Twenty-two Stories—224 Pages of Reading Matter

Adventure

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"SAIL HO!"

"Where away?"

"Dead ahead, sir. Looks like a schooner."

"Aloft there! Keep your eye on her and report at once when you can make her out. If that's Billy Englehart and the *Albicore*, then you can lay to it there's going to be hell to pay before we're much older!"

Well, it ***was*** Billy Englehart, though how they knew he was in the *Albicore* is hard to say. The *Albicore* sailed from Honolulu under Captain Cleary with a cargo of tea and sugar for —— But that doesn't matter. Billy Englehart has her now, he and Carncross and a chap named Harvey Winthrop, and the captain of the vessel that has just sighted her is most amazingly right when he says that things are going to begin happening right off.

Billy Englehart is—Oh, you know him, do you? Yes, that's right; same man you met in "The Mutiny on the *Tonga Belle*" and in "Salt of the Sea" in Adventure. One of the nerviest and squarest and most likable men that ever sailed the South Seas; ready-handed and quick-witted and big-hearted, that's Billy Englehart.

And here he comes again, he and Jim Carncross, their topsails just showing above the horizon. On the biggest adventure they've tackled yet—

"King Corrigan's Treasure"

which begins next month in the December Adventure. The kind of serial story that sticks in your mind out of a whole year's reading, and then some. Strong, straight from the shoulder, full of action and color—a corker. How could it be otherwise if H. D. Couzens wrote it?

One of the best stories Adventure ever published was Mr. Couzens' novelette, "Brethren of the Beach," last summer. This new story is still better, for it's longer. You certainly will enjoy it.

But will women like it?

They will, ***if*** they like a love-story, for there's a fine love-story, with real men and a particularly charming girl, running through the tale. But it isn't the sit-on-the-sofa-and-talk kind of love-story. Far from it! Excitement till you can't rest!

"King Corrigan's Treasure."—Look out for the next

Adventure

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VOL. 5 NO. 1

ADVENTURE

Arthur Sullivant Hoffman
Managing Editor

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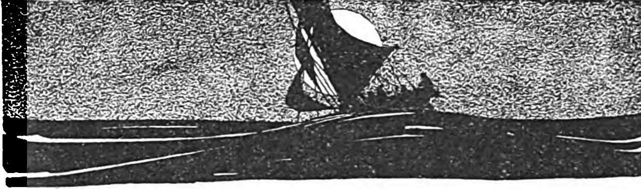
Issued monthly. Yearly subscription, $1.50 in advance. Single copy, fifteen cents
Foreign postage, $1.00 additional. Canadian postage, 30 cents.
Trade-mark Registered; Copyright 1912 by The Ridgway Company in the United States and Great Britain
Published by THE RIDGWAY COMPANY
Erman J. Ridgway, President Ray Brown, 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



HE WAS in Russia in 1904, as special correspondent of the London *Tribune* during the war with Japan, and again through the revolution of 1905–6. Similar work took him to Greece and the Ægean islands in 1906; also Scandinavia, Sicily, Germany and across all the European seas; "but," writes Albert Kinross, whose "Discovery of the Hampdon Garden Suburbs," another Adam Newman story, is in this issue, "for all that, I don't know any place that gives one the blue funks so much as London and an empty pocket." But he tells this little story:

I was going back to the station, which is about a mile from the town of Wenden in Livonia, which is one of the Russian provinces on the Baltic. I set out on foot, unarmed, which was no doubt a foolish thing to do, especially at night and in the dark. In those revolutionary months of 1905–06 the whole country swarmed with homeless men who had taken part in the insurrection. They were poor, they were cold, they were hungry, and very much like wolves. The road to the station was lonely, and I had taken a short-cut through a thin spinney of birch-trees.

I remember it all very well, for it was here that three such outcasts as I have described surrounded me and began declaiming passionately in a foreign tongue. It was neither Russian nor German; perhaps it was Lettish, or, maybe, Esthonian. I could not understand a single word. I tried to explain this and they only grew more passionate, more threatening, more everything that was sinister and wolfish. It was dark, and those three figures, saying incomprehensible and tragic things to me in a wood, affected my imagination. If I could only have understood them and what they wanted, it might not have been so bad. They didn't seem to be begging; they didn't seem to be asking anything that could be satisfied with some small gift of money.

In the darkness of the spinney these passionate and incomprehensible voices became terrible beyond anything human. I could stand it no longer. I grabbed up the skirts of my overcoat and ran. I ran most of the way to the station. They did not pursue me. I think my sudden flight must have taken them by surprise.

It seems to me now, writing here in all security, that perhaps they were merely asking me for money and threatening me with violence should I deny it them. Now that would have been quite human and I could have understood it. In that darkness and strangeness, however, these incomprehensible and tragic voices seemed to belong to something wilder and more savage than men; to something unknown and infinitely terrible that went beyond endurance. And so I ran away; and to this hour I have never known precisely why those men stopped me in the spinney between Wenden and the station.

IN SPITE of this, I do not think I am a coward. A concrete danger which one can know and see and recognize has always left me surprisingly cold. I say surprisingly, because it was quite a matter of doubt with me until past my thirtieth year whether I could stand it; and the first time I came under fire, for instance, I was just as much interested in my own sensations as in anything else. "So I am not a coward," I reflected afterward. I was quite prepared to discover that I was.

For, after all, what do we who have lived in England and similar secure places know about ourselves till it comes to the point? Till I went to Russia in 1905, I had never seen a shot fired in anger, never exposed my person to greater risks than those that appertain to sport. So when my friends, the R——s, with whom I was staying near Tukkum in Courland, kept their castle against five thousand poor devils who thought themselves revolutionaries, it was quite an open question with me whether I would flinch at my post and take refuge with the women and children in the cellar, or whether I would stand pat and answer shot for shot. I fired away, as it happened, and was considered rather reckless; indeed, I think I have enjoyed few moments more than these. It was more exciting than gambling or cricket or any other game of chance or outdoor game. A relief column and five guns dispersed the rebels, and we were free again.

Under similar circumstances other friends of ours were less fortunate. That was their bad luck, I think, for what people call "danger" and "sudden death" are only things of the mind till in a moment they are realized and the non-existent passes into actuality. I dare say we ran risks as great as those which finished off our friends, but luckily for us the risks remained at that; and so to all intents and purposes were non-existent.

As to his stories of the pigeon-breasted Adam Newman — you remember them, "The Mystery of the Twenty Sacks of Coal," "The Disappearance of Signor Caroli," "Prince Marmoroff's Gold Plate" —Mr. Kinross, who laughs when he writes them, says:

Here, in England, editors have taken Adam and his adventures quite seriously. They have received the stipulated amount of blood, mystery, burglars, detectives, etc., etc., and they are happy. In America I suspect that the humor of this series has been discovered, and that where my fellow countrymen have shuddered and said "Oh!" the American has laughed aloud and seen the whole thing as a "roast," a satire, and a lark.

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Adventure
Registered in the United States Patent Office
November 1912
Vol. 5
No. 1

HONOR by Talbot Mundy

BUGLES sang sweetly up and down the lines, and trumpets blared; the British flag rose up the trim white pole in a series of little jerks to the accompanying click of presented arms, and the broad maidan turned a preliminary violet. All at once the long straight rows of brick huts woke up like so many colonies of ants, and Tom Taylor, sergeant-major of the Exmoors, strode out from his sleeping quarters and faced the dawn. He looked like a soul in torment as he stood there, with the professional expression as yet unsettled on his face.

A group of pariah dogs were whimpering and snuffling shame-facedly around the square; he picked up a stone and hurled it at the nearest of them, and the whole pack yelped and scattered.

"To —— out o' this, you brutes!" he growled, watching the last of them go scampering around a corner out of sight. "That's all India is—jackalls and pariah dogs, and corruption for the brutes to feed on!"

The first pale yellow shafts of the sun shot upward as he spoke, and the long lines changed from violet into gold; then the gold melted, suddenly, as everything must change in India, and the brick huts and painted roofs and cemented foot-paths stood out once again, clear-cut like cameos —long serried rows of crude, abominable coloring that hurt. Another merciless Indian day had started—bone-dry as hell itself, and the epitome of hot monotony.

"Oh, God," he grumbled, "for the good green hills and dales o' Devon! Four an' twenty years o' soldiering! Sixteen years o' drilling rookies, an' ten o' them spent spiked on the horns o' hell! Dear God, I'm weary!"

A dust-cloud rose over in the distance, pierced here and there by gleams of flashing brass, and from the center of it came a bumping, rumbling noise, and the tramp of horses.

"There go the guns," he muttered. "Who wouldn't be a gunner! First under canvas, pick o' the cantonments, change o' stations all the time to save the horses, route marchin' instead o' troop-trains, they've got it all their own way, —— them!

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Well, three more months o' this, and I'm through! Then Devonshire again!"

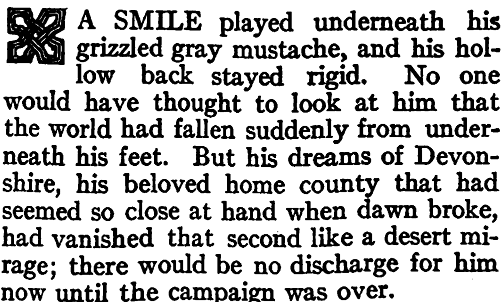
"Morning, sergeant-major!"

He turned smartly to the right-about, and sprang to the salute. It was not often that the Colonel was about before the men paraded, and though the sergeant-major's face was as rigidly formal and correct as his neat white uniform, and though his voice betrayed nothing but respect, there was inquiry written in his steel-gray eyes.

"Good morning, sir."

"A telegram has just come from Peshawur. The tribes are up to the northward of the Khaibar Pass, and two brigades have been ordered up at once to deal with them. We'll be the first regiment to go from here. You may tell the men."

"Very good, sir!" he answered, saluting again as the Colonel turned and continued on his way to the orderly-room.



A SMILE played underneath his grizzled gray mustache, and his hollow back stayed rigid. No one would have thought to look at him that the world had fallen suddenly from underneath his feet. But his dreams of Devonshire, his beloved home county that had seemed so close at hand when dawn broke, had vanished that second like a desert mirage; there would be no discharge for him now until the campaign was over.

Tom Taylor was one of three men in that regiment who knew what campaigning meant in northern India. He knew and his Colonel knew, and so did the senior major, that the man who comes back down the Khaibar on the soles of his ammunition boots is lucky.

He glanced from where he stood to where the hospital stood sharp-outlined against the sky. Of course he could go sick. Without any shadow of a doubt the doctor would take into consideration his twenty-three odd years of service; he would only have to talk of rheumatism, and the doctor would pass on him, and wink the other eye, and report him unfit for active service. The Colonel would grumble, of course, for it is no light task to replace a sergeant-major at the final moment; but there was Sergeant Buckley waiting to fill his shoes, and Buckley was more or less efficient. Rheumatism was the obvious way out, and nobody, he thought, would blame him.

Blame him? He laughed at the thought. Only one man in a thousand can be sergeant-major; and his is an easy job to lose. One act of favoritism, once drunk, or one neglect of duty, and a court martial will deal with him and reduce him back to sergeant, or even down to the ranks again. And Tom Taylor had been sergeant-major of the Exmoors for nine long years. He felt no sense of blame; he had done his duty. He had seen men come and go in hundreds. For nine years he had drilled and taught and preached and watched and bullied and coaxed, thinking always of the regiment, and slaving early and late toward one end—efficiency, the only fetish that he knew.

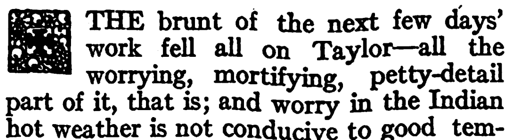
He had seen young officers pass through all the stages of self-conscious impotence and glad dependence on him, to haughty and almost insolent superiority as they began to feel their feet, and back again to frank and half-familiar friendship as they learned by experience to realize his worth.

He knew the regiment from the Colonel to the newest joined; the everlasting grind of knowing it had sunk into his soul, and the regiment was his regiment. Would he go sick and leave it in the lurch, now that the call had come for active service? His shoulders stiffened in answer to the thought, and as he strode off to give the men the news his tread was firm and elastic.

His whole being thrilled with soft emotion at the thought of the vales and leafy lanes he loved, but weary war-horse that he was, with peace and pasture almost within reach of him, he loved the regiment better. Not one of the men who heard him tell the news suspected that he was not gladder even than they were; he had made up his mind to go almost before his Colonel had walked ten paces from him, and the old fire shone in his eye and a laugh played on his lips.

But down in his secret heart he was resolved to save himself from danger in the one-hundred-and-one-ways that the old campaigner knows, and determined that if hard thinking and experience could bring him back again through the Khaibar safe and sound, he would still see Devonshire.

II



THE brunt of the next few days' work fell all on Taylor—all the worrying, mortifying, petty-detail part of it, that is; and worry in the Indian hot weather is not conducive to good tem-

per. But a sergeant-major must be heat and temper proof. He must be able to keep his temper and his head even in cholera-time, when the camp-followers desert in dozens and the married women run through the quarters shrieking. Taylor had seen all those things and a dozen more—he had been tried out a hundred times, and proved—so the work of getting the regiment entrained progressed under his watchful eyes like clockwork.

The officers were busy, and important; the sergeants grew red in the neck and apoplectic; the corporals looked wise and made mistakes and needed more supervision than any one could give them, and the men were like a pack of hounds, baying gleefully on a breast-high scent, and nearly as uncontrollable.

But the long strings of third-class carriages backed at last into the sidings, and the men climbed into them. Everything went smoothly at the finish, and the incoming regiment settled down into the Exmoors' deserted quarters as comfortably as though it had always been there. It looked very much as though the entraining of a regiment was one of the simplest things on earth, but Taylor, who had worked like a Titan assisting at creation, knew otherwise.

He stumbled into a stifling third-class carriage and fell asleep, and not even the cheers of the jealous regiments left behind, or the gloating, thundering answer of the Exmoors, or the rattle of the train along the single track could wake him. He slept until the day grew dark again, and the train pulled into a siding for the men to get their meal.

Then Taylor's everlasting round of work began again. Soldiers in Indian troop-trains strip to the buff invariably, and they have to be kept from prancing bare-foot and naked on wayside stations and scandalizing civilians' wives. For a while the excitement and the new experience and curiosity to know what lay ahead of them kept the men good-tempered and comparatively quiet, but the quietness soon wore off.

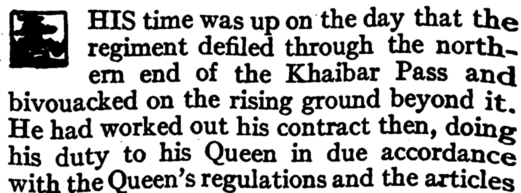
A carriage full of naked soldiers in the Indian hot weather is not a gilded paradise; the sun beats down on the iron roof and peels off the paint in flakes, and the dust off the track blows in through the windows. What water there is gets hot enough to cook tea with, and thousands of flies come in to browse on the unaccustomed acreage of white anatomy. There is nothing in the world to do but flick the flies away, and stare through the windows at the aching desolation on every hand, and smoke, and talk, and swear. And in the course of time all those amusements grow monotonous.

Before long it was borne in upon the more restless spirits that there was no "clink" now that any one could put them into. The worst punishment the Colonel could inflict on them would be to leave them at the base, and troops were much too badly needed at the front for that penalty to be inflicted very readily. They began to take advantage of the situation in a hundred different ways, skylarking like a lot of gutter urchins. So Taylor was kept busy. At each stop—and the long string of trains stopped everywhere—he had to get out and settle arguments, or stop a fight, or read the riot act to a carriage full of raving Bedlamites.

He was as thirsty and hot and fly-besieged as any one. The dust choked up his throat, and the oven-hot wind scorched his eyes, but he had to get out and toil in the sun to save his officers. Officers are meant to lead a regiment, and it is one part of the duty of a sergeant-major to see that there is a regiment to lead.

He did his duty, neither shirking nor forgetting the smallest fraction of it, and through it all he was smiling and respectful to his officers, and tactful or tyrannical with the men as occasion warranted. But when the troop-trains reached Peshawur and the roll was called, and all were present and correct, he was the weariest sergeant-major that ever faced the commencement of a Hill campaign.

He was homesick, too, for his native Devonshire, and sick to the heart of soldiering, and filled with an unconquerable loathing for the everlasting "Hills" that piled away and away up in front of him toward the north. He looked like a man, though, and a soldier, and no man in the regiment got an inkling of what was passing in his mind.



HIS time was up on the day that the regiment defiled through the northern end of the Khaibar Pass and bivouacked on the rising ground beyond it. He had worked out his contract then, doing his duty to his Queen in due accordance with the Queen's regulations and the articles

of war, and he should have been a free man, homeward-bound on a troop-ship. But no one to look at him could have guessed that he was anything but quite contented.

The men thought he was in his element. He and his Colonel and the senior major were the only three in that regiment who had ever seen a shot fired off the range, or who had faced the rigors of the Hill climate, so on those three fell all the work of dry-nursing the men. But Taylor did the most of it.

There are no such fools as soldiers on their first campaign. They drink green water from the nearest stagnant pool, march until their feet are blistered and then neglect the blisters, starve themselves when the rations are not to their liking, and overeat when good luck gives them the opportunity. They need showing how to keep themselves warm at night and teaching that it is not wise even to smoke inside the tents lest the pipe-glow should give a watchful enemy a mark to fire at.

They need teaching how to scout, and how to shoot before they challenge, according to the immemorial custom of the Hills, and above all how to lie quietly in the tents and wait for orders, instead of rushing out in confusion at every false alarm. All these things Taylor taught them and a thousand more, as they climbed up over the Roof of the World to come to hand-grips with some tribesmen who had gone just one step too far in flouting British suzerainty.

Then, as the scenery changed and the steep track trailed out northward, a change came over Taylor. Black, sheer-cut crags and snow-filled *mullahs* began to take the place of rolling hills; chill winds that a man could lean against howled everlastingly among the crags; and *sangars* crowned every other hill-top. The Exmoors were sent on in advance of the slow marching brigade to get in touch with the elusive enemy, and bullets, aimed with astounding accuracy from age-old rifles, began to whine from unexpected crevices among the rocks.

The real thing had begun. Now was the time to see what all the teaching had accomplished, and instead of moving ever in and out among the men and preaching horse-sense as they marched, the sergeant-major took his rightful place behind them. And at night time, when the pickets were all posted and the reliefs were warned, he turned into his tent—and dreamed of Devonshire.

It was a different Tom Taylor now. He was still the sergeant-major, and there was no part of his duty that he left undone or did not do properly, but where his duty ceased he stopped. He had to be sent for if the Colonel wanted him, instead of being always somewhere near the Colonel's elbow; and in passing through defiles he was always behind the last half-company, ostensibly to spur on stragglers, but thinking of himself really—and thinking of Devonshire and how to get back there alive.

He thought that a man who had served his country and his regiment faithfully for four-and-twenty years, and who was time-expired before the campaign really started, had a right to pick the safest places for himself.

III

SO IT happened that when the regiment wound slowly through a long defile—so narrow that the flanking parties all but touched the column; so winding that company was out of sight of company, and the advance-guard might have been in Russia for all the rear-guard knew; so deep that the summit on either hand seemed more than a rifle-shot—Tom Taylor was the last man of the last company to enter it.

There was no one behind him but the rear-guard, two hundred yards away. And Taylor's were the sharpest pair of eyes that watched the ragged tops of the escarpments on either hand. The man who had tired himself relentlessly in shepherding the rank and file, and had taught even officers, and had brought the whole regiment thus far unscathed and fighting-fit, now used every nerve he had for self-protection. Each boulder that he passed was cover to hide behind should an unexpected enemy appear, each new jagged cut in the soaring sky-line was a possible hiding-place for hostile riflemen, and each new turning in the long defile ahead of him seemed in all likelihood a trap from which there would be no escape.

He was not in the least afraid, for fear had not been included in the list of kit and accouterment with which he had come into the world. If it had been, he would hardly have reached the rank he held. But he

was painfully aware of the risk of warfare in the Himalayas, and more and more homesick for his distant Devonshire, and grimly determined, if the gods of war would let him, to get back home to Devonshire alive and draw his pension.

So he tramped along behind the regiment with leaden footsteps, grumbling at the men for marching slowly, for that was his duty, but in secret thanking Providence for every stumble, and every unexpected halt that kept him for so much as a second a little farther from the zone of danger.

He had marched about a hundred paces into the defile, and the advance-guard of the column was far out of sight already somewhere among the devious windings on ahead of him, when a fusillade of rifle-shots rang out sharply. The sound came from nowhere near him, but he stepped behind a huge boulder instantly and listened—his eyes glancing ever and anon toward the entrance of the pass that was still within such easy reach of him.

The answer to the shots came promptly. He heard ten well-timed volleys, and judged by the volume of the sound that none but the advance-guard were engaged as yet. Then he heard shouted orders, that echoed and reëchoed down the rock-bound road and, clear and sweet above the volleys and the shouting, a single bugle-call.

"Advance?" he muttered. "The old man's mad! Orders were to get in touch, and we're in touch. The game is to get out o' this pass quicker'n lightning, and wait for the brigade!"

But, company by company, the men resumed the march and swung on into the narrow gorge, laughing, and singing comic songs. They were wild with excitement at the prospect of a scrap, and the only man in all the regiment who did not relish the advance was Taylor.

"Mad!" he kept muttering. "Mad as a coot!" as he trudged on in the rear with leaden footsteps.

It was still not fear that made a laggard of him; he had seen fighting to the northward of the Khaibar, and he knew the methods of the tribesmen, and knew the risk; he felt certain that very few men would get out of that pass alive should there happen to be marksmen hidden on the hill-tops, and Devonshire was tugging at his heartstrings; his time was up, and he meant to be one of the few.

BUT a shout came dancing down the line, a single shout, repeated many times, tossed backward from rank to rank; three or four words that grew louder and more distinct and louder as they neared him. He knew what they were before he actually heard the purport of them, but he tried hard to deceive himself, and hoped, and shut his ears. They referred to the senior major possibly, or perhaps it was a joke in kitchen Hindustanee that the men were passing down the line.

He refused to listen until the message reached the last half-company, but then he had to listen for the men could see him and there was no means of escape.

"Colonel wants the sergeant-major! Send on the sergeant-major!"

The men had not the slightest inkling of his feelings. They just passed on the message, and watched to see him answer at the double.

But he still lagged, hoping vaguely that something might happen in the nick of time to interfere. He drew out his pipe and stepped back again behind the boulder, and began to light it. But the files beside him stared in wonder, and he had to remember what his rank was, and what was the example he must set.

"Hear that, sergeant-major? The Colonel wants you in front!"

It was an officer who told him that time, so there was nothing for it but to slip the pipe into his haversack and obey. He bent forward, more to hide the emotion that he feared was showing on his face than to ease himself, and broke into a jog-trot, holding his sword still with his left hand to keep it from tripping him.

"Here he comes! He's coming! Here he comes!"

The message danced back again from lip to lip along the line, and heads turned to look for him. He would have felt important and have rather liked it a year or less ago, but now he felt much as the gladiators must have done when the Roman crowds roared an ovation at their entry.

The regimental funny-man marched with the middle company. He craned his neck and saw the sergeant-major running with his head bent down toward his chest. Something in the situation struck him as incongruous and he started to sing:

"'I'm coming, I'm coming, for my head is bending low!'"

The whole column roared with laughter, and took up the refrain and thundered the time-worn chorus until the hills resounded with it. And Taylor cursed them as he ran. And then he heard more rifle-shots away on in front of him, and a volley or two that answered; and he cursed still more fervently. Devonshire and its sunlit fields and meadows seemed to be receding farther and ever farther away from him as he passed the singing, laughing companies at the slowest jog-trot he could command.

The distance to where the Colonel was seemed all too short, although the column was stretched out over a mile or more. He reached him almost before he had had time to get command over his features and hide his feeling of discontent beneath the regulation mask of iron rigidity, and he found him sitting on his charger, peering at the hill-tops overhead through binoculars.

He saluted, and the Colonel nodded. Since the campaign started they had reached a stage that verged very close on intimacy, and the Colonel treated him with all the respect that was due to a commissioned officer, omitting nearly all formality.

"What d'you make of this, Taylor?" he asked. "Weren't you here on the last campaign?"

"I was, sir. This ravine goes on for miles yet. It leads upward in a roundabout way to the table-land up above there," he answered, panting.

"What's up above there?" asked the Colonel, pointing with his bridle-hand to the crags that overlooked the gorge.

"Level ground, sir, more or less. Under favor, sir, we've got no business in here! The enemy can enfilade us—they can run along the top there on either hand and shut us in completely. There ought to be two regiments up there on each side before we try to force this pass!"

"Um-m-m! So you'd pull out, would you?"

"I would, sir, 'fore the enemy gets a chance to get behind us and it's too late. It's my belief we're too far ahead of the brigade."

"I think you're right. This place ought to be thoroughly reconnoitered first. Sound the 'Retire,'" he ordered.

BUGLE after bugle took up the refrain, and the advance-guard that had been firing volleys at unseen riflemen away in front, began to fall back in echelon. The companies that were farthest up the gorge halted and faced about, and the rear ones commenced to lead the way back to the entrance of the pass again.

The singing and the joking ceased, for the men realized that something in front was wrong, and three stretchers, bearing things on them that neither moved nor spoke, passed rearward. Stretchers mean nothing in the heat of battle, but before the battle starts the effect of them is chilling. For a minute there was nothing to be heard but the tramp of nearly a thousand men that echoed from cliff to cliff.

Then a shot was fired from a neighboring hill-top, and the senior major fell! The shot was followed by a boulder that came tumbling and leaping and crashing down the cliff side, and plowed a way through the ranks of the leading company.

Then from every nook and cranny of the hills on either hand there broke loose pandemonium! Flames spurted out as though the cliff-tops were on fire, and the *crack-ak-ak* of two thousand picked *jezails* echoed and rattled and dinned from crag to crag until the long defile resounded like devils' anvils when they forge hell's thunderbolts.

"Retire! Sound the double!"

The Colonel's voice was drowned beneath the roar and rattle of the attack, but Taylor heard it, and he grabbed a bugler and bellowed in his ear. The bugler did his utmost, and sent out a blast of music that cut through and quivered above the turmoil. Bugle after bugle answered him; the leading companies broke into a double and crowded on the ones behind, and then all hell was loose—a shouting, stampeding, struggling, cursing, blood-bespattered hell, made horrible by mocking Afghan laughter and the piercing war-cries of an unseen enemy!

"Taylor," roared the Colonel, "cut down the line, and hurry on the rear companies! Quick, man! Clear the road for the love of God! Get 'em moving!"

Taylor wasted no time on a salute. He had his orders and his orders suited him. He bent forward again and began to run, and then pushed and kicked and pulled his way through the struggling mass of infantry that blocked the road between him and the entrance to the gorge. Devonshire was growing nearer now—nearer with every footstep that led him rearward, away from

the whining bullets and the mocking, bloodthirsty Afghans who sped them. The hell behind him, and the cries of stricken men meant nothing to him now; it was nothing that the leading company of the finest infantry in India was writhing helpless in a shrieking shambles. Ahead lay Devonshire.

His orders were to hurry to the rear and clear the pass for a retreat; so he hurried. He pushed and shoved and struggled through the crowd of stampeding men in front of him, and ran.

He ran so quickly that he stumbled and fell down headlong. And when he rose to his feet again he turned and looked. As he looked, the Colonel took his death-wound, and fell forward, bleeding, on his charger's neck. The pass behind him was like a shambles, with dead and wounded men scattered up and down the length of it, and in front of him the way was blocked by other men who crowded on one another, and swore, and milled like a mob of steers.

He had to get through that crowd to Devonshire. He seized one man by the collar to drag him backward and clear a way for himself. He let go of him again, and looked once more backward. Devonshire seemed somehow less worth while. It was his regiment that was being butchered—his Exmoors! It was the regiment that he and his dead Colonel had labored over for year after long-drawn year, through Indian hot weather and sickly season and all the trials that face a regiment in India. Each single man of it had come from Devonshire—not he alone. He had his orders; and without a shadow of a doubt he could force his way through to the rear and safety, but—honor or—— Why, honor!

IV

IT WAS a madman, or a sergeant-major who resembled one, who seized the nearest bugler and dragged him backward by the collar of his tunic, and shook him into understanding.

"Sound the rally!" he ordered. "Blow, —— you, blow!"

At that point the cliff on the regiment's right hand sloped downward at a lesser angle; the side of it was not so steep, and there seemed at some time to have been a land-slide there, for at the bottom of it was a pile of earth and rock and crumbled shale that a dozen men might stand upon where the top of it leaned against the cliff. He dragged the bugler, resisting and complaining, to the summit of the ridge, and cuffed him into acquiescence.

"Now then, sound the rally again! Blow, can't you! That's it! Now again, and louder!"

Again and again the clear notes of the bugle rang out above the turmoil, and the cliff sides echoed and reëchoed them. The officers heard it and, knowing that the sound came from in front, supposed that the Colonel ordered it.

Sharp reiterated orders answered it, and slowly and uncertainly the leading companies faced about, their officers behind them. They faced the stricken bend in the defile where half a company writhed or lay still in death, and turned to run again, and as they turned they saw the sergeant-major. He still held the bugler by the tunic, and once more the rally ripped out its inspiration down between the echoing cliffs.

"Form up, men of Exmoor!" he thundered at them.

Then he stood on the mound and watched them as they got their dressing, and the shoulder-to-shoulder touch as they faced him somehow restored their confidence. He glanced once to where the leading company still writhed under the hail of Afghan lead, and the men's eyes turned and followed his. Then he looked up, to where the beetling crag above him cut the sky-line, and out licked his sword, and once again his deep-chested, bellowing voice thundered out an order:

"Up, men of Exmoor! Up, and follow me!"

He sprang upward from rock to rock, dragging the bugler after him, and ever and anon pausing on some ledge of rock to make the bugler rip out the notes of the "Charge." A roar went up beneath him that told of nerves resteadied, and ambition reawakened, and a regimental spirit found again.

"Charge, men of Exmoor!" he roared at them.

Again the bugler sounded the well-remembered notes. And the roar swelled upward like the thunder of a flood, as four hundred deep-throated men of Devon seized on the spirit of the thing, and four full companies rushed like one man to the base of the cliff and struggled to be first to follow him.

Company by company, the men who blocked the entrance to the pass sensed the new enthusiasm and, turning, saw what was happening. They followed with a roar, until a regiment was swarming up the cliff, its officers behind or in among the men or anywhere, but led by a sergeant-major.

THERE was not a man of them but obeyed his voice and followed him by instinct. He had drilled and damned and taught them from the day they joined, and he had never failed them. Some of their officers were new, and all were strangers to them whom they did not understand; they understood the sergeant-major. He had shepherded them until the very sight of him or the sound of his voice restored their confidence. So, when he called on them, they came.

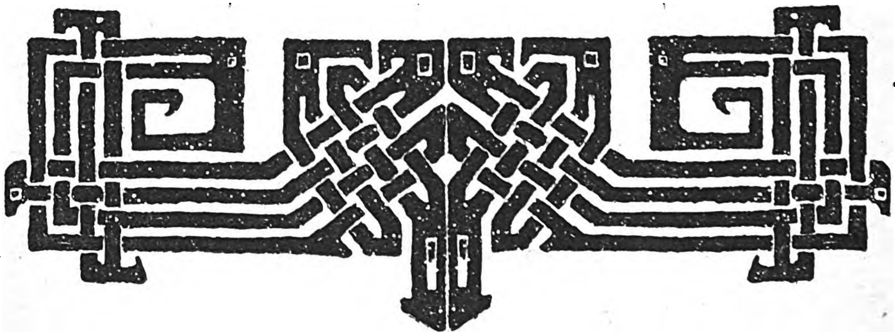
They came with a rush, as the men of Devon used to do when Drake and Raleigh called on them. They swarmed up the cliff-side as the boarding parties did up the sides of towering Spanish galleons, and though the Afghans rolled down boulders on them and withered them with hail after hail of lead, and though the first ones met their deaths at the point of Afghan *tulwars* and their bodies were sent hurling down on the heads of the swarm below, they stuck to the climb and raced for the top, and reached it, spurred on—dragged on—stung to amazing effort by the voice of the sergeant-major!

"Up, men of Exmoor! Up, and follow me!"

They followed him just where he chose to lead them. And he led them to the cliff-top, and reformed them, and put the Afghans to the rout.

WHEN the slow-marching brigade at last reached the long defile, it marched through it unopposed, and as it reached the center of the pass, each regiment in turn came to the salute and marched in silence; it is a way they have of honoring an army's dead. There was a mound beside the roadway—one more mound to mark the edge of Empire, and the crimson cost of it.

And up above the mound, standing out clear and sharp against the skyline, was the six-foot cairn of stones that marked Tom Taylor's resting-place. The Fates had denied him Devonshire to lay his bones in, for the lion heart of him and his love of honor had overcome his fixed desire. He had gone on to certain death when safety was in reach of him, and the Fates give a man like that his dues. So he lived and he died like a soldier!



THE PURPLE FLAME

by Frederick Irving Anderson

AT THREE o'clock in the afternoon Mr. Homer Jaffray cleared his desk for the day and announced to his secretary that he would take the 3:30 train for Waverly. The announcement was not of seeming importance, but he repeated it as though to himself, as he sat gazing absent-mindedly out over the tall roof-tops whose gay plumes of condensing steam told of the clear cold day outside.

There was nothing unusual in his manner, even to the keen eyes of his secretary, who was almost his second self. To look at the dull, pallid face that hung wedge-shaped under the bulging dome of the head, to listen to the crisp, incisive voice, no one, not even his most intimate friend—if this man owned to such—would have suspected that the events of five years had been slowly pyramiding themselves into an apex for this moment. Such was the fact; yet now Jaffray, to whom the next few hours meant life or death, sat idly twirling the ratchet of his watch as he gave a few parting instructions to his assistant.

Before closing his desk he selected a cigar and filled his case from a box in a drawer. From another drawer, which he unlocked, he took a paper of matches that bore the advertisement of his tobacconist. He examined the paper critically as though it were the most important thing in the world at that moment—as indeed it was.

As he bit off the end of his cigar and struck a light, he eyed his secretary sharply as though he were about to address him and were framing his words. But he said nothing. Instead he turned his attention to the match. The match burned out in his fingers, and he tossed it away without lighting his cigar. As he climbed into his greatcoat, he said,

"You will see that the cost-lists of the Class 'B' ultramarines are made up and ready for me the first thing in the morning. Wire Carson in Pittsburgh to pare his estimate another five per cent. if he thinks it necessary. Tell him I leave it to his judgment entirely."

At the door he turned, taking his unlighted cigar out of his mouth, and sniffed the air.

"Is it my imagination, John—or do you too detect an acrid odor in the air?"

The secretary coughed slightly.

"There is something, sir," he said. "It rather irritates my throat. It is probably from the laboratory. Good-day, sir," he added hastily as his employer turned and started running for the elevator, shouting, "Down! Down!"

NINETY minutes later his train set Mr. Jaffray down at Waverly. He was the only passenger to alight; and he smiled to himself as he watched the receding tail-lights of the train. What he desired most of all in the business in hand was to leave a clear trail. And what could be more conspicuous than a solitary passenger alighting from a train at a lonely station?

He walked around the depot, a gaudy little structure of gingerbread pattern to match the mongrel architecture of this new suburb. The depot was deserted. Across the plaza stood a one-story building of field stone with a red-tiled roof, the office of the realty concern engaged in the exploitation of this community. Waverly was one of the so-called "restricted communities" where the party of the second part was provided with culture and gentility and Italian garden effects, along with water, gas and electricity, for a price.

It was rather a cheerless corner of the world at this time of year. A coat of snow covered the whole; the shrubbery and trees, shrouded in wrappings of straw and burlap against the icy wind that swept in from the Sound, described indefinite squares and figures-of-eight across the bleak landscape; and the only evidence of thoroughfares was the double row of gas-lamps that wound in and out among the boarded and darkened houses. Only a few lights glimmered here and there to break the gloom; for most of the residents had fled to the warmth of steam-heated flats at the first rising of Winter.

"Can you tell me if Mr. Potter is at home?" he asked of the young man who greeted him as he entered the real-estate office.

"Yes, sir; he came down on the one-o'clock train."

"Can I get a conveyance to take me to his house?"

"It is only a ten-minute walk, sir," said the young man. Through the window he pointed out a structure that stood apart from the others and showed, even in the gloom, a more pretentious exterior than its neighbors. But Jaffray pleaded a fallen arch, saying he feared he would find the combination of snow and ice and the uncertain going too much for him, and the young man called a carriage by telephone.

Jaffray, idling the interim, put a question or two, and the all-seeing eye of the apprentice recognizing this man as a person of affairs, began to talk volubly of the plans and prospects of the Waverly Realty Corporation, and the exceptional advantages it offered a city business man seeking the much desired privacy and at the same time the refined surroundings, etc., etc. Jaffray smiled indulgently, nodding his head occasionally as the talker nailed down his points here and there.

"Let me send you our literature," suggested the young man as the carriage drew up to the door and Jaffray drew on his gloves.

Jaffray shrugged his shoulders indefinitely; but as the other pressed him, he took a card from his case and handed it to him, with a good-natured smile.

"Does this Mr. Porter live alone?" he asked.

"Mr. Potter," corrected the other. "Yes, sir. He is the secretary of the corporation—oh! you are Mr. Homer Jaffray," he broke in as he read the card. "I know you through a cousin of mine employed in your color-works. Would you mind, Mr. Jaffray," he asked ingenuously, "merely mentioning to Mr. Potter that I spoke to you of the Waverly proposition?"

Jaffray bent on him his lean, dry smile.

"You have my permission," he said, "to tell Mr. Potter that you interested me exceedingly."

A FEW minutes later he drew up at the curb, paid off the driver generously, and presented him with a cigar. He mounted the steps and rang the bell, and a maid-servant admitted him to the library, a long low room whose polished floor and waxed roof-beams reflected the light of the wood-fire burning on the hearth.

He arranged himself with his back to the fire so that his face was entirely in shadow; and when Potter entered, bustling with the made-to-order assurance of his profession—for he was the resident manager—Jaffray did not stir, but watched him intently from under the cornice of his heavily shaded eyebrows.

He had not sent in his card purposely. Potter, he knew, would be accustomed to meet all manner of persons at his home without stopping on formalities, especially during these days of the active exploitation of the Waverly project, and Jaffray had counted on the natural easy inclination of a man without a family turning his home into an office. Thus he came face to face with the man he had set out so ostentatiously to meet—ostentatiously to every man in his path with the single exception of Potter.

Potter took in the outline of his visitor

with a sharp glance, a glance keen and penetrating from long training; but the indefinite outline of a figure with only the dull background of the fire, and no other reflections than those of the falling Winter evening, suggested nothing familiar. Jaffray smiled to himself. Still he said nothing.

Potter touched a button to turn on the electric lights, mouthing an easy apology the while for the carelessness of his servant in leaving him in the dark. As he turned and faced Jaffray, he stopped abruptly and stared. He took a step backward, and one hand went involuntarily to his brow.

"Homer Jaffray!" he cried, his breath catching at his throat.

Jaffray nodded, his eyelids closing and opening with the bobbing of his head like those of a mechanical doll tipped over backward.

"Yes," he repeated, "Homer Jaffray."

Jaffray studied the face. His eyes marked the fleeting emotions written there—surprise, hatred, fear. Potter moved slowly across the room, his hand before him, he steadied himself on the arm of his chair before sitting down. He avoided the malignant eyes that followed him.

"I have been expecting this moment—for five—years!" he said haltingly, as he stared at the table.

Then he opened a drawer and took out a revolver and laid it before him. The touch of the steel seemed to infuse new life into him, for he raised his eyes to meet those of the other.

"Sit down," he said, not loud, but with a suggestion of asperity.

Jaffray took the chair opposite.

"We are men," said Potter, studying the other as though trying to divine his thoughts. "We can talk it over calmly."

Jaffray made no response, but stared at the other with eyes so hard and cold that Potter dropped his gaze and let it wander to the fire. And thus, for a full minute while the mantel clock ticked, these two men sat silent and tense.

POTTER was the first to stir. He turned and took a cigarette from a tray (a movement the other followed greedily) and began rolling it absent-mindedly between his palms. The act in another man might have meant nonchalance, contempt, bravado. Stupidly, as though his thoughts were miles away, he searched his pockets for a match. Jaffray leaned forward with a quick movement, handing him his paper of matches.

"Permit me," he said with his easy though elaborate courtesy.

Potter started and brought his eyes back with an effort. He looked questioningly at the other, but said nothing as he took the proffered matches and struck a light, inhaling deeply as he held it to his cigarette.

Five minutes passed, during which Jaffray, his elbows on the arms of his chair and his head sunk between his shoulders, watched the other through half-closed eyelids. He reached over quietly and picked up the revolver. It was an automatic weapon, potential with quick, sure death. He threw over the cap and saw that the magazine contained a full clip of cartridges. It was still greasy with vaseline, this hair-trigger engine of destruction.

He replaced it in exactly the same spot where it had lain and, walking to the window, he raised the sash probably four inches, letting in a draft of cold air. Closing it again, he studied the thermometer on the wall, as the mercury slowly climbed back to normal. He picked up several pieces of paper that the draught had blown about the room, and when everything was in order again he gave his attention to Potter.

POTTER'S feet were drawn up under his chair, his knees wide apart; his head had fallen back and his gaze was fixed vacantly on the ceiling. Jaffray exposed one eyeball and pressed it with his finger. He felt for the pulse at the wrist and put his ear to the chest. All the while he was thinly smiling, even when the eyes stared at him. He touched the bell and stepped into the hall, drawing the door shut behind him.

"Your master is ill," he said to the startled maid-servant. "Seriously ill, I am afraid. A good deal depends on your promptness. Go at once for the nearest doctor."

Her eyes and mouth opened simultaneously. Before she could exclaim, however, Jaffray seized her shoulders and turned her right-about-face, saying sharply,

"Hurry, there is not a moment to lose!"

"A very capable woman," he said to himself as she suited the action to the word and dashed out of the house, hatless and coatless.

Five minutes later, when he was still considering the coolness of this female person, he heard steps outside, and he left off strumming his fingers on the table to open the door. A young doctor entered and Jaffray pointed to the huddled figure in the chair without a word. The doctor exclaimed in surprise, and leaned over the figure as he unbuttoned his ulster and drew off his gloves.

With one hand free he picked up Potter's right arm by the wrist, with his finger on the pulse. Between the fingers of the dead hand was the cigarette still burning, mute evidence of how shortly life had fled. With a grimace he took the cigarette from the livid fingers, and looking oddly at Jaffray, he straightened up. Jaffray compressed his lips, but said nothing. He was not interested in abstractions, however weird they might be.

"I happen to be the coroner," said the doctor, laying off his coat. "My name is Jevons," and he looked inquiringly at Jaffray.

"I am Mr. Homer Jaffray, of 1628 William Street," said Jaffray, producing his card.

"Ah, indeed," said the doctor-coroner. "I know you—or at least I know your firm, as I occasionally get supplies through them. This is rather an awkward situation for you, Mr. Jaffray," he added, assuming an official tone. "We officials grow rather callous to this kind of thing," he said, jerking his head over his shoulder at the chair, "but there are certain formalities that have to be gone through with. I will telephone the police, if you will excuse me a moment."

He went to the hall to telephone, and Jaffray heard him say:

"I think you had better come right over here, Carson, and we can clean it up in a jiffy."

The doctor stopped to question the maidservant, whose frightened face appeared at the turn of the hall; and then he came back into the room, rubbing his hands to restore their circulation.

"Will you tell me just what occurred, Mr. Jaffray?" he said. "If I am not mistaken you have a medical training. Quite good. That will simplify matters considerably."

JAFFRAY related tersely the circumstances. They had no especial significance, explained nothing. Potter was in the act of lighting a cigarette. He was alive one second, dead the next, that was all. Jaffray had noticed no premonitory symptoms, no spasms, no coughing. In fact he had just come into the room. The face was rather livid. It suggested congestion, did it not? Possibly a blood clot.

"It is indeed most singular," said the doctor. "He had no heart trouble, although he smoked too much by far—had the infernal cigarette habit. I was his physician—had been in fact since he came here two years ago. He was in robust health—lived out a good deal."

He was plainly puzzled, but ventured the opinion that an autopsy would clear the situation.

"You were his friend?" he asked, looking up from his examination of the dead man. "I was rather intimate with him, but I never heard him speak your name. You were his friend?"

"No," said Jaffray.

"An acquaintance, then?"

"Hardly that."

"What brought you here? I am sorry, but you will have to answer some questions."

"I understand," said Jaffray, nodding.

He hesitated as if in doubt how to frame his words.

"Well," said the doctor impatiently.

Jaffray pointed to the revolver.

"Yes, you have already noticed it, I see," he said quietly. "If you wish to know how I felt toward him, you will understand when I say that if the hand of God had not intervened, still one of us would never have left this room alive!"

He turned a look of slow-burning hate at the figure in the chair. The doctor sniffed and looked uneasily about him.

"You are probably surprised at my—at what you choose to interpret as my lack of—respect, for the dead. I can save both you and myself trouble by frankness. It would be idle to show feeling, or to attempt to disguise the situation from the eyes of the police. Listen. I had sufficient and just motive to desire this man's death. And it was sufficient to make me jealous of the Divine Providence that has taken the task from me!"

"Oh, I say——" began the doctor.

Jaffray cut in on him sharply.

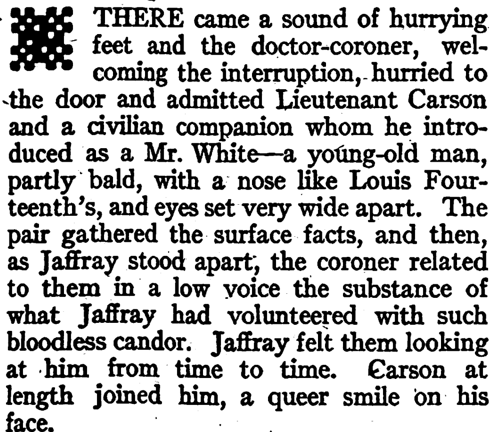
"Hear me out," he said. And then, "He took my wife from me—and thrust her

aside! She killed herself three months after——"

"I think," interrupted the doctor, rubbing his hands together nervously, "that it is rather ill-advised for you to run on like this."

He paused, embarrassed.

"On the contrary," said Jaffray, "there is no other course open. However, there is only one other thing, and you as a county official, I think, should hear it." He wetted his lips. "I lost track of this man Porter—or Potter as he called himself here—but a strange chance brought us together. He had a great many irons in the fire, as you probably know. One of his investments had to do with an anilin process for which the Ætna Company holds the patent. It happens that I am the Ætna Company. He did not know it; else—" he smiled grimly—"I do not believe he would have involved himself in the litigation to test the Ætna's rights. I, myself, was in ignorance of his true identity until my lawyers brought the information to me."



THERE came a sound of hurrying feet and the doctor-coroner, welcoming the interruption, hurried to the door and admitted Lieutenant Carson and a civilian companion whom he introduced as a Mr. White—a young-old man, partly bald, with a nose like Louis Fourteenth's, and eyes set very wide apart. The pair gathered the surface facts, and then, as Jaffray stood apart, the coroner related to them in a low voice the substance of what Jaffray had volunteered with such bloodless candor. Jaffray felt them looking at him from time to time. Carson at length joined him, a queer smile on his face.

"Your attitude is rather unusual, to say the least," he said. "However, that is your own concern. There seems no doubt that this man Potter or Porter, or whoever he may have been, came to his death through purely natural causes, but an autopsy will settle that. You say that you are Mr. Jaffray, the color manufacturer. I will not detain you if you can identify yourself to my satisfaction. The fact that you take occasion to say that you would have done your utmost to commit murder, if Potter had not been so good as to shuffle off on his own accord, is nothing that concerns me. I take it that your mania does not extend beyond this man. It means nothing to me, except—if you will pardon me—to emphasize the fact that it takes all sorts of people to make up the world."

"I am afraid the coroner has put the wrong construction on my words," said Jaffray. "Believe me, I explained the situation to him solely for my own protection. If you find an investigation necessary, these facts—my mania, as you choose to call it—would be the first to come to light."

Jaffray looked at his watch.

"It lacks a quarter of six," he went on in a matter-of-fact voice. "My office force stays late the last three days of the month to get off the foreign mails. If you will take the trouble to call my secretary, you will find that I left the office for Waverly at three this afternoon. I came down on the 3:30 train, and I drove to the house in a carriage which the young man at the office was kind enough to summon for me."

"You seem to have blazed rather a clear trail," said Carson dryly. He made no attempt to conceal his instant dislike for this person. "I will telephone, as you suggest."

JAFFRAY followed him with his eyes as he left the room. His gaze came back to the doctor who had taken a seat at the table and was filling in his reports. There was an easy contempt in that look. The official scrutiny of these two was irritating, yet at the same time amusing to one who had come by so long a road to so satisfactory a conclusion. He dropped into a chair, his back to the room, and gave himself over to his thoughts.

He was dimly conscious of the huddled form. Something in him, a little higher than the animal, a little lower than the human, vibrated, and thrilled him with a pleasing sensation. It was appeased hunger—that was it. He had often wondered what it would be. He had never been afraid of losing control of himself. He was too sure of himself and his means for that.

But even the beginning, which had destroyed all sense of proportion for him, seemed now dwarfed into insignificance by the finale. It had all evolved step by step, like some intricate formula that had to do with the mysticism of number instead of the fatalism of events. Through it all there had been that dull, gnawing something. And now it was gone. His blood ran cold and placid again, his thoughts

flowed crystal clear. The very air he breathed was sweet and pure once again.

Carson's step aroused him from his reverie. Carson was satisfied with the investigation he had made by wire.

"I will not detain you, Mr. Jaffray," he said curtly. "You may consider yourself fortunate, however, because the average man in my situation would have clapped you behind the bars for your impertinence, if for nothing else."

Jaffray turned to hide the flush he felt mounting to his temples. He picked up his hat and coat, saying,

"If anything develops in which I can be of service to you, you can reach me by telephone either at my home or my office."

He nodded curtly to the room and was starting out when he was interrupted by White, the civilian onlooker.

"Just a moment, Mr. Jaffray," said White in a high, thin voice. "Just a question or two. You have half an hour for your next train."

Jaffray turned and eyed White questioningly. He had hardly noted his presence before. Now he noticed with a slight start that White had been interesting himself in the effects of the dead man, and had gathered on the table a collection of odds and ends such as one might find in any man's pockets.

"I didn't catch your name," said Jaffray.

"White."

"Of the police, I presume?"

"No. Newspaper," said White tersely.

Jaffray frowned. He had a contempt for the class.

"If there is anything you wish to ask me, lieutenant," he said, turning his back on White, "I shall be very glad to give you my time. Otherwise, I will be on my way."

"Who is your tobacconist, Mr. Jaffray?" asked White imperturbably, resuming his examination of his trifles. Jaffray was in the act of buttoning his coat. His lips curled in a sneer. He produced his cigar-case, from which he selected one cigar and handed it to White.

"I have to admit," he said, "that my dealings with your class are rather limited. However, I ought to know that cigars of course are usual. I am sorry you had to remind me. Permit me."

White took the cigar, and examined it critically.

"José Mendoza," he said, reading the name on the band. "And a very good tobacconist, I should say," he went on. "There is another formality—in dealing—with my class. Have you a match about you?"

THEN suddenly, to the amazement of the other two who stood by, watching White draw sparks from the cold-blooded Jaffray, Jaffray lost control of himself. He glared at White, pale with rage. The muscles of his face began to work convulsively. He launched bitter invectives against the scavenger press and the meddling minions whose callous sensibilities stopped them at no outrage. Carson and the doctor stared in astonishment. White waited until the spasm had passed, and said,

"A match—like this, sir—if you please."

He held up a half-burned match, which he had found in the dead man's fingers.

"I can help you out with a light, White," said the doctor. "And what's more, I won't quarrel with you about it either."

"Thanks," said White. "I think Mr. Jaffray will oblige."

"You impertinent puppy!" cried Jaffray, striding toward the door. Carson blocked his progress at a sign from White. The police lieutenant was in the dark, but he was well enough acquainted with his friend White and his methods to follow his lead blindly and ask questions afterward.

"Stand aside, you!" snarled Jaffray, glaring at Carson; and the lieutenant answered by shutting the door and pocketing the key.

"This begins to look interesting," he said; and he walked to the table and selected a cigarette for himself. "Perhaps you will oblige me with a light, Mr. Jaffray."

"Does this mean that I am under arrest?" cried Jaffray.

The change that had come over him was pitiful to behold. His cool well-poised insolence seemed demolished at one blow. His eyes lost the veil that had given his face so dull an expression; and he turned from one to the other of the three men who were now watching him intently. The effect of this sudden development on Carson was electric. The situation was blank to him. Yet a cord had snapped, somewhere.

For fully a minute the scene was set

thus, Jaffray motionless except for the convulsive breathing that heaved his body, and the others watching.

Then Jaffray's eyes wavered, but he brought them back instantly. A shade of color crept into his cheeks. It was a signal for White to step forward with soft tread, holding out his hand.

"If you please," he said, his gray eyes flickering as the only indication that he appreciated the situation his simple request had conjured up.

Jaffray drew a long breath. He had himself in hand again. He produced a paper of matches and handed them to White.

"José Mendoza, eh?" said White, as he examined the advertisement stamped on each stick. "A very good tobacconist."

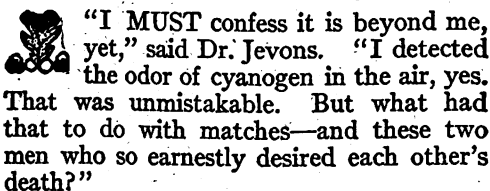
He tore off a match and struck it and raised it to his cigar, watching its purple flame. He turned his eyes and encountered those of Homer Jaffray, tense and staring.

"You seem—fascinated—Mr. Jaffray," said White.

The match burned out in his fingers and he flung it away and lighted another, still eying Jaffray. The second burned down to his fingers and he flung this one away.

"Do you detect a peculiar odor—in the room—doctor?" he asked suddenly, turning to Jevons and sniffing.

A gasping cry escaped Jaffray. Before any one could move to block him he had reached forward and seized the weapon that lay on the table, and thrusting the muzzle in his mouth, he pulled the trigger!



"I MUST confess it is beyond me, yet," said Dr. Jevons. "I detected the odor of cyanogen in the air, yes. That was unmistakable. But what had that to do with matches—and these two men who so earnestly desired each other's death?"

"This is the match," said White, "that I found—in Porter's fingers. It had scarcely begun to burn, when his hand fell, extinguishing it. Do you see those tiny crystals—just beyond the burned rim? I don't know what they are. But I never saw them on a match before. Did you? Now, do you see—that blue discoloration on the match-stick? Prussian blue—I should say, eh? And the flame—it was a rich purple."

"Gad!" exclaimed the doctor, the chemist in him coming to the fore. "But how did you know?"

"I searched Porter's pockets—and I couldn't find—another match like that. Jaffray must have given it him; see? When I asked him for a light—he knew—the jig was up. Did you see him—study our faces? He wondered—how much we knew. He wasn't sure—so he took a long chance—and handed me the matches."

"I don't catch the drift," said the unimaginative police official.

"I will make a guess," said White. "Jaffray was a chemist. It was easy enough to strip the paste—off a bunch of matches—and substitute another paste—of his own compounding. Something like cyanid of mercury in it—I should say. Heat applied to cyanid of mercury—evolves cyanogen—the deadliest of gases. One good whiff—the breath, for instance, of a confirmed cigarette-smoker—like Porter here, and—well, you see Porter."

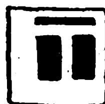
"And he offered you a light!" said the policeman. "I am mighty glad he didn't select me! Now I understand why he watched you like a bird watching a snake."

"You can hold your autopsy," said White, "but I don't believe you will find anything—except possibly a trace of gas—in the lungs. That match was the thing. If it had burned up—as it should have done—Jaffray would have been on his way—back to town—by this time. Poor devil! I wonder—if that was true—about his wife?"

"BLACK" MORTON, BUCCANEER

The Freeing of the French Prisoners

by Leonard Matters

HEOPHILUS H. MORTON, better known in the South Seas a quarter of a century ago as "Black" Morton, had a fixed notion when he slipped out of Savaii with a full cargo of the best copra that an island king was ever buncoed out of, and incidentally omitted to pay his port dues, that he could make 'Frisco without trouble and with much profit. And it was just this latter little omission that led to his tying up on the other side of the Pacific instead. True, it is only incidental to the story that remains to be told; but the episode may as well be chronicled.

Morton had many outstanding vices, all of which were more or less essential to controlling a mixed crew in the South Seas, and carrying on a trade not considered legitimate even in the loosely administered island possessions of the powers, but profanity could not be charged among them, although his language on occasion came as near it as was fitting in a man who, in his regenerate days, was a foundation member of the Rockbound Waterlily Baptists, back in Astoria, Oregon.

So when Theophilus H. Morton, owner and master of the smart topsail schooner *Harriet Constance*, found himself headed off by a stub-nosed, barge-beamed, hiccoughy German gunboat, which came sneaking round the north end of the principal island of German Samoa just as the schooner had finished a wearying beat up to the open water, where lay the course to San Francisco, Black Morton did not actually swear, but what he said was so near it that we need not quarrel over the difference.

In a moment of mental aberration, for which he would never forgive himself as long as he roved the seas, he had overlooked the fact that Savaii was in telegraphic communication with the little coaling-station on the north end of the island, where the gunboat *Condor* grew a fine crop of weeds on her bottom, while her commander swilled cool lager ashore with Herr Grosse. Morton's vessel was bucking a head wind and sea to get into open water when the *Condor* coaled, got steam up, and came out just at the right moment to intercept him.

It was Bill Tompkins, the mate, who first sighted her, and when he called Morton on deck, it didn't take that discerning creature long to know what the steamer

wanted. He had a brain-storm, but he saw clearly enough what capture meant.

"Darn and doggast him! The dirty shovel-nosed sauer-krauter!" was the least emphatic of his remarks. "Thinks he's got me for sure. Well, I guess I'll just show him Theophilus H. don't attach himself to the tow-rope of any Dutch mud-barge. No, sir! All hands 'bout ship! Jump to it, you swabs! Sta'b'd helum! You there at the wheel! Skin yer eyes, you slab-sided, splay-footed farmer! Steady now! Square away!"

The booms shot across with a jerk, as the smart little vessel came round on her foot with a rush that would have pulled the sticks out of a less capably handled and taut craft, and the *Harriet Constance* squared away before a ten-knot breeze. Captain Morton spat into the boiling wake, and shook his fist at the gunboat from whose stumpy funnel the smoke came thicker and blacker.

"Close shave, Bill," he said, and apostrophizing the pursuing steamer, remarked, "Hang on, ye doggone coffee-pot, and bust yer biler! Guess I can keep this up longer'n you, and Sydney looks as good to me before the wind as 'Frisco into it."

BEFORE that breeze the schooner easily held her own with the wallowing gunboat. When Morton sent up every stitch of canvas he had, she simply walked away; by dusk the *Condor's* smoke was just a smudge on the horizon, and it had taken quite a lot of her coal to add that touch of shade to the seascape.

Either side of the Pacific was equally familiar to Morton, and at this time, with copra bringing the best price in ten years, and a nasty German gunboat standing between him and 'Frisco on the slow beat to windward, Sydney was attractive enough. Clearance papers? Well! Morton had a whole chest of them for use on all sorts of occasions. He had been "connected" with the island trade—this is the most non-committal way to put it—for well-nigh thirty years, and what his own resourcefulness hadn't taught him, he had picked up from others.

So that's how the *Harriet Constance* came to tie up at the Sugar Company's wharf at Circular Quay one bright morning in November, twenty years ago.

The skipper stepped ashore in his best rig, and, with his big buck teeth fastened like fangs in a spongy black cigar, walked round the Quay till he came to an ancient, convict-built shack, brushing disreputable shoulders with a bank on one side, and a shipping company's palatial offices on the other. Morton walked straight in, smote a thick-set, weather-beaten man of uncertain age between the shoulders, swung him round, and said,

"Shake, brother; glad to see you again."

"Spare me days, it's me ole pal Theophilus!" exclaimed the proprietor of the shack. "Where'd you spring from?"

"Yours truly," said the skipper, "has kinder busted all records to git here for a little trade with his old friend Sam House, and if the market in copra ain't kirflumixed while he's been knockin' corners off all the reefs between here and Samoa, why he's got five thousand dollars jest sweatin' to death in his holds. Anythin' doin'?"

"Leave it to me, Cap'n, leave it to me," replied House with a knowing look. "You're here at the best time. Copra's in demand, and I dare say, if I know anything, you've got the best to be had. What?"

"You betcha," Morton remarked with a smile, "and can you git me a cargo? Don't just hanker to stay in this locality too long. Little argument out in Samoa. Nothin' serious, Sam."

"Certain'y not, Cap'n. Cargo you want, eh? Well, there's a nice little charter for some one who ain't too particular, but maybe it won't suit you."

"Which is?" Morton asked.

"Passage for two foreign gents from New Caledonia to Shanghai, Sydney, 'Frisco, or anywheres else the Frenchies don't *allong* or *marchong*."

"Pass," was the laconic reply of the skipper. "I'm tradin', Sam, not advertisin' for more trouble."

"Just as I thought, Cap'n; but still, if you saw a thousand of the best—five thousand your money—walkin' about lookin' for an owner, would you pick it up, or would you——?"

"Would a shark eat pork, Sam? Put me wise, and lead me to it!"

"Spoken like a skipper and a man, Theophilus. Meet me here to-night and there'll be some one I can acquaint you with, and maybe business will be on," answered House.

MR. SAMUEL HOUSE had been a trader of more or less discredit and renown before he grew too rich and fat to kick obedience into a colored crew, and now he hung out the sign of respectability on Circular Quay, "Ship-Chandler and Cargo Broker." Under that sign he conducted a clearing-house for all the stolen pearls and contraband cargoes that came out of the South Seas. His ship-chandlery was really a bureau of information drawn upon by the Mortons and other similar characters who flourished at that time.

He and the skipper were old acquaintances, and there was nothing more natural than that Morton should seek him out when he blew into Sydney. House seemed to know all about the devious doings among the islands, and when he heard of an enterprise in which there was money to be easily made he did not hesitate to put the proposition up to the master of the *Harriet Constance*.

That night they sat together with a third man, in the little room back of the ship-chandler's office, and drank duty-free cognac and smoked "High Life in the East" cigars, the flavor of which had not been spoiled by a customs impost. The third man was unmistakably French, of military bearing, and called himself De Passey, though Morton would have taken any oath, from the blowing out of a match to a Scotch affirmation, that he had known him under another name up in Saigon.

"Let's get down to business, mister," said the Captain, after the Frenchman had put forward his scheme for the removal of certain prisoners from New Caledonia. "What's there in it—in dollars?"

"My sentiments exac'ly, Cap'n," House chimed in; "this is business if it's anythin'."

"I will pay, as I told Mr. House, five hundred pounds the day we sail from Sydney, and five hundred more when the two men are landed safely in any port which is not under French government," replied De Passey, who spoke perfect English. "I make all arrangements to have them aboard, and all you have to do is to transport them safely to any port to be named—Shanghai preferred."

"Now see here," interrupted Captain Morton, "if I'm goin' into the business of rustlin' political prisoners from New Caledonia, I name the place I rustle 'em to; and as I'm takin' the risk of losin' as fine a craft as ever flew Old Glory or any other flag that suited Theophilus H. Morton, I charge accordin' to expert advice and services rendered."

"Well, Captain, what is your plan?" the Frenchman asked quietly.

"You get the men, and I'll get 'em away," answered the skipper. "If we ain't shot full of holes by the fort, but get away all right, and run for Shanghai, it's good-by, Mary. We'd jest about be in sight of the Yaller Sea when we'd meet a whole fleet waitin' to escort us in. Yep, and not let us out, which don't quite suit me. Goin' to 'Frisco would be breedin' trouble too. Figure it out, Sam. 'Lowin' we make Noumea day after the mail-steamer leaves for Sydney, and get away three days later, and ain't chased, we can make Sydney inside of twenty days—fifteen if the wind is right—and yours truly will be away again before the steamer gets back to the island to learn what's happened while she's been gone.

"Guess my schooner can pass the tow-rope to anythin' that tries to sail after us. But if we try 'Frisco or Shanghai it's goin' to be fifty or sixty days' sail, and we'd jest git there ten days after everybody in the aforesaid ports had the news by cable. And I don't let some people I know have the laugh on their Uncle Theophilus as easy as that."

The Frenchman was puzzled and annoyed.

"See here, my sweet-smellin' Christian friend, and no offense meant," continued Morton, "we can make Sydney a week before the people in New Caledonia get to the business end of a deep-sea cable. We can't do that if we try Shanghai or 'Frisco, because they're just twenty days too fur for us. Savee?"

House looked at the skipper with admiration in his eyes, and refilled his glass, while the wisdom of the skipper's argument sank into the Frenchman's brain.

"Ah, I see," he said slowly. "Very good, Captain. It shall be as you say. What is your price, and when can you sail?"

"I don't risk the liberty of any son of Uncle Sam, to say nothin' of the schooner, for a cent under six thousand dollars, and if that's agreeable, I can sail as soon as House can get my cargo out, and find me another to justify me in lookin' in at Nou-

mea. I dare say they'll be glad to see me if they've forgotten a visit I paid 'em in the *Comet*, but they won't believe I'm a millionaire on a pleasure-trip. Sam, when does the next French mail-boat happen?"

"Just a week from to-day, Cap'n."

"That so? Then what's your answer, Mr. De Passey?" said the skipper.

"I accept your terms, Captain," replied the Frenchman.

"Good for you. Then, Sam, we'll just yank that copra out at once, and you git me a shipment of gunny-sacks, which I reckon they'll buy up to New Caledonia for packin' nickel ore in. Looks kinder proper to make port with the right freight, and"—in a whisper to House—"sacks is good business up there."

"The very identical thing I thought of, Cap'n," the old trader replied. "I can put you right on to that."

"Well, I calculate that's all there is to it, gents. Nothin' in writin': Party of the first part (which is me) agrees with party second part (which is De Passey), for valible consideration and one dollar in hand paid (fork over, mister) to give passage to two gents (names unknown) from Noumea to Sydney; said gents to be provided by party second part, and delivered in good condition on board the schooner *Harriet Constance.*"

Morton rattled it off as though he were running over a legal document, and did not fail to collect five shillings in lieu of a dollar, to clinch the bargain. The three men then quietly discussed the venture. De Passey studiously avoided being definite as to his own interest in the affair, but it was plain enough to the discerning brace of worthies with whom he was in treaty that he was the agent of a wealthy political party in France.

His mission was the release of two exiled political offenders who had been detected in one of the many conspiracies set afoot by the claimants to the rulership of France, and, provided with plenty of money for this purpose, he was ready for a desperate attempt to remove the men he wanted from the island which for years had been a convict settlement.

A previous visit had shown him that the prisoners worked practically unguarded in the nickel mines and quarries, from which a break was comparatively easy, but the difficulty lay in getting prisoners away from the island. With Black Morton, who was not easily deterred from any enterprise in which he saw money, De Passey felt that he had a strong ally, and he confidently counted on landing the men he wanted in a foreign port, whence they could make their way to Europe. The bargain now made, the scheme required only time and coolness to bring it to successful fruition. Morton yawned over the Frenchman's description of the exiles' quarters, and after another glass of House's cognac, rose, and concluded the conference.

FOR the next three days the crew of the schooner worked with feverish haste to get out the cargo of copra, for which House had found a ready market at the best price, and when the unloading was completed the schooner's holds were filled with bale after bale of sacks. Six days after her arrival in port, the *Harriet Constance* towed out to Sydney Heads, where House drew his share, by way of commission, from the gold paid over by the Frenchman, and after shaking hands with Morton, dropped over the side, and was rowed to the tug.

De Passey himself was not on the scene, as it was arranged that he should make the journey to the convict settlement in the French mail steamer *Ville de la Ciotat*, which would be in Noumea, and away again, a week before the schooner should arrive. Once clear of the Heads, the *Harriet Constance* reached out to sea and was lost to sight.

The days passed in a succession of uneventfulness, calm sailing on a placid sea of azure blue, with the skipper in sweet temper with himself and his crew. The schooner made long legs of each course, and on the tenth day out she crossed the track usually followed by the mail-steamer, and with a favorable wind followed it till the mate sighted the smoke of the *Ville de la Ciotat* as she came out of the west.

"Bill," said Morton after satisfying himself that it was the liner, "she'll hit Noumea day after to-morrow, and we'll make it a week later. Let's stick around here some; we've got to let her get away before we begin operations." And for the next day or so, the *Harriet Constance* lazily tacked backward and forward over the course taken by the mail-boat, all the time, however, drawing nearer the island. Morton timed

his arrival nicely, and stood in for the harbor just as the *Ville de la Ciotat* was coming out, ceremoniously dipping his flag to her.

Handling his ship like the master he was, he then ran straight in past the high, fortified headland and rounded up behind the peninsula which lies like a protecting arm across the otherwise open roadstead. As the open water came into view, a grunt of disgust issued from the skipper, for there, lazily swinging on her anchor, was a business-like steam sloop, with a long gun on her fore deck, a companion to it on her aft, and a brace of handy quick-firers on either broadside. She flew the tricolor, and Morton's curiosity as to her identity was not satisfied until he ran past her and read her name—*La Fantôme*.

"It's their new cruiser I heard about at Tutuila," he said to himself. "Snakes and little fishes, here's a raft of trouble for Theophilus H! That darned frog-eatin' hold-up never included the smoke outfit in his inventory of bother, or I'd have stuck him good and hard for another thousand liberties. This rustlin' business is goin' to be interestin', that's a cinch. How long's she goin' to hang round? Wonder what the mainspring's doin'?"

LATE that night, as the schooner lay snug at the little wharf, the skipper was quietly pacing the deck, biting reflectively on one of his poisonous cigars and thinking things out. The night was one of perfect tropical beauty, the atmosphere warm and clear, the sky fleckless and radiant. The soothing influence of the night and the juicy cigar put Morton in a cheerful mood, and he hummed a chanty as old as the first ship in time and tune, but somewhat revised as to words.

He stopped in his walk to consult his watch, and called the lookout to strike seven bells. The frizzle-haired Solomon Islander uncurled himself from a coil of rope on the foredeck, shuffled to the waist and obeyed the skipper's order. Morton listened mechanically to the echoing call from the war-ship, and was about to resume his march when he heard a noise on the wharf among the miscellaneous heap of cordage, cases, bales and reeking piles of island fruit, tumbled in confusion on the planking. He gazed intently in the direction whence the sound came, and with a smothered "Ah!" watched a figure sneak furtively from behind a big iron buoy and study the deck of the schooner.

Morton silently screened himself behind the mizzen and watched. The figure stepped cautiously out and, avoiding the path of light thrown by the hurricane lamp lashed to the mizzen shrouds, slipped quickly across the wharf and clambered over the schooner's rail. Then there was a pause, while a pair of eyes searched the entire length of the deck. The skipper felt for his revolver and waited. Creeping carefully, the interloper came opposite Morton's hiding-place. Like a flash the skipper's long, sinewy arm shot out and, grabbing the man by the back of the neck, he pressed the revolver against his captive's head.

"Keep still, you scut!" he whispered. "Who are you, anyway?" and dragging his victim round to the light, he beheld the startled face of De Passey.

"It's you, is it?" he cried in a tone of surprise. "I came darn near puncturing your hide, friend! What's this layout?" he asked, as he plucked at the torn and filthy clothes of the Frenchman.

"*Ma foi!*" exclaimed De Passey, releasing himself with a sigh from the grip of the big sailor. "You gave me a big fright, Captain, although I was looking for you. I had to come like this—quietly and without warning. Quick, let us go where we can neither be seen nor heard. Then I will explain."

Morton pointed to the companion, and leading the way, conducted De Passey to the fusty little cabin of the *Harriet Constance*. There the Frenchman recovered his composure, and in whispered tones told how he was being watched and had to guard against suspicion, which had led to his being spied upon.

"I have been recognized," said De Passey; "at least there is a man who thinks he knew me as an Orleanist; and though I have laughed it off, and shown my credentials, which they dare not question, they are still suspicious, and will not believe that I am just the idle traveler I say I am. There is a Captain Maillat who is determined to find out what I want here. When I left my room unlocked to-day, he went through my papers, but he got nothing for his pains. To-night, when I left the club I was followed to my hotel, and a watch was set; but they did not recognize Armand

de Passey in the rough man who came out through the kitchen. That is why you nearly, what you call, punctured me. I tell you, Captain, it is a risky game we are playing!"

"Seems like it, brother," Morton replied. "So the ducks don't jest like the look of you? Well, guess you ain't exactly an oil-painting at this moment; and, say, my friend, over in Sydney you kept a noisy silence about that fightin' outfit lyin' out there." The skipper jerked a thumb over his starboard shoulder. "Looks like this ain't goin' to be jest the little put-in-and-take-out affair we figured. Meanin' that battleship out there," he added by way of interpretation of his previous remarks.

"I did not know about her before," De Passey replied. "She came in yesterday from Papeete to look after poachers of shell."

"Yes, but when does she sail?" Morton asked impatiently.

"Not for a week at least, and we can get away before she is ready, and you must give her the slip. All my plans were laid before she came in, and they can not be altered," De Passey replied.

"That's your funeral, mister," the skipper said. "I can sail any old time, and as it's part of your performance to get your men on board, I'm not worryin' any. Jest interested."

The Frenchman pulled his mustache.

"I have arranged to get my friends away during Friday night. A guard is in our pay, and if you will be ready I want you to sail on Thursday night and wait for us at Point Eclaire with a boat. I will bring the men to the foot of the cliff, and we will be aboard before daylight."

"Couldn't be arranged better by a presidential reception committee, only there won't be a band and speeches," Morton said with a grin.

The Frenchman continued the recital of his plans, and said in conclusion,

"If all goes well, we will be away before any one knows how the prisoners have left the island; but if the *Fantôme* follows, I trust you, Captain, to get away from her. Will you be ready by Thursday?"

"Yours truly is a whale on punctuality," was the only reply the skipper made, as he rose to conduct his visitor from the cabin.

De Passey smiled, and mounted the companion. Before leaving the schooner he gazed cautiously out on the wharf and listened closely for any sound that might suggest the presence of a spy. Nothing was heard save the gentle lapping of the water among the piles and the scurrying of rats on the planking. Having satisfied himself that all was safe, the Frenchman slipped over the rail and disappeared as quietly as he had come, while the skipper went below and tumbled into his bunk.

THE next three days passed without a sign from the Frenchman. Morton attended strictly to the work of unloading his vessel, having disposed of his cargo of sacks. He quietly gained a lot of information regarding the movements of the war-vessel, and learned with satisfaction that she was not due to sail till a couple of days after his own contemplated departure. If there was any curiosity as to his future movements on the part of those port authorities who knew Morton by reputation, they got little result from their investigations.

He had brought a valuable cargo in; he wanted to take one out if he could get it, and his papers were all in order. Morton did not appreciate any one, authorities or others, prying too closely into his affairs. When his vessel had finished unloading, he decided to take a trip into the country; and, hiring a venerable hack, he was driven along the coast-line in the direction of Point Eclaire, passing on his way the big white-washed prison overlooking the quarries and the nickel mines. He carefully scrutinized the point where he was to pick up his strange passengers, if De Passey succeeded in getting away with them; and noted for future use a convenient landing-place at the foot of the cliff, free from surf breakers.

Returning to the town, he made inquiries in the least likely places to find one, for a cargo for any island port and was visibly disgusted when he failed to do business. Next day being Thursday, he announced his intention to quit port at once; and making his way to the office of the harbor-master, called for his clearance papers, boldly mentioning Sydney as his next port of call, at the same time voicing a forceful opinion about having to go away in ballast.

From the shipping-office Morton repaired to the wharf, and stood for a moment gazing at his schooner, which floated very light; but that fact occasioned him no concern, for

he knew she would probably need her light trim if by any chance he were chased and had to dodge among the reefs and shallows.

"She'll do," he muttered; "I'll fill her tanks if she wants it, but she won't;" and, satisfied with his inspection, moved to go aboard. As he did so a Japanese boy lounging against the rail caught his eye and tossed something to him. Morton caught it deftly, crushing it in his big fist as he went below. It was a note from De Passey, telling him briefly that everything had been arranged for the morrow, and the escapees would be at Point Eclaire before daylight. The skipper used the paper to light another big cigar, and told the mate to get a line and warp the schooner out to a buoy there to await a favorable breeze.

A couple of hours later, before a gentle land breeze, the *Harriet Constance* floated out of Noumea harbor, passing within a cable's length of *La Fantôme*, whose appearance betokened that she was not by a long chalk ready for sea.

"We'll stand right out before this breeze, Bill," said Morton, "and bring her round after dark."

"Ay, ay, sir."

"And, Bill, get the dingey ready; we'll want her before mornin'. Put the Winchester under the stern sheets; I'm goin' to turn in. Call me at ten o'clock."

WHEN the skipper came on deck again the schooner was already standing in for the land, with lights out, and the mate was carefully watching for shoal water. Morton picked up Point Eclaire toward midnight, and hove to within half a mile of the shore. Leaving the ship in charge of the mate, he called away the dingey, and was pulled ashore, landing at the very spot he had picked out on the coast during his visit of inspection.

The hours passed slowly without a sign from the Frenchman. Dawn was already breaking when the skipper called his crew, and, entering the dingey, stood off a couple of hundred yards, for he had no desire to be pounced upon by any prowling guards who might have been aroused by some mistake on the part of De Passey. Silently the buccaneer and his crew floated, just out of pistol-range of the shore. Morton had gazed at his watch and noted it was five o'clock, when the deep boom of a gun from the direction of the prison reached his ears, followed by the clanging of a bell.

"The performance begins," he said; "that sounds like a jail-break for sure. Guess that's our cue," he added as a revolver-shot sounded from behind the cliff. Ordering his crew to pull in, the skipper steered the boat for a landing-place afforded by a ledge of rock which jutted into water deep enough to float the dingey comfortably, yet half screening her from the shore.

He had hardly reached this point of vantage when he heard a cry from the top of the cliff and, looking up, he saw two men running at full speed down the little pathway, while a third, whom he recognized as De Passey, threw himself flat on the very summit of the cliff and emptied his revolver in the direction from which he had come. With a hoarse shout of pleasure the first two saw the boat and made for her. De Passey rose at the same moment and dashed frantically after his two companions.

At the same moment other figures appeared on the cliff. Morton, rifle in hand, sprang up to cover the retreat of the Frenchman, on whose heels a guard followed closely. De Passey was close on the boat when his pursuer stopped and took aim; but the skipper was too quick for him, and with a cry the guard pitched forward and lay still.

"In with you!" Morton cried, as De Passey, panting and exhausted, stood gazing in wonder while a volley of bullets whistled around the party. "Let's get out of this unhealthy latitude, or we'll be shot full of holes."

Dragging the Frenchman into the boat, he pushed her off, his crew straining at the oars and driving her at her best pace over the placid waters. Deterred by the fate of the more daring of their companions, the pursuing party held their position on the cliff and took pot-shots at the boat and her occupants, the bullets spouting little fountains of water all around.

"That's goin' some," Morton remarked quietly, as he stuck his finger in a hole in the gunwale through which a bullet had plugged its way. "Darned near pinked old Tanna here. Guess we've about lost that bunch back there, but we've got to hit out for other parts like a bat out of hell, or we'll go back to Noumea on the end of a tow-rope, and there'll be quite a lot doin' before we get out."

THE boat ran alongside and, almost before she was hoisted aboard, the mate had the *Harriet Constance* under way, reaching down the coast with a mild breeze on her quarter. Morton went below with De Passey and his companions, whose acquaintance he made over a meal of which they all seemed badly in need. From the Frenchman the skipper learned the story of the night's doings at the prison, and incidentally the explanation of the desperate fight for liberty, which had only narrowly succeeded.

As De Passey had feared, he had been recognized, and his movements watched by Maillat, a zealous Republican. Maillat had sensed that a prison break was to be attempted, but the steps to prevent it had not been taken till too late, although they had impeded the escape and led to the running fight from the prison to the cliff. De Passey was convinced that the hurried departure of the schooner had also been associated in the minds of the port officials with the plot.

"Well, that shouldn't give a brain-strain," the skipper interrupted, "and if that bunch of bad shots on the point had eyes, they could see this old gal footin' it away. I can jest see 'em fallin' over themselves to get that fightin' craft on our trail, and we're goin' to hear from her before this time to-morrow for sure. Guess it'll take 'em some hours to get out, so we'll have plenty of time to wait for 'em."

De Passey looked at Morton in blank amazement and said,

"You joke, Captain! You don't mean that you will let the *Fantôme* catch you?"

"Sure. That's what I said. But my contract is to land you in Sydney, and I've got a hunch I can do it. Guess the *Fantôme* will catch us all right—I'm figurin' that way—but that ain't to say she'll land us." And the skipper went on deck, leaving De Passey to wonder over the enigma.

The breeze had freshened since the morning, and the *Harriet Constance* was reeling off ten knots on the patent log when Morton walked to the stern and peered back at the island rapidly fading to a shadow. The mate was at the wheel, and after telling him to hold the schooner on her present course, the skipper remarked,

"That speed-burner'll learn somethin' about island navigation round about this time to-morrow, Bill."

THE first land you see between New Caledonia and Australia is Bellona Island, if you take the northerly course from Noumea to pick up the monsoons. It lies barely a day's sail from the French possession, and is little more than an atoll, surrounded by a reef, some two miles from the low-lying palm-fringed land. Bellona Island lay a bare ten miles away when the *Fantôme* came in sight on the morrow, and Morton shifted his vessel's course a point to make the center of the island. The warship was still hull-down, but the breeze was light, and the odds were that she would overtake the schooner before the sailer was abreast of the island.

"It's a race for it," Morton said to himself, "but guess I'll win."

The mate gazed gloomily at the warship, then studied the land ahead and contracted the disease of talking to oneself.

"Skipper talkin' about racin'!" he muttered. "He'll be wantin' to fight her next, with that toy salute-firer there! This is just where we come to a stop, I guess. She'll have us in range in an hour."

"Bill," Morton remarked with a tone of despair, "there's jest two things I don't figure on doin' in this world. The first is playin' piker to that bit of machinery aft, and the other is makin' you see the bright side of things. You've got the foggiest pair of lamps that ever saw blue. We're afloat and movin'. We ain't fightin', we're racin'!"

"Racin' for what?"

"Well, if you'll drop your smoked glasses, and strain your eyes some, you'll see a break in that reef ahead. Steer for that, and if we get through it we win. If we don't, stand by to heave to for a boat full of Frenchies."

"——!" replied the mate, "you ain't goin' in! I thought you was figurin' to beat this craft to Sydney!"

"Jest what I'm doin', son," Morton said coolly.

"Well, if that don't beat anythin' Black Morton ever put up," answered the mate.

"Now see here, Bill," replied the skipper, "this ain't the first time I've been in there. The openin's big enough for me, I guess."

"It is, Cap'n; it's as big as ever was wanted for a rat-trap," Bill grunted ironically. "It's gettin' out worries me."

"That's my secret, Bill. There she goes."

A puff of smoke burst from the bows of

the ship, now only a short three miles astern, and was quickly dispelled by the breeze. The shell fell harmlessly, a long way behind the schooner.

"They don't mean any harm by that, Bill," the skipper commented. "Jest a quiet little invitation to stop and talk things over; but we don't accept. Come in on those sheets a bit!" he cried to the watch. "And pinch her hard for that clump of pines a couple of points to sta'b'd. Steady now, hold her there!" And pointing closely, the schooner plowed her way to the rapidly revealing foam-crested reef, beyond which lay an open lake of calm water. A faint boom followed another spurt of smoke from the pursuing war-vessel, and a shell burst not five hundred yards in the wake of the *Harriet Constance*. The Frenchman shivered and paled.

"Gettin' close and interestin'," was the casual remark of Morton. "They'll have to shoot better'n that, to stop us; and I guess we've beat 'em to it," he added, as he gazed at the opening in the reef to which the schooner was rushing.

"Breakers ahead," roared a lusty-voiced native in his equivalent for the time-honored nautical announcement of reef and rock.

"Ay, ay," answered the mate at the wheel, casting a despairing final look at the skipper as if to dissuade him from his intention of entering what looked like a certain trap—a point which those on *La Fantôme* were doubtless appreciating.

"Starboard a trifle, Bill. Steady, now, we're at it!" said Morton. The little vessel rushed through the gap into the quiet waters beyond. "We'll stand right in, Bill," he added; "they'll think we intend to anchor," and "Guess there won't be any more shootin'," the skipper further remarked by way of comfort to the escapees, who were visibly concerned when *La Fantôme*, after some execrable shooting, sent a shot whistling through the mainsail of the schooner as she safely cleared the passage.

AS MORTON anticipated, the warship ceased firing, evidently satisfied that she had the schooner cornered; and without hesitation she steamed into the lagoon, following closely in the wake of the *Harriet Constance*. No sooner was *La Fantôme* safely inside than Morton put his craft about, running her at right angles to the other's course, until he was close to the reef again, when he squared away, with the wind dead behind him, thus presenting as little target as possible to her bow-chaser. This move evidently puzzled *La Fantôme's* commander, but he followed slowly, expecting the schooner to round up and drop her anchor in a better locality.

"Now, Bill," said Morton, "I'm goin' into the bows to con her out. You listen for orders, and don't wait a second to carry 'em out. Understand? We're goin' out again, and not through that hole!" indicating the entrance to the lagoon.

"Well, for God's sake what's got him now?" muttered the mate as he took the wheel. "He's gone dippy! Thinks this schooner's a darned kangaroo, and is goin' to hop, step, and jump that reef!" His eyes bulged in wonder a few seconds later, when, in obedience to the commands shouted to him by the skipper, he saw that the reef ahead was broken by a gap not ten fathoms wide, through which the tide ran like a mill race. There was barely seaway through it, but the water was deep and clear, although it required careful seamanship to take any vessel through it, even if some submerged portion of the reef did not block the way.

"Starboard easy!" cried the skipper from the bitts, where he was gazing intently into the blue waters. "And take a pull on your main sheets," he added, as the schooner's nose pointed at the gap.

"Starboard easy it is, sir," cried the mate, who repeated the order to the crew, already springing to the braces.

"Let fly the jib!"

The headsail flapped idly.

"Port a trifle! Now steady!"

The schooner's nose was among the swirl of waters rushing through the gap. In another second the reef was on either hand, and with a momentary glance over his shoulder at the sloop now rushing at her escaping prey, the mate gripped the wheel, uttered a prayer for luck, and instinctively followed the hand of the skipper as he directed the course of the vessel.

"Let fly everythin'!" yelled Morton. The schooner shivered for a moment. There was a rasping sound, and a second later she floated easily outside the reef. The skipper dashed aft, shouting his orders as he ran, and the *Harriet Constance* raced away to sea again, while shot after shot whistled

through her rigging or sped harmlessly past it.

"Busted the top of the Mushroom, Bill!" cried Morton, his face tense and drawn with excitement, "but did no serious damage! She's too light for that. Now, watch our friend. Why, say, Bill, I wouldn't miss this for anythin'! She's comin' after us, and she'll break her back on the Mushroom!"

Into the treacherous gap steamed the sloop, while the skipper and his mate watched for the catastrophe that awaited her. Seeing the clear space through the reef, the commander of *La Fantôme* believed the passage was safe, and anyway was ready to take the chance when he saw that his prey was about to escape.

Those on the schooner held their breaths as the warship pointed fair for the middle of the break. A second later she heeled, and a volume of steam rushed from her funnel. With a jerk she righted herself; but it was too late, and through his glasses Morton watched her decks crowd with scurrying men.

"She'll chase us no more, Bill," he said quietly; "if she hasn't ripped her plates from stem to stern, write me down a farmer. When I located that break in the old *Comet* I also found the Mushroom, which stands fair in the middle of it. It takes a sailor and a light craft to get through there. Bill, serve grog to all hands! Mr. De Passey, we'll be in Sydney a fortnight before any one knows what's become of you and your friends, and guess there'll be good money to be made out of that junk-pile back there when I've got time to pick her bones."

WHEN MEN PLAYED FOR BIG STAKES

The Golden Age of Gambling in the West

by Frank J. Arkins

GAMBLING for big stakes was a common thing in the West a few years ago. In nearly all sections the evil has been suppressed by law. In the few portions where it is still followed it is carried on under cover and in constant dread of police interference.

Not so long ago, however, the cry of the roulette man and the click of the ball could be heard in the lobbies of many of the principal hotels. This was particularly true of El Paso, Cripple Creek, Leadville, Goldfield, Butte, the Cœur d'Alene, and many other sections. The practise prevailed to a greater or less extent in the larger towns. Everybody has money in the early days of a mining camp.

It was an era of speculation. The country had not "been proven," and hence a "find" in a new section resulted in a great rush to that locality. Property changed hands at fabulous prices overnight. The ragged

prospector of to-day might be rolling in wealth to-morrow. It has happened so many times.

When there is money to throw at the birds, the gamblers, like so many vultures, assemble at the point to which it is being cast by the thoughtless and improvident possessors.

Games were played where the stakes ran into the millions. A man wealthy in the morning sometimes had to borrow money to avoid going to bed hungry at night.

A QUARTER-OF-A-MILLION-DOLLAR POKER GAME

A STOCKMAN in Colorado "sat into" a poker game in Denver, and by midnight had not only lost all the cash he had with him, but had exhausted a large bank balance.

He owned, on the range in Colorado, the neutral strip ("No Man's Land," now extreme western Oklahoma), and in Texas ten thousand head of cattle, worth twenty dollars a head, or a total of $200,000.

He possessed land in three States and a handsome residence in Denver. He made a bet of a thousand steers—worth twenty thousand dollars—and lost. He continued this until his herd of ten thousand head of stock belonged to another man. Day dawned, and he was still playing. Breakfast was sent in from a restaurant maintained at the end of the gambling hall for just such people.

"Now," he said to the men who had won his cattle, "you have the critters, but no place to keep them. I will play you for my Texas ranch."

He lost that. Then followed the Colorado ranch, finally the residence in Denver, together with the furniture, his horses, his watch and chain. At eight o'clock at night—twenty-four hours later—he was penniless, and started for the Rio Grande country of Texas, where he found employment hauling logs to a sawmill. He had lost more than a quarter of a million dollars in twenty-four hours!

QUITS

"WILL you oblige me by taking off your shoes?" asked a road-agent politely, while he held a revolver menacingly in the face of a passenger who stood up in a line with others.

The hold-up man had stopped the stage going into Leadville to "collect toll." He had just purchased the road, he said, and needed the money.

He passed down the line and, by means of a passenger whom he forced into service, gathered up all the money and jewelry, until he came to the last man in the line. Then he asked the man to take off his shoes. He found four thousand dollars under the inner soles!

Several nights later the man who had been outwitted by the hold-up man was sitting in the dealer's chair of a faro game in the "Cloud City," as Leadville is called. Before him sat a man who lost money steadily. The gambler "raked in" the money carelessly and with the utmost unconcern. The player lost something like five thousand dollars and then pushed back his chair.

"All in?" asked the gambler, arching his brows.

"Yep—you've cleaned me out."

"Then we are even for that little incident the other night, when you collected your road tax from me."

"I——"

"Yes, you!"

The hold-up man knocked down half a dozen loiterers in his rush to reach the door and escape.

THE PROSPECTOR WHO LOST—AND THEN SOME

A WELL-KNOWN mining man, who was noted for his judgment in "knowing a hole in the ground" when he looked into it, had just made a purchase in Cripple Creek. He had money, and he was willing to spend it for anything that looked good. After having tramped over the hills all of one day, he "sat into" a poker game in the lobby of the principal hotel that night, and engaged in a friendly game with a number of acquaintances.

They were playing for twenty-five cents a corner. While the game was in progress a ragged prospector appeared and attempted to inject himself into the company. The mining man explained that it was simply a private game between friends—outsiders, and particularly strangers, were not wanted.

"I have money that has never been spent."

"We don't know you."

"Oh, that's it! Then let me introduce myself."

There was no way to get rid of him apparently. Then, like an inspiration, and in an annoyed manner, the operator said;

"How much money have you?"

"Eight hundred dollars."

"Sit down, and I'll show you how to play poker."

In less than fifteen minutes the prospector withdrew.

Shortly after he returned with a thousand dollars more. This was interesting. He lost it. Then he lost a diamond pin, following it with a watch and his "cayuse."

When he pushed back his chair the operator asked:

"Are you broke now?"

"I have a claim over on the hill."

"What do you value it at?"

"One hundred thousand dollars."

This staggered the mining man for a moment.

"You have been a good loser; I'll put in with you and play a hundred thousand against your claim."

The prospector lost the claim.

"Now I will play you for your services to-morrow to show me where the claim is and where to open the ore. For that I will consider that you have five thousand on the table."

The prospector lost that.

The next day he traced out the lines of the claim for the winner, who organized a company, with a stock of one million, the shares of which went for sixteen dollars each!

Millions were taken from the mine within a few years. It became one of the most famous in the entire Rocky Mountain country.

TWENTY-FIVE MILLION DOLLARS FOR SINKING A SHAFT

IN THE early days of the Comstock Lode, in Virginia, Nevada, some men made money so fast that they did not know what to do with it. Those who were not making it spent their time devising ways and means to talk the others out of a portion of their wealth. Gamblers were in full evidence, and there were some big stakes; but it remained for a bunch of Mexicans to play for the largest stake on record in the United States—without the use of cards.

One of the many claims, located in the midst of the district, had not shown any ore. Even the men who had millions hesitated to sink a shaft on it. The people were in a fever of excitement. The Mexicans owned practically nothing. In fact, the "Greasers" could not get a "look in." Altogether it was very discouraging—to them.

Then it occurred to some bright genius to capitalize the labor of the Mexicans. Gathering a bunch of them together, it was proposed that they sink a shaft on one of the well-known claims, which was twelve hundred feet in length.

"For each foot you sink, we will give you a one-foot surface interest in the claim," they were told, "provided you sink to ore."

In other words, if they abandoned the work at any time before reaching ore, they would get nothing, and the owners would have the shaft. It looked like a cheap way to prospect.

The Mexicans pow-powed and jabbered at one another for half a night and then started to work.

Everybody laughed. They were comparatively poor men. They could ill afford the expense they were undergoing. They drilled by hand, fought the hard granite, and gradually lowered that shaft. They bailed water that flowed in so fast that it threatened to drown them, but they stuck to the work with desperation.

At three hundred feet they uncovered the richest portion of the world-famous silver deposit, and, from the vein they opened, more wealth was taken out than from any other portion of that richest single mile of ground in the world.

The Mexicans' share was one-quarter. Nearly one hundred million dollars came out of the hole they sank! It was a gamble pure and simple. They played for high stakes—and won.

ONE HUNDRED AND EIGHTY DOLLARS A MINUTE AT FARO

A MAN stepped into a gambling room in Cripple Creek and sitting down at a faro-table when the proprietor was dealing, shoved five twenty-dollar bills across the table and asked for one hundred chips.

The fact that a man was starting with dollar chips attracted a crowd. Within an hour he had changed the value to five dollars a chip, because it was easier to calculate

that way. Later on it was raised to one hundred dollars a chip. When the man was twenty-eight thousand ahead, the proprietor stretched his arms, yawned and, motioning to a dealer, remarked:

"I'm sleepy. Guess I'll go home and take a nap."

Just how a man who was twenty-eight thousand dollars to the bad could feel sleepy was more than the crowd could understand.

"What do you think he will do before he gets through?" he was asked, as he put on his coat.

"Why, he's liable to do almost anything. He may own the place before I get back here in the morning. The limit is the sky, and he can go as far as he likes with me."

Saying which, he walked out.

When he returned in the morning he found that the other had won forty-four thousand dollars and had left it in his safe until he was ready to leave town. It took about four hours to make the winning.

THE QUEEN OF SPADES

IN THE Cœur d'Alene, of Idaho, when that mining region was the center of the earth, there were some big games. The story is told of one man who conceived the idea that he could make money in gambling faster than he could take it out of the ground. It was so much easier. With what cash he had, after selling his mine, he could count up to one hundred and fifty thousand dollars.

He had evolved a wonderful system.

"I simply can't lose," he told his friends.

His plan was to play steadily for sixteen hours daily, and, by a complicated series of bets, to retrieve when he lost.

Everything went along swimmingly for the first few days. At times he was as much as twenty-five thousand to the good.

Nine days after he started to play he suddenly found that he was just where he had started—he had one hundred and fifty thousand dollars when the cards came a certain way, which would involve, according to his system, betting the entire amount on a single "turn." He played the queen to win, and the fickle creature played false to him.

"Women are the cause of all trouble, anyway," he muttered, as he rose from the table. "I ought to have known better than that, for that was the queen of spades, and I should not have made that bet except when all the queens except the queen of hearts was out."

It was the irony of fate that, when the queen of hearts came out of the box, it so happened that it won.

A FOUNTAIN OF GOLD

A STRANGER walked into a gambling house in Bisbee, Arizona, when money was as thick as the smelter smoke in the good old days, and, walking up to the roulette-table, said:

"Here is a quarter—all I've got in the world."

He placed it on number seventeen. He won, which means that he received thirty-five for one, and his money back, or a total of nine dollars. This fellow, who was extremely noisy, wanted to play nine dollars on the same number for a repeater. He did, and won again. Now he had three hundred and twenty-four dollars. He was delirious with joy. He passed from table to table, placing a bet here and another there. In less than two hours he had thirty-nine hundred dollars.

Stepping up to a faro-table, he offered to put it all on the ace to win. The proprietor hesitated a moment.

"Piker!" cried the rag-tag specimen of humanity. "You take yours without a murmur, but howl when we outsiders want a chance to win!"

"Take the bet!" said the proprietor to the dealer.

The tramp won. Now he had seventy-eight hundred!

Every time he made a winning he placed it in his hat. He had bills, double eagles, silver dollars and chicken-feed—a whole raft of money. He offered to treat everybody, and it seemed as though the whole world were there, waiting for an invitation. He took his hat off, when somebody struck it from the underside. His cash reserve spouted upward and for a second resembled a fountain of greenbacks and coin. At the same instant it seemed as though a million hands materialized and grabbed the money out of the very air. No magician ever made a valuable watch disappear so quickly as did that money. In an incredible time the place was empty. The proprietor, paralyzed with astonishment, ejaculated:

"It's a disgrace to have a thing like that happen in my house! It's robbery, that's what it is! It was my money, and now I don't get no chance to get it back no more!"

THE UNLUCKY WHEEL

IN THE days when Cheyenne, Wyoming, was the headquarters for the cattlemen of the Northwest, gambling ran wide open. When the cowboys came to town they made things hum. Money grew on trees. The gaming spirit was in the air.

A dealer standing behind a roulette-table one night suddenly motioned the proprietor. A few moments later he was paid off. It is customary to pay a gambler his salary at the end of each day. Many of them have the faculty of losing it back over the very table where they know the odds to be against the player.

In roulette there is a distinct percentage in favor of "the house." Everybody knows that.

This dealer took a seat in front of the table and in the course of a few hours had won fifty dollars. Then he stopped. He would pass in and out a dozen times a day, play a little here and some there, but always he would bring up in front of the roulette-table, and more often than otherwise left it winner. His luck was amazing. He started a bank-account. He was saving his money to get into business with, he said.

He won so steadily that it made the proprietor of the place shiver every time he came in.

One day, while the ex-dealer was playing, an old man dropped in and, glancing around the room for a moment, asked:

"Who runs this place?"

"I do," answered a bewhiskered individual who was watching his former employee rake in the cash.

"Will you do me the favor to tell me where you got that wheel?" he asked, pointing to the one that proved such a hoodoo.

"I know it's a Jonah. That fellow over there wins all the time."

"So?" said the stranger.

He walked over and watched the man lay his bets.

Returning to the proprietor, he said, as he passed out a card:

"I represent this house, which, as you see, deals in gaming devices. I take it that the man sitting at the wheel makes a 'killing' every day?"

"He does, stranger, to the tune of fifty or a hundred."

"For a thousand I can tell you how to bust his luck and make him look the living picture of remorse. You would have to agree to purchase a new wheel from me, also."

"If you show me, I'm game."

"It's a bargain," said the drummer.

Walking over to the wheel, he waited until the ball dropped, stopped it, and turning to the proprietor asked:

"See anything strange with that wheel?"

"No."

"Well, see, there are two nineteens and two twenty-threes on this wheel. They are unusual numbers—so that the fellow who plays them has about the same percentage in his favor, on those numbers, that you have when a man plays on a regular wheel. We made this wheel more than thirty years ago. It was sold to a house by a couple of 'sure thing' men, who almost broke the outfit. Then we lost track of it."

The ex-dealer had noticed the double numbers, and therein was the secret of his "luck." How the numbers had escaped attention so many years is one of those mysteries of gambling that can never be explained.

THE PLAYER WHO QUIT WHEN HE WON

WHEN Seattle was the big noise in the Northwest gambling world, and the primeval forests were closer to her doors, some big games were played.

One night a stranger stepped into one of the principal houses and took a seat at a faro-table. An hour later he had lost more than five thousand dollars. The proprietor sent him a fifty-cent cigar. A few moments afterward the stranger had a couple of hundred dollars, and within an hour had regained his five thousand. Then commenced a streak of luck that has seldom been witnessed in any gambling-house. The "roof" had been raised "to the sky" and Mr. Stranger "coppered" the king and doubled a bet of five thousand. He tried it again for a repeater, with ten thousand, and drew back twenty yellow chips, worth one thousand each.

After that he made bets of a thousand each, and before he had smoked the cigar

he was twenty-eight thousand to the good! Then he quit.

Who he was, where he came from, where he went, no one ever knew. His coming and going were as mysterious as his winnings were sensational.

OFF AGAIN—ON AGAIN

WHEN the great silver reef known as the Comstock Lode was surrendering its wealth, a printer from Salt Lake dropped in and "subbed" on one of the local papers. One evening he was invited to try his luck at faro.

He protested that he did not understand the game.

Nevertheless he bought five dollars' worth of chips, the garden variety of which was worth a quarter each in those days. By his language, the onlookers gathered the impression that he had been there before, usually on the wrong side. He played steadily from eight in the evening until two o'clock the next morning, when he had the equivalent of sixteen thousand dollars in front of him. Then he made a bet of two hundred.

"Just a moment," interrupted the owner, before the cards were drawn out of the box. "There is less than one hundred dollars in the house. If you win, what we have in sight must satisfy you."

"Sure," answered the printer.

He won.

"Now I'll play you for the house," he said. "What do you value it at?"

"Call it five thousand."

Within an hour one of the best printers that ever struck Virginia City, Nevada, was the full-fledged owner of a gambling hall in a state of activity.

Learning that the proprietor also owned two other houses in the town, he offered to play for those also.

"Come to my other places and play there."

The printer was a regular visitor to the other houses, and two weeks later was the owner of three dens, all of which were coining money. He smoked the finest cigars and wore the best clothes, and might have retired with wealth, when the mania to own all the gambling clubs in the mining camp overcame him.

With that thought in mind he commenced to "buck the tiger" in the largest house in the town.

Six weeks later he was on the water-wagon. Also he was setting type again for a living. In the height of his "glory" he was worth eighty thousand—all in cash.

A MULE AND MILLIONS

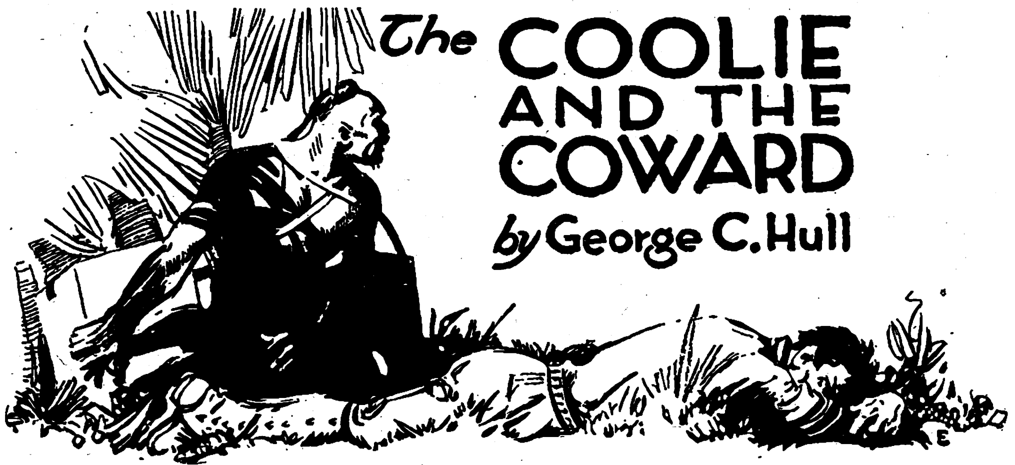
PROBABLY one of the greatest stakes ever hung up was raked down on a mule race in Arizona. A man owned a "hole in the ground." He was satisfied that it was worth a fortune. His friends thought he was crazy. He refused to go to other "diggings" where the prospects were better. He was more than twenty-five miles from water, which had to be carried in on the hurricane deck of a mule. He worked away, nursing his claim and sticking it out alone. Then he went to a settlement some distance away. He became excited over the performances of a mule owned by another man, and in a moment of exuberance bet his claim against one owned by a prospector from another section that his mule could outrun the other fellow's. He lost.

He had the privilege of piloting the winner to the "mine" and saw him take more than seventy thousand dollars' worth of silver, net, out of a pocket, almost on the surface of the ground! Since then the property has produced millions. It all came about because one mule could not run so fast as another.

IN THE Northwest tracts of timber equal to entire Eastern counties changed hands as the result of card-games, and some wonderful stories are told of the returning Klondikers and their exploits in Seattle when that place was a wide-open town. Men gambled for belts of gold, each staking his against the other. In the frozen North at times the games played were of the kind that would make even an old stager's hair rise at the reckless manner in which money was risked on the turn of a card.

The gamester represents a phase of Western life that has disappeared, for he has been ruled out by law.

In most of the Western States it is impossible to play any kind of game now, and as for betting on cards—it is as rare as horse-stealing.



MEN with cold feet are born, not made. No man that is brave kin ever be a coward, and no coward kin ever be brave. That's the long and short of the whole thing."

It was Private Peter Clancy, with the short wisdom born of a year in the service, who launched the result of his meditations at the heads of three other members of B Troop with an emphatic flourish of his cigarette. The four had just completed a tour of fatigue duty under the blazing Philippine sun and were languidly resting under the fragrant foliage of an ihlang-ihlang tree, which, aside from the sultry "pup" tents, afforded the only shelter from tropical rays in the cavalry camp at Pabang.

Private Clancy's declaration was apropos of nothing, for the other three had been carrying on a listless argument as to the respective merits of their mounts. Nevertheless, Clancy was not prepared for the reception his unexpected but apparently harmless announcement received.

Three pairs of sleepy eyes were turned upon him in amazement and then Trooper Halloran woke up.

"What talk have you?" he demanded angrily. "Who said anything about cold feet?"

"Nobody," replied Private Clancy lamely, "but I've been thinking about this thing of being a coward ever since I've been in the army, more or less, and it struck me all of a sudden that I'd like to hear what somebody else thought. I've never heard any of the fellers talking much about it, not since I've been in the service," and he gazed appealingly at Buck Johnson, a grizzled trooper who, under the stress of the occasion, had just touched a flaring match to his pipe so recklessly that the blaze had singed his gray mustache.

"And you never will," gravely responded that worthy in answer to the unspoken question, as he rubbed the scorched stubble on his lip, "not unless cause is given, and God help the man that gives it in B Troop."

He stared down the empty company street with unseeing eyes as one who is recalling the past.

"You're but a rookie, Clancy," he continued, "and when you've done your twenty years an' a bit as I have and when you have seen the black shame put upon men that you have known, you'll feel like the rest of us that the matter ain't one for foolish talk on a hot afternoon. Experience will teach you, as it has me, that it is somethin' of which no man may speak with authority, either touchin' himself or others, for he don't know the mystery of the thing which turns strong hearts to water.

"Clancy, you tossed out them words careless and sudden-like in the hopes of gettin' an argument. You don't get it, but you've minded me of a story, which, contrary to your belief, makes a bold man a coward, whereby he wins a medal from Congress for bravery, while the one that helped him to the bit of bronze is left where he fell, a despised corpse with the hungry village dogs to howl his requiem.

"I pass no judgment on the one, who was a soldier, or the other who was naught but a Chinese coolie. The first confessed to

me, and it takes a brave man of a sort to tell another of his shame. As for the coolie, he only did his duty as he saw it to them that fed and paid him."

It was Private Peter Clancy, properly crushed, who begged for the story, but Troopers Halloran and Tolliver who urged it as a fitting lesson for a rookie who rambled aimlessly on tabooed subjects.

Trooper Buck Johnson bit on his pipestem reflectively.

"I will tell it," he said finally, "for, as you say, it may prove instructive. The name of the blighted man you will not know, seein' I hold it as a trust."

He began:

WHEN the trouble with Spain started, I had just taken my discharge from the reg'lers as sergeant-major. I had reckoned on takin' on with the same outfit again, but when they started to organize the volunteer regiments it seemed to me that the chance of a quick step upward would be better with them, for there would be need of firm and knowin' men to drill the young fellers, and such services would be quickly appreciated.

So I took on with an outfit that was ordered over to the Islands among the first. Boys fresh from school, the most of them were, and from the same town, savin' me and the other man whom I will call Conners. Now because I had been a regular and was supposed to be fightin' for pay, the young volunteers who was supposed to be fightin' for their country sort o' looked down on me at first. Conners, being from another city and joining the company at the last moment, was on the outside, too, for a while, so we became bunkies, continuing as such even after I got my stripes.

A strappin' big handsome man he was, black, reckless and bold, with always the hint of a devil in his eyes which leaped large into life when he was drinkin'. It was when he was gettin' out from under the influence and his heart was sore with remorse that I learned the most about him, and that was precious little.

Anyway, when we hit the beach below Manila under the nose of Dewey's ships, the sum total of my knowledge concernin' him was that he had been to college and had been thrown down turribly hard by a girl because of his little ways of havin' a good time. Then he had taken a runnin' jump into the army, figurin' that if he got shot up a little by the Spaniards, or got mentioned in despatches for bravery, he could square himself with the woman who had put him in the discards.

"She'll forgive me," he'd say, "when she gets a chance to nurse a hero." He bein' half-seas-over at the time. "She'll be glad to, when she sees me mentioned for bravery. I'll show her I'm a man among men."

I used to take shame for him talkin' that way, like a big kid, and roll over in my blankets and go to sleep, but there was no question that up until the city surrendered and there was no more chance of grandstand fightin', Conners was tryin' desperate hard to get that mention one way or the other.

IT WAS durin' the siege of the city that Conners got the name of bein' a brave man among the enlisted men, and that of bein' a reckless one with the officers. What with throwin' his hat on the wrong side of the trenches and goin' after it on a dare, with a regiment or two heavin' lead at us at the time, and goin' off on unofficial scoutin' expeditions, strictly against orders, he gets an official reputation from bein' called down by the commandin' officer and a week in the guardhouse besides.

"I certainly expect to get that mention this trip," he says at reveille on the mornin' of the day we attacked the city, as he puts on a complete outfit of clean clothes. Later, when we are movin' up the beach, wadin' knee deep in surf whipped into heavy froth by volleys of Mauser bullets, the order is given to lie down. Conners won't have it. "I'll not wet the suit which I have had washed and ironed for the express purpose of makin' me appear presentable when I'm picked up wounded," he says, and stands up firin' away with the eyes of the regiment upon him, until the top sergeant hits him a swipe with the flat of a bayonet and pushes him down.

While we was loafin' around Manila waitin' for the Gugus to cut loose, Private Conners is still workin' for those mentions. Single-handed he captures two escaped convicts from the island penitentiary, by crawlin' into a drain-pipe after them. One of 'em had a knife, but there was five hundred men lookin' on and Conners made good. There was always plenty of persons to

witness his performances, but still, somehow he couldn't get into the dispatches.

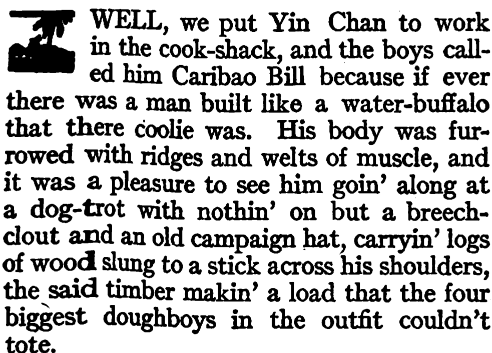
Naturally everybody expected him to get the stripes and move up rapidly, but the Colonel seemed to have it in for him. Said he was reckless and not to be trusted to lead even a corporal's squad.

"Good soldiers costs a mint of money in the makin'," says the C. O., "and I'm not goin' to risk them bein' wasted to make a Roman holiday for no rough-neck!"

So it goes on until just before the insurrection breaks out Conners gets a three-days' pass and crosses the line into Aguinaldo's country. When he returns, he is accompanied by Caribao Bill, the coolie which is the other half of this sketch.

It seems from Conners's tale that, while passin' through a village on his wanderin's, he hears groans and, enterin' a nipa shack without knockin', finds four natives torturin' a Chink staked out on the floor. Conners havin' been required to leave his weapons at the outpost on crossin' the line, wades in with his fists and knocks two of the Gugus out, while the other two kick their way out through the walls and escape. Then Conners pries Yin Chan, which was the coolie's name, loose from the nails and brings him in.

Of course there was nobody's word but Conners's for all this, for the Chink couldn't do anything but make signs, the aforesaid Gugus havin' deprived him of his tongue, but when that coolie got well the way he attached himself to Conners, like a dog, was proof enough that the bravest man in the regiment had tallied once more for the record.



WELL, we put Yin Chan to work in the cook-shack, and the boys called him Caribao Bill because if ever there was a man built like a water-buffalo that there coolie was. His body was furrowed with ridges and welts of muscle, and it was a pleasure to see him goin' along at a dog-trot with nothin' on but a breech-clout and an old campaign hat, carryin' logs of wood slung to a stick across his shoulders, the said timber makin' a load that the four biggest doughboys in the outfit couldn't tote.

Caribao Bill wasn't like the other coolies either. Most of them were Cantonese and so chicken-hearted that they would cry if you looked hard at 'em, but our coolie was a Manchu and afraid of nothin'. I used to think it was because he was so ignorant that he didn't know there was such a thing as death. He couldn't talk, but if anybody got rough with him, his eyes would light up most ferocious and you could naturally see he'd be a bad customer if he was aroused.

The Filipinos was afraid of him; they had a right to be, seein' what they had done for him, and they knew he hated 'em like a mongoose does a snake. I always had a hunch that one of the Colonel's *muchachos* what was found with his head twisted nigh off had run foul of Caribao Bill.

But whatever he was to the rest of us, he sure was Conners's slave, givin' us to understand that his preserver was as good as any heathen god he ever worshiped. He used to wash Conners's clothes, shine his shoes and buttons and sleep on the floor beside his cot at night, finally goin' so strong with his valetin' that the Captain had to call him down, it not bein' proper, of course, that a private should have a "dog robber" like a commissioned officer.

You can take it from me that when the insurrection broke out we was mighty glad to have that same bull-necked coolie in our employ. The Gugus was so nimble footed that we had to travel light to keep on their trail. Caribao Bill had the job of trottin' after us carryin' two of these big tin cans Rockefeller ships his oil abroad in full of cartridges. We hiked along with forty rounds to the man and depended on the big coolie for the reserve ammunition.

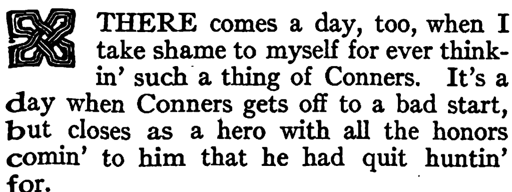
Say, mebbe Caribao Bill didn't like the berth, eh? He just reveled in it. He had an old Remington that he had copped off one of war's victims, and he carried it right along with the rest of his load so that when he caught up to us and we were havin' a brush with the natives he could pitch right in and shoot a few himself. Then he was tickled with havin' the chance to take care of Conners, who by this time had quit his foolishness and was, in my opinion, takin' extra good care of himself.

It seems the girl had heard Conners was in the army battlin' with his country's foes and that was enough for her. She had written him and forgiven him and that was enough for Conners. He quit wishin' for that mention in dispatches right there, or workin' for it either. All he thought about was gettin' through, and goin' back to marry the girl. Every time he'd get a letter ad-

dressed in one of these big spidery hand-writes he'd cuss himself as a fool for bein' in the army.

"I volunteered for the Spanish-American war and not to be potted like a prairie chicken by some Gugu hid up a tree," he'd say, when we was by ourselves. "The Government has no right to keep me here or to make me risk my life against my will."

Of course, bein' his bunkie, I'd listen until he got too strong, then I'd shut him up, and although I didn't believe he meant a word of what he said, his constant talkin' made me fear that some day Private Conners would quit.



THERE comes a day, too, when I take shame to myself for ever thinkin' such a thing of Conners. It's a day when Conners gets off to a bad start, but closes as a hero with all the honors comin' to him that he had quit huntin' for.

Word comes to the Colonel one night that there is a few scattered bunches of Gugus hived up in the country between Laguna and Manila Bay, and he orders out J Company, which is ours, as scouts to locate every white-shirted Gugu who can boast of a sore shoulder through havin' been kicked by a rifle.

We starts at daylight the next mornin' in light marchin' order, with forty rounds in our belts and dependin' on Caribao Bill to come drillin' along with the reserve ammunition when we needed it.

Movin' in line of skirmishers, we strike a rough country, all gullies and washouts, before we had been out of camp many miles. What with crawlin' in an' out of these holes, my squad gets separated from the rest of 'em and when we pull out of an *arroyo* on to the lip of a plateau there is just the eight of us to face the hell which pops loose from a steep wooded hill about a thousand yards off to the right.

From the way the big brass-nosed Remington slugs come floppin' around, I figure there is quite a considerable body of Gugus lyin' up there to give us ours, and not havin' been delegated to lead no forlorn hope, I lead a masterly retreat back into the *arroyo*, to await instructions. The top sergeant is wormin' his way toward us from off to the left, and seein' this, we squat on our heels enjoyin' of the breeze which the Gugus is makin' over our heads in shootin' at the spot where we was last seen.

It's then that my attention is particularly attracted by Schmidty, the company cook, to that bold man Conners.

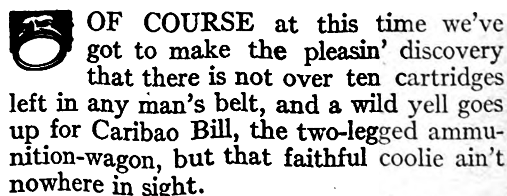
"Hear them bullets whistlin' *C-ee, C-ee,*" remarks that fat warrior. "Conners, they are callin' for you," he says.

"Ooh, don't say that!" groans a muffled voice, and turnin' my head, I see Conners lyin' with his face half buried in an ant-hill and his shoulders heavin'.

I'm just about to step over and give him a good kick in the ribs to stop his foolishness, as I thought it, when the top sergeant motions me to bring the men after him around the foot of the gully. Here we find the rest of the company, and the Captain, who is announcin' that we will take the hill.

Creepin' up to the rim of the washout, we send a half-dozen volleys at the top of the hill, and then away we go, racin' over the flat where there wasn't cover for a squirrel. Half-way to the hill I'm minded of Conners with his face in that ant-mound, and in a glance I see he isn't with the squad. There's two others missin', too, but I had seen them leave, Schmidty, the cook, almost pullin' me down with him. I'd heard the tall Frenchman's "*Mong Doo!*" when he was stopped. I didn't have time to puzzle about the mystery of Conners then, or for some time afterward, for when we got to the top of the hill the Gugus had vacated and we were trapped.

Right across from the hill we had taken was its twin brother, and it was fair swarmin' with the enemy, as we soon discovered. They had bits of flags stuck up between to give them the range, as we soon learned when we started across. Six men of J was retired from the service in a couple of smoky minutes, and the rest of us went back to the shelter side of our hill to dig burrows with our bayonets and try and keep that small army from comin' across to visit.



OF COURSE at this time we've got to make the pleasin' discovery that there is not over ten cartridges left in any man's belt, and a wild yell goes up for Caribao Bill, the two-legged ammunition-wagon, but that faithful coolie ain't nowhere in sight.

"Corporal," says the Captain to me, "drop down the hill a ways and see if you can locate that triple-dashed loafin'

Chink, for unless I'm much mistaken, this —— hill is liable to be surrounded in a holy second."

I go as directed to where I can sight the gullies we came out of and the nice smooth plain we came over. I see Schmidty and the Frenchman lyin' there quiet, markin' the way, but I don't see Caribao Bill. Neither do I see Conners, and I'm markin' him up as a cold-footed hound, when I sight a campaign hat liftin' over the edge of the ravine and figure it is Conners comin' "better late than never," as the sayin' is, but I'm mistaken. It's Caribao Bill with the ammunition!

Sirs, that big coolie hadn't no more than got his shoulders, with the cans of cartridges balanced on 'em, in sight, when from off to the left, at the base of the hill we are on, comes a volley from a bunch of Gugus creepin' around to cut us off. Caribao Bill goes over backward, and I hear the rattle of the cans as he rolls down the slope out of sight.

"Good night all!" I exclaims, and head back to report. At the edge of the timber I meet the Captain and the top. "They got Caribao Bill just as he was comin' up out of the gullies," I says.

"What! Who got him?" exclaims the Captain.

"A bunch of Gugus what's comin' around down yonder to surround us."

The Captain whistles softly.

"Uh huh," he says. "Just as I espected. I reckon our little prospectin' tour is liable to end right here on this hill unless some other devastatin' band that started out this mornin' hears the shootin' and comes to our rescue.

"But we've got to have more ammunition," he says. "I hate to send a squad after those cans, for it would be nothin' but wholesale murder, and I doubt if one man could carry 'em."

"But here comes one man a-carryin' 'em!" sings out the top. "And just look at that murderin' traitor of a Chink!"

There across that bullet-burnt flat comes Conners on a trot, balancin' the cans across his shoulder as if he had been born a coolie. Runnin' behind him is Caribao Bill, emittin' of strange screams and apparently shootin' off the hip at Conners with his old gun. I throw up my rifle to get the coolie, but he's behind the hero. The Gugus seem paralyzed at the sight, and the pair of 'em gets half-way across with the Captain and the top and me mixin' curses for the coolie, with encouragin' words for Conners.

Then the enemy opens up. Caribao Bill jumps in the air like a jack-rabbit and drops in his tracks. I see Conners flinch and stumble, but he keeps on comin'. Right up the hill he charges with that load no man but a coolie was supposed to be able to carry. We go down to meet him, but he makes as if to run through us, a red foam on his lips and moanin' in a high sing-songy voice. I have to trip him to stop him.

WE CARRY Conners up to the spot which looks as if it has been picked for J Company's graveyard, for he has a bullet in his chest, and, what I don't *sabe* at the time, a knife-wound in the leg.

"If we get out of this, Conners will get what he has been working for," says the Captain, almost weepin', as with the ammunition, secured through Conners' bravery, we take our places in the firin'-line with the rest of 'em.

Well, we repulsed them Gugus from front and rear six times that evenin' and night, and just as, hungry and thirsty, we are nearin' the end of our rope, comes a couple of battalions plowin' along at one o'clock in the mornin', their scouts havin' heard our firin'. The Gugus vamoose and we pick up our dead and wounded and hike for home.

Naturally we left Caribao Bill, the yellow traitor, just where he fell, but everybody wanted to help carry the stretcher that held Conners. Me, being his bunkie, I managed to keep my place at the handles, and went in thinkin' wicked thoughts of myself for havin' misjudged the poor fellow so cruelly.

Conners' name went into the dispatches all right this time, just as soon as it could be shoved through, and about three days after we hit quarters in Manila a General Hospital orderly calls on me.

"Conners of yours," he says, "is goin' to make a die of it, and he wants to see you alone before he goes."

I go right down with the orderly and I see Conners.

"Hold your head down so that I can look into your eyes," he says, speakin' mighty weak. I did so and he looked a

long time it seemed. "I see you know it," he says at last, "and you've known it all along."

"Know what?" I asks, fair puzzled by his actions.

"That I'm a coward and a quitter!"

"Man, man, you're off your head!" I says soothin' like.

"I am a coward!" he repeats wildly.

"Sure," I says, determinin' to humor him. "Of course a man has cold feet when he shoulders a few hundred pounds of ammunition and runs through a blizzard of bullets with the man whose life he saved shootin' at him from behind to help on the festivities—the dirty murderin' yellow cur!"

Conners puts a hand to my mouth.

"For the love of God, not that!" he whispers. "*I'm* the coward—wait 'till I tell you——"

And he sort of chokes up.

"I'm goin' to confess to you," he continues, "and it will be the only brave thing I have ever done. I've had the reputation of bein' a bold man through some of the things I've done," he says, "but it was all playin' to the galleries and not from the heart. Pride was back of me at first, because a girl in the States had thrown me over and I wanted to show her that I amounted to something after all. But when I had gained my end, knew that I had been forgiven and that she was waiting for me to come home, I lost the support of pride, for fear took its place. I have been a coward ever since—in deadly fear that I would be killed and lose what I had regained—in fear that those about me would guess my secret. This last thing is too much. I have a little self-respect left and there was no one I could turn to but you.

"I quit in the gully that day. I lost my nerve and stayed there when the rest of you went on. I knew that you were getting the worst of it. I heard you callin' for Caribao Bill and I hoped that he wouldn't come and that you would get wiped out. I thought then I could go back as the only survivor, and nobody would know I had quit.

"Then the poor faithful Chink went patterin' past where I lay, the sweat runnin' from his face as he hurried to answer your call. He was shot through the shoulder as he breasted the slope and came tumblin' back. I watched him as in a dream while, with blood streamin' from his wound, he tried desperately and vainly to lift his load again. Then he saw me. He thought I was dead at first and made queer sounds of pity in his throat, because he loved me. When he found I wasn't hurt, I heard him groan like somebody had struck him. Then he whipped out my bayonet and jabbed me in the leg. I stood up then, still shakin'.

"He tapped his rifle and motioned me impatiently toward the ammunition-buckets. I saw by his face that he would kill me if I refused, and in fresh and more deadly fear I shouldered them. He prodded me from behind with his rifle and I heard his guttural screams of rage. I hear them yet and the patterin' of his sandaled feet behind me as I ran. When I was hit, I did not feel it. I didn't know what I was doin' save that I was fleein' from death.

"That's all, and I'm leavin' it up to you. I'm goin' to go a lot easier because of havin' told it, but—" and he laid his hand on mine—"if you can figure it to be right, I'd rather the girl never knew the straight of it!"

THERE it was again, you see. Fear had left and pride was back, even in the face of what he had told me, every word of which was burned into me so that I couldn't never forget. Word for word I've repeated it as he said it. My memory ain't so particularly good, either, but it's only once in a lifetime a man hears another strip his soul for inspection.

I realized then that I had known him for what he was right along, but I hadn't wanted to sense it, so I sat there like a rummy, starin' at him, before I pass sentence.

"Conners," I says, "if you should happen to live, an' don't make this thing right, I'm goin' to do my best to run you out o' the army an' into your grave! If you die, why this girl, that made a coward out of you, can keep on thinkin' you're a hero, for I will speak no ill of the dead."

Overlookin' his hand, I turned and walked out. I couldn't shed any tears over him—not with Caribao Bill in my mind.

A month later, when we are back out in the country again, I sneaked off with a bugle and my rifle and, bein' proficient with both, I buried the bones of Caribao Bill with military honors, firin' a salute and soundin' taps.

"I RECKON this here coward, this Conners, got a proper hero funeral too—regimental turnout and all of that?" queried Private Clancy.

"He did, like ——! He was invalided home and got well. He's in Congress now, votin' medals for other brave laddybucks, but you can gamble he never wears his."

"And you never showed him up?"

"Nope, I aimed to do it my first furlough, and I went to his home town on purpose, but I lost my nerve."

"Lost your nerve!" shouted the indignant trio.

"Yep. I saw the proud and happy woman that was wearin' his name."

THE DISCOVERY OF THE HAMPDON GARDEN SUBURB

by Albert Kinross

CHAPTER I

ADAM NEWMAN FINDS A "CLEAR FIELD"

THE world was smiling upon Adam Newman. He had known his lean years, and his less lean years, but never a year like nineteen hundred and eleven. It was the year of King George's coronation, and perhaps that may account for it—his Majesty King George the Fifth. Most of us, from the royal family downward, have never known a year like it.

To begin with, there was the coronation; and secondly, there was the rainless Summer; and thirdly, there was the Hampdon Garden Suburb. All these affected Adam in their varying degrees and manifestations. The coronation hit him hard because of the Gala Performance at the Opera and Lady Pluckley's loss of her pink pearls. The rainless Summer drove soft fruit down to pin-point prices and made cos lettuce "run away." The Hampdon Garden Suburb, however, was a discovery that atoned for everything.

Six hundred-odd acres of garden suburb, and not a greengrocer in the place! Thousands of suburbans, mostly fruitarians, vegetarians, and soft-food munchers, and not a greengrocer in the place! Adam, in that line of business, had hit upon the suburb and would not let it go. To this itinerant vendor of fruit, vegetables and green stuff it wasn't a suburb at all. It was a gold mine, a diamond field, a magic valley of roc's eggs, precious stones and minerals, such as one meets with in the Arabian Nights—London is not so distant from Arabia, and a wandering hawker, equipped with horse and cart, is none so terribly unlike the hardy Bedouin.

In a despondent moment Adam had driven his horse and cart and stock-in-trade out of the Hampdon Road and into the suburb.

Choosing a shady anchorage, overhung by an oak tree that the suburbans had spared, Adam had pondered and the horse had tucked into the contents of its nosebag. The cart, laden with fast-decaying strawberries and early potatoes, gooseberries and peas, shared in the shadow cast by the stout oak, and formed a fitting couch for Adam's meditations.

London, he first of all reflected, was a sell: a fruit-hawker could get but a bare living there, and that only if he cheated and covered the rotten stuff lightly with the good. It was all swank and lying and humbug and dealing with people who wanted a shilling's worth for sixpence and got threepennyworth instead. Bah, he was growing sick of it, and tired of old women who picked and chose and tried his scales! Stole things, too, some of them did, if you weren't looking.

In the cheap quarters there was too much competition; in the high-class neighborhoods, such as Kensington and Hampstead, a hawker was scoffed at, and everybody traded with the shops. And it wasn't as though his stuff were bad, or that he couldn't get good stuff if you wanted it and would pay a fair price. He had capital; he had the run of Covent Garden Market; and in all London there was no finer judge of fruit and green-meat than Adam Newman, though he said it himself too.

Didn't he come from the country, and hadn't he cropped and hoed and watered and mulched and picked and pulled and dug ever since he could stand upright upon his feet? Was there any greengrocer in London who knew Ellam's Early from Daniels' Defiance, or Bedford Champion from Laxton's Latest? "No," he reflected bitterly, "not one!" And here he was, undersold and driven out by the swankers and rubbish merchants who made day hideous in Kentish Town, or else turned from the door by the haughty scullery-maids who answered his timid ring in Fitzjohn's Avenue or Bombay Gardens.

FROM these thoughts, aphorisms and challenges he was suddenly deflected. Nothing very serious had happened. Through a suburban window he had caught sight of a suburban family eating its lunch.

There was the suburban mother, a droll thing in a shapeless gown and spectacles; there was the suburban father, in an earth-colored suit that matched his earth-colored beard; there were five earth-colored suburban children; and everybody ate off earth-colored platters with wooden spoons. The pet rabbit did the same, omitting the spoon. Adam Newman's eyes grew round with wonder; he sat bolt upright in his cart and had ideas.

"Beans," said he, "kidney beans, an' peas an' termarters an' lettuce, an' milk an' nuts an' dates an' bernarners! An' that there rabbit jes' the same!" A second impulse brought him to his feet. He whipped up the mare; and now through dozens of suburban windows he spied on people, pets and servants who lunched off everything but meat or fish.

"My word," he cried, "an' not a greengrocery shop in the whole place! Eatin' o' fruit they was, like birds, an' stuffin' vegetables like the sow in Squire Brockman's garden! Kids an' all, an' that there rabbit!"

But why pursue an improvisation that only Mickiewicz, the Polish national bard, has equaled, and which, in the cold, abstracted light of printed symbols, can never do justice to the voice and ardor of the great original? Enough to say that in Adam's pigeon-breast once more arose the pale-blue glow of hope. Pale blue! It was azure, cerulean—the blue of Venice and the deep lagoon!

THAT afternoon he explored the Hampdon Garden Suburb from end to end. Houses and gardens he found, and greens and tennis-lawns, and cottages and closes, and churches and an institute, but not a shop of any kind whatsoever. Neither fruiterer's nor butcher's nor grocer's nor baker's, and not even a public-house. His nearest rival was outside the suburb and in the Hampdon Road.

"Wreaths and Crosses to Order," he read upon the rival's florid sign.

"'Oo wants wreaths an' crosses?" demanded Adam.

"Salads Fresh Daily," ran a second legend.

"Mine's fresher!" cried Adam, looking fierce.

"Special Terms to Large Customers," filled up the space.

"I'm ready," announced Adam, "an' the larger the better!"

Then, roused to a sudden access of purpose and integrity by the occasion, he tipped up the cart on a near piece of waste land. Decaying strawberries, early potatoes, gooseberries and peas were all flung overboard by this maneuver, and left to hazard, circumstance and time.

"Ter-morror mornin'," cried Adam, thus relieved, "ter-morrer I feeds that Garden Suburb, or dies an' perishes!"

CHAPTER II

CRICKET AND GOOSEBERRIES

AMONG the earliest of Adam's suburban customers was Wentworth Betts, the celebrated cracksman, cricketer and rogue. You may have heard of him or read of him or, worse than either, have suffered from his callous depredations. Needless to say that to the Garden Suburb this villain's real character was quite unknown. A gentleman of leisure, with ample means and a fond, foolish passion for the game of cricket, he seemed to those who had looked out upon his motor-car, his family and his five servants, or had watched him make a practise-wicket on his front lawn and busy himself with the yards of netting that, when complete, would keep the ball within safe bounds and save the legs of those who bowled to him.

Naturally, on entering the suburb, he had carefully suppressed his professional name and aliases, and answered only to the more prosaic cognomen which his father, his grandfather and a long line of ancestry had all borne honorably before him. For the purposes of this story, however, he is Betts; and as such the suburb was eventually to know him. The proposal to affix a memorial tablet on the house which he had occupied was negatived by seven hundred and fourteen voters to a bare eleven.

The acquaintance—or had we not best describe it as a business friendship?—between Adam Newman and the cracksman began in an informal way.

"Any fruit or vegetables this mornin'?" demanded Adam, putting his head over the front gate, and bringing his horse and cart and green-grocery to a halt outside that barrier. "Any gooseberries for stewin' or black currants, any lettuce, cauliflower, or spinach?"

"Not this morning, thank you," responded Betts. "But can you bowl?"

A cricket-bat on the lawn, the four stumps in position, the all but completed netting, and a good thirty yards of level and close-cropped turf explained the sudden question —explained everything.

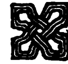
"Bowl?" repeated Adam. "Of course I can."

So ready a response delighted the good cracksman.

"Well, come and bowl at me," he answered, "and if you're any good I'll pay you handsomely."

And with that Wentworth introduced Adam to the netted-in and freshly laid practise-wicket and placed a brand-new match-ball in his hands.

"Right-o!" said Adam, not at all averse to the exercise, and flung down his coat and vest and prepared for action.

HIS third delivery, following on two wides, was a straight one, and took the cracksman completely by surprise. His seventh, a real good ball, removed the bails, and, after a brace of full-tosses and four long-hops, he produced a yorker that did the trick and made the cracksman pause.

"I didn't get to bed till five this morning," sang out Betts; "perhaps that may account for it."

"It's my good bowlin'," answered Adam. "Why, afore I come to London, I bowled for Plaxtol—me an' Fielder. Every Saturday arternoon I bowled, an' Squire Brockman said as I were a nat'ral born bowler, or would be if I kep' my head an' thought about it."

The cracksman now offered Adam the bat, and himself went over to the other wicket.

"It's neck or nothin' wi' me," said Adam, taking a furious wipe at everything sent down; "neck or nothin'!"

And after missing several that reached the stumps or else went by, his efforts proved successful, and he moved one clean out of the net and through the kitchen window. The crash of broken glass and indoor crockery was followed by the arrival of Mrs. Betts.

"Now you've done it!" the cracksman found time to mutter before that lady bore down upon them in her wrath.

"I told you so!" she screamed breathless. "If Cook had been a head taller and Polly half a head, they'd both be corpses! It missed me by inches! Who is that man?"

Her gaze had settled upon Adam Newman, and she was giving him a stare that might have frozen the equator. It failed, however, to freeze Adam.

"Any fruit or vegetables, ma'am, this mornin'?" he asked. "Any gooseberries for stewin' or black currants, any lettuce, cauliflower or spinach? That's my horse an' cart outside the gate, ma'am, an' I can do yer as cheap an' good——"

But Mrs. Betts was in no mood for epic poetry.

"Listen to the rascal," she had interposed, "after nearly killing Cook and me and Polly!"

"It was my fault," now spoke up Betts; "I should have finished netting in the wicket before using it."

"Your fault, was it?" cried Mrs. Betts. "Then you did it and not he!"

"He did it," explained the cracksman, with admirable patience; "but it was all my fault for not netting in the entire wicket."

"Now I calls that handsome," interlarded Adam; "only a real gentleman, born an' bred——"

"Gentleman!" shrieked Mrs. Betts, coming down heavily upon Adam and drowning him and holding his head under. "Gentleman! The men of my family——"

"Yes, I've heard about them," said Wentworth, "till I'm sick and tired of them."

"Now don't be rude!" began Mrs. Betts, and continued for the length of one of these chapters.

THIS sudden quarrel had silenced Newman. That a lady and gentleman should squabble thus openly was their business and none of his. Ordinary politeness demanded that he should take himself off, or else wait obscurely round the corner. He had had a good deal of fun, and he wouldn't be hard on the gentleman over a shilling or two. And, besides, it was he who had smashed the kitchen window.

Quietly he retrieved his coat and vest, and, donning them, made for the garden gate. But Mrs. Betts had seen the maneuver; so instead of answering the question she had just propounded—it was a simple inquiry as to why Betts had married her, when he knew all along that it was utterly impossible, et cetera, et cetera—she ended, turning to Adam:

"We were just stewing some gooseberries, and you've made Cook upset the saucepan, and the fruit's all spoiled, and the mess it's made in the kitchen——"

Adam did not wait to hear another word. In a trice he had reached his cart and returned with gooseberries in abundance.

"One an' eight the gallon, seein' it's you," he cried; "usually I charges one an' ten."

"The greengrocer charges two and six," murmured Mrs. Betts.

"I know he do! An' it's exactly the same class o' gooseberry—you lay 'em side by side an' see for yersel'. It's jes' here where I comes in," continued Adam confidentially; "I pays no rent, no rates, nor taxes; I got no one to keep excep' mysel' an' this ole mare. I knows the market an' I has friends that grows the things—there's no one as can stand up agin me. I sells out almos' afore I'm loaded. This here suburb looks out for me as though I was its mother. Adam Newman I am, ma'am—Newman for short—been in this business close upon two year."

Mrs. Betts looked at him and liked him. Certainly he had a pigeon-breast, a class of infirmity which no true woman readily forgives. Still, in a greengrocer, what did it matter? She was not going to repose upon it.

"And he can bowl, too," cried Wentworth; "comes from Plaxtol in Kent—same village as Fielder."

"How delightful, darling!" And, "So nice for both of you, dear," she added, taking her husband's arm and rubbing her soft cheek against his brawny shoulder.

Adam, too well-bred to show the astonishment he felt at these sudden and unexpected endearments, was quick to observe that his patron accepted them with the same placid dignity which had marked his previous reception of the lady's billingsgate and tantrums.

"I s'pose that's the secret o' it—how to bear up though married," reflected Adam.

"I'm going to see what the man's got in that cart of his," said Mrs. Betts, and herself led the way to it.

A BRIEF conference between Adam and Mrs. Betts was sufficient to induce that lady to declare her fixed intention of giving up their regular greengrocer and appointing our hero in his stead. The prices were right, the goods were right, and the scales and measures—Mrs. Betts insisted on testing the scales and measures—even they were right! So she ordered a half-bushel of potatoes there and then, and, being a great salad artist and consumer, gave a standing order for lettuce, another for beet-root and tomatoes, and a third for mustard and cress. And Adam insisted on replacing the spoiled gooseberries, free, gratis, and for nothing.

These commercial transactions ended, and Mrs. Betts being once more safely in the kitchen, Wentworth spoke up:

"Now we'll get on with our cricket, and no more blind swiping and smashing windows, Newman, if you please."

The cracksman thereupon himself took up the bat.

When Adam called again next morning, the netting was complete, and a fresh, though thumb-marked, sheet of glass had replaced the damaged window-pane.

CHAPTER III

LADY PLUCKLEY'S PINK PEARLS

WHILE these events were enlivening the suburb, London itself, the great heart of the city, was swiftly passing from the throes and preludes of anticipation into realization the most profound. The coronation was upon it; the coronation was all but here.

Enormous stands had been erected; processions and ceremonies had been rehearsed; the streets were ablaze with arches, bunting and illuminations; King George's crown had come home from the jeweler's; pickpockets and confidence-trick men were pouring in from every continent; the Maharajah of Kakapatam had unpacked his lavender silk suit; hotels and boarding-houses had doubled their prices; Colonials, Indians and other denizens of the British Empire were thick as flies in August; and you and I, dear reader, were debating whether we should pay ten guineas for a seat, squeeze one from our friends for nothing, or wait for the slump that was sure to set in at the eleventh hour. We all wanted to see the processions and we all wanted to be comfortable.

The Betts family, perched on a grand stand inside the Mall, *were* comfortable. Mrs. Betts, after getting up at 5 A. M. and living on sandwiches ever since breakfast, was all enthusiasm from start to finish. So were Nurse and the three Betts children. How they shouted when the Maharajah of Kakapatam, bowing like a mandarin, came by in his new lavender silk outfit; how they welcomed Canadians, South Africans, Australians, New Zealanders, and our own troopers; how they tried to pick out and name the foreign envoys and princes!

And when at last the King and Queen arrived, all bowing and smiling, the Betts family rose in a mass and screamed "Hurrah!" and waved its arms and pocket-handkerchiefs. The great cracksman, bareheaded and in his best tail-coat, was as wild as anybody. In all the Empire there was no more loyal and patriotic household. It motored home and went straight to bed, quite worn out, but thoroughly happy, and ready to begin again next morning.

Adam Newman, occupying a point of vantage on the common pavement, was no less fortunate and no less loyal. He pushed and hustled and perspired as freely as any one in all those panting thousands. Policemen placed rude hands upon his pigeon-breast; soldiers, keeping their line, were just as summary; and Adam complained no louder than his neighbors. It was a long wait and a strong wait and a wait all together. But he "wouldn't ha' missed it for a sovering," he vowed next day, discussing royalty and cucumbers with Mrs. Betts.

ON THE Monday came the Gala Performance at the Opera, and needless to remark that from this function our hero was excluded. Not that he had expressed any desire to attend it; on the contrary he would doubtless have been as much bored with it as it with him. But there was the Gala Performance, and Adam, standing in the rain, watched carriage after carriage on its way to Covent Garden. Crown Princes and Crown Princesses, Grand Dukes and Duchesses, and Royal Highnesses with their suites and ladies; Sultans and Begums and plain Americans, the Maharajah of Kakapatam in sky blue with ropes of emeralds, and Ambassadors and Ministers and Special Envoys; Peers and Peeresses and famous Commoners, Admirals and Generals and Monsignori, Financiers and Brewers and Lord Mayors with their Mayoresses, and Pill Merchants and County Councilors and Tobacco Manufacturers—their carriages made an endless procession.

Adam stood in the rain and smiled upon them. The King and Queen, escorted by a cloud of Life Guards, swept by; and still it rained, and still Adam Newman smiled. It was the first rain in seven weeks, and also the last.

"Jes' in the nick o' time ter save the peas an' beans," said Adam; "jes' in the nick o' time ter save em!"

Refreshed and happy, rejoicing in the thought of parched plantations made green again, of thirsty orchards drinking up the wet, he walked the streets and let the rain drive through him; welcomed it, tasted it, held out tingling palms to it. Soaked to the skin, he reveled in that fine sensation, and saw it repeating itself with every fruit and vegetable in the land.

Like him, the currant-bushes were drenched and glad of it, the plum-trees and the damson-trees, the carrots with their feathery tops, the marrows lying inert upon the crumbled soil. The rain had fallen like manna in the wilderness. He waited till it was over, and then, all cool and dripping, undressed and tumbled into bed.

Meanwhile, the Gala Performance at the Opera had reached its end, and Lady Pluckley, seated in her motor brougham and following in the wake of all the princes of the earth, had just discovered the loss of her pink pearls.

"To Scotland Yard!" she cried, all roused and frenzied. "I sat next to the Duke of Saxe-Pilsen-Münchener, but surely he——"

"To Scotland Yard!" bellowed Lord Pluckley. "The police—er, yes, the police."

Their chauffeur turned into Whitehall and exchanged surmises with the footman. His lordship and her ladyship, rendered speechless by this sudden discovery, maintained a blank and mournful silence till the footman, standing respectfully at the open door, murmured, in a voice whose every note was one of tenderest sympathy and esteem:

"Scotland Yard, my lady."

CHAPTER IV

SCOTLAND YARD AT WORK

THE Pluckley pink pearls, produced only on great occasions, or worn snugly in bed, the latter being a precaution against their loss of luster, pinkness and health in general, were an heirloom. At least, they had been such, till Sir Nicholas Brine, in whose family they had stood during six generations, was allowed to break the entail and send them up to public auction. Sir Nicholas had married the most extravagant of ballet-girls. He himself was a spendthrift without equal; what chance, therefore, had this famous necklace of descending to his heir? It was sold, and the purchaser was none other than Mr. Buttery.

"Buttery's Pink Pills and Ointment" has long stood on every sign-board, or promised you health, freedom from scalds, bruises and seasickness within the columns of your newspaper. Buttery had become a millionaire, whereas we—poor wretches! —were just as scalded, as bruised, as seasick and as unhealthy as ever.

"Pink pearls," mused Mr. Buttery, finding a statement of Sir Nicholas's misfortunes and the impending sale of the famous necklace all duly set out in his *Daily Telegraph*. His eye wandered to a familiar announcement that took up half the page. "Pink Pills," he murmured, "and pink pearls. Supposing I were to turn them one into the other? Anne would love to have the necklace, and it would be a magnificent advertisement. Pink pearls and Pink Pills —egad, this is a bright idea!"

And so it came about that Anne, otherwise Mrs. Buttery, became the possessor of the famous necklace. From her it descended to their daughter Gwendoline, the greatest all-British heiress of the day.

In Gwendoline Buttery the reader with his eyes open will recognize the Lady Pluckley of this narrative. Yes, she had married a lord, and the famous pink pearls had come to her from her mama. Pluckley was proud of her and of himself.

"Of course I might have married an American heiress," he would exclaim, "but, like a true patriot, I stuck to good old England. Naturally, at first, the family was a serious inconvenience. I actually discovered that one of the footmen was a third cousin once removed—I, er, removed him a second time."

But all this is ancient history, and Mr. and Mrs. Buttery repose in a common grave. The pearls, however, remain, and, at the moment, they are missing, and Lord and Lady Pluckley have just driven into Scotland Yard.

A FEW words with the uniformed official at the door, and they were led straightway into the presence of Detective-Inspector Finch. To this gentleman Lady Pluckley told her story as fast as she was able.

"You are sure that you wore the necklace, and that you didn't leave it at home?" asked the inspector when she had ended.

"I've never been surer of anything!" replied her ladyship. "Would I go to a Gala at the Opera and leave my very best jewels at home?"

Lord Pluckley added that he distinctly remembered saying "Damn!" at his first unsuccessful effort to fasten the clasp.

"Why didn't your ladyship's maid fasten it?" asked the inspector.

"Lord Pluckley always keeps this particular necklace in his dressing-room, and I went in to him——"

"Quite so," interposed the detective.

"On ordinary nights," resumed her ladyship, "when I merely sleep in the pearls—all good pearls should be slept in—Lord Pluckley brings them in to me; but this evening I distinctly remember——"

"Me saying 'Damn?'" inquired his lordship.

"You say it so frequently, Harry," she began; but the detective had again interposed with one of his searching questions.

"Did you fasten the clasp—fasten it securely?" he inquired.

"Yes, at the second shot; and there's a small chain as well—I tried 'em both," responded his lordship.

The inspector entered these particulars on his writing-pad.

"Of course Lord Pluckley sat on one side of you," he next asked; "and on the other?"

"There was the Duke of Saxe-Pilsen Münchener."

"You know his Highness?"

"Quite well; in fact, he has promised us a few days in the Autumn."

"So we may safely reckon him out?"

"Of course, of course," hastily put in Lord Pluckley.

"'Of course' is rather a dubious phrase in my profession," remarked the detective; "we suspect everybody."

"How dreadful!" shuddered Lady Pluckley. "Even your best friends?"

"So far they have done nothing to arouse suspicion," came the curt rejoinder. "I think, however, we may safely leave out the duke. In the first place, he would not have the necessary experience, and, on an occasion like the present, he would hardly dare to disgrace his country. You discovered your loss after leaving the Opera House or in the building itself?"

"In the motor. I was fastening my cloak——"

Detective-Inspector Finch rose from his desk.

"You must search the car and every other likely place," he ended; "meanwhile I will have a search made at the Opera House. There was a crush as you came out; but as we know the occupier of almost every seat, I doubt whether it was taken then. Good night, my lord; good night, your ladyship; I'll ring you up at ten o'clock to-morrow morning."

And so saying, the celebrated police officer escorted them to the door, where a uniformed constable stood in waiting and ready to lead them back to their motor.

ONCE more alone, the famous detective trimmed his finger-nails, then touched a bell whose button projected from his desk.

"I want Detective-Sergeant Hobday," was his brief order to the man who answered him. "He isn't here, but send him in as soon as he arrives."

The man saluted and withdrew. Toward 2 A. M. Detective-Sergeant Hobday entered the office of his chief.

Finch, ever a light sleeper, awoke with a sudden start, then took a pinch of snuff to clear his brain.

"*Tish-oo!*" he sneezed. "It's you—*tishoo!*—Hobday—have a pinch?" and he held out the box to his colleague and subordinate.

"Thanks," said Hobday, unwilling to offend his chief; and though he hated the dreadful stuff, he was presently *tishoo-ing* worse than Finch.

"Where was Betts to-night?" began Finch, as soon as the other had recovered.

"Safe and snug at home."

"Did you see him there?"

"Yes, I watched him till dinner-time, and after that the blinds were drawn, so I couldn't see any more."

"Did any one leave the house?"

"Not a soul."

"It's in the Hampdon Garden Suburb, and, being so open, you can get out sixteen ways at once?"

"Nobody left the house in the usual manner, and nobody left it from the front while I was at the front, nor from the rear while I was at the rear—I swear to that."

"And nobody came back?"

"No one. At eleven there were lights in the best bedroom, so I imagine he went to

bed. I stayed till one o'clock, and wet work it was, sir."

"Still, I can't believe that Betts would miss a Gala at the Opera. All the tiaras in England, all the diamonds, the necklaces, the ropes of pearls, and heaven knows what! You don't think Betts would miss a chance like that? It's the reason why I sent you to keep an eye on him."

Sergeant Hobday next produced his note-book and reported as follows:

"On Duty 4 P. M. Shadowed B. 4.15 B. went out and purchased cigarettes and newspaper. He and family took tea in the garden. Hawker with pigeon-breast arrived. Name on cart Adam Newman. Cart empty. Sold out. Suspect fruit and vegetables. B. and Newman played cricket. There is a first-class practise-wicket. Offered to join them——"

"You did!" cried Finch.

"Offer accepted," resumed the other. "Played uncommon well, considering how out of practise I am——"

"But don't you see," thundered Finch, "that you've given the show away? Of course Betts knows you—he knows all of us! He saw that you were there and keeping an eye on him. All he had to do was to get to Covent Garden, in his own time and in his own way."

"I never could resist a game of cricket," began Hobday. "Tempt me with all the liquor in the world, and I stand firm; offer me money, and I scorn it; but cricket——"

"Conquer your weakness, Hobday; fight with it. At one time I could never see a pretty face without wanting to pass the time o' day; now I'm thankful to say that I despise good-looking women. I turn the other way till I see a bus or tram, and then ride off in the opposite direction. 'Get thee behind me, Satan!' is my motto; and if there isn't a bus——"

"But I had to stand there and watch 'em," interposed Hobday. "Could you watch 'em and resist? It's all very easy to get on board a tram——"

"So it is, so it is," conceded the inspector. "But Wentworth Betts was at the Opera and stole Lady Pluckley's famous pink pearls. I'm sure of it."

"I never saw him leave the house," protested Hobday, "and there was a light in the best bedroom."

"Did you see him in bed, or even his shadow on the blind?" demanded Finch.

Hobday had to admit that he had seen neither.

"Who else could have done it?" pursued the inspector. "There's no other cracksman in London who would have had the nerve. I've given Lady Pluckley till to-morrow morning. The Opera House will be searched, the charwomen and cleaners examined. If that is no use—and it will be no use—I am going to put in the burglars."

"Whew!" whistled Hobday, screwing up his eyebrows. "The burglars, eh?"

"You must arrange this for me," proceeded the other. "No time must be wasted; to-morrow night Betts' house must be ransacked; and if we don't find the necklace there, we'll never find it at all."

"It's a desperate measure, and may get us into trouble," began Hobday.

"It's a desperate case, but I rely upon your getting the right men. It's promotion if you succeed—remember that, Hobday; a sub-inspectorship and better pay."

"Very well, sir," replied Hobday, "if you order it. Betts' house will be entered tomorrow night."

CHAPTER V

THE INSPECTOR PLANS

ADAM NEWMAN, punctual and businesslike, arrived in the suburb as usual on the following morning. Of the pink pearls he knew nothing, of Lady Pluckley he knew nothing, and so far the story had been kept out of the newspapers. Not that he ever wasted his precious time on these; but people talked, and even Adam could not always escape the latest murder, robbery, or other nine days' crime.

Thus, on several occasions, all unknowing, he had heard of the anonymous doings of Mr. Wentworth Betts. Blythe, happy and gay, he entered the suburb, and was soon immersed in dealings with his numerous customers; for true to the oath he had so rashly sworn, to-day he fed that Garden Suburb, and, without his genial ministrations, it might have starved.

Outside the Betts establishment he found Mrs. Betts waiting for him. As was her kindly habit, she had a couple of lumps of sugar with her, and, placing these in the palm of her small white hand, she held them out to the mare who was Newman's chief co-operator.

"Good old Alice!" she said, patting the careworn neck of that ungainly beast. And then, turning to Adam, "I've bought her a coronation souvenir."

"One o' them china mugs they gives to school-childer?"

"Absurd creature!" she laughed; "I've bought her a coronation nose-bag."

And with that she ran into the house and returned with a beautiful new nose-bag, adorned with striking portraits of Queen Mary and King George.

"My eye," breathed Adam, "won't the ole gal be smart!"

"And I've filled it too—beans and bran and oats."

"You'll be givin' her the stomach-ache!"

"Isn't that right?" demanded Mrs. Betts.

"Beans an' bran, or oats an' bran, or beans an' oats—all three's too rich—like ham an' beef an' chicken all on the same plate," expounded Adam. "But it won't do her much harm once in a while."

"And we mean to fill it for her every morning, and I'll do just as you said, if you'll allow us?"

"I'll allow yer," piped up Adam. "Now I calls that handsome, if yer really means it, an' if it ain't goin' too fur."

"I'd like to; we'd all like to. I always was fond of horses," pursued Mrs. Betts. "Before I married, we lived in the country, and all we girls had something to ride or drive. Now don't you forget; we're to fill that nose-bag every morning, and, if I'm not at home, you're to ask for Cook or Mr. Betts. It's a bargain, Newman," she concluded, and, laughing brightly, held out her hand to him.

"A bargain it is, ma'am," answered he; "an' in the mare's name I says thank yer as well as in my own. She'll remember the coronation as long as she lives, even if we an' King George forgits it. Now I'll hang the nose-bag on to her an' you can watch her take her dinner."

And without further fuss or ceremony, the nosebag was hung on, Alice began to munch, and Adam and Mrs. Betts, after an admiring and parental interval, proceeded to business.

Two pounds of strawberries, a quart of French beans, and a brace of cauliflower were left with Mrs. Betts. Then Alice, Adam, and the coronation nose-bag proceeded cheerfully upon their way.

IN GROSVENOR SQUARE Lord Pluckley was at the telephone.

"Ah, yes," he was saying, "Inspector who—Inspector Finch? Of course, of course, Inspector. Any news?"

"None whatever. We've gone through the Opera House, done everything that was possible—and how about you?"

"Not a pearl."

"You searched the motor?"

"As soon as we got home."

"And, er—Lady Pluckley?"

"Couldn't find it anywhere."

"I thought as much."

"I—I'd better offer a reward, hadn't I? That's the usual thing."

"Offer nothing, and keep quiet about it till to-morrow morning. I don't want it to get into the newspapers—not yet, at least. When I've found them, there'll be time enough. You understand?"

"You've got a clue."

"I've got nothing; but to-morrow, perhaps. Can you keep Lady Pluckley quiet?"

"I don't know. I'll have a shot."

"Don't let her see anybody. Say she's ill."

"I'll manage somehow. And you'll ring us up to-morrow morning?"

"Yes—say ten sharp. That's all, my lord."

There followed a vacant buzz which lasted till Lord Pluckley replaced the instrument upon its rest.

Lady Pluckley, a breathless listener during the foregoing missing word competition, now asked for particulars.

"It was Scotland Yard, and the man said they'd done all they could do at Covent Garden, and that it was no go; and that we weren't to offer a reward, but to sit tight and keep our mouths shut till to-morrow, when he'll ring us up again and tell us all about it."

"So I'm to lose my pearls, and not say a single word!" cried Lady Pluckley.

"Not till the thief's caught. You don't want the fellow to know we're after him!"

"Oh, he knows it—I'm sure *I* should!"

"I'm only telling you what the inspector said. If you like to talk about it, you do so at your own risk and I can't help it. I wash my hands of the whole business; I give it up and you can go your own way. If you know better than your husband, then all I've got to say is that I won't be bored with it!"

"You're always a cross old thing in the morning," interposed her ladyship.

"Well, I'd like to know who isn't!" and Lord Pluckley made for the morning paper and buried himself within its ample folds.

"I'll tell Harriet," said Lady Pluckley, "and no one else."

"Tell whom you like—tell everybody! I give it up—I give it up!" his lordship muttered in despair, and flung out of the room and made for his own quarters.

AT THE other end of the wire, and while Pluckley was filling up his largest pipe, Detective-Inspector Finch was conferring with the Chief Commissioner.

"The fellow—and I'm sure it's Betts—can't dispose of them in Europe; so he's pretty certain to try America; and even there he'll have to wait till the thing's blown over," the inspector had just remarked.

"So he'll have to hang on to them for a time before he sends them out of the country?"

"Yes, I think we may count on that. He won't trust his American friends too far; and just now they'd be sure to be nabbed at the Customs."

"But if Betts hasn't taken them, after all?" interposed the Chief Commissioner.

"It's his work—just the kind of thing he would do—I'm ready to swear to it. I know him far too well. I can't say how he managed it, and I don't care; but Betts isn't likely to let a Gala Performance go by without helping himself to something."

"Have you a plan of the seats and their occupants?" was the next question.

"Yes;" and Finch produced it.

The two men now stooped over this chart, which gave the exact position of the Pluckleys' stalls together with the names of all their immediate neighbors. Beside Lady Pluckley had sat the Duke of Saxe-Pilsen-Münchener, and next door to him was the Countess Montepulciano of the Italian Embassy. Immediately behind Lady Pluckley had sat the Amir of Indrapur, and, beside him, Sir Philip Joshua, the banker.

"All impossible, or, at the least, unlikely," observed the Commissioner. "What's this Amir, though—a hard-up or a plutocrat?"

"It's contrary to his religion to wear pearls—I've gone into him. But he's full of diamonds, sapphires, rubies and the non-animal jewels. He's a kind of vegetarian in jewelry as well as in his diet. The oyster's an animal, and therefore he's forbidden to touch it. So they tell me at the India Office."

The Chief Commissioner stroked his snow-white beard.

"I suppose it is Betts, and no evidence as usual," he added wearily. "The way that fellow escapes us is absolutely heartless."

Detective-Inspector Finch shared none of this pessimism.

"You leave him to me; I think I've managed it."

"You've thought so before," was the dismal rejoinder.

"But this time he has to keep the stuff, and we've only got to find it in his house."

The Chief Commissioner whistled.

"So that's your game, is it?" he asked.

"Nothing else left for us. We've tried every other way; picked his pockets, tripped him up and gone through him."

"When is it to be?"

"This very night."

"Well, don't be too rough with Mrs. Betts. I rather like the little lady—took her in to dinner a week or so ago."

"That's all right, sir," answered the inspector, and went off to arrange the final details with Detective-Sergeant Hobday.

CHAPTER VI

EXCITEMENT COMES TO HAMPDON GARDEN

THE Hampdon Garden Suburb, immune from burglaries, except on Bank Holidays, when the London rabble disported itself upon the adjacent Hampdon Heath, was startled the next morning by a dozen different stories of violence and crime committed at its very heart. Not a servant-girl in the suburb but had her version; not a master or mistress that did not tremble and turn pale.

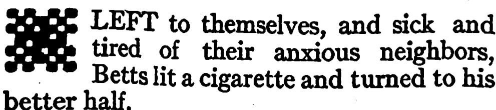
If these things occurred in the Hampdon Garden Suburb, where on earth could one be safe? It was all very well for brutal flesh and fish-eaters to show indifference, but how could simple vegetarians be expected to cope with such a risk? Four times a year, on the several Bank Holidays, one could endure the anguish, and, if fate so willed it, even a burglary; but to come out of turn and out of season, as it were—no, the suburb drew the line at that!

When Mr. and Mrs. Betts appeared upon their lawn at tea-time—just as though nothing serious had happened, so all the suburbans agreed—they received the congratulations and sympathy of everybody who passed. And most people did pass and step in and ask about it—the fluffy lady who was always pretending to mow the lawn opposite, the little thing in the loose gown and spectacles who took suffragette circulars from door to door, the doctor at the corner who never seemed to have any patients, the literary gentleman from "Rosamund's Bower," who perpetually wanted a hair-cut and a shave. There was really no end to them. Were they badly injured? was the first question; and what had the ruffians taken?

Wentworth Betts, who acted as spokesman, was able to assure the public that the burglars had behaved most humanely. He and Mrs. Betts had simply been chloroformed in their beds; and as to the second question, they were well insured.

"It really isn't as bad as it seems," he added, with perfect courage and unshaken nerve. "The drug has left a slight headache, but otherwise we enjoy our usual health."

A sigh of relief escaped from the suburbans. If that was all an out-of-season burglary with violence amounted to—well, they would risk it and buy a few dozen dogs as an extra guarantee.



LEFT to themselves, and sick and tired of their anxious neighbors, Betts lit a cigarette and turned to his better half.

"And what do you make of it, dear?" he asked, with one of his rare smiles.

It was a smile of pride, of affection, of thoughts too deep for words. Even now, after twelve long years of married life, he felt, perhaps once in a blue moon, that Mrs. Betts was worth her keep.

"Make of what—this burglary?" she responded. "I think it was very unnecessary and very silly. They've made both of us ill; they've turned the house upside down and smashed the safe and ruined the drawing-room carpet, spilling the ink and breaking everything open and, in the end, they haven't taken a single thing! Perhaps somebody disturbed them."

"They weren't burglars," now hissed Betts; "it was the police!"

"The police!" she cried in amazement.

"Yes; as they couldn't very well come here on mere suspicion, they planned this outrage and put it into execution."

"Disgraceful!" she exclaimed; "I'll talk to the Chief Commissioner. He took me in to dinner a week or two ago."

"He knows all about it," pursued Betts in a tone of pessimistic fury. "A cracksman isn't safe in his own house or even in bed! I'll leave off, I'll retire, or else I'll emigrate. I'll go to some civilized country. It's worse than Russia!"

"Have you done anything very dreadful lately?" she next inquired. "Of course, if it's not in the papers, I don't want to know."

"Nothing worse than usual. The papers haven't got hold of it yet, but they will, I suppose." Then recovering his ordinary urbanity and calm, "You're best out of it, old lady; we'll stick to our bargain. Unless the whole world knows about it, we two'll leave it alone. Though I do wish the papers would say something," he added. "Until they begin I'm always uneasy. It's my liver or my imagination. I'm like a child in the dark.

"An imaginative man should keep away from what is popularly called crime. I fancy things, I fear things; but when the papers begin, I'm all right again. And it does make something really interesting to read. You know I hate novels. They're so deuced silly; just as though we cracksmen didn't have wives and families and eat boiled mutton the same as other people! Did Newman turn up this morning?" he ended abruptly.

"Yes, of course he did. What made you think of him?"

"I'd like a little net practise—shakes up one's liver—clears the cobwebs from one's brain. I'm going out, dear, to see if I can find some one who'll bowl at me like mad."

SIX miles away, in the center of busy London, sat Detective-Inspector Finch, grown desperate and pale. He had telephoned to Lord Pluckley, who had threatened to turn on Wendell Oliver, a private detective, and therefore anathema to Scotland Yard.

"One of those deductive fools!" muttered Finch, bridling. "Goes to work like a calculating machine and makes a blooming sum of it. The pearls aren't in the Garden Suburb—Hobday made a thorough job of that. They must be somewhere. Where else can they be?"

Once more he opened the detective-sergeant's note-book, with its brief and graphic account of last night's doings. If Betts had shot somebody, there would have been the devil to pay.

"'Not a weapon in the house,' he says. Hullo, what's this?"

The inspector's soliloquy had ceased upon a sudden. Turning the note-book over two pages at a time, he had come upon an entry that seemed to afford a clue. Quick as lightning he sprang to the telephone, and, as luck would have it, Lord Pluckley was at home. A moment later, and his lordship himself was bleating testily at the other end of the wire.

"Keep it out of the papers? I've kept it out."

"Go on keeping it out; I think I've nabbed him. And, er, what about Wendell Oliver?"

"Haven't had time to do anything yet."

"Keep him out of it."

"I don't want him in it. This confounded business is worrying the life out of me! If it goes on much longer, and in the morning too——"

"Her ladyship well?"

"She's begun telling everybody."

The detective gave a groan and dashed the receiver down upon its rest.

CHAPTER VII

MR. BETTS IS SURPRISED

NEXT morning the story was not in one but in every London and provincial newspaper, accompanied by editorial foot-notes, or, sometimes, common paragraphs, that gave an account of Mr. Buttery's purchase and the price he bid at Christie's, that dragged in the Pink Pills and the Ointment, and retold the sad and salutary history of Sir Nicholas Brine. The Pluckleys, of course, were introduced, and photographs—or what purported to be photographs—of the famous jewels exhibited. Except for this misadventure, it was said, the coronation had passed off without a hitch.

At Scotland Yard Detective-Inspector Finch ground his few remaining teeth—it is dangerous to grind false ones, as they often snap off short; so he put these carefully aside and ground only those that remained. But, in Grosvenor Square, Lady Pluckley, now in the full glare of publicity and fame, reveled in the sensation that she had produced and made hay while the sun shone.

"You're like one o' those star actresses," commented his lordship, "who always have their jewels stolen before they put on a new piece."

"I suppose I am," replied her ladyship; "at any rate it's quite a tonic to be somebody. Not since poor father died and they wanted to know all about the Pills and Ointment have I had such a time as I am having now," and she flew down-stairs again to interview three more reporters and a lady detective who begged to be employed.

"I won't charge you anything; you see, I'm just starting in business, and a success with your necklace would be the making of me," the stubborn creature implored.

But Lady Pluckley was adamant.

"If I show a favor to one, I'll have to show a favor to everybody;" and this poor yet brave young woman was promptly shown the door.

Not so the reporters. They were asked into the magnificent dining-saloon and given whiskies and sodas, sandwiches and the best cigarettes. Cigars they pocketed; and even this was winked at. A special man was deputed to look after them and see that they lacked for nothing; and Lady Pluckley told them all she knew, and especially mentioned that she had sat next to the Duke of Saxe-Pilsen-Münchener, who had been most attentive; but who, of course——"

"Of course," they repeated; and, emboldened by this condescension, one of them asked about the Amir of Indrapur, who had sat immediately behind her.

"That was the Eastern Prince in the blue and gold draperies and uncut stones as big as pigeon's-eggs? There was one in his turban——"

"What I can't make out," interposed the reporter, who once upon a time had reported in India until he got the sack; "what I can't make out is the Amir. At home he'd never dare go near an opera, or look on any woman publicly unless she was veiled. It's against his religion. Nor may he wear pearls, because they're supposed to be animal, and therefore spell defilement to one of his peculiar creed. But it's his being at the Opera that floors me, and sitting right behind you—and you were certainly unveiled——"

"Not more than any other lady!" protested the indignant hostess.

"Still, I suppose the Amir, being away

from home, wouldn't be so particular. I shall, however, make a note of it, and see what he has to say for himself."

The reporter pocketed a fourth and last cigar, swallowed his sixth whisky and soda, ate another ham sandwich, helped himself to a glass of sherry, lit a cigarette, and hastily withdrew.

LORD PLUCKLEY, meanwhile, free from these impertinences and safe in his own den, was quite content to read the newspaper. Indeed, he read them with uncommon relish, but a reporter he would not see. Toward eleven o'clock in the morning, Inspector Finch had roused him with a triumphal message.

"I've got my man," announced the inspector. "I'll ring you up again at one."

At one o'clock, however, a less jubilant note was sounded.

"Perhaps I've been mistaken—no trace of the pearls. I'm pretty despondent; but one never knows."

Lord Pluckley told the inspector to "buck up," and he set out for his club. He would lunch there to-day, and so escape the disorder and bell-ringing and double knocks and front-door banging that had descended on his home.

Brushing off the reporters like flies and bringing his walking-stick down heavily on the apparatus of a too importunate camera-man while another snapped him in the act he passed into the square, and, with a very good appetite, strode off toward Piccadilly. And even as he turned into South Audley Street, Inspector Finch was once more at the telephone, but Lord Pluckley being away from home, this third and later message must perforce wait till his return.

AWAY in the Hampdon Garden Suburb Wentworth Betts had read all the newspapers, and so had Mrs. Betts.

"It's those pink pearls that have been worrying you?" she asked. "I'm sure it's those pink pearls."

"I feel better now," he answered, "now that it's in the newspapers and I need no longer imagine the worst. And seeing that everybody knows about it, I may as well confess."

"Clever boy!" she exclaimed archly. "The way you do it is a never-ending wonder, even to your wife, and that's saying a good deal. I can't see how you do it."

"It's quite simple," said he; "it's just a business, the same as any other."

"An art I should call it," exclaimed Mrs. Betts, "or at least a profession. Wentworth, you're too modest."

"Well, I suppose it is an art. I don't often talk shop, for obvious reasons. Yet sometimes I think that, speaking broadly, mine *is* an art, and far superior to most of the occupations which pass under that degraded term."

In a highly self-satisfied and placid frame of mind the cracksman now retired to his study and there began to map out the next of his great operations. This carried him till noon, when, as was his custom, he went outdoors to mow the lawn, or else to woo appetite with some small piece of gardening.

A pruning-knife in one gloved hand, a pair of scissors in the other, and a solution of arsenate of lead all prepared and ready, he was debating whether he should cut his sweet peas, spray his roses, or amuse himself with the knife, when Mrs. Betts came running out to him and asked whether he would mind going round to the greengrocer's in the Hampdon Road. The servants were so busy, she explained, and he had nothing else to do.

"But where's Newman?" he interrupted her.

"He hasn't been here this morning. And I had the horse's dinner all ready for it—a good feed of fresh hay."

"Did he say he wasn't coming?"

"No, he promised me some rhubarb and some extra good tomatoes. It's because——"

"Why didn't you tell me earlier?"

"I never thought it would interest you."

"It does, it does, most infernally!" replied the cracksman; then, going to the garden gate, he looked out thoughtfully upon the roadway and the suburban glow of this fine Summer.

"Will you run round to the greengrocer's in the Hampdon Road, and—" Abruptly Mrs. Betts had ended, had approached a step nearer. "What is it—what is it?" she cried. "What have you seen?"

Her husband's face was livid, great beads of perspiration stood upon his brow.

"The house is surrounded; there are three men in front of it and four at the back—plainclothes men—I know them well."

"Detectives?" she asked; and Wentworth nodded.

"I'll go round to the greengrocer's," he pursued; "perhaps I'll get away entirely; you've your own banking-account, so you and the kiddies are safe. I'll take a small basket on my arm; it'll make 'em think I am coming back. I'd better put on a hat—mustn't overdo it."

In the hall he kissed her, spent one moment with his children, then said good-by.

With firm tread and stepping jauntily, Wentworth Betts passed out of the front gate and into the suburb.

CHAPTER VIII

ADAM NEWMAN MEETS DETECTIVE-SERGEANT HOBDAY

ADAM NEWMAN, loaded up with a stock as fine, as fresh, as carefully assorted as any in London, and mindful of Mrs. Betts's rhubarb and the extra good tomatoes, was on his way from the market and had nearly reached the suburb. With not an ounce of fruit, with not a single vegetable, would he part until he had entered that splendid destination. Intending customers, lured by the fragrance of his wares, their manifest superiority, might accost him; rich ladies in slippers and silken negligee, cooks and working housekeepers in clean print and apron, small boys holding up their penny.

"You go and live in the suburb," was all he would deign to answer, "and then mebbe I'll serve yer;" and to the more persistent, "Out here there's nothin' doin'."

Why should he waste time on these, when, compact, unscattered, the suburb was looking out for him and would clear his groaning cart?

Black looks frequently followed him all the way from London, rude remarks were made about his pigeon-breast; but, once in the suburb, these personalities ceased, and he saw no face that did not wear a smile. Even now he was turning from the hostile Hampdon Road into that sanctuary where all was ready cash and sunshine.

His familiar cry had resounded, already a watchful vegetarian was at her gate, when a heavy hand, the hand of Detective-Sergeant Hobday, was laid upon Adam's shoulder, and a brutal voice, the voice of Detective-Sergeant Hobday, croaked:

"You're wanted, my man!"

"I know I am," returned Adam, "there's fifty families lookin' out fer me an' ready to deal."

"I must warn you that whatever you say will be used in evidence against you."

"Will it?" asked Adam. "An' wot's evidence?"

For so long and strange a word offered difficulties that even two years of London had been unable wholly to overcome.

"Will be used against you in court," explained the other.

"Wot court?"

"The police court!" came the brief rejoinder. "You've been arrested; you'll be charged at the police station; come along quietly. I've two men ready to help if you resist."

"But wot's to become o' my customers an' this here cart an' vegetables?"

"We can't help them. You'd better drive me to Bow Street—the cart'll come in handy."

"D'yer mean ter say you're goin' ter stop me in my business?"

"Unfortunately I must."

"You must! No man stops me, an' no woman neither! You ain't dressed like a policeman; I believe you're a fraud! I believe you're one o' them greengrocers wi' shops!" exclaimed Adam, his wrath rising at each new supposition.

"I've warned you—all this is evidence."

"You're evidence," said Adam; "now you git out o' my way or I'll call the perlice to yer! *I've* warned *you!* Now step it an' be off!"

HOBDAY, a stout and powerful man, was listening massively and without a smile. Stealthily he produced a pair of handcuffs.

"You'll come quietly," he said. "You don't want me to use force?"

"You try it!" cried Adam. "A perfect stranger, at nine o'clock in the mornin', an' not a farthin's-worth sold!" He struck an attitude of defiance. "Come on," said he; "you lay a hand on me an' see what I'll do ter yer!"

"I have no wish to lay a hand on you. I'm a police officer, and I've a warrant for your arrest." In his heart of hearts Hobday was thinking: "I can't make Finch out, sending me after a silly fool like this! He hasn't got the Pluckley pearls, and he

wouldn't know what to do with them if he had them. However, orders are orders, I suppose, and I must take the fellow to Bow Street."

"But I ain't done nothink!" fairly shouted Adam, alarming several suburban gentlemen on the way to business or wherever they earned their daily bread.

"That may be or may not be. I've my duty to do."

"And so have I!" said Adam; and addressing the mare, "Gee up, ole lady; this feller's gone ravin' mad!"

The horse was about to obey when Hobday seized the bridle.

"You let go o' that or you'll get such a punch in the nose!"

There seemed to be no other way out of it, so Hobday, his handcuffs ready, advanced swiftly upon Adam; yet before he could effect his purpose, Adam had effected *his*.

Hobday's nose was a large and bulbous nose, one of those noses, in brief, that seem as though made for punching. Adam gave it one solid bang, and the detective bit the dust of the suburb.

"Good morning," said Adam; "that'll learn you a lesson!"

He was about to resume his natural avocations, when two men, who had sprung seemingly from nowhere, seized him, pinioned him, and held him fast. The detective, risen from the ground, quickly snapped on the handcuffs.

"Now up on the cart with him, and I'll drive him to Bow Street!" and Hobday wiped his bleeding nose while the two men obeyed.

A crowd of astonished suburbans, headed by the watchful vegetarian lady who had waited vainly at her gate, had hastily gathered round while these events were in progress.

"What's to become o' all my fruit an' vegetables?" they heard Adam cry as he was driven off in the custody of the three Scotland yarders.

Well he might ask it, they agreed; but what—but what, they inquired, had the poor young fellow done? We leave them comparing notes upon his stock, his manners and his prices for ready cash. No one but had a good word to say for him or that did not prophesy his innocence and speedy reappearance in the suburb where his fresh wares were a positive necessity.

CHAPTER IX

THE FINESSE OF INSPECTOR FINCH

INSPECTOR FINCH was waiting nervously. A telephone message had already apprised him of Adam's arrest, and we have seen that, without loss of time, he had passed the news on triumphantly to Lord Pluckley and her ladyship at their home in Grosvenor Square.

Inspector Finch was an optimist, a creature of sudden impulses. Despondent moments he had in plenty, but these never sobered him nor had the power to outstay the first rude shock. He recovered himself, hope flowered again, self-confidence returned. No need, therefore, to tell him to "buck up"—it was Lord Pluckley's expression. Finch was one of those men who have a natural and inexhaustible capacity for "bucking up."

Unable to curb the impatience that devoured him, he had reached Bow Street long before Adam could possibly arrive, and, had he known their exact direction, he would have gone out to meet captor and captive on the road. Forced thus to cool his heels at the police station, he began to reflect upon the wild audacity of his conduct, the swift and unexpected inspirations which had urged him to effect this man's arrest.

Of Newman he knew nothing, neither for nor against him. No suspicion rested on the fellow, no crime of his was on record. The impulse had come, almost an admonition, as though Providence itself were lending a hand in this especial case. As the first Mormon or the first Trust Magnate heard voices, so did the great detective feel himself inspired. Yet, often before the inspector had allowed himself to be carried off his feet; and always the scent had proved false, indeed, not infrequently, had covered him with ridicule and shame.

Thus, for instance, it was he who had ordered the arrest of young Hugo Brabazon three days after the celebrated Pimlico murder case, on the sole ground that Hugo, the fourth son of the Marquis, had been seen in Pimlico on the very day of the murder. The son of a Marquis, Finch had resolved, could enter so low a neighborhood with only one object, and that object was—to commit a crime. The poor lad was forced to explain, almost in public, that his one reason for descending to Pimlico was a

pressing necessity to pawn his watch and chain.

In Belgravia he was so well known that not only passers-by in the street but even the assistant might recognize him and inform his father. So he had walked as far as Pimlico, and here was the result! He had produced the pawn-ticket, and Inspector Finch, disgraced and reprimanded, had confessed his error, issued abject apologies, and sworn to be more circumspect in future. Yet, in spite of this and many similar lessons, the inspector still continued to "follow the gleam."

SEATED, as we find him, in a cool and secluded quarter of the police station, he for the first time probed into the causes that had determined his present action. From an inside breast-pocket he produced the slender clue which had dictated it.

This clue was nothing less than a page torn from the detective-sergeant's note-book—the page which had caught and finally fixed his attention when he had turned over, two leaves at a time, Hobday's record of the abortive burglary in the Hampdon Garden Suburb. Here, on this earlier page, was an account of the cracksman's movements on the day of the Gala Performance at Covent Garden:

On duty 4 P. M. Shadowed B. 4:15 B. went out and purchased cigarettes and newspaper. He and family took tea in the garden. *Hawker with pigeon-breast arrived. Name on cart Adam Newman. Cart empty. Sold out. Suspect fruit and vegetables.*

The italics are the inspector's. Here was the accomplice, the fence, the receiver. How clever of Betts to work with so simple-seeming a partner! Maybe this "pigeon-breast" was only an artful padding and contained the string of pearls itself!

The same impulse which had inspired his issuing orders for the arrest of this pretended fruit-hawker had inevitably dictated parallel action in the case of Wentworth Betts. The cracksman must not be allowed to leave his house. If he left it, he left it at his own peril. So far Finch had no other evidence.

This review, this brown study, had come to a close as sudden as it was welcome. Above the inspector now towered the massive bulk of Detective-Sergeant Hobday, and nonplussed, handcuffed, yet still truculent, there appeared the outraged figure of Adam Newman. Needless to say that the keen eye of the inspector had recognized him at a glance.

THERE is no need to dwell on the examinations and personal indignities suffered by Adam at Bow Street. The intelligent reader will have been quick to anticipate them, and, once anticipated, their barbaric detail can only prove an offense to the refined, a sop to the brutal and malignant. Wherefore we take them for granted and pass on.

Naturally, they were fruitless and led to no practical result. The man concealed nothing, he revealed nothing; and now for the first time Adam heard that his patron of the Hampdon Garden Suburb was none other than Wentworth Betts.

"But I always called him Mr. Tankerville," said Adam, unable to conceive that a fellow creature could pass under two names.

"Did you?" grimly returned the inspector.

This first inspection being over, he and Hobday went out to inspect the horse and cart.

The fruit and vegetables were real enough and of an uncommon quality.

"I'll take a pound or two of these beans home to the Missus," said the inspector; "they'll only go bad if they stay here."

Hobday, always quick to follow his superior officer's example and urging the same reason, helped himself to a brace of cauliflower. "I'll have a few cauliflower as well," added the inspector; and between them they almost cleared the cart.

From the cart the two men proceeded to the horse; and from the horse it was but a step to the coronation nose-bag. This article, decorated as it was with striking portraits of Queen Mary and King George, could hardly escape their attention; and, moreover, the horse was actually wearing it, and flinging it high in a vain effort to find further sustenance.

"He asked me to give the horse his bag," explained Hobday, "and, being fond of animals, I humored him."

"Suspicious, very suspicious," returned the inspector.

The nose-bag was thereupon impounded, and it was with this object under his arm that the police officer again faced Adam Newman.

"Them Tankervilles, or I'd better say them Bettses, give me that," said Adam, volunteering an explanation. "Nice bag, ain't it? They said as they was goin' ter fill it for me every mornin' an' give Alice her dinner—the mare's name's Alice—a kind o' coronation present like. She ain't had no feed to-day 'cause o' me bein' brought here so early an' unexpected, so I arst him to hang the bag on her, ter see what she could pick up in the leavin's."

The inspector let him run on. All this was doubly interesting. More than ever now the inspector was becoming convinced that the fellow was innocent, the tool, the unconscious instrument of a superior mind; and that mind—he had no doubt of it—was the mind of Wentworth Betts.

"So Betts gave you that nose-bag," Finch replied at last, "and you were to return with it every morning and he would fill it? Simple as A B C! He couldn't keep the pearls in the house; he couldn't get rid of them; he had to keep 'em somewhere—somewhere near at hand and where they would be ready for him at any moment. By your calling regularly every morning, he could assure himself that his booty was safe and outside the range of suspicion. He didn't want to feed your horse; he wanted to get at the nose-bag! In the lining of that nose-bag, I'll stake my reputation, are Lady Pluckley's pink pearls—or, perhaps, it is provided with a double bottom!"

The nose-bag, however, far from being provided with a double bottom, had no bottom at all. The famished mare, so it appeared, deprived of her usual meal, had chewed clean through it, and had even eaten a piece out of the striking portrait of Queen Mary. Nor was there any visible lining. The inspector inspected, but all his inspections only tended to confirm these facts.

"You did this!" he cried, turning on Adam in a white heat of rage and fury. "And what have you done with the pearls?"

His whole theory had collapsed, and Lady Pluckley's jewels stood as far away from him as ever. And as to Adam—this scoundrel innocent, the unconscious tool of a superior mind? No, a rogue, a cunning rascal, who evaded them, who had eluded them! What if the arrest of Wentworth Betts should prove equally futile, equally lacking in result!

It was at this crisis in his history that Inspector Finch again repaired to the telephone and mumbled that second and despondent message to Lord Pluckley.

CHAPTER X

DISCOVERY

SENSATION followed on sensation throughout that afternoon. In the first place, the Amir of Indrapur, run to earth by the reporters, declared categorically, and even with violence, that he had been nowhere near the Opera House on the night of the Gala Performance, and that he had certainly not purchased a ticket. Nor had one been presented to him. The officials responsible knew better.

As had been stated, and stated correctly, his religion forbade all public visits to the theater. A private performance—at home he often commanded one—was permitted. And as for wearing a blue and gold dress adorned with precious stones as big as pigeons'-eggs, he possessed no such costume, but invariably dressed in white—a clean suit twice a day. His washing bill was enormous, and the London laundries either lost things or else tore them all to shreds—at home he had his own washerwomen, who did nothing else but the palace washing.

His precious stones, and only one was as big as a pigeon's-egg, were locked up in the hotel strong-room, and since the coronation procession he had not had them out. No, he had been impersonated; the thief had not scrupled to use his name at the box-office. At home such a rascal would be boiled in melted butter, cut up into small pieces, and given to the palace alligators. His Highness spoke excellent English, it was added; and this interview, carefully split up into paragraphs with vivacious head-lines, made an exceedingly valuable half-column.

The question now arose as to who, impersonating the Amir of Indrapur, had sat immediately behind Lady Pluckley, and, profiting by this position, had quietly unclasped the famous necklace.

The second sensation was the report that the police had seized a blue and gold costume together with a quantity of imitation precious stones as big as pigeons'-eggs in a house that belonged to the Hampdon Garden Suburb. No, not adjacent to the

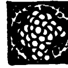
suburb, but in the suburb itself. Inquiry in that quarter elicited the opinion that the police must be mistaken, as the house indicated was occupied by a Mr. and Mrs. Tankerville, a most respectable couple, who kept their own motor-car and who had only themselves quite recently been the victims of a burglary.

It was true that an itinerant fruit-hawker had been arrested in the suburb that same morning, but he was hardly a resident, and the suburb could not fairly be held responsible for a man who might equally well have been arrested somewhere else. As to the blue and gold costume and the precious stones, the parties seen knew no more than was already in the newspapers. This interview, or, rather, series of interviews, carefully split up into paragraphs with depressing head-lines, made a very second-rate quarter-column.

The third and greatest sensation of all was an official notification to the effect that the pearls had actually been recovered and were once more in the possession of their original owners. This statement, like all official statements, though convincing, was provocatively bald. It whetted the appetite, yet failed to provide a hearty meal. And naturally, human nature being what it is, the wildest reports, the absurdest stories, were current and found credence with the multitude.

The pearls had been returned by a lady who had to choose between honesty and insomnia; this, being her first offense, she could not sleep for thinking of it. The Duke of Saxe-Pilsen-Münchener had found the pearls hanging on to an excrescence of his uniform, and, being aware that everybody would "speak at once," had wisely decided to keep them until their loss was definitely and circumstantially announced. Lady Pluckley's maid had conspired with her young man with a view to pocketing the immense reward that would be offered the lucky finder.

All these, and stories still more foolish, were afloat until the authorities thought fit to amplify their first bare outline. The exact facts which had led to this recovery were as yet unknown, nor even later were they given with any precision. To learn the truth and nothing but the truth we must repair once more to Bow Street, where Adam has just been vilified by the inspector.



THE detective's outbreak and his despondent confession through the telephone, rewarded by Lord Pluckley with a laconic adjuration to "buck up," were promptly followed by the arrival of the Chief Commissioner. The great man stroked his snow-white beard and listened unmoved while Hobday and the inspector told their story.

"So you suspect that the pearls were hidden in the nose-bag?" was the Commissioner's summing up.

"No doubt about it," responded Finch; "and that this man Newman himself ripped them out of the bag, taking care that it should look as though the horse had done the damage. The problem is——"

"But you yourself admit," interposed the Chief, "you yourself admit that the horse had gone without its usual meal this morning and had only yesterday's leavings. What more likely, therefore, than that it should have tried to eat the nose-bag, bottom and all?"

The Inspector, however, stuck to his guns.

"We have only Newman's word for all this," he began.

"I quite see your point," returned the other; "you've made out a certain case, and you don't want me to chip in and spoil it. But suppose we apply a little common sense. Your whole theory rests on one assumption—that the horse was to be fed each morning by Mrs. Betts or Betts; and, failing these, it must go hungry." And then, in tones convincing and succinct: "If the pearls were really there, then the horse has swallowed the pearls as well!"

The Commissioner's words fell like a thunderclap.

"My heavens, I never thought of that!" exclaimed the inspector.

"I knew it all along, I did," muttered Hobday.

"What a fool I was—what a fool I was not to guess it!" pursued the humiliated Finch.

"Yes, you always were too clever," slowly enunciated the Chief. "You're too subtle, Finch—that's what's the matter with you. A complex question, and there's hardly anybody like you—not even myself. A simple solution like the present, and you're all at sea. We'd better have the horse—er—opened, and take a look inside. Of course, of course, if we're mistaken, there may be a

claim for compensation. And—er—all may be as you suggested, Finch. This Adam Newman may be the cunning rogue you picture him. I admit that Hobday—how's your nose, Hobday?—gave no such indications. Let's have the fellow in and put it to him."

A moment later, Adam, escorted by two stalwart constables, was introduced into the presence of the Chief Commissioner. The great man did not spare his feelings:

"A pigeon-breast," he began, "according to Lombroso, is a sure sign of degeneracy. Confess, confess that you are in possession of Lady Pluckley's pink pearls, or else know of their whereabouts. Otherwise we must —er—have your horse opened and see whether it has swallowed them."

"Yer don't mean ter say as you'd cut up the ole mare?"

"I do," responded the Commissioner. "Now what about those pearls?"

CONFRONTED by this terrible dilemma, poor Adam could only repeat what he had said before. He knew nothing of any pearls, and no more did the horse. He took his dying oath upon it.

"Yet Betts, or, as you call him, Tankerville, gave you this nose-bag, with a promise that if you called every morning he and his wife would fill it for you and give the horse its dinner?"

"That's right," said Adam, swallowing.

"Very well," said the Commissioner; "you may go."

"Yer won't do anything to my ole mare?" cried Adam, now thoroughly alarmed. "I'd sooner yer cut me open——"

"I'm afraid we have no alternative," the Commissioner had interposed.

He signaled to the brace of stalwart constables. Though Adam could hardly understand the phrase, he knew its drift.

We will draw a veil over the scene as he was led away; we will draw a veil, indeed, over everything that followed, until we find Inspector Finch for the fourth time at the telephone—the reader will recall that the third time Lord Pluckley was from home and had just bashed in the apparatus of a too-persistent camera-man.

"We've got the pearls!" now chortled Finch. "Quite undamaged and undigested!"

"Undi—what?"

"Digested," chuckled the inspector; and left it at that, and took pearls and a "taxi" round to Grosvenor Square.

CHAPTER XI

RECOVERY

THE trial and sentence of Wentworth Betts to seven years' hard labor is an old story; for all such stories grow old within the year. The chief evidence against him was a drawerful of imitation precious stones and the blue and gold suit wherein he had impersonated the Amir of Indrapur. These, as reports most truly said, had been found in his residence at the Hampdon Garden Suburb. He had known that potentate's attitude toward the Gala Performance, it seemed, and seen his way, not only to profit by it, but also to throw unmerited suspicion upon a devout and blameless foreign prince.

One detail, however, had escaped him, and caused his downfall—and served him right: he was unaware that the Amir invariably dressed in white. The blue and gold costume as well as the imitation stones had been there all the time, we may add; but, as Detective-Sergeant Hobday observed to Inspector Finch:

"I was told to look for pink pearls, and for pink pearls only."

This get-up, in conjunction with a pot of face-stain, Oriental whiskers and a wig, taken together with the testimony of Adam Newman, was sufficient to convict the cracksman. The mystery of the jewels was now explained, and Lord Pluckley, the trial once ended, could at last settle himself comfortably over his morning newspaper without fear of telephonic or other disturbances.

Lady Pluckley, who had had a final flutter of publicity in court, where she exhibited a hat and walking costume specially ordered for the occasion, was also entirely satisfied; was, indeed, a heroine for many a long day afterward. Inspector Finch, that brilliant officer, whose untiring vigilance and marvelous intuitions had led to so happy a result, received a well-deserved promotion. He is now a superintendent, while Hobday is at last a sub-inspector.

Mrs. Betts, who explained her delicate position most lucidly and clearly at the trial, and whose new hat and walking costume betokened a taste infinitely superior to that of Lady Pluckley, was exempted

from all blame; and, to repeat the identical words wherewith a feeling judge dismissed her, she "left that court without a stain upon her character."

Adam Newman, we regret to say, received a warning. Though no doubt guiltless, remarked the judge, he had, by his own indiscretion in accepting gifts from people with whom he was but slightly acquainted, of a higher station than himself, and upon whom he had no claim, been taught a lesson.

THOUGH the judge had been thus down on him, it was not so elsewhere. Reading the recital of his trials, his truly pitiful story, the Hampdon Garden Suburb itself promoted a subscription which enabled Adam not only to buy a younger and more elastic horse, but also to renew a stock that, where not depleted at the police station, had suffered grievous decay.

The presentation was made in public on what the suburb calls its "village green;" and now, completely restored to favor, reestablished both in character and pocket, Adam realized the dream to which he had vowed and dedicated himself that first sad day in June:

"To-morrer I feeds that Garden Suburb, or dies an' perishes," he had sworn; and if not the case "to-morrer," it is certainly the case to-day.

THE TESTING OF DAVE MORGAN

by Wilder Anthony

MORGAN let down the bars of the corral, led his horse through the gateway, and stuck his toe into the stirrup. He had just settled himself in the saddle, when he was hailed from behind, and he turned to see Billy Peters, the foreman of the V-Bar Ranch, hurrying toward him.

"Well?" he questioned, as the latter stopped at his side.

Peters regarded his old friend critically for a few seconds before he made reply. He was a big man, was the foreman; big and burly, and honest as the day. Just now he would rather have faced a maddened grizzly than say what he had in mind, but since he felt that he must say it, he did so directly. He spoke, as he would strike an enemy, straight from the shoulder.

"Dave," he began earnestly, "what in thunderation are you going to do? How long are you going to let this thing slide, anyhow?"

"I don't know," answered Morgan. "I can't tell yet, Billy. It depends on how things shape up. The trouble is, I'm scared —scared stiff when I think of what may happen the next time I meet up with Sam

Hickey. Yes, dad blame it, I'm scared!"

"You're *what?*" Peters almost yelled in his surprise. "You're afraid of that low-lived, chicken-hearted hound? You sit there and tell me you're afraid of Sam Hickey? Go tell it to your mother-in-law! I ain't as foolish as I look!"

Morgan's bronzed cheeks puckered into a grin.

"You don't get me, Billy," he observed, beginning to roll a cigarette. "I ain't afraid of Hickey. I'm only afraid *for* him. If he keeps on crowdin' me, I'll have to kill him, just as sure as God made little apples. And if I do that, you know what it'll mean for me, Billy?"

The foreman nodded thoughtfully.

"Sure, I know," he admitted, "and that's why I'm buttin' in this-a-way. You're sewed up so you can't help yourself; but I'm not and neither is the rest of the outfit. You just say the word, Dave, and we'll darn soon show that skunk that these parts ain't any health-resort. The white-livered kiyote! He never dared to sass you until he knew your hands were tied."

"That's the funny part of it, too," said Morgan, blowing a huge cloud of smoke out into the still air. "I've never been able to figure it out exactly. There ain't any one that knows but you and me and—her. How do you reckon he got wise, Billy?"

"I pass, Dave. It's beyond me. But seeing that he does know and you can't help yourself, I wish you'd let me sit into the game."

"Nope," the mounted man slowly shook his head. "I wouldn't ask for a better man, Billy; but I reckon it's my ante. The quarrel is between Hickey and me alone, and I ain't ever needed help in a thing of that kind yet. If it wasn't for that promise, I'd——"

"That's just it," the foreman interrupted, "you promised and you can't break your word. Still, why have you got to go so far's to kill him, Dave? Why don't you take about twenty minutes off some day and just naturally whale him to a frazzle? That would shut his dirty mouth, I reckon."

"Perhaps it would; but it's not my way—leastways not with a feller like Hickey. He's gone too far, Billy. I'm plumb afraid to turn loose on him. If I ever started to beat him up I'd end by killing him, sure as taxes. Besides, a gunplay is a whole lot quicker and cleaner. Sometimes, Billy, I almost wish I never made that durn fool promise. Honest, I do."

"I know, but it can't be helped now," said Peters. "Any man but a cur dog like Hickey wouldn't take advantage of such a thing. They say the ornery skunk is pestering around Kitty Delano right now, too. Dave, you couldn't get her to let you off, I don't suppose?"

Morgan made no reply. He did not even look up. It was beyond his power to put his thoughts into words. He swung his horse around and rode silently away from his friend, who made no attempt to follow or detain him.

FOR the remainder of that day, as he had for many days past, Dave Morgan went about his various duties in the mechanical manner of one whose mind is not in his work. His face was set in a stern, grim mask, and he appeared wholly oblivious of what was going on around him. He was thinking, thinking harder than ever before in his life, and his thoughts, if one might judge from appearances, were far from pleasant.

The worst part of his trouble with Sam Hickey had scarcely been touched upon in the conversation with Peters.

Until a little over a month before, Morgan had for three years served as deputy sheriff. During this time he had established a reputation for bravery and skill with weapons which was second to none in that part of the country. As an officer, Dave Morgan was heartily feared by every lawbreaker in the county, and people were beginning to talk of electing him sheriff for the coming term, when suddenly, without any previous warning, he resigned his deputyship and went to work breaking horses for the V-Bar Ranch.

Morgan had strong reasons for doing this, although only two persons besides himself knew just what they were. His position of "bronco-peeler" for the V-Bar netted him considerably more money than he could make as sheriff, and he knew that within a year he would be foreman of the ranch—his friend Peters being slated for the post of manager of the big cattle company. This meant that Morgan would be able to marry Kitty Delano, the pretty daughter of a neighboring ranchman, whom he had loved for years. In fact, the young lady herself was directly responsible for his resignation.

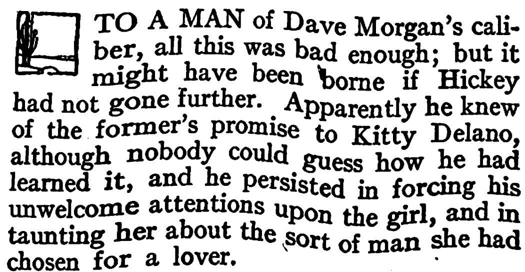
Miss Delano was a rather wilful young person, with several very firmly rooted ideas of her own. One of these was the conviction that she could never under any circumstances marry a man whose business made it necessary for him at times to kill or try to kill a fellow human.

"Promise me, Dave," she had said, "that you will never shoot another man as long as you live, and I will marry you; but not otherwise."

And Dave had promised; also he had given up his profession of thief-catcher and gunfighter to follow the more prosaic and lucrative calling of a cattle man. At the time, he considered it little enough to pay for the winning of a girl like Kitty Delano; but lately he had several times almost changed his mind. He was beginning to realize that a man can not acquire a reputation as a dead shot and an efficient peace officer without assuming certain responsibilities and making a good many enemies.

Sam Hickey was one of the latter. Twice, during his term as deputy, Morgan had been obliged to arrest him for disturbing the peace, and the last time Hickey had sworn to get even if it took the rest of his life. Confident in his own ability to take care of himself, Morgan had merely laughed at these threats, and he had almost forgotten them by the time he decided to cease being a representative of the law. Hickey, however, had not.

No sooner was the news of Morgan's resignation made public, than he began to talk and try by every means in his power to pick a quarrel with the man he chose to call his enemy. Not content with mere insinuations, he said plainly that Morgan had quit because he was afraid of him—Hickey—and that the ex-officer was lacking in courage and other manly attributes too numerous to mention. Whenever he drank too much—an almost daily occurrence, by the way—he boasted of what he would do.



TO A MAN of Dave Morgan's caliber, all this was bad enough; but it might have been borne if Hickey had not gone further. Apparently he knew of the former's promise to Kitty Delano, although nobody could guess how he had learned it, and he persisted in forcing his unwelcome attentions upon the girl, and in taunting her about the sort of man she had chosen for a lover.

No wonder that Morgan was boiling over with rage; no wonder that his friends were grumbling and asking each other why he did not shut Hickey's mouth for good and all. None of them except Billy Peters knew of the promise and none of them could understand why Morgan submitted to Hickey's abuse. A few of the less loyal among them were even wondering whether there were not a little truth in Hickey's oft-repeated assertion that the former deputy had lost his nerve.

All of which only goes to show that Morgan's affairs were rapidly approaching a crisis; what's more, he knew it. He must either shut Hickey's mouth, or forever lose caste in the community, and, what was much worse, his own self-respect. If, however, he allowed himself to be forced into a fight with Hickey and then shot him, he would lose the girl whom he loved more than all else in life. Truly, Dave Morgan was, as the saying is, between the devil and the deep sea, and for the life of him he could not determine which way to turn. That was why he had avoided Hickey for a week or more—he knew that their next meeting would settle the matter one way or the other.

It was mid-afternoon of the next day when Morgan stepped into the ranch office and approached the foreman, who was adding up his cattle tally.

"Billy," he asked quietly, without the least preface, "where do you reckon Hickey is right now? At Nolan's?"

Peters looked up in some surprise.

"Yes," he assented, "that's where he's been hangin' up lately. Why? You ain't aimin' to start something, are you, Dave?"

"That depends on him. I think I'll ride down there and look things over, Billy. Want to come along?"

The foreman dropped his tally-book and sprang to his feet with alacrity.

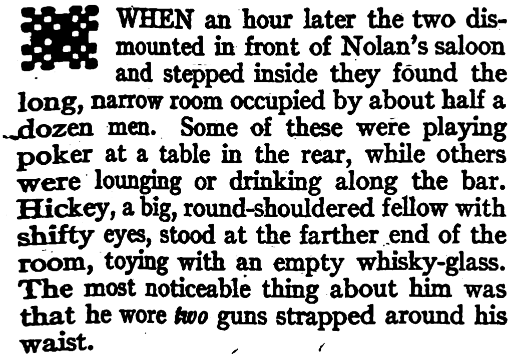
"I'd tell a man!" he growled, suppressing with difficulty a strong desire to cheer. "If I was you, Dave," he added, "I'd go heeled. Hickey's most usually half full at this time of day and he's liable to be pretty ornery."

Without replying, Morgan entered the bunkhouse and returned in a moment wearing his belt and revolver. Peters chuckled grimly:

"Hickey's friends, if he's got any, will be bringing flowers by this time tomorrow," he

said to himself, as he mounted his horse.

In the silence of men who understand each other, the two friends set out toward town. Peters did not need to ask questions. The look on Morgan's face was enough. The foreman had seen that same grim expression once before when they were following the trail of a gang of rustlers, and he remembered what had happened when they came up with their quarry. Sam Hickey was going to get all that he deserved—promise or no promise.



WHEN an hour later the two dismounted in front of Nolan's saloon and stepped inside they found the long, narrow room occupied by about half a dozen men. Some of these were playing poker at a table in the rear, while others were lounging or drinking along the bar. Hickey, a big, round-shouldered fellow with shifty eyes, stood at the farther end of the room, toying with an empty whisky-glass. The most noticeable thing about him was that he wore *two* guns strapped around his waist.

His face as calm and expressionless as bronze, looking neither to right nor left, Morgan walked steadily in until he was only about six feet from his enemy. Peters had stopped just inside the door. He knew that his friend was fully able to take care of himself; but he intended to see that the outsiders did not interfere. There was a faint smile on his weatherbeaten face as he hitched his revolver holster out of a rut in his hip and hooked his right thumb into his belt.

This smile became a noiseless chuckle as he noticed the strained silence that fell upon the inmates of the saloon when they recognized Morgan. They all instantly guessed what the visit portended—the time had come for Hickey to make good his boast. Even the most hardened man among them caught his breath sharply and began to edge toward the wall in a stealthy attempt to get out of range of stray bullets.

"Hello, Sam," Morgan greeted casually, stopping and leaning one elbow on the bar.

Hickey's eyes blinked. At Morgan's entrance, he had dropped his hands until they rested close to the butts of his six-shooters, otherwise he had not moved. Now he seemed to hesitate.

"Hello," he retorted gruffly, at length. It was apparent that he had consumed just liquor enough to be in an ugly mood.

"Have a drink?" Morgan invited.

For an instant, during which every one of the onlookers held his breath, Hickey was silent; then he accepted curtly. There would be time enough to do what he had in mind later on, and Morgan's attitude puzzled him.

Without taking their eyes from each other the two men drank what the bartender gave them. Then Morgan took a silver dollar from his pocket and paid for the drink.

Hickey watched him evilly. The thing was getting on his nerves. Morgan was not acting at all as he expected he would. There was a cold, half-scornful glare in the former deputy's gray eyes that made Hickey feel uneasy in spite of himself.

"Well," he demanded, at length, after what seemed hours of silence, "what do you want? What's the play?"

Morgan laughed softly. Producing tobacco and papers, he slowly began to roll a cigarette.

"Well, you heard me, didn't you?" Hickey burst out heatedly.

The other nodded and reached for a match, but he made no audible reply.

Hickey almost choked. He was rapidly fanning himself into a blaze of fury, which, strangely enough, did not appear to interest Morgan in the least. He was deliberately lighting his cigarette, when Hickey straightened up and his hand flashed to one of his guns. With a lightning motion he drew and leveled it.

Morgan never even winked. Pinching out the match with steady fingers, he gazed calmly into the muzzle of the heavy weapon and puffed deeply at his cigarette.

"Caught you nappin', didn't I?" observed Hickey, who, now that he had his enemy covered, seemed to have grown calmer. "I thought you was some rapid on the draw, Morgan; but you don't act like it. You're a bluff—that's what you are! I've always said it."

"Glad you think so, Hickey," said Morgan very quietly.

Not a soul in the room guessed that he was fighting for self-control with every ounce of strength in his body. Outwardly he was as cool and self-possessed as though engaged in a chat with a friend.

"Well, I do," Hickey went on truculent-

ly, "and what's more I ain't afraid to say so! You're either a plumb fool, Dave Morgan, or you're crazy! Why don't you draw an' defend yourself like a man? D'you think I'll let you go now that I got you to rights?"

MORGAN laughed easily. He saw the other's intention and he had no idea of aiding it until he was ready. Hickey dared not shoot him so long as he made no attempt to reach his own weapon. A rope and the nearest tree would be the bully's reward if he committed a cold-blooded murder of that sort; but if the thing could be given the semblance of a fair fight —if Morgan died with his gun in his hand, Hickey would be allowed to go free. Such is the ethics of the rangeland.

"I've heard tell," Hickey continued, in an effort to drive his enemy desperate, "that you lost your nerve, an' I guess it's so, all right. You wouldn't of been fool enough to make that crazy promise otherwise. Didn't know I was hid around the corner of the house that day, did you? But I was an' I heard the whole thing. Funny how soft fellers like you will let a woman play with 'em! Love is a darn curious thing. Like the smallpox, once it gets hold of a man it leaves its mark on him always. I don't see, though, how a girl like——"

"Stop!" Morgan still spoke in an ordinary tone, but there was a rasping grate in his voice that had not been there a minute before. "We'll mention no names, Hickey, if you please. This business is between us alone."

"But if I don't please!" Hickey retorted, with a nasty chuckle. "I knew that would get under your hide! I knew you'd loosen up when I brought her name into it. ——, you! Why don't you fight like a man? I'll tell you why! Because you're afraid—because you're a coward! That's ——"

Morgan apparently did not move, but somehow the revolver on his hip sprang form its holster into his hand. The first thing Hickey knew he was staring squarely into its muzzle.

"You see," said Morgan, after a short pause, "I'm not as slow as you thought. I drew after all. Now why don't *you* shoot, Hickey? You've still got me covered even if you haven't got the 'shade' you had a second ago. Go ahead—shoot! If you do, I promise you that you'll never know the result of your shot, but to a brave man like you that won't matter. Go ahead, you cowardly dog! Go ahead and start something, or else drop that gun, quick! If you don't, I'll take it away from you and beat you up with it!"

Hickey wet his lips nervously. The thing he had asked for had come. His enemy had suddenly assumed the offensive. It was an even break now. By the unwritten law of the cattle country, if either man killed the other, the killing would not be counted a murder. Still, Hickey could not shoot. His gun was aimed squarely at Morgan's head, but his trigger-finger seemed suddenly to be paralyzed. The liquor in him, or something—he couldn't tell just what—gripped at his vitals until he felt weak and sick.

He did not like the menacing look in those cold gray eyes which faced him so steadily. They seemed to bore into him like icicles. Great beads of sweat appeared on his forehead and ran slowly down his cheeks as he stood there, grasping his leveled gun until his knuckles showed white under their tan; but he did not shoot. All at once something seemed to snap in his brain—he staggered back, swore weakly, and his gun clattered on the floor!

AS THE tension broke and the beaten man, cowed and helpless, shrank back against the bar, a man laughed harshly, another swore, and the card-players suddenly resumed their game. It was all over now and no one had been hurt after all. Hickey had merely been shown up for what he was—a coward.

With an exultant exclamation, Billy Peters sprang forward and grasped Morgan's hand.

"Good boy!" he said. "You showed the skunk up right! He won't ever peep again in your presence. I always had a hunch he wouldn't stand the acid. It was better than killin' him, Dave, and you didn't have to break your promise. But what——"

His jaw dropped and he gazed at his friend's gun in astonishment. Then he seized it and spun the cylinder.

"Good God," he ejaculated, "it's empty!"

"Yes, Billy," Morgan admitted. "You see, I was afraid it might go off if it was loaded. And, anyhow, I always knew he was a skunk!"

THE RIME OF THE ROARING THREE

by Albert Lee

T*HE sea was blue, the sky was blue, the sun was blazing bright,*
The wind was dead, the sea-gulls fed in the shimmering, glimmering light;
The brig alone lent a human tone to the ghostly, ghastly day,
With a lazy lilt to its starboard tilt, and the mains'l's creaking sway,
For its hold was filled with the bleeding killed, and the dripping scuppers wept
With red, red tears for the living's fears, and for those that in slaughter slept.

OF ALL the reckless, rascal rowdies roving with the breeze,
Of all the savage, surly set that sailed the Seven Seas,
The rowdiest, the savagest, were named the Roaring Three—
And one was black, and one was white, and one he was Chinee.

THE black man was a monster oaf—his chest was two feet through,
The brawny muscles of his arms could snap a chain in two;
As ink is black, so was his skin, so were his eyes and hair—
A Moor he was from Africa, from Biskrabd-el-Kader;
And no man lives, save him, on earth, who certainly could tell
The number of the murdered souls who wait for him in Hell.

THE white man wore a ruddy beard, his nose was long and slim;
His eyes peered out through battle scars, all cruel, gray and grim;
His shoulders grew up to his ears, too broad for any door;
His chest, like leather bellows, seemed by nature built to roar.
His teeth were tusks, his hands were claws, his legs were links of steel;
And fear, compassion, pity, he was never known to feel.

THE Chinaman was full as fierce as were the other two—
He was a yellow devil of a murderous Manchu;
He lacked three fingers of one hand, and one ear from his head
(These members in some youthful struggles he, no doubt, had shed).

He had a voice that was a mixture of a hiss and squeak—
There was no oath or blasphemy that villain could not speak.

AND how it came to pass these three their evil fortunes joined
Is still a tale no scribe has yet from history purloined.
No record stands to mark the day when these fierce Roaring Three
Embarked upon their vain career to carminize the sea;
But in the grimy, gory trail that they have left behind,
This simple tale of piracy and punishment we find:

THEY sailed away one sunny day—just three men in a boat—
A ribald song, a roister rime, rose loud from each one's throat.
No heed they held of where they went, or whither sailed, or how;
To seaward for adventures new they pointed forth their prow,
And fate decreed a hurricane which hurled them far away
For many days and many nights, to winds and waves a play.
Till finally the clouds dispersed and left for them the balm
Of torrid heat and glassy sea and breathless, deadly calm.
So one took up the tiller rope, and two laid on the oars,
And onward still they pushed their course toward undiscovered shores.
They rested every now and then to taste of meat and drink,
To smoke their pipes, and spin their yarns, and hear the dice-bones clink.
For well their sloop was stocked with food, and tight the hold was packed
With tuns of rum left over from some luckless ship they'd sacked.

SO THUS the days passed wearily, and soon the Roaring Three
Grew restless of their idleness upon an idle sea.
They cursed the windless weather, and they cursed the cloudless sky,
They called upon their Seven Devils victims to supply.
And so, as if to favor such a suppliance profane,
The topmasts of another craft upsprouted from the main;
Like blades of grass, upon the east the brig's two masts were lined
And blossomed out with idle sails that soon hung clear defined.
Each villain with the lust of chase, fell heaving to his oar,
While up the Jolly Roger climbed, and fluttered at the fore,
And soon the sea was churned with foam that bubbled in the wake
Of these mad three, all pulling free their pirate toll to take.

THE brig sat well down in the sea, and nosed the languid tide;
A group of sallow sailormen leaned calmly o'er the side
And gazed with listless unconcern, but not the least dismay,
Upon the little sloop that thus had come across their way.
Nor even when each snarling corsair pulled his whetted sword
And mouthing motley curses climbed uproariously aboard,
Did captain, crew, or cabin-boy, or carpenter or cook
Display the slightest interest by gesture or by look;
But each one stood, as carved of wood, and gazed a glassy glare
Upon the savage Roaring Three that stood in wonder there.
They were not clad as sailormen are clad who sail the sea,
But more like those who wander o'er the wastes of Arabee;
They wore loose robes of dingy white, and slippers quaint and red,
And curious baggy pantaloons, and turbans on the head;
And all were gaunt and grim and thin, all bearded men and brown,
With sunken cheeks and hollow eyes that gleamed beneath a frown.

THE pirates swaggered down the deck in silence kin to awe,
For ne'er before had pirates seen what these three pirates saw;
And ne'er before had pirates heard such sounds to rouse their fears,
Such wailing, moaning, groaning sighs as fell upon their ears.

Whene'er they passed a battened hatch, there came up from the hold
Some muffled squeak, some dying shriek, that made their veins turn cold.

THEY found the Captain on the poop in attitude of prayer.
The black man seized him by the beard, the white man by the hair.
"Now what is all this folderol?" the yellow pirate cried;
What are these sounds, these men in gowns, that lean upon the side?
Why kneel you here in frozen fear, and call upon your gods
With yours the might to offer fight to three with whelming odds?
Come, speak, old bearded loon, I say, or sure as flows the tide
I'll spit thee on my scalabar and heave thee o'er the side!"

"OH, GENTLE SIR," the Captain spoke, "be sparing of your wrath—
No ordinary sailors we who've drifted in your path;
We were not born to sail the seas — our fate lies on the land—
The good ship of the desert is the ship we understand.
But when this brig, by storm and stress, was driven to our shore
The crew that sailed her came to land and vowed that nevermore
Would one of them step on her deck, or handle rope or sheet—
She's cursèd with a cargo of the God-forbidden meat!
Ay, verily, I say this most unfortunate of brigs
Is loaded to her gunwales with a cargo of live pigs!
'Twas therefore that our pious Sheik, to ward an evil fate,
Declared the brig must anchor weigh before it was too late;
'Twas thus he called for willing hands to sail the ship away;
These pious men and I, by lot, were chosen to obey.
And forth we set upon the sea to find some desert rock
Where we might lose these cursèd swine their wretched fate to mock.
But wind and wave rose on our heels and drove us far astray
To leave us rocking idly here with nought to do but pray;
For, as you know, our Al Koran forbids the flesh of swine;
It likewise bids the Faithful never touch their lips to wine;
So we, all good Mohammedans, must forego eating pork,
And from the bottles in the hold we may not draw one cork.
Ay, as we lie here now, becalmed, 'tis fearful for to think
That, loaded as the vessel is, we have nor food nor drink,
For all is swine and bottled wine that's stowed beneath our feet,
Oh, food, oh, food, is everywhere, nor any crumb to eat!"

"O HO," the yellow pirate said, "'tis many, many days
Since we have tasted fresh-killed meat, or aught but canned *entrées*,
I see a chance for sumptuous meals, with pork-chops, loin and rib,
For bacon, knuckles, trotters, ham, and sausage, too, *ad lib.*
Come, let us find these prisoned pigs and butcher half a score,
And if they do not prove enough, we'll carve up fifty more!"

THE other villains grinned for joy and shouted to the crew
To open quick the forward hatch, the after hatches, too;
And lest the timid Arabs fail to grasp the harsh command,
The pirates cursed them lavishly and cuffed the swarthy band.

A NOXIOUS stench rose on the air, and sounds of grunts and squeals
Came rolling from the brig's dark hold to mingle with the peals
Of laughter from the Roaring Three, who bared their brawny arms,
And forthwith leaped in brutal glee into the porcine swarms.
They drew their swords and vowed to slaughter every squealing swine,
To slit the throats of hogs and shoats, and pickle them in brine!

BUT fate had much in store for those three vagrant renegades,
And Justice joined with Nemesis down in that hold's dark shades
Where hundreds of half-famished pigs, unfettered and unfed,
Were maddened to combative lust, and feared nor steel nor lead.
They charged the Three in solid waves of husky, tusky jaws,
They fell a perfect avalanche of snarling, gnarling maws.
The Roaring Three fought back to back; they smote to left and right;
Their trusty blades cut high and wide, with desperation's might.
And as they stood, knee-deep in blood, amid that savage flock,
They heard the Arabs close the hatch and sharply turn the lock.
And there amid the bleeding pack of crying, dying pig,
They struggled, while the Sons of El Mohammed left the brig.

THE camel-drivers dropped into the pirates' little sloop
Whose galley they found richly stocked with pickles, jam and soup,
They rowed away with all their might and left the Roaring Three
Imprisoned in that gory pit amid their butchery.

THE *sea was blue, the sky was blue, the sun was blazing bright,*
The wind was dead, the sea-gulls fed in the shimmering, glimmering light;
The brig alone lent a human tone to the ghostly, ghastly day,
With a lazy lilt to its starboard tilt, and the mains'l's creaking sway,
For its hold was filled with the bleeding killed, and the dripping scuppers wept
With red, red tears for the living's fears, and for those that in slaughter slept.

BILLY BLAIN walked along Sixth Avenue, New York, humming happily, and with both hands in his hip-pockets; he was contrasting his position with what it had been little more than a year ago in London. Then he had been a defeated light-weight, with a shilling in his pocket and no prospects—shabby and friendless and "up against it."

Now he was a fairly prosperous welter-weight, with a bank-roll of considerably more than a thousand dollars, and a fight on his hands about every other week; they were not important fights, but so long as he contrived to win them they brought in money enough on which to live and even save.

His eyes wandered from side to side, taking in everything, for he felt pleased with the world and everything seemed worth looking at. He took no notice, though,

of the girl who hurried along in front of him; she was dressed in a way that was not calculated to attract passing notice, and from behind she looked just like any one of a thousand other girls.

Besides, girls were not in Billy's line; they never had been. What he did notice, though, was a man who lounged at a street corner and who spoke to the girl in low tones as she passed him.

She ignored the man and hurried on; but the fellow followed her and overtook her and slipped his arm through hers. Billy was too far behind to hear what the man said, but he saw the girl turn round indignantly and face him, shaking her arm loose and glancing hurriedly from left to right as though in search of aid. He saw, too, then, that she was singularly pretty.

Her assailant, too, looked keenly from left to right twice; then he came even closer and spoke to her again; there was no officer in sight. Billy was within six paces of them; the girl looked at him eagerly for a second, then she seemed to realize that he was only half the size of her assailant, besides being a complete stranger and the word that was on her lips remained unspoken.

Billy, though, had seen the appeal that was in her eyes, and he was at her side in an instant. The other man had raised his hat when he first spoke—a thing which Billy forgot to do; the little pugilist had never been taught manners in his life.

"CAN I help, Miss?" he asked.

One hand was still in his hip-pocket, but his left was free, fingering his watch-chain, and ready to lead off or guard if wanted.

"I don't know—will you? This man has no right to speak to me. He—he stopped me in the street and took hold of my arm. I—I never saw him before in my life!"

"Oh, come now!" said the cad. "There's no use in talkin' like that, little girl!"

He took a step toward her to try to take her arm again, but she stepped back too quickly for him.

"Want him shunted?" asked Billy.

"If you would kindly call an officer——"

Her voice hinted at tears not so very far away, but Billy looked at her with half-pitying, half-contemptuous tolerance.

"We don't want no officer!" he told her; then he turned and faced the cad, his head bent back a little in order to be able to look him straight between the eyes. His right hand was still in his hip-pocket and his left still played with his watch-chain.

"Git!" he ordered suddenly. "Git quick, before I make yer!"

The cad laughed and took half a step toward him, pushing his jaw out and leaning forward in the ridiculous attitude that untrained men believe is a fighting one.

"What's this got to do with you?" he asked. "Who are you, anyway?"

"That's who I am!" said Billy.

The words were preceded by a thud, and the cad's jaw receded two inches with a jerk as Billy's left shot out; and they were followed by a *smack-smack*, as his right came out of his hip-pocket and joined in the argument. The cad reeled back against a shop-window, with a splurge of blood on his face and a nose that would not look pretty for many a long day to come.

"Want any more?" asked Billy, eyeing his knuckles to make sure he had not cut them on the fellow's teeth.

The man recovered himself and made a rush at Billy, trying to strike at him with a heavy cane he carried. The girl screamed faintly. Billy straightened, and once more the cad reeled backward—this time, though, with an eye closed up. He staggered against the stone door-step of the shop behind him, and Billy walked toward him leisurely to finish what he had begun. But the cad had had enough of it; he turned on his heels and ran as though half of New York were after him; and Billy stood and watched him with an expression of quiet amusement on his face.

His right hand had gone back to his hip-pocket and his left was once more fingering his watch-chain; he was not even breathing hard. Suddenly a voice from very close beside him said, "Thank you!" and he turned; he had actually forgotten about the girl!

He still forgot to raise his hat; but he looked her up and down with an expression on his face that was entirely too good-natured to be really rude, and altogether too eloquent of admiration for any daughter of Eve to object to it with genuine sincerity.

"Thank you!" she repeated.

"What for?" asked Billy. "That weren't nothing! You ought to jab that kind with your umbrella. See here—I'll show you!"

He held out his hand and she passed him her umbrella, not in the least knowing

why she did it, but feeling in some way fascinated by his bruskness and his utter lack of embarrassment. He showed her then in pantomime how to ward off an assailant, repeating the motions two or three times for her benefit.

"Jab 'em that way," he told her; "jab 'em good and hard! Don't be afraid to hurt 'em!"

"Thank you," she said, smiling and regaining the umbrella; "I'll try to remember it. I'm afraid I'm not very plucky, though."

"Probably not," said Billy; "girls aren't as a rule. Live far from here?"

"Why?" she asked him.

"'Cause I'm going to see you home."

"Oh, indeed you're not! It's really very kind of you, but I—I couldn't think of it!"

"All the same, I'm going to!" said Billy; "come on!"

"No, really, I——"

"You mean you ain't that kind, eh? Well, nor'm I! I wouldn't offer if I thought you was!"

What was the use of arguing with a man like that? She realized that she might as well argue with a lamp-post. He evidently meant to escort her, and he was just as evidently going to, whether she consented or not; and he looked honest; and he spoke as though he were honest; and he had certainly behaved splendidly. Besides, she liked him; and that is reason enough for most women. In less than a minute she was hurrying along homeward with Billy at her side.

THE experience was an absolutely new one for Billy Blain, and it bewildered him a little and rendered him speechless. Presently, though, a new idea occurred to him.

"Gimme that bag," he demanded, holding out his hand.

"Thank you; it's not heavy. I can carry it."

"Give it here! I'll tote it for you."

She demurred, but Billy won the day again. He simply held out his hand and seized the bag and she let him have it simply because she did not want to scramble for it in the street.

"That's not the proper way to behave!" she said, a little angrily.

"I dare say it's not!" said Billy. "You'll have to learn me better—I'm always learnin'."

She looked at him in positive amazement, and Billy gave her back stare for stare, eyeing her very much as he was used to when summing up an antagonist in the ring.

"It'll be good fun, too!" he added after a moment.

She could find no words with which to answer him; he seemed to have fallen like a bolt out of the blue and to have taken charge of her and left her spell-bound, speechless, and not even indignant.

"Here's where I live," she said presently, stopping and standing on the lower step of an apartment house with her back to the doorway; "thank you very much."

"My name's Blain," said Billy; "Billy Blain."

"Thank you, Mr. Blain; you've been very kind."

He gave her back her bag.

"What's your name?" he demanded.

"Watson."

"What Watson? Jane? Mary? Betsy?"

"Miss Watson!"

"Miss what Watson?"

"Maud, if you really want to know."

"I did want to!" said Billy, pulling out an old letter and making a note of her address on the back of it.

"You home evenin's?" he asked her.

"My mother is!"

"You too?"

"Sometimes."

"See you again, then!" said Billy. "So long."

He turned and left her then abruptly; and she stood on the steps and watched his sturdy little back as he strode away manfully down the sidewalk. He turned, though, in less than half a minute, and caught her in the act of looking after him. He seemed to have forgotten something, for he started back again. He came back ten paces, stopped, faced her squarely—and raised his hat! And as he turned round again to resume his walk Billy Blain—marine fireman and professional pugilist—was actually blushing!

II

IN SPITE of the fact that Geoghan had been such a bitter enemy of Billy Blain, and had worked so persistently to bring about his downfall, he and O'Hanlon were on friendly terms

again. The engineer had given up the sea after the wreck of the *Diogenes* and had settled down in New York to make a regular business of the fight game, with Billy Blain as the first member of the string of pugilists he hoped to get together under his management. And Geoghan had been extremely useful to him.

O'Hanlon had eyed him very much askance at first and had refused even to be seen talking to him; and even when Geoghan sent him a written offer for a match he had ignored it. He felt certain that Geoghan was only scheming fresh devilment in the hope of winning back, by means of some trickery or other, the money he had lost in his last two efforts to score at Billy's expense.

He knew that Geoghan was the type of man to harbor a grudge, and harbor it secretly; and he had already had quite enough experience of his methods to be afraid of them. So, as Billy agreed with him cordially, he refused to have anything to do with the rascally promoter on any terms whatever.

But one afternoon Geoghan buttonholed him and drove him into a corner from which there was no escape; he had either to listen to him, or have a public quarrel, or else run away; so he listened.

"Look here, Terence, what's the——"

"Mr. O'Hanlon to you!"

"Well, all right; Mr. O'Hanlon, then! What's the matter now? I wrote you a perfectly civil letter three or four days ago, and you don't even answer it. And on top of that you cut me dead whenever you get the chance. What's the reason?"

"It's struck me pretty forcibly, and more than once, that you aren't on the level, Geoghan! I wouldn't have thought a whole lot about it, maybe, but that last attempt to keep Billy out of a fight by throwing bricks at him was pretty near being the limit, to my mind!"

"I'm glad you spoke!" said Geoghan. "Now, look here, Terence O'Hanlon; this fight game's no Sunday-school picnic, and you know that as well as I do. We're all in it for what we can get out of it, and we're none of us too squeamish about how we tackle the proposition. I'm out to win your money if I can; and you're after mine.

"If you're clever enough to trick me, you're welcome, and I'll pay and make the best of it; and on the other hand, if I can trick you I'll do it. And in any case we'll neither of us squeal—that's part of the game. You see, I'm not making any bones about it; I'm being perfectly straight with you. I admit I'd loot you if I saw the chance! But that's one thing, Terence; injuring a decent boy like Billy's another. I wouldn't do it! I don't know who it was that tried to injure him."

"They did injure him. They —— nearly broke his foot!"

"Well, it's a shame! But, as I was saying, I don't know who did it, and if I did know I'd tell you. I ask you to believe, Terence, that I wouldn't do a dirty thing like that! Do you believe it, or don't you?"

"I'd like to believe you, Geoghan. But there was circumstantial evidence against you, and it was strong, very strong."

"Then you still believe I did it!"

Geoghan drew himself up into a very well-acted pose of outraged innocence and prepared to take his leave.

"I don't know what to think," said O'Hanlon. "I know what I thought at the time, and what others thought. And I've seen no proof yet that what I thought was wrong."

"I'm surprised at you, Terence! We used to be pretty good friends, you and I, and I've done you many a favor in the old days; I didn't think you'd accuse a friend like that without proof. I'd get the better of you in any way I thought was legitimate—we're all doing it—we've got to do it in the fight game, if we want to live! But I'm not that sort of skunk, and you've no right to think I am! Good-by!"

And Geoghan started to walk away, apparently more in sorrow than in anger.

"Here! Come back!" said O'Hanlon suddenly. In spite of his huge frame, and ferocious aspect, and his intense love of fighting, the Irish engineer had the heart of a child. "Maybe I did you an injustice," he said, as Geoghan faced him again. "I admit I'd no proof—I take it back!"

"Spoken like a gentleman!" said Geoghan, holding out his hand.

O'Hanlon ignored it.

"All the same," he said, "I did have proof of some of the other things you did, and I tell you straight, Geoghan, I don't like your methods. They're not square!"

"Good ——, man! How many times must I repeat that no one's on the level in

this business! We're all cutting one another's throats all the time. I'm no exception. I admit I tried to trick you. What about it? You won my money, didn't you? I paid, didn't I? Real money, wasn't it? Did I make any kick? Well, then? Supposing I did try to get my money back? Your man Billy Blain was too good for me, that's all, and you and he won some more of my money between you. You got it, didn't you?"

"I did," said O'Hanlon. "And I've got it now."

"Good for you," said Geoghan. "Now, see here, Terence; you've got an idea in your head that I've got a grudge against Blain. I tell you straight I haven't. I like the boy; he's game, and he can fight; he's a winner if ever I saw one. He's proved himself, too; I wouldn't be such a fool as to run up against him again—not on any terms. The money I lost laying against him is lost for good and all; I'm on the other side in future, and if I don't make some more money backing him, my name's not Geoghan! There!"

"Thanks." said O'Hanlon. "But he seems to think that one manager's enough, and I agree with him."

"I don't want to manage him. I've a string of my own to look after, and they're trouble enough, God knows! But you're not getting any fights for him. I want to see him in the ring, so's I can back him. He's a winner, that boy of yours; what's the good of letting him eat his head off behind the scenes? He ought to be fighting once a week at least."

"Fights aren't so easy to get," said O'Hanlon ruefully.

"Rubbish, man! You don't know the ropes, that's all. Let me help you. Say the word, and I'll have a fight for him this day week, and pretty nearly one a week from then on. Mind you, they won't be big things—just fifty dollars' worth of easy money every time he goes into the ring. No, I don't want anything out of it—not from you, at least—I'll make mine betting on him. Besides, I want to prove to you that I'm not your enemy."

GEOGHAN was true to his word. That day week Billy fought a six-round fight, and won it; and from then on ten days hardly ever went by without seeing him in the ring, and leaving it fifty or a hundred dollars richer. He trained systematically at the Y. M. C. A. gymnasium, and every now and then Geoghan went there and watched him at practise and gave O'Hanlon occasional advice. The engineer chose as a rule not to take it, though.

"It's my belief," he told Geoghan one day, "that the boy knows more about getting fit than either you or I can tell him. I watch him all the time, just to keep him up to the mark, but I don't give him many orders."

"He'll overtrain," said Geoghan. "You mark my words."

"Bah!" said O'Hanlon; "he can simply eat work! I don't believe you know a thing more about it than I do!"

But, for all that they disagreed on the subject of what was good for Billy and what was not, their friendship grew rapidly, and before long it was on nearly the same basis as it had been before O'Hanlon took to managing. O'Hanlon came gradually to lean more and more on Geoghan's advice, and when a crisis occurred in his affairs—or rather when he first learned of it—it was only natural that he should confide in Geoghan immediately.

"What d'ye think's happened?" he demanded gloomily one afternoon, as the two men met in Sharkey's and leaned their elbows on the bar.

"Nothing gone wrong with Billy, has there?"

"Call it nothing, if you like! The little runt's in love! He's engaged to be married too. Fact! Met the girl one day on Sixth Avenue—punched a masher who held her up—an' saw her home. I wondered what in —— he wanted a new suit o' clothes for, so soon again; little beggar got dolled up in a new outfit next day, and went and called on her. Straight! I'm not kidding. He's been badgering me ever since to find out what's polite an' what isn't!"

"There's no harm in that," said Geoghan; "there's nothing like a girl to keep a young fellow steady, provided she's the right sort o' girl. What's this one like? Have you seen her?"

"No, I've not seen her—I don't want to, darn her! She's a sure-enough good-looker, though, for he showed me her photograph; carries it in his breast-pocket. Remember when you used to do that kind o' thing?"

"Don't I!"

"It makes me feel old!"

"So it does me. Did he tell you her name?"

"Maud Watson—know her by any chance?"

"Dunno. Might. Where does she live?"

"Somewhere around Sixth Avenue and Fifty-fifth Street, in one o' those apartment houses they just finished building this year."

"No, I don't know her, then," said Geoghan, making a careful mental note of the address. He was silent for a minute, saying it over and over again to himself.

"The worst of it is," said O'Hanlon, "that she's one o' these straight-laced women. She don't believe in drink or tobacco —and that's good, so far as it goes, especially for Billy. But she don't believe in prize-fighting either. She'd be shocked stiff if she knew he was a pugilist."

"How does he keep it from her?"

"She never reads the papers for one thing; her mother thinks they're immoral. Billy didn't tell her any lies; he's the most truthful little beggar I ever came across; but he didn't tell her all the truth either, and he's afraid to tell her the rest. He said he was a fireman, just home from being shipwrecked off the *Diogenes*."

"She'll want to know soon why he don't go to sea again."

"She's asked him that already. He told her he'd saved pretty nearly all his money; and that was true, too. He quit then—got out o' the way before she had time to ask him any more questions; and what d'ye think the little runt went and did? Got fifty dollars out o' me, and subscribed for a correspondence course in marine engineering! Next time he saw her he was able to tell her he was staying ashore in order to improve himself!"

"How did you find it out?"

"This way. She kept on askin' him what progress he was makin' with his lessons, an' he won't tell her lies; so what does he do but begin studyin' in his spare time, and when he couldn't understand a thing he asked me about it. That started me off guessing, as you can imagine, and before long I asked him straight out what his game was; and then he told me. You could have knocked me down by looking at me! The little runt's learning, too! I never knew a kid to learn so quickly."

"Well, what harm's being done?" asked Geoghan. "It all sounds good to me. It'll keep him steady and make him ambitious. What have you got to complain about?"

"Nothing as yet," said O'Hanlon. "But how about when she finds out he's a pug? He's crazy about her; he'd quit the game for good at a word from her."

"She mustn't find out!" said Geoghan.

"I hope to goodness she won't," said the engineer; "it's all up the minute she does. And if she doesn't find out for herself, and Billy doesn't tell her, somebody else will. Then, good-by Billy!"

"Rot!" said Geoghan. "You keep quiet, and let things take their course for the present. Then, when you get a chance, tie him down hard and fast to an agreement. You'll have him cinched then, girl or no girl!"

III

THAT evening Geoghan called on a man of his acquaintance named Einstein.

"You still managing Dick Snyder?" he asked him as he dropped into a chair.

"Sure. We're not doing much fightin', though. Dick's gettin' lazy, for one thing, and these here fifty-dollar fights ain't worth his while. There's nothin' much else doin', though, around New York just now. Y'see, Dick's got a right to be considered runner-up for the welters; but the champ seems afraid to meet him; he's just like all these cheese-champs, makin' money in vaudeville while he can get it, and turnin' down every offer of a fight that comes his way."

"They all do that," said Geoghan; "I don't blame 'em."

"Point is, they do it!" said Einstein; "not whether you blame 'em or not. Meantime Dick Snyder's coolin' his heels an' gettin' fat. Y'see, it don't pay him at present to fight any one except the champ. If he fights and loses, his name's mud; an' if he wins he don't gain any good by it, 'cause he's runner-up already. It's the champ or nothing for him; an' meantime money's gettin' scarce."

"I had an idea it might be that way," said Geoghan; "that's why I looked in. Five hundred any use?"

"How d'ye mean?"

"I could put five hundred your way."

"How?"

"I could get Terence O'Hanlon to send Snyder a challenge on behalf of Billy Blain an' post a good-sized forfeit."

"Dick wouldn't fight him—not just now. I've seen that boy Blain fight; he's a little bear-cat! He's just the type of man we're not lookin' for at present. Why, —— me, he hasn't lost a fight in weeks—he'd quite likely wade in and beat Dick!"

"There won't be any fight!" said Geoghan; "I'll vouch for that. This is an easy money proposition. All you've got to do is accept the challenge, and bring Dick Snyder up to the scratch to sign articles. Leave the rest to me. O'Hanlon will be there, and he'll post a couple of thousand dollars as a forfeit. Can you cover it?"

"Snyder could."

"Well, can you make him do it?"

"I doubt it. He won't put his money up to fight any one except the champ, as I told you."

"Would he sign, if you put up the money?"

"Oh, sure; he'd sign. But I haven't got it."

"Well, I'll find the money, if you'll have Snyder along on time to sign articles for a fight. If he signs, there won't be any fight, and O'Hanlon'll lose his two thousand forfeit. I'll see to that."

"And what do I get out of it?"

"Two hundred."

"You said five just now."

"I didn't know I was to find the money. You find it, and I'll give you five—fifteen hundred goes to me."

"Wait while I have a talk to Dick; I guess I can get him over the 'phone; I know where he is."

Einstein left the room, and returned at the end of five minutes looking radiant.

"Dick'll do it!" he said; "he says, 'you find a thou, and he'll find a thou; then he'll sign, and we'll all three divide the money equally.'"

"Nothing doing!" said Geoghan. "My share's fifteen hundred, unless I have to find the money myself; in that case I want eighteen hundred. Take it or leave it!"

"Why be mean?" said Einstein. "Why be a dog-in-the-manger?"

"Why cut up a good thing, you mean? I arranged this; all you've got to do is sign, and put the money up; you get five hundred for doing it, and I get the rest for ferreting the thing out and bringing O'Hanlon to the scratch."

"Are you sure the other side'll forfeit?"

"Absolutely sure."

"Then what do they challenge for?"

"I'd be a nice sort of sucker to tell you that, wouldn't I! That's where I earn my fifteen hundred!"

"Well, all right," said Einstein; "I'll go you. Send along your challenge, and I'll do the rest."

"Fifteen and five, and you put up the money?" said Geoghan.

"Fifteen and five. Fifteen to you, and five to us, and we find the money."

THE two men shook hands, and Geoghan went off to find O'Hanlon. He had no difficulty at all with that gentleman; a fight with Dick Snyder was just what half the welter-weights in New York were yearning for; it would prove a good drawing card; the fight-hall would be packed full, and there would be good money in it for all concerned.

"Sure, I'll send him a challenge," said O'Hanlon; "but will he accept?"

"Send it to Einstein, his manager, and Einstein'll make him accept."

"All right. Better mail it, hadn't I?"

"Yes; and register it. I could take it for you, but you'd think I was trying to get the better of you."

"Aw, can that!" said O'Hanlon. "Can't you let bygones be bygones? You've proved you're a friend of mine, Geoghan. Here, wait while I write the thing out, and you take it."

"No," said Geoghan; "you'd better mail it; it looks better."

So Terence O'Hanlon wrote out the challenge, and in due course it was accepted. Two days later he and Billy Blain met Einstein and Dick Snyder, and in the presence of two witnesses articles were drawn up for a ten-round fight, to be held subject to the laws and regulations of the State of New York. And both O'Hanlon and Einstein deposited two thousand dollars in the shape of forfeit money with an official stakeholder, who handed each of them a receipt.

"Fight or forfeit!" said the stakeholder.

"Fight or forfeit!" said O'Hanlon and Einstein both together.

They found Geoghan waiting for them outside the room where the articles were signed.

"Finished?" he asked them as soon as they appeared.

"Sure."

"Money up?"

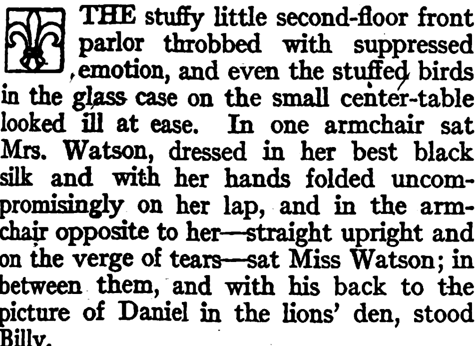
"Yep."

"Good!" said Geoghan. "I was afraid there'd be some slip at the last minute."

Then he walked off in the direction of Sixth Avenue, where he took a trolley-car to Fifty-fifth Street. He spent about twenty minutes making inquiries, but at the end of that time he was admitted into Mrs. Watson's front parlor, after having ascertained very cautiously that her daughter was not at home.

Geoghan never told anybody what he said to Mrs. Watson, and he certainly did not tell her his right name; and Mrs. Watson's subsequent account of the interview was altogether too confused for any one to make head or tail of it. But he left her under the impression that she had been talking to an evangelist of some kind, and that the fight game was an invention of the Devil, designed for the especial purpose of entrapping marriageable only daughters and luring them to headlong destruction. And the net result of it was that, immediately on her daughter's return, Billy Blain was sent for by telephone and telegram and special messenger, and that Billy came—and faced the music.

IV



THE stuffy little second-floor front parlor throbbed with suppressed emotion, and even the stuffed birds in the glass case on the small center-table looked ill at ease. In one armchair sat Mrs. Watson, dressed in her best black silk and with her hands folded uncompromisingly on her lap, and in the armchair opposite to her—straight upright and on the verge of tears—sat Miss Watson; in between them, and with his back to the picture of Daniel in the lions' den, stood Billy.

His hands were behind him, for he had learned that to keep them in his hip-pockets was not polite; and his face was a picture of angry, but invincible, determination. While the ormolu clock ticked thirty seconds there was silence; then Billy spoke:

"It's no use," he said; "you can talk yourselves black in the face for all the good it'll do. I'm going through with it! I've got to fight this time. I went an' asked O'Hanlon, an' told him what you said; an' I talked to him on an' off for two whole days. But he's put up two thousand dollars, an' half of it's his. If I don't fight, he'll lose his thousand and I'll lose mine. I wouldn't mind myself—I'd chuck a thousand into the East River any day for your sake——"

"That would be wicked!" said Mrs. Watson firmly.

"Wicked or not, I'd do it!" answered Billy hotly. "The point is that what's O'Hanlon's ain't mine, an' I'm not goin' to let him down! He's been a good pal o' mine, an' he'd die sooner'n leave me in a hole; I'm goin' to do the same by him!"

"And forfeit the respect of the girl you're engaged to marry!" said Mrs. Watson.

"Forfeit whose respect?" asked Billy wondering.

"Mine!" said Miss Watson, trying hard to keep her tears back. "Prize-fighting is a disgusting exhibition of brutality; I'd never marry a man who made his living by it!"

"I've been doing it all my life since I was old enough," said Billy.

"That's another matter; you didn't know. It hadn't been brought to your notice that you were demeaning yourself! Oh, Billy! Do hear reason! Billy, dear, I'd hate to lose you, but if you insist on fighting to-night I must!"

She broke down completely and sobbed, with her face between her hands.

" ——!" said Billy, clenching his fists and ramming them into his hip-pockets in spite of his new education; "what can a fellow do, I'd like to know!"

"That's the sort of language one would expect to hear from a pugilist!" said Mrs. Watson. "That's the kind of thing you'd have to tolerate, my dear, after you were married!"

But the girl sobbed and sobbed and took no notice of her mother. It seemed she was losing Billy, and the thought of it was nearly breaking her heart.

"I've told you," said Billy, controlling himself with an effort, "that I'll quit the game after this one fight, but I've got to fight this time. Let it go like that, an' I give you my word it's the last time!"

"Now don't you listen to him, Maud!" put in her mother; "don't you forget he was deceiving you all along! Said he was a fireman, and that's low enough, good-

ness knows! And him a prize-fighter all the time! A man who'll deceive you once will do it again!"

"He told me when I asked him!" sobbed the girl.

"Yes! And a nice thing to have to tell you, too! Had to admit he was nothing more than a low-down bruiser, and then refuses to reform when he's given the chance! Wants to marry my daughter! The idea!"

The girl looked up at him through tear-filled eyes.

"It's me or the fight, Billy!" she said mournfully. "You must choose which!"

"I tell you I ain't got no choice!" said Billy vehemently. "I can't let O'Hanlon down, any more than you could let a friend o' yours down! I simply gotter fight, an' that's all about it!"

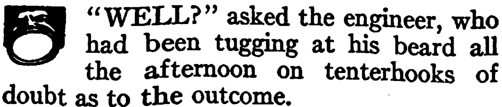
She drew the ring off her finger and held it out to him.

"Take it, Billy!" she sobbed. "It might—it might do—for—for some other girl!"

Billy took it and placed it in his vest pocket.

"Other girl!" he grunted scornfully. "I'll keep it all my life to remind me what women are like, in case I feel like makin' a fool o' myself again!"

And with that courteous speech he seized his hat and flung the parlor door open and bolted down the stairs; he ran, when he got outside, and he never stopped running until he reached O'Hanlon.



"WELL?" asked the engineer, who had been tugging at his beard all the afternoon on tenterhooks of doubt as to the outcome.

"I'll fight!" said Billy; "I told you I'd fight, didn't I? Well? What are you asking about then? Don't you believe in me either? Are you one o' these guys who don't believe a fireman or a pug can keep his word?"

"I believe ye! I believe ye! Ye've been having a bad time of it, my boy; I can see that. Now listen to me, my son."

"Oh, go to ——!" said Billy, sitting down and dropping his head between his hands.

"Poor little devil!" muttered the engineer. "Lord! I do hope it hasn't taken the heart out of him! Listen to me, Billy," he went on out aloud. "Listen, d'ye hear, ye little runt! There's something important I've got to tell ye. Are ye listening?"

"Oh, get it over!" grumbled Billy.

"It's this, then! The other side aren't ready! Lord knows why, but they seem to have been expecting that we'd forfeit, and I'm told that Dick Snyder isn't half trained. I've an idea Geoghan's been up to his tricks again!"

"A fat lot I care!" said Billy.

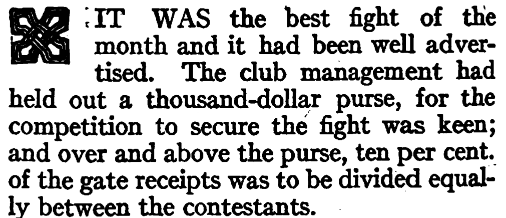
"Ye durned little fool! Snyder's runner-up! Can't ye see that if ye beat him to-night ye're a made man? You force the fighting from the word 'go,' d'ye hear, and if it's true he's only half trained you'll be next in line for the championship before the night's out!"

"Bah!" said Billy. "I'm through with the fight game anyhow after to-night! D'ye hear me? I'm through with it!"

"Aren't ye goin' to try to-night, then?"

"Try?" said Billy. "I'll knock his blooming block off or bust! You watch me! It's my last fight!"

V



IT WAS the best fight of the month and it had been well advertised. The club management had held out a thousand-dollar purse, for the competition to secure the fight was keen; and over and above the purse, ten per cent. of the gate receipts was to be divided equally between the contestants.

From O'Hanlon and Billy's point of view it was much the best fight they had entered on as yet, and O'Hanlon's eye sparkled as he looked round the crowded hall and tried to estimate what ten per cent. of the receipts would mean.

"The pity of it!" he muttered, "to think he means to quit!"

It was the first time that Snyder had been in the ring for months, and all the regular fight-followers were there to see him; long before the preliminary bouts were over there was nothing to be had in the hall but standing room, and if Billy could only beat Snyder decisively his name and fame would be made beyond any shadow of a doubt. All New York would get to know about him, either from the papers or by word of mouth.

"He looks fat as a goose!" whispered O'Hanlon in Billy's ear, as Snyder crawled through the ropes into the corner opposite amid a deafening thunder of applause.

"Not him!" said Billy. "That kind

don't carry any fat. He's built awkwardly, an' that makes him look fat. He's maybe half trained, an' maybe more; can't tell yet; but he's the foxiest-lookin' customer I've had to tackle yet this side o' the water! Mind you're handy with your sponge an' bottle in between rounds—this is goin' to be a real fight!"

"All right, sonny!" said O'Hanlon; "I'll be there with the first aid—don't you fret!"

"Where's Geoghan?" demanded Billy. "Better keep an eye on him. There's always something crooked happens when he's around!"

"He's over in Snyder's corner, see him? Close up by Snyder's second. But I heard him make a two hundred dollar bet on you, so you've nothing to fear from him."

"I'd feel comfortabler if he betted on the other guy!" said Billy.

"Why, don't you feel like winnin'?"

"Me? I feel like killin' the whole outfit, with you an' Snyder thrown in!"

"Snyder, yes. But why me?"

"'Cause I lost my gal, o' course!"

"'Twan't me that told her, sonny."

"I know that! I wouldn't ha' fought if it had been!"

"Come up to the center of the ring, you two men!" ordered the referee, and Billy and Snyder left their stools and faced each other. While the referee was talking to them, Billy's eyes wandered around the ring; he seemed quite indifferent as to the instructions. Suddenly he stiffened, though, like a pointer when he gets wind of partridges, and a moment later he took hold of Snyder's arm and pointed in the direction of his corner.

"Change the water in your bottle, mate!" he suggested. "I just seen that swine Geoghan drop something into it, an' I know he's got two hundred plunks betted on me! I ain't winnin' fights that way!"

Snyder walked back to his corner and gave some orders to his second, who promptly poured the water out on the floor and called for fresh. Snyder stood and saw the bottle filled again before returning to the center of the ring.

"Pretty white of you!" he said, as he once more faced Billy; there was an expression on his face, though, which hinted that he thought Billy a fool for having warned him.

"Pooh!" said Billy; "I can lick you anyhow! I don't want help!"

"You men ready?" demanded the referee. "Then—Time!"

SNYDER was more than half trained; but he was a long way from being in the perfect condition that Billy was, and he knew it. His best chance, it seemed to him, lay in forcing matters and ending the fight by a knock-out before Billy could tire him out and weaken him. And it just happened that those tactics suited Billy both ways from the middle.

The little chap was mad, mad all the way through; he was sick at heart at having lost his girl; and, because pluck was the very essence of his being and there was no white streak in him at all, he was furious instead of half-hearted. A toe-to-toe, hammer-on-anvil, ding-dong fight was exactly what he wanted just then above all other things, and he waded into Snyder with a will and a ferocity that started the fans going from the minute the first round started.

Snyder tried to rush him and Billy countered, landing heavily on Snyder's jaw; and from then until the call of time the two men fought over every square inch of the ring. They were clever as bantams, both of them, and quick; they exchanged blows with a rapidity that the eye could scarcely follow, and every single blow that either of them gave had steam behind it.

O'Hanlon raved and swore over behind Billy's corner as Billy's head went back twice in quick succession in answer to two quick uppercuts of Snyder's; Billy rocked on his heels for half a second and the fans roared. But Billy seemed to be only spurred on to further efforts by the blows, and in less than a second O'Hanlon was cheering and shouting like a maniac—beating on the edge of the platform with his fists and yelling:

"Go on, Billy! Oh, good boy! Sick him, Billy! Now! Oh, great!"

Billy landed below Snyder's guard with a punch that started from his knees; and the whole of Billy's strength and energy and spirit was behind the blow. Snyder rocked and doubled forward to save himself, and Billy landed once more, this time on his forehead; and the blow straightened him and sent him reeling back against the ropes. Then the gong went.

Both men were bleeding freely, and each man had stopped at least a dozen telling

blows; but it was Billy's round. He walked back to his corner; Snyder tottered back to his.

"Ye little fire-brand!" said O'Hanlon, plying the sponge assiduously. "Gad! But ye make me want to fight, too! Ye've got him, boy! Ye've got him! Ye'll be runner-up after this!"

"Shut up!" said Billy, "an' keep on spongin'!"

"TIME!" said the referee; and Billy sprang to the middle of the ring again. Snyder left his corner slowly, and, acting probably under instructions from his seconds, left the forcing to Billy this time. Billy rushed at him before he had reached the center and bore him backward toward his corner again with a shower of well-directed body-blows, nearly every one of which landed.

Then Snyder pulled himself together and drove Billy along the ropes, and suddenly he slipped away and took the center and waited. Billy rushed at him again, and Snyder dropped on one knee just as Billy landed on his mouth with the full force of a left-hand swing. Snyder went to the floor hard and lay there.

"Foul!" yelled Snyder's seconds.

"Foul!" roared the spectators.

"No foul!" said the referee. "His knee wasn't touching the floor when the blow struck!" he called down to the reporters. "Six—seven—eight——"

Snyder rose to his knees and gazed around him; then he struggled awkwardly to his feet, and Billy rushed in to finish him. But the finish was not yet. Snyder had fought his way to very near the top of the welter-weight division chiefly by using his brains. There were plenty of stronger men in the ring than he, but very few who had half his cunning. He side-stepped Billy's blow, and as he turned sideways to it, it glanced off his arms; and as Billy swung past him, losing his balance very nearly from the terrific force of it, Snyder landed on him twice with all the strength he had left. He clinched then, and held on for half a minute, successfully foiling all Billy's efforts to chop him loose. Billy drove him backward around the ring, keeping up a hail of short-arm punches to the body, and the referee did his level best to separate them; but Snyder held on and leaned all his weight on him and once every now and then he got home a kidney-punch with the heel of his glove that made Billy wince and grunt.

The result was that the call of time found Snyder the fresher of the two; he went to his corner grinning. But Billy, although he was still bleeding freely and a little tired from his efforts, was not very much the worse for wear.

"Don't let him clinch next time!" advised O'Hanlon.

"Might as well try to stop you talkin'!" answered Billy. "Gimme another swig o' water, an' shut up!"

THE third round was the fiercest yet. Snyder was feeling considerably better for his rest during the latter half of the second round and the minute interval, and he once more proposed to do the forcing. The two men met in the center, as fighting bulls meet, with a crash, and neither man let up for so much as half a second from his efforts to knock out his opponent. It was boxing, though, not milling.

There were no wild, unaimed swings. They stood up toe to toe and swapped punches, using every trick they knew and all the strength they had; then Snyder began to waltz away backward, drawing Billy into lunges—ever longer and longer ones—until O'Hanlon shouted to him across the ring:

"It's a trap, Bill! Look out! Steady!" he yelled.

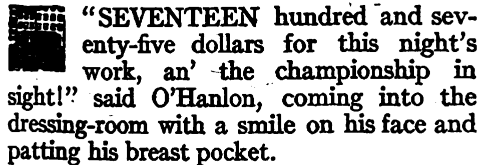
And Billy heard him even above the thunder of the cheers that seemed almost to lift the roof off. Snyder heard him too, and turned the trick—just one hundredth part of a second too late. Billy had swung as O'Hanlon shouted; but he heard the shout and caught the purport of it just in time to "pull" his blow and keep his balance. Snyder side-stepped very neatly indeed, and let out with all his might at the place where Billy should have been had he put all his weight behind the blow instead of checking it; Snyder's right slid off along the breadth of Billy's chest, and Billy stepped back a pace and landed on him with a left-right-left—ribs, jaw, armpit—that sent him staggering sideways against the ropes.

There Billy leaped on him and got home with a thumping swing to the stomach that doubled his opponent up, and Snyder

leaned, face downward, against the ropes —his toes on the floor and his arms hanging limply over them supporting him. There Billy pummeled him until the referee stepped in and stopped the fight.

"You win!" he said. "Get over to your corner!"

Billy Blain was runner-up, with first claim on the champion's attention!



"SEVENTEEN hundred and seventy-five dollars for this night's work, an' the championship in sight!" said O'Hanlon, coming into the dressing-room with a smile on his face and patting his breast pocket.

"What do I care!" said Billy, pulling on his jacket; "I'm going to sea again!"

"You'll care all right when you've had time to come to your senses, my son. Come along home now—ye'll feel better when ye've counted your share of the money and had supper!"

"Come on, then!" said Billy, taking O'Hanlon's arm and wiping his face with his free hand; his nose and lips were still bleeding.

"Better stay and wash your face a bit more, hadn't you?"

"Come on, I said! —— the blood! What does that matter!"

O'Hanlon saw that there was nothing to be gained just then by talking to him, so he let himself be dragged out into the street, where he stopped and began looking around for a cab. Just as they reached the edge of the sidewalk a taxi-cab drew up in front of them and the chauffeur reached round and opened the door of it. Voices came from inside the cab—the voices of two women raised in argument—and as he heard them Billy Blain tightened his grip on O'Hanlon's arm and turned to look.

"I tell you, you can't!" said a voice. "It's unheard of! Besides, they won't let you in!"

"All right, ma!" came the answer; "then I'll wait outside here on the sidewalk! You'd better get out, too, unless you want me to wait alone!"

A neat shoe and an even neater stocking appeared through the door, feeling cautiously for the step. Then a girl stepped out and stood revealed in the light of a street lamp.

"That's her!" said Billy in an undertone.

"'Pon my soul, boy, I don't blame ye, then!" exclaimed O'Hanlon. "But what's she doin' here?"

"Dunno!" said Billy. "None o' my business! Come on, let's get home!"

But the girl had seen him.

"Billy!" she called. "Billy! Why, I thought you were—" She rushed toward him and threw herself into his arms and kissed his face over and over again. "Why, you're bleeding!" she exclaimed, drawing back suddenly. She drew him toward the lamp and examined his face keenly. "Billy!" she exclaimed, "you've been beaten!"

"Not me!" said Billy.

"You mean you won?"

Billy nodded.

"Then what's that blood doing?"

"It took some winning!" answered Billy.

"Billy, have you forgiven me?"

She looked into his face with an expression that would have melted the heart of a tiger. It melted O'Hanlon's, for he had to look the other way.

"Now that you ask it—why, sure!" said Billy; and there was an interlude, when even a patrolman whistled and retraced his footsteps so as not to interfere.

"And you'll give it up now, Billy?"

"Not me! I would ha' done, if you'd taken me at my word this afternoon. I won't stop short o' the top now! I'll quit when I've won the championship, or had a try for it anyway!"

"What does that mean?"

"One more fight probably."

"All right, Billy, that's a bargain! Hurry up and win it, that's all!"

"Are you coming, Maud?" asked a shrill voice from inside the taxi-cab. "This meter's running up all the time we keep the cab waiting!"

"All right, ma'am!" said O'Hanlon; "I'll pay the taxi! What is it, my boy—supper?"

"Supper for four!" said Billy.

A DEAL IN REAL ESTATE

An Adventure on the Mexican Border.

(by W. Townend

EVEN in this age of wireless telegraphy, aeroplanes and special correspondents, things occasionally happen which escape the notice of the newspapers.

This is, on the whole, fortunate for an enlightened civilization.

Otherwise, it were as well to set aside all talk of Arbitration Treaties and Universal Peace, and prepare for an all-against-all Armageddon the week after next.

And if you do not believe this, as of course you don't, hearken for a moment to the story of Lieutenant R. K. Burgess, U. S. A., and the Republic of Mexico.

ON AN afternoon in early Spring, six bedraggled horsemen, who looked like out-of-work cow-punchers, but who were in reality patriots on active service, rode into the valley in the rain and fired on the Federal outposts.

Early the next day the Insurrectos attacked in force, with the result that by noon the Federals had abandoned their advanced positions and were falling back slowly, preceded by a trickle of wounded men.

Whereupon the inhabitants of the little adobe town in the hollow, hastily packing together such belongings as they could carry or load on to decrepit wagons, stampeded through the sage-brush up the slope to the cluster of houses on the American side of the line.

Here, safe from the immediate danger of sudden death, they halted, mud-bespattered and weary, putting their trust in Providence and the United States, while the khaki-clad sentries rested on their rifles and gazed at them in stolid silence.

Burgess, who commanded the small body of troops, one of the many detachments patrolling the border from sea to sea, eyed the newcomers with despair, saw their helplessness, listened to their vain clamorings against fate, and straightway proceeded to alleviate distress, as was his duty.

To which end, realizing the nakedness of the land, he took counsel with his second in command, a sergeant, issued such supplies as could be obtained from the general store and post-office, despatched frantic messages north to brigade headquarters for further provisions, and requisitioned all available shacks, stables and outhouses as shelter for the fugitives.

Lacking ammunition and reinforcements, the Insurrectos did not push home their attack, so the little town in the valley remained in the possession of the Federals;

nevertheless, the refugees, being wise in their generation and eating three times a day through no exertions of their own, stayed with Burgess, who accepted all difficulties as foreordained, did the work of three men, and bore base ingratitude, revilings and thanks alike with inscrutable countenance.

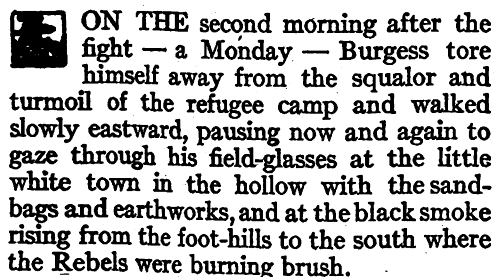
To avoid explanations hereinafter, these were the positions held by the combatants during the six days that followed:

The Insurrectos to the number of sixty-odd fighting men, all of them hungry and all of them, with the exception of three, white, occupied the foot-hills to the south and east on the other side of the valley, their scattered pickets stretching in a wide semicircle as far as the American line, a mile east of the custom-house.

The Federals were entrenched in the town and on the rising ground to the southwest, with sentries strung out along the border to the west.

And from the east, where the Insurrecto picket was posted, far away to the west, the United States soldiers tramped to and fro, preserving neutrality, openly contemptuous of all men and all things south of the border.

Each day brought desultory firing, many rumors and a hot sun. At night a cold wind blew from off the mountains. Occasionally it rained.



ON THE second morning after the fight — a Monday — Burgess tore himself away from the squalor and turmoil of the refugee camp and walked slowly eastward, pausing now and again to gaze through his field-glasses at the little white town in the hollow with the sandbags and earthworks, and at the black smoke rising from the foot-hills to the south where the Rebels were burning brush.

As he reached the last of his sentries, he saw a man on horseback riding through the chaparral toward the line.

"One of the Insurrectos, I guess," said the sentry.

Burgess waited and the Insurrecto reined up his sorrel pony a few yards distant and saluted gravely.

He was a thin, broad-shouldered man, his face burnt to the color of fresh-sawn redwood. He wore a soft hat, the brim of which hung around his ears, a short-sleeved khaki shirt and patched trousers, with a bright scarlet handkerchief about his neck. And though this uniform might have failed to satisfy a sergeant-major on parade, or a hobo in sore need of a change of clothing, his rifle, his two revolvers and his rows of cartridge-belts tied with red ribbon would have delighted the heart of a special artist and his public.

"Mornin'," said the Rebel airily, as one who conferred a favor.

"Good-morning," said Burgess. "You're one of the Rebels, hey?"

"I believe I have that honor," replied the Rebel, his teeth flashing in a sudden smile.

"Officer?" Burgess, noting the accent, looked at him closely.

"Not yet, but——" He broke off with a laugh. "No, as a matter of fact I'm a sergeant at present—acting more or less as a supernumerary brigade-major, if there is such a thing."

"You'll do, anyway," said Burgess. "I'd be obliged if you'd tell your commanding officer that I can't have you people running across the line. We're here to preserve neutrality, and we'll have to take prisoner any one—Federal or Rebel—caught over here. That's all."

"Quite right," said the Insurrecto with great cheerfulness; "carn't have them trottin' backward and forward just as they jolly well like. Never do." He laughed once more. "I say, how do you enjoy frontier work, eh?"

"We-ell," said Burgess, "the sooner you quit scrapping and settle your little differences, the better I'll be pleased, for one."

"I know. Frightfully dull, isn't it? And yet a —— sight too excitin'. I've been there myself once upon a time. It does you a lot of good, though. I remember up at Peshawur in——" The Insurrecto checked himself abruptly.

"British Army?" asked Burgess; and then, without waiting for an answer, he continued, "How are you making out? Pretty tough, isn't it?"

"Oh, so, so. We're gettin' along fairly well, on the whole, considering we're only a side-show. Shockin' lack of *bundobust*, of course. Once we start moving things in earnest, however, I hope to hear the mess-call a little more regularly. Just now—and, I say, look at this old gas-pipe! One of your condemned 45-70 Springfields. An outrage, eh? Expectin' a grown man in

these days to fight with a thing like this!"

"Have any trouble with the inhabitants, ever?" asked Burgess.

"Not very much. Sometimes. Yesterday, for instance, reconnoitering, about seven or eight miles southwest of here." The Insurrecto showed a bandaged wrist. "Skin-graze, that's all. We'd heard from a peon that a white man ran the show, so we thought we'd pay him a friendly visit. Also we were hungry. The blighter stood on the porch until we were close up to the house, then he popped under cover, and he and his bally ranch hands let us have about six rounds apiece. Jolly, wasn't it? I had a handkerchief tied on to my rifle, too."

"Were they all white men?"

"No fear! Cocopahs mostly, or Greasers; any old thing. Whacking big ranch, it is. One of the youngsters I had with me, a 'Frisco boy, got a bullet through his chest. We managed to lug him off with us, but the poor chap went out larst night. And I do not think that my friend Mr. Saunderson—which is his name, so I gather—will enjoy our next meeting. I'm going to look him up in a day or two; we're short of gees, and forage, and beef and quite a lot of things."

Burgess, remembering that he had other and more important business afoot, turned away.

"I must be moving back, now. Keep to your own side of the line, and I don't care what you do. Good-by."

"Oh, I say, harf a minute!"

"Well?" Burgess stopped.

"Look here," said the ragged Englishman, "if you see any likely recruits, no age, religion or color barred, just parss them over to us, will you. We want all we can get. Well, so long!"

Burgess grinned and started back toward the custom-house.

A LITTLE before daybreak, while it was yet dark, a Mexican soldier, half-asleep and wholly overcome by a sudden panic, fired across the line at one of the United States sentries posted to the west of the camp.

Thereby occasioning complications and bitterness and endless worry for all concerned.

"Who the —— do you think you're shootin' at?" shouted the justly indignant and rather scared sentry. "—— it, I ain't goin' to be made a target for drunken Greasers to shoot at! Let's see where you're at! Durn you, I'm ready for you!"

And so on, until the arrival of his very much flustered commanding officer and the calling out of the detachment.

Later on in the forenoon followed an interview at the boundary monument west of the camp between Burgess and a captain in the Mexican army. This interview was in the nature of a monologue, Burgess by virtue of his birthright doing most of the talking.

The Mexican captain, a depressed little man who spoke English badly, was supported by half a dozen cream-and-coffee-skinned soldiers, clad in dirty white uniforms and armed with Mauser rifles.

With Burgess on the American side of the line was his sergeant, a cynic of many years' service, and a red-faced private who chewed tobacco and from time to time spat gloomily and contemptuously, showing no interest whatsoever in the proceedings, attending as a mere matter of duty.

"Now, see here, sir," said Burgess, after preliminary explanations and compliments, "this kind of thing will have to stop right now! Your men have been bothering mine ever since we came here, and I'm not going to stand for it a minute longer. Understand!"

The Mexican officer shrugged his shoulders in a deprecating, apologetic fashion as one who hated plain speaking.

"My men ver' excited—war!" he observed. "Accidents happen." He waved his hand gently.

"Yes, sir, and my men are not excited yet, but should they reach that condition, as seems highly probable, other accidents are bound to happen. And that's what you and I have got to avoid. We represent our respective Governments, and I am going to preserve neutrality even if I have to——" Burgess in a side glance saw the red-faced sentry yawning capaciously; whereupon he lost the thread of his argument, forgot what he had intended to say, and groped feebly for a threat that would carry conviction. "Even if I have to—to preserve neutrality!" he growled. "Understand!"

And the interview ended rather abruptly in protestations on the part of the Mexican captain that never, never again so long as hostilities prevailed or the sun rose in the east beyond the mountains, would there be cause for complaint regarding the conduct

of his troops. Which was, of course, most satisfactory.

THAT same day Scott, a captain commanding a larger detachment of the same regiment fifteen miles to the east, paid Burgess a flying visit.

Together they inspected the shacks and barns and tents where the refugees lived.

"We've done the best we can, but it's heart-breaking work," commented Burgess. "There are about a hundred and thirty of them, all of them dirty and all of them disobedient. They won't listen to what they're told, and they live like pigs. And yet—I dunno, but I'm sorry for the poor brutes, after all. Some of 'em don't seem to know or care what's happening—no more than that yellow dog over there by the pepper tree."

They stood and watched a little withered old woman who sat huddled up in a red and blue blanket, her filmy eyes fixed on nothing, her face like a mummy's, without life or expression.

"See that old lady?" Burgess went on: "They tell me her husband died last week, her eldest son, a soldier, was shot about a month ago, and the other son is out on the foot-hills now, killed in the first skirmish they had on Friday. Also her house has been torn down by the troops—military necessity, of course—and the two cows are God knows where! Military necessity, again, I suppose. Sits there all day in the sun, never moves or anything. Rough on her, hey? *Viva la libertad!* There's a kid dying in the shack behind her."

Scott, a big, rather silent, grizzled man, sniffed.

"Huh! you'll be having typhoid in the diggings soon, if you're not careful."

"I've sent to headquarters for a doctor. It's none of our business, all the same. Why should we bother about them at all? I never thought when I joined the army, instead of taking up a respectable career of crime in a Wall Street office, that in a year or two I'd be dry-nursing Mexican kids and bandaging wounded Mexican soldiers from across the line and dosing old ladies for stomach-ache. And yet in return they, or their friends, shoot at us nights. Funny life, isn't it?" Burgess gave a dry laugh. "And whatever I do I'll get blamed for doing it, of course."

"Of course. That's what you're in the army for. We're not civilians, remember; we're only soldiers. It's a long, long way from here to West Point."

"What shall I do if their sentries start firing again to-night? It's not in human nature for a man to be shot at and not answer back, you know."

"It may not be in human nature," said Scott, "but according to most people, soldiers are denied the privilege of being considered as human, so they mustn't answer back! Washington, D. C., does not want complications—yet. They—so I hear on good authority—would be very much annoyed."

Burgess shrugged his shoulders and his freckled face took on an expression of intense gloom.

"All right," he said, "but if one of my men happens to get hurt or killed, then——"

"Then what?" asked Scott, snapping his fingers and smiling at a small child, who stared at the two soldiers with grave eyes. "Then what?"

"Then, —— Washington, D. C.!" said Burgess wearily.

OUTSIDE the small general store and post-office with the wide veranda and screen doors and board-walk raised above the sandy street, two men, Mr. Buckley, the postmaster, and Dan Wallace, ex-cowpuncher, now a line-rider, stood and listened to the complaints of a third, a well-dressed, prosperous-looking individual, who rode a beautiful, long-legged chestnut colt.

Burgess approached from the custom-house where the Stars and Stripes fluttered lazily in the breeze.

"I tell you, gentlemen," said the man on horseback, removing his big leather gauntlets, "I've got good cause to kick. I'm——"

"You're not the only one," interrupted the postmaster, who was thin and wore spectacles.

"Not by a durn' sight," said the line-rider with a little chuckle. "Besides, you are nach'rally prejudiced. You want a Greaser to be—hello, lieutenant, mornin'!"

"Huh!" said the well-dressed man on horseback. "It's no use tryin' to hand me out any of that talk, Wallace. Facts are facts." He glanced sideways at Burgess as though to note the effect of his words. "How would youse like to have your young barley trampled down, stock rounded up

an' stolen, boys taken off to fight, and—and I'm to sit still and be robbed, am I? Not on your life, Mr. Dan Wallace!"

He was a small, wiry man with a hard, sullen face, clean-shaven and burnt by the sun; his white collar and soft green velvet hat and store clothes seemed out of place in the little frontier town, and he sat his horse after the manner of a shop assistant on a hired hack.

"Where do you come from?" asked Burgess shortly. "I don't see why we——"

"Lieutenant Burgess," said the line-rider, "I'd like you to meet Mr. Saunderson. Mr. Saunderson, this is the lieutenant who's in charge o' the post here."

"Both sides been holding you up, hey?" said Burgess, as he shook hands.

"Holding me up! You betcher life, they're holding me up! Yes, sir-ree! It's nothing more or less than robbery, just the same as if they was to take my rings or stick-pin. And—and I'm an American citizen. I wanter know my rights!"

"You ain't got none," said the postmaster with great cheerfulness. "Mr. Saunderson, you'd better 'uv stayed home 'stead of—— Yuh shorely don't think that the United States is a-going to butt in just 'cause o' yuh, Mr. Saunderson?"

Saunderson looked at Wallace, then at the postmaster, and finally shot a quick, suspicious glance at Burgess.

"No," he drawled, but his tone showed a certain doubt. "No, I guess not. But—but, lemme tell you, it's a darned poor concern that won't help its own citizens, that's all I gotter say."

"—— you and your citizenship! Why don't yuh say what yuh mean?" The line-rider's temper flared. "It's your pocket that's your worry. You own 'bout four times as much land down thar' as it's good fer any one man to own. Good land, too, range and water. You pay Mexican wages in Mexican dollars, an' then you ship your stock over here an' git American prices!"

SAUNDERSON slapped at a fly with his gauntlets.

"We've gotter intervene and take the country, and that's all there is to it!"

"Why?" said Wallace. "Listen! Just so soon as your Uncle Sam sends a single regiment, a single man, across the line, hell 'ull break loose. You big ranchers want intervention, nach'rally. So would I, if I was you. But I ain't."

"Want it! What's the good of intervention to us? It's the holding up of a man's property I'm kicking against. Twenty head of cattle driven off and—my —— It's about time to kick! I've got big interests down there, and——"

The postmaster began to laugh once more.

"You cert'nly have. Now, Dan!"

"Big interests!" said the line-rider. "You've made enough money out o' them poor —— to be generous for once in your life."

"Generous! I'll be generous enough in the proper place. Wholesale robbery's another thing altogether. Makes you feel generous, don't it? No, sir, I'm an American citizen an' the United States oughter do something! Lemme tell you, there'll be no safety or peace along the border till there ain't no border at all, and it's United States all the ways from the Pole to Panama."

"Hear, hear!" said the postmaster.

"Them sentiments," said Dan, "at a Fourth-o'-July oration with fire-crackers goin' off an' the kids out fer a good time, and the G. A. R. paradin', 'ud give rise to gen'ral enthusiasm, an' justly so; but in the present company, who ain't quite so chock-full o' patriotism an' sody-pop, they don't cut so much ice. Yuh know, Mr. Saunderson, that if over thar' ever is ours, thar'll be a rush across the line as 'ud make the Oklahoma gallop look like a straw-ride.

"An' your little property—eighty thousand acres, ninety, or whatever it is—would be worth how much?" Wallace's face was crimson and his voice shook. "What would the raise in values amount to, hey, Mister American Citizen? O' course yuh never thought o' that, did yuh? But, all the same, it sounds to me!"

Saunderson leaned forward suddenly, scowling, then sat upright again and laughed in rather a weak way.

"Oh! I dare say if I wanted to get rid of the ranch, I could; but then, I don't. It's mine. I bought it and—but ——! you don't understand, Dan, and never will." He turned to Burgess, who had listened to the conversation with a grin of amusement. "Had much trouble with the Mexicans, mister?"

Burgess raised his eyebrows and became the officer once more.

"Trouble?" he said.

"Yep. I heard that there'd been some unpleasantness last night between the sentries. Shootin' an' so on." He looked at his watch, and drew on his gauntlets. "Well, I've gotter be moving. My foreman's pretty handy at using a Winchester, but I don't like to be away from the ranch too long at a spell, these days. First time a bunch of Insurrectos come—that was a month ago—me and the foreman weren't at home. But say, second time—Sunday—gee! We sure did give 'em ——! Let 'em have it as they come up to the house. Killed one of 'em and the rest beat it, quick. Since then I ain't had the pleasure of seeing 'em, but they've been rounding up cattle and stealing wagons, and I've had about enough of it! Well, gentlemen, drop in any time you're down my ways. Good day!"

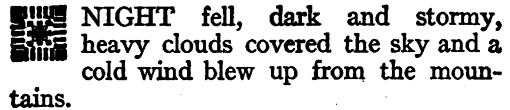
And the rich Mr. Saunderson wheeled his horse, waved his quirt in the air and cantered off down the wide, sandy street, fringed with small houses and shacks, pepper trees and gums, broken wagons and brown tents, and littered with heaps of refuse, straw, tin cans, mangy yellow dogs and Mexican refugees.

"There goes the meanest son of a gun and the worst rider that ever hit the pike between here and 'Frisco," said the postmaster, as the chestnut colt disappeared around the corner of the blacksmith's shop. "He'll cross the line west of the camp. A mean man, he is. He'd steal a nickel out of a blind man's cup, that guy would. An' rich? Say! Money ain't the word for it! I dunno how many thousand acres he owns! Intervention 'ud be all right for him."

"Saunderson did he say his name was?" asked Burgess, suddenly remembering his talk with the Englishman. "Owns a big ranch, hey?"

"Yup," said Dan. "He were a bar-tender in St. Louis, once upon a time; then he ran a dance-hall with faro layout, crap-games and roulette in Cheyenne; afterward he made a pile o' money in Los Angeles real estate, an' now he's a pious, law-breakin', God-lovin', sell-his-soul-for-a-dollar next-to millionaire."

Dan ended in a grunt indicating his scorn and crossed the street to where his pony stood with the reins trailing over its head, Western fashion.



NIGHT fell, dark and stormy, heavy clouds covered the sky and a cold wind blew up from the mountains.

Burgess, filled with a vague uneasiness, made no attempt to sleep, but sat in his tent and tried to read.

At midnight he left the camp and visited the sentries, accompanied by his sergeant.

"Not a light anywhere," said Burgess. "That's rather queer. No camp-fires."

"Guess they're expectin' an attack," said the sergeant.

Even as he spoke there came a sudden flash out of the blackness and the crack of a rifle.

"——!" said Burgess. "That's another of those crazy idiots!"

They walked softly toward the nearest sentry, who broke off a subdued torrent of profanity to challenge them.

"That dol-garned Greaser put a bullet through my hat!" he resumed in an aggrieved tone.

"He couldn't see you," said Burgess, "so——"

"If a feller chooses to light a match an' smoke," said the sergeant dryly.

The sentry choked. "Anyhow, even if——"

There came a second flash and a bullet whistled over their heads.

The three men waited. From the camp arose a sudden murmur of voices and the clatter of accouterments.

Burgess roused himself from a stupor.

"Sergeant, go back and tell those men to keep quiet. See that there's no disturbance in camp. Understand!"

"Yes, sir," said the sergeant.

"I'd better just show that Greaser that he——" The sentry raised his rifle.

"You'll do nothing of the kind!" said Burgess sharply. "Cut that out at once!"

Yet a third time the sniper fired at random, wide of any mark.

"Ah!" said Burgess quietly. "I think I've located you, my friend."

"Sure," said the sentry. "He's on the little hill over there beyond the draw. He ain't above two hundred yards off."

Burgess set his jaw grimly.

"Now, whatever that lunatic over there does, you're not to fire! Better get under cover, too."

And he walked off toward the west, unbuttoning his greatcoat.

FIVE minutes later, Lieutenant Burgess, U. S. A., disobeying all laws, violating the neutrality of a friendly power, had invaded the Republic of Mexico, single-handed.

He made his way cautiously over the stretch of grass and sand, crossed a small piece of marshy ground, his boots *squish-squashing* at each step, and at the foot of a slight incline stopped suddenly, scared by the whinnying of a horse. He crouched down, scarcely breathing, listening to the wind in the mesquite and the pounding of his heart against his ribs.

A spatter of rain-drops dashed into his face, and the sniper fired once more, a little to the left and not thirty yards distant.

Burgess crawled noiselessly up the slope until he heard close at hand the breech of a rifle being opened and the creaking of leather.

Then, risking everything, the bullet or, what would be a thousand times worse, capture, he sprang to his feet, ran forward and hurled himself at the form of the sniper, barely visible in the gloom. As he landed he hit out fiercely with his revolver.

The man gave a sigh and lay very still.

Burgess stooped down and swiftly, as a cowboy hog-ties a steer, bound his wrists with a silk scarf and gagged him with a jack-knife thrust between his teeth and kept in place by a handkerchief knotted at the back of his neck.

Then, commending himself to that Providence that guards the soldier, he slung the rifle across his shoulder and lifted the limp body from the grass.

Burgess was muscular, inured to fatigue and in good training, yet the sweat trickled down his forehead, his back ached, and his knees shook as he carried his prisoner over the rough, uneven ground toward American territory.

They had covered more than half the distance to safety when the man began to struggle feebly. Burgess dropped him and pressed the muzzle of his revolver against his temple. For a full minute he waited thus, ready to pull the trigger, should the slightest sound warn him that he was discovered.

But at last, reassured, he jerked his prisoner to his feet, and with one hand gripping his collar, hurried him in the direction of the line, praying that they might avoid not only the Mexican sentries, but also his own men. So, when his prisoner collapsed and fell, he wasted no time in seeking the cause, but lifted him up once more and staggered on and on until he missed his footing, and sliding into a sandy ditch half full of water, knew that he was safe across the line.

For a minute or two he did not move, but sat, breathing unsteadily, wondering at himself and his folly. Thinking of what might have happened, he shivered and felt sick.

Then he shouted,

"Sergeant Smith!"

From the camp there came an answering shout and the thud of heavy footsteps on the hill.

"Here, give me a hand with this," said Burgess when the sergeant arrived.

"What's that, sir?" asked the sergeant.

"Mexican soldier who was shooting at us."

He spoke as though it were the most natural thing in the world for lieutenants in the United States Army to go filibustering on to foreign soil.

"For heaven's sake!" said the sergeant blankly.

They bore the prisoner up the hill into the camp, where armed and excited men greeted them with many questions.

"Ain't there going to be a fight?"

"Are the Greasers attacking?"

"What are we waiting for, by golly?"

"Who killed the guy, anyway?"

"Shut up!" said Burgess. "And bring that lantern, some one."

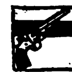
"That's the funniest Mexican I ever seen," said the sergeant.

"It's one of those —— Insurrectos," said the private who held the lantern.

Burgess knelt down and fumbled at the gag.

"Good God! Why it's——"

And he found himself staring with a kind of dazed horror into the pale, blood-stained face and sneering eyes of Mr. Saunderson!



"WELL, Mr. Saunderson," said Burgess, standing up. "Didn't think I'd have the pleasure of seeing you so soon." The scorn in his voice gave place to a dull anger. "I'd like an explanation and —— quick, too!"

The man did not answer.

"Get up!" said the sergeant. "Come on, now; you ain't hurt."

"Don't keep us waiting all night," said Burgess. "What's it all mean?"

"What does what mean?" said the prisoner, goaded into a surly reply by a half-arm jab from the sergeant.

"My God!" said Burgess. "And he calls himself an American citizen!"

"Who is he, sir, anyway?" said the sergeant, deeply bewildered.

The private holding the lantern began to chuckle.

"By golly! That 'ull be the guy what shot at me the other night, hey?"

And at that a grim understanding showed in the faces of the soldiers.

"Let's string him up!" said a voice.

"Well, Mr. Saunderson, what shall we do with you?" asked Burgess.

The ranch-owner's lips curled into a slow smile.

Firmly and tenderly, without haste, they laid him down on his face, writhing and twisting like a fish in a landing-net. Willing fingers pulled off his boots. One man knelt on the small of his back, another held his knees in a vise-like grip.

"Gimme room, boys," said the sergeant. "Don't crowd."

"Mr. Saunderson," said Burgess, "for the last time: why did you fire at us?"

"You're not going to beat me up?" quavered the prisoner.

"Don't you make any mistake about that, my friend! You'll speak right now, this minute or we'll——"

"Lemme get up, curse you!" said the prisoner weakly. "I'll speak."

"——!" said the sergeant in a tone of deep regret. "He ain't got no grit; not an ounce. His sort 'ull stand for anything except gettin' their precious skins hurt. He's scared sick."

"Well," said the prisoner, turning to Burgess with a snarl, "you want to know why I fired at youse, hey? If I killed one of you toughs, your patriotic fellow citizens that love their dear soldiers almost as much as I do, would have raised such a howl that your good-for-nothing Government would have been buncoed into doing something. I only wish to God I'd done my share of the job and killed a dozen of youse!"

Burgess whistled softly.

"Very pretty, indeed! Does you credit, you American citizen! I understand, and the value of your ranch goes up four times, five times!"

"Of course it does," said Mr. Saunderson brazenly. "What didjer think I was out on that hill for? Fresh air and exercise, looking for butterflies, or what? And now, what are you going to do? Lemme tell you! You're going to do nothing. You dursen't. You crossed the Mexican line and you're as scared of me as I am of you, for a fact!"

"What amuses me," said Burgess, "is that you probably believe it. Good Lord, man, when I think of what's going to happen to you, I almost—not quite, though—pity you! Sergeant, tie him up for the rest of the night and in the morning we'll attend to him. You, Kelly, go down to the line by the monument, and see if you can find my coat."

From the hills to the south came a faint crackle of rifle-fire that ended as suddenly as it had begun.

Burgess yawned sleepily.

"Shouldn't be a bit surprised if they started to fight in earnest now."

NEXT morning, when the shadows were still long and before the wind had died down, Watson, the line-rider, galloped east with a certain message.

Later on he galloped back, grinning.

At nine o'clock a wagon drawn by a team of mules drove through the little town and headed in the direction of a wilderness of sage-brush, mesquite and cactus, far away from any known trail or settlement.

At nine-thirty Watson rode up to the post-office and dismounted leisurely.

"Say, Dan, didjer see that wagon?" said Mr. Buckley, who stood on his veranda smoking a cigar. "Couple of soldiers riding on it."

"Yes, I seen it," said the line-rider. "George, let's have a sack uh tobacco, will yuh?"

The postmaster opened the screen-door and they entered the store.

"I seen the lieutenant going out that ways a while back," said Mr. Buckley, as he handed the tobacco across the counter. "I wonder what he was up to."

"I wonder," said Dan, filling his pipe.

The postmaster scratched his chin deliberately.

"I feel considerable interest in the contents of that wagon, don't you, Dan?"

Dan winked solemnly and made no reply.

But had the postmaster known what

was taking place at that precise moment about a mile east of the town, he might have felt a still greater interest.

Burgess was standing by the side of the wagon, talking to the driver. South of the line three tattered, war-stained scarecrows were approaching through the brush. Their leader was the thin, brown-faced Englishman on the sorrel pony. He saw Burgess and waved his hand gaily.

"Mornin'," he said, pulling up. "Look here, a message reached us, saying you wanted to speak to me. Nothing wrong, is there? None of our brigands been——"

"No, there's nothing wrong," said Burgess. "I'm in a hurry, so I can't stop to explain; but, do you still want any recruits by any chance?"

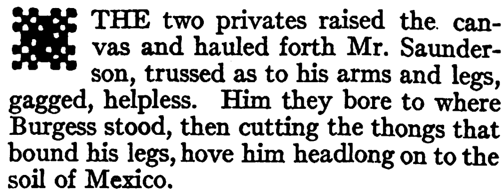
The three Insurrectos looked at one another and laughed.

"Do I want any recruits by any charnce?" said the Englishman.

"Nope," said one of the other patriots. "We don't want no recruits, nor yet ammunition, nor Mauser rifles, nor porterhouse steaks, nor Greasers. What spiel are youse handing us now, Mister Man?"

"But," said the Englishman, "it's most awfully good of you, and all that sort of thing."

"That's all right," said Burgess hastily. "We've brought you a recruit. A fine fighter, too. Just wait a minute, will you?"



THE two privates raised the canvas and hauled forth Mr. Saunderson, trussed as to his arms and legs, gagged, helpless. Him they bore to where Burgess stood, then cutting the thongs that bound his legs, hove him headlong on to the soil of Mexico.

"You'll have to supply him with a rifle," said Burgess; "I've got his as a keepsake. He's not a very good shot at anything over a couple of hundred yards."

"My sacred aunt!" gasped the Englishman.

He jumped from his pony and gazed earnestly at his new recruit, who had not stirred from where he had fallen. He was still gagged, and therefore silent, but his eyes spoke his thoughts more eloquently than any words.

"Why! it's the blighter who owns the big ranch, the Johnny that shot young Grey larst week! Pleased to see you, Mr. Saunderson, but——"

The Englishman straightened himself and stared at Burgess.

"We don't want him," said Burgess pleasantly. "And I thought you might be short of men. Do what you like with him, only don't let him get back here."

"Am I getting softening of the brain?" said the Englishman. "Or is that——"

Burgess laughed.

"Well, I don't mind telling you that he was shooting up my sentries last night from that side of the line."

The Englishman glanced round over his shoulder.

"Trewin," he said sharply, "just tie the end of that lariat of yours around him and we'll take him along with us." And to Burgess: "Most considerate of you, really," he said. "Every little helps in these hard times. But may I arsk, without showing undue curiosity, how the gentleman who is shortly goin' to have rarther an unpleasant time—a *most* unpleasant time—comes to be on your side of the line? In other words, who er—rounded up our Mr. Saunderson?"

"Well," said Burgess, "as it so happens, I did. Some one had to fetch him, you see."

"The —— you did! Firing on your sentries, was he, larst night?"

"Yes."

"An American, eh?"

"No, sir. Anything but."

"What a putrid swine the man must be! And you went out and captured him, did you? That's pretty average useful! How on earth did you drag him back with you?"

"Hit him on the head and carried him."

The Insurrecto gazed at Burgess with a certain quaint bewilderment.

"As a matter of fact you ought to have been a Goorkha or a Pathan, then I could begin to understand. As it is, I give it up, ab-so-lutely! I won't arsk your name, for the simple reason that I have no name to give in return—not while I'm with this circus. But some day perhaps——"

He shrugged his shoulders and walked toward his pony.

"Isn't there any message," said Burgess, "that I could——"

"No," said the Englishman. "There's not." A grim smile played around the corners of his mouth. "Thanks awfully, all the same. Needn't let people know, but we'll be fightin' later on, and a friend of

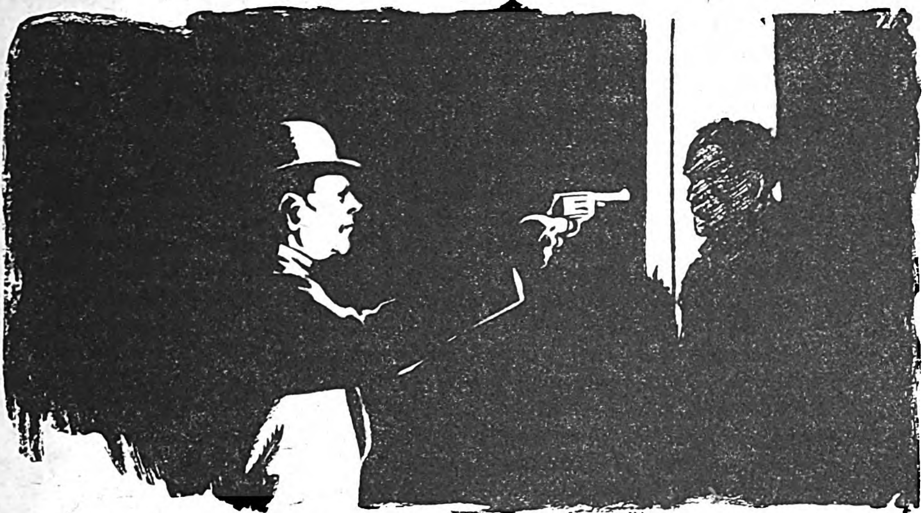
ours is goin' to be well up in the firing-line. Glad he joined us; one volunteer is worth a dozen pressed men. We're all volunteers, of course. Well, so long; good-by."

Burgess and the two privates watched the small party of Insurrectos make their way through the prickly pear and brush in the direction of the foot-hills. Three of the Insurrectos were on horseback; one was on foot. The man on foot was gagged and led by a lariat around his neck.

At the top of a slight rise the Englishman turned in his saddle and waved his hat.

"He'll have the time of his life!" he shouted.

Now the Englishman was a humorist, and therefore, like all true humorists, cruel beyond all ordinary men.



THE STRANGE LIGHT

by Garnsey Weeks

DETECTIVE LAWSON bit off the end of a second cigar, threw one leg over the other, and leaned back in his chair.

"What time was that?" he asked.

Young Jerrold thought deeply for a moment, and then replied, "Exactly two o'clock in the morning."

"That point's settled, then." The detective puffed out a great cloud of white smoke. "Then the thing occurred," he continued, "and you saw, Jerrold, what might have been a coincidence. I mean by that, the reflection of moonlight or some other natural light on the tower.

"Nerve-strung persons, under what appears to them to be certain abnormal conditions, find themselves invariably ready to accept the unusual. That was you." Lawson flicked the ashes from his cigar. "And yet, there is one feature that stands out so prominently—the screams of the woman, the invisible woman, and the sounds coming from the direction of the tower. This one item alone lends plausibility to your claims.

"You saw a light, and you were and still *are* unable to account for the phenomenon," Lawson went on, looking straight at the young man. "I've nearly always found that any occasion such as you cite has been more or less an illusion; if not that, then the delusion of a diseased mind."

The younger man sprang to his feet. "For God's sake, don't think that! Why, I've tried to discredit my eyes and ears, but I tell you I can see that light—weird, flickering, ghastly — even now, and I can

hear those wild cries that rang out when everything was so quiet. I searched and searched around the tower, in every direction, but I had to come away unsatisfied. So I came to you because I thought——"

The other walked quickly to Jerrold's side and laid a hand on his shoulder.

"And I'm going to help you, my boy, strange as the whole affair seems to me. When do you want me to set to work on this case?"

Jerrold got to his feet and put on his hat. "As soon as is convenient to you," he answered.

"Come at ten sharp in the morning," he said.

IT WAS nearly six o'clock of the January day, when the young man closed the door behind him, and Detective Lawson dropped again into his chair, first closing the window to shut out the keen night air and drifting flakes of snow.

Suddenly, as was characteristic of him when he had planned absolutely and surely the thing he wanted to do, he began to write upon a white pad:

JERROLD CASE (Doubtful)

1. Arthur Jerrold, walking from Penscote to Warrenville, at two o'clock in the morning, on the 27th of January, is arrested by screams of a woman, and a strange light on the tower of the brick church, situated about two hundred yards outside the Warrenville corporation.

2. Jerrold searches the premises, from time to time seeing the light, but finds nothing. The light soon ceases to show on the tower, and he lingers for half an hour. Then he walks home.

3. Is the whole thing a phantom? Apparently sound in mind, is Jerrold temporarily obsessed? Can the screams of the woman be associated with anything in Jerrold's life?

4. First, search the premises. Second, question Jerrold.

Note: The possibility of a love motive.

He turned out the light, and picked up his overcoat and hat as he felt his way to the door. Once in the hall, he buttoned his coat up to his chin and pulled his felt hat well down over his forehead. Then he went swiftly down the stairs and out into the night air.

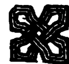
It had ceased to snow, but the wind still whirled the flakes from tree-tops and house-tops. Lawson dug his hands into his coat pockets and pushed his way along the side street that led out on the Penscote road.

When he reached the lighted window of the restaurant, that stood at the corner of the street he drew out his watch. It was a little after nine o'clock.

Putting back his watch, he turned the corner into the Penscote road and was soon trudging along in the direction of the brick church. It loomed up, at his left, black against the snow-covered ground, and it did not in the least present an air of mystery.

When he reached the front of the church he paused and glanced up at the tower, some fifty feet high, sturdy and solemn, its spire seeming to penetrate the heavens above. That such an edifice could have furnished anything uncanny was quite ridiculous to Lawson. He walked slowly around the western end of the church.

Passing back of the chancel and around to the northern side of the church he noted two rustic seats, one of which was just visible behind the trunks of two old and gnarled trees. Having thoroughly satisfied himself that he was partly in command of the situation now, he returned to the restaurant, where he ate a hearty meal and then sat back in his chair to read and smoke for an hour.



AT THE stroke of twelve he again made his way to the church and took up a position upon the almost hidden seat.

For an hour everything was as still as when he first visited the grounds, except for now and then the night call of a restless bird or the intermittent swaying of the branches over his head.

Suddenly, he was aware that a figure was approaching him from the rear of the church. It came forward slowly, cautiously, methodically, pausing now and then, and then renewing its measured tread. In the dim light Lawson could distinguish neither man nor woman, only the dark, muffled form.

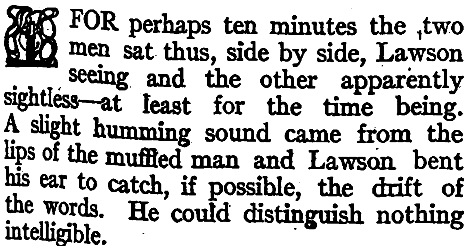
Stealthily he pulled out his watch; it was twenty minutes after one. Had Jerorold been wrong about the time or was some new thing to take place? Perhaps the figure might have been making preparations for its early morning performance? Turning completely around, the form faced the front of the church and for fully two minutes stood gazing up at the tower. A bat circled the belfry and then flew off in the shadows of the pines. Lawson was

beginning to feel cold and cramped. He gazed steadily at the tower for some sign of a light, but none showed.

He next beheld the muffled form resuming its walk straight in the direction of the bench upon which he was seated. Lawson pulled his hat well forward, thus shading his heavy face. From beneath the brim he watched and counted the number of steps that would be taken before the night apparition reached him. He slipped one hand into his coat pocket and grasped his revolver, every sense in his body alert, ready for whatever the gods might have in store for him.

The thought that a sleep-walker was soon to confront him flashed into his mind. And just as the apparition reached him a light fell full on the gray stone tower! The whole affair now began to assume an air of real mystery to the detective.

He watched the flickering light until the muffled figure was almost upon him. With unconscious nervousness he drew back. The figure sat down beside him. Silently, but not fearfully, for Lawson really knew no fear, he gazed at the form now on the bench. He could see that the eyes were closed, and as he looked more closely he was sure that the features were those of a man.



FOR perhaps ten minutes the two men sat thus, side by side, Lawson seeing and the other apparently sightless—at least for the time being. A slight humming sound came from the lips of the muffled man and Lawson bent his ear to catch, if possible, the drift of the words. He could distinguish nothing intelligible.

All at once the man at his side threw back the long black cape that hung closely around his shoulders, opened his eyes wide, and gave a start, looking full into Lawson's face. The detective moved away quickly, but the other, suddenly recovering himself, seized him by the wrist.

"Sh—sh!" he said in a hoarse whisper. "The light—the light, man! See it? There! For three nights!"

He pointed a long, white finger toward the tower. The flickering light danced in and out among the barren ivy leaves that clung to the gray stone. Lawson gripped his revolver tightly.

Here, evidently, was a case for the asylum authorities, thought Lawson, or perhaps for the police. The man was a madman beyond a doubt. To have a sane criminal to deal with was one thing, but a lunatic—that was quite out of the detective's line. Yet, the light! And there had, as yet, been no screams issuing from a woman's throat; and young Jerrold had said there had been a woman. Mystery? Undoubtedly mystery. He must take some measures at once to solve it. Gathering himself together, he spoke sharply:

"Look here, old man, hasn't there been about enough of this sort of thing?"

The other suddenly straightened back, his body becoming rigid; he took his eyes from the light and slowly turned his head until Lawson could see the gleaming whites of them. There was rather a pathetic appeal in those wild orbs—a hypnotic spell, and the detective shifted his gaze to look again toward the tower. The light had disappeared. But at that moment a terrifying cry rent the air!

Both men jumped to their feet simultaneously, Lawson bringing his revolver out of his pocket and holding it in readiness, and his strange companion moaning softly to himself and wringing his hands in anguish. The cry was followed by three piercing shrieks—and then the detective felt his right arm grasped as if it had been seized in a vise.

"Listen! The woman—the woman—every night like—like that. Will it ever cease?" The muffled form drew closer to Lawson, whose revolver had been jarred out of his hand and now lay a shining bit of metal on the ground beneath the bench. He stooped to pick it up, but the man tightened his grip upon his arm, and whispered: "See! The light again. The light—one cry—three cries—more light—always the light. Sit down, friend. We'll wait. Then—then we'll look. Poor Elsie, poor girl! It *must* be Elsie!"

FOR perhaps a minute they waited. Once the flickering light flitted across the tower, but it was gone in an instant and did not again appear.

The detective, unable to stand the strain any longer, put his question:

"Who is this Elsie? Is that the woman's name?"

The other nodded:

"Elsie—yes—it's like Elsie's voice, my

friend. She is Father Georgian's niece."

"Where do you think the cries come from?" Lawson asked. "From the woods, the tower, or that house over there? Isn't that where Father Georgian and the Brotherhood live?"

"My friend, I can not tell you from what direction the cries come. Not from the house. There are no women there. I am Brother Demitro."

As he spoke, he drew aside his cloak and, for the first time, Lawson noted the brown cassock and cord; also the small cross that, fastened to a cord around his neck, lay in his lap.

"You see, I am one of the Brothers," said he, "and when you saw me coming toward you I was deep in prayer, with my eyes closed, as is our custom when walking in the vicinity of the church or house. The other Brothers are away at present upon a mission. Father Georgian is also away, but not with them. He has gone to a great prelate to solicit funds for our home. Elsie, poor child," and Brother Demitro crossed himself, "has been living with her mother, Father Georgian's sister, at Penscote.

"There is only myself at the house, with the exception of the two gardeners, noble fellows, who help the Brothers with household duties and farm work. You must not mind my laughter. I am hysterical over the affair. Alone—and hysterical."

"I am Detective Lawson," said Lawson. "Come, hadn't we better look around? Perhaps the girl is in distress. Why haven't you mentioned this to some one before? I have been asked to look into the matter by a client who was passing here early yesterday morning and saw the light and heard the cries."

"We are not of the world," said Brother Demitro, rising, "but, as you are here, and the circumstances are unusual, I will accompany you, talking as we go.

"Can I get into that house?"

"Under the circumstances, yes," replied the Brother. "But I myself fear to enter it. For three nights I have not slept. Those piercing cries and the strange light have entirely unnerved me. However, I shall follow you."

"Where are the gardeners?"

Brother Demitro pointed to the eastern side of the Brotherhood home.

"At the foot of that drive in that little stone lodge," he said. "They sleep there, when not in town. Their tools are also kept there."

"I wonder why they haven't heard these cries?"

"They are sound sleepers," the other answered. "And I fear that sometimes they drink a little too much, which brings on a stupor. They are noble, in that they work well. We can hardly ask more."

Lawson smiled. "Come," he said, "we'll go down to the lodge."

The two men walked slowly through the light snow until they were within fifty feet of the little gray stone building. Here Lawson came to an abrupt halt and, bidding his companion conceal himself behind a fir-tree, crept swiftly and silently from tree to tree until he brought up at the door of the lodge.

Through the keyhole he could see light within and, as his eyes became accustomed to the light, he was able to see clearly the interior of the one room. He had just seen a man stretched at full length, with clothes on, upon a cot, apparently asleep, when another came from behind the curtain hung at the other end of the room and made his way toward the door. Lawson stood up quickly. The next instant the door was opened wide and a very much surprised man was looking straight into the muzzle of Lawson's revolver.

II

"HANDS up!" ordered the detective.

The man sullenly raised his hands above his head. "What the —— do you want?" he asked between quick breaths.

"I don't exactly know," Lawson smiled, "but I thought I'd drop in. I'll take that gun, if you don't mind!"

He reached for the man's hip pocket, all the time keeping his own revolver pointed straight at him, and pulled out the weapon, the handle of which had showed above the pocket.

Just as Lawson dropped the prize into his own coat pocket the other cried out, "Bill!" The man on the bed jumped to his feet; there was a dazed expression on his face as he saw his companion confronting Lawson. In a moment he had whipped out his revolver; but the next instant it clattered to the floor and a tiny stream of blood flowed from his right hand. Lawson

had fired, knocking the gun out of the fellow's grasp.

He dropped upon the side of the bed, hugging his injured hand between his knees, the red stain running down the legs of his trousers. Lawson backed away from both men until he was in sight of Brother Demitro, who stood holding his hands over his ears and mumbling to himself with terror.

The detective called to him.

"I want you to help," he said, when Brother Demitro had come near. "Take that piece of rope in the corner there and we'll tie this fellow up."

With trembling hands Brother Demitro got the rope.

"Pick up that gun, too," Lawson ordered. The Brother brought the rope to Lawson and then held out the revolver as if he were afraid that it would go off at any moment. Such articles were unknown in the Brotherhood home. "You keep that," said the detective, "and if one of them moves, wing him."

The effect was impressive in that neither of the two men was tempted to stir. Lawson quickly bound the rope around the body of the first fellow as Brother Demitro, with shaking hand, held the revolver. Then the detective slipped his foot under the feet of the tied man and dropped him to the floor. He next turned to the man on the bed, first handing him a corner of the bed blanket with which to stop the flow of blood from his hand. As quickly then he bound this fellow and pushed him back upon the bed, where he lay cursing to himself.

"Now," said Lawson, "we'll come down to business. Take that chair," he said to Brother Demitro, indicating a chair at the side of a small table.

"What right have you got to butt in here?" growled the injured man.

Lawson laughed; "I'll tell you, my man. I happen to know all about you two fellows, your records, and just how long each one of you has served a term in prison. You'll probably have the pleasure of another term if this affair turns out proportionately as bad as the other. Let me see, you've been out of jail for about three months, haven't you? Am I right?"

The man on the floor, muttered a kind of assent.

"And you served five years, I believe?"

"A little less," grumbled the man on the bed.

"Something off for good behavior," smiled the detective. "I suppose the strain was too much for you."

Neither of the men answered.

"Now," said Lawson, drumming on the table, "I want to ask you a few questions, and I want straight, unvarnished answers. The game's up and you might as well make a clean breast of the business from the start. Now, my first question: How long have you two fellows been working here at the home?"

"Three weeks," said the first man.

"Is that right?" Lawson asked, turning to Brother Demitro.

"Yes, three weeks yesterday," the Brother replied. "But, Mr. Lawson, I'm painfully surprised—shocked to think——"

"You people are unsuspecting creatures!" said Lawson. "It's just your sort that these men have been playing upon. They're about the smoothest crooks in this part of the country. I suppose the title pleases them; there is a certain pride even in the criminal classes."

"What did you do before you got this job?" went on the detective, trying to catch the shifting eyes of the injured man.

"Tramped it," he answered sullenly.

"Then you came here on salary, of course. What salary?"

"Thirty dollars a month for each of us, board and working clothes," the fellow grumbled.

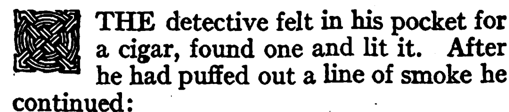
"Couldn't you live on that?"

There was no reply.

"I think you two are all to the bad," said Lawson. "You might better be working for the State. That seems to keep you out of mischief. Tell me about the money you were after."

"There weren't no money!" the man on the floor cried.

Lawson smiled. "Lie number one—be careful," he said. "There was, and you couldn't find it; that's the trouble."



THE detective felt in his pocket for a cigar, found one and lit it. After he had puffed out a line of smoke he continued:

"We're coming now to the subjects of this mysterious light business and the cries of some woman I myself heard just a short time ago."

Then the detective's voice hardened. "What have you done with Father Georgian's niece?"

The abruptness of the question startled the man on the bed into a grunt. The other preserved a grim silence.

"Well?" asked Lawson. "Speak up. Remember, the truth!"

The detective rose and stood over the man on the floor and something in his face prompted the fellow to speak. "She's in there," he said, nodding his head toward the curtains at the rear of the room.

"Elsie! Elsie!" cried Brother Demitro, leaping to his feet and rushing to the curtains. He swept them back and there before him sat a young girl, fair and comely, securely bound in a chair, and a cloth tied across her mouth. She was perfectly quiet. Detective Lawson quickly crossed the room and unfastened the cloth. Then he took the gag out of her mouth.

"She's fainted!" he said. "Get some water from that pail." Brother Demitro got the water, which Lawson dashed into the girl's face and then he began to rub her hands. In a few moments she opened her eyes.

"Curs!" muttered the detective. "This work is about worthy of both of you." He unbound the girl and supported her in the chair as she looked curiously around her.

"I—I must have fainted," she said.

"Just about that," smiled Lawson. "How do you feel otherwise?"

"Tired—oh, so tired!" She caught sight of the two bound men. Her eyes widened. "Those horrible brutes!" she added, "They've kept me here, each one taking a turn at watching me. Of course, I've had food and all that, and I haven't been tied up all the time—but I couldn't leave this lodge. They watched me all the time. They're after Father Georgian's money—and—and they think that I know where it is. I've cried out each night before they tied me up, hoping some one might hear." The girl's head lowered; she was indeed exhausted from worry and the cramped position in which she had been placed.

"They'll pay for it," said the detective grimly. "I'll see that they *do* pay for it. Now, miss, hadn't you better get to your home? Brother Demitro here says that you live with your mother, the Father's sister, at Penscote."

The girl nodded weakly. "Yes, and I want to get home at once. Mother has been away for a week; so I thank God that she doesn't know. I'm so glad some one has caught these men. You see, they came for me when I was alone in the house. Father Georgian is away and mother too, and they took advantage of that. I was smuggled here against my will. Couldn't some one take me back?"

"I'll see to that," smiled Lawson. "But first I want to get the details of this affair while the trail is hot, so to speak. I want to investigate this place and I want to question these men. Anything you can say will help. You can wait a few minutes?"

She nodded.

LAWSON made a circuit of the room, while the two men rolled uneasily in their bonds. Suddenly he stopped, as Brother Demitro and the girl watched him, before an apparatus attached to one side of the room near the curtain. Closely examining the apparatus, he saw that it was an electric battery. Near by, he discovered a push-button. Quick as a flash an idea came to him, and he pushed the button, at the same time drawing aside the shade that hung at the window on that side of the room.

He held his hand on the button and glanced out of the window in the direction of the tower. The strange light danced again upon the gray stone! Having satisfied himself upon this score, he was just about to turn to ask one of the men a question, when he heard the man on the bed moan; then there came two loud raps on the door, followed by three short ones.

"The signal! The signal!" cried the man on the floor.

Grasping his revolver firmly and holding it in readiness, the detective went swiftly to the door and flung it open. "Hands up!" he called to the individual on the threshold. "So, there're three of you! A confederate. Come in and drop into that chair and don't move! I've got you covered."

The newcomer dropped into the chair without uttering a word.

"We may as well truss this one up, too," Lawson said. "There's rope enough."

And he proceeded to bind the third man, first searching him for weapons. He found a large clasp-knife instead of the expected revolver, and with this he cut off the remainder of the rope after finishing his task. Then he resumed his seat at the table and began to smoke again.

"So that was your game," he said to one of the men. "The light—a signal—and your confederate. I'm sure the arrangement was like this: When the light showed on the tower, that was the signal which let your confederate know that the coast was clear—that you had the girl securely gagged and tied up, and he could then join you in your hunt for Father Georgian's money. You thought to get information from the girl, and when she wouldn't tell you, because she didn't know, you hardly dared to harm her; so you merely kept her here secure and under surveillance. I'm right so far, eh?"

One of the men burst out with an angry snarl. "And we'd got it, too, if you hadn't butted in!"

Lawson laughed. "Sorry I'm in the way," he said. "But it's part of my business. "Further," he went on, "you planned well, but you didn't make allowances for some one passing along the lonely road at just about the time of your operations, did you? Well, that's just how your little game came to be nipped in the bud. You see, some one was passing. That's why I'm here. Now, where did you expect to find that money? *You,*" turning to the man on the floor.

"In the library," answered the man. "But this guy," indicating Brother Demitro, "was always there—except to-night. We'd have got it though!"

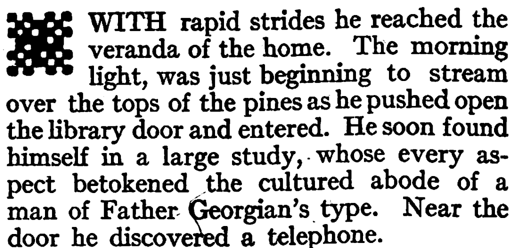
"This—er—this attachment on the wall?" said the detective.

The fellow growled a surly but full reply: "When the light showed up on the tower, he was to come over and watch the girl."

"Which you were planning to have him do to-night. Um—well, I guess this is about the finish of the enterprise. Brother Demitro," turning to the Brother, "I want you to watch these three men until I return. There's a phone at the house?"

Brother Demitro nodded.

"You and the girl," directed the detective, "can each handle a revolver, in a pinch, and you'll have to keep an eye on these fellows for the present. I'm going to look around the library. In the meantime I'll 'phone for a carriage to convey this young lady to her home. You'll have to see that she gets there all right. I haven't time to find a horse and carriage on the grounds here."



WITH rapid strides he reached the veranda of the home. The morning light, was just beginning to stream over the tops of the pines as he pushed open the library door and entered. He soon found himself in a large study, whose every aspect betokened the cultured abode of a man of Father Georgian's type. Near the door he discovered a telephone.

"Give me the Central Police Station," he said through the 'phone. In a moment he heard Sergeant Conklin's voice at the other end of the wire.

"Hello! This is Lawson—Detective Lawson. Yes! That's me. Now listen, sergeant. I'm out at the Brotherhood home. There are three prisoners in the lodge here waiting for a conveyance to the station. Send out a couple of your men and your patrol. I'll see you in the morning—this morning, yes—later. Good-by."

Then Lawson called up one of the livery stables with which he was familiar and ordered a carriage for Father Georgian's niece.

Having relieved his mind of these two burdens, he next gave his attention to the details of the study. In one corner he saw a safe—evidently the place in which Father Georgian kept his money, and the place which the three men had planned to visit in their search.

Passing over to the library table, Lawson picked up a memorandum pad and, under the date of January 24th he found this entry: "Take train for New York at 8:30 A. M."—which verified Brother Demitro's statement that Father Georgian had left the home for a few days. And this was the period during which the three men Lawson had left at the lodge had planned to do their work! He smiled thoughtfully; it would be an extreme pleasure to put those fellows behind the bars. They had certainly taken advantage of Father Georgian's absence, and also of the absence of Elsie's mother; besides they knew that Brother Demitro, unsuspecting and devoutly religious, would be as clay in their hands should he attempt to interfere with their plans.

When he returned to the lodge, the scene before him struck him as bordering on serio-comedy. He had witnessed just such a setting at the theater. Brother Demitro, with set features and a look of awe, was seated at the table. In his hand he held a revolver, and his expression seemed to show forth the extreme discomfiture he would

have felt had he been compelled to pull the trigger.

The girl was equally pale, but it was more the pallor of exhaustion than fear. She smiled wanly when she saw the detective.

He grunted with satisfaction as he took his revolver from Brother Demitro, and ordered the three men to stand in a row. Then he tied the three together, passing a bit of the remaining rope around the wrists of each.

ARTHUR JERROLD entered the office of Detective Lawson at precisely ten o'clock. He had spent a restless night.

"Any—any news?" faltered young Jerrold.

The detective quickly covered the ground of his adventures during the night up to the point where he had entered the lodge. At the mention of the name of Elsie, young Jerrold's interest became suddenly intense; and when Lawson spoke of her as being the niece of Father Georgian, the young fellow leaped to his feet.

The blood flamed into his cheeks and he grasped the back of his chair for support.

"Mr. Lawson," he gasped thickly, "that's—that's—my God, man, it's Elsie—Elsie Reynolds—little Elsie! I—I——"

He dropped back into the chair and the detective rose to his feet.

"What's this, boy?" he asked.

"I—I—we're engaged to—to be married, Mr. Lawson." Then he straightened up, with a new fear shaking his body. "She's—she's safe?"

"Perfectly safe," broke in Lawson, laying a hand on the young man's shoulder. "I took her home myself—early this morning."

"Thank God!" breathed Jerrold. "I wish to God I could punish them myself. You see, I didn't recognize Elsie's voice. If I had—" He made a gesture of despair. "There's no use in talking now. I'll go to Elsie right away."

"It's the best thing you can do," Lawson replied.

LONGING

BY BERTON BRALEY

GYPSY, take me with you
  Anywhere you will—
Downward through the valley,
  Up across the hill,
Westward to the sunset
  Where the world is new.
Are you off a-singing?
  Gypsy, take me too!

Gypsy, take me with you
  Wheresoe'er you go—
Southward to the palm-trees,
  Northward to the snow,
Where the woods are lonely,
  Where the city teems.
Gypsy, take me with you
  On the road of dreams!

Gypsy, take me with you;
  Only you are wise—
You with vagrant fancies,
  You with laughing eyes.
I am sick of duty
  And of peace I tire.
Gypsy, take me with you
  To my heart's desire!

A Romance of New York and Teheran

by Grace Sartwell Mason and John Northern Hilliard

SYNOPSIS—Judith Gray, stenographer in a New York hotel, her home a boarding-house, lives her real life in dreams of adventure and even writes thrilling books, not for the small financial returns, but because she has to. There comes to the hotel John Savidge, world-wanderer and civil engineer. He appreciates Judy's fineness and her passion for adventure. During his brief stay the two become friends, and she learns that he is the confidential agent of big American financial interests backing a proposed Trans-Persian railway. Owing to the hostility of the Russian Government, he has had to work in secret and to leave hidden in Persia the plans for the route. He takes the girl's first name for the key to a secret cipher. Wolkonsky, high in the Russian secret service, appears in the hotel, and Savidge, quick in his decisions, suddenly persuades Judy to marry him and taste real adventure—in Persia. Courtship and marriage occupy only a few hours, and they leave at once for the Orient, as comrades rather than man and wife, though Savidge is in love with Judy. In Tiflis Savidge knocks down a servant of the Khadkhuda, or chief magistrate, for having jostled against Judy. About to take train for Akstafa, Savidge is arrested by Wolkonsky on the technical charge of assault, but slips a note to Judy telling her tn wait two weeks in Ispahan and then, if he is still detained, to go on with his trusted servant, Abdullah ibh Hassan, to the buried city where he has hidden the plans. A term of endearment escapes Judy, and Savidge leaps on the train long enough to kiss her. At Akstafa the station-agent claims there is no cipher telegram from Savidge, but Jaggard, a wandering American magician, scares him by "magic" into giving it to Judy: "See Gholam Rezah in Tabriz." Jaggard attaches himself to her service. Lina Arlundsen, passing as the buyer of a large Paris house, but really an agent of Wolkensky's, steals from Judy the cipher note telling how to find the plans Savidge had hidden in the buried city. Jaggard, guessing the key to the cipher, shows Judy that Lina has also undoubtedly guessed it. Gholam Rezah, of the anti-Russian patriots, arranges relays of horses for Judy, Jaggard and Hassan from Tabriz to Ispahan, on the road to the buried city. At Ispahan they find that Lina, posing as Judy, has already secured a telegram from Savidge.

CHAPTER XX

THE WRITER OF LETTERS TALKS

ONCE more in the street, they looked at each other. Jaggard's wrinkled face was tragically humorous, but Judy could not have forced a smile had her life depended on it. She felt benumbed by the blow. It seemed an extraordinarily cruel prank of luck that lost her this message she had been hoping for every mile on the long road from Tabriz.

Intuition told her the wire was from Savidge—probably a direction in their cipher or code. If in the code, it would be no good to Miss Arlundsen; but what was of greater moment, its loss meant to Judith continued ignorance of her husband's whereabouts, and left her in a state of nerve-racking uncertainty.

"If I only knew where he is or what he would have me do!" she cried, twisting her hands together.

Jaggard took her firmly by the arm and turned her face towards the *Meidan*.

"If he was here he'd make you rest, that's sure. And that's what you've got to do. We're going back to the caravanserai,

and while you lie down I'm going to circulate around a bit."

They retraced their steps along the tree-embowered avenue. The letter-writer gathered up the implements of his craft, slung the cloth over his shoulder and followed at a discreet distance. They crossed the *Meidan*, shouldered their way through the crowded bazaars and reached the comparative seclusion of the *bala-khanah*. Jaggard extracted a promise from Judy that she would rest, and left her.

She threw herself down on her rugs and tried not to think of her disappointment; but in spite of herself her mind circled around and around the problem of what she ought to do next. Hassan brought her a cup of tea. She was drinking it sitting, a forlorn little person, on the corner of her rugs, when she heard the click of Jaggard's heels coming down the corridor. Mingling with them sounded the patter of native sandals. The instant he entered the *bala-khanah* Judith knew by her friend's face that his spirits had risen.

"Say," he began, "there's a native letter-writer out here that wants to write for the Memsahib. Will you let him come in?"

"But I have no one to write to!" she protested. "And I'm too tired. Send him away, please."

"You might send a letter to Gholam Rezah—just a polite note to let him know you've got here safely," Jaggard persisted.

He looked over his shoulder. The letter-writer was not visible, but his shadow fell over the threshold.

"The fellow is so determined to see you I think he's got something to say. You'd better let him come in and see what comes of it."

Jaggard stepped to the door and beckoned to the letter-writer, who at once appeared on the threshold. He salaamed low and murmured something in the vernacular, which Jaggard interpreted.

"He wants to know if the lady whose loveliness shames the moon on the fourteenth night and puts the stars to flight will honor her servant. He's a very learned chap—says he can write in Persian, Arabic and French."

"As I don't know any of those languages, you must dictate for me," Judy laughed.

Jaggard nodded to the letter-writer, who dropped on his knees, spread out his cloth and laid on it several rolls of snowy rice-paper and the *kalemdan*—an oblong box with a convex top, exquisitely inlaid with mother-of-pearl. Out of this box he took a small brass inkstand, a stick of sealing-wax and a reed pen. Holding the paper on the palm of his left hand he dipped the pen into the ink.

"I DON'T sling much of a style," said Jaggard, "but here goes: 'To Aga Gholam Rezah, Greeting. We have come down as far as Ispahan, making the journey in twelve days without incident. The arrangements at the post-houses were satisfactory, and we had no trouble about the horses.' Is that too fast for you?"

The hand of the letter-writer flew over the paper lightly, writing from right to left diagonally across the paper. When he had done he looked carefully about the *bala-khanah*. Then he spoke in a low voice, in clearly enunciated English,

"Is it by any chance that this letter goes to Aga Gholam Rezah of Tabriz?"

Jaggard gave no outward sign of surprise.

"To Gholam Rezah of Tabriz. You know of him?"

"Assuredly," replied the letter-writer. "Who else in all Persia is better known than Gholam Rezah? We come from the same birthplace, he and I." He looked at Judy with his bright brown eyes. "We are of Mazanderan, Memsahib."

Judy started at the word and leaned forward.

"I have heard that in Mazanderan they have many proverbs——"

The letter-writer took the words out of her mouth.

"We of that province have a proverb—perhaps the Memsahib has heard of it? We say that the jackal that lives in the wilds of Mazanderan can only be caught by the hounds of Mazanderan."

"I have heard it," answered Judy. "It was in the house of Gholam Rezah."

"It is well said. Then I am to tell you that he has left Ispahan, and gone south."

"He? Whom do you mean?"

The letter-writer rose to his feet, slipped noiselessly to the doorway and glanced up and down the corridor. He came closer to Judy as he replied,

"I was to tell you that the man you fear has gone south."

"Wolkonsky?" she whispered.

The letter-writer nodded.

"Is this true?" demanded Jaggard, fixing the native with his keen glance.

"All the world may tell lies," answered the letter-writer simply, "but when did Gholam Rezah ever betray his friends?"

"True; that is all true. And it does not profit any one to lie to the friends of Gholam Rezah."

"Did I not repeat the proverb that Gholam Rezah gave to the Memsahib?"

Jaggard nodded.

"These are matters that can not be left to chance, my brother."

"Assuredly. The hired servants of Russia are everywhere. On every hand is intrigue. Even the court of Teheran is in league with the Czar. But this is not for long. There are brave men ready to lay down their lives for the Cause. They are only waiting for the signal. When that is given, they will rise and Persia will be free. I, too, am a patriot. That is why I am here to help the friends of Gholam Rezah. But if it were known, what I have just said, my life would be the forfeit. I might sleep again—but not twice!"

"Enough, brother!" said Jaggard. "You are no letter-writer of the bazaars."

"Before entering the Cause under Gholam Rezah I sought instruction at the Gates of Learning in many lands—at Heidelberg, at Oxford, and at your own Yale. Before Persia can be free her young men must have knowledge of the world."

Jaggard grasped his hand.

"I can't give you any of the High Signs, brother, for I never rode the frat. goat; but you're all wool and a yard wide! What is the rest of this tale?"

THE letter-writer moved nearer.

"Four days ago I received word from Gholam Rezah. I was charged to watch in Ispahan until you came. He sent word also that Wolkonsky had been in Tabriz with the woman. You understand?"

"In Tabriz! With Miss Arlundsen!" gasped Judy. "When?"

"Wolkonsky was in Tabriz even on the day you arrived there. The tall woman went at once to him in the house of Salared Ali. They had a long conference. That night—the night you were in the house of Gholam Rezah—Wolkonsky left for the south. Rezah did not know of these things until you had gone."

"And the woman?"

"The woman remained until the next day. You left Tabriz the seventh hour after sunrise. On the ninth hour the woman followed by post-carriage."

"Then she was behind us all the way!" cried Judy.

Jaggard nodded as if confirming his own judgment.

"She was behind you until the fifth hour after sunset of yesterday. You stopped at the rest-house for the night. She changed horses there at midnight and came on to Ispahan."

Jaggard's face wrinkled with cunning.

"How is it, brother, you know these things that happened on the road?"

The letter-writer gave no sign of resentment.

"These things, and many more also, are known to me because of what I have said. Think you, Sahib, that the word can not be passed other than on the wings of lightning? The Cause is no small thing, Sahib. In every province, in every city and town, even in the rest-houses along the way, men are banded together to bring this thing about. They have their own way of knowing one another, and their own way of passing the word."

A shadow of a smile flickered over the dark, thin face:

"Is it beyond the Sahib's belief that the drivers of the post-carriage might also be of the Cause?"

Jaggard grinned.

"The game is well played, brother," he said heartily. "I was at fault. Go on."

"Here in Ispahan, Wolkonsky was at the caravanserai when the woman arrived this morning before dawn. They had much talk. What the talk was is not known to me, for the corridor outside the *bala-khanah* was guarded and my men could not get near. Once they summoned the *na'ib*—he is also of the Cause—and he reported that they studied maps and papers. He could learn no more."

Judy shot a meaningful glance at Jaggard.

"Yes—go on!" he said.

"On the second hour after sunrise this morning the woman went to the telegraph station. I myself followed her. She received a telegram and returned to the *bala-khanah*. An hour later the Russian and two men left the caravanserai. They rode over

the Zendah Rud, through Julfa, and followed the caravan road to the south. That is all."

"But what of the woman?" asked Jaggard.

"The woman is in Ispahan."

"Are you sure?"

"Memsahib, a mouse could not creep out of Ispahan to-day without my knowledge! The city is surrounded with men of the Cause. It is the order of Aga Rezah."

Jaggard turned to Judy:

"The thing's as plain as the nose on my face. They've drawn cards and it's up to us to boost the pot and stay in to the show-down."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean just this: the Lina woman has read your cipher!"

CHAPTER XXI

JAGGARD MAKES SOME GUESSES

THE world seemed slipping from under Judy's feet. Her face was haggard and the corners of her mouth twitched pitifully. The letter-writer, with the tact of the Oriental, moved toward the door.

"I can't believe it!" she whispered. "No one in the world could read that cipher!"

"Mrs. Savidge," Jaggard said quietly, "we haven't any time to waste in talk. Wolkonsky has got your papers and map and he's on his way to find your husband's plans. You haven't told me where they're hidden, but I'm ready to gamble they're south of here. Wolkonsky was headed south two hours after sunrise this morning. What's the answer? They've read your cipher—and you'll have to admit it."

"But I tell you they couldn't!" Judy persisted frantically. "No one could read it without the key-word."

"Then they've got the key-word!"

He began walking up and down the *balakhanah*. As he walked he absently took a coin from his pocket and it began slipping like a live thing in and out between his incredible fingers.

"Look here," he said at last. "I haven't butted into your business, have I? I haven't asked a single question and I don't intend to. But you're out here alone and up against it, and, by God! I'm going to help you! Now listen: Lina Arlundsen is on to your cipher. Why did Wolkonsky leave for the south as soon as he had his confab with the Arlundsen woman in Tabriz? Because he had the translation of your cipher. Why did he leave Ispahan this morning? Because the woman translated your husband's telegram for him. It's as plain as two and two make four."

He stopped in his walk and faced her.

"I know something about ciphers, Mrs. Savidge. I've collected a lot of queer ones in my travels. You say yours can be read by means of the key-word?"

Judy nodded.

"You use figures—two figures to represent each letter?"

"Yes."

"I know that cipher—the nihilists of Russia use it, and it's the greatest one ever invented. You're right, it can only be read with the key-word."

"I knew I was right!" Judy began triumphantly.

"Wait! What's to prevent a person from finding out the key-word?"

"Impossible! Think of all the words in the language! Think of the difficulty of hitting on the right word among thousands!"

"Ordinarily, yes. In this case, no. I'll bet I can read your cipher, Mrs. Savidge."

She defied him with her indignant eyes to prove his assertion. He smiled back at her good-naturedly.

"Let me see—you were married just before you came abroad. You were on your honeymoon when your husband taught you this cipher, weren't you?"

"Really I don't see what my private affairs have to do with this business!"

The wrinkles gathered under Jaggard's eyes.

"Your private affairs have everything to do with it. I've told you before that guessing is my business. Well, I'm going to make another guess. It's only a guess, mind you, so you mustn't take exception to what I say. I'm going to guess that a man, just married, and very much in love with his wife, wouldn't have to bone a dictionary for a key-word to fit his cipher. Isn't that reasonable?"

Judy colored and admitted that it was very reasonable.

"I don't think he'd look in a book for that word," Jaggard went on imperturbably. "And I reckon Lina Arlundsen doped it out the same way."

"You think——"

"I think that *Judith* is a very pretty name! Miss Arlundsen thinks so, too—in fact, she told me so that day in the *bala-khanah* when I asked her for your papers. I didn't think much about it at the time, but a good guesser goes back and picks up every straw. I know now that the minute the Arlundsen woman heard your name she decided to see if that key would unlock your cipher. Do you see?"

Judy's eyes were round with astonishment and dark with fear.

"And she succeeded! What will she do now?"

"She'll stay here to spy on you and prevent any communication between you and your husband, if she can. In the meantime Wolkonsky is going south; where, I don't know."

"To Persepolis," she said under her breath.

"And no one knows where John Savidge is. But there's no use waiting for him; he'll take care of himself. There's no use waiting here for orders, for they've got it framed up against you. My advice is to try to beat him to it. Gholam Rezah's offered you an escort; why not hit the trail? I'd like a chance at that foxy Russian myself—for Lina's sake."

"Call the letter-writer in," was Judy's answer.

THE somber-eyed Persian came back. Jaggard glanced into the corridor for a possible eavesdropper. It was empty except for Hassan, who sat smoking, wrapped in his burnoose, just beyond the door.

"In the message that Gholam Rezah sent you was there any news of Savidge Sahib?" Judy asked the letter-writer.

The man bowed.

"I was to tell you that Gholam Rezah sent word to Savidge Sahib of your loss, and of your journey south. Also I was to tell you to expect the release of Savidge Sahib soon."

Judy's face brightened somewhat at this. By comparing dates with the native they came to the conclusion that Rezah had sent his message to the letter-writer, about five days after they left Tabriz. In the week that had elapsed since then, the prophecy of Rezah might have come true. There was every probability that Savidge was on his way to Ispahan and Persepolis at the moment they stood discussing his movements. And also, it was much more certain that Wolkonsky was speeding nearer to Persepolis with every minute they wasted.

"These men that Gholam Rezah have promised me in case I go south—can they fight?" Judy suddenly turned upon the letter-writer.

A cryptic smile lighted the face of the native.

"Memsahib, Gholam Rezah has sent out the word that we are to spare nothing, neither money nor lives, if necessary, to aid the thing that Savidge Sahib is trying to bring about."

Judith turned to Jaggard.

"How many men would we need?"

"I should say not more than two. The lighter we travel the faster."

Judith's eyes gleamed.

"Yes, yes; we must travel as fast as possible. How long will it take to get the horses ready?"

The letter-writer held up a deprecating hand. It would be better to leave Ispahan after dark, just before the moon rose. The Memsahib should eat and rest before the journey. At the second hour after sunset horses and men would be ready beyond the south wall of the bazaars, and a rider would be sent ahead to arrange for fresh horses and various other necessities at each stage.

Footsteps sounded along the corridor and the letter-writer dropped to his knees before the ink-stand. Jaggard made a pretense of going on with the dictation. Judith stepped outside into the gallery to think. As she stood looking down into the courtyard a fanfare of trumpets sounded from the *nakarah-khanah*.

The brazen sound was like a wild call to battle. Judith shivered as she listened to it. Then she hurried back into the *bala-khanah* and spoke to the letter-writer.

"If Savidge Sahib passes through Ispahan," she said, "you are to tell him that I have gone to the Lost City. To the Lost City—you understand? And tell him also that I am not afraid."

The letter-writer bowed.

"He shall receive the very word, Memsahib, that you are not afraid, and that you have gone on to the Lost City."

CHAPTER XXII

ABD AL-MALIK, TELLER OF TALES

ON THE second morning after Judy and her escort had crossed the Zendah Rud and galloped down the ancient caravan route to the south, a man, tall and gaunt of face, mounted on a handsome bay stallion, rode slowly into Ispahan. The horse was jaded, the drooping head and quivering nostrils denoting long and hard riding; and the broad-sleeved *abba* of brown, which the rider wore over a tight-fitting undergarment of bright yellow that reached to the knees like a surplice, was powdered with dust.

The tall red fez was improvised into a turban by means of strands of white cloth bound round the head, the white folds contrasting saliently with the sunburnt brown of the rider's face. In the center of his forehead was a scar, white as bone—the mark of the Bagdad "date."

Although he rebuked a beggar that clawed at his stirrup, in the *argot* of the bazaars, his eyes did not play their part so well. Of a cool, clear hazel-gray, they were not characteristic of the Orient, and the crows'-feet at their corners gave them a quizzical effect that is never seen in the men of the East.

Neither did he ride as the men of the desert ride. In the length of the stirrup, in the way he gripped the leather with thighs rather than with knees, and in the careless, half-lounging yet secure seat, there was a suggestion of the American cowboy. An almost imperceptible slope to the left shoulder accentuated the awkwardness of his carriage, but whether his horse trotted or galloped, the man's seat was as square and solid as his hand on the rein was light and firm.

Entering the city from the north, he forced his way through the press of the bazaars to the caravanserai. Leaving his horse in charge of the *na'ib*, he made his way down one of the tortuous streets on the east of the *meidan*—a street so narrow that he could have touched with outstretched arms the houses on each side. The dingy crowding walls were corbelled out so that the projecting eaves of the flat roofs almost touched overhead, filling the narrow passageway with a cool, crepuscular light as if the city were concealed in an oubliette of titanic trees.

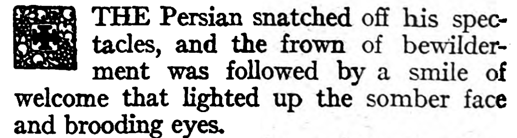
He stopped before a house whose window, set high up in the wall, was covered with an iron grating. The low narrow door was studded with brass nails. He was ushered into a long room opening on an inner courtyard where a tiled fountain was playing in the sunshine. In the center of this room a man wearing a *tarboosh* and horn spectacles sat cross-legged on a handsome rug before a low table covered with writing materials. The tall man in Arab garments left his slippers at the door and made a profound salaam. The Persian rose to his feet and returned the salutation.

"*Sabbah-ak Alla bi'l khayt*—Allah give thee good morning!" he said.

"Peace be unto thee, man of letters," returned the stranger gravely.

Then in English,

"That's one on you, Nadir Shah! Set them up, you old reprobate! I haven't had a drink or a decent smoke since I left Tiflis!"



THE Persian snatched off his spectacles, and the frown of bewilderment was followed by a smile of welcome that lighted up the somber face and brooding eyes.

"Savidge Sahib!" he exclaimed softly. "What is predestined, that must needs be! Thou hast come in good time!"

They shook hands in the manner of the West. The Persian's eyes took in every detail of the disguise.

"I was expecting thee," he said in his own tongue, "but not in this favor. Beyond question thou art a merchant of Bagdad! It is wonderful! That scar—it would pass thee into the shrine of Husein at Kerbela. *Aie!* I know of but one in all Persia that could render such good account of the orpiment and walnut-juice."

Savidge nodded.

"It was he—Mehemet Hassan Khan, in the shop of the Sunnee barber at Enzeli. No one in the East has such dye for the face."

"*Nali kadeem est!* He has none of the newfangled dyes that fade in a day or a week. Who should know that better than I, who have been hunted from Mazanderan to the Gulf?"

"I also have had occasion to test his dyes, when a blotched skin would have meant a knife from ear to ear." Savidge shrugged his shoulders and dropped on the

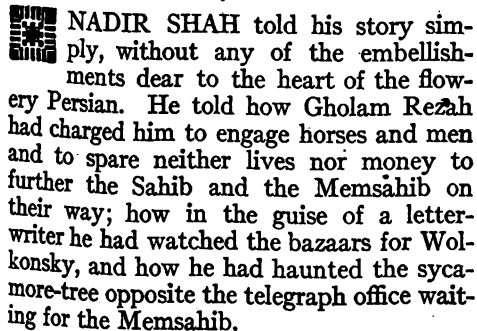
rug beside Nadir Shah's table. "I'm hungry, thirsty and dying for a smoke, and you're the only man in Persia civilized enough to drink brandy-and-soda. Do you still import Henry Clays?"

An attendant brought refreshments, and Savidge, sitting cross-legged like a native, ate and rapidly sketched for Nadir Shah the incidents of his release from official clutches in Tiflis through the influence of Gholam Rezah. One of Rezah's men had brought him word of Judy's loss; and from that moment he had spared neither himself nor his horses. The ride south had been, as he put it, an unholy scramble.

From Tiflis he had gone to Baku by rail, and from Baku across the Caspian to Enzeli, where a heavy fog had kept them from landing for half a day. He had been followed to Enzeli by two of Wolkonsky's men. He was sure of that. So he had gone to the shop of the Sunnee barber and had come forth an Arab merchant, walking under the eyes of the Russian's men without arousing suspicion. From Enzeli he rode to Kasvin, and then to Hamadan, traveling most of the way by night.

A day's ride from Ispahan he had met the word going north that the Memsahib and her escort had left Ispahan and were trailing Wolkonsky to the south. The news had roused him to new effort, and with the aid of the men of the Cause, who had kept him supplied with good horses, he had made Ispahan in five days.

"And now, brother," he concluded, lighting a cigar from the box that Nadir Shah opened with a solemnity amounting almost to prayer, and heaving a long sigh of contentment as he blew a cloud of smoke to the arabesqued ceiling, "what has befallen while I have been on the road? I was told by one at Sultanabad that you would have news for me."



NADIR SHAH told his story simply, without any of the embellishments dear to the heart of the flowery Persian. He told how Gholam Rezah had charged him to engage horses and men and to spare neither lives nor money to further the Sahib and the Memsahib on their way; how in the guise of a letter-writer he had watched the bazaars for Wolkonsky, and how he had haunted the sycamore-tree opposite the telegraph office waiting for the Memsahib.

Savidge listened impassively, smoking his cigar in silence.

"Good business," he said, when Nadir had finished. "One thing have I learned in the East—when in trouble go to Gholam Rezah and to the house of Nadir Shah."

The Persian's face flushed darkly.

"*Cheezi nist*—it is nothing!" he exclaimed. "But Gholam Rezah, ah! Sahib, that is right. Gholam Rezah knows everything, and nothing is too great for him to do for a friend!"

"Thou, also, Nadir Shah."

"Thou and he are not little people, Savidge Sahib. What I have done is for the honor of my house."

"I know," said Savidge. "But the demands of friendship are heavy. I still have need of thee, brother."

"Thou hast only to ask and it is done."

"I am sure of that, Nadir Shah. I have come to thy house as a merchant of Bagdad. But it will not be wise to ride alone to the south as a trafficker in merchandise. So I shall go forth as Abd al-Malik, a teller of tales. I shall have need of simpler clothes."

"It shall be as the Sahib wishes. But is it good that he ride alone? The south is a rough and hostile country, and the Bakhtiari would plunder their kinsmen's graves."

Savidge smiled and reminded his host that he had not known him as the merchant of Bagdad; was it likely they would know the teller of tales?

"Remember," he added, "I have journeyed to Herat and to Mecca and have worshipped in the mosques of Meshed. I know all the genuflections and can pray the five prayers of the faithful."

"Assuredly thou art one of us, Savidge Sahib."

Savidge watched a smoke-ring whirl to the ceiling.

"I used to be more Mohammedan than Christian, for a fact," he mused. "Queer, though, how a chap changes as he grows older. Do you know, a year ago I thought I never could go back to the desperately dull routine of civilized life. You know they haven't learned how to live in my country. It's only here in the East that you fellows with money understand that life is a fine art. Up there in Tiflis I had lots of time to think about things, and I was lonesome, mighty lonesome. Never felt that way before. And I got to figuring out

how having a home in a clean, safe place might have its advantages after all."

Nadir Shah smiled.

"We Persians have a proverb: 'Only he who is without a wife, or has many wives, rides far into the desert!'"

"That hits home all right," admitted Savidge. "To tell the truth, my friend, I'm losing my nerve."

The Persian raised his eyebrows incredulously.

"Savidge Sahib afraid? That is what your compatriots would call—ah, yes—funny!"

"Funny or not, it's a fact. When that gauzy old boat got lost in the fog off Enzeli I began to wonder if I'd ever reach land again; and all the way down here I rode with a heavy hand on the curb for fear the horse would stumble and I'd break my neck!"

"And yet thou art going into the south alone."

"That's a part of the Game; I can play it better alone," Savidge rejoined simply. "A wandering teller of tales arouses no suspicion. Believe me, brother, it is the best way."

"But the Bakhtiari—what can you do against them alone?"

"They will welcome me to their fires. The name of Abd al-Malik is not altogether unknown in the south. They will remember his tales of Alf Laylah wa Laylah." There was a dreamy expression in the eyes that watched the blue smoke curling up from the cigar. "You should see them, Nadir Shah—the old men wagging their beards and the women cackling over the adventures of the Porter of Bagdad or the story of the Wazir's son and the Bathkeeper's wife. You know those yarns—the rarest of all the Nights? I've told them all over the East. And they've got me food and a blanket to sleep on in many a camp where a white man would have had his throat cut on sight.

"I shall never forget those wonderful nights. So long as I live, the bitter smoke will be in my nostrils and I shall see the light of the fires flickering on their dark faces. Allah has been very good to me, Nadir Shah. I have lived!"

"And when the Game is played, Sahib?"

The lean outlander shrugged his shoulders and spread his hands, palm upward, in a deprecatory gesture.

"Who knows?" he answered. "I'm a good enough Moslem to believe in Kismet. What will be will be, and I'm content that it is so. I've played the Game for the sake of the Game, for the glory of doing good work and knowing that it was good. If I win, the men of my profession will say the work's not half bad, and that's reward enough for this world. But win or lose, the Great Captains that have put up the money will fold their hands over their fat paunches and haggle over the expense account."

HE FINISHED his cigar in silence and rose lazily to his feet.

"So she told you to tell me she wasn't afraid, eh?"

Nadir Shah nodded assent.

"Such was the Memsahib's command."

"Good girl!" muttered the other under his breath. "I knew she had it in her from the first." He turned to his host. "How's that for pluck, Nadir Shah?"

The Persian smiled cryptically and put his hand on his friend's arm.

"Assuredly," he said, "a man might ride far into the desert with such a woman."

"And for such a woman—eh, my friend?"

"Such is the custom of the Sahibs, I believe. And when does Abd al-Malik ride to the south?"

"At sunset. They have two days the start of me, but I'll catch them before they get to Pasagardae if the horses hold out."

"Have no fear of the horses, Sahib. Word has been sent out by Gholam Rezah all along the road. The men of the Cause are behind you in this thing. We play different games to the same end—the clipping of the bear's claws—the Russian bear."

"It is so. And the Game is drawing to an end for me. Down there in the south is the man whom Persia should most fear—the man who will bring your country under the Czar's scepter if any one man can. I've got him where I want him now—down there in the desert—and it'll be a man's fight this time, face to face, with no Cossacks or magistrates or laws to help him. He has had everything his own way so far, but I'm figuring I'll have something to say down there in the Lost City.

"Well, I shall need a little sleep if I get out at sunset. Will you see about the clothes for the teller of tales, Nadir, and

get me another horse? I shall have to ride like——before to-morrow morning!"

The Persian nodded slowly.

"Everything will be in readiness an hour before sunset. And Allah speed you, Savidge Sahib!"

CHAPTER XXIII

"I AM CYRUS, THE KING"

THREE days later Abd al-Malik, a teller of tales from Bagdad, rode across the Plain of Murghab. Between him and the purple circle of hills lay mile after mile of knobbly plain, silent, desolate, oppressive: withering under a brazen sun. In the heat of the hour before noon his horse's head drooped and he himself sat wearily in his saddle, the white sand dust from the desert caking in the perspiration of his face. Barren of tree or shrub, the desert spun out around him to a point where a solitary shaft of stone reared itself toward the sun.

This was not the first time he had seen this shaft; but never before had the tremendous and significant loneliness of the thing struck him so sharply. In this desert over which it watched, once stood Pasagardae, the seat of kings. The sands had long since swallowed palaces and streets, but this solitary megalith remained, forever announcing to the jackals and the stars: "I am Cyrus, the King."

Tossing the bridle over his horse's head so that it trailed on the ground, Abd al-Malik stretched himself out in the shadow of the rock. The horse, left to himself, nibbled the scanty herbage of the desert, but did not stray far from his master. The man slept for four hours. When he awoke, the sun was sloping to the west and the broken top of the megalith glowed a dull red.

The teller of tales rose lazily from the ground, yawned and stretched himself. Then he took from the saddle-horn a water-skin and from the saddle-bag a piece of *sandjiak* and some date-paste. As he ate this frugal meal he sat at the foot of the shaft and talked to the horse, who came nuzzling and sniffing at the breast of the gray *abba*. Cranes with flamingo crests stalked in the dry reeds near by; and overhead the sinister black of buzzards was silhouetted against the brilliant blue of the sky. The teller of tales glanced from the circling buzzards to certain rings of blackened sand that were scattered about the foot of the megalith.

"Bakhtiari, I should say, Billy," he remarked aloud. "We're in their country. Those fires haven't been cold more than twenty-four hours. We'll go on when I've eaten this *sandjiak*, old boy."

RESTING on an elbow he contemplated the black stone of the megalith and discoursed to Billy on the mutability of things. Like many men that are taciturn among their fellows, Savidge could be whimsically loquacious when alone; and by the simple expedient of making his horse take the place of a companion, he could banter many a black hour away.

In point of fact this mental exercise operates on the principal of a safety-valve, and men that are much alone in the wide spaces of the world soon learn to recognize it as such and to cultivate it as a gift tossed down from the gods to keep the mind wholesome and sane.

"He was a great man and a great king, Billy—this Cyrus, the Achaemenian. But like a great many big men, he lost his head over a woman. That's a joke, Billy, though you won't see it any more than Cyrus did! The lady's name was Tomyris, Billy; she was the first suffragette in history. She came down here with an army, lopped off Cyrus' head and sent it home to his folks in a wine-skin filled with blood. Fact, Billy! I can imagine her passing by here and looking up scornful-like at Cyrus's stony boast. That inscription's all right as far as it goes, but down here at the bottom he should have put —— well, I'll be damned!"

Savidge started forward and examined the second stone of the shaft. Underneath the cuneiform inscription: "I am Cyrus, the King, the Achaemenian," was a row of figures freshly scratched on the face of the ancient rock; and below these was scrawled faintly the single word "Judy."

For the first few seconds he could only stand staring at that one little word. Then his mind leaped at the row of figures. It was a fragment written in their cipher, with more than one mistake, as if the writer had scratched down the figures in desperate haste.

"Captured—Bakhtiari," was all, but Savidge felt as if the story of what had

happened on this spot was blazoned to the last detail on the surface of the rock.

For a long minute he stood staring at the cipher and the one faint little word, so fixed and motionless that the horse pricked its ears forward and in turn stood still.

"Billy," said the man, at last, softly, "we've got work to do, you and I!"

He patted the horse's neck and breathed into its nostrils. The horse whinnied as the man tightened its girths.

"It's up to you, old boy," he said, as he sprang into the saddle.

CHAPTER XXIV

THROUGH THE NIGHT TO THE ROCK OF NAKSH-I RUSTAM

BILLY raised his head, mumbled his bit and drew a long, nostril-quivering breath. Savidge chirruped and the horse struck into the easy lope that horses of the East as well as the West can maintain from sunup to sundown.

At first the road stretched like a thread across a treeless plain as level as the sea and flanked with purple-looming hills. Then it ascended gradually for miles until it entered a mountain pass. By this time the sun was behind the mountains and the horse had to pick his way carefully in the uncertain light.

Then the moon, almost at her full, rose and dropped a silver-white drapery on the mountain walls. In places the trail was so narrow that Savidge could look into the fathomless gloom of the gorge below—a gloom untouched by the moon. Then the road descended, twisting through craggy defiles, crossing the turbulent Polvar on a narrow causeway hewn through solid limestone rock, winding through a series of ravines, diving into a succession of valleys and eventually debouching into the Plain of Mervdasht.

The moon now rode high in the heavens, the cloudless sky glowed with a brilliant, incandescent fire, and the huddled shadow of horse and rider bobbled fantastically on the saffron-colored floor of the level plain. Far ahead several points of light pricked the gloom.

"We're almost there, Billy," said Savidge, drawing the horse down to a walk and patting him on the neck. "If the stars haven't lied to us she's over yonder by those fires. Understand, Billy? She's there—Judy—the only Judy!"

Billy nodded his head sympathetically. The man went on,

"I'll tell you a secret, Billy, if you'll promise not to give me away." Billy promised with his ears. "Old fellow, I want to see her more than I want anything in this world—or the next! Funny, isn't it? That little slip of a girl, with her steady eyes, and her face that lights up as if it had a flame behind it, and her quick little brain, and her way of taking orders like a soldier!"

Something black scuttled across the trail and Billy stopped dead in his tracks. Savidge, sitting loosely in his saddle, peered forward to where the dancing fire-points glimmered like glow-worms against a velvety curtain. The night wind rustled silkily through the grasses, and there floated to his ears the ululant plaint of jackals and the obscene laugh of hyenas.

AS THEY plodded on through the night the dancing fire-points grew larger and larger; they glowed through the gloom like the ends of lighted cigars; they became bobbing lanterns; and eventually they materialized into campfires. Straining his eyes through the uncertain light Savidge could make out a village of tents—inky blotches in the moonlight—and above the plain a huge black bulk floating uncannily in a sea of amber mist. It was like the sudden apparition of a great ship out of a fog.

"The rock tombs of Naksh-i Rustam," muttered Savidge. "I might have guessed they'd camp there. Billy, old boy, it looks as if we'd got to the journey's end. If there's any magic in the yarns of Sindbad, you'll fare royally for the rest of the night. And I—Billy, you know what your namesake said—'Journeys end in lovers meeting, as every wise man's son doth know.' Never heard of it, eh? Billy, I'm ashamed of you! You've neglected the higher side of your nature! I suppose you'd rather munch hay than metaphysics, and bolt a bolus of oats than fletcherize a cud of poetic thought!"

And so he rode through the moonlight, with a whimsy on his lips, as he had ridden many times in other years on long and lonely journeys through the sinister places of earth. There was a lilt in his heart

that never before had companioned him in adventure or on quest. As with all men that have to do with big things, his moments of supreme attainment had been sad; but on this night, as he faced the most desperate situation of his career, he was as buoyant as a boy—recklessly and riotously happy.

He was carrying on a quixotic dialogue with his horse, and riding carelessly, when, as if they had materialized out of the night air, two figures loomed up at Billy's head. Their hands gripped the bridle rein, and Savidge looked down into the muzzle of a long gun that appeared particularly sinister in the moonlight.

"*Pidar sokhtah*—son of a burnt father!" a guttural voice cried. "Get down and surrender!"

"I am in your hands, brothers," said Savidge calmly, making no movement in the saddle.

"Art thou a *kafir* [unbeliever]?" asked a voice.

"A wandering teller of tales and a *hadji* of Bagdad, thanks to Allah, the merciful and compassionate."

There was an instant's silence in which it was evident that the two outposts looked at each other, as if in uncertainty whether this night-rider spoke the truth. At last one of them said:

"In the name of Allah, thou art welcome, O, teller of tales, and *hadji* of Bagdad. But what brings thee beyond the borders of Farsistan?"

"Much travel is needed to ripen a man, brother!"

"True, O teller of tales. But also it is true that he who has seen the world tells many a lie!"

"Thou art wise, brother; and it may be that thou hast heard of Abd al-Malik. I bring the latest gossip of the bazaars of Bagdad and Ispahan."

A second pause of consideration. Then, "Thou art welcome to the camp of Amir Mujahid. Pass on, brother, and may thy nose never lose its fat nor thy shadow its bulk. To-morrow, please Allah, we shall hear thy tales."

The Bakhtiari disappeared as mysteriously as they had appeared, and Savidge, dismounting and leading his horse, picked his way toward the flickering fires of the camp. He could hear ahead of him the faint sound of voices, and halting for a moment to listen, he would have taken his oath that he heard a word or two of English.

A few rods farther on he stopped again, this time in some amazement, for there came to his ears a dry and nasal chuckle. The chuckle was followed by a voice—an unmistakably American voice, discoursing in fluent Persian liberally interlarded with American slang. A clump of dwarfed trees blocked all sight of what was going on in front of him, but upon flanking this obstruction, Savidge had a clear view of the nomad camp.

A dozen scattered fires threw fantastic shadows upon a huge, scarped wall of stone that heaved itself out of the earth and in the moonlight seemed to tower up to the very stars—the great rocky cliff of Naksh-i Rustam, in the bosom of which are hewn the sepulchers of the Achaemenian kings. The flames lighted up the base of the rock and flickered on the huge bas-reliefs of men and beasts, until they seemed to quiver and grin as if they were about to be warmed out of their stone sleep.

CHAPTER XXV

"NO BULLET CAN HARM ME"

SAVIDGE, standing in the thick, soft shadows of the night, had no eyes for the tombs of once puissant kings, or for the towering cliff swathed in moonlight. His gaze was riveted on a scene as strange as any he could have evoked from the pages of "The Thousand and One Nights."

In the center of a broad circle of silent Bakhtiari stood Judy, the lights of the flickering fires falling on her face. Her eyes were following the movements of a solidly built man with a pumpkin-shaped head, who, coat off and sleeves rolled above the elbow, stood haranguing his audience concerning the merits of an old-fashioned, muzzle-loading pistol that lay on his palm.

Except for his surroundings, he might have been the conventional magician spellbinding his audience with the usual magician's patter. And Judy might have been his assistant—the pretty little lady who allows herself to be bound with a few miles of tape and sealed in the inviolable cabinet at the climax of the show. But the stage-setting and the audience had a certain quality that gave to the performance a grim and fantastic touch.

The magician was plainly working with a little more than his usual professional zest, the audience was listening and watching a little too intently, and the eyes of the assisting lady were a little too strained and bright.

Savidge left his horse in the shadows at the lower end of the cliff and began to move toward the lighted circle. He had heard his coming announced from outpost to outpost. At any other time he would have been welcomed with acclaim, but now, as he joined the outer ring of onlookers, only one or two turned to look at him. The majority of them were too much absorbed in the drama of the night to do more than lift their eyes for an instant to the new arrival's face. Then they turned again to their rapt scrutiny of the two figures in the center of the stage.

On one man only did his appearance have any effect. As he passed into the radius of the firelight, a tall Arab lounging in the shadow of the cliff rose softly to his feet, his somber black eyes gleaming with a sudden excitement.

Savidge began to move unobtrusively around the circle until he reached a point not far from where Judy was standing. He then saw that between the magician and his assistant was a little heap of paraphernalia —the magician's usual accessories. The entertainment had evidently been going on for some time, and the audience had reached the point where they hung between scoffing derision and superstitious awe.

"So that's Jaggard," Savidge thought. "Well, he's got nerve and he's clever, but I'm afraid he's bucking against the wrong gang if he thinks he can get away from the Bakhtiari by magic—unless he's got a miracle up his sleeve."

BUT it would seem that Jaggard had no misgivings. He put one thumb in a trouser pocket and leaned forward from the hips, the pistol held out to the scrutiny of his audience.

"O men of the Bakhtiari!" he said, grandiloquently, "what I have shown you is but child's play compared with the next number on the program. I am come but lately from sitting at the feet of the great Lamas of Thibet. By certain deeds I acquired merit and favor in their eyes, and in return they bestowed upon me a marvelous gift. This gift, O men of the Bakhtiari, I shall deign to exhibit before your unworthy eyes, that you may learn what I am and treat me as becomes my rank."

"So sounds the wind when it blows through the dry reeds!" sneered a voice from the outer circle.

A pockmarked, fanatical and altogether unpleasant nomad stood staring skeptically over the shoulders of his companions. Jaggard disregarded the interruption serenely.

"This gift, O benighted children of the desert, is no other than the gift of invulnerability. Possessed of it as I am, no bullet can harm me. The best shot among you may shoot at me, but he can not kill me!"

"Assuredly thou art a jinn or an afrit that thou canst do such a thing!" mocked the disgruntled skeptic from the outer circle.

Jaggard wheeled toward the voice sharply.

"Nay, brother! Nor a ghoul nor a cat-headed man with horns and hoofs—such as thou art afraid of when alone after dark!"

A hoot of laughter greeted this remark, for Jaggard, hitting out at the superstitious traits of the Bakhtiari in general, had landed neatly on the well-known weakness of this particular member of their band. The man's face darkened angrily at the too intimate banter of his neighbors and he moved away, muttering a "*Bismillah!*" to frighten off any demons that might be lurking in the haunted demesne beyond the fire. As he flung himself angrily away from the circle he ran plump into the Arab that had been lounging in the shadow of the cliff.

"Gently, brother!" said the Arab.

"Thou art the servant of the *farangi!*" exclaimed the tribesman. "Tell him that I, Mohammed Ali, have sworn by the Blessed Prophet to kill him before the dawn!"

He disappeared into the darkness, muttering threats, and the tall Arab worked his way around the ring of swarthy spectators until he stood pressed close to the elbow of the teller of tales.

"Sahib?"

"Hassan!"

The teller of tales did not move his head and his voice was lower than a whisper. In the laughter that followed another of Jaggard's sallies Hassan murmured the threat of Mohammed Ali.

"We must get away to-night," said Sav-

idge, scarcely moving his lips in shaping the words. "Can you get the horses?"

"Yes, Sahib!"

"Have them ready at the lower end of the cliff, where the fire-altars are. Wait there."

"Till the Sahib comes. I understand."

"Good! Don't go yet. Wait your time —— By my eyes, O pupil of the Lamas, it is a bullet!"

This remark was addressed to Jaggard, who stood before the teller of tales holding a round black ball between his finger and thumb.

"Better examine it and make sure," urged the magician. "It might be a *div* [demon] in disguise, and carry you off!"

AGAIN the tribesmen gave way to laughter, and Hassan took advantage of the diversion to slip away. A snake could not have wriggled through the grasses more noiselessly.

"May I be stung by a scorpion of Kashan if it be not as thou hast said—a bullet," repeated the teller of tales, after a grave and prolonged scrutiny of the object. "It is such a one as I have seen magicians use many times in the Capital."

"Then, O traveler, take thy knife and mark the bullet, that thou mayst know it again."

The Bakhtiari crowded around Abd al-Malik, the teller of tales, as he marked with his knife a cross on the bullet.

"It is done, worker of wonders," he said, and handed the bullet back to Jaggard.

"Good! Now drop the bullet into the pistol, which thy neighbor has loaded with a double charge of powder. That's right. Here is a rod. Ram it down well so that the powder will kick. Thou art sure the bullet is in the gun, brother?"

"As I am a *hadji* and an honest man, the bullet is in the gun!"

"And thou, O benighted children of the desert, hast thou seen the gun loaded and the charge rammed down?"

The tribesmen made a hoarse sound of assent. There could be no doubt that the magician had the full attention of his audience. He swaggered across the firelit space and flippantly took the old-fashioned pistol from a tribesman's hands. Unshaven, unwashed, his clothes begrimed with the dust and stains of hard travel, he was still Tom Jaggard at his best—suave, insolently serene and entirely the master of the moment.

"Gad! I'm beginning to like you, Jaggard!" Savidge thought. "But you're in the tightest box I ever saw. What next?"

CHAPTER XXVI

THE MAGIC OF THE "FARANGI"

BY THIS time Jaggard had stepped once more to the center of the stage.

"O men of the Bakhtiari!" he cried, spinning the pistol around his amazing fingers, "I have a talisman more powerful than the knuckle-bone of the wolf or the eyeball of the weasel." He held the pistol on the palm of his outstretched hand. "I defy the best shot among the Bakhtiari to kill me!"

A sharp murmur and movement of excitement ran among the audience and Savidge heard his wife give a smothered gasp of fear. Jaggard, still keeping up his patter, stepped closer to Judy.

"Don't be scared, little girl!" Savidge heard him say, "I've got the bullet out of the pistol. They can shoot till morning and not hurt me. When I give the signal drop the handkerchief—you understand?"

He took from his pocket a red silk handkerchief and thrust it into her unwilling hands.

"Oh, don't risk it!" she whispered. "Isn't there some other way?"

"Got to risk it," Jaggard returned. "The trick will work, and they'll take me for Auramadzu, Junior! Remember, Persepolis is only six miles away. You want to get there, don't you?"

"Yes! But I can't let you risk your life!"

"Oh, cut out the worry, little girl! Keep your eye on the Professor and drop the handkerchief when I say three!"

He stepped back again to the center of the ring of watching faces. Savidge edged his way into the front row. He stood now within six feet of Judy, who kept her eyes fixed desperately on Jaggard. He could see that she was white to the lips and the hand nearest him kept opening and closing nervously. Jaggard looked once at her; and then he repeated his challenge, twirling the pistol provocatively.

For a moment no one moved. Then out of the shadows swaggered the pockmarked

tribesman, Mohammed Ali, pistol in hand. But before he had time to utter a word the teller of tales sprang past Judy and strode into the center of the ring exclaiming,

"I will kill you!"

He heard Judy give a little cry of terror behind him.

"All right, Judy!" Jaggard sang out.

Then he handed the pistol promptly to the teller of tales.

"So you want to kill me, my friend?"

Abd al-Malik nodded gravely.

"It is a good pistol. I will shoot at you and I will kill you, if your talisman does not work."

"All right, brother! Aim straight at the heart. When the *farangi* woman drops the handkerchief, fire!"

Jaggard walked a few paces away and faced the teller of tales. Savidge aimed the pistol deliberately at the magician's breast.

"One!" Jaggard's resonant voice boomed through the night. "Two!" He stood erect and folded his arms with a mocking smile on his face. The teller of tales squinted along the barrel, which was as fixed as if jawed in a vise.

After an interval measureable by centuries, Jaggard called out "Three!" and the handkerchief fluttered from Judy's hand to the ground.

There was a flash followed by an ear-splitting report. Judy closed her eyes tight and swayed like a flower in the wind. But there came a shout of guttural laughter, cries of "*Ba! Ba!*" and "*Ahie! Shahbash!*"

HER eyes opened in spite of herself. In front of her was the teller of tales, his lean face thrust forward, the smoking pistol in his hand; and a few paces away stood Jaggard, a black bullet nipped between his bared teeth! The firelight fell on the round, red face covered with a scraggly beard, on the lips stretched into an inhuman grin, on the bullet between his teeth, and he looked for all the world like a leering gargoyle. But as he stood there looking at Judy he did something that gargoyles never do—he slowly and solemnly winked his left eye.

Her taut nerves gave way. Softly but hysterically she began to laugh, even as the tears ran down her face.

Jaggard spat the bullet from his mouth and it fell to his feet. The teller of tales hastened forward and as he stooped to pick it up he said in a low voice,

"I'm Savidge. If anything happens, make for the end of the cliff."

He walked over to one of the fires and gravely examined the bullet. Then he turned to the Bakhtiari.

"Assuredly, the *farangi* is a worker of miracles!" he cried. "On my word as a *hadji* and an honest man, this is the very bullet!"

The tribesmen pressed about him. The marked bullet flew from hand to hand. Undoubtedly it was the very one they had seen put into the pistol and rammed down. Their faces were full of superstitious awe; the whites of their eyes gleamed in the firelight. An odd thrill that was half fear and half wonder ran through the crowd. Some of them refused to touch the miraculous bullet, and there were many "*Bismillahs!*" muttered into wagging beards.

Jaggard's face was complacent, but his eyes were gleaming watchfully as he looked into the crowding faces. Mohammed Ali had strode into the firelight, a sneering smile on his pockmarked face. He held a pistol in his hand.

"Assuredly thou art a great magician to have done this thing," he began. "I, too, would test the Sahib's powers."

"Thy bullet could not touch me, brother," replied Jaggard calmly.

"Thou needst have no fear, since thou hast a talisman to ward off bullets!"

"I have no fear brother—for myself!"

"Then, in the name of the Blessed Prophet, I will shoot!"

Jaggard held up a warning hand.

"Oh, foolish one! By the talisman I possess I can turn a bullet from its course and sent it back into the body of him that shoots at me!"

There was a stir of wonder among the Bakhtiari at this announcement. But Mohammed Ali, fearful though he might be of afrits and the unseen powers of darkness, had little belief in a *farangi* magician.

"The true believer can not be harmed by a dog of a *farangi!*" he said, with dignity.

"Thou hast seen what a *farangi* can do?"

"I have seen the Sahib's pistol and the Sahib's bullet!"

"Was not the pistol fairly loaded with powder and the bullet rammed home?"

"Even so it appeared to the eyes, Sahib!"

"And did not the *hadji* shoot straight to the heart?"

"If it be that he is a *hadji!* Is it not said of the jackal that he dipped himself in indigo and thought he was the peacock?"

Abd al-Malik, the teller of tales, sprang forward.

"Dog of a Bakhtiari!" he snarled. "Son of a burnt father! Thou art a liar and the offspring of liars! May a curse fall upon thy house!"

Mohammed Ali jerked up his long-barreled pistol, but before he could finger the trigger, Savidge hit him fairly between the eyes. The tribesman fell like a log, but the body had not struck the ground before Jaggard dashed through the circle of bewildered Bakhtiari and disappeared into the night. Then there was a rush of feet, a babel of hoarse cries and a scattering fire of musketry as the Bakhtiari followed in pursuit!

In thirty seconds the camp was deserted. There remained only the teller of tales and Judy, who stood as if rooted to the spot, straining her ears to catch the sounds of pursuit that grew fainter and fainter.

"Judy!"

The teller of tales spoke under his breath.

She did not catch the word, but she met his eyes full, the gray, unoriental eyes with their shrewd deep twinkle. As she looked into them, they grew very tender, and she faltered toward him with outstretched hands.

CHAPTER XXVII

THE LOST CITY

A MOMENT later they were running side by side through the dark, toward the black bulk of the cliff. Behind them and to their left they could hear the sound of an occasional shot, as the angry tribe searched for the invulnerable pupil of the Lamas. Jaggard had evidently led the chase away from the cliff for when they reached the fire-altars at the end of the cliff, Hassan alone stood by the horses.

He led forward Judy's horse and Savidge swung her into the saddle. During their run through the dark they had not exchanged a word. From the instant when Judy recognized her husband and their hands met over the nomads' fire, the only words between them were,

"Are you all right, Judy?"

"Yes—yes! I'm all right!"

But now as he swung her up to the saddle, she clung to him for an instant, and he heard her say,

"Oh, I'm so glad—so glad!"

And in the darkness she brushed his cheek with her lips.

It seemed to him that flowers must be growing somewhere near; the stars seemed to swing down in a radiance of white fire; and in that crowded instant, John Savidge proved himself capable of the divine madness of the true lover. For with the sounds of pursuit growing louder, and the pounding of running feet coming nearer, he snatched his wife from the saddle, swung her down to his breast and held her close, while he told her that he loved her, loved her—that she was dearer to him than anything else in all the wide world.

Then he put her back into the saddle and mounted his own horse. They sat with tightened rein, waiting. The noise of shouting and running came nearer; they saw figures darting between them and the distant camp-fires, and in a moment Jaggard rounded the end of the cliff, running low with the fleetest of his pursuers not more than a hundred yards behind him. He flung himself on the horse Hassan held for him, with a grim chuckle.

"We'd better go while the going's good!" he gasped. "There's about a million of 'em scouring the cliff!"

"Keep close to me," Savidge said to Judy. "Never mind the reins—just hang on. Your horse will follow mine."

IN SILENCE they streamed out across the plain. The wind whistled about their ears. The dry sand flew behind their horses' hoofs; and they had not gone far when a bullet *zinged* uncomfortably close to Hassan's head.

"They've taken horse, Sahib!" he called.

For half an hour the Bakhtiari followed; but the sound of pursuit grew gradually fainter; an hour before dawn the noises died away entirely, and the horses were pulled down to a walk.

"They've given it up for the night," Savidge said, "but they'll be on the trail in the morning. They would track a man for a week if they thought he had a dozen *kran* in his pockets."

For a mile or two farther the jaded

horses plodded along together. Then something squat and black glowed against the sky. It was thus that Judy came upon the Lost City, under the magic of the moon and the stars. She saw it for the first time, vast and void and still, just as Savidge had described it that day in the bronze cage on the mezzanine floor—the colossal flight of steps sweeping up to the great stone platform, the moonlight throwing fantastic shadows on the ruins of palaces and temples, the outlandish columns black against the stars. It lay in a welter of silence—the heavy, oppressive silence that falls upon the world just before the dawn—a city whose heart had ceased to beat centuries before.

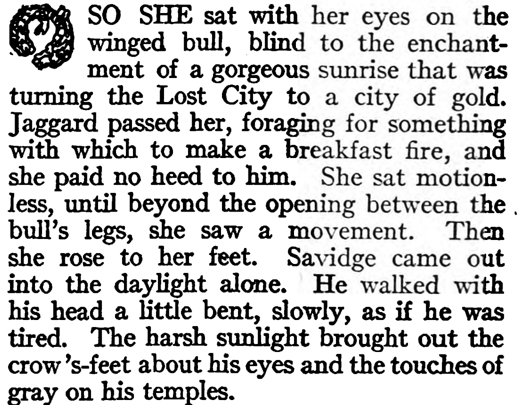
By the time they reached the great stone stairway, the fire had gone out of the stars, the moon had become wizened and gray and a red glare shot up behind the hills that form the eastern bulwark of the Dead City.

The dawn-wind was bitterly cold. They rode up the stone stairway—more than two hundred steps, with an angle so gentle that it was like riding up the slope of a low hill—and dismounted in the lee of a ruined temple.

Savidge wrapped Judy in his blankets and bade her wait while he and Hassan went at once to the place where he had left his survey-maps. Jaggard unsaddled the horses and found a sheltered spot for them; and Judy was left to herself. She sat huddled in a corner of a great ruined doorway of black basalt, carved with curious angular figures of beasts and men, and watched the desert and the gray ruins turn to an iridescent wonder under the rising sun.

So this, at last, was the Lost City toward which her desires had run! This was the goal of adventure she had dreamed of! This was a page from one of her own stories! And yet, all she could think of was John Savidge and his maps. He had disappeared between the forelegs of an enormous winged bull; all she could look at was this black aperture that had swallowed him up; and the one emotion she was capable of just then was fear of what she would see in his face when he came back. She knew she would be able to tell at once whether he had found the precious papers undisturbed, or gone.

"If they are lost," she thought, "I shall want to die!"



SO SHE sat with her eyes on the winged bull, blind to the enchantment of a gorgeous sunrise that was turning the Lost City to a city of gold. Jaggard passed her, foraging for something with which to make a breakfast fire, and she paid no heed to him. She sat motionless, until beyond the opening between the bull's legs, she saw a movement. Then she rose to her feet. Savidge came out into the daylight alone. He walked with his head a little bent, slowly, as if he was tired. The harsh sunlight brought out the crow's-feet about his eyes and the touches of gray on his temples.

She knew that they had lost, that the Game was going against them; but in this moment the thing that hurt her was the drag of his feet, the tired droop of his shoulders. It seemed as if she realized for the first time how hard he had worked and fought, all his life. An exquisite sense of pity and tenderness was born in her heart. She began to walk quickly toward him, between the rows of ruined columns that once had been the Palace of Xerxes.

When he saw her coming he straightened his shoulders and smiled cheerfully.

"Well, they're gone, Judy! Some one has been here; not longer ago than yesterday, by the signs."

She put out her hand and touched him.

"Ah, my dear! my dear! It is my fault! I've lost you the Game! I've——"

She turned away and hid her face against a column, trying to control the quivering of her lips.

"Why, Judy! dear little girl! look here—you mustn't blame yourself. It's all in the Game. The thing might have happened to me!"

"No, no!" she sobbed. "I was stupid! I've been a handicap to you! I've f-f-failed!"

With a swift lighting up of his whole face he interrupted these self-reproaches in the only right and authentic way: he gathered her into his arms with authority and a great tenderness.

"Hush! Judy! You mustn't say you've failed. Why, don't you know, you silly little person, that I'm happier this minute with your head right there than I've ever been in my life before? I've lost a set of maps down here, but I've found something worth more than all the maps in the world—you! If it hadn't been for the maps I

might never have found you—Judy—little wife!"

A woman never really loves a man till she has wept in his arms. For Judy, the greatest love-story in the world began at the moment when she could not find her handkerchief and had to wipe her eyes on a sleeve of the gray *abba*.

The sun climbed higher and fell warm against the pillars of Xerxes' Palace. Jaggard straightened up from a small fire among the stones of a neighboring ruin and surveyed with a tolerant grin two telltale shadows that had fallen for some time across the floor of the Palace of Xerxes.

"Breakfast is now ready in the dining-car—last car to the rear!" he boomed.

And the two shadows hastily kissed once more and came out from behind the pillar hand in hand.

TO BE CONCLUDED

PEASGOOD'S PROFESSION

by Muriel A. Pollexfen

LECK VIDAL walked up the long flight of steps to his front door with slow deliberateness.

He surveyed Collins, who opened it for him, with admiring regret. He lingered in the spacious, fountain-centered hall seemingly reluctant to pass through it, as though all the priceless pictures, the faintly gleaming statuary, the gilded group beneath the curve in the double staircase, the subtle perfume stealing through the air from the banks of exotics in the mullioned windows, were all things he had never fully appreciated before and now perhaps might never see again when once he had crossed the blue mosaic floor and left them behind.

He stood by the plashing fountain for a barely perceptible pause, but in that pause he had mutely said his good-by to it and to all the treasures surrounding him.

For the past month Vidal had been a man with a secret—a secret shared with Collins only, a man who had served him through thick and thin for ten years or more and who was his confidant and friend before the unlimited numbers of his relations, acquaintances and parasites.

So he and Collins alone knew that by this same time the next day all London would be ringing with the news of Aleck Vidal's smash, and there would be a swarm of locusts cursing his name and demanding their just debts before that sumptuous house in Park Lane.

"Beg pardon, sir," murmured the servant's voice in subdued tones as though he realized he was intruding upon a sentimental moment, "I was to tell you the instant you came in that Mr. Peasgood wished to see you, sir."

"Peasgood?"

"On most urgent business, sir, or he would not have intruded. In the small study, sir, with your supper, I'm sorry to say."

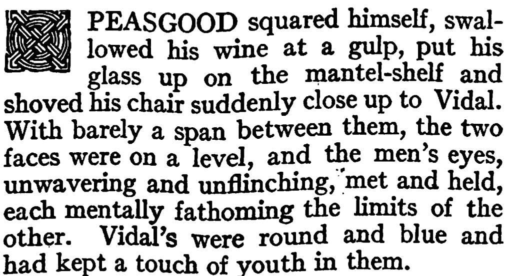
"I'll get him out of that before anything's cold, Collins, don't you worry. Funny thing—I scarcely know the chap."

Vidal's visitor rose up to greet him the moment the door was opened. A short, squat, bulky figure of a man. He was in dinner dress, and his heavy face gleamed oddly white in the glow of the solitary light over the table, giving an impression of a mass of white blur—shirt-front and white face showing up against a background of unlit darkness.

"Good evening, Mr. Peasgood. My man tells me your business is urgent."

"I think you'll agree with me that it is when you hear it. You eat and I'll talk. I'll take a glass of that very good champagne there, if you'll allow me. Thanks. Now then, without thinking me brutal, you're broke, aren't ye?"

"Utterly and entirely smashed, since you so delicately ask. To-morrow sees the end; to-morrow the bomb will burst and a deuce of a lot of poor devils will be dragged down with me. I feel a —— rotter, a thief and a blackguard, but I never realized I was so dipped. To-night I'm the Honorable Alexander Vidal, reputed millionaire and prince of good fellows; to-morrow the whole world will be hunting me down like a dog; to-morrow a whole army of beggars will be turned loose on the world— And now, Mr. Peasgood, what precisely is your game?"



PEASGOOD squared himself, swallowed his wine at a gulp, put his glass up on the mantel-shelf and shoved his chair suddenly close up to Vidal. With barely a span between them, the two faces were on a level, and the men's eyes, unwavering and unflinching, met and held, each mentally fathoming the limits of the other. Vidal's were round and blue and had kept a touch of youth in them.

A man can not live in the shadows and teach his eyes to lie. Eyes are never liars. Peasgood knew this, and made no secret history of his nights and days. They were there, plain, for Vidal to read, and he did so without hesitating for a single syllable. Adventure! The man lived for it and by it; a free-lance looking on the whole world as his by natural right, and the riches of the world his too if he could get them.

His face was a miracle of strength. Civilization had been washed out of it, and there was a kind of freedom in it that told of the unfettered places of the earth and the wide spaces of the seas, the heights of the hills and the depths of the valleys. It appealed strongly, vibratingly, to Vidal, suggesting as it did the very antithesis of his life of the moment, hemmed in, drained bloodless by a horde of creditors and conventions, forcibly fed as he had been upon all the mockeries of his world instead of the things, the dare-devil, reckless things, which had been meat and drink to the man before him ever since a crowded slum had ejected him into the world to shift for himself.

A quick flush tinged Vidal's face and Peasgood noted it instantly and an answering flush blazed up like a flare in his eyes; a blaze of enthusiasm, a torch of triumph, a sweeping fire of victory, as though he had stormed a citadel and seen the walls fall flat.

He leaped to his feet and the words rushed out like a torrent bursting through a shattered barrier. One hand, burnt brown and of steel-like strength, gripped Aleck's shoulder and the vivid eyes raked his shrinking face.

Vidal, his very soul palpitating, stood stock-still. An inward voice kept telling him that he had sold himself to Peasgood, but his brain denied it; for how can a man sell himself and no words pass between man and man—sell himself to something unlistened to, unspoken of, something only sensed?

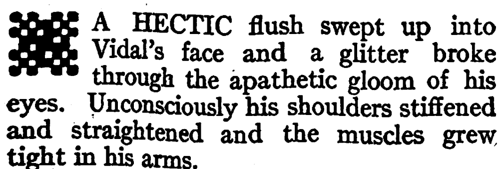
"You're my man, Vidal! You're my own man! From the day I first saw you I knew there would come an hour when you would join forces with me. Not then! You were secure then and at the top of your power. Now you're free—free to join me and make a fortune bigger by millions than anything you've ever touched. Listen—you've known me for some time at a distance; every one knows Jay Peasgood; every one knows that he's got money—lots of it. But they don't know where it comes from, eh?

"They ask him to their houses, but they can't find out his profession, eh? You tried; it was because I found out you were trying, that made me first notice you. Your methods were distinctly in advance of the others. Well, now, I'm going to let you in on my secret. I'm not going to try and bluff you that the game's straight. It's

not, from the point of view of what the world calls straight, but to my mind it's as honest as the spoils of war, the acumen of the financier, the genius of the man of Trusts.

"The fight is to the strong, Vidal; and I am strong, and I count it no sin—this strength. Look at me; look in my face. What d'ye see? The hunted man? The thief? The man of mean streets and hidden gutters? The underworld? No. I'm a free man! A man of liberty and life, and all the great and wonderful places of the world are my property. I recognize no law. The world is mine, Vidal, the whole world, and I pick the baubles it offers from its outstretched hands. Outstretched to *me*, Vidal! Wealth, the wealth of the Indies, scooped up and offered to *me!* Adventure is my steed! Adventure!

"The world in kaleidoscope, and you can come in and share it with me if you will. Will you? Or will you sit down here in the ruins you've come to and watch the sufferings of a hundred other poor devils who are no more than the wretched victims of your wastrel way of viewing life? Well, what do you say? That—or this: I to advance sufficient for you to pay off your debts—every man Jack o' them—and you to come out into the world hand in hand with me, to share wealth with me, but to share dangers also. My lieutenant died of smallpox, caught in a Chinese slum a week back, and I need another man. I like you. Will you come? What's it to be, Vidal? You've to decide now—now; not in an hour, or to-morrow—now. Well? Well?"



A HECTIC flush swept up into Vidal's face and a glitter broke through the apathetic gloom of his eyes. Unconsciously his shoulders stiffened and straightened and the muscles grew tight in his arms.

Peasgood was looking at him, waiting for a sign.

Again the two faces leaned near to each other, jowl by jowl, and the eyes of them met and stayed.

"But I'm leaping in the dark!" muttered Vidal. "I can not see my way. You explain nothing."

"I explain nothing until I've got your answer. What's it to be?"

For an interminable moment there was silence: a silence choked to the brim with vibrating, pulsing emotion—Vidal staring with mesmerized eyes into the veilless ones opposite, Peasgood throwing out every grain of power in the effort of bending Vidal.

"Well, it's to be—what? Yes—or no?"

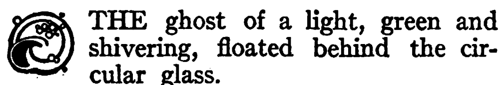
"It's yes—yes—I'll come in with you, Peasgood. Yes!"

Peasgood's voice went suddenly flat, and a film crept down like a veil and hid the writing in his eyes. The blood-vessels in his cheeks showed up rather more clearly, more definitely. That was all.

"Good, Aleck, good. Stout feller," he said.

Vidal straightened out, walked round to the side-table and helped himself to a brandy.

II



THE ghost of a light, green and shivering, floated behind the circular glass.

Vidal stared at it for a long time, trying to realize it. He had never seen anything quite like it before; he couldn't place it. Save for that circular rim of phosphorescent light he was in darkness, and from the way in which the darkness seemed to press right down on to him he imagined that the room, or space, or wherever he was, could not be either very large or lofty.

A dead, dull silence brooded over the place, and he felt as though he had been wrapped close in fog, thick, dense, noise-deadening fog. But the air vibrated curiously—a soundless, unreal vibration, touching the nerves rather than physical feeling. No motion, no sound, no hint of progress, no suggestion of stationary solidity—nothing save that curious vibration.

Wondering, twinged with nervousness, Aleck reached out his hand. He touched the wall beside him. It was iron, and felt clammy, chill; there was a row of rounded buttons beneath his fingers.

"Bolt-heads, rivets—I'm aboard a ship of some sort. Yet I don't hear the water. Queer!"

He reached up and his hand struck the ceiling. It was low down over his head and accounted for his feeling of depression.

"So the game's afoot, eh? You work quickly, my friend. And secretly too."

His mind flew back to his last interview with Peasgood. He remembered the motor arriving, and himself and Collins entering it.

Peasgood had stepped in after them and the car had started.

"Our destination is my yacht, Vidal. She is lying down the river, quite ready for a journey," he had explained.

Into Vidal's brain there leaped back the memory of fleeting lights, traffic-crowded streets gradually thinning, mean streets becoming more frequent, flashing public houses crowding closer and closer together, their glaring gaudiness shining brilliantly through the night and reflecting on the rain-driven pavements. He remembered peering out through the closed window at the groups of huddled wretches seeking shelter in the gilded doorways; he remembered hearing a poor devil playing "In the Shadows" on a tin whistle—yes, that was the last thing he could think of—"In the Shadows." He could almost swear he could still hear the shrill, thin notes piercing the distance.

Peasgood opened the door at that very moment and turned on the light—electric light, and it glowed richly, encouragingly; from an opaque, inverted bowl in the ceiling.

Peasgood looked different, somehow. More of a man and less of the town-breed about him. He was clad in thick serge, and a peaked cap came down over his eyes. He looked alert, awake, alive—dangerous almost.

"Well, Vidal, quite awake, eh?"

Vidal's brain cleared suddenly.

"So I was drugged? You played that game, did you? A good beginning, I should say, Peasgood."

"Very good, I should say, dear chap. I was sorry, but I could not quite trust that conscience of yours, you see. Ye can't break down a feller's training in one blow. It takes a good few backhanders, I can tell you. Also, I was in a funk that you'd bunk at the last moment, and I didn't want you to. Believe you would, too. Collins is quite all right and waiting for you to ring for him. A very good fellow, Vidal, and very useful; valeted me like a prince.

"I took the opportunity of admitting him a little way into our confidence, and I'm pleased to say, and relieved too, that he showed no sort of emotion whatsoever; not a feather out of him. You got a good man when you got him, and showed a judgment I'm glad to have enlisted under my flag. Now, you're to have breakfast first, and then I'll give you a little sketch of what I'm counting on to happen within the next few hours."

"Thanks. Breakfast won't take me long. You'll come back?"

"Quite soon. I'll send Collins. And please reserve all questions for me. Understand?"

Collins came in sheepishly, but resigned.

"Your suit-case is unpacked, sir. Shall I get out a blue serge? And would you prefer tea or coffee, sir?"

"Tea, Collins, and—yes the blue serge, certainly. Then come back here and get me dressed as quickly as possible."

FRAGRANT tea and a Dover sole exquisitely cooked cheered Vidal immensely, and a certain leniency toward Peasgood gradually permeated his thoughts of him.

"I suppose I shouldn't have risked the chances myself," he decided, and on the heels of the decision Peasgood came in again.

"Finished? Feeling fitter? Good. Now fire away at me."

Peasgood settled himself down on a corner settee and pulled out his pipe, lighting up and exhaling great clouds of creamy smoke.

Aleck opened battle at once.

"Look here," he said strongly, "tell me what we're up against? Tell me what craft this is and what the —— sort. You told me you were taking us to your yacht, but this is not a yacht. Tell me."

"We're aboard what I choose to call my yacht, the *Fire of Opal*. Most people would class her a submarine, and they'd be correct. She is a submarine. We are fifty feet below surface level at this moment. There have been a large number of high-seas robberies committed just lately, and there's a swarm of odds and ends of Government tubs scouring the oceans for signs of piratical-looking craft.

"Under circumstances which you will understand more clearly in a moment or so, my dear Vidal, I thought it healthier to keep under and out of sight for a spell. We'll shake 'em off pretty soon, and then we can go up for a breather. But you don't feel inconvenienced? We've been submerged ever since we left the Thames more than twelve hours ago, and have done a record run. You will admit that my oxygen department is well managed, eh? Tut!

this is nothing to what we have done or could do. We could keep right on till we ran into N'York and then turn round and run back to the Pool without for one moment feeling that a puff of good air would buck us up.

"If only the Governments of the world knew I'd got such a secret, they'd give their ears to buy it from me. But it don't suit my book just at present to let 'em in on it. Why, their best boats can only do a run of a couple of thousand miles on the surface—their oil supply won't stretch further than that. But my *Opal* has a driving power that makes a laughing-stock of oil! Why, with a full complement of the stuff she could race round the world and round again without a stop! What d'ye think of that? D'ye blame me for making use of an almost magical possession, eh?"

"Use?"

"Yes. This use. Listen. You've heard of Yarkes Bellew, millionaire, trust-maker, financier, world-famous collector of precious stones, purchaser of every valuable article of virtu selling?"

"And scoundrel, scamp, blackguard and —and murderer! Yes, I've heard of him. I stumbled across one of the ruins of a home he'd left behind him once. I'll remember it till I die. There was a lad—the only son of a widow—and Bellew used him as a tool to steal the secrets of his firm; used him, sold the information to Germany, made a fabulous haul over the deal, sucked the poor fool dry, and then—and then gave him over to the police on a falsified charge with the positions reversed. The lad was dead when I saw him, and there was a bullet in his brain to tell how it happened. Yes, I know the man! What of him?"

"We're looking for him, that's all. I'm hoping to meet him well within the next couple of hours or so."

"And then—what?"

"Then we'll hold him up, deprive him of a bit of his ill-gotten gains and share the plunder between us."

"H'm. Robbery, eh? Piracy! No, thank you, Peasgood. I stop short at that sort of thing."

"Do you? Well, I allowed for that. Now hear my view. Here's a man whom you admit you know as a blackguard and murderer. You know personally of at least one case of suicide through him. I could tell you of a dozen. He is now on his secret way to England, and he has in his possession almost a million pounds' worth of diamonds and samples from a mine for which he's been tapping the markets for a buyer.

"His price is a thick one, and among the biters is a Belgian syndicate. Their bites being more worth consideration than any of those on the American side, our friend is coming over to try and hand 'em the gaff with his own hands. So he comes over like a thief, sneaking across the ocean in his yacht, the *Queen Elaine*, instead of openly by a Cunarder, with the diamonds smuggled aboard and the whole passage wrapped up in black mystery. And why? Why? D'ye know?"

"No, I don't. Why?" echoed Vidal. "His usual method is to loom very large in the public eye, and advertisement is his creed. What's up? I should have thought he would have been exceedingly proud of his haul."

"I dare say he is—in his black soul. Gloating over it, feasting over it, in the secrecy of his barricaded cabin."

"But why?"

"Because of the manner in which he became possessed of it," said Peasgood sapiently. "Once upon a time, not so long back, he had the fortune to lose himself in the mountains back of Hell's Mouth. It was miles beyond the usual diamond zone, and he was out looking for God knows what, and he found Chris Collyer. Chris was a prospector and gave him food and water and shelter in his shack—in the very nick of time, mark you, to save that traitor's life.

"He listened to the prospector's story of his discovery of what he thought, believed and prayed to be a mine endless in its promises of unbounded wealth; he watched the youngster day by day, appraising his takings, silently valuing each bit of quartz the fellow would bring out and speculatively ponder over at nights. Then came the day when Bellew felt himself convinced, and on that day the stranger within the prospector's gates repaid his debt—met him face to face in the shack door and shot him dead! He buried him under the flooring of the hut, and then busied himself packing away the specimens that were to make him richer than Midas!"

"And now?"

"Now he's making for England or the

Continent with the finest haul of stones this century's seen, and the selling of a mine in his pocket which will set him on the topmost pinnacle of wealth."

"And the proof of your story? The witness?"

"Ah, that's the rub. That's where he gets away. My witness was the youngster's partner; they were working independently, communicating at intervals. On the day Bellew murdered Collyer, my witness came in to report. He was very sick, and had lived through a bout of fever that ought to have killed an ox. He saw the murder, recognized the man and then went off into a dead fit of unconsciousness behind the rock he had stopped to rest against when he heard the gun fired and saw his pal drop.

"Lucky for him he did that spell of sleep or he'd have been under the floor too. He managed to make the journey down to Fellsberg, crawling on his hands and knees and taking a week to do it. But he got there, dying, delirious, a man haunted. I was in the town, and being a bit of a doctor, I did my best for him. To me, as to the others, he babbled everything—the whole sordid tragedy. But he was a sick man and was dead in three hours. I can tell you the end in three words—he wasn't believed.

"The townsfolk were simple in their way and they said the lad's sufferings had turned his brain. He never gave a clue as to the whereabouts of the claims, and the Hell's Mouth mountains were a byword in that part. That's all the proof I've got for you. Is it enough? It was enough for me."

"It's enough for me, too, knowing the brute. Well?"

"Young Collyer seemed to be a derelict. I haven't traced a soul to him. He was a man unknown, unmissed. I've searched for his people and found nothing."

"Therefore?"

"Therefore my profession comes to my aid. From my point of view those illicit diamonds stored away on the *Queen Elaine* are as justly yours and mine as they are Yarkes Bellew's. Follow? I propose to get 'em. Use some of it allaying as much misery and poverty and hopelessness as we can in compensation to the poor chap who sold his life for 'em, hold some of it in trust lest any relatives turn up, and the rest we'll share up between every man Jack aboard this craft of mine. What d'ye say?"

"What do you suppose the chap that's got it will do with it?"

"Don't ye know? Haven't ye heard his latest? His very latest? Sacrificed Washington! Haven't you heard, sure?"

"Nothing. I give you my word."

"Well, it's this: He's getting a concession from the Belgians on the Congo or thereabouts, and is going into competition with his late majesty, Leopold. I believe it's a kind of a swoop-deal. Understand? Running a rubber industry with the help of a slave-trade. Fine bit of business to put the dead boy's money to, eh? Well, and how are the scruples now?"

"Dead as door-nails, Peasgood! Dead as door-nails! ——, you've made the very lining of my soul cringe! And the man himself? What about him?"

"He goes free, I suppose, but bitten. I fight, but I don't kill with deliberation. The loss of those stones will be bitterer to him than an acid-dipped knife in his heart!"

A faint sound tinged the air. The sound of a numbed alarm-bell."

A knock sounded on the stateroom door and Peasgood called enter.

"What news?" he asked the messenger, his voice ringing with a new, virile distinctness.

The man saluted stiffly—a naval-trained seaman.

"Mr. Geddes reports the *Queen Elaine* just sighted on the starboard bow, sir. And what orders?"

"I'm coming up," said Peasgood.

III

A GRAY noontide hung like a pall over the heaving waters; away down, deep dipped in the horizon line, a red bulb of sun tried to push and pierce its way through the veil of dull shadows; the air was very still, the only sound the soughing of the waters rising and falling from deep, unfathomable abysses to towering, crested mountains.

The *Opal's* periscope was visible like a pygmy stick above the churning sea, and down below, in the hidden, speeding body of the great fish-like monster, Peasgood and Vidal watched the curl of spreading smoke away on the starboard bow.

"Steaming well and easy. We should be

on speaking terms within fifteen minutes. Any sign of those interfering gunboats still nosing round?"

"No sign. The whole trackless ocean is deserted save for Bellew's yacht and our periscope. The audacity of your suggestion almost takes my breath away! Are you sure of yourself, Peasgood?"

Peasgood smiled faintly. Somehow or other he had changed considerably within the last ten minutes—since the alarm had sounded. He had lost his almost youthful, buoyant serenity and had become doubly aged and silent, and there was a stiff setting along the lines of his virile jaw that spoke of a determination to win his duel with the oncoming yacht at all and any costs. Vidal recognized the man at last. Peasgood's profession! *This was it,* and he was a past master at his trade—a master with a master mind, free and unfettered and untrammeled by the custom and caution and restrictions of modern civilization!

Aleck felt his own brain coming under the influence of the other with a rapidity that was startling. He felt it ejecting the twentieth century and its teachings and resorting to the principles that power is victory and might is right, and the whole world a no-man's-land and the prey to the hunter!

"Quite sure," said Peasgood grimly. "There'll be excitement—that's all. There's also a chance that a gunboat may come along and try a hand in the game. But I'm not nervous on that score. I'd challenge a whole torpedo flotilla and win out with the *Opal*. Nervous? Don't be—there's no need. Keep cool, and buck at nothing you see. Now then, Geddes—all in trim?"

"Quite ready, sir, and there's smoke about twenty miles abeam, sir. I think she's a gunboat. Does that alter the tactics, sir?"

"Yes, Mr. Geddes, it does. To this extent—fire first and palaver afterward. The gunboats have got wind of something; she's looking either for us or him. I wonder which. How many knots d'ye make her."

"Not more than fifteen or so. Perhaps if they shoved her along all crowded they'd get eighteen. Not more."

"Good. Get in on the play right away. Clear for action. Now then, Vidal, peel, and prepare to lend a hand where your natural sense tells you it's needed. Above Plimsol, the first couple, Geddes."

THE next five minutes were smothered in haze for Aleck. He never remembered anything of them afterward except the crushing, bewildering sense of confusion and the sensation of obliterating noise. He realized nothing but a huge appreciation of a pressure of events.

The minutes were crowded with electricity, pressed down, jammed down and brimming with action, every man racing against time, every man fitted to his inch on the board, every man alert, eager, courageous, drilled like a machine. He felt out of it, in the way, tingling with excitement, his fingers twitching to be at something, but his brain racing in confusion, stultifying his nerves.

Once Peasgood jerked him beside him and bade him glance through the periscope.

It was queer looking at that vast ocean through the registering eye fixed on the end of an antenna—gray, heaving sea, and almost abreast the white-and-gold bows and twin cream funnels of the *Queen Elaine*. And away on the sky-line the suddenly thickening banner of black smoke from the gunboat's stacks darkened the horizon.

Vidal heard Geddes draw Peasgood's attention to it.

"They're crowding her, sir; look at that smoke. They're crowding her all they know. I wonder why? Who's it for? Us? They can't spot us from that distance. The yacht, d'ye think?"

Peasgood nodded.

"Sure, yes—hullo, look there! Bellew's twigged they're after her!"

Vidal's breath caught in a thin whistle and Geddes showed the first sign of excitement. Peasgood's neck craned, and Aleck could distinctly see the knotted veins swelling out thick and coarse and darkly blue.

"Get up to the top as quickly as you can, Geddes. Send Peters to me."

He turned like a flash to Vidal.

"We're going to see some fun, Vidal, my boy. Look there."

The deck of the *Queen Elaine* became alive with men hurriedly summoned from below. Like ants they swarmed up the gangways and ran to and fro from bow to stern, carrying apparent orders, clearing the two ornamental guns on either side of the poop, ramming on more steam, showing at once a scare and an anticipation of it.

"Bellew's been caught napping, and the Government are after him over that little matter of the Hillick Reefs in South Africa.

Hear about it? He jumped the boundary back a mile and bluffed 'em out of the fattest vein in the country. They didn't find it out until he'd sold the vein to Ligania, and, *entre nous*, there's almost been a war over it. Apart from the loss of the wealth it would have yielded, it means they've got an alien, unfriendly power sitting in possession of the very heart of Africa. I guess they're going to try and get him for it. Now, watch—we're going to fire."

A thing like an abnormal fish sped like a black streak through the shivering green of the sea, leaving behind a string of glittering bubbles and a silver-white froth that churned and sizzled and hissed.

One moment the gleaming white-and-gold of the *Queen Elaine's* high, curving sides showed perfect and undefiled; the next the lean, black shadow leaped out of the water and bit into the white boards barely a foot above the Plimsoll mark, and, like a yawning, toothless mouth, a great hole showed jaggedly; and above the hole, on the spotless decks men went suddenly sheer terror-stricken mad, and fled for safety and shelter where they imagined it might be.

IT WAS as though the hand of an unseen enemy had struck them out of the empty waters and they were demoralized by the hidden danger. The men in the submarine could see Yarkes Bellew on the storm bridge, and they could see that the panic of the men was his too. They watched him appealing to his Captain—threatening, bribing, cajoling, cursing in turns a man who stood stock-still reckoning up his chances.

"The Captain is the only man who guesses right. Look at him spying out for our periscope. Thinks we're mothered by the gunboat. Now, then, Peters, get busy with your wireless. Tell Mr. Yarkes Bellew that we're free agents and out with a different motive from the Government boat; tell 'em we've just sent that black-snouted present to 'em to let 'em know we mean business and no hank. Tell 'em the next will root down a bit nearer the scuttling line or take a seat in the engine-room.

"That'll give that gray-hulled police yacht over yonder a pretty fine walkover; and would he like to step it to the tune they'd play for 'em? Tell him I'm after those little packets he's got stowed away in his cabin, and that if he'll drop 'em aboard us I'll see the play's fair. Give 'em all that?"

Peters, a fair-haired lad with the restless, eager eyes of the born adventurer, presently turned a face all crinkled up with laughter toward Peasgood.

"I've given it to them just as you gave it to me. They're roaring mad, and white to their gizzards with funk. Bellew says he'll let you sink him rather than give you the packets. What shall I say?"

"Tell him I'm not such a fool as to sink him. I'd much prefer to see him trotting home in tow of that bulldog over there than help him out of danger; it would be no good to me, tell him, to see his Aspinalled match-box settling down stern first and him and his diamonds with it. That would be a sight too easy. Tell him he ain't the man to get such a cotton-wool ending, not by a jug full. He'll look pretty tripping it back to England in chains, captured by a fifteen-knot cattle-boat. Ask him if he'll drop us the diamonds if we undertake to keep the gunboat waltzing round here for a bit and so give him a chance to clear off. What do they say, sonny?"

"Say they'll see you dashed first—at least Bellew says that. I think the Captain's plugging him a lot."

"Don't blame him. He's Garston Grosser, the feller that got legged for gun-running for the Dagoes, and wanted for a big thing up on the canal. Guess he'd rather meet a man-eating tiger than a British gunboat. What now?"

"Still firm," sang out Peters, his fresh young voice sounding oddly amid the grim surroundings of the adventure.

Peasgood snapped an order and two men came running.

"Send a couple of 813's—bluffs. We ain't got time to *parlez-vous*, with that Government maria legging it after the same quarry."

"Very good, sir."

THE submarine was running along the top of the Atlantic dead slow, keeping just out of range of the toy tin guns guarding the yacht like stuffed dogs, and about as much use. Still, as Peasgood said, you never could tell, and under the influence of the moral he kept at an easy distance, and across the little space the wireless spat and crackled and hissed its warning messages to Bellew and Grosser.

And across the little space the secret, dubbed by its inventor "813," opened its shrill shrew's mouth and spued two messages, grim, deadly earnest, unerring, from the little conning-tower to the palatial yacht—a message shrilling a warning that the next would bring death folded under its wing and show no mercy; a death that meant not one here, another there, a miss, a hit, another miss—no, no, not that, but a scythe reaping a holocaust. The deadly power of 813, as yet unknown to the world, but bequeathed to it in Peasgood's last testament. A weapon so deadly that its universal use must bring universal peace following close upon its ruthless heels.

And just now Bellew tasted of it.

It shivered across his head as close as a razor and left a groove that ran red from chin to ear. It whittled down the three tall, towering masts as fire snaps ice, and the sea churned up black spume where the missiles spent. Black burn-dents studded the polished decks, black ribbons like irrigation canals fissured them, a sickly, suffocating smell of singe rose to the nostrils and a thin stream sent tiny spirals into the air.

Bellew was a shattered wreck. He collapsed into the corner of the bridge, his face ashen, the groove from chin to ear blazingly red, his eyes filmed with fear. Grosser stood over him, cursing him as a man lashes a dog.

The gunboat was coming up closer and closer and the first boom of her heavy guns rolled out suddenly, coming like the tolling of a funeral bell after the shrill skirmish of a guerrilla warfare. The shot went purposely wide and dropped far astern, cutting a ragged, white-edged hole in the dull gray ocean. But they had got the range wonderfully near.

And coming up with almost as much speed as the gunboat, Peasgood noted a fog-enveloped squall. Presently, he judged, it would be on them, obliterating them from one another. If that was so, there was no time to lose. It was fighting bigger odds now—a trio of them—the oncoming, squall-driven fog, the speeding gunboat, the man on the yacht.

Peasgood whipped round and met Vidal's eyes with the question in them.

"Yes, you're right. I didn't mean to hit him without warning. It fouled. I'm going aboard her. Will you come?"

"Of course. I'm armed. Come on, Collins; you're a good bulky individual. Bring your gun."

Peasgood stayed a moment to cover his face in a thick, disguising mask that came down close to his mouth and fitted over his head. He ordered two more to be served out to Vidal and Collins, and as they swept up closer to the yacht, every man aboard the submarine slipped one on. They took on with an instantaneous miraculousness the appearances of some loathsome monsters of the sea, gaunt, alert, black-hooded.

"It wouldn't do for Peasgood's profession to become a public thing, ye know," he said to Vidal as they stepped out on to the little bridge surrounding the conning-tower.

They hailed the yacht, but not a soul answered. They shot close up under her counter, and first Peasgood and then Vidal gripped a hanging rope dropping from one of the fallen masts and swarmed up on to the deck, Collins following with a solidity that would have been amusing at another time.

The yacht was deserted, derelict almost. The men had crowded below, chattering and rebelling and threatening mutiny, scared, every soul of them; watching with eager, terror-stricken eyes, the gray gunboat coming nearer and nearer and wondering with whimpering oaths what it all meant. Even the engineers and firemen were coming up one by one, refusing to risk being sent to the bottom like rats in a trap. Grosser was still on his bridge, but he was a madman, pacing up and down, wasting precious moments raving at his owner, his voice thick with profanity reaching clearly to the three listeners in the shadow of the deck-house.

"While he's so happy, I'll get busy," said Peasgood sapiently. "Be ready to lend a hand should I need it, Vidal."

QUICK as the wind he vanished down the curved, gilded, thickly carpeted stairs that led from the smoking-room, to the lower saloons and staterooms. A two-tiered gallery ran round the dining-saloon, and Vidal could see him running like a hare, silently, down between the long tables and disappear into a corridor; disappear—and after a wait of interminable minutes, reappear with reckless, blazing triumph gleaming from his eyes behind the black crape mask.

"I've got 'em!" he whispered, his voice cracking under the pressure of excitement. "I've got the lot! Here you, Collins, get back aboard the *Opal* with 'em while we have a try to get Bellew. I can't leave him, wounded like that, to the care of that blackguard Grosser. Here you are. Take care of 'em."

He handed a long, narrow steel box to Collins and watched him over the side. Then he turned to Vidal.

Crouching in the shadow of the smoking-room, they stopped.

"Where is he?"

"Still on the bridge. Grosser has been kicking him. Got all the stones, do you think?"

Peasgood smiled satisfaction.

"Every mother's son of 'em. That's why I'm going to give Bellew a run for his money—the money I've got! His retribution will come sooner or later now that the Government are after him. But it might just as well be later. Don't you think so?"

"Sure. Now's our chance—quick. Shin up that stanchion—keep clear of the companion. Grosser is coming down."

Grosser came down as Vidal and Peasgood went up. He was shaking with passion and fear and palsied cowardice, and his great burly red face was streaked with white. He went toward the engine-room.

"Gone to flog and kick the men down there into crowding on every inch they can without busting her, I should guess. Well, he can rot for all I'll help him," muttered Peasgood, watching him go along.

There was not a man else visible. Vidal found Bellew crumpled up like a sack in the corner of the bridge, all but unconscious, almost delirious, gripped in the ague of an awful fear of death. His rolling eyes shot yellow hatred when they looked up at Vidal stooping over him, and his bitten lips gabbled curses with a rapidity which was fever. It was like lifting a gross hog to get him up on to his back, and Aleck staggered under the enormous weight and shuddered under the clawing fingers that clutched a hold in his hair and round his neck.

Peasgood came then and helped to drag him down, and between them they got him to the gun'le, got him noosed round with a rope-end, got him slung over and down on to the submarine's bridge, from whence he was taken down below, plastered up and put securely to bed in a room that looked like a bunk, but which was as impregnable a prison as any they could have provided him with on the gunboat.

THEN, just as they'd got him safe, the shattering boom of a gun churned up the water so near to them that Peasgood gave the order to dive immediately.

"That old black maria has got 'em, and I think old Grosser will have to take his gruel. Well, he can go to —— for all I care. I offered 'em the chance. Well, Vidal?"

"Well, Peasgood?"

"Sorry you came?"

"Sorry? Not a bit! I'm beginning to live! The diamonds are nothing to me, but the thrill of it all still throbs!"

"Grosser is still running. Look!"

So he was. The yacht was scudding away at a tearing pace, the noise of her engines sounding like a Gatling gun through the gray waters, the smoke from her stacks darkening the sky behind her like the fluttering veil from a widow's bonnet. The gunboat raced after her, crashing like an elephant through the wash of her wake, her booming guns the only sign of superiority.

"Well, they're off," said Aleck Vidal, a smile twisting his mouth. "And what are you going to do with *him?*" jerking his head toward Bellew's cell. "You'd have given him a better chance if you'd left him, after all!"

"Him?"

"Yes. Bellew."

"Take him ashore at the nearest port. Shove him in hospital and wash my hands of him. Suit you?"

"Quite; I suppose he's got funds?"

"Plenty. So have we."

"So we have. Poor devil!"

"Save your sympathy. He ain't worth it. This is about the first dose of gruel he's ever got. Good for him. Come on down and drink luck to us all."

Collins once again filled two beakers brimming full of bubbly, golden wine, and once again Vidal and Peasgood lifted their glasses to the light and watched the diamonds break against the rim.

"Well, that ends that," said Vidal slowly.

Peasgood held his glass high to the flashing, reflecting glow of the electric lamp and sipped it.

"Here's to our next!" he said.

The Right of the Line

by H. L. Holmes

THE dull gray light, that heralds the approaching dawn on the African veldt became gradually streaked with vermilion. Presently the crimson sun rose slowly and majestically from behind the low-lying ridges in the east. As he tipped the rugged rocks with his rays and lit up the plain beyond, all seemed at peace. The breaking day was all harmony.

A Kaffir dog in a distant native *kraal* howled dismally; faint, but yet distinct, came the triumphant crow of a rooster from a deserted farm nestling at the base of the hills; and over the ridges of the kopje, backed by the sun, streamed a khaki-clad mass of soldiers. The measured tramp of the infantry guarding the long column of mule-spanned wagons, the jingle of chain on harness, the clatter of horseshoes on rocks, and the deep rumble of heavy wheels as they plowed their way onward, alone denoted that all was not the harmony it would appear to be.

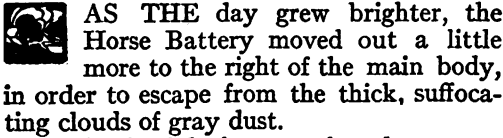
All night long the column had marched in the pitiless dark, and they were tired—very tired. Day after day they had given chase to the elusive Boers without once coming in touch with them. From north to south, east to west, they had traversed the monotonous dusty veldt of the Orange River Colony until their very souls cried for rest. Men and animals showed grim traces of their two years old campaign. The horses were mere pitiful bags of skin and bone; the transport animals were hardly able to draw the heavy wagons, and the men looked what they were, lean, veldt-soiled specimens of England's finest regiments.

Slowly the main body reached the sloping veldt beyond the kopje and snaked like a huge, unwieldy caterpillar toward the drift at the river, three miles or more across the plains. The rear guard took up a strong position on the safely traversed ridges to guard against possible surprise. Nothing marred the beauty of the now thoroughly awakened day. Yet death lurked all around them, giving no sign of his presence. In war, as in peace, he seldom has any herald to announce his coming.

Far out on the scantily grassed plains, the scouts of the advance-guard were silhouetted against the river-line. Dotted here and there over a mile or more of frontage, these mounted eyes of the army rode their tired, dejected horses with never-resting alertness.

To the right of the column, a compact body of cavalry kept careful watch on the flank; to the left a similar group performed a like duty; the main body, composed of two regiments of infantry, two regiments of cavalry, and a battery of Royal Horse Artillery, guarded the mobile convoy of mule transport and field hospital. A little to the advance of the main body rode the General, surrounded by his staff, in earnest conversation with his Chief Intelligence Officer.

Somewhere in the front of the advancing column, if the information received the night before was accurate, lurked three large commandoes of Boers. Spoiling for a fight and anxious to wipe out old scores, the General had ordered a night march so that his brigade might come up with the enemy by daylight and give battle. As yet, no sign of the latter's whereabouts had been discovered.



AS THE day grew brighter, the Horse Battery moved out a little more to the right of the main body, in order to escape from the thick, suffocating clouds of gray dust.

The jingle of the harness, the solemn rumble of the wheels, and the uniform clatter of hoof on Mother Earth were music in the ears of Lieutenant Cecil Barrington, the junior subaltern of the battery. Ever and anon he turned affectionate eyes toward the khaki-stained guns. Under his breath he hummed the latest musical-comedy song —that is to say, the latest of two years previously, for he had been at the front ever since the beginning of the Boer war—and his face was illumined by an unfathomable pride in his corps.

This long-limbed, clean-cut son of Britain had been born to the life of a soldier. The arduous campaign had left him sunbrowned, hardy, and more of a man than when he had landed at Durban two years before with his battery. He came of a long line of artillery officers, men who had written their names large in the history of their country and in the annals of their beloved corps.

On receiving his commission he was posted to "QQ" Battery of the Royal Horse Artillery. He soon won his way into the hearts of officers and men alike by his sunny disposition, his devotion to duty, and wholehearted worship of the traditions of the artillery. His youth earned for him the nickname of "The Cub," and the name stuck, even after he had attained the dignity of a second star.

No officer could have been more popular with the rank and file, from the big, strapping six-foot-two sergeant-major down to the minutest trumpeter. His first thought in camp was the care of the horses of the battery, then the comfort of his men, next the care of his beloved guns, and lastly of himself.

His men swore by him, as men swear by their god. Wo betide any man who dared to speak disrespectfully of "the Cub" in the hearing of any member of the famous "QQ" Battery!

The Major commanding the battery dropped back from the lead to chat with "the Cub." As he talked, his eyes were fixed on the movements of the cavalry scouts ahead.

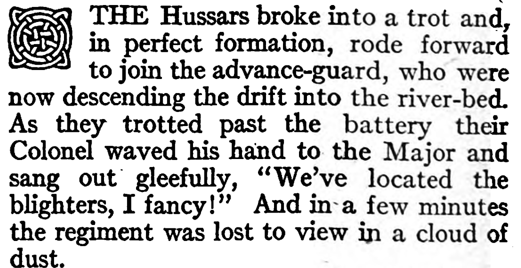
"Feeling tired, Barrington?" he inquired, as the Cub attempted to stifle a yawn.

"Just a trifle, Major. How are you feeling?"

"I'm as right as rain, but I should feel better if we could only get a chance to let our little beauties speak to Johnny Boer." The Major paused to look proudly at the guns of his battery, for he loved them better than life itself. "Lord! but I'm infernally sick of this everlasting trek, trek, trek, with nothing at the end of it. For twenty days we have not even caught a glimpse of a Boer, but now, 'pon my soul, it looks like business."

"By Jove, sir, I'm jolly glad to hear it," the Cub laughed. "It's been due to us for a long time. Hullo! What the——" he broke off suddenly to point to the staff, who were now trotting ahead toward the advance-guard. "Wonder what's in the wind?" he continued meditatively.

At that moment a staff-officer detached himself from the General's following and galloped madly toward the Colonel commanding the Hussar regiment, which was in the lead of the main body of the column. He reined in his horse on its haunches and, saluting, delivered his message. Then he wheeled and raced back to the General.



THE Hussars broke into a trot and, in perfect formation, rode forward to join the advance-guard, who were now descending the drift into the river-bed. As they trotted past the battery their Colonel waved his hand to the Major and sang out gleefully, "We've located the blighters, I fancy!" And in a few minutes the regiment was lost to view in a cloud of dust.

Again the staff-officer galloped furiously toward the main body, but this time he made directly for the battery. He pulled up his horse beside the Major and saluted him stiffly.

"The General wishes you to reinforce the advance-guard with your guns, sir," he announced authoritatively. "We have information that the Boers are occupying a strong position in the hills a mile beyond the river. The cavalry are going to cross the river at the drift and attempt to draw the enemy's fire. You are to take up a position near the drift and be prepared to cover the advance with your guns."

"Very good, sir." The Major saluted grimly.

And as the staff-officer galloped back toward the infantry guarding the convoy, the Major turned in his saddle and looked proudly at his battery.

"'QQ' Battery, Tr-o-ot!" he thundered at them.

The drivers applied whip and spur to the horses' flanks and the latter threw themselves into their collars, straining every muscle to full tension. The guns moved off at a smart trot in the wake of the fast-receding cavalry. It was a truly magnificent sight.

The tired, footsore infantry, plodding along ahead of the convoy, turned dust-clogged eyes lovingly toward the guns. Private Thomas Atkins knows what the little twelve-pounders mean in these days of long-range weapons, and is positive that there are no finer exponents of the art of modern artillery than the Horse Gunners. They have a record which is second to none in the service. The Corps' proud boast—unofficial, it is true— "the Right of the Line, the Pride of the Army, and the Terror of the Whole World," is no idle one. The two former they undoubtedly are; and the latter they have amply proved themselves to be, whenever given the opportunity.

As the battery trotted toward the drift, the Cub kept his eyes glued to the spot where the scouts had dipped down into the river-bed. Presently he saw them emerge safely on the other bank and spread out fan-shaped at a smart gallop. The Hussars, who had almost caught up with the Lancers forming the main body of the advance, broke into a walk. The Lancers dropped from view into the yawning chasm of the deep river-bed, only to re-appear again in a few minutes on the opposite bank. No sound beyond the clatter of the advancing battery marred the serenity of the perfect morning peace.

The Hussars followed the Lancers and joined them on the far side of the river. A sharp trumpet-call rang out clearly on the air, and the squadrons wheeled and galloped into line. They were going to draw the Boers' fire, if possible, and make them disclose their position so that the battery might shell them preparatory to the general advance.

The trumpet sounded "Gallop" and away raced two squadrons of Lancers to the right flank of the hills, where the Boers were suspected to be hiding. Meanwhile the remainder of the cavalry continued steadily at a trot toward the center of the hills. No sign of the Boers was discoverable.

THE regiment of infantry guarding the convoy came to a halt on the plains and the native drivers parked their mule-wagons ready for any emergency. The shrill whistle of the long-lashed whips through the air, the irritated cry of the Kaffir drivers to their unruly teams, and the curt orders of officers to their men were wafted down on the light breeze to the battery as it made for a position near the river.

The Cub took his eyes off the advance for a few minutes to take in the maneuvers going on behind them. The second regiment of infantry were deploying on the plains in the rear of the battery, ready to take up the attack of the Boer position when the cavalry should have drawn their fire and the artillery shelled them.

Arrived within twelve hundred yards of the river bank, the Major held up his hand in warning.

"Walk," he commanded, and the drivers brought their horses to a walk. He beckoned to the Cub to join him.

"Gallop forward, Barrington, with one of the bombardiers and find the range of those hills. Be smart about it now," he ordered.

"Very good, sir," the Cub saluted, and called to one of the near-by bombardiers. Together they galloped toward the river and quickly returned with the range.

The Major now led his battery at a smart trot toward a small *donga* within eight hundred yards of the river. Sectional commanders gave the objective, the range—two thousand two hundred yards—and the guns swept down in line with neither sight nor sound of the enemy.

"Halt! Action front!" roared the Major, bringing his horse abruptly to a stop.

The drivers lifted their whips as they drew up their sweating horses, the gunners prepared to dismount and take up their positions beside the guns, and the ammunition-wagons galloped to the shelter of a dry watercourse five hundred yards in the rear. The led horses of the officers and men were quickly taken to join the ammunition park.

Then, suddenly, hell was let loose. *Bang!*

went a heavy gun from the hills beyond the river. A sound like an anchor chain rattling through the hawsehole, a crash of thunder, and a ripping, tearing, whistling as if all the fiends in hell were free, burst over the plains. The Intelligence Department had underestimated the strength of the Boers, and the cavalry had stirred up a hornets' nest.

Maxims and automatic one-pounders had opened from the kopjes beyond the river; every gun on the hills behind had spoken. And from every ridge a terrific rifle fire burst in the face of the advancing cavalry. The two regiments turned and galloped madly back to the river. They had accomplished what had been desired. They had drawn the fire of the Boers and had located their position. But what was at first an orderly retreat soon became a panic-stricken rout.

They reached the river and fought their way madly over the ford and out on the British side. They were completely out of hand. Officers yelled at them to halt and tried to turn them, but without avail. They galloped madly past the battery, which had quickly opened fire to cover their retreat. And behind them on the plains they left their dead and dying in confused, mangled heaps.

The Boer fire was now directed against the battery. The Major gritted his teeth. He was going to do a bold thing. Something, perhaps, which had never before been attempted; but it might save the day. He was determined to fight his guns as long as he had a man left to serve them, or a shell left in the ammunition-wagons. The infantry could advance under cover of his brave little guns' fire and the cavalry could be brought to their senses and help the General save the day.

He knew that many, if not all, of the officers and men of the battery would lose their lives, but another defeat might be averted. He realized that, in accordance with the accepted rules of military tactics, he should retire his battery to safety at a gallop. But then the Major never played the game of war according to the drill books, if he could help it. He let circumstances guide him. And seldom was he proved wrong.

The Boers were galloping down from the hills toward the river-bed, and soon took up a position under cover of its banks. A terrific hail of bullets followed the retreating cavalry and began to plow a lane through the advancing infantry regiment. The fearless ranks of the gunners also felt the effect of the enemy's fire. Man after man fell, but the survivors were not dismayed.

A TRUMPET in the rear rang out "Retire," but its only answer from the battery was the ear-splitting discharge of all the guns in unison. They were speaking with telling effect. It was not for nothing that "QQ" Battery was conceded to be the model horse battery in the British army. Despite the fact that they were standing in a perfect hail of shell, rifle and Maxim fire from the Boer positions at the river and beyond in the hills, they faced annihilation in order to save the day. A famous General, inspecting the battery at Aldershot, had said that they were "fit to go anywhere and fit to do anything." They were determined to live up to this reputation.

Steadily, as on parade, the gunners hammered the Boers until the Burghers were checked. The vicious little Vickers-Maxims, however, were turned against their flanks and sent a rapid stream of one-pound shells among the guns until they were temporarily silenced by a subdivision of the battery.

At this juncture the Boers closed in to harass the retreat of the main body of the British, who were now retiring quickly and in perfect order on the ridges over which they had just come. But the battery faced the Boers and checked them until the column was safe. And then they retired alternately, one half of the battery unlimbering and opening fire, while the other fell back to a position on the open, shell-torn plain behind it. The Boer gunners gained steady range on Subdivision 3, killing five horses out of the gun-team. The other gunners galloped on, deeming the gun lost.

Boers, swarming over the ant-heap-dotted ground on all sides, rapidly spurred in, firing heavily from the saddle; but when capture seemed imminent, the two gunners, who had stood by the trail-eye, unlimbering from the wreck and hooked the gun to an ammunition-wagon limber and team brought back by the Cub, and the piece was safely extricated.

Another gun was overturned on an ant-heap, the team being piled up indescribably.

The Cub saw it and galloped toward the surviving gunners and drivers. By almost superhuman efforts they unhitched and untangled the team, righted the gun, and brought it to safety at a gallop amid the cheers of their comrades.

Without direct support, the gunners were bearing the brunt of the fight. They were assailed by a hail of bullets poured in at almost point-blank range, the terrible machine-guns across the river searched them out with their cruel little shells, and ere the guns were unlimbered, half of the teams were down, gunners and drivers were writhing on the ground, and it seemed impossible to retire from the trap.

The wonderful discipline of the artillery, which had earned for them the proud title, "the pride of the Army," responded nobly to the test. The ammunition-wagons were suffering as heavily as the guns, but the detachment high numbers, rushing forward, cut loose the tangled teams, dragged the limbers behind the guns, "changed rounds" to replace casualties, and served ammunition as if on a field day. The gunners worked the guns steadily until the whole of the Boer front was erupted with bursting shrapnel and case.

Then a shell from a Boer high-velocity gun, sheltered in the kopjes beyond the river, plowed a forty-pound missive of steel through the devoted battery. A subdivision was practically wiped out of existence and the Major with it. The survivors, finding their gun useless, ran to augment the detachments on either side of them.

Officer after officer fell dead or mortally wounded. Only the Cub at last remained, and he had been wounded twice. A splinter had torn a deep gash in his face from which the blood streamed down over his khaki tunic. His left arm hung useless by his side, snapped in twain below the elbow by a shrapnel bullet. But, totally unmindful of shell, bullet or pain, he directed the heroic fight of his battery.

He was everywhere, helping, sweating, cursing and ordering. He slaved at the guns with the surviving non-commissioned officers and men to the very last. Splendid fellows were these heroes who stood so grimly serving their guns in the face of certain death. Leonidas would have been proud of such.

A staff-officer galloped up, through a tempest of bullets, and shouted for the officer in command. The Cub turned a bleeding, powder-stained face toward him.

"Here, sir!" he shouted. "The others are dead."

"The General orders you to retire and abandon your battery, sir!"

"Impossible!" the Cub retorted angrily, and then swore fiercely under his breath.

He turned his back on the staff-officer and continued to direct the fire of his men.

"Confound you, sir!" the staff-officer ejaculated. "Orders are orders, but I like your plu—" the words were cut short by a bullet, and the speaker fell dead from his steaming, sweating horse beside the young artillery officer.

THE fire of the battery decreased. Ammunition was running short and they must soon obey orders and abandon the guns, unless help reached them quickly. Would it never come? they asked themselves wonderingly. But still they served their guns, ready to die rather than admit defeat.

Number 3 of one gun was shot as he fixed the lanyard, but attempted to fire as he lay on the ground. The downward jerk lifted the friction tube and it snapped harmlessly above the vent, but, supporting himself by the wheel, he managed to insert another tube and fired his gun before another arrived to take his place.

At Number 6 gun, only Numbers 2 and 4 were left, but they ran up, laid and fired their piece, alternately fetching ammunition from the limber. One fell, and the solitary Number 4 served the gun until the limber contained case-shot alone. Pressing home double charges, he flung out the tins of balls at an extreme canister range, searching the enemy who lurked along the river-bank; then a bullet found him, and he sank across the trail of the now silent gun.

Another gun was worked by two gunners alone until they could get no more shell; other subdivisions, reduced to three or four men, also fired on until their last charge was expended; then the remnant lay down beside their guns to await a fresh supply of ammunition.

The Cub looked behind him and saw that the infantry were moving forward in skirmishing order. The cavalry were also

reforming again, having overcome their panic. The former were firing on the Boers as they advanced in short rushes, seeking the advantage of every bit of cover as they ran.

On the plains around them the dead horses lay in tangled masses, some with legs pointing grotesquely skyward. In huddled groups, officers and men lay dead and dying around their beloved guns. They had fought their best, but it had been futile against such overwhelming odds. With their last breath they had gasped forth a groan of defiance. Theirs was a spirit which could not be quenched.

But now the cavalry were recovered from their fright, and, thoroughly ashamed of themselves, were returning hastily to wipe out their disgrace. The Cub and his men watched the advance from where they lay with deep disgust on their faces. They could not understand cowardice nor panic. The Lee-Enfield bullets were whistling over their heads, vying with the Mausers of the Boers to make the most noise.

Slowly, inch by inch, the infantry and cavalry gained ground. Only a thousand yards; then five hundred; and finally, a bare two hundred intervened between them and the silent battery. The Boers swept the advance with rifle and shell, but were unable to check it.

The Cub was having his wounds roughly bandaged by one of his men, when he suddenly awoke from his stupor. He looked with wild eyes at the men who had so bravely fought with him.

"Who will volunteer to run these guns—our guns, lads—to safety?" he asked them with trembling lips, fearful lest none would respond.

To a man the survivors rose with a yell. They seized one of the guns, quickly threw it around, and with a shout of defiance began to drag it back toward the advancing British troops. They were between both fires, but they did not heed. Slowly and painfully they dragged the gun to cover. Time after time they ran back over the shell-and-bullet-spattered plain and seized a gun. Each was in turn dragged by tremendous effort to safety. At last all were saved, except the limbers, but by this time the advancing cavalry and infantry had gained the ground beyond them, and the Boers were in full retreat beyond the river.

THE reserve of the advance broke into lusty cheering as they passed the men of the battery, who were now pushing their beloved guns into position to cover the advance as soon as ammunition should reach them.

A wagon, spanned by a team of eight mules, galloped up to the battery with a supply of ammunition. Grimly the survivors of "QQ" Battery fell upon it like wolves and in a few minutes the guns were again in action. Their shells fell with unerring precision among the retiring Boers, so that in a short space of time the enemy's orderly retreat became a rabble.

The led horses of the cavalry galloped past the heroic battery and joined the dismounted men. In a few minutes the cavalry were in their saddles and galloping down the drift in pursuit of the Boers. As they streamed up on the far bank, the sun glistened upon their bare sabers and lance-points.

With spasmodic shots the battery gradually became silent. Their work was done and they had saved the day, but at what a cost! The Cub helped, as best he could, to bind up his men's wounds, for there was not an unwounded man among them. As this was being done, the column came to a halt beside the battery and prepared to camp. A doctor hastened over to help with the wounded.

In the far distance across the river, the cavalry were returning from their pursuit of the enemy. The infantry were already marching into camp. Soon the battery was the center of the hearty congratulations of officers and men alike. The Cub listened with an amused indifference to all they had to say about the pluck of the battery.

Presently the General, surrounded by his staff, rode over to the battery. The Cub saw him coming and winced.

"Here goes my commission," he muttered aloud.

And his men looked their mute sympathy, for discipline would not permit them to express it in words.

"Who commands this battery?" the General asked abruptly.

"I do, sir, as the senior and only surviving officer," the Cub answered gravely, saluting and standing at attention.

"Your name?" the General queried sharply.

"Barrington, sir."

The Cub gritted his teeth with the excess of pain he was now suffering from his hitherto unnoticed wounds.

The General silently eyed him with a stern face, but was met with unflinching, calm gaze.

"Well, sir," he exclaimed at last, "what have you got to say in mitigation of your gross disobedience of orders?"

"I can offer no excuse, sir. I should have obeyed your orders, but I could not bring myself to desert my guns in the face of the enemy."

The Cub did not take his eyes from the General's face as he spoke. The men of the battery imperceptibly crept closer to the group, as if to give their officer their moral support.

"Confound it all, I can't blame you, sir! You saved the day for me, and I am proud to think that England still has such magnificent material. I shall recommend you and all of the survivors of the battery for the Victoria Cross!"

The General put out his hand, as he finished speaking, and grasped that of the Cub in an iron grip:

And it was noticeable that from that day on, Lieutenant Cecil Barrington ceased to be known as "The Cub." Henceforward he was known to all artillerymen as "The Right of the Line."

The GRAND COUP

An Episode in the Career of a Gentleman of Fortune

by

Max Rittenberg

"WHAT'S fifty thousand pounds?" asked John Hallard, apparently apropos of nothing at all.

"Two thousand a year," answered Renie promptly.

"And what's two thousand a year?" pursued her husband dreamily, and then started to answer his own rhetorical question. "Patrician poverty. A town house, and take in paying guests for the London season. A couple of motors, and growl at the tire bills. Look at every fiver half-a-dozen times before you part with it. Two thousand a year is no use to us, my dear."

"*Chéri*, I'd like to settle down."

"And so you shall. One last coup to turn this fifty thousand into a hundred thousand, and then—then it's to be good-by to the great game!"

The fifty thousand pounds in Hallard's thoughts were mostly the proceeds of the "hold-up" of the S. S. *Fortuna*, the floating gambling-palace. The ship had been compelled eventually to haul down the flag of Venezuela, and had crept ignominiously away from the gambling preserves of an outraged Italian Government. Then Hallard and Laroche, his confidential man servant,

had dug up and cashed the fifty thousand louis. Forty thousand went to the credit of Hallard's account with the banking house of Edwardes, Coldred & Co., making his total capital somewhere between fifty and sixty thousand sterling.

The other ten thousand louis were invested by Laroche in all sorts of queer premium bonds and wild-cat enterprises, for which he had a peculiar hankering. He liked to watch the Bourse lists and see them rocketing up or down. Mostly it was down, for Laroche was no judge of investments.

IT WAS on the Boulevard des Pyrénées at Pau that the conversation recorded above took place. Hallard and his wife were seated facing the full blaze of the sun and the hundred-mile panorama of snow-peaks to the south, with the Pic du Midi, Queen of the Pyrenees, lifting her white head in proud sovereignty above her retinue of courtiers.

In front of them passed a very fashionable, moneyed crowd of idlers, for it was November and Pau was filling up for the Winter season. Golf, tennis, shooting, hunting and mountain-climbing, apart from the magnificent climate and the gay life of the town, had lured a cosmopolitan crowd to the capital of the ancient kingdom of Béarn.

Renie looked very thoughtful after her husband's last words. She hated to put into his mind a doubt of his own powers, and yet there were deep misgivings in hers. From a clouded parentage and a boyhood of poverty, John Hallard had created for himself the style and position of "Sir Ralph Kenrick," dilettante young man of leisure. On his way up he had taken Renie from behind the counters of a jewelry establishment of the rue de la Paix, had made her Lady Kenrick, and had given her all her heart's desires so far as they lay within his power.

Was it the moment to stop, or to go on higher?

"What made you think of that one last coup?" she asked hesitatingly.

"This crowd, for one thing—they reek of money. The Château de Rovecq, for another."

"That place in the mountains we went over last week? What was there in it to suggest a scheme?"

"The secret staircase leading to the guest chamber."

"Where they murdered the young Comte de Foix."

"Yes."

Renie shuddered involuntarily.

"That room gave me the creeps."

"I'm thinking of buying up the Château. It's for sale, you remember. Twenty-five thousand pounds would buy it. That would leave twenty-five thousand odd for the other necessaries."

"What's this strange scheme you've got in mind? I don't see any chance of money-making at all. Who would buy the place from you, even if you put it in order?"

"We can't discuss the plan now, some one might overhear. Let's take a walk along the Gave de Pau."

THREE months later, in early February, a famous American steel magnate, who was also a collector of art treasures and historical relics, was prowling round the antiquity shops of Paris.

In the course of conversation a dealer remarked:

"I might have had a most magnificent Murillo last week—small, you understand, but in the master's best style. No question about its authenticity."

"What was the hitch?"

"Sentiment, monsieur. Figure to yourself that at the last moment the wife cries, 'I will not part with it; the cherub is the image of my dead brother!' She weeps, and the husband gives in to her whim. Yet they are in need of money."

"Where is this picture?" asked the magnate interestedly.

"A long way from here, monsieur. In the Pyrenees—the Château de Rovecq. They ask me to travel all that distance, and then, just as the sale is on the point of concluding, the wife refuses to part with the painting. They pay me my fare to and fro, and for the loss of my time, but I would much rather have bought the Murillo. So delicate, so tender, so sympathetic!"

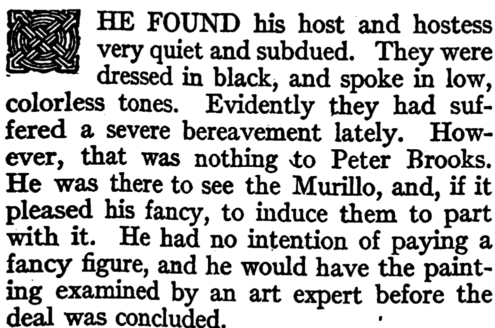
Peter Brooks loved the zest of the chase almost more than the capture. With his characteristic quickness of decision, he took the night express to Pau, and there made further inquiry about the Château de Rovecq. It came out that the Château possessed a definite historical interest, having been at one time the home of Godefroy

de Salignac, but that it had passed into the hands of a young English milord and his wife, and was now no longer accessible to visitors. The new owners were in mourning, and therefore did not entertain or desire to see people.

These difficulties only added further to the steel man's desire to get a sight of the Murillo. With quick decision again, he thought out a simple ruse to get inside the Château, and acted on it.

Perched on a crag of the foothills, between Pau and Lourdes, and some twenty miles away from the Béarn capital, stood the old castle. Around it were beech woods and a few scattered farms that made up the estate of Rovecq. It was a lonely, eery mountain country.

A bogus motor-car accident late in the evening gave Peter Brooks the excuse for ringing the bell at the gates of the Château and asking for hospitality. He was a big, bluff, hearty man, thoroughly used to getting his own way in matters large and small alike. While he apologized to John Hallard and Renie for thrusting himself upon them, yet at the same time his manner took it for granted that his request would be cheerfully allowed.



HE FOUND his host and hostess very quiet and subdued. They were dressed in black, and spoke in low, colorless tones. Evidently they had suffered a severe bereavement lately. However, that was nothing to Peter Brooks. He was there to see the Murillo, and, if it pleased his fancy, to induce them to part with it. He had no intention of paying a fancy figure, and he would have the painting examined by an art expert before the deal was concluded.

Lady Kenrick offered him an improvised supper, and then left to see to the getting ready of his room for the night.

"I must warn you," she had said, "that the room is supposed to be haunted. The tradition is that a young Comte de Foix, a guest in the castle, was secretly murdered there. Unfortunately there is no other room that I can offer to you at such short notice."

"Don't mind that a scrap!" answered Brooks in his bluff, hearty manner. "A real live ghost would interest me a good deal. Over in the States, you know, we're too new to be long on ghosts. I imagine it takes a couple of centuries to get the breed lively and strong on the wing."

The Murillo was hung in Sir Ralph's private study. The two men smoked a cigar together there before turning in, and Brooks arranged his chair so as to have a clear sight of the picture while his host was talking.

"There is ill-luck about this Château," Sir Ralph was saying. "I'm convinced of that now. I bought it, you know, because it was once in the possession of my wife's family. She was keen on the ancestral home and all that kind of thing, you know."

Brooks was thinking: "That's a Murillo beggar-boy sure enough."

Sir Ralph continued in his depressed monotone,

"One thing after another has happened since we took over the place three months ago. I wish to heaven we were out of it! Even my wife has begun to realize that we made a mistake. We paid too heavy a price, though, and we'd lose on selling again. There's the rub."

Brooks was thinking: "Worth seventy-five thousand dollars if it's worth a cent." Aloud he said,

"That's a nice-looking picture. Who's the artist?"

"Murillo."

"Ah! Valuable, I suppose?"

"Yes. I'd sell it if it were not for a whim of my wife's. She sees a resemblance to a dead baby brother. That makes it impossible to sell it—you know what women are with their whims."

"I should imagine you could get pretty near five thousand pounds for it at auction."

Sir Ralph smiled faintly.

"It's evident you're not a connoisseur of pictures, sir. I have been offered fifteen thousand already. But, as I explained——"

"Any others?" interrupted Brooks.

"Nothing of real value."

The conversation drifted off to other topics, and soon they parted and went to their respective rooms.

Peter Brooks was a man without "nerves." The gloomy, stone-walled bedroom into which he was shown by an aged retainer of the Château, carrying an antique silver candelabrum for only illumination, did not disturb his composure one jot. He undressed calmly, opened his window wide, and went off into a hearty slumber.

IT MUST have been midnight or after when he was awakened with a start by a blinding flash of light. For a moment the impression came to him of a visit to the King's Chamber in the Pyramid of Cheops, where magnesium flares were used to sweep away the darkness. But the fleeting memory was overwhelmed by the sight that confronted him. The door of the antique wardrobe stood open, and framed in it was a figure of a young man dressed as in the time of Henry of Navarre. A dagger was plunged in his breast. The face was deadly pale. Over it all was a ghostly, phosphorescent light.

The figure slowly raised its arm and beckoned to him. Then it seemed to disappear into the depths of the *armoire*, still beckoning as though it were a command for the visitor to follow.

Brooks jumped out of bed and lit the candles. He took them over to the *armoire* in which the ghostly figure had disappeared. And there his keen eye found a crack in the woodwork.

He opened a pocket-knife and ran the blade into the crack. The crack widened, and a whole panel slid back smoothly. Behind was a cavity—stone steps—a secret staircase in the wall.

Brooks stepped inside with his candelabrum. Here was an adventure; he would see where it led him to. Of ghosts, as such, he had no fear, and against anything more material he had his fists.

The staircase wound upward to directly over his bedroom. Then it opened out into a windowless room long and broad but low as a cellar room.

"Great Solomon!" he gasped as the light from his candles fell around the room. There, dusty and overlaid with cobwebs, lay suits of armor, helmets, swords, all heavily chased; drinking-cups and plates of antique pattern; and a pile of pictures laid one upon another. He took the latter up and let the light fall full upon them.

Two of them he carried downstairs, dusted, and examined. Then he whistled low and long; took them up to the attic again; and ran over the whole jumble of objects in mental addition of their worth.

As he was moving some of the armor to one side, a sight came to him which caused him hastily to drop it and cease his rummaging.

There behind the armor lay a skeleton, the bones fallen apart, the skull grinning wide!

The steel magnate went down to his room, carefully closed the panel of the *armoire*, and started some hard thinking. Like most other successful men of business, he was scrupulously honest in the small things. If one of his foundries were to overcharge a customer fifty cents, and he were to get to hear of it, he would have that fifty cents returned at once with a personally signed letter of apology.

But in the big deals his code of ethics was altogether different. In a big deal the other man had to keep his jacket buttoned tight and both hands in his trouser-pockets.

THE result of Brooks' thinking came to the open at breakfast the next morning with his host and hostess.

"I had a visitor last night," he mentioned casually as he bit into his rolls with a hearty appetite.

"You mean——" asked Renie.

"I do. The same. The young man with the dagger and the rest of the trimmings."

"I'm so awfully sorry!"

"Not at all! I've quite taken a fancy to him. The fact is, I've always wanted a ghost of my very own. Now that I see you've got the real goods, I'd be willing to buy him off you at a reasonable figure."

"Buy the ghost!"

"Buy the Château. I take it that everything inside it, ghost included, would go with the place."

"Oh, if you only would take it off our hands!" answered Renie, her face lighting up. "We made such a mistake in buying the place at all."

"Everything inside it?" questioned Sir Ralph. "You mean the Murillo as well?"

"I do. That's essential."

Sir Ralph looked at his wife pleadingly.

"Yes, I will let it go," she conceded with a brave smile.

"I'm a man who has to live quickly," pursued Brooks. "I like to do business on the jump. If your husband will show me round the estate after breakfast, I'll be ready to name my figure."

After a morning spent looking over the Château in detail, the farms and the woods, Brooks and his host drove into Pau together to have the title deeds of the estate examined and a deed of sale drawn up.

Kenrick had wanted an even hundred thousand pounds, everything included, but the steel man stood firm at ninety thousand. That was the arrangement as set out to the lawyer.

ON THE next day everything was to be ready for signature. Sir Ralph Kenrick and Lady Kenrick would sign; Brooks would hand over his check—and then Renie and her husband would retire from the great game and settle down on the comfortable income of some four thousand a year.

It was at this crucial moment that Hallard's luck, which up to then had carried him on from victory to victory, suddenly deserted him to lavish her wanton smiles elsewhere. An incident occurred which no planning, however careful, could possibly have foreseen or guarded against.

On the Boulevard des Pyrénées Peter Brooks ran across Lord Lemington, Deputy Governor of the Bank of England, taking a brief holiday at Pau. The steel magnate knew him well, and in the course of a chat mentioned that he was buying an estate in the neighborhood from a young Englishman, Sir Ralph Kendrick.

"I know that young man," said Lord Lemington, "and I once ventured a prophecy in connection with him. I told him that he would either end his career in the Cabinet or in prison."

Then he added dryly,

"I have not yet heard that he is standing for Parliament."

"Prison?" repeated Brooks. "Would you mind telling me just what made you get on to that line of prophecy?"

"I will tell you this much," replied Lord Lemington, "if you will keep it strictly to yourself. He smuggled a load of dynamite into the gold vaults of my bank. Or rather, he pretended to. The result was the same."

"Phew! That harmless-looking dude!"

"Harmless-*looking*," assented the Deputy Governor. "Did you know the floating gambling palace, the S. S. *Fortuna?*"

"Read something of it in the New York papers."

"It was operated by a private limited company with a capital of two hundred and fifty thousand pounds. I had occasion to have the record of the company looked up at Somerset House. It appeared that the chairman and prime mover of the enterprise was our young and harmless friend, Sir Ralph Kenrick."

"Great Solomon!"

Brooks became lost in deep thought.

AT THE appointed hour Hallard and his wife drove into Pau in their motor-car to sign the deed of sale. Both were unusually nervous—or rather, Renie's nervousness had communicated itself to her husband. He had become keenly anxious to have the affair settled and done with. An intuitive feeling was creeping over him that It—his luck—had been worked to the end of the streak. He had had a similar feeling over the gaming-table at various times, and it always preceded a run of ill-fortune.

In the lawyer's office cheerfulness returned to him. Brooks—bluff and hearty as usual—made jokes about the ghost and the way he proposed to tame and educate him.

The lawyer, a ferrety little man with a repulsive tuft of hair trained on a mole at the side of his chin, droned over the long rigmarole of the deed of sale. Château, farms, woods, easements, water-rights and what not were detailed in nauseous elaboration.

"What's that about the cascade?" interrupted Hallard at one point of the recitative.

"I want the right to divert that water and run an electric-light plant to bring the place up-to-date," answered Brooks. "Candles don't appeal to me."

"I suppose it's all right," said Hallard, anxious to get the affair settled.

The lawyer droned on; Hallard read through the lengthy document once again; he and Renie signed jointly; and the check was handed over amid mutual congratulations.

"I'd like to take possession this afternoon," said Brooks.

"Right ho! We'll pack up at once."

On the way back to Rovecq, Renie pressed her husband's hand and exclaimed in half-hysterical relief from the tension of the last few days,

"Now we're free—we're free! No more plotting and scheming! No more waking in the dead of night with a clammy hand on my shoulder to drag me to prison! See, the sun is breaking through the clouds—breaking through to smile on us!"

"I'd no idea the life was telling on you like that," answered Hallard with deep feeling. "You never told me. I ought to have guessed. Forgive me, dear. The game has made me selfish. I didn't stop to think how it might be telling on you. Thank heaven, it's all over now!"

"But when Brooks finds out about the faked pictures in the secret room?"

"What does it matter—we've sold him nothing under false pretenses. There's no mention of the contents of the secret room in the deed. He's entitled only to the Murillo and the other things specifically mentioned. We'll have the luggage sent to Pau, and drive in the car to Spain, over the pass. We'll make it a second honeymoon, my dear!"

Renie snuggled close to her husband.

When they left the Château de Rovecq that afternoon, Laroche driving, Peter Brooks was waving good-by to them from the donjon tower.

Directly they were out of sight, he made for the guest chamber and the secret staircase, and hauled the pile of pictures into the daylight, examining them under a magnifying glass with minute care.

Then, with his suspicions confirmed to certainty, he hurried in his car to the village of Rovecq, sent off a telegram to his bankers to stop the check, another telegram to his lawyer in Pau, and himself drove to the town to pick up a police escort.

While Hallard's car was slowly climbing the hair-pin turns of the pass, up to the snow-line, a second high-powered car forced the pace after them.

THE road became gloomier and gloomier as the mountains closed in upon them. The road clung to the face of the scarred cliffs down which torrents fell, to rush below frail bridges over which the car crossed to the thunder of waters. Perched here and there on the cliffs was the isolated cottage of a goat farmer, adding to rather than diminishing the loneliness of the scene.

After a couple of hours of steady climbing, they came to a gray, poverty-stricken mountain village called Ste. Marie de Morgils. A rural policeman came out from the single *auberge* and signed to the car to stop.

"What's the matter?" asked Hallard in French.

The policeman answered in the harsh twang of the Béarnais,

"You are to stop, monsieur."

"Who says so?"

"I have orders from the Prefect of Pau. A telegram came not five minutes ago."

"On what grounds?"

"I don't know."

"Then wire and find out," answered Hallard curtly, his nerves on edge with the strain of the last two days.

"I arrest you!" asserted the policeman stubbornly, laying his hand on the car.

"Not without a written summons! How do you know if I am the right man? This is an outrage! Laroche, drive on!"

"You will repent of this!" shouted the policeman after them.

"Oh, *chéri*, what does it all mean?" asked Renie, white-faced.

"We've done nothing against the law," answered Hallard. "It's a sheer outrage!"

Laroche put in a word,

"At the top of the pass is the frontier village of Bourg Rodèze. There is a guard of soldiers up there. They will wire to stop us. Shall I cut the wires, monsieur?"

"No, we can't do that. We must keep inside the law. What game can Brooks be up to, I wonder?"

A turn of the pass brought them suddenly to a view of the winding road far below. On it was a motor-car speeding after them—a high-powered car with a dark blue body.

"That's Brooks' car!" cried Renie.

"He can't catch us this side of Spain!" answered her husband, making a swift mental calculation.

But his face had grown dark with misgivings. In the blue car were two uniformed men besides Brooks and the chauffeur.

The road wound into a cliff cutting, and the pursuing car was lost to view. For a couple of hours more they climbed up through the snow-line, chill and dark with the waning of the afternoon. Conversation among the three was fragmentary and separated by intervals of gloomy silence. How far behind was the blue car, lay constantly in their thoughts. And why were there orders to stop them?

AT LENGTH the toiling road eased off to a level stretch, and the snow-clad, gray-stone village of Bourg Rodèze came into view. They could see the squat stone pillar that marked the

border between France and Spain, and the two guard-houses, French and Spanish, on either side.

At that moment a tire burst with a vicious *bang!*

Laroche was off the car in an instant to adjust a new tire to replace it.

But Hallard came to a sudden resolution.

"Drive to the frontier first on the flat tire. Replace it there while the officials are examining us for contraband. Then find some other imaginary repair to make."

"You mean——" asked Renie.

"I mean that if we are stopped and Brooks catches us up, we may be in for a rough time. Now listen, Laroche, listen carefully. If I take out my handkerchief to stop a sneeze, be ready to jump into the car. When I do sneeze, start her off and drive through anything and anybody."

"*Bien, monsieur!*"

"What could happen to make that necessary?" asked Renie anxiously.

"I don't know. We must be prepared. Now listen further, Laroche. When you come to a likely place on the downhill road, send the car over a precipice into a mountain torrent. A motor-car is useless to escape in. You must take Renie over the mountains on foot. You will make your way to Barcelona and get a boat from there to Corsica. You will take her to your native village, among your own people, and keep her safe until I rejoin you. Here's money to do it."

He pulled out a bundle of notes and a pocketful of loose change, and passed them to his man servant.

"I won't leave you!" cried Renie.

"Dear, that will only hamper me. Alone I can fight, but with you by me my hands are tied."

"Monsieur is quite right," said Laroche.

"Besides, all this planning may be totally unnecessary," added Hallard in order to reassure her.

But his misgivings had grown deeper. The feeling was surging over him that It —Luck—had deserted like a rat from a doomed ship.

At the frontier, three yards away from Spain, a group of officials and soldiers with great-coats and carbines came out from the Spanish and French guard-houses respectively.

The car slowed to a stop, and Hallard and Laroche jumped out.

"We have orders to stop you, monsieur," said one of the soldiers.

"I know. We're to wait for a car coming on behind. Meanwhile, we may as well have the customs examination through."

There was no objection raised, and a Spanish customs officer began a leisured search. Meanwhile, from a hamper Hallard brought out a couple of bottles of wine and all the palatable food he could find. It might be useful later.

He also offered to stand drinks to the group of soldiers around, and they accepted greedily, though still keeping near the car. Laroche fixed on the new tire, and then crawled under the *chassis* with a spanner and an oily rag.

ROUND the curve of the road from the French side rushed the dark-blue car, and stopped with a grinding of brakes on the outer side of Hallard's.

Brooks and the two gendarmes from Pau jumped out.

"That's him and that's her!" said the steel magnate, pointing.

Hallard went forward to meet him.

"What's wrong, old man?" he asked in his Kenrick drawl. "These fellows here told me we'd got to wait for you. Anything you want from me?"

He started to light a cigarette.

"I want you and your wife in handcuffs!" answered Brooks viciously.

"Ah! What's the charge, may I ask?"

Brooks took from his pocket an official document signed and sealed, and held it out in token of his authority.

"You're wanted for selling me fake goods, you smart Alec!"

"What goods?" challenged Hallard.

"Water rights you don't possess! Told me that cascade could be diverted for electric-lighting, and now my lawyer tells me you'd no earthly rights in it. *That's* what you and your wife are going to prison for!"

Hallard's heart sank for the first time in many years of dare-devil adventure. The meaning that lay under Brooks' words flashed plainly upon him. "Water rights" were of course the merest excuse—but an excuse which was deadly legal. Faked pictures were the real grievance, but the steel magnate was far too shrewd to take his legal stand on that ground.

Brooks had been "playing both ends

against the middle." If he had found the pictures in the secret room to be genuine, nothing more would have been heard of the "water rights." He would have won on the pictures. But if these turned out to be forgeries, as he had strongly suspected after the conversation with Lord Lemington, he would have Hallard and his wife arrested first on the matter of the cascade he had cunningly inserted into the deed of sale.

Thus he stood to win under both contingencies. He had played both ends against the middle.

For the moment Hallard had thoughts of giving in quietly and standing for trial on the official charge. He would plead guilty, but urge that the matter was one of misunderstanding, without *mala fides*, and that it could be set right by canceling the deed of sale and returning Brooks his check and his legal costs.

At that moment of hesitation Peter Brooks let out a sneer that showed up the situation in a totally different light.

"Lord Lemington put me next to some of your 'con' games," he said. "Now I'll show you the way to tame and educate a ghost, you crook!"

WITH that, a new vista of events opened out to John Hallard. Once he and Renie were safe in custody, other charges would be heaped on top of them. The faking of the secret room at the Château de Rovecq would be brought against him; the daring bluff in the gold vaults of the Bank of England would be adduced as evidence of crooked intentions; probably Monsieur Octave Bourdion, the Monte Carlo banker, would come forward as an accuser, and many another man he had bluffed out of money or valuables. Once down, the whole of his enemies would be hastening to pick at him. If Bourdion came to the witness-box, it was Renie who would suffer, for she it was who had cashed the check for 250,000 francs at Bourdion's bank.

If they could not fasten a criminal charge on him, they would get Renie.

Renie!

And that decided him. He took his cigarette out of his mouth and said jauntily,

"Right ho! That cascade business was a pure oversight—I didn't understand what it meant. I'll come along."

"*With* your wife," said Brooks significantly.

"Of course. Turn the car round, Laroche."

Laroche, wondering greatly, cranked up and took his seat, preparing to turn around.

At that moment Hallard began to gape, and reached for his handkerchief.

"*Atish—shoo!*" he sneezed.

And then things happened at lightning speed.

Laroche snatched at the gear lever, and his car shot forward with a snort into Spanish territory.

"After them!" cried Brooks, and his own chauffeur jumped down to crank the blue car.

One of the French soldiers had laid down his carbine to pour himself out another glass of wine at Hallard's expense. In a bound Hallard had seized the weapon at the muzzle, and with two mighty blows he had smashed the steering-wheel of the blue car to scrap-iron.

The two gendarmes closed with him, but swinging his carbine like a flail, he broke loose and ran across the Spanish lines, the two gendarmes at his heels.

Hallard turned round at bay, and then there came to him an inspiration of a lifetime. With the tail of his eye he had caught the soldiers hastily bringing their carbines up to the shoulder. In a moment or two they would be pouring a volley of lead into him.

He flung his own weapon aside and started to run down the steep mountain slope by the side of the Spanish road. Far down below, the road doubled on itself to return directly underneath him before swerving southward again.

Throwing away the carbine was his salvation. With a yell of triumph the two gendarmes started after him, and thereby covered him against the fire of the soldiers. The latter dared not let fly while they might shoot down their own men.

"Get out of the way, you fools!" shouted Brooks in English in the rage of the moment, and of course they did not understand him.

Before he had got his commands into French, Hallard was a third of the way down the hillside.

The two gendarmes made to one side, and their comrades above took aim at the fugitive. He stumbled and dodged and leaped downward among the boulders and

rubble of the mountain-side. Bullets zipped past him. One of them made a streak of red on his scalp.

But down below, Laroche was speeding to meet him. Renie was crouching in the car with eyes averted, praying that her husband might escape that hail of lead.

With a last leap of desperation Hallard was in the car, and Laroche was plunging them full speed down the road to Spain.

Up above at the frontier, Peter Brooks was cursing fiercely at his crippled, useless machine and the fool police of Europe.

A FORTNIGHT later, far away in the Isle of Corsica, among the relatives of their faithful Laroche, Hallard and Renie were building up health and strength for their coming fight against the world.

They had lost their money and their position; their name was now useless to them; they were marked characters. Much was gone, indeed, but much remained. They still had their nerve and their courage—the brain to plan and the will to execute.

They would start afresh.

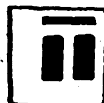
THE ISLAND OF THE BELOVED

by

William Tillinghast Eldridge

CHAPTER XVI

STRANGE DOINGS



THE drop from the balcony was but a little over eight feet, hardly enough to hurt a man severely if he had a chance to catch his poise before plunging downward, or if six more had not come after.

D'Estes and Gordon went down first, the six with whom they had been fighting falling upon them.

The two men left on the balcony, one with the big club, peered over with frightened faces. It was one thing to brain a man, or stick a knife into him—quite another to see him tumble into space and have some of your own companions go after, with shrieks and curses that were sickening.

The two men on the balcony turned and raced for the front stairs and came around

the building. As they started, two other men stepped out of the bushes; these men had been interested witnesses of the fight. They walked up to the eight silent figures on the ground, pulled them apart and spread them out so that it was possible to distinguish one from the other. Some of the men stirred, and all looked as if, when their wind came back, they might be none the worse for the tumble; perhaps there was a broken bone or two.

The two men who had come out of the bushes knelt down over D'Estes and Gordon, made certain of them, and, in a superficial way, the extent of their injuries, and stepped back.

The two men off the balcony were coming on the run, dragging a rope behind them. So intent were these two men that they failed to note the men who, from the shadows of the bushes, continued to watch the proceedings, but without offering to interfere.

The first thing the two ruffians did was to pick out Gordon and D'Estes and make them fast hand and foot. Then they turned their attention to their companions. Two of the men who had fallen were sitting up rubbing their heads. A couple of the others came around very quickly, and the other two required each a pail of water and a few minutes longer.

Gordon and D'Estes lay quite still. Gordon was groaning softly as if his muddled brain told him some one was inflicting a torture he had no power nor desire to stop although it was horribly uncomfortable.

D'Estes's head had an ugly cut on the back of it and the blood ran from the matted hair. The man who had come around last looked the situation over as he held his head in his hand. His arm was bleeding, and he considered D'Estes with a nasty glance.

"What was it about?" questioned one of the men who had come down from the balcony.

All he knew was that he had heard that a fight was on, and had come running, loath to miss so interesting an affair.

"Yes, what was D'Estes up to?" questioned another man. "And the other—that American—what was he here for?"

The man who had come around last looked crossly at the two questioners and made a sign.

"Carry them in; my arm's cut," he said.

D'ESTES and Gordon were picked up and carried in through the lower door and up to the second floor. Then the bearded fellow sent all the men but two out of the room and cursed them roundly for their innumerable questions. When the door was shut he turned to the two who were left.

"Now what in ——?" he demanded, sitting down and resting his head in his hand. "We've got the girl; we can't keep them."

"And we can't keep the girl here nor that fellow with the smashed leg. What will we do?" asked the one who appeared to be such an indifferent leader.

"Better see him and find out," suggested the third man, a young fellow, who had not spoken as yet.

"You go," said the man with his head on his hand.

"He'll rave," the young fellow said.

"These two will rave, when they come about," the bearded fellow muttered, and he got up, swinging his injured arm, and took a look at Gordon and D'Estes. "Tell him," he said to the younger man, "that they aren't much hurt. This American may have a smashed shoulder; D'Estes has only got a cut in the head—hit a rock or something. He'll be around if we dump water on him, and then he'll raise ——. Go along."

The younger fellow nodded and went into the hall. The other two men looked to the ropes on their prisoners and then carried D'Estes into another room. After that they found the man who was in charge of the girl, and the bearded fellow nodded with indifference when he was told she was crying.

"I've an arm to attend to," he said, and he went off to look to his own injuries.

When he had put a dirty bandage about the cut he got his pipe and sat down in front of the old building. After a little he was joined by the two men from up-stairs. They lighted their pipes and sat down.

"The girl's stopped yawling," said one of the men.

The bearded fellow nodded and smoked slowly. His eyes were on the distant ocean and, as if he had nothing else in the world to do, he watched the storm clouds as they raced toward the open sea.

At the far corner of the house the two men who had come out of the bushes watched the three in front of the door.

They had circled the house, listened a while to the low sobs from the upper floor, and then moved around to their present position.

Half an hour passed, and as the three men by the door looked good for some time more, one of the two men crawled through the bushes and went around to the rear of the house.

By the same means employed by Gordon and D'Estes he gained the balcony and went in through the French windows which had been left open from the bedroom.

Moving cautiously, he gained the hall. Making sure the way was clear, he went from door to door, bending his ear at each to listen.

One room he found open, and in the bed, apparently sleeping under a heavy drug, lay a man with his leg encased in bandages. The man looked at the face, nodded—for all the growth of beard he recognized him—and went back into the hall.

He tried two more doors, found them locked; opened one more—the room was empty—and then came back to a door midway down the hall.

He knocked softly.

The second time his knuckles touched the panel he heard the low, breath-choking sobs cease.

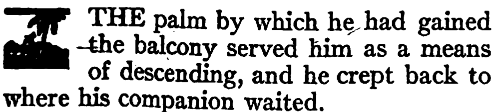
"Miss Haverstraw," he whispered. Then after a silence, "Miss Haverstraw!"

The girl crossed to the door.

"Miss Haverstraw?" questioned the man.

"Yes," came the answer in a low voice.

Then the man straightened and a smile touched his lips. He looked up and down the hall and tiptoed away without another word.



THE palm by which he had gained the balcony served him as a means of descending, and he crept back to where his companion waited.

"It's the girl," he said and settled down to wait.

The moon came out from under the sea-scurrying clouds and bathed the open ground to the sand beach in a semi-light. Still the three men smoked by the door and the two men watched from the bushes.

An hour passed, and when half an hour more had gone by there came the pounding of hoofs on the road. The man who had gone away was back.

He came over to the bearded fellow, who looked up with a look of utter indifference upon his brutal face.

"I saw him. It took time."

The bearded fellow nodded.

"My head feels better," he said. "What did he tell you?"

"We are to move them both, the girl and the fellow. He told me to take them. For you I have a nice job," and he leaned down and whispered in the bearded fellow's ear.

"You told him who it was—the American?" asked the bearded fellow.

"I did," nodded the messenger.

"Well, if he says so I suppose it is to be done. In my own way?"

"He didn't say; only do it."

"Get the cart," ordered the bearded man, and he got up slowly.

While the three men went to bring the cart about he passed into the house. Presently he came down-stairs, bearing Burnett in his arms. He laid the injured man on the ground and went back.

One of the men came out of the bushes and ran across. He took a look at the drugged American and slipped back to cover.

The cart came around, and two men picked Burnett up, laid him in the bottom, and covered him over with a blanket. Then they raised the hood of the wagon, a dirty canvas strip on bamboo poles.

When the bearded man brought Celia Haverstraw into the yard she was crying softly.

"We've told you there's no harm coming," growled the bearded fellow. "Get up and ride. You can't stay here, now that they have found you out. Get up on the seat there!"

"They—they asked me about Mr. Burnett, my cousin, who came with me on the boat. They talked as if he were here in this house. Is he?"

"Burnett?" questioned the bearded fellow. "He's the one you've been asking us to find out about?"

The girl nodded. Her eyes were red and her face swollen. She seemed shrunken and crushed. Her glance turned from the man to the ocean, and her face filled with a look of longing as she studied the sea.

"We don't know nothing about him," replid the bearded fellow promptly. "Get onto the seat."

"Where am I going? Can't you take me to Count D'Artois and let me see him for

just a few minutes? I would like to talk with him."

The bearded man smiled as if he were attempting to twist his face into a semblance of patience.

"I've told you Count D'Artois was not at home. All this wouldn't have happened to you if he was. I'm his overseer on this island, as I've explained to you, and I'm doing my best for you. These other people are the ones we've got to keep you away from until he gets back."

"I wish I'd listened to what that American—he said he was an American—had to say," whispered the girl.

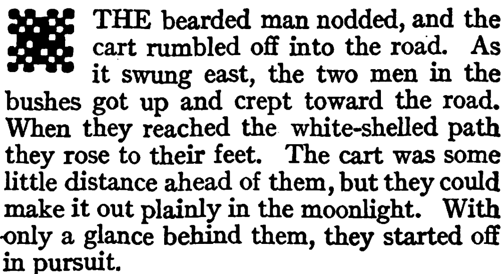
The bearded fellow smiled.

"They ain't no Americans on this place. That was a sweet lie."

He motioned the girl to the front of the wagon and she went reluctantly.

"Drive ahead," said the bearded fellow to the man already on the seat, "and mind I'm not asking where you are going."

"Mind you remember what I told you. I'll do my part, you do yours."



THE bearded man nodded, and the cart rumbled off into the road. As it swung east, the two men in the bushes got up and crept toward the road. When they reached the white-shelled path they rose to their feet. The cart was some little distance ahead of them, but they could make it out plainly in the moonlight. With only a glance behind them, they started off in pursuit.

The bearded man had sat down again. After a little he looked at his two companions.

"Get another cart, will you? I've some one for you to take."

The men got up and went around the house. Then the bearded man went into a lower room, poured out a dark fluid in a glass and filled it with water. Carrying this he went up the stairs and unlocked the door to the room where D'Estes lay a prisoner.

The Count's grandson stirred and groaned and his eyes opened slowly.

The bearded fellow raised him up and with some trouble got the contents of the glass down his throat. Then he picked him up and carried him down-stairs.

The cart was at the door and he laid D'Estes down in it. The straw in the bottom he tossed over the body and then walked around to the front.

"Go to the other side of the town," he said. "I've got a dose down his throat, and you can dump him anywhere along the shore—somewhere so he'll be found by the fishermen about to-morrow noon."

"And do we come back here?" asked one of the men.

"You can, but I'll not be here. I shall keep under cover. We'll let Mark handle this thing from now on. Since I made my slip, I'm not liked; he can do it."

"But you don't know where he has gone."

"He'll get us word some way. I'll be found in some one of the old places. Perhaps the cave on the point will be as well as anywhere for a few days. I'll see that word is left so Mark can find us. Drive on."

The cart rumbled away, and the bearded fellow sat down to smoke. After a little he took his pipe out of his mouth and shut his eyes. When he opened them again it was just coming light in the east.

Then he sat up, knocked the ashes from his pipe and got to his feet.

"I don't like it," he grumbled. "He might have let me fix him as I did D'Estes."

He went into the house and up the stairs. At the door to Gordon's room he halted, drew out a long knife and, unlocking the door, stepped across the threshold.

The first thing that met his gaze was Gordon's eyes full upon him.

"You!" cried the American.

It was the first good look Gordon had had of the bearded fellow, and not until now had he realized that, among the men with whom he and D'Estes had fought, was the one who had attacked D'Artois.

The bearded man said nothing. He fingered the dagger-point and crossed over to Gordon's side.

"I'm not liking the job," he said in an indifferent voice, "but when you sell yourself to the devil you must dance always, having danced once. If you have anything to say, say it, for it will be the last you will say!"

And he fingered the point of the dagger again with his thumb.

CHAPTER XVII

MADAME LAVAILLE AND THE MAN WITH THE BEARD

"STOP!"

The single word rang out like a pistolshot, breaking the strained and deathlike silence which rested upon the room.

Gordon's eyes swung from the face of the bearded ruffian. The man himself wheeled as if struck.

In the doorway stood Elsa Grey! She looked as if some sprite had by chance brought her to this desolate and barren house and left her there upon the threshold to electrify these two men by her single word. She leaned slightly forward, her face was unusually pale, and her breath checked. One hand rested upon the edge of the door.

It was her eyes that spoke when her tongue was silent, with that one word of command uttered. They burned with suppressed emotion and seemed to hold the gaze of the two men, as if in the depths of those pools of brown lay a greater power than had yet been dreamed of.

It was just a second when Elsa stepped aside and into the room flashed Madame Lavaille. She was dressed in riding costume as was Elsa. In one glance she gleaned the situation. Like a fury unchained, her face ablaze with wild, ungovernable rage, she swept across the room, riding-whip raised.

Like the hiss of the serpent the stinging lash fell upon the bearded man's face.

"You! You!"

It was all she said, but before the madness of her attack the bearded fellow gave ground, his two hands held before his face to protect himself as much as possible from the slashing whip.

There was no mercy in the attack, no letup. The man was driven before the infuriated woman, down the room and toward the bedroom door. Suddenly he leaped away from her, wrenched the door open, and sprang through. As Madame Lavaille would have followed him, although Gordon called out for her to desist lest the man turn upon her, the door was slammed shut in her face.

"Let him go, let him go!" cried Gordon, and then his eyes lifted to the tear-filled ones of Elsa Grey who was bending over him and tearing at the cords which held him powerless.

Madame Lavaille never turned.

"Open this door, Banter! Open! Open!"

Gordon was sitting up, his arms free and only his legs still bound. He tried to put out his hands to help Elsa and his lips set hard. His left shoulder underwent a sharp pain like a knife-thrust.

Elsa got his feet free and he stood up. For a moment he hardly moved, his limbs were so numb. His eyes, however, were upon Madame Lavaille. Elsa, whose hand rested upon his arm, studied his face as if asking confirmation of his safety; and then her glance turned to the woman at the end of the room.

"Open this door!"

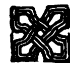
The fury was gone out of Aspasia Lavaille's voice, but in place there rang a note of command that stirred the two who listened and waited to see what would happen. Some way, Gordon felt he should not move or interfere. There was an undercurrent of understanding here, between this superb woman and the ruffian, who would have taken his life as one might kill a dog, that called for no suggestions upon his part.

The door opened ever so slowly. The woman pushed it aside and disappeared. Then Gordon sprang forward.

"Madame Lavaille," he cried, "are you crazy? Let me in there—let me in!"

The door had closed and he heard the bolt go home.

"I will be out in a moment," came the woman's voice.



GORDON turned to Elsa with outstretched hand. She had crossed after him. His gesture demanded an explanation.

A smile touched her lips, a smile that wreathed her face in a glorious thanksgiving for his safety, and she shook her head.

"I do not understand," she said in a whisper. "Last night, during the evening she came to the house. We were surprised, of course, but it seemed it was just a call. She said she was out riding and stopped. Then after a little she asked me to walk with her in the garden. She talked a great deal about Miss Haverstraw and a little of Guy D'Estes.

"Then she suggested I should take a ride with her. There was something strange in her actions; it was because of that that I went. I was curious. We rode for a little and then turned up the second road to her place. She had said nothing more about the affair while we rode, and when she suggested I should stop for a little while, why, I did so."

"At her place?" asked Gordon.

He didn't know why, but intuitively he

felt that there had been some hidden danger in the act.

"Yes. We sat on the veranda and after a little she began to speak of Guy D'Estes. Do you know," with a quick glance from under heavy lids, "I think she imagined that I—I cared for him. She didn't say so, but—" and Elsa's face lighted with a rare smile.

"That was last night," suggested Gordon, a troubled frown crossing her face.

"I stayed with Madame Lavaille last night. We were going to ride back when a man came. Who he was I don't know. He told her something and she asked me if I would stay. She said that she might have word of Miss Haverstraw at any minute."

"And you stayed, of course," put in Gordon.

"I sent word to Marjory by one of Madame Lavaille's servants. I didn't say why I was remaining away; she asked me not to do so."

"Suppose it hadn't been the truth; suppose she wanted you to stay there for some other purpose?"

"I guess, Jack, that was just why I did stay. I wanted to find out; my curiosity was fully aroused. I just had to know what was going on—what she meant by her actions."

"For the same reason that you have been fooling with D'Estes and D'Artois—to find out what they knew?"

"Oh, perhaps," laughed Elsa.

"Well?" he questioned with a glance toward the bedroom.

No sound had come from the room since the door shut upon Madame Lavaille, and Gordon was growing uneasy.

"Nothing happened until very early this morning. Then Madame Lavaille awoke me and told me to dress quickly. She said that she had news. More than that I did not know until we got here. She led the way; how we *did* ride through the woods! It was just growing light.

"When we got here," with a nod toward the yard, "she told me to hurry; to look for you and Guy D'Estes; that you were both in this house, prisoners; that Miss Haverstraw had been here. I didn't suspect until then."

Elsa's words came quickly, a little breath-choked; as if she rode that ride again through the early dawn.

GORDON motioned toward a chair and sat down himself. He felt a little weak and his shoulder pained him. It did not, in a way, seem as odd to be talking with Elsa in the very room where he had found Miss Haverstraw and fought with her guards, as to be indebted to Madame Lavaille for his rescue.

"She was here," he said slowly, "Miss Haverstraw. "Guy D'Estes and I found her. We'd have had her out if she hadn't been so frightened, and then those men came down on us. I don't suppose she can be here now. I wonder where D'Estes is; they separated us."

The door to the bedroom swung open and Madame Lavaille came into the room.

They both turned to her.

"There is no need to look for Guy D'Estes here. There is something else to do. Can you ride, Mr. Gordon?"

"If I had a horse to ride," answered Gordon with a smile.

"We will find one. How did you and Guy D'Estes get here?"

"Rode, and left our ponies in the woods below here."

"Then they may be there now," and Madame Lavaille moved toward the door.

"This seems very mysterious," suggested Gordon, holding back. "Where is D'Estes? Miss Haverstraw was here—Burnett possibly, although we didn't see him. And this fellow from whom you two saved me," his eyes turned to Elsa more than Madame Lavaille, "I should like to know where he is."

Madame Lavaille turned on the threshold. Her face was absolutely colorless, her eyes no longer flashed fire, her voice was even, but without life.

"Guy D'Estes has been taken away from here. He is quite safe. I want you to ride with me to the eastern end of the island. We will find Miss Haverstraw and the man Burnett."

Gordon made a quick step forward.

"Do you mean to tell me that that man, who would have stuck a knife into me, has told you where he moved his two prisoners?"

"I know where they are," answered Madame Lavaille. "He did not tell me, for he did not know. He did tell me which way—the direction in which—they were taken; I can guess the rest," and she turned down the hall.

Gordon and Elsa Grey followed after her. They felt a little as if they were both moving in a daze. Madame Lavaille was the guiding spirit, the woman who put to rout murderers and made a ruffian bend to her will. Gordon knew there was much to be explained, but he also realized it was no time to stop for questions.

Elsa and Madame Lavaille mounted. Gordon took his pony and set the other free and the three turned along the road toward the east.

CHAPTER XVIII

AN ANNOUNCEMENT

THE sun was up now, the cool of the morning in the breeze. Far off, the ocean rolled in great green slides to a far-distant horizon line that melted into gray haze. On the rocks to their right the surf beat in resounding booms.

The village was left behind. Elsa and Madame Lavaille had had early breakfast before they left the latter's home. Gordon munched at a roll he had found before he left the house where he had come so near meeting his death. His shoulder pained him with each jolt of the pony, but he said nothing of his injuries.

Elsa rode at his side, Madame Lavaille, a graceful figure on her mount, a little ahead. Her head was held high and, although they could not see her face, both were certain it still carried that lifeless look which had marked it when she set out.

"She asked you if you cared for Guy D'Estes?" Gordon finally questioned.

He was still turning over and over the information Elsa had given him and trying to patch some explanation out of the shreds.

"She did not," laughed Elsa.

The girl's natural buoyancy of manner had returned, her vitality was fully alive once more.

"You said as much," he argued.

"I said that I gathered that she was trying to learn whether I cared for Guy D'Estes. I think she was jealous. I am very sure that I satisfied her, if that was her reason for questioning me. I didn't tell her just what my opinion of Guy D'Estes was; I didn't want to hurt her."

"Perhaps she had good reason for such a fear; I myself have wondered."

"Mr. Gordon, you are amusing," cried Elsa, but there was not a great deal of mirth in her voice; rather did she sound actually provoked.

"I know," he answered quickly, "and still you have seen a great deal of him the last few days."

"You are truly masculine," she said. "I never yet saw a man who wouldn't jump at just such a conclusion if a girl danced twice with another man or took more than a single walk with him."

He bowed before the accusation without a word of reply.

After a little he turned and looked at her.

"I won't defend man for such opinions, in some cases."

"You won't argue, you mean," she laughed.

"I won't attempt to explain the effect a person's heart may have upon his brain," he answered with a faint smile.

She shot him a queer look and then she laughed.

"Where are we going?" she demanded.

"Perhaps to find an answer to many riddles. I hope it will be to all."

"If we find Miss Haverstraw, as Madame Lavaille seems so certain we will, I don't see what other riddles are left unsettled."

"There is the riddle of who did this thing," he said, turning to study her flushed and radiant face.

"Those men, the ones with whom you and Guy D'Estes fought. You haven't told me about that fight, Jack. I want to know."

He set his lips. An extra sharp pain went through his shoulder. "That will keep. What we find at the end of this ride interests me."

"I shall be told in the end. I will know everything," she answered with positiveness.

"I shall tell you everything; I hope I always may."

Her eyes again studied his face in a swift, questioning glance, but she said nothing.

THEY rode into the hills at the eastern end of the island. Rocks rose all about them, the vegetation grew less plentiful, the aspect more and more barren.

The part of the island they were approaching was quite unknown to Elsa and

Gordon, but suddenly the American remembered the instructions given him by D'Artois only the night before. It was at the eastern end of the island he was to find the black, Quezet.

He hardly expected that the black's hut was to be their destination, and his surprise was genuine when Madame Lavaille drew rein and announced that such was the case.

"I only know that Miss Haverstraw and Burnett were taken in this direction," she explained. "This black, Quezet, rules this end of the island as surely as Count D'Artois does the rest. He can tell us something, but," she warned, "I must talk with him. Do not ask questions. He is queer. I can handle him."

"If as successfully as you did the ruffian from whom you saved me, nothing more can be asked. You had a marvelous control over him."

Madame Lavaille turned her horse to ride on, but her eyes rested upon Gordon's face.

"Perhaps you are thinking that I controlled that man and dictated his actions," she said.

Elsa leaned over and touched Gordon on the arm as Madame Lavaille again led off without waiting for an answer.

"You don't think that?" she whispered, her eyes bright. "You don't think that she had Miss Haverstraw kidnapped?"

"It doesn't look so when she is taking us to her, as she says," he replied guardedly. "And yet there is a great deal to be explained."

They went on for a mile farther and came to a little group of palms which sheltered the settlement over which the black, Quezet, ruled and where then lived the remnants of the race that once controlled the destinies of the Island of the Beloved.

Madame Lavaille went into the largest hut, leaving Gordon and Elsa outside. They walked across to a pile of boulders under two large palms and sat down. Off in the distance lay the ocean and they could look across green everglades and catch the towers of the château in the sun.

On the other side stretched barren cliffs and the rocky shores of the eastern end of the island. It was anything but a pleasing picture—this waste of land devoid of all vegetation save a little cultivated spot and a few trees.

Once the door of the hut opened and a huge black stepped out. Gordon turned his head and saw a tall, half-naked giant of a man who returned his stare unmoved.

The black disappeared and silence fell upon the place. The two on the rocks talked in low tones.

Half an hour passed and Madame Lavaille suddenly appeared. She came straight toward them, and behind her stalked the black, Quezet.

"I am going," she announced in a voice charged with deep emotion.

Gordon noted that she held clasped in her hand a roll of papers to which she clung so tightly that they crumpled in her palm.

"The girl is down among those rocks—Burnett too. They were left there last night. There is no guard. Quezet will take you to them, and you can bring them to the château. He will provide you with a cart."

"And you?" demanded Gordon, rising quickly, hardly liking this arrangement.

Madame Lavaille mounted unaided and smiled down upon Elsa and Gordon. She held out her hand to Elsa, and the girl crossed to her and took it.

There was no pleasure in Madame Lavaille's smile, and her face, if anything, was paler.

"I am going to be married," she said. "To Count D'Artois—at once!"

And she put whip to her mount and rode away.

CHAPTER XIX

QUEZET GUIDES

MADAME LAVAILLE disappeared in a cloud of dust, leaving Gordon and Elsa staring after her in blank amazement. Behind them, stolidly indifferent, stood Quezet, his knotted arms folded across his massive chest.

Gordon turned about and looked at Elsa. A slow smile touched his lips, and when Elsa saw it she laughed outright.

"Of all things! She is going to marry Count D'Artois! Who ever heard of such a thing?"

"I am almost of a mind that last night must have unseated my reason," said Gordon. "Or rather that I'm in a dream—been in one ever since I found De Roquesford's body. She can't mean it," he ended up with a touch of disgust showing in his tone.

"Did she bring us here to tell us this? How positively tragic she looked! One would think she were going anywhere but to her wedding."

"Perhaps she doesn't fancy the bridegroom," laughed Gordon. "I don't believe she meant it."

"Then why——" began Elsa, when Gordon made a sign.

"That's just it," he said lowering his voice. "Why did she bring us here? But then D'Artois himself told me to see this fellow," with a nod toward the patient Quezet.

"You were thinking——" and Elsa stepped closer to his side.

"Nothing, only how odd it was," he answered her, not at all willing nor seeing the reason for voicing the sudden suspicion which had flashed across his brain.

"Another thing to be explained," smiled Elsa.

Gordon nodded and turned about to look at the black. It was the first time he had ever seen the man although he had heard quite a little about him.

"I suppose," he said, speaking to Elsa, "that we might as well find out whether Madame Lavaille was dreaming dreams concerning Miss Haverstraw and Burnett. I do think she was off as to her nuptial day."

"Certainly Miss Haverstraw must be here," urged Elsa.

"We'll see," nodded Gordon, and he walked across to Quezet. "You know where the American girl is and the man with her?"

The black nodded instantly.

"I know," he said in a deep, guttural voice.

"Then it isn't all dreams," smiled Elsa at Gordon's elbow.

"Apparently not. Whereabouts, Quezet?"

"Down," answered the black with a wave of his hand toward the eastern stretch of barren rocks.

"How'd she come there?"

"Last night, dark. A man come with girl and man in cart, covered up. Those who go there," again the black indicated the rocky point, "must speak to Quezet. He took them and left them and paid Quezet."

"Left them! Do you mean that he left that girl and her injured companion out on that barren strip of land?"

The black nodded.

"And you let him? Why, man, if we hadn't come they would have starved."

The black shrugged.

"How far is it? Madame Lavaille said you would furnish a cart. We must get them to the château at once," turning to Elsa.

"Of course! Jack, think of that poor girl—a prisoner all these days and frightened to death last night! Now she is off there among those rocks. Couldn't she find her way back?" demanded Elsa turning to the black.

"There is a point, water about it," Quezet made a circular motion with his hand. "The man said he would lift the bridge."

"And you let him!" exclaimed Gordon.

He felt mad with anger at the stolid native who apparently viewed the fate of a girl and injured man as nothing.

"He paid Quezet; it was nothing to me what he might do. Madame Lavaille, Quezet knows. She has said it was not to be; you were to take them. I will show you," and the black turned across the clearing.

Gordon made no move. He put out his hand to detain Elsa.

"Those men may be gone, and they may not," he cautioned. "You had better wait here while I go and see."

"Here?" exclaimed Elsa.

GORDON cast a glance about him and frowned. By the huts among the palms squatted half a dozen blacks no more attractive in appearance than the one who offered to act as guide. He didn't like the situation in the least, and he was of half a mind to turn back, ride to the village and leave Elsa where it was quite safe. When he suggested such a course, however, the high-strung and impulsive girl would not listen to the idea.

She insisted there was no time for such a move and, moreover, that there was no need. Madame Lavaille had brought them there because Miss Haverstraw and Burnett were to be found, and it would certainly be the height of folly to throw away a chance such as might never come again.

"By the time we could go to the village and get help, those men might come back and move them again," she urged.

"I wasn't going to the village for help. If there are one or two men down there—but that I doubt, considering what this

fellow says about the lay of the land—I'd tackle them and gladly."

"Then you needn't hesitate upon my account. I am capable of doing something; perhaps I can help you."

"I've no doubt," he agreed, and yet he did not move.

Something seemed to tell him that all was not right. It was an intangible feeling, but real, nevertheless. He didn't like Madame Lavaille's dashing off in any such a way, with what he now considered a very flimsy excuse.

Yet where could the danger lie? If from the Frenchwoman, against whom was she moving? Certainly not against Elsa, for she had had her in her power all night. Certainly not against himself, for her coming had saved him from death.

When he came to look at the affair from this point of view he began to think that the last few days, with their attending surprises, had made him overcautious. Still he put the whole matter to Elsa just as he felt, and his reasons for believing his suspicions unwarranted.

Elsa heard him through with a serious face, but when he looked to her for her opinion she was laughing.

"You are too cautious, and I thought you over-reckless! You didn't hesitate last night when you knew that place was guarded."

"You weren't there," he answered.

"But I am now," she laughed into his face, "and, what is more, Jack Gordon, I am going with you. I am certain you frightened that poor girl to death last night or you would have got her out. No," very quickly, "I don't mean you bungled—I don't think that about you; I only mean I can help now."

"Perhaps you can," he nodded, realizing that if Elsa had been with him and D'Estes the night before, things then might have turned out differently.

She gave a quick nod, and they moved toward Quezet, who had been waiting with that same stolid patience which seemed a part of his make-up.

THE black went through the palms and along the edge of the little village over which he ruled. There was a long line of low squalid huts and a rough cane fence had been built across one side.

A path opened across the rocky ground beyond, a path that was just marked by the trodden brush and creepers which grew from the crevices of the volcanic rock.

Suddenly Gordon, who had been still turning the matter over in his mind, called out for Quezet to wait. When they came up with the black, he faced the man with set lips.

"There is no mistake about this?" demanded the American. "Those two are over there?"

The black nodded without the least show of impatience at a repetition of this question.

"And you say there are no men on guard. How do you know that?"

"When they went, Quezet watched. He saw the bridge lifted and laid down this side. The man that came, went back. Quezet has watched, for he must pay again to take them."

Gordon nodded, feeling better satisfied.

"Who pays when we take them?" he questioned, remembering with a faint touch of humor D'Artois's instructions about making a bargain with this black.

"It is done; Madame Lavaille has done this."

"There," cried Elsa, "are you satisfied at last?"

Gordon made a sign for the black to lead on, and nodded. His face spoke his relief.

"I was bound to be sure," he said. "Do you think I'd take you down here where there was a chance of a pot shot being taken at us from behind one of these boulders?"

There was a note in his voice that made Elsa's heart leap, a look in his eyes that caused her to turn and glance away as she had twice while they rode with Madame Lavaille.

"Well, you don't answer," he pressed.

"Why, of course I do," she laughed at him. "I think you are the very man to drag me out on to this barren point and set me right in the middle of a path, then step back and say: 'Mr. Ruffian, here is your target, but wait until I get behind a rock.'"

She laughed at him and he was forced to join her.

Their mirth seemed to make them both feel a little more at their ease when Gordon's questions and the look upon his face had come near to placing a sharp restraint upon them.

Quezet led on, walking with a light, easy swing. He took turns among the boulders, went down over steep slides and up counter-rises with leaps and bounds and waited patiently until the two had overtaken him.

BUT WAS at least a couple of miles, and the sun was growing uncomfortably warm when they came to a deep cleft in the rocks.

The black lifted a single plank and tossed it across the six-foot gap. He went over quickly and they followed a little more slowly, glancing down to where the ocean roared and sung and the wind made queer noises a hundred feet below.

"What a place to fall into!" whispered Elsa when they were across.

Gordon gave a nod and looked ahead eagerly.

"How much farther? They are here on this land somewhere?"

"Beyond," answered the black.

They came to the very end of the island proper and Quezet pointed to a knob of rock which stuck up out of the sea. A racing ocean current cut it off from the island.

"There is no bridge!" exclaimed Gordon.

"They might swim; they could not cross the other," answered the guide as he drew a small canoe from between two boulders.

It was a ticklish passage, but Gordon, knowing the skill of the natives, did not hesitate, although he did advise that Elsa should remain behind, to which suggestion she refused to listen.

The black put them across safe and they stepped ashore upon the shelving beach.

Quezet followed them and stood looking about.

"Do you know where they are, or must we hunt?" questioned Gordon.

Quezet stepped close to the American and pointed along the shore.

Gordon turned to look, when Elsa uttered a wild shriek and sprang forward. Gordon turned, saw the descending club which the black had drawn from his loin-cloth, and then he felt the dull crashing weight of the weapon on head and arm, for he had thrown up his right hand as Elsa cried out.

He pitched forward and went down. The black, without a word or look, leaped back, sent the canoe into the water and sprang for it.

He landed squarely, righted the treacherous craft and began to paddle like mad for the farther shore.

CHAPTER XX

ALONE

THE unexpectedness of the attack on the part of the black left Elsa dazed for the moment. With fascinated gaze she watched the frail canoe swerve with the rushing current, straighten, and head for the island.

Her inactivity was only a thing of the moment. With a pent cry she sprang across the few intervening feet and dropped to her knees beside Jack Gordon.

He lay face downward, his head curled under his body, and his right arm across his temple as it had been raised quickly to ward off the blow which fell with such unexpectedness.

"Jack!" she whispered.

Her breath choked her, the one word came from a throat that seemed paralyzed and drawn.

"Jack!" she begged again, and she turned him over.

The whiteness of his face frightened her. He lay so still she believed he must be dead.

She drew him to her and strove to stay the blood from the cut in his scalp. Then she ran to the beach and wetting her handkerchief—it seemed such a tiny thing for such an emergency—she raced back and bathed his face. Again and again she hurried from the ocean to where he lay. She put the salt water to the cut, bathed him, and at last seized his hat and, filling it, threw the contents into his face.

Her eyes turned again and again to the sweep of ocean, to the shore they had left with so much confidence, and there on the very beach from which they had set out stood the black, unmoved but watchful.

It was a mockery, this one figure in the barren waste of shore, the one who had wrought this wrong standing like a vulture or some fiend incarnate waiting to be sure that his work was done.

It came to Elsa, while she strove with all her power to bring Gordon back to life, that Quezet was waiting for that very purpose—to be sure. What would he do when in his evil mind he was satisfied he had done his work? Would he cross to her?

It came to her that the greater danger lay in the black's suspecting that Gordon was not dead. She feared that he was, and yet she had noted the merest movement of his chest, the faintest dilation of his nostrils as he breathed. But if the watching black knew this!

She threw herself back, cross-legged there on the beach by Gordon's side, and buried her face in her hands. It was easy for the tears to come, easy for her voice to be raised in a wild cry that, carried by the wind, should reach the black's ears.

"Jack, Jack!" she moaned. "You are dead, dead!"

Then with utter indifference to the black she rushed again to the beach and brought more water in Gordon's hat. This she threw into his face to see it dry and leave a white salt brine on lips and eyebrows.

FOR the first time she was conscious of the pitiless sun. Bending down, she strove to lift Gordon in her arms and found his weight too much for her. She cast a hurried glance about and, catching a line of shade behind a jutting rock, she seized him by the shoulders and dragged him across and up the beach.

For the first time a sound came from his white lips. The groan brought wild riotings of hope to Elsa's heart. It was something to hear him groan, a sign that hope was not gone.

She got him in the shade and again raced to the beach. With the water slowly oozing from his hat she sank down by his side and, pillowing his head in her lap, bathed and bathed his face.

Her eyes were upon his; she watched his lips for returning color, his cheeks for the merest sign of departing pallor, his broad chest for a deeper breath.

Her thoughts were a mad jumble of past events, of that terrified fear that gripped her heart with an icy hand as she saw the black's arm lift, noted the short club in his grasp and realized what a fiend he was to have pointed up the shore to gain the chance of striking down an unsuspecting enemy.

Then, as she labored on and on with no cessation in her effort, it came to her that the black had no reason, so far as she could know, of considering the senseless man at her feet as an enemy. Her heart filled with wild, ungovernable hatred of Madame Lavaille. She was the one who had placed them in the power of Quezet, the one who had brought them to their fate.

To Elsa her fate was no less terrible than Jack Gordon's. She suffered even as she knew he must; for her love for him, which had grown with days of intimacy, welled up in her breast and made her eyes fill with tears that left her nearly blinded to her work.

There, in the silence of the sea-swept hill of rock, with no one save this wounded man, who was so much to her, she confessed in low words what she had hardly acknowledged even to herself until that moment. She had known, as woman will, that this man was much to her. That she felt a quickening of her pulse when he was near; that her faith in his ability to solve the puzzle that they all were contending with had been the faith of one who loved. Still she had not, until this moment, allowed herself to say: "I love you." Now she whispered the words again and again, and begged him for her sake to open his eyes and look upon her.

WITH the intuitiveness of one so active and filled with animation she had felt that he cared for her, but it had been only that morning, as they rode together, that she had seen in his glance the full feeling of his heart. First it had come as his eyes turned from the ruffian, who would have killed him, to her face as she stood there in the doorway. Again, twice, as they rode side by side. Once more as he tried to persuade her to remain behind or go to the village.

She was glad that she had not gone. In a dull way she appreciated her danger. But she was glad that he was not alone. She thought of him on the beach where he had fallen under the cruel blow, the hot sun beating unmercifully upon his head. Little as she felt that she was able to do, she was glad that she was with him. She would not have had it otherwise.

And she wondered why she had laughed when he looked at her with love in his heart. Why had she turned his words, and made light of what his tongue would have said, as his eyes spoke? She wanted him to speak to her, to tell her how he cared, to take her in his arms.

Slowly she leaned down and her lips touched his.

"Jack!" she whispered, and her hot tears fell upon his cheeks.

So time passed, time of which Elsa took no note, time which went with leaden feet yet flew as swiftly as the rushing ocean. The shadow changed, crept along Gordon's boots, and reached his knees.

It was then that a terrible sigh came from between his lips.

"Jack!" she begged.

He moved the merest trifle and a groan escaped him. He tried to raise his arm and dropped it.

Wild fear and longing, hope and anguish, choked Elsa's words.

"Jack! Jack!" she begged.

It seemed to her he must have heard and striven to make answer. Was it the effort that comes at the very last when a man's strength fights with departing life? Was it the first sign of returning consciousness that was to make her heart beat with a wild joy that knew no confines?

She called again to him, brought more water and bathed his face. When the handkerchief, damp with salt water, touched his wound he moved again and tried to lift his arm.

She thought of water for him to drink and laid him down while she searched the rocks that rose about them in brown ragged knobs.

She came back once and he still lay motionless. But there was more color in his cheeks—at least so she made herself believe—and his breathing was deeper. She raced then toward the other side of the beach, still looking for a spring.

As she stood, a wind-swept figure, her Titian hair playing madly about her flushed face, her eyes turned toward the ocean.

Spellbound she watched as a huge steam yacht, a mile seaward, passed down the coast. Then she turned and went up over the rocks, searching each crevice, each clump of boulders in the wild hope of finding water.

CHAPTER XXI

BACK TO THE ISLAND

SHE ran back, stumbling in her hurry, to where Gordon lay. As she rounded the pile of rock which gave him shelter from the sun, her breath came in one quick gasp.

"Jack!" she cried and was beside him, his hand in hers.

His eyes were open, he looked at her, tried to smile and raise himself.

"Don't, please don't!" she begged. She drew him to her and laid his head in her lap. "You must lie still, you must! Oh how thankful I am, how thankful!" and she brushed the tears from her heavy lashes.

"I—I think I'm——"

"You are all right," she urged. "But you mustn't talk. Be still, very still. I will not have you speak."

He put up his right hand slowly and touched his head. When he took down his hand he looked at the blood on his fingers curiously.

Then he tried to lift his left arm and dropped it with a groan.

"What is it? Your right arm is bruised, where the club struck, and your head is cut, but your other arm, what is it?"

"Last night," he said, speaking with an effort, "when I fell off the balcony."

"You didn't tell me."

"When we fought with those men," he answered her and shut his eyes.

She let him lie still, saying nothing, and after a little he stirred again.

"I'm dizzy," he said finally, "and my head aches, but I—I feel better," and although she begged him to be still, he sat up.

With his back to the rock and her in front of him he studied her curiously, as a man will who is still a little puzzled as to what has happened.

FROM her face his gaze turned to the beach and open water that lay between them and the Island of the Beloved. Slowly he began to comprehend, and when he did, when it came back to him, he sat straight.

"That black, where is he? What happened, Elsa?"

She leaned forward, begging him to be quiet, and then she told him just what had happened.

He listened with a frown, and when she finished he nodded.

"I was right, then," he said; "there was a trick in the thing. But why did she do this, when you were with her last night? Why did she bring you to that house and save me? Oh, it was a flimsy excuse—her going to marry D'Artois!"

"Puzzles," she tried to laugh. "Never mind, Jack, never mind anything now, you are not going to die."

He looked up quickly, for there was a new note in her voice, a note he had in fancy thought he had caught before, but never been certain of.

"Did you think I was going to die?" he asked.

"I thought—what could I think? You were so pale, so still. I feared everything—anything!"

"That black?" he demanded.

She got up and went down the beach.

"He is gone," she said, coming back. "He was over there watching for a while, but he is gone now."

"Miss Haverstraw, Burnett? What a fool I was to take stock in that wild story!" Then he frowned again. "D'Artois told me to come to Quezet for help. Elsa, that woman is at the bottom of this thing. For some reason she didn't want me killed there in that house; didn't, perhaps, want that ruffian to do it; would rather have left it to the black. Ah, it was that!" he cried, sitting straight. "She knew D'Estes had been with me and would perhaps go back to that house to look for me, if D'Estes isn't dead."

"If Madame Lavaille is responsible for the action of those men, she would not allow them to harm Guy D'Estes. She loves him."

"Does she? Well, I wish him joy of her! That man who was going to knife me was right. He said that she was a devil. What a woman! That man, Elsa, was the one who tried to kill D'Artois; he was the fellow that D'Estes and I caught and shut up in the dungeon. Madame Lavaille let him out."

She looked at him questioningly. Then he told her of how Madame Lavaille had come into the picture gallery, of D'Artois's injury and the finding of De Roquesford's body.

"Madame Lavaille didn't know about that," answered Elsa, "for as we rode from her place this morning she said that she wondered if we would find De Roquesford's body. I remember that, but at the time I didn't know what she meant, for I didn't realize you were a prisoner there."

He nodded.

"There is a good deal to be explained," he said, finally, struggling to his feet.

She came to him and her hand rested on his arm. "You saved me from Madame Lavaille there in the picture gallery."

"Well," he demanded, and then he smiled, for her pleading eyes filled with gratitude awoke strange feelings in his heart, "was that a great thing to do?"

"No," she said, and turned away, "it was not a great thing for you to do."

HE WALKED out on to the beach and looked about.

"I should not mind a drink of water or something to eat. You must be famished," and he turned to her.

She sat down on a rock and he saw that she was trembling.

"I am all right," she said.

"All right!" he laughed angrily. "You poor little girl, you have been through a great deal and you say nothing. I am a brute, thinking about this head of mine and my arm and not of you."

"It's just because I am so thankful that you are safe. I will be all right; I am now," and she jumped up and came to him smiling.

He studied her a moment and turned away quickly. He walked to the far end of the beach, looked about him and came back, studying the gap of water between them and the Island of the Beloved.

"There is just one thing to do," he said. "I will swim across and get to the village. We could wait here forever and no one would ever come to our aid."

"Oh, some one will come; they must!" she urged. "You can not, your arm is injured."

"Madame Lavaille and Quezet know where we are. Do you think either of them will send us aid? As for my arm, I can swim with my right. That club didn't break it."

"I will swim, not you. Listen," she rushed on as she read refusal in his eyes, "I swim a great deal at home; I have here, you know."

"I know you are as good a swimmer as I, but I also know you will not try it. I will go."

"Then we both will go. I shall not stay here. If you do not let me, I will come after you have started."

"I always knew you were obstinate," he said, and then he laughed naturally and she joined him.

They sat down in the shade and waited

for the tide to turn, and as they waited, he tried to prevail upon her to let him go alone, and she refused as firmly as at first.

Finally he gave up and then he got his coat off and took a look at his left shoulder. They decided there were no bones broken, and so, as they sat and talked, he worked his arm slowly to get the muscles and bruised flesh pliable so that he could use it when he got into the water. At first it hurt him so that he could hardly move it, but after a while it hurt less and he decided finally that when he started he could use it.

As the afternoon wore on and the tide turned, Gordon got ready to leave. He stripped down to his thin shirt and trousers and came back to where Elsa sat. When she saw his purpose she leaped to her feet.

"Wait," she said, "I am going."

Again he raised his objections and again she would not listen to him.

Hurrying away, she threw aside her clothes, dressed herself in a waist and skirt and drew on her stockings. She walked out from behind the rocks and straight down to the ocean.

"I am ready," she said, looking back to where he stood.

He glanced about quickly—he had been studying the ocean, and then went down to her.

Together they waded in until the water was up to their armpits.

"We'll take it very slowly," he said. "Keep close to my side. It isn't such a great distance; we should make it easily."

Then he plunged under, came up, and rolled over on his side, looking back. She came alongside of him, swimming with a long, even stroke that denoted great reserve strength.

CHAPTER XXII

QUEZET PAYS

THEY swam along, side by side, taking it very easily. Gordon was driving ahead with long strokes, using his left arm; Elsa lay on her left side, using her right arm. They were so close that their faces rose above the waves almost in line.

The water ran from the girl's hair and rippled down across her bare neck in shining waves as she rose with each stroke. Her eyes were unusually bright and her face flushed with the excitement of the moment and the unusual experience. She laughed now and then, and her white teeth sparkled like jeweled dew-drops. He thought her more beautiful than ever; at the moment he thought only of her, all else—the puzzles of the past days, the danger that lay behind, that which might yet come — was forgotten.

The cold water had revived him. Twice he rolled over and swam with his injured arm and, while it pained him a little, he could use it. The salt burned the cut in his head, but he did not mind.

"When we get to the island," he said as he blew spouts of salt water from his mouth, "I will swim back while you go and dry your clothes. I'll get the things you left behind and mine too, and bring them across."

"I was wondering," she admitted. "I can dry my skirt and waist—the sun is still high, and you can take the canoe; I saw where Quezet drew it up."

"How stupid of me! I could have swum across and got it and you would have had no need to get your clothes wet at all."

"And missed this!" she cried, driving ahead with a harder stroke. "It is the greatest swim I've had since I left San Francisco. San Francisco"—and she laughed with the full-hearted mirth of youth, "how far away it seems!"

"I have dreaded going back sometimes," he acknowledged. "This life takes hold of one; not the last few days," he added, "but the lazy warmth in the air, the languidness—it seems to whisper of a life and a love that we do not know anything about at home."

She gave a little nod and swam on.

"Of a love I thought of once back there," he added, spurting to her side, "but never realized to its full until I came down here, and——" she dove under a wave, came up and tossed her hair from about her face. He said nothing, but began to lag behind, swimming with less power to his arm. She looked back, laughed, and then slowed down. When he failed to come up with her she swam back.

The laughter was gone out of her face.

"What is it?" she demanded.

"Nothing," he said.

She was close to him now. "I've towed a man out at home; put your hand upon my shoulder."

THE alacrity with which he complied should have warned her. They went along for a little way in silence and she thought how light he was to tow, when she did not know that his powerful legs were sending them both along.

"—until I came down here," he began again, very abruptly, taking up the words her dive under the wave had interrupted; "then I knew what love was, Elsa. It grew upon me, it came as a wonderful truth; it told me how much you were to me, and how, if these days on the Island of the Beloved were to end, I should find my life as nothing. It told me how much you were to me, how much I loved you!"

It seemed as if she hardly heard him. He dropped his hand from off her shoulder and swam to her side. Her eyes met his and he could read nothing in their depths.

"I am growing a little tired," she said suddenly.

He offered his shoulder and she put her hand out and half turned on her side.

After a few minutes she said:

"Man is a deceitful creature," and he laughed, with the result that he choked upon a splashing wave.

"I won't ask for your assistance to make an answer," he said when he got rid of the salt water.

"I should hardly think you could have any answer," she gave back.

"But I have," he urged. "The answer is the greatness of my love. When we get over there," indicating the approaching shore, "there will be a good many things to do. And there will be much more to do when we get back to the village. I've got to find that girl and Burnett. I'll have no time to tell you of my love, perhaps for days; I believe in taking time by the forelock."

"A seizer of opportunities," she smiled. "I am convinced that you are nothing else."

"If you knew how much I cared for you, how I love you, sweetheart!" and he was swimming slowly.

"I shall go ahead and leave you to be drowned if you don't hurry."

"Which means that you don't care what happens to me. I know differently: I saw the look in your eyes as you stood in that doorway and I lay bound. Elsa dear, if I hadn't, I might not have spoken now, for I am a poor man, with little courage."

"Are you referring to your worldly wealth when you designate yourself as 'poor'?" she demanded.

"I might, though I wasn't. But I don't care. I am poor, but that doesn't matter the least bit to me. I want you, just you, and I think, hope, believe that you care a little for me. Do you, dearest?"

She would not be serious, much as she longed to be.

"What a situation! Why don't you say you will drown me if I don't say yes?"

He laughed with her.

"I might do that," he admitted.

"I could beat you to the shore," and she set off with a strong overhead stroke.

He tore after her, leaving a trail of foam in his wake and came alongside of her as they neared the beach.

"I shall not look for any one until I have an answer. Yes or no?"

"I am going to swim down the shore and land behind that rock. You can get the canoe and my clothes. They are all wrapped in a bundle; pick them up gently."

"Yes or no?" he demanded.

She turned and laughed at him and swam away and he had to let her go.

HE CLIMBED the beach and waded out, dripping wet. His clothes clung to his massive frame and he looked like a god of the ocean, tall, strong, resourceful, as he stood and rubbed his limbs in the sun.

When he had pressed most of the water from his few garments he stepped toward the spot where the black had left the canoe and drew it forth.

As he pushed it toward the water he heard a sound above him and looked up quickly.

Quezet stood on the cliff overhead, and poised in his hand was a huge rock. Gordon sprang back as the missile came flying straight at him.

Then up behind Quezet, before the black could turn and race down to the beach, stepped another figure.

"Stand still!" came the low-voiced order.

Quezet wheeled to face Guy D'Estes's leveled revolver.

"Hello, Gordon," called D'Estes. "I've been sunning behind that rock watching this black and you and Miss Grey. Good swim?"

"Very," agreed Gordon, and then—

"Watch that fiend, D'Estes. He tried to brain me across there and came near doing it."

"Indeed! and did you, Quezet?" there was a sharp emphasis in the question and a wild flash in D'Estes' eyes.

The black stepped close to D'Estes and said something in so low a tone Gordon could not catch the words.

The effect upon the Count's grandson was startling. He stepped back one step, raised his revolver and said very slowly but distinctly:

"You lie!"

"It is so. He——"

The roar of D'Estes's revolver ended the words. With a wild shriek the black leaped forward, clutched at the spot where D'Estes had stood and went to the rocks.

Gordon was struck to rigid silence. His eyes were upon the cliff above. He could see D'Estes, but not the black.

Then D'Estes stooped down and went along the cliff. He came down the path, and in his arms, legs dangling, head back, arms swaying, he carried the huge body. He walked to the beach and swung his burden for a moment, and then with one heave tossed the man into the ocean.

"I might have done that for what he did to you, Gordon," said D'Estes, walking over to where the American still stood, startled by the suddenness of the thing, "but I did not. I did it because of what he said to me."

Gordon looked at the bobbing form on the green waves. Then he looked at D'Estes.

"What did he say?"

"I may tell you sometime, but not now. Drag down the canoe; I want to go across."

"You? Why?"

"My dear cousin is over there and that man Burnett," answered D'Estes with a smile.

CHAPTER XXIII

VON BRUNT'S TABLEAU

D'ESTES and Gordon paddled across toward the knob of rock. As they passed the floating body of Quezet, Gordon shuddered.

"Why," laughed D'Estes, "all men must die, even black devils. Gordon, I was drugged to the Queen's taste. I came to on the beach and went hunting for you. I met a friend, a man with a black eye. I had a sweet time with him."

"The one who knifed you on the cliff road! Did he talk?"

"Beautifully, when I had set him in a chair and made him think I had a knife that would fit his heart. No, I didn't kill him; he was a pig. I only made him twist. He told me a great deal; he absolved my dear Madame Lavaille."

"Madame Lavaille!" exclaimed Gordon, his hot blood leaping in his veins. "I have something to say to that woman."

"May I be present when it is said! I'd like to see another man talk with her! Whatever she may have done to you, Gordon, she did not send her blond overseer to kill me. Karl Hemming told me my dear cousin was out here on this rock."

Gordon stepped on to the beach and looked at D'Estes.

"You mean Madame Lavaille's overseer, Hemming, was the man who knifed you on the cliff road and told you that Miss Haverstraw was here?"

D'Estes yawned and nodded.

"Sweet Aspasia had a fancy I knew a great deal concerning my cousin. She had Hemming watch me, but he tried to kill me just because *he* has no love for Guy D'Estes. He tracked us last night from where we found De Roquesford's body. He sat by and saw us fight that lovely fight on the balcony. He saw them cart my cat of a cousin and the fellow Burnett off, and followed. Then he fled to sweet Aspasia and told her all."

"And she came with Miss Grey, saved me, and brought us here," Gordon added consideringly.

He was wondering whether by any chance he had been wrong in feeling that the Frenchwoman was responsible for what the black had done.

"Well," he said, stirring, "she will have to talk," and he went off to find Elsa's clothes. With them he paddled back while D'Estes started to search the far end of the small island.

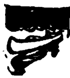
Elsa took the clothes which Gordon tossed to her and announced that she would be ready as soon as he returned. He had explained what D'Estes had done and that after all the two, for whom they had searched so long, were as good as found.

"My clothes are quite dry," called Elsa,

"and I have developed a primitive instinct; a flat rock, that is very smooth, makes an excellent iron."

The laughter in her voice, the relief her tone showed, made his heart leap with gladness. He went back, paddled across, and there, down over the rocks, came D'Estes, carrying Burnett. Beside him walked a woebegone figure—the girl they had come so near rescuing the night before.

"My dear cousin and her lame cousin," called D'Estes.



THE canoe bore them all across and Elsa was on the beach waiting. With quick impulsiveness the American girl took her maltreated countrywoman under her charge. Gordon and D'Estes carried Burnett between them. The man was out from under the influence of the drug and he announced that, while he could not use his foot, it had been attended to, set and splinted. How well the work had been done would be a question for Von Brunt to determine.

Food was secured at the little settlement, which had not yet awakened to the loss of its leader, and Burnett with Miss Haverstraw started ahead in a cart. D'Estes, Gordon and Elsa followed behind and as they rode they compared notes and freely discussed the events of the past few days.

"So Madame Lavaille knew that bearded fellow?" nodded D'Estes when he had heard Gordon's story. "I must talk with her. I fancy he has done *work* for her,"—he put a peculiar, lingering emphasis upon the word "work,"—"and so she could make him dance to her tune. Why she turned you over to Quezet—well, we will see."

As they came over the brow of the last hill and looked down upon the village, Elsa uttered a surprised cry and pointed toward the harbor.

"It must be uncle, Jack!" she was all excitement. "I saw a yacht pass while you were senseless."

"And there is the regular bi-monthly boat," added Gordon, not so elated to find Stephen Grey in port as was Elsa.

"To be sure," nodded D'Estes. "She came in early this morning. Yes," to Elsa, with marked deference, "your uncle is here. I heard the news as I rode through the village."

Miss Haverstraw and Burnett were put down at Hunter's cottage and then it was discovered that the minister, Marjory, Stephen Grey and his wife had all gone to the château.

Burnett was not able to travel and he remained at the parsonage with Miss Haverstraw. Gordon deemed this the best course to follow, rather than take them on in the cart, and he also felt that D'Artois should be prepared for his granddaughter's coming before she appeared at the château.

He, D'Estes and Elsa mounted and rode up the cliff road. They were forced to a slow pace, for Gordon's head was troubling him a little.

At last they reached the level ground and rode up the drive. D'Estes shouted for a servant and the three dismounted while their horses were led away.

D'Estes' voice brought Von Brunt on to the terrace.

He was smoking furiously, and his face was as red as fire.

"Devils in flight!" cried the Doctor, surveying the three. "Your uncle and aunt are in the oak room, Miss Grey, and they have been worrying about you. Come into the library, you men, come in; I have much to say to you."

"To me?" questioned D'Estes, getting out his makings for a cigarette.

"To you? Yes, to you, Guy D'Estes! There is much to say to you that will set you up—much."

ELSA hurried away while Gordon and D'Estes followed Von Brunt in through the French windows. The German halted with his back to the center-table and his frown settled upon the two men

"Yes," he began with a sudden straightening, "there is much to say to both of you that will make your eyes come wide—much."

D'Estes made no pretense of hiding a yawn and Von Brunt wheeled upon him.

"You'll not yawn; you'll cry out, swear, be ready to do murder. Devils in flight!"

"Do murder," smiled D'Estes, glancing at Gordon. "Shall I begin on the German? How he would squeal with a knife in him and he's so red I know the blood would spurt."

Von Brunt seemed too full of his news to heed the words. He made a step forward, clasped his hands behind his back and shot out his under jaw.

"I got it," he said. "A fine thing to send a man—a dead friend! Ach, but it was well you did! I thank you, I used him to a good purpose."

D'Estes drew deeply on his cigarette and blew rings. "I'm glad you liked him. I told Gordon that you would. I hope you gave him a decent planting?"

"De Roquesford is buried," said Von Brunt slowly, "but first—I used him first, Guy D'Estes."

"Used him?" questioned Gordon with a frown.

Von Brunt sat down by the table and pointed to the vacant chair across from him.

"I put De Roquesford there in that chair. Propped him up, twisted his stiff limbs, broke some, I dare say, and tied him so he sat bolt upright, as near the looks of a live man as a dead one could be. Oh, frown, you," as Gordon made a move forward; "look hell and damnation if you like and think I did a strange thing with a dead friend. He would have given me leave had he been able to speak," added the Doctor with a touch of feeling in his voice.

"And when you had made a dead man look alive——" questioned D'Estes with indifference.

"I turned the lights low and went and fetched D'Artois."

"Fetched my grandfather!" cried D'Estes with an angry scowl.

"Fetched Count D'Artois," said Von Brunt with an emphasis upon the name. "I brought him in that door and when he saw De Roquesford he dropped and—— Gordon, his pulse ran low, almost stopped. Tell me I do not know what a pulse-beat means! I thought I did not; but now I know that I do and did. Do you get me, Gordon? I was right as to the meaning of that pulse-beat, yea, right, the time you came and said De Roquesford was dead. D'Artois had the news you brought ahead of me."

"And why, German man," came D'Estes' whisper, "did you do this damnable thing?"

"Because I looked through De Roquesford's clothes and found some letters. Then, after that, I looked through Count D'Artois's papers. These things I did, and found things, before I set De Roquesford up and fetched Count D'Artois."

"We'll know the things you found before we decide whether you would look well in that chair as dead as De Roquesford!" whispered D'Estes.

Gordon made a step forward.

"Here," he said, facing D'Estes, "we'll have no more fighting for a while, no more attempts at murder. Sit down and listen. If Von Brunt has done what he should not do, the way will be found to punish him."

The Doctor laughed, but Guy D'Estes, studying Gordon's face, settled back in his chair and went at his cigarette-making again.

"Well?" questioned Gordon turning to Von Brunt.

"I did as I tell you—brought d'Artois here and he dropped. I called a servant then, to take him back to his room. He is there now, dead!"

"Dead!" cried Gordon, getting to his feet.

"Dead!" whispered D'Estes, and he drew his revolver.

CHAPTER XXIV

GUY D'ESTES PROVES HIMSELF

GORDON leaped across the room and had D'Estes' weapon.

"Guy D'Estes, you and I have fought together, and you saved me from Quezet, but you'll do as I say till the whole story is told! Come, Doctor von Brunt, be quick. It is no time to tell a story backward."

D'Estes waved his hand!

"Block me, do as you will, Gordon. I'll not fight with you, I like *you!*" and he scowled at Von Brunt.

"Quezet?" said the Doctor. "So some one saved you from the black? Do you know who set the black on you?"

"I have an idea," admitted Gordon.

"And you doubtless think that it is I who am responsible?"

The three men turned. Aspasia Lavaille stood in the hall doorway, tall, beautiful, graceful in the extreme, but deathly pale.

"I have just seen Miss Grey," she went on, "and I understand what happened."

"Well, if he does," broke in Von Brunt, "if he thinks it was you, Madame Lavaille, he's a poorer guesser than I fancied. Gordon," swinging around and facing the American, "it was D'Artois who ordered Quezet to kill you!"

Gordon faced the Doctor, too astonished to reply.

"What a pile of stones he is building to fall upon his head!" said D'Estes quietly.

The German stepped a little nearer Gordon.

"I have told you D'Artois is dead; let me tell you more. He was carried from here to his room, and I went and talked with him, for, although his pulse was low, he did not die when he looked upon De Roquesford. While I talked with him—it was this afternoon before I would even do that—Madame Lavaille arrived and was downstairs here, for I would not let her go to him, though she tried. Then came Hunter and this Stephen Grey."

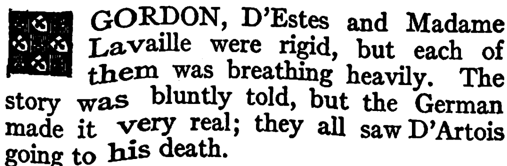
"He'll say they killed him," said D'Estes.

"He killed himself," snapped Von Brunt; "he didn't wait for the hag's time and the knife. Grey and Hunter were asking for you and Miss Grey. I came down and we talked, we three and Madame Lavaille, and I told them what I have told you. They went to D'Artois and I was glad that they were willing; I was sick of the thing. They can tell you what he told them and we all can tell you that after they came downstairs and we were sitting and talking, D'Artois came into the room. He came tall, stalking, tottering on his feet. He looked at us, said he had told us all and that he could tell us no more, and out of the room he went, like a man walking in a dream. They would have stopped him—I would not have it."

"And because a parson and a yachtsman can not lift a hand, this German man thinks we are all putty to his smooth tongue. Go on, go on; the fall is ahead!"

Von Brunt did not seem to hear D'Estes.

"He went across the hill, falling, getting up, to come to where I, with my own hands had turned a sod for De Roquesford. He knew we were behind him, for when he came to the grave he faced about, standing on the other side. He smiled at us, a death's head smile, he looked the island over and then he drained a vial he had. Grey and Hunter carried him in. Oh, I did what I could, but what was the good of using medicine when the brew was of D'Artois' own making! He is up-stairs, asleep—for good!"



GORDON, D'Estes and Madame Lavaille were rigid, but each of them was breathing heavily. The story was bluntly told, but the German made it very real; they all saw D'Artois going to his death.

"Dead!" said Gordon when the silence had to be broken.

"A dead man needs no attention save a turned sod," said D'Estes in a hard voice which covered his feelings as best he could. "What did my grandfather say to Grey and the parson? Why do you say that he set Quezet upon Gordon and that he knew of De Roquesford's murder before the news was brought?"

"Because he has confessed to all I have told or can tell you," answered Von Brunt turning on D'Estes and then swinging quickly to Gordon. "He talked because, I fancy, he had his mind made up to drink that stuff and he wanted to go with a clean soul. Would not a man want a clean soul who had done the things he has done?"

"The things he has done and the things we have done—are the scales so heavy on one side, German man?" demanded D'Estes.

"As heavy as are the damned with the sorrow that their torture brings!" and Von Brunt sat down.

"Your torture is coming, German man, for assuredly are you damned. Certain, then, are you heavy."

"Am I? Heavy with sorrow, mayhap, for the things lost. It is a great blow, for an old man, to see two, who have walked with him, gone; and worse when he knows they both played false."

D'Estes sank back in his chair.

"Is the drug a woman's friend poured into me making my head still heavy? I can not sense the trail, Gordon."

The American did not move, but his eyes turned to D'Estes and then rested upon Madame Lavaille as she stepped forward.

"That man was no friend of mine. I did learn from him that you had been drugged and that, at Count D'Artois's order, no harm was to be done you; that you were simply to be left on the beach."

D'Estes's eyes lifted to the woman's face.

"Did I catch that, Aspasia? At my grandfather's order?"

Madame Lavaille flung out her two hands.

"At Count D'Artois' order. One of those men with whom you two fought came here for instructions. Because Count D'Artois did not care how Mr. Gordon died, so long as he did, he was to be knifed, but you, simply drugged."

D'Estes smiled.

"It is a pleasure to know some one loved me so much."

"Count D'Artois told Quezet to kill me; told that ruffian as well? It is impossible! He told me to go to Quezet for help in finding his granddaughter," urged Gordon, looking as if he could hardly believe his own ears.

"Can you two be blind?" cried Von Brunt. "Who had De Roquesford killed? We each have had our doubts of the others, save of Gordon here. None of us are guilty."

D'Estes' hand crept backward and dropped as he recalled that his revolver had been taken from him.

"German man," he whispered, "what do you mean?" His face was set and his white teeth flashed like the teeth of a tiger.

"It is true, Guy, true," flung out Madame Lavaille; "he has confessed."

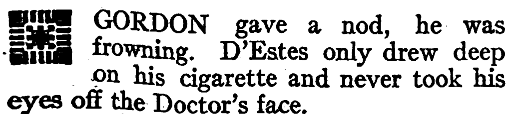
"Aye," growled Von Brunt, "he has confessed. D'Artois had De Roquesford killed, that girl and Burnett carried off! Start; well you may! He did that, and the man who did the trick for him came, demanding money, always money, for he said the hunt was coming close to his heels and if he were caught it would go hard with him."

"There was one who had some wit," nodded D'Estes.

"And we know how it was with D'Artois when it came to money," went on Von Brunt. "He would not pay, and the fellow waited for him, where they were wont to meet in the right wing, and used the knife. You two saw that."

"The man who knifed my grandfather killed De Roquesford and carried off my dear cat of a cousin? We are straight to here, Von Brunt, if your tongue is not split. Go on."

"It is plain as the heavens. D'Artois went down to where you had the fellow a prisoner—do you recall that D'Artois's servant came to ask for the man while we talked here?"



GORDON gave a nod, he was frowning. D'Estes only drew deep on his cigarette and never took his eyes off the Doctor's face.

"Well, he went down to that dungeon, threatened, and the threat was given back. D'Artois called the truce, paid well, and let the man go to carry on his damnable work. There you have it."

"I found a tassel," nodded D'Estes sadly.

"Right after this, d'Artois questioned you, Gordon, as to whether you would find the girl. When you said you would, he told you to see Quezet and sent word to the black to have your life. As I've told you, he thought to save the black the trouble, for the man who did for poor De Roquesford was told to use the knife on you, but Guy D'Estes here was to go drugged."

"What a beautiful thing, this love of a grandfather! Did he think I would not find the girl alone, or did he think that when I did, and had the secret, I would understand his acts and judge more charitably than some?"

The question was addressed to space, and no one answered.

Then Madame Lavaille moved.

"And I took you into further danger, Mr. Gordon, when I thought I was helping."

Gordon drew a deep breath.

"I ask your pardon. When you left us, with that excuse, and then what happened, why, I blamed you."

"I understand," said the woman in a dead voice, "but it was no excuse, as you looked at it; it was the truth."

"Do you mean that you married——" he began.

"No," broke in Madame Lavaille. "Doctor von Brunt would not let me see Count D'Artois when I got here. He died very soon."

"You are talking riddles," put in D'Estes. "Why did you leave Gordon and Miss Grey, Aspasia? I have felt that you might have set a trap for them. Why did you do this?"

"To come here and marry your—to marry Count D'Artois," came the hardly audible answer.

"No?" and a broadening smile touched D'Estes's lips. "How interesting, Aspasia! And what brought this sudden decision? You have had a fancy for my grandfather's wealth, but—well, Aspasia?"

"I have had a fancy for Count D'Artois' wealth," came the whispered admission, "but I have always loved you, Guy."

"You hear her, Gordon?" cried D'Estes in delight. "She loves me—I am overwhelmed. Yet she left you to rush to my grandfather's arms. Woman, woman! I wonder now if they would have held you

passionately had they not grown cold too soon?"

THE Frenchwoman's lips set hard and what little blood was in them was driven out. She moved one step forward and halted. A tired smile came to cross her face.

"It seems the hour of frankness," she murmured. "I do love you, Guy, but I came to marry Count D'Artois because I found out something about you."

"This is truly exciting," cried D'Estes, getting to his feet. "I did not suppose you could find out anything new about me. Did you learn I had a new love? You know I should not be censured too severely for that, for a man must, when the constancy of woman is such a frail thing. One," with a gesture that seemed to include the universe, "finds some little thing out about me and rushes to old arms, a frail body, and comes to dead flesh. A marvel! In all things we find the moral. Aspasia makes it here; hold young love, no matter what you hear, and hark not to the call of pomp and power, else you find the death's head where the altar flowers were thought to bloom."

Madame Lavaille looked as if she would fall. Her hand went out to the table.

"It was not a little thing I found," she whispered.

"No," growled Von Brunt, his eyes upon D'Estes's face in a fascinated stare, for the younger man stood tall, resourceful, master of them all in his marvelous calmness.

Von Brunt knew that D'Estes had taken a hard blow when he heard of D'Artois' death, he watched to see him as he took an even harder one—the German knew it was coming.

D'Estes had glanced at Von Brunt as he uttered that one word. He smiled.

"He," with a gesture for the Doctor, "knows the secret that Aspasia's lips tremble to utter. Come, justify the preference you have shown."

"I found some papers," answered the woman slowly. "Quezet had them. Where did Count D'Artois' eldest daughter go when she returned and her father would not see her?"

"To the man I killed this morning," replied D'Estes. "I told him he lied, Gordon. Quezet, I take it back. Lips that are silent now have spoken and confirmed the justice in your words which named the man who bade you strike."

Madame Lavaille stirred.

"Quezet had these papers. Count D'Artois' daughter left them with him when she died. I might have had them sooner had I known of their existence. When I talked with Quezet to-day, he said something that made me suspect, and I questioned him. He showed me the box which Count D'Artois' daughter left with him. I opened it and read the papers; then I came to marry D'Artois, and he is dead!"

"You have rounded the story without telling it," said Guy D'Estes.

Madame Lavaille walked across and faced him.

"You can read for yourself. Mr. Grey has the papers; he will let you see them, doubtless. They tell the truth concerning you. The man who married Count D'Artois' daughter was your father; Count D'Artois' daughter was not your mother!"

GORDON made a step forward, but the words of astonishment which trembled upon his lips went unuttered.

D'Estes never moved a muscle. Then a smile touched his lips, he studied Madame Lavaille's face curiously, raised one hand and dropped it to his side.

"I have wondered at your love and its depths," he said in a voice as calm and cold as ice. "I learn at a strange moment. Position, wealth! God in heaven give me red blood and passion, which whispers: 'Take what you love, if but for a night!' Yet, Aspasia," with his easiest smile, "I do not blame you. Will ever the most beautiful flower find that it has enough more than its beauty to change the nature of its unfolding if it would? Perhaps you had in mind some plan as clever as you are?"

"Plan?" whispered the woman.

"A quick death to my—to Count D'Artois, and then you might, perhaps, have had a fancy for poor me. Sweet, sweet love—your deep love—all for me!"

Her lips tried to frame his name as he stepped back.

"The thing I can not understand," he said consideringly, as if the problem did not in the least concern himself, "is, dear Aspasia, that knowing this, and having these papers you did not burn them, marry me—Count D'Artois dead—and still get

half the mark you aimed for after dividing up with this one whom I have called cousin."

Madame Lavaille's cheeks flooded with angry color.

"Stephen Grey had all this proof before Madame Lavaille," growled Von Brunt. "He told her so, then she gave him her papers."

"Stephen Grey knew this?" cried Gordon.

"Ay, Stephen Grey. He knows more of this island than you may dream; more of the marrying of D'Artois' daughters than I."

D'Estes touched his cigarette-paper with his tongue and gave the end a critical twist.

"So we untangle another skein. We see why you played as you did, Aspasia. I, too, love wealth, place, those things that warm the heart but do not set it afire. Too, *I love women!* Zetel," to the smoke he blew into the air, "because your face was like the night flower, your dark eyes deep pools of passion, I took you to myself. Zetel, you love as Guy D'Estes might teach love. You wait for me always, Zetel, thinking not Count D'Artois' grandson comes, but only that I, your love, come. I have the wit to make a path. Together, Zetel, together! The world is wide and where we go we will find that which is greater than all else that may be found, search where you will—love! Together, Zetel, together!"

He laughed and crossed the room as they all watched him. At the door he turned.

"Doctor von Brunt, master of ceremonies—who guards a body which he hated when life was in the veins and he knew the duplicity in the heart—I am going up-stairs to kiss dead lips! I love wealth, I love women, but I still love an old man who might, had life run differently about his feet, been different. It is not for me, who have done things, to say hell yawns at any man's feet!"

And Guy D'Estes walked out of the room with head high, and no sign upon his face that he had received a terrible shock.

CHAPTER XXV

THE HEIR TO THE D'ARTOIS

AN AWED silence rested upon the great library. Madame Lavaille made a step forward.

"Guy!" she cried, and swayed.

"God," said the German, "he is a man!"

"I have fought beside him, but I do not need to have done that, to know," said Gordon.

The woman flung up her head.

"And I know!" she said, and went out through the windows to the terrace.

Gordon turned the length of the room and stood at the open windows where he watched the Frenchwoman going down through a shaded path, walking as though she went to her death. Suddenly he swung about.

"How does it happen that Stephen Grey knew about D'Estes, and why, in the name of high heaven, did D'Artois have De Roquesford killed?"

"Ah," said Von Brunt, looking up like a man roused from a dream, "you alone wait to ask why. De Roquesford was a friend of mine; I loved him as I loved, and love, D'Artois. It is only a desire for fair play that makes me seem to hate. De Roquesford planned a thing I would not have thought him capable of doing. With Burnett, whom he had met once when he went to America, he arranged to bring a girl here to pass as D'Artois' granddaughter."

"*Pass* as D'Artois' granddaughter!" broke in Gordon. "Do you mean to tell me that the girl we found is——"

"Aye, devils in flight! I mean that! D'Artois learned of this after De Roquesford had gone. He wrote him if it was true never to return. De Roquesford came, D'Artois had more proof, letters found among De Roquesford's papers and a last letter to De Roquesford from Burnett which came after De Roquesford set out. D'Artois told Grey that he ordered his men to make De Roquesford, the girl and Burnett prisoners. What he would have done then I do not say, but he did try to have you killed for fear you would find the girl and trace the crime to him."

Gordon sat down suddenly.

"You mean this is so? The girl is no relation, Guy D'Estes— Man, you are crazy!"

Von Brunt got up and turned toward the door.

"I am telling you what Stephen Grey told me; what D'Artois confessed to; what the letters I found prove is true. Ask the girl, ask Burnett. Aye, devils in flight! I am crazy. A man grows old hard, grows older fast when those with whom he has gone up and down are—gone!"

And the German passed into the hall with head upon chest. His pipe was out, no trail of smoke followed him.

GORDON sat deep in his chair. He was suddenly wondering whether his muddled brain ached so hard that he was weaving fancies. At last he got up and was about to pass from the room when he saw a tall figure cross the window.

With a leap he was on the terrace and at Elsa's side.

"Have you heard, has your uncle told you?" he demanded.

She nodded, her eyes upon his face.

"He has told me a great deal, all, and he has gone to the village. Mr. Burnett and the girl will go back on the steamer that is now at the dock, so uncle says. Madame Lavaille sent that man, who tried to kill you, away this morning."

"That man? I hadn't thought of him. It is this startling news that I can not make myself believe."

They passed from the terrace and went down a palm-lined walk where the shadows hung heavy as the sun set in the west.

"Elsa," he cried suddenly, "I suppose we must accept all this and—well, let us. It is nothing before greater things, my love —you!"

He swept her to him, his arms about her, as her eyes lifted to his face.

"Elsa, dearest! You would not give me an answer before. You laughed at me, you mocked me, and yet my heart tells me that you care as I do. I love you, darling, love you with all my heart. Dearest, do you care? Oh, you must, for my love is so great!"

Her eyes, big, brown eyes that were now swimming pools of tears, lifted to his face. Her lips parted, a smile touched them and then the single word—his name.

He crushed her to him, his lips were upon hers, and the Island of the Beloved, the days that had rushed so swiftly were things of long ago to those two under the cool palms.

THEY sank down upon a rude bench.

He drew her close to his beating heart, and for a long, long time they were very silent. Then after a little she stirred and looked up into his face.

"I want to tell you one thing more, Jack, dear. Count D'Artois' youngest daughter did marry a man who called himself Haverstraw. He went back to America, died, and after a few years his wife died too. I have just been told all this, since Count D'Artois died. Their child was adopted by Stephen Grey, my uncle; that is how he happened to come to the Island of the Beloved first, why he took such an interest in the place."

"Adopted by your uncle," puzzled Gordon. "Then there is a granddaughter after all?"

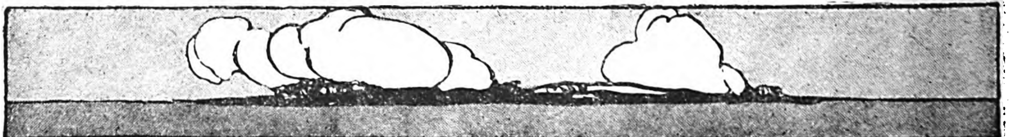
"Yes," nodded Elsa with a troubled smile. "Haverstraw was not my father's last name."

"Haverstraw was not—" and Gordon held Elsa at arm's length. "What do you mean?"

"My father's name was Rodney Haverstraw Grey. Stephen Grey is my uncle, he adopted me. Jack dear, I am Count D'Artois' granddaughter. Will you love me less? I am frightened; I have just been told. Do you see why uncle was so willing I should stay with Marjory, why he told me to be kind to Count D'Artois, to see much of him?"

His arms drew her close to his beating heart. He could love her no more, he could love her no less, his lips upon hers was his answer; it mattered not if she was heir to the Island of the Beloved.

THE END.



The GOLD SHIP

A Tale of Dick, the Seaman Trained by Doricot.

by

H. C. Bailey

IT IS claimed by Captain Rymingtowne that his quarrel with the King of Spain was not of his seeking. I do not discover that he made strong efforts to avoid it or to compose it, nor yet that he had any remorse for profiting by it. But in the papers which he left behind him at Assynton he paints himself a simple, honest fellow, who meditated ill to no creature in Christendom—till his genial innocence was molested.

Then, he allows, he hit back according to his ability. His modest journal expresses surprise that the King of Spain should have made a noise about the business, and hints decorously that his Majesty was no gentleman. But I fear that Captain Rymingtowne had a sense of humor. You shall judge.

That he had no original purpose of falling out with Spain, I believe easily. He found as much plunder as his large appetite needed in hunting the Barbary pirates, and he was essentially a man who knew when he had enough. Also, he was one of those who would not choose to make enemies of those who could pursue him home.

Therefore I acquit Captain Rymingtowne of intending the quarrel. What is more, I think he might have tried to compose it if he had wanted to do more business in the Mediterranean. He was a very practical man. But he had his passions, and the quarrel came down upon him when he had made all he wanted out of the Moors—enough to keep house as a gentleman—when he was ready to go home to the girl of the Berkshire Downs, and it annoyed him and he went into it vehemently.

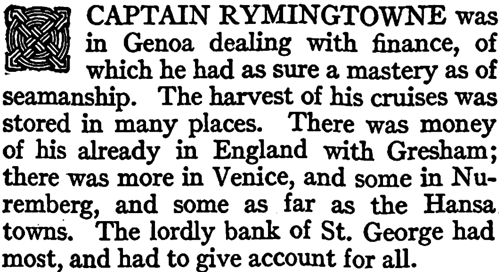
For if you suppose him thinking with oaths—if Spain sought to trap him when at last he was to possess the woman of his life, Spain should yield him jewels to hang on her neck, and a mocking triumph over all the power of Spain should be part of the laughter of their marriage.

The original cause of it all was a girl and

IN THE previous stories of "Witless Dick," laid in the time of Queen Elizabeth, it has been made plain that the hulking Berkshire shepherd was anything but witless, despite his seeming stupidity. Having saved Gabriel Rymingtowne from a relative's murderous plot to secure his estates and daughter, Dick assumes the name of Rymingtowne, hints that he will return for the daughter when he has made his fortune, and sets out with a Captain Doricot on a voyage to Egypt, incidentally kidnapping the Bristol alderman who financed the venture. The ship is captured, Doricot dies, the others escape. From that time, Dick sails on his own ship, the *Reckoning*.—THE EDITOR.

her temper. Captain Rymingtowne, you remember, picked up the daughter of the Governor of Valencia, when she had fled from her father in a cockboat, and an arrogant sea-captain, Don Alonzo Girono, who came seeking her, he answered with insolence, contumely and lies. It is true that he sent the lady back to Spain in all honor with the gentleman paternally destined to marry her, and therewith thought the whole matter happily over.

But the Governor of Valencia, who was a person of importance, and Don Alonzo Girono, who had important uncles, conceived that in making fools of them Captain Rymingtowne had outraged the majesty of Spain and must be notably punished.



CAPTAIN RYMINGTOWNE was in Genoa dealing with finance, of which he had as sure a mastery as of seamanship. The harvest of his cruises was stored in many places. There was money of his already in England with Gresham; there was more in Venice, and some in Nuremberg, and some as far as the Hansa towns. The lordly bank of St. George had most, and had to give account for all.

There was still merchandise to sell: Eastern brocades and a treasure of perfumes. Altogether he counted himself worth ten thousand pounds. It was enough and more than enough to match his Berkshire's girl's manor with another and entertain her splendidly. I imagine him content, for despite the masterful greed of that jaw it is certain that he could be satisfied.

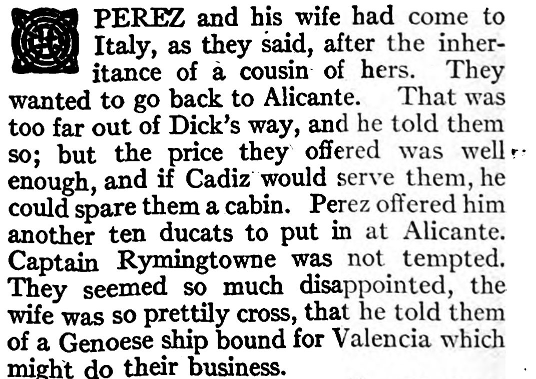
But he meant to make sure of every groat and to make the most of it, and so there were long conferences with the chiefs of the bank. When he was all but ready to sail, one of them introduced to him Annibale Gaddi, a banker of Florence, who, having business in England, wanted a passage thither and would pay for it handsomely.

Messer Annibale Gaddi was perfectly the Italian man of money, smooth and polished, so that any reality in him seemed to slip through the fingers, consummately courteous and cold as ice. Dick Rymingtowne, who liked all kinds of men, found the type amusing, but even if he had been bored by it would doubtless have given it passage at a price. He had been bred too poor to despise any gain of size. So one passenger went aboard the *Reckoning*.

Through the five years he had been in and out of Genoa harbor, Dick Rymingtowne used the same tavern. Its fat and masterful mistress ranked as a friend. But since there was no need, he did not tell her that he was going back to England. All she knew, when she asked him if he would care to carry a man and wife across to Spain, was that he would soon be off on another cruise.

Spanish ports were on the way to England, and it could be no great trouble to earn a few more ducats. That he and his ship might run into danger was not a possible suspicion. He had done Spain no wrong, and if he had, the matter of landing a pair of folk would but take him into harbor and out again before any one ashore had time to know who he was. He thought of the business merely as worth his while if the pair chose to make it worth his while.

So he let Don Miguel Perez come to speech with him, and Perez brought his wife. They were visibly both Spanish, though her eyes were blue and her hair yellow, an arrangement very comely against the golden brown of her skin. She was piquantly shaped and gay. Perez, shorter as well as slighter than she, was a neat, brisk fellow, and they both had a vivacious freedom of speech which Captain Rymingtowne liked none the worse because it was sometimes a trifle coarse. He had, I fancy, a way of trusting folks more if they were not too virtuous.



PEREZ and his wife had come to Italy, as they said, after the inheritance of a cousin of hers. They wanted to go back to Alicante. That was too far out of Dick's way, and he told them so; but the price they offered was well enough, and if Cadiz would serve them, he could spare them a cabin. Perez offered him another ten ducats to put in at Alicante. Captain Rymingtowne was not tempted. They seemed so much disappointed, the wife was so prettily cross, that he told them of a Genoese ship bound for Valencia which might do their business.

"I thank you for nothing," said Perez fiercely. "I know that captain; I would not venture with him for a thousand ducats. An oily fellow. A knave of culture."

Dick shrugged.

"What d'ye look for in sea-captains? Knaves be we all. 'Tis our living. And what d'ye fear of him? D'ye travel with this inheritance of yours?"

"Why, sir, there's enough in my wife's traps to buy a ship or two."

Dick shrugged.

"You are like the goose in the fairy tale that went calling, 'Come and eat me.' D'ye think I ha' not the pluck to pluck you? God help you! would you have me more virtuous than a little Genoese?"

"Oh, sir, your fame is known," Perez laughed. "You only plunder the heathen. You are—not to offend you—of approved honesty. But to be plain with you, 'tis not my ducats that I feared for, but my wife." Whereat the wife looked coy and made eyes at Dick. "Our friend Matteo is known for a pirate, a slave-dealer, a merchant in human flesh. And with you we are safe."

"Now out on it! this is a worse insult than the other," Captain Rymingtowne grinned. "D'ye think I would not know how to get a price for the lady?"

"I count you a man of honor, sir," said Perez with a bow.

"I will be sworn no woman hath ever trusted you in vain," his wife smiled.

"Maybe I never found one who was fool enough to trust me."

"Then let me be the first," said the lady with a comely smile.

"God help you, you will come, I see," quoth Captain Rymingtowne. "Well, it's Cadiz or nowhere."

"You are a hard man, sir," the lady sighed.

"The better for you—and your husband," quoth Captain Rymingtowne.

"So be it," said Perez. "When do you sail?"

"Your baggage aboard to-morrow night and yourselves on the morning of Saturday."

Then Perez paid him half the passage money. So the *Reckoning* was provided with two more passengers.

I SUPPOSE that Dick, as he went about his business, dismissed them from his mind. He may have wondered a moment why Perez was so suspicious of Matteo Pulci, who had no worse name than other dubious mariners. But if he thought of them more than a moment, it was merely to think that they would be amusing.

All these last days in Genoa were crowded with business, and any time which was free of that was given to eager dreams of the maiden of Assynton, but before he slept that night Perez obtruded himself again.

Captain Rymingtowne feeling, as I conceive, much in love, chose to pace the quay after supper and look at the stars in the water when he ought to have been in bed. His walk took him past the ship of Matteo Pulci, and as he passed he heard Perez's voice. He checked, and in the moonlight saw Perez standing at the gangway beside Matteo.

They shook hands. Then Perez came ashore. Captain Rymingtowne took two paces forward and met him chest to chest, nose to nose, and said, "God save you!" Perez recoiled so violently that he was almost gone backward into the water.

"Yes. You had no thought of seeing me," said Captain Rymingtowne grimly. "Maybe you had no wish for me to see you."

Perez laughed nervously.

"How you frightened me! The truth is, my friend—be kind and do not tell my wife—the truth is I am a great coward."

"Hasn't she found out?" Captain Rymingtowne sneered.

"Ah, my friend, among women I am a very Hector. But among men," he shrugged, "one is what one is made." He took Captain Rymingtowne's arm. "Confess that you were surprised to see me talking to that pirate."

"Confess you never meant me to, my lad."

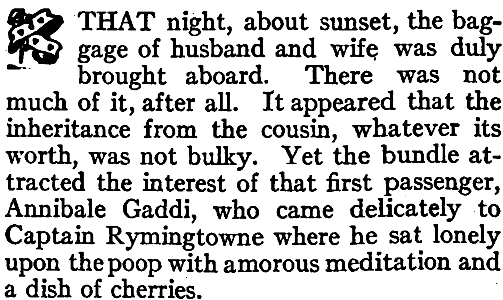
Perez laughed.

"I have had to give up being ashamed. I had no time for anything else. But yes, I did not mean you to know. One does not like to publish one's weakness. The beast—he has bled me! He pretended that I had taken passage with him. He threatened to sue me for the money. And I—I want to get back to Spain. I had to make my peace with him. He would have put the officers upon me for a debtor about to fly the city. It cost me twenty ducats to buy him off. A pirate! A leech!" He invoked several saints. "Alas, it is such as I who foster such as he. But what would you? I was born a timid man. My good friend, walk with me to my lodging. The streets are unsafe o' nights."

Captain Rymingtowne jeered at him all the way, and afterward, turning him over in thought, felt a contemptuous liking for him grow stronger. The fellow was so frankly feeble, so naively mean.

In the morning it amused him to see that Matteo Pulci's ship was gone. Doubtless Pulci had never meant to stay and go to law. He only wanted to frighten money out of the poor Perez. Plainly he knew Señor Perez well.

II



THAT night, about sunset, the baggage of husband and wife was duly brought aboard. There was not much of it, after all. It appeared that the inheritance from the cousin, whatever its worth, was not bulky. Yet the bundle attracted the interest of that first passenger, Annibale Gaddi, who came delicately to Captain Rymingtowne where he sat lonely upon the poop with amorous meditation and a dish of cherries.

"Am I wrong, sir, if I argue by this," he waved toward the baggage, "that I am to have more than your society aboard?"

Captain Rymingtowne spat out cherry-stones.

"Ay, ay. A gallant and his wife for Spain. Peaceable creatures. And for the rest—well, we be all flesh and blood."

"For Spain?" Messer Gaddi repeated. "I did not know that you would call at any port in Spain."

He was a man who always seemed to mean more than he said. Dick looked at him queerly.

"And why will I not touch at Spain, if you please?"

Annibale spread out a white hand.

"Why not or why—what do I know? But some of you English mariners have found trouble in Spanish ports. With the Holy Office or in other matter. You English and the Spaniards—you do not much love each other in these days?"

Dick shrugged.

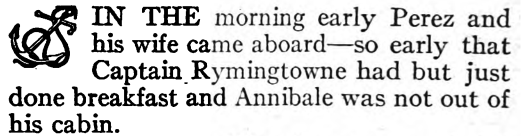
"Nor love nor hate. I'll have no trouble, my friend. Never fear, you shall come safe to England. We'll be in to Cadiz and out again and not lose a day by it."

"They are for Cadiz?" Gaddi said. "I have some acquaintance there. May I know their name?"

"Perez, he calls himself. A little fellow with a wife which thinks she is pretty."

"I never heard of him," said Gaddi and turned away.

Captain Rymingtowne relapsed to his cherries and his thoughts of love.



IN THE morning early Perez and his wife came aboard—so early that Captain Rymingtowne had but just done breakfast and Annibale was not out of his cabin.

"It's you for catching the worm, my lad," said Captain Rymingtowne.

"I confess I am in a hurry to be going," Perez laughed. "This is an unsafe town for a quiet man."

"And I was afraid you might go without us," his wife gushed. "Was not that silly?" she looked at Dick from the corners of her eyes.

"Why, I would not call you a fool," said Dick, and looked her over without reverence. She knew how to make the most of her shape, and it was worth showing. A mantilla of black lace set off piquantly the strange harmony of her yellow hair and golden-brown skin, and the blue eyes were big and bright. "You don't know when you are well off, you landsmen. A sailor never goes o' shipboard till he must, but here you come hours before your time, and the other we ha' had for days."

"The other?" said Perez in a hurry. "You have another passenger?" His wife looked at him.

"Oh, ay," Dick laughed. "A tremendous fellow, my lad. A bully, a fire-eater!"

"You should have told me," said Perez nervously. "Who is he? What is his name?"

"He looks like a man; and he calls himself Annibale Gaddi."

"I never heard of him," said Perez, who still seemed troubled.

"You'll have time to cure that," Dick grinned. At this moment the precise face of Annibale Gaddi appeared at the top of the companion ladder. "Begin now. The most illustrious Annibale Gaddi—the most heroic Miguel Perez, who is silly enough to keep a wife."

The two men showed no liking for his wit. They stared at each other with something of distrust, something of defiance. It was a long minute before either spoke.

"We are to be shipmates, I hear, sir," Gaddi said coldly. "I am honored."

"The pleasure is mine," said Perez. "You are for Spain, sir?"

"No, sir, I leave you there. I stay by the ship."

"Indeed? Well, I shall have time to make your acquaintance," said Perez.

They bowed again. "You—you go on in the ship?" Perez suggested.

"I am bound for England, sir." Then Gaddi turned to Dick. "And count myself happy in sailing with such a captain."

"There is none could please me so well," Perez cried out, and smirked at Dick and looked at his wife.

"It's a very knight of the sea, I am sure," said she, and languished.

But Dick, who was bored, grunted out:

"You've to know me yet. Try my breakfast. Maybe you'll not eat much more, my lads."

Perez started.

"I do not know what you mean by that?"

"I'll have you at sea by nightfall."

"Well, sir?"

"Do you never get seasick?" Captain Rymingtowne grinned.

On which omen they went below.

OF THE breakfast Captain Rymingtowne records that it was as oily as the introduction. He felt, I infer, that Gaddi and Perez together were much more tedious than apart, but nothing else about them seems to have occurred to him. He left them soon and was busy in his cabin and later on deck.

That afternoon a little before sunset they sailed. Pacing the poop while the land drew away, watching the white city lose its form and melt into a cloud, Captain Rymingtowne became pensive and as sentimental as he was able. Genoa had served him well, Genoa had been rest and safety through five years of crowded strife, and now that he was leaving her forever she seemed something like home.

But as night came down on the sea and Genoa was no more than a gleam of fading lights; as the ship drove on through black water, home seemed far and very far, and all his life's desire, all that he had fought for, a dream. From this condition he was waked by Gaddi at his elbow.

"I should without doubt be troublesome if I asked for a word apart."

Captain Rymingtowne glanced round. They were alone on the poop.

"You're as much apart as you're like to be unless you jump over side."

Gaddi looked all about him too.

"I think that Señor Perez is below with his wife."

"Then I am sorry for him," quoth Captain Rymingtowne with some indifference.

"I do not think her such a fool as she would have you think her," said Gaddi suavely.

"You may fall in love with her for what I care."

"I do not think that she intends that it is to be I who should fall in love with her."

"Well, that's modest in you. And if you're right, it's modest in her."

"I did not say that she was modest."

Captain Rymingtowne was irritated.

"For God's sake say something or don't say anything."

"I shall endeavor. May I ask what you know of Señor Perez?"

"As much as I know of you, my lad. His money is good."

Gaddi drew himself up.

"I will remind you, Captain, that I was introduced to you by persons of repute. Was he?"

"What's your quarrel with him?"

"I shall take pains to have none. I do not think that Señor Perez is a man whom persons of condition honor with a quarrel."

"I thought you had never heard of him."

"I had not. That is why I have no confidence in him. For once I came upon a man in Rome, who was not called Perez, who had a very evil fame and who fled the city leaving two men dead in his lodging. And this man is as like him as you are like the man you see in the glass."

Captain Rymingtowne whistled.

"You seem to have some pleasant friends, my lad. What do you want me to do?"

"Ask yourself what harm he can do you. And see that he does not do it."

Captain Rymingtowne considered Messer Gaddi without affection.

"I am good at that trade, my lad."

Suddenly Perez's wife fluttered up to them with a giggling question of what the two old fogies were talking about.

"Supper," said Captain Rymingtowne, and made for it.

Gaddi was very affable to Señor Perez over the meal. Neither of them had yet become seasick. They accommodated themselves to shipboard like seasoned travelers.

IN THE morning early, as Captain Rymingtowne stood naked while two seamen flung buckets of water at him, he saw Perez's head and shoulders rise from below. He expressed surprise

not delicately. He had not suspected Señor Perez of a desire to rise superfluously soon or become superfluously clean. But it appeared that Perez had not come for a bath. He was wholly dressed. What he wanted was conversation, and he began it while Captain Rymingtowne put on his breeches in the sunshine.

"Our good friend Gaddi is not afoot o' mornings," he said with something of a sneer. "Candle-light is more in his way than sunrise."

"To be sure it's a gentlemanly taste," said Captain Rymingtowne, and buttoned his shirt.

"Gentlemanly!" Perez laughed. "Indeed a dainty gentleman!"

"Dainty's the word for him," Captain Rymingtowne agreed benevolently.

"I see you know him," Perez sneered.

"I know what he pays. I give you my word it's enough."

"He would pay well," said Perez thoughtfully. "But I wonder why?"

Captain Rymingtowne turned to stare.

"You seem to know him well enough to ask him, my lad."

Perez laughed.

"Yes, I think I know him. You look suspicious, sir. I told you I had never heard of him. When I knew him he was not called Gaddi. He was a spy then. I am wondering if he is a spy now!"

"God bless you, there's nought for him to spy on but you," Captain Rymingtowne laughed.

Perez was startled and for a moment uncomfortable, then he went on with bland dignity:

"Nay, he can do me no harm that I know. But if you have enemies, sir, look to it. For Gaddi is such a man as they would choose to discover your secrets. And he is cunning in his trade. As for me—I know nothing he can do unless he tell you slanders about me."

"God help us! Why would he do that?" quoth Captain Rymingtowne.

"For fear you should believe me if I told you what he is. For fear you should be warned against him."

"Now, here's craft," Captain Rymingtowne gaped; "here's craft, to be sure."

"Who, I? Nay, craft lies below," quoth Perez.

It may be that he heard steps, for when in a moment Gaddi came on deck, Señor Perez was talking eagerly of when they would be in sight of land again.

AT THE first opportunity—he was not delicate in making one—Captain Rymingtowne left the two suspicious gentlemen and went forward. He wanted to think about them. That each should be anxious for him to believe the other a rogue, was something more than humorous. That each was a rogue, he believed easily.

His mind was always apt to such an opinion. It was the reciprocal anxiety to urge it on him which was disturbing. Why should either care what he thought of the other? Neither was anything to him. Or why should two rascals hate each other because they found themselves in company on his ship? They could have nothing to do there.

He records briefly that he had no suspicion of the truth. He made up his mind that they were spiteful fools, perhaps with old scores to clear, perhaps both in the same dirty business, which, whatever it was, could be no business of his. There were not many things in his well-managed life with which he was dissatisfied. His conduct in this affair seems to have made him smart whenever he remembered it.

The two had spent much of their time at chess. Not so much, Captain Rymingtowne now perceived, from any affection for the game or each other's society, as the desire of each to make sure that the other was doing nothing behind his back. All that day, too, they played chess, while Perez's wife haunted the poop and made alluring attitudes and eyes. Captain Rymingtowne, having at last nothing better to do, allowed her to engage him.

"You avoid me, sir," she complained with a challenging smile. "Am I beneath the dignity of a Captain?"

"I'll swear I never thought so," said Captain Rymingtowne with enthusiasm. She lowered her eyelashes coquettishly. "For I never thought about you."

"Oh! Indeed you hit with a bludgeon, sir. And am I so little account?" she languished in comely curves.

"You are doubtless all that is alluring, my friend. But I am never allured while my ship's at sea."

The Señora Perez sighed deep.

"I see that you dislike me. Confess that

you dislike me."

"I have no time for it."

"Ah, you are all contempt. There is something in me—you distrust me, sir? Indeed it is cruel."

"My lady, I only distrust people who matter to me."

"Oh, you are worse and worse," she protested prettily. "What is it you have against me? You have heard some ill of my husband? You suspect him? You——"

"I suspect we are making fools of ourselves. So I'll walk for'ard."

With which he left her. He saw that she had been put up by her husband to find out whether he had been listening to Gaddi and what he believed. He began to be bored by the whole affair. The fools were tiresome. Doubtless they would both be the better of a hanging, but to worry him about which deserved it more was intolerable. And the woman with her world-old coquetries insulted his intelligence.

But if his intelligence had not been so contemptuous, or if even he had looked back at her after he turned away, I think he might have found something more in her than the wary craft of the decoy.

III

HE RECORDS nothing more in particular of this part of the voyage, except that, as soon as the Spanish coast was in sight and long before they were near Cadiz, Perez appeared anxiously impatient to arrive. They came into Cadiz bay after sunset, and, as Captain Rymingtowne had no mind to fumble his way past islets into a strange harbor by night, they anchored to wait the dawn.

To this delay, however, Perez had no objection and he was good enough to say so to Captain Rymingtowne, thus making himself the butt of sardonic insolence. For Captain Rymingtowne, I find, much disliked the comments of landsmen on what he did with his ship.

Not abashed, Señor Perez was up on deck before dawn and "jumping about like a flea" (I quote Captain Rymingtowne) while they had the anchor up and got under way. The wind was easterly, which gave them some trouble, but the tide ran strong. It was a morning of great beauty. The tall marble houses on the limestone headland were at first all golden above the dark water, and then, as the light came in flood from the cloudless east, shining like a city of jewels.

Perez expressed his delight so banally, with such a base landsman's yearning to be on land, that Captain Rymingtowne addressed him with a mordant voice:

"Well, you're mighty glad to have done with us, my lad. It's kind in you to help us feel the same for you."

At which Gaddi, who had also chosen to be on deck betimes, desiring, as he said politely, to see the last of Señor Perez, sniggered with delicacy.

Perez's wife, who was very close by her husband, looked timidly at him and then at Captain Rymingtowne with an expression of pity which he did not the least understand, but seems to have remembered. After a minute Perez explained volubly that he was intoxicated with joy at being come again to his native land and his children, of whom they had not before heard. He then gushed forth professions of obligation and friendship to Captain Rymingtowne. I suppose he was nervous.

Captain Rymingtowne anchored his ship off the town between the two castles, which is certainly evidence enough that he neither intended nor expected trouble. The Spanish Ambassador in his plaint to the Privy Council denied this, but was refuted into silence. The cable was hardly out before Perez rushed upon Captain Rymingtowne and grasped his hand.

"My friend, a thousand thanks for a most felicitous voyage! You have entertained us as though we were friends and kinsfolk."

"I'll not say that you have not entertained me," said Captain Rymingtowne. "Is your baggage packed?"

"We shall not forget your courtesy," Perez cried and looked a volume of instigation at his wife. But she would not answer his eyes. She hung back. "Come, sir, let's make a festival of our parting."

"I am not so happy as that," Captain Rymingtowne drawled.

"I wish this were Alicante, that we could do you honor in our own home. But at least let us show you what Spanish good will is and Spanish good fare. Come ashore with us and let us have a merry dinner." Again he looked at his wife who was still backward, and for a moment there was something of venom in his sleek face. "Nay, I'll not be

denied," he said eagerly; "you must honor us with an hour ashore, sir."

"I can not suffer that," said Gaddi quietly.

They all looked at him: Captain Rymingtowne with amused amazement and a "God bless you, grandad!" Perez with that touch of venom contorting his mouth and a "You, my old friend?" The woman in surprise and fear.

Then Perez said with contempt,

"Oh, if the gentleman is sore at being left out of a good dinner——"

"I might be more sore of eating it," Gaddi said quietly. "Captain Rymingtowne, if you, who are an Englishman, go ashore in Spain you may stay there longer than you wish; which, as you observe, is no affair of mine. But my voyage would be delayed, which I should deplore."

"Now you are very tender of me, to be sure," said Captain Rymingtowne and looked at him with a grin and a frown. "But I ha' cut my wisdom teeth, grandad, and I'll thank you not to hold my hand."

Perez laughed heartily.

"I think the old gentleman has a stomach-ache. Come, sir, let's leave him to nurse it! You are in no more danger on Spanish ground than strutting your own quarter-deck. Danger, quotha! The only danger you shall find with me is what there is in a gallon of the best from Xeres."

"I'll dine with you, my lad, when you come to Berkshire," said Captain Rymingtowne. "Now I am in a hurry to be there, and I have spent time enough already in landing you." He turned to a sailor and said in English, "Get their baggage on deck."

It seems that he was now doubtful of Perez and Gaddi both. They were both too interested in him for his taste.

Perez turned to his wife, and there was something of a threat under his tone of urgent affection.

"Come, Maria, my love, the gentleman makes us seem inhospitable. Persuade him to honor us."

"I know that he will not listen to me," the woman said wearily.

Perez gave her a look like a blow. Captain Rymingtowne strode away shouting in English,

"Get a ladder over the side. Is that baggage ