Adventure

NOVEMBER

15 CENTS

The rifles spurted upward-Something pinged shrilly past his head.—"THE RUNNERS OF THE AIR"

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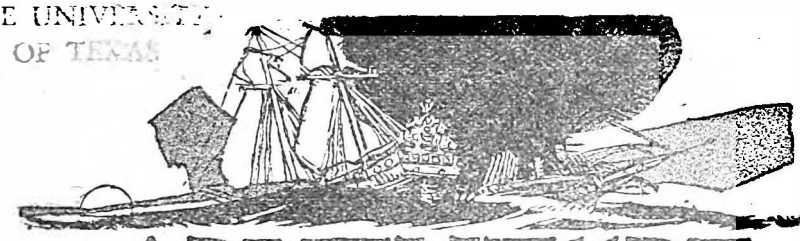

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Issued monthly. Yearly subscription, $1.50 in advance. Single copy, fifteen cents
Foreign postage, $1.00 additional. Canadian postage, 30 cents.

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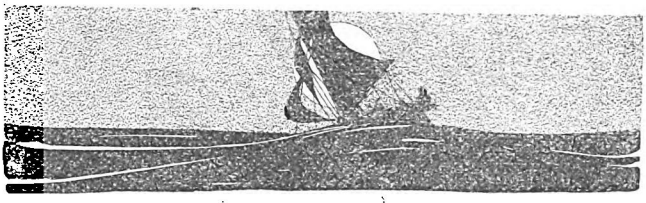
Published by THE RIDGWAY COMPANY
Erman J. Ridgway, President Wm. L. Jennings, Secretary and Treasurer
Spring & Macdougal Streets, New York City
5, Henrietta St., Covent Garden, London, W. C., England
Entered at the New York Post-office as Second Class Matter



THERE is a little house in Renard, a suburb of Paris, which hasn't seen its owner for fifteen years. Very likely the good French neighbors can tell you little about him, this young American who came to study art under Gérôme, Carolus Duran and Julian after a course at the Art League and the old Chase school in New York. He came and studied and starved, like most of his kind, and then he went away.

How did he come to own a house, this young man fighting his way into the field of Art? I don't know, but I'll ask him some day, for maybe there's a story in it.

Anyhow, he went away. And doubtless his old neighbors would open their eyes wide if they knew the places he went to—cruising in the South Seas, chumming with traders, "black-birders," beach-combers, remittance-men and sailors; lying out in the hills after moonshiners; sleeping under the sky in San Francisco parks.

It was the Spirit of the Out-of-Doors that was in him. Ever since he could remember he had ridden horses of all tempers and breeds, sailed boats of all rigs, and used firearms of all descriptions. And he came of a long line of sea-captains running back to old Matthew Couzens, original settler of Newport, Rhode Island, and captain of a British privateer.

Couzens? Yes, you know him. H. D. Couzens, whose stories you have been reading in ADVENTURE—"The Mutiny on the *Tonga Belle*," "On the Water Front," "In the High Wood," and "A Venture in Contraband." And there's a bully tale of his in this very number—"Salt of the Sea." And more to come.

Mr. Couzens was born in Virginia and educated for a civil engineer. But he has always had that habit of going away. In 1886 he left New York for Honolulu. In 1890 he left Hawaii to continue his engineering in Yonkers with his grandfather, Matthew K. Couzens. Then he left engineering for art, and New York for Paris. Then he left his little house in France for New York, and left New York for Honolulu again, this time for eight years. When the Islands were annexed to the United States in 1000 he was appointed Chief Deputy in the Internal Revenue Service. In 1907 he left for San Francisco. In 1909 he left for Los Angeles as an Internal Revenue expert on special service. In 1910 he left for New York. In 1911 for Los Angeles. Just now he is here in New York.

It is the South Seas and their people and what men do with schooners (a schooner has masts, not a handle) that interest him most, and it is chiefly of these that he writes. "I trust," says Mr. Couzens, "that 'Billy Englehart' and I will have many a wild cruise together. The company of that celebrated ruffian is meat and drink to me, as Billy Bones says."

In one of his letters, in reply to some questions I had asked, he writes: "I met Robert Louis Stevenson in King Kalakaua's stand at the old race-track at Honolulu in '89, and I've sat with Jack London on the *lanai* of the Seaside Hotel and heard him discuss his critics by the hour. I have gone back and forth across the Pacific in Army transports and found old schoolmates in Captain's uniform seated opposite me at mess. I think I have as large a nodding or speaking acquaintance as any man in the world."

NATURALLY you see this little paragraph you are reading now. Well, this little paragraph is three or four full pages of text. At least so far as importance goes. Because this is what it is saying: In the next issue of ADVENTURE begins "The Marriage of Kettle," by Mr. C. J. Cutcliffe Hyne, a serial.

You've met the fiery, plucky, dapper little Captain Kettle before, and you've met McTodd before, but never have you met them in the same story. Each has been enough by himself. But now we get double measure. Adventure? Nothing but. Laughs and chuckles? All through. It's a tale of Captain Kettle in his youth, one of the biggest stories of the year. If you like it half as much as we do here in the office, that's all we ask. If you like it any better, it will interfere with your work.

WE DON'T mind admitting that we've just had our first birthday and that this issue is the first of ADVENTURE'S second year. Thanks. Yes, we do feel a little that way, but this next year is going to be still better.

ARTHUR SULLIVANT HOFFMAN.

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Adventure

Registered in the United States Patent Office

November
1911
Vol. 3
No. 1

My Adventures with your Money

VII - Taking a Hand in the Wall Street Game - RAWHIDE Coalition and B. H. Scheftels & Co.

by George Graham Rice

EDITOR'S NOTE—Mr. Rice's ventures and adventures with Maxim & Gay, sellers of racing tips, carried him smoothly along upon the high flood of fortune and then, suddenly—he drowned. Mr. Rice's ventures and adventures in the great mining-boom towns of the West and as a record-breaking seller of mining stocks, as set forth in previous articles of this series, carried him tempestuously along upon the high flood of fortune and then—he ventured into Wall Street. You have read in the daily papers of the Government's raid upon B. H. Scheftels & Company and of Mr. Rice's indictment in connection with that affair. In the present article he tells how it happened. Still more interesting, he tells *why* it happened. The raiding of the Scheftels company makes good reading, but Mr. Rice, in telling of it, is offering something more than good reading. His pen unfolds his interpretation of that happening and gives it a significance that makes this article and the next and concluding one of vital interest to all who read and think and buy and sell. If you think, then read. And if you read, then—use your judgment when you buy and sell.

A MAN who thinks he knows what happened to me in Wall Street, and *why it happened*, suggests that the New York section of "My Adventures With Your Money" be prefaced with the following:

This is the story of an energetic, self-confident, aggressive, optimistic, enthusiastic, nervy, fearless, imprudent, uncompromising, presumptuous *fool*.

Maybe he was worthy of a following in that he would cast his own fortunes with those whom he asked to follow him, but withal he was a dangerous leader because he could not see the rents in his own armor and lacked caution, prudence and discretion. He could see a goal ahead and would lead the rush, but always failed to take into his reckoning one circumstance in his youth that left a blot on his escutcheon and placed in the hands of unfair opponents an envenomed weapon ready for use. He failed to see the necessity of making friends of his competitors and of placating his critics as he progressed. Indeed, he reckoned these elements not at all. He made many enemies and few allies. He never compromised. Naturally, he met with disastrous defeat for himself and the loyal ones who placed their faith in him.

I disagree. I was not a fool. I refused to be a knave, and I am not sorry. I have in mind a man of parts who as a stockbroker has been doing the dirty work of unscrupulous multimillionaire Wall Street mining promoters for years. Dishonest in his expressed opinions and a sycophant in his every action, the interest of the Wall Street man of power is always his as against that

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of the unprotected investor. I look upon this man as a vile person. I could not do as he does if my very existence depended upon such conduct. I would rather be out of business and broke for the rest of my life than be he. For me to serve the base purposes of high-class crooks just because they have money and power, would be for me to barter away my soul and lose my peace of mind. I would not sell either for all the money in the world.

Honesty is the best policy. The type of man I have described can not thrive for long. He must eventually suffer total eclipse. The business of this world is founded and builded upon individual integrity. The business man who allows himself to be used to carry out the base purposes of men in high places forfeits the respect of those whom he serves, is forever afterwards mistrusted by them, and loses caste in the very set he tries to gain favor with.

I charge that powerful, dishonest interests on Wall Street found it necessary for selfish reasons that I be put out of business. I declare that they bided their time until newspaper clamor against so-called Get-Rich-Quick promoters had been fostered, aroused and stimulated to a point where citizens became imbued with the idea that all promoters who use the advertising columns of newspapers are crooks. And I aver that when the Government used upon me and my associates its rare power of seizure, search and confiscation, it was with no evidence that any Government statute had been violated. In this and the concluding chapter of "My Adventures with Your Money" I state the facts which I believe prove these statements to the last syllable.

GOOD BIG FISH VS. BAD LITTLE FISH

ASK the casual newspaper reader to define offhand the compound adjective Get-Rich-Quick and he will tell you it is applied solely to professional promoters who employ flamboyant advertising methods, promise great speculative profits, use other devices which are calculated to separate the public from its money, and are in every instance dishonest. That is the idea which powerful "interests" have inculcated in the public mind by subtle, insistent press-agenting.

Time and again during the progress of "My Adventures with Your Money" I have endeavored to show that the really dangerous Get-Rich-Quick forces are the men in high places who, by the artful and insidious use of the news columns of "friendly" publications and others which copy from them, divorce the public from millions upon millions.

I said in my foreword in April ADVENTURE:

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

No man has a right to assume that a promoter who sells stock by means of display advertising in the newspapers is *per se* a Get-Rich-Quick operator. There are honest professional promoters of the display advertising variety and there are dishonest ones, just as there are honest promoters of the multimillionaire kind and dishonest ones.

The *on-the-level*, trumpet-tongued mining promoter, who believes in newspaper advertising and successfully finances companies by appealing uproariously to the speculative investing public, performs an actual service and is entitled to a place among honorable men. Indeed, he is the hero of the prospector and "poor" mine owner of the West. He alone stands between these men and grasping monopoly.

Mine men, stockbrokers, and financiers the country over understand this, although the Eastern newspaper-reading public has been taught to believe that this type of promoter must be a Get-Rich-Quick operator.

A BROKER in Wall Street who speculates in the securities of the New York Stock Exchange for his own account is considered unsafe. E. H. Gary, Chairman of the Executive Board of the Steel Trust, stated under oath at Washington in June that J. P. Morgan never speculates. Ask the average member of the New York Stock Exchange what chances the stock-gambler has. If he is frank, he will shrug his shoulders and reply something like this:

"If the game could be beaten, do you

think I would be a broker? Wouldn't I be a player?"

The aggregate market value of seats on the New York Stock Exchange is nearly $100,000,000. It costs more than a hundred million dollars more every year to gather and transact through offices and branch offices the speculative business which forms the bulk of the transactions of the members. The "kitty," or "rake-off," is enormous. Who pays it? You hear of the stockbroker going to Europe in his yacht every Summer. How many of his trading customers travel that way?

Who pays the freight? Can a game be beaten where so many multimillionaires are created among those who are on the "inside" and where so large a percentage of the speculator's money must come out every year to pay the enormous cost of maintaining a vast system of stockbrokerage offices, stock exchanges, telegraph and telephone wires, newspapers, publicity bureaus, yachts, Fifth Avenue palaces, huge contributions to national and State political campaigns, etc.?

YOU hear a hue and a cry against bucketshops. There is no Federal embargo against bucketshopping. Yet somehow or other the machinery of the Government's Department of Justice is used to crush out this sort of gambling institution. Now, what is the difference in principle between gambling on margin on fluctuations of stocks in a bucketshop and doing the same through a New York Stock Exchange house?

This is the unimportant difference:

The bucketshop-keeper takes the other end of the play, pays you out of his pocket when the market goes your way and keeps your money when it goes against you. He never delivers any stocks.

The New York Stock Exchange member is expected to buy your stocks for you and *carry* them—some of them do and most of them don't, as is shown farther on—but in this case also no stocks are delivered to you.

The transaction is the same in principle as the one in the bucketshop, so far as the gambling feature is concerned. The only real difference is that when you gamble on market fluctuations through the bucketshops no contribution is made to the New York Stock Exchange "kitty."

RIGHTEOUS WALL STREET AND THE "SUCKER" PUBLIC

THE New York Stock Exchange member will tell you that the evil of bucketshopping is that the bucketshopper is tempted when the public is long on stocks to depress the market by heavy short sales. On the other hand, the bucketshopper urges upon you that his business is gambling against fluctuations which he has no hand in making and that the financial powers of Wall Street resort to the same trick that he is occasionally accused of. The "interests" know at every hour in the day approximately how many shares of stocks have been borrowed for delivery against "short" sales or are being carried on margin for the long account. They know what the public's short interest or long interest is, and they, too, have it in their power to shake out the public at any moment they choose. Worse, it is common knowledge that this practise is continually resorted to. Stocks are put up and held up on bad news and marked down and held down on good news or no news at all. News is withheld and is manufactured to suit occasions. For years the market has been thimble-rigged to a frazzle. Margin-trading "suckers" have been milked to a finish. George E. Crater, Jr., writes:

> Margin trading on the New York Stock Exchange is the most dangerous and destructive form of gambling known, because, being "legal" and therefore "respectable," it allures hundreds of thousands of people who would never think of risking their money at "faro," "rouge-et-noir," "roulette" or any of the other games of chance. Statistics show that more people are ruined physically, morally and financially by stock gambling than by all the other forms of ordinary gambling combined. Monte Carlo is a Christian philanthropy compared with "Wall Street." You have quite as good, if not a better chance to win a fortune at Monte Carlo than you have by putting up "margins" against Stock Exchange bulling and bearing, and if you ruin yourself at Monte Carlo the proprietor will at least refund enough of your money to pay your way home. The man who "goes broke" on "margins" finds no relief fund at his service on the Stock Exchange or among the brokers. There would not be so many millionaires in this country if there were not so many fools ready to throw their money away on margins.

A howl of condemnation is raised against horse-racing. Newspapers, periodicals, politicians, enthusiasts, crusaders, and charlatans in every walk of life, are encouraged to make a big noise. Horse-racing, like bucketshopping, is an avenue for specula-

tion—gambling—and it keeps much money out of Wall Street. Fakirs, who are the tools of Wall Street, collect from Wall Street for their services and at the same time make moral or political capital of their zealousness in crusading against such Wall Street gambling competition.

The small fry mining promoter, who is not a member of the Stock Exchange, pays no toll to the big game, is beyond the discipline and control of the governing body of the New York Stock Exchange and is not a part of the machinery, sets up a competitive business which caters to the gambling instinct in the way of fluctuating mining stocks. The speculating public gets action, likes it, and invests money that might have been used in margin-trading on the New York Stock Exchange or for "investment" in the constantly fluctuating low-priced industrials or higher-priced mining stocks that are sponsored by big interests with New York Stock Exchange affiliations.

Promptly the machinery of Wall Street is used to crush him. Column upon column is printed in the magazines and newspapers about Get-Rich-Quicks. A conviction for crime is obtained of a real Get-Rich-Quick offender—a little fellow who is guilty, but no more so than his "licensed" brother higher up, who is doing infinitely greater damage. The *one* that a coterie of high-class Wall Street thimbleriggers are really "after," because he thwarted them in their swindling operations by exposing them in his newspaper, but against whom they can not make a case, has a skeleton in his closet. They bring it forth, dangle it in the air, make the public think he, too, must be a scoundrel, and he is raided by a Government agent during the uproar; and they "get away" with it. The "righteous" crusade against "Get-Rich-Quicks" is press-agented to the limit. The public "falls" for the "dope." At last the Government has acted to protect investors!

Wouldn't it wilt you?

Were P. T. Barnum to be reincarnated and his humbugging mind by some miracle expanded a million times, it would still be impossible for him to conceive such a gigantic faking of the American public as it has been put to in the last few years.

And the public isn't "on." Shrewd schemers on Wall Street keep pulling the wool over the eyes of the "sucker-public," and not only see no reason why they should discontinue the practise but find it very lucrative to continue doing it.

THE MARKETING OF MINING STOCK

AS A RULE, it takes much money to make a paying mine out of a promising prospect. Later on in the mine's progress, through the constructive period, other very large sums are generally required to pay for the blocking out of an ore reserve and to supply milling facilities for the reduction of the ores.

The peripatetic mining prospector of our Western mining empire—the dauntless finder of mines who laughs at hardship and ridicules the thought of danger, who makes companions of Gila monsters and the desert rattler, whose only relief from the everlasting silence of the untrodden reaches of arid wastes is the sex-call of the coyote—has the choice of just two markets for the sale of his "find." He may either accept a comparatively small sum from the agent of a powerful mining syndicate for his prospect or he may receive a fair speculative price from the professional promoter.

The great mine financiers of this country rarely compete with one another for the purchase of any mining property. This is particularly true if one of the others happens to be operating in the district where the small mine owner's property lies.

As a rule, the original owner, whose entire fortune is perhaps tied up in the property, then finds himself in the position where he must either accept the first offer, however small, which is made to him by one of these dominant interests, or find that market closed to him.

His alternative, as mentioned, is a sale to the independent mine promoter of comparatively small means, who incorporates a company to own and develop the property and finances the operation from start to finish by selling stock in the enterprise to the general public.

The method of this class of professional promoter—the hope of the small mine owner—in marketing stock, usually involves the liberal use of the advertising columns of newspapers. He lacks "pull" or power sufficient to get his stock and mine talked of favorably in financial literature of the day to a degree that will excite public interest, and so he must construct his own publicity forces.

Advertising costs money and the public foots the toll. But if the promoter is honest,

this item of cost is not in itself an argument in favor of stock offerings of the multi-millionaire mine capitalist who does not patronize the display advertising columns of the newspapers. Nor does it establish a case against the wares of the promoter who does. The promotion expenses incurred by the advertising promoter do not nearly approach in their totality the difference between cost price and the price at which the magnate promoter usually invites the public to participate in similar enterprises.

For example: A few years ago a certain man bought a certain mine for $1,000,000 on time payments. He has been making a market for the stock of that mine on the New York Curb at an average of above $8 per share, or more than $8,000,000 for the property. His firm, members of the New York Stock Exchange, have been advising people in their widely circulated market literature to buy the stock at this figure. And yet the property is without a reduction works, will need $2,500,000 to $3,000,000 in excess of money now in the company's treasury to erect one, which money must yet be raised somewhere and somehow, and the producing era of the company can not possibly begin for two years yet at the very earliest. I could cite many such instances.

WHEN Nat. C. Goodwin & Company of Reno purchased the control of Rawhide Coalition, during the exciting Rawhide camp boom early in 1908, the valuation agreed upon for the property was $700,000. This was considerably more than the original owners could obtain for it at that time from any big interest. It, too, needed milling facilities.

As a matter of fact, but for the success of mine promoters of the Nat. C. Goodwin & Company and B. H. Scheftels & Company class, the great Comstock lode, which produced over $600,000,000 in gold and silver bullion, would have likely remained undeveloped. The big public demand in the early 70's for Comstock mining shares of all descriptions was created by a series of flamboyant flotations and aggressive stock-market campaigns. If the Con. Virginia mine had not opened up into a bonanza ore-body at a depth of 1,400 feet, the frenzy of speculation in Comstock shares might have gone down in history as another South Sea bubble.

The "brass-band" promoter, be it understood, is therefore not without honor in the Far West. Deprive the mine prospector of the services of this style of enterprise projector, with his operating machinery, namely, facilities for appealing to the speculating-investing public, and you hit the small Western mine man a solar-plexus blow. Conversely, every obstacle placed in the way of the mine promoter of loud methods and moderate means is an added cause for rejoicing on the part of the Wall Street multi-millionaire mine capitalist.

When B. H. Scheftels & Company, with whom I was identified, were raided by the United States Government in September, 1910, a wail went up from the Western mine operator to his Representative in Congress. The best sentiment of the Far West, as I was able to gather it, favored the idea that the last hope of the small Western mine owner had been shattered. During the short period of B. H. Scheftels & Company's activity in New York it raised directly nearly $2,000,000 for Western mining properties and indirectly influenced in that direction at least $10,000,000 more.

The raid was a body-blow to the small Western mine owner who needs capital to develop his properties and has no affiliations with capitalists. Since the raid I do not know of a mine owner of any of the great Far Western States who has successfully financed a mining proposition in the East except by delivering his property in its entirety into the hands of some big interest, which has taken it over for a sum insignificant by comparison with what the public may ultimately be expected to pay for it when the stock is finally marketed on the curbs and exchanges.

I BUCK THE WALL STREET GAME

AFTER I had conducted the big camp publicity campaign of Rawhide, as narrated in ADVENTURE for September, which I had done with a view to centering the attention of the American investing public on the speculative possibilities of the stock of the Rawhide Coalition Mines Company, and in that way endeavored to finance the proposition—after I had failed by this method, in the teeth of the bankers' panic of 1907-8, to dispose of enough stock to finance the company for deep mine development, mill equipment and the payment to

the original owners of the price for the control agreed upon, I came to New York, late in October, 1908, bent on trying to succeed in the encompassment of my original purpose both by direct appeal to the public through display advertisements in the newspapers and by making a deal for part of the enterprise with the "big" fellows.

I found Rawhide Coalition stock listed on the Curb, and the market quiescent. Public interest in the East had been aroused to some degree, but the market was not absorbing stock. An effort to induce leading stock brokers to mention the issue favorably in their market letters failed. Those who were willing to give the stock some publicity exacted either a "call" on stock at a low price or an out-and-out reduction below the market quotation for such stock as they disposed of.

Such concessions were not to be thought of. It was the intention of Nat. C. Goodwin & Company to support a rising market for Rawhide Coalition. My Goldfield experience with mining-stock brokers convinced me that few might be expected to protect the shareholders' interest in such an enterprise. Commission mining-stock brokers of that period, who put their customers into a stock at, say, 30, were tempted to advise profit-taking when the price advanced to, say, 50, because by the operation they made another commission and often earned an additional, or third, commission by getting their customers out of the stock at a profit and into another one, levying a commission on each transaction.

Nat. C. Goodwin & Company decided to "try it on" direct with mining-stock speculators by appealing to them through the advertising columns of the newspapers, asking them to purchase the stock on the New York Curb through their own brokers. Also, Hayden, Stone & Company, the Boston and New York banking firm, were induced to agree to raise $1,000,000 for the company for railroad and mill purposes, if their engineer would report favorably.

Provided with money with which to buy advertising space and furnished with stock certificates to supply the market, Nat. C. Goodwin & Company inaugurated an active campaign on the New York Curb.

What happened will be found instructive to the reader in several particulars; among them these:

(1) The free-lance mining promoter does not always "get the money" when he succeeds in creating a buoyant market for his stock.

(2) Some stock brokers of seemingly high standing would just as soon "skin" a mining promoter of this order as they would an ordinary speculator. They play no favorites.

(3) Be a mine promoter ever so honest, without New York Stock Exchange affiliations his motives are bound to be misconstrued if he makes an error. The "big" fellows will sick on to him the newspapers or newspaper men whom they control or influence. Dust will be thrown into the eyes of the public so they'll buy the big fellow's wares, principally for sale on the New York Stock Exchange, and may forever be prejudiced against the little fellow's.

THE campaign in Rawhide Coalition made good progress. It was early in November, 1908. For six weeks I had been supporting the market for the stock on the New York Curb for Nat. C. Goodwin & Company of Reno. My office was an apartment in a Fifth Avenue hotel; our brokers were members of the New York Stock Exchange. For a month we had used, every day, display advertisements in the financial columns of New York City daily newspapers, signed by Nat. C. Goodwin, to boom the stock. About 600,000 shares of the stock were in the hands of the public. The market, which was on the New York Curb, was "real." Speculative buying had carried the price from 40 cents up to $1 a share. Mine reports were rosy. Wide distribution of the stock was taking place.

The public evinced deep interest. The Nat. C. Goodwin advertisements set forth that $2 ought to look reasonable for the stock by Christmas day. There were reasons. Several very promising mines had been opened up. An engineer of high rank was examining the property. If his report should be favorable, a deal was practically assured that would involve the expenditure of $1,000,000 for deep mine development, a railroad, and adequate milling facilities. This, in turn, would mean early dividends for stockholders. Experienced, conservative mining men had expressed the opinion that the property bore the unmistakable earmarks of a big producer.

The stock became the feature of the Curb market. It easily occupied the center of

the stage. Not less than 20 brokers could be counted in the crowd executing orders at almost any hour during the daily session. The fact that a New York Stock Exchange house was executing the supporting orders from the "inside" impressed the "talent." Public buying through other New York Stock Exchange houses further convinced Curb veterans that the stock was "the goods." Up went the price under the impulse of public buying. Curb brokers themselves caught the infection. By December 7th the price soared to $1.40 per share. This was an advance of 500 per cent. over the "low" for the stock of half a year prior.

THE "DOUBLE-CROSSING" OF RAWHIDE COALITION

AT THE close of the day's business on December 7th, our brokers, a single firm, members of the New York Stock Exchange, reported the purchase of 17,100 shares in the open market at an average price of about $1.39, and the sale of 1,800 shares at a little above this average. For the first time in the campaign there appeared to be selling pressure. We had quit "long" 15,300 shares. The sum of $21,000 in cash was required to pay for the "long" stock.

On December 8th, the day following, the same firm of brokers reported that they had purchased 17,800 shares at an average price of $1.37½, and the sale of 12,800 shares at an average price of $1.40—"long" on the day 5,000 shares.

On December 9th our purchases through this firm aggregated 16,800 shares at an average price of $1.40, while our sales totalled only 6,400 shares at a slight advance.

Nat. C. Goodwin & Company were now "long" on the three days' transactions 30,700 shares and had been called upon to throw $43,000 behind the market to hold it. This was a comparatively small load to carry and did not alarm us. We considered the stock worth the money. We were curious, however, to learn the reason for the selling.

Nat. C. Goodwin & Company had placed most of the outstanding stock direct from Reno with the investing public at from 25 cents to $1 per share, and early buyers were reaping a harvest. But this did not appear to be the explanation for all of the selling. Interest in the stock was now widespread. There was free public buying and for every actual profit-taker there appeared to be a new purchaser. Apparently, somebody was selling the stock "short."

Late that night a member of our brokerage firm which had been executing our supporting orders, called on me at my apartments. I inquired of him what protective orders he thought the stock would need the next morning to guard against professional attack. He replied:

"I think if you will give us a buying order for 5,000 shares at $1.35 there will be no difficulty."

My understanding was that he wanted to handle the market for me the next morning and that he would, of course, give me quick notice if further supporting orders were needed.

The order was given. It was a very ordinary precaution, for there is hardly a stock on the list that would not be raided by professionals if supporting orders were not known to be in the market. As Saturday is only a short two hours' session, I readily fell in with the idea.

Retiring late that night, I left a call for 11 A. M. Next morning at about 10:45 I was awakened by my valet. He said Nat. C. Goodwin wanted me on the long distance. Mr. Goodwin was in Cincinnati, where he was playing a week's engagement.

"Hello," said Mr. Goodwin. "Did they get you? Shall I wire the Knickerbocker Trust Company to pay you $25,000 to support the market? Reported here they have you in a hole."

"What's up?" I inquired.

"Why, brokers here say the stock broke to 60 cents on the Curb soon after the opening," he said. This was news to me.

"I do not need more money," I answered. "I have been asleep. Our brokers have been on the job. I will see what is doing and let you know in a little while. Don't worry." And I rang off.

I 'phoned our brokers and they reported that they had bought 5,000 shares of stock at $1.35 at the opening and had withdrawn support. "Too much stock was pressing for sale," they said.

"This is hell. You should not have permitted the market to break that way. Support the stock!" I said. "Buy 7,500 shares at the market!"

In a few moments this firm of brokers reported that they had rallied the market

to $1.16. The recovery was only temporary, however. Another drive broke the stock to 60 cents.

FOUR brokers had bought 7,000 shares at from $1 to $1.16 and then stopped. The member of their firm who had been handling our orders throughout this campaign said the purchase of this fresh block of stock exhausted our cash balance on deposit with his firm. They had a number of drafts out for collection, attached to stocks sold to Western brokers, that had not yet been credited to us. There was also a big block of Coalition stock due us from them. This was the stock they had bought on our supporting orders. They refused, however, to consider either the drafts or the stocks as a credit.

We had cash on deposit and credit with a number of other brokers. I promptly telephoned several of them to buy large blocks of the stock at a limit of 95 cents. This was 35 points above the quotation that was given me. Not a single share was reported bought on these orders.

I jumped into a taxi and rode to the office of the brokers who had been handling our orders.

The situation was critical. I realized fully that a sharp break of this character in the market price of a stock that had been so widely exploited must prove shocking to investors. I feared that public confidence would be shattered completely.

"This is an outrage!" I protested. "Buy 5,000 shares at 95!" I tendered five $1,000-bills as payment in advance.

It was five minutes to twelve when I gave the order. At noon they reported that they had purchased 2,000 shares, for which I gave them the money. The market closed 95 bid for a "wagon load."

On the face of things it appeared that the market had rallied from 60 to 95 on the purchase of 2,000 shares. This was another convincer that there must somewhere be much that was rotten about the play.

Investigation satisfied me that I had been "double crossed."

The one firm of brokers, members of the New York Stock Exchange, who had been handling our orders, had acted as our clearing-house, holding our stocks and our money. They had an advantage, which stock brokers understand well. Having executed most of our supporting orders, their agents on the Curb were also in a position accurately to judge the professional and lay speculative pulse. It was easy for somebody to "put one over" on us.

Shortly after noon I learned that Hayden, Stone & Company's engineer had turned down the proposition of advancing $1,000,000 for railroad and mill construction. A sufficient tonnage of ore had not been blocked out in the mine. Beyond a question this information was in the possession of brokers early in the day.

While I slept damage had been done to the market that was irreparable. By the time the price hit $1 on the way down trading had reached huge proportions. One clique of Curb brokers were reported to have been persistent sellers throughout. Their identity made it very plain that the double-crossing process had been employed to a fare-you-well.

I accused our broker of not protecting our interests—the interests of stockholders. I raised a howl. He telegraphed another member of his firm who was away on a hunting-trip, to come back to town. Next night both of these men, Nat. C. Goodwin and myself met in my apartments behind closed doors. Their firm agreed to charge to their own account 3,000 of the 5,000 shares reported purchased for us at $1.35. Some other minor concessions were made.

ON THE day after the "break" New York newspapers reeked with sensational flubdub about the causes of the smash in the price of the stock. In the preceding few months not less than a dozen other securities had "busted" wide open at various times on the New York Curb and New York Stock Exchange, but Stock Exchange houses were sponsors for these and the newspapers kept mum. Never on these occasions was there a hint in the newspapers that possibly somebody had separated the public from its money.

Nat. C. Goodwin and I were wrongfully accused of willfully smashing the market to shake the public out. The New York *Sun* printed an account of the "break" on the front page, top of last column. It began in a strain that indicated to confiding readers that chorus girls had lost their savings through the recommendations of Mr. Goodwin.

The *Sun* printed the list of officers of the

Rawhide Coalition Mines Company and emphasized the fact that I "of Sullivan Trust Company fame" was second vice-president.

The *Sun* made no mention of the "double cross." Nor did any of the other newspapers, with the exception of one.

The New York *Tribune* said:

A Stock Exchange house which has been putting out orders in the stock was charged with leading the attack on it yesterday, but members of the firm said that they had been acting merely as brokers for customers in the regular order of business.

Following the newspaper "roasts," which helped further to destroy public confidence, two brokers on Logan & Bryan's continental wire system resorted to tactics of a kind to force lower prices. This wire has over one hundred out-of-town broker connections. A report was sent over the wire that Nat. C. Goodwin & Company had failed. Another followed it that the Rawhide Coalition Mines Company was about to go into the hands of a receiver. The *Nevada Mining News* accused Nat. Boas of San Francisco and J. C. Weir of New York of exchanging messages to this effect over the Logan & Bryan wire systems, so that all correspondents on the wire would have the false reports. Both Boas and Weir were believed to be "short" of the stock. Both were openly operating for a further decline. These and similar tactics resulted in a further easing off in price to 40 cents bid on December 24th, which was the "low" on the movement.

Two weeks after Christmas the stock rallied to 58 bid, 59 asked, and the market was firm again. On January 14 the price bulged to 70. At this point the stock again became the center of attack. By January 20 the price had eased back to 50.

Thus far the net result of Nat. C. Goodwin & Company's various campaigns on Rawhide Coalition was the distribution of some 600,000 shares of stock. The issue had been well exploited. It had a big following and a broad market. Some excellent judges of mine values had become stockholders. The company, however, was still unfinanced for a long period of systematic mine development and mill construction.

We realized very clearly that some arrangement would have to be perfected to avoid a repetition of the trouble which the New York Stock Exchange brokerage firm had made us.

"INSIDE" MARKET SUPPORT

THE removal to New York of B. H. Scheftels & Company, Chicago stock brokers, representatives there of Nat. C. Goodwin & Company of Reno, and a merging of brokerage and promotion interests of the two firms took place.

There was precedent for the move. There are a thousand other corporation interests in this country that are closely affiliated with Stock Exchange and other brokerage houses, through one or more of their directors or owners being partners in the business. As a matter of fact, it would be difficult to lay your finger on a single big interest of this kind that has not such a representation. These houses, of course, make it a rule to recommend the purchase of stocks in which their principals are interested. Affiliations of this kind are found essential to successful financing of enterprises. A number of New York Stock Exchange houses which are headed or controlled by men who are heavily interested in mining ventures that require financing are exponents of this method in the mining field.

Most of these have succeeded in promoting projects in which they or their associates are heavily interested, with the aid of the banking and brokerage facilities thus afforded. Principally by the use of market literature and accompanying market manipulation, these houses have placed with their customers the securities of their firm members and associates. They have encompassed this by maintaining a brokerage, banking and promotion business without parading before the public, although never denying, the mixed nature of their business.

For the reader to comprehend the necessity for transacting the business this way, he should understand the underlying principle of financing an enterprise by the route of the listed stock market.

There are two ways of financing any enterprise with other people's money. One is by the primitive method of appealing directly to the public for subscriptions in huckster fashion, taking the money and then refraining from listing the stock or establishing an open market for it. You can't finance an enterprise of consequence these days by any such procedure. It is practically impossible to borrow from banks or from loan-brokers on any security that has no fixed market value. A market must

be established, for without a market on which to sell, intelligent investors won't buy.

The method, therefore, in common use, and the only one which has been found effective by financiers, is to create a demand for the security, encourage speculation, establish an active market, and dispose of stock on the market as necessity demands whenever financing is required. This implies and necessitates that the inside interests must support the security in the open market. Therefore, it becomes necessary for the successful marketing of the stock by the promoters, once a demand is created and public buying is under way, that stockholders shall be kept in full touch with the latest transpirations on the property and in the market—be furnished with news concerning their interests so that they may judge the value of their stockholdings. This process is particularly essential during the financing period of the company and the security-digesting period of the public.

In fine, the ultimate purpose in this regard of all the promotion machinery of Wall Street —the machinery that has been putting out billions of dollars' worth of securities to investors—is to place stock where it will "stay put," that is, not come out on the open market again to embarrass the interests that are behind the enterprise, and who for a long period are compelled to support the market.

On the question of the ethics of market support by "the inside," a whole tome could be written. I will not attempt to discuss the subject at length here. Suffice it to say that in my opinion "inside" support of a listed security is not base when it is done with a view to creating a broad market, to stimulate public interest, and to increase the price to a point within the bounds of intrinsic plus reasonable speculative worth. Support of the market to the point of stimulation is moral obliquity, however, when dishonestly performed for the sole benefit of the "inside" and to the hurt of the stockholder. This sort of market support is only a shade less reprehensible than manipulation that has for its purpose the reduction of the market price of a security to beneath its real value, which, in my opinion, is nearly always infamous.

I might place myself on record right here to the effect that only once did I ever "bear" a stock from "the inside," and on that occasion it was a temporary affair, caused by a desire to secure at a reduced price a big block of stock that was pressing for sale from a quarter that I was under no obligation to. Even in that instance I gave the investor much of the benefit my associates secured by letting him have stock at the same figure at which "the inside" secured it. Nor have I ever tried to push the price of a stock to a higher level than that which I considered warranted by the reasonable speculative and demonstrated intrinsic value behind the security.

ENTER, B. H. SCHEFTELS & COMPANY

B. H. SCHEFTELS & COMPANY, Incorporated, mining-stock brokers, successors to B. H. Scheftels & Company, for many years stock brokers in Chicago, opened its doors on Broad Street, New York, on January 18, 1909. For a long period B. H. Scheftels & Company of Chicago had been advertised as the Eastern representatives of the corporation of Nat. C. Goodwin & Company of Reno, of which Mr. Goodwin had been president. It was now announced that Nat. C. Goodwin had become vice-president of the new corporation of B. H. Scheftels & Company. Because Mr. Goodwin was by profession an actor and not a stock broker and because of the personal abuse he suffered in unfair newspaper criticism which followed the "break" in the market price of Rawhide Coalition a month before, he was quite willing to serve as vice-president instead of president. Besides, he could not spare the time from his profession to attend closely to the business.

The new corporation of B. H. Scheftels & Company made its bow to the public by at once featuring in its market literature advice to purchase stock of the Rawhide Coalition Mines Company. I became publicity manager for the Scheftels corporation, manager of its promotion enterprises, and was placed in charge of the protection of the corporation's interests in all markets where its stocks were traded in.

Soon I was conducting a fresh campaign with investors that became so hot, so exciting and so big that for nineteen months I labored on an average sixteen hours a day, including Sundays, without being able to complete in a single day a day's accumulated business. The business grew until B. H. Scheftels & Company were actually

spending more than $1,000,000 annually for office and publicity expenses. In the nineteen months of its existence it bought, sold and delivered approximately 15,000,000 shares of mining stock. The Scheftels corporation broke every record in this regard that was ever made by a mining-stock brokerage and promotion house in the history of Wall Street. Throughout its career it was viciously attacked from many directions, but it held its own. Through its hold on the mining-stock speculating public, who were getting fairer treatment than ever before, it survived the concerted onslaughts of a number of important interests which it had competed with and antagonized, until one day in September, 1910, on a warrant sworn to singly by one George Scarborough, since permitted to resign, clothed with the office and power of a special agent of the Department of Justice, its offices were raided, its books and papers seized, its property confiscated, and its officers and employees arrested.

THE annual expense of B. H. Scheftels & Company was $1,000,000 or more.

Follows a tabulated statement of the expense item. The figures are approximated. The books of the corporation, which are now in the possession of the Department of Justice of the United States Government, will probably show that the annual expense was larger. The books not being readily available, an attempt is made here to be ultra-conservative in setting down figures:

ANNUAL EXPENSE OF B. H. SCHEFTELS & COMPANY

Establishment of main office and six branch offices (furniture, fixtures, etc.)	$40,000
Office rentals	35,000
Private wire system connecting branch offices in six cities with New York	25,000
Telephones	5,000
Telegraph tolls	100,000
Salaries (all offices)	200,000
Daily and Weekly Market Letter (printing and postage)	100,000
General office expense, etc	100,000
Miscellaneous postage	25,000
Miscellaneous printing and stationery	25,000
Advertising, publicity, etc	200,000
Expert accountants	15,000
Commissions and salaries to Curb brokers	50,000
Mining examinations, engineers' fees, legal fees, etc.	50,000
Interest charges	30,000
Total	$1,000,000

Before the Scheftels corporation was in business a month it became plain that it was "filling a long-felt want." In almost every branch it was performing some function in a manner more satisfactory to mining-stock speculators and investors than were its competitors.

Its Market Letter news service, usually 16 pages, was the prime article. It soon gained a circulation of 34,000 among the highest class and best informed stockholders of mining companies in the country. It was also regularly sent to more than 2,500 stock brokers, including members of the New York Stock Exchange, New York Cotton Exchange, Boston Stock Exchange, New York Produce Exchange, etc.

Before the Scheftels corporation was five months old the work of its Market Letter was supplemented by the *Mining Financial News*, a weekly newspaper which had been published for a long period at Reno as the *Nevada Mining News*, latterly as the *Mining Financial News*, and which removed to New York when the Scheftels company found the mining-stock public was hungry for real live news and the truth regarding the mining propositions of other States as well as those of Nevada. The *Mining Financial News* and the Scheftels Market Letter, which were published three days apart, were supplied with news from practically the same sources. The newspaper was mailed to all readers of the Market Letter.

The ablest and most reliable mining correspondents obtainable for money in Tonopah, Goldfield, Ely, Rawhide, Cobalt, Butte, Globe and other mining camps, and the most experienced market news-gatherers in the mining-stock-market centers of Salt Lake, San Francisco, Boston, Philadelphia, Toronto and New York, were placed on the pay-roll. Brokers in these and other cities, including Duluth, Seattle and Butte, supplied more news.

Wherever there was mining or market activity, representation of the very highest character was sought. News was always wired, no matter what the cost, whenever it was important to traders in mining shares. Expense was never spared when the information was considered of value to the speculator or investor. In the New York offices of the Scheftels corporation and the *Mining Financial News*, which adjoined each other, a staff of newspaper men with a mining financial experience of years was gathered.

Little that transpired in the mines or the markets ever got away from them. Days before the mining newspapers of the West reached the East the Scheftels Market Letter or the *Mining Financial News* communicated the news regarding mine developments. They also contained a daily and weekly stock-market diagnosis and prognosis. These were based on the news, as gathered by trained forces and aided from time to time by secret information which filtered into the offices. This service soon obtained an accuracy theretofore unknown on the Street.

There is probably not one stock broker in five hundred that would know a mine underground if he saw one. On the payrolls of B. H. Scheftels & Company and the *Mining Financial News* there were thirty men who had been literally brought up in the mines and who, when they put their pen to paper, knew what they were writing about. The Scheftels company and the newspaper furnished mine and market information of quality to investors who had before been inundated with misinformation, guesses and twaddle. It sought to guide mining-stock speculators right.

It was really a delicate job to handle the *Mining Financial News* in a manner which would not lead stupid people to believe that it was an entirely independent paper. It was desirable that its independence be maintained to a degree, so that the full value of the *Mining Financial News*, as a property, might grow. The intention was some day, when the *Mining Financial News* found itself on a paying basis, to sever the Scheftels alliance.

The *Mining Financial News* had always been an entity. It had up to then been assisted financially at periods by mining promotion concerns with which I had been identified and was always a quasi house-organ for this reason. But it invariably preserved a certain independence in its news columns and at least such partial independence of ownership as enabled it to stand on its own bottom.

MORE TRUTH ON THE "MINING FINANCIAL NEWS"

WHEN the *Mining Financial News* removed to New York Mr. Scheftels used much persuasion to get the owners to transfer title to the Scheftels company. Admittedly, if the Scheftels Company could boast ownership of the newspaper at the head of its editorial page, it would be a great feather in the Scheftels cap and might lead investors to think that an organization which could own and publish a first-class, metropolitan newspaper of the *Mining Financial News* variety must for that reason alone be worthy of financial credit.

Thompson, Towle & Company, members of the New York Stock Exchange, print a small sized pattern of such a newspaper, called the *News Letter*. Hayden, Stone & Company, and Paine, Webber & Company, of Boston and New York, are said to have much influence with the *Boston News Bureau*, a newspaper which features news of mines and mining share markets. The *Boston News Bureau* at times has printed no display advertisements and at other times has. It is considered by Boston mining-stock brokers who handle the Michigan and Arizona copper securities as a necessary complement to their market literature. *Walker's Copper Letter* and the *Boston Commercial* are other examples. *Walker's Copper Letter*, which carries no advertising, for years has said the very nicest things about copper securities promoted and fathered by important Boston and New York interests. Needless to state, what *Walker's Copper Letter*, the *Boston Commercial* and the *Boston News Bureau* say about the mining propositions of their friends is as a rule based on fact. The point is that promoters find it necessary that news happenings regarding the markets, the securities and the mines in which they are interested be given broad publicity.

It was the idea of the owners of the *Mining Financial News*, of which B. H. Scheftels, president and 25 per cent. owner of the capital stock of B. H. Scheftels & Company, was not one, that anybody who would supply the sinews while the paper was getting on its feet and was establishing itself, was entitled to all the publicity which the paper could consistently and honestly give it. With this understanding the Scheftels company assumed to take all of the income of the *Mining Financial News* and pay all of the running expenses until such period as the newspaper might become self-sustaining.

In doing so it performed a stupendous service to the entire mining industry in that the space devoted to the Scheftels enterprises therein did not average more than one-eighth of the whole, and it spent

dollars to supply the news of all stocks where other mining financial publications in its field spent pennies.

To make sure that the public understood that the *Mining Financial News* was the quasi house-organ of the Scheftels company many precautions were taken. No application was made for admission to the mails as second-class matter, and the paper was mailed under one and two-cent postage. The name of Harry Hedrick was lifted to the top of the page as vice-president of the corporation owning the *Mining Financial News*, Mr. Hedrick being openly employed by the Scheftels company as head of its correspondence department. My own name was later placed at the head of the editorial page as editor, the Scheftels company making no bones about my position as absolute head of its publicity department, its promotion enterprises, and of all markets for the Scheftels promotion stocks. The connection had before been established even closer than this. I had formerly been advertised as vice-president of Nat. C. Goodwin & Company of Reno and vice-president of the Rawhide Coalition Mines Company; and the Scheftels company had advertised that Nat. C. Goodwin was its own vice-president.

Further, the Scheftels company announced in its market literature that it had selfish interests in protecting the market for the stock because of the Nat. C. Goodwin affiliation. Occasionally market articles under the signature of B. H. Scheftels were published on the front page of the *Mining Financial News*. Whenever anybody made a request for the Scheftels Market Letter a copy of the *Mining Financial News* was quite regularly mailed to him without cost. Articles under the signature of other officers and employees, formerly of Nat. C. Goodwin & Company of Reno and later of B. H. Scheftels & Company of New York, were very frequently printed in the *Mining Financial News*.

Probably the most important reason why the Scheftels company made this sort of arrangement with the *Mining Financial News* was that it could do so with only a very small additional outlay. The Scheftels company found it necessary to employ correspondents in all mining and market centers, and the same correspondents could work for both enterprises. Another economic argument was that an enormous saving could be made in telegraph tolls, all dispatches addressed to the newspaper being sent at press rates. These dispatches were always available to the Scheftels corporation and its clientele.

IT WAS the idea of the Scheftels organization that the mining-stock investing public sorely needed right direction and that any brokerage house which led it right would soon be unable to transact all the business that would be offered to it.

And that is just what happened. Before the Scheftels company was six months old the fifteen men in its accounting department were compelled to work day and night—time and again throughout the night until 6 A. M.—to catch up with their work.

If the Scheftels news service was as nearly perfect as money and brains could make it, its facilities for the execution of orders on the New York Curb, the Boston Curb, San Francisco Stock Exchange, Salt Lake Stock Exchange, Toronto Stock Exchange, and other mining markets were unsurpassed. Its New York and Boston offices were connected with branch offices in Philadelphia, Chicago, Detroit, Milwaukee and Providence by exclusive private wires, and the service to out-of-town offices was almost instantaneous.

The New York offices were located right in front of the Curb market on Broad Street on the ground floor of the big *Wall Street Journal* building, 50 feet front by 200 feet deep—occupying about 10,000 square feet of floor space. The Boston office, occupying two floors, was located within 100 feet of the Curb market in that city. The public wires of the telegraph companies gave quick service between San Francisco, Salt Lake and Toronto, where business was transacted through members of the mining-stock exchanges of those cities. The private wires of the Scheftels company were constantly flooded with rapid quotations and market, mine and company news during every trading hour. In New York the Curb brokers in the Scheftels employ, some on salary and some on commission, rarely numbered less than ten and at one period exceeded twenty.

The correspondence department was presided over for a long period by two of the best posted mining-market men that could be employed for money. From this department were usually graduated the managers of out-of-town offices. In the cashier's cage

six men were engaged at an average salary of above $100 a week, registering stocks, receiving stocks, paying money and drawing checks. The payroll of the mailing department, which was operated in conjunction with the *Mining Financial News*, was comparatively small. Money-saving machinery for the handling of the large output of market letters and newspapers gave excellent and economic service. About ten stenographers were regularly employed in the correspondence department. Occasionally, when a special effort was being made to interest the public in some security in which the corporation was particularly concerned, a force of forty additional typists was pressed into service for short periods.

THE SCHEFTELS PRINCIPLES

WHEN the corporation of B. H. Scheftels & Company opened its doors in New York it had no affiliations with any other Wall Street interests. It had no axes to grind except its own. It was practically a free-lance. It cracked up its own wares, careful always to keep within the facts, and never minced words about the quality of the goods of its contemporaries. The principle of both the Scheftels corporation and the *Mining Financial News* was to be always *right* in their market forecasts. The general order to mine and market newsgatherers and market prognosticators was to GIVE THE FACTS.

The law laid down was this: If the news is bad and is likely to injure the interests of our best friends, tell it in the interests of the investor. If it is good and the backers of the stock affected happen to be our worst enemies, tell it. No matter on what side of the market you think B. H. Scheftels & Company is committed in any of its own speculations, give the customer all the news. Put the cause of the mining-stock trader in front of you as the one to further always. Never exaggerate. Eventually, this policy must redound to our credit and profit.

Eventually, this policy resulted in our ruin. Our truth-telling policy was directly responsible for the loss of millions to competing promoters, and they banded together to destroy us.

The publicity, promotion and brokerage activities of the corporation were of such magnitude, and withal so simple, that they at once challenged the attention of the Street. Before the Scheftels corporation was half a year old veterans of the financial game began to opine that some big interest was behind the concern. Its dashing market methods, its mighty publicity measures and its unbridled assurance attracted much notice. From every quarter expert views reached the Scheftels company that its manner of doing things was convincing on the point that it knew the business. But the general opinion of the talent seemed to be that the new corporation was spending too much money and that it could not win out unless a big boom in mining shares ensued.

The market tactics adopted by the Scheftels company in its promotion enterprises were as old as the hills. On the New York Stock Exchange they had been employed in a thousand instances before. The method will probably survive all times. The corporation sought to distribute the stocks of which it became sponsor in turn—first Rawhide Coalition, then Ely Central, later Bovard Consolidated and finally Jumbo Extension—by the approved Wall Street system of establishing public interest and inquiry and causing an active market. The aim was to establish higher prices for the securities, always within the bounds of intrinsic and reasonable speculative value. All efforts were directed this way.

Plans like this are, however, sometimes thwarted. Markets get sick. More stock presses for sale than the "inside" has money to pay for. Stocks break in price. Then the promoter can't make any money and might lose a lot of it. Since money-making is his primary object, and stock distribution secondary, he has got to do some close figuring when markets are subject to the price-breaking habit. That's where B. H. Scheftels & Company, through its brokerage business, found, after a short period, that it held within its grasp the power to insure itself against declining markets.

Without promotion stocks on hand—obtained by wholesale at lower figures than values warranted—in which it could profit to the extent of hundreds of thousands of dollars on a rising market, the million-dollar annual expense of the Scheftels company would not have been justified. Once the market sought lower levels and no profit could be made on the promotions, it meant a discontinuance of the business on the large scale.

The corporation's insurance was the open market in stocks on the general list and its brokerage business.

From time to time it openly shorted tens of thousands of shares of stocks in which it had no promoter's interest whatever, by going out in the open market and selling them to all bidders against future delivery, by borrowing them from brokers and selling them for immediate delivery, and by short sales generally.

Speculators play the market and so did the Scheftels company, but never against its own stocks. Speculators, however, buy mining shares outright or on margin because they want to gamble. The Scheftels company played the market for just the opposite reason. It didn't want to carry its eggs in one basket and wanted insurance against market declines to cover promotion losses that must ensue if a general market slump occurred.

And the Scheftels company did not inaugurate any fake bookkeeping system or otherwise hide behind any bushes in doing this.

MOREOVER, the corporation didn't take advantage of anybody. The cards were not marked. The deck was not stacked. There was no dealing from the bottom. Market opinion for which the corporation was directly or indirectly responsible was genuine to the last utterance. No news was suppressed on any stock. The corporation divulged to its customers and to the general public every piece of important outside or inside information regarding any stock on the general list that was in its possession. At the very moment when it was going short of stocks in greatest volume its market prognostications were winning for it a reputation for accuracy never before recorded.

If the stocks which the corporation went short of—stocks on the general list and amounting to probably 15 per cent. of the volume of its entire business, the remainder of the transactions being all in "house" stocks (these "house" stocks it could not be short of because of its promoter's options on hundreds of thousands of shares)—if the stocks on the general list thus "shorted" went up in price and the corporation was compelled to go into the market later and "cover" at a great loss, it was always in the corporation's heart to sing a pæan of thanksgiving, for it could well afford to pay the losses sustained by it in the general list out of the greater profits which would be made in the "house" stocks, which must, forsooth, share in the general upswing.

Collateral securities put up by customers as margin for the purchase of other stocks were credited to the customers' accounts and mixed with the company's own securities. In every case proper endorsement of certificates, put up for collateral margin, was required. Every certificate of stock bears on the reverse side a power of attorney, in blank. The signature thereto of the person to whom the certificate was issued makes it negotiable by the broker. It was the rule of the house always to inform those who brought collateral to the offices for margin that the stocks would be used and that they would not receive the identical certificates back again. In a number of cases objection was made. Acceptance of the stock as collateral margin was then promptly refused. If there were any scattering exceptions to this rule, it was contrary to instructions and due to neglect or ignorance. Whenever a customer closed his account and demanded the return of his collareral, stocks of the same description and denomination were recalled and delivery made.

The same rule applied to stocks pledged with the corporation for loans, it being specifically set forth in the promissory note which the borrower signed that the privilege of using the stock was granted to the lender.

This practise is so common and the rule so generally understood by mining-stock traders that objection was rarely made by customers.

To test the general custom, a friend at my suggestion not long ago sent certificates of stock to 17 stockbrokers now doing business on Wall Street. Three of these were members of the New York Stock Exchange and 14 were members of the New York Curb, Boston Curb, or of a mining exchange. A letter substantially as follows was sent to each of the 17:

> Enclosed please find ..... shares of ..... stock to be used as collateral margin for the purchase of an additional block of ..... shares. Please buy at the market and report promptly.

The 17 orders were executed by the 17 individual houses. A month later when the stock ordered purchased had advanced in

the market, the following letter was sent to each of the 17:

Please sell the ..... shares of ..... stock which you purchased for me a month ago at the market and return to me the certificate of stock which I sent you as collateral with check for my profits.

It took nearly two months for all of the 17 to make delivery. When they did, not one of them returned the same certificate that had been put up as collateral.

Don't be shocked, dear reader, at this disclosure. It is the *custom*.

And don't, please, think mining-stock brokers are alone given to the general practise. If you order the purchase of a block of stock on cash margin from any New York Stock Exchange house or send a certificate of stock as collateral in lieu of cash to one of them for the purchase of more stock, you will receive a confirmation slip of the trade which will generally read something like this:

We reserve the right to mix this stock in our general loans, etc.

That is, the right is reserved, and actually exercised, of immediately transferring ownership of the certificates to the broker.

Unless a certificate stands in a customer's name and is unendorsed by him, he has no control over it. According to law, a broker has a right to hypothecate or loan securities or commodities pledged with him, for the purpose of raising the moneys necessary to make up the purchase price, and such stocks have no earmarks. In other words, the customer is not entitled to specific shares of stock, so that stocks bought with one customer's money may be delivered to another customer.

As for the Scheftels company laying itself open to the charge of bucketshopping in "shorting" stocks, such a possibility was never dreamed of. The penal law of the State of New York, sections 390 to 394, inclusive, is the only criminal statute covering market operations commonly known as bucketing and bucketshops. In each section and subdivision it is provided that where both parties intend that there shall be no actual purchase or sale, but that settlement shall be made on quotations, a crime has been committed, the language of the statute being, "wherein *both parties* thereto intend, etc.," or "where *both parties* do not intend, etc." The Scheftels company was never a party to any such arrangement. And it always made it a practise to make delivery of stocks ordered purchased within a reasonable period after the customer had paid the amount due in full.

Now, neither myself nor the Scheftels corporation is responsible for brokerage conditions as they exist, nor for the laws as written. Custom and practise are responsible. The purpose here is to communicate the exact nature of the business methods of the Street as I found them and to lay particular stress on those that are open to criticism.

THE SCHEFTELS COMPANY AGAINST MARGIN TRADING

THE Scheftels company did not encourage margin trading by its customers. In fact, it railed against the practise. Time and again the *Mining Financial News*, editorially, denounced the business of margin trading. The Weekly Market Letter of the corporation sounded the same note. On several occasions, in large display advertisements published in the newspapers, the Scheftels company decried the practise and urged the public to discontinue trading of this character.

There were selfish reasons for this. In the marketing of its promotions the Scheftels company found that not more than 20 per cent. of the public's orders for these stocks given to other brokers were being executed, or, if executed, that the stocks were at once sold back on the market, the brokers or their allies "standing" on the trade.

Had the Scheftels company been able to destroy the practise by its campaign of publicity, it would undoubtedly have been able, during the nineteen months of its existence, successfully to promote three or four times as many mining companies as it did, and its profits would have been fourfold.

It, however, appealed to the public in vain. Loud, frequent calls to margin traders to pay up their debit balances and demand delivery of their certificates, which would compel every broker to go out in the market and buy the stocks he was short to customers, failed miserably.

The lesson of this experience was that the speculating public did not "give a rap" whether their brokers were short of stocks to them or not. All they wanted, apparently, was to be assured that when they were ready to close their accounts, their stocks, their profits or their credit balances would be forthcoming.

What is the evil of short selling of the kind described herein? The only evil that I could ever discover was that the market is denied the support which the actual carrying of the stock is calculated to afford. This hardship weighs heaviest on the promoter. There appears to be no cure. Even if a broker does buy the stock and does not himself sell it out again, there is no law that denies him the right to borrow on it or loan it to somebody else. And it is to the interest of the broker, because he gets the use of the money, to loan the stock always. Stocks are rarely borrowed by anybody except to make deliveries on short sales.

What about the broker who doesn't execute his order at all but "stands" on the trade from the beginning and sells the stock "short" to his own customer, delaying actual purchase until delivery is demanded? This practise is even less damaging to the customer than the one of actually executing the buying order for the customer at the time the order is given and then selling the stock right back on the market again for the account of the broker or his pal—the usual practise when the object of going short is sought. When a broker buys stocks in the market he must bid for them, and actual purchase generally means a higher cost price to the customer than that at standing quotations.

THE rule of the Street is to charge the customer interest on all debit balances. When a broker lends to a "short" seller a stock which he is carrying for his customer, he is paid the full market value, as security for its return. In that case the broker ceases to incur interest charges for the customer, and is actually able, in addition, to lend out at interest the cash marginal deposit put up by the customer.

Maybe you think, dear reader, that a broker who charges his customer interest at the rate of six per cent. per annum on money which he has ceased to advance is crooked. Very well. If that be so, then all members of the New York Stock Exchange must be labelled "crooks." Here is how it works with even the highest class and most conservative members of that great securities emporium:

John Jones orders the purchase by his broker of 1,000 shares of Steel on margin. He pays down 10 per cent. of the purchase price. Mr. Jones receives a statement at the end of the month charging him with interest at the rate of six per cent. per annum, or more if the call-money market is higher, for the 90 per cent. of the purchase price advanced by the house.

On the same day that the order of John Jones is received, William Smith orders the same house to sell short 1,000 shares of Steel at the market. This order is also promptly filled. Thereupon the broker uses the 1,000 shares of Steel, which he bought for the account of John Jones to make delivery through the Clearing House for the account of William Smith. Sometimes a fictitious William Smith is created, known as "Account No. 1," "A. & S. Account," "E. Account," etc. This is usually done when a broker wants to hide from his bookkeepers that he or an associate is taking the other end of the customer's trade.

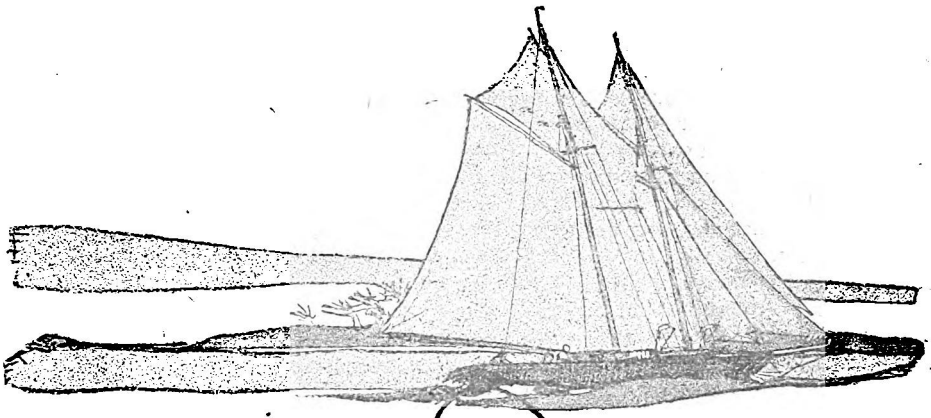
The broker is out no money, yet he charges Mr. Jones the regular rate of interest on his debit balance. As a matter of fact, too, the stock bought for Mr. Jones is never even delivered to his broker. The Clearing House, because of the "short" sale, steps in and delivers it to the broker to whom it is due "on balance."

Custom and practise cover a multitude of remarkable transactions—don't they?

You have the framework of the Scheftels structure and of its Wall Street environment outlined in this chapter. Some of the narrative is undoubtedly "dry-as-dust," but its recital has appeared to be necessary to enable the lay reader properly to interpret the chronology of stirring events which forms the concluding instalment.

In the foregoing I have endeavored to lay bare many practises that are common to Wall Street. Wherever I have laid them at the door of B. H. Scheftels & Company, I have given that corporation much the worst of it, because in the recital I have omitted to mention a multitude of happenings that were creditable to an extreme to the Scheftels company. Most of these had to do with the experiences of the Scheftels company as publicity agents and promoters. Its wide-open publicity and promotion policy called forth the ire of influential Wall Street pirates and caused the "pressure" at Washington which resulted in the Federal raid of the Scheftels offices.

I have reserved this dramatic series of events for my last chapter—in ADVENTURE for December.



Salt of the Sea

by

Ed Couzens*

"SEALED orders!" said Jim Carncross. "Humph!" He tossed the afternoon paper aside, crossed his legs on the rail of the boat-house veranda and methodically filled his pipe. "'H. B. M. S. *Hydrangea* sails tomorrow morning under sealed orders!'" He pointed across the harbor with the stem of his pipe to where the British cruiser lay at anchor in the roadstead.

"I reckon there's a flag-raising due somewhere, but do you really suppose there are any islands left, unlost, unstrayed or unstolen, that are worth the price of a piece of bunting to the British taxpayer? It used to be quite an interesting game; a sort of gamble, like putting a lot of islands in a hat and picking 'em out blindfold. Once in a while there was a prize—they drew Midway, and now it's a cable-station—but the majority were blanks. Japan drew one of 'em once 'way out in the Western Pacific on the edge of the China Sea. In a modest way it was a prize, but Japan didn't get it. It was Billy Englehart, Tommy Ridpath and me. I wonder what in Sam Hill makes that Kanaka boy so slow with the fresh soda!" He clinked the ice in his glass and looked anxiously over his shoulder.

"I suppose you were hunting trouble, as usual," said I. "What particular breach of maritime law was it that time?"

*See facing page 1.

Carncross chuckled. "I'm not well posted on the statutes made and provided; I don't know," said he. Then, the Kanaka boy having appeared with the belated beverage, he poured a hissing portion over a yellow liquid that chanced to be in his tumbler, re-charged his pipe and continued:

IN THOSE days, you understand, "sealed orders" was something of a joke. A war-vessel would be stationed at Honolulu or some Oriental port for so long you'd think she had grown to the bottom of the harbor. Then some fine day she'd suddenly pull up her barnacled mud-hook and hike out under "sealed orders" and every one would say: "Well, Ocean Island's due for a flag-raising at last," or it might be some other worthless piece of real estate in the middle of the Pacific. It was like a game of "Island, Island, who's got the Island?" between four nations who were trying to see which could use up the most flags.

There were a lot more islands and reefs in those days marked E. D. and P. D. ["Existence Doubtful" and "Position Doubtful"] on the charts than there are now, and there were times when there was so much activity in the free-for-all flag-raising that a chart a month old wasn't official. This island I'm telling about was marked P. D. till Japan came along under

"sealed orders" and annexed it. They didn't know there was pearl-shell there then.

When we dropped in, casual-like, we had been out a good while and were full up with copra and very short of grub. The schooner was foul, too, so that we could see long green whiskers on her sheathing below the water-line, and so logy that she just squattered and wallowed along. It wasn't much of an island to look at—just a little speck of an atoll with a few palms and some green shrubs—nothing edible except coconuts and ti-root—a real God-forsaken kind of place, but sort of pretty all the same, the lagoon as full of color as a painted picture. We thought at first it was inhabited when we saw the flag, for they usually leave a few marines or soldiers when they intend starting a colony, but there wasn't a soul there.

There were birds, though, and patches of good guano, and we knew that before long there would be a busy little colony of brown, bow-legged Japs there who would strip the place bare in no time. You plant a Jap on a Pacific island and he'll find more ways to make money than a white man ever dreamed of—sea-slugs, dried octopus, shark-fins, fish-scales, bird-skins and the Lord knows what else. He'll even kill the palms by cutting the tender shoots for toddy or palm-tree cabbage. When he is through there won't be anything left except just sand and an empty *saki* tub or two.

Therefore, when we found a fine little bed of shell growing all alone and peaceful there in the lagoon it appeared only right and proper and sensible to skin it before that colony arrived. We had to do it quick, too, and that was where the shoe pinched. Billy thought it over and put it up to Tommy and me. Tommy was nominally supercargo and I was mate, but we both had an interest with Billy, and were just three friends without any man-'o-war discipline between us, though Billy was boss by a whole head and shoulders by virtue of just being Billy Englehart.

"Boys," says he, "here's about how we stand: there's no time to get diving-suits and air-pumps on this job; besides, the lagoon's plumb shallow and four of our Kanaka boys are good divers. If the schooner stays here with all hands we'll have to live on sea-birds and fish and jettison our copra to make room for the shell. That last don't appeal to me.

"I'll give no orders, understand, but put it to you man to man, and if you don't like it speak up. I suggest that one of you stop here with the four boys and work the shell. The other will go with me and the other two Kanakas and sail the schooner to Shanghai, where we'll unload, get cleaned up, take on supplies and come back for the shell. By that time the bed ought to be worked out. The man that stays may get in a hole. I'd do it myself but I'm master and owner and so named in the papers and we want no complications in port. What do you say?"

"Tommy," says I, "I'll match you for it, winner to stay!"

"Done!" says Tommy. We flipped coins and Tommy was elected. The Kanaka boys needed no persuading. One of 'em had an accordion and with that and an occasional nip of gin they would have roosted content in Tophet if Billy had told 'em to. We left some old sails for tents, our best surf-boat, all the stores left except just enough to tide us over, and our last case of trade-gin. Night and day we drove the schooner for all she could stand and all the way Billy was sour and impatient because we couldn't get more out of her, foul as she was. That was Billy's way—ugly as a ruffian when there was something to be done, savage and high-strung till it was all over, and all the time more anxious about Tommy and the boys left there in a ticklish position than he was about pearls and shell.

One of the men with us was a quarter-white Hawaiian named George Kaulu. We distrusted him, for he was unreliable and inclined to be sulky. He was rated as a foremast hand and no better sailor than the rest of the crew, but he always thought his white blood entitled him to a shade the best of it. I guess you've seen that kind. He began to grumble at once over the extra work and short rations till Englehart gave him a beating that kept him peaceable for the rest of the voyage. He did some thinking, though, or this yarn wouldn't be worth the telling.

II

THE afternoon of the day we made port Billy and I strolled into a place uptown to get a drink. The bar was full of sailors on shore-leave and Billy nudged me with his elbow and pointed

toward a corner of the room. Sitting at a table was a short, slim man with a pointed black beard and mean, crafty eyes. Opposite him was George Kaulu, very drunk, but talking low and eager and drawing lines with his finger on the wet table-top. I knew the white man well enough. He was Ben Pease, once a partner of Bully Hayes, and no better than a common pirate.

It was a disturbing sight and we slipped out without being seen. There was no love lost between us and Ben Pease. We may have been in something of the same line of business and no respecters of Admiralty law and little things of that sort, but Englehart played the game square and there wasn't, so to speak, any black flag flying from our main-truck. Billy hated Pease for a mean thief—a despoiler of Kanakas and traders at lonely stations, and made no bones of it, but Pease had a considerable following of ex-convicts and hard citizens and was into all the devilment going on the beaches. He was a dangerous man.

"Well," says Billy, "we've got our hands full now, Jim. We can't fight a brig with cannon aboard and a raft of cut-throats from Port Jackson. Too bad. I wonder if this fellow Kaulu by any chance knows the latitude and longitude of the island."

"Don't see how he could," says I.

"I don't either, but there's no telling. Now, Jim, you go down and hustle that schooner out of dry-dock. I've other work to do; and Jim, there's a ball to-night for the naval officers. Get into a suit of white duck. We're going to meet Quong Lee there. I'll be aboard by ten o'clock."

There was no use my asking questions about that ball, but I knew it wasn't to be all social diversion for us. I signed on four more men, all Kanakas, and was pleased to get the schooner afloat by nightfall. Toward evening George Kaulu came aboard.

"*Kimo*," says he, "I'll take my bag and what's coming to me. I don't ship no more!"

"You'll get what's coming to you," says I; "here it is!" and I gave him the heel of my fist *bang!* between the eyes and knocked him overboard. He swam ashore and never came back for his bag.

When Billy came aboard I told him and he went straight to his cabin and began fussing in the lockers and using strong language. I didn't know what for, because just then I was struggling into the interstices of a clean suit of white duck, and when I had succeeded we took a rickshaw at the wharf and went to the ball.

I'm not strong on social affairs, though I've been to balls at the Palace here when Kalakaua was king, and to a *kava*-drinking with Malietoa of Samoa, which, when all is said and done, was about as ceremonious and refined an affair as you'll find anywhere. This one at Shanghai made a fine sight, though. There were a couple of British cruisers in port, a Japanese gunboat, and our own *Juniata* and the poor old *Nipsic* that was lost afterward in the hurricane at Samoa. So there were officers in tropical uniform, a lot of officials and a swarm of gorgeously dressed women.

We sat at a little round table and the waiters brought us glass cups full of punch that tasted sweet and smooth and had a hard kick in it. We could see Quong Lee circulating about in a fine brocaded blouse and his mandarin's hat, and once or twice he passed us, smiled and shook his head. Billy sat studying hard, his eyebrows puckered up, watching everything. And hovering round, not always in plain sight, but so you'd know he was there, right on the job, was Ben Pease. Once as he passed he lifted one side of his mustache in a nasty grin.

"Fine sailing weather, Billy!" says he.

"So?" says Billy, lifting his eyebrows.

"Fine it is! I'm wondering which sails best, a brig or a schooner," and with that he passed on.

Billy looked at me and grinned. "Wants to know, does he? Well, I could have told him, Jim, but it's better to let him find out. He'll know right soon!"

We saw Quong Lee off in a corner back of a cluster of palms, talking to a woman. A little later, after circling clear around the room, he came and sat down at our table. This Quong Lee was a curious character, a graduate of Oxford College, in England, and a kind of silent partner of Billy's. There wasn't anything going on that was worth knowing that he didn't know all about, and he had a rake-off on all the highly educated graft in Shanghai, from official bribery to coffee-house tea, and bought and sold everything from brocades and pearls to punk-sticks and fire-crackers.

Coffee-house tea? Why, that's the tea that's been used once in the little restaurants, saved up and returned to headquarters. They crisp it over again on a hot pan, pack it in lead, and ship it to connoisseurs in

New York and other civilized ports. It's a thriving industry. Quong used to buy our pearls or copra, cash on the nail, sell us Hongkong opium, was absolutely square and reliable, and the only out-and-out Chinaman I ever knew who could twist his tongue around the letter R.

"The gunboat is sailing to-morrow for Nagasaki," said he. "There she will take on some colonists for Japan's new possessions."

"Good," said Billy. "How did you learn their orders, Quong?"

"Oh, plenty of ways! Lots of politics here in Shanghai!"

JUST then a little Japanese officer came by, talking to a white woman a head taller than he was. She was a beautiful, fine woman, and around her neck were yards and yards of great big pearls. She was the lady Quong had been talking to behind the palm, but she made no sign as she passed. Quong saw Billy and me both admiring her.

"Very fine lady," said he. "The wife of a Government official. She understands politics very well."

"Yes?" said Billy absent-mindedly. "What fine pearls, Quong! She has a fortune round her neck!"

Quong looked at him and smiled a queer, crafty Chinese smile, his eyes half shut. "How much do you think?" says he.

"Anywhere between forty and sixty thousand dollars, gold."

Quong rubbed his long, slim fingers. "I'll tell you a secret, just between partners," says he. "Divide your average of fifty thousand by two hundred and your estimate is about right."

Billy looked at him curiously.

"Chinese are very ancient race," says Quong; "been making fish-pearls for, maybe, four thousand years!"

"Do you mean to tell me those are fish-pearls?"

"I ought to know," says Quong; "I sold 'em. Very fine fish-pearls indeed!"

"Hum!" says Billy. "I ought to have known it. Might get fooled myself some time."

He sat and drummed on the table for a while, looking at Quong with a kind of puzzled smile. Then his face cleared up and he hailed a waiter with a tray of punch.

"Jim," says he, "you and I can take lessons from Quong here. Think of our being fooled by a lot of fake pearls! And speaking of pearls—" here he raised his voice and picked up his cup of punch. Out of the tail of my eye I saw Ben Pease and his red-headed mate right behind us—"speaking of pearls, Quong, drink to our good fortune. We're sailing to-night!"

We all drank, and, soon after, Ben Pease and his mate edged hurriedly toward the door. Billy leaned across the table. "Now, Jim," says he, in a low voice, "get down to the schooner in the devil's own hurry! Get everything clear. I've got a few things to settle with Quong Lee and I'll be aboard in half an hour. I've sprung the trap," says he, "and there's the finest little three-cornered mix-up started that you ever saw!"

We got under way at once when Billy came aboard. The full moon was hidden by a cloud-bank, but as we slid by Ben Pease's brig we could hear the clink of her pawls and the flapping of sails let loose from the gaskets and knew they were busy. We slipped past the Japanese gunboat like a ghost, for we set no sailing-lights, and search-lights on war-vessels weren't as common then as they are now. Billy tramped back and forth, his eyes shining, puffing his pipe, as happy as a king, though the more I thought of what was ahead of us the more of a muddle it appeared to be. As for Billy, he and trouble had been comrades for so many years that the very smell of it made him plumb happy and content.

There was a stiff breeze outside and when dawn broke we were snoring along, both topsails set and the lee rail awash. Away off on the horizon we made out the upper sails of a brig. Billy looked at 'em and laughed. "He wanted to know which sailed best," says he. "Well Jim, we point up a *leetle* mite higher than he does. Just enough to serve, I think."

"I hope so," says I, "or the Lord help Tommy Ridpath!"

The brig stuck to us till the next day, when we shook her off. There came a sudden black squall from out of the sou'-west and, after that cleared, there wasn't a sign of her anywhere.

III

WE MADE the island in a week of fine sailing and we hadn't more than reached the mouth of the lagoon when Tommy and the boys came aboard in

the surf-boat, singing and cheering like kids on a holiday. Tommy looked thin and drawn and his pajamas hung on him like bags. "Tommy, lad," said Billy, after greetings; "you look over-trained. Had any trouble?"

Tommy leaned up against him like his legs were giving way. "Man," says he, with a sob, "trouble's no name! For the love of heaven give me a piece of cheese and some pickles and tinned salmon! Gimme a taste of food fit for a Christian—and some beer! I've been living on birds! Gulls and goonies and terns—ugh! and oh! *oh! oh!!* wait till you get ashore and smell the shell! Man, it's stupendous!"

It was. If you've ever smelt an acre or so of shell rotting out in the sun you'll know what I mean. If you haven't, you won't, for there's nothing else on earth that's horrible enough to compare it to. Even out where we were anchored the stench was awful—enough to make a man gasp and stagger, but on the beach, where the mess was boiling and festering, the air was all blurred and wavy, and poison enough to knock you down.

While Tommy gulped warm beer and wolfed down canned grub and biscuit we told him how things stood and he talked between mouthfuls. "Good thing you shook off Ben Pease," said he. "What an ass he was to try and follow you here! If the bally gunboat holds off for a week they can have what's left, and that will be nothing. We've cleaned the bed—one lot of shell all rotted out and ready, and that lot on the beach can be cleaned in three or four days. And, gentlemen, there's the cutest little bag of pearls from that first lot you ever saw! I buried 'em in case there were visitors while you were away. Made a chart, too, regular buccaneer-fashion. Here it is!" He fumbled in his pajamas, brought out a folded paper and spread it on the table.

Well, sir, Billy and I had a good laugh when we saw it. Tommy had real talent as an artist and used to amuse us with comic drawings. He had put in all of his spare time on this, making it, as he said, like an old-fashioned pirate chart, with a nicely drawn map of the island, embellished with anchors and dolphins and crosses and the name "*Moku Pilau*" across it, which is just the Kanaka name for "Island with a Bad Smell." The directions read:

From extream S.E. Palm due N.N.E. 168 paces to tall Frigate Bird; thence W.N.W. 27 paces to Albatross Egg; thence W. by S. 63 paces to Nest of One-eyed Gooney with 3 young. Treasure berried near.

It was signed "Thomas Ridpath, Mariner," with a clove-hitch underneath, and looked very neat and ship-shape, except for the fool talk of eggs and birds' nests. Billy chuckled over it a long time, then he folded it carefully and tucked it away. "A good job, Tommy," said he. "The pearls are there, are they?"

"They are," says Tommy. "The old gooney's setting on 'em now. Maybe she'll hatch out something."

We went to work at once packing the clean shell into bags. It was good stuff worth all of a hundred and sixty dollars a ton. Everybody slept aboard and we hauled well out into the lagoon to get as far away from the smell as possible. I stood at the taffrail along about eleven o'clock, smoking my pipe and thinking how peaceful and lonely it was now that the birds had settled down for the night. The moon was due about midnight, but there was a skyful of stars so close overhead you could almost reach out and touch them. There was a sickly, phosphorescent light over the rotting shell on the beach.

Englehart came on deck and yawned. "Jim," says he: "it's a pretty odoriferous night, isn't it? It makes me bilious. How is it with you?"

"The same! The stink's enough to drive a man to drink!"

"Too bad," says he, "that there isn't some way to hurry matters. Do you reckon it possible to clean out that batch of shell as it is?"

"Why, no," says I, "it can't be done. The man who monkeys with that corruption now will get poison and fever clear to his bones. What are you driving at, Billy?"

"Nothing in particular. Ugh! That breeze is certainly tainted. I wonder how it would be if a fellow tied a wet sponge over his face?"

"Not for me! Not for all the pearls in the Pacific!"

"Well, I guess you're right. Help me lower away the dingey, Jim. I can't sleep and I'm going for a run ashore."

He pulled away in the darkness and pretty soon I turned in, leaving a couple of men on watch.

I didn't go on deck again till morning

and when I did Tommy was looking at the beach through the glass. There was the dingey drawn up on the sand and beside it Billy Englehart, lying like a log. We yelled at him and after a while he rolled over, sat up and waved his hand to us. Then he shoved off the boat and rowed out to the schooner. He looked tired and, I thought, sick, but he was in a good humor.

"I thought I'd take a nap on the beach and overslept," said he. "I think I need a nip of something." The skin on his hard, brown face was drawn white, and his knees shook. There was a kind of excitement in his eyes, too, as he gulped down gin and soda in the cuddy. "Jim," said he, "it's a rum place ashore there at night, what with the perfumery and the birds stirring around, uneasy and chattering in the dark. They fly in your face, too. I don't wonder Tommy and the boys didn't like it. I think I've a touch of fever myself, and I'm going to turn in for a couple of hours."

WE GOT the clean shell below and reported to Billy. We found him sitting on a transom, drinking tea. "I'm glad we've got that much safe," said he. "I've a notion Ben Pease will drop in for a social call soon. In fact, it is only a matter of hours. There'll be the deuce to pay then, boys."

"Why," says I, "what makes you think Pease will be here? Didn't we give him the slip over a week ago?"

"Jim, are you such a thundering idiot as to think that Ben Pease was trying to make a stern chase of it for two thousand miles? He knows the location of this place as well as we do. The night we sailed I found that the locker where we keep the log-book had been forced. Kaulu did it, of course."

"Then why didn't Pease get away at once, instead of watching and waiting for us to make a move? He might have beaten us to it."

"He couldn't, because instead of him watching us, *I* was watching *him*, and he knew it. Oh, he's due here, all cocked and primed for a fight, you can lay to that, Jim! Now what do you fellows suggest?"

"We'll fight, that's what we'll do!" says Tommy.

"Tommy," said Englehart, "you're a nice boy and I'd hate to lose you. Go on and fight if you want to and get all shot full of holes for shark-bait. There are enough hard citizens on the brig to give you a run for your money."

"Are we going to quit then, like dogs, and be robbed by this scum of the beach?"

Englehart straightened up and poured himself some more tea. "Boys," said he, "I've been playing this game a good many years now. I've been mixed up in hard, rough man's work since you, Tommy, were back home in petticoats, sucking sugar candy; and I've got a life-size grudge against this Ben Pease. You'll admit that I'm generally known as a man capable of handling things. Do I make myself clear?"

"Perfectly! You needn't be raw, Billy."

"Very well. I only wanted an understanding. I have a plan of my own and I thought you chaps might be bright enough to have a better, but you haven't. We're not going to fight, at least not openly, and just remember that, no matter how things look, we're not beaten till the last gun. If we lose, you can both kick your Uncle Billy."

"All right," said Tommy, "but now let's go and dig up those pearls I buried and get 'em safe aboard."

Billy hesitated, looking from one to the other of us. Just then there was a cry of "Sail ho!" from the deck, and when we tumbled up, there was the brig beyond the point a couple of miles to windward. Tommy danced around excitedly. "—— it," says he, "we've got to hurry and get those pearls! Come on, boys!"

To Tommy's disgust Billy lingered and called the boys together. "There's another ship coming—a steamer, do you mind—and the man who first reports it I'll pay a hundred dollars. Look alive now! Tommy, quit dancing hornpipes and come along!"

IV

WE RACED to the beach in the surf-boat and followed Tommy on the double-quick toward where he had buried the pearls, when suddenly a voice called: "'Vast, you men!" and there, right on top of the rise of the beach facing us, were half a dozen men covering us with rifles! Ahead of them, leaning on his gun and grinning, stood Ben Pease.

"Just hold your hands up, gentlemen, please! Thanks! Captain Englehart, we meet again. I knew how pleased you'd be,

so thought I'd give you a surprise by landing with a few of my men on the other side of the island."

We looked mighty foolish, standing there like sheep, and none of us said a word. Two of the men came forward to tie us up and this was too much for Tommy Ridpath. He gritted his teeth and swung on the man nearest him with his fist. The fellow went sprawling, for the blow caught him flush on the jaw, but the other man clubbed his gun and as Tommy dodged and threw up his arm the gun struck him just below the elbow and his arm snapped and fell helpless to his side. Meantime the rest of the gang took a hand, and soon we were all trussed up with belts and rope from our boat. Pease came and stood facing us, a sneer on his mean little face.

"Sorry to use violence, gentlemen," said he, "but you *would* have it. I abhor violence, myself. Pleasant retreat you have here, Captain, but an awful odor. Bless me, it must be pearl-shell, all laid out and rotting in the sun! Thanks for saving us that much trouble!"

Englehart stood looking him in the eye. His face was flushed a dark red. "Have you done?" says he.

"For the present, I think."

"Well, if you've done with your blithering imbecility, you low-class swindler and thief, listen to me! You know me, Ben Pease! You don't dare turn me loose and meet me man to man! You know you can't scare me with your cut-throat crew and your gun-play! Go ahead with your pilfering and have done with it and spare us your cheap twaddle, but mind this, Ben Pease—either you shoot me out of hand or I'll beat you in the end!"

The sneer vanished and Pease's face went white as chalk. "We'll see about that!" said he. "Why, —— you, Englehart, if you'd kept a civil tongue I'd have made an offer to divide!"

"Divide ——!" says Billy. "When I go into partnership with a thief and blackguard I'll make my own terms, you can lay to that, Mr. Pease!"

Pease drew back his clinched fist. Billy's right foot swung back and his eyes blazed. There was something cold and deep in Billy's eyes when he looked that way that made you shiver. "Try it!" says he. For a second they glared at each other, then Pease swung round and tramped off down the beach.

Billy spat in the sand. "Humph!" said he. "I thought for a minute he was going to hit me, Jim. If he had, it would have spoiled everything."

THE brig had worked round into the lagoon and anchored about a cable's length from the schooner. Pease walked over and inspected the shell on the beach, then came back and, leaving a couple of his men on guard, took our boat and went out to the schooner. There was a short scuffle with our Kanaka boys, who must have been pretty well flabbergasted, and in about half an hour Pease came back. He meant devilment as plain as ever I saw, and for the life of me I couldn't see why Englehart hadn't used different tactics. It seemed so unnecessary, being in the hole we were, to bullyrag a man who held all the cards in his own hand. They made us get in the boat and rowed us to the schooner, and when we were all on deck Pease turned to Englehart with a snarl.

"Now," said he, "I see you've got a lot of shell under hatches. What have you done with the pearls?"

"Why," says Billy, "they're safe where you can't get your dirty hands on them."

Pease raised his rifle and cocked it. "I'll give you two minutes to tell. If you don't, I'll blow the lot of you to ——!"

"And by doing that," said Billy, "I suppose you'll get the pearls?"

Pease studied for a while, looking from one to the other of us. "No," said he thoughtfully, "I won't. I have a better plan." He pointed to Tommy and me. "Take those two men for'ard to the mainmast. Now unbend the halliards and noose 'em round their necks. That'll do. Now untie their arms. Englehart, I'll ask you twice for those pearls. The first time you don't answer I'll trice those men up with their hands free. The second time, they'll go aloft with their arms bound!"

Tommy broke out into curses. I forgot to say that Tommy was a young British remittance-man, very hot-headed, but as game a little lad as ever breathed. His broken arm was giving him a good deal of pain, but tears of rage ran down his cheeks. "Don't do it, Billy!" he cried. "I'll swing

if I have to, so help me, but *don't* give in to that cur!"

"Do you squeal?" says Pease.

"No, —— you!" says Billy.

Pease gave the signal and I was jerked from my feet by the neck. I grabbed the rope over my head, but strangled horribly; my eyes and tongue bugged out and things began to snap inside my head.

As for Tommy, he had only one arm to hold by. I know now that Billy would have let us both be swung that once if it hadn't been for that, but no sooner was Tommy swung off than he yelled: "Avast, Pease; I give in!" He kicked off one shoe. "There's the data right there," said he.

Pease looked in the shoe and took out a folded paper. He looked it over, sort of perplexed. "What's all this foolery?" he asked.

"It's a chart. Start from the furthest palm on the beach to the sou'east and follow directions and you'll find the pearls unless Tommy made a mistake."

Tommy, sick and hurt, looked at Englehart reproachfully. "Billy," he moaned, "I'll never forgive you—never!"

They took us ashore again and made us wait while Pease and a couple of his men went to find the pearls. Meantime a boat had come off from the brig, and the mate and half a dozen men went projecting over to the shell on the beach.

The sun was blazing hot. My head ached and throbbed and Tommy lay on his back, cursing under his breath. It was plain to me that something had miscarried and, my neck being still tender, I was pretty sore at the high-handed way Billy had tried to carry things when we really hadn't had the ghost of a show from the beginning.

In about an hour Pease came back. He had the bag of pearls and shook it in our faces. "There," said he; "I've got 'em, and a good thing for you that I have! I guess you'll admit that the laugh's on you, Englehart!"

"I guess I will," says Billy.

Just then we heard a yell and Pease's mate came running toward us. "Ho, ho!" says he, as he came up, out of breath. "Look here, Ben! The first sample I picked up!" He held an oyster-shell in his hand. He turned up the rotten oyster with a bit of stick, and there, underneath, was a great big pearl the size of a boy's marble!

Pease's face broke into a broad grin and he held the shell for Englehart to see. Billy looked fishy and disgusted. Tommy fairly foamed at the mouth and it turned me sick.

"Now," said Pease, "you men clear out! Your bluff is called, Captain Englehart! Be off with you! Get out of this lagoon, or I may take a fancy to blow your schooner out of water! And remember the laugh's on you, and the man that's done you is Ben Pease!"

"Oh, I'll remember," said Billy.

They turned us loose and we rowed aboard, very crestfallen and quiet. We took a drink all round in the cuddy and then set poor Tommy's arm. Billy was ugly and nervous and kept pacing up and down. He called the Kanakas together. "You boys remember," said he, "that there's a hundred dollars' reward for the man that sights the steamer. Get up aloft, some of you, and stay there!"

"What's the use?" said Tommy bitterly. "Pease has us beaten."

"Tommy," said Englehart sourly, "you make me tired! For two cents I'd pitch you into the lagoon! I told you, I think, that we were not beaten till the last gun. I know it looks bad, but we have a fighting chance yet, so quit your calamity-howling and stand by for the next move."

Over on the brig they had a port open and a brass gun trained on us. The sun was going down. Long lines of birds were stringing back and forth between sea and land. Englehart kept questioning the boys and once or twice went aloft himself with the glass. There was no use asking questions, and for the first time I mentally called Billy Englehart a fool. Night began to close down and several times boats went back and forth between the brig and the shore. Then "Bang!" went the brass gun and a shot whizzed by our stern. A voice from the brig called out: "Time to clear out!"

We cleared, cursing the brig and all hands aboard, but that night we stole back as near as we dared, and Billy and I dropped over in the dingey. We felt our way into the lagoon and got under the bows of the brig without being seen. There was a fire going on the beach and, from the noise, we judged that all hands were drunk. The brig had a hemp cable and we sawed it through without any trouble. Just as the

job was done and she began to drift a man overhead called: "Who's that?" Looking up, we could see a head and shoulders silhouetted against the sky. Billy had an oar in his hand. He swung it with all his strength and it caught the man full on the side of the head, curling him up in the scuppers without a whimper. Then we put for the schooner and, as we stepped aboard, Billy says to me: "I'm pleased with our night's work, Jim. That inquisitive party was George Kaulu."

With the first streak of daylight next morning one of the boys sung out from aloft, and there on the horizon lay a long trail of black smoke. The island was away off astern and, as soon as we made out the gunboat and knew she had seen us, we turned tail and ran back the way we had come. The gunboat belched black smoke and made after us hand over fist. We passed the island about half a mile to leeward. The brig was in plain sight, hard aground. We watched the gunboat as she came on, headed straight for us, till she came up to where the brig was visible. For a breathless, heartbreaking while she hesitated, then swung round and pointed for the lagoon. Before night we had that island clean down beyond the horizon.

"BOYS," said Billy, as he turned the wheel over to one of the Kanakas, "let's go below and take a drink!"

Mind you, we hadn't been acting very dignified all this time. Tommy was swearing with joy, and when I saw that tin-pot of a gunboat point in for the island and Ben Pease I held on to the rail and cheered, and the Kanaka boys, who had caught the spirit of the thing, cheered too, like mad. But when we went below Tommy got moody over his drink.

"All right, Billy," said he gloomily; "we've done Pease, I'll grant you that. He'll get a long spell in the mines. But oh, those pearls! Those beautiful pearls! The —— Japs will get 'em! It's almost as bad as if it was Pease!"

Billy walked into his cabin and came back with a buckskin bag. There was a bowl on the table and he emptied the bag into it and there, before our eyes, lay more than a pint of as beautiful pearls as I ever saw!

Tommy's eyes bulged out and we looked at Billy with our jaws hanging wide open. "What in the name of the immortal Davy Jones are those?" says Tommy.

"Pearls," said Billy. "Good, honest pearls. Every last one that you and the Kanaka boys brought out of the lagoon!"

"Excuse me," said Tommy, "my mind's going! Gimme a drink, somebody!"

"Me too!" said I. "Billy, if those are pearls, what in Sam Hill has Pease got?"

"Fish-pearls," says Billy. "I bought 'em of Quong Lee for a hundred dollars, Mex. I got the idea that night at the ball, Jim, when Quong told about that woman. Excuse me, boys, for not letting you in the whole scheme, but you would have spoiled the show. I dug up the lot that Tommy buried, and left fish-pearls in place of 'em. Then I went over that stinking lot of shell on the beach, felt out all the pearls and 'salted' the bed carefully with more fish-pearls so they'd be sure and lay their hands on the nice big ones the first thing. And a horrible nasty job it was, too. I'm shaky over it yet. I fainted twice before it was done. Had a sponge over my face soaked with gin, but the smell came right through."

"Boys," he went on, helping himself to another drink, "Ben Pease saw those pearls come right out of the shell. I'd give half the value of these—and that is a pretty tidy sum—to see his face when he learns what it was he really got!"

A Bearded Legacy on the Hoof

By Raymond Currie

WHEN the Churchill County Consolidated Burial Company's eight-mule hearse, on its post-election rounds, reached Wonder, via Seven Troughs, Boyer and Bernice, "Sad" Sidney rose up on the box of the somber vehicle and declared to Embalmer Cherry that he was through.

"You're a pretty fair boss," said Sad Sidney, "an' the work is easy till we get to Seven Troughs, where you ring me in as uncle to two claim-jumpers, which I weeps for terrific. I might 've stood for that, but when it comes to designatin' me as widower for a female highwayman who kills herself for love o' a mine salter, you blew the whistle.

"I can hear that gang o' Bernice Elks an' Odd Fellows yelpin' yet. It were a low-down trick, Lou Cherry, an' you know it. You pretty near broke that iron map o' yours smilin' on it, which ain't no decent way for a man o' your callin' to act. My face may be built for a professional mourner and I may be equipped with a pair o' leaky lamps, but I ain't no double-backed camel o' patience. If there 's a job mixin' poison open at the Three Wheels, I applies."

Argument and flattery prevailed not. Sad Sidney was through. His long sallow countenance was tense with determination when he climbed down off the hearse and strode into the Three Wheels. There was a vacancy behind the counter and Hal McGinnis was mighty glad to enroll the ex-mourner as first secretary of libations in his popular resort.

"Them funeral features o' yours is goin' to let you in for a lot of kiddin' in this camp," said McGinnis, "but that ought to draw business if you'll keep your dander under. I don't stand for gun-fightin' in the Three Wheels, less 'n for self-defense."

"I reckon I got the patience for the job," Sad Sidney responded. "I seem to have been brought into this world o' joys an' tears for the special purpose o' makin' fools bray. Howsomever, Mr. McGinnis, I can't promise I stands stall-fed ca'm perpetual. It ain't in my scheme o' long-sufferin' to lay down an' be trod onto."

"It ain't expected," reassured McGinnis. "This ain't no lamb academy, nor yet it ain't no wolf ranch. Jest sit easy an' copper your play."

Wonder was in the full surge of its boom when Sad Sidney assumed his apron of office in the Three Wheels. From time to time his forbearance was sorely tested. As the weeks went by the strain upon his gloomy features to mask the emotions that seethed within him became positive torture. Wherefore, when the ultimate straw was added and he did break out, he flared sulphurously and fluttered hardware in both hands.

"TODY" SIMS, pilot of the Fallon motor express truck, had come into the Three Wheels, hot and dusty. After quenching his thirst in silence he laid before the compounder a gasolene-drenched invoice and a smudgy letter. Sidney perused the invoice and passed it back. There was a nasty gleam in his eye and his freckles came out in crimson patches.

"Run 'round the corner if you're lookin' for play," he jerked out. "This ain't my funny day."

"Play nothin'!" Tody Sims shot back. "That's a genuine invoice. The goat's in the truck, crated and tagged. Got a tin tag wired into his ear with the name Happy onto it. He's been raisin' —— all the way out, an' if he hadn't been billed collect I'd a-dropped him into Gilligan Cut back on the Stillwater trail, puttin' his decease down to perils o' the road. Express charges per one goat is sixty-two dollars, plus fodder, which he ain't had none, seein' as he fancied the tin linin' o' his crate."

"Quit it, I tell you," Sad Sidney snorted. "This ain't jokin' day in the Three Wheels. What in blazes would I want of a goat in Wonder, with water ten Liberties a barrel an' fodder sellin' like precious jools?"

"I tell you it ain't no joke!" yelled Tody Sims. "That goat's come express in your name clear through from San Luis Obispo, an' it's my job to deliver him to Sidney Gerald Van Deusen, charges collect, if it takes me a week!"

'Twas then Sad Sidney went berserker and there might have been an early planting in the Sims family if Hal McGinnis and Sheriff Cowles hadn't jumped in between.

"Can't you see Tody ain't jokin'?" said Hal McGinnis. "Why don't you read the letter he give you?"

Still boiling but some calmer, Sad Sidney tore open the letter and read it. As he read it, his long, lean phiz switched expression in quick slides. First his eyes popped wide in surprise, then he bit his lips and mumbled. Finally he turned his head away and brushed the back of his hand across his nose. When he swung round to the counter again the under lids of his eyes were glistening wet.

"Bad news, Sid?" asked "Lone" Jack Farley.

"Worst! Uncle Fritz is dead! Read it."

The bereaved nephew passed the letter with a trembling hand. Farley read the sorrowful epistle aloud:

SAN LUIS OBISPO, CAL.

SIDNEY GERALD VAN DEUSEN, ESQ.,

DEAR SIR: I regret to inform you of the sudden death of your uncle, Fritz Van Deusen. He died penniless, save for his one treasured possession, a fine specimen of Rocky Mountain goat. On his death-bed he spoke fondly of you as his only surviving kin and begged me to ship the goat to you, as he felt confident you would give the animal a good home. The goat's name is Happy. With some assistance I have crated it securely and trust it may reach you in good condition.

Faithfully yours,
RILEY GRANGER, Attorney at Law.

"Who was your Uncle Fritz?" Sheriff Cowles asked, turning his head away and gripping his throat nervously.

"He was Dad's own brother," gulped Sad Sidney. "He raised Spanish onions an' green peppers, but he couldn't keep away from the wheel. Gambled like a Canton cooley. How he kept that goat all these years I can't figger. I can remember the little chap as a kid."

"Little chap, hey!" sneered Tody Sims. "He's bigger'n a burro, with a neck like a bull an' whiskers to his knees! Fork over sixty-two hard men an' the lad's yours. If you want to hire a nurse for him there's a boiler-maker back in Fallon out of a job. I'll——"

But a return of the thunder-cloud to Sad Sidney's brow cut short the expressman's banter. He waited in sullen silence while Uncle Fritz's heir excavated sixty-two dollars from the depths of a long, lean purse.

"Where'll I take the beast?" asked Tody Sims, after he had rung each silver dollar on the counter.

"Take him up to my shack," directed Sidney. "I'll go up and look him over at noon."

WHEN Sad Sidney returned from an inspection of his legacy there was an unwonted shine of gladness in his eyes and he walked with a pronounced limp.

"He knew me the minute he glimpsed at me," he almost chuckled, rubbing his left leg and smiling down on his boss.

"Did he toddle up an' kiss you?" Hal McGinnis grinned.

"No joking, boss," cried the bartender. "He came out of his crate with one bang and ran up to me playful as a kitten, slapping his horns against my legs and most standing on his head for joy. I bought him a bale of alfalfa an' he had the wire off it before I set it down. But say, boss," was added with less enthusiasm, "he's got a fierce thirst; stuck his head into my water butt an' emptied it like he was a suction pump."

"In which case you ought to trade him for a camel, unless you can put him to work for his board."

"That's jest what I been figgerin' on," said Sad Sidney eagerly. "Maybe I can break him in to the windlass and make him help work that mine you gave me for Christmas. He's stronger'n a team of mules."

Uncle Fritz's heir rubbed his left leg and allowed a puzzled frown to replace his smile.

Lone Jack Farley kept a log of S. G. Van Deusen's bearded legacy's career during its first week in Wonder.

It ran as follows:

Friday—Happy the goat arrived, express collect—heirloom to Sad Sidney from his deceased Uncle Fritz.

Saturday—A. M. Sad Sidney not on job. Hal McGinnis hits trail and finds Happy sitting outside Sidney's shack, nibbling a suspender buckle. Sidney is looking wistful out window.

"Why in blazes don't you come to work?" McGinnis bellows.

"No pants," replies Sidney, pointing to Happy.

"The dev——" Mr. McGinnis started to say, when goat interrupts. McGinnis beat all local sprint records down hill to Three Wheels, assisted at odd intervals by Happy.

Saturday—Noon. The goat, having left threshold of Three Wheels, divers thirsty Wonderites lubricate. McGinnis serves.

Saturday—2 P. M. McGinnis offers ten dollars to any man who will take Sad Sidney a pair of overalls. Lone Jack Farley volunteers, but comes back quickly in advance of Happy.

Saturday—5 P. M. Sad Sidney reaches Three Wheels in a barrel. Had lured goat into doorway of shack, exiting via window in grand leap.

Sunday—Happy sleeping off joyous effects of Saturday, while Sad Sidney boards at St. Felix.

Monday—A. M. Sad Sidney and Sheriff Cowles chain goat. Thirty volunteers offer to shoot Happy, but Uncle Fritz's heir won't hear of it. Says goat is not really vicious; furthermore that Happy's beard reminds him wonderfully of the late F. Van Deusen.

Monday—P. M. Happy vanished with chains. Sad Sidney swears goat victim of plot. Vows terrible revenge on plotters.

Tuesday—7 A. M. Wong projectiled through laundry window. Living image of Uncle Fritz appears in aperture of window. Happy expression on Happy's face as arm of Sheriff Cowles' silk shirt rapidly disappears within. Sheriff shoots but misses. Sad Sidney saves goat on promise to defray all damage. Wong says goat is full of opium and lily bulbs, not to mention assorted collars and cuffs.

Tuesday—P. M. Wonder Vigilantes aid Sidney in lowering goat into mine where Uncle Fritz's heir will strive to tame him.

Wednesday—Sad Sidney got day off to tame Happy. Went down into mine with sledge-hammer and crowbar, saying grimly, "If I come up alive that goat'll eat out o' my hand."

Thursday—A. M. Sad Sidney still in mine. Hal McGinnis asks for volunteers to succor his faithful compounder. No volunteers volunteer.

Thursday—7 P. M. Still no volunteers.

Thursday—9 P. M. Having imbibed deeply, "Centipede" Riley volunteers and leaves Three Wheels with lantern, three revolvers, one sawed-off shot-gun, and a Chinese dirk loaned by Wong.

Thursday—12 P. M. Sad Sidney and Centipede Riley hoisted out of mine, both partially conscious. With feeble smile Sad Sidney moans, "Tamed 'im! Tamed 'im! Tamed 'im!" In spite of this reassurance no effort made to lift "tamed" goat from mine.

Friday—7 A. M. (Scene—Wonder Emergency Hospital. Centipede Riley and Sad Sidney on adjoining cots.) Sidney asks Riley to confirm his statement that Happy is tamed. Riley goes off like gunpowder; says among other things, "Don't blip the name o' that bearded varmint to me again on your life's peril!"

IT MAY be gleaned from the foregoing log that if Wonder got only two mails a week and was shy a telegraph it did not yearn for a topic of conversation. Down in the mines, up in Three Wheels, out on the trail, and in their sleep, men talked goat.

Hal McGinnis began making book on various sporting propositions involving Happy. Odds of 10 to 1 were offered against the truth of Sad Sidney's statement. Centipede Riley sent for his check-book and started the betting along this line with an offer of $1,000 to $100. No takers.

Eight to one was offered that Sad Sidney would not be able to bring up his tamed legacy for at least a week. Still no takers. "Doc" Bannard reported that five of Sidney's ribs were cracked. Even money was bet freely that the goat would starve to death before any one went down the mine to visit him. Sad Sidney bet all he owned that the goat would survive. Tommy Merriweather, seated at Sad Sidney's bedside, covered his offer.

"What did you leave him to eat, Sid?" he asked.

"About a thousand foot of shoring timber," replied the patient. "Reckon he ought to get breakfast food out of that. Then there's a keg o' detonatin' caps if he wants seasonin'."

"Guess it's safe he'll starve," spoke up Doc Bannard. "That stuff about goats eating tinware and wagon-wheels is all drivel for the funny papers. Goats have got to have proper fodder same as cattle."

"A cow'll eat a picket fence in a pinch, maybe," retorted Sad Sidney. "Anyway, my bet goes as she lays."

A week elapsed before Uncle Fritz's heir managed to hobble up to the mine shaft and let himself down. He was gone about an hour, then came up the ladder on the run, looking white and scared. Practically the entire population of Wonder was grouped about the shaft-head and the air rang with the clamor of the bettors.

As the pale countenance of Sad Sidney sprouted into the open, Tony Merriweather, who stood to lose two mines if the goat still survived, shouted out,

"Alive or dead, Sid?"

"Neither!" gasped Uncle Fritz's heir. "He ain't there!"

"Fake!" yelled twenty bettors. "He's lyin'."

"Betcher 100 to 1 I ain't!" denied Sad Sidney fiercely. "Go down an' see for yourselves."

There was no immediate move to investigate, Centipede Riley having remarked, "If I'd a million dollars down against the vitality o' that goat I'd sell my prospects for two-bits before I'd go down into that mine."

"Wong go," suddenly chirped up the Wonder laundry trust. "Wong take plenty led plepper. No flaid ba-ba dloggie."

They let the slant-eyed hero down into the shaft while Sad Sidney stood by and growled about the eternal suspicion of natural-born liars when an honest man told them the truth. Nevertheless he did not gloat when Wong reappeared.

Shaking his head he walked away silently to resume his post behind the counter in the Three Wheels.

There was no end of speculation that evening over the disappearance of Happy. Now that the goat was gone, his bitterest enemies covered his head with fulsome flattery. The air grew thick with theories to account for his disappearance.

That he could have climbed up a forty-foot perpendicular ladder was scouted as a preposterous suggestion. At the bottom of the shaft was a chamber thirty feet square, representing all the work that had been done on the mine before and subsequent to its gift to Sad Sidney by Hal McGinnis.

In the midst of the excited debate Tony Merriweather suddenly exclaimed, "Say, Sidney, what about those detonating caps? Were they still in the mine?"

"That's just what's fussin' me," complained the inheritor of the vanished goat. "That keg o' caps is gone as well as Happy, but there's not a hair nor a horn to mark a blast. This has certainly got my wheels buzzin' off their axles."

Spontaneous combustion was suggested by Centipede Riley, only to be ridiculed by Doc Bannard. The mystery seemed hopeless of solution.

SAD SIDNEY listened eagerly to the propounding of theories. His affection for the goat gained the fire of a deep passion. He became utterly blind to the animal's short-comings. His bereavement became more terribly real as the days passed and the disappearance remained unsolved.

If he had seemed a gloomy presentiment of a man before, he became vastly more a figure of sorrow. The nerve-control of his lachrymal ducts seemed utterly destroyed and many complaints were made to Hal McGinnis that the beverages that came from Sad Sidney's hands were highly flavored with salt water.

McGinnis at last "lost his goat."

"Cut out this weep stuff and act like a man!" he blazed out one night when Sad Sidney's eyes appeared to be in a state of freshet. "How do you know the varmint is dead? Maybe somebody kidnapped him. They can't get him far enough off to suit me."

"It ain't possible they kidnapped him," gloomed Sidney. "There ain't any ten men in Wonder capable o' abductin' that goat. There's been some infernal work done by some low-down cuss, an' when I find him, I'll show him how a smoke-wagon can pump lead."

"You'll flag that goat-wail instant," retorted the fiery McGinnis, "if you want to

hold your job in the Three Wheels! I'm sick an' tired o' your bleatin'. You couldn't take on worse if you'd lost a wife an' ten kids!"

"I lost two wives," sighed Uncle Fritz's heir, "but 'twasn't like this. They went voluntary."

Thereupon, S. Gerald Van Deusen fell into a doleful silence that fairly bowed him down. He went about his work mechanically, like a melancholy mannikin and this was the mood I left him in when I departed from Wonder. Had I only remained in the camp a few days longer, I would undoubtedly have witnessed the most exciting chapter in the career of Sad Sidney's legacy. I got the news from Centipede Riley in the following letter:

Dear Pal:—All is known. Sad Sidney recovers the use of his speech and changes from a crawling snail of wo to a human dynamo. It comes to pass in the St. Felix dining-room at the sunset mess. We're all gathered in the act of consuming a new piece de resistless of Wing Duck, the chef, own cousin to Wong, the worst cook that ever caused mutiny aboard ship. Of course, he was limited as to materials, seeing as fresh meat is scarcer in Wonder nor duck's ears.

In consequence, when Sad Sidney's appetite begins to taper off, he isn't missing much. Most of us is envying him his lack of interest in his fodder when we all sit down to a St. Felix dinner which stuns us by its delicate aroma and enticing taste.

Tony Merriweather is total absorbed in the viand before him when Mr. Van Duesen droops down beside him and sighs for three funerals. I am sitting opposite with Lone Jack Farley and I bow short and haughty, owing to words we've had on the fitness of goats as legacies. Sidney nods back similar and sighs some more. Then he looks down into the plate that Miss Molly O'Kelly lowers before him. He regards the steaming dish with about the same degree of enthusiasm most folks would display for a bowl of poison and when he lifts his main eating tool, he lets go still another long-suffering sigh as if despair was the only emotion he could crowd into or out of his system.

"Cheer up, Sidney," Tony Merriweather growls at him, "this goulash ain't half bad. Wing Duck must have gone crazy with the heat, for it's forty mile above his standard."

Mr. Van Deusen turns a reproaching eye on Tony as if to say, "Let me at my poison without piling on the agony." Then he takes a nibble. His droopy eyes wink wide open and he takes a second nibble.

"It ain't possible Wing Duck done this," he whispers half to himself.

"That's right, call me a liar!" Miss O'Kelly snapped him up. "I've already give fourteen oaths I seen him do it, and that goes."

Sad Sidney begs the red-headed young lady's pardon and then attacks his plate like he'd just come off a shipwreck. When he'd polished the crockery till it burned, he asked most excruciating humble for a second helping.

"Tell Wing Duck I allee samee Oliver Twist," he says with the first smile he's flown in a fortnight.

Miss O'Kelly retires to the galley slow and haughty and returns stiff and stony as a stage princess.

"Good you spoke quick," she sniffed, "for Wing Duck has struck hard pan."

Sad Sidney tips her a Liberty and returns to the massacre. 'Twas the first time I ever glimpsed him use his knife and fork indiscriminate, for he mostly eats prim as an old maid. Satisfaction is writ deep in every line of his face, and when he stops for breath there's the same look of ecstasy in his eyes you see in some prints of old-time monks, the kind of a look a man ought to have when he presents his credentials to St. Peter and is O. K'd.

So he goes on till his knife begins to clink bottom, whereat he leans back and expands his chest.

"Great!" he utters soft and soulful, raising up his lamps to the ceiling. His eyes come down slowly, but when they focus his plate, they give a sudden lunge like they're going to jump out of his head. The flush on his cheeks fades like a Tonopah twilight. He begins to choke.

"W-w-w-w-w-w-hat I b-b-b-b-b-b-been eatin'?" he gurgles, gripping Tony Merriweather by the wrist.

"Stew, o' course," replies Tony, shocked at the change in Sidney's aspect. "You ain't poisoned, are you?"

"Stew!" Sidney explodes. "What kind o' stew?"

"Well, it ain't beef an' it ain't lamb," says Tony, "but whatever it is, it's confounded good."

"It ain't beef an' it ain't lamb!" sings out

Sidney, turning black like a maniac. "It ain't beef an' it ain't lamb," he repeats like he's rambling and then he screams, "IT'S GOAT!"

He goes up similar to a skyrocket and hurdles the table. As he wings for the galley door he's got a cannon in each hand.

Miss O'Kelly saves Wing Duck's life by as neat a jiu jitsu tackle as you'll see east of Kobe.

By the time Sad Sidney shakes himself free and projectiles out the kitchen window, Wing Duck and his cousin Wong have negotiated the tailboard of Tody Sims' outgoing gasoline bus. They took away a couple of lead mementoes with 'em, but from all reports they arrive intact at 'Frisco and go underground in some rat-hole of Chinatown.

Whether it is intentional or otherwise that Happy's tin tag looms up on the bottom of Sad Sidney's plate, I don't fathom. The heathen of China has got us simple white folks invoiced as tufa-domed cave men when it comes to hiding their trumps. But the big mystery is solved and S. G. Van Deusen raised out of his life-sapping suspense.

Your friend,

CENTIPEDE RILEY.

Sergeant McCarty and the Hatchet-men

by P. C. Macfarlane

IT WAS a quarter past eight in the evening. Officer Klein had just come out of Ross Alley. About and around him Chinamen, blue-bloused and pig-tailed, came and went. Groups clustered at the bulletin-boards, which were only convenient spots on brick walls where pink slips bearing spidery characters setting forth the latest editions of Oriental news were always replacing earlier ones. The Orientals read them stolidly, yodled unmusically to one another in harsh, emotionless gutturals and passed on.

In the officer's ear rang continually the loud reports of banging oaken timbers in the alley behind, where squint-eyed wicket-men sat on watch and gave the signals that opened and closed for sport-hungry countrymen the double and sometimes triple doors that barred from the police or other undesirables the approach to the rooms of the so-called "Benevolent Associations." These were gambling clubs in disguise.

Sergeant McCarty was swinging down Clay Street. In uniform the Sergeant was a dream of policely beauty, trim, square, imposing; and even in plain clothes, which was the rule for the Chinatown squad, his air was unmistakable. The Sergeant's

manner was serious as he approached him.

"Something stirring," he announced in confidential tones. "I been watchin' 'em here on Dupont Street. I took the pulse av 'em yonder in Kearney, fifteen minutes ago. I think it's the bulletin-boards. Chinese is a haythen language which no Christian should understand, but I tell ye there's somethin' been daubed on them bricks in th' last quarter of an hour that's got them angel-faces buzzin' like a lot of bees."

Officer Klein listened respectfully, as became a young man, when the shrewdest policeman that ever worked in Chinatown was talking and then turned and looked back down the alley. So far as he could see this was like last night's crowd and the night before for a month. An arc light sputtered above the heads of the two men.

"'Tis some devilry ready to break," affirmed Sergeant McCarty with settled conviction. "But where? I'd be easier in the mind av me if I knew. Is it here in Ross Alley? Yonder in Waverly Place? Or right in the middle of Dupont?"

He was muttering the words almost absently, but his shrewd little eyes were glancing restlessly everywhere.

"Go back through the alley," he said to Klein, after a minute. "Pick up Hurley at Washington, walk down to Dupont and meet me in the middle of the block between." Klein saluted.

"Wait!" ordered Sergeant McCarty, suddenly, through closed teeth. "Stand still! Don't move an eye-lash. I'm seein' something." For sixty slowly ticking seconds, the swift, traveling glance of the Sergeant went repeatedly down the alley and back across Clay Street. "Now, go on like I told you, but without lookin' round."

After a few moments the Sergeant himself moved down to Dupont and there, in the middle of the block between Clay and Washington, he met Klein and Hurley, and a moment later Officers Sheble and Cullenbach came from across the street.

"What is it, Sheble?" queried the Sergeant, recognizing instantly the one pregnant face in the group.

"Louie On's wife was stolen to-night about seven-thirty. There's a reward on the bulletin-boards. Louie is the craziest little devil you ever saw. He thinks some Hop Sing Tong men got her and his own Tong are grindin' their hatchets and layin' in artillery to beat the band."

"Hop Sing Tong?" questioned McCarty. "I see a Hop Sing Tong man, this bull-headed Chinaman, Ong Dock, readin' a bulletin in Ross Alley not ten minutes ago. He had his hands in his pockets and was smokin' a cigar with one of them long, curved holders. After readin' the bulletin, he took the holder out of his mouth and jabbered something to a friend of his and I thought he was wavin' his smoker too much when he talked. Looked to me like a signal to somebody. I cut my eye around quick, but all I could make out was a tall, rangy lookin' fellow about six feet behind me.

"HE HAD streaks of gray over his ears and was wearin' a highbinder's queue. That was funny, because these highbinders is usually young bloods. He was a sullen lookin' devil and a new Chink on me, too. Besides he looked like he was asleep in his tracks, by which I knew he wasn't. When I turned again to look at Ong Dock, he was amblin' down Ross Alley, peaceful as Old Dobbin comin' back from the County Fair. They both looked so blamed innocent that I says to myself then, 'Them two Chinamen is at the bottom of whatever breaks. I'm a mind to grab 'em both now and save trouble.' But I didn't."

"Ong Dock lives in Ross Alley over the Oriental Club," volunteered Klein.

"Louie On is crazy mad," declared Sheble, "him and all his friends. If they locate the woman anywhere in Chinatown, they'll surround the place like a flock of pirates and they'll get her if they have to tear the house down one brick at a time."

"Ong Dock lives in Ross Alley," repeated Klein.

"But they'd never take the woman to Ross Alley," affirmed Hurley, "even if Ong Dock was mixed up in it. More likely they hustled her off to some launch and took her up the river or out to some ship bound to Seattle or Los Angeles."

"That's right," observed McCarty sarcastically. "Figure out just what these heathens will do and then look for the exact opposite. A Chinyman writes backward and he thinks backward. He's an unreasonable creature and unnatural. It's in Ross Alley that trouble will be poppin' this night and that quick. Get back there at

once. Hurley and Sheble up Washington! Klein and Cullenbach with me up Clay! Hark! What did I tell ye!"

A sound like a muffled shot was heard; then another, followed by a wild chorus of Oriental cries and then more shots.

"What did I tell ye?" exclaimed the Sergeant again, his voice hoarse with excitement. "'Tis in Ross Alley. Run for it, ye sons of guns! Block him off at the ends!"

Sergeant McCarty shouted these commands over his shoulder, for at the first sound he had turned to run toward Clay Street, followed closely by Klein and Cullenbach. Clay Street was in an uproar. Scores of frightened Chinese were pouring out of Ross Alley, and ahead of them they saw Officer Rodefer dashing in.

The firing had ceased. As Sergeant McCarty and his two men turned into the little alley at the Washington Street end, Hurley and Sheble appeared at the other. The narrow thoroughfare was deserted, except that down almost in the center a little blue heap was huddled on the ground under an arc light. Officer Rodefer, gun in hand, was scanning swiftly the stairways in the immediate neighborhood and peering at the darkened upper stories of buildings.

His eyes were searching for a glimmer of light and his ears were attuned to catch the rattle of a shutter, the squeak of a blind or the slipping of a catch upon a grating, for he knew that the Chinese murderer is not likely to fly far from the scene. He mixes in the crowd, darts only into some nearby doorway or seeks some point from which he can look out upon the scene and, indeed, may be one of the very curious group of morbid ones who gather to look upon the face of the dead and jabber emotionlessly.

Sergeant McCarty was first to examine the body. It lay face down under the sputtering light. One swift, comprehensive glance that took in the situation told him the man had fallen only after a struggle. One shoe was off. His hat lay to one side. His legs were twisted under him.

One clenched hand was visible—a thin, yellow claw, with the fingers tightly wound about something.

Forcing them apart, the Sergeant found a queue-ribbon and eight or ten hairs. Quickly he stripped them from the entangling fingers and lifted them to the light. What the dead hand had held was no ordinary queue-tassel, nor yet the greasy strip of coarse thread with which a careless dresser wrapped the end of his pig-tail. It was the narrow black ribbon that bound the much more loosely plaited hair of the highbinder. The little blue heap from which the life gushed out in half a dozen trickling streams of crimson, was dead by the hand of a professional assassin; this much the queue-ribbon told.

McCarthy was preparing to interrogate this trifling accident still further when his mind was jostled suddenly by a new idea. For some little time faces had been appearing at windows and wickets and now, curiosity having conquered fear, the alley was filling and a little group of Chinamen had even gathered around the dead. It was the remark of one of these that had distracted the Sergeant's attention.

"Just now," said the Chinese voice, in English but with the Mongol idiom; "just now this time Louie On makes finish."

"Louie On!" exclaimed the Sergeant in surprise. "Is it Louie On, then?"

HE TURNED the body over and exposed to view the familiar features of the little merchant. True enough, Louie On had "made finish." The swift hands of the Sergeant located his weapons, a dirk in his sleeve and a heavy revolver in his pocket, neither of which he had been able to use.

And all the while McCarty was thinking. His starting-point was the heap on the ground before him that had been Louie On. His mind leaped backward to a signal made by Ong Dock ten or twelve minutes before as he read a bulletin regarding the abduction of Louie On's wife.

"Ong Dock is in this thing somewhere, all right," affirmed the Sergeant's mind. "He gave a signal to somebody, but to whom? That tall hatchet-man, I wonder?"

The Sergeant's speculations leaped from peak to peak of probability while his eyes again sought the shredded ribbon in his hand. Louie On was short. A highbinder's queue does not sweep to the heels but only falls to the hips; moreover, a short man thrusting an arm about an antagonist who was tall and struggling with him would be likely to grasp the queue near its ribboned appendage. As McCarty scanned the hairs again, some of them flickered in the light.

He drew them over his fingers, those eight or ten hairs. Three of them were white!

"Right!" he chortled softly and, taking a police lantern from Hurley, began carefully and methodically to scan the jambs of closed doors along the alley, centering his attention on a spot about the height of his shoulder.

At perhaps the tenth he paused and swept the light over the jamb a second time. With a little grunt he noted three hairs gripped tightly between the door and the jamb. One of the hairs was white! One in three—the same proportion!

"He went up here," he said, and backed off to look at the building.

It was the home of the Oriental Club. It will be remembered that Ong Dock lived over the Oriental Club.

"Goin' straight to get his money," commented the Sergeant and then paused to reflect. Eight minutes ago Louie On sank to the pavement. Ong Dock would have been waiting upstairs. As the murderer dashed in he would be handed a small bag with gold coins in it. From the upper floor, hallways, stairways, connecting rooms and opening windows promised easy egress in any direction desired. Over the housetops, down a ventilator-shaft to a cellar full of labyrinthine openings or straight through inviting passages to stairs that led up or down, each of the men would have made an easy escape.

But the woman! Sergeant McCarty had reasons for believing that when the murder was ordered she was confined here. It was not so easy to move a woman, especially one who was a prisoner and whose whereabouts was to be concealed.

Yet, as the Sergeant sketched in his mind the honeycombed pile that rose before him and joined other honeycombed piles right and left, he knew it was easily practicable. In fact he had not a doubt that before the murderous shot was fired, the wife of little Louie On, gagged and swathed in silk veils, was being hurried away through devious channels to some place of concealment that was deemed secure.

"Th' coop is empty," he said at the end of his ruminations, and turned away to blow his whistle sharply.

The men of his squad were working up and down the alley, searching in cellarways and some of them trailing fire-escapes to the roofs, or mingling quietly in the crowds to hear what they might pick up in the unemotional, monosyllabic comment of the Mongols themselves.

"Have ye anny clue?" he asked, judicially, as his men gathered round him.

Silence and blank looks gave a negative reply.

"All of ye back to your beats, then," he said, a trifle severely, "and keep your minds workin'. If we don't nail somebody quick, we'll see the biggest Tong war ye ever read about. And say! If ye see a tall highbinder with gray in his hair that's new to the town, bring him round for me to look at. That's all."

The men, perhaps a little chapfallen, turned away to their work and Sergeant McCarty dropped into the shadow of a doorway to scan eagerly the shapeless flock of Orientals who were pressing round where the Coroner's deputy was superintending the placing of the body of Louie On upon a stretcher. The crowd sifted to and fro under the lights and the Sergeant was looking in it for one particular man.

That this man should be found in this crowd would seem utterly improbable and highly indiscreet. Yet in McCarty's judgment it was not improbable, and according to Chinese tactics it was not indiscreet, since when the murder took place no white man was in sight and no policeman nearer than two blocks and no Chinaman ever tells. Presumably, the man who emptied his revolver in the squirming body of little Louie On was as safe from detection in this crowd as in the heart of Hunan.

Presently Hurley came softly back and stood in the doorway beside his Sergeant.

"Joe Cone, the hackman," he said, "has orders to have a closed carriage at 938 Stockton Street at ten o'clock sharp and wait for a passenger, if it's all night. He thinks it's Chinese business all right, but he ain't wise to what."

Sergeant McCarty, with narrowed eyes, swept the alley. Not a muscle of his face twitched. One might have thought he did not hear. Then his upper lids drooped for an instant as if he was visualizing a plan of campaign and, after more reflection, he spoke in quick, specific phrases.

"Tell Joe," he directed, "to hook on to the biggest hack he can find—a roomy one —with curtains that shut out every ray of light—and to leave the stable exactly at nine forty-five. There'll be a man on the inside seat that he know's nothing about."

AS HURLEY departed, the Sergeant consulted his watch. It was eight-thirty now. He had a busy hour before him; but for the present he stood, still as stone, looking out. Suddenly he left his lurking place and moved forward with the crowd. He was straining his neck at something ahead. He had need to hurry and he had need to avoid startling the crowd by seeming to hurry. But presently he became impatient. A fat fellow was shouldered roughly aside. A moment after, he plucked another by the queue and jerked him out of his range of vision.

On the instant a tall form, a few steps in advance of him, melted down into the blackness of a cellarway opening into the block of buildings in which the home of Ong Dock was and to the door of whose house the Sergeant had traced the murderer by the hairs in the door-jamb.

This tunnel-like place had many exits and a chase through its subterranean labyrinths at night raised the goose-flesh just to think about; but as noiselessly as possible the detective dropped into the foul-smelling darkness and hurried forward only to bring up violently against the end of the passageway. To the right another opened and a dim light burned far down it, revealing the shadow of the pursued, ambling on a few feet ahead of him. The man turned and observed that he was followed; but as he broke into a run the sweep of McCarty's hand caught the tonsorial appendage of the fleeing one. The Sergeant threw his weight upon the backward pull to stop his man abruptly, but to his surprise, went careening to the clay-hardened floor on his head and shoulders, holding in his hand only an empty, rope-like thing, while the pursued fled onward in the dark.

McCarty leaped up in rage and dashed forward, expressing his bewilderment in a hasty examination of the queue as he plunged forward. He discovered at the other end of it a wig.

"A Chinyman wearin' a wig, now!" he muttered in disgust. "Well what do you think of that?" Then he ran his fingers down to the end of the rope of hair. There was no ribbon on it.

"'Th' right Chink, all right, all right," he growled, a small geyser of satisfaction spouting up out of the ocean of his disgust; "but why didn't it come off when Louie On had hold of it, I want to know?"

He passed just then under the gas-jet. Holding the wig up for an instant, he saw that it was stoutly made, with the skull-piece low cut and close fitting, so that nothing but a straight upward pull could have detached it unless the wearer himself should have released it by throwing his head far back, exactly as he had done now to make good his escape.

The Sergeant apprehended this swiftly while still flying forward through sinuous passages. Sometimes they were dimly lighted and sometimes they were not lighted at all, but for a time he was guided by the patter of soft-falling, wooden-soled shoes. But presently in utter darkness he lost the sound.

"That geezer took his shoes off and is runnin' barefoot," the Sergeant advised himself, groping in the blackness, which was malodorous and gruesome. Feeling for a wall, he struck a match. The passage divided.

"Which way now, begob?" he puffed and, immediately choosing the left hand one, hurried down it to come to a stand presently against a wire screen. A match—his last one—revealed the entrance to a ventilator-shaft. The opening was screened with heavy netting, and the frame was hinged, with a catch that opened easily.

The Sergeant thrust his head and shoulders into the shaft and felt around. It was, perhaps, four feet square, with brick walls, the corners of the rectangle filled with water- and drain- and vent-pipes leading upward. The hole was empty and silent.

"I took th' wrong one," the Sergeant observed, laconically, and then, like the careful soul he was, paused yet longer to look and listen. The sky was overcast above and he could see absolutely nothing. To make perfectly sure the darkness above was untenanted by that softly scrambling Celestial who had just eluded him, he placed his ear in turn against each of the pipes nearest him, listening for the creak of a bit of metal or the slightest vibration. There was none, but as he stooped he received a sharp, stinging blow behind the ear!

For a moment he reached out wildly for his assailant. Then he steadied himself.

"Did somebody drop a brick on me head," he murmured, rubbing the sore spot reflectively, "or did I dream ut?" No one seemed disposed to answer his query and, stooping, he felt over the floor of the shaft,

to bring up presently what he knew by the touch was a Chinese shoe with the usual wooden sole an inch or more in thickness.

"'Twas that hit me on the block, huh? Wood ferninst wood," he muttered sarcastically.

As he looked upward, he thought he saw a shadow slip over the coping at the top. The mystery was explained. The Chinaman was in the shaft, climbing out, still carrying his shoes, as it was impossible to gain a foothold while wearing them. One had slipped and come crashing down upon the head of his pursuer of whose presence at the bottom of the shaft he was probably unaware.

"Begob," he commented, humorously, relapsing into his broader brogue, "this man is comin' all to paces. I got the hair off his head and th' shoes off his feet. Now I'll go up and get the r-rest of his r-remains."

HASTILY stuffing the clumsy, slipper-like thing in his hip pocket beside his hand-cuffs, for it might prove valuable evidence, he drew himself through the ventilator and began to climb swiftly. The well-braced pipes made hand- and foot-holds everywhere and his fingers were already on the coping at the top when he was halted abruptly.

He paused and listened with a gruesome, uncanny feeling chilling his veins. He had heard a sound half between a moan and a sob, which seemed to come up out of the ventilator-shaft.

On the third floor level he had passed, in the shaft, an iron-barred window, perhaps two feet square, where a ventilator should have been. But since there was absolutely no plan in the throwing together of these old rookeries, he thought nothing of it beyond feeling the bars over with his hands and taking note that they were there.

Presently he heard it again. The sound was unmistakable—a woman's voice, or perhaps, a child's, in deep distress!

The Sergeant drew himself to the roof level and looked about. His man was not in sight. Around him lay four acres of roofs, shrouded in night, with a hundred byways leading down. The trail for the time being was as good as lost.

With swift decision he turned back into the shaft and, hugging a drain-pipe, was soon at the barred window. As he reached it, a woman's sob, clear and unmistakable, poured into his ear. The Sergeant thrust his face up as close as possible and asked sharply:

"Who are ye and what's the matter?"

His quick ear caught the sudden stifling of a moan, followed by a gasp of fear and surprise.

"Who are ye, I say?" he bawled.

The woman seemed to tell her name, but it was lost in a quavering sob that touched the heart of the Sergeant to the quick and heated the hot Irish blood in his veins to the boiling-point. He forgot that sociologically he was in the heart of Asia, that, whoever this woman, she was only a chattel and to be bound and penned at will. He thought only that some monstrous wrong was being put upon a defenseless woman.

"Begob," he shouted, "I'll have ye out o' there at wance!" Then he put his face up closer to the window and said in tones meant to be soothing: "Me—Sergeant McCarty. You open window. Me take you away. Come quick!"

"No can," wailed the woman. "No can."

"Tied down," the Sergeant concluded, gripping the window by the two outside bars and throwing his whole weight upon it. It refused to yield to the sturdiest assaults of his strength, but he found a loose brick in the first course about the frame and worked industriously for ten minutes, using the barrel of his revolver as a pry and the hook of a hand-cuff to dig out crumbling mortar.

At the end of this time he seized the frame and, with a mighty heave, pulled it away from the bricks which he had loosened or partially dug away on two sides.

"'Twould only hold women, that thing!" he muttered in contempt, as he let it fall with a crash to the bottom of the shaft. Next, before him, was a window, hinged at bottom, opening inward from the top and set so there was an opening above of about six inches which was heavily swathed with a thick black curtain that fell down over the glass and prevented the light from the cell streaming through the window.

It was because of this opening of the window at the top for ventilation that McCarty heard the woman's cries at all, while the heavy layers of cloth gave it the peculiar, muffled sound. The Sergeant swung the window in, broke the chain guards and

let it hang by the hinges against the wall inside, while he promptly crawled through.

The floor was some four feet beneath the window and the Sergeant landed on his hands upon it in a most undignified and incautious, but thoroughly impetuous manner.

His first act was to snatch the great fringed shade from an ornamental lamp that burned upon a low table at one side of the room. Its unfiltered rays now illumined a cell-like chamber perhaps seven feet by ten, of which the barred window marked one end while at the other was a door opening inward, but which was now closed and fastened with a Yale lock. On the left of the room, three feet from where McCarty stood by the window, was the table with the lamp. Beyond this on the same side in a corner not more than two feet from the door was a triangular space screened off, and behind it a coal-oil stove on a low box with a few utensils hanging against the wall. On the opposite side of the room was a low, bench-like bunk and on it a Chinese woman.

Her hands and feet were bound with strips of cloth and the one that held the hands was also attached to a sort of ring or hand-hold of metal in the wall a foot or so above the bed. A silk scarf had been bound into the woman's mouth for a gag, but she had bitten into and chewed at it with such desperation that it was partially displaced.

Quick knife-strokes slashed the lashings from her hands and feet and cut away the remainder of the gag. In the first moment of freedom the little woman flung both her small arms about the Sergeant's hands and laid her cheek upon them, sobbing for pure joy. Her yellow, peach-tinted cheeks were guttered with much weeping and even when her eyes closed in an ecstasy of relief, while her oily, black, otterlike head lay worshipfully on his hands, briny hysterical drops forced themselves from under her glistening lashes and broke upon her face in fresh rivulets.

An embarrassed blush rose to the veined cheek of the Sergeant.

"No bigger than my Katie," he breathed softly, disengaging himself and turning away to sneeze violently.

"PLEASE you take me from Ong Dock," she pleaded in a tremulous, girlish voice, with the English of the mission schools.

"From Ong Dock!" gulped Sergeant McCarty in amazement. "Are you Ong Dock's woman?"

"No, no!" she protested frantically. "Louie On my husband."

"Louie On!" gasped the Sergeant in amazement, a hot rush of exultation presently sweeping through all his veins.

Sergeant McCarty had struck the broader trail.

"My name Ah Fawn," the little woman went on. "Ong Dock steal me. Ong Dock and Bin She."

"Bin She was in ut, too, eh?" commented the Sergeant.

"All same," she concurred eagerly. "They steal me from Louie On. Then they fight. And Ong Dock steal me from Bin She. Hide me here. Beat me. Choke me!"

She pushed up the sleeve of her kimono to show where a blow had fallen and lifted her chin till McCarty could see the marks of fingers on her soft throat.

"Ong Dock and Bin She scrap?" queried McCarty.

"O—h–o–o, fight!" exclaimed the girl, shaking her head vigorously and her eyes flashing at the memory of what she had seen.

The Sergeant sat down upon the foot of the bunk to think—sat down and then got up again abruptly and draped the curtains at the window to shut the light out of the ventilator-shaft and, at the same time, he replaced the shade upon the lamp, so that the room was again in heavy shadow. Then he resumed his position on the foot of the bunk. Things were becoming complicated. He looked at the woman sympathetically.

A forlorn little figure she made, sitting up, cross-legged on the bed, her present distress and her hatred of her abductors so apparent and her affection for her rightful owner so clearly depicted, as she mentioned his name.

"Me all same his wife," she pleaded. "You take me to Louie On?" Her black eyes were burning into his, half trustingly, half suspiciously.

"To Louie On?" she murmured, two shiny drops appearing at the corners of her almond eyes. The Sergeant gulped something down deep in his throat and looked away.

"When did they quarrel?" he asked presently.

"Pretty soon quick when they bring me

to Ong Dock's. Bin She say, 'Sell me Seattle.' Ong Dock say, 'Bime-by mebbe so. Keep me here now.' Both go way. Talkee much mad. Ong Dock come back soon. Tie me! Gag me. Puttee under bed. Bin She come back pretty soon. Bime-by—fightee—squawllee—pullee hair. Bin She go way. Ong Dock bring here. I try run away. He chokee my neck, beatee my arm." In her excitement she had lapsed almost entirely into pidgin English.

"And how long have ye been here?"

"Pretty soon long time. Two hours, mebbe so."

"And is Ong Dock comin' back?"

"Mebbe so he come soon," said the little woman with a fearsome look in the direction of the door.

"Who? Ong Dock? Good!" exclaimed McCarty. He wanted Ong Dock and felt to see that his handcuffs were readily accessible. The queue with wig attached had been thrust into the same pocket with them. The shoe was there also. He slipped it under the couch on the floor. The queue and wig he flung down thoughtlessly upon the table at the base of the lamp.

At the same moment, he heard the shuffling patter of footsteps outside in the hall. Some one was coming—Ong Dock doubtless. The Sergeant hesitated for a moment. He wanted Ong Dock, not as badly as he wanted the tall unknown of the false queue, but he wanted him. The shuffling footsteps drew closer. The Sergeant stood fingering his revolver thoughtfully. Suddenly he turned to the Chinawoman and whispered sharply:

"Turn to the wall! Look like you was tied!"

The woman obeyed instantly, even to drawing down the silken cord from the handhold above till it appeared to tie her to the wall as before.

THE Sergeant watched the operation with a little nod of satisfaction. Then his eye came back to the door. He saw it tremble under pressure and heard the rattle of the parts in the complicated lock and, as the bolt slipped back, he stepped noiselessly behind the screen in the corner, not two feet from the door on one side and only three from the taborette with the lamp upon the other.

Completely obscured from view, he stood with the revolver in his hand, as the door opened and a tall Chinaman who was clearly not Ong Dock, entered the room. He closed the door behind him noiselessly, glanced around the room silently and turned to the door again. It was equipped with heavy hasps fitted for an oaken bar and the bar stood beside the door. He slipped this into place so that, to one coming after, a key would be useless.

The man and his actions puzzled McCarty. He bent in the direction of the bed for a moment and then as though satisfied, placed his ear against the crack of the door and listened. In the stillness Sergeant McCarty heard again the confident patter of Chinese shoes in the hall. They came up to the door. Once and again there was a steady, patient shooting of the bolt, but the door did not swing.

After a puzzled silence weight was cautiously thrown upon it. The oak bar took the strain unyieldingly. From without came a muttered expression of bewilderment and impatience. McCarty admired the absolute passivity with which the man on the inside awaited developments. From the outside, after another puzzled silence, came a sudden explosion of wrath, in red-hot, blistering syllables, like a volcanic eruption. It was an unknown tongue to the officer, but the calorescent quality was unobscured.

"Smokin' hot," he commented mentally, enjoying the situation immensely.

The man outside called Ah Fawn in bitter, threatening tones and seemed to be demanding that she open the door.

"He thinks the girl done it," murmured McCarthy way down inside of himself.

As Ah Fawn's name was called the intruder turned to her with a threatening gesture.

"She's a wise one," communed McCarty's inner self again, marking her limp stillness.

And then something began to happen that threw a new element of tenseness into the scene of waiting. The man on the inside seemed to have turned away from the door for a moment to take, once more, a careful, scrutinizing survey of the room. His glance stopped at the lamp. He turned from the door and advanced toward it with slow, fascinated gaze.

"What the —— is he up to now?" murmured McCarty in that voiceless way of his. As the man entered the circle of light,

half crouching, the Sergeant could see a glitter in his eye. His gaze was fixed on the table on which the lamp sat. His lids rose till the bald white of the eye was visible above the pupil. His mouth was open. His yellow teeth glistened like fangs. He scarcely seemed to breathe. Inch by inch, in that fascinated way, he crept toward the box. McCarty thought of a picture he had noticed somewhere of a scene in an Indian jungle where a poor native, overcome by the spell of a great serpent, was drawn resistlessly within the radius of its fang-stroke. Outside, the stream of murderously wrathful expletives doubled in volume. The man within was completely unconscious of it. The tiny chamber, reeking with foul air and ringing with the assaults upon the door, might have been some vast, primeval, illimitable silence in which the tall Chinaman alone was sentient.

Closer he drew to the lamp, crouching lower and lower. Before him was the queue and wig which McCarty had flung thoughtlessly upon the table, lying just as it fell in a half coil and, as McCarty now noticed, looking wickedly suggestive of hideous serpents and grisly scalp-locks. The man fell upon his knees before the table, uttering a prolonged soul-cry of horror and fear and, at the same moment, like the claws of a wild beast, his saffron fingers gripped the queue.

He held it up before him; felt of it; examined it even to the threads of gray, and all the time perspiration streamed from his face and his teeth chattered. A series of low gutturals, hysterical in tone and sequence, fell from his lips.

Apparently satisfied with his examination, the man dropped the queue from his fingers and, wringing his hands, his whole body shaking in a palsy of terror, he lifted his face for a moment while his eyes wandered helplessly. Then slowly he lowered his forehead upon the table and the light fell full upon the top and back of his head. He wore no queue! His hair was short!

"BEGORRA!" the Sergeant almost gasped aloud.

This was the tall unknown, the man who took the signal from Ong Dock at the corner; the man who killed Louie On and who, in his morbid curiosity, had returned to view the pallid dead and from whom in the blackness of the cellarway Sergeant McCarty had wrested the wig and queue of his disguise. Now by a strange coincidence he had flung it here, where the man cringed in terror before it, believing himself bewitched. His superstitious mind could frame no other solution.

The thing was alive and pursued him, or else McCarty himself, in league with evil spirits, had bewitched it and set it loose to dog his footsteps, to crouch now beneath the lamp and watch him while he stole Ong Dock's woman from him, or killed her, which in his bloodthirsty, seething passion of hatred, might suit his next mood as well.

Absolutely motionless for a moment, the man presently sat up and looked about him for the queue upon the floor where he had dropped it.

It was not there! He looked upon the other side. It was gone. He stood up, calmed suddenly by a new phenomenon, and moved carefully round the entire circle of light.

The queue was not there, because as he dropped it, the tail fell close to the McCarty hiding-place and, while the man sat with bowed head in a state of semi-collapse, that experimental psychologist had swiftly drawn it inside and it was now hanging on a nail behind the Sergeant's ear.

The Chinaman lifted the lamp and swept its beams clear round the room. He looked suspiciously in the direction of the woman on the bed, but he could see the cord that appeared to bind her, hanging from the ring, and knew she could not have taken it. As he realized that the horrid thing was indeed alive and had crawled away from him, a deeper despair settled upon his face, but he did not shriek.

Instead he braced himself upon tottering legs and looked unsteadily about, a ghastly grin of sickening fear upon his face and his loose lower lip palpitating, while his whole body shook as he gibbered inanely like a drug-fiend in the hour of his collapse.

For some time there had been silence outside. From the moment of that terrible shriek Ong Dock was still. The man seemed to recover somewhat from his fright and moved toward the door. Sergeant McCarty could have reached out and taken him by the back of the neck. But in his state of terror the man would have died perhaps. The Sergeant thought of that. Besides, he wanted to see more, to learn more, to get Ong Dock, to play with his

man, or men, cat-like, and gather, if possible, that which would confirm his suspicions or multiply his convictions.

And so he stood, silent, behind his curtain and watched.

Abruptly a pistol-shot rang out in the hallway and a bullet came crashing through the door. The man dropped to the floor so suddenly that the Sergeant thought he had been killed. But instead the shot seemed to recall him to his physical situation. He drew a revolver from the folds of his own blouse and answered. Shot for shot the men sent bullets ripping back and forth through the door till the guns were empty.

While the man was intent upon the door Sergeant McCarty lifted the wig from its place on the nail behind him and, holding the queue-end, swung it outward like a pendulum till it landed unobserved upon the table under the lamp. Then he let go of the queue.

As the fusillade of pistol-shots ended, the murderer waited a moment for the next development and then, rising from the floor, moved out of range along the wall to the lamp. The wig and half the queue lay upon the table before his staring eyes. Fear gave way to a kind of ferocity. He pounced upon it so violently that the table was nearly overturned, seized the thing with his teeth and bit and tore at it savagely.

While he was thus engaged Sergeant McCarty reached out an arm on the other side of the screen and pushed the oak bar back till it escaped the heavy hasp. As the Sergeant's arm dropped back behind the screen, the man was crouched over, trampling the wig under his feet. At this instant Ong Dock made a vicious assault upon the door with his body. It swung open easily and he in surprise went clattering to the floor. At the sudden inrush of his body, the other Chinaman, half maniac that he had become, started up so violently that he knocked the shade from the lamp and from that instant everything that happened in the room was as clear as day to Sergeant McCarty.

Ong Dock was instantly on his feet. Yelling like maniacs, the two men leaped together with the ferocity of wolves, each grabbing for the queue of the other after the manner of their race. Here Ong Dock was at a disadvantage, since his antagonist wore no queue; but he gripped at his throat, gouged at his eyes and spun round and round with him in an embrace that promised to be deadly.

The tall man had completely recovered from the shock to his nerves and fought like a demon. He had seized Ong Dock's queue and taken a half hitch round his fat neck with it and with every turn sawed it deeper into his throat. Soon his eyes bulged; his yellow face showed grayish green and then purple. His knees weakened and, as he sank to the floor, the unknown snatched up from the edge of the bed, where he must have secreted it when he came in, a Chinese butcher's cleaver, the favorite weapon of the highbinder and from which they are called hatchet-men.

ONG DOCK was writhing on the floor, struggling frantically to unbind the hairy noose that was strangling him. The hatchet-man executed something like a war dance over and about him, his face working hideously. For a few seconds he brandished the cleaver and then suddenly his body grew rigid as he poised the frightful weapon for the descending blow. The murderer's eyes blazed. His form was for a moment a statue of stone, with the shining blade quivering aloft, its glistening edge a tremor of iridescent light. Then the arm swept back a foot, that gleaming edge describing a glowing circle as the supple wrist pivoted for the blow—a blow which did not descend, for a blue arm shot out from behind the screen and a great hand with the resistless grasp of steel bands, closed upon the tense, slipping sinews of the maddened Mongol.

With a wild squall, the man turned, recognized McCarty, darted quickly under his arm, dropped the cleaver from his right arm, caught it with his left almost as it touched the floor and dealt a vicious chop at the stout legs of his captor.

"Ye baste!" hissed McCarty, dodging the wicked swipe and aiming a kick that should have ended matters. But the writhing, twisting bundle of bone and sinew slipped under his arm again the other way, gyrating like a dervish. At every degree of every circle he made one of those savage, left-handed digs with the cleaver at the most likely portion of the policeman's anatomy, until they stumbled over the struggling body of Ong Dock and together struck the floor like the blow of a pile-driver.

The Sergeant did not notice that Ong Dock had released his throat and was on his hands and knees trying to regain his breath, for the very excellent reason that in his fall he had lost his grip upon his man and was busy trying to regain it. And neither of the three saw a pair of eyes that glittered like twin stars in the dark of the hallway a few feet from the door.

The Chinaman was quicker than the Sergeant in regaining his feet and while he was still on one knee, the Oriental, with the cleaver back in his right hand, was upright and aiming the blow that was to end McCarty's career; but with a lightning move McCarty lurched forward and by a powerful sweep of his great arm carried the Chinaman's feet from under him.

He fell like a post, the deflected cleaver burying itself so deep in the floor that he could not withdraw it before McCarty was upon him. But even then he wriggled to his feet, where the Sergeant caught him on the jaw with a right hand that went smashing through his guard and stretched him senseless.

"Glory be!" puffed the Sergeant, tearing the drapery from the window and gulping in a grateful breath of the outer air. At the moment, a frightful bawl of rage broke out at his back. He turned toward the door in time to see a Chinaman flying down the hall, bearing something in his arms!

On the floor, the short-haired Chinaman turned weakly. Ong Dock was tottering toward the door, gesticulating violently and shrieking: "Bin She! Bin She!" And accompanying this with a stream of expletives, frightful in tone and doubtless equally so in significance. The bed was empty. Ah Fawn was gone!

The Sergeant dashed out into the hall. A dozen feet away it opened to right and left. There was no one in sight in either of these passages. He hurried down one of them at a venture. A group of belated gamblers were climbing some stairs in front of him. Two or three others were loitering on the landing. They gazed at him with stolid, expressionless faces.

"No sabe," one of them grunted morosely, in response to his interrogatories.

McCarty stood hesitating. The man who killed Louie On and the man who hired him to do it were at the moment both in his power. To capture Bin She, the other accessory and abductor, and restore Ah Fawn to the best fate that might await a Chinese widow—it would be the most brilliant night's work that he or any other man had ever put through in Chinatown.

HIS blood leaped at the thought. But still he hesitated. It was too good to be possible. The trail was lost for the moment. Follow it five minutes and Ong Dock and the murderer would have pulled themselves together and escaped and there was no certainty that Bin She might not also elude him.

"'A schooner in th' hand is worth two in th' bar'l,' as they say on the coast," he muttered, turning back only to bring himself up standing again with the sudden memory of the closed carriage to be sent to 938 Stockton Street at ten o'clock. 938 Stockton was somewhere out back of him in this block.

"Begorra," he breathed softly, "is that Bin She's scheme? I wonder."

Opening and closing the fingers of his right hand absently as if collaring an easy prisoner, he turned swiftly back to the cell. Ong Dock was out in the hall, squatting on the floor and holding his sides. He had made a feeble effort to escape, but the fierceness of his battle for life with the short-haired one had left him too exhausted to go farther. The tall hatchet-man had struggled to his feet and was also groping groggily toward the door.

The Sergeant picked up the torn and trampled wig and the shoe and thrust them in his pocket. Seizing the man as he leaned helplessly against the wall, he felt the other shoe in the bosom of his shirt. The shoes he now wore upon his feet had doubtless been appropriated as he passed through the lodging-house. There was no doubt of his identity.

"I got my man, all right!" the Sergeant muttered, seizing the fellow by the shoulder and marching him into the passageway ahead of him. "And I got you, old horse!" he added exultantly, taking Ong Dock by the short of his pig-tail and setting him none too tenderly upon his feet.

Keeping the two men in front of him, he worked his way down the passage to the left and, descending by succeeding stairways, found himself presently on Ross Alley in the very doorway where he had observed the hairs. A sharp whistle brought Rodefer and Hurley.

"Take 'em to the box," he ordered lacon-

ically. "Search 'em," he added. "This short-haired fellow done the killin' and he ought to have a bag of Ong Dock's money on him now."

Officer Klein came up and stared wonderingly. The Sergeant was looking at his watch. It was nine-thirty-five.

"Did you see the hackman?" he asked Hurley, very quietly.

"Yes, it's all right," replied that officer, moving off with the prisoners.

Promptly at nine o'clock and fifty minutes a four-wheeler with lights burning very dimly and the blinds drawn close, emerged from a livery stable down on Clay Street near the water-front. Precisely at the hour of ten it stopped at a shadowy spot opposite 938 Stockton Street.

The rookery in front was dark. At the ground level, a deeper shadow bit into the edge of the pavement. This was a cellarway and, as the carriage stopped, something stirred in the darkness and two muffled figures, one of them evidently a woman, moved across to the curb. A quick hand opened the carriage door and the woman was abruptly planted in the far corner of the back seat. As the man took the seat beside her and softly closed the door, a half-bitten sob escaped her lips. The interior of the carriage was black as a tomb as the man leaned forward to give directions to the driver who had his ear at the little window in front.

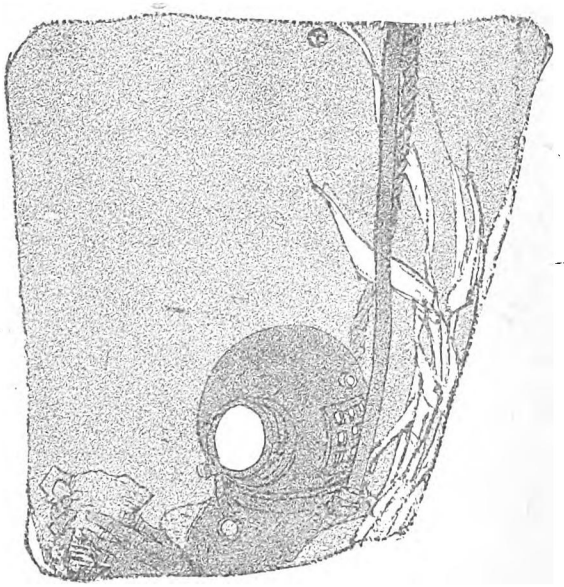
"You dlive——" he began and then his instructions ended in a gasp of terror, for he felt something in front of him. Out of the darkness arms of terrible strength suddenly reached and stout fingers sank into the soft neck of Bin She.

"What say?" asked the hackman, still waiting for his orders.

"Drive to the Central Station," growled Sergeant McCarty, with swelling heart of pride, as he knelt on a struggling form in the bottom of the carriage.

In the Bay of San Giraldo

by Owen Hall



IF I had only seen that shapeless lump of what looked like rock, as I saw it then, I should have turned away, feeling sure it wasn't worth the trouble I had taken to find it. As I looked at it through the dim eyes of my diving-helmet, however, the remembrance of the evening before came back to me.

I seemed to myself to be leaning again over the bulwark of our trading schooner as we drifted slowly to an anchorage in the bay of San Giraldo. I had done the same many a time before, for the bay had the reputation of being the resting-place of a Spanish galleon—burned and sunk three centuries ago—but till last night my curiosity had

never been rewarded by the discovery of anything more than the gleam of crimson coral, or the flash of some darting fish of brighter color than usual.

This time something seemed to loom up suddenly from the bottom and for a moment I thought of a whale. It was only for a moment and then I knew I was wrong; it was something more interesting than any whale. As we drifted my eye unconsciously followed its outlines and in a moment, strangely unfamiliar as its shape appeared, I knew it was a ship.

"Let go the anchor, Captain!" I shouted in my sudden excitement and then, rather to my surprise, I heard the order given and the sharp rattle of the chain that followed.

The Captain had cast anchor on the spur of the moment, but I found it a good deal harder to convince him that I had really seen the hull of the long-lost galleon. I was not surprised at that, for nothing but my own eyes would have convinced me I had actually discovered the ship, the story of which had clung to the place for centuries. The Captain and I were great friends, however, and at last he agreed to give me the chance I asked for of settling the question.

We had everything that was needed on board and I had some experience in diving, gained on the coast of Australia. The apparatus was in first-rate order and, as I stood on the ladder in the full glory of my diving-dress, I felt as if the opportunity of my life had come.

"Here, Crawford, if you find her, you may want something like this. If you don't, you might have the luck to meet a shark and it would come in handy." The Captain handed me a small but sharp tomahawk. "We'll follow you in the whale-boat. If you want help, pull the line three times and I'll send Jacky down."

The last faces I saw were those of the Captain and Jacky, before I waved the little tomahawk and let myself slide, feet foremost, into the glassy water that glittered in the morning sun.

It took me some time to find the thing that had looked so like a ship the evening before, but I had found it at last, though from the point at which I stood now it looked like anything rather than a ship.

It was black and shapeless, crusted all over with corals and shells, among which plumes of seaweed floated like long tresses of hair in the tide. I may as well admit it was disappointing; it looked like a rock and nothing more.

I pulled myself together after a minute and, moving closer, struck a blow with the tomahawk. It made very little impression and yet it seemed as if it made more than if I had struck against a rock. I looked up at the dark mass that rose above me; it was too high to encourage any attempt at climbing. Perhaps it might be lower on the other side; yes, after all, that was likely. A sunken vessel would be almost sure to settle to one side or the other. The thought gave me new energy—I would see.

Grasping the tomahawk firmly with my clumsy gauntlet, I moved cautiously around the dark mass till I reached the end. It ended abruptly and after three or four steps I had reached the other side. My idea had been correct; it was much lower on the side I had reached than on the other, though I had to take a good many steps before I reached the lowest part. It was little more than breast-high there and, with hardly a moment's hesitation, I seized what seemed a sharp edge of the rock—if it was only a rock—and succeeded in climbing to the top of the ledge.

I had not been mistaken! At last I felt certain I was standing on what had once been the deck of a ship. It was only a narrow strip, three feet wide at most and beyond that was a darker hollow, in which I could make out a confusion of corals, shells and heaps of sea-weed.

It puzzled me for a moment; then I remembered the uncovered central hold of the old naval architecture of three or four centuries ago. The treasure—if this was really a treasure ship—must be under the high poop deck at the stern. I paused for a minute to decide what I should do; then I slid down into the mysterious hollow, with just a slight sensation of fear as to what I might find there.

FOR an instant I swayed unsteadily in the tide; then I grew steady and made my way slowly toward the high poop that rose darkly before me. There were many obstacles in the way: shapeless things that might once have been cannon, or perhaps only water-casks, crusted with shells and festooned with sea-weeds, as well as a hundred smaller things that might have been almost anything before

they suffered the sea change that made them unrecognizable.

I moved slowly, but at last I had reached what must once have been the entrance of the poop. To my surprise there was no wall. Instead of that, the rough floor over which I had found my way so far seemed suddenly to slope downward into the darkness below. I stopped to think what it could mean; then I remembered the story that the galleon had been destroyed by fire before she sank. Yes, that would account for it. The fire, no doubt, had burned both bulkhead and deck. Perhaps the dark cave, into which I strained my eyes to look, was little more than the shell of the vessel gutted by the fire. And yet—and yet—if there had been treasure, it must be there still! Yes, I would go on and see!

The slope was steep and rough with what I now recognized as pieces of half-burned wood, crusted thick with shells. Cautiously, step by step, I made my way down the incline into the shadows. The bay is not a deep one but, of course the light at the bottom was dim, though strong enough to make everything visible through the eye-pieces of my helmet. But now every minute it grew harder to see anything distinctly. More than once I stopped and hesitated, but each time the fear of ridicule, as well as curiosity, made me go on. At last I reached the bottom!

I paused and tried to look about me in the dim, uncertain light. The place looked like a cave and what light there was now came from behind, making the places where it failed to penetrate like black holes that might be abysses. After a minute I suppose my eyes got more accustomed to it and I began to make out dim heaps that might once have been cargo, though like everything else, they were bearded with floating sea-weeds that moved like ghosts in the darkness.

I think I must have hesitated for several minutes, for I felt a strange feeling of danger, such as I had never felt in any of my diving experiences before. Then I pulled myself together and moved on. These strange mounds that towered so black overhead must have been cargo once, I told myself, and what I had come to find must be here.

It was farther off, after all, than it had seemed and as I took one cautious step after another it appeared almost to fall back before me, but I had reached it at last. Now that I was close to it I felt sure it was the cargo, for it seemed to rise tier above tier, till the top was lost in the darkness.

These had been cases once, I felt certain, though now they were roughly coated with shells. What was in them? That was the question which even then made me pause breathlessly before putting it to the test. Then I made a step forward. I would see!

I struck a blow with the tomahawk. It cut through the shells and sank a little way into the wood! Then the excitement got hold of me. I grasped the little ax with both hands and struck again and again. The wood must have grown hard, for it was long before the blows I struck so fiercely produced much effect, but at last I could feel it give way. First the wood splintered; then an opening gaped in the black surface; then something fell! Was it gold? Even gold might be tarnished after these centuries! Of course I could hear nothing through my helmet. I stooped to touch my find.

At last my hand grasped it! It was something hard and heavy; something with sharp clean-cut edges—metal of some kind—was it gold or silver?

As I lifted it closer to my eyes, something seemed to draw me aside. I drew back with an involuntary shudder. For a moment I thought it must be fancy, for, though I felt something hold me, I could see nothing. I let fall the tomahawk and groped vaguely for something at my other arm. Yes, that was it!

My gauntlet had met with something—something hard and rigid, like a tightened rope. I followed it till it reached my shoulder and there it stopped. It was fixed there! A shudder ran through me, though I hadn't an idea what it meant. I grasped it tightly with my hand and tried to wrench it away. I couldn't move it!

At the same moment something seemed to dart across my eyes, like a thin streak of blacker darkness and I felt something touch my other shoulder. For a second or two I stared stupidly at the two black cords—I could see them now—and a strange, new kind of fear came over me as I looked. Even now it was impossible to see them clearly; but one thing was certain—they were alive!

A hundred questions seemed to dart through my mind in a moment; then the

answer came, like a flash of lightning. It was a devil-fish!

I had often heard stories of devil-fishes before, but till that moment I had never seen one. And now it seemed as if all I had ever heard came back to my memory with a rush. I felt myself stagger backward.

As I did so I was conscious that two more black streaks darted after me and I knew that one had fastened itself on my breast. Both had appeared to come downward and, without thinking why, I looked up. There, out of the black shadows at the top of the heap of cargo, I saw, or thought I saw, two fiendish eyes looking down!

If I could, I would have run away, but it was impossible. The cords or arms that had grasped me kept me face to face with the terrible eyes that somehow seemed to light up the darkness with their steady glare, and while I stared helplessly, a fifth arm shot out and seized my leg. I saw it, but it didn't seem to matter now. Nothing mattered but the fiendish eyes. And they were coming slowly nearer and nearer! The thought flashed through my mind that it looked as if they were waiting for something. What could it be?

Till that moment I hadn't thought of it, but now I became aware of a strange sensation of sucking at my breast and shoulders where the rope-like arms had fixed themselves. The thick, waterproof leather dress was drawn tight and I felt oppressed by the suction.

Ah, it was for this that the eyes were waiting; I knew it now! But for my dress, I should have been helpless already, for these arms would have sucked the life from me and left me an easy prey to the owner of the eyes.

What would happen now? I was helpless enough, I thought, with a curious feeling of something like amusement, but not quite so helpless as the creature supposed.

I felt as if I couldn't take my eyes from those that came slowly nearer and nearer. Like a bird gazing at a serpent I waited. I felt as if I could do nothing but wait! Nearer and nearer it came without a sound, without a movement I could trace. I felt as if I could have screamed and yet I seemed unable to move!

At that moment something happened. The line attached to my arm, which I had forgotten all about, was pulled once, twice, a third time! It seemed to bring me back to myself in an instant.

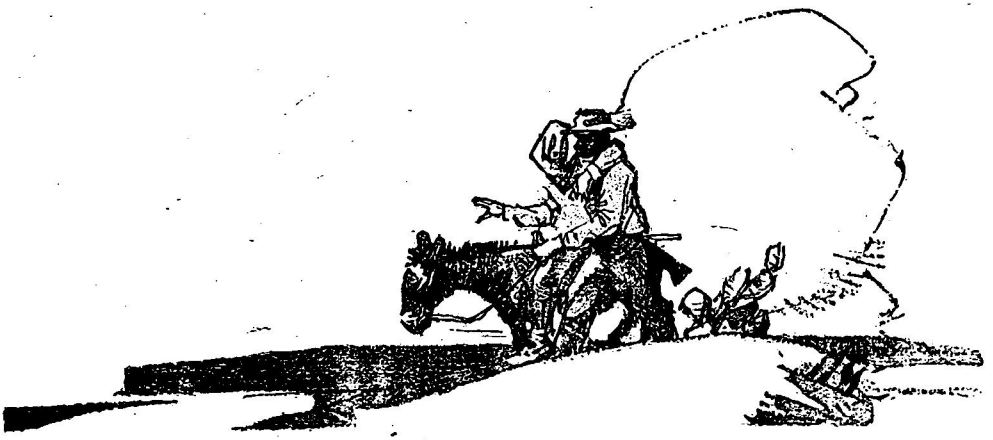
The eyes were close to me now, but they were no longer able to paralyze me as they had done. With one quick plunge I stooped and grasped the tomahawk that lay at my feet; then, straightening myself, I struck two fierce blows at the fiendish eyes that seemed to be gazing into mine.

I don't know what happened then. There seemed to be a wild convulsion and I was hurled from side to side by the rope-like arms that gripped me—then I fell!

THE bright sunlight on my face woke me from my faint. I looked slowly around at the ring of faces that stared at me, feeling as if I were only half awake.

Then the Captain's voice broke the silence. "That was a narrow shave, Crawford, but thanks to Jacky, you've pulled through."

I turned my eyes to the deck where one of the long black arms of the dead octopus still clung to my leg. My hand still grasped a strangely shaped vessel of dull yellow metal. It was the sample of the sunken treasure ship.



In the Desert

by Frank X Finnegan

AS THE rays of the morning sun, newly risen in a sky of flawless blue, slowly increased in their burning intensity, the man lying asleep in the sand with his head pillowed on a pack-saddle stirred uneasily and threw one arm across his eyes as though to shield them from a sudden and unwelcome glare of light in his room.

Then, after a few moments more of restless sleep, he woke suddenly and sat up to find that his chamber was the desert, already palpitating with a heat that was but a hint of the torrid terrors to come with the advancing hours, his canopy the pitiless sky, his companions the tethered burro that drooped in the heat near by and a huge buzzard that soared far above him in the blue—waiting.

It was the beginning of the fifth day and Hatfield muttered a curse in lieu of his orisons as his awakening senses took in the monotonous scene. Four days of sand and heat, of hunger and thirst and growing despair. Four days of stumbling unsteadily onward through the sand that seemed to clutch his wavering feet with jealous fingers lest he escape; of husbanding the little store of drinking water in the red-hot canteen slung over his shoulder; of searching the desert ceaselessly with swollen and bloodshot eyes for the two gleaming strips of steel that crossed the trackless waste somewhere and would lead him back from hell to civilization. Four days of fear and rage and horror—of wondering how soon the mighty swoops of the watchful buzzard would begin to circle nearer and nearer to the sand.

He drew the precious canteen from its hiding-place beneath the saddle and carefully estimated its contents as best he could by peering into the mouth-piece and weighing it in his hand. The canvas-covered can had held two quarts of mawkish water when he discovered, five days before, that he had lost the trail and was marooned in the desert. Now it was half gone, despite the miserly care with which he had measured out every mouthful.

His last scrap of food he had eaten the day before and the burro had tasted neither food nor water since the disaster came down upon them. This must be the beginning of the end, Hatfield told himself, as he carefully moistened his tongue and lips with a few drops of the water and fought down his fierce desire to let the contents of the canteen gurgle down his parched throat. Another day or two at the most would see him stretched upon the desert, unable to move his swollen limbs, inert, unconscious—unless help came.

Help! The very thought of such a possibility in that God-forsaken corner of

Arizona brought the semblance of a grim smile to his puffed lips as he slowly struggled to his feet, picked up the pack-saddle, and began to adjust it on the patient little burro that looked up at him with eyes of dumb suffering.

From the first he had realized that he must depend upon his own strength, his own efforts, his own ingenuity, if he was to escape. In that trackless waste of alkali and sage-brush there was no chance of stumbling upon human habitation and the possibility of his being accidentally rescued before the sun completed its deadly work was most remote. Hatfield knew it all too well and yet as he tightened the cinches of the saddle and prepared for another day of struggle and torment, hope had not died in his breast.

To find the railroad! That was the thought that burned in his brain insistently. He must find it! A thousand times since he had wandered from the faintly-defined trail that led to it, he had thought he saw its level rails glistening in the fierce sunlight far across the dancing waves of heat. A thousand times he had thought he descried, against the horizon that ringed him round, a faint and wavering blur that might be smoke from a passing train. But the glittering rails resolved themselves into streaks of alkali as he stumbled eagerly toward them and the misty mirages in the sky faded away while he stared at them. Yet somewhere in that mocking distance the railroad awaited him and he stubbornly resolved to continue the maddening quest for it as long as he remained master of his senses.

AS HE unfastened the trail rope, by which the burro was tethered to a pick driven into the ground, the doomed man felt a wave of pity for the faithful little beast that had carried him for weary miles in his wanderings or plodded beside him as he tramped for hours over the burning waste. It must be dying, as he was, of hunger and thirst—a bullet would put a merciful period to its sufferings.

For himself there remained at least a few sups of water, but for his companion there was nothing. The light burden of the pack-saddle—a prospector's outfit of pick and shovel and hammers, a few pans and cooking utensils—could readily be spared and Hatfield grimly reflected that the chances were he would never need them again. His hand went to the hilt of the heavy revolver at his belt—he hesitated, and the hand dropped to his side.

He could not do it. To his tortured mind it seemed like killing the only friend he had on earth. After all, the burro was a living, breathing thing that had shared the hardships and horrors of his plight. It represented some sort of companionship, and he shrank with new terror from the prospect of facing the desert utterly alone. Coiling the rope on his arm he faced the south and started heavily forward in the sand, the burro following on legs that trembled with weakness.

He went on unsteadily in the ever-increasing heat for some hours, pausing at times to moisten his cracked lips with a few drops of the precious water, and in his new attitude toward his little gray companion, he even took occasion to pat the burro's head now and then and growl out a few words of encouragement as he noted its steps grow more lagging and uncertain. And suddenly, as he stared steadily ahead through the dizzying waves of heat that danced above the baking earth, his attention was focussed upon a black speck that stood out in relief against the monotony of the vista.

At first sight Hatfield thought it was a rock, standing a lonely sentinel watch in the midst of the emptiness. Then, as he watched it with bloodshot eyes through half-closed, swollen lids, he thought he saw it moving and he felt a sudden fierce spasm of joy in the hope that it was a man—that he was near civilization at last—that he was saved.

But in the next instant he cursed the folly of such a thought—it was a rock, of course, and it was his disordered vision, rendered uncertain by sun and sand and days of ceaseless strain, that had led him to believe it moved.

Still, he pressed toward it with a desperate hope gnawing at his heart and before he had covered a mile he was running through the sand and tugging fiercely on the rope that led the protesting burro. The black speck had unmistakably resolved itself into a man, moving slowly toward him!

Long before they came together, a dozen questions, pleas, demands, flashed through Hatfield's whirling brain and he stood ready to enforce them at the point of his revolver if the oncoming stranger proved obdurate or inhospitable. He would have water,

food, shelter for himself and his animal until both had recovered their strength in a measure; then direction to the nearest point at which he could catch a railroad train.

His plan seemed simplicity itself—its fruition but a mere matter of hours, which would be as seconds compared to the hell of days he had passed through. But when he was near enough to the approaching dusty figure to sense its details, hope slowly died in his breast, a chill hand seemed to clutch his heart and squeeze from it every atom of the strength that the unexpected vision had given him.

For the other man, tottering weakly toward him with outstretched arms and twitching features, was as begrimed an outcast of the desert as himself—a parched and sun-baked object that croaked hoarsely from between its swollen and cracked lips:

"Water! For God's sake, give me a drink!"

Hatfield stopped short and instinctively drew the canteen up under his arm and clutched it fiercely as a mother would seize her infant when a sudden danger threatened. Instead of finding a rescuer he had encountered a new menace in that panting world of horrors—a dying man demanding a share of the scant mouthfuls of water that promised to keep life in his tortured body for another day.

"Water?" he gasped thickly, as he faced the wavering figure defiantly. "Why should I give you my water? I haven't got enough for myself! Where—where did you come from?" he added hazily.

The reaction from the buoying wave of hope, the realization that he was confronted with a new problem, turned him weak and giddy for a moment and he leaned heavily upon his trembling burro. The other man continued to advance, his burning eyes fixed upon the canteen, until he was but a foot from Hatfield and then he flung himself upon the man who had refused him a drink and fought like a wild beast that sees its food after days of starvation.

"GIVE me that water!" he screamed, clutching at the canteen and beating Hatfield's swollen face madly with his other hand. "Give me a drink or I'll tear your heart out!"

Hatfield, taken unaware, was thrown off his balance for a few moments and reeled back against the little burro, helplessly, but he clung to the canteen with the desperation of a dying man keeping his clutch upon life until he had straightened up to defend himself from the furious attack.

And then he fought back with all the strength that the sun and the desert had left in his frame. Weak and emaciated though the stranger had looked to Hatfield, his madness gave him an energy and ferocity that carried both men off their feet and, with arms intertwined and fists flying wildly and ineffectively at intervals, they rolled in the sand, battling like cave-men for the water that meant life.

Again and again the stranger got his feverish hands upon the canteen and once he attacked its mouth-piece with his teeth, striving to tear loose the cork, while the other held both his hands in a desperate grip and finally wrenched them from it.

Gradually Hatfield's greater bulk and strength began to count. The frenzy of the other passed, the weakness that had made him appear a tottering wreck again supervened and he relaxed in the grasp of his opponent until he lay upon the sand, gasping and helpless. Slowly the victor drew himself up to his knees and looked down upon the prostrate figure. He was trembling with excitement, and the exertion of the battle had left him as weak as the man he had conquered.

"Sit up," he said thickly, "and I'll give you a drink. I ain't going to watch you die here like a lizard!"

Despite the week's growth of stubble beard, the lines which fear and hunger and despair had left in the face, despite the gray dust which was caked upon his features, Hatfield saw that the man was quite young—hardly more than a boy. Slowly, and with desperate effort, he raised himself to a sitting posture and held out his trembling hands for the canteen.

"Give it to me, then!" he panted. "Give it to me! I haven't had food or water for three days!"

"Not much, you don't get hold of this canteen!" Hatfield growled, drawing back a bit from the twitching, grasping fingers. "If you ever got this to your head, you'd take one swig and it would be all off with both of us. I'll give you one drink and then we'll talk this thing over. What have you got to drink out of?"

The younger man continued to squirm and crawl toward him, clasping his hands in

momentary supplication and wiping his cracked lips in anticipation of the coming draught, while Hatfield held the canteen away from him at arm's length.

"No, no!" he pleaded. "I promise—I swear—I'll only take one swallow—just one little drink—please—for God's sake!"

"Look, here!" commanded Hatfield hoarsely. "I've only got about a quart of water. It's got to last me until I get to the railroad where I can get a train to somewhere. Maybe I'll never get there—but this water is every drop there is in this desert so far as I know. Do you suppose I'm going to spill it out on you because I happen to cross your trail out here? I'd better put a bullet through both of us and wind it up right here instead of stringing it out a couple of days!"

The younger man dropped his head upon his breast wearily. All the life seemed to have gone out of him and he toppled over on the burning ground.

"Only one little drink!" he gasped weakly. Hatfield reached over and dragged him upright. Then he drew his revolver from its holster and held it in his left hand while he unslung the canteen and removed the stopper.

"Now, you hold out your hand," he ordered, "and I'm going to pour a drink into it. And if you make one break to grab this canteen, I'll put a hole through you!"

The trembling hand was instantly outstretched and into the grimy palm Hatfield carefully poured the precious drops, holding his gun in readiness to kill if the other's madness should overcome him again. As he drew the canteen away the man pounced upon the mouthful of water, sucking it up at a gulp and licked the damp palm greedily, turning his eyes pleadingly upon Hatfield for more. The latter shook his head decisively.

"That's got to do you," he said, "and I shouldn't have spared that. It's more than I've had in three hours. How did you get out here without grub or water?"

"My horse stampeded," explained the younger man. "Everything I had was in my pack-saddles. I think a rattler bit him. I was on my way back to Meta for provisions—he bolted and ran away. I hung on for an hour and then he threw me. I suppose I was knocked out. When I came to, I didn't know where I was—and I've been wandering for three days—in the sun."

THE words came haltingly from the swollen tongue and Hatfield listened with a dull sort of pity for a plight so like his own. They were brothers in misery and despair, yet he hardened his heart at the thought of sharing the few remaining mouthfuls of water, of adding this stranger's burdens to his own. The man was no more to him than the burro that stood trembling beside them and the thought came to him, as it had a few hours before concerning the donkey, that the easiest and most merciful solution of the problem would be to put a bullet through the whirling brain of the dying man and struggle on alone until the end came. But he turned quickly from that grim idea and tried to put it behind him by asking more questions.

"What were you doing out here—prospecting?" he asked.

"Yes—and I found it!" was the reply, with as much triumph as the croaking voice could express. "I've been out here three months and I've found the gold—oceans of it! I was going back to—to tell my people—and to—to get provisions for a long stay—when—when this happened. But I've got it—at last!"

"A lot of good it is to you, isn't it?" snarled Hatfield. There was an unreasoning rage in his heart against the man for projecting himself into the frightful situation—for having thus put him face to face with the problem of abandoning a fellow-creature to a horrible death or of hastening his own crisis by trying to help him. "If you could trade your mine for a canteen of water," he went on brutally, "you'd be a big winner on the deal!"

The thrust seemed to bring a new idea to the drooping figure beside him. The man raised his head and turned his fever-bright eyes eagerly on Hatfield's sullen, glowering face.

"If you'll help me out of this," he said, "and—and give me some of that water—I'll give you a half-interest in the mine. I'll make you a partner—and we'll both be rich—if we ever get out."

Hatfield laughed. It was close to noon and the pitiless sun, beating down for hours upon his head, was making him giddy and a bit fanciful.

It struck him as nothing short of humorous, this attempt at a mining deal there in the parched heart of the desert, between two hopeless men with less than a quart of water to keep death at bay for a few hours.

"And if we don't get out?" he said cynically. "The deal doesn't go then, eh? But my water would be all gone, wouldn't it? It seems to me you stand to win too much, stranger. No, the best thing you can do is to take this gun of mine and end things sudden. There's no use of both of us dying of thirst—and it's my water!"

He held out the revolver as he spoke, hoping frantically that the despairing man would end the fearful problem for him as he wished. But the other shrank away from it and covered his eyes with his hand.

"No, no!" he almost screamed, "I'm going to beat it! I'm going to get back, I tell you! Just give me one more drink, and—and I'll go along."

He tried unsteadily to get to his feet, but his legs collapsed under him and he sank back on the sand. Then the sense of his weakness utterly overcame him and he burst into tears. Hatfield watched him curiously until the paroxysm had passed.

"What's your name?" he asked then.

"The boys call me 'Texas,'" said the other weakly.

"Well, Texas, I'm afraid your gold mine will never do you any good," Hatfield went on, "because it looks to me that we haven't one chance in a thousand to get out of here. I might last another day or so, with the water, but you——"

"It isn't so much for myself that I want to get out," gasped Texas slowly; "it's for my mother. She's been waiting for me for years to make a strike and do something for her. And now I've made it—and I was riding back to send her the news—and to tell her that I'd brought a little comfort to her—at last. She's waited—and waited—and hoped—that I'd make good—and now her waiting is all over—and here I am, lying in the sand like a lizard—and that gold waiting for her—right back there!"

HIS mother! Hatfield dropped his head and stared at the sand. He saw the little farmhouse back in Illinois that he had run away from twenty years before, the little scrub peach trees in the dooryard, the nodding hollyhocks ranged along the fence, the old-fashioned garden of dahlias and bachelor's buttons and drooping fuchsias and tea roses; he saw the old pump at which he had toiled on cold Winter mornings to water the stock; the barn and the farmyard with their endless "chores" which he had turned his back upon like a skulking deserter, to make his way along less toilsome paths. And in the midst of the old familiar scene he saw his mother, sweet-faced, gray-haired and gentle, carrying her heavy burdens uncomplainingly.

Perhaps she was waiting for him—drooping toward the grave with the passing years—waiting and hoping that he would "make good." He saw her growing more bent and feeble, moving among the dahlias and tea roses as of old, her dim old eyes turning hopefully toward the gate when the latch clicked and drooping sadly to her faithful flowers when she saw it was not her runaway come home.

Texas was still babbling on of his mother and his mine, of the heat and the thirst and the sand, of the water that Hatfield held from him so jealously, but the other did not hear him. His thoughts were far away from that dreary waste of alkali and sun-baked earth, reveling amid the fields and running streams of home. And when he raised his head the smoldering hate was gone from his eyes.

"Texas," he said, "I'm going to give you a lift just for the sake of your mother. I haven't seen my mother for twenty years—she may be gone by now. But if I ever get out of this I'm going home and I couldn't look my mother in the face if I left you here to die. I'd see *your* mother's face looming up between us. You and I haven't got much of a chance, but what there is we'll hang on to until the last minute. And now we'll both take a drink, but remember to go easy on it."

He thrust the canteen into the young fellow's eager hands and Texas valiantly checked himself after taking a mouthful and handed the flask to his preserver.

"Thank God!" he said fervently. "And what I said about the mine goes—you get a half-interest if we get out. I've got the papers right here in my pocket—maps and drawings and everything locating the claim—it's a winner!"

Hatfield struggled to his feet with a laugh and held out a gnarled hand to help Texas up.

"I don't want any of your mine," he said; "if we ever find that railroad I'll be satisfied. Here, you're too weak to walk—you get on the burro. The little chap is pretty near gone, but I guess he'll hold out for a while. That railroad ought to be some-

where southwest of us and the best we can do is plow along that way and take a chance."

He helped Texas to mount the burro, which drooped beneath the burden, and they set off toward the southwest, crawling slowly along through the furnace. Texas dropped his head upon his breast and at times slumbered through sheer exhaustion, and Hatfield, looking at him from time to time, wondered in the dull fashion of one unused to introspection whether this deed of his would in a measure wipe out some of the years of neglect and ingratitude and selfishness should he ever be able to tell his mother of it.

He thought of her more in those hours than he had done in years before and he was amazed by the realization of how completely she had faded from his mind in the past. And while the little caravan was stumbling unsteadily ahead the burro suddenly sank down and gasped and looked up at them piteously. The last straw had come for one of the suffering trio.

"I'm afraid the little fellow's done," said Hatfield grimly, as Texas rolled off the quivering little body. "He's had no food nor water for five days. I'll just finish him and we'll have to take our chances alone."

The shot that ended one of the three flickering lives was fired, and without looking ing back the two men crawled on. From time to time they moistened their lips from the dwindling bit of water in the canteen and looked at each other with eyes from which hope was slowly dying.

It was mid-afternoon when Hatfield suddenly uttered what was intended for a shout and clutched the other's arm, pointing frantically ahead.

"Do you see it?" he croaked. "Do you see it, or are my eyes gone wrong again?"

Texas looked along the line of the pointing finger and there on the horizon was an unmistakable trail of smoke—the long, feathery plume left by a locomotive.

"The railroad!" he gasped. "The railroad! But I'll never make it," he whispered the next moment and sank down upon the sand. Hatfield was on his knees beside him in a moment, the canteen held to his parched lips.

"You *will* make it! "he snarled. "I'm not going to lose out now at the last minute! Brace up, Texas! We've only got an hour or two more to go!"

Texas tried to rise. His legs sagged beneath him, and he raised a terror-stricken face from between his sprawling arms.

"It's no use," he groaned, "I'm all in. You go on—and make it."

FOR answer, Hatfield took the inert arms and passed them over his back, stooped low to balance his burden, and painfully struggled to his feet at last with Texas on his shoulders. His teeth were set in his bleeding lower lip. He staggered in pain and his eyes blazed with a maniacal light.

"We'll see if we don't make it," he muttered, "we'll see!" And he staggered forward through the engulfing heat-waves.

How many hours of hell he passed through Hatfield never knew. How many times he fell with his unconscious burden, how many times he rose in agony that wrenched his soul, he did not count. But at last he came within sight of the two gleaming strips of steel that he had looked for so steadily through all those frightful days, and when he drew still nearer so that the heat-waves did not blur his vision he saw something else that gave him enough new life and strength to fight the battle to a finish.

A water-tank beside the railroad track and a windmill pump whirling lazily above it!

In the blessed shadow of that tank he finally laid Texas down and with a frantic pull of the cord sent torrents of water splashing over both of them until they rolled and reveled in its delicious coolness and drank deeply from the pools that flowed around them.

But while Hatfield revived almost immediately, the strain on the young fellow's constitution had been too great and he sank back upon the bank of the railroad and grew slowly weaker and more incoherent. He tried to thank Hatfield for saving him, but the words died in his throat. He lay back and closed his eyes.

"Come, Texas, this won't do," Hatfield pleaded. "There will be a train along here some time pretty soon and I'm going to flag it if I have to shoot the engineer. Brace up, old boy! We'll be all right in an hour or two. Why, you're going home to see your mother. Don't forget that, Texas. Keep your nerve!"

The boy roused a little at that and managed to sit up, though his head bobbed on his breast.

"Yes, that's right," he said painfully, "I was going to see my mother. Going—tell her—about the mine. But that's all too late—now. I'll never get back—to the mine."

He reached into his pocket and slowly drew out a little packet of papers which he extended to Hatfield.

"Here—I'll give you the mine," he said weakly. "I can't make out any papers—but everything is here—maps and everything—and a letter to my mother—I was going to send it right away—wrote it in camp. You'll mail it—won't you?"

"Surely," Hatfield said soothingly, "but you're all right, Texas. You'll mail it yourself as soon as that train comes along."

He took the papers and kept his anxious gaze fixed on the distant point from which he expected the train.

"Send her the letter," Texas went on, "and if you work the mine—you'll—you'll sort of take care of her, won't you? She hasn't got anybody but me, you know. We've been all alone since—since——"

Hatfield had been glancing over the papers nervously. Suddenly he dropped them with an incoherent cry when he encountered the picture of a sweet-faced, gray-haired woman.

For the first time he glanced at the address on the letter. Then he flung himself upon the babbling boy, slapping his wrists and rubbing his temples fiercely.

"Texas! Texas!" he shouted. "Hold on a few minutes! Don't go out on me now! Why, you old son-of-a-gun, *I'm Jim! I'm your brother!*"

Faint and far-off sounded the whistle of a rushing locomotive and Texas sat up and smiled.

The Man with the Twisted Leg

by

M. J. Phillips

"SOMEBODY been stickin' up th' express company?" demanded "Bunk" McGann, Deputy Sheriff, inserting his sturdy frame into a leather chair in the express office at Bradner and beginning to search his pockets for the "makin's."

The two express detectives, Wormley and Zimmerman, and the company's local agent, Martin, held their peace, while Superintendent Blott, thus elected spokesman, replied:

"Some one certainly has. Four days ago a box of seven thousand dollars in five- and ten-dollar gold-pieces left our New York office for the Bradner Tool Works.

The box was packed at the Interborough National Bank and contained the semi-annual profits for the employees. It was of inch-and-a-half oak boards, strapped with iron hooping. It was twenty inches square and twelve inches deep.

"That box was shipped out at ten o'clock in the morning and reached Bradner at seven o'clock at night. The driver locked it in his safe and delivered it next morning to the company. When they opened it, the box was found to be filled with iron washers."

"That was a real little man!" said Bunk admiringly.

"Who's th' thief?" asked his brother Dan.

Blott cast an ironic glance on the express detectives. "Unfortunately we haven't been able to find out."

"You have some idee?" prompted Dan.

The Superintendent shook his head. "We haven't been able to get a thing on anybody." He hesitated a moment before going on. "One of our drivers was drowned here the night of the twentieth."

"Say that agin," demanded Dan, sitting up alertly.

"One of the drivers, Elbert Pickney, was drowned the night the box reached town."

"Go ahead!"

"We have decided that Pickney could not have had anything to do with the robbery and, besides, the poor fellow's dead."

"Who found his body?"

"It hasn't been found."

"Anybody see him drown?" asked the grinning Bunk.

"No, but ——"

"Say, Blott," interrupted Bunk, "that trick wus old before Noah h'isted anchor. This mysterious disappearance business has been worked t' death. Why, you guys" — turning to the detectives — "are hep to it. I wonder yuh let this Pickney geezer put it over yuh!"

"Aw, wise up!" snarled Zimmerman. "I was poundin' a beat when you was makin' mud-pies in an alley! I'm hep to all th' stalls. Pickney didn't do this; he was drowned!"

"All right, Zim," said Dan, smiling tolerantly; "but me 'n' Bunk 'r' from Missoury."

"Pickney slept in the back room," resumed the Superintendent. "He had been sick for a few days with heart-trouble. The evening the box came he was able to go to the station with Kingsley, the other driver.

"He helped unload and came back on the wagon. After the stuff was locked in the office, he got his boat and went out on the mill-pond."

"Did he often do that?" asked Bunk.

"Go out in the boat? Yes, nearly every evening when the weather was fine," said the local agent. "He was fond of the water."

"That night," resumed Blott, "he was seen on the pond till dark — eight o'clock. Then a furious storm blew up suddenly. The next morning he wasn't around and Mr. Martin noticed his bed had not been slept in.

"When I came to investigate the robbery, I looked up Pickney's case, too. We found his boat overturned and stranded on an island two miles downstream. His hat and coat, lodged in weeds, were on the same island. But we didn't find his body."

"Sure not!" gibed Dan.

"See here, McGann," broke in Martin sharply, "I was well acquainted with Elbert Pickney. He wasn't a thief. You are accusing a dead man of a crime he didn't commit."

"All right, cull," soothed Dan, rising. "Come on, Bunk!"

"Where to?" asked the Superintendent.

"Down t' have a look at th' boat. Yuh brought it back?"

"Yes; it's on shore, below the dam. It's a flat-bottomed scow, painted red. I'll go along ——"

"Don't want yuh," interrupted Bunk; "we'll find it."

"WHAT'S yer dope on Pickney?" McGann asked, when he and his brother had returned.

"We think the storm came up while he was fishing close to the dam," explained the Superintendent. "He didn't dare raise his anchor and try for shore. The rope broke and he was washed over the dam. He was stunned by the rocks and never came up. We'll find his body in some deep pool."

"I thought he might have had one of his heart-attacks and fallen overboard before the boat broke away," said the agent;

"so we used dynamite and dragged the pond, too."

Dan seemed much interested. "Find anything?"

"Nothing."

The Superintendent moved impatiently. "Let's get back to the robbery," he suggested.

"Sure," agreed Bunk. Then he added, "An express thief pulled off this job; it's a slick one. The guy that put it over knows th' express business. Th' good yeggs always stick t' th' game they know."

Blott smiled triumphantly. "I thought that, but my men don't agree with me."

"Why, Mr. Blott," said the aggrieved Wormley, speaking for his colleague as well as himself, "all the good express yeggs are accounted for; they couldn't have been in on this.

"It's neat enough to be one of Mahone's, but old 'Turk' is crazy as a loon. He's in Matteawan; Zim slipped over to make sure of him."

"Who was th' transfer-man who helped Turk in th' Grand Central job five years ago?" asked Bunk.

"Hugh English," volunteered Zimmerman.

"What become o' him?" demanded the McGanns.

"Don't know," admitted Zimmerman. "But he wasn't really mixed up in that deal. Turk got him drunk an' robbed his safe. English wasn't even tried."

"What kind of a lookin' chap was he?" asked Dan.

Zimmerman passed over a typewritten sheet. The McGanns, their lips silently forming the words, read:

"Hugh English. Born Everden, N. J., March 21, 1880. Educated Everden High School; State College of New Jersey, chemistry department. 1902, assistant chemist Champion Dye Works; discharged 1904 for selling trade secrets to Empire Dye Mills Co. Employed Continental Express Company as transfer-man, 1904. Discharged for drunkenness on duty.

"Height, 5 feet, 10 inches; weight, 165 pounds; smooth shaven; perfect teeth; straight nose, no facial peculiarities; light hair and blue eyes. Good talker; athletic build; fond of baseball and football, which he plays well. At home in the water; fine swimmer. Physically sound. Has taken part in amateur theatricals; fair actor. Periodical drunkard."

"Well, any reason why English couldn't be Pickney?" demanded Bunk, when they had finished. "He's conned yuh on this drowndin'. Can't yuh fall t' his makeup?"

"English weighed a hundred and sixty-five; Pickney weighed two hundred," was the opening gun from Zimmerman.

"English was in good health five years ago; Pickney had heart-trouble of long standing," contributed Martin.

"Pickney had three gold teeth in front; English's teeth were perfect," interpolated Blott.

"English had light hair; Pickney's hair and mustache wus so red he might 'a' been called 'McGann,'" sneered Zimmerman.

"English had 'no facial pe-cu-liarities,'" remarked Wormley, feeling his way carefully over the shoal which the long word thrust into his course; "and one of Pickney's eyelids had a droop to it."

"Aw, what's the use!" crowed Zimmerman. "English was an athlete and liked to swim and play ball. Poor old Pickney couldn't run or swim to save his soul. He had a twisted leg — and a club foot!"

"A club foot!" echoed the McGanns.

"Yes, a club foot. And he was fifty years old. English ain't over thirty-one."

"Besides," added Martin, "English was a booze-fighter, and Pickney never drank!"

None of the four, except Blott, pretended to feel sorry over the discomfiture of the East Siders. Wormley grinned, Zimmerman chuckled audibly, and Martin permitted himself a dry, superior smile.

"I guess that eliminates Pickney," said Blott. "The only other persons here who could have made the switch are Mr. Martin and the second driver, Kingsley."

"Martin ain't a thief," said Dan briefly.

"Thanks," acknowledged the agent, ironically.

"Where's th' driver?"

Kingsley had been waiting and came promptly when summoned. He was a quiet youth, who told a straight, well-connected story of the occurrences on the night of the twentieth. He took the box and other valuables from the train messenger, receipted for them and loaded them into his wagon, he said. He drove straight to the office, where the money packages were locked in a large safe. Pickney had ridden on the back end of the wagon.

The wagon had not stopped on the return journey and neither of them had left his place. Pickney did not make a move he could not see. They chatted constantly and he sat sidewise on the seat, the better to hear what the older man was saying.

He alone knew the combination of the safe in which the money was placed. The safe had not been tampered with. The box which he delivered at the Bradner factory next morning was the same one the messenger had turned over to him.

"He lied!" said Dan, when the young man had gone.

"Nonsense," cried Martin; "that boy is no thief!"

"He ain't the thief and he don't know who is," conceded Dan. "But he lied, just th' same!"

"Where and why?"

The deputy rose and stretched himself. "I dunno," he confessed. "Lemme look at Pickney's room."

The whole party followed Martin to a small room partitioned off at the back end of the building.

Dan threw back the rug in front of Pickney's cot and dropped to his hands and knees. There he squatted, like a huge bull-dog examining the tracks of an enemy.

Presently he grunted and rose to his feet. "How long had this guy been here, Martin?" he asked.

"Six months; he came in March."

"Any cellar under th' buildin'?"

"No."

The McGanns went to the back door, which opened into a small court off the alley, where the wagons were unloaded. The court was paved with ashes.

"Say, Blott," said Bunk, when they had looked casually about, "we want to ride from that evenin' train with Kingsley and we'd like t' stay here, to-night. Gimme yer profile picture of Pickney, too."

"All right," returned the mystified Superintendent.

"Now where?" asked Bunk of his brother. "Dentist's?"

Dan looked at him with the manner one uses in scolding a child. "I'm ashamed of yuh, Bunk!" he chided. "We're goin' t' th' doctor's. You talkin' about dentists!"

"What's the answer?" queried the Superintendent, when the brothers had gone.

It was Wormley who spoke: "Answer ——! There ain't none!"

II

TWO days later Superintendent Blott, who had returned to New York, received an urgent message to come to Bradner. It was signed by the McGanns. He called in the company detectives, who were working on feeble clues, and they all went down to Bradner.

As usual, the deputies were sitting in the most comfortable chairs in Martin's private office, resting far down on their spines and clouding the air with cheap cigarette tobacco.

"Found yer man yet, Zim?" inquired Bunk.

"No," returned the detective shortly.

"Neither have we," confessed Dan.

"But," supplemented Bunk, "we know who it is, Blott. We c'n give yuh yer choice: You c'n wait a year 'r so, an' get yer money an' th' thief. Or you c'n have th' gold t'day — but not th' thief."

"I'll take the money!"

"This guy'll make yuh trouble in th' future," warned Dan; "he's one of th' smoothest yeggs we ever run up ag'inst."

"The future can take care of itself," said the Superintendent briskly; "the money for mine!"

"Well, who's the thief?" asked Martin.

Bunk grinned. "I hate t' do it, Martin, honest! But it's Hugh English, whose other name is Elbert Pickney!"

"Impossible!" shouted Martin.

Bunk tossed a profile photograph on the table.

"Who's that?" he queried.

"English," returned Zimmerman. "He was 'mugged' the time of th' Grand Central job."

Wormley agreed.

"Who's this?"

"That's the picture of Pickney Mr. Blott let you take."

"Put 'em side by side," directed Bunk.

A silence of profound astonishment followed. For the profiles were identically the same. Pickney's mustache could not hide the lines of the weak, pouting mouth which formed the only flaw in the face.

"Pickney's so much older; he might be this other man's father," said Martin uncertainly. He was still loath to believe that the quiet, sober Pickney was a crook.

"Aw, come on," cried Dan, getting up. "We c'n show yuh, an' make yuh like it."

They followed him to Pickney's room.

The cot was shoved aside. Dan knelt down and inserted the blade of his pocket-knife in a crack. He pried carefully and a section of floor came away. When lifted out, it revealed a yawning hole.

It was not an ordinary trapdoor, since Pickney, the shrewd, had avoided cutting any two boards of the same length. It was an irregular slab which, in place, defied ordinary scrutiny.

Bunk let himself down into the hole, which was shoulder deep.

"Is the box in there?" asked the eager Blott.

"Naw," returned Bunk; "we ain't got that yet."

"You haven't?"

"Don't worry, bo," reproved Dan; "if we don't get yer gold, we'll eat them washers!"

Bunk lighted a candle. From shelves in the hole he began to produce a variety of objects which evoked cries of amazement from the others.

At last the cache was emptied and Dan, springing out, faced his audience.

"When yer man English wus canned five years ago," he said, "he went out an' got a job with a jerkwater express company in Minnesota."

"Pickney came to us from the Fox River Company," confirmed the Superintendent.

"He always was a booze-fighter an' he didn't cut out th' red stuff; but he learned to lay off an' hide when he got piped. He was a good worker, an' got a fine 'rep' wit' th' Fox River people. O' course he changed his name.

"All th' time he was sore on youse guys. At that, he didn't have any roar comin'. He'd ought t' been sent up th' river f'r that Grand Central job. He wus in it as deep as ol' Turk, an' Turk got pinched just because English tanked up at th' wrong time.

"He wus puttin' on fat, as a fellah will between twenty-five an' thirty. He planned this disguise t' come back an' get a job so's he could stick up th' Continental.

"What he learned in th' dye business helped him out a lot. First, he colored his hair an' mustache." Dan held up a bottle half-filled with brownish-red fluid.

"Then he fixed up this dope t' make a squinty eyelid."

He uncorked a small bottle containing a pasty, gray substance, half-closed one eye and applied the paste to each corner. In a short time it hardened, holding the drooping lid firmly in place.

"We had that analyzed," continued McGann, "an' th' guy said it was a harmless mucilage. English washed it off every night. Try it out," he urged.

BLOTT took the outstretched bottle and daubed the paste on his half-closed eyelid. The others followed his example; soon there were six pronounced squints in the room.

"You're hep t' th' gold teet'," resumed Dan, when the mucilage had been washed out.

"Sure," said Wormley, eager to discount in part the amazing disclosures. "All the wise crooks has 'em. They slip on an' off like an overcoat."

"Here's how he got his old look," continued Dan, nodding confirmation to Wormley. He held up a vial and a tiny brush.

"He just put a little black in every wrinkle, an' a bit o' yellah over that A Bowery actor put me wise. You remember English was a amacher actor. Now f'r th' twisted leg."

He held aloft a contrivance consisting of two stout strips of iron, bound together by a basket-like arrangement of flat-iron hoops at the bottom. Leather straps encircled the long irons near the middle and at the top.

Dan took off his shoe and stripped up the trousers from the lower leg. He inserted his foot into the top strap and pulled the joined irons on like a boot until his foot was encased in the basket.

This twisted his leg inward and when the straps were fastened, it was impossible to turn it to a normal position.

"Don't need t' tell a sleuth what that's for," smiled Dan. "We spot more crooks by their walk than any other way. Pretty hard t' change yer gait, but it's a cinch a man can't walk natural wit' that thing on. Now f'r th' club foot."

He laid two pieces of heavy felt across his instep and replaced his shoe with a large shapeless one that had also come out of the cavity.

"There's yer man," he said. "He could wear all this junk because he didn't have t' walk much."

Dan pulled down his trousers-leg and took a half-dozen steps in the clumsy but ingenious harness.

"I give up!" cried Martin. "That's just how he walked, McGann."

Dan removed the shoe and iron. "Thought we'd show yuh," he said. "Now about th' heart-disease. Wasn't he sick on Monday, always?"

Martin thought a moment: "I believe he was — until just before the box of gold was stolen."

"He was stallin' then, so's to be ready to cop it when it came. His 'heart-disease' came out o' them bottles."

He pointed to a battalion of empty whisky-bottles which the hole under the floor had yielded. "There was no one t' disturb him from Saturday afternoon. So he got soused Sundays and sobered off Mondays."

"But he really had heart-disease," objected the agent. "The doctors who treated him told me so."

The McGanns laughed. "He sure was a smooth devil," said Dan admiringly. "We went t' see a heart-specialist th' other day, an' he says th' best of 'em get fooled. All athletes control their heart's action more or less. Why, this M. D. knows uv a grappler that c'n keep his heart from beatin' f'r twenty seconds, don't he, Bunk?"

"Betch yuh," agreed Bunk.

"How in blazes did he steal the box?" queried Blott.

Bunk took up the narrative. "He makes his box, loads it wit' washers, letters it wit' that paintin' outfit, an' plants it.

"Frost's meat-market, just round th' corner, has a sort o' shelf from th' sidewindah intuh th' alley. That's where they get their ice. There's a canvas t' throw over it if they happen t' be too busy t' take it in right away.

"He hides th' phony box he's made under th' canvas on this shelf. No one thinks o' lookin' there and th' shelf's only used a couple hours in th' mornin'. "

"Comin' back that evenin' wit' th' box o' gold, yer driver heads f'r th' back door, as usual. There's a turn in th' alley which keeps him from seein' there's another rig blockin' th' way till he's right on to it. He can't back up an' he can't go ahead till th' road's clear."

"That's where Kingsley lied. He didn't tell about th' rig across th' alley an' how he got down an' led th' hoss away. He didn't want t' get mixed up in this thing, y' see. The wagon was right near this shelf.

"Then English shifts the boxes. He didn't have t' put foot t' th' ground t' do it. Back comes Kingsley an drives t' th' office, not dreamin' he's luggin' washers now, instead o' gold."

"You're right," agreed the agent; "the back end of our wagon would be within a foot of Frost's shelf. The boxes could be changed easily."

"Th' rest was a pipe," continued Dan. "It was English who hired th' hoss an' wagon t' block th' alley. After Kingsley had unloaded and went home, he got th' gold, an' drove through alleys t' th' edge o' th' mill-pond.

"His boat's waitin'. He puts th' box in, covers it wit' his coat — an' there y'are."

III

AS ONE whose tale has been told, Dan scraped the pockets of his short, square coat in a search for the "makin's." He rolled a cigarette, borrowed a match from his brother, and began to smoke.

Said the Superintendent: "Well, go ahead with your story; where's the gold?"

"Why," replied Dan, in the utmost good faith, "we don't know just exactly where th' box is ——"

"You mean you haven't found it?"

"Not yet, but ——"

"Good Heavens!" cried the exasperated Blott, as he sprang to his feet. "Then you haven't the money after all! He probably took it away with him in that wagon."

The brothers rose. "Don't get yer shirt off," admonished Bunk. "Th' stuff is safe. Come on, if y' want it."

"Martin," he continued, when they were outside, "go t' th' mayor an' get a permit t' empty th' mill-pond. Youse guys c'n come wit' us."

At the mill-pond the McGanns secured a boat and its owner, a bare-legged youth, and rowed across the pond. There they waited until the opened gates had carried off more than half of the stored-up water. Then, adventuring along the inner side of the wall, they stared through the swirling brown current.

Presently the watchers saw them stop.

The bare-legged youth stepped over the side and, after vigorous tugging, lifted something into the boat.

The "something" was an iron-bound box, covered with weeds and sand.

When the cover had been pried off at the office, the seven thousand dollars of the Bradner Tool Works was found to be intact, to the last gold-piece.

"And now," said the Superintendent, as he passed out a handful of expensive cigars, "just go on from where you left off, will you? I confess I don't see how English got that box up against the inside of the dam."

"He put th' hoss away," replied Bunk, lighting the black cigar doubtfully; "then he came back an' rowed out on th' pond. He saw th' storm was goin' t' help his disappearance stunt. He'd changed to new clothes, but fetched his old hat an' coat along f'r a bluff. He took his leg-armor off; he wasn't goin' t' need that any more.

"Well, he floated around out there, fishin', till th' storm came. Then he cut th' anchor-rope ——"

"It wasn't cut; it broke. I noticed that, myself," interposed Zimmerman.

"That's where yuh fooled yerself, Zim," retorted Dan. "He cut it, careful, wit' a dull knife. Then he rowed ashore, turned his scow wrong side up, wit' plenty o' air under her. He set th' box on th' stern, an' swam out, pushin' th' boat ahead.

"When he got as close t' th' dam as he dared t' go, he gave 'er a final push, swam back, put on his clothes an' skipped.

"He thought he'd be safe. If yuh wasn't conned by th' cap an' coat an' boat, all washed over th' dam, he still had an ace in th' hole.

"F'r th' cops'd be lookin' f'r a red haired man wit' a bum eyelid an' a club foot an' a twisted leg; not f'r a nice-lookin' young chap wit' two good legs, nary a gold toot', an' light hair, clipped close.

"But he got in Dutch wit' us when he tipped over th' scow. Didn't yuh notice how flat she was? She c'n stand more rough weather than a battleship. An th' slope o' th' dam's so gradual she wouldn't turn turtle there. No, it took a big, strong man t' turn that scow over. That wised us where th' money was. As her nose goes over th' dam, the box slips off behind.

"There's a tidy little hidin'-place f'r yer money — hard money, remember, that water won't spoil. It's just as good as th' bank till th' excitement dies down. Then Mr. Hugh English could come back and collect what Mr. Elbert Pickney had planted."

"I can't understand why he didn't take currency," commented Martin. "His disguise was just as good for that. Some days he handled as high as twenty thousand dollars in treasury certificates; the whole bundle would have gone into a little bag. Why didn't he get away with that?"

Bunk stretched himself and yawned. "A crook's a crook," he said tersely, "an' a crook's a fool. Tab that, bo, an' yer hep t' why they do mutt tricks. They can't help it!"

Forbidden Treasure

by Beatrix Demarest Lloyd and Esther 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. An Icelandic family, the Olafsens, murdered the surviving Vikings and the curse falls on them. Stuart recovers an ancient bell, whose inscription concerning the treasure is deciphered by Mr. Lee. Stuart explores the desolate coast of the Vatna Jökull where the fatal treasure is supposed to be, is left to die by his deserting crew, and is rescued by the yacht. The yacht's captain is washed overboard under suspicious circumstances, and Healy, the substitute mate, assumes command. During an unsuccessful half-serious hunt for the treasure the boat is suddenly frozen in for the Winter. Stuart learns Dr. Berwind is treating Mr. Lee for the morphin habit. Nora, after continued ill-treatment of Stuart, makes overtures of friendship. Healy gains an ugly influence over the crew.

CHAPTER XXVI

AN APPEAL FOR HELP

QUIETLY as they all outwardly accepted the unforeseen situation, within a week of the beginning of their imprisonment, every soul on board the *Blessed Damozel* began to feel the deleterious effects of the confinement. This nervous condition was undoubtedly greatly intensified by the continuous daylight now prevailing. Seen with the distorted vision of the overwrought, those things which had been strange became terrible, and the impressive became a thing of horrors.

When the water of the fiord began to freeze, overpowered by the besieging army of ice, a first fear for the safety of the yacht had roused a ripple of interest that lifted the men for a while from their dangerous self-absorption and apathy. But with the demonstration that her steel sides were able most gallantly to resist the attack, the men relapsed into their empty restlessness, and Satan found mischief still for idle brains to plot.

In the forecastle it was a far more dangerous mischief than the cabin realized, for although the crew was as yet too recently well-officered quite to throw off all discipline and order, the revulsion was surely coming. Since their encroachment upon the territory reserved for those so much above their station seemed condoned and unforbidden, they played shuffleboard at any odd hour during the day that hung heavily upon their hands, the watches became lax and irregular, the punctual obedience to the signal for rising in the morning became obsolete, and the noise increased unrebuked. Slowly it may

be but with an inevitableness that caused Stuart and Berwind an endless and increasing anxiety, the men were beginning to realize their power, outnumbering by so overwhelming a majority their employers, in a situation where right could summon no authority to enforce its position.

Poignantly now they felt the lack of power in Mr. Lee. Had he been the man of force he once had been, he might, by the mere exertion of his righteous authority, have retained an unbroken discipline among the men.

"If it could be brought to his attention sharply," said Stuart musingly, as he talked with Berwind one night in his cabin of the gravity of the situation, "in some way to rouse him even momentarily to ordering them back into their proper station, we might be able to keep the thing going until we can get away. Once the yacht is under way again toward the established centers of law and order, I feel sure the men will return to their muttons, if only from force of habit. One can't wholly blame them for feeling the irk of this monotony. The dreadful place affects us all, and they have minds like children."

Berwind's smile was dubious. He stared out to sea, over the mass of glittering ice. "Do you know, Stuart, I feel as if the Vatna had by some unnatural convulsion of the laws of nature closed its immense hand upon us—that we shall never get away from the grip of the Vatna's fingers—that they will close tighter and tighter and that we shall die."

Stuart rounded on him sharply. "Now don't you get like that!" he exclaimed. "Good heavens, if we give over to this hideous mesmerism, what is to become of us all? Pull yourself up, Berwind—that sort of thing is suicidal!"

"Don't worry about me, my lad," said Berwind, still smilling.

"Good enough," said Stuart. "To get back to Mr. Lee, tell me how he has been of late, I mean technically? It is curious, but he has seemed to me to be more as he was when I first saw him. Is there a sort of periodicity about his attacks of nervousness?"

Berwind's faint smile faded. "I tell you frankly, Stuart," he said slowly, "I don't know. He has puzzled me in these last days, since we dropped anchor in this fiord. At one time I am confident he improves. Then suddenly he seems, as you say, to have gone back to his condition when you first met him—nervous, hysterical and beyond the appeal of reason. It puzzles me."

"Wouldn't it do him good to have something to do?"

"Perhaps," repeated Berwind.

"Then if," persisted Stuart, "we could bring it to his attention, this disorganization among his men, bring it home in some way perhaps to touch his pride on the raw, wouldn't some slighting disregard of his superior position rather nettle him?"

"It might," said Berwind.

"You are encouraging!" laughed Stuart.

Berwind rose to his feet. "Forgive me," he said. "I don't know what has been the matter with me these two days or so past. I am not prone to fanciful dejection, but really I have felt a sort of threatening horror in the air, as if something terrible were about to happen. But as I said, with you about, it's quite impossible to believe. I agree with you about the crew, however—we'll see what can be done with Mr. Lee, eh? Well, I have kept you up long enough. Go to sleep, Stuart—the advice is free, and I am going to follow it myself."

"Good-night, my dear chap." Stuart followed his visitor to the passageway and nodded encouragingly.

WHEN he turned back into his cabin, he stood for a moment by the porthole looking out into the light night. As he looked out a vague sense of dissatisfaction grew and gathered in his resolutely cheerful heart. He felt distinctly that the burden of responsibility was falling upon him. It was upon him that Mr. Lee and his daughter would have to depend, since even Berwind turned to him for encouragement and advice.

The yacht was unusually quiet, almost reassuringly so. After all, the insubordination was not so bad, perhaps, as he and Berwind had feared. The men were, as he had said, a bit out of sorts, no more. It was Healy's own interest to remain faithful. Was a shrewd New Englander the man to throw up a snug berth such as Healy had by chance secured under Mr. Lee, for the sake of all the moonshine treasure stories between here and Golconda?

A sudden sharp and fluttering knock at his door caught his heart up into his throat. He turned and jumped across the stateroom

in one movement and jerked the door open. He had known it was she by the very knock, and yet he was startled to see her there.

"Miss Nora! What has happened?"

Her face was white and her eyes large and dark with fear. Over the fantastic barbarity of the Chinese coat she was wearing as a wrapper her rippling hair hung in two heavy plaits, one over each shoulder. He was quite unaware then of anything except the words that might issue from her pale lips, but he saw afterward on the retina of his memory the beauty of her as she stood before him in that moment.

"Oh, Mr. Stuart!" Her hand closed upon his wrist and her white face turned to glance over her shoulder. "I don't know what is the matter! I don't know what to think! I woke up just now and saw my father standing in my stateroom. He had his back to me, and he was dressed in his fur coat and his fur cap with the flaps down. It was all so strange that I was afraid to speak to him—I couldn't make a sound. He took something out of my desk—I couldn't see what it was—and went out. I slid out of bed and followed him to the door, and saw him steal down this way and cross the saloon and go above. I am so afraid for him—what can he be going to do? He may try to cross the ice and come to some harm!"

Even in the sharp poignancy of the moment Stuart's mind was able to devote a happy instant to the thought that in her hour of need she had come direct to him. He stepped out into the hall, pulling his coat and cap from the hooks as he did so. "Don't distress yourself, Miss Nora. I will go with him and see that he comes back quite safe."

"But he mustn't see you! It might make him quite angry. You remember how vexed he always is when he thinks that any one is interfering with him. What can you do?"

"I can follow him about, in any event," said Stuart. "I won't let him see me unless he comes to need my help."

"Oh, God bless you!" she whispered brokenly as he smiled at her and hurried away.

CHAPTER XXVII

A STARTLING DISCOVERY

IT was the work of a moment to cross the saloon and leap silently up the companion. One glance up and down the ash-strewn deck served to show him that it was empty.

At a distance of some rods from the yacht, on the ice of the fiord, he made out the tall thin figure of Mr. Lee, thin even in the enveloping thickness of his easily recognizable fur coat. He was walking with some difficulty over the slippery surface of the frozen inlet, and he was quiet alone.

Stuart remained in his inconspicuous position at the rail. The terrible cold struck slowly through his heavy wraps. A first impression that Mr. Lee was perhaps walking in his sleep began to waver as he considered the possibility of any one's remaining unaroused by that transit from the warm comfort of the yacht's saloon to the merciless attack of the penetrating aching cold.

The figure of the man upon the ice as it made its way farther and farther along toward the beach and the moraine of the glacier became fainter in outline, and Stuart concluded the moment had arrived when he should follow.

AS STUART turned toward the steps, Nora Lee's voice called to him again by name softly. She had come out on deck hastily dressed in her furs and walking clothes, and she now crossed to his side hurriedly. "You are still here! Where has he gone?"

For answer Stuart pointed to the dim shadow. "I am going now—before this he might have seen me."

"I am coming with you!" she said determinedly.

He looked at her for an instant and then held out his hand to help her descend the stairs of the yacht's side.

They gained the surface of the ice and started forward on the trail of the wanderer.

The strangest part of the whole proceeding had as yet occurred to neither of them. They had forgotten Berwind as completely as if his existence had been wiped from the face of earthly things. Instinctively in her alarm and fear she had come straight to Mark Stuart for assistance, and he himself in answering her needs had forgotten everything except the privilege of serving her. That the invalid's natural protector and advisor was within hail had never entered his mind.

When the comparatively smooth surface of the fiord was abandoned for that of the moraine the walking became a far more arduous affair. Yet the figure ahead of them forced its difficult way onward, up the rocky,

fissured incline, straight toward the heights of the glacier itself, turning neither to the right nor to the left. Now and then Stuart almost feared that they had lost sight of Mr. Lee entirely, but it proved to be a bowlder that had hidden him, or some unevenness of surface that had landed him in a depression deep enough to conceal his tall figure from their view.

Nora, stumbling bravely on beside him, was quite naturally a very great hindrance to Stuart's progress, yet he got along fast enough to keep the man at least intermittently in sight and to be able to assure her through her own eyes that her father so far had not come to the very slightest harm.

Up, up the precipitous incline of the moraine they clambered, swinging across the sudden fissures and laboring up and down the rocky mounds. Nora's hands were sore with the jagged edges of the stone and ice on which she had occasionally to lean for support, and her feet were weary with the climbing and the many unevennesses of the way.

"He is going straight on up the glacier," said Stuart softly, at last. "Are you very tired?"

"No," she more shook her head than answered. "Where can he be going? What does he want up here, do you suppose?"

"I have been wondering," he answered simply.

Suddenly, as they rounded the side of an obstructing bowlder, he pulled her back with him behind the rock. The natural startled cry she felt in her throat she instinctively repressed. It had all happened in the twinkling of an eye, but they had come too quickly and the figure, which had paused in its progress, had been perilously near them. Nora Lee felt the breath panting in her breast. If her father had seen them, if he should now himself round the corner of their hiding-place, what would he say to her for having set a spy upon his steps? How impossible it would be for her to explain his own condition to him! What would he think of her being there dogging his way with this man? For the first time she thought of Berwind, and her having up till now forgotten him struck her with a significance that brought a hot flush into her icy cheeks.

The moments of apprehension passed. Stuart, releasing his arm from hers, stole to the edge of their shelter and again looked out. Then he returned to her.

"He is crossing the glacier now, to the side of Sigurda," he whispered. "We are just across from the Red Rock of Half, very near the base of the mountain. There is no other rock or depression that can afford us a hiding-place, so we had best stay here. I can see him quite plainly without exposing myself and can get to him in ten seconds if anything should happen."

"The Red Rock of Half!" she echoed, her eyes upon his in the gloom. "Do you suppose the poor soul is tormented by the thought of that treasure?"

"It may be," said Stuart uncertainly.

SHE fairly wrung her hands. "Oh, that we should ever have come to this terrible place!" she said. "It was all my fault. I urged it. I thought it would prove amusing to the poor soul! Somehow since we have been imprisoned here I have lost all my balance—I begin to believe the place is actually accursed, actually capable of wreaking the curse upon us for our coming! I feel as if something terrible were going to happen to us all!"

It struck with a chill on Stuart's heart to hear her use Berwind's own words. His natural courageous buoyancy came to his rescue. He turned to her, and she saw his eyes glowing steadily in the smoky night that lay about them. "Please help me by keeping up your courage. And be sure that if my body and soul can save you from the realization of these terrors that distress you, they will be cheerfully and fitly given."

Unconsciously she put out her hand to his, in recognition of his generous words. The touch of the strength of his fingers thrilled her. And their hands remained so, clasped like those of children, while they waited.

"Look again," she whispered finally, releasing her gloved fingers from his hand. And Stuart went to the edge of their hiding-place again and peered out.

In a few moments he came back to her. "The wind is blowing toward us, you see, so there is little danger of our voices being heard," he said. "But I can hear him sounding the rock thereabouts for hollow caches. He is undoubtedly searching for the treasure and I am heartily glad of it."

"Glad of it?" she echoed amazedly.

"Glad of the definite idea, the easily explainable ambition that has brought him out. He may be just playing a game on us —wants to do it all himself so as to crow over our stupidity, you know."

"Then you thought he might have come wandering out here with no determined motive? You thought him as ill as that? Oh, tell me, please!"

"My dear girl, no—not ill! But perhaps just too miserably restless in his confinement." It was an adroit recovery and she pressed the point no further.

It was a long time that they spent there, listening and waiting. There was not much to say, and they said even less. Only the mere fact of their sharing the duty of watching over the sick man drew them together with infinite force. Now and then Stuart went to the edge of the boulder and returned to her. "He is still at work," he said each time except the last.

When that time came he returned to her somewhat breathlessly and bent down beside her where she was sitting. "He is coming back," he whispered hurriedly. "He is already half-way across the glacier and is coming directly toward us. Keep very still!"

Trembling, she let him help her to her feet. And he drew her farther back along the surface of the rock of their hiding-place.

"Quiet now!" she heard him breathe in her ear, and his hand closed encouragingly on her own.

In silence and somewhat slowly, as if sunk in conjecture, the figure came into range of their vision, and so past their hiding-place within a dozen feet of where they stood breathlessly. At the moment of its passing, Stuart's hand gripped hers with a sudden spasm of strength that sent one of her diamonds deep into the flesh. She made no sign. She waited without breathing or moving till the figure had gone on into the inky fog toward the edge of the moraine. Then as she started forward to follow it she was surprised to feel him hold her back.

"Surely he can not see us now?" she protested softly, pulling her hand away.

"No—but you! Didn't you see?"

"See what?" She turned an apprehensive face to his.

"It wasn't Mr. Lee at all," said Stuart slowly. "It was Captain Healy in your father's clothes!"

CHAPTER XXVIII

STUART DEALS A BLOW

"BUT if you believed that it was Mr. Lee you were following," asked Berwind with some reproval in his kindly tones, "why didn't you come for me?"

It was the afternoon following the midnight escapade of the yacht's captain. Berwind and Stuart were talking together upon the deck. About the whole yacht hung an atmosphere indescribably lax and down at heel. With perplexity plain upon his brow, Stuart turned to answer the Doctor's question.

"Upon my word, Berwind, I don't know. You see my one idea was to follow after her father. I never thought of there being anything to do but to keep an eye on him, and that, of course, was a business I could do well enough alone."

"I see," returned Berwind quietly.

Although jealousy was the emotion most impossible to his frank and unselfish nature, he was conscious of a pang of something akin to it, as this confession was naïvely made. They had not thought of him! Well, it was natural. He was not too blinded by his hopeless devotion to Nora Lee to see how in spite of herself her heart was turning to Stuart as a flower to the sun. It was quite natural.

His quiet words and his silence made Stuart presently aware that he had hurt the sensitive, faithful soul. He turned quickly, laying his hand on the Doctor's poor crooked shoulder. "My dear Berwind," he said sincerely, "if I have shown you any discourtesy, I ask your pardon from my heart. She came to me because my cabin was nearest her as she followed the figure from her own room, and as for me I had no thought in my head except that she had asked me to do her a service and that I was transfigured with delight even in the anxiety of the moment."

Berwind nodded and his smile lighted his plain face. "I understand, old man," he said. "And since, as matters turned out, it was not my patient, there is no harm done and we will say no more about that part of it. But about this midnight prowl of the Captain's——"

Stuart nodded gravely. "This very morning after breakfast I saw Healy starting for the shore again with Levine and

Grimson and an outfit of picks. He was talking angrily at Svenson, who refused to go."

"Mutiny within mutiny?" asked Berwind with a half smile.

"The man is superstitious and afraid. He picked up a lot of stuff about the legend back there in Reykjavik, I dare say. But Healy is utterly disaffected, Berwind, that's what he is. And as for the men, just listen to that row!"

They turned and listened. O'Reilly was strolling up the deck with pipe between his teeth and from the fore part of the vessel came shouts of laughter, mingled with much loud talk of a most disorderly crew at play.

"I suppose you have heard," said Berwind in a low voice, "that a petition for double grog all around has been handed in to-day by our worshipful Captain. He has a motive, he has the means—what chance is there that the crew may remain faithful against such pressure as he can bring, Stuart?"

"One in a million," returned Stuart grimly.

"Hush!" said Berwind.

Turning, Stuart confronted Nora Lee as, with bright face framed in wind-blown hair, she came swiftly down the deck toward them. But as she read the trouble in their faces, her smile darkened in instant comprehension.

"I know what you are talking about, you two," she said slowly.

But Stuart continued to smile at her.

"Of last night, yes," he returned gaily. "And the more we tell of it, the more we decide that it is the best thing that could have happened. If Healy knows now that the treasure is no more than a myth, his interests become one with ours. And so there is no further cause for anxiety."

"None, whatever," put in Berwind, with a self-betraying eagerness.

Nora regarded the two men with a deep and evident pity.

"Oh, you poor things!" she said. "Do you suppose I did not see Captain Healy start for the shore again this morning? Do you suppose I don't know what this relaxing of all decent discipline means? Oh, I am not the imbecile you seem to think me!"

Through the heat of admiration, inspired by her bravery, there struck on Stuart's heart, like a cold wind through sunshine, his first vivid realization of what an outbreak among the savages in the forecastle would mean to her. In the sickness of the thought he turned his eyes away from the loveliness before him. How small and inefficient, after all, was the single life which he had to offer in her defense!

As though reading his thought, Nora turned her clear glance upon him. "I don't say I am not afraid," she said, "that would be silly. But at least I want you to believe that I am not afraid to face the last door of escape, if—if by any chance we should come to that—and in the meanwhile, I demand it as my right to be treated as a woman, not as a little child."

Her beautiful eyes swept their solemn glances from one man to the other. "And now," she added, "I am going to ask you whether you think my father is in any condition to grapple with the situation, Dr. Berwind?"

Stuart stood in silence while Berwind explained to Nora, in brief sentences, the upshot of their last night's conversation. To call up again the old instincts of authority and resourcefulness now lying dormant in Mr. Lee, the Doctor explained, was their hope to effect at once the benefit of the master and the cure of the men.

Nora nodded with a faint smile. "It all sounds very well," she said. "I only hope it may work out as well in practise. Look, here is our dear Captain coming aboard! Do you suppose he has been hunting that treasure again?"

Up the motionless stairway, decorous and unsmiling, came the lank form of the Captain. After him. laden with ropes, ice-axes, and the various paraphernalia of climbing, marched Levine and Grimson.

"Look!" whispered Stuart. "The stains of lava dust on their trouser-knees. They haven't taken any trouble to disguise their search. However, there is nothing there for them to find, and they haven't found it! Look at their faces!"

The men, indeed, appeared of an extraordinary glumness, and the Captain's melancholy features were more like those of a downcast sheep than ever.

THEN, just as he was to set foot upon the deck, he looked past them and nodded and smiled. Stuart and Berwind and Nora turned to look behind them and there saw Katie standing in the companionway, confused and blushing, but

holding her ground with a faint touch of boldness in her attitude. Nora and her two companions turned back, looking at one another in some amusement.

Then Nora laughed. "Oh, I'm not going to suspect Katie of being mutinous just because she flirts with the Captain. My dear psychologists, fancy the position of a pretty girl like Katie among all these lonely men. Can you blame her if the flattery has turned her head a little? She is a good girl."

"I hope you are right," said Berwind so gravely that her smile faded.

"I am very fond of her," she said quietly. "It would grieve me very much to be forced to doubt her."

"Good afternoon, Miss. Good afternoon, gentlemen!" came Healy's tones in a long-drawn snuffle of civility. Stuart, turning, saluted the man with a careless smile.

"Well, Healy," he observed, "been trying it ashore?"

The Captain nodded. Beneath his decorous, homely exterior, there was a faint hint of defiance, as of one who is civil not because he must, but because he condescends to be. One or two of the men, in open disobedience of the regulations which restricted them to certain parts of the yacht, came strolling toward them.

Levine, whistling a bar of "Rose Marie," regarded Nora from under his shock of red hair with an impudent meaning which made Stuart's blood sting in his veins. From the forecastle the group of idle seamen stared intently aft.

"It's an awkward fix, this Vatna country," observed Healy, looking about. "And you mustn't blame the men if they git a mite restless. I see by your eye, Doctor, that you don't like that noise up for'ard—well, mebbe neither do I. But as you know, Mr. Lee and I, we agreed to give the men a little rope. That Svenson has been fillin' 'em up with all kinds o' notions that he picked up out o' them fool natives, back there in Reykjavik."

"That's unfortunate," replied Stuart. "This place is awe-inspiring enough in itself without Icelandic superstitions."

"Ah, there it is!" Healy replied mournfully. "It may be superstition and it may not, but directly we come here to git caught like flies on fly-paper f'r all the Summer months—there's somethin' about it I don't like, mind I tell you, and I'm a man that's been to school. And then, Sven says——"

He stopped abruptly. Stuart was amazed to see that the lean face before him was trying to hide an unfeigned anxiety. Was it possible, he asked himself, that the hard-headed, scheming man before him had fallen a prey to the terrors of this fantastic wilderness?

A little withdrawn from them, Nora had perched upon the arm of a deck-chair. The determined jauntiness of her little gray-furred figure, the resolute smile on her red lips, showed the indomitable quality of her spirit.

Stuart had half-watched her all during the episode, but in the moment that he had turned to stare at Healy, she suddenly gave a cry and sprang to her feet. Stuart wheeled.

Bill Levine, who had evidently leaned across the chair toward the girl, was just in the act of drawing back, flushed and lowering. Nora, on the contrary, was quite white; the light of her eyes concentrated in one keen ray of flashing indignation. Levine caught Stuart's eye; then, as though emboldened by his Captain's sustaining presence, he spoke again to the trembling girl.

Before Berwind could clench a fist or Nora herself so much as shrink farther from the man, Stuart had struck him down upon the deck.

There was a pause of curious length and intensity while the prone man blinked up, almost uncomprehendingly, at his assailant. Stuart, drawing a long breath, looked about him at the circle of hostile, flaming faces. He was conscious of a desperate transformation wrought in the situation by his swiftly-delivered blow. Instead of mental and overt hostility, it was suddenly crystallized into actual physical danger.

In the moment, it seemed as though the attack were actually at hand. O'Reilly, a surly, black-bearded fellow, leaning over the forecastle rail, hurled himself aft with a roar which bespoke his eager readiness for any fight that might be on hand. Behind him swarmed a blue-shirted crew, some with a shuffle-board mallet in hand or a marlin-spike caught up from the rigging.

STUART felt a touch upon his shoulder.

"We'll stand shoulder to shoulder," cried Berwind swiftly, "and back toward the companion with Nora behind us."

Stuart retorted as swiftly, "No—they must not think that we are afraid of them. Don't give an inch. I will send her below now before them all."

He turned back to Nora, who, with a white face, but with chin uplifted to an angle which fully verified her proud words of a few moments before, was standing like a statue behind them. "Miss Lee," he said hurriedly, "you must not stay here." He turned to Katie, who, with signs of distress swimming obviously in her eyes, oscillated helplessly between her mistress and the conquering Healy. "Katie, take your mistress below!"

"'E busted my 'ead wide open, that's wot 'e did!" Levine's voice, explaining his grievance to his mates, came to them in an angry singsong, answered by a roar which had all the gusto of the human beast long in bondage and at last let loose. Stuart took a step toward Nora. His eyes were full on hers.

"Miss Nora," he said, "please go below at once."

This time her pale lips forgot to smile and her eyes dropped before his. She turned from him and obeyed.

The combatants of both sides stood motionless while the two girls retreated and vanished down the companion. Stuart took a long breath. What was to follow he did not know, but Nora's safety was for the moment at least assured. Then calmly he turned to Healy, who, with a faintly leering smile, stood facing his seething swarm of men.

"Captain Healy," he asked quietly, "can you control these men?"

In the glance which passed between them, it was easily to be seen that the situation was perfectly understood by each. It was plain that the suave Healy, while he had no present intention of allowing violence, was not averse to letting the cabin-party see how keen and powerful a weapon he could wield. The fatuous smile on his thin lips showed with what pride he displayed the perfection of his control. With a little nod, he turned toward the furious crew.

"Why, sure!" he said easefully. "What's the matter with you fellows? Go forward to your places there and learn to behave—can't you let well enough alone for a bit?"

To Stuart's surprise, for he had expected that even the Captain would find some difficulty in repressing the men, this inconsequent address proved to possess the calming qualities of oil. The sailors, trailing their mallets behind them, turned slowly back toward their quarters. Healy's coddling process had given him, it was plain, an amazing mastership over the diverse and unruly elements which made up the crew.

Had Healy's own character been one to inspire more confidence, his control over his men might have been as reassuring as perhaps it was intended to be. But Berwind's eyes, as they rested momentarily on Stuart's, were filled with the gravest doubts.

CHAPTER XXIX

THE SCENE IN THE FORECASTLE

LATER in the same afternoon, the various members of the crew sat clustered together in the forecastle. The single exception to the general sociability was little Fong Charley, who, with an ivory-handled knife and a block of wood, sat in a patient and evidently endless job of carving, below the pale shaft of the open hatch.

Levine, the steward, sat jingling his keys, posed in his chair as one who does not expect to remain long therein. Durkee was leaning against the wall and looking at the door of the passage, kicking one foot against the other. O'Reilly, on the edge of the table, was also watching the door. So were the rest of the men, who were disposed about the place, each one expressive of his own expectancy, all except Svenson, whose brooding look was bent on vacancy.

The door opened with a snap and all the men looked up. It was Katie, beaming and with red cheeks. She struck an attitude, her hands on her hips and her daintily capped head on one side. "The top of the morning to you!" she said airily.

O'Reilly, her compatriot, brightened visibly. "The same to you, mavourneen. 'Tis the divil's own eyes ye have the day!"

Katie flung a look about her. "I know by your insolence the Captain is not here," she said, and came in and shut the door. "Where is the lad?" she asked.

"As our friend 'Craps' 'ere says, in that peculiar lingo that is 'is," piped Levine, "'e's a-jawin' of the gav'ner, that's wot 'e 'is."

"What about?" asked Katie, dexterously and without too discouraging a margin avoiding the arm with which O'Reilly essayed to encircle her.

"Double grog!" growled Craps Durkee.

"And why shouldn't we have it?" said O'Reilly. "Sure, men are not to be found in ivery three that would sign on fur a vy'ge like this wan!"

A grumble arose among the men at the mere mention of their wrongs. "It's a awful plyce, that's wot it is," mourned Levine with sharp resentment.

"'Tis accurshed it is," assented O'Reilly, "as anny wan could see with half an eye—with quarter of an eye loike yours, mavourneen. Why, niver do I go on watch alone at night but I cross meself before I go to slape." The laugh that greeted this ended as Svenson lifted his head and answered him.

"Ve should never haf gum," said the big Swede, his thorough fear of the spot made only the more impressive by his immense size and the brave look of his thick leonine poll. "Not'ing grows here, but t'e terror of t'e soul!"

"I ain't strong on the spook lay," said Durkee sullenly, "and I guess I could stow all de rest of it under my belt if it wasn't fur dis everlasting daylight."

Another step sounded in the passage. Every one's eyes were again on the door. They scarcely realized themselves the importance of the moment. To them it was a more generous allowance of liquor. But, as a matter of fact, it was far more momentous than any of them dreamed, except the Captain. That he had planned it as a first step, no one knew but himself. The power it would give him over the men he alone understood. Dutch courage was better than none, Con Healy had decided. When he opened the door and stood there before them he was a different man from the melancholy creature known to the owner. A grin sat oddly on his long, pock-marked face. "Grog, Levine!" he said with laconic force.

A rumbling sound of exultation broke impersonally from the men, to be quieted for a moment as Healy raised his hand. "And no night watch," he added, and his grin deepened. He had reasons not all philanthropic for sparing his men this wearisome duty.

"Ooray fer you, Cap'n!" said Levine lustily. "Hall we need now is a Turkish bawth and a voydeville."

"In a place loike this, phwat should there be to watch, indade?" inquired O'Reilly.

"Come here, Katie—I ain't seen you all day," called Healy. The girl went toward him, smiling and coquettish. The excitement of exhibiting her power over him had triumphed over certain better instincts of a duller nature that she undoubtedly possessed.

Healy put his arm about her and brought her down somewhat bruskly upon his knee. "Give us a kiss!" he said. But she pushed his face away. "Not before all the boys," she whispered archly.

"Tell us wot happened," urged Durkee, slipping into a chair. "Wot hot air did you hand the dope, Captain?"

Healy grimaced as he continued to tease Katie in a playful way. "What did I say to him? He was butter in a hot pan. What's the matter, Svenson? Sick?"

"Ah t'ink ah bane," said the big Swede heavily.

The men roared with laughter. Levine was serving grog, with liberality.

"Fong, go get the doctor," said the Captain with a sneer. And with a gesture of unquestioning obedience lost in the general confusion, the little Oriental laid down his carving and left the forecastle.

SVENSON suddenly sprang up. "Laugh, laugh!" he cried fiercely, his face flushing up to the roots of his lemon-colored hair. "But vait! Ah tells you ah know about zis Vatna. Ah tells you zat braver men zan you haf been avraid of it. Ve vas fools to gum here, fools! Ven for two t'ousand years it haf been known to be blackened with curses, ve laugh and say it is nottin' and ve gum. Are ve not in drouble from de first? Are ve not in prison? Are ve not in prison for two monts, and can't much happen in two monts? Laugh if you vant to now—but vait! Ze Vatna Jokull has not vinished with us yet!"

"Shut up and stow your noise!" said Healy sharply. His own color faded a trifle under the stumbling eloquence of the man—eloquence because it was the full speaking of conviction carrying conviction to the others. He noticed the side-glancing uneasiness of the men.

"Drink up, boys," he said with a straining cheerfulness. "Fairy-stories don't go any more. Svenson here will be tellin' you about witches 'n' ogres if you let him go on. Come, Katie, give us a song, girl."

"What'll it be?" asked Katie, taking a sip daintily from her master's glass and making a wry face over it.

Svenson relapsed again into his place, drinking his grog avidly. So convinced was he of the reality of their danger that their mockery of him affected him no whit more than the gibes of his neighbors had deterred Noah from the building of the ark.

"Sing us 'Rose Marie!'" said Levine, refilling glasses. "If we're agoin' to tyke wot we bloomin' please, as Cap'n says, I'll 'af to know that 'ere song to amuse Miss Nora on our 'oneymoon, I will." He said it with a bravado that lifted it, to the men, above common boast. They were beginning to believe in the power of the Captain and those he chose to befriend, as the grog warmed their imaginations.

But Katie tossed her head. "You'll have to kill three men before you get her," she said with a contradictory pride in the people whose friendliness she was betraying.

Levine's handsome eyes narrowed in a look of inflamed hate. "I wouldn't mind killin' one of the blokes in the least," he snarled. "Why didn't the bloody fool go on a-dying when he was so far started?"

"She's getting sweet on him something awful," said Katie, rising to put the Captain's glass down.

"—— 'im," said Levine, "'e knocked me down w'en hi spoke to 'er!" He spun around on Katie, suddenly assuming the airs of Stuart with a truly remarkable mimicry. "Miss Nora," he said, imitating Stuart's voice, though he could not rob his speech of its Cockney accent, "be good enough to go below. This is no place for you. This bally steward is too hinsolent. 'E really thinks, 'e does, that 'e is a man has good has me."

Katie, falling into the spirit of his jest, flung a languishing look at him and clasped her hands. "And leave you alone with these naughty men, dear Mr. Stuart?" she piped. "Never—not while I live and breathe!"

The men roared again with the easily-provoked laughter of the well-stimulated. O'Reilly pounded on the table with his glass.

Levine, inflated with the little success, flung himself on his knees at Katie's feet. And Healy, for purposes of his own, let the play go on. "Miss Nora, I must implore you to go—if you love me, ducky, go below."

"'Tis just because I love you, darlint Mr. Stuart, that I can't tear myself away," replied Katie, giggling.

Levine caught her hand. "Nora, hangel——" he began, and stopped.

In the doorway of the passage stood Dr. Berwind and just behind him the literal Fong Charley who had done the Captain's bidding. A thick silence fell upon the entire company, through which the odor of liquor rose as eloquently as a clamor of voices. There was that in the look of Dr. Berwind's eyes that brought even Healy slowly to his feet. Berwind turned to him at last.

"What is the meaning of this disgraceful scene?" he said with a calm anger of self-control. "As you are in command, I suppose you have authorized this extra grog at this unwonted hour?"

Levine, already erect again, started to speak with a vicious triumph in his face, but Healy put up his hand. The Captain saw the advantage to be gained now in showing before his men how little he feared these other creatures. He sat down again with an exaggerated air of lazy comfort. "I suppose I did," he said.

"And permitted this drunken, insolent ridicule of your employers?"

Healy turned a leisurely look upon the surroundings. "I wasn't noticing," he said indolently. "But I did tell Levine here to serve the grog. What then?"

Berwind, struck with the tremendous increase of the men's independence of all decent canons of respect, was silent a moment. Then he turned quietly to the seated Captain. "Fong said some one was ill," he remarked.

"Fong? Oh, he's a fool. It was just a joke."

The slant-eyed Celestial received this appraisal quite impassively.

"THE sense of humor in the forecastle seems to be growing very keen," said Berwind dryly. "May I ask you, Captain Healy, to accompany me to the cabin, where we can discuss this matter without misconstruing anything as a possible joke?"

Healy, with a luxurious wink at Levine, rose slowly. "Certainly, Doc'," he said easily. "It will be a pleasure."

Berwind, as he turned to go, looked for an instant into Katie's eyes. "I should think, Katie," he said quietly, "that you would be unable to hold up your head in Miss Lee's presence. But the forecastle is not the place for you. You may take my word for it that this time I will say nothing of your disgraceful conduct. Another exhibition of this na-

ture will not go unpunished, I assure you. All of you," he added with his quiet force, looking around upon them all. There was a momentary silence. Berwind turned back to the door. "Now, if you please, Captain Healy," he said.

The two men made their way in silence to the saloon, where Mr. Lee was sitting at the table, brooding over a magazine some six months old. His forehead rested in one hand heavily—the other hand wearily turned the leaves of the monthly, and each page rattled tremulously as it turned. Berwind looked sharply at him as he entered. It seemed a desperate task indeed to rouse this man. Nora, a snowy bit of embroidery in her hands, looked up at Berwind as he came in, and smiled. The smile faded as she saw the Captain's form behind him. Her eyes flew back to Berwind with a question and her brows wrinkled in anxiety. Had anything more happened?

"Mr. Lee," said Dr. Berwind quietly.

Nervously, the man glanced up. "Well, well, what now?" His voice rang thin and sharp.

"I was summoned just now to the forecastle through a misunderstanding on the part of the Chinese boy. And as I was not expected I came upon a scene that had not been prepared for our eyes." He felt Nora's eyes fixed in a brave kind of terror upon him as he spoke.

Mr. Lee impatiently pushed the magazine away; one of his shaking hands felt for his watch and, drawing it forth, began snapping the case irritably open and shut.

"I thought it was better to report it at once to you and to bring Captain Healy along that he might see I did him no injustice."

"Go on, sir, go right on," said Healy soothingly. He had moved to one side a little and looked over his shoulder at the sound of an opening and closing door. That Stuart should have emerged from his stateroom at just this moment and come down into the saloon suited the Captain to a T.

Stuart, gaining the doorway, looked from one to another with a questioning look like Nora's upon his face. He stopped where he stood and listened to what Berwind was saying.

"Most of the men, sir, are the worse for liquor, which is a most flagrant breach of conduct. Captain Healy tells me that he ordered this liquor to be served to them at this hour, contrary to the rules, and that he is willing to answer for it. Just what he means by that I can not imagine. You can readily understand, sir, that I bring it to your notice only because I realize the importance of keeping more rigidly to routine now than ever."

"Well?" jerked Mr. Lee.

"Well, sir, the rest is for you to say. I have no authority."

With a suddenness that startled them all, Mr. Lee broke out violently with an oath. Nora, starting to her feet, stood gazing at him with something very like terror. "Authority, indeed!" cried Mr. Lee, gesticulating furiously. "I should say not, indeed! Why, you penny starveling sawbones you, I'll teach you to meddle with affairs that don't concern you! I ordered Captain Healy to serve that grog, do you hear? Who in the —— are you to come advising me and finding fault with my arrangements? Didn't I take you out of a starving practise and give you a gentleman's job? Everything you have got you owe to me, confound your impertinence! And you come tale-bearing about another of my servants—that's what you are, a servant. Do you hear me, a servant!"

He brought his hands down with a bang upon the table and leaned so, staring at the Doctor. Berwind's face had gone pale and his hands were twitching. Stuart turned away, sick at heart, from the sight of him. But Mr. Lee saw the action from the tail of his eye. "You can stay and take advice, too, Mr. Stuart!" he cried, swinging round on him. "You and this precious doctor of mine have been taking a good deal more for granted in these days than I can quite endure!"

WITH a half-sob, Nora Lee had at last run to her father's side and thrown an arm about his shoulder. "Dearest, dearest!" she whispered imploringly, trying to turn his face to hers.

Berwind, fearful of the possibility of Mr. Lee's transport including the girl as well, took a step forward unconsciously, and that too inflamed the sick man's anger to the point of explosion.

"Ah, you'd even try to get between me and my daughter, would you?" he cried, facing Berwind again. "You're a precious pair, you are! So you think you'll get my daughter, do you, and give the orders on this

yacht yourself! Which one of you, I'd like to know, expects to step into my fortune, eh? Oh, a pretty game you're playing—a very pretty game!"

"Father, father!" sobbed Nora. "Don't, dearest! Look at me! Dear father, hush, hush!"

"Look at you, Nora?" he repeated, closing his arm about her. "I think so, indeed. Trust your father to take care of you!"

Berwind's white face set like a death-mask and Stuart's crimsoning visage was as stamped with shame as if the outrageous outbreak had been his own. The sight of the Captain, however, drew Mr. Lee's wandering attention for one moment back to the question that accounted for his presence. He drew himself more stiffly erect. "You may go, Captain Healy," he said. "Please refer any future interference to me and take orders from no one but me. Do you understand?"

"Understand? Well, rather!" smiled the Captain, sweating at the temples with eagerness to get back and retail the scene a thousand times over to the forecastle. "'N' thank you very kindly, Dr. Berwind, for givin' Mr. Lee the opportunity of expressin' himself so very clearly." With a short laugh, the Captain went out jauntily.

With a little sniggering, high-pitched laugh, Mr. Lee loosened Nora's arms from his shoulders and put her from him. "I ve had my say, my dear, and I don't fancy any one will interfere with us again. I am going into my stateroom for a little rest. Don't you worry one moment, darling. Your old dad isn't so ill but that he can take care of you."

He laughed again, a little flat laugh that had no resonance. And then, with a pat upon her shoulder and without a glance at either of the men nearby, he turned down the corridor and in an instant more his door was heard to close bruskly and the bolt to snap into its socket.

In the dreadful pause that left them all face to face, Nora turned slowly, her hand resting heavily upon the table as if she felt the need of physical support. Painfully, she controlled the twitching of her lips.

"I need not tell you, Dr. Berwind, as you knew my father in his early illness, that he would have been by nature incapable of what he has just done. But you, Mr. Stuart, have never known him as other than he is, and I must implore you to believe me. A kinder, gentler, and more honorable gentleman never lived upon this earth."

Her voice was tremulous with tears, and yet she controlled it longer. "I plead to you both, in memory of what he was, to forget this terrible scene, just as you would forgive a man in delirium for any evil he might speak. I plead to you both to help me to forget that these things have been said by any one so dear, so dear to me, and that you will not let it make any difference in our friendship for each other—which is the only true and helpful thing I have to lean upon in these dreadful days. If you could only know him as I have known him, in the days when—when he was his dear, open-hearted, brave——"

The words faltered, trembled on her lips, and the end of her endurance was upon her. With a heart-broken gesture of her distress, she sank into the chair her father had deserted and bowed her head upon her arms.

Berwind went toward her slowly. His rough, homely face was softened and transfigured by the tenderness of love that went toward her in her pitiful affliction. Stuart half turned his eyes away before the overwhelming confession of the man's look, when suddenly he saw him stop.

Berwind stood still, his head bent down, his eyes upon her. Then, with his radiant, patient smile, he lifted up his head and turned to Stuart. With a gesture, in which he contrived gently to express his fondness for them both, his understanding of their suffering and the sweet renunciation of his desire to be the one to comfort her, he motioned Stuart to her side and, turning, left the two of them alone together.

CHAPTER XXX

STUART PREPARES—BERWIND DESPAIRS

LATE in the afternoon of the next day, Stuart and Berwind were met in the former's cabin for a smoke. Despite the apprehensions awakened by the various painful outbreaks of yesterday, the night and the day had passed quietly enough. So much control, at least, Healy had over his men, if he could make them turn in so docilely after much stimulating liquor. As for Mr. Lee, he was mildness and sweetness itself. Over the whole yacht, indeed, brooded the stillness of a deep repose. It was the repose, however, of a taut bow-string. Every step,

every voice raised above a whisper, brought with it its own fearful suggestion, that now, at least, this artificial peace was to be shivered in the precipitance of open war.

But in this brief interim before the bowstring should twang, it was Dr. Berwind upon whom, of all the four persons most deeply concerned, the burden of the present situation lay most heavily. His responsibilities were not only personal, but professional. Not only as a man, but as a physician, the blow of yesterday's disgraceful scene had fallen upon him with painful force.

With deep concern Stuart watched his friend turn the pages of a geological notebook picked up at random; while between his fingers the neglected cigar slowly gave up its spark. With sudden abruptness, Stuart put the question, "Do you think, Berwind, it is possible that Mr. Lee should have a private stock of morphia that you know nothing of?"

He had sorrowfully expected the question to pain the other, but it produced no other effect than a grave, quiet answer. "I do not believe it is possible. I have thought of it, of course, and wondered about it. His condition is so insanely irregular! But I am positive he had none of the drug with him when we embarked. I made myself positive.

"I took occasion while he was asleep to go over his belongings, as one might vulgarly say, with a fine-tooth comb. You know they are inhumanly cunning with their contrivances, secreting the pellets in the very hems of their pocket-handkerchiefs. But I found nothing. And his condition continued to tally with my expectations so exactly that I was forced to believe he had put himself wholly and honestly into my care.

"It is a long and dreadful struggle at the best, and the very mental and physical weakness he exhibited during our cruise from Reykjavik was to be expected. His extraordinary change since we cast anchor here has alternately swept me up into the clouds of exultation and dashed me down upon the rocks of despair. And the last dash, I will say, old man, has nearly shattered me to bits and by no means remolded me according to the heart's desire!" His smile was wry and wistful.

He hesitated and his color rose a little as he asked haltingly, "After I had gone—Miss Nora—was she much distressed? Did she—did she cry?"

"Not she!" said Stuart with a pride in her courage that made Berwind wince. He got to his feet and walked the length of the room and back. "If I could only get her father well!" he fairly groaned, coming to a stand before his friend. "She believes in me, Stuart. I verily believe she confidently expects me, in the face of all these desperate evidences to the contrary, to get him well! I begin to think I was a fool ever to dream it, Stuart, even if for no other reason than that I have always been a failure! Everything I have ever touched has crumbled in my fingers to a worthless end!"

"I say, you know, you must not go on like this!" cried Stuart. "This is the second time lately you have gone into this sort of rot."

Berwind gravely smiled. "There's nothing I wouldn't give to cure him, Stuart—for her sake. She can't spend all her youth under this hideous cloud—it's monstrous."

They were silent a while. The stillness of the ship, the stillness of the Vatna, assailed their ears. It seemed as if the whole earth had plunged itself into eternal silence.

Stuart laughed shortly. "You know, I'd almost rather those men would make a little noise," he said, "sing or something. I dare say they are only sleeping off the debauch of yesterday, but the stillness gives me the creeps. I feel as if they were crouching around us, so many watchful wild beasts, waiting to spring at our throats."

"Don't you go and lose your nerve, now," said the Doctor promptly. "It's my opinion that we are going to need all we can take and scrape together."

Stuart laughed again and nodded. "You are right there," he made reply. "The stillness won't last long enough to play me out, I imagine. They are going to play merry deuce with everything in very short order, that's plain to see, and the sooner we prepare to face this thing, the less scramble there is going to be in the end."

"Prepare?" echoed Berwind docilely.

"Oh, take stock of our firearms and the like," said Stuart. "There are about ten rifles in the rack there by the companion."

"I have a couple of pistols," said the Doctor.

"Good! Give me one, will you? And carry yours too—one never knows. I will look over those rifles and see that they are in shape. Do you suppose Mr. Lee would notice if we took them down and locked them

up in this empty stateroom next to mine? You see there is a connecting door, so that I could get at them without difficulty."

"I DON'T believe he would notice it," said Berwind in the dejected tone he had used before in speaking of his patient.

"Good again!" said Stuart. "I will do it this evening while he is dressing for dinner. We must expect that, from now on, the crew will add insubordination upon insubordination. Just how far it will go remains to be seen. It may fizzle out like damp firecrackers—they are all cowards at heart, or it may flare up into an hysterical outburst that will do considerable damage.

"Unless Mr. Lee's improvement is unexpectedly rapid we can hardly hope for any help from him. In point of fact, he has already done the very thing that will advance our enemy's course. Consequently, a geologist and a doctor are left to protect a very lovely woman from anxiety and possible insult."

"Right you are!" said Berwind cheerfully. Stuart smiled to see how his spirits rose at the mere suggestion of being called upon to do something for the girl under their protection.

"I have already mentioned that I had come to the point. But I haven't really. The important point is that in time of crisis, if we decide that Mr. Lee's possible inability to comprehend the gravity of the situation tends to render our position—which means the protection of her position—more precarious, you are to exercise your medical authority, my dear man, and lock him up!"

Berwind looked grave, but he nodded. "Good Lord, what a situation!" he said softly.

"In the event of a concerted attack," said Stuart after a moment of acquiescent silence, "we can undoubtedly hold the mouth of the narrow corridor against the whole crew. We shall have to use those pistols quite seriously, Berwind! What sort of a shot are you?"

"Good enough to put a man out of his misery if he tries to get past the companionway," returned the other with a reassuring smile. "I quite relish your Thermopylaean plan of battle. The thought of picking out a drunken ringleader and shooting his equilibrium from under him fills me with fantastic joy. We can put Miss Nora and her maid and Mr. Lee in staterooms on one corridor, blockade the place and take in provisions before we commence our salutary measure of thinning out the crew."

"That's the idea," assented Stuart. "I hope it won't come to that, for Miss Nora's sake, but I am glad to have settled upon one course in the event of its coming to pass. Particularly, as a plan, all settled beforehand, will probably have the same effect on possible trouble as an umbrella in the hand has on a threatening rain."

Berwind smiled. "There's no harm anyway in hoping so, is there? You would put hope into the heart of a dead dog, Stuart! So now, as it's drawing near the hour for Mr. Lee to have his dose, I'll just go and have a look at him and then I'll look up those revolvers."

With a smile, into which Stuart's determined optimism had almost succeeded in calling back some of its old sweetness, the Doctor nodded and turned away down the corridor toward Mr. Lee's cabin.

The continued depression of the anxious times was bound to find its reaction in occasional bursts of optimism, and one of these, at the moment, warmed Berwind's heart with the glow of wine. His patient had been so normal, so encouragingly calm since the last wild outbreak—could he not take that solace and comfort to himself and hope that better days were on their way, when the periods of normality would lengthen and increase? The golden possibility dazzled him and brought a little throb into his throat so that he paused a moment with his hand on the door of Mr. Lee's stateroom.

Then with the freedom of the physician, he turned the knob softly and silently opened the door. He stood, astonished beyond words!

The sick man, turned toward the daylight of the port, had not seemed to notice his entrance. In a long gasp which, though deep, hardly moved the air to a tremor, Berwind took in his breath. For the left arm of the self-absorbed man was bared to the biceps and the hairy skin thus exposed was shot like a pincushion with innumerable punctures! Buried like a poisonous insect in the skin, its long needle feeding mania into his veins, a shining hypodermic syringe glittered in the fingers of his practised hand and his eyes were bent upon the process as he slowly forced the fluid from the tube into his flesh with a fierce and secret satisfaction.

In an unbreathing silence, the Doctor stepped back into the corridor again and closed the door.

CHAPTER XXXI

MORPHIA AND A SONG

SICK at heart, Berwind leaned against the wall of the corridor unable to move away, staring at the door of Mr. Lee's stateroom with eyes as wide and horror-struck as if the man at his dreadful occupation were still visible through the stout paneling.

But the explanation of the private store of morphia came immediately. The keys of the medicine-chest had never been out of his keeping save once, the day that Stuart was brought aboard. Then he had given them to Nora herself, and he remembered vaguely that Nora had not returned to the stateroom after she left it to do his bidding. The thing was as clear as daylight. Mr. Lee had seen his opportunity, and, intercepting her, had sent her off while he rummaged the doctor's hypodermic cases for morphia and found it.

On the thought, Berwind rose and made his way to the surgery. A thorough investigation of the medicine-chest showed that a small case, containing twelve tubes of morphia in varying strengths and combined with various other drugs, was missing. It was a small black case; Berwind knew it well. He almost groaned aloud as he thought of what hellish destruction of a human soul and body the contents of the little black case was capable.

Trembling with despair and nauseated with a sense of his culpability, Berwind went back into his stateroom and cast himself down upon the bed. After a little he got to his feet and walked about, mechanically beginning his dressing for dinner. When the soft gong sounded, he opened his door a crack and watched until Mr. Lee issued from his room and went down the corridor to the saloon. Berwind came out of his stateroom then, cautiously, and went down to Mr. Lee's door.

He went into the stateroom and locked himself in. Then began a rapid, skillful, thorough-going search. The empty black case turned up among the linen in the drawers of the chiffonier, but the search for the tiny straw-shaped vials promised to be a long one. Still, Berwind was not an inexperienced hunter for this sort of thing, and the hem of a dressing-gown gave up three of the bottles. Among the socks in the chiffonier he found two more half full, and two in a widened crack of the floor under the rug, with a few pellets gone from each. Two empty vials, with the corks and the labels gone, he discovered in the toothbrush-holder of the bathroom, and the cold sweat broke out under the hair that hung upon his temples as he thought of the amount thus far declared to have been consumed.

The last three bottles kept him longer than any of the others, but came to light at last, cunningly secreted in the toilet-powder of a full box with a sprinkler top. All of these vials had been opened and a tablet or two were gone. The syringe itself was not to be found, and he concluded the patient must have it with him. There was, of course, the possibility of his having also some unused tablets with him. This, time only would show.

He put the bottles back into their little spaces in the case and the whole thing in his pocket. Then, with a deep breath and a squaring of his poor, uneven shoulders, he let himself out into the corridor and went down to the saloon.

They were in the midst of dinner when he joined them. His first glance was for his patient, and he saw him to be strung high with the drug. The pupils of the sick man's eyes were reduced to needle-points, his voice was uncertain and somewhat shrill, and he ate nothing, but continually wet his lips with a sip of water, and the hand that lifted the glass was well-nigh uncontrollable. What a fool, what a fool he had been! Berwind was saying inwardly, as he dropped into his place with a thin smile and an apology.

"I'm sorry to be so late," he said. "I must have dropped asleep."

Nora, lovely in her white gown with a collar of brilliants about her throat, sat opposite her father, her eyes resting so happily upon his animated face that Berwind found a new depth to his despair. Stuart was quite at ease, handsome and indolent and apparently without a care. Yet only Berwind knew the unfaltering steadiness with which he kept their predicament in mind, and only Berwind saw that not a movement of the Cockney steward's hands escaped his notice.

The immutable Fong went on about his

own affairs as serenely as the sun itself, which was, as ever, shining in the dim sky.

But Levine—there was a different matter altogether.

THEY were still at table, Nora eating bonbons while the men smoked, the servants having withdrawn, when Captain Healy came into the saloon. He had evidently been drinking, and yet was quite able to speak and think connectedly. It showed to the most marked degree in the absence of his usually assumed manner of sanctimonious melancholy. Or was it by intent that he had abandoned this pose? He was positively cheerful, and his long sheep face was smiling and actually a bit aggressive. "Good evening!" he said largely.

Nora turned in surprise at his voice, and then her eyes went rapidly from one man to another of those at the table with her. Mr. Lee, who had during the latter part of the dinner become restless, looked up inattentively. "Good evening," he said.

Mark Stuart, brushing a crumb from his knee—and odd enough, indeed, he looked in the clothes with which Mr. Lee had fitted him out, especially about the shoulders, where he was of a far more stalwart build than his host—rose to his feet and stepped a bit nearer to Nora's chair.

"Good evening," he said in his turn. "Miss Nora, do you wish now to get that book from your stateroom?"

But Captain Healy spoke again as she started away. "If you would kindly not go, Miss Nora," he said suavely, "for it was you I came to speak with."

"To speak to me?" she echoed, turning to him.

The Captain laughed reassuringly, but with an assumption of familiarity that made the muscles twitch in Stuart's fingers. "Why, what I want to say, Miss Nora, is nothing very serious, of course. 'Tis only this—we're all agreed, I'm sure, that we must do what we can to keep the crew contented—we talked that over yesterday, Mr. Lee, you will remember. They're all good boys, but restless, naturally, in this place, and we have to humor them a bit. Don't we, Mr. Lee?"

He addressed himself exclusively to his employer and to Nora, yet his eyes traveled with a tolerant maliciousness from Berwind's face to Stuart's and back again.

"Yes, yes," said Mr. Lee testily.

"Of course, sir, as you say," returned Con Healy, always smiling. "Now, the boys, Miss Nora, are fond of a bit of music, and they made bold to ask me if I would come and tell you how kindly they would take it of you if you'd sing a song or two for them."

The request was mildly put, and Nora Lee for the moment forgot the possibility of its being repeated in less servile terms. "Sing for them!" she repeated, accenting the pronoun amazedly. "Certainly not, Captain Healy. They have well demonstrated their ability to sing for themselves when they need music."

The Captain shifted his position calmly. "They've grown very fond of that 'Rose Marie' song that they've picked up from hearing you sing it, and they asked particular that you'd render that."

"You have heard Miss Lee refuse to agree to your preposterous suggestion," said Stuart, stepping forward. But Nora caught his arm and whispered, "Wait a bit!" She looked past him at her father, who was still fidgeting in his place at table. "What do you say, father?" she asked calmly. "Do you wish me to do this or not?"

"I see no reason, my dear, why you shouldn't," returned her father nervously. "It is only philanthropic to treat your employees with consideration. I heard of a man once who had a roof-garden on his factory. I don't see, my dear, why you shouldn't sing that song for the sailors, since Captain Healy seems to think it would help make them contented in this awful place."

Nora Lee watched her father an instant after he had ceased speaking. Then she turned to Healy. "Very well," she said quietly, "I will do it."

"Thank you very kindly, Miss Nora. I felt quite certain that you would," said Healy, moving amiably away.

"You shall not do it if you don't want to!" said Stuart forcibly.

"How cowardly you must think me," she made answer. "Do you suppose I can't do my part?"

He looked at her in silence, the admiration he cherished for her sheer youthful pluck shining unrestrainedly from his eyes. She turned away in a little trouble from the look. "I am growing boastful," she said with a flush and an uncertain laugh. "Dr. Berwind, will you open the piano, please?"

As the three of them crossed the saloon to the instrument, the shuffling of many feet

became audible on the deck, and in a moment or more the men came piling down the companionway.

It was a grim spectacle, as it met Nora's eyes when she seated herself at the piano and ran her fingers faintly over the keys. Her face went white with the look of it. Flushed with liquor and inflamed to what unknown degree by the sense of their new and increasing power, the ugly brutish faces of the men, rising one tier above another as they crowded close upon the stairs, regarded her with unendurable leers of triumphant force.

Stuart, watching intently, saw the new pallor and horror of her face. Instantly he stepped between her and the men upon the stairs, and, leaning his elbows on the side of the music-rest of the piano, looked her squarely in the face. "Keep your eyes on me, Miss Nora; sing the song to me. Remember that I stand between you and any danger with my soul and body.

"Berwind," he added more loudly, without releasing Nora's eyes from his, "stand over there and watch the men; I want to use your face as a mirror."

Gravely Berwind complied. As he took his stand where he thought Stuart could most easily observe him, he noticed that Mr. Lee's place at table was empty. The man had seized the opportunity to slip away.

FOREMOST of the men and lounging considerably in advance of them by habit of his familiarity with the room, was Levine. He had moved to one side as Stuart interposed his broad back between the girl at the piano and her audience, so that he still might see her. A little more liquor since the serving of dinner had not abated his insolence and his infatuation. The glances that he flung at her she partly saw, but kept her eyes on Stuart's eyes and never flinched.

With head bent, her eyes now on Stuart, now on the keys of the piano, she began to sing. Her voice trembled and choked at first, but gradually gained volume and grew confident:

"Down she came as white as milk,
A rose in her bosom, as soft as silk—"

The delicate little song, so inappropriately the favorite of these hulking brutes of men, rang prettily out upon the air. Stuart, alert and watching, could hear the heated breathing of the half-drunken creatures behind him. The revolver in his pocket helped him to endure. All the while his eyes held hers, and he smiled at her brave smile.

The song reached the wailing minor of the chorus, when, with an unexpected suddenness that fairly spun Stuart around with his hand going instinctively to the revolver pocket, the men took up the repetition of the chorus and roared it with a wild volume of sound that drowned the tones of the piano:

"My Rose, my Rose!
But they'll never wake my Rose Marie!"

Nora had ceased to sing and to smile, but she played on while the men drunkenly shouted the wailing lines of the song and Levine's sinister eyes continued to assail her.

CHAPTER XXXII

A MILLION DOLLARS

BERWIND meanwhile had turned from his watching of the men to cast keen, expectant glances at that open doorway of the port corridor leading to his own room and Mr. Lee's. He calculated the amount of time that would elapse between his patient's discovery of his loss and his ascertaining just how thorough the search had been. Now he was at the crack's door in the floor, now at the shaving-powder, now at the hem of the dressing-gown. Oh, the sadness of it all! He could picture the crouching figure, feeling with trembling, sodden fingers in the crevices where it had secreted the destroying drug, a groveling caricature of the splendid man.

Finally, unable to endure the suspense and not at all sure that he might not spare Nora something by going to meet the enraged invalid, he started across the saloon: As he did so, the expected figure appeared in the doorway.

Berwind instinctively paused and looked at him, taking the measure of his mood. He had expected anything. But surprise fairly swung him off his feet as Mr. Lee approached him frankly and with a smile.

"You found me out then, didn't you?" he said lightly. "Sit down a minute. I want to talk to you."

Mechanically Berwind obeyed. The place

at the table he sank into was Nora's. Her bonbons were still there. Mr. Lee dropped into Berwind's own place.

Across the room poor Nora's brave little voice had begun upon the second verse.

"I want to talk to you quite rationally," said Mr. Lee. "We do a great deal of play-acting in this life, and I think there is more between a doctor and a patient with nerves than in any other combination. I'm sure we have done quite enough of it, you and I. Now, let's talk quite sensibly."

He settled himself more comfortably and threw an encouraging smile at Berwind. Of the mass of men on the companionway, of his daughter in the ignominious position of being forced to sing for the drunken wretches, he seemed quite oblivious, or at any rate indifferent.

"I am a morphin fiend. Cheerful appellation! The drug has eaten its way into my body, as the worms will do another day. I am infested with the foul appetite. You see I do not mince words. I have become another man. I am no longer any use in the world. I am a grief and a shame to my own daughter.

"You see, we are not mincing words now, my dear Berwind. You have done very well, you have been very patient and very forbearing. I dare say I have been trying at times, rude and all that. I assure you I did not mean it. Please forgive me!" He flashed his old open-hearted, brilliant smile at Berwind, and the Doctor caught his breath in the glow of it. This was the Mr. Lee of the old days. Was the man possibly sincere?

Was he perhaps going to begin again, going to give Berwind another chance? The thought gave a glow to the physician's heart. With the honest endeavor of his patient, he might save Nora's father for her yet.

"I have not got long to live, Berwind, —— those men, how they startled me!" The chorus from the crowded stairway had broken out suddenly again. Then with a gesture dismissing the subject, Mr. Lee went back quietly to the other matter. "As I was saying, you and I know well that I have not long to live. And being eaten to death with worms is not a cheerful process to look forward to. I shall not be able to pull myself out of this mire. I know that. My very desire to do so is worm-eaten as well. I shall simply sink deeper and deeper into the appetite until I disappear."

"Believe me, sir, if you would only——" burst out Berwind, his voice throbbing with the intensity of his desire to put new determination into the man.

BUT Mr. Lee cut him short sharply. "I tell you it is out of the question. The struggle is too great. I haven't the heart for it. What is there in it for me, anyway? I have lived my life. I should never be anything but an invalid, no matter if I did fling off the gnawing worms. Better let them finish the job, I say, now they have begun!" He cast a sidelong look at Berwind and fumbled in his pocket as he went on speaking.

"No blame attaches itself to you. Do you want Nora to live through years of this sort of thing, going about with me in this half-crazy state and seeing me dissolve slowly from the father that she loved into a terrifying bogey that is dying of its very self? Think what it would be for her to remember me as I am now, more or less. Think what years of suffering she would be spared. And what is there in it for you and me except as it is done for her? Give me back the morphia, Berwind."

He put out his hand and laid something down on the table before Berwind's eyes. Berwind looked at it, stared at it. The mute eloquence of it was far more effective than if it had come heralded and announced.

It was a check for one million dollars!

"You need not be afraid of its not being good," said Mr. Lee with a laugh. "Take it up, man, take it up! And for the love of God give me the morphia quickly!" His voice changed abruptly from a nervous lightness to a tragic intensity. Nora Lee had begun to sing another verse, her soft voice vibrating in the saloon as steadily now as if the four of them were there alone together.

Berwind put out his hand and picked up the check.

Mr. Lee, his eyes glittering with suppressed excitement, leaned forward with a smile. "That's right, that's right, my dear fellow! In the merest humanity you could do no less! You'll take it, won't you? And give me the morphia?"

Berwind folded the check into a small square and tore it across and across. "Certainly not, Mr. Lee," he replied quietly.

The change in the man was instantaneous and far more appalling than he had antici-

pated. The maddened and defeated maniac, for he was little more, sprang to his feet, his white face showing vastly more fiery in the gray twilight of the room than if it had been flushed and red. His hands at arm's length gesticulated about his head, and his mouth was distorted, like a child's in crying, to the hideous square of the old Greek masks. Nora's music had stopped as suddenly, and the very drunken sailors on the steps shrank back before the exhibition of unbridled rage.

Mr. Lee broke off in his tirade against Berwind as he noticed this movement among the men, and he incontinently abandoned one for the other.

"Get out of this, you wharf-rats!" he screamed, flinging himself like a temper-maddened child across the saloon toward the stairway. "What the —— do you mean crowding into my quarters? I'll have you put in irons! I'll have you whipped!" The incoherent phrases of his frantic wrath poured out like the curses of a frenzied prophet as he advanced on them. Even Levine and Healy retreated before him. The lower steps of the companionway were quite deserted when he reached them.

"Blyme if 'e haint gone rootey!" said Levine, shaking and white and pressing back against the men behind him.

And Svenson's raucous voice was suddenly heard above him. "T'e curse, t'e curse, ah hear of it in Reykjavik, t'e rage of t'e Berseker cooms ubon him!"

It precipitated the stampede. Under the panic of this terror-stricken utterance and the advance of Mr. Lee's maniacal figure, the men fled, falling over one another on the narrow stairs in their cowardly anxiety to get away.

Berwind had half followed him, and in doing so crossed nearer to Stuart and to Nora. The latter, her face a blank of inability to comprehend at all what was the matter, leaned weakly against the piano. Stuart closed in with Berwind.

"Madness?"

"It may be. Only temporary, I think. See that he doesn't attempt to hurt her, won't you?"

The question needed no answer. As the madman turned from the deserted stairs, Stuart went back a step or two to be near her.

"Berwind," cried Mr. Lee, the fierceness of his passion still glowing in his face, "I shall die, I shall die! For the love of God give me more morphia! I can't stand it! You are killing me!" He seemed about to attack the Doctor, but the latter made no movement to avoid him. "You see, I am ill. It is your duty to give me what I need. I command you! Good God, am I not the master of this yacht? I command you, sir!"

"If you will come with me, Mr. Lee, and let me help you to bed, I will begin a new routine with you, as before."

"No, no, no, no!" he screamed. "That means less and less every day. I want more and more. I must have it! I shall have it! I shall go mad! Nora, Nora, my daughter, plead for me, darling! The Doctor won't deny you anything. You know he loves you, Nora. Ask him, dear. Ask him, Nora. Tell him to give me all the morphia I want!"

She shrank back from him faintly as if she were at a loss to recognize him under such a disfigurement. And Mr. Lee, seeing the movement, turned furiously again upon the Doctor.

"She won't do it!" he said insanely. "She won't do it! But I tell you what I will do —I'll make her marry you, Berwind, if you'll give me the morphia! So help me God I will! She'll have to obey me. I'll make her! She'll have to give herself to you, Berwind; and she's a beauty as well as a rich girl, too, mind you. Eh? Eh?" The look he flung at Berwind fairly sickened him. Almost he could find it in his heart to say, "This man is better dead."

Nora Lee, with a low, horrified cry, had dropped back in her place at the piano and hidden her face upon her arms. Stuart went nearer her and guarded over her. He would have given his remaining years to have spared her this unforgettable scene of degradation.

The silence that had suddenly come down upon the turmoil of a moment since made him at last turn in some surprise to look at the enraged invalid and his caretaker. To his amazement he found Mr. Lee standing at the open porthole, looking out, while Berwind watched him intently from the middle of the room.

The outburst had been so unlooked for, so violent and of such short duration that now, in the amazing quietude that had settled down, it seemed as if perhaps the whole insane convulsion of order had been a long

hallucination of his own. But in a few moments Mr. Lee turned back. He was quiet again, but there was an unctuous servility in his manner that added fresh surprises to Stuart's already abundant store.

"I ask your pardon, all of you," said Mr. Lee. "My nervous physical condition must plead for me, and yet I quite admit even that is insufficient excuse for such an exhibition. I am very sorry. And I think the best thing that we can do is all to go to bed and try to forget this very dreadful evening. What do you say?"

Stuart tried to answer, but his dry tongue made no sound. He believed afterward that he nodded.

"Yes, I am sure of it," said Mr. Lee as humbly as before. "We will all go to bed, won't we? We will all go to bed. Good-night! And again, please forgive me. Good-night all! Yes, I am sure that is the best thing to do—we will all go to bed!" He made a shaking gesture of farewell and went falteringly toward the corridor. They heard him repeating as he went down to his own door: "We will all go to bed, I am sure that is best, we will all go to bed!"

Stuart crossed to Berwind and drew him out of the room, leaving the girl alone.

(TO BE CONTINUED)

by George Barton

The Adventure of the Anonymous Cards

A Tale of the Adventure Syndicate Ltd.

BARNES, Forward, and Clancy were spending an evening "at home." They sat in the bachelor apartment at Washington Square, puffing and smoking until the room resembled a locomotive roundhouse. The old man was in a reminiscent mood, and he told his young friends of many interesting and thrilling events of his earlier life.*

In the midst of the talk, Clancy began idly handling some postal-cards that lay on the table. He picked one up and unthinkingly read aloud, "It's never too late to mend."

Instantly he realized his indiscretion and exclaimed, "Chief, I hope you'll excuse me. I really didn't intend to read your personal letters!"

Barnes laughed.

"You may have 'em all if you want 'em."

Forward joined Clancy in a stare of mild surprise. "For four consecutive days I received a postal-card without date, address, or signature. Each one contained an enigmatical proverb or warning typewritten on

* Bromley Barnes, formerly chief of a detective bureau, his faithful factotum Cornelius Clancy, and his lawyer friend Forward have for their amusement formed "The Adventure Syndicate, Limited," to give Barnes a chance to prove that even present-day New York abounds in mystery, romance and adventure.—THE EDITOR.

the face of it. On the fifth day none came. After that, four in daily succession."

"May I examine them?" asked Forward.

"Certainly," and the old man tossed the cards to the lawyer.

Forward scrutinized them carefully and with gradually wrinkling brows. The sentences on the cards could hardly be regarded as threats, and yet some of them might be twisted into warnings.

They were as follows:

"Brag's a good dog, but Holdfast's a better."

"Love me little, love me long."

"Like master, like man."

"Time and tide wait for no man."

"Rob Peter to pay Paul."

"A man's house is his castle."

"Crosses are ladders that lead to heaven."

"Years know more than books."

After some minutes the young man looked up with an impotent sigh.

"It's too deep for me, Chief. What do you make of it?"

"I make nothing of it," snapped the old man irritably; "the cards are anonymous. That's enough for me. What's the use of talking about such silly things?"

They smoked in silence for some moments. Presently the old man's eye was attracted by the calendar. It was an enormous affair, with the date of each day of the year printed on a separate sheet of paper.

The Chief riveted his eye on the two figures that stood out conspicuously against the smoke-laden atmosphere—23.

"By Jove!" he exclaimed, "but that's a reminder that I must send a telegram to the Warden at Sing Sing!"

"The Warden—Sing Sing?" repeated Forward.

"Well," said the Chief indulgently, "you boys were not in this affair, but I'm sure you'll be interested in it. It concerns Bill Tracy, whom I consider to be one of the cleverest crooks on two continents. I've always felt this deep down in my heart, but I'd never admit it to Bill. He takes more chances than any man in the business, and he's as slippery as an eel, but he tried the game once too often, and now he's being fed and lodged at the expense of the Commonwealth.

"It happened in this way. He went into an express office in broad daylight and stole five thousand dollars in bank-notes from the cash-drawer!"

"How?" asked the astonished Irishman.

"You've seen those express offices. Half a dozen clerks doing routine. Well, in this particular office the clerk who had charge of the cash-drawer wore a linen duster much bespattered with ink. Another one of this fellow's personal fads was a green shade that he wore over his eyes. He usually went out to lunch about noon and returned a little before one o'clock.

"One day he came in ahead of the usual hour. At least, the other clerks thought so. They paid no attention to the man who walked in behind them wearing the green shade and the ink-bespattered duster. Later, they thought a great deal about it. They discovered that the money-drawer had been rifled. Also, they felt pretty cheap when they learned that Bill Tracy, aided only by the green shade and the duster, had taken the money from under their very eyes.

"Well, to make a long story short, I captured Tracy. He was tried, convicted, and given five years in Sing Sing. That was thirty days ago—the 23rd of last month. He's been on parole, but was scheduled to go to the penitentiary this morning. The date on that calendar reminds me that I must telegraph to the Warden that I wish to lodge a detainer against Tracy."

"A detainer?"

"Yes; when his five-year term expires I have enough evidence on other charges to keep him in prison for ten years more. But it's necessary for me to lodge a formal detainer against the fellow."

"How did he take his conviction?"

"Oh, as blandly and as smilingly as ever. But I made him wince. I told him that he was a bungler; that only a child in the infant class of crime could have been detected and arrested under the circumstances. But in reality his capture was a bit of sheer good luck on my part."

THE telephone bell rang furiously as though some important person were demanding a hearing.

The old man answered the call.

"Is that Bromley Barnes?" came from the other end of the wire.

"Yes."

"Well, you are wanted at One Hundred

and Sixty-eighth Street—at the first drug store near Seventh Avenue. The druggist there will give you an important message."

"But ——" began the Chief.

"That's all. Please come at once!" and the speaker hung up the receiver.

Barnes was mad and mystified. He repeated the conversation to his two assistants.

"Still," said Clancy, "there may be an adventure in it!"

Barnes pretended to be arranging the volumes in his bookcase. He lit a fresh stogie. He talked in an inconsequential way. They both recognized the symptoms. He was preparing to yield to the lure of the mysterious telephone call.

"Boys," he said finally, "there *might* be something in that message."

"It don't seem right to ignore it," responded Forward argumentatively.

"You might never forgive yourself," chimed in Clancy.

"Well, we'll go," declared the old man decisively, "and on the way I'll send that Tracy telegram to Sing Sing."

They started at once. Clancy, who was the last, paused to look at some bright object fastened to the outside panel of the door. Barnes noticed the halt and said in a half-embarrassed tone:

"Don't you recognize that?"

"No, I don't."

The old man turned up the gas in the hallway. Clancy and Forward stooped down to take a look.

"Why, it's your picture!" exclaimed the lawyer.

"Yes," said the detective, "it's my photograph with an autograph attached. It's a little whim of mine. I had it screwed on there under that bit of plate glass. It's intended to serve notice on would-be robbers that I'm master of this house. The moment they see that—and I'm not trying to brag—they'll run away as fast as their legs will carry them. You know the old saying, 'an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.' This is a preventive."

"Suppose, though," said Forward, on second thought, "some thief should come along that did not know you or had never heard of you?"

Clancy stared at his colleague with undisguised scorn.

"The crook that never heard of the old man," he said," is too insignificant to talk about. A fellow like that—if there is such a stupid person—wouldn't be fit to rob children's play banks!"

Barnes laughed softly. He was human and not insensible to praise. They hurried down-stairs and out through the arch and up Fifth Avenue. The detective halted at the first telegraph office. While he went in, Clancy and Forward stood outside and discussed the strange adventure.

The old man selected a desk in the corner of the office and wrote his telegram:

Will be up Monday to lodge detainers against Bill Tracy, confidence man. Meanwhile, accept wire as evidence of my intentions.

In searching for his fountain pen, the Chief pulled out an empty envelope on which his name and address were typewritten. He laid this on the desk while he was scrawling his telegram. As he finished he discovered that some one was looking over his shoulder.

"Clancy! Clancy!" he said laughingly, "you're more curious than a woman."

But a strange voice answered him,

"I beg your pardon, but you've dropped something."

He turned sideways and saw a light object fluttering in the air. He bent over to pick it up. It proved to be a piece of blank paper. He turned impatiently to speak to the stranger, but he was gone—and so was the empty envelope.

He was very much chagrined over the incident, but he despatched his telegram and joined his two friends. He questioned them guardedly concerning the people that had gone in and out of the telegraph office, but their replies threw no light on the curious happening.

After a conference lasting but a few minutes they took a taxi to the One Hundred and Sixty-eighth Street address. Barnes was strangely irritable. All three were burning with anticipation, but they managed to stifle the questions that were on the tips of their tongues and made the long ride in Quaker-like silence.

HOWEVER, they finally reached their destination. It was a conventional up-town drug-store. There are hundreds precisely like it in New York City. The proprietor, a pale-faced young man, came to meet them.

"You have a message for me?" questioned the detective.

"Are you Bromley Barnes?"

"I have that honor."

The druggist gave a sigh of relief.

"I'm glad you came. I'm glad to get this message off my hands."

"What is it?"

"Well, you are to go on up four blocks and ring the bell of the fourth house from the corner on this side of the street. You are to go there at exactly ten o'clock, and when the woman comes to the door you are to say that you came to see about the papering of the third story back. She will escort you to that room."

"What are we to do then?"

"You are to be guided by circumstances —by what you find."

"Gee!" ejaculated Clancy, unable to restrain his feelings, "this beats a tale from the 'Arabian Nights'!"

"Who gave you this message?" asked Barnes, assuming a cold and formal tone that was intended to quench the ardor of his assistant.

"An old man."

"Didn't you think it a peculiar message?" he asked.

"I did, indeed. I refused to have anything to do with it at first, but he pressed a ten-spot in my hand, and before you could say 'Jack Robinson,' he had dashed out of the door and was gone. After receiving such a fee I felt bound to follow his instructions to the letter. One of the conditions was that I was not to ask any questions and not to attempt to pry into his secret. I hope I haven't done anything wrong, Mr. Barnes."

"I hope not," retorted the old man dryly, "but that remains to be seen."

It was a few minutes of ten, but, jumping into the taxi, the three adventurers reached the door of the appointed house just as the hour was striking.

They rang the bell, and a woman answered the summons.

"We came to see about the papering of the third story back," said Barnes, glibly repeating his lesson with parrot-like correctness.

"Come right up, gentlemen!" she said.

They followed her along the narrow stairway, but before doing so each one felt in his hip-pocket to make sure of a friend that had served him in many an hour of need. If they were being led into an ambuscade they would, at least, give their lives dearly. On the way the detective made an attempt to draw the woman out.

"Who occupies the third story back?"

"An old gentleman."

"Has he been with you long?"

"No, he only came this afternoon. He engaged the room for a liberal price and gave me a week's rent in advance. He seemed awfully strange to me. His only requirement was that I was to be at the door at ten o'clock and let you gentlemen in. I was to lead you to the landing and let you go to the room yourselves. Here it is. I'll carry out his directions by leaving you."

The light in the hallway was quite dim. For a moment the three men stood there irresolute. Then Clancy, with a pretense at courage which he did not feel, caught the knob of the door of the third story back and threw it open. Barnes and Forward marched into the room with their hands on the triggers of their pistols. Clancy struck a match and lit the gas.

The room was empty!

With a feeble smile, they took their hands off their weapons. Barnes made a hasty appraisement of his surroundings. A sheet of paper lay on a table in the center of the room. It was the form and size of the blanks used by physicians in writing prescriptions. The old man picked it up. Clancy and Forward looked over his shoulder. This is what they read, written in a bold, cheerful hand:

A wild-goose chase has been known to cure an aggravated case of swelled head.

Barnes dropped the slip and it fluttered to the floor. The young man looked at him sidewise, but his face betrayed no emotion whatever.

He spoke coldly, "Let's go down-town."

They followed him into the awaiting cab. They hadn't gone many blocks when they were suddenly halted. Barnes poked his head out of the window. A man stood in the middle of the street, wildly gesticulating. It was the pale druggist who had delivered the message only a short time before.

"I want to see you!" shouted the excited one.

"I guess I want to see you," grunted the Chief.

"I've been cheated!" yelled the druggist.

"I guess I've been hoodwinked myself," chuckled the old man.

"Why not ask him what he wants?" suggested Clancy with undreamed-of wisdom.

"A good suggestion," laughed the detective, whose natural good humor was returning rapidly. "Say, Mr. What's-your-name, what do you want, anyhow?"

"You know the man that left the message for you? Well, that ten-dollar bill he gave me was a counterfeit!"

A chorus of laughter, the banging-to of a cab door, and the machine shot off, leaving an angry apothecary standing in the middle of the road, shaking his fist and calling on high heaven for vengeance.

WHEN the creaking vehicle drew up in front of the Washington Square apartments each of the three men involuntarily experienced a queer sensation—a sort of mental sensing that something had happened.

The appearance of the housekeeper, Mrs. Hobbs, with glaring eyes and disheveled hair, did not tend to dispel their apprehension. It was some moments before the good woman could muster sufficient breath to express herself.

"He had the letter, Mr. Barnes," she said, gasping; "he had indeed, or I'd never have admitted him! Indeed, I wouldn't! You know that, Mr. Barnes. You know——"

"I'd know a good deal more if you'd tell me what you're trying to talk about!" was the impatient retort."

"Why," she exclaimed, with eyes wide open at the idea of any one not grasping her explanation, "why, the man and the letter and——"

The Chief raised his hand for silence.

"One moment, Mrs. Hobbs. Your news seems too portentous for a single sentence. We'll have to chop it up in little bits for mental digestion."

Mrs. Hobbs stared at her star lodger as though he had gone mad.

"Now," resumed the Chief, "take the man first. Who was he? What was he and why was he?"

The affair, in Mrs. Hobbs's eyes, was too tragic for smiles. She spoke gravely, if somewhat incoherently.

"Why, sir, he came here a little while after you left to take the measure for the new rug."

"I wanted no new rug!" said Barnes.

"That's what I said, sir. But he persisted, and said you would be very angry if I did not let him in. He said to-day was your birthday—the 23rd, you know—and that the rug was to be a present from an admirer. Besides, he showed me the letter with your name on it. He said that was his authority. He——"

Barnes groaned.

"The envelope that was nipped from me in the telegraph office!"

"We don't know yet what's happened," said Clancy, looking at Mrs. Hobbs.

"We'll find out for ourselves," said Barnes, starting at a double-quick pace for his rooms. The first evidence that something had happened was on the door. The photograph and autograph of the Chief had been pried off the panel. The bit of plate glass that covered it lay on the floor, broken. They entered the room. It was in confusion. An empty champagne bottle and some cracker dishes and a cheese-holder proved that the uninvited visitor had enjoyed himself. A note was pinned to the tablecloth. It read:

So sorry you were not at home when I called. However, I partook of your hospitality and enjoyed it immensely. I want to congratulate you on your wine. It was just dry enough to suit my taste. I have taken your photo and autograph as the memento of a very delightful occasion.

Barnes said something that sounded very much like "damn." While he was trying to form an estimate of his probable losses a telegram came from the Warden of Sing Sing. It conveyed the regrettable information that Mr. Bill Tracy, by impersonating a workman, had managed to elude his keepers and escape.

The Chief was so flabbergasted by this unexpected news that he had to sit down to recover his wind. Forward looked very grave, but Clancy, in his trivial way, was fooling with the postal-cards on the table. Mrs. Hobbs had handed in another since their return, so that there were nine cards in all.

Forward, happening to glance at the calendar, noticed a penciled note under the date. He went closer, and this is what he discovered:

23
B. B.'s Jonah Day.

The lawyer could not restrain a smile, but he forbore to say anything to the Chief.

The old man had troubles enough. Clancy was still fooling with the postal-cards, building and rebuilding them as a child does with toy blocks. Suddenly the irrepressible let out a shriek of the war-whoop variety.

"What's the matter!" snapped Forward, whose nerves were on edge.

"I've got it!" shouted Clancy, jumping to his feet,

"Got what?"

"Nine cards. They form a perfect acrostic!"

"An acrostic?"

"Yes, don't you know," he cried impatiently, "a sort of puzzle by which you form words out of the first letters of each line or sentence."

Clancy laid the cards out in order on the table.

One glance was sufficient. The acrostic solved the problem of the whole night's misadventures:

Brag's a good dog, but Holdfast's a better.
It's never too late to mend.
Love me little, love me long.
Like master, like man.

Time and tide wait for no man.
Rob Peter to pay Paul.
A man's house is his castle.
Crosses are ladders that lead to heaven.
Years know more than books.

"Boys," said the old man weakly, "if you don't mind, I think I'll go to bed. I need the rest!"

Barnes bade them good night cheerfully enough, but he looked a bit sheepish.

"Boys," he repeated, in farewell, "keep this night's business a dead secret. If the newspapers ever got hold of it they'd laugh me out of New York!"

Lost Treasures under the English Flag

Gold and Jewels still waiting to be found by some Modern ADVENTURER

by Buffington Phillips

TREASURES where the cows find them; treasures which the divers can see, but cannot reach; treasures where only superstitious fears stand in the way of recovery—such is the state of affairs in and about Great Britain proper, one of the richest fields in the world for the treasure-hunting adventurers.

The most ardent seeker of these troves was King John. Most of his time was spent in hunting buried treasures of other centuries, assembling the gold and jewels of England and burying them again. Only those groups of known value and of certain or nearly certain location can be mentioned in this article, so numerous are they.

It was known that the King had knowledge, gleaned from old documents, that the

Romans, during the time of their occupation, had great quantities of gold, silver, jewels and plate in a fashionable resort in the north of England, and, being cut off in the rear by an invasion of Picts and Scots, buried it in a vast trove near the old Roman wall in Northumberland.

King John made extensive explorations and found a large cache made at a later period, but did not find the more important store of wealth. He removed his find to Hermitage Castle, and, according to all accounts, the masonry of the wall was opened from the outside and the treasure hidden once again.

THE GOLDEN CHAIN OF THE ROMANS

ONCE since his day the true clue to the Roman cache was found and lost again through the brutality and stupidity of some English county officials in Northumberland.

Two poor and ignorant farm laborers were working in a field on the line of the old Roman ruin one day and sat down, in the shade of a heap of stones, for their lunch. Idly, they turned over a large stone, and in the bottom of the cavity left they saw an enormously heavy chain.

Pushing away the dirt until they could get hold of it, they drew it out. It was several feet in length and weighed enough to make a burden for both of them. Seemingly it was brass, and they left it till the next day, when they were working with a cart. At evening they loaded it in the cart and carried it home, leaving it against the wall of the stable as a curious but useless find.

One Sunday when idling with some neighbors they fell to discussing the chain, and one of the neighbors scraped it with a knife. He said it looked and felt more like gold than brass and was very soft. Taking a broken link to the market when he next went, the elder of the two finders submitted it to a jeweler, who pronounced it solid gold of a very fine quality.

The neighbor, who had made the discovery of the nature of the find, thought he should have half and be let in on the secret of the remainder. This was refused, so he informed the authorities, and the two peasants were arrested, spent a long period in jail, and, as a result of the ill treatment, one of them went insane.

The other had steadfastly refused to disclose the spot where the chain was found, having taken an oath when he was flogged in prison that he would never tell any one. This was his method of getting even and it proved very effective.

KING JOHN'S TREASURE-TROVE

IT IS CURIOUS indeed that the termination of the great treasure hunter and hider's career should be marked by the interment of wealth in an amount as great, or greater, than that involved in any of his previous exploits.

In his historic flight, King John's party carried with it not only an enormous treasure in the store of gold that represented the royal funds, but a cumbersome weight of treasures he had acquired, and more valuable to-day than all the others—the full regalia, crown jewels, and insignia of the great orders of which the King was head.

The British Museum and the various orders would pay at least $25,000,000 for the recovery of these, and yet it does not seem a difficult matter. Some individual or syndicate with the proper backing could easily look up the circumstances as contained in the old records and make a consistent, determined effort.

The royal fugitive and retinue were riding in mad haste around the dip of the Wash, and the animals on which the precious load was carried mired so frequently in the lowlands that it was decided to cache the treasure.

The King and a few faithful noblemen superintended the work, impressing some peasants for the labor. The records state distinctly that the interment took place precisely where the road crosses the river to Lynn.

The old road ran where there is now a morass in Spring and Fall, baked dry in Summer. A few years ago, during the drought season, some farmers, sinking a well so as to water the cattle that were feeding on the marsh grass, struck an odd crown of solid gold, but made no further excavation.

By the time London heard of the find, the season had changed and the spot was a swamp once more. There is no question in my mind, after reading all accounts, that the treasure is there and can be excavated with a steam shovel floated on a barge into the mouth of the great Ouse.

IN 1799, when England was at war with the Netherlands, H. M. S. *Lutine* sailed from Yarmouth for Cuxhaven. She sank off the island of Veieland, at the mouth of the Zuyder Zee, and only two of those aboard were rescued. She carried gold and silver specie. It was later learned that she was insured for $5,941,665.

In 1800, boatmen succeeded in fishing up about $275,000, and in 1857 English divers recovered $250,000, principally in gold and silver bars.

Meanwhile, the sand covers her more and more each year. Last February the National Salvage Association, having fitted out an expedition with the latest dredging apparatus and suction pumps, started operations. They expect to recover several millions in specie.

THE SUNKEN MILLIONS OF THE SPANISH ARMADA

THE United Kingdom was literally girdled with sunken treasure in the latter part of the sixteenth century. Sir Francis Drake returned in 1580 from his great journey of exploration to California, and he had an adequate idea of the vast amount of gold which was being carried in Spanish ships from Mexico and South America to Spain. As a matter of fact, there was so much of it in Spain that the possessors did not know what to do with it, and the idea of the great Armada may have been conceived as much to find a glorious means of expending the royal wealth and the wealth of the ambitious nobles as to have a method of diverting the attention of the poorer classes, who were very little better off in spite of the flood of gold that had come to the Peninsula.

However that may be, the great Armada is usually considered a magnificent adventure which was meant to crush the power of England at sea and to humble the kingdom to a state of practical vassalage to Spain, her bitter enemy.

If the adventure had succeeded it would have changed all history. Undoubtedly we would be speaking Spanish instead of English in this country to-day. When, however, one goes into the details of the attempt there comes the conviction that it was an expression of mob-mania, something in which some twenty or thirty thousand brave men and their friends went entirely against what would have been their cool individual judgment.

The English ships were well-trimmed, meagerly fitted vessels for war—war and nothing else. The Spanish ships had, in some cases, silken sails, many splendid canopies on poop decks, gold-mounted cannon, and even the lowest estimated accounts say that from seventy to one hundred millions in Spanish gold and silver was the sum total in treasure distributed among eighty great ships. The useless imperilling of such an amount of wealth is not to be explained, save by the theory that Spain was gold and silver mad.

How Sir Francis Drake and the British admirals and captains fell on the fleet and scattered it, how in battle after battle it was worsted, is a matter of history familiar to every one. The bulk of the Armada, driven by a great storm, was hurried into the North Sea and, vainly endeavoring to circle by the Orkneys and Shetlands and get back to the Bay of Biscay through the Minches, the North Channel, Irish Sea, and St. George's Channel, was wrecked in strange waters.

It is impossible in brief space to go into detail concerning all of these rich sunken wrecks. Each of them that is known has its more or less definite history and from some of them millions of dollars' worth of trappings and treasure were recovered in the years following soon after the gigantic disaster.

Those from which there has been no recovery or only a partial recovery lie as follows: Near St. Heliers, on the island of Jersey; on the north side of Alderney, close to Portland Bill; on the south coast of England; off Brighton; between Harwick and Lowestoft on the desolate Yorkshire coast; south of Flamborough Head; two among the Farne Islands; the Firth of Forth, under Buchan Ness; on the west coast of Pomona; on Yell; on Lewes; near desolate Iona off the Mull; three off the coast of Argyll; at Tobermory; in Bantry Bay, Ireland; and several on the coast of Wales, between St. David's Head and Braich-y-pwll.

On Ru Rea the people pray for storms, because the waves strew the beach with old Spanish gold. In Enard Bay the fishermen say that on clear days there is a spot so thickly strewn with gold that it reflects the lights.

At Tobermory the galleon is very definitely located, and scores of divers have descended to within a few yards of it where they can see the broken chests of treasure, the gold poured out within easy reach apparently. But there is a treacherous cross-current which wrenches at the air-pipes, and any diver who ventures into that current loses his life, drowning helplessly in his helmet. Still, divers continue to descend every favorable season, hoping to find the current weakened or changed. When one of them does reach the treasure he will acquire a great fortune in a few hours' work.

One of the Spanish Armada ships, the *Florencia*, went ashore in the Sound of Mull in 1588. She had a vast treasure aboard, and when she was attacked by a band of Scots her commander blew her up. The Duke of Argyll spent a fortune in the search. His ancestors have been hunting since 1664, and in 1667 an announcement was made public that the old records showed that there was $30,000,000 in money on her, besides the gold and silver plate. None of it has ever been recovered, although the Argyll family have the full information of where the wreck lies.

THE TREASURE THAT A COW FOUND

THE Cavalier treasure of Marston Moor is another famous cache. For centuries the villagers near the historic field where the Roundheads and Cavaliers contended have been thrown into great excitement by finds of gold-pieces and by the arrival of parties of strangers who the villagers imagine have come to look for the treasure.

Four insurance inspectors on their way to adjust a fire loss stopped over night at Marston, and got up in the morning to find the entire populace gathered under the windows of the inn waiting for their appearance and prepared to watch them as they exhumed the treasure-chest of the Cavalier army.

The story of this trove is that before the battle, owing to the necessity of shifting headquarters of the King's government so often, the army funds in four chests, each of which could be transported *en pannier* between two large horses, was brought to the Cavalier camp. A sudden descent of the Roundhead cavalry cut off the treasure and its guardian, who held out stubbornly till dark, then buried the treasure hastily.

The Cavaliers retreated, expecting to receive reinforcements and regain possession of the treasure, but the battle of Marston Moor followed. The ground was torn up with hoofs, fire swept part of the plain, and the marks were gone, so it has remained undisturbed ever since. No, not quite undisturbed—a village cow found it, but she did not appreciate her advantages and could not have told her master if she had.

It is a well-known fact that when certain forms of stomach trouble affect cows, dogs and other animals, they seek metal oxides, and will swallow nails, rusty iron, and bits of jewelry. This particular cow was so troubled. Her grazing-ground included part of the general locality in which the treasure is known to lie. She was noticed licking the rusty hinges of the pasture gates, licking an old plowshare, and some weeks later she gave evidences of being in great pain. The wiseacres of the village were called in council and decided that she had swallowed something that disagreed with her, and, partly out of curiosity and partly through desire to save the beef by killing her before she died, the owner had an end put to her misery and an autopsy was held. Imagine the excitement when the butchers opened the stomach and, amid nails, bits of iron, and copper, found a number of gold-pieces of the Cavalier treasure and a small latch-lock of the type of which there must have been several on every one of the treasure chests. The soil had been washed or had been plowed over the treasure, and the cow had found it and absorbed her mortal end. The wiseacres then told the owner that if he had but kept the cow alive till she returned to the spot where she had found the treasure he might have watched her and so discovered it. He worried over his folly till he grew so despondent that he hanged himself.

HISTORY is not clear on the subject of the loss of the royal treasure of James I. The story as it is now related is that in his headlong flight he refused to leave the crown jewels, the orders of his family, and the large quantity of gold and silver in the royal coffers in the castle of some loyal nobleman, but carried all of them with him into Wales.

Somewhere not far from Ystradffin, when he was cut off from embarking at Swansea, the King decided to hide the treas-

ire. Consequently, in some cave in a chasm it was put away and subsequent events prevented its recovery. It has been variously estimated at from $5,000,000 to $15,000,000, but its value increases every year on account of the growing value of the historic jewels among the lost hoard.

In the ruins of the Castle near Hastings lies a treasure that dates back to the invasion by Canute the Dane, but the various accounts of it are so confused that it is impossible to say which one is true.

Cornwall, Worm's Head, St. David's Head, and the Goodwin Sands, all localities that once marked the scene of activities of plundering wreckers, have their myriad stories of hidden treasures, but none of them can be of any very great amount.

THE SMUGGLERS' GOLD

THE square face of Gibraltar, made so familiar in America by use in advertising, in reality fronts the landward side. Between the Rock and the mainland runs a flat sandy strip that is neither British nor Spanish. Gibraltar has always been a great haunt of smugglers, and the neutral strip has always been their greatest danger-ground.

In 1870 the dangerous Theron band desisted from smuggling long enough to run some cargoes of arms into Spain for the use of Don Carlos and his army. After securing some $450,000 they set out to effect a retirement from Gibraltar, and made their way to Jaen, where a wealthy merchant was known to have some $600,000, collected in readiness for use in the Carlist cause. Under pretext that they had instructions to deliver a shipload of munitions to him at Malaga, and displaying the documentary evidences of their late deal with Don Carlos, they persuaded the merchant to accompany them on the road to Malaga.

When a fitting opportunity came they murdered him, threw his body into a dry ravine, and with their weight of wealth in gold and English notes, set out for Gibraltar. The body was found sooner than they had expected, and they were pursued. Some ten miles from the neutral ground they were overtaken, and a running fight occurred, in which Gasprey, one of the outlaws, was killed in a most spectacular manner.

He was mounted on a very large donkey with a deep saddle. He was mortally wounded, but did not fall from the saddle; and the perverse animal, turning, galloped headlong toward the pursuers. In the moonlight some of these were greatly frightened by the sight of a man whom bullets could not stop galloping down on them. They turned and ran. Only when the donkey was shot and fell, pitching its dead rider to one side of the road, did the party regain its courage.

The fleeing Theronites had gained quite an advantage through the manner of Gasprey's death, but the three mules that bore the treasure in steel boxes were so weighted that they could not keep the pace. The outlaws desired to make a quiet entry into British territory, and with such a noise as the fusillade made this could not be done.

A hasty plan was formed as they drew near the neutral strip. It was near dawn, and they had to act before the sentries on the Rock could see with glasses from the lookout on the peak just what was going on.

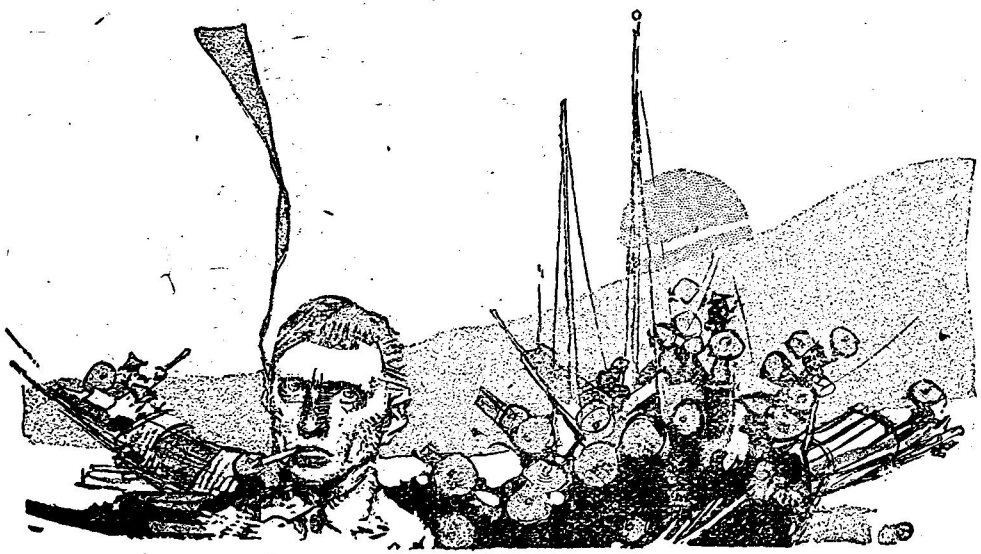
Theron himself, being the poorest shot, owing to his near-sightedness, was selected to drive the three mules to the edge of British territory and hastily bury the treasure while the others made a stand and covered the movement.

Four of the outlaws crouched among the rocks and held the pursuers at bay, anxiously awaiting Theron's return. But when the dawn came they found that he had buried the treasure, turned the mules loose, and was making his way back to them when a bullet had stretched him out dead on the sand.

Seeing this, the four now tried to retreat toward the Rock, one after the other, but they were shot down.

When it was found that there had been over a million dollars in booty with the party, a careful search was begun; but the drifting sand had obliterated the necessary traces and it has never been recovered.

The wind is constantly carrying away the sand on this zone, and the Gitani and others who frequent it keep a sharp eye out for the rusted corner of a steel box. Some day the money will be found; in fact, search with a magnetic instrument could disclose it to-day if some one on the spot only thought of such a device.



The Final Average

by Frank L. Packard

I

HE CALLED himself Richard Watt, but up and down the waterfronts from Singapore to Shanghai in certain circles he was known as the Beast. Furthermore—and this, in a manner, is an eloquent tribute to Richard Watt—he was, probably, the only man on earth that "Red" Mulvey, the most widely known and earnestly cursed "crimp" of Eastern ports, whose haven for sailors flourished in Singapore next door to Gulab Singh's, would hesitate to take any liberties with.

"God made all men," the crimp would sniffle in his pious moments, "an' though it's pretty well covered up an' hard to find, I suppose He put *some* good into 'em an' had a reason for it—all except the Beast. As for him, the only good thing he'll ever do 'll be to die; but, so help me, that'll be so——" Mulvey's adjective, a compound one, lapsed sadly from the pious—"good that he ought to get a halo for it."

No one seemed to know where the Beast came from. They had counted his existence amongst them, that is, amongst the sea-going fraternity, for a matter of three years. Of him and the years before, that they knew nothing—and knew better than to ask. He went to sea occasionally when the mood, not the crimp, seized him, signing mostly for short voyages to the Australian ports.

Between times, ashore, he lived at Mulvey's, and the only thing that his fellow "boarders" admired him for was his ability to wring, when he wanted it, blood from a stone—the stone being the blear-eyed, unkempt Mulvey and the blood being their own money which the crimp robbed them of to the last shilling.

The nature of the Beast's hold over Mulvey was naturally a matter of considerable interest. Rumor had it—and rumor often enough repeated comes at last to be accepted as fact—that at the beginning of all things the Beast fell into the crimp's hands and, the latter's parsimonious nature getting the better of him, or under-estimating the resistance of his proposed victim to withstand drugs, he had used his dope liquor too sparingly when, after pocketing two pounds advance wages from a trusting skipper, he attempted to shanghai Richard Watt.

The Beast awoke from his lethargy and

state of semi-coma before they got him to the landing-stage, flung away like so much chaff the three or four "leeches" employed by the crimp and with one great hand that curled, strangling, around Red Mulvey's neck lifted the wriggling sailor-vulture at arms' length up off his feet and with his free fist beat a tattoo upon the other's countenance that for the time being put it out of all semblance to the form of man. After that he "borrowed" back the two pounds—and had been borrowing it at odd intervals ever since.

The probability is that this was strictly true. The Beast was big enough and powerful enough and tempestuously ferocious enough to have done it. He stood a good six feet two in his stockings and his build was massive—not over heavy, but all muscle. And the marvelous thing about his physique was the fact that, to all outward appearances at least, the sodden, debauched and drunken days in which he passed the time while ashore made no inroads upon it. Not more than thirty-five at the outside, his hair, close-cropped against his skull and once jet black, was beginning to shade white. His face was weather-bronzed and lined a bit, especially where the corners of his mouth drooped down toward his heavy, outflung jaw. His eyes, or rather their expression, seemed wholly incongruous, wholly out of keeping, with the rest of his personality, for they held always, except when he was aroused, a curious lurking light, sensitive, wistful, in their brownish depths.

"A 'ARD nut, that's wot 'e is," said the Hopper, runner and chief of staff to Red Mulvey. "A 'ard nut, my word! But did ye ever 'ark to the smooth tongue of 'im when 'e's peaceful-like? A bloomin' orficer, I'll bet a month's wages, 'e was onct. Wot's be'ind it is a dirty mess, an' that I'll bet on, too—but for —— sake don't tell the Beast I sed so!"

Moody, surly, quick as a flash to take offense; quicker to leap into the brute-like savagery that had earned him his nickname; with an air of dare-devil recklessness that somehow seemed veneer, forced, untrue, as though he were attempting to delude himself and with a snarl and a curse had let go his hold—that was the Beast.

It was late one afternoon in mid-Summer that, lounging half asleep over one of the tables in Mulvey's den, the Beast suddenly roused himself up, placed his two elbows on the unclean table-top and, supporting his head in his hands, gave unceremonious attention to the conversation of two sailors near him.

"Aye," one of the two was saying, "she's just in. Shipped her crew in Shanghai, I reckon, so if you're lookin' for a berth you'll 'ave to whistle—an' that's where you're in luck, my son. I wouldn't ship on the bally hooker for double wages an' the skipper's sofa to sleep on an' no watch to stand. She's a hoodoo boat, an' you can take my word for it that knows."

"How's that?" inquired the other. "I thought she was a new boat. Don't the papers say this is her first trip?"

The first speaker cackled hoarsely.

"Ever hear of the *Mona*, of the New York and Liverpool Mail Line?"

"I dunno. Seems as though mebbe I did. She was wrecked once, wasn't she, years ago? I remember hearin' somew'at about it from a Western Ocean man that drifted into these parts."

"Once! Holy Christmus, she never did anything else but wreck herself from the day she slid off the ways! She begun by drivin' ashore on the Lizard, then she burned her innards out at sea, an' one night in sheer cussedness she sunk plum at her dock in New York. The last I heard of her they was tryin' to float her off from somewheres near the Fastnet where she'd rammed hard an' fast. Ships, as you know, is more or less human an' a little of the tantrum in 'em is to be overlooked, but the *Mona* was just a cross-eyed, man-drownin' trap from the time she was launched. I was a Western Ocean man myself them days. I never shipped on her, no fear! But, Lord, we *knew* her! The Yellow Death, we called her —that was the line's color, you twig? The foc'sle was leery of her from the first, an' I figure the passenger crowd must have come round to the same way of thinkin' from the looks of things."

"Meanin' the *Eastern Empress* out yonder has——"

"Meanin' my eye! D'ye think a brushful of paint along the hull an' a change of names makes a new ship? The *Eastern Empress* is the old *Mona*. I reckon the crowd over there sold her to the Australian Packet Company here—an' were glad to get rid of her at any price. You mark my words, matey, you'll hear from her. You can't change a

ship's nature with a little refittin', not some! Hi, you, Lu, you slant-eyed heathen!"

The Beast raised his head from his hands and looked around the room, as Lu, Mulvey's Chinese dispenser of liquid horrors, shuffled by toward the other table. The Hopper, stretched on two chairs in the far corner, was snoring the hot, torrid afternoon away unmusically. The Beast rose from his seat, crossed the room and kicked the runner roughly.

"Where's Red?" he demanded.

"Hm?" said the Hopper, sitting up and rubbing his eyes. "Red? I dunno."

"Well then, chase yourself into Gulab Singh's and get him! When he isn't anywhere else he's concocting some deviltry there. Tell him I want him and look sharp about it!" The Beast appropriated one of the other's chairs, drew it up to the corner table, after yanking the Hopper to his feet by the collar of his shirt, and sat down to wait.

At the end of ten minutes Mulvey's short, squat figure darkened the doorway. There was a scowl on the never over-pleasant face of the crimp as he joined the Beast.

"WELL, what do you want?" he flung out.

The Beast looked him up and down coolly before he answered.

"I don't know as I want anything and then again maybe I do. Sit down!"

Mulvey complied with a grunt.

"I'm busy," said he.

"You don't say!" ejaculated the Beast; then bluntly, "What do you know about the *Eastern Empress?*"

The crimp's eyes opened a little curiously.

"The *Eastern Empress?*" he echoed. "Not much. She's a new boat out here. Shanghai, Singapore and Sydney—first trip. Australian Steam Packet Company."

"I know all that. Where'd she come from? Where'd they get her?"

"Oh!" said Mulvey. "Bought her from some Atlantic line, I heard, an' refitted her out here. What d'ye want to know for?"

"Who's on her? Her old crew, or the people from here?"

Mulvey stared. "You're gone batty, ain't you? What's her old crew to do with her now? Sanderson, of the Packet Company, is master, an' the rest of her lot signed on at Shanghai, of course."

The Beast drummed with his fingers on the table edge for a long minute and his eyes, though fixed on Mulvey, seemed to ignore the crimp utterly. He burst all at once into a short, hoarse laugh.

"I'll ship on her," said he suddenly.

"Ow!" said Mulvey. "Ow! Now, ain't that just my bloomin' luck!"

The Beast scowled at him. "What d'ye mean?" he demanded.

"There ain't no room on her, that's what I mean. She's got a full crew!"

"How d'ye know?"

"How'd I know!" sneered the crimp. "It's my business to know, ain't it?"

"Right. So it is. Well then, Red, you'll make it your business to get me a berth!"

"As if I wouldn't if I could!" exclaimed Mulvey fervently. "On her, or anything else, with the hope sooner or later you'll go to the bottom, an' be —— to you!"

"You're a nice, sweet customer, you are," said the Beast evenly enough, but with an ugly look beginning to creep into his face. Suddenly his fist shot out in a feint, causing the crimp to shove his chair quickly backward. The Beast chuckled grimly. "I don't like you," said he impudently. "You haven't got much time to lose. She sails with the tide, don't she?"

Mulvey made a sullen nod of affirmation with his head.

"What are you waiting for, then?"

"I told you once," Mulvey growled, "that she's full up. What in —— can I do?"

"You're too modest by half, Red," smiled the Beast unpleasantly; then, flashing into a burst of rage: "Chuck it, d'ye hear, chuck it! A berth on her I want and a berth I'll have and a berth you'll get for me, or the Lord have mercy on Red Mulvey! Now move!"

The crimp rose from his chair, his mottled face quivering with impotent passion, his every action like a cowed animal's before its trainer.

"Some day," he wheezed hoarsely, "you'll go too far, you will. I promise you that!"

"Look out that it ain't *now!*" snapped the Beast. "If you know what's good for you—hop it! I'll be here when you come back."

He watched the crimp roll down the room and pass out of the door, then he settled back in his chair and bawled for Lu.

During the hours that he sat there the Chinaman brought him drinks, many of them. These the Beast consumed sometimes at a gulp, sometimes more slowly, sometimes chuckling gutturally, sometimes

with sullen, puckered face, muttering darkly to himself. Once or twice, with an oath that burst suddenly from his lips, he jumped to his feet and then slowly, as though by main force, with his hands on the table-edge, he pushed himself back into his chair again. As it grew darker he huddled in his seat, staring in front of him—and called Lu no more.

The lights were lit, throwing the place into dingy gloom, when the crimp returned. There was a leer on his face as he flopped down in front of the Beast.

"Well," said he, "you got your dunnage ready?"

The Beast raised himself up and stared at Mulvey, blinking.

"Fixed it, did you?" he said thickly.

Evidently judging the other far gone in liquor, Red Mulvey grinned wickedly.

"I did what I could. A Chink took sick an' there's a stoker's berth empty. I booked you for it."

The Beast's lips parted in a snarl and the crimp's grin vanished instantly.

"So help me!" said Red hastily, "it was the only bloomin' show there was. That or nothin'. 'Twarn't my fault, was it? You—you don't need to go if you don't want to. That's what I ses to myself, 'he can suit hisself when I tells him an' so——'"

The Beast cut him off short, laughing raucously.

"Stoking, eh? Stoking! Ha, ha! Stoking the old hooker that I——" He stopped abruptly and glared at the crimp with narrowed eyes. "It's a joke!" said he, with a sharp-flung oath. "A giddy joke, Red, but you'd never see it. Humor's not in your line, you sailor-robbing swine! I'll get aboard!"

II

THERE was not a breath of wind to coax a ripple from the sea as the *Eastern Empress*, two hours out, with Singapore lost astern in the soft starlight of the small morning hours, was reeling off her eighteen knots, heading for the Java Sea.

In the stoke-hole it was dripping hot. What little air there was from the ventilator shafts was sticky, warm and fetid long before it reached the bowels of the ship. In the faint glow of the sparse and high-hung incandescents, queer, uncouth shapes like shadow-specters moved about to the accompaniment of the sibilant, whispering steam purring at the gauges—shadows that suddenly, as though at a magician's touch, would materialize into the forms of men stripped to the waist, the sweat streaming from their naked hides, as, with a din of clanging shovels, a furnace door swung wide, flooding the sweltering hell with light, fiery red that leaped greedily in its momentary freedom to beam and iron-shod floor.

Black and yellow and white they were—a grim-faced, tight-lipped, gasping lot, wasting no breath on words—slaves, abject and absolute, to the shivering needles on the dials over the boilers, dials that gleamed at them like mocking devils' eyes.

Of them all only the Beast smiled. His lips were curled defiantly, tauntingly. As he worked, his muscles, flexing, seemed like great knobs of steel beneath the skin of his giant frame. His face was blackened almost beyond recognition where his grimy hands had brushed away the trickling rivulets that, spurting from his forehead, rolled down his cheeks. In breathing spells he leaned upon his shovel, his head inclined a little to one side—listening. Above the clamor around him he could catch the steady throb and beat of the machinery from the engine-room. Then, for a moment, his smile would fade, his fingers over the shovel handle would twitch and a hunted look creep into his eyes, only to give place again, the next instant, to the jeer-like set of his lips as he swung to his work.

It had just gone three bells in the middle watch as the Beast flung open his furnace door and, bending, shot a shovelful of coal over the grate-bars. As he straightened up and turned to repeat the operation, the fire glow fell full upon the white-clad figure of an engineer standing just behind him. For a second the Beast, his shovel poised, stood rigid as though turned to stone, staring wildly at the other; then the shovel clattered to the floor, ringing upon the iron sheeting, and like one fascinated, impelled in spite of himself, he took a quick step forward, bringing his eyes to within an inch of the other's face.

"My God!" he whispered hoarsely. "My——"

That was all—the Beast's head went back with a jolt from a full-arm swing that caught him cleanly on the point of the jaw and, lifting him from his feet, bowled him over

like a ninepin. He struck with a crash, head first, and lay an inert heap, stunned and senseless.

"I'll teach you manners, I will, you swine!" bawled the officer. "Now then, what d'ye mean by shoving your dirty physog into your better's? Get up!"

He planted a none too gentle kick in the Beast's ribs. The Beast did not stir. The engineer glanced grimly at his bruised knuckles and then bent down over the Beast. A casual glance and he was about to turn away when, suddenly, he bent closer, scrutinizing the face of the unconscious man sharply—then the red flamed to his cheeks and his fists clenched tightly.

"You!" he choked. "You—you rotter, here on *this* ship! If I'd known you, I'd——" He stopped and shouted at the man nearest to him. "Here, you, hump some coal into this boiler and shut the door before the fire's dead. When you're through, heave a bucket of water over this blighter and if he ever gets his senses again give him Mr. MacCleave's, of the *Mona's*, compliments and tell him I promise him he'll wish to High Heaven he'd been dead before he had the gall to pollute the stoke-hole of this ship!" MacCleave, with a black face, looked down again at the Beast. "You—you —— rotter!" he muttered through his teeth and, turning, went back to the engine-room.

They sluiced three buckets over the Beast before he moved and then, as he sat up, the water running off his head and shoulders streaking furrows of white in the dirt of his face, the crowd drew back to a respectful distance. Those of them who did not know the Beast personally knew him by a no uncertain reputation and that reputation invited caution.

But the explosion they waited for did not come; instead, the Beast, after a single quick, searching look into the row of faces, dropped his eyes and staggered slowly to his feet. Not a word came from his lips.

He picked up his shovel mechanically and in a nerveless, dazed way went back to his work. All the aggressiveness, all the brutality, all the ferocity was gone; even the bulk of the man seemed shrunken.

"MY WORD!" said one of the lot toward the end of the watch. "Steer clear o' the chief engineer; 'e 'as a bloody 'ard punch in 'is fisties. Blimy, if the Beast ain't groggy yet! Wot's the bloomin' row habout?"

For answer they shook their heads, and carried the discussion into the forecastle, where they retailed the affair and the chief's remarks to the rest of the watch, while the Beast lay in his bunk, his face turned sullenly to the ribs of the ship. They robbed themselves of an hour's sleep speculating vainly over it, and then they turned in.

But, meanwhile, their mates of the other watch, who had gone on duty, were acquiring knowledge of the Beast that promised well to make the chief engineer's threat speedily good. MacCleave spoke with bitter words in the engineers' mess in the presence of a steward—as he meant to. The third engineer repeated it to the mates, who passed it along to the first officer and he to the skipper—the steward did the rest. Deck-hands, quartermasters, stokers, cooks, trimmers, to the last man of the port watch they got it.

Nor did the port watch have any secrets from the starboard watch and, by the time they had changed tricks twice, the history of the Beast, or at least an excerpt of it and one not softened in the telling, was the common property of the entire crew of the *Eastern Empress*.

To the looks that began to be thrown at him askance by noontime, to the increasing tendency of his watch-mates to give him more elbow-room than the common amenities of the sea demanded, to the whispering groups that glowered at him, the Beast offered no other response than a quick averting of his eyes, followed by a flush that settled in hectic spots upon his cheek-bones. There was little chance to mistake the attitude and temper of the men, and that little they took pains to remove, bluntly enough, in the second dog watch that evening when they were off duty. Dunn, a twisted old quartermaster, with a hard face and harder tongue, acted as spokesman for the crowd.

The Beast had flung himself into his bunk, but they hauled him out unceremoniously and set him on the edge of it. The forecastle was choking full—and a tough set, at the best, it was full of.

Malays and Chinamen and Lascars, the dregs of Shanghai, crowded in the background; while bunched to the fore were the whites of all nations, rough, rum-shivered

hulks some of them, Americans, English, Germans, Swedes. One and all they sneered at the Beast, a cosmopolitan tribunal, their faces stamped with scorn.

"Look 'ere, you scaly cur," said Dunn without preface, a foot in advance of the others, "you listen to wot I says an' you give 'eed to it, for it's the last you'll 'ear from a man aboard the *Eastern Empress!* We knows you for wot you are, an' we takes it as a bloomin' hinsult to be called upon to associate with the likes o' you."

"'Ear, 'ear!" growled the crowd, pressing in a little closer, as Dunn paused to roll his quid.

"Snug an' tight you've kept it these three years with your beasty ways," went on the quartermaster; "but we've got you to rights now, Mr. Orficer an' Gentleman an' Third Engineer o' the *Mona!* An' likewise we knows wot you did to save your dirty hide, you white-livered skunk, the night she struck by the Fastnet!" Dunn's grisled old face screwed up fiercely and he leaned forward, shaking his fists. "Shoved a woman an' her baby from the boats, did you! Gawd, you crawlin' pup! Damme, even a Chink would stop at that. Pah—you—you——" he choked from sheer inadequacy of epithet.

A menacing snarl rose and swelled behind him. The Beast shivered a little, licked his lips with his tongue and drew farther back into the bunk.

"Some o' the 'ands was for sewin' you up in a bit o' canvas an' heavin' you overboard, an' we took a vote on it," proceeded the quartermaster. "There ain't no law 'gainst doin' away with reptiles an' you can thank your bloomin' stars it's a soft-'earted lot you're dealin' with. We talked it over reg'lar an' shipshape, we did, an' 'ere's our hultimatum.

"We sends you to Coventry till this 'ere hooker makes port, an' then hout o' these parts you clears. Not a man Jack says a word to you aboard, me sayin' now the last you'll 'ear, an' if you dares to open your jaw even to a sloppy Lascar 'e is to bash your face, an', if you hits back, them as 'appen to be around 'll pommel you to jelly."

The Beast raised dull eyes and stared gloomily at the ring of hard, savage, scowling faces about him.

"Go to ——!" he moaned in pitiful defiance and, rolling back into his bunk, turned his head from them.

III

BEFORE the Beast, in a red haze, swam the picture he had drunk and caroused and brawled for three years to blot from his memory—striving by unsavory acts of poor bravado and coarse physical brutality to satisfy himself that, whatever might have gone before, within him still beat the heart of a man. None had known him. *Then* he had had only himself to delude. And he had almost succeeded. The vicious life he had sought and courted and lived had begun to dull even the one last saving grace of shame. So the picture had faded little by little, the outlines growing more blurred, more indistinct, the sense of reality blunted, until it had dimmed almost into oblivion.

But now it was before him again in all its first vividness, every detail seeming to leap out at him and strike, searing, into his brain.

The song of the howling wind was in his ears; forked, angry, zigzag tongues of lightning, rending great gaps in the black of the night, lived again before his sight. He felt the sickening, crunching pound of the hull beneath his feet; he saw vast black walls of water with white, spume-flung caps rear themselves over the riven, empaled bows and smash in thundering tons upon the lower forward deck, while the ship, like a stricken thing, quivered in every beam and stanchion. Around him, as he had gained the boat-deck, bleeding from the blow upon his head when the first terrific impact of the vessel as she struck had hurled him to the floor of the engine-room, were struggling, panic-stricken, half-clothed men and women and children, their cries and screams, as they fought for places in the boats, mingling with the hoarse, rasping shouts of the officers and, now and then, the sharp bark of a revolver and a spurting flash of flame! All was seething madness, chaos, terror.

In a sudden, engulfing surge hot fear had swept upon him—fear, nauseating, blind, that knew no reason. He had fought his way frantically to his boat, the after starboard lifeboat, only to find the davit tackles swinging empty. He had lain too long on the engine-room floor. Some one had yelled at him. It was MacCleave, then second engineer, facing a mob in front of the next boat. "Keep 'em back!" MacCleave had shouted, pushing a revolver into his hand. "Keep 'em back and see this boat off!

There's room for one more. Get this woman and her baby in. I'm wanted for'ard." And then a voice, it was his own voice, ordered the boat to lower away, while "room for one more, room for one more" rang, rang, rang in his ears.

Then a man, big, muscular, of giant frame, pushed back the woman and her clinging babe, held the press in check with leveled revolver till the boat swung clear, then leaped, as it lowered away, to the vacant place—and the man was *himself.*

The Beast covered his eyes with his hands as he lay on his face. His head had been bad that night from the blow in the engine-room. He was almost whimpering his one ray of justification to himself. He had been dazed, not responsible for what he did, but the Board in its finding had shown him neither leniency nor mercy as, in the bald, stinging words of scorn with which they had stripped him of his certificate, they had sent him branded "for cowardice" an outcast amongst his fellows! He had had no mercy, no chance.

He turned on his side, his face hardening. Well, they had had their fling, but he had cheated them. It had been well enough in Singapore with the Atlantic and the Pacific and a new name between him and those who knew him. Well enough—his lips parted in a quick, bitter snarl—well enough if he had not played the fool at Red Mulvey's when he listened to the tale of the *Eastern Empress* and yielded to the sudden, mad impulse that had led him, partly through the morbid attraction with which a criminal returns to the scene of his crime, partly in a crowning, self-flaunting fling of bravado, back to the *Mona* under her new name.

Well enough, even then, but for the accursed turn of fate that, alone of all her old crew, had kept MacCleave, tempted, on the boat, it was easy to see, through promotion to chief engineer by the new owners. The Beast raised himself suddenly on his elbow and shot his free hand, fiercely clenched, above his head, then sank heavily back and lay still.

That night passed and the next day and twenty-four hours more and no man spoke to the Beast, but in his bunk off watch, the recrudescent voices of three years ago talked to him and disturbed his rest. On duty in the stoke-hole, the chattering engine, that once had called him master, whispered to him constantly through the bulkhead.

NO MAN knows how it happened. Learned treatises had been written on the ailments of materials, and the diseases of iron and steel have been given names; also, similarity has been found between them and humans—even to the point of heredity. No man knew. But those acquainted with the family history of the *Eastern Empress* put it down to the chronic deviltry of the old *Mona.*

It came at midnight, just at the end of the first watch, on the fourth night out. And the Beast, always listening, turned cold in the heat of the stoke-hole as the whispering voice of the engine rose suddenly into a hissing shriek of agony, while the ship shuddered under the bombardment of a series of crashing blows.

Then, instinctively, the engineer in him for the moment dominant, he leaped for the engine-room. In the alleyway he collided with the fleeing staff of wipers who staggered past him, some screaming from scalds, some holding their hands over faces streaming with blood.

At the threshold the Beast hung back. The engine-room was raining flying nuts, scraps of metal and bits of glass from shattered oil-cups, as, rising and falling, swishing a path of demoralization, the connecting-rod of the after engine, snapped short off at the cross-head, smote backward and forward like a demoniacal battering ram; while, swirling from the level of the engine-platform and already banked to the hatch-lights in a great white smothering canopy, a dense cloud of steam, deadly hot and scalding, poured hissing from the cracked cylinder and its loosened head.

It was comparatively safe under the platform and he stepped in, edging his way cautiously aft. It was MacCleave's watch, but where was—— A crimson drop splashed through the grating overhead on to his naked shoulder. The Beast stared. Then he laughed hysterically, as, raising his eyes, he caught, through the lifting layers of steam, a dark-outlined, motionless form curled on the staging above him.

MacCleave had been struck down at his post just beneath the wheel of the main steam-valve and, the chances were, killed. If not, the steam would finish him; it was fast settling floorward and the platform was already as good as a death-trap!

The rip and tear, the pound and crunch of the raving bar as it circled with the crank-

shaft, bringing up every half turn with a mighty flog on the bedplate, twisting, slewing, jarring, wrenching, was spreading to the other parts of the big triple expansion engine like an infectious disease, spelling death and destruction not only to itself but to the ship; and none knew it better than the excommunicated engineer.

Many things happen in the bare twinkling of an eye and thoughts take form with inconceivable rapidity. In the fraction of a second that passed as the Beast stood motionless, the hysterical laugh died away and his face went deathly white. His eyes were straining toward the valve-wheel, hidden now in rolling steam. There was a chance to reach it, a chance that his endurance, before the steam struck him down, would last to close it if—if—— He faltered and shrank back, his face full of torment.

His whole life, in one blinding flash, seemed to pass before him in review. Then, his lips, quivering, moved in a soul-wrung, whispered prayer to his Maker: "God, God, make me a man again!"

He sprang for the ladder and began to mount it. Halfway up he reeled and swayed dizzily, clinging to the rail, as something struck his cheek and gouged an upward track to his temple. The blood welled, blinding, into his eye. He dashed it away with his hand and went on—only slower, more unsteadily.

He reached the platform and gasped and staggered as the boiling steam settled upon him. He clapped his hands to his face and flung himself forward, stumbling over MacCleave's body.

His hands shot up, groping for the valve, closed on it, and, tearing at the wheel, madly, frantically, he screamed out in his agony. With not a scrap of clothing above his middle, he was being literally parboiled alive.

The wheel brought up with a jerk and he dropped like a stone full across the chief engineer. Almost gone, he lay there for a moment unable to move; then, as he rolled himself over the engineer to crawl back along the grating, MacCleave groaned. The Beast turned. A few minutes more, even with the live steam shut off, and the dead, airless vapor would suffocate the unconscious man.

He began to drag at MacCleave's feet. On his knees, swaying backward and forward at every motion of the ship like a drunken man, moaning in fearful pain, sightless, his lids puffed into great balls over his eyes, his skin hanging in blisters, he won inch by inch to the ladder.

He felt the opening with his feet. Straining at MacCleave, he pulled the other past him until the engineer's legs and body hung down the ladder steps. His strength was gone, there was no other way than just to let MacCleave slide to the bottom. He held, pitifully weak, to the other's collar, trying to lower the engineer by degrees—then blackness swirled upon him, and, jerked by the engineer's weight and the roll of the ship, he dove head foremost over MacCleave and shot, hurtling, to the iron floor beneath!

THEY picked him up there a few minutes later as the engine staff, off duty, tumbled in through the boiler-room door, the steam above making the deck entrance impassable. They also picked up MacCleave. The chief engineer they carried to his cabin and the stoker they carried tenderly, but with horror-stricken faces averted from their ghastly burden, to the sick-bay.

MacCleave, by nightfall, propped up in his bunk with only his eyes showing through bandages, listened to the tale. He said nothing because he couldn't talk; but the next day, in the intervals between painfully traced sketches for temporary repairs, he penned a letter to post in Sydney, to a certain society in England that awards medals on occasions.

But Richard Watt was to go beyond all that. A day before they made port, the crew of the *Eastern Empress* mustered with bowed, bare heads, solemn and very quiet, on the forward deck, and a canvas-sewn, shotted form slipped from a tilted grating into the sea.

As between friends

by Damon Runyon

ABIMILECH FETCHER sat upon the front stoop of the Parkins County court-house, smoking a fretful pipe and paying no heed to the snow-tinged breezes that searched his meager apparel. He gazed with eyes of gloom upon the frame houses and store buildings, standing like serrated teeth; his gaze traveled moodily on to the vast expanse of flat country which aproned the small but enthusiastic town of Advance, and against the far horizon he could see the windmills, flogged by a relentless eastern Colorado wind, waving wildly. Abimilech Fetcher, Sheriff of the County of Parkins aforesaid, was a study of Gloom, done in heavy, corpulent lines.

A tall, thin, ragged young man, with a self-confident air and a lean, alert face, suddenly sketched himself into the picture and stood looking at Abimilech Fetcher, who returned the gaze morosely.

"Well," said the young man finally, "I may be wrong, but if I was guessin' and had just one guess, it'd be that there sits 'Chicago Fat,' lookin' as sad and forlorn as a millionaire in jail."

The dull eye of Abimilech Fetcher slowly brightened.

"It's me," he said. "And you might be 'Kid' Switch."

He arose and extended a cheerless fat hand. "Set down, Kid, set down, and tell me how come you to git shoved offen the main line."

"You tell me what *you're* doin' here," said Kid Switch. "I heard you'd quit hobo-in' some years back and had settled down somewheres, but this can't be the where?"

"Yes," replied Abimilech drearily, "this is it. I'm the Sheriff. Also I'm a married man, with two children and a mortgage on my house, and I'm starvin' to death right now, Kid."

Kid Switch laughed uproariously.

"That's it—laugh!" said Abimilech bitterly. "I've gota notion to vag you. You're the first feller that even looks like a possible prisoner I've seen in a year. Whatta you doin' here, anyway, Kid?"

"On my way to San Francisco," said Switch. "I didn't know this was a branch line until I got here. I snared a freight train at the junction, havin' been chased offen a varnished rattler, and I didn't know I wasn't pursuin' the main haulageway until I peeked out and saw this wide place in the road. And to think I've scairt you up—Chicago Fat—who usta be one of the grandest hoboes in the world!"

"It's me, Kid," said Abimilech. "And I thank you for them words. Sometimes I wisht I'd stuck to the road, but I got remorse and fat and et cetery and here I be, starvin' to death. I was a good hobo—I was a good hobo when you was just a gay cat, and I might be a good one yet, barrin' the fat."

"Tell me what's the trouble," urged

Switch, as he contemplated the stout figure and suppressed further hilarity.

"It's the cussed fee system," said Abimilech. "The Sheriff has to make his livin' offen fees. If he's on the main line, like ole Tobias over here in the next county, he can arrest enough of you hoboes in the Winter time to make money. We git paid a dollar a day for feedin' prisoners and we kin feed 'em for ten cents a day, if we use judgment—that's ninety cents profit. If you've got enough prisoners you kin git fat. If you ain't got no prisoners, you starve, or go to work. I been Sheriff two years, come next month, and I ain't seen enough mallyfacters to keep me in keresene and other delicacies."

"If you had, say twelve prisoners for, say, ten days each, would that help you any?" asked Kid Switch.

"Help?" said Abimilech. "Help? Say, Kid, it'd set me in swell! I'd perk up and take a reg'lar interest in life. But what's the use o' talkin'? How kin I git twelve prisoners? How kin I git any prisoners, when folks don't violate the law, or if they do they're friends o' yourn and you dassen't stick 'em?"

"I met 'Cleveland' George yesterday and he tells me a bunch of the fellers are layin' out the cold spell with your neighbor, Tobias," said Switch.

"He's a mean guy, is Tobias," interrupted Abimilech. "Bein' prosperous, he's natchally mean."

"Well, he's all right to the tourists," said Kid Switch. "And a dozen or more of them are hangin' up with him for a coupla weeks. They're nearly all ole time pals o' yourn and mine and 'd be glad to help you out if it was put to 'em right. We'll call my end just half, if that's satisfactory to you."

"Talk sense, Kid," urged the bewildered Abimilech. "I don't git you. How'm I goin' to git them fellers? Tobias aint goin' to lend me any. He's too blame stingy."

"Listen," said the Kid mysteriously. "But let's find some place where it ain't so crimpy around the edges."

II

SHERIFF JOHN TOBIAS, of Queever County, had at least a nodding acquaintance with all the gentry of the brake-beams who traveled from east to west a few years ago. The county seat of Queever County is a division point on a transcontinental railroad and during the year hundreds of nomadic individuals pass that way.

The Queever County jail is a rickety, but fairly comfortable structure and during bad weather it was the custom for the human birds of passage to lodge with Sheriff John Tobias and thus insure him, in return for good food and treatment, a prosperous business under the fee system.

He had a sort of gentlemen's agreement with the veterans of the rail that they might plead guilty to a charge of vagrancy before the only justice of the peace in the town and ten days was the limit of their sentences. Novices, who were sensitive in the matter of being called vagrants, but who desired shelter over a stretch of untravelable weather, could plead to a charge of carrying concealed weapons—a razor being a weapon in those parts, and Sheriff John Tobias was obliging to the extent of furnishing the razor.

No one really had to remain in the Queever County jail; it was of such frail texture that even a sparrow might have escaped without great difficulty. Half a dozen tunnels beneath the floor, leading to sunshine and liberty, told of the passing, in days gone by, of many an itinerant from the hands of less obliging officers than Sheriff John Tobias. In his régime, if a prisoner happened to be in a hurry, Tobias would permit him to go before the expiration of his term, via the front door, and would speed him on his way with words of cheer.

Through the years of his long tenure of office this arrangement endured, an indictment against the fee system, perhaps, but a source of comfort to those who traveled the Western trails in that day. The town of Queever understood the situation, but when the jail was filled, plenty of supplies had to be purchased of the local merchants, for Tobias was content with small profit and treated his patrons liberally; the local merchants consequently favored the full county jail, particularly as the burden of taxation fell upon the balance of the county, which, probably, did not fully understand.

Sheriff John Tobias was viewing the snowstorm from the window of the jail office with deep satisfaction; snow meant that his jail population would rest contented against the coming of warmer weather. The darkened skies, pinned down all around the horizon, foretold a long continued storm.

The office bell jangled shrilly and Sheriff Tobias opened the door to look upon the damp figure of Kid Switch, who had found a ten-mile tramp across the snow a bit more of a hardship than he had figured on. Only freight trains ran to Advance and they were few and far between.

"Well! Well!" said Sheriff Tobias, heartily. "Come right in, Switch! I haven't seen you in over a year. Come in, boy, you'll find a lot of friends present, if you're plannin' to stay, and they'll be mighty glad to see you."

"I hope so," said the Kid. "Stake me to some dry clothes, Sheriff; I'm as wet as a fish. I'm goin' to hang up with you until it clears a little."

"Yes, sir!" said the Sheriff, with the unction of a hotel clerk greeting a wealthy guest and leading the way to a big steel door, from behind which came a subdued murmur of voices. "You'll find 'Red,' and Gordon, and Kline, and Kilgallon, and the 'Philadelphia Shine' and a lot of friends inside, Kid. Cleveland George left here yesterday. It's a good Winter for me, son."

Kid Switch was familiar with the personnel of Tobias' guests, having been enlightened by Cleveland George. He was prepared for the roar of greeting which arose when he stepped into the "bull pen" of the none too commodious jail. After having changed his wet clothing for capacious garments loaned by the Sheriff, Switch took a careful inventory of those present and found that, besides nine whom he knew personally, there were three subdued looking individuals. He diagnosed them as "natives."

"They're holdovers to the next term of the district court," explained Kilgallon contemptuously. "Plain yaps charged with stealin' cattle or somethin'. They ain't even got sense enough to git out o' this pokey and we use 'em to do the cleanin' up. I thought you was on your way to the Coast, Kid?"

"I was," replied Switch. "But I've stopped over to do a friend a turn. Bring all the fellers except them rubes around me and I'll let you in on the play."

"You all know the ole Chicago Fat?" was his introductory as he squatted upon the floor and nine choice gentlemen who had carved their initials on every water-tank between the coasts gathered about him. Most of them nodded, Kilgallon with emphasis.

"Ain't he the guy that got up the hoboes' convention?" he demanded. "Well, he done me dirt——"

"Never mind!" interrupted the Kid. "That's past and gone. He's in hard lines now."

With vivid eloquence he painted a verbal picture of Abimilech Fetcher, once Chicago Fat, starving at his own hearthside, as it were; he etched in pathetic touches here and there which caused the inky face of Philadelphia Shine to wrinkle lugubriously.

"Fat was a good guy," said Kid Switch. "He was always helpin' some one else and now he's in distress it seems to me we oughta remember them ole ties—ties of brotherhood and such, I mean—and go over there and give him a play for ten days so he can make his fees offen us. We can step out through one of the ole tunnels to-night and hike over there in no time."

"No, sah!" dissented the Shine. "Ah ain' makin' no premedjutated changes. Dis hive suits me an' Ah ain' movin' 'til mah rent comes due!"

"Shut up!" said Kid Switch savagely. "You'll go if the rest do."

"It ain't a bad idea," said Kline, a pallid young man who was known to the police between the two coasts as a hotel sneak-thief, but who was, withal, romantic-looking and interesting. "We've been pretty good to ole Tobias. And after we stay at Fat's for a week or so, if the weather is still bad, we can come back here and finish out with Tobe."

Kilgallon, Jack Gordon, the "Cincinnati Skin," "Red" Henry Hennessey, "One-Thumb" Cafferty, George "the Greek" and Heine Barr nodded grave approval.

"We'd better take them felons, too," said Gordon. "They'll help the count."

"Them's vallyble felons and Tobias thinks as much of them as he does of his right arm," demurred Hennessey. "Supposin' they'd beat it?"

"They've got a fat chance!" said Kid Switch. "We'll take 'em right along and return 'em to Tobe when we git through. Set 'em to work cleanin' out one of them tunnels now."

III

ABIMILECH FETCHER doubted that Kid Switch would be able to carry out his plan successfully; long continued adversity had made Abimilech

pessimistic, but he waited, nevertheless, in the rarely occupied bastile of Parkins County and amused himself playing solitaire as the night wore on. His teeth chattered as occasional wisps of wind sneaked through the chinks in the building and he shook his head dolefully as he looked about the bare quarters the thrifty commonwealth had designed for criminal habitation.

As compared to the county jail of Queever County, the Parkins place of incarceration was a shanty against a country villa. Queever County had at least provided heat and electric lights. Parkins County had simply purchased a tier of steel cells, set them down upon the ground and walled them in with loosely laid brick. Lanterns were the source of what little illumination was required.

"I never seen a worse one myself," mused Abimilech. "And I've seen some bad ones. I never thought it looked so fierce before until it comes to offerin' it to my friends."

A shout aroused him from his shivering reverie and he opened the door to admit a terrific gust of wind and an assemblage of chilled and profane men.

"We're here," said Kid Switch, shaking a blanket of snow from his shoulders. "Maybe you think it ain't some job herdin' three felons through ten miles of snow, specially when they know the country and have a yen to go home. And that coon there——" He turned a baleful eye upon Philadelphia Shine who snuffled damply in a corner.

"He bus' me in the nose," whined the Shine dolorously.

Abimilech Fetcher was engaged in shaking hands with friends of another day. A pang of remorse bit at his vitals as he found himself surrounded by faces he had been more than glad to see in times gone by, and Kilgallon almost forgot the discomfort of that long march over the snow as he held a passage in rough repartee with Abimilech.

"I suttinly appreciates your kindness, fellers," said the Sheriff. "I suttinly do. Now if you'll step into them cells, two in each, I'll bed you down for the night."

"Ah doan lak dis place," sniffled the Shine. "Ah reckon Ah'll go back to Mista Tobe's."

"Second the motion!" said One-Thumb Cafferty, who had been investigating the tiny cells.

At that moment the front door again opened and admitted two stalwart individuals whose coats bulged ominously and who wore gleaming stars upon their bosoms. Abimilech was relieved. He had become slightly alarmed over the tardiness of these efficient farm-hands, whom he had impressed as deputies that afternoon and whom he had instructed to hasten to the jail upon the arrival of any strangers. His manner changed. He looked as stern as it is possible for a fat man to look.

"Silence!" he roared. "Jail rules prohibit talkin'. Officers, put 'em in their cells!" he added, turning to the newcomers.

Kid Switch looked at Abimilech, startled. "You aint goin' to double-cross me?" he whispered.

"Sh-h-h," said Abimilech. "Of course not."

He personally escorted Switch into a small cell near the door and locked him up by himself.

"You're a swell actor, 'bo," he whispered. "They ain't on."

As the locks clicked behind the prisoners, Gordon shouted, "Turn on some heat, will you?"

"Heat!" bellowed Abimilech. "They ain't no heat! Lessee, you're Gordon, ain't you? I know a man what looks like you who would interest some people in Oskaloosa."

Gordon subsided immediately.

"Hey, you!" bawled Red Hennessey bitterly. "What about that church door welcome mat that got lost in Sacramento when you was there last?"

Abimilech went close to the door of the cell and hissed, "Statoot of limentations, Red; statoot of limentations. But maybe I kin dig up some place where the statoot ain't run agin Henry Hennessey."

Whereupon Red became strangely silent.

"If these guys git to chewin' the rag with you, just git some pails o' cold water and throw it in on them," instructed Abimilech to his deputies, as he took his departure.

Then the night wore on in cold silence, broken only by the intermittent comment of the guards upon the weather and the prospective crops. The prisoners sat hunched up in their chilly cells whispering softly to one another and evolving gigantic schemes of vengeance not only upon Abimilech Fetcher, but upon that incarnation of misguided philanthropy, Kid Switch, who slept the sleep of the just and innocent beneath a large country quilt which Abimilech had thoughtfully left in his cell.

MORNING brought a succession of incidents, including some underdone beans and an apology for coffee. Abimilech also arrived, accompanied by an aged, bewhiskered individual who wore an air of vast solemnity and carried an enormous book.

Abimilech called him judge. A table was placed in the narrow corridor before the cells and Abimilech seated the tottering judge thereat with much ceremony. Then the judge opened his book, scanned the pages through gigantic horn spectacles and read:

"'John Doe, *alias* George Kilgallon."

"That's this wicked lookin' murderer here," said Abimilech, indicating the peaceful Kilgallon. "Stand up, you Doe, *alias* Kilgallon! This is your trial!"

"You're charged with vagrancy, resistin' an officer and assault!" said the judge in a squeaky voice, peering with great severity in the general direction of Kilgallon's cell.

"Who'd I resist and who'd I assault?" roared Kilgallon.

The judge was evidently deaf, as Abimilech bawled in his ear:

"He says he's guilty and that you're a —— ole fool."

"Hey!" howled Kilgallon, in wild remonstrance.

"Six months!" piped the judge, making an entry in his book.

"Richard Roe, *alias* the Philadelphia Shine," he read next. "Assault with a deadly weapon and attempt to commit arson."

"Ah wants a mouthpiece! Ah wants a lie-er!" yelled the Shine in great dismay.

"He says he's guilty," bellowed Abimilech into the whiskers of the Court.

"Ninety days," said the judge.

Hennessey got three months on a charge of stealing chickens; One-Thumb Cafferty got sixty days on a charge of disturbance; the three felons were given twenty days each for vagrancy and all the others received varying sentences on various charges without having the opportunity of saying a word. Some turmoil arose, as they endeavored to voice their protests, but the deputies secured buckets of water and quelled the incipient disturbance by a dumb show of throwing it over the already half-frozen prisoners.

"Kid Switch," said the judge finally. "You are charged with carrying concealed weapons!"

"Not guilty!" shouted the Kid from the depths of his cell, where he was still buried beneath the quilt.

"This man's a dangerous character," yelled Abimilech. "You'd better git rid of him."

"Two hours to leave town," squeaked the old man, and then the procession filed out, while the prisoners babbled wildly. Abimilech stopped long enough to unlock Kid Switch's cell.

"You don't want to let dark ketch you here," he warned.

"You don't want to let me ketch you anywhere!" howled Gordon from his cell, regardless of the deputies, and there was a hoarse growling from the other prisoners.

Outside the jail door, Abimilech handed Kid Switch a package of yellow bills.

"That represents every cent I could borry," he said. "It means a second mortgage on my house and everything else. I didn't like to hand it to the gang so hard, but I can't let this good thing get away from me. It'll never happen agin. I wouldn't want to be in your shoes when them parties gits out."

"Don't worry," said the Kid lightly. "I can square it with them."

"Square it!" said Abimilech. "What a chance! You better beat it out o' town now, before some of the citizens take a shot at you on general principles. Square it! What a nerve!"

"Good-by," said Kid Switch blithely. "You won't hear from me for quite a while."

And then he set off, kicking the snow before him in little flurries, and Sheriff Abimilech Fetcher looked at the jail with a complacent grin.

"Here's where I either git rich or bankrupt the county," he said. "I may have give it to 'em a little strong, but a feller has got to snatch his opportunities nowadays. I suppose I will have to give 'em *some* heat."

IV

WHEN Sheriff John Tobias found his jail depopulated he did not immediately notify the citizens. He sat down to think the matter over. By creating tumult, the people might become cognizant of a laxity of vigilance around the bastile which would hardly redound to the credit of the Sheriff. Besides, Tobias felt that the strange exodus was no common jail break.

Fresh snow had fallen during the night and the ground gave no clue. No train had passed through since the preceding day, owing to blockades, and it was quite cold. Tobias was satisfied that his guests would not have undertaken travel in such weather simply because of a sudden desire for freedom.

"Them boys wouldn't a-took my felons," he argued. "They wouldn't let no ornery cattle thieves go with them."

So the old Sheriff sat quiet and pondered the matter throughout the day. The light of information broke upon him along in the evening and the people were aroused by the clamor of a huge bell in the tower of the court-house, used to apprise the public of trouble and festivity. The citizens hurried to the court-house, carrying lanterns, guns and pitchforks, to find Sheriff John Tobias waiting on the steps of the building.

As soon as he could secure order, the Sheriff made public an address:

"My friends," he said, "they's been a jail burglary. My prisoners, includin' them felons what stole cattle on the Piedras, was stole out of my jail by Abimilech Fetcher, Sheriff of Parkins County, who now holds them without warrant o' law in his jail. He larcenied my prisoners, bag and baggage, includin' them felons, well knowin' the same to be then and there my pussonel property and the goods and chattels o' Queever County. He figgers to collect fees offen his ill-gotten gains from the County o' Parkins, which never has no prisoners, because no prisoner would ever become such thereabouts if he had any sense. Shell this town stand for such injestice, my friends? I don't think it shell. Shell it allow my jail to be burglarized and my prisoners stolen away to fatten the fee account o' Abimilech Fetcher? I don't think it shell."

The crowd yelled "No, no!"

"Then, my friends," said Sheriff John Tobias, "I want volunteers to go with me and rescue them poor prisoners from the clutches of the rapscallion Fetcher."

Forty or fifty men stepped forward with alacrity.

"Come on!" shouted Tobias.

In twenty minutes a weird procession of horsemen, light buggies and footmen was streaming across the snow toward Advance, clamoring for the blood of Abimilech Fetcher.

Arriving at the county seat of Parkins County and finding the town asleep, the citizens of Queever lost no time in assailing the jail. The prisoners, who had put in a wretched day, were vastly alarmed, fearing that they were to be the victims of mob violence, but when they saw Sheriff Tobias leading a charge through the shattered door, they set up a cheer of welcome. Abimilech's deputies disappeared with amazing rapidity.

A general reunion was in progress inside and outside the jail, the three felons being the only persons present not transported with joy at the turn of events, when Abimilech Fetcher, in a state of great dishevelment, rushed upon the scene.

"Hey! Whatta you doin' with my prisoners?" he roared at Sheriff Tobias. "It's agin the law!"

"Your prisoners! I like your nerve!" said Tobias. "Whose prisoners be you, gents?" he asked of the assembled jailbirds.

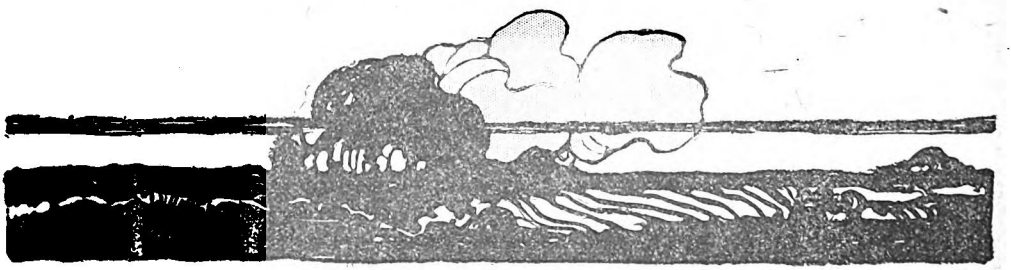
"Yours!" they cried in chorus.

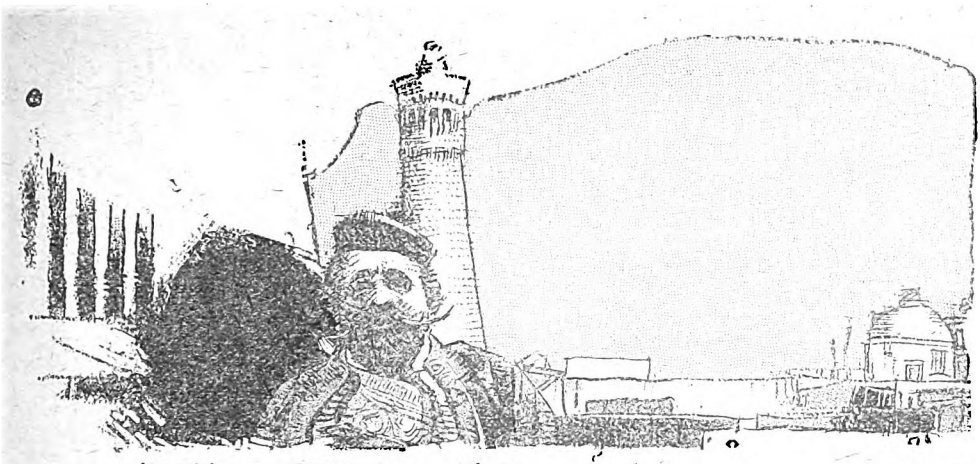
"Come on, then, let's go home," said Tobias.

The prisoners assembled with alacrity. Abimilech viewed the proceedings with a feeling of dismay. Then a thought occurred to him.

"Lemme ask you one thing, Tobias," he said. "How'd you find out where them people was?"

"Why," said Tobias, "Kid Switch, he told me. I give him fifty dollars for the information. He wouldn't let it out until I paid him the money, either. What's the matter, 'Bimilech?"





The Road

A Romance of Americans in the Balkans

by Frank Savile

CHAPTER XXVIII

THE SNARER SNARED

AS ESULI'S launch sidled up to the wharf-edge at Vodra a sudden and apparently electric thrill of anticipation seemed to grip the onlookers. He himself had been sitting unseen at the tiller behind the small cabin. As his tall figure stood erect a sort of restrained murmur rose from half a hundred workmen who were scattered about the square, enjoying what appeared to be a universal holiday.

They were Albanians, most of them. Some one saw and recognized the Governor of the district. Esuli heard his name being passed from mouth to mouth. All eyes were upon him—here and there a hoarse laugh burst from the lips of the staring men—a laugh which seemed to imply an amazement for which he had no key. His face was mask-like as ever, but a tinge of uneasiness impregnated his mind. As his engineer cast the painter into the waiting hand of an Italian trackman on the bank, the Turk hesitated, his foot on the gunwale.

The man who held the painter had not lashed it to the pile. He bent over it and suddenly, from below his lowered head, Esuli heard a single word repeated in a fierce whisper.

"Go!" the fellow breathed with Italian shrillness. "Go!"

Esuli had met emergency before. His foot fell back from the gunwale. He spoke quickly to the engineer. Without question the man jerked the painter from the hand which held it loosely and leaped for the engine lever. Esuli dropped beside the tiller.

The propeller began to throb.

A voice on the embankment hailed him. He took no notice. It echoed again, insistently—"Halt!"

He looked up. The most engrossing object he discovered in the immediate foreground was the muzzle of a rifle, leveled at his chest. The holder of it was Jovan Vaco. He stood not thirty yards distant.

"It would be best to pay attention, Excellency," he said grimly. "I do not usually miss—at twenty times the distance."

Slowly, and with no sign of agitation Esuli nodded to his engineer. The propeller ceased to revolve. Esuli stepped ashore.

"You may consider yourself under arrest!" he told Jovan dispassionately. "An arrest which, for the moment, I have no means to enforce. We wait."

Jovan shook his head.

"The period of waiting is over," he said. "That your Excellency will be the first to recognize."

He looked round. A roar of laughter burst from the watching crowd. Some of

the young men made deplorable gestures at their Governor—gestures of derision which spoke volumes for the want of refinement in their wit. Half a dozen of them fell upon the workman whose warning had failed of its object.

"Here is one of them!" they cried wrathfully. "He spoke—it must have been some word of his that made him hesitate!"

"Probably," agreed Jovan. "We can not reach his traitorous soul, but his body might be cleansed effectually. And at once!"

They laughed again, drowning the entreaties of the victim in uproar. The struggling wretch was raised shoulder high by twenty willing hands, poised, swung backward and forward to gain impetus, and then shot out on to the calm bosom of the lake. He made a most stupendous splash.

The uneasiness in Esuli's mind had become intense apprehension. He looked at Jovan.

"It is the Signor Proprietor whom you wish to interview?" said the Albanian. "You will find him at your service."

He made a motion to lead the way to Gresham's hut. After a moment's hesitation Esuli nodded and followed.

JOVAN knocked and, without awaiting a reply, opened the door. He announced his visitor without preamble and omitting the use of any title.

"Murad Esuli," he said quietly, and ushered the visitor in.

A man rose from the table at which he sat with Gresham—a man clad in military uniform. He looked at Esuli gravely.

A queer throb of emotion flickered in Esuli's eyes. His hand, which lay upon the hilt of his saber, twitched. And then he spoke—a monosyllable, as if comprehension had reached him suddenly, but with absolute clearness. "Ah!" he commented dryly, and then stood silent.

The other nodded.

"Yes, it has come, my friend. You stayed on the wrong side too long. We rose and seized the Sultan yesterday. The Government is in our hands. The regeneration has begun. And it is I who am delegated by the Central Authority to take your place. You are—like your master—deposed."

"I shall require my proofs." Esuli's voice was under complete command.

The other nodded again. "They will be complete and drastic," he agreed. "You are to be arrested for corrupt and unworthy government, for subornation, for receiving bribes, for failing to safeguard and attempting to molest foreigners carrying a special Sultan's sanction. The tale of your offenses is complete—even up to last night."

Gresham had not spoken. After the first glance at Esuli his eyes had been reserved for the man at his side. His glance had in it something of not wholly extinguished amazement, which was accounted for, perhaps, by the fact that the latter's uniform covered the body of his ex-valet, Vilip.

But now he turned and confronted his visitor.

"Will you explain the kidnapping of my daughter and her companion yesterday?" he asked coldly.

Again Esuli hesitated, though his mind worked with lightning rapidity. Somehow they knew—all. How?

And then a shuffling sound came from the inner room. The door was pushed back. A short figure entered, leaning on the arm of a taller.

It was Gugi, pale-faced, exhausted, his vitality sucked from him by stress and privation. He was supported forward into the center of the room by Agnew's arm.

He said nothing. He stood looking up at Esuli with quiet, unemotional, but satisfied eyes.

"This youth's story is naturally well known to you," explained Vilip quietly. "Within the last hour it has become equally so to us. You came here, did you not, to—bargain? Miss Gresham was in your hands. The price of her liberty was to be—what? We can guess, can we not?"

"And *my* price? For all the anxiety and despair of this last night? What is to pay me for that?" demanded Gresham with sudden fierceness. "By the God who made me, you'll pay and pay double if any single hair of her head has been harmed!"

Agnew nodded. "Yes!" he said, and there was something grim in the restrained fury of his voice which sent a queer throb of apprehension through Esuli's soul.

He looked at his accusers with a calculating glance. In the course of his career Esuli had had to come to decisions with some promptitude. A plan was matured in his exceedingly alert brain in that short period of hesitation.

He bowed, with a gesture of resignation.

"Your daughter, Mr. Gresham, is, I regret to say, in custody for being a party to an offense against the laws of this country which I am—or have been—sent here to enforce. I had come to explain her situation to you—to give you and to hear—advice."

"We have plenty at your service, my friend," said Vilip. "Advice is a commodity very plentiful in the ranks of the Young Turk Party. We have never been niggardly with it, and your late master has received it from us in abounding measure. I hope you may make better use of our liberality in this than he found time to. But by advice you do not mean, by any chance, bargaining—compromise?"

Esuli smiled. "Does the name matter?" he asked. "I would merely suggest to Mr. Gresham that the dignified course would be an apology on behalf of his daughter and a withdrawal, in her company, from the district. That I could make this course an acceptable one to my superiors I do not doubt."

"I doubt it exceedingly. In fact, my doubts amount to convictions," said the ex-valet. "For, good friend, you are forgetting who your new superiors are."

Esuli's eyelids moved in a quiver.

"Am I to be satisfied with your word in this matter?" he asked.

"I will endeavor to make it convincing," said the other. He moved to the door, opened it, and uttered a name.

Jovan Vaco entered.

"You will see to—this," said Vilip.

The Albanian nodded and made a little gesture toward the still open door. Esuli's brown cheeks took on a shade of yellow. He looked significantly at Jovan's still unslung rifle.

"You propose being convincing indeed?"

Vilip frowned. "You judge others by your own instincts," he said. "No, my friend, we are not assassins. You will be sent in due course to appear before the General Court Martial. For the present, use your leisure to perfect your defense. It must needs be a sound one."

Esuli's shrug conveyed assent—and fatalism. "Force is with you," he answered. "I should like to see a certain Signor Gessi—if I have the name right. His daughter, who accompanied Miss Gresham and shares her detention, charged me with messages to him. It is possible that his fatherly feelings have been disturbed and need reassurance."

Vilip looked at Gresham. The latter nodded.

Esuli bowed amiably and turned toward the door. "Then, for the moment, good-by," he said, and passed out into the square at Jovan's side.

THE latter looked at him with a meditative and doubtful glance. He felt, somehow, that though his prisoner was safe, something—some influence—had escaped him which a moment or two before had still been in custody. For Esuli's bearing was arrogant again when it should have been overwhelmed.

His glance, in leaving his prisoner, encountered another figure, one which he reviewed with a certain expectant curiosity. It was Gessi, hastening toward them, his aspect menacing, his eyes passionate with such fury as the Sicilian, and he alone, knows how to make dramatic and yet untinged with exaggeration.

"This is your man," Jovan informed Esuli. "A different class of father to the Signor Proprietor. He seems annoyed."

Esuli halted. "You are the Signor Gessi?" he asked.

The Italian looked at him. Did a message pass from the imperturbable eyes of the prisoner to those of his confronter? What goad lay in the glance? Jovan asked himself these questions throughout a situation which had become critical without a hint of warning.

For the Italian, with a sudden shriek of rage, launched himself at the prisoner's throat.

"My daughter!" he bellowed. "My daughter! It is *your* unclean hands which have been laid upon her, dog of an infidel!"

The two fell struggling to the earth. So closely were they entwined that the white teeth of the aggressor flashed within inches of the other's cheek. It was as though he would have bitten him. The two writhed and chattered and cursed, clinging to each other with the ferocity of dogs at the worry. The Albanian, despite his strength, tugged vainly to drag them apart. Finally he snatched up the rifle which he had laid aside to use his hands, and thrust the muzzle in Gessi's face.

"Cease, wild-cat!" he thundered. "Cease, or I fire!"

With a snarl and an imprecation Gessi dropped away from the other's grip.

"*Brutta bestia!*" he cried. "For the moment you win—for the moment! But wait, my unbaptized one—wait! I will see to your affairs yet!"

He shook his fist at the Turk, cursed the Albanian with a string of fluent oaths, and passed on toward his hut. Esuli rose to his feet.

"A dog and the son of a dog!" he commented. "Why did you not blow his unclean brains into the air?"

Jovan grinned sourly. "Not for want of inclination," he admitted. He continued to observe his prisoner with keenness as he led on toward the far side of the square.

"You have little cause of quarrel with that one," he added at last. "He did you no harm, as far as I can see—nor you him."

Esuli gave him a magpie-like glance.

"Your train of thought was his, my friend," he observed calmly. "It was not, apparently, for want of the inclination."

Jovan shook his head in a manner which implied that he did not find conviction in this answer, and ushered his charge into the hut that he shared with the foreman of his gang.

Meanwhile, inside another hut, Gessi's show of wrath had fallen from him like a cloak. He was confronting his son Gaspare with sinister eyes of command. Below his hand lay upon the table a tiny note which he had written with haste, but with no loss of precision.

"The boat lies in the reed-patch two hundred paces from the shoreward end of the embankment," he said. "We hear many tales of your strength. If you wish to make them credible you will arrive at the Castle of Jeka within a couple of hours."

"I can row; it is well known that I can row," said the boy eagerly. "Give me the note!"

"And you hand it on to the Commandante—into his hands and no other!" ordered Gessi. "Is it understood?"

"I understand!" cried Gaspare. "Two hours? With the help of the Madonna and saints I will make it one and a half!"

CHAPTER XXIX

THE BARGAINERS

COMMANDANTE SARRASCO sat in the kiosk above the landing-place below the Castle of Jeka, looking down the vista of the lake.

A vague sense of uneasiness mingled with his impatience. Esuli's negotiations were of a nature that necessitated little delay. He had goods to sell which his purchasers, in Sarrasco's opinion, had no option in refusing. There was one price and one alone. Surely the American Proprietor would value his daughter's safety above a mere matter of pride! Where, then, was the need for chaffering? Miss Gresham would be delivered up in the course of the day and her father would retire with his defeat from Vodra within the week. It was simple and inevitable, this plan. But why did not its author return to confirm it?

He frowned at the lake. Still no trail of smoke broke across its shining plain. A rowboat—but moving under the impetus of one pair of oars as Sarrasco had seldom seen one move before—was the only break in the unrippled calm.

The rower moved up to the landing-place and conferred hastily with the corporal of the guard. The latter personally escorted him to the Signor Commandante's presence.

It was a boy whom the Zaptieh was presenting to him—a boy at whom Sarrasco looked with inquiring eyes. He was deformed—a humpback, with abnormally long arms, withered lower limbs, and eyes that flashed with excitement. He held out toward the Italian a tiny note.

"Will the signor observe that I have come with this in less than a hundred minutes from Vodra?" he said, with childish self-satisfaction.

Sarrasco smiled and nodded. He took the tiny square of paper. He read. His cheeks whitened—he swore—he made a category of the whole heavenly host and called upon them to emphasize his concern.

"You have seen at Vodra?" he demanded. "What is happening?"

Gaspare looked puzzled. "I was at work within our house—I cook for our family, Excellency," he answered. "My father came and gave me directions that I was to come and put that message in your hands. He mentioned two hours. Your Excellency will remember to explain that I arrived in little over the hour and a half."

"May the Pit receive your hours and half-hours!" snarled the other in fierce exasperation. "What is doing at Vodra? Where is Esuli Bey bestowed?"

The boy shook his head. "I do not understand of what you speak, Excellency," he

replied. "I row better than most—that is why I have come. I have seen nothing."

Sarrasco sprang to his feet and wheeled toward the house. The corporal saluted and asked a question.

Sarrasco made a gesture of impatience. "The boy?" he said. "Let him return to the devil! Come you and attend me. Collect the whole of your men! Much has to be done—and quickly." He cast a searching look at the lake, swore again, and then whipped up the path toward the castle at a run.

Gaspare looked at him with much discontent. "Within a hundred minutes I came," he told the corporal sourly, "and I do not receive as much thanks as a single *soldo!*"

The corporal swung him round toward the lake. "Take this!" he answered, kicking him dispassionately. " And return, if it give you pleasure, twice as fast as you came! Do *soldi* grow on bushes that you should expect them to fall upon you like leaves? Depart, or other kicks will be very much at your service!"

He started the boy with a violent push toward the landing-place and called to his men. Each, as Gaspare passed him, found it due to his sense of the fitness of things to imitate the action of their leader. Gaspare returned into his boat and sculled hurriedly homeward, *standing*.

THE corporal and his men found themselves involved in a strenuous half-hour. The Castle was dominated by the energy of the Commandante, whose eyes and voice were everywhere. The great gates, the only access to the courtyard, were swung to and a fatigue party was set to build a mound of earth and boulders behind them. The flagstones that paved the stables were prized from their foundations and used to close solidly the three or four window embrasures that flanked the doorway. Rifles were cleaned. Sentries were posted at each corner of the great square wall that enclosed the whole range of buildings.

The corporal had his own particular duties assigned to him. He was to escort the two Nazarene ladies into the cave whence the emergency water-supply of the garrison was drawn. He was to guard them there, and was held responsible for their imprisonment and safety. His care would begin at once. A twice-married man, the corporal viewed these arrangements with silent distrust. Women, he explained to his superiors, were only manageable when shackled—or dead. Which of these alternative safeguards should he employ?

He was smitten by his sergeant. He was to employ force as a last resource. Tact was the only weapon to be used without trenchant explanations being required. The corporal groaned.

The ladies appeared, escorted by the ubiquitous deputy commander. His smile was deprecating, his apologies profuse.

"In my friend's absence no other course is open to me, signorina," he said. "It is revolution we have to face—civil war. This ungrateful country has risen against its paternal sovereign's Government and is attacking all authority—even that of so kind-hearted a ruler as Esuli Bey."

Katrine looked at him impassively. "Into whose hands has the Bey fallen?" she asked.

"Rebels, signorina. Base men who have dared to imprison him. But in the midst of this crisis his wonderful courage stays by him. He has managed to let me know. Under his orders I act."

She nodded. "The alternative of meeting these—rebels? That is not permitted to us?"

He threw up his hands. "But, signorina! Your safety? That is my supremest care. I can not permit you to risk even a chance bullet if these rebellious dogs so far forget themselves as to fire on the emblems of their ruler's authority. Your life? This shall have protection if it has to be bought with my own!"

His attitude was drama confessed. His right hand was uplifted, his left laid upon his heart. And above the ends of his curling mustache his eyes twinkled keenly, cruelly, humorously. Excellent comedy, this, they seemed to say, comedy which shall be tragedy whenever my black imagination so desires. In his voice the echo of a chuckle was barely hid.

Katrine turned to her companion. "You have heard?" she said coldly, and followed the corporal without a backward look. Lucia Gessi hesitated. Her eyes sought the Commandante's inquiringly, bewilderingly. And his, losing their light of amusement, stared her glance down. Greed was in his glance, sensuality, the triumph of the hunter whose prey has been run to a standstill. Lucia's eyes drooped. And the color mounted darkly crimson to her cheek. Sarrasco laughed—amiably, almost deprecat-

ingly, but with the thorough content of a man who has spoken and been well understood. He stood watching as the two women and their warder passed into the mouth of the cave from which Agnew had peered incredulously a week before. He watched as a cat might watch a mouse-hole, from which he knew the despairing mice must ultimately return.

A MINUTE later he stood upon the roof of the row of barrack dwellings that lined the square below a parapet five feet high. He had his telescope, but the exclamation that escaped him proved he did not need it. The launch—long expected, but now so little welcome—was entering the Jeka arm. It towed a couple of *londras* filled with armed men.

The flotilla advanced toward the landing-place. It was within fifty yards of it when Sarrasco took leisurely a rifle from the sergeant at his side, aimed, and flung a bullet in front of the launch's bow. From behind the tiny cabin three figures rose and examined the castle wall intently.

Sarrasco rose and bowed. "You must pardon the directness of my challenge, signors," he deprecated. "I have been left here in command. I can not distinguish among you his Excellency?"

His voice was raised into a shout to carry the yards that separated him from the boats, but it still held its tones of suave sarcasm intact.

It was Vilip who replied.

"Murad Esuli is under arrest by order of the New Government," he said coldly. "If you will come to the landing-place I will produce my commission under which I replace him. In any case a foreigner can not be allowed to deputize for a Turkish official without Government sanction."

Sarrasco laughed amiably. "I must take your self-appointed Excellency's word for it," he answered. "But as I have received my trust so I mean to return it. I hand over this fortress to my friend Esuli Bey and to him alone!"

The three conferred.

"Then on you must lie the responsibility of bloodshed," said Vilip at last. "We shall enter by force."

"That must be at your own discretion," said Sarrasco pleasantly. "I have in my hands two women—of yours."

And he laughed again, significantly yet lightly, as a man laughs at the culmination of a successful anecdote that has been received with the approval of his circle. He lit a cigarette with careless imperturbability as he looked down upon the waiting boats.

Gresham spoke rapidly to his companions. They could be seen to shake their heads. He appeared to insist. Vilip at last seemed to withdraw his opposition with a shrug.

"If you come to the landing-place we can confer," he suggested. "This is no distance for negotiations."

"On my part it appears an excellent one," said Sarrasco. "But if you find high-pitched conferences a strain upon your lungs, two of you can come ashore, provided the boat immediately retires. You can advance to the foot of the wall, at which point I may as well warn you, some fifty rifles will be pointed at your chests. I give you my word to safeguard you and from that distance we can almost whisper—if whispers are necessary to your self-esteem."

Again the three spoke rapidly among themselves. Then the launch moved forward; Gresham and Vilip landed and came up the path to the castle gates. Sarrasco nodded a complacent welcome.

"Nobody can regret the rigors of this interview more than myself," he said. "You must blame Fate and my rigid sense of responsibility. Duty has been a hard mistress for me all my life, but never a harder than when it stabs my desires to show hospitality."

Gresham looked up at him with frowning eyes. His lips were hard and set:

"You spoke of women, of my daughter, in your hands? What is your price?"

Sarrasco's eyebrows were lifted in deprecation. "You go quickly, signor," he said. "Almost too quickly for my uncommercial brain. A price? For what? To betray my trust? You would not insult me with such an offer!"

The blood flooded Gresham's cheeks. "You dog!" he snarled. "Tell me your price and have done! It defiles me to speak to you. What is the sum of your blackmail? Give me my daughter and take your money to the devil the shortest road you know!"

Sarrasco made a gesture of melancholy reproof. "Calm," he suggested. "Calm. That is the most necessary ingredient when negotiations are in question. Use it, my dear sir, use it, I implore you."

Gresham's companion intervened.

"Would it not be as well to consider your position?" he said quietly. "You can not expect to maintain it long. If any injury—any annoyance, in fact—results to Miss Gresham, you have a good deal to fear. I exceed my powers, indeed, when I promise to permit you to depart unmolested when she and the Signorina Gessi are surrendered to us."

SARRASCO put his foot upon the parapet, leaned his elbow upon his knee and his chin upon his hand in an attitude of easy contemplation. And he laughed with unaffected enjoyment.

"There is only one control of this situation—mine," he said. "As to terms? Mr. Gresham is in possession of my demands. I made them a week or more back. He leaves this country and he hands over his undertaking to the Compania Daragno for a sum which will reimburse him for his efforts, less ten per cent. My first offer mentioned five, I know. My terms have risen—with delay. They may rise yet again—under the same compulsion."

He took the cigarette from his lips and sent a cloud of smoke spinning up into the sun-brimmed air. He watched it float away and dissolve—watched it as an artist might watch a new color-effect, with calmly complacent eyes. And for a moment the silence was unbroken.

Then the other looked up. "You forget that I could not consent to these terms—if my friend brought himself to consider them. And, less than twenty miles away, there is artillery at my disposal—at Novisar."

"I shall tax my ingenuity to preserve Miss Gresham's safety throughout the terrors of a bombardment," said Sarrasco, "but, at the same time, I shall deliberately cut her throat when the first foot passes any breach you like to make for your assault! My humanity and my sense of duty will clash—as they have clashed before, but Duty—the terrible task-mistress—has invariably won."

Gresham's fingers clenched and unclenched. His eyes burnt upon the Italian's face in ecstasy of loathing. "You devil!" he breathed hoarsely. "You devil from hell!"

Sarrasco stood up and saluted with sardonic amusement.

"You flatter me!" he protested. "The barometer of my conceit rises ten degrees at a bound."

Vilip turned and spoke to his companion beneath his breath. Gresham scarcely seemed to hear. His eyes, his whole attention, were centered upon the mocking figure twenty yards above his head. Vilip spoke again, more urgently.

The tension seemed to leave Gresham's body—he swayed, stumbled, and then turned away. Vilip put a supporting hand under his arm.

"To-morrow I shall return," he said quietly to the Italian. "We give you twenty-four hours for reflection. After that my duty will lead me to reduce your obstinacy and this place by force. And do not be too sure that the men who temporarily obey your commands will stay by you under shell-fire. Give that fact your very earnest consideration."

He drew his companion back toward the boats. Gresham walked as a very old man might walk, feebly, unsteadily, as if the forces of his body were sucked from him by sudden disease. Sarrasco made a courtly gesture of farewell.

"May you both live a thousand years!" he cried gaily. "Consideration? I will give it to your concerns freely and in full. But with the one and inevitable result. And that is that I have goods to sell and that you are buyers. Not because you wish to buy, not because my wares are cheap, but because you must, best of friends—because you must!"

And, echoing harshly from the white wall of the parapet, his laughter pursued them to the boats.

CHAPTER XXX

THE UNBARRING OF THE LIVA

AS THE hut door was opened Gresham looked up. He leaned upon the table, his elbows upon the planks, his closed fists supporting his chin. His eyes held unfathomable depths of despair.

Agnew, on the threshold, hesitated. His glance expressed more than sympathy. It spoke of strain, of anxiety, but with these—determination. Something of this last seemed to reach Gresham and tinge his apprehensions with a faint thrill of hope. He rose, holding out his hand.

"You are going—now?" he asked.

Agnew nodded gravely. "We shall be at the cave-mouth within two hours. Less

than another two will find us at the Jeka entrance. Then"—he lifted his hand reassuringly—"then—all will go well."

A shiver shook the elder man's limbs. "Till to-morrow—till it is finished, I shall live—in hell!" he cried with the sudden passion of the mentally unstrung. "To know where she is—to know what *can* be—to think—and think—and think!"

Agnew's eyes grew dim in compassion. "And your pain—is mine," he said gently. "If to know that every care, every misgiving, is shared to the uttermost brings you the help of sympathy, you may know that now. I am going because I have got to go. Because Katrine's life is as *my* life—because without her, life for me has lost all worth in living."

The pain in Gresham's eyes was clouded with bewilderment.

"You?" he cried. "You? I thought——"

Agnew smiled gravely. "And I—*thought*," he interrupted. "I tried to persuade myself, but now I *know*. And I am going to earn—forgiveness."

Gresham looked at him slowly, incredulously, and then, with a gesture that spoke of emotion utterly overtaxing self-control, flung himself back upon his seat.

"God!" he cried wildly. "God help me—and you—and you!" The hut was filled with that sound of all sounds most pitiable—the sobs of a grown man beaten back by anguish to the weakness of a child.

With the sound still pulsing in his ears Agnew closed the door gently and passed back into the silence of the night.

Two figures moved up to meet him through the darkness. It was Vilip's voice which broke the stillness.

"I am not altogether convinced," he said quietly. "I still think that you might take a whole company and break in upon them in force. I doubt if this is a sound adventure—you and Jovan attempting all this alone."

"And I, on the other hand, grow yet more and more convinced that my instinct is the right one," said Agnew. "Miss Gresham is the scoundrel's only hope—sole defense. He will do as he said—these wolves of the Black Hand are trained to that, even to the death. If he sees himself undone—he will kill her, and, if necessary, himself too. No—one man may enter, and bring help. A hundred? They will bring disaster alone."

The other shrugged his shoulders unseen.

"Yes, it is settled," he said fatalistically. "And yet? There is a good chance gone—nay, a certainty of gaining the castle and all we desire with hardly a blow. But risks? Yes, there are risks to Miss Gresham. Perhaps more than risks. You have reason—I don't deny it. You go—now?"

"Now," agreed Agnew laconically. "And you?"

"Within an hour. It is one o'clock. You will have done what you purpose—or you will have failed—within five hours. At dawn, then. The artillery has already gone forward. We summon him and the first shell falls—at dawn."

Agnew took his hand in a firm grasp.

"At dawn," he answered quietly. "A dawn which shall be the end of a long night for the lands of the Bir—if God so wills."

"If God wills," said Vilip, and pressed the fingers laid in his. "God keep you! May His protection be yours!"

And Agnew and Jovan passed into the veil of the night to seek—the dawn.

FIVE hours later the day broke over the gleaming surface of the lake and flung living colors upon the gray walls of rock that guard the Jeka arm. It tinted the white walls of the castle with rose—flung the leveled rays of the sun in the eyes of the sleepy sentries upon the parapet—revealed to them matters which the darkness had hid but which sounds out of the night had hinted. Upon a slope less than three hundred yards from the castle wall two field-guns were posted, the brass tampions winking golden against their muzzles' gray. And the sentries saw more than this. Men, they told each other fearfully, were everywhere—behind each tree-trunk and bush—in every thicket—enclosing them in a living wall beyond their breaking.

Filled with a new mistrust, the sergeants went to rouse their leader. He came slowly, puffing a leisurely lighted cigarette, his own nonchalant, complacent self.

He stood behind the parapet. A man from beside the guns came forward, holding a white handkerchief in token of truce.

Sarrasco nodded cheerily.

"Good day, my friend!" he called. "An early call. A wounded conscience? Has that stood between you and sleep? I myself slumbered as an infant slumbers—at peace with the world."

Vilip's eyes were grim. "Signor Commandante Sarrasco, I summon you to sur-

render to arrest under charge of armed resistance to lawful authority. By the laws of every civilized nation you are a filibuster. You, a foreigner, are levying war against the Government of this country."

Sarrasco laughed pleasantly. "Formalities must be observed?" he questioned. "Well, I deny your authority. I hold my trust—as it was given me. What then?"

Vilip wheeled and pointed to the guns. "Is not the answer plain?" he asked.

Sarrasco nodded. "And mine? Was that not plain last night?" he asked. "Open fire, then. Your shells will still leave me unconvinced. But you—when you enter? You will find my proofs unquestionable. I still promise you that!"

His lips smiled, but his eyes were savage, obstinate, hating with the callous, rabid hate of the cornered beast.

Did Vilip read them? Perhaps, for his voice was suddenly raised in summons to the men who stood silent, bewildered, doubting, along the embrasured wall.

"Soldiers!" he cried. "This man has misled you! He does not serve our country, but his own will. What has an outlander to do with you? Surrender to us, who are of your own race, and your sins of ignorance shall be forgiven!"

Sarrasco spat out an oath and snatched a revolver from his belt. "Am I or am I not the deputy given you by your Bey?" he cried. "Who is this who questions your loyalty—and mine?"

One of the sergeants breathed a doubting question. "Bombardment? He threatens that?" he asked.

"What have you to do with threats? Duty—that is your affair!" cried the Italian. "Is your Bey among these men? Is it to him that you are asked to give your submission?"

A murmur rose and fell among the staring Zaptiehs. They shook their heads—they shrugged their shoulders. There was no leadership but the one in this crisis. They must await Allah's plan.

And then fate herself interfered to give them an unexpected prompter. A figure strolled across the courtyard up the parapet steps and reached Sarrasco's side. Gordon Glaisher looked out upon the sunlit hill and rubbed his astonished eyes.

"A review?" he asked bewilderedly. "Troops—guns?" He made a gesture which sought for information.

Sarrasco looked at him with contemptuous eyes. "Rebels—war," he answered grimly. "Is that beyond your experience, my good friend? We shall widen it very shortly. They are taking the tampions from the muzzles of the guns."

And, indeed, a movement among the artillerymen showed the breeches opened, the shell thrust in, the breech-block snapped home. Perhaps mere delay was to be the signal, for Vilip had made no sign.

But now he spoke again, quietly, distinctly, his eyes full of resolution, but filled, too, with repugnance—and regret.

"I give you a minute—one," he said.

Sarrasco bent forward and deliberately spat across the parapet. "My answer!" he snarled fiercely. "My answer to fifty shells!"

SLOWLY the other drew back, passed into the shadow of the trees, and reappeared. Silently he held up his open hand.

A roar—a flash upon the knoll where the guns were posted. Something shrieked through the air and fell upon the castle roof. Stone, tiles, jagged splinters of riven rafters flew wide. One struck a man upon the parapet. Another quivered in the body of a goat tethered upon the grass-grown courtyard flags.

The wounded man groaned and fell. And another groan answered his—a groan of rage and indignation from the ranks of his comrades. A score of men flung down their rifles, unchecked by the non-commissioned officers. The two sergeants moved forward toward Sarrasco, saluting sullenly for leave to speak.

The muzzle of his revolver covered them. "Back!" he cried fiercely. "Back to your ranks!" He wheeled toward the men from whose hands the rifles had fallen. "Dogs!" he cried, "take up your weapons before I fire!"

Crestfallen, wide-eyed, dominated by the personality of a single man, they did as they were bid. Not one hand of the sixty which fingered triggers was raised to counter the menace of the revolver. Discipline—even the slack discipline of the Turkish line—remained true to leadership. Were they not there to obey a commander? And this one commanded. That, for their apathetic souls, was enough.

It was left for the one man in whose soul

discipline had worked no leaven to dispute what they found convincing. Glaisher sprang forward with a yell of angry terror.

"Surrender to them!" he cried. "My God—surrender, I tell you! It's death for all of us—death!" He snatched his handkerchief from his breast and flourished it excitedly in the air. "We give in!" he shrilled. "We will open the doors! Not again—for God's sake, not again! We surrender——"

Grimly, deliberately, Sarrasco turned the revolver at the screaming wretch and fired.

Glaisher flung up his arms. The words upon his lips merged into an incoherent shriek and died to silence. He stumbled forward. Inertly, heavily, he crashed down upon the flags and rolled against the wall. His limbs moved once and then were still—with that stark stillness which neither hope nor fear can fail to understand.

"Is that lesson plain?" thundered the Italian. He glared down upon the staring, shivering files of men. And his height seemed to grow upon him as they looked up. He towered over them, a cowing, cruel, incarnate threat. The beads of perspiration broke out upon the watchers' brows.

And then from the group upon the knoll came another roar—another flash. Again that intimidating shriek of the flying shell before the impact of its shock. And this time the sound of its bursting was drowned in uproars a thousand times louder than its challenging crash. They were swallowed, obliterated in the red answer which flamed from the very center of the building's mass.

The castle opened, as it were, from its foundations. The parapets and roofs were riven. Huge stones were flung out into the open—great timbers hurled to the very water's edge. The walls rocked against each other with a grinding noise as if some Titanic mill worked within their very core. They crumbled as powder crumbles. They were—and they were not. The Castle of Jeka was gone, blotted out! Upon its base lay no more than a heap of ruin, veiled in the rising haze of dust!

From Vilip's lips came a sound that rang with wrath, and —as it seemed—passionate self-reproach.

"The magazine!" he cried. "God help us—the magazine!"

A figure burst from the group and went stumbling down the slope. Blindly, gropingly, Gresham ran toward the smoking heap of ruins. He reeled as a drunken man reels—he called aloud his daughter's name. His hands were stretched out before him as if he grasped at the intangible—as if he wrestled with fate for what she had snatched from him—as if he fought with the throttling grip of an overwhelming despair. His voice echoed wailingly upon the after stillness of that stupendous shock. And he cursed—cursed his God and every living soul beneath His sun.

SWIFTLY, silently, Vilip overtook him and closed in upon him with the support of his arm.

The other turned, looked, and struck out at him with savage, impotent rage.

"You!" he cried. "You killed her—you—you!" He rained blows at him as he ran—savage, unsteady, unseeing, his eyes still fixed upon the piled débris which had been Katrine's prison and which his agony already recognized as her grave.

And then he stumbled—his feet rocked from under him. He grasped at a sapling for support, looking round with a bewildered, suspicious gaze. For Vilip, too, had faltered and was reaching in his turn at an arbutus stem for steadying. It was the ground that was failing them—the very ground beneath their feet!

They looked up.

Ponderously, sluggishly a ridge of earth seemed to separate itself from the mountain-side and come slipping, slipping, slipping toward the lake. Trees went down before it, the snap of the breaking trunks resounding in the silence like intermittent musketry-fire. Mouths in the green acres gaped a wide brown upon its flanks. Boulders were wrung and twisted from its front as if they were huge drops of perspiration beading a giant's brow. In crests and ripples it moved on, skirting the ruined castle walls, slowly, inexorably toward the shore.

And then, as the watchers stared at the point of its disappearance, a breathless murmur of astonishment rose among them.

For a maelstrom seemed to burst into being on the surface.

Immediately below the landing-place and the kiosk a huge bubble, followed by a gout of foam, broke with a noise like a stupendous sigh. A sucking sound followed—a huge circle began to whirl upon the surface. Faster and faster it revolved, drawing toward it all the floating objects within a hun-

dred yards. It tore and strained at the tethered boats—it drew out the line of rushes toward itself along the tide of its attraction. A river was born as in a moment. A river, indeed, returning to its ancient paths.

The barred waters of the Liva were back into their subterranean channel again. With Esuli's castle had perished Esuli's cherished device.

The Liva was roaring back to Gorac—roaring through the bowels of the earth to join its sister waters in the ravine.

CHAPTER XXXI

THE GIFT

KATRINE stirred uneasily upon the rugs that carpeted the dusty floor and stretched her arms with a gesture of weary impatience. So far, fear in her mind had nowhere reached the border-line of panic. And this was not due to her imperfectly realizing the situation. It was rather the effect of a fatalism born of her surroundings. The stillness of the cave—the dusk, broken by the tiny flame of a lamp which appeared to hover ceaselessly upon the point of extinction—the apathy of her companion and of her guard—these things all combined to dull the edge of any sense of crisis.

Subconsciously she knew that her position was that of a hostage, but this was not a point upon which her meditations dwelled. She had not, perhaps, allowed herself to remember what that position implied—what threats against her life it held. Her imagination was at work on other themes. Her thoughts were at Vodra. Her father? How was he meeting this blow from fate? And Agnew? A little reflective smile curved her lips. She thought of the concern he had shown at the small mishap of her wound. How did this move him—this sudden stab of circumstance that made a wound a mere triviality? How did his heart meet the thought of their separation at the hands of death?

A tiny shiver shook her. Death? Mentally she repeated the word. How squalid, how unnecessary, and yet, if she had probed the meaning of Sarrasco's parting words, if she had read his eyes—how probable, how inevitable!

"It is midnight, signorina," he had said. "Within a matter of hours we settle our account. Your friends, so far, have refused to meet your responsibilities. It will be with infinite regret that I shall find myself forced to collect them—from yourself."

And so he had gone with his cruel laugh and his ironical bow. And that was five hours ago. How long had she to wait?

Her movement roused her guard to attention. She saw him stir and bend toward the flickering lamp to trim it.

She turned, and in turning faced the far end of the cavern. For a moment her heart stilled its beating in her breast.

A face showed against the background of blackness—dim, veiled by the shadows, gray as the surrounding rocks were gray, but yet, to her incredulous eyes, vividly recognizable. And, in spite of her incredulity, she knew that it was no trick of the imagination. It was Agnew whose glance met hers—Agnew whose hand was lifted with a warning gesture toward the Zaptieh's figure outlined by the guttering lamp!

Her hand clutched at her breast.

It was echoed at her side. She saw Lucia Gessi rise—saw the pupils of her eyes widen and dilate in amazement—saw her lips part, her fingers clench. Instinctively Katrine grasped the shaking arm—tried to place her palm across the quivering lips.

Too late.

A cry echoed into the darkness—a cry in which surprise was mingled with delight. Lucia Gessi stood up—her face warm with welcome, her arms outstretched. This was no actress acting. Even in this crisis Katrine had time to recognize that. This was the woman so absorbed in the man, the man of her desire, that outside circumstance—such circumstance, even, as this—had not the power to distract her. Her beloved? This was the pivot of all that the moment held.

The man beside the lamp rose with a startled movement and wheeled. His eyes blinked into the outer rim of darkness and saw—what his prisoners had seen. He swore loudly and plucked at the revolver in his belt.

OUT of the shadows came Agnew with a rush. And Lucia, still intent, still wrapped in her misunderstanding, sprang into his path. Her hands sought his—her lips murmured softly as the mother murmurs half-waked to her stirring child. Her fingers gripped his tunic as he passed.

He stumbled, lost footing, plunged forward, and fell—below the pointed pistol's aim. The red flash seared the darkness—the crack of the report ripped through the subterranean echoes.

A second report answered it—from the back of the cave. Jovan ran out into the circle of the light, his own revolver still smoking in his hand. And the Zaptieh was down—had sunk inertly to the floor. He made choking, agonizing gasps for breath.

But the echoes were ringing to other sounds than these. A cry came from Lucia's lips—a cry of agony, wrung, as it were, from the very heart of pain. And she, too, was falling as Jovan's victim had fallen, back into the night.

Katrine, stumbling forward, was conscious of Agnew rising beside her. He caught at her wildly, staring into her face.

"You?" he asked hoarsely. "You—are not hurt?"

A throb of pleasure beat in her, conquering fear, anxiety, bewilderment. His first thought had been of her—of her! If death was still lurking for them all, she would have this to remember when his hand closed. Had she won what she had set out to rewin—already?

Gently she pushed him aside. "I am unhurt," she said quietly. She reached down into the shadows which were filled, as it seemed to her, with Lucia's wailing sobs. And her fingers, as they reached and rested on the warm, sodden patch upon the girl's breast, revealed to her only too eloquently what was still hidden from her eyes.

She turned and over her shoulder called quietly to Jovan for the lamp.

There was a moment's hesitation which, for Katrine, seemed to hold within its delay the suspense of hours. From the Albanian's direction came a dull, muffled sound and then silence. A moment later the light moved toward them, held delicately in his brown, unquivering hand.

"Your pardon, signorina," he said in his level, imperturbable voice. "I had to use an instant—to make sure." He gave a backward jerk of the head. "And I have done so," he added. "No one—not even Esuli Bey—can use that man's services again!"

He leaned down, as he spoke, and held the light within a few inches of Lucia Gessi's face.

Katrine knew only too well what to expect, but she could not stifle the shudder which shook her as her eyes confirmed what her fingers had learned. The deep crimson stain was spreading wide—drawing, as it seemed, all that was vital from the face above it—that face which the dim lamp shone upon as upon marble, so pale was it—so grayly, inhumanly pale.

The Albanian made a little gesture of deprecation.

"Here, too," he murmured, "it is but a matter of minutes. That is plain, is it not?" He looked at Agnew with a quaint, whimsical shake of the head. "Impulse? That is what carried her into that bullet's path—and saved you, Signor Intendente!"

Agnew's fingers rose to his throat with the unconscious action of one who fights for air.

"God!" he panted. "She saved me—saved me! And now—and now!"

Words, it was evident, were beyond his mental grasp. He could only feel—agonizingly. He leaned toward the dying girl; he took her hand as if, by mere force of contact, he could infuse his own great store of vitality into the ebbing cistern of her life. Her fingers closed convulsively in his.

"Signor?" she gasped weakly. "It is you—the Signor Intendente—*my* signor—mine?"

His voice fought for control. "I am Gervase Agnew," he answered; "I who hold your hand."

"I feel—but I am the other side of the veil—I am talking to you—from another room. I go, signor—I go!"

The sound of a sob escaped him, do what he would. And her eyes grew suddenly wide with light.

"It is you who weep—you?" she asked wonderingly. "The cold—the cold of the North? Has that been melted? Is your heart warm—at last—at last?"

And now he could not answer. The words which would have come choked him. And a band, a tightening band, was about his heart.

AND Katrine? To her it was as if a nightmare had come to culmination—as if the last weeks had risen, as a tide rises, through level after level of strange, unaccountable, unaccustomed circumstance, to sweep her up to *this!* She felt as if she could cry out that she must wake—wake—wake! Where was the ordered life of three months ago? Was that a dream, or this?

What Katrine was it who knelt thus in this black pit to touch the very core of tragedy? Not Katrine Gresham—not her own intimate, well-controlled self?

Again the slow and still wondering voice broke the silence, but weakly, diminishingly, as the fires of passion sank and flickered to the final flame. And the words halted—one by one.

"I—desired you," she breathed. "Now—you have—come—and I—go. I would have—bought you. But not—with blood. My bribe—was here."

With a quick convulsive jerk her left hand rose and probed for what lay within the bosom of her dress. A white packet fell from the weakening grip.

"And so—I pay twice," she whispered. "I kept it—always—to buy you—when I had—great desire. And now—I have paid—indeed!"

A spasm convulsed her. Both her hands fell upon Agnew's and held it, as a drowning man holds the outflung rope. A crimson foam shone like a sudden wound upon her paling lips. One word escaped—one only.

"Beloved!" she breathed, and then silence fell, the cold silence which dogs the passing tread of Death.

It was the Albanian's voice that broke it—a voice still steady, still in control, but with a thrill in it, nevertheless, which betrayed feeling—in restraint.

"Her life was what her birth and passions made it," he commented, as if he answered an unspoken question. "Her death atoned for much."

He laid his hand gently on Agnew's shoulder. "Our duties are to the living, signor," he reminded him. "Time presses."

Agnew rose, hesitated, looked down. "And leave her—so?" he asked. His gesture indicated all that the few syllables left unsaid.

"And—for the moment—leave her," agreed Jovan gently. "It is a matter of hours only. But we ourselves must instantly get back to Gorac."

Agnew turned to Katrine. She was holding toward him something white—the packet, in fact, which had slipped from Lucia's fingers and which had lain where it fell—in the dust.

He took it silently. It was bulky. A tiny shudder shook him as he recognized that it was still warm with the living warmth of its bearer—who was now so strangely cold. He thrust it into his pocket.

"And now," he said, pointing toward the back of the cave and holding out his hand, "you must let me guide you."

For a moment there was a queer silence which seemed, somehow, to cover a question—one which was expressed, too, in her eyes. Then she took the offered hand.

"Yes," she said gravely, and passed on with him where he led. There seemed no need for further comment. He had asked and she had given. The same thought was in both their minds. Explanations? These were matters for another place—another hour.

THEY descended through the opening and down the rugged path to the larger cave—the one through which the tiny trickle of water ran in the empty bed of the torrent. And at this point Jovan, who had held the lamp, halted and produced candles. He lit them slowly and handed one to each. He turned with an energetic gesture to the broader path.

"With all possible speed that you can command, signorina," he suggested. "These will give us ample light."

And then from the cave they had just left came a terrific sound, muffled to some extent by the rocky aisles, but booming thunderously in their ears and shaking the earth above their heads. They halted in breathless apprehension.

Jovan gave a sudden cry of exultation. "Dawn has come!" he explained. "It is the first shell of the bombardment!"

But the next instant his eyes clouded. "Some of them will take refuge in the cave," he suggested. "They will see—what they will see. They will be hot on our footsteps." He turned again toward the torrent's bed. "Use your utmost strength, signorina!" he cried. "Hasten! Hasten!"

They turned as he turned and set their faces toward the darkness. They had taken, perhaps, half a score of steps. Was the very earth a-quake—was the hill being riven open from their feet?

The voice of a thousand thunders let loose upon the hillside seemed to roar down through the shivering crags and beat upon their heads. They reeled and swayed as the very rocks seemed to sway. Huge stones rolled from the walls and ground the pebbles to dust. Great cracks widened in the

bed of the stream and ran from floor to roof. Their feet were torn from under them—they grasped wildly, each to each, for support.

And then, following instantly the first stupendous shock, came another, nearer this time—not thrilled through the intervening crags, but with a menacing roar which told of disaster almost within touch. And there was no mistaking the sound. It was the voice of many waters unleashed.

Agnew gave an inarticulate cry and snatched Katrine to him. The next instant he had leaped with her on to one of the terraced levels of rock beside him, from that to another, and so again to a third. He reached a point six feet above the floor. He looked round him wildly for yet another point of vantage, searching the crevices for hold.

Foam-white a wall of water burst into view, shooting along the passage man-high. Stones, silt, even great boulders were licked up into the bosom of the wave which flashed upon them with lightning speed, roaring as the wolf-pack roars, hungry for prey. It rose to their feet—to their waists—to their shoulders. Agnew, with one hand locked to a jutting edge of stone, the other in an iron grip about Katrine's waist, felt as if something living, something vitally malignant, fought with him for his burden—fought and ravened and would not be denied. His breath came in gasps—his thews were like steel cords within him. It was as if eons of time passed over his head in that impenetrable darkness—as if wave surged eternally after deepening wave.

At last, slowly but perceptibly, the level fell. He knew that his lips were no longer threatened—felt his shoulders rising above the surface—became aware that it touched no farther than his belt.

His hands crept upward and felt again for support—found it—found Katrine's hands and placed them in it; supported her feet to another ledge; heard his own voice, hoarse and almost unrecognizable, uttering half-coherent words of encouragement; gained another yard and yet another; crept, as spiders creep, along the rugged wall, slipping, touching every moment the edge of perdition from the hungry lap of the torrent below, but only touching it. And finally, in the darkness, finding and guiding his companion into the narrow corridor that led into the upper cave they had left a short half-hour before.

With his feet on dry ground Agnew turned and sent his voice pealing into the underground echoes.

"Jovan!" he cried ringingly. "Jovan!"

The darkness held no reply.

CHAPTER XXXII

ALLAH'S PLAN

"IN ALLAH'S name—a moment's silence!"

Gresham looked up. It was Vilip who had spoken—Vilip standing in the tense attitude of a listener upon the crumbling wall that had once supported the parapets of Jeka. Around him two score of the Albanian trackmen were grouped, leaning upon their mattocks, wrapped in a sudden stillness by the intensity of their leader's voice.

Faintly, muffled by intervening yards of masonry, a tapping could be heard, feeble sounds, filtering up through crevices left in a thousand blocks of stone.

Gresham gave a strangled cry and stumbled forward, and a yell of hope—even of exultation—answered it from those near enough to hear and understand. They made a rush toward the spot.

Vilip waved them back. "Six—or at the most eight—have room to work," he explained. He picked half a dozen of the most powerful. "With care, and block by block, if you please," he directed, showing them how they must use their hands alone. They began to sink a sort of well through the hill of rubble—a well that deepened inch by inch. Gresham watched the play of their great muscles in silence. Expectation and anxiety kept him upon a sort of mental tiptoe. It was as if he could not breathe—as if he did not dare to think with any concentration—lest the effort should unseat those ill-poised masses of masonry and send them down upon the courtyard flags in a completed ruin.

The minutes passed. Buckets were brought up—more men to fill them with the rubbish thrown aside by the workers from under their very feet. They were in a pit by now, the growing power of the sun beating upon them, the dust raised by their efforts acrid in their mouths. But no one faltered for so much as a moment. Something lived—something moved—within a tomb below them. They gritted their teeth with determination. They had faced Death be-

fore, all of them in a hundred savage forms. They would win their will of him in this.

A stone fell away inward from a worker's foot. The man sprawled down, one limb lost from sight in the opening. Vilip bent and dragged him to his feet. A dark hole was discovered. In it there appeared human fingers gropingly outstretched.

A shout went up—a shout which pealed up the crags and sped ringingly across the surface of the lake. A rower heard it—a man who was entering the Jeka fiord. He thrust his boat along with desperate, wrenching strokes, the perspiration raining into his eyes.

Carefully, delicately, half a dozen of the larger stones were taken from the rim of the opening. The fingers were withdrawn and a head appeared. Out of the darkness grave, imperturbable eyes were raised to blink at the cloudless blue. A hundred hands, so it seemed, were proffered to meet the one which was slowly put up to meet them.

With a wrench and a heave the prisoner was released. He stood in the midst of the circle of his rescuers, panting.

It was Uiko, blood-stained, bruised, his hair streaked with grime. And his usual self-possession was tinged with an obvious anxiety.

"The signorina?" He looked anxiously at Gresham's haggard face. "The signorina?" he repeated. "In the name of the All Merciful, what of them?"

The tension went out of Gresham. He sat down, leaning his head upon his hands. And his attitude spoke more than words. He was hopeless, broken; the anticipations of the last hour were props which realization had shattered. The fisherman watched him through an instant's silence, before he turned to Vilip, his look pregnant with inquiry.

Vilip shook his head. "We had hoped that you shared, perhaps, their prison," he said. "We were building much on that."

The other shivered. "I shared it with—nothing," he said. "Except vermin—and rats. And since the roof crashed in over my dungeon *they* left me—their instincts were sound enough in that!" He shivered again. "Have you water—or *raki?*" he asked. "I wish to drink—to forget these things."

A bottle was pressed into his hand, and, as he drank, the color warmed his cheek. He turned back to Gresham and suddenly laid his hand upon the bowed shoulders.

"Signor!" he said quickly. "There is hope. My jailers talked—talked as such sons of infinite dishonor ever do. I believed that they lied—lied that their words might add to my pain."

Gresham looked up. He dragged himself erect. "Yes?" he said hoarsely. "These devils, they said—what?"

Uiko hesitated, opened his lips, closed them, appeared to debate upon a form of words—and then spoke with a rush. "They told me, signor, that the Bey—may hell hold him in an everlasting embrace!—was not likely to risk their lives in any chance of assault, because he was reserving them—or, at any rate, your daughter, for other ends than this. Women—in the hands of Esuli? They would have their market value, would they not? He would safeguard them—and their honor—till the final moment came!"

Gresham nodded, dully, apathetically. He pointed to the wreckage of a parapet and roof.

"He safeguarded them—here!" he said. "And it is here that they are—here beneath a thousand tons of ruined walls!" He flung out his hands with a gesture that incarnated despair itself. And the silence remained unbroken save for that inarticulate murmur that sympathy, conscious or unconscious, drags from the lips of watchers by the deathbed of hope.

THERE was a crash in the courtyard. A stone had toppled down from the summit of the outer wreckage which had reached and been piled high against the slope of the hill. The men beside Vilip and Gresham whirled round to look at it, the tension of even their iron nerves indicated by a sigh.

A couple more blocks fell. A little stream of rubble trickled away from the heap, disclosing a huge flagstone, wedged among its fellows. And this, under the astonished eyes of the onlookers, trembled and heaved as if some gigantic mole tried to emerge from a concealed earth. It seemed as if the whole heap of ruin shook under the efforts of an unseen force.

A roar of astonishment, incredulity, and then enthusiasm broke out. The Albanians charged recklessly off their crumbling foothold to gain the courtyard. They rushed upon their goal as they would have rushed upon an enemy entrenched and holding comrades of their kin in chains. Fifty eager

hands were outstretched to reach the great stone and tear it from its uneasy resting-place.

They were not needed. For a tiny instant the stirring ceased as if the impelling force behind it concentrated its impulse. Then with a crash, unseating half a dozen of its fellows, the great stone flew up and out, to thunder to the very foot of the slope, and with it came something that was not stone. A man staggered out of the opening and followed the obstacle which his effort had displaced, falling into the support of a score of extended arms. The sun beat down upon the face of Gervase Agnew.

The welcoming roar pealed up the crags. The Southern blood was aflame—the Southern pulses stirred. Caps spun into the air. Half a dozen pairs of lips, a-reek with garlic, were pressed passionately to Agnew's cheek. This was he on whom a thousand fears had been pivoted, the Signor Intendente. And he had won out of the pit in which he had been caught! Triumph! Triumph! Triumph!

The next moment triumph became sudden ecstasy. For a cry shrilled from Gresham's lips—a cry which beat down the welcoming uproar around Agnew—pierced it as the scream of the eagle might rend into the twittering of a flock of starlings. And the man himself came through the throng—came through with a rush, his arms outstretched, his face alight with passionate emotion, his voice calling wonderingly one well-loved name.

"Katrine! Katrine!"

They parted right and left to let him pass, and in dividing turned their faces toward the hill. They looked up.

Framed by the rock lintels of the cave she stood, her hands trembling to meet her father's, her smile itself a story of what had been done, suffered, won, before she stood there to greet them, safe, unharmed, back from the lips of the grave itself. The thunder of the watchers' voices testified to this—showed that they understood and welcomed with little less than delirium this incarnate witness of victory snatched from the inner strongholds of defeat!

They ringed in father and daughter with their sympathy—they cheered, questioned, invoked a hundred saints. A dozen ardent spirits drew revolvers from their belts and sent a ragged fusillade spattering into the air. All was tumult, enthusiasm—emotions unleashed after hours of suspense. Men gripped each other by the hand and danced grotesquely, roaring out stale witticisms to cloak feeling which was drawing them to the edge of sentimentality and tears. The gray, grim rocks of Jeka rang to echoes which such sounds had seldom invoked before.

A lonely figure toiled up the slope from the lake and came staggeringly across the ruined courtyard at a run. And the runner wrenched his way into the center of the throng savagely, hurling the men in his path aside with a sort of desperation. He reached Agnew's side—he clawed fiercely at his arm.

"My daughter—*mine?*" he cried. He fought for breath. He made gestures toward the ruined walls—gestures that seemed to express all the agony of hope's fight with hopelessness. He called, as Gresham had called, upon a daughter's name.

A sudden stillness fell upon the listeners. For Agnew's face was eloquent of what answer waited to be said. His cheeks were gray—from his eyes the light of joy had faded utterly. There was infinite compassion in the movement which dropped his outstretched hand upon the Italian's shoulder.

Katrine turned and whispered quickly to Vilip. He nodded gravely, beckoned a couple of men toward him, and with them disappeared within the mouth of the cave. Some thrill of understanding seemed to pass through the onlookers. They drew back, still watching, but with the respect which Sorrow exacts from those who meet her uncloaked before their eyes. They saw Agnew's lips move to words they could not hear; saw the dark lines deepen about Gessi's burning eyes; saw his shoulders wilt and grow sunken with an invisible weight beyond all bearing; saw his gaze lifted upon the dark entrance of the cavern in a glance which held the very core of despair. And following that glance they saw yet more.

The two men who had followed Vilip were returning, tramping with the heavy, fateful step of those who carry sorrow. Slowly, silently, they laid their burden at Gessi's feet. As slowly and as silently he knelt beside it, his limbs bending beneath him as if some compulsion drew him down. Silently still, and with a sort of reluctance which appeared to surrender to an inner force, his hand went out and touched his daughter's hair. A strong shudder shook him. A low, inarticulate sound passed his lips. And his

cheek was white—white as the brow of the quiet dead beside his knee.

SOMETHING stirred the stillness with new tumult. Voices broke out in acclamation and surprise which even sorrow's sympathy could not restrain. With shouts the Albanians flocked toward the cave-mouth again to welcome yet another adventurer from the perilous paths of the underground world. A tall figure emerged slowly, blinking in the sunlight, the tired, impassive eyes resting at last upon the central figures in the group at his feet. His face lit up. He came down the slope of rubble with energetic strides.

"To the All Merciful be praise!" acclaimed Jovan. "God knows what terrors the darkness held for me, signor and signorina, in thinking you—dead!"

His fellows were about him, shouting, questioning. He shouldered them aside. He gripped Agnew's hand.

"Signor!" he said. "Signor!" His voice was broken—his words failed to come. But his eyes were eloquent—eloquent as the eyes of a faithful dog to whom the absent master has been restored at last. Agnew's fingers returned the pressure of his grasp in sympathetic understanding.

"And you?" he cried.

The Albanian made a gesture of indifference.

"The flood gripped me," he said. "My head made the acquaintance of a dozen rocks and boulders. I was flung up—senseless, as I suppose—on a ledge, where the dwindling waters left me. And then I had candles. My matches, by Allah's plan, remained dry. I have crept out as best I could—weary, signor, with sorrow. But now? My mourning is turned into joy!"

Agnew with a gesture turned to show what the crowd had hidden. "Here, too, is sorrow," he said gently. "One beyond any healing of ours, God knows!"

The Albanian's impassive eyes reviewed the living and the dead. Did some instinct of his glance pass into Gessi's stricken brain? Perhaps—for he looked up.

Through a moment's silence those two looked each within the other's eyes, and what they read in hate implacable is one man's secret now and his alone. They did not speak. And their silence was more menacing than a thousand words. Its impression reached those around them, stilling them to a stillness of expectation—even of foreboding. It was, indeed, almost with an effort that Agnew sought and found means to break it. His hand went to his pocket. He stepped toward the Italian, holding a packet in his hand.

"This was what your daughter left in my trust," he said. "She gave it me without directions—there was time for none. Probably its contents are for a father's eyes, and his only."

Gessi rose. He looked first at the white envelope in Agnew's hand and then, with a bewildered, half-questioning air, at the face of the dead. The muscles of his throat moved as if speech eluded him. And then, with a sudden effort, he achieved and retained mastery over his emotion. A queer, anxious, yet triumphant light grew upon his features. He stretched out his arm. "Thank you, signor," he said quietly, and opened his hand to receive what was offered.

His fingers were not allowed to close. Another arm was thrust over Agnew's shoulder. The white packet was clutched fast in Jovan's iron grip.

"Signor!" he cried, and his voice seemed to reach the limits of reproach—of exasperation. "Signor!"

Gessi shrieked—and sprang. His hands reached for and closed upon the Albanian's throat. His face was convulsed. He chattered a thousand curses. He raved—he tore at his antagonist with hideous, clawing motions that were inhuman and all of the beast. And with the first shock he bore him back.

His advantage was only momentary. Agnew's grip fell upon his wrist. A couple of trackmen had him by the body and twisted him back. Jovan stepped aside, panting, the echo of a grim laugh dying upon his lips.

"No, good friend," he mocked, and the sound of his voice thrilled Agnew with something akin to repulsion, so pitiless were its tones in the presence of death and sorrow. "No! This trick is not to be snatched from us—at the last!"

HE TORE the packet open. He thrust it into Agnew's grasp.

"Read, signor!" he cried. "Read!"

Agnew unfolded the furrowed sheets. A bewildered frown creased his forehead, but as his glance sped down the lines of writing his eyes grew suddenly bright. The blood mounted to his cheeks—his excitement cul-

minated in a shout. He almost flung the document into Gresham's hands.

"The simplicity of it!" he cried. "The simplicity! I—an engineer—not to see what was under my very eyes!"

Gresham took the packet. At the first glance an exclamation escaped him. "Sanders wrote these!" he gasped. "Sanders!"

Agnew's triumphant laugh was not the only confirmation. Another sound added its testimony—in Gessi's voice. He flung up his hands.

They wheeled toward him and saw—or so it seemed—a drowning man! He fought—he agonized for breath as if a weight of waters were closing upon him. His strained eyes—his frantic gestures were those of the swimmer sinking below an engulfing flood. His head was tossed up with a last choking cry. He fell back into his captors' grip. He lay limp, inert, and very, very still.

Jovan strode forward. He peered into the glazing eyes. His hand probed beneath the clothing and rested upon the unheaving chest. He made a sign to those who held the body to lay it down.

He turned to Vilip as if he, and he alone, would grasp the significance of what could scarcely be misunderstood.

"It was written!" he said gravely. "It was Allah's immutable plan!"

CHAPTER XXXIII

THE LAST BARRIER DOWN

THE dawn was breaking to full day as Katrine came slowly out of her father's hut on the Vodra embankment, strolled across the square and seated herself upon a balk of timber at the lake side. The flush of rose still lingered on the Albanian snows. The first touch of sunlight was tipping the lower slopes of the foothills and rimming the waters with gold. A breeze came singing down from the northern crags and set the ripples lapping against the wharf-side piles.

She turned and her eyes searched the sides of the embankment keenly. Her gaze was principally directed at the unbridged outlet through which the Jana swirled through in its long escape toward the sea.

At the sound of a footstep she wheeled. It was Jovan who stood beside her, saluting punctiliously.

"God give you fortune to-day, signorina," he said gravely. He, too, directed a searching gaze upon the waters at his feet. "A further fall of the level," he announced. "There will soon be nothing left to bridge."

She smiled. She pointed to the brown acres of mud which had risen, as it seemed, from beneath the surface. The lagoons of the marshland were draining back into the parent lake. The huge waste of reeds had already drooped from living green to the browns and yellows of decay. And the great song of the frogs seemed to have a note of melancholy in it. Their fastnesses were being ruined—their refuges destroyed.

"Yes," she said quietly. "The menace of the marsh is gone. All that threatens the road has been vanquished. Only the difficulty of the ravine. And that is removed—to-day."

Jovan nodded. "To-day," he agreed. "And you will come, signorina? You will be there?"

"Could I stay away?" She smiled. "For I have not guessed it yet, Signor Jovan. I asked them not to tell me and for this last week I have wrestled with the problem, but in vain. Curiosity would drag me, if nothing else did."

The wave of his hand expressed deprecation. "You have nothing to reproach yourself with, signorina. Did any of us guess Signor Sanders' methods—till we read them? And yet,"—he shrugged his shoulders and gave a little laugh—"it was so obvious; as the Signor Intendente remarked, it was of such simplicity!"

He raised his head at the sound of an engine clanking down the track. It drew an elaborately decorated truck.

"Our train," he said. "And there is the Signor Intendente himself."

The Albanian looked toward him with welcoming eyes. And his salute, as Agnew approached, expressed more than courtesy or respect. It seemed to imply comradeship and the friendly greeting of intimacy.

Agnew smiled and looked at Katrine. "Am I to be jealous of Jovan?" he asked. "Has your curiosity driven you to ask from him information which you would not accept from me? Is that why I find you abroad at this hour?"

She smiled in return. She shook her head. "No," she answered. "The veil of my ignorance is still unlifted, and my curiosity is still unfed. But to-day? I shall gorge it, to-day, shall I not?"

"When you will," he said. "We are waiting for you, all of us. To-day is *your* day. We offer it you with our homage—it and all the success we hope it is to contain."

She rose. She began to stroll with him toward the track, where a little group had formed beside the engine. She could see her father and Vilip exchanging greetings as they inspected the beflagged and decorated truck.

Jovan, with a kindly, unseen gesture which had about it something of benediction, drew back and began to give loud greetings to Uiko, whose *londra* could be seen approaching, propelled by Gugi alone. The fisherman sat in the stern, resplendent in tight-fitting serge tunic and breeches, braided with black. He, too, was evidently infected with a sense of *festa*. His face was one great grin; his directions to his underling full of jovial ferocity.

Agnew halted in his stride and looked down the vista of the lake, gleaming now like polished metal in the rays of the fully risen sun. He sighed with an intonation of utter content.

"This last week? How it has changed everything! It is a new heaven and a new earth!" he said suddenly. "I see nothing the same."

Katrine gave a little nod of comprehension. "Or are you looking at it from a new point of view?" she asked. "Even, perhaps, in a new perspective? Is that it?"

"No," he said quietly. "I see things now—as they are. Formerly I looked through a veil." He turned and met her eyes. "If I had looked where I am looking now," he added, "that would have made the difference."

A flush rose to her cheeks. "Would it?" she asked. "Love? Does that alter everything for you, Gervase—for you—a man?"

He smiled.

"What does your own heart say to you—a woman?" he answered.

She gave a happy little laugh. But she shook her head. "No, for you love is the spice in the cup of life. For us it is the wine itself. Over here, with the vital questions of existence, passion and hate, peril and death, confronting me, I, too, have begun to see clearly. I know that for a man—a real man—life must always hold more than love. Ambition—effort—success? These are part of the masculine heritage. Your work will always be my rival, but—love will be there—always, Gervase?"

"The answer to that must lie in my eyes—for the present," he said, and laughed in his turn, tenderly, joyously. "Too many faces turn this way—your father's, Vilip's, Jovan's. But when this rival of to-day has no need of my services—when the great Bir road stretches from the Danube to the sea—then, sweetheart, then!"

"Then!" she agreed, and put her hand upon his arm with a little significant gesture. "Then, Gervase—then!"

They joined the group beside the engine. They mounted, all of them, upon the truck, Uiko in his dazzling attire casting glances of pitying disdain upon his friend Abdul, who, from the footplate, grinned cheerfully back. Slowly, but with gathering speed, the train rolled out along the track, labored up the heavy gradient, entered the tunnel's mouth, passed through the mile of darkness, and halted at the entrance of the ravine. And here the engine came to a halt.

Beside the track half a dozen wiry ponies waited with their attendants. Katrine looked at them with surprise.

"We do not go on into Gorac?" she questioned. "We do not enter the ravine."

Gresham smiled.

"For the moment it is not possible," he answered. "The track is broken in the tunnel, before you come to the river. We are going to climb."

She hesitated, still looking at him with inquiry. Then she lifted her shoulders in a little shrug.

"The track broken—in the tunnel?" she repeated. "Is that part of your mystery, too? Well, that does not help me—it tells me nothing. I must continue to wait."

She poised her foot on Agnew's hand and was swung into the saddle. The little procession formed along the mountain path. They set their steps toward the slope of the ravine.

AN HOUR later they halted, a full thousand feet up on the cliff edge. They were looking across the empty canyon, facing the snow-covered rocks and the glissade where Esuli's creatures had set that trap into which they themselves had fallen. Across the intervening void they could see men, who stood in little groups at different points. And so clear was the air that the expectant attitude of the watchers was recognizable, or so Katrine said. The

very mountains themselves, she declared, appeared to be awaiting—something.

Agnew pointed down into the ravine where the river roared along its narrow bed. "Look!" he said laconically. Katrine's glance followed the direction of his hand.

She looked, frowned, made a gesture as if to rub her eyes. "The tunnel entrance is fallen in?" she cried. "There is no opening to where the bridge is to be built?"

He nodded. "Look again!" he said. "Look the other side!"

She looked and gave a little cry. "But that is the same!" she declared. "That entrance is gone!"

"It is blocked up," he answered, smiling. "Each of the tunnel openings has been solidly built in." He laughed. "And that still is a mystery? That still tells you nothing?"

"No!" she said breathlessly. "No! I can't see——"

"Then we must make it very plain," he interrupted. He made a sign to Jovan, who stood, holding his revolver in his hand.

He fired into the air.

An answering shot came from the far side of the canyon.

Jovan fired again—three times in quick succession.

The little groups of men became suddenly animated. A moment later they all retired, running toward a point to the left of the great fan-shaped depression which culminated above the site of the ruined bridge.

A roar echoed suddenly into the morning quiet. A huge column of smoke shot into the air. Another followed—another—another. The hillside seemed suddenly to have acquired the characteristics of a volcano. Twenty craters seemed to have opened, flinging columns of fiery defiance against the peace of the open sky.

And then the first bellowing outburst merged in one huge and continuous thunder. The hill itself seemed moving. In crested waves, as it were, huge masses of earth and rock and boulder crashed down the declivity from twenty different points to meet in one enormous billow at the cliff edge. Ponderously, stupendously, the great avalanche shot out into the void and fell, as a cascade falls, a thousand feet into the narrows of the defile!

The river was blotted out. A thousand ledges, green with clinging shrubs, disappeared. The whole face of nature was changed. The canyon was filling—filling before their eyes, as if some giant sculptor was brimming his Titanic mold with clay. The walled-in entrances were utterly gone. The topmost levels of the heaped destruction stood a score of feet above their lintel heads!

A ringing cheer broke out from the men, Jovan's voice leading in triumph. It was echoed from those on the far side of the ravine. A fusillade of revolver-shots emphasized their exultation. A score of caps whirled up into the air.

Agnew turned to Katrine. "Simplicity? Is not that the word?" he asked. "To Sanders' genius the menace of the avalanches became no longer a menace, but a help. His plan—which you have seen fulfilled—was to use them. The ravine was the difficulty in the road? What was simpler to his imagination than to blot out the ravine! Instead of a bridge—a tunnel. The Liva, which raged below the track, will now pass fifty feet above it! Was that not an explanation under our very eyes?"

Her glance was still wide and wondering. Her breath still came in a gasp.

"And so—?" she said bewilderedly. "And so——?"

"And so the last barrier is down! The road goes forward—to its appointed end!"

For a moment a little silence fell—a silence eloquent of all that was left unsaid.

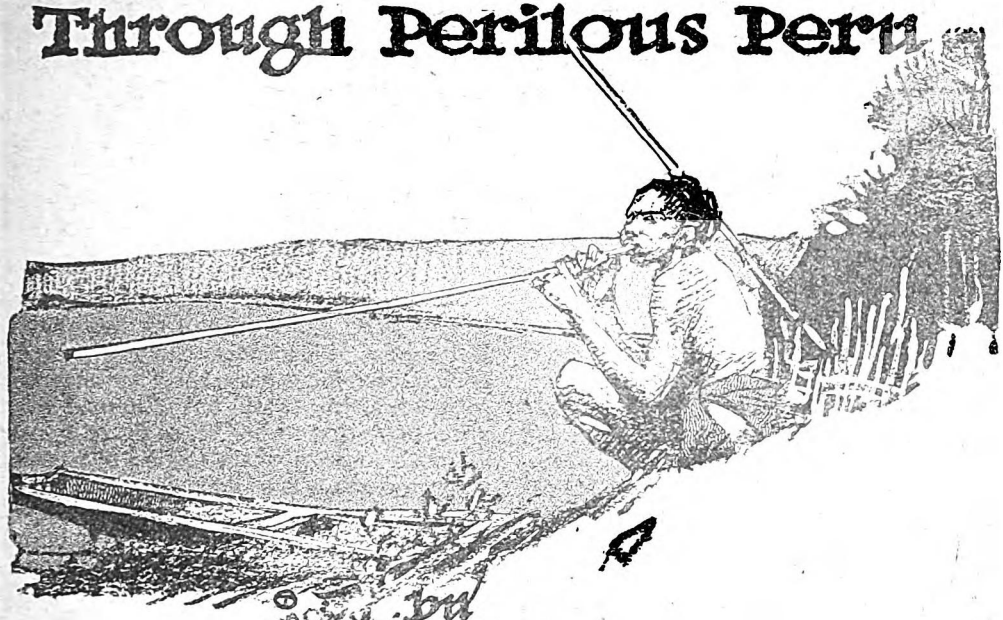
Then she looked up. The flush of surprise had died from her cheeks, and her gaze was grave, earnest, almost pleading. Her words, when they came, were whispered. "And *our* road, Gervase—our endless road which is just begun? Is that smoothed—at last?"

His hand went out to her in a quick, passionate gesture.

"Katrine!" he said. "Katrine—my guide!"

THE END

Through Perilous Peru



by Russell B Huffman

EDITOR'S NOTE: This article covers the most exciting part of an actual expedition across the Andes Mountains which was a struggle against death from starvation almost from the very start. Perils of all kinds beset the little party of Americans whose way led them into the jungle-heart of a vast unexplored country much of which was held by warlike tribes of cannibals. Only by dint of American pluck and perseverance were they able to win through with the loss of only one white man.

Mr. Huffman is an engineer for one of our large American financial interests and to him was entrusted the dangerous task of leading a small party across the Andes from Peru to the vast country on the east which is watered by the Amazon. Most of the district traversed was not only unmapped but totally unknown to civilization, and the object of Mr. Huffman's expedition was to make the first survey to determine the possibility of a proposed railway. This road, now under process of construction, will link the Pacific coast of South America with the Atlantic, the Amazon being so huge a river that ocean steamers of 10,000 tons burden, from Liverpool or New York, can unload cargo 3,000 miles into the heart of the Continent, there to be lightered to the eastern terminus of this railroad running 300 miles to the Pacific coast at Lima.

Owing to the failure of their Peruvian agents to send supply expeditions, the handful of Americans and their Indian bearers have struggled through to the summit of the last mountain-range only after twenty-one days of terrible suffering and with their strength nearly exhausted. The worst part of their journey is still to be faced, but below them, many miles away, lies a thin gray thread across the green of the jungle and they recognize it as the Ucayali River, their distant goal.

AFTER a brief rest, since it was, as always, very cold and disagreeable on the summit, we pulled ourselves together and began the descent. This was a hard job; at times our legs refused to support us and now and then a man would fall forward and go rolling and sliding downward among the rocks and bushes until something fortunately intervened to stop his descent. Often, while this was going on, the others would still be descending as best they could, entirely conscious of the other man's predicament but correspondingly unable to help him.

And so we went down, each man for himself, winding around waterfalls and skirting precipices with, I imagine, much the same glassy, indifferent stare in our eyes with which the sleepwalker on the cornice of a building regards the paved street hundreds of feet below.

But four o'clock found us all safe and

sound at the foot of the mountain and established in a camp hastily constructed out of palm leaves. Barometric readings at this point showed an elevation of 4,300 feet, or a drop of 3,400 feet in six hours, which was very good going, considering our condition. No doubt this singular spurt was caused by our proximity to food, for we knew that with a drop of another thousand feet we would be well within the game limits.

And so we lay down that night in our blankets and gratefully sucked at our last strips of dog-hide smeared with lard and dreamed of whatever pleased each one most, which generally proved to be the same thing. As for myself, I was always pointing my dream rifle at an animal swinging by its tail in a tree, whereupon the animal immediately dropped to the ground and turned into Filet Mignon, with Sauce Bordelaise.

Late in the afternoon of the second day following we encountered our first Indian signs and immediately pitched camp and investigated the vicinity as closely as we were able. We were feeling more courageous now, although none too strong yet, for we had bagged some monkeys and eaten them, and the effect of such an unfamiliar article was at first very painful, but it was comforting, nevertheless, to know that where others could live we might live also.

During the scouting which followed until nightfall, one of the more intelligent of our *cholos* returned bringing with him an armful of yuccas, a farinaceous root resembling the potato, which he had stolen from a nearby *chacra*, or farm. He said that, though he had seen no one, the still glowing embers of their fires showed that the owners could not be far away and that they were probably scattered through the forest watching us. But even this alarming bit of news failed to stir us, and as the *chacra* was described as being in an excellent state of cultivation we decided to stay near our new-found base of supplies for a few days and gather strength.

CANNIBALS AND HEAD HUNTERS

THE Cashibo Indian, who inhabits this section of the vast Pampa del Sacramento west of the Ucayali, is a relic of the Stone Age. Nowhere else in the Western Hemisphere is there to be found such an appalling mixture of stupidity and savagery. While there are other savage tribes near them, notably the Ungonino branch of the Campas Indians on the south, whose territory is correspondingly difficult to enter, and the Aguaranas and head-hunting Huambesis on the north, yet none of these is of such low intelligence as this man of the Ucayali region who goes without clothes, eats his enemies and uses a stone hatchet. The Cashibo, in fact, might be compared to the African pigmy in lack of mentality and hatred of any but his own kind.

Yet the most surprising thing about him was, to me, the absence of metal equipment of any kind. I don't mean by this that I had looked to find Mrs. Cashibo using a patent bread-knife or spanking her offspring with a wire hair-brush, but it seemed very queer to me that we had hit on the only spot in South America where the use of metals, if not unknown, is at least dispensed with.

And it is this tribe of degraded savages which has for its domain the choicest bit of rubber-country in the world! Men come down off the Andes on the west and other men come up the Ucayali from Iquitos, the headquarters of the rubber trade, and look longingly over into the Pampa where the Cashibo flits shadow-like through the forest glades, but so far they have had to do their coveting from a distance, or content themselves with sudden dashes into the district, which nearly always meant that some of the party would never return.

And these Peruvian rubber-men are no cowards, at that. As a matter of fact, they are very tough customers who will commit any kind of atrocity in order to secure the single thing they want. But the Cashibo, so far, has been too much for them.

As it stands just now, I doubt whether anything but a railroad will open up this particularly desirable spot on the map. The Cashibo has retreated and contracted until he can't retreat and contract any more. In fact, he says so pointedly, the points in the case being at the ends of his six-foot *chonta* palm arrows, and so, I suppose, it will rest until with the building of the railroad he will either be put under dietary restrictions, or be driven into fastnesses where there is nothing for the white man to covet.

In the course of the rubber raids occasionally made on the northern and eastern sides of the Pampa many of the women and children of these Indians have been captured by the *Gaucheros* and sold down the Ucayali for slaves. Looking at the rubber pirates from the Cashibo point of view and having

in mind the bloody work of these gun-men when they descend upon an isolated *chacra* in the depths of the forest, I am not sure but that the Cashibo, except for his unfortunate diet, is the better man.

As to their cannibalism, I found, much to my surprise, that this is by no means confined to their white-skinned enemies, for, while at a small trading-post on the Pachetea River, I saw a woman who *had killed and eaten her own child!* Her husband was a rubber-hunter, and during one of his expeditions had left his family rather poorly provided for at a remote *chacra* in the forest. On his return he found that the cannibal instincts had been stronger than those of motherhood. My amazement over this story was so great that I went to the woman and asked her if it were so, whereat she calmly acknowledged the truth of the report. Looking into the matter a little farther, I found that the woman was of half Cashibo and half *Gauchero* blood, which I might have suspected. It would take just about that murky mixture to perpetrate such a crime. Strange to say, the husband failed to kill the woman and, in fact, continued to live with her, although, my informant said, it could be plainly seen that he was very much annoyed!

Imagine a similar case in this country, perhaps in a Harlem flat, with hubby just home from a hard day's work in the glue factory. The wife, well fed and happy, is found seated in a rocker, laughing merrily over the familiar troubles of the Dingbat Family in the evening paper.

Hubby (*after looking vainly about*), "Where's Cash? Where's the little fellow?"

Wife (*without looking up*), "Oh, yes. I meant to tell you. The meat man didn't come to-day, so I ate him."

Hubby, "Do you mean to say that the butcher won't give us any more credit? I think you might have told me if the bill was so high. How are we ever going to raise a family if you persist in doing this? Really, Minnie, I think it was very shabby of you," etc., etc.

COMPARED to the Cashibos, the Aguaranas of Northern Peru are much more intelligent, but this may be expected when it is remembered that at the time of the Inca Manco some of the Incas escaped the butchery of the Spaniards and hid in the forests on the eastern slope of the Andes. The proof of this lies in the many high-caste Inca words found in the Quichua dialect spoken by these Indians, a dialect with a grammatical construction.

These Indians use blowguns to bring down birds and small game, some of the tubes being twenty feet long. Principally they are made of bamboo and are lined very accurately with a highly polished bone. They are then wrapped with fiber and covered with crude rubber so as to render them air-tight, producing in the end a very good imitation of the blowgun used by "Ayacanora," the fair one who has charmed many a boyish heart in the wonderful pages of "Westward Ho!" The arrows, which are about six inches long, are also polished and have the tip sawed partly through in order to let the arrow break off of its own weight and leave the tip in the quarry. These tips are often saturated with poison, the peculiar property of which is to paralyze the nerve-centers of the bird or animal, the arrow not having sufficient penetrative power to reach a vital spot. I think that this poison is probably analogous to henbane.

While the Aguaranas are probably the smartest of these petty tribes, the imaginative powers of the Huambesis, or head-hunters, have produced a thing which, in its way, is thoroughly unique. The custom of separating people from their heads is one of the most popular diversions detailed in history. But, once severed, the head, which really caused all the trouble, has been considered of no account. Right here is where the native refinement, the classic taste of the Huambesis, shows itself. Admitted that your enemy is worth stabbing or arrowing at all, why let it stop there? Why not retain some outward and visible sign of the inward and spiritual face? In other words, in the absence of stocks and bonds to leave the children, why not hand them down a collection of heads? What more concrete evidence of your prowess in the business world than Jones' head in a cabinet—Jones, who sold you that mining stock, or Brown's well-known features smiling at you from the bedpost—dear old Brown, who worked up a monopoly of the shoe-string trade and drove you to the door of the poorhouse? Perhaps it is hard to put yourself in another man's place, but I've no doubt you see the Huambesis point of view by this time, and in the mechanical side of the art he is no less ingenious than in the theory.

We will presume that the Huambesi has obtained material with which to work. The first step is to sew shut both eyes and mouth. After this is accomplished a cut is made at the base of the skull and the scalp turned inside out and entirely removed from the head. The process followed in reducing the skull itself is not precisely known, but the fact remains that by the removal of the brains and some peculiar manipulation the head *is* reduced in size until it is about as large as a cricket-ball, or one-third of its former dimensions. The scalp is then restored and the trophy hung in the smoke of the owner's camp-fire until it is thoroughly smoked and tanned and acquires a richly aromatic odor.

I have said that the Cashibos were the only cannibals left in South America, but I shall have to qualify this slightly by saying that the Aymaras of Bolivia also have such customs, although they confine them to devouring the heart of the victim and not the flesh of the limbs and body. This custom is unquestionably the outgrowth of some religious or scientific theory, for the Aymaras contend that they are benefited morally as well as physically. I suspect that over-religious persons will disapprove of this theory and, in fact, it *does* seem like stretching morals to the breaking-point, but when one goes into the jungle one should take with him a set of tough, serviceable morals that can stand a little pulling and hauling, and not fall apart when they get wet. Canned morals are no good.

WATCHED BY UNSEEN EYES

FOR three days we remained in the vicinity of the *chacra* and fattened up on monkeys and yucca. With the exception of one man, the party was still intact. This man, curiously enough, proved to be the *cholo* who had given me the coca, and had apparently either deserted us or succumbed somewhere along the trail. In any event it was useless to search for him, although I often found myself thinking about him and the patient smile on his lips as he gave me his last leaves.

Under the influence of food Fleming seemed to forget about the steak he left in Lima, and we found ourselves growing sociable once more, which was a welcome change from the causeless rancor that had embittered our hearts in our days of starvation. But, with the acquisition of food, our indifference in the face of danger began to fade away. In plain English, once our stomachs were full, we began to grow timid. This nervousness was more increased than lessened by the invisibility of the Indians, for we knew perfectly well that we were under constant surveillance. Not even an animal is as noiseless as an Indian stalking, and to know that unseen eyes were on us whether we ate or slept or worked kept our nerves at high tension.

To add to the strain, we often heard them at a distance imitating the cries of animals and trying to lure single members of the party into the jungle where ambush would be easy. Thus our actions can be easily imagined when, on the second day of our encampment, we were startled by the sound of fire-arms. Before we could bring ourselves to realize that the Cashibos could hardly be the possessors of rifles, we heard one of the supposed Indians calling to the others in a rich Irish brogue. Another moment and McRea, our old cook, and four packers with a limited supply of provisions, came into sight.

McRea had deserted us on November seventeenth. At that time we had fully made up our minds to continue our journey at all costs, and the outlook had proved too much for our chef. Perhaps I ought not to class him as a deserter, for in our desperate situation the matter of going forward or back was left for each man to decide, but even though he brought us food we found it difficult to regard him as before.

McRea said that after traveling one day on the back trail he met with three packers carrying provisions and mail. These informed him that the rest of their party were camped on the Tulumayo River and had refused to go any farther. They believed from what they heard that after the packers had eaten most of our provisions and otherwise amused themselves they were to return to Huanuco with stories of our death. Although McRea, while hungry, had had no confidence in his ability to go on with us, he evidently plucked up courage after a few meals and began to take another view of it. Finally, when the pangs of hunger had been completely exchanged for those of remorse, he got behind the three packers with his Winchester and started them toward our party.

On the summit of the last range before

descending to the Pampa del Sacramento he was startled to find a man's body lying across the trail. He knew at once that it was one of our *cholos* who had become exhausted while trying to keep up, but he was so covered by ants and insects that were on the point of devouring him as to be completely unrecognizable. Although, at first sight, the poor fellow appeared to be dead, he gave indications of life after a time and McRea immediately set to work to restore him, which he finally accomplished by means of coca-leaves and some pea-soup. Thus the invaluable coca came into play for a second time and saved a life. My pleasure over this fortunate outcome can be easily imagined, for of course this *cholo* was the one who had saved my own existence—the man who had given me his last leaves.

A FORLORN HOPE BY RAFT

ON THE twenty-seventh of November we camped on the banks of the Aguatea, an affluent of the Ucayali. Here we made two rafts of balsa wood, which is cork-like in its texture and supporting powers, and prepared for the last stage of our journey. These rafts, since we had no ropes or nails, had to be bound together with tough vine cables. They were also fastened transversely with poles which we pegged down as best we could with wooden pegs. We made a good, workmanlike job of it, nevertheless, and finally embarked eighteen of the party, including McRea, with the purpose of getting them down to the Ucayali as quickly as possible. The remainder of the party were to finish the trip overland.

While a separation of the party at this point may be criticized there were two very good reasons for so doing. The first of these was that our men were footsore and exhausted. Further delay, even for rest, was undoubtedly hazardous, and by shortening the trip for so many the supplies would last longer for the rest. The second reason was that our work was not yet done. It took a little grit to come to this determination, inasmuch as our ammunition, even increased by that of the raft parties, amounted to only a hundred rounds, and at least ten days' travel would be needed to cover the distance remaining, but we had engaged to carry the reconnaissance overland and we did not like to give up.

We said good-by to the raft parties on the first day of December. One of the rafts had a carrying capacity of twelve men with their packs, while the smaller raft, of which McRea took charge, carried six. It was our purpose to have the small raft act as a pilot, and it was therefore despatched about five minutes in advance of the cargo raft with the majority of the packers.

I think they were very glad to go. Once we had turned them loose on raft-construction, they were perfectly happy and capable of no end of work, and as they poled out from shore that morning their faces shone with a good-will which had not been ours to know for many a day. "*Dios guarda usted!*" they called back to us, and "*Hasta luego!*" which means something more than "*Auf wiedersehen*" because it translates into not only a temporary farewell but also a hope that the meeting may be soon.

"Good-by, boys," McRea shouted, when a few yards out from shore. "I'll have some dacint drinks and shmokes waitin' fer yees at Massasea. The best thing about this country is the injyment of other places whin ye get out of ut!" Poor McRea! He never lived to get the cheering drop he used to crave.

Our overland trip consumed about ten days, as we had calculated, for we limped up to the banks of the Ucayali on the morning of December 11th. Individually we were perfect sights. Collectively we were a band of disreputable, dangerous-looking men. Our upper garments were torn to shreds. We had no trousers and no shoes. Naturally we had not shaved during the trip, and our faces were not only bearded but also so terribly ravaged by the insects infesting the low river-country that we would not have been recognized by our closest relations.

THE JUNGLE'S CURSE OF INSECTS

NEVER have I encountered such vast quantities of creeping, flying things with stings! Every tree, every bush, every frond or tiny shoot that lay across our path seemed loaded with insect life all ready to disengage itself and fasten upon our limbs and bodies as we walked along. Naturally this sort of thing, combined with the higher temperature and humidity, had an immediate effect on our tempers, and we were often on the point of blows over trivial matters that were later found to be ridiculous. Perhaps the worst of these stinging

torments were the pium, a species of sand-fly, and a large, black ant about an inch and a half long whose bite is not only painful but causes a terrible swelling.

There were many other varieties of ants, some of which are said to carry a fatal poison, but we fortunately escaped both them and the tarantulas and scorpions, of which there were great numbers. The flies were not so bad, although there was one variety which fastened itself on our faces when wet with perspiration and had to be picked off one at a time. I do not think that one realizes the full meaning of the word "life" until one has studied that riot of animal and vegetable growth which is called the jungle. In colder climates one is *attracted* by signs of life—the movement of an insect or a bird or an animal catches and even startles the eye through its contrast to the immovable things around them; but in the steaming hot-house of the tropics the whole world about you seems a crawling, clutching, squirming mass—a vast ferment in which countless things are being born and killed and eaten with dazing swiftness, and absorbed into the inconceivably prolific earth to burst forth again in some other form into irrepressible life. It is oppressing, this constant thronging upon the senses of animal and insect activities. We love the sight and feel of living things, but where the very plants and vines seem to grow under the watching eye, and the rich, black earth seems throbbing with unseen seeds about to burst, the mind sickens of the diet.

AND so we had grown heartily sick of the jungle in our last ten days, and when at last we glimpsed the water through the trees and stood on the banks of the river for which we had striven through two awful months, I, like Xenophon's soldier with his *"Thalatta! Thalatta!"* cried out "The Ucayali!"

That evening, shortly after we had come out on the river and were casting about for wood for a raft, we encountered a camp of rubber-hunters. These proved to be very friendly and agreed to take us down the river in a canoe in the course of a few days. In the meantime, having nothing better to do, we rested and attempted to alleviate the soreness caused by the insect bites.

The business of collecting rubber has been described very fully many times before, but not until our stay in this camp did the human side of the industry come up. Most of these men were half-breeds, crosses between Peruvian stock and the less savage Indian tribes, and were all armed with Winchesters, seeming to prefer the old 1872 model, which has the sliding breech-cap on top. They had been sent out by their *patron* at Iquitos to spy out the land and see whether they could not get into the Cashibo country when the rains ended a few months later. This seemed quite probable, as I doubt if any rubber gathering farther inland than ten miles from the Ucayali has ever been done.

Most of the outfitting of these parties is done by the traders at Iquitos who make advances of goods and supplies at fabulous prices to the contractors. These adventurers surround themselves with piratical crews of Indians and half-breeds and take to the field near the end of the rains, returning to Iquitos with their coagulated rubber in the Fall. Much of the rubber, of course, is obtained by companies which work concessions, but in this section it is a case of getting what you can in a hurry.

These fellows seemed to make no secret of their willingness to kill off the forest people, and, to be perfectly truthful, were as cold-blooded and ruthless a set of devils as one might meet in many a day.

As I have said before, there is a surplusage of neither law nor humanness in this particular nook of the universe. The Peruvian Government is composed of earnest, efficient men striving to develop their wonderful country with all intelligence and speed, but until the railroad is built into this section there will be crime and outrage in direct proportion to the rich harvest awaiting those daring spirits who enter on this prolific territory. Nature guards her treasure-troves with varied perils, and here she stored away her wealth in the steaming, treacherous labyrinth of the jungle in whose dark glades lurks a death which may come unheralded in any of a score of forms.

It is a hard and cruel job, this rubber-piracy, and after the atmosphere of the camp had soaked into me and I could see the ambushes laid, the *chacras* in flames and the groups of frightened women and children going down stream to a life of labor from which they could never escape, I decided in favor of a trader's store at Iquitos if I ever went into the rubber business. Three and four hundred per cent. on clothes and hard-

ware is enough for me, anyway! Anything over a thousand per cent. return is unsafe, and marks a man as a speculator.

BAD NEWS OF ONE OF THE RAFTS

WE ARRIVED at Massasea on the sixteenth. The small raft party had not yet come in, much to our surprise, and we found but one of the party which had been on the larger raft, the rest of the men having gone farther down the river to Puca Alpa, where they were awaiting orders. This man said that they had passed the small raft shortly after embarking, and although they had waited for more than a week at the confluence of the Aguatea and the Ucayali they had seen or heard nothing of the other party. This bit of news made us feel very bad, as we couldn't see much hope for McRea at this late date.

To add to our troubles we found that the funds which we had arranged to have placed to our credit at Massasea had been missent and that we were beggars. It was just such mistakes on the part of others which had surrounded our expedition from the start and exposed us to such hardships, and on my way up to the Wireless Office which the Government maintains at Massasea I composed a message which could have been written only on asbestos. But, as luck would have it, the Wireless Company informed me that they could not "get" Lima, for some reason, and were accepting no messages.

In the face of this we felt very downhearted, and when we went to the merchants for new clothes and a line of credit which would enable us to eat, for we still retained that curious habit, we met with nothing but refusals backed by pointed references to another party like ourselves who had left many unpaid bills. Still, when I look back on the episode, I can hardly blame them. Unshaven, only half clothed and left by the insects without a semblance of those marks by which a trustworthy person is known, we must have presented a sorry sight. Since then it has occurred to me that every scientific person should have at least one pair of trousers.

As a last resort we sent word down river to the Gobernador of the Puca Alpa District, detailing our predicament and asking aid. In the meantime we went to the proprietor of the local hotel, told him what we had done and demanded accommodations. He seemed to be impressed, either by our words or our demeanor, and finally agreed to board us for a short time. He was a very kind and generous man—at Coronation prices. But he would not give us any trousers.

DOWN WITH FEVER

THE next day the Gobernador arrived and I left for Puca Alpa. He had heard nothing of the missing men, and the only thing for me to do was to interrogate those of the larger party waiting below and see what I could learn. Brown and Fleming I left behind at Massasea, as they had been stricken down the day before by fever and could not get out of bed. I was congratulating myself on my fortunate escape from this particular torment when I suddenly began to feel uncomfortable, and on my arrival at Puca Alpa was also taken down and rendered helpless for ten days.

My condition at this time was very bad. I was naturally in poor health, owing to the trials we had gone through, my stomach was out of order and I could not sleep. In fact, when the fever showed no signs of abating and I began to fear that I should become insane under the strain, I obtained a box of opium pills and swallowed several, totally unconcerned, so far as I remember, as to the quantity, and only hearing my mind and body crying out for sleep and a cessation of the torture. As might have been expected, the opium first made me very drunk and then brought on a profuse perspiration. Possibly these fireworks broke the fever, for the next day it passed away and left me clear-headed though frightfully weak.

During this convalescent period I was wakened one morning by the sound of a steam whistle, and on going out found the Captain of a trader's launch which had just come down the river. The Captain, a very jovial Italian, was glad to be able to inform me that five of the missing party had been seen encamped near the mouth of the Aguatea at the *chacra* of some friendly Conibo Indians. I asked immediately whether he had noticed a white man among them, but he was unable to say whether McRea were still alive or not. I therefore despatched some canoes at once and ordered the men brought down to Puca Alpa.

THE UNKNOWN FATE OF MC REA

ON THEIR return the sad story was quickly told. The accident had happened shortly after embarking. The Aguatea is not a deep river, and while the smaller raft had been shooting some bad rapids it had struck a submerged rock with the result that occupants, fire-arms and cargo were thrown into the river. With the loss of the supplies it occurred to McRea that the best chance of safety lay in finding the trail which I was cutting down the left bank of the river and, though he knew nothing of woodcraft, he induced the men to follow him.

Probably it seemed to McRea an easy task to find our trail, but he evidently forgot that we were behind him at the time and, moreover, were making wide detours from time to time. At all events he was unable to find our blazing and, after wandering around in the forest for several days, the natives became so exhausted that they asked for a halt until they could rest and find some kind of food. This McRea refused to grant and, taking up the only machete the party possessed, he went forward into the jungle, intent on pushing on alone. This, the men said, was the last they ever saw of him.

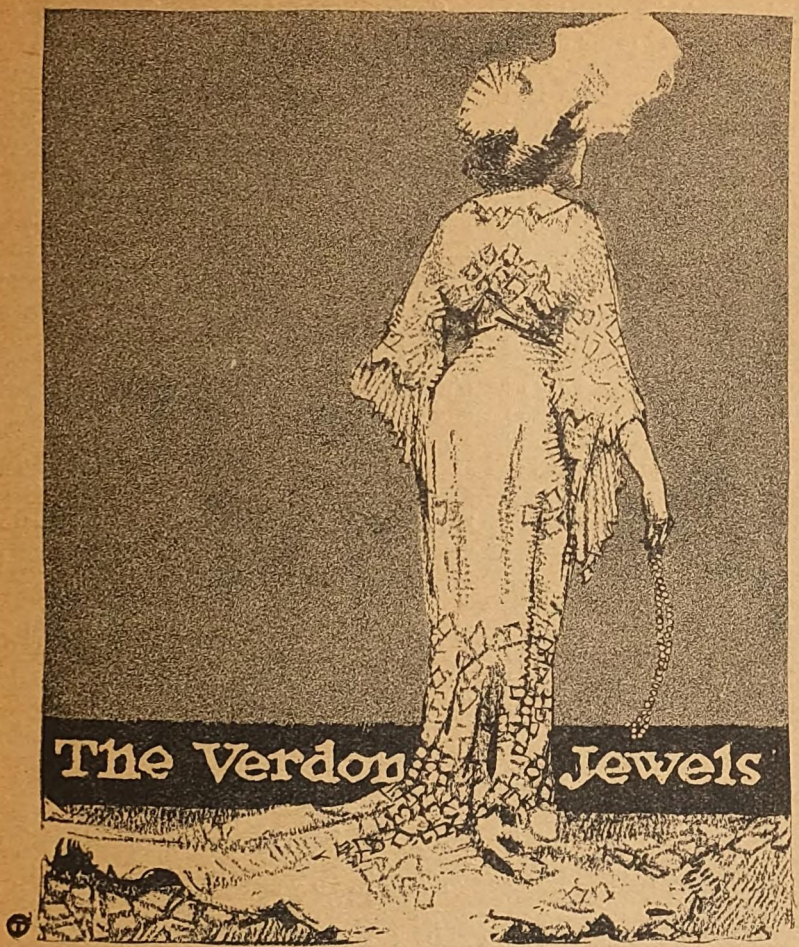
Whether McRea was killed or taken captive by the cannibals or died of starvation is problematical. As I look back at it now I am convinced that McRea was murdered by his men. In view of his previous desertion it seems improbable that he would try to go alone through a trackless forest armed only with a corn-knife when they could have made another raft in a short time and eventually got down the river. But all the men told precisely the same story, though without as much variation as truth-telling generally supplies, and there was nothing I could do or that the authorities could have done if I had wished it. And so McRae never got his cheering drop, or anything else, for that matter, and when our party got together some months later we thought of his last words—and drank to him—and turned down an empty glass.

RETURNING to Massasea on January 10th, I found the Wireless people still unable to communicate with Lima, and so was brought to the realization that if we were ever to get out of Massasea I would have to go to Lima and obtain funds for the return trip. This entailed, besides the river travel, a very hard journey on mule-back for a distance of a hundred and fifty miles. The trails over this part of the Andes are very bad and the journey is so much dreaded by every one that the Government men living in the province of Loreto find it preferable to go by river steamer down to the mouth of the Amazon and thence up to Panama and down the west coast to Callao. If there is any other country in the world where you travel six thousand miles by water to escape a few hundred miles by land, I'd like to know where it is.

Arriving in Lima on the first day of February, 1910, where I was later joined by the remainder of the party, I found rumors current to the effect that we had perished. These currents I traced to Huanuco, and found their origin in two of the four packers who deserted us on October 24th. The other two had died en route, one through a fall over a cliff and the other from starvation.

Such, in brief, is the story of the first expedition to cross the Pampa del Sacramento, and if any information I have given be regarded as useful I shall have obtained a true reward for the trials I experienced in cutting the first trail through completely unknown regions.

As to the Pampa itself I can say that it is a wonderful piece of country, surpassing in fertility, equable climate and variety of products any other spot in Peru. In only a short time now this wonderland of agricultural and timber wealth, in fact, much of Interior Peru, will be colonized and developed through the new railroad. For the colonizer the Pampa del Sacramento offers more return for less labor than any land elsewhere in South America that I have seen. For the metal miner, the slopes of the Andes, from which once came the wealth of a European dynasty, provide a treasure-house to which there will prove no end. For the venturesome, the restless, for the men of blood and iron whose fighting natures force them into contact with the perilous in hope of gain or wild adventure, there is yet one place where they can get their fill of it, and bring back something into the bargain—the Heart of Peru.



by Zenda Warde

I HAD run down to Palermo and had been stopping there a week. The New York detective force was, through its Italian members, investigating a Black Hand atrocity, but my part in the work was finished and I was planning a run over to Cairo by way of vacation. Indeed, I was in a cab on my way to buy a ticket, when I opened the Paris edition of the New York *Herald*. The first item that came under my eye made me change my plans.

Across the top of the column were the headlines:

VERDON GEMS STOLEN

MRS. JAMES VERDON OF NEW YORK LOSES JEWELS VALUED AT $15,000. WILL SUE BRUSSELS HOTEL

The item itself gave scant enough news of the robbery. It mentioned the jewels as being of great value, described them and stated that the robbery had taken place in one of the well known Brussels hotels. The proprietor of the hotel had at first agreed to pay for the jewels; subsequently he refused to do so. Two things decided me and I went to Brussels as rapidly as steam could carry me.

I had known Jimmy Verdon for years and I knew that "Napoleon" Ragdon was in Europe. To recover such a superb array of jewels for Jimmy would please me as well as anything could, for Jimmy was a good fellow and I owed him a good turn or two.

While the Brussels police might be as good as any in the world, I thought I knew more about Napoleon Ragdon than any Continental detective could know and, with my knowledge of that master hotel-thief's

methods, I believed I would be more likely to recover the jewels than any other detective living. I had already had my little wit matches with Ragdon. Sometimes I had come off second best. I had reason to believe, however, that Ragdon was in Belgium or Holland. It looked like one of his jobs.

If I had tried to keep my identity secret at Palermo I adopted the opposite course at Brussels. I went at once to the hotel where the robbery had occurred, registered in my own name and let it be known that I had come on the matter of the jewels, for I knew how such knowledge travels through Europe and I hoped Ragdon would hear of it soon. In fact, he called at the hotel the second day and asked for me. I had rather thought he would. It was characteristic.

I was surprised to find the Verdons still at the Hotel Magnifique. It seemed that, after all, the manager had not fully decided to refuse payment for the lost jewels. He was wavering.

"Wavering" is a mild term to express the state that excitable little man was in. He was going through a series of somersaultic convulsions. And no wonder, for $15,000 translated into francs is an enormous sum. The Swiss insurance company that had issued his policy, protecting the hotel against such losses, had flatly refused to make the amount or any part of it good. Whether to pay Verdon and sue the Swiss company or refuse to pay Verdon and stand Jimmy's suit for the amount was what had turned the manager's mind upside down.

I found Jimmy as plump and well dressed as ever. Even the loss of the jewels could not destroy his cheerful air of satisfaction with life, although he tried to take the affair seriously. But fifty years of good digestion and ease of mind can stand a few assaults of bad fortune.

"By George, Bobby!" he said, as soon as he had shaken my hand, "you know it is infernally good of you to take all this trouble for me. Just like you, old chap! But, I say, you ought to be doing this job for the hotel, not for me."

"How so, Jimmy?" I asked.

"Why, the hotel has to pay me for the trinkets, you know," he said. "I'm just sitting tight. I'm not worrying."

"But, Jimmy," I said, "unless you had the jewels in their safe you can't hold the hotel responsible. And if they were in their safe——"

"Oh, now, Bobby, that's all rot, you know!" he exclaimed. "Here is how it was. The madame—that's my wife—had just gone up to her room and peeled off her traveling rig. Hadn't been in the room two minutes, you know, and opened her suit case and took out the jewels. Understand? I was down in the lobby, picking up a couple of newspapers. So the madame took the small purse she carries the jewels in and started for the office, to have them put in the hotel safe. Got that, Bobby?"

"Plain as day," I said.

"Very well! That was about seven o'clock in the evening. She closed her door and double-turned the key. As she stepped into the corridor a man brushed against her. It was rather dark, you understand. The chap begged pardon, in French, and the madame trotted on down the hall to the elevator. When she reached the office——"

"The gems were gone," I said.

"Nothing in her hand but the silly handle of the purse, mind you," said Jimmy in an aggrieved tone.

"Don't sound like a Ragdon job," I said. "Still, he may——"

"I don't know who your jolly Ragdon may be," said Jimmy, "but if the madame wasn't doing her full duty toward getting those trinkets into the hotel safe, what was she doing? I say I've got a fair case against the hotel. What?"

"Looks so," I agreed, "but why did the Swiss company repudiate the claim. They don't do such things."

"How do I know why a bally Swiss company does things?" Jimmy asked carelessly. "Come and have a real cocktail, Bobby. They let me mix them myself at the bar."

Jimmy mixing a cocktail was a picture of a serious artist at work on a masterpiece and he would not talk until I had tried the concoction. Then he told me more.

IT SEEMED that Jimmy and his wife and the boy had come direct from Paris to Brussels, meaning to tour Belgium and Holland slowly after seeing Brussels and the World's Fair. The madame, as Jimmy insisted on calling his wife, rather thought they might get what Jimmy called a "knock down" to the new king and Jimmy expressed himself frankly on the subject of meeting kings.

According to Jimmy the whole thing was a "frame-up." You had to buy your court

costume from a particular "Tailor to the King," at a shocking price. In Jimmy's opinion the king got a "rake off" from the tailor.

The jewels were new, fresh from a jeweler on the Rue de la Paix in Paris. I had suspected as much, for I knew Jimmy had no family jewels and it was common knowledge that Jimmy's wife had received none of the Winchell jewels. The old man left them to his sister.

Jimmy was on his wedding trip, as I knew. Four months earlier he had married, at New York, Maranne, the widow of Silas Winchell. The wedding was talked about quite a little at the time, for they were married less than a year after the death of old Silas. It was understood that the widow-bride brought Jimmy considerable money, which she very properly kept in her own hands. She also brought him a son, full grown, twenty-two years of age, and a gay youngster he was, too.

This gay boy—Roderic—had his own allowance, the income from a sum that was not to fall into his hands until he reached twenty-eight years.

"You must meet Rod," Jimmy said. "Fine chap, that boy. Like a chum to me, but he trots a bit faster than I do. I guess I'm getting old, Bobby."

"Nonsense!" I said. "But how about the boy's finances, Jimmy? Has he been running close lately?"

I could say that to Jimmy.

"You mustn't think what you are thinking, Bobby," Jimmy said, "but the boy has been running it pretty close this Summer. We did Monte Carlo and he got touched rather deep there and then he guessed the wrong horse at the Grand Prix at Paris. But Rod wouldn't touch his mama's trinkets."

He thought a moment.

"What good would they do the lad, anyway?" he asked carelessly. "He couldn't turn them into cash here, especially after all this row. Who's this Ragdon fellow you mentioned?"

"Ragdon is a fly hotel thief and he is in Europe. It may have been a loose guess. Don't sound like a job of his."

I did not have to look up Roderick Winchell for he came swinging into the bar just then with a cheerful "'Lo, popsy!" to which Jimmy responded "'Lo, baby," with evident affection, such as a man of Jimmy's age often has for a young fellow. But my first glance assured me that Rod was no innocent child. He was, first of all, a spoiled boy and he was a little weak. Not the criminal type, but evidently a young man who might yield to an impulse of temptation. From the fact that he was spoiled I guessed he was the idol of his mother, for old Silas Winchell was not indulgent. I could imagine that Rod would try to avoid confessing any misstep that would distress his mother. Rather than that he might be drawn into just such an act of dishonesty as this I was investigating.

"Babe," said Jimmy, "this is my old friend and he has come all the way from nowhere to look up those trinkets. He is a detective. Tell him what you know."

Rod told the story exactly as his father had told it, but of course all this was merely hearsay. Neither had been in Mrs. Verdon's room when she unpacked the jewels, nor in the corridor when she was robbed. I wanted to hear that story from her own lips. But one thing Rod said was worth remembering.

"Mom went right up to her room," he said, "and Popsy walked over to the newsstand to pick up a paper, so I slid into the bar and had a hasty nip and scooted up to my room——"

"Where was your room?" I asked.

"Right next to Mom's," he said. "Nearer the elevator."

"Did you pass her on your way up, or was she still in her room when you entered yours?"

He colored.

"I say!" he exclaimed, and then, "I suppose this is all in your business. Neither. Life is too short to wait for that dinky little elevator, so I ran up the stairs. Probably Mom was coming down the elevator while I was going up the stairs."

"Don't mix the boy in this, Bobby," expostulated Jimmy. "He doesn't belong, I tell you. I know all about Rod. It don't count that he has been hard up lately. Matter of fact, he touched me for some cash to tide over and he can touch me again any time he needs any of these little franc things and he knows it."

But, in spite of all Jimmy's faith, there was something in the young man's manner that caused me to give him a long, disconcerting stare. That stare is part of my stock in trade. I have a trick of seeming to throw my glance deep into the heart of man or

woman—or into the hidden pocket or skirt—and my victim feels the glance burning through to whatever may be hidden in pocket or brain. I call it my searchlight. It is true that this stare is as disconerting to the innocent as to the guilty; an utterly innocent man will often flush the reddest under it. It throws the man I wish to study into a nervous panic for a moment and that is the use I make of it. I usually preface my searchlight glance with a disconcerting question of some sort.

"DOES your father know everything?" I asked Rod and turned my stare on him. Roderic turned as red as a guide-book cover and in the one moment of his confusion I saw him move his hand, ever so slightly, toward his breast pocket. I turned my searchlight on that pocket. I looked at that spot steadily. It must have seemed hours to the young fellow. His hand wavered, moved a fraction of an inch nearer the pocket and then dropped stiffly.

It was as if the young fellow was pushing that hand down by mental effort. I knew Rod had something in that pocket he wished to conceal. It might be the gems, or it might be the picture of some girl, or a dunning letter. I was satisfied. Whatever the boy knew or did not know, I had him "rattled."

Jimmy told me, frankly, all he knew—which was not much—and the talk drifted from the theft to his marriage and domestic affairs. The madame, he told me, was the finest woman in the world. He said she was trying to make up some lost time in the matter of happiness; that she had led a dog's life with Winchell. With Jimmy the expression meant she had not been allowed to spend money.

"The poor kid had less jewelry than a Sixth Avenue shop-girl," said Jimmy, "and the minute we struck Paris I told her to cut loose. I thought she would jump in and spend a hundred thousand or so. She talked that way at first, but old Winchell had planted the economy idea in her so deep that she could not get rid of it. Fifteen thousand was all she could brace herself to part with. It was her own money," he hastened to add. "She can spend it or keep it. I won't touch old Winchell's dirty cash."

"Pride, Jimmy!" I warned him.

"Maybe," he said. "I've enough of my own to keep me going."

The fourth member of the Verdon party was Mrs. Verdon's maid and Jimmy said she was as true as steel. She had been with Mrs. Verdon eight years. I made a mental note of the true-as-steel maid. Even steel has flaws.

So that was the way the case stood and, but for one thing, it would have been a simple hotel theft case and not worth my time to trace. Ragdon might have got the jewels, or they might have been stolen by some Continental thief, or the maid might have stolen them, but in any of these events the Swiss insurance company would have made good the loss. That was their business. For some reason, then, the Swiss company did not believe it was an ordinary theft case. The company refused to reimburse the hotel. That meant that the Swiss crowd had reason for believing—what? Either that the hotel people stole the jewels or that some one in Jimmy's party stole them.

My interview with the manager of the Hotel Magnifique was a comedy. The man was almost crazy. He had searched the person and rooms of every employee on his pay-roll. One minute he declared them all innocent; the next minute he said they were all a lot of thieves. He swore that Jacques, elevator man, was the soul of honor and a brigand of the deepest dye. One minute he assured me that Jacques would die rather than steal, and with the next breath he declared that he, and he only, could have taken the jewels.

He had, indeed, had an opportunity. Mrs. Verdon had used the elevator and she had not noticed her loss until she stepped from it.

I looked up Jacques. He was standing in his little box of an elevator in a most dejected state and he almost collapsed when I told him I was a detective.

"Ah, m'sieu!" he cried, "if you but knew the horrible state of things since the accursed jewels of M'sieu Verdon are gone! Every hour—every minute—the manager, who has gone forever crazy, comes and begs. He threatens, he coaxes, he prays, he curses, he raves! Imagine my state, m'sieu. I am not fit to run an elevator. When the guests say 'up!' I go down, and when they say 'down!' I go up!"

I eliminated Jacques from my list of possibilities and told him so.

"M'sieu," he said, wiping his eyes, "I wish I had taken the jewels; indeed I do!

Then I could confess and silence that ill-begotten, accursed manager."

"He shall not bother you any more," I said. "Now, tell me—who came down in the elevator with Mrs. Verdon?"

"Not a soul, m'sieu."

"Who went up, the trip before or any other trip?"

"Oh, many, many!" exclaimed the poor fellow. "An elevator is like a public street. All who wish may come and go."

"Now, listen," I said. "Was there a man, a tall man, dark hair touched with gray, scar on the left side of his chin?"

"Yes, M'sieu," said Jacques eagerly. "A man with a cat's-eye ring. A gentleman American."

"If you want the manager silenced, say nothing about the man with the cat's-eye ring. Understand?"

"My tongue is frozen," said Jacques.

I had learned one thing. Ragdon had been in the hotel the day of the theft. I wandered into the bar and took a seat at one of the small iron tables, to think. If Ragdon had done the job he must have been hard pressed for money, because the theft had been too boldly carried out.

How could he have had information that she would leave her room at a certain minute with a bag containing jewels? The maid might have told him! I made the seeing of the maid my next step. I sent up my card, asking for a few words with Mrs. Verdon. She said she would see me.

THE room in which she received me was an ordinary hotel room. There were no transoms over the connecting doors, through which any one in the next room could have observed Mrs. Verdon unpacking her jewels.

Mrs. Verdon was just such a woman as I had imagined from Jimmy's talk. She was the well-fed New York type, blonde, well dressed and with the unmistakable marks of the "spender." Added to this was a certain "up-from-the-people" air.

In Europe this is a relic of the peasant and is found in places where it is least expected. In America it is rather more rare, for our "spender" type more frequently "cuts loose," as the term is. The particular trait to which I refer is a certain suspiciousness—if there is such a word. It is a fear that the spender is not getting his, or her, money's worth. Mrs. Verdon was the sort of woman who would spend fifteen thousand dollars for jewels and think little of it and who would then turn around and mail a letter with two cents postage when it should have four cents on it. Also, she was beautiful. She must have spent a snug bit of the Winchell money among the Parisian modistes.

"Oh," she exclaimed, with a smile that sought to embody a little pathos, "I am so glad you have come to our aid. The notoriety is so annoying. Jimmy says you are an old friend."

"Almost chums, in the old days," I said. "That's why I came."

"Yes?" she said. "Well, before we talk business—for I suppose that is what you are here for—I wish to tell you how shocked and pained I was when Roderic told me you had —you had——"

As a matter of fact I had not done anything. I had stared at the boy once and that was all.

"You don't suspect Roderic?" she said.

"Suspect? I suspect no one," I said. "I'm not here to put any one in prison, Mrs. Verdon. I'm on a holiday, as you might say. I came because Jimmy is an old friend and I read that he had lost some jewels. When I find the jewels and return them to you, I'm done."

I noticed that she looked relieved.

"Now," I said, "tell me something about your maid."

"Mary has been with me for years," she said. "I have never suspected her honesty and I do not suspect it now. I will call her."

"One moment," I said. "Has she, so far as you know, ever had an acquaintance with a tall man, dark haired with a touch of gray, scar on the left side of his chin? A man named Ragdon?"

Mrs. Verdon's face crimsoned.

"Ragdon?" she said. "Why, that is her name."

"There is a notorious hotel thief of that name," I said. "No doubt it is a coincidence."

"Let me call Mary," said Mrs. Verdon.

Honesty of the most aggressive type was written on Mary's face. She was not, I was sure, the thief. But I turned my searchlight stare on her as I asked my first question.

"Who is this 'Napoleon' Ragdon?" I asked suddenly and Mary's face turned red.

"He is my brother," she said, twisting her fingers together nervously.

"That is all I want to know," I said gently. "Unless you wish to tell me anything more, you may go, Mary."

She hesitated and then left the room, weeping.

"Oh, you are cruel! Cruel!" cried Mrs. Verdon suddenly. She paced up and down the room, wringing her hands. "What right have you to come here and meddle in our affairs? What right have you to——"

"Mrs. Verdon," I said, "some one took those jewels. I do not know who took them and I am proceeding, in the only manner I know, to discover who did take them. If you know who took them and would tell me——"

"What do you mean!" she cried, turning on me like an angry tiger. I gave her a touch of my searchlight and under it her eyes wavered. "How—how should I know who took them?" she faltered. "What do you mean? I—I——"

She threw herself into a chair and began to weep.

"It has been such a strain on my nerves," she cried. "Nothing like this ever happened to me before. Mary is such a good girl. She had nothing to do with it——"

"And neither had Roderic," I said.

"Nor Roderic," she repeated, but she looked at my face. "I'll swear Roderic hasn't the jewels."

"So will I," I said heartily. "I know he has not the jewels."

She looked at me searchingly.

"Do you—do you think you will recover them?" she asked.

"I am now absolutely sure," I said.

I was not, but I left that with her to mull over and went down to have a chat with the hotel detective. I found him an intelligent fellow, a Parisian, but with the mannerisms of a Parisian of his particular trade. With him I was absolutely frank. I told him everything I knew and explained that I was now waiting for Ragdon to show up. I told him all I knew about Ragdon and then suggested that we work together.

"Now," I said, "what do you think of the affair as it stands?"

"One man," he said, "I do not suspect. M'sieu Jimmy Verdon. I do not theenk he had anything to do with it."

"Right you are!" I agreed. "Now, what's your idea of Roderic?"

"The young man, he is not free from guile," said Moreau.

HE DREW from his pocket one of those blue telegraph blanks. It had been crumpled into a ball. The words written on it were:

Anton Hiller, Geneva:—Refuse absolutely to pay——

There it was broken off. Evidently the writer had thought of some better wording, had crumpled this sheet and had thrown it into the waste basket.

"M'sieu Roderic, I see heem write this," said Moreau.

"Before or after the jewels were taken?" I asked.

"Aftair," said Moreau.

"All right, Moreau," I said, "I'm going to learn who this Anton Hiller is."

He put his hand on my arm.

"It is attend to," he said. "I hear now almost any time."

I dropped into my chair again.

"In my opinion," I said, "Ragdon has the jewels, but either Roderic or the maid helped him get them."

"In my opinion," said Moreau, "Meester Jimmy Verdon, he has the jewels."

"What!" I cried. "Jimmy? Oh, get out!"

"Just so, geet out!" said Moreau pleasantly. "I make you a bet, yes? Ver' good. Madame Verdon she arrive with the jewels. She has theem. That night Meester Roderic he has theem. Now, Meester Jimmy, he has theem. To-morrow Meester Ragdon, the t'ief, he has theem. Then you and I, we have theem."

"And then," I said sarcastically, "Mrs. Verdon, she has 'theem'. Well, you got them all in it," I said, "except Mary, the maid. It is a shame to leave her out."

"My mistake! My mistake!" said Moreau. "Between Ragdon, the t'ief and us, Marie, the maid, she has theem. Just so!"

"Moreau," I said, when I had thought the thing over, "you know something about this Anton Hiller that I do not know. Is he the thief?"

"T'ief? There is yet no t'ief. Not yet. Soon."

"And that is why you have done nothing yet?" I suggested.

He nodded and smiled. He was no fool, this fellow.

When Ragdon turned up at the Hotel Magnifique I asked Moreau to keep off. I took Ragdon to a quiet corner of the bar, ordered two glasses of light beer and began to talk. When I mentioned the Verdon jewels he admitted he knew of the robbery.

"Bobby," he said, "I had nothing to do with it. This is straight. I haven't turned a trick, or tried to, since I landed. I'm a reformed crook, Bobby. I have a bunch of money as big around as your arm and I'm going in for legitimate graft from this on."

"What line?" I asked.

"That's my secret," he laughed.

"No matter," I said, "but I can tell you that Anton Hiller——"

It did not work. He gave no sign that he recognized the name.

"Napoleon," I said, "you have a sister Mary. When a man has been a hotel job man for years and went up in a hotel elevator just before——"

"Cut that out!" said Ragdon angrily. "Mary is straight, she is. Here, I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll pick the lint off this mystery for you and I'll do it in twenty-four hours. Not for you, but because you ring Mary into it."

"And you will return the jewels?" I asked.

"If I get them. I tell you I never had them."

"Who has them?"

Ragdon leaned his elbows on the table and buried his head in his hands. He looked up once to ask, "Who is this Anton Hiller you threw at me a while ago?" and when I told him the little I knew, he buried his head again. When he spoke, which was not for five minutes, he did so hesitatingly.

"I should say," he said slowly, "from what I know, that Jimmy Verdon has them."

"Explain," I said.

"Roderic must have run into trouble in Paris," said Ragdon. "He found himself short of money, picked up his mother's jewels and then, alarmed by the fuss, turned to Jimmy, confessed and handed him the jewels."

"And who cut the bag from the handle?"

"Mama. She guessed Roderic had taken the jewels and she tried to square things for him."

"And who is Anton Hiller?"

"Probably the agent for the girl who is after Roderic's cash. 'Refuse absolutely to pay.' That means the young fellow is not going to pay the blackmail. Why? He hasn't the money to pay with. Why? Because he couldn't pawn or sell the jewels."

"Pretty thin, Ragdon," I said.

"Listen," he replied. "To-night or to-morrow my sister will come to me with the jewels and I—as a penitent thief—will turn them over to you. See if I don't!"

"What shall I do?" I asked.

"Keep away from me and give some one a chance to approach me," he said.

I WAS on my way to do this, which was not very difficult work, when Jimmy strolled up to me.

"Bobby," he said, "it's awfully decent of you to take all this trouble, but I guess I can make this hotel chap pay for the jewels. Let's drop it."

"As you wish," I said.

"Rod's sick and the madame is sick and Mary is weeping her eyes out and I'm sick of the whole affair. Let's drop it!"

"Just as you wish," I repeated. "But how can we square Anton Hiller?"

I threw this in as a mere chance cast.

"Square Hiller?" asked Jimmy in surprise. "Why what's Hiller got to do with it?"

I passed quickly over my unsuccessful thrust and walked out into the corridor.

Five minutes later I did know a little about Hiller, for Moreau handed me the telegram he had received from the house detective of the Hotel Magnifique at Geneva. It said that Anton Hiller was the general manager of the Geneva and Universe Insurance Compagnie; that he had formerly been general agent for America in New York.

So that was clear enough. Roderic had wired Hiller not to pay the hotel for the lost jewels. That was why the Swiss company had refused to compensate the hotel. So Rod must have had the jewels.

It was time to wind the thing up.

"Moreau," I said, "you and I must clear out for an hour or two and let these people get together."

"I agree," he said. "Meester Jimmy is dying to gif the jewels to some one."

"I began to believe you are right," I said. "But I'll swear it isn't like Jimmy. He is the most open fellow! But, come on! We will walk down to the lower town. Just for exercise!"

We returned in two hours and we were no sooner inside the hotel than we received

word that Mary, Mrs. Verdon's maid, wished to see one or the other of us. She was permitted to see us both. We had her come to Moreau's office and she brought the jewels with her.

"Here's the jewels," she said, and that was all she would say, until we had pressed her closely. We had to use some threats and then she admitted she had received them from Ragdon. We sent her away comforted, assuring her we meant no harm to Ragdon.

"Moreau," I said, when we had the jewels before us on his desk, "you can turn them over to Jimmy Verdon. He offered a pretty reward for them, I understand, and I could not take it from Jimmy. You deserve it, anyway. I only want to know one thing. How did you know Ragdon would give the jewels to Mary?"

"Because he is a t'ief," said Moreau.

"Meaning?"

"Meaning some ones has go to Mary and beg her to coax those jewels from her brother," said Moreau. "They say to her, 'Your brother is a t'ief. Maybe he steals those jewels; maybe not. Ask him.'"

"Come along," I said. "Let us return the stolen property."

We ran across Jimmy in the lobby and I told him I wanted to see him in his room.

"Now, Jimmy," I said, when we were there, "just call your wife and Rod and Mary and we will have this jewel business settled in fifteen minutes, all quietly and nicely. Here is Moreau and he has the trinkets."

Moreau handed them to Jimmy. When Mrs. Verdon entered she was haughty and defiant, but she had been weeping. The maid was weeping when she came in. Rod came in his dressing-gown and was white as a sheet.

"JIMMY," I said, when they were all in the room, "this jewel business has narrowed down to a family affair and we must handle it so as to avoid any scandal. Rod, why did you telegraph Anton Hiller not to pay the theft insurance?"

"I—I——" he stammered. "I thought the things would turn up, sooner or later."

"In other words you had them in your pocket?" I asked severely.

"Oh, come now, Bobby! Oh, come now, Bobby!" said Jimmy.

"You!" I cried, turning on Jimmy, for he made me angry. "Why didn't you tell me, like a man, that you had them when I came here?"

"I?" cried Jimmy. "I didn't have them! Honest, Bobby——"

"I beg pardon, sir," said Mary Ragdon, "but Mr. Rod never had the jewels. And neither did Mr. Verdon. I stole them, sir."

"My girl," I said kindly, "it is all very well for you to tell a lie to protect Mr. Roderic, but you were never cut out for a liar. Now, Rod——"

"If Mary says she took them, she took them!" said Mrs. Verdon angrily.

"Mrs. Verdon," I said, "I can excuse you for showing a mother's desire to shield her son. And it is noble of Mary to sacrifice herself, no doubt. But that will not satisfy Moreau here. He represents the hotel. Perhaps if Mary went to prison for a year or two——"

"I won't stand for that!" said Roderic suddenly. "Look here, momsy, I'm going to tell pop the whole thing. You meant well enough."

Jimmy looked from one to the other, amazement written all over his face.

"I only wished to save a little money," said Mrs. Verdon, weeping.

"That's all she had in mind," said Rod. "She gave the jewels to me as soon as she reached her room. I was going to mail them to Jack Ferguson, at Ostend and then this infernal row began to be so big it frightened me. I couldn't mail a parcel like that without every one knowing of it. So I wired Hiller not to pay up, because popsy was so strenuous for payment. I was afraid we might all get into jail over it. So what was I to do with the jewels?"

"Nothing—except to give them to your popsy," I said with disgust.

"Oh, come now, Bobby," said Jimmy, "I never had the——"

"Yes, you did, pop," said Roderic. "I told him they were some letters a girl had written me, that I needed in case she tried blackmail on me. I put 'em in a box and sealed 'em——"

You should have seen Jimmy's face. It was a study.

"And—and I gave them to Ragdon, not an hour ago!" he cried.

"That's right!" said Roderic. "I told pospy that Ragdon was the girl's agent and that the thing had been settled."

"Hold on!" I said. "What excuse could you give Jimmy for turning those letters over to him?"

"He said his mother was rummaging in his things," said Jimmy. "He said she suspected something."

"So dad handed the box to Ragdon," said Rod.

"And I," said Mrs. Verdon, "told Mary we had learned beyond a doubt that her brother had stolen the jewels and that the only way she could save him was to coax him to return them."

"And I hope," said Mary, "you will not think I would lie for myself, or for Mrs. Verdon, or Mr. Rod, or any one. But my brother came to see me the day we arrived here and told me he was going to try to live straight and I thought he might have been tempted too strongly by the jewels."

"Just so!" I said. "But now, if all this is the truth, will some one please tell me why the jewels were ever out of Mrs. Verdon's hands at all? What is the motive?"

"Pardon!" said Moreau. "May I be permitted to guess? There is a tariff duty on jewels in the United States of Amerique? Yes? And if jewels that a lady"—he bowed—"is known to have purchased are stolen and the world knows it, the agents of the revenue are off guard? Yes?"

"That was it," said Mrs. Verdon, rather shamed. "I thought if it were published everywhere that the jewels had been stolen, I could save the duty."

"Moreau," I said, "will you let it be known that a thief has been caught? That the jewels have been recovered?"

"With pleasure," he said. And that was the end of the Verdon jewel case.

But Jimmy, once the thing was settled, was instantly his old happy self again.

"Clever woman, the madame, what?" he said joyously, when we were down in the lobby again. "Clever scheme, if it had worked?"

"Jimmy," I said, "if I had a wife as clever as that I would be afraid of her!"

"Do you know," confessed Jimmy, "I *am* a bit afraid of her!"

The Glimpse that Kelly Had

by Charles Wesley Sanders

THE significance of Kelly's act came to me in the quiet of the next morning, after I had talked to the doctor and after the fever and the restlessness from participation in my first big story had worn off. For some time the wreck unrolled itself in its panoramic and, to me, kaleidoscopic details; but at the last, the personal drama of Kelly flashed itself out from the rest as upon a screen.

He lay dead then—a heroic, silent, satisfied figure, apart from those who had been near death but had eluded it. He not only gave his life upon the altar of his love, but he gave a much finer, brighter thing—gave it with a mask upon his face but with agony in his heart.

I had been on the staff of the *Beacon* for a week, and the city editor had kept me cruising up and down the docks in search of human interest stories which our matter-of-fact marine editor wouldn't pay any attention to.

I wrote two or three stories every day and the city editor printed one of the mess. He printed it just as I wrote it, and I guess its value lay in the fact that it violated all known newspaper rules. The city editor said it was "ingenuous."

Kelly leaned against the side of the pier wall the first time I saw him—a lounging, pipe-sucking, cynically smiling, red-headed giant. He eyed me with big, humorous, brown eyes as I looked him over, wondering whether he had a story concealed about his person.

"What's eatin' you, kid?" he asked, taking his pipe from his mouth.

"Nothing," I answered. "I'm looking for news. Know any?"

Kelly beamed.

"Not to-day," he said. Then he appeared to rack his brain for an "item." "No, I guess not. But I hear a lot of stuff from time to time. You look me up every once in a while."

I don't just know how it came about, but the next instant Kelly was piloting me along the docks, a big, red hand under my elbow. We rounded the Pennsylvania slip and came across the "island" into the pocket, where Danny Gallagher's saloon tried to hide itself from the sun and the air of the lake.

We stepped down into this and felt our way to the bar. Danny's face presently etched itself out of the gloom and he put a bottle on the bar. Kelly poured a glassful of the liquor and "tossed it off."

Then he turned and sauntered out into the sunlight again, leaving me standing there with Danny's little red eyes defiantly on my face.

"That's good liquor," Danny hinted.

I gulped a little of the awful stuff, gasping as it burned its way down to the bottom of my stomach. I put a quarter on the bar and Danny took a thimbleful himself.

"Three fer a quarter," he said, and he put the quarter on the back bar and turned indifferently away.

Kelly was waiting outside, and he fell into step with me without apology for having made me his host. We went across the railroad bridge and up the hill.

"They have some stuff in a barrel up here that's fine," Kelly said.

"I've got another quarter," I volunteered.

Kelly turned a wise, considering eye upon me.

"Need it?" he asked.

"I can make a touch to get my supper with," I said. "To-morrow's pay-day."

Kelly laughed.

"A man with a pay-day needn't worry," he said.

We were almost in front of this second saloon when the girl came around the corner. At sight of her Kelly turned white. She came up to him swiftly, anxiously regarding him from beneath her bonnet, the badge of the order to which she belonged—the Order of Holy Light.

"You're not going in there, Mr. Kelly?" she asked.

"I was," Kelly said quietly. "I had one drink with this young feller."

The girl reproved me with her mild, gray eyes.

"You mustn't do that," she said.

Kelly looked at me, too, as one who would say: "You ought to be ashamed of yourself for tempting me."

It made me hot up and down my spine, but I couldn't take issue with Kelly, and from the way the girl looked at him, I guess she wouldn't have been open to argument. She was saving Kelly. You could see that sticking out all over her. And when a woman's in that notion about a man, every other man is a devil in disguise.

"You'd better go with me," the girl said. "I'm going to the barracks. I'll find some work for you to do, and you can stay for the night service."

"All right," Kelly said. They turned away without a word to me.

The girl tripped happily along beside the big man till they were gone from my sight. She was aglow with her proselytizing, but her feeling was lost on him. I could see that.

While he had looked at her his eyes had suddenly burned and she had been as close to a demonstration of the fiery affection of an elemental man as she could possibly be and not feel his big arms about her slight body.

II

GONE were the nonchalance and the cynicism from Kelly, the man who had mocked at men and at God his whole life through. Fear had stripped his soul and it faced the world unashamed in its terror.

It was the morning of the next day and I had come down upon the docks early, in the hope of picking up something before the other fellows got around. Kelly sat upon a pile well back from the edge of the dock.

"I was afraid to sit out there—afraid I'd tumble into the drink," he said.

His face was white and there were lines about his mouth and at the corners of his eyes.

"What's the trouble?" I asked.

"Sick!" He let his eyes wander dully to a tug that was wheezing down the oily stream on her way out into the lake. "I never been sick before. I feel awful." He took off his battered old slouch hat and wiped sweat from his forehead. "It's cuttin' out the booze that done it. I promised that little girl faithfully last night that I wouldn't take a drink. I thought I'd be all right. But when I got to my room I was wet as a rag from sweatin' and I hadn't no more strength than a cat. I didn't sleep a wink. I had a kind of a poisoned, swelled-up feelin'. I guess I had a touch of the 'jimmy-quivers.'"

I leaned against the wall of the building and lit a cigarette.

"I've got my pay," I said. "You better let me take you over and throw a couple of drinks into you."

"Not me. I won't. I promised her."

"Maybe you can't cut it out so suddenly," I ventured. "It must be an awful shock to your system."

He tried to sneer defiantly, but failed.

"The way to quit drinkin' whisky is to quit!" he said stubbornly. "I can't monkey with the stuff." He shifted uneasily on his uncomfortable seat. "Still I'd give a million bucks for one small smell of it. Shock! I guess it *is* a shock to my system." He looked up at me with his haggard, frightened eyes. "I been drinkin' whisky for fourteen years and I'm twenty-eight now. I guess I'm more or less used to it, ain't I? I feel lost—that's the way I feel." He wiped his forehead again in a helpless, bewildered fashion. Then he shook his big shoulders. "Aw, I'm going to come out of it. I'll suffer for a few days and then I'll be all right."

Some of my pity was lost in this determination. My interest went to the story in the situation.

"What's your idea in quitting, anyhow?"

He pretended nothing.

"I'm stuck on that kid."

"Going to marry her?"

"I don't know. Maybe you'd think I'm not a marrying man? But I don't know why I haven't got as good a license as the next. I can earn a decent living. I was going to work to-day on one of the fish tugs, only I felt so doggoned rotten. I'll get out to-morrow. That will start me. Then I'll ship for a trip up the lakes and see how I stand it—I got mate's papers, you know."

"Have you?" I said, glad that he was above the common seaman class.

"Sure, I'm no dub. I been sailin' these lakes ever since I was twelve years old and most of the time as a man at that. I was always big and I could get by for a man when most is in short pants."

"How does the girl look on your suit?" I followed the sequence.

He laughed a low, gentle laugh that I had not thought him capable of.

"Rotten—till last night, when she got my faithful promise that I'd cut it out. She loosened up considerable. Treated me real nice. Take me about a week to cinch things, I guess."

"Got a deadly rival?"

For an instant his face flushed into a hard mask. Then it relaxed about the lips.

"Several," he said. "One in particular—Jim Kearney, captain of one of the fishin' tugs. He went out a while back. Saw me sittin' here." He took his breath between distended nostrils till his big chest was thrust forward. The veins in his neck stuck out. We looked at each other. "He's on—it was him that first knocked me to the girl. Told her I was a no-good souse. It didn't result like he thought it would. She got interested in me. Got to fussin' over me for my soul's sake and first thing I knew, she had me faded. Believe me, before I get through with him, Kearney will wish he'd kep' his face shut."

He stopped talking for a moment and the fear that I had seen upon him when I met him first came back. He closed and un-

closed his left hand, rubbing it with his right. Still he was not ready to put his thoughts into words.

"What's this Order of Holy Light game that the girl plays?" I asked.

"Oh, the gang's nutty!" he said in a strained voice. "I don't care nothin' about that. She's on the level and she thinks the rest of them are. They got an old ramshackle barracks up here a piece where they think the sailor lads will come and be saved. She's on the level about it. Believes it's great business. I'll soon cure her of that."

He worked his hand convulsively and then he looked up at me with the brown eyes of a stricken animal.

"What in —— do you suppose is the matter with me?" he whispered. "My arm's numb clean up to the elbow. That's the way its been off an' on all night and this morning."

"Come on over and see Doc Lenahan," I said; because I was really anxious about him. "He's the deputy coroner, you know. He won't charge you anything if you're with me."

We found the doctor in the coroner's office at the morgue. I told him about Kelly. He looked at Kelly and opened his lips to speak. Kelly rose and stood in front of him. There was a new light in the man's eyes. His big face was handsome with a dignity it had not had before.

"I'd like to talk to you alone, Doc," he said.

The doctor opened the door of an inner office and Kelly followed him inside. They were gone for perhaps twenty minutes. When they came out Kelly had his old hat pulled down over his eyes—eyes that were somber now with no sign of fear in them. The doctor did not look at me.

"Come to see me when that medicine is gone," he instructed Kelly.

Kelly nodded and went out He was half a block away when I gained the street.

III

I CAME into possession of the facts of the meeting of Kelly and the girl at second-hand; but the picture, drawn in the gray color of the people of the river front, was vivid enough.

Nobody had ever seen Kelly so drunk before. He had been, in his cups, a swaggering, swearing, brutal, bullying inebriate; but on this occasion he was almost helpless, with set, staring eyes and white face and twitching lips. The hangers-on had noted, too, that he had drunk in a different way. There had been no "fun" in it, this session. He had gulped his unholy liquor steadily and gravely. Then when he could take no more of it and walk, he had groped his way to the door and staggered into the street.

Straight to the barracks he went and asked for the girl. She was not there then, they told him, but they expected her presently. He had better sit down and rest till she came. But he went outside and paced unsteadily up and down till she turned the corner.

She lifted her head and smiled at him brightly in the first instant of ignorance of his condition. Then the light died out of her face and her hands dropped to her side.

"Oh, Kelly!" she breathed.

Kelly got his big frame to its full height, towering over, menacing her.

"Yes," he said brutally. "I'm drunk. I'm drunk as——!"

"You mustn't talk that way!" she said sternly.

"Mustn't?" he laughed and then, before she was aware of his intention, he reached out and gathered her to him. She lay there on his breast for a sickening instant, with his whisky-soaked breath in her face and his lips on hers. Then she was standing alone, shaking, while he took his uneven way down to the docks.

That night Jim Kearney came seeking Kelly, swearing he would have Kelly's life. He was not so big a man as Kelly and Kelly had bullied him in the past; but there was something about him now that made Kelly's friends glad that Kelly could not be found.

At midnight Kearney sat in a river-front saloon and wept, though he had not had a drink.

"I kept tellin' her what he was; I kept tellin' her!" he said over and over.

ONE by one, slowly, picking their way, their crews drenched and shivering, the fishing tugs came home through the slithering storm. The boats had crept out of the harbor in the early morning in the face of a late Spring gale. All day the wind had whipped them and

the lake had rolled steadily under them in long, blue swells.

Toward dusk the clouds had thickened, entirely blanketing the sun. Night had come down with a fury of sleet and snow at its back. The long swell chopped itself to pieces and the whitecaps shook the foam from their backs and sent it across the decks of the little craft.

They were all in by six o'clock except one. Rumor of disaster spread along the docks. The saloons and lodging-houses emptied themselves. All faces were turned toward the storm-tossed lake.

"What is she?" they asked.

And the word went back: "Jim Kearney's *Silver Bells*."

"Aw, she'll make it. She can't help it. She's one of the best boats they is."

"Well, what are we going to do about it? We going to stand here? Where's them life-savers?"

As most of us who stood there in the shelter of the tug office knew, the life-savers were not yet on duty for the Summer. The *Silver Bells* could go jangling to her doom for all they could do.

"Well, let's get a tug," some one suggested.

The big harbor master turned on him in scorn.

"Shut up!" he commanded. "You want to send one good boat after another? You couldn't get out in this blow. Listen!"

The wind was hurling itself with venomous wrath against everything that lifted itself above a dead level. Even the big freighters, moored fast, groaned and trembled under the blast.

A man broke the silence which followed the harbor master's injunction:

"There's Kelly. Wonder where he's been."

Kelly, bareheaded, his red locks plastered down on his head from the rain, came creeping up out of the gloom along the breakwater wall. He stood panting, fighting for his breath and then he pointed out beyond the breakwater's far arm where the night hung like a pall.

"She's out there—Kearney's *Silver Bells*," he said. "I seen her light. They're burnin' something, too. Her rudder is busted, I guess. The way the light bobbed, she seemed to be wallering. This wind'll carry her on to the breakwater and she'll go to pieces there."

He looked about him rather helplessly.

"There ain't no chance to do anything, is there?" he asked.

"No," said the harbor master impatiently. "There ain't."

Kelly took hold of my arm almost in his old way.

"I got something to tell you," he whispered. "Come on."

He piloted me along the dock till we came to a saloon which had a back door opening on the river-front.

The proprietor was alone in the room, smoking a pipe before a fire he had kindled in the big stove. Kelly ordered whisky for us.

"You got some money, haven't you?" he asked.

I reassured him.

"We're going out after Kearney," he said when he had taken a big drink of liquor.

"Going out?" I repeated.

"Yep. Me and Kearney's too kid brothers. They're getting steam up in the *Eureka* now. I was just stalling them guys. They might try to stop us, because the fleet manager of all the trust boats has given orders that nobody's to go out in this storm. We're borrowing the *Eureka* because she's the best boat in the river now. If we can get to Kearney at all, we can get to him in her. Want to go along?"

I had such a sensation as a man has when a surgeon tells him an operation is necessary at once. I shuddered and grew cold as if I had had sudden thoughts of sickening anesthetics and sharp knives.

But Kelly offered me a chance that came to few newspaper men. It would make a great story—if we got back!

I swallowed hard and answered: "Yes, I'll go."

"All right," said Kelly. "It'll be a tough struggle. We'll need all the men at the wheel that we can get around her."

I looked at Kelly in wonder, then, as I remembered who Kearney was. Kelly's hand had been shaky at his first drink, but now at his fifth—and they were all big ones—he was steady as a rock. A slow color was coming into his pale face and his eyes were hot as coals.

"What're you doing this for, Kelly?" I asked.

His lips tightened in a smile, but he only whirled to the door without answering the question.

"Come along!" he said.

The wind swept my breath from my mouth as I faced it again. Kelly put his arm under mine and again piloted me along the dock, away from the group of men near the tug office.

IV

THE *Eureka* strained at her moorings and fairly danced on the river swell as we dropped down on her deck.

"That you, Kelly?" a voice asked from the wheel-house.

"Me, yes. You ready?"

"All ready!"

A young man came uncertainly along the deck and peered over the side at the taut ropes.

"To —— with them!" Kelly said. "You two get to the wheel."

As we watched him from our position, he took a big clasp-knife from his pocket and cut away the ropes fore and aft. The boat hugged the dock for a minute like a frightened live thing. Then, under the impulse of its wheel, it pushed itself out into the river. As we came down by the tug office her whistle screamed in scorn at the men standing there, gazing in astonishment. The little boat made her way swiftly to the harbor entrance. Then we could hear the great waves, smashing over the breakwater, driven in clouds of spray beyond.

I did what I could at the wheel, but it was Kelly's mighty arms that held the boat sufficiently to her course to get her through the opening into the mad sea. As he lurched against me, I could hear his breath come in a great heave and his muscles were like iron bands.

"Watch for the light!" Kelly panted.

Battling there in the dark, now riding the huge waves, now almost going into the trough of them, at the mercy of the elements except for Kelly's almost superhuman strength, we peered through the blackness for a sight of the light or the signal-fire from the *Silver Bells*. When we had about given up hope, the light, now little more than a smoking pile of waste, showed up right before us.

The *Silver Bells* was bearing down directly on the west breakwater. She was beyond all control and she rolled and tumbled in the sea as if she had been hurt. We got a glimpse of a face behind the glass of the wheel-house—a staring, stricken, helpless face. Then we saw a man on deck, clinging with both hands to a rope fastened to a stanchion.

"That's Kearney!" Kelly said. "He ain't taking any chances, you notice. He's ready to try to jump to the breakwater when she hits."

He put the nose of the *Eureka* toward the breakwater and shoved in between it and the disabled tug. The two little boats came together with a crash that rocked the *Eureka* but stayed the *Silver Bells* for a minute in her dash to death.

The instant the boats struck, Kearney leaped and landed on the deck.

"Come on!" he screamed and his voice just carried in the wind.

The stricken face left the wheel-house window, and its owner, little more than a boy, scrambled out upon the deck. He stopped to shout down the engine-hole. Then he thrust his hand down and helped another youngster up. The first jumped, as Kearney had done, and landed safely; but then the boats were swept apart by the sea. The second boy tried to leap, but the distance was too great. He fell into the black water and was swept away.

Kearney groaned and dragged himself into the shelter of the engine-house gangway. I bent over him.

He lay in utter exhaustion, but he managed to whisper, "I couldn't do no more. I been fighting that wind with a busted rudder for two hours now. The poor kid is gone."

His lips trembled and tears came from under his closed lids. Kelly, jealous, had sized him up wrong, I saw.

I got back into the wheel-house and put my hands up beside Kelly's again.

Kelly cursed Kearney in pitiless profanity.

"You bet he wasn't taking no chances with his own hide!" he panted.

Something in Kelly's voice struck me as peculiar. I stole a glance at him. There was a band of sweat across his forehead and the color brought by the whisky had gone from his face. The veins in his neck were corded and knotted.

"Kelly," I said, "you're all in."

"God, if I only had a drink!" he gasped.

He fought his way back into the river again and as we moved into the quieter waters, he was clinging to the wheel, taking more support from it than directing it. He was breathing through lips dropped apart.

The gang on the dock was waiting with grappling-hooks and ropes to seize the tug. When she was fast, Kearney got up and staggered over the side.

"I lost four men," he said grimly.

His two brothers left the boat and came to stand by him. Then Kelly climbed up from the boat's deck.

Kearney stood and stared at him. Then he cursed as Kelly had cursed but a moment before.

"So you done it?" Kearney cried. "If I'd known that, I'd never have come in with you!"

Kelly's blanched lips sneered.

"Well, you left one of them kids out there, didn't you?" he asked.

For answer Kearney took a step forward and "planted" his heavy fist on Kelly's mouth. Kelly tried to lift his hands to strike back, but they were limp from exhaustion. He dropped to his knees, spitting blood from a cut on his lips. All the while he cursed Kearney impotently.

"I told her I'd do it to you first chance I got!" Kearney said.

He took another step forward as if to strike the fallen man again, but his young brothers seized his arms and led him away through the rain.

The sailors watched the vanishing trio as if they had a mind to go after Kearney, but it was only a fight between men and not their fight and they came to Kelly and helped him to his feet.

"Get me some whisky!" Kelly said.

They looked from one to the other helplessly with hands in empty pockets.

"Come on," I said. "I have some money."

For an hour Kelly sat at a table in the river-front saloon and drank from the quart bottle of whisky which he had set in front of him. He said nothing. Only once in a while he wiped away the blood that oozed from the cut in his lip.

V

THE deputy coroner was descending the stairs of the cheap lodging-house, which Kelly had made his home, when I started to ascend.

"You needn't bother going up," he said. "Kelly's dead. They called me this morning when they found him."

"Drank himself to death last night, did he?" I asked.

I was impatient because I had vainly pleaded with Kelly to quit. The doctor only smiled. We walked along for a bit in silence.

"Kelly drank himself to death long before last night," he said at last. "He had drunk himself to death when you brought him to see me that day. Man, his liver was like a stone and his heart was as rusty as the plates of a beached derelict! He had no chance in the world to live more than a little while."

"You told him that?"

"Sure, I told him."

I understood.

"That was why he got drunk and insulted the girl, and that was why he went out after Kearney when he knew it meant his death!" I said.

"Yes, that was why. He figured it out all very coolly while we sat in my office that day. He asked me half a dozen times if there wasn't the slightest chance, and I could only tell him there wasn't. Then he told me about this girl. He said he knew she was beginning to care for him, though she had seemed to care for Kearney before. He knew if he did what he finally came to do, she would certainly fall away from him and back to Kearney. He was mortally hurt in his spirit, son, when he found he had thrown his life away just at the moment when it seemed worth while. So he got a glimpse of something big and kind and strong to do and he did it."

"I'm going to tell the girl all about it!" I cried, like a kid. "I'm not going to let her remember Kelly that way! He was too good a man!"

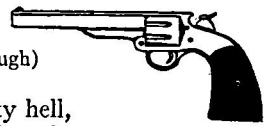
The doctor shook his head, sadly.

"Don't *you* be a fool," he advised. "Kelly wasn't."

The Fancy Shots

by

Berton Braley



(Incident taken, in part, from a story by Emerson Hough)

THEY came in town awhoopin' an' they raised aplenty hell,
They was bold an' wicked bad men an' they ran things fer a spell;
They was shootin' round promiscu's, like a Wild West show parade,
They had everybody duckin', they had every one afraid;
When they saw the city marshal in his hat they shot a hole,
Then they kep' him nimbly dancin' while they done the double roll,
They could keep a tin can rollin' with the bullets from a gun
An' the stunts they didn't show us simply never has been done.

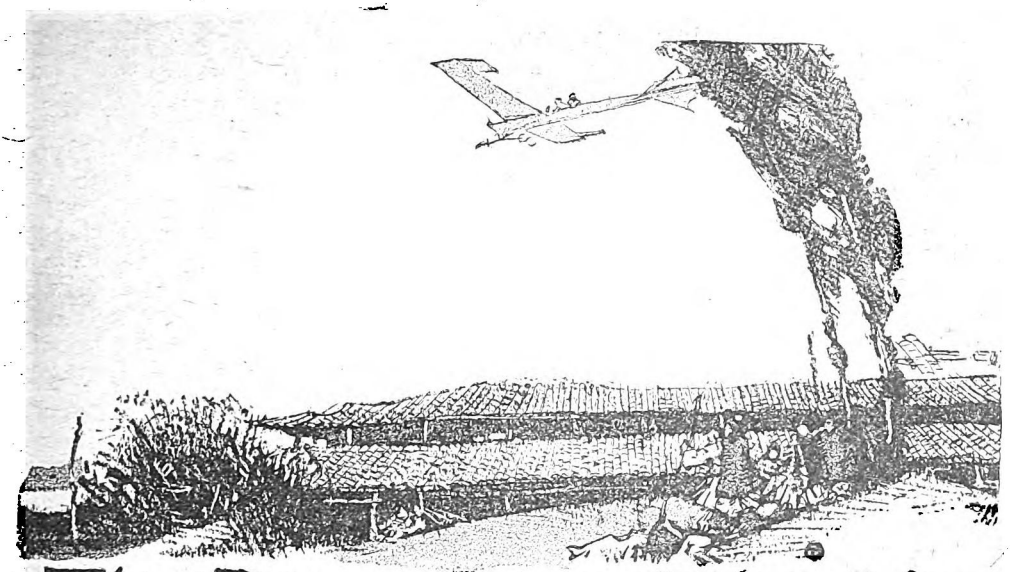
But at last they both departed, havin' nearly wrecked the town,
An' the Sheriff come in after—on his face a worried frown;
An' he says some cattle rustlers has been busy round of late
An' he gives us their descriptions—it was them, as sure as fate!
So we told him of their shootin', of their quickness an' their skill,
An' we says they sure would git him if they really shot to kill;
Fer the Sheriff ain't no wonder, quite an ordinary shot,
Though the people he went after he most generally got!

When we offered him a posse he just grinned an' shook his head,
"You kin hitch me up a wagon an' I'll go alone," he said.
"I ain't got no shootin'-irons but this rifle here of mine—
There's a couple bullets in it, just as good as eight er nine—
I ain't much on fancy motions, bustin' crystal balls an' such,
But I wants them cattle rustlers an' I wants 'em very much."

Well, we hitches up the wagon an' we says to him, "Good-by,"
An' most every feller present has some moisture in his eye,
Fer we kind of likes that Sheriff an' we hates to see him die!
But he drives away ahummin' of a funny kind of tune
An' we all goes back to drinkin' in the Yellow Dog saloon.

Now there ain't no twists an' turnin's to this here veracious tale;
In a half a day er shorter we see something on the trail,
An' at last the dust-cloud parted an' we makes it very plain;
It's the Sheriff on his wagon drivin' calmly home again.
He is whistlin' soft an' tender on that same fool melody
An' he wasn't none excited fur as any one could see,
But underneath the canvas on that little wagon floor
Was them two bad cattle rustlers that would never rustle more.

I don't know the way he done it, but the moral's plain an' clear:
You may shoot tin cans an' quarters flung up in the atmosphere,
You may make the natives wonder at yer marvelous control,
You may break the shootin' records, do the nifty double roll,
But the really fancy shooter, when you git right down to pan,
Is the guy who shoots the quickest an' who always gits his man!



The Runners of the Air

by Charles G D Roberts

CHAPTER I

THE HOLY STONE OF VOUSIC

UNWILLING to betray the excitement that worked in his lean face, Sergius got up from his chair by the writing-table and crossed over to the window. He stood staring down over the steep, bright confusion of roofs and streets and terraces which formed his beloved city of Belgrade. The fingers with which he pulled at his mustache trembled a little. At last he turned back to the table and sat down again.

"Then, the fact is, we will be able to save Servia," said he quietly. He looked at his visitor with a smile, but a kind of exaltation burned in his eyes.

Count Sergius Charles de Plamenac, known to his intimates as Serge Ivanovich, had schooled himself to curb the impetuosities of his Serb temperament. Educated in England at Harrow and Oxford and afterward a graduate of the mining-camps of Nevada and Nome, he prided himself upon his imperturbability. But just at this moment he was near losing it.

From the sheet of dark green blotting-paper beside him he picked up a great white stone—water-white, with fleeting, ineffable tints of palest rose—turned it slowly between his fingers, then dropped it among the litter of pens, pencils, sealing-wax and postage-stamps that occupied the tray beside his big bronze ink-well. He opened a cigarette-box and abstractedly pushed it over to his companion.

"Yes, my friend," he repeated, "I think we will be able to really do something now! Have a cigarette."

The Count's visitor was a man of not over middle height, but of that gaunt, big-boned, loose-jointed type of frame that suggests great stature. He was dressed in the snuff-brown homespun short jacket, gaudy-colored loose shirt and shrunken-legged brown homespun trousers of a Servian peasant farmer. But he had an elusive air of being at home in many garbs; and his face—hard, keen, vigilant, proud, swarthy and fiercely mustached, suggested that of a masterful bandit who took no discredit of his calling.

He chose a cigarette with deliberation, as if seeking to emulate Plamenac's coolness.

"I knew it, Serge Ivanovich!" he cried. "Of course I knew that would be your first thought, the thought of Servia! And so I trusted you. And I was right. I hear it in your voice. I see it in your eyes! I——"

and checking himself abruptly he lighted his cigarette.

"And how should you *not* have trusted me, Gregory Nicolaievich?" demanded the Count. "Would I have hesitated about trusting *you*, think you? We've known each other well enough, surely, and trusted each other well enough, in the old bloody days in the mountains!"

GREGORY sprang to his feet and began restlessly pacing up and down the room.

"I never distrusted you, Serge Ivanovich," he declared, "or I should not have been here. I knew you were honest and had the truth in your lips. And I knew you were Serb to the last breath, in spite of your Austrian grandfather. But the best of men may grow sluggish and selfish. Their hearts, if not their heads, may forget, far away in the laughing world. And the fate of a little people, a poverty-stricken little people surrounded by the wolves, might come to seem in their eyes a little, far-off thing."

"I have been far away, quite true, and in the gay world. But I have not been forgetting—not for one moment have I forgotten, my Gregory," answered the Count quietly. "I have been waiting—getting ready for what must come. Now, I think I begin to see how it will come. It is our poverty that has made it possible for Austria to so divide us and throttle us."

Gregory opened and shut his hands savagely as if he felt them clutching at an Austrian throat.

"It's the money that will do it," he muttered. "When we've all the money we want—for guns, rifles, horses, fortifications, gunboats on the river; when we can pour arms and supplies into Montenegro; when we can arm and drill our brothers from the stolen provinces, from Macedonia, from the North—then our rights will be given to us, because, with a million fighting Serbs in the field, we can *take* them! It's the money will do it!"

Count Sergius stood up.

"And it is you, my friend, who will have done it," he said solemnly. Then he sat down again and let his eyes wander over a map of the Balkan States, which lay open on the table.

"No," answered the mountaineer, "it is only that I have been so fortunate as to find the treasure. It is for you, Serge Ivanovich, to find the way to secure it, to get it into Servia—or better, into the secret places of the Black Mountain.* And then, it is for you to find out how to turn it into gold, into power. I'm a mere free lance and leader of outlaws. What more can I do than help carry out what you may plan? I know the hills and the thickets and I know the hearts of the people. But you know the world!"

Count Sergius turned to the pen-tray. He picked up the great diamond and scrutinized it once more.

"How much is it worth, do you think?" asked Gregory.

The Count looked doubtful.

"Five hundred thousand francs, perhaps. More likely twice as much," he hazarded at length.

"There are a hundred more as fine," said Gregory; "and of littler ones, oh, more than I could take the time to count. Here's all I thought it wise to bring with me!"

And emptying his beaded tobacco-pouch on the green blotter before Count Sergius, he picked out of the tobacco a great stone of an elusive bluish tint, subtle and entrancing as the blue that flames in the depths of a crevice in clear ice. This he laid in Plamenac's hand. Then, spreading the tobacco with his lean fingers—which were not the fingers of a worker in the fields—he gathered out five smaller stones, all colorless as dew. These he bunched carelessly upon the blotter.

Count Sergius did not glance at them. He was absorbed in study of the great jewel in his palm. Deep within those cerulean gleams he saw the ancient splendors of the Servian Empire, dead since the black day of Kossovo five hundred years ago, now awaking, bursting into new glory.

"Is it equal to the other?" asked Gregory.

"Equal to it!" murmured the Count, looking up as if half-dazed. "It is priceless! Priceless!" He was silent for a moment. Then he muttered, "The hand of God is in it!"

"Of course, the hand of God is in it, Serge Ivanovich," responded the outlaw, with a touch of impatience at what seemed to his robust faith so obvious a remark. "How else, do you think, would I have found what so many have looked for in vain during

*The Montenegrins call their country Tschernagora (the Black Mountain).

these five hundred years? How else, when I had found it, would it have come into my heart to guess the meaning of the cleft in the stone? How else would I have had the courage to do what seemed a sacrilege—to split open such a sacred thing as the Holy Stone of Vousic?"

"SURELY you are right. Your heart told you that, however holy was the Stone of Vousic—which, so far, to be sure, has never done much for Servia!—the Cause of our Country was holier. For that cause, my Gregory, you were ready to dare a sacrilege, and so the stone gave up its secret to you. You tore the secret from its heart. And so the ancient tradition may come to be fulfilled. The Holy Stone may indeed prove to be the salvation of the Serbs, if only we are faithful enough and brave enough and prudent enough. But why did you not bring more of the gems with you?"

"Would that have been being 'prudent enough,' my Count?" demanded the outlaw. "Remember, the treasure lies far within the borders of Austria. I needn't remind you that I am not unknown or uninteresting to the Austrian police and their spies. It's the easiest thing in the world to pick a quarrel with some people. Imagine me searched and diamonds to the value of a king's ransom found in my tobacco-pouch! Imagine it, Serge Ivanovich. Would anything ever have got to Servia? Would not the very mountains of Slavonia—seeing that I was on my way from that district—have been turned upside down to find the source of those stones?"

"True enough!" agreed Count Sergius. "But that brings us to another point. You found them. Why may not some one else find them, too, while we are planning how to get possession?"

"They are well hidden," said Gregory. "I have divided them into two lots, to be the safer, and have buried them under the muck of a hog-pen. They are well-guarded. The swine of old Maria Petrovich are rooting and wallowing over them."

Count Sergius sprang to his feet, laughing heartily. Half offended, half reproachful, the outlaw stared at him.

"Could I have found a safer place, Serge Ivanovich?" he demanded stiffly.

The Count caught him by the shoulders and shook him.

"No, a thousand times no, my Gregory!" he exclaimed. "As usual, you have done exactly the right thing. You are the most unerringly correct person in the world—which is surely amazing in a bandit, an outlaw. You outrage all the proprieties of romance, my Gregory."

"But I don't see what you are laughing at, Serge Ivanovich," persisted the other, only half mollified.

"Well, you see," explained the Count, "you've supplied just the human touch which was needed to make this thing quite real. The whole affair has been like a fairy-tale, up to this point. It was all just a little bit too magnificent to be true—and too miraculous, also, to be true. Now, I *feel* it to be true. I know your word is as pure gold, my Gregory. But there was the chance that we were both crazy or dreaming, or hypnotized. Now, I can see those hogs, rooting and wallowing and squealing and grunting, above the hope of Servia! How appropriate the hiding-place! How fit the guardians! For Servia lives by her pigs." And he laughed again, joyously as a boy.

Gregory looked more offended than ever.

"Still——" he began.

But Count Sergius interrupted him, at the same time pushing him into his chair and handing him a fresh cigarette.

"You see, my friend," he explained, "we were in danger of getting just a trifle too high-strung over this affair. And that's what we must not let ourselves do. Cool, steady commonsense is what we've got to depend on. What we've got to do is keep cool and think straight and see clear and be as practical and deliberate as if we were going to start a pig-farm. The fate of our race, and perhaps of more thrones than one, is in our hands, my friend. Wisdom is what we've got to cultivate—wisdom and sanity. I wish, now, my Gregory, you could see not only how clever, but at the same time how funny it was of you to leave the Holy Stone and all the hope of Servia under the guardianship of Mother Maria's pigs."

"I see, my Count," responded Gregory, in a tone which showed that, though he did not see at all, he was nevertheless entirely mollified. "I suppose now, when you come to think of it, pigs are amusing brutes, but when you've seen such a thundering lot of them as I have, you——"

THERE came a tap at the door and he stopped in the middle of his sentence.

Count Sergius swept diamonds and tobacco together into the beaded pouch, drew the cord tight and called out impatiently, "Come in!"

A lad, the son of his concierge, who ran errands for him, approached with a card held deferentially between his finger-tips. Seeing the frown of annoyance on his patron's face, he hesitated and began to stammer excuses.

"The gentleman was very pressing, sir," he began. "He wouldn't believe me when I said you——"

But as he spoke the Count had glanced at the card. His face cleared.

"Show him up at once," he commanded.

As the boy, greatly relieved, darted away without finishing his apology, Count Sergius turned shining eyes upon his companion.

"There's not a man in the world," he declared, "whom I'd rather see come in at this very moment, Gregory!"

"Who is he?" demanded the mountaineer, in a tone of jealous suspicion.

"A friend of mine—a lover of the Serbs, whom I can trust as I trust you, Gregory."

But the cloud remained on the face of Gregory Nicolaievich.

"Captain Andrews of the British Army," continued Count Sergius. "Here he comes. Be civil to him, Gregory!"

But the cloud on the outlaw's face had lifted.

"They don't make spies of Englishmen," he muttered with relief.

CHAPTER II

THE AUSTRIAN AUTHORITIES MAKE A CALL

A TALL figure in brown tweeds entered and strode across the room with long, cavalry strides. His light brown hair was cropped close, his long, square-jawed, weather-reddened face was covered with tiny wrinkles, his piercing, light-blue eyes looked out from under shaggy, sandy-colored eyebrows with a gaze that was frank, fearless and self-contained. His mouth, clean-shaven, was firm to obstinacy and reticent as his eyes were candid.

Count Sergius came forward eagerly to meet him; while Gregory, who had risen as he entered, remained standing close by the table, the fingers of his right hand moving nervously as if they longed to clutch the precious tobacco-pouch that lay close by on the blotter.

"Jove! But this is luck, old chap, to catch you here in Belgrade! I was afraid I'd find you flown," exclaimed Andrews in English.

"I call it more than luck, Bob! You were the very man I was wanting to see," answered the Count, in Servian. "But let me introduce my friend, Captain Andrews—Mr. Gregory Nicolaievich—a captain also, though of slightly irregular commission."

The Englishman gave the Servian a civil but coolly appraising glance, and the two men bowed stiffly to each other, with inarticulate murmurs that sounded vaguely polite.

"My very old and tried friend and companion-in-arms!" continued the Count, with significant emphasis.

A sunny smile broke over the Englishman's face, softening it to boyishness, and his hand went out heartily to the rough-looking stranger.

"The tried friends of Count Sergius are the kind of men above all others that I want to know," he exclaimed warmly, in good Servian.

Gregory took the proffered hand, but with frigid ceremony. His over-sensitive pride had been ruffled by that first searching appraisal of the Englishman's cool eyes. He made as if to go. He picked up his tobacco-pouch, but dropped it again instantly upon the blotter and stretched out his hand, with its long, well-kept fingers, for his peasant cap, which lay on the back of the desk. The Englishman's keen eye took note of those fingers, so little in keeping with the garb of their owner.

"Well, I'll bid you good day, Captain Andrews," he said. "And I'll see you again this evening, Serge Ivanovich, about ten o'clock, if you'll be in then. Or at eight to-morrow morning, if that will suit you better."

"Man," exclaimed the Count impatiently, "you are as suspicious as a cat! You men of the Black Mountain are as touchy as a porcupine. You can't be running off like that, Gregory Nicolaievich. You're needed here—and right now, not to-night at ten o'clock, nor yet to-morrow morning." And with intimate affection he pulled Gregory down into the nearest chair.

AS HE repeated the name of Gregory Nicolaievich, the Englishman looked up sharply. It was evident he had not caught it when he was introduced. His blue eyes danced with delight and he hoisted his long length—which had just subsided into an armchair—once more to its full height.

"Really," he exclaimed, "I didn't catch your name, you know, first shot. Hope you'll pardon my stupidity. But if you're the Gregory Nicolaievich those Austrian rascals down in Bosnia are looking for so anxiously, I'm much honored. I've just come up—not without troubles of my own—from Sarajevo. I'd like to shake hands with you again, Captain Gregory."

The Montenegrin's white teeth flashed under his mustache in a gratified smile and his hand shot out impulsively.

"Yes, the Austrians do me the honor to interest themselves in me," he assented. "And I can imagine they look on you, Captain, with some distrust. Count Sergius tells me you are with us."

"Indeed, yes, I am with you!" responded the Englishman simply. "But I'm afraid, Captain Gregory, I'm not going to see as much of you, just now, as I would wish. It is not only in Bosnia that the Austrians are looking for you. It is right here in Belgrade, also; and right now. They're hot on the scent."

"Curse them!" said the Montenegrin. His eyes flamed, but he seemed by no means surprised at the intelligence. Count Sergius, however, was more disturbed.

"What do you mean, Bob?" he demanded. "You've just arrived. How do you know so much already?"

"Well, you know, I was at the Prefecture just now, raising a row about some stuff I've had stolen since crossing the frontier. Of course, I was having a devil of a time to make myself understood, in a mixture of English and French—because at that time I thought it prudent not to know a word of Servian! That being so obviously and naturally the case, the agent of the Austrian minister, who came in while I was there and appeared to be in a great hurry, talked quite frankly before me.

"He was demanding the immediate arrest and extradition of one Gregory Nicolaievich, for the shooting of an Austrian official of some sort, somewhere on the other side of the river. I must confess that the description of the guilty personage did not exactly tally with your present appearance, Captain Gregory. But——"

"I have several appearances," interrupted the Montenegrin, smiling. "I find it advisable at times!"

"Quite so," agreed the Englishman. "Well, it appeared that the Prefect was most unwilling to be convinced that it was his duty to arrest you, but the Austrian, as usual, was obstinate and from the strictly legal point of view, Captain, he seemed to have a case! The Prefect had to yield, which he did with a very bad grace and as much delay as possible. But, procrastinate as he may, the warrant is doubtless out by this time and we may be sure our Austrian friends will let no grass grow under their feet. They seem to want you badly and I should judge that all the time you've got is none too much, Captain. If I can be of service, please command me absolutely."

"Is it something new, Gregory?" demanded Count Sergius, with a trace of anxiety in his voice. "It's doubly necessary to be prudent, just now, surely!"

THE mountaineer gave a little laugh of satisfaction.

"It was quite unavoidable, believe me, Serge Ivanovich," he answered. "There were several of them and they permitted themselves to be too inquisitive. I was a little abrupt perhaps, but if I had not been so, they would have found—what it was necessary they should not find. And I should not have been here. They wanted to search me for letters, documents of any kind, you see. And that means a minute search! I told you there were difficulties to be considered when things were across the river!"

"If they track you here, my Gregory," said Sergius, "I've no doubt you have some way of escape ready. But it might lead to complications, to more suspicions where I am concerned. And suspicions would be inconvenient. I crave obscurity now, for some time on."

"Oh," said the Montenegrin easily, "they've been thrown off my track for a while. They probably won't know I've come here at all. There are plenty of backyards in Belgrade, and Michael, down-stairs, is a friend. I came by the backyard route and I'll go that way. When I let them pick up my trail again it will be a long way from the street where Count Sergius lodges."

"It's as good as underground passages!" ejaculated the Englishman. "When I was a boy I thought there was nothing like underground passages and, by Jove, they've got the most ridiculous fascination for me even yet!"

"We fellows of the bush, we've got to have them everywhere, or something like them, Captain Andrews," assented the outlaw. "But now, my Count, I think I'd better be getting away. I didn't really imagine the enemy would be quite so hot on my heels."

He rose and looked at Count Sergius significantly.

"I'm in the way, maybe!" said the Englishman smiling and rising also. "I'll step out till you two are through."

"Not a bit of it. You're needed right here, Bob," insisted the Count. Turning to the Montenegrin, he explained, "Andrews is in it, Gregory. He's the man I've had in my eye as the one we need, from the moment you opened your mouth to me about this affair. I answer for him. We can trust him with both our heads, as well as with what is far more precious."

The fiery, greenish-brown eyes of the Montenegrin met and plunged deep into the calm blue ones of the Englishman. They seemed satisfied with the result of their expedition.

"The word of Count Serge, of course, would be enough of itself for me," said Gregory. "But allow me to add, Captain, that I do not find it difficult to trust an Englishman."

Then he selected a folded scrap of paper from several that were in his pocket and spread it out on the blotter before Count Sergius, at the same time motioning the Englishman that he should inspect it, also.

"In case of its falling into wrong hands," said he, "you'll see that I have put down nothing that could indicate the part of the world it refers to. For the locality and how to get there, you must trust to your memory. From Pravnitza, the high road, such as it is, runs nearly northeast about eighteen miles till it strikes the little village of Slovich. A bridle-path leading up the hill from the back of the village takes you to old Maria Petrovich's cabin—a good five miles from the village, in the hollow behind the ridge. That square at the foot of the map is Mother Maria's cabin—better not give it any name!

"She lives there with her son, a sturdy lump without more wits than enough to watch a hog-wallow, but honest and faithful. The country about there is open and reasonably level, with woods to east and north, about half a mile distant. Here and there you'll see a big oak—maybe six or eight in all. But there's only one other tree—the pine marked in the map. Straight north from Mother Maria's cabin is a curious-looking rock, like a beast crouching. There you see it. The only trees near by are the ones I've marked. You can't by any possibility go wrong. Well, if you sight off three lines, just as I've marked them here, at the two points of intersection you'll find what you're after. But they're messy places to dig, for that's where Mother Maria's hogs are penned at night and she keeps a lot of them. Have you got it all straight now in your mind?"

COUNT SERGIUS eyed the rude diagram for a moment, then handed it to the Englishman.

"Yes, Gregory," said he, "I've got it all. I've got it photographed indelibly on my memory, directions, diagram and all. And I know of no safer place to keep this paper itself than in the inviolable pocket of our methodical English friend here. He'll never mislay it. And all the Continental Powers won't be able to take it from him."

"Good!" said the Montenegrin.

Andrews grinned happily, as if contemplating himself in a scrimmage with Kaiser Wilhelm and the Archduke Ferdinand.

"Meantime," continued Count Sergius, "where shall I be able to find you? I take it you'll be getting away from Belgrade at once. Of course! And we must not make any hasty move, since you say the stuff is safe where it is. The thing will take a lot of planning, patient planning and preparation, if there's to be no risk of a slip-up at the last moment."

"All that is what I've come to you for, Serge Ivanovich," said the mountaineer. "Now it's in your hands—the destiny of our people. I'm off to-night. And I'm going straight to Niksich. A letter enclosed to Jacob Baki—your old gossip, the little tailor by the corner of the church—will get me."

"All right," said Sergius. "And I'll send for you the moment things are ripe for a move. Meanwhile—don't you want your tobacco-pouch?"

The outlaw laughed. "I'd like the *pouch*," he agreed. "It's a keepsake. But I don't need the tobacco; it would be very inconvenient for me and not much use in Niksich just at present. I don't object to a few gold-pieces, however, if you have them by you. I'm a little short for the journey."

Count Sergius picked up the beaded pouch, opened it and held it poised above the blotter.

"Bob," said he, "there are singular virtues, you'll observe, in this Servian tobacco as Gregory carries it."

He emptied the tobacco and spread it out on the green blotting paper.

"By Jove!" exclaimed the Englishman. "Now I see what you two chaps have been driving at all this time."

He picked up the ice-blue stone and examined it with the eyes of a connoisseur, while his companions watched his face for the verdict. Laying it down among the fragrant tobacco without a word, he took up the rose stone and subjected it to a like scrutiny. Then he handed it over to Count Sergius.

"Those two stones," said he, "would make the Great Mogul himself sit up and take notice. He'd pawn his harem for them, and the harems of his subjects as well. Any more such where those came from?"

"Enough to engineer some considerable changes in the Balkans," answered Gregory.

"And you'll have your work cut out, Bob, helping us convert them into currency," said Count Sergius. "One of the first things we do will be to run up to Amsterdam, sell these baubles where we can get fair value and put the cash in the Bank of Holland, where they mind their own business and mind it well."

As he spoke he unlocked a little drawer in his desk, dropped the stones into it and took out two Servian banknotes with half a dozen Turkish gold-pieces. These he handed over to the Montenegrin, who thrust them carelessly into the pocket of his tight trousers.

"That's all I've got by me, my Gregory," said he. "But when more's needed, you always know where to reach me."

"Thanks. I'll get away now," said Gregory, giving his right hand to Andrews, his left to Count Sergius, with a look and manner that made the act almost a sacrament. The most solemn of pledges, of dedications, were in their hearts; but there seemed no need of words.

"SAFE journey, Captain!" was all the Englishman said. But Sergius, the intensity of his excitement threatening to break through the mask of his self-control, followed the outlaw to the door, clutching his arm with both hands and seeming to struggle with emotions which he was unwilling to let out. All he said, at last, was the one thing most obvious:

"I can't quite believe it yet, Gregory."

As he spoke, there came the sound of voices, sudden but dim, from below-stairs. The Montenegrin's hand was already on the door-knob. He stiffened like a listening grouse, turned away and stepped up to one of the great panels of wainscotting beside the chimney.

With the quiet words: "I know this house well. This is one of the reasons I got you to take these rooms"—he reached up and pushed hard on the top of the panel. It opened inward, a little stiffly, showing a very narrow passage faintly lighted from the roof.

"This is the safest way for me, Serge Ivanovich." And stepping within, he closed the panel behind him with a click.

Count Sergius turned back into the room with an air of discontent.

"That makes it more unreal than ever, Bob!" he grumbled. "It's too much like make-believe. I wish you'd kick me."

"A bit melodramatic, if you like," agreed Andrews, "but after all, since the passage was there, it was only the soundest commonsense for him to make use of it. Don't be unreasonable, Serge. Listen to that row down-stairs!"

What was evidently an excited discussion went on for some minutes.

"Michael's keeping them in play," muttered the Count.

"I fancy our bandit friend can take quite good care of himself," remarked the Englishman in a tone of joyous appreciation.

The alarming murmurs below-stairs came to an end.

"Michael's probably got them searching the cellar," said Count Sergius.

"Will they look in here?" asked Andrews.

"If they do, they'll be very civil about it, I assure you," answered the Count, grimly. "But I've really no objection. I think, however, I'll leave it to Michael to do the

honors here, as well as in the cellar. Save annoyance!"

He unlocked the little drawer, took out the diamonds, sealed them in an envelope and put them in his pocket. "Let's get out, Bob," he continued. "Let's get down to the 'Danilo' and look at some real waiters—German waiters—and drink a real whisky-and-soda."

"You'd better take beer and a Limburger sandwich, old chap," suggested the Englishman, elongating himself lazily from the depths of his chair. "That'll convince you you're not in a Jack-and-the-Beanstalk dream. For myself, I *like* fairy-stories."

CHAPTER III

THE TERRACE OF THE CAFÉ DANILO

THE Café Danilo was high up on the hillside, and its terrace, where Count Sergius and Captain Andrews sat at their little table, gave a clear view of the city and the river.

It is the smartest café in Belgrade and the sparkling, excitable throng was frivolous enough, customary enough, material enough to bring Count Sergius back, as he desired, to the realities of life.

His visits to Belgrade were frequent, though his Servian estate lay far to the south, on a branch of the Morava, beyond the ancient city of Nisch. To the Englishman, the scene was altogether in keeping with the fairy-tale he had just been listening to in the Count's rooms and in which he now found himself, to his unqualified delight, pledged to play no unimportant part. Far down along the curving shore of the great river the quays of the city were not so busy as a lover of Servia might have wished. But importance was lent by the picture of a large boat swinging in to one of them—a splendid passenger steamer of the line that plies between Budapest and Rustchuk. Across the broad water, close to the northern shore, moved the squat, black forms of two monitors of the Austrian river fleet, thrusting their way up toward Semlin against the massive tide of Father Danube.

As his eyes rested on these craft and he slowly realized their significance, a contented smile broke over Andrews' lips. Any check to Austria's southward march would mean some schemes thwarted on the banks of the Spree, also. Yes, the pie was plainly one he had a right, as an Englishman, to put his finger into. The more he dwelt upon it, the broader grew his smile; till presently the voice of Sergius recalled him to his immediate surroundings.

"What is it you are grinning about, Bob? What do you see out there so amusing?"

"Don't you see those two monitors off there by the north bank?" demanded Andrews.

"Yes, —— them!" assented the Count.

"We *will*, old chap! That's why I'm grinning!" explained Andrews lucidly.

"Ah, yes, of course, to be sure!" agreed Sergius, tugging at his mustache to disguise the expression that leaped into his face.

"But, by the way," he continued in a lower voice, "I fancy we'd better regard our subjects of conversation as strictly limited while we're here, even though we are talking English. There are many Greeks who come here. And where the Greeks come, you have all languages—and all lies!"

"You might speak more gently, Serge, of a race which produces such enchanting women as those two yonder! They're both Greeks, I take it. Off there to your right, with two men, one a Servian officer with a decoration."

Plamenac turned his head.

"Yes," he assented promptly, "they are both beautiful. But only one of them is a Greek. The one furthest from us, drinking coffee—she's the wife of the Greek Consul here, and the civilian is her husband. The other—and the more enchanting of the two, to my mind—is a Frenchwoman, a true Parisienne, with a fondness for English customs. You see she is drinking tea, like yourself. She's the wife of the biggest wine-merchant here—and has sundry and various good gentlemen—of whom, thank heavens, I'm not one—at her small, American-shod feet."

At this moment Madame de L'Orme turned slightly and her eyes met Plamenac's. A smile of emphatic favor irradiated her face and she bowed conspicuously. Count Sergius returned the greeting somewhat eagerly.

"If you're not one of them, you jolly well ought to be ashamed of yourself!" muttered Andrews. "Introduce me!"

"Not much!" breathed the Count with decision. "She's too enchanting for a candid soul like you, Bob. And you've something else to think about."

AT THIS moment, apparently after a word from the Frenchwoman, the Servian officer turned half round in his chair and saluted the Count. With marked punctiliousness and a face like a mask, Plamenac acknowledged the salute.

"You don't like him," murmured Andrews.

"I have as little intercourse as possible," answered the Count under his breath and apparently quite occupied in lighting his cigarette; "as little as is politic—with the wearers of that particular decoration."

On the Servian officer's breast glittered a Maltese Cross of white enamel, with golden rays flashing from its center.

"Ah!" muttered Andrews. "So!" Then he let his eyes wander out over the roofs with careful indifference. "I've seen several like that, already, here. And I can't place it. The last time I was here was in 1902—in the days of Alexander and Draga. I saw none of these white-and-gold crosses then."

"For the best of all reasons!" said the Count dryly. "I was no admirer of the peasant dynasty of the Obrenovichs, you may be sure. But—well, there are subjects, as we agreed! The best way I can explain to you is by saying that the officer there is Major X——! I see you understand. Also"—and here his voice became almost inaudible, while he bent over his glass to remove an imaginary speck—"also, I would have spat upon that decoration long ago, if I had not loved Servia too well to put obstacles in the way of my being useful to her!"

"Well, cheer up, old chap!" rejoined Andrews enigmatically. "There are a good many holes in the colander, you know."

Which seemingly irrelevant suggestion appeared, indeed, to cheer Count Sergius greatly. The gloom vanished from his face.

For some minutes the two men sat in silence, smoking diligently. At length, along a street below them, in full view, passed an open carriage, in which sat a spare, gray-faced, tired-looking man. In spite of his brilliant escort, he had an air of being surrounded by a solitude. People lifted their hats as he passed, but there was no cheering, no enthusiasm.

Andrews leaned a little forward, studying the gray-faced man with interest. It was his first view of King Peter Karageorgevich of Servia. Then he turned to the Count with a faint interrogatory lifting of the eyebrows.

Plamenac's face was a mask of languid indifference. But to the Englishman's ear, gliding under the buzz of voices, came the low breathed words: "Karageorgevich!*—Obrenovich!*—Both tarred with the same brush!"

Andrews withdrew his gaze from the landscape, turned his face to his companion and fixed him with a comprehending look.

"Do you know, old chap," said he, with great heartiness, "I find this Servia of yours amazingly interesting, even more so than I had hoped. You must help me to see a lot of it while I'm here."

"Too happy," responded the Count.

Just then, as they once more lapsed into a pregnant silence, some scraps of excited conversation floated to them from the next table. Two German travelers had a copy of the Berlin *Lokal Anzeiger* between them and were eagerly discussing (for this was in September, 1909) the flights of Orville Wright at Johannisthal. They were enthusiastic over the heights to which he had

*When the Servian Empire, which at its height comprised nearly the whole of the Balkan peninsula, from the Danube to the Gulf of Corinth, was shattered by the Turks on the field of Kossovo in 1389, most of the old Servian nobility perished in the ruins. Of the remnant all but a handful fled into the fastnesses of Montenegro. When, in the nineteenth century, after nearly five hundred years of bondage, the Serbs rose against their oppressors, they were led by two peasant chiefs, Karageorge and Milosh Obrenovich. Both won victories for Servia. Both carried her far toward Freedom. But it was Karageorge who most greatly served his country. When, at length, there was once more a Servia to rule over, Obrenovich, that he might rule, had Karageorge murdered in his sleep. That was in 1817. The house of Obrenovich held the throne till 1842, when it was expelled and a Karageorgevich was called in. He ruled till 1858, when the fickle people deposed him and recalled the Obrenovich dynasty. Michael Obrenovich ruled well, till he was murdered, in 1868, by adherents of Prince Peter Karageorgevich. The plot to overturn the Obrenovich dynasty failed, however, and the Karageorges were exiled from Servia. Another plot in 1903 was successful. The young King, Alexander Obrenovich, and his Queen, were murdered with atrocious savagery. Once more a Karageorgevich sat upon the unstable throne of Servia; and the assassins who had placed him there he rewarded with the decoration of a cross of white and gold. In the meantime, while these peasant kings of Servia were cutting each others' throats, there was, in the kindred Serb state of Montenegro, the unconquered, a ruling line of wise and able princes, the Petrovics of Niegus. To this illustrious house of Montenegro, not unnaturally, the eyes of patriotic Servians are turning.

flown, but what seemed to impress them most was his flight with their Crown Prince as passenger. That settled the matter. If the Kaiser could trust his heir, the adored of all Germany, to that fragile and flickering machine of the American bird-man, then of a surety was the conquest of the air achieved. From this feat they passed to that splendid piece of audacity of Latham's, when he flew, in his monoplane, from Johannisthal to the Tempelhof field, high over the roofs and steeples of Berlin. To them this seemed more convincing than Blériot's flight across the English Channel—for had it not taken place in Germany and was it not, therefore, a fact indisputable, a bed-rock fact, on which they might proceed to build as they would?

IN SPITE of themselves, shamelessly and as if by a mutual understanding, Plamenac and the Englishman listened to this conversation—the latter with a strained intensity, since he was not at ease with his German. Presently they looked at each other, as if to say, "There's a subject we can talk about." The interchange of glances said even more than that. For, as if the tremendous matter that gripped their minds had endowed them with new keenness of intuition, the thought that flashed upon them simultaneously was, "There's the subject that we *must* talk about!" And straightway it seemed to both that explanation would be superfluous. Plamenac beckoned to a waiter.

"Kindly bring me a copy of yesterday's *Morgenblätter*, if you can find one," said he.

The waiter hurried off to find the great Vienna journal.

"I've been intensely interested in this thing for months," said Count Sergius, as the waiter brought the journal and laid it on the table before him.

"So have I," said Andrews.

"Also," went on the Count, "I've been studying the subject theoretically and at the same time practising with home-made gliders of various patterns, in those open, rolling pasture fields behind the house, down yonder at M'latza."

"Jolly place for it!" agreed Andrews. "And, as I remember it, you've got a stretch of level in front, along the river, that would be ripping for a sort of private aviation ground, if you should think of wanting such a thing."

He spoke in an undertone, but Count Sergius lowered his eyelids and ignored the suggestion.

"I had planned to get up to Rheims," he continued, "for the Aviation Week. But some unexpected business here kept me. I was disappointed."

He unfolded the paper as he spoke, and it opened to a rough but thrilling cut of Hubert Latham, in his machine, soaring over the Berlin house-roofs.

"I was there," said Andrews. "It was an eye-opener, I can tell you!"

With unconcealed eagerness the two bent over the paper.

"Our German friends at the next table are unquestionably right," spoke the Englishman again. "The aeroplane has arrived."

"Bob!" said Sergius in a tone of decision, looking up suddenly and glancing around the terrace.

"Yes, old chap?"

"The Aviation Fortnight at Juvisy begins on the 7th. We must be there! And the exhibition in the Grand Palais will be on at the same time. We've got to see that!"

"Yes, old chap!" said the Englishman again, but this time in no voice of interrogation.

"Then," began Count Sergius, "—but there's Madame de L'Orme signing to me to come over to her table. I see she won't be denied. Come along, Bob, and I'll present you, since we'll be leaving Belgrade at once. You'll have to shake hands with Major X——, to be sure! But you're not supposed to know, necessarily, what the white thing on his breast stands for."

"I want to meet her—but not so badly as all that," replied Andrews. "I'll wait here, old chap. Get leave to bring me to call on her when we come back from Paris."

CHAPTER IV

AN UNEXPECTED MEETING

IT WAS in the middle of the first week of October that Plamenac and Andrews arrived in Paris. They put up at one of the new and admirable hostelries, smart but quiet, just off the upper end of the Champs Elysées.

As the two men walked down the Avenue toward the Grand Palais, where the Aeronautical Exhibition was being held, the

fantastic element in the beauty of the scene fitted into their mood.

Once entered within the towering portals, their mood changed. They were there, keen-eyed and practical, to study aeroplanes.

They passed around, examining the different types and models, noting the merits and defects of each; considering, the while, to what usage and to what dangers the plane they bought would be put.

"I lean to the monoplanes," said Sergius.

"They're not weight-carriers," protested Andrews. "I grant them speed and beauty and handiness, of course. But we're interested in something that can carry weight, old chap. Lots of petrol, a passenger, a bit of grub, a box of tools! Don't forget that—a box of tools! Well, note the carrying surface of those two splendid supporting planes. Then, we must have stability. Look at the generous length of the empennage, the stabilizating tail. No pitching forward on your head, there!"

"The Blériot has just as much length of tail, in proportion to its wing surface!" protested Plamenac. "And so has the Antoinette."

"But they don't carry the weight," persisted Andrews.

A SOFT, gay voice and irreproachable French accent at their elbow made the men turn sharply, hat in hand.

"Madame de L'Orme!" exclaimed Count Sergius, with a swift apprehension which it would have puzzled him to explain. "Why, I thought you were in Belgrade!" At the same time he bent low over the small gloved hand which she held out to him.

"But do hurry, Count, and tell me how glad you are that I'm not in Belgrade—or Captain Andrews, I am sure, will forestall you. I don't need an introduction, Captain Andrews," she continued, holding out her hand to him in turn. "Count Sergius has told me lots of lovely things about you and promised to bring you to see me on your return to Belgrade. He must not wait for that, for now I'm in Paris."

She was an altogether delightful apparition, graceful and well groomed in her long, dark green, straight-lined, narrow coat, of the mode of the hour. Andrews looked at her with so frank an excess of admiration that she laughed, girlishly embarrassed, and Count Sergius exclaimed:

"I fear, madame, I'll have to bring him this very evening or forfeit his friendship forever. May we call to-night? And where are you stopping?"

"Yes, you may come this evening," she answered graciously. "I'm at the Hôtel Meurice. Mama has come in from St. Germain to stay with me and she'll be delighted to see you. But tell me, what were you talking about when I stole up behind you?"

"He's got it into his head that he wants to buy an aeroplane and fly it," explained Count Sergius. "And, as I value his neck if he doesn't, I'm trying to cool his ardor."

"But I thought it was you, Count Sergius, who were so interested in flying!" she exclaimed. "I've heard so much about your wonderful experiments and the strange machines you've built and the daring things you've done with them, down there in your seclusion at M'latza. Why should you discourage Captain Andrews?"

An involuntary glance of astonishment, of suspicion, flashed between the eyes of the two men. It was instantaneous, but Madame de L'Orme intercepted it and smiled. The prompt reply of Count Sergius, however, was simple and candid.

"Surely you've given reason enough, dear madame. It's because I know so well the dangers that I would discourage him. Besides, you have exaggerated the importance of my poor little experiments at M'latza. Like all good Servians, I raise pigs down there. Naturally, it takes some very exciting hobby to divert my mind from that engrossing occupation."

The lady seemed content.

"Well," she said gaily, "since you know all about it, you may take me around and explain the different machines to me."

So they wandered among the exhibits, the two men explaining the various models to Madame de L'Orme. Her ready understanding of the mechanical details surprised them both.

They were discussing the stability of the Voisin as compared with the speed of the Blériot when madame herself expressed a half-laughing desire to learn to fly, but confessed to some hesitation in risking her neck in the learning.

"If you really contemplated learning to fly, madame, I would undertake to teach you myself and make myself personally

responsible for the safety of that inimitable neck," responded the Count.

"There, I knew you knew how to fly!" she cried delightedly. "I may hold you to that promise when you least expect it."

"My poor best shall be at your service," replied Plamenac. But at the same time a whimsical sense of apprehension flashed over him. She might possibly be in earnest. And she might call upon him to redeem his promise at some time when it would be inconvenient either to comply or to refuse.

By this time they had come over to the third corner and were looking at the long, slender, exquisite profile of the Antoinette.

"There's the machine that most appeals to me," cried Count Sergius, unable to subdue the thrill of enthusiasm in his voice.

"But the Antoinette doesn't carry weight," objected Andrews.

"She could be made to, very simply," replied the Count. "That's an easy matter, with her lines. Besides, she has another advantage. She——" but here he hesitated and seemed to change his mind.

"What other advantage?" demanded Madame de L'Orme, a gleam of sharp interest leaping into her great eyes.

"I was going to say something quite foolish," answered Plamenac.

Andrews gave him a steady look with a tinge of amusement in it.

"You've excited all my curiosity and now you leave it unsatisfied," pouted Madame, persuasively petulant. "Make him tell me, Captain Andrews."

"If you can not, Madame, what do you think my persuasions would count for?" answered the Englishman. Count Sergius met her eyes with an admiring but baffling smile.

"If you were so rash as to start me telling you things, dear lady, I might tell you too much!" he retorted ambiguously. She had it on her tongue to challenge him, but, with a half-vexed laugh, she refrained.

AS THEY were re-crossing the hall to the farther corner, that upon the left of the entrance, the crowd was so great that their conversation was interrupted. Andrews, his lofty shoulders towering above the throng, guided Madame through. Plamenac, who had paused for a second to look at some detail of the Antoinette propeller, was separated from them. He rejoined them immediately, however, at the ropes of the Wright stand. He had no intention of leaving Andrews—whom he imagined much more susceptible than he really was—alone with Madame de L'Orme. He was jealous of anything that might divert ever so little of the Englishman's attention from the vital matter in hand. And for Madame he felt a curious mingling of attraction and distrust.

Madame de L'Orme and Andrews were standing very close together as Count Sergius came up beside them.

"Why do you look at me so suspiciously, Count Sergius?" demanded the lady gaily. "We were talking aeroplanes. Nothing more frivolous, I assure you."

"Or nothing more serious? In that case I could not forgive you!" bantered Plamenac.

"Now you are laughing at me," said Madame. "And I don't like it. I think it's only aeroplanes and perhaps men that you take seriously. Here's the lift, by the door. My head's crushed with all this wisdom. I must go and find mama!" She put out both hands at the same time to her two escorts, in her gracious French way. "Thank you so much! But I'm going to ask more, much more. Will you both take me with you, one day, to see the flights at Juvisy?"

"We'll be only too much honored," answered Andrews quickly.

"Yes, indeed!" agreed Plamenac.

"*Entendu!*" said Madame. "Till tonight, then. Hotel Meurice, right after dinner!" and she stepped into the little lift that takes tired visitors up to the buffet in the gallery.

The two men lingered after she was gone.

"Why did you hesitate in speaking to Madame about the Antoinette?" asked Andrews.

"Some queer instinct. I found I didn't want to speak to her about the boat-like body. With a little ingenuity, one could manage it so that there would be no great danger in descending upon the water."

"Sly old devil, Serge!" said Andrews.

"You've got to be careful there, Bob," expostulated Plamenac.

"Don't worry about me, old chap. I'm as dumb as an oyster on points I don't want to speak about. Shall we go and look at the rest of the machines?"

"No," suggested Plamenac. "I've had enough for the moment. Let's come in

again to-morrow morning, before the crowd, and look over all the experiments, models and freaks. We may get some ideas."

CHAPTER V

PLAMENAC MAKES AN ACQUAINTANCE

PARIS, it appeared, had gone quite mad over flying.

It was advertised to be one of the greatest days of the Flying Fortnight at the Juvisy Aerodrome. And it was a public holiday. All Paris had made up its mind to be there. Almost before the day's journeying had well begun the railways were overwhelmed.

Late in the morning, after a hurried lunch, Count Sergius and Andrews, with Madame de L'Orme, arrived at the Gare D'Orsay, the central station of the Paris-Orleans railway. The station was almost in a state of siege. The ticket-windows were surrounded by a surging mob; but Andrews, a veteran traveler, had got tickets in advance, so that the mob was of no consequence.

On arriving at Juvisy, they found troops by the hundreds, cavalry, guards, zouaves —directing and controlling the crowds.

They found every seat in the pavilion already occupied, but this they turned to their own advantage. Count Sergius got three chairs and found a place for them close by the railing, almost exactly level with the starting-line. Flying had not yet begun, because the wind, though falling, was still tricky and dangerous. But the red flag, announcing that they were about to fly, was just fluttering to the top of the signal-mast some hundred yards out in the field.

Plamenac and Andrews barely had time to explain to Madame de L'Orme the signals hoisted, which showed the velocity of the wind, what event was to be decided and who was about to fly, when, with a great hum, a motor was started and Gaudart in a Voisin rose from the ground.

"He's off!—He's coming!—It's Gaudart!" came the eager, broken cries.

Suddenly the aeroplane veered. The note of the motor changed and, gliding to the ground, the Voisin ran along a little way and came to a stop.

Another type was rolled out, the operator took his seat and the motor was started. The plane moved forward, but did not leave the ground. It passed the starting-line and ran on down the course to the turn.

At this point it ran neatly round the post and came racing back at speed toward the hangars as if it had just been out for a spin. Then the crowd began to laugh. "He's an automobile!" "*Il roule bien!*" and other good-natured gibes, floated across the field.

"That motor's all right. It's the aeroplane that's at fault," said Count Sergius.

"Yes, it's the machine!" said a voice at his side, speaking English with a marked American intonation. "Not enough lift to the planes, far as I can make out."

THERE was an assured note in the voice which gave the words weight and Count Sergius turned to the speaker, who was not looking at him, but intently watching the aeroplane.

He was a man of medium height, dressed in a heavy brown motoring-coat, with a motoring-cap pulled well down over a strong, smooth-shaven, craggy face. His mouth was large, thick-lipped but resolute; his nose large and somewhat hooked. Suddenly he turned upon Count Sergius a pair of noticeably fine eyes, large, calm and of a very dark, luminous gray.

"From things I've overheard you say," he continued, as if in half apology for having addressed a stranger, "I reckoned you knew something about these flying-machines." But it was evident to him at once that no apology was necessary, for both Andrews and Madame de L'Orme were leaning over interestedly to catch whatever he had to say.

"I don't know half as much about them as I want to and intend to before I'm much older," responded Count Sergius cordially.

"Same here!" said the American.

Gaudart made another attempt and was rewarded by a short flight. Then Count de Lambert, Wilbur Wright's first pupil, came out in his Wright biplane.

For a time, now, the crowd was very quiet, content to watch de Lambert as he rolled up round after round to his credit.

Suddenly the cry of "Latham! Latham!" rippled along the stands. Latham's signal, a red globe topping a white "diabolo," rose slowly to the place beneath de Lambert's.

"Now, wait!" muttered Count Sergius.

"But don't be too sure!" warned the American. "It's Latham, but he hasn't got his own machine. This is Captain Burgeat's. His own has gone on to Blackpool."

"But it's an Antoinette!" said Andrews.

"Yes," agreed the American, "and when I get home I'm going to put all the money I can scrape together into it. But I'll have my own motor! Listen to that motor now!"

Across the line it soared, the great dragon-fly, at a height of perhaps twenty-five feet from the earth. The crowd, which had been dead still with expectation, roared. Then, the throbbing hum of the motor changed. There was a sputtering. Slowly, reluctantly, the machine slanted downward. Half-way to the turn it was within five feet of the earth. Then the motor woke up again. The tail-plane waved vigorously. Once more the machine soared upward.

With a lovely, assured sweep it rounded the turn and resumed its straight course along the south of the field. But it was only for a few moments. Again the ominous sputtering marred the hum and this time it continued. It slowed to a sharp spitting and, as the machine gently came to earth, it stopped altogether.

For some little time now there was nothing going on. The crowd grew restless. The afternoon was drawing to its close in a calm that was perfection for the flyers and the people wanted more flights.

Suddenly the sound of a propeller came from an almost invisible hangar far down by the Orge. Presently some one discerned its number, and cried, "27"! There was a fluttering of programs. Then a glad shout of "Paulhan! Paulhan!" ran the length of the grounds. The signal of the daring Southern aviator, a red globe surmounting a black pyramid, floated up the mast.

"If you can be sure of any one, he's it!" remarked the American tersely.

Mounting at a steep slant, Paulhan was eighty or ninety feet in the air at the first turn. The crowd yelled themselves hoarse. Smilingly the aviator gazed down and waved his hand. Still he kept on rising. At the farther side of the field he was fully a hundred and fifty feet up.

Several rounds of the course Paulhan made at this height, then, swooping down, he skimmed along near the ground for a few more rounds. Presently he rose again and swept up to the stands, straight above the heads of the thrilled and shrinking spectators. At last, now once more at a height of perhaps two hundred feet, he forsook the field altogether and sailed off over the woods straight into the sunset.

Count Sergius, seeing that Andrews was intent on Madame and Madame on the sky where the aeroplane had vanished, turned to the American and began an interested discussion of the merits of the Antoinette machine. The unusual heartiness of their agreement on all the most important points drew the two men together so strongly that Count Sergius took out his card and presented it, saying: "I hope we can see more of each other, since we have such strong mutual interests."

The American took it and read aloud, "Count Sergius Charles de Plamenac. M'latza.

"Thanks. Where's M'latza?"

"In Servia," answered Count Sergius.

The stranger looked at him with new interest.

"I've read up a lot about that disturbing little country of yours. It's caught my fancy. Yes, I hope we can get together and kind of talk things over."

He took out his card, scribbled on it with a pencil and handed it to Count Sergius. It read:

Wesley Carver
Buffalo

In pencil he had written,

Hotel du Quai D'Orsay, Paris

"As soon as this show is over," he continued, "I'm going down to Châlons, to study those Antoinettes."

"Why, so am I, Mr. Carver!" exclaimed the Count, warmly holding out his hand.

Next moment he felt a light touch on his arm.

"Oh, don't miss it! He's coming back," came Madame's voice, tense with excitement.

Black, massive, incomprehensible, high against the mystic sky, came the great machine, a portent and a promise, whose significance the world, then, hardly dared to more than guess at. The crowd seemed to feel, all at once, that aspect of the Event. They had begun to cheer at first sight of its return; but as it drew down upon them out of the sunset, they fell silent, as if at a command. At last, as it swept humming over their heads and they saw young Paulhan gaily and most humanly waving his hand at them, the spell lifted and their shouts rent the air. Once more around the judges' stand the voyager swept his flight. Then he

came softly to the ground before the hangars.

Five minutes more and the Red Flag fluttered down from the top of the mast. Flying was over for the day.

CHAPTER VI

PLANS ARE DISCUSSED

THE crowd was on its feet, trying to get away.

"No use being dragged into that maëlstrom!" said Andrews. "Let's stay here in the café and have tea, till it thins out."

"Yes, I want tea now!" agreed Madame de L'Orme.

"Stay and join us," said Count Sergius to the American. He had an intuition that this was a man he was going to need.

"Thank you! Delighted!" said the stranger. "I'm anchored here for an age yet," he continued. "My car's in the very inside corner of that awful bunch out yonder."

Over the tea, which they took in the pavilion, while a sweeping searchlight and ranks of Roman candles illuminated the gathering twilight, the American talked with a frank enthusiasm and unpretentious authority which delighted Madame at once, and presently won over the more guarded Englishman.

Count Sergius had no difficulty whatever in getting him to talk about himself—a subject in which he was frankly and healthily interested. But his egotism was quite without offense, the whole man being so transparently straight, capable and well-equipped along his own lines. Count Sergius speedily drew it out of him that he was a graduate of the Stevens Institute of Technology, a practical as well as theoretical engineer and a manufacturer of motors.

"I think I've scored just a little bit over a good many smart folks," said he with a boyish pride. "I've just about secured all the Antoinette rights for a country that's going ahead, right now, faster than any other country on this little globe, bar none. That's Canada. There's where the money's to be made now. They've got imagination for big things."

"So—well, after I've learned all there is to know about the Antoinette, after I've learned to make it, to fly it and if necessary to improve it, I'll float a company in Canada and set up my plant in Toronto or Winnipeg likely."

"It certainly interests me," said Count Sergius. "I'd like to look into the whole idea with you, by-and-by, if I may be permitted."

"You sure may!" agreed Carver heartily.

"Oh, how interesting it must be to be a man!" sighed Madame. "What chances you have to do such big, interesting things!"

The American surveyed her frankly, appraisingly.

"I reckon it's women like you that make it interesting to be a man!" said he.

Madame was unmistakably gratified. There was no gloss on the compliment to disguise or discredit its vigor.

"Curious, isn't it," she remarked, "that you men with such decided interests in common should just chance to come together this way, among all these thousands."

"Folks say I'm lucky," responded the American readily. "Oh, by the way! I gather that you've come down by train. It'll be particular Hades getting back. I wish you'd all come with me. I've got a big car here—empty. Looks selfish, but I stopped in Orleans last night, and ran up here this morning."

Both Andrews and Madame looked at Count Sergius.

"Thank you very much," said he without hesitation. "If Madame de L'Orme is willing, we'll be only too delighted and too grateful."

"Madame de L'Orme is certainly willing, —and her private opinion is that you are an angel," said the lady with decision.

LATE that night, Plamenac and Andrews were sitting in a snug corner of Fouquet's café on the Champs Elysées over a good-night glass.

"Carver is a jolly good sort," said Andrews. "You've a keen eye for a man, Serge!"

"I feel it in my bones," replied Plamenac, "that he's the other man we've been needing. He's efficient to the finger-tips. At the same time, he's a dreamer. You feel at once that he's 'white all through,' as his countrymen would put it. I'm bound to land him, you see if I don't. He'll forget his Canadian Antoinette factory for a while, if I'm not much mistaken in his quality."

"I've no doubt you're right! And you're the Commander-in-chief, anyhow. But

aren't you, possibly, going just a bit too fast, old chap?" cautioned Andrews.

"Oh, we'll not commit ourselves, not a bit of it, till we know him. But you'll see I'm right."

"Then, what now?" suggested Andrews. "We've got about all we're likely to get out of Juvisy, I'm thinking. And I'm for the Farman machine."

"And I'm still for the Antoinette," replied Count Sergius. "But let's not talk it over here. Let's get back to the hotel and thrash it out in my room, where we won't have to talk under our breath this way."

In the Count's luxurious room the two men argued earnestly over the respective fitness of their favorite aeroplanes for the task before them.

"But as we've got to have two machines anyway," said Andrews finally, "we certainly can't put all our eggs in one basket. Why have them of the same pattern? I'll get a Farman, you an Antoinette. That will widen our margin of security a bit, I'm thinking."

"Agreed," said Plamenac. "And now for our program. Let's get up to Amsterdam at once, to-morrow, and market the stones."

"How will a certain bewitching dame like so sudden a flight on our part?" suggested Andrews.

"No better than you will, Bob," retorted Plamenac.

"I?" laughed Andrews. "I, indeed!"

"Of course, I like her—find her most interesting and attractive," acknowledged the Count, with a slight change in his voice. "But we mustn't let anything distract us for a moment from our work. I sha'n't see her. I'll write her in the morning. And I'd advise you to do the same thing, Bob."

Andrews looked inscrutable and changed the subject.

"And after Amsterdam, what?"

"Why, then straight down to Châlons, to Mourmelon-le-Grand, both of us," answered Sergius. "The Antoinette people are down there and so are the Farman people. We'll order our machines and get to know every screw in them while they're being built. And meanwhile we'll be learning to fly. That will cut out our Winter's work for us, Bob. We've got to be nothing less than experts, masters, you know."

"Good, and then?"

"Then, we'll have the job of getting our machines into Servia—to my place at M'latza, where we'll tune them up and make our final arrangements."

"But will M'latza do?" queried Andrews. "You'll remember Madame de L'Orme seemed to know all about what you had been doing at M'latza. It's my honest opinion, old chap—chaffing aside—that if she took so much trouble to find out something then, she'll take a lot more trouble and find out a lot more now."

Count Sergius looked worried. "I don't see why she should, Bob," he protested. "But if it seems advisable, we can find a place farther south, where no one can possibly be any the wiser. We can settle that by and by. You see, we'll be running over to consult with Gregory before Spring and he'll be able to advise us on that point better than any other living soul."

"Well, we needn't borrow trouble," said Andrews cheerfully. "Let's return to Châlons. I'm going to begin on a Voisin and I'd advise you to do the same. Of course we'll have to pay by the nose for lessons, if we're not going to be purchasers. But it will be well worth our while."

"Oh, we'll buy one Voisin. That will be better every way," said Plamenac. "We sha'n't have to count the pennies, you know."

Andrews got up, knocked the long ash of his cigar into the grate and stretched himself with an air of joyous anticipation.

"Now I think I'll turn in, if we've got a journey on for to-morrow," he said.

At the door he turned.

"But say, old chap, I've more than half a notion that we'll find that little lady down at Châlons, too, taking lessons on a Voisin. She's really awfully keen on getting a flyer, you know."

"Well," said the Count, "if she's there that won't be our fault."

The next afternoon they left the Gare du Nord for Amsterdam. Not till they were nearing St. Quentin did Madame de L'Orme's name come up.

"Did you get in to make your adieux?" asked the Count.

"No," said Andrews, "I didn't. I wanted to. But it occurred to me that I'd have to be either mysterious or ungracious or lie to her. I couldn't very comfortably be any one of the three, with those big trusting eyes of hers upon me! So I copied

your admirable discretion and sent a *petit bleu.*"

"I'm glad of it," said Plamenac heartily.

CHAPTER VII

AT MOURMELON-LE-GRAND

AT AMSTERDAM the matter of the diamonds went without a hitch. A week in the quaint old many-watered Dutch capital sufficed to conclude the business.

From Amsterdam, Count Sergius and Andrews hurried straight to Rheims, by way of Namur, without returning to Paris. They were impatient to get settled down to their work at Mourmelon-le-Grand.

Here they were overtaken by a letter from Madame de L'Orme, forwarded from the Amstel Hotel at Amsterdam. It was addressed to Count Sergius but evidently intended for both. Madame wrote in tears, being suddenly summoned back to Belgrade by her husband, for reasons which she did not specify. But she declared her purpose of returning as soon as possible and begged that certain amiable promises might not be forgotten. Plamenac drew a breath of relief, but to Andrews it seemed as if his relief were tempered by some other consideration.

"You're not really so pleased as all that, Serge," he gibed. "What is it? Why look so black about it?"

"It's not that, I assure you, Bob," protested the Count seriously. "I was thinking about her husband. I don't like that chap. He's an oily little fat beast, a thorough bounder. He must be rather loathsome to such a woman as she is."

Andrews laughed hugely and laid an admonitory hand on Serge's shoulder.

"Let's hope for the little lady's sake, it's not so bad as that," he said.

"You see," continued Plamenac, "I don't trust the brute. I have my suspicions that there's something more than selling champagne that keeps him busy at Belgrade. He runs up to Vienna too often."

"Oh, ho!" said Andrews. "That lively Austrian curiosity, you think! That might account for Madame's information as to your occupations at M'latza!"

"Impossible!" answered Plamenac decisively, forgetting certain vague suspicions that had flashed more than once across his own mind.

"Impossible, of course, as far as anything of that sort would involve her personally," agreed Andrews without reserve. "But you forget, old chap, that husbands—even 'oily brutes,' do sometimes tell their wives harmless things that they think may interest them."

"Oh, quit it, Bob! Gentle irony does not become you," protested Count Sergius. "We'll write her a joint letter wishing her all the consolation that Belgrade can afford her at this season."

"And telling her," added Andrews, "that when she gets back she'll find us expert enough to teach her."

At Mourmelon things were speedily *en train.* With their machines ordered, a Voisin, a Farman and an Antoinette, both Andrews and Count Sergius had the run of all three establishments, where they proceeded to familiarize themselves with every detail of manufacture. All three factories were swamped with orders and they were told that they could not get their machines before mid-Winter. But meanwhile there were the training machines on which to learn.

As they had already decided to do, they turned their attention first to mastering the Voisin. At his first attempt Count Sergius flew, covering a couple of hundred yards and coming easily to earth. After four more flights he accomplished, in excellent form, the circular kilometer, after which Monsieur Chateau, the instructor, left him entirely to himself, to practise as he would.

But with Andrews, to his surprise and frank chagrin, it was quite different. An expert at the most varied and divergent sports, skater, swimmer, horseman, tennis-player, automobilist; sure of eye, hand and balance, he had expected to master flying as easily as he had mastered all else he had undertaken. Nevertheless, the capricious aeroplane refused to rise for him. During his first three lessons its front wheels never left the ground.

THEN, at last, in the fourth lesson, it got up, heavily and reluctantly, and covered perhaps a hundred yards before slinking to earth again, as if with its tail between its legs. For several more lessons this seemed about all that Andrews could accomplish. Sergius was keenly disappointed. Monsieur Chateau shook his head and indicated his serious

apprehension that Captain Andrews was not cut out for a flying-man.

But Chateau didn't know the Englishman. Andrews was annoyed, but he was by no means discouraged. He set his long jaw. Then, all at once, it came to him. It was his tenth lesson. Chateau stood by with a weary and supercilious air, which made Plamenac furious. Andrews, however, didn't care how the instructor looked. He grinned resolutely, grasped the wheel and rolled off.

Curious! To-day for the first time the machine felt like a live thing under his hand. With confidence he tilted the elevating plane.

The great machine rose obediently into the air and sailed steadily down the field without wavering. When he judged himself to be about fifteen feet up he lowered the plane a trifle and with a gentle fanning kept the machine at that height. He heard, from behind him, a yell of approval from Plamenac. When he had gone about a quarter of a mile, almost without thinking of it, he began to turn. The machine tilted inward—but not too much. It came at once to an even keel as he went ahead on his new course. Exultant, but cool as steel, he turned again and came humming back to where the instructor, Count Sergius and half a dozen spectators stood watching. He swept triumphantly past them in a clean curve and continued his flight.

At last he felt himself getting cold. Swooping back to the sheds, he made a perfect landing just before Chateau and Plamenac. The little group was excited and fell upon him the moment he descended from his seat. The instructor, enthusiastic and repentant, hugged him violently. He saw the keen delight in Plamenac's eyes, though all his friend said, as he wrung his hand, was,

"Bully for you, Bob!"

"I think," said he in a casual tone, "a cup of tea would go pretty well now."

After this spectacular success, Andrews and Plamenac were almost daily rivals in their flights. They began now practising on other machines, Plamenac on an Antoinette and Andrews on a Farman, though both returned to the Voisin from time to time. When, about the middle of February, their own new aeroplanes were delivered to them, they felt that they might fairly consider themselves equipped for the great adventure.

MEANWHILE, all through the Winter, their friendship with the American, Wesley Carver, had been growing. Him they had found in the Antoinette factory, in workman's blouse, busy and glad. To the astonishment of Monsieur Levavasseur, the manager of the company and inventor of the machine, Carver insisted on working regular hours and receiving regular wages, even though he was at work on the very machine which he had himself ordered at a handsome price.

Being so occupied, they saw little of him in the day-time, but they had gradually dropped into the way of looking him up in the evenings and of sometimes running over to Rheims with him for dinner.

It was not long before Andrews signified to Plamenac his hearty agreement and thereafter, in the most natural way in the world, Servia and her affairs would continually crop up in the conversation. Like so many Americans, even of the most exclusively business class, Carver was full of the sentiment of romantic adventure, and they found him already hot against Austria for her cynical bullying of the little inland kingdom. He was also inclined to rag Andrews rather mercilessly, on the score of England, Russia and France having submitted so meekly to Austria's affront and countenanced the shameless rape of Bosnia-Hertzegovina.

One evening, as they sat discussing these subjects, Carver jokingly arranged how this end and that might be accomplished.

"The princes of Montenegro should be kings of Servia," interposed Count Sergius.

"Why, of course," agreed the American. "What you say goes, in this affair. So Andrews and I will attend to it at once. But, meanwhile, let's have another drink. You fellows look as if you were already attending the funeral of those Karageorgevichs."

To his surprise, the Englishman leaned toward him across the table, and Count Sergius turned upon him eyes that went suddenly ablaze with exaltation.

"I take you at your word, my friend," said Andrews solemnly. "We *will* attend to it!"

The American wrinkled his brows and glanced from one to the other.

"You fellows beat me!" he muttered in whimsical bewilderment. But he felt that something big was in the air and his luminous eyes grew eager as a boy's.

"Old man, what you have planned for Servia in joke," said Plamenac in a low voice, "that we have set ourselves to do. Power, enormous power, has been miraculously put within our reach. We have but to stretch out our hands to grasp it. We have needed another man, a strong man, a straight man—above all, the *right* man.

"When I met you at Juvisy, I felt that you were the man. Andrews feels about it as I do. We want you with us in this great adventure. I'm sure I don't have to assure you that it's clean. And vaster destinies than those of my little country are bound up in it. We want you to come and help us."

Carver's face had grown very grave during this amazing speech.

"Thank you for your confidence," he said simply. "I can see what it means for you to have spoken so freely to me. It looks mighty tempting to me—any sort of an adventure would look tempting to me, if it meant going into it with you fellows. But I can't run my motor in the dark without head-lights. Before I say yes or no, I must know just what we're going to be up against. Then if my business—I'm not altogether free, you know—if my business won't let me go in with you, it will be just as if you hadn't told me."

"Of course," replied Count Sergius, "you have to know all about it before you can decide."

"But you're decided already," broke in Andrews. "I know you, Wesley Carver, and you can't keep out of it, at any cost. *I* couldn't. Why, man, it's what you came over for!"

"Have a cigar. You'll find them all right," said Carver coolly, holding out his case.

Then Count Sergius began. First he sketched, briefly but glowingly, the story of Servia, her splendors, her disasters, her imperishable dreams, the perils now surrounding her. Then, the tradition of the Black Stone. Then, the treasure and their daring schemes for getting it safely into Servia; how it might, thereafter, be turned into a lever for prying Austria out of Bosnia, heaving a mountain against her southward march and throwing the scattered Servian people together into one great nation.

As he talked, the American's great gray eyes began to flame with dancing lights. At the end of the story he stretched himself, drew a prodigious breath and relighted his cigar.

"I reckon," he remarked at last, "my Antoinette factory in Toronto will have to wait a while. There are things going on over here that seem too good to miss."

SOME three weeks after this decisive conversation, the three new aeroplanes, after having responded satisfactorily to the most searching tests that Andrews and Count Sergius could put them to, were taken apart and boxed ready for shipment. The Voisin was consigned directly to Count Sergius himself at M'latza, by way of Vienna and Belgrade.

"This will give the Austrian spies something to find out," said the Count. "They'll watch that Voisin to its destination and perhaps I'll amuse them with it by-and-by, when we think they ought to have their attention occupied."

"We might let it leak out that there's some grand smuggling scheme afoot and they'll keep their eyes on that Voisin till they hypnotize themselves," laughed the Englishman.

As for Plamenac's Antoinette and the Englishman's Farman, it was decided that they should go by different routes. The Antoinette was to go by way of the Mont Cénis Tunnel, across Italy to Venice and thence by water to the Montenegrin port of Dulcigno, where it was consigned to one Allessandro Mosso, bicycle agent—and also incidentally, agent and ally of Gregory Nicolaievich and the free bands.

Gregory would be on hand at Dulcigno and would see to getting the unwieldy freight safely through the mountains up to Niksich —which secluded Montenegrin town had been chosen as base of operations.

For the Farman machine a rather more elaborate program was arranged. Andrews decided that it should go by water from Marseilles, all the way around through the Dardanelles to Kustendji on the Black Sea, the chief port of Roumania. It was consigned to himself at Bucharest, where a certain potent "pull" he had with the Government would enable him to avoid undue curiosity on the part of the Roumanian customs.

From Bucharest he would himself superintend the long and troublesome transport of the aeroplane up the Danube to the Servian frontier and thence across to the safe seclusion of Niksich. It was more or less intricate and troublesome, but seemed to appeal to the Englishman's imagination more than any other route.

THEY were on the eve of getting away, Andrews for Bucharest, Plamenac and the American for Slavonia, where they would look over the lay of the land, when a letter came from Madame de L'Orme, dated from Vienna. It was addressed, as usual, to Count Sergius; but, in accordance with that impartial *camaraderie* which Madame had so tactfully established, it was manifestly intended for both men.

It announced her purpose of coming at once to Paris and beginning her lessons without further delay. The Count, with a troubled look on his dark face, handed the letter over to Andrews.

"Oh, but we must head her off, instantly!" exclaimed Andrews, who now was growing day by day more impatient. "If she comes to Paris, she'll come down here. And if she comes down here, she'll find out that we've been getting *three* machines and packing them all off in different directions. And if a lady's husband is mixed up with the Austrian Secret Service, it's just as well that a lady should not know too much."

"He might get things out of her without her suspecting that it was going to do us any harm," agreed Count Sergius. "What had we better do?"

Such indecision was so unlike his prompt and positive friend that Andrews laughed outright.

"Do? Why, wire her at once, to-night, that we'll meet her day after to-morrow in Vienna. That will fix things for the moment. She'll wait. Then, old chap, you can deal with the situation more exhaustively when you see her."

"Yes, we will tell her we've got a Voisin at M'latza, and will give her lessons down there," said the Count.

But in this hope they were to be disappointed. Madame de L'Orme, for reasons that did not seem to them very clear, was unable to await them in Vienna and for some weeks they heard no more of her.

CHAPTER VIII

TSCHERNAGORA

SPRING comes late to the Balkans for a land of the same favored latitude as Rome and Barcelona. But it had come and established its kingdom before Andrews arrived with his charge at the camp on a tributary of the Drina, where Count Sergius, Carver and Gregory Nicolaievich had been awaiting him for more than three weeks.

The outlaw—he was no outlaw in Montenegro, but a highly honored citizen—was one of those rare men who could induce his valorous but most unindustrious compatriots to work. He had accomplished marvels by letting his workmen suspect that there was a military purpose behind their toil—which toil forthwith became worthy in their proud eyes.

In accordance with the plans and minute directions forwarded to him by Count Sergius from France, he had got two spacious hangars ready to receive the machines, as well as a rough but sufficing workshop to accommodate the tools, materials and spare parts which the American had brought with him. The site Gregory had chosen for the camp was a good twenty miles from Niksich, near a hamlet buried in the mountains.

While waiting for Andrews to arrive, there was infinite occupation for Count Sergius and Carver. First, the outlaw had to be made free of the air. From his first sight of the white-winged monoplane soaring up and down the valley and butting into the squalls like a sea-eagle, he was a slave to the game. For a few days he was like one possessed and could neither sleep nor eat till he had flown. It did not content him in the least to be carried aloft by the Count or by Carver. He must do it himself. Very cautiously and gradually they taught him. He proved an apt pupil, but quite too recklessly daring. And as soon as he had learned, they would let him fly no more.

"We *must not* risk this precious machine in your wild hands, my Gregory," decreed Plamenac. "We must think of but one thing, till that one thing shall be accomplished. *Then*—why you shall have this very machine, all to yourself, and may soar up to play with the eagles of the Tschernagora* to your heart's content.

At Vienna Count Sergius had collected a series of large-scale topographical maps, which covered not only the whole of Southern Hungary, Slavonia and Bosnia, but Servia and Montenegro and the Sanjak of Novi Bazar as well. It was evident that Austria took the liveliest interest in the topography of her Balkan neighbors.

At M'latza they spent a week, getting the

*Montenegro.

Voisin machine unpacked and put together, though the meadow-lands around Plamenac's place were not yet fit for flying. Then they had to come to join Gregory at Niksich by way of the Sanjak.

By the time Andrews arrived with his Farman, the valley fields and the lower slopes were blue-misted with incomparable violets; and though the brooks still ran swollen and icy from the melting of the mountain snows, the magic of high Spring was over the land.

It was planned that Count Sergius should take Carver with him in the Antoinette, while Gregory should go with Andrews in the Farman. This was not altogether to the outlaw's taste, as the great biplane made no such appeal to his imagination as the bird-like monoplane.

But it was the inevitable division, for every reason. Andrews was by far the heaviest man of the four, his tall frame tipping the beam at one hundred and ninety-eight pounds; while the lean Montenegrin went a scant hundred and thirty. Carver and Plamenac, on the other hand, were men of from one hundred and fifty to one hundred and sixty weight.

Again, Count Sergius and Gregory were the two who knew the country thoroughly and had eyes trained to the peculiarities of the landscape; so it was obviously well that their knowledge should be divided between the two aeroplanes. Lastly, the Englishman had much of that turn for mechanics, that instinct in the hands, that intuitive comprehension of machinery, which was so highly developed in Carver and so lacking to both Count Sergius and Gregory. And thus it was that fate decreed the division.

In the Antoinette Count Sergius had substituted a sturdy seventy-five horse-power Anzani motor for the fine, but frail, motor of Levavasseur's invention. It was the Farman machine that proved to be the triumphant weight-carrier.

A FEW days before the arrival of Andrews, however, something had happened to make Count Sergius uneasy. There came to the village a Jewish peddler, who displayed an immense amount of interest in aeroplanes. Of course, it was not surprising that he should be interested; and though his anxiety to penetrate the sacred enclosure which fenced the hangars was rather firmly repressed, no one had the least objection to his attending on the flights and gazing at them to his heart's content. When, however, he fell into the error of questioning the villagers as to the aim and intent of all this wonder work the villagers took alarm. Of course, they could not tell him, for they themselves did not know.

But they did know there was some righteous reason for their ignorance. And they felt it was not good for a stranger to be so inquisitive. They forthwith began to notice that, for a peddler, this stranger was singularly indifferent to the prosecution of his calling. So unnatural a Jew was a problem demanding solution, so they propounded him to Gregory and to Count Sergius.

The peddler's investigation of aeronautics was cut short. He was led, by the duly instructed villagers, for some distance on the road back to Niksich and effectually advised against return.

It was a small matter, but it put Gregory sharply on his guard. He set pickets several miles beyond the village, who scrutinized every wayfarer, and within the next two weeks a phenomenal number of peddlers, strollers and unaccounted-for persons came that way. With ruthless disregard of the rights of the highway, they were inexorably turned back. But the circumstance of their coming was disquieting. Count Sergius became convinced that he was being spied upon, and grew eager to push matters to a conclusion before his invisible adversaries should have time to guess too much.

The four men now held conclave assiduously over the maps, and at last came to a decision as to the course.

The route finally selected, Gregory went north with a company of tried followers to see to the placing of petrol and food supplies at certain points along the way. It was a task for shrewd strategy, but with the resources at his command the wary guerilla-leader was not likely to fail in it.

In his absence, Andrews, Count Sergius and the American busied themselves with the drawing of special duplicate maps, on a large scale, for use during the flight.

Two days after Gregory's departure there came a letter to Count Sergius from Madame de L'Orme. It was addressed to M'latza and had been forwarded promptly by the Count's overseer, because it was marked "Immediate," and also "Urgent." It announced Madame's return to Belgrade

with a Santos flying-machine and begged the fulfilment of certain unforgotten promises. She was anxious to come at once to M'latza, with her maid and her new toy; moreover, she felt confident that she was ready to do credit to her kind instructors—she put it in the plural, she said, because she expected to find Captain Andrews at M'latza, having heard of his recent visit to Bucharest and his departure for Servia. This was the gist of the letter itself; but there was also a postscript.

When he had read the letter aloud to Andrews, about half way through, he looked up with a smile of content and remarked, "We'll have to think of some nice way to postpone her trip for a week or ten days; but it will be pleasant, Bob, to have the little lady down at M'latza for a bit when we get back. We'll be feeling pretty slack when this is all over, and she'll be a Godsend."

Without waiting for his hearer's endorsement of this sentiment, which easily went without saying, he ran his eyes on hastily and in silence, to the end of the letter.

But when he came to the postscript he turned a little pale, sprang to his feet, read the scrawled lines over again and thrust the letter abruptly into the Englishman's hand. Recovering himself on the instant, he sat down again and asked in a quiet voice—"What do you think of that, Bob?"

This was the postscript:

"If you are not at M'latza, I hope this will be forwarded to you instantly. And if you are engaged in anything very important, *please* do not go on with it. You are being watched! You are in danger! *Please* do *nothing* until I see you!"

Andrews read the postscript in silence. Then he read the letter. Then he read the postscript again, turned the paper over in his fingers and stared with inward eyes at the blank back page.

"What do you make of it?" demanded Sergius.

"Just what you do, no doubt!" answered Andrews. "I'm no Sherlock Holmes. I think it's just as she says. We are being watched. And we are in danger. And she's got wind of it, through some confidence or indiscretion of that interesting husband of hers. She's a good pal, all right, so she has warned us. I can't see any deeper into a millstone than that. Can you?"

Plamenac's face had been very white and his mouth grim. An ancient suspicion had thrust itself upon him. But as Andrews spoke his expression relaxed.

"No!" said he. "That's the whole of it, no doubt, and she's doing her best for us in sending this word. Unless——"

Here he hesitated and bit his mustache.

"Unless what?" demanded Andrews.

"Unless nothing!" responded Sergius with sudden decision. "It was a fool notion, a rather darn fool notion, and I won't stultify myself by giving it breath. The question is, what to do. Go right ahead? Or see her first and find out what more she knows?"

"Not likely she knows anything more or she'd have told us all about it," said Andrews, who was foolishly persuaded that he understood women to some extent. "If Gregory were back, I'd vote for action first and information afterward."

"Shouldn't wonder if you were right. Let me see. About where did we calculate that Gregory would be operating to-day?"

"It's one of those ingenious names that look like something else. It has slipped my mind, but you've got it in your note-book," answered Andrews. "Anyhow, he said he'd be at Mother Maria's to-morrow night, you know."

"Yes," said Count Sergius. "Well, now, I've got an idea. But I'd like to let it ripen for an hour or two before I expose it to your critical eye. Suppose you get hold of Carver and lay the situation before him. I'll go and take old Ivan for a flight. He's keen as mustard to go up and I've promised it to him. You know he's got an eye like a hawk. Then after lunch we three will hold a conference."

AT THE meal, Count Sergius was dumb; but there was an excitement in his eyes which led Andrews and Carver to look for something interesting. When chairs were pushed back and Andrews had lighted his black briar and Carver had satisfied himself that his cigar was up to the mark, then the Count rolled himself a cigarette. But he forgot to light it. He used it as a pointer, to fix unsure objectives in the air.

"Here's my plan," he began without preliminary. "If you fellows don't like it, fall upon it. First, as to Madame de L'Orme. We'll send her a wire from Niksich this afternoon, telling her simply that we will meet her in Belgrade next Friday or Saturday and take her down to M'latza. This is Tuesday."

"But will we?" queried Andrews.

"We can but do our best," answered Plamenac. "Then—well, you see, there's no wind! The moon's full! To-night we'll start for Slovich!"

The American blew a long column of smoke from between his lips.

"Right!" said he. "When in doubt, trump!"

"It looks good," assented Andrews. "It would seem safer than waiting. And the Austrians are apt to be a bit slow. But what about Gregory?"

"Why, if things work out right—and they've got to—we'll pick him up at Mother Maria's, with other things."

"All right," agreed Andrews. "But you'll have to keep by me or I'll get lost; for I won't be able to use the maps when I'm alone, nor a gun, very well, if there *should* be any little misunderstanding. I'm going to miss Gregory's company a lot."

"I'll send Ivan with you," said the Count. "That's why I took him up this morning, to get him used to the motion. He'll get the hang of the maps in five minutes and he's one of the best shots in all Tschernagora. He's been decorated by Prince Nicholas for his shooting and Prince Nicholas doesn't throw away decorations or anything else. You'll be all right with Ivan, who admires you immensely and believes that England is almost as great as Montenegro."

"Well, to-night it is, then, old chap," said Andrews. "And power to your elbow!"

The face of the American suddenly worked with strong excitement and his big gray eyes fairly flamed. "We'll stand to your back, Andrews and I, I reckon," said he in a voice from which all emotion was scrupulously dried out. "You're all right, Plamenac."

Sergius started to thank them, but the words stuck in his throat. At last he muttered, "Well, there's one good thing about me and that's my friends!"

Then he got up hastily and went out to send his wire to Madame de L'Orme.

CHAPTER IX

RUNNING THE AIR

AT MIDNIGHT, exactly, both aeroplanes were run out of their hangars and the doors locked behind them. Then, within the shelter of the high-fenced enclosure, the motors were given a final test and everything aboard was minutely checked off to see that there had been no oversight.

At last the wide gates were thrown open and the great white biplane was rolled out into the practise field. The long, low, silvery form of the Antoinette, the specter of a giant dragon-fly, came crawling sluggishly after. Behind the machines the gates of the enclosure were locked. The hangars were to remain conspicuously guarded, that they might seem still occupied.

The night was one of Spring's most divine enchantment. A full moon, honey-yellow in a faintly purplish sky, swung just above the mountain ridge which bounded the valley on the east. There was no wind. But mild as was the night at the valley level, all four voyagers were clothed as for Winter travel, for Spring is a sluggard when it comes to mountain-climbing.

Each aeroplane carried a powerful acetylene head-light and, bright as was the moon, these lamps were lighted, in case there should be need to choose a landing-place suddenly on shadowed ground. But lighted though they were, their betraying glare was not in evidence, for the ingenious American had fitted them each with a metal shutter or blind, operated by a cord from the passenger's seat.

Besides these lamps, there was also a tiny but brilliant acetylene lamp attached under the hood of each passenger seat, for use in consulting the compass, the maps, the barometer, and the speed-gage.

Having the slower machine, Andrews was to get away first. Without a word he climbed into his seat. Old Ivan followed alertly and the first thing he did on gaining his place was to see that his rifle was exactly ready to his hand.

A few directions were given in strained, unnatural voices. The motors roared and the propellers set up their mystic drone. Every man present felt that he stood face to face with Destiny.

"I'm all ready, Serge."

The voice of Andrews, cool, crisp, decisive, struck as clear across the noise of the motors as if they had been still.

"All right, Bob. Go ahead!"

The commonplace words came slowly, weightily. The face of Count Sergius as he spoke was in shadow, beside the lofty *empennage* of the biplane.

"Let her go!" rang out the command of the Englishman, as if he were leading his company into battle.

The machine swept forward with a rush for some forty or fifty yards, then sailed majestically into the air. Rising steeply to a height of perhaps a hundred feet, it flew off down the valley toward the V-shaped pass where the river broke through its prisoning mountains.

Every one watched it breathlessly till it was no more than a mist-wraith in the illusive light. Then Count Sergius climbed into his machine, where Carver was already seated, with a big cigar between his teeth.

He leaned sideways and gave ear to the high drone of motor and propeller.

"She's working smooth as silk, Plamenac," said the American, in a tone of intense satisfaction.

Count Sergius turned and gazed at him for a moment or two in an amiable but absent-minded fashion. Then all at once his face changed and he seemed to swallow hard. Tears came into his eyes. He gripped the American's gloved hand.

"God!" he muttered—and the expletive sounded like a prayer—"I don't see what I've done to deserve that two such chaps as you and Andrews should stand by me this way. Old man, it must mean that God intends that I should succeed! Don't you see it? It's clear!"

Carver chewed hard on his cigar till the glowing tip described a wobbly circle and he returned the grip of Count Sergius with vigor. Otherwise he made no reply. None, indeed, seemed necessary. Dropping his hand, Count Sergius glanced around at the men. Then, looking up at the pale stars, he lifted his hands for an instant in a gesture of invocation—and the mountaineers clutched off their caps.

Then—"Let her go, my friends! And pray for us!" said he.

The monoplane darted forward with such a rush that it seemed she was in the air at the first instant. Steady and unswerving she swept upward; the ground seeming to sink away as it slid beneath them.

"About a hundred and fifty feet," reported Carver presently.

Sergius brought her to her level and flew after the other aeroplane at top speed down the valley.

"Never before, in the history of the world," he cried—and the words stormed back to Carver's ears with the roar of the wind and the motor—"never before have men gone forth upon such an adventure as ours!"

"I was just thinking that same," replied the American.

For some moments they were silent. Then Carver, peering ahead, spoke. "We don't seem to be overhauling Andrews very fast," he said. "But how he's mounting! He must be a thousand feet up!"

"He's finding air-currents, likely, there in the mouth of the pass and trying to get above them," answered Sergius. "We may as well follow suit. Saves time and petrol not to fight air-currents."

He slanted upward steadily and entered the pass at a height of fifteen hundred feet. Here there was full calm, for the crests were wide apart. Below, the gorge was in blackness, with the river, now a torrent, shining up through it, a ribbon of white foam.

They were overtaking Andrews rapidly now, for they could see from the swervings of his machine that he was meeting adverse gusts at the turn of the gorge. Ten minutes more and they were almost above him and having no gusts at all to butt against. At this moment Andrews came slanting upward. After a rise of a couple of hundred feet he shook off the whirling adversaries. At once his speed returned; but he kept on mounting till he reached the level of the Antoinette.

Then the two machines flew on side by side, about fifty or sixty yards apart. Count Sergius slowed down a trifle, to keep from forging ahead.

"He's doing a good thirty-nine," said Carver. "The best he's ever got out of her. The Gods are with us!"

"We need them!" answered Count Sergius fervently. "We'll be crossing the frontier in some fifteen minutes at this rate. What's that down there to the left, across the gorge, on that bit of open field away up above the shadow? Is it two little patches of white?"

Carver levelled his glasses.

"Yes, I make it. It's the two white sheets that Gregory was to peg down at a good landing-place, where he'd hide some petrol. Good old Gregory! Ah, and there go the two fires the watchers were to light as soon as they heard or saw us coming, if the coast was clear."

"If we'd had a head wind, we'd have

needed the stuff by this time," said Sergius. "But we're good for nearly two hours yet, if this calm holds."

About fifteen minutes later the Count spoke again.

"There's the elbow of the gorge, where the boundary-line crosses the river. Once over that and we're in the enemy's country. The Austrians have a patrol on both sides of the river. We'll open up their campfires in half a minute. There! I think we'd better get up another four or five hundred feet."

"Shall I signal Andrews?" suggested Carver.

"No. Ivan will explain. And he'll follow us up quick enough."

BY THE time the aeroplanes were over the line they were not less than two thousand feet in the air.

Staring down with awe from that terrific height, Carver noted the black shadows of the two aerpolanes sweep across the open space before the tents of the patrol. He saw tiny figures. Could such mites be men? They rushed out from the tents, aroused by that portentous humming in the sky. He lifted his glass. As he brought the camp into its field he ripped out an indignant oath.

"The dirty dogs!" he added. "They're going to fire on us!"

"They'll not find us much of a target," said Count Sergius with composure.

From the group before the tiny tents came a flash of keen, pale light. Then a small, flat report. As for the bullet, it may have gone anywhere—its whine had been drowned in the great drone of the propellers. The next moment came a report from the other aeroplane.

"By George, that Ivan can shoot!" cried the American. "He's hit the beggar in the hand or the arm. It serves him —— well right, potting at us that way without any excuse whatever!"

"Ivan couldn't be expected to let that insult go unavenged," answered Count Sergius. "But I hope Andrews won't let him waste any more cartridges. We're here to run, not to fight—unless we get cornered."

Apparently Andrews was of the same opinion, for, doubtless much against his will, the old Montenegrin made no further display of his marksmanship. Nor did the Austrians fire again. They had probably found that shot from the sky discouraging.

A few minutes later, being well beyond range of any frontier patrol, Sergius sloped his great dragon-fly down to the fifteen-hundred-foot level, the big white biplane swooping after him. Almost immediately the gorge widened to a spacious valley. The river, forgetful of its tumult in the mountains, once more slipped waveless and silvery between tilled shores.

Following on down the river, they presently made out the scattered and feeble lights of dreaming Fotcha. Immediately Count Sergius turned his course sharp to the right, giving wide berth to the town and cutting off a long curve of the river.

Holding their course true by the compass, he struck the river again some twenty miles farther on. It led them close round the base of a southward jutting shoulder, dense with oak-forest. Along the skirts of the wooded height lay frequent patches of meadow and pasture. Here Sergius dropped again, till his flight was not more than fifty feet above the tree-tops.

"What time is it?" he asked.

"Twelve past three," announced Carver.

"Keep your eyes open," admonished Sergius. "Petrol's nearly out. And Gregory was to have established one of his depots about here."

The words were hardly out of his mouth, when, a little ahead and far to the left, the light of a small fire glowed through the trees, A few seconds more and another fire revealed itself, very near the first.

"Doesn't look a very likely place for a landing," said Carver, peering through his glass. "But we're too low to see. Better swing aloft."

"All right," responded Sergius. The dragon-fly shot upward, circling around toward the left. At a height of two hundred feet a lonely patch of upland meadow opened out, a sort of amphitheater islanded in deep woods. There at the back of it burned discreetly the two signal-fires and near them two square white patches on the ground.

Circling widely, like the fishing eagle, the two aeroplanes descended over the meadow. At a height of not more than twenty feet above the ground, Sergius made a complete circuit of the meadow, satisfying himself that it afforded good landing. Then, gently as an alighting snipe, he came to earth just in front of the fires. Ten seconds later the biplane ranged up abreast of him, not twenty yards away.

Carver and old Ivan sprang eagerly from their seats, and Ivan, sputtering with exultation, ran forward to greet his friends by the fire. Andrews and Count Sergius climbed down stiffly, being cramped and half numb from the long strain and the cold. Andrews took out his watch. It was half past three and the night was just beginning to change with that mysterious gray pallor which comes in just before dawn. They had run the air for one hundred and fifteen miles!

"Kick up one of those fires a little bit, boys!" said Count Sergius, swinging his arms. "We're frozen!"

CHAPTER X

OVER BOSNIA

HERE they drank hot coffee, while their tanks drank petrol. Fifteen minutes sufficed, but to their impatience it was hours. The lowered moon was beginning to whiten and grow papery as they climbed back to their seats. They shook hands formally with each of the little band of watchers.

"How did you come to be so sharp on the lookout?" asked Count Sergius of their leader. "You couldn't have expected us so soon."

"The Captain said you might come any minute!" answered the mountaineer a little stiffly. "Did you think to catch us sleeping at our post?"

"Does one expect to catch the eagle asleep?" demanded Count Sergius in reply. It was not a question that called for an answer, but it soothed the mountaineer's resentment.

"Better keep wide of Vishegrad, Count," he admonished. "Better keep to this side, along the hills. There's a troop of Austrian light horse in the town and they might give you some trouble."

"Good!" said Sergius. "Hear that, Bob?"

"Right!" answered the Englishman. "Austrian Horse at Vishegrad. Keep clear, to left along the mountain. I caught it. Let me get off ahead, now."

Motor and propeller broke out with their high chanting.

"Let her go!" sang out Andrews, in Servian.

The great white biplane rushed and soared. The watchers shouted involuntarily and then stood silent, spellbound. Half a minute later the pale dragon-fly followed, springing aloft more steeply and swiftly overhauling its fellow.

"It is a miracle!" muttered the leader to his awe-struck companions, as the two machines, a hundred feet in the air, swept from view around the shoulder of the mountain.

Day broke swiftly. As the flyers climbed the air, to get above the swirls and turmoil which the first light would cause at earth's surface, the black Servian summits were suddenly outlined in rose fire. Vishegrad came into view some five miles ahead and to the right, nestled in a bend of the Drina.

Sergius, now leading, but careful not to get far ahead of the biplane, pressed farther to the left, till he was over the broken ground and oak-woods which divided the cultivated foothills from the heights. In a few minutes they were abreast of Vishegrad, still at a distance of perhaps five miles.

"I don't wonder you Serbs won't stand it, to have such a land snatched from you," said Carver in the Count's ear.

"We won't!" shouted Sergius in the teeth of the wind.

Some ten miles farther on they bade farewell at last to the river which had thus far guided them. In another hour they caught sight of two signal-smokes rising from a field to their right and swerved wide to pass over them.

There they saw the two white sheets pegged to the ground, the group of watchers about the new-lit fires, and they realized how efficiently Gregory had done his work. But they had petrol yet for a good hour and a half. They were sweeping onward triumphantly above the two thin smokes, when Plamenac seemed to feel a tug at his inner consciousness. It was as if he were leaving something down there by the smokes, something which he might need very badly.

"Signal Andrews!" he shouted, beginning to circle to the right, away from the other aeroplane. "We'll stop here and fill up."

"But we're loaded for another seventy miles yet!" protested Carver, as he waved the little red flag.

The pale dragon-fly was already swooping back and settling over the smokes.

"Coast clear here and we'll make the most of it," replied Sergius. "Next depot is where this chain of hills comes to an end, not far from Zhupche. We'd have to stop then. And if the coast wasn't clear, we'd find ourselves in a hole!"

"Right O!" agreed the American heartily.

"DO YOU chaps *drink* petrol?" demanded Andrews, from his seat, after they had landed. "I've enough still in my tank to take me all the way to Mother Maria's hog-pens, if this weather keeps up."

"You never can have too much petrol!" retorted Sergius.

The sun was well above the mountains by the time they were again under way. It presently raised a light wind, but fortunately a following wind.

They were running now at a height of about a thousand feet, for greater safety.

All at once Count Sergius heard a change in the roaring hum which filled his ears. It had suddenly diminished in volume. Anxiously he glanced at his own motor and propellers. They were attending strictly to business. Then he heard Carver's voice at his ear.

"By George! Something wrong with their motor. It's stopped!"

With a qualm of dread Sergius looked across the hundred yards or so which separated him from the other machine. The great biplane's propeller was still! But it was clear, to his great relief, that Andrews had the situation in hand. He had turned half round to the left and was gliding downward, swiftly, but steady as a table, toward an expanse of what looked like pasture-land.

Sergius could make out some shepherds, with several large flocks of sheep. Where sheep feed, that is likely to be close turf and firm ground. He headed his dragon-fly downward toward the same landing-place.

"Let's pray it's nothing serious!" he cried.

"It'll have to be something pretty bad that we can't mend!" answered the American confidently, following the descent with his glass. "That looks like good ground."

"And old Ivan's sure to find friends, or fellow-outlaws, among those shepherds," added Sergius.

The flocks fled in uncontrollable panic as the humming white monster swooped down upon them out of the blue. Some of the shepherds followed their charges; while the others, awe-struck, but scorning to run, stood staring up with blanched faces.

Through his glass Carver saw old Ivan looking at the silent motor. He saw Andrews put the wheel into the old mountaineer's hand, with a gesture which seemed to say, "Hold it steady!" Then Andrews turned in his seat, reached backward and with his right hand did something swiftly.

The biplane was within fifty feet of the earth and staggering dangerously under Ivan's untaught guidance. In a flash Andrews had turned and clutched the wheel again. The propeller was seen to spin and to whirl once more into invisibility!

"Oh, neat! Neat, by George!" shouted the American. In the same second the heavy hum of the Gnome motor rose again to Plamenac's ears. The biplane's descent stopped. It ran along on level planes, some twenty feet above the shepherds, to whom Ivan, leaning down, was seen to shout something. Then it turned upward and swiftly remounted the morning air.

"Thank God!" cried Count Sergius fervently. Once more he turned the humming nose of his dragon-fly toward the sky.

"About the coolest and neatest thing I've ever had the luck to see!" remarked the American.

"When anything can be done, you can count on Bob to do it!" said Sergius, steadying the monoplane at the four-hundred-foot level. "Keep a sharp watch ahead and if we catch sight of a patrol we'll run up higher. By the look of the country we're all right down here for a while."

FOR the next hour the landscape never changed, except for the gradual shortening of the shadows as the sun rolled up the blue.

At last the mountains fell away suddenly, as if the plain had engulfed them, and in the distance a spire and a minaret rose to view over the roofs of Zhupche.

It was a rolling country here, a country of low, bare ridges, irregular valleys and patches of dense oak-forest. Carver swept every inch of the land to locate the two white sheets. Suddenly, dead ahead arose the two smokes, from behind a screen of billowy oak grove.

"Your admirable outlaw never fails us, Plamenac!" exclaimed the American, leveling his glasses at the signal.

But the words were hardly out of his mouth when he detected a third smoke. The next instant it curled up dense and emphatic, as if damp straw had been thrown upon the fire.

"Aha! That means 'Go on'!" cried Sergius, slanting the Antoinette sharply up-

ward and at the same time swerving off to the right.

"Keep near enough to see what's the matter!" urged the American.

"We can't afford curiosity!" answered the Count, mounting as steeply as he dared. The great biplane came soaring up after him.

Then from behind the trees rang out three rifle-shots.

They were now about six hundred feet in the air and the smokes were some two hundred yards to their left. They swept beyond the screening groves and saw men running to cover behind the oak trunks.

"There's one of our men down!" said the American in an icy voice. "There he is by the last fire. Swing a bit nearer, Plamenac. I can't stand that! There they are, —— them! The uniforms! Among the trees the other side of the field!"

He snatched up the rifle that lay beside him. Involuntarily Count Sergius swung inward toward the fight, though wisdom urged him to fly. As Carver leveled his weapon, two pale tongues of flames leaped out from behind the trees where the Austrians were hiding. An arm and shoulder came into view beside a great oak trunk. The American's rifle spoke—and again. The arm and shoulder had disappeared. A sharp report came from the other aeroplane.

"Old Ivan's at it again! Well, I winged my man," said Carver coolly, laying down the rifle.

"Yes?" answered Sergius, swinging off again at a sharp angle and climbing steeply. "Well, we can't afford any more of this. Signal Andrews. He's run in too close. He's as bad as you and Ivan. We can't risk our venture in a petty skirmish!"

"That's all right," said Carver. "But I had to even up a bit for that poor fellow down there by the fire. And it wouldn't have looked well to leave our fellows there without a word for luck. There comes Andrews. I'll bet he and Ivan don't like quitting, not one little bit."

Sergius grinned as he bent over the wheel, urging his dragon-fly upward from the danger-level.

"For a respectable citizen of Buffalo, U. S. A., old man, you'd make a very fair Servian bandit," he remarked. "But don't think I enjoy running away any better than you do."

"Darn good thing you made us stop back yonder for petrol," said Carver. "If we hadn't, we'd have been in the soup now for fair!"

"Yes. It was a guidance!" responded the Count gravely.

The machines were now a thousand feet in the air and flying level. Sergius pondered with sharp anxiety over the attack on the post. What did it mean? How much did the Austrians know or even suspect? And how could their suspicions, however grave, have got hold of any accuracy of direction? What did Madame de L'Orme know? And how did she come to know it?

Why did she show such concern as to a peril threatening himself? Was it because the peril threatened Andrews? This latter notion, to his amazement, gave him a stabbing pang at the heart. He was so surprised that he laughed shortly, there, over the wheel, with the wind of their flight in his teeth. But he felt, somehow, that it was on account of himself, rather than of Andrews, that she was so concerned.

Yet how had she got herself mixed up in it and how had that unspeakable husband of hers found out anything—if he had?

Absorbed in these enigmas, the leagues fled by below without his noting them. The Bosna was reached and thereafter he followed its general course, but cutting chords and tangents to its innumerable curves. At last the river swerved off decisively toward the northeast, while the path of the great adventure lay straight northwest. To the left, at a safe distance, lay the little town of Durventa, on a small river of which he had forgotten the name. Not more than twenty miles ahead was the Save.

He would breathe freer when he had crossed that tide, for he would be in Slavonia, a tranquil province, where there would be fewer Austrian patrols to trouble his wits about.

His nerves were so strung up by the long, unremitting tension of the flight, he was so engrossed in his thoughts and at the same time so semihypnotized by the prolonged hum of motor and propeller, that he started at the sudden sound of Carver's voice at his ear.

"Ain't the petrol running pretty low?" it inquired.

With a sinking of apprehension he looked at the gage.

"We can keep up for twenty minutes more at the outside," he answered. "Less,

if anything. The glasses, old man. Where are we?"

"I make out water ahead—biggish water; a lake, maybe," answered the American. "No, it's a river."

"Thank God! It's the Save, and nearer, much nearer than I thought!"

"Ah, yes. And now I make out a little river running into it, just beyond a patch of woods," continued Carver.

"That's the place!" shouted Sergius. "That's the next depot. How far, would you say?"

"Twelve, perhaps. No, more. Fourteen, maybe," hesitated Carver. "Hard to judge from this height. I don't believe it's more than fifteen!"

"We'll make it," declared Sergius, putting on top speed and slipping ahead of the other machine.

"By the skin of our teeth!" said the American crisply.

CHAPTER XI

PATROL AND PETROL

RAPIDLY they left the biplane behind as they raced against petrol for the river junction. Rapidly the smooth reaches of the Save rose into clear view, shining in the sun. The miles fled, crowding upon the heels of the desperate minutes. At length a long narrow field appeared on the hither side of the woods and about half a mile south of the Save shore.

"Reckon I see the place!" shouted Carver triumphantly. "If that's it, we'll make it safe. Aye! Aye! There's the two sheets. Now for the two smokes! I see somebody moving, but I can't make him out very clearly against the trees. Ah, here come the smokes. They've caught sight of us." And he laid down the glass in his lap to wipe his wind-fretted eyes.

"Yes," said Count Sergius a moment later, "there are the smokes. But, Carver—*there are three of them!*"

"By ——" and Carver forgot to finish his oath in his haste to get the glass back to his eyes.

"The chap I saw lighting the fires is gone," he went on. "Ah, ha! There's why! There come the Austrians; six of them from the other side of the field! What's to be done, Plamenac?"

"There's only one thing to be done," replied the Count coolly, dipping his planes for the long slide down the air. "Our petrol's there. We've got to go and get it!"

The American laughed approvingly. "I love your nerve, my son! How do you propose that we shall work it? Fight or bluff?"

"Whichever may seem most appropriate to the occasion!" replied Sergius, lifting the dragon-fly with a long swoop as he saw that she had been dropping too fast. "How far back are the others?"

"Two miles, maybe."

"They'll be along in good time," said Sergius. "Have your guns ready. But don't shoot, unless it comes to the last pinch. I'll give sweet reasonableness a trial."

"You're Captain!" said the American. "But I couldn't stand any nonsense from them, you know."

"Nor I. Don't worry!" answered Sergius.

As the monoplane came within easy range, dropping fast and making straight for the place where they were standing, the little group of Austrians seemed astonished. They had taken up a position close to the three fires, which were near the center of the field.

At a height of about three hundred feet Count Sergius stopped his motor and planed down at terrific speed, calculating on the impression he would make. At some thirty feet from the ground he lifted her plunging nose, swooped along just above the sod and came gently to rest in front of the awe-struck enemy.

The leader of the band, however, regained his self-possession on the instant. He was a ruddy-faced German, tall and massive, with irascible blue eyes and a bristling blonde mustache. He came forward with an authoritative air and addressed his aerial visitors bruskly.

"Your business?"

Count Sergius, resting quietly in his seat between the wings of the dragon-fly, met the eyes of his interrogator with a look of cold rebuke. After a slight pause, to convey his displeasure, he replied with courtesy:

"Our business is our pleasure," said he. "We are on our way north, on a flight from Montenegro, by far the most ambitious flight yet attempted by aeroplanes, and we have stopped here for a fresh supply of petrol, which was ordered to be left here for us that our journey might not be delayed."

The German laughed rudely.

"You'll find there's no hurry," said he.

"No? May I ask why?"

"Because you are under arrest! There are things the Government wants to know about you, so you'll come with me to Durventa and explain yourself. Come now, climb down out of that machine of yours, and come along! I haven't any time to waste!"

The conversation had been carried on in German and Carver knew just enough German to catch the drift of it.

"Curse his swinish impudence!" said he. Count Sergius looked back at the sky, to see how near the biplane was. It was not yet so near as he could have wished, but it was already slanting downward.

"Pardon me, Captain, I don't think you quite understand the situation," said he, civil but firm, and with a trace of condescension in his voice. He knew that the fellow before him was not a captain at all, nor a subaltern of any grade, but only a sergeant. Nevertheless, it was more significant to condescend to a Captain than to a sergeant and at the same time the angry-eyed sergeant was flattered in spite of himself.

In order to give both the flattery and the condescension time to sink in, Count Sergius allowed him no opportunity to repeat his rudeness, but continued coldly:

"We are well-known gentlemen, pursuing our diversion without harm or inconvenience to any one whatever. We will show you our passports, of course, if you wish to see them. I am Count Sergius de Plamenac. My friend, here, is Mr. Wesley Carver, a prominent citizen of the United States. And another friend, who is coming as quickly as possible in that aeroplane yonder, is Captain Andrews of the British Army. I think you will see that this is one of those cases in which it would be well not to exceed your duty—Captain!"

Thinking himself mistaken for an officer, the Austrian became better mannered, though not in the least degree diverted from his purpose. He drew himself up and grew ceremonious. Ceremony takes time, and time was what Count Sergius was playing for.

"As I have already had the honor to inform you, Count," said he pompously, "you are under arrest. I don't require your passports. They're nothing to me. You are all of you my prisoners and will come with me to Durventa. You can display your passports there, Count, no doubt, if you like. That's not my affair."

"But, Captain," said the Count softly, "we can not possibly go to Durventa with you!" The hum of Andrews' approach was now thrilling in their ears. The Austrian did not quite catch the smiling words.

"What's that?" he demanded, forgetting his ceremony.

"I said that we are obliged to deny ourselves the pleasure you propose for us—or words to that effect!" repeated Count Sergius, eying him with an ironical smile.

"Thousand thunders!" roared the Austrian. "You'll see!" And he turned to call his guard.

"Wait! Or you're a dead man!" ordered Count Sergius. The words were not loud, but the tone was penetrating and the assured authority of it made the sergeant, who was trained to obey such tones, hesitate in spite of himself. Not fear of the threat, but the force of habit, stopped him.

"Rubbish! What do you mean?" he demanded, with a mixture of scorn and boorish curiosity.

"Exactly what I say!" replied the Count incisively. "You see that my American friend here has his right hand—take a good look—on one of his country's excellent repeating rifles. He does not miss. He could shoot the buttons off your coat at forty paces. You'd be snuffed out before you could say two words and my friend would still have five cartridges left in his magazine for your five men yonder. Don't turn; I have you covered, Captain, from my pocket here!

"Furthermore, you will observe my two friends in the other aeroplane, who have at last arrived to join in our festivities. They are circling around us, you see, without coming to earth. One of those two is Ivan Petrovich, the best marksman in Montenegro. As you doubtless realize, he is very eager to exercise his skill on an Austrian uniform, if only I would permit him. You will see, that, just for the moment, Captain, we hold all the trumps. You'll have better luck next time, perhaps."

THE Austrian was no coward or he would not have been doing patrol duty in Bosnia. He glanced into the steady, gray, shining eyes of the American. Then he looked at the great white biplane, which was circling the field like a marsh-hawk at a distance of some twenty

feet from the ground. He noted the pleased self-possession on the face of the Englishman, as he guided the amazing machine through the air. He also noted the dark, eagle face and glittering eyes of old Ivan, as he sat expectant in his rushing seat with his rifle across his knees. All this the Austrian noted with precision, and his little blue eyes blazed with wrath.

It was not fear, not the least shadow of fear, which kept him from rushing upon Count Sergius like a mad bull and putting all to the test of one headlong onslaught. But he was methodical in his mental processes, for all his violence of temper. He felt quite sure of himself. He was certain that promotion would come to him from this affair—and he had a practical desire to live to profit by it. Therefore, he temporized.

"Rubbish!" he growled. "Utter rubbish! You're my prisoners. And you'll come quietly to Durventa with me! Your other machine will have to come to earth in a few minutes. It will want petrol, too. I'd like to know how you think you're going to fill up your tanks!"

"I haven't considered that yet, Captain—unless you should be so kind as to tell your men to do it for us," answered Count Sergius hopefully.

The man choked with indignation. Then he bellowed a laugh, thrust his hand into the breast of his tunic and drew out a cigar. Count Sergius followed his example, but with his left hand, keeping his right on the butt of the heavy pistol in his side pocket.

"I've some rather nice Havanas here, Captain," said he, "if you'll do me the honor."

"Thank you," retorted the man, looking up with a grin, "I'll take them *all* presently! You've smuggled them in!" And he went on lighting his black Slavonian weed. His five fellows beside the fire, some thirty paces distant, stood watching stolidly. Count Sergius let his glance roam past them to the fringe of woods.

"By the way, Captain," said he.

The man took a couple of deep puffs, threw away the match and looked up inquiringly.

"I think—I may say I am quite sure—*you* are *my* prisoner!" continued the Count. "Look!"

About twenty men, some in brown peasant garb, some in the picturesque costume of the mountain bands, but all armed to the teeth, were emerging from the woods in various quarters and converging on the center of the field.

The Austrian's face fell. Between these free bands and the Austrians the feud was to the death and no courtesies. His resolution was prompt.

"I surrender to *you*, Count, I and my men. To *you*, you understand!"

"Certainly. Call your men over here!" said Sergius.

They came with alacrity. They laid their weapons on the ground and stood close beside the aeroplane. Seeing the turn of affairs, Andrews brought his biplane to earth as close as possible to the Antoinette. The leader of the free band came forward ahead of his men, a tall, far-striding figure; and Count Sergius descended to meet him.

"I'M GLAD we got here in time to be of service, Count!" said the mountaineer, grasping Plamenac's hand. "Captain Gregory did not lead us to look for you quite so soon."

"Thank you, Captain Stephan. You've rendered a more invaluable service than you realize," answered Sergius. "We should probably have had to blow up these Austrian swine to make them listen to reason. And it is of the very essence of our undertaking that there should be no fighting or bloodshed, nothing to make us conspicuous, for the present. I was in a dreadful dilemma!"

The mountaineer looked at the group by the aeroplane as if he was aware of their presence for the first time.

"We'll hang them quietly, by-and-by," said he with elaborate indifference.

"Unfortunately," replied Count Sergius, "that is just what can not be done. They had us in their power for a few minutes and could have wrecked our whole venture. But I parleyed with them. They are my prisoners and I have pledged my honor that they shall not suffer. Besides, you would make a noise in Europe, my Captain. And that would be fatal, just now."

The mountaineer frowned. It was annoying to be forbidden to hang his enemies.

"My men will be enraged. They have long scores to settle," he protested.

"You will make them wait," responded Count Sergius. "You can tell them, from me, that it will not be long before we square

accounts with Austria. But meanwhile, as touching these poor slaves, who have but tried to do their masters' bidding," (in the eyes of the mountaineers, this was bitterest of contumely), "you understand well that my private honor is in your hands, Captain. I look to you to guard it, when I leave."

"What must be, must be!" sighed the mountaineer with deep reluctance.

"You will hold them, Captain, for twenty-four hours and then send them back uninjured, unmisused in any way, to Durventa?" insisted Sergius.

"You have my word. They shall be counted as your children—till the next time we meet them!"

"Thank you!" said the Count and held out his hand. The mountaineer grasped it.

"You will be safe with this gentleman." Count Sergius turned to the Austrian leader.

"Yes, I know!" grunted the man savagely. He turned his furious little blue eyes for one moment full upon the mountaineer's face and his heavy mouth worked as if he were about to burst forth with curses. Then he spat scornfully on the ground and fell to studying the tree-tops.

"And now, Captain Stephan, let me present my dear friends—our true friends and allies—Captain Andrews and Mr. Wesley Carver. My friend, Ivan Petrovich, you already know."

"And I know all about Mr. Carver and Captain Andrews. In the name of our Holy Servia, I thank and bless them!" cried the mountaineer, his fierce face breaking into smiles of ardent welcome. "What time did you leave the Black Mountain? And why so much sooner than Gregory expected?" he asked Andrews.

"We left at a few hours' notice, because of a warning that reached us from Belgrade. We started just after midnight. We're ravenous, Captain Stephan. I could eat an ox, if you happen to have one about you."

Count Sergius and Carver, meanwhile, had gone off with two of the Bosnians to the edge of the woods to get the hidden petrol.

"You've not breakfasted, then?" exclaimed Stephan.

"No, indeed, Captain!" responded Andrews enthusiastically. "But we're most open to an invitation, if you're so good as to think of inviting us. Besides, here under your care is the only place, this side of a thousand feet up, where we could feel safe."

The mountaineer laughed sympathetically. The big Englishman seemed to make nothing of running a hundred leagues of air and dropping down out of the sky for either a battle or a breakfast. This attitude was much to Captain Stephan's taste. He gave quick orders to certain of his men and two of them set off for the woods at a run, while others busied themselves about the fires. Sergius and Carver were just coming up with the petrol.

"Gentlemen, you are to have breakfast with me before you go any farther," said he. "Captain Andrews has accepted for you."

"With all my heart!" exclaimed Sergius; while the American hurried over to examine the biplane's motor. He had been consumed with curiosity as to what Andrews had done to it so quickly while in the air.

CHAPTER XII

AT MOTHER MARIA'S HOG PENS

BY THE air line, they were now not more than an hour and a quarter's flight from their goal. After a stout breakfast of boiled ham and black bread with unstinted coffee, this seemed nothing. They felt themselves already there. But it was now the time of day when all the world was trafficking, and the country-side full of eyes.

After a brief consultation with Andrews and Carver, Count Sergius decided that they should add a half hour to their journey by flying at first due north, so as to set possible spies on a false trail.

As they climbed once more into their seats, the mountaineer leader said warmly,

"You had better fly as high as you can, Count, while crossing the river."

"Yes," answered Sergius, "we'll keep up, as well out of range as possible, till we come to the wooded country to the north of Brod. Then we'll fly low, so that we may not be seen from a distance. There'll probably be no one in the woods up there who wants to pot us. Anyhow, we'll risk it."

The sudden roar of motors and propellers drowned his concluding words.

This time Sergius and Andrews got off together. With a stupefaction of wonder the mountaineers stood watching, as the great machines circled around and around the field in splendid spirals, climbing like falcons into the blue. Not till they had gained the thousand-foot level was Sergius satisfied.

Then he headed straight away, out across the wide current of the Save, with Andrews a hundred yards behind. In five minutes they were in Slavonia. Ten minutes more and they were over the railway. The long express, coming from Trieste and Agram and bound for Semlin, passed beneath them. To Carver, gazing down, it seemed to crawl like a wounded worm.

Straight ahead, some wooded hills took shape—and the outworks of the crescent range which occupies and breaks up the center of Slavonia. Boldly prodigal of petrol now, Sergius kept climbing the mild air-currents till his height was nearly two thousand feet. From there, everything on earth looked little except his dreams.

Some fifteen minutes more and they were running above the lonely wooded lands. Here they dipped the planes.

At a hundred feet above the tree-tops they checked and then, sinking more gradually, skimmed like herons, close over the green billows of leafage.

"We're taking a big risk, ain't we, Plamenac, flying so low over these woods?" objected the American. "If we had to light suddenly, there'd be no chance to pick out one of those little patches. We'd come down in a tree-top and good-by to us."

"I think we'd better compromise," said Count Sergius and drove the dragon-fly upward again for a couple of hundred feet.

For the next three-quarters of an hour all went smoothly.

"We arrive! We arrive!" cried Plamenac as Plavnitza came into view. "In ten minutes we'll pick up the village. You ought to be able to make it now, Carver, with the glasses."

"I have it," said the American a few minutes later. "Must be it—the only village in sight."

"Yes, there's no other! Mother Maria's, you remember, is just the other side of the long hill beyond the village. We'll have to swing around out of sight and come in from behind, over the woods." And Count Sergius steered sharp to the right. "It would be better, perhaps, to be getting there at night," he went on. "But I'm thinking that every minute counts, after all that's happened."

"Right you are!" agreed the American. "I wouldn't lose a second. It's too late for us to play Brer 'Possum's game!"

AT LAST, as the two great white flyers came droning sonorously over the oak forests, Carver's glass made out the cabin in the hollow, and then the curious gray rock, like a crouching beast, over which he had so often mused and pondered. There, too, was the one pine tree, towering over its fair companion oaks.

"That's the spot, all right!" he remarked with a hushed thrill in his voice. Such a voice a child might speak with, who saw suddenly an old fairy-tale come true. "Yes, everything's according to specifications. Do you make out any sign of life about the place? Any sign of Gregory? It will be awkward if we've got here ahead of him."

"Plenty of pigs!" answered Carver. And then, after a searching pause, "Yes, yes, *strictly* according to specifications! There's old Gregory, shading his eyes with his hand and staring at us. He looks quite natural. And there are those excellent and admirable cut-throats, his followers, at least a dozen of them, apparently springing up out of the earth to greet us. Plamenac, you've engineered this thing to a marvel. You're great! It's *you* ought to be the king of this story-book country, by jing! If I were a Servian citizen, I'd insist upon it."

Count Sergius laughed.

"No, old boy, you'd never get me into that *galère*. It's a precarious job these days, holding down a throne. But I may find something interesting to do *behind* the throne."

They came to earth between Mother Maria's cabin and the two nearest trees. Gregory fell on their necks in turn. He was incoherent over the miracle of their having come so soon.

"The hand of God is in it, indeed!" he cried to Sergius. "All night I prayed for it, since I heard that the Austrians were warned. But I did not dare to hope. Oh, my faith was weak and I am ashamed in God's sight! I ought to have known that His hand was in it!"

This outbreak of religious fervor was no surprise to any one. All knew that for the zealous outlaw, religion and patriotism and raiding and insurrection were effectively intermingled.

"His hand has certainly been with us today," replied Count Sergius simply.

Hurriedly they ran both aeroplanes down into the hollow under shelter of the cabin, and all of the band, except their chief, re-

sumed their hiding so quickly and quietly that it seemed as if earth had swallowed them.

"I've pickets out all round," said Gregory. "But every minute here is perilous. There's been something found out, somehow. Come!" and, seizing a spade that stood against the wall, he called to Mother Maria to bring him another and led the way toward the nearest of the two great hog-pens which occupied the center of the field.

The old woman came striding in haste from the cow-shed, a strong, raw-boned figure, with huge kerchief of stout, unbleached linen covering her head and tied beneath her chin and wisps of iron-gray hair straggling out from under it. She cutseyed with profound reverence to Count Sergius and then, less profoundly, to Andrews and Carver.

The little party moved quickly toward the pens, Gregory and the old woman leading, while Sergius, Carver and Andrews followed on their heels. As for Ivan, he had disappeared. Hidden under some bush, he was doubtless detailing to thrilled listeners the marvels of his flight.

AT THIS hour the hog-pens stood open. The swine were away feeding along the edge of the oak forest, herded by Mother Maria's son.

"In this corner!" said Gregory, pointing to a spot in the black mud, rooted by a hundred busy snouts.

"It's a great place to hide a treasure, by Jove!" exclaimed Andrews, his blue eyes sparkling like a boy's.

The American gave one keen stare, then turned away satisfied.

"Come on, Andrews!" he said practically. "We've no time to waste here watching 'em dig. If you'll fill the tanks, I'll be overhauling the motors. This job ain't off our hands yet by a long chalk! We'd look silly if the Austrians were to happen along and catch us with our tanks unloaded."

"Right you are, old chap!" agreed the Englishman, tearing himself away reluctantly from the sight of the busy spades and striding back toward the cabin.

Count Sergius stood watching, calm now as if they had been digging a post-hole. Among the qualities that made him a leader, he had the brain that does not forget little things while occupied with great ones.

"Have you thought, Gregory," he asked, "of the position our good mother and her son will be in after this?"

"Yes, surely," grunted Gregory over the unaccustomed spade. "They'd get their throats cut if they stayed here. They'll have to take—to the bush—and follow our men into Servia."

"Have you arranged for any reward for their great and faithful services?" went on Count Sergius. The old woman seemed to pay no attention, as if the conversation had been in another tongue.

"Certainly *not!*" replied Gregory. "Such services are not bought."

"Naturally. For money could not pay for them. Only the gratitude of our country can reward them," said Count Sergius tactfully.

Then he addressed the old woman. "Mother," said he in the homely speech of the people, "the highest privilege of the Fatherland is to reward its faithful children. You and your son are giving up everything for the Fatherland. The Fatherland must care for you. Captain Gregory will see that you have what you and your son may need for the present. And I want you to come straight to M'latza, where my people will be honored in entertaining you till you have made up your mind where you will have your new home."

Mother Maria had paused in her digging to listen reverentially, her gnarled hands, the color of old wood, resting on the top of her spade. She was struggling to find a reply when Gregory cut her short by urging her on with the work.

"Dig, dig, mother! You can thank Count Sergius at M'latza," said he. "But if you don't hurry now, he'll never get there!"

Sergius laughed, and turned away.

"I mustn't loaf here," said he. "I'll go and have everything ready for an instant start. You'll come back with us, Gregory, of course, instead of Ivan."

"Surely, my Count," said Gregory, thrusting his spade to one side and reaching down into the hole.

Most of Gregory's band had been at the Niksich camp at some time during the past month and so were more or less familiar with the marvel of an aeroplane. But five were outlaws from North Bosnia and knew only what their comrades had tried to tell them.

These five now crept down into the hollow beside the cabin, where Sergius, Andrews

and Carver were busy over the great white planes. They seemed to regard the machines as something of divine origin, as a sort of direct bequest from Heaven to Count Sergius for the benefit of Holy Servia.

Smilingly Count Sergius pointed out to them, as he worked, the source of power in the machines and explained how fast and how far they could fly without fresh fuel.

AS THE Count was talking, Gregory came briskly down the slope, followed by Mother Maria with the spades. He carried two little leathern bags, corded securely with thongs of leather and heavily sealed.

"It's all here!" said he in a solemn voice and handed the bags to Sergius with the gesture of a priest serving the sacrament.

Sergius took them and held them for a moment in silence. Every one stood silent and motionless. It was so still for several seconds that the sudden scratching of one of Mother Maria's red pullets in the straw before the cow-shed became a noticeable sound. It stirred a new train of thought in the old woman's brain and her lips worked and she wailed: "Oh, I'm leaving it all! I'm leaving it all! And I'll never find chickens anywhere else to lay like them red ones!"

She dashed the back of her hand across her brave old eyes and hurried into the cabin to collect some of her treasures. Immediately, in a matter-of-fact voice, Count Sergius said:

"We could carry them more conveniently and securely if they were in several smaller parcels, but I suppose there's no use taking the time now." He handed one of the bags to Andrews, who proceeded to lash it to his belt. Then, after a moment's hesitation, he turned and gave the other bag to the astonished American.

"Take care of it for me, Carver. I don't know any one better able to," said he.

The words were hardly spoken when a rifle-shot, followed instantly by another, resounded from the farther slope of the hill.

"That's the signal! Quick! We must be off!" shouted Gregory. "Ivan! Ivan!"

The old mountaineer started forward from the bushes in the same moment that both motors began roaring. Gregory threw him his purse.

"I'm going in your place. Take the men back and meet me at Niksich," he directed. "And I commit Maria and her boy to your care, Ivan. Give them what they need and send them to Count Sergius at M'latza."

While he was giving these orders, the planes, now throbbing and humming with fierce life, were being rushed up out of the hollow to the hard, level ground behind the pine-tree.

"Come on! Come on, Captain!" yelled Andrews above the noise of the machines. Gregory came leaping up with immense bounds like one of his own mountain goats and wriggled himself lithely into his place beside the Englishman.

"Let go!" commanded the Count, while Andrews waited to let the Antoinette get off ahead, to avoid any possibility of the machines' fouling each other's wings at the start.

"They get away quicker than we do," the Englishman exclaimed to Gregory, "so they might bump us; but we aren't quick enough to bump them, no matter how clumsy I might be."

Within a hundred feet of the pine-tree the slender monoplane was well in the air and slanting upward at a daring angle. Then the big biplane started after it with a fierce rush, going at tremendous speed over the hard, perfectly smooth turf and leaping strongly into the air like a heron. The men stood staring after them for a few seconds only, then ran, carrying their rifles at the trail, around to the other side of the cabin, to throw themselves down and peer cautiously over the crest of the rise.

CHAPTER XIII

THROUGH THE HEART OF THE STORM

AS THE dragon-fly came over the edge of the forest she had a height of some three hundred feet, while the biplane was a hundred feet lower and at least three hundred to the rear.

"By Jings!" came Carver's voice in Plamenac's ear. "Good thing Andrews and I got to filling the tanks when we did."

"Indeed your forethought has saved the day," responded Sergius. "I wish I could look around. What's going on back there now?"

Carver had the glass at his eyes.

"The pickets are running up the hill and old Mother Hubbard's boy is quitting his hogs and running back to the house to see what's up. Mother Hubbard herself is just

coming out of the cabin with a little basket and a big bundle done up in a red quilt. I wonder if she thinks she can run away from the Austrians with all that stuff in her arms.

"Ah! Ha! There come the Austrians, half a mile down the hill yet, but Great Jonas! there's a slue of them! They must think we meant war. Ivan appears to be giving our fellows a Sunday-school lesson, by the way they're all hanging round him while he waves his hands over 'em. By Jing, boys, it's time you are making yourselves scarce! There—they're off, scattering across the field by twos and threes after old Mother Hubbard. Ivan's last. He don't appear to like running away any too well. No help for it, partner! They're too many for you. Hurry along now! By Jing, what's struck the pigs? Apparently they've just caught on to the fact that there's a disturbance. They're tearing like mad down the field and I can just imagine how they're squealing. Good! The last of our chaps has disappeared into the woods. There come the Austrians now, over the hill—just too late for the fair.

"Now they're going to try a shot at us! Don't you know we're out of range, my friends? There, they've fired a volley! We'd have heard that, if it hadn't been for the noise we're making ourselves. No harm to waste a little ammunition! Well, good-by, gentlemen! Or shall we say *au revoir?*"

He laid down the glass beside him.

"We're all very well out of that, Plamenac," he said after a pause. "But tell me what we're up against now. No more petrol stations ahead of us. And we've only got three hours' flight in us!"

"That's a good hundred and fifteen miles," answered Count Sergius, "even holding back as we do to keep from running away from Andrews and Gregory. But I calculated that something less than ninety miles' flying will take us over the border into Servia. This day, this weather—they seem to have been made for us."

"I don't know much about your Balkan weather," said Carver, "but if I were in Buffalo, I'd say this was most too good to last. This heat and this calm and this time o' year, taken all together, would be a weather-breeder. I'd be on the lookout for a thunder-squall."

"We'll pray it may keep off for three hours, anyhow!" replied the Count.

Now, at a height of about five hundred feet, Count Sergius slackened the dragon-fly's darting speed and gave the Farman a chance to creep gradually nearer. In the course of an hour the two machines were flying abreast. They were soaring over fertile plans, dotted with villages and interspersed with wide areas of woodland. Down on the earth, men and beasts, at this hour, were sweating under a sultry and ominous heat. But up here in the sky the voyagers were cooled by the wind of their winged rushing.

BY-AND-BY, the face of the chequered land below them gradually changed. As landing-places became more scattered and uncertain, the aeroplanes soared to a higher level that they might command a wider choice.

"This is not just the country I'd pick out to fly over," said Count Sergius, "if we were having more wind than we knew what to do with."

Carver, with the glasses, was anxiously scanning the land to either side of their flight.

"Well, there's our wind coming, a bit of a breeze, anyhow, blowing up from sou'-east," he exclaimed. "I see the color changing on the tree-tops as it comes. Do you catch it? A couple of points off to your right there!"

"Yes," answered the Count presently and headed the great dragon-fly to meet it fair in the teeth. "It doesn't look like any sort of a stiff blow, but it's going to make us lose time. There, Andrews has noticed it. He's heading up to it."

"I don't altogether like the looks of that cloud-bank piling up over there," said Carver. "The breeze is coming straight out of it. I should say there's more behind it."

Just then the blue-black pile on the horizon was streaked by a double fork of white flame.

"It's a thunder-squall!" said Sergius, though no sound of thunder came to their ears. The distant rumble was not heavy enough to surmount the throbbing chant of the 'planes. "It will blow itself out, probably, before it gets to us. But all the same, to be on the safe side, we'll work up quickly as we can toward those open fields yonder. Pasture, aren't they?"

"Yes. We'd better get near them," answered Carver. "Ah, Andrews has got it! Now, mind your eyes, Plamenac!"

The biplane was a couple of hundred yards to the southeast of the Antoinette and so caught the breeze first. They saw it lurch abruptly, lift like a blown leaf some fifty feet upon the gust and then, apparently, bear down upon them at appalling speed. In reality, it had merely lost its headway all at once, thus letting the dragonfly rush up. In the next instant, however, the wind reached the monoplane and checked her way also.

For a second she staggered, then bounded aloft, steadying herself with a convulsive undulation of her wings as Sergius warped the tips sharply against her roll. A moment later, both aeroplanes, the biplane some seconds before the Antoinette, dropped straight downward on even keel some thirty or forty feet, as if a supporting hand had been all at once withdrawn from under them. The next instant they darted forward again at top speed. They were in the lull behind the first gust.

"That was pleasantly exciting!" said Count Sergius.

"Yes, brisk!" agreed Carver. "But if I'm any judge of weather that was only intended for an appetizer. My advice is to get down as soon as we can make a landing and lie low under the lee of the woods till the squall's over."

"Your advice is undoubtedly sound, old boy," responded the Count, "and I only wish I could act upon it at once. However, we're getting ahead pretty well now. That pasture field is drawing nearer rapidly."

A moment more and the wind returned—but this time gently. Gently it began, but it kept steadily increasing in force, till the 'planes, their singing screws boring straight into it, were not advancing more than five or six miles an hour.

Cautiously the battling machines nosed their way downward to the two-hundred-foot level, to be ready to swoop to cover as soon as they should gain that patch of pasture, whose light green gleamed so invitingly a mile or so ahead of them.

"We can handle this wind easily enough," said Sergius, "but I want to get out of it. We're wasting our precious petrol. We're just guzzling it."

CARVER was watching the other machine critically.

"That Farman's behaving well," he commented. "She's rolling a bit, but doesn't pitch, and she keeps her speed like a wonder. Why, she's holding us level! Have you full power on, Plamenac?"

"I should say I had!" responded the Count emphatically.

"Well, then, I should say that as long as we're butting into a head wind, we're not going to have to hold back any for Brother Andrews. But I'll be anxious for him if the wind gets corkscrewy."

By this time they were come within three or four hundred yards of the field. Suddenly the forest beyond the field and then the field itself were drowned in shadow. Then the blackness swept over the sun. The change was instantaneous and daunting. A few big drops plumped down sharply on the 'planes.

"We're in for it now!" said the American philosophically.

"We're in God's hands still, just the same, old man!" responded Sergius.

"Don't you think you'd better slant her up a trifle?" suggested the other. "We're pretty close to those tree-tops and the first burst of the rain may beat us down."

"Right, as usual!" agreed Sergius and lifted the quivering 'plane.

He seemed to be lifting her right into chaos, for at this moment the purple darkness overhead was torn across by a withering forked flame of blue-white. Upon the instant-following blackness burst the thunder, crashing upon them till it seemed as if the aeroplanes must be beaten down by sheer intolerable sound.

For one blinded second Sergius felt that he was falling, but instinct held the wheel true and a dash of rain full in his face cleared his senses. The rain passed at once, but behind it came a leaping, tortured wind that made the quivering monoplane wallow.

He heard the voice of the American at his ear saying coolly, "A pretty piece of handling, that, by Jing!" and realized that, in some mysterious way, he had steered the machine successfully through the first crash of the conflict.

The thunder leaped and battered and roared above them and the lightning darted over them like a shuttle, but he felt that he held the mastery of the wind in his grip.

"I'm glad the rain doesn't amount to anything. It might have blinded me," he remarked aloud. But he could not hear his own voice at the moment, so naturally he expected no reply from Carver.

Glancing downward, he was amazed to find himself now several hundred feet higher than he had intended to be. He was just wondering how any uprush of air could have volleyed him so far skyward without his knowing it, when a curious sensation at the pit of his stomach warned him that he was being let down again with even more precipitate abruptness.

The awful drop ended, promptly but softly, as if on a cushion of air. At the same moment the thunder paused and he heard Carver grumbling: "Darn those holes in the air! There ought to be signs up, so a fellow wouldn't fly into them that way."

Having now the machine so well in hand, as far as steadiness was concerned, he was able to cast a rapid glance around for the biplane. He caught sight of it about a hundred feet below him, but far to the right and, to his amazement, some distance ahead. It was rolling hideously and bucking and plunging, but it was almost over the edge of the cleared space.

IT SEEMED beyond belief that any human hand and brain could hold the tormented machine many minutes longer from destruction. The heart of Sergius sent forth a passionate prayer for his friends' safety; then his attention was demanded by his own 'plane. A cross gust had slewed him from his course and he was drifting over the tree-tops at a sharp diagonal. He was farther from the landing-place than he had been five minutes before. When he had got the nose of the dragon-fly once more up into the wind he saw that he would have to make now for the head of the field instead of the foot.

But now, from his new angle, he could see the laboring Farman without turning his eyes too far from his own task. It was by this time well over the open, cautiously, staggeringly, beating its way downward.

At last it seemed to be within a few yards of earth. It plunged forward, swayed sickeningly to one side and touched its left wing-tip! The wing seemed to crumple like paper! Sergius gasped. But Andrews somehow—or the wind—brought the other wing swooping forward and the machine settled back on to its skids. The next instant it stopped, dipped its fore-plane and stood upon its head. For one dreadful half-second it hung there, almost perpendicular, struggling to turn end over end and crush its riders in the ruins. Then the wind, satisfied with victory, beat it back level and Andrews and Gregory sprang safely to the ground.

"Gee!" exclaimed a voice of relief at Plamenac's ear.

The thunder had stopped. Boring her way into the wind with quivering persistence, his beautiful, triumphant white dragon-fly was nearing the field.

"There's not more than fifteen minutes more petrol in her," he said over his shoulder, "but we're going to land beside Andrews and help ourselves to the poor old chap's supply. He and Gregory will have to walk the rest of the way!"

"Mr. Sergius Charles de Plamenac," replied the American irrelevantly, "allow me to say, while I think of it, that I take off my hat to you and to any more there may be of your breed. It's plainly a good breed and it ought to belong to the U. S. A. The man that can ride out a gale like that, in a winged match-box a thousand feet in the clouds, could sit steady on a Balkan throne. And if you don't appropriate said throne when the time comes, I'll raise a revolution in your hog-pastures and just naturally make you!"

"Ah, old boy," rejoined Sergius, "there are better places than a throne, to my mind. Right here, right now, for instance. Don't you think so? I thought you were my friend!"

They were over the upper edge of the field now and Sergius, turning sharply, drove down across the wind toward the lower end, that he might make his landing head-on.

"You're right. I take it all back," said Carver.

CHAPTER XIV

THE FIGHT AT THE CROSSING

SECOND by second the wind was going down. At the lower end of the field the Antoinette swung about in a short circle, tipping her wide white wings like a wheeling gull. Both Andrews and Gregory were at her side as she stopped. Sergius and the American sprang down from their seats. The four men wrung hands in silence, their hearts too full to let the words come out.

At last Carver spoke.

"Gee!" said he, his gray eyes dark and shining, "for an effete monarchy, Andrews,

you put up a great fight. A dozen times I thought you two were gone. I guess my hair turned gray while I was watching you." And he felt his head whimsically.

Gregory turned adoring eyes upon his companion.

"He's done more than man can do!" he cried in a sort of exaltation.

The Englishman gave an embarrassed laugh.

"It's a sorry kind of triumph that leaves us wallowing in our gore," said he, gazing sorrowfully at the wreck of his biplane. "Poor old machine, she's a bit clumsy for a tussle like that—gives too much hold to the wind. Now what I call a victory is this of yours, Serge! Clean and tidy. You've come through that howling hell without a hair turned. And here your Antoinette sits purring as if it had been a picnic."

This speech—a long one for Andrews—relieved the tension.

"It would have been awful defeat," replied Count Sergius, "if we'd had to fight five minutes longer. Our petrol's about done."

"You'll have to take ours," said Andrews. "Gregory and I have been wanting to stretch our legs a bit—eh, Captain?—so we'll walk. And here's your other bag of baubles."

Count Sergius took the momentous leather bag and strapped it securely to his waist as Andrews had had it. "All depends on us two, now," said he, turning to the American.

"Exactly," responded the latter, carefully lighting a cigar. "Now, while you fellows are transferring the petrol—you can't smoke during that process, so I don't offer you my weeds—I'll be giving the motor a look over to see if any of that rain flurry got in where it ought not to."

"How much petrol have you left, Bob?" asked the Count.

"Oh, enough to carry you an hour and a half, anyhow. How much farther have you to go?"

Count Sergius turned questioningly to the mountaineer.

"Another forty kilometers will put you over the Save, just beyond the Drina," answered Gregory. "And that's the place to aim for, if the Austrians should be after you, for they wouldn't dare follow you across just there. We've always got a strong patrol on guard at that point."

Sergius and Carver climbed to their seats, then leaned down to grasp the hands of the two who were being left behind in the enemy's country.

"We'll wait for you at Shabatz," said Count Sergius.

"If all goes well, we ought to make Shabatz to-morrow night or next forenoon," said Gregory. Then motor and propeller broke into their great song and the monoplane, darting forward over the firm turf of the pasture, soared into the air.

CARVER looked back and waved his hand. A moment later he saw Andrews and Gregory hasten to the wreck and fumble in the box behind the seats. Then he turned his attention to the course which Count Sergius was steering.

"I wish you'd pull the peak down farther over my eyes for me," said Sergius. "This light makes it hard to steer."

Carver complied. Then he looked back. Andrews and Gregory were just vanishing into the woods on the extreme right of the field. The wrecked aeroplane, snowy-white in the intense sunshine, looked poignantly solitary in the wide green emptiness of the pasture, the strangest derelict that time had yet recorded.

The white dragon-fly was still climbing into the blue.

"Why so high, now?" questioned the American. "Hadn't we better fly low and not make ouselves so conspicuous?"

"I'm afraid there's no chance of not being seen or heard, in this part of the country," answered Sergius. "The only thing to do is to let them look and be ——, and shoot if they want to. We'll fly so high there'll be little danger of them hitting us."

They were clear of the forest now and passing above the outskirts of a straggling village which lined both banks of an extraordinarily crooked little stream.

"In proof that you're dead right, Plamenac," said Carver scrutinizing the village with his glasses, "there's a squad of our friends squinting up at us now. It looks as if they were going to do more than squint. Let's see—how high are we? Eleven hundred? I could bear to be a bit higher myself. Those beggars might make a hit, you know. And think how inconvenient!"

"From where they are, it's a good three thousand feet," answered Sergius, "and getting more every second."

"There they go, anyhow," remarked the American coolly. The flat crash of the volley rose faintly to their ears, just heard across the drone of the propeller.

"Wasting their ammunition!" he continued after a pause.

"Well," said Sergius, "I'd like it better if they shot worse. Look here ahead, just abaft the screw."

"Gee!" ejaculated the American. A three-inch splinter had been flicked off the upper edge of the body, between the propeller and the motor.

"We may as well slide up another seven or eight hundred feet, don't you think?" suggested Sergius, lifting the planes sharply. "It's a comfort to think we've lots of room overhead."

As they ran up the slopes of air the distant rivers came clearly into view, the broad, sprawling reaches of the Save and the twisted coils of the Drina flashing their summons to safety. With amazing speed they drew near, as if all the pictured side of the hollow bowl of the landscape were sliding inward and downward toward the bottom. Then, all up and down the fields, parallel with the river-bank, little groups of men in uniform came into view. They were gesticulating and pointing and staring upward toward the humming and darting plane.

"This is where we run the gauntlet, I'm thinking," remarked the American, gazing downward through the glasses. Count Sergius said nothing. Every faculty, every ounce of will within him, was concentrated on the effort to lift the machine across the zone of fire.

"AH-H-H!" came a long-drawn exclamation from Carver as the rifles spurted upward their tiny jets of flame. Something pinged shrilly past his head, a high note which stood out from the noise of propeller and motor. His ear caught also a sharp, small sound which told him a bullet had gone through the taut canvas of the planes. Then, with a grunting sob, the motor stopped dead!

Count Sergius jerked upon his lifting plane. In the sudden, startling silence the great white dragon-fly began her terrific descent.

"Struck the magneto!" said Count Sergius. His voice sounded unnatural. Carver saw that his face was deadly pale.

"You're not hit?" he demanded.

"Only my leg!" answered Sergius, the strong ring returning to his voice and the blood mounting back to his face. "Thank God it wasn't my arm! Are they going to fire again?"

"Don't look like it. They see they've winged us all right. I don't think they want to shoot us all to pieces, because that would kind of spoil us for curios."

"We were not more than a quarter of a mile from the river when we were hit," said Sergius setting his teeth hard as the anguish awoke in his leg. "I believe I can keep her up till we're half-way over."

"Quite convenient for conversation, this unusual quiet," suggested Carver, eying him with admiration, then sweeping the river with his glasses. "But as to where we strike the water, I don't think it much matters; we'll be nabbed wherever we strike it, my boy. There's a little motor-boat piling up the river as if she had an engagement with us and thought she was late. And there's a big motor-boat hustling down the river in almost as big a hurry. I wish we could stay up here."

Sergius twisted his mouth in a ghastly grin, but made no reply. He was nursing to the last inch every foot of glide that the monoplane had in her. They were well out over the water now; but it was coming up at them too fast.

"By Jing, I'd like to take a shot at some of those comfortable-looking swine!" went on the American itchingly, lifting his rifle and laying it down again abruptly. "But it would be a fool trick all right. Not unless they begin it again! But if they do —ah, there's a tubby gentleman in civilian's clothes, who seems very important. It is borne in upon me that he is at the bottom of all this disturbance. I don't want him to profit by it as much as he thinks he's going to. Even at this distance, I can see he is what old Andrews would call a bounder. Well, if there's another shot fired, you'll go, my tubby friend, for I don't like your looks a little bit."

"It's de L'Orme!" gasped Count Sergius, the torture of the smashed leg-bone mounting upward into his thigh. They were half-way across the river and not ten feet above the water. He jammed his elevating plane hard upward, lifting the dragon-fly's nose and, with a great rustling sigh followed by a smacking splash, the machine settled level upon the current.

SHE floated. She was badly down by the nose, to be sure, but she floated. The Austrians were arriving all along the river-bank—the tubby gentleman in civilian dress conspicuous among the uniforms. On the opposite shore the Servian guard came down close to the water's edge, and looked on with amazement. It grieved them that they had no excuse to take a hand in the game.

Down the river, the little motor was coming on at a great pace. Up the river—but much farther away—the big motor was also hurrying to the scene of excitement.

"Game's up! Shall we drop the parcels overboard?" suggested Carver.

"Oh," groaned Sergius, "if the dogs hadn't smashed my leg, I could have swum ashore with both parcels."

"I couldn't swim more than half that distance," said Carver, slipping off h s shoes as he spoke. "But I'll try it. Give me the other bag. If you make signs hard enough to your friends over on the shore, maybe they'll understand and come to the rescue. Worth trying, eh?" And he threw off his coat.

At this moment the Austrians began firing again. Several bullets struck the plane, but most of the shots, to the amazement of Sergius and Carver, seemed to be directed at the little motor-boat, now almost upon them.

"Gee!" shouted the American, half rising and just saving himself from toppling overboard. *"They're friends!"*

He sat down again, the bullets kicking up the water all around the 'plane. Coolly he lifted his rifle. As he fired, the civilian, who had been directing the attack upon the motor-boat, dropped. He fired again, aiming with quick deliberation and a mounted officer rolled from the saddle. Then a shout from Count Sergius distracted him just as he pulled the trigger, and his third shot went wide.

Before he could shoot again, the motor-boat had rounded to between him and his target and was poking her beak up over the drowned wings of the aeroplane. To Carver's amazement, she had hoisted the Servian flag. And then, to his double amazement, he caught sight of Madame de L'Orme, crouched as flat as possible in the bottom of the boat.

"Come quick! Come quick!" she cried in a desperate voice.

"Gee!" said Carver as he caught the bow of the boat with one hand while he reached to help Sergius with the other. The American followed nimbly, seating himself beside Madame de L'Orme. The boat darted for the Servian shore through a singing swarm of bullets. But having the Servian flag at her stern, she gave the Servian guard the excuse they were craving. Their flag had been assaulted! They opened fire enthusiastically, and the little boat, running under their fire, darted for the mouth of the Drina.

Forgetting her peril, Madame sprang up from her place of safety, ran forward and knelt beside Count Sergius, who lay with his eyes closed. She wrung her hands passionately.

"Oh, where is he hurt? What is it? What is it?" she wailed.

"It's his leg. Can't do a thing till we get him ashore," said Carver, and resumed his deadly practise on the Austrians.

The next moment Sergius opened his eyes. At the sight of Madame's face bending over him, he smiled, grasped her hand and sat up. A glance at the Servian shore, now very close, showed him that the day was won. The pain fled from his face, leaving it alight with solemn joy.

"We have achieved the great quest!" Then, turning his eyes once more to Madame's face, as she knelt bending over him, he went on, "And it is your hand that snatches victory for us at the last! I am glad! You don't know the great thing you have done! I am glad it is your hand."

Madame had been dry-eyed, but now the tears rushed suddenly down her face.

"I've done the only great thing I care about, if I've helped you, if I've served you!' she sobbed.

The American looked at her, at the distortion of her beautiful face, and puckered his lips in a sudden, vast comprehension.

"And I'd thought all the time it was Andrews!" he muttered.

Then the boat, which had run out of range a few hundred yards up the Drina, poked her nose softly into the bank. Carver, seeing that Sergius had fallen back unconscious, stooped to lift.

"Don't be frightened," he said gently to Madame as she bent to aid him. "It's loss of blood. He'll be all right."

Swarthy men in the Servian uniform came hurrying down the bank to help. The steersman of the motor-boat, the blood dripping

from his left sleeve, came forward, grinning with triumph. Madame de L'Orme turned to the other side of the engine, leaned over a huddled heap and gently shook it.

"Poor Andréas!" she muttered. Then she called two of the guards into the boat and pointed to the dead man.

"He has died for his country," she said simply and turned to hurry after the little procession which was bearing Count Sergius up the bank.

CHAPTER XV

THE FRUITS OF VICTORY

COUNT SERGIUS did not go to Shabatz. They carried him to the nearest farmhouse, not far from the water-side. From Shabatz they summoned the army surgeon of the district to set and dress his leg; while Carver and Madame remained to nurse him.

The American was filled with admiration for the courage and efficiency Madame had shown in her conduct of the rescue. But her reception of his eulogies left him hopelessly bewildered. She repudiated them desperately, crying, "Oh you'd never even speak to me, if you knew!" Then she fled from the room in a passion of tears. Carver stepped outside, took his place by the open window where he could keep his eye upon the patient, and lighted one of his inexhaustible cigars.

"Seem to be just as queer in Servia as they are in the U. S. A.!" he murmured reminiscently. A few minutes later he mused aloud: "I wonder if she knows it was me potted that tubby bounder who was trying to kill her. If so, she don't seem to bear me any grudge. I wonder if she knows!"

Presently Madame reappeared, her emotion brought to hand. Her white face smiled upon him frankly in the twilight, as she passed him to reënter Plamenac's room. The American stopped her.

"I've a notion that Monsieur de L'Orme had something to do with messing up our expedition this way," he said in his direct fashion, scrutinizing her face with his strange bright eyes.

Madame's mouth hardened for an instant. She looked as if she were on the verge of explaining something. Then she said abruptly,

"Don't let us talk of him. He is dead."

She spoke very clearly and deliberately. Then she passed in to Plamenac's bedside.

"Wonder how she found it out so quick," mused Carver.

About four o'clock next morning Madame got up from her chair and blew out the night-light which stood on the floor beyond the foot of the Count's bed. The surgeon had been there some hours before and dressed the wound, and Sergius was sleeping. Carver, exhausted, was sleeping profoundly on a blanket in the farther corner of the room. Plamenac's voice called to her faintly and she glided back to the bedside.

"What is it? Do you want anything?" she whispered.

"I want you to sit down by me. I want to thank you!"

She obeyed, putting her hand into his craving, outstretched palm as she did so.

"You risked so much—your life—everything—to save us!" he muttered searching her face with eyes that would not be denied.

She bore that look for a moment, then turned away her face, gently withdrew her hand, and pressed at her throat as if it hurt her to swallow.

"It was all my fault—that you were spied upon," she said at last in a very low voice, keeping her face averted.

SHE was silent for several minutes, while Sergius gazed at her intensely and the colored light flooded wonderfully across the bed.

"I can not let you go on thanking me and honoring me," she continued, her voice growing small and unresonant. "I was in the Austrian Secret Service—*a spy!* At the very beginning, after Gregory's visit to your rooms that day, I became suspicious and gave warning at Vienna. I was sent to Paris to watch you. Oh, I was well, well paid! I worked quite independently of my —husband, and was paid much more than he.

"We detested each other, but had to work together—had to seem to live together. In Paris I—I came to know you better, to know you and Captain Andrews better, and I began to understand how base a thing it was that I was doing. I understood. And I suffered—oh, I suffered! You will believe that, surely! But when I tried to draw back, it was too late—they knew too much.

"When I refused to spy for them any

longer, my—Monsieur de L'Orme went on with it. Then—then I tried to get back into favor with them, so I might find out what they were going to do and warn you. But for that I was too late. They wouldn't trust me again. I could learn almost nothing. But, oh—I *did* warn you, as well as I could. And just at the last I found out in time. For that, perhaps—you will come to despise me less, some day."

She buried her face in her hands and her shoulders shook with dry, strangling sobs.

After a moment, Count Sergius spoke.

"You were not one of us—you were not a Servian, you know!" he said. "So, you must remember, you were not a *traitor!*"

She made no answer to this. She kept her face covered; but her sobs gradually ceased, because she had caught no note of scorn in Plamenac's feeble voice. Presently he spoke again:

"I think you have very much more than made amends to Servia. Oh, yes—many times over. What you did was *everything!* And was that—was that the only reason you did it—to make amends?"

Neither to this did she make reply.

"Please give me your hand again," he begged, his voice growing feebler. She gave it to him, still keeping her face averted. He tried to pull her toward him—but feebly. She realized how feebly and turned and looked into his eyes. What she saw there told her plainly that it was all the strength he had—that he was trying with all his heart to draw her to him, though his hands were so weak. At his weakness her eyes ran over. "Oh, my dear!" she sobbed, and bending swiftly she gathered his head into her arms.

NEARLY four months later, at a table in the extreme outer corner of the Café Danilo, sat Madame de L'Orme, Andrews, Carver and Count Sergius.

In those four months Sergius had slowly recovered. He had been well nursed, the surgeon said, without contradiction from the patient. But the wound had been a nasty one. The Count's crutch was not yet thrown away.

After the affair at the river there had been a bad quarter of an hour between Austria and Servia and Austria had tried to bully her little neighbor into an apology for having struck back when her flag was fired upon. Her case, however, when examined, had seemed so palpably bad that she had graciously dropped it at a hint from her sagacious ally on the Baltic.

There had been a nine days' marveling all over the Balkan lands as to the great adventure and the object of it. Songs of "The Runners of the Air" were sung in the mountains. But beyond a whispered, expectant rumor about the recovery of the "Holy Stone" and certain miracles it was going to work for Servia, nothing of the truth had leaked out. They had close tongues, those admirable bandits of Gregory's.

Carver, forgetting his dream of an Antoinette factory at Toronto in a more exciting vision of battles and empire-building in the Balkans, had stayed by Sergius all Summer, helping Madame with the nursing.

He loved Sergius with a devoted comradeship which the Count fervently returned and the Summer had not seemed long, for he had a new monoplane sent down to him from Mourmelon-le-Grand.

Andrews had been twice to Amsterdam, but with small consignments only. The enormous bulk of the diamonds, in sealed leather bags of which their guardians knew not the contents, still rested in the vaults of the Bank of Servia at Nish. Andrews had also been in England, discreetly laying diplomatic trains, and in Montenegro, discussing problems of interest with Prince Nikolas, who had developed a sudden amazing *penchant* for his society.

Gregory was in his own Black Mountain. He was busy organizing and arming, with secrecy unmatched and a most comfortable amplitude of funds, bands in Bosnia, bands in Hertzegovina, bands in Dalmatia, bands even in long tranquil Slavonia. But he had plans beyond all precedent for the future of guerilla warfare and had ordered two Antoinettes and two Farmans to be delivered at Dulcigno by October.

Mother Maria and her son, after a pampered sojourn at M'latza, where their epic narratives had given them great vogue, had found a pig-farm beyond their wildest aspirations, on the banks of the Morava to the west of Krucevac.

And old Ivan. With five of his fellows, Ivan had died as he would have elected to die, after emptying many saddles, in a skirmish with the mounted patrol at the crossing of the Drina. He had covered the retreat; he had got his charges safely over and he had won for his name an illustrious place

in the hearth-songs of his Montenegrin village.

On the quays, Sergius and Andrews noted the great white boat for Budapest swinging out from its pier and, in the distance, the dark hulls of Austrian river-monitors nosing upward against the Danube current. This time, however, there chanced to be four of them and the Englishman smiled, thinking of the four powerful craft now being laid down, for a mysterious purchaser, in the yards of one of the great Clyde-bank builders. His companion, following his glance to see what had interested him, smiled also.

"They're sturdy craft," said Carver, "as far as I can make out, but not the last word in monitors, by any means."

"I wish we had a hard-and-fast alliance with Turkey," said Count Sergius.

He was thinking of how to get Servian monitors, when built, through the Dardanelles.

"That ought not to be difficult to manage," commented Madame, somewhat naïvely.

UP THE street below them came the tramp of marching feet and they peered down over the rail with lively interest. A regiment was marching by—quick, serviceable-looking, very smart in their white tunics and crimson trousers.

"They look very fit, old chap," said Andrews, scrutinizing them as an expert.

"They are our crack regiment," answered Sergius. "No better fighters in the world."

"I calculate you could put pretty near half a million like that into the field," remarked the American casually, "if only Servia could find a gold mine somewhere!"

"Yes, Servia alone!" agreed Madame innocently, in her childlike voice. "How interesting it would be!"

Count Sergius absent-mindedly pulled his crutch around in front of him and leaned against it.

"A fellow does waste an unconscionable lot of time, being sick," said he musingly. Then his voice grew deep with earnestness. "Boys," he went on, bending forward that he might not be overheard, "best and truest of comrades, you know that, having so long neglected my affairs, I shall need even further advice and support in arranging them than you so generously give. We are strong, we three—but for my own part, I have learned how to make myself stronger, braver, more indomitable, more quick in insight, more unfaltering in faith. I am annexing those qualities to myself, to make myself more equal to my task." He turned his face toward Madame, reached across the table and touched her hand swiftly. "I want you to admit my wife, to-morrow, to full comradeship and alliance!" he added.

"With all my heart!" responded Andrews, grasping Madame's hand.

Carver turned his bright eyes from one face to the other and his rough-hewn features twitched humorously.

"You needn't think, either of you, that this is any kind of news to me," said he. "I've got a fairly high opinion of both of you. But let me tell you fair and square it would have suffered considerable of a shock, if you hadn't sense enough, both of you, to see your chance and reach out for it."

Madame looked down. Her face went low over her cup and to the unqualified surprise of both Carver and Andrews, they saw two big tears run down her cheeks.

"You can't know, ever, how grateful I am for your confidence in me," she said, toying nervously with her spoon. "Indeed, I am going to try to show that I am worthy of it!" And looking up quickly at the face of Count Sergius, she smiled happily through her tears.

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