled on a projecting tie—and the train was gone!

THE wedding-guest who beat his breast because his journey to the ceremony was interrupted had no valid cause of complaint as compared with this would-be bridgeroom who stood bereft on the cinders.

He dropped limply to the ground and covered his face with his hands. About him stretched the unbroken gloom of singular blackness. Nowhere was the glimmer of a light. Nowhere, it seemed, was a human habitation. Somewhere a girl was rushing on an express train toward a broken tryst! No one would meet her save a woman-hating best man! What could he do? For a time he did nothing but sit stunned in the darkness, a hundred yards from his abandoned baggage.

It was in just such desperate exigencies as this that chagrined warriors of antiquity were wont to fall upon their swords. Unhappily he had no sword upon which to fall. In the midst of crisis and defeat he sat and strove to evolve out of chaos some bright plan by which he, stranded in juxtaposition to the murmuring pines and the hemlocks, might, in the space of a few minutes, transport himself across an unknown distance and be married at Jaffa Junction.

It has been commented that at the average wedding the bridgeroom has a minor and insignificant rôle. Mr. Copewell had discovered a sure method, in the parlance of theatrical folk, of fattening the part. The male contracting party has only to stay away.

Suddenly he was aroused out of his apathy by the realization that he was not the only living being in that section of rural America. The discovery brought both surprise and comfort. There had drifted to his ears a plaintive singing voice, evidently not far away. The voice was a tenor and it floated through the thick night with the insistent melancholy of a lone minstrel who sings in adversity. Mr. Copewell could quite plainly distinguish the words of the ballad. They were these:

"Jay Gould's daughter afore she died,
Done signed a paper, so de bums can't ride."

There was a silence, then the voice swelled and grew more melancholy, as though the singer were invoking verse and notes for the voicing of his own piteous plight:

"Or if they do ride, they must ride the rods,
And trust their souls in the hands of Gawd!"

The voice dwelt lingeringly on the final chord, then broke off in a deep-drawn sigh.

Suddenly it flashed on Mr. Copewell that

there was need of quick action. For a while the minutes could hardly be too full of action.

CHAPTER V

INTRODUCING MR. RAT CONNORS

THE gentleman whose voice Mr. Copewell heard singing beside him in the wilderness was not, himself, without his troubles. Trouble resembles the star in the drama, who comes in various make-ups and reading various lines, but always demanding the center of the stage and claiming the white glare of the spotlight.

Mr. Copewell, longing for the soft voice of the lady of his heart, believed in his soul that no misfortune could equal that of a marriage ruthlessly interrupted by the chance hostility of Fate. Mr. Rat Connors was equally certain that Destiny does her worst when she thwarts a dash for freedom and fortune.

Mr. Rat Connors had more than a bowing acquaintance with Vicissitude, the hope-scuttling Lord of Life. Vicissitude, in its latest guise, had come wearing the mantle of Reform to the city of Mercerville, where rich treasures had heretofore awaited enterprise and where the new régime had blasted prospects. Mr. Connors wished most wishfully that the gentlemen responsible for this spoil-sport amendment of régime were, for two minutes, in his power and that he held in his right hand a serviceable fragment of lead pipe.

Only last night a warning had been given him at Corkhill's Exchange that it would be most expedient for him to leave town. Corkhill's Exchange was, in the argot of such as Mr. Connors, "de dump w'ere de woid is passed ter cut loose or lie low." The word just now was not merely to lie low but to fly far.

"Take it from me, Rat," the bartender had confided, "an' *beat* it! De new Chief ain't goin' ter run t'ings on de old plan. De bulls ain't goin' ter take de divvy an' keep d'eir faces shut no more. McGarvey's due ter get de ax. If you hangs round here, you'll be ditched an' settled an' de key t'rowed away, see? McGarvey tipped dat off hisself, an' it's straight. He said de best he could do fer youse guys was ter warn youse ter make quick getaways, see?"

This advice, being interpreted, meant that an end had come to the old régime under which Corkhill's Exchange had operated as a neutral zone where police and criminals maintained an *entente cordiale* on a monetary basis. That was the work of the Hon. Alexander Hamilton Burrow and his confrères. It was very inconvenient for Mr. Rat Connors.

So Mr. Connors, being just then short of funds, had planned a double event in the way of a flight and a *coup*. There was a certain country house near Perryville where the treasure was alluring, and if Mr. Connors could reach it he thought he saw a way to mend his fortunes. It was the journey thither which "Captain" Fallow had frustrated.

But to return to immediate conditions—Mr. Copewell wished to learn the time. He struck a match to consult his watch. Then he groaned again. His watch had stopped! Without knowledge of the hour he was a storm-tossed mariner deprived of a compass. In a rudimentary fashion the paralyzed brain of Mr. Copewell had begun to take up again the task of thought.

Thought had carried him this far. Mary Asheton would necessarily take one of the horns of her dilemma. She would either leave the train at Jaffa Junction, as per program, to find herself at the mercy of a rude and woman-hating man, or she would receive a quick and unsoftened warning from the aforesaid brutal person, in which event she would continue on her way, heart-broken, to aunty and Europe. If she were indeed marooned at Jaffa Junction, the essential thing was to establish communication with that point. Hence, the first step was to find a telephone. If, on the other hand, Burrow had warned her, the one indispensable step was to flag the east-bound train as it passed his own isolated spot.

Without knowledge of time or place he could not risk leaving the track, because he could have no idea when the train might pass. Perhaps this minstrel, whose voice had come to him through the curtain of darkness, might have a watch. Perhaps he might become an ally. Without a lantern Mr. Copewell could not flag the train unless he built a fire. Obviously, therefore, he must kindle a blaze and open negotiations with the unknown singer. Under the sudden stimulus of revivified hope Mr. Copewell became facetious. "Hello, you, Caruso!" he shouted.

EVEN before Mr. Copewell hailed him Mr. Connors had noted that the man who appeared in the night so near him was dressed too well to be a fellow vagabond. His photographic eyes had recorded this fact when the sputtering match had caught a red reflection on the watch-case with the glint and color of gold. It might have been wiser, reflected Mr. Connors, to have remained silent and slipped up on this gentleman in the official capacity of a thief in the night. His tell-tale song had, however, made that impossible, so he decided upon permitting events to shape themselves. If it came to a crisis, Rat had, in his inside pocket, his "cannister" which was of .38 caliber and dependable.

"Hello yourself, bo!" responded Mr. Connors with affability. "Did you git t'rowed off de dangler, too?"

"I beg your pardon?" inquired Mr. Copewell. It began to dawn on him that this person might after all be an undesirable companion.

"Did yer light on yer neck offen de hurry-up train?" elucidated the other, coming amicably forward and striking a match. The two men regarded each other in the temporary illumination.

"No," said Mr. Copewell, "I got off by mistake."

"Same here," declared Mr. Connors. "De conductor guy made de mistake. De brakeman helped him."

For a moment Mr. Copewell stood hesitant. Mr. Connors was not just the man he would have selected to assist in retrieving his disastrously threatened life, but there was small choice of collaborators.

"Have you a watch?" he demanded. "Mine has stopped."

"Sorry," replied Mr. Connors with a grin. "I loaned me ticker ter a pal."

Mr. Copewell turned on his heel and began foraging for firewood. Mr. Connors looked on without comment. When the blaze was at last glowing prosperously, its radius of light revealed to him the suit-case which lay near the track a short distance away.

"Now I don't know you and you don't know me," tersely began Mr. Copewell. "It is vitally important to me to telephone to Jaffa Junction. When the Eastern express comes by, it is also important to flag it. Do you know this country? Do you know where there's a farmhouse?"

Mr. Connors shook his head.

"Neither do I," went on Mr. Copewell. "Now, whatever you do for me, you get paid for. I can't be in two places at once and I'm going to hunt for a 'phone. I'll be back shortly, but if I miss that train I want you to flag it and ask whether Miss Asheton is on board. If she is, you must give the conductor a note for her."

Mr. Connors was eying the suit-case. He thought the absence of the other man would afford him a better chance to investigate its possible value. "Sure," was his ready response. "I'd do most anyt'ing fer a pal."

Mr. Copewell tore a page from his note-book and hastily scribbled this message:

Dearest: Am caught in the Mill of the Inexorable. I can't explain now. I'll follow you to Europe and it will only mean a delay. I love you. Reserve judgment and you will understand.

He then plunged into the smothering tangle of the hills. Had he been told that there existed in his State such void and unpeopled wastes, he would, as a patriotic citizen, have resented the charge. He climbed a tree, remembering that all the correspondence courses in woodcraft advise survey from an eminence. The net results were a bark-scraped face, bruised shins and spoiled wedding-clothes. But at last, with a leap of joy, he descried a dim light off to the left. Where there are lights there is humanity, and where there is humanity there may be information—possibly even a telephone.

HE HAD meant to remain close enough to the track to reach it if he heard the train whistle, but this light lured him like a marsh-fire, through briars and over deceptive distances. At last it grew steady and Mr. Copewell went forward at an encouraged trot. A rise of ground confronted him. He rushed across it as though he were charging Fate's artillery. He did not know that the ridge was in reality the brush-cloaked edge of a steep river-bank, any more than he knew that the light he sought was on the opposite side of the stream. He became apprised of both facts, however, a half-second later, when the ground dropped out from under him and he found himself floundering in cold, deep water.

Handicapped by the weight of his clothes, he made the bank after two or three highly problematical minutes, arriving in the un-

beautiful condition of a drenched rat. The ascent of the sticky acclivity contributed a coating of mud. As he turned miserably back he heard the approaching rumble of an express locomotive. Mr. Copewell broke wildly through the thicket toward his fire, half a mile away.

Neither his exterior nor his rate of speed accorded with that staid dignity which should characterize a man going to meet his fair young bride. Mr. Copewell, however, had lost his sense of proportion. He did not care. What he wanted was to get there.

The sound of the oncoming train grew louder. Mr. Copewell attained a higher rate of speed. The sweat poured into his bulging eyes. The rumble grew, gathering into a crescendo, then dropped down the scale of sound with diminuendo. He knew the train had passed. It had not stopped. It had not hesitated. The engineer was getting a good forty-five miles an hour out of his boilers!

As a capstone to his arch of misfortune an outcropping root caught Mr. Copewell's toe and threw him headlong into a deep cut. It began to look as though, in the question of his marriage, the nays had it. A very definite pain in the chest and shoulder told him that something had broken. He staggered to his feet and went more slowly. A torment in one ankle retarded him—also, there was no further need of hurrying. At the fire he discerned the peacefully recumbent figure of Mr. Connors, his head pillowed on the suit-case.

"Why in —— didn't you stop that train?" bawled Mr. Copewell in futile frenzy.

"It's like dis, pal," confided Mr. Rat Connors placidly. "I just gets t'rowed offen one dangler, see? I ain't goin' ter take chances stoppin' no fliers in places like dis. It ain't healt'y. Meself, I knows w'en I gets plenty."

"Didn't you agree to do it?" screamed Mr. Copewell, choking and sputtering like a cataleptic maniac.

"Sure," smiled Mr. Connors, "but I loses me noive, see?" He did not add that he had accomplished his real object when he had rifled the suit-case and that his promise had been purely strategic.

Mr. Copewell sank down by the fire. Perhaps it was the shock of the wetting and a broken clavicle. Perhaps it was despair and pain combined. The blood in his temples seemed to be cascading into his eyeballs and flooding his sight with red. Slowly Mr. Copewell crumpled forward in a senseless heap on the stone-ballasted right of way.

MR. CONNORS, rolling a cigarette, was startled by the collapse of his *vis-à-vis*. He rose and went over to investigate. He studied the face and its pallor impressed him. Mr. Rat Connors stood indicted for several dozen felonies. More cities claimed him living than ever claimed Homer dead. The fact that he was at large was sufficient evidence of his criminal efficiency. Yet at times he felt that a career of great promise was seriously handicapped by a tendency toward soft-heartedness.

Now his hands played over the prostrate body as deftly as though the fingers were experimenting with the combination of a safe. The diagnosis told him that a rib and a collar-bone were broken. There might be also other breakages, but these two were patent on a cursory inventory.

"Now if dat ain't ——," snarled Mr. Connors, "I'll eat a goat!"

He sat down and brooded bitterly. He had been booted off a train and had dropped into the company of a stranger. By virtue of helplessness, this stranger became an enforced trust upon the unwilling hands of Mr. Connors until he could be turned over to some one else. Mutual misfortune created a certain tie of brotherhood. Mr. Connors scorned the quitter who abandoned even a chance pal in a state of wounded disability. Every profession has its ethics. There was, however, no ethical objection to robbing the invalid's pockets. Mr. Connors was a socialist. This man had money. Mr. Connors had none. It was equitable that the extremes of wealth and poverty be leveled. Profound thinkers have enunciated this principle.

Mr. Connors bent over and proceeded to carry into effect the socialistic propaganda by the simple device of searching every pocket. Mr. Copewell had drawn his check that day with a view to meeting the requirements of honeymooning—and honeymooning is an expensive pastime. The eyes of Mr. Rat Connors bulged and glittered in the firelight as he counted bills and made transfers. Then Mr. Connors dragged the prostrate figure farther back into the shadow and arranged it as comfortably as possible on the

grass. After that he piled fresh sticks on the blaze.

"Now I've got ter find some hoosier ter look after dis guinea," soliloquized the unwilling custodian. "Gee, but it's —— to be soft-hearted!" He paused and felt through his coat the thick wad of bills in his pocket. "An' say, Rat, me son," he added with deep sorrow, "wid a bun like dat yer could beat it ter de North Pole, too!"

Mr. Connors struck off at random into the night, singing mournfully as he went:

"Jay Gould's daughter, afore she died,
Done signed a paper so de bums can't ride."

CHAPTER VI

MR. BURROW SUGGESTS A REMEDY

THE Honorable Alexander Hamilton Burrow had been something like two hours in Jaffa Junction. Two hours in Jaffa Junction is more than sufficient for any man. For the Hon. Alexander the night held nothing save the melancholy prospect of seeing a friend abandon himself to the emotional insanity of marriage. For marriage Mr. Burrow had no tolerance. For women he had a supreme contempt. When the train which should have borne his friend whisked through and brought no Copewell, the best man became testy.

Mr. Burrow reflected that this development left him to take charge of an unclaimed lady, whom he did not want. He found the idea disconcerting. Decidedly he must devise some escape. Then an inspirational idea dawned. He would rush up to her Pullman when it arrived. He would shout warningly, "On your way! Your lunatic didn't come!" That ought to solve the situation very nicely. First, though, he would call up Mercerville and find out what had happened.

Calling up Mercerville from Jaffa Junction proved an undertaking of such magnitude that Mr. Burrow's grouch ripened slowly into misanthropy before it was accomplished. The telephone exchange, instead of being central in location, seemed to have been placed on the principle of an eruptive hospital in far-away isolation. When at last he got Copewell's lodgings it was to learn that Copewell had left on the west-bound express.

As the Honorable Mr. Burrow came down the stairs of the telephone exchange the shriek of a train whistle smote discordantly on his ears. The motor proved balky and required a singular amount of cranking. The cranking required a superlative amount of profanity. Altogether the series of petty annoyances spelled delay. The station was quite a distance away and Mr. Burrow proceeded to desecrate the speed-limit, rehearsing as he went, "On your way, young woman! He didn't come!"

And Miss Asheton, alighting on the station platform, was startled to find it empty. She had expected it to be filled with the welcoming presence of Mr. Copewell.

Her alarm was at once dissipated, however, by the glare of acetylene headlights whirling around the curve of the road some distance away.

The mad speed of the approaching car indicated that it was her own private reception-committee. She set down her suit-case and waited.

"Captain" McDonald also saw the automobile headlights. He knew that automobiles were not indigenous to Jaffa Junction. This one could mean only that Miss Asheton was being properly and enthusiastically met.

A moment later the best man alighted at the station and looked regretfully after the train. He had been too late. Mr. Burrow had not considered the possible effect on Miss Asheton of his contemplated bluntness. It had not mattered. Mr. Burrow had the military mind. The military mind can not pause to consider the feelings of the enemy. Decimation is painful to an army but desirable to the attacking general. The military mind sees and pursues one object. Mr. Burrow's one object was to rid himself of a superfluous young female. It was the same thing that makes some warriors slay prisoners rather than be burdened with them on the march.

For an appreciable space of time the Hon. Alexander Hamilton Burrow eyed Miss Asheton with icy politeness. She looked back at him inquiringly. There was nothing ardent in the tableau.

"I take it you are the bride-elect?" hazarded the Hon. Alexander.

"Yes." The man had no idea the monosyllable could be so short. Her voice was so musical that it was altogether too short.

"I'm A. H. Burrow. I'm the best man."

"Yes, but where is Lewis?" Miss Asheton put the question with a pardonable

eagerness. Conversely, her voice conveyed an entire absence of interest in the best man.

"All the weddings I have ever attended," said Mr. Burrow sententiously, "were marred by some slight hitch or omission. At this one the missing detail seems to be the bridegroom." Having spoken, he awaited her hysterics.

IT HAPPENED that Miss Asheton was not the hysterical sort. She merely looked at Mr. Burrow, and Mr. Burrow suddenly felt himself grow microscopic. Also, he was puzzled. This young woman had planned to elope with Mr. Lewis Copewell. That indicated that she must consider Mr. Lewis Copewell a desirable possession. He had just announced, with studied bluntness, that she could not have Mr. Copewell. Why did she not take the cue and weep? He regarded it as axiomatic that women and children cry for what they want.

Yet here before him, in the full glare of the acetylene lamps, she stood eying him like an offended young goddess, precisely as though he were responsible and she meant to punish him. Mr. Burrow had not arranged his battle-front to receive that type of enemy. It dawned upon him that this was a very brave young woman and, although he admitted it reluctantly, a very beautiful young woman.

"If it's not too much trouble," she suggested icily, "you might explain more fully. On the whole, I think I have the right to understand."

Mr. Burrow shrugged his shoulders.

"My dear Miss Asheton," he began with weak defiance, yet feeling that she had put him on the defensive, "might I remind you that this is not my funer—that is to say, my wedding? All I can learn is that he left Mercerville, and did *not* arrive here. The question which now suggests itself to me, is this: What are the functions of a best man when there is no marriage?"

The young woman turned away and marched scornfully toward the far end of the platform. It was revealed to Mr. Burrow that if all women could walk like that, and take punishment like that, there would be no room in the world for woman-haters. His objections to marriage could not apply to a union with a deity!

He turned and went over very humbly.

"Miss Asheton——" he began.

The girl wheeled with her chin in the air and an angry gleam flashed through the mortified tearfulness of her eyes.

"Will you kindly go away?" she said in a peremptory voice. "I want to think."

Mr. Burrow skulked back, crestfallen. He sat dismally on the step of his automobile and fanned himself with his cap. He was very busy hating himself.

Afterward she came over, walking very straight, and halted rigidly before him.

"Will you be good enough to take me to a telephone?" she asked.

Mr. Burrow rose with a new alacrity and put out his hand to assist her. She drew carefully away from his touch and opened the tonneau door for herself. Into Mr. Burrow's self-hatred crept a note of self-pity.

"Won't you—won't you sit in front?" he timidly suggested. "It will be easier to talk."

"It's not necessary to talk," the young lady informed him.

The run to the telephone exchange was made in heavy and depressing silence.

"Can't get Mercerville any more before to-morrow," enlightened the operator briefly. "Line's in trouble—somethin's just busted."

"Any trains out to-night?" demanded Mr. Burrow.

"All out. Long way out. Nothin' doin' until ten-thirty to-morrow mornin'." Mr. Burrow thought it inconceivably strange that any one could be facetious at such a time.

"Where's the telegraph operator?" he inquired coldly.

"Gone to the country. Office closed till to-morrow."

"I suppose there is some sort of hotel," suggested the even voice of the girl at his elbow. "If you will take me there I sha'n't trouble you any farther."

"But—but——" began Mr. Burrow, then he began again. "But—but——"

The girl threw up her head. She even managed to laugh a little. "Yes?" she questioned sweetly. "You've said that four times."

"But—but——" stammered Mr. Burrow again. The Hon. Alexander was usually regarded as a loquacious man.

"I suppose some day—when I get the perspective on it, it will all be rather humorous," mused Miss Asheton. "It would make a good farce, wouldn't it? Only now it doesn't seem exactly funny."

MR. BURROW gave up the problem of articulation. He raised the hood of the car and adjusted something. When he came back he appeared to have regained the power of speech.

"Wait a minute," he said. His hands were greasy, so he procured a bunch of waste from the tool-box and carefully wiped each digit. Having accomplished this task to his satisfaction, he boldly returned and thrust his right out to Miss Asheton.

"I know," he said, "that I don't deserve quarter, but you are the gamest sport I ever saw and I want to be able to tell my grandchildren that I once shook hands with you. After which," he added, "I am going down on my marrow-bones and make my most contrite obeisances."

Miss Asheton did not this time repudiate the amenities. She smiled forgiveness.

"Why were you so atrociously horrid?" she asked, as though the psychology of his behavior mildly piqued her interest.

"You see, I was a woman-hater," he explained.

"Oh, are you? How interesting!"

"I am not!" hotly denied Mr. Burrow.

"But you just said——"

"I just said I *was*. There's a big difference between saying you were something and saying you are something. Life is a matter of tenses."

"Oh!"

"Do you know what a woman-hater is?" inquired Mr. Burrow, as the car nosed its way deliberately along Jaffa Junction's principal esplanade.

"Certainly," replied Miss Asheton. "It's a man who thinks he's a little wiser than other men, and who is, in fact——" she hesitated politely, "—who may be mistaken."

"It's a man," savagely supplemented Mr. Burrow, "who's such a blank-dashed fool that he glories in his folly! Until ten minutes ago I was one of them."

Miss Asheton said nothing. It occurred to the Honorable Alexander that she might be thinking of Lewis Copewell. The thought filled him with hot indignation. Who was Lewis Copewell that a goddess, playing truant from Olympus, should trouble her decorative head about him? Thinking of the decorative head, Mr. Burrow turned in his seat to contemplate it. The car veered into the ditch but without casualty. Houses sit along Jaffa Junction's thoroughfares as Chinese beads are strung—at extended intervals. Illumination is yet in the future. The ways are dark.

Besides, ran Mr. Burrow's train of thought, if Lewis Copewell wanted her, why wasn't he on hand to claim her? If he, the Honorable Alexander Hamilton Burrow, was to be dragged scores of miles to act as a human dead-letter office for unclaimed girls, surely he was justified in taking possession in his own distinguished person. The circumstances emancipated him from any Quixotic ideas of loyalty to Lewis Copewell. He turned again to the passenger in the tonneau.

"Aren't you afraid you'll ditch your car if you keep turning around?" quietly inquired Miss Asheton.

"It's quite probable," acknowledged Mr. Burrow. "Perhaps it would be safer for you to sit in front. I'm effervescing with repartee—scintillating with epigram. You need to be amused. It will take your thoughts off of your temporary annoyances and prevent brooding. Brooding is bad."

"Possibly even that wouldn't distract my mind," she ventured.

"Then run the car," suggested the Honorable Alexander, surrendering his place. "The more you have to do just now, the better for you. The less I have to do, the better I can talk."

Miss Asheton took the wheel.

The arrangement gave Mr. Burrow the opportunity to study her profile as she watched the road. It occurred to Mr. Burrow that he had hitherto lost much out of life by neglecting to study profiles. Then came the realization that after all this was the only profile in the world.

"Now," began that gentleman cheerfully, "this little hitch in your plans is not really so fatal as it seems."

"It's funny that he didn't get off the train," said the girl.

"Yes, it's so funny that there's no use trying to explain it," Mr. Burrow assured her.

"And I don't know what to do," she continued.

"I have a perfectly rational and logical plan," confided her escort. "One, in fact, which I regard as an improvement on the original."

"What is it?" This somewhat doubtfully. Miss Asheton saw no fault with the previous arrangement.

"Now you came here to get married, didn't you?"

"That," she admitted, "was the idea, but——"

"Never give up a purpose," interrupted Mr. Burrow with a note of steadfast resolve. "You came to get married. Do it!"

"But," her voice trembled just a little, "but I can't. How can I?"

"Nothing simpler. Just do as I say."

She turned her face from the wheel and gazed at him in wonderment. "How? I was on hand. *I'm* ready—but where's Lewis?"

"You came here to get married," insistently repeated Mr. Burrow. "You passed up a trip to Europe and left aunty waiting in Mercerville. I came here to get you married, and passed up a Ninth Ward meeting in Mercerville. That wedding *must* take place!"

Her eyes gazed out at the road, under brows wrinkled with bewilderment.

Mr. Burrow looked at her a moment in silence, then spoke with great impressiveness.

"A woman owes it to herself to marry the best man obtainable. I am, in my official capacity, the best man. Marry me. I am very much at your service, and it may not be irrelevant to add that I love you."

THE immediate effect of this announcement was that the girl at the wheel threw on the brakes and stopped the car with a jolt which almost sent her suitor carroming through the windshield. Next she turned and sat staring at Mr. Burrow, with an expression of absolute and paralyzed incredulity.

Mr. Burrow felt that he had failed to make himself quite clear. "I concede that it's a trifle abrupt," he acknowledged, "but I am essentially a man of action. Some dilatory fools might take a month to discover that without you life is a superfluous by-product." The Honorable Alexander thought contemptuously of Mr. Copewell. "It is enough for me to see you. Besides, Europe yawns for you, and it's bad luck to postpone a marriage. Possibly when you know me you'll like me. If you don't, I'll remodel myself according to your specifications." Phraseology notwithstanding, there was sincerity in Mr. Burrow's voice.

"It's very good of you," said the girl at last, speaking a trifle vaguely. "Your courteous proposal seems to cover every possible point—except one. The one is Lewis Copewell. Really, you know, I didn't just come here to get married at random!" She started the machine forward again.

"I assure you there's nothing random about me!" argued the Honorable Alexander with dignity.

She shook her head. "In matrimonial matters," she told him, "one can't eliminate the element of personal preference. I still prefer Lewis."

Mr. Burrows sighed. Even deities, it seemed, had undiscriminating tastes. "This is the hotel," he said wearily.

The girl looked at the uninviting façade of the building indicated. It suggested the kennel of a dog in very modest circumstances.

"This—a hotel!" she exclaimed.

"Yes," said the man. "It isn't a very good hotel. The County Judge lives on the next square. He can perform the marriage ceremony, you know, and his house is much nicer. Shall we go on?"

"We will get out here," said Miss Asheton firmly.

Though it was midnight, it chanced that the hotel office was not completely deserted. Through the open door struggled the yellow glimmer of a coal-oil lamp, and its reek hung offensively on the sultriness. Two drummers, with loosened neck-bands and hanging suspenders, were beguiling the heavy hours with a deck of greasy cards. Dozing in dishabille, sat mine host, his chair propped on two legs against the wall and his snore proclaiming him in the shadow. The arrival of a beautiful woman and a man in motor-togs brought the drummers to their feet with an exclamation which aroused the innkeeper.

That worthy rubbed his eyes and began in a wheezing voice: "I'm afraid it's goin' ter be kinder onhandy to take keer of you folks. The house is mighty nigh full up."

Before Mr. Burrow could reply, one of the drummers rose chivalrously to the occasion.

"The gent and his wife can take my room, if Mr. Sellers, here, don't mind my doubling up with him." The drummer had been marooned an entire day in Jaffa Junction. For a glimpse of that face at the breakfast table he would gladly have slept on the roof. Mr. Burrow cleared his throat, but before he could find words, Mr. Sellers graciously declared that he would be much pleased to oblige.

Then, while Miss Asheton stood painfully impersonating the aurora borealis, the Honorable Alexander Hamilton Burrow astounded her with these composed words: "I am sure you gentlemen are both very kind, but if you will pardon me a moment I will consult with—er—with my wife."

Since the space of the hotel office was limited in scope to something like ten by twenty feet, partly preëmpted by a cigar-counter, the two drummers exchanged glances and rose, with innate delicacy, disappearing into the street. Mine host, prompted by the same latent courtesy, disappeared up the stairs.

Then Miss Asheton turned a whitely angry face on the Honorable Alexander. She could hardly have confronted him more belligerently had she really been his spouse.

"How dared you!"

"My dear young lady," expostulated Mr. Burrow humbly, "you don't know Jaffa Junction. You arrive unchaperoned. If I had corrected our Calvinistic host, he would have turned us both out like pariahs."

"Will you please drive me to Mercerville?"

"Certainly. Direct or—via the County Judge's?"

"Direct—and fast!" said Miss Asheton with decision.

"Please consider," urged the Honorable Alexander. "It is now past midnight. Mercerville is ten hours away either by motor or train. It will be a trifle difficult to explain to aunty."

"It will be a trifle difficult in any event," sighed Miss Asheton.

"On the contrary. I should not feel called upon to make any explanation whatsoever as to the movements of myself and my wife." Mr. Burrow spoke with some hauteur.

The young woman ignored the suggestion. "We will go on," she said.

"The roads are very bad, and one tire is a little weak."

"We will go on."

"You are spoiling the most improved elopement that was ever devised," sighed the Honorable Alexander mournfully. "It breaks my heart to witness such iconoclasm."

"We will go on," murmured Miss Asheton mechanically.

One hour and a half later, as the car turned a sharp curve, there came a loud report, a sudden jolt and a long-suffering sigh from Mr. Burrow.

"That," he said in a voice of deep resignation, "was the rear, left-hand tire, and I should say that as a blow-out there was some class to it."

CHAPTER VII

MR. RAT CONNORS, SAMARITAN

WHEN Mr. Rat Connors dropped out of sight over the railroad embankment his ideas of procedure had been somewhat vague. In the United States were some eighty million people. It seemed a fair sporting proposition, and one worth a small bet, that out of that number at least a single individual must have residence in this neighborhood. If he sought hard enough he might find that habitation. Himself, he would have preferred a night's lodging under the broad and starry skies to a quest of the sort he had undertaken. But the other gentlemen was "in bad" and the tenets of Mr. Rat Connor's primitive knighthood precluded the possibility of "leavin' him lay" suffering and unsuccored.

The search was, for a while, futile. The timbered hills stretched unbroken in lines of ragged shadow. It was a knob country, surrendered, even in the narrow valleys, to the crawfish and the crow, save for a few scattered cabin-dwellers who cultivated peach orchards on the sterile slopes of the hills. But at last Mr. Connors came upon a sort of trail which seemed to be the poor relation to a road. Mr. Connors set his feet therein and trudged on with what comfort and companionship he could derive from Jay Gould's Daughter personified in song.

At last he came upon a point where, through a gap in the timber-line, he saw a dilapidated and almost shapeless bulk etched darkly against the star-punctured sky. Now, disclaiming any intention to speak with aspersion of Mr. Connors, it must be said that his profession made his habits largely nocturnal. Men who operate in darkness share with the cat the power to use their eyes where the honest householder would find himself blind.

To Mr. Connors the well-nigh shapeless mass defined itself into a building, and the erect projection at its top into a modest steeple, proclaiming it a "meeting-house." A church on a hill, in the middle of the night, offers little encouragement to a man seeking living aid. Toppling smudges of lighter

gray flanked its walls, telling of men and women who slept in the enclosure, but these men and women were all dead. The smudges were their gravestones.

The eyes of Mr. Connors went farther back, penetrating the darkness, and discovered a second and more indistinct pile. That might be the parsonage! Mr. Connors halted for reflection. Churches were establishments distinctly out of his line. Parsons were gentlemen engaged in a different, even a hostile, profession. On the other hand, churchmen might be expected to lend an attentive ear to tales of distress.

Mr. Rat Connors turned into the churchyard, shivering instinctively as he passed among the graves. Mr. Connors was a simple soul easily awed by the Great Phenomenon of death. No lights shone from the windows or doors of the house in the rear. At this hour honest folk slept, in that vicinity. Before the house hung a rickety gate, and Mr. Connors had his hand on the latch, when his entire plan of campaign underwent sudden revision.

He had intended entering the gate, proceeding up the grass-grown walk and hammering at the front door. Instead, he went fleetly up the fence, paused on its top only long enough to grasp an over-arching branch, then swung himself precipitately into a convenient tree.

The cause of this sudden change of itinerary remained below, since it is the wise dispensation of Providence that dogs can not climb trees. The Cause, however, in his sudden heat and passion, did not seem willing to admit that Providence had acted wisely in the matter. He gave evidence of a desire to pursue Mr. Connors into the upper branches. It was clear that the Cause was given to violent and hasty prejudices and that Mr. Connors had aroused such a prejudice.

The dog squatted below and leaped into the air. When he alighted he leaped again. Mr. Connors, straddling a limb, the strength of which was not guaranteed, was ready to admit without cavil that the animal was jumping some. The brute seemed gifted with an almost Rooseveltian strenuousness and sincerity. Even in his moments of resting between efforts there was a grim determination in his pose which indicated his intention of remaining until Mr. Connors came down.

For a time he was silent, save for an occasional snarl; then he sent his voice echoing belligerently across the hills. Lord Byron says, "'tis sweet to hear the honest watch-dog's bay." Lord Byron was, no doubt, quite sincere in the assertion. It all depends on the point of view. It is safe to assume that Lord B. did not compose that line while clinging to a bending tree-limb with the honest watch-dog baying at the exact spot upon which he would fall if the branch broke.

Something must be done. The force of habit is strong. So often had Mr. Connors found it necessary to cover his movements with a cloak of silence when approaching a dwelling-house in the night time that it did not occur to him for some minutes to shout for help from within. Then he remembered that this time he was not on burglary bent. He lifted his voice in competition with that of the dog and shouted madly.

AT LAST the door of the house opened and a timid female voice inquired who was calling and why he was calling.

"It's me," explained Mr. Connors from his perch in the tree. The explanation was candid yet it seemed insufficient.

"Who are you and what are you doing up my tree?" demanded the voice a shade more boldly.

"Is dis your tree?" apologized Mr. Connors with some irony. "I didn't get no time to ask whose tree it was."

"What are you doing up there?"

"Ask your dawg," replied Mr. Connors. "He put me here."

From the dog came a growl which entirely corroborated Mr. Connors on the point in question.

The slit of light in the door remained just wide enough to permit a shawl-wrapped head to protrude. The dog fell silent. He appeared to recognize that his was now a thinking part, but he relaxed nothing in vigilance of pose. As the parley proceeded he squatted below, ominously alert, a beast couchant waiting his cue to take again the center of the stage. There was a painful pause.

"Say," suggested Mr. Connors at last, "if you're skeered ter talk ter me, send out some of the men-folks. I ain't dangerous. I won't hurt 'em."

"The men-folks are all away," replied the voice, growing timid once more, "and I guess

you had better stay where you are till they get home."

"When are you lookin' fer 'em back?" inquired Mr. Connors courteously. The branch was made of hard wood and it was a very knotty bit of timber; the length of time he might be required to occupy it was interesting.

The rustic mind runs to loquacity. The woman found herself explaining in more detail than the circumstances required.

"My husband is the minister. My son is the justice of the peace. They have both gone up the river, but the boat is due at the landing in an hour or so—unless it is late. You might as well wait a while and see them."

Mr. Connors groaned from the depths of his soul. In an hour or so, unless the boat was late!

"Lady," pleaded Mr. Connors in his most ingratiating voice, "I come here lookin' fer a doctor, see? W'en a guy goes ter git a doctor, it ain't right ter butt in an' stop him. Dat's de way it looks ter a man up a tree, lady."

The woman ventured no opinion. She merely closed the door.

"Lady!" shouted Mr. Connors in his most humble and winning manner. "Lady!"

The door opened again.

"Well, what is it?"

"Lady, I come here to git help fer a guy dat's lyin' on de railroad track wid a busted slat. He ain't got nobody ter look after him. If you keeps me up here dere ain't no tellin' what'll happen ter de pore afflicted feller."

"A man with a busted what?" inquired the lady suspiciously.

"A busted slat," repeated Mr. Connors. "Dis guy falls down a clift and caves in a few spare-ribs. Dat's on de level, lady. I ain't kiddin' wid yer."

"You mean the man is wounded?"

"Dat's it. He's all in an' down an' out."

"Where—where is this person?" The minister's wife put the question with preliminary symptoms of relenting. If some one were genuinely in distress, she must probe the facts.

"Right up de railroad about three-quarters of a mile from here."

The lady was considering. While she did so the beast below made a sound as if licking his chops with the relish of keen anticipation.

"When my husband and son come home," ruled the woman at last, "they will investigate your story. Of course they may not get home to-night—the boat is usually a few hours late."

Once more Mr. Connors groaned.

"Meanwhile," added the lady, "I'll call off the dog. You can vamoose."

"T'anks, lady." Mr. Connors voice was eager.

"But," continued the warning voice, "the dog will be about all evening, and if you come back——"

"*Me* come back, lady!" Mr. Connors' voice trembled with emotion. "Ferget it! Dis is me farewell appearance!"

The lady opened the door a little wider.

"Fido," she commanded, "come here! Here, Fido! That's a good little doggie!"

Thirty seconds later Mr. Connors dropped to the ground and disappeared.

MR. LEWIS COPEWELL resumed consciousness to find himself apparently deserted. With the reawakening of his mental activities came a renewed horror of the situation which engulfed him. He must find a telephone. He struggled to his feet, but while he slept his injuries had been multiplying and his joints stiffening. He breathed with difficulty. Also, he could not walk. One ankle had swollen until his shoe bound it like a vise, and when he stepped forward he fell, with nauseating pain, to the broken rocks.

The following is a true capitulation of the casualties suffered by Mr. Copewell: one broken collar bone; one broken rib; one sprained ankle. Mr. Copewell was not a man of flimsy courage. In order to send a single reassuring word to the lady he loved, he would gladly have waded through blood, but one can not wade successfully through blood on one foot. He could not even walk along a railroad track on one foot. He tried hopping and found it, on the whole, an unsatisfactory means of locomotion. Then Mr. Copewell crawled back to his suit-case and sat down again in despair.

Mr. Lewis Copewell was not astonished that his chance companion should, as it seemed, have abandoned him in his adversity. His meeting with Mr. Connors had been merely casual. Finding himself converted without warning from a voyager bound for the Enchanted Isles where a beauteous maiden awaited him into a

wrecked and battered derelict, his course had drifted across that of a second derelict. The second derelict had stood by for a time and offered him some slight aid, then had drifted on, abandoning him to the mercy of winds and tides.

As Mr. Copewell's harrowed mind dwelt on the analogy of his shipwrecked life he realized that instead of being a friend this black-haired youth was in fact his Nemesis, his evil genius. In the waste places of the sea float dangerous, half-sunken craft that menace the traffic of the ocean lanes. Good ships bear down on these submerged hulks and yawning holes are driven into seaworthy prows. Such a drifting peril was the black-haired youth.

But for him the train would have gone on uninterruptedly to Jaffa Junction, and the hope-laden argosy of Mr. Copewell's existence would have made its happy port! But for this creature's perfidy, Mr. Copewell himself would have remained by his fire and flagged the eastern train, at least establishing communication with the civilized world. So he might have snatched victory out of defeat. But now! Now there loomed before him only the ignominy and bitterness of a life spoiled in the making.

In all maritime law it is meet and proper, when a sea-faring man encounters a drifting derelict, to destroy it. Mr. Copewell wished whole-heartedly for an opportunity to dispose of Mr. Connors. Yet, even as he brooded vengefully, Mr. Connors was parleying in his behalf with a clergyman's wife, while a clergyman's dog, of unchristian temper, licked his fangs beneath.

CHAPTER VIII

A PISTOL AND A PUNCTURE

HAVING, by soft speech, won his way out of that parlous plight, Mr. Connors was still wearily trudging the abandoned roads of the vicinity in search of succor. His own state of mind was not joyous. Thanks to Mr. Copewell's wedding funds the financial phase of the case had been satisfactorily adjusted, but he was still anchored by responsibility until the man whom Fate had thrust upon him could be transferred to other and competent hands. And he was anchored, too close for safety, to the reform-infested city of Mercerville.

With these drear reflections he tramped along until he came upon another road. It seemed a somewhat more traveled way than the one he had left. Possibly it was the almost abandoned stage-road which in ancient days had linked Perryville with the east.

Mr. Connors extracted from his pocket a five-cent piece. Prior to the rifling of Mr. Copewell's wallet it had been the only buffer between himself and destitution. He could go but one way at once. Heads should guide him east, tails west. Tails it was.

A turn in the highway brought him upon quick discovery. Confronting him at some distance glared twin eyes of bright light, throwing broad, luminous shafts along the road. "Oh, me mother!" ejaculated Mr. Connors in astonishment. "If it ain't a benzine-buggy!"

Caution being the very soul-breath of Mr. Rat Connors' policy, he did not approach the stationary motor-car conspicuously by the center of the road. Instead, he dropped into the deep shadow of over-hanging trees and made his way forward with the noiselessness of an Indian on a war-trail. He meant to see what manner of person piloted the car before he presented his demand for first aid to the injured. He advanced on his toes.

The automobile was empty. One of its tail-lights had been removed and placed on the ground. There it blinked, lighting the work of a solitary man who knelt on a folded robe, swearing—also mending a punctured tire. This man was coatless, smeared with grease, covered with dust and panting laboriously. His profanity was voluminous and capable as he struggled with the task of replacing an outer casing on a jacked-up wheel.

Mr. Connors did not at once emerge from the shadow. He knew that this car could not possibly proceed until that tire was replaced and inflated. He meant to ask a favor, and asking a favor carried with it a certain obligation to reciprocate. Mr. Connors had an idea that pumping up the tire of an automobile which looked like a baby battle-ship would involve a distasteful element of manual labor. The evening was hot and, on the whole, it might be as well not to interrupt this gentleman until he was through.

It pleased Mr. Connors to discover, after a careful reconnoiter, that the gentleman was absolutely alone. If he proved obdu-

rate, and a gun-play became necessary, one man would cause less trouble than several. The frayed condition of the gentleman's temper indicated that he might prove obdurate.

Mr. Connors cautiously drew his "cannister" from his pocket and tested trigger and hammer. If the lone wayfarer quietly accepted the charge of the "guy wid de busted slat" there need be no friction. If he lacked that large sympathy which should make him a willing rescuer, then he must have philanthropy thrust upon him. Mr. Connors meant to thrust it with the pistol. So he gave thanks that this was not a party, nor a couple, but only an unaccompanied chauffeur.

When the injured man should be safely stowed in the tonneau the trusteeship of Mr. Connors would terminate.

Then what? Life has its business exigencies even for those of us who are not materialists. Men who tour in motor-cars may be assumed to carry money. Why not first impress the gentleman into service and then relieve him of his valuables? Why should the doctrine of socialism apply as to the man who lay wounded and not as to this one who drove an automobile?

The man in the road rose with a sigh of relief. He stretched himself, adjusted the pump and bent to his labor again. Mr. Connors sat watching. At last that too was done. The lone motorist put away his tools and turned wearily. Apparently the sight of the car fatigued him.

As he did this Mr. Connors stepped out of the shadow and placed the muzzle of his revolver in impressive juxtaposition with the gentleman's face. The gentleman had fancied himself alone. The discovery that he had been mistaken surprised him. It startled him.

"Let's see you stretch your arms up high," suggested Mr. Connors. The gentleman obligingly and promptly followed the suggestion.

"What is this, if I may ask?" he inquired. "Highway robbery?"

"Some of it is," Mr. Connors assured him pleasantly, "an' some of it's ambulance service."

"I'm afraid I don't quite follow you," admitted the traveler.

"Dat's all right. You will foller me in about t'ree minutes," replied Mr. Connors. "But before dat let's see w'at youse got in yer clothes."

THE motorist offered no verbal protest. When one looks down a gun-barrel at one A. M. in a lonely road, silence is eighteen karat fine. This highwayman was carefully keeping a position just too far away for a clinch. At that distance the pistol gave him priority of rank and entitled him to issue orders.

"Get over dere in de light an' turn your pockets out!" directed Mr. Connors. "T'row everyt'ing down here by me feet. If youse got a gun in yer clothes I wants ter see it come out wid the muzzle pointed de oder way! See?"

The gentleman saw. "I haven't a gun," he said.

"An'," pursued Mr. Connors succinctly, "let's be on de level wid each oder. Don't let's have no holdin' back. I wants ter see de linin's of dem pockets hangin' outside. You looks prettier dat way."

For a moment there was complete silence, while pocket contents showered on the grass at Mr. Connors' feet. Mr. Connors secured for himself the gentleman's coat, which hung over the tonneau door.

There is a distinction between tribute-levy and vandalism. Mr. Connors left letters and papers undisturbed, taking only currency and articles of intrinsic value.

Then, as they stood, with Mr. Connors unostentatiously in the shadow and the other gentleman in the full glare of the acetylene lamps, hands high and his pockets inverted, they heard a somewhat startled exclamation in the road. A young woman emerged suddenly from behind the car, carrying a bucket of water. The tableau had not greeted her eyes until she reached a point where the screening framework ceased to screen. Then it appeared to interest her greatly.

"Lady," said Mr. Connors steadily, the pistol muzzle never wavering, "or ladies an' gents, if dere's a bunch of youse—please come round here an' get in line an' put your hands up. If anybody makes a false move, I croaks dis gent, an' dat goes, see?"

The lady came forward and took up her station by the side of the man. In order to raise her hands she had to set down the canvas bucket with which she was burdened.

Standing in the acetylene spot-light the young woman struck Mr. Connors as supremely beautiful. He deplored the necessity of keeping her in a prisoner's attitude and he admired the calm with which she

endured the compulsion. Her eyes even seemed to be dancing a trifle as she looked at the somewhat abject Mr. Burrow.

"Please, Mr. Highwayman," she naïvely requested, "would you mind if I poured some water into the radiator?" She added reassuringly: "It will keep both hands quite busy. The machine can't go on until we do that, you know, and we'd like to get home—when you are entirely through with us."

Mr. Connors considered the proposition.

"Go as far as yer like, lady," he assented at last. "But let dis gent keep close ernuff fer me ter watch youse both. If his hands comes down, I'm afraid I'll have to hurt somebody, see?"

As the young woman lifted the full bucket with a surprising strength for such slender arms, the gentleman assured her that he regretted his inability to assist. The young lady laughed.

"Dat will be about all fer dis part of de job," said Mr. Connors. "Now fer the ambulance."

"The what?" questioned the young woman.

"I'se sorry ter trouble yer, lady," apologized Mr. Connors, "but it's like dis: Dere's a guy up de railroad track w'at's got a busted slat. I'se got ter borrow your benzine-buggy ter take him ter a doctor."

"Now see here, you infernal pirate!" The gentleman took one belligerent step forward and halted abruptly as he recognized how close it brought him to the ominous muzzle. "You're asking too much!"

"Me?" questioned Mr. Connors in an injured tone. "I ain't askin' nothin'. I'm tellin' yer w'at I wants done, an' yer don't need ter git fresh about it, see?"

"Is there really an injured man? Is this true?" asked the lady. Evidently she was willing to be reasonable.

"Honest ter Gawd, lady!" Mr. Connors spoke earnestly and his eyes wore their frankest appeal. "Dis guy is liable ter croak if he don't git a doctor. He's a pore skate. Meself, I don't know him personally, but I'se sorry fer him."

"Some disreputable drunk!" growled the gentleman savagely. "Some contemptible hobo like this man here."

"It occurs to me," suggested the young woman in a level voice, "that up to this point you have been very obedient to this person you call a contemptible hobo. At all events I'm not going to leave an injured man by the roadside. I'm going with this person. Do you care to come along?"

"Oh, he'll come along all right," Mr. Connors assured her. "I needs him ter run de car."

THE gentleman's face went white with anger; then, as he turned his eyes on Mr. Connors, his expression grew quizzical, even amused, and a light of sudden recognition came to his pupils.

"Mr. Rat Connors," he said with deliberate courtesy of address, "I congratulate myself that I have fallen under the bow and spear of so distinguished a crook as yourself. I retract the 'contemptible hobo.' I have just recognized you."

"Mr. High-Brow Reformer Burrow," replied Mr. Connors with instant promptness, "t'anks fer dem kind woids."

"May I inquire," purred Mr. Burrow, "how you knew me?"

"After you, after you!" returned the young gentleman modestly. "How did yer git hep ter me?"

"You see," explained the Honorable Alexander suavely, "the Chief of Police was speaking of you this morning. He had a good deal to say about you."

Mr. Connors grinned, as one whose greatness has been duly recognized.

"Will yer give me best ter de Chief? Will yer tell 'im I'm well an' doin' business an' I hopes he's de same?"

"I shall be honored to do so," declared the Honorable Alexander gravely. "I shall also look forward with pleasure to a meeting when all three of us shall be present—you, the Chief and I. But you haven't told me how you came to recognize me."

Mr. Connors smiled broadly.

"Yer name was printed in gold letters on yer pocket-book—an' I kin read."

"Oh," murmured Mr. Burrow.

Mr. Connors waved his weapon with a gesture of energy.

"Let's beat it," he suggested. "Dis busted-up guy's liable ter git homesick."

CHAPTER IX

ON THE RAILROAD TRACK

MR. RAT CONNORS superintended the arrangement of the car. The Honorable Alexander was requested to take the wheel, and the lady to sit at his side. Mr. Connors disposed himself in the tonneau,

from which vantage-point he issued orders after the fashion of an Admiral from the bridge of his flag-ship.

Two hundred yards from the railroad track Mr. Connors gave the word to halt.

Having disembarked, he marshalled his cavalcade in what he deemed the most advisable formation.

"Let de lady go foist," he suggested. "Dat's de perlite system." As they took the indicated order of precedence Mr. Connors added, "An' den if yer makes a break, I won't haf ter shoot t'rough de lady ter git yer, see?"

While they were picking their way through a bit of woods the Honorable Alexander Hamilton Burrow was moved to speech.

"You see, Miss Asheton—Mary—I may call you Mary, mayn't I? Life is full of chances. You need a protector. You had better reconsider and give me the right to act always——"

But Miss Asheton interrupted him with a clear peal of laughter. Despite the guard at the rear, she halted in her tracks.

"Certainly you may call me Mary," she said, "and you may protect me, too. Protect me now. Take the gun away from this person."

The halting of Miss Asheton forced the Honorable Alexander to halt, and the halting of the Honorable Alexander brought the cold muzzle of the revolver against the back of his neck.

"Move on dere!" ordered Mr. Connors. "Cut out de chin-music an' keep hikin'!"

The march was resumed.

"Of course," said Mr. Burrow, in a less jaunty voice, "there are times when we are at a disadvantage. The protection I alluded to——"

"Cut it out!" suggested Mr. Connors. "Less of dat comedy! Less of it!"

Mr. Burrow fell silent. To have one's tenderest declarations pronounced comedy by a critic one is not at liberty to contradict, is disconcerting.

Then they came to the embankment and were instructed to climb up. On the railroad-track they saw three men. One was an elderly gentleman in rusty clerical garb. One was a tall man of a younger generation, but the salient feature of the situation was that between them they supported a third person. Despite mud-smeared clothes and demoralized personal appearance, this third person was clearly recognizable to bride-elect and best man as Mr. Lewis Copewell.

Mr. Lewis Copewell raised his head and saw standing at the edge of the embankment a rare and radiant maiden whom mortals called Mary Asheton. For an hour Mr. Lewis Copewell had been demanding of the smoldering logs whether he should ever again clasp this rare and radiant maiden. It was upon this reverie that the Minister and his son, the Justice of the Peace, had arrived. And now—miracle of miracles!—there seemed to stand the lady in the flesh!

He tore himself from the supporting arms of the minister and the justice of the peace with an inarticulate roar. Then he proceeded to hop on one foot across the track, to find out whether this were a true vision or merely a brain mirage.

Miss Mary Asheton took a swift inventory of his injuries and went to meet him. Miss Mary Asheton did not have to hop, and a man can stand quite well on one foot when he has both arms around the only girl in the world. If you don't believe it, try it.

It dawned quite suddenly on the Honorable Alexander Hamilton Burrow that the party was quite complete. Bride, groom, best man, minister, witness and—how should he classify Mr. Connors? He swept a comprehensive glance about—but there was no Mr. Connors. Mr. Connors had vanished into the night as suddenly as he had arisen out of the night. He had played his part and passed.

In point of fact, Mr. Connors was looking on from the shadow of a not-too-distant sycamore. Sitting at the foot of this sycamore he drew from one pocket the gold timepiece that had formerly reposed in the pocket of Mr. Lewis Copewell. Then he abstracted from another pocket the watch that had been, until a short time ago, worn by the Honorable Alexander Hamilton Burrow. Then he affectionately patted the rolls of greenbacks in his breast pocket.

"Oh, dat ain't so bad!" he optimistically told himself.

For a moment there was silence on the railroad-track. Then Mr. Copewell, feeling quite assured that the vision was genuine, managed to say, "*Mary!*"

Miss Asheton said, "*Lewis!*"

The Honorable Alexander Hamilton Burrow, thinking of nothing witty or timely to say, touched the minister on the arm and began feeling in his pockets for the marriage-license.

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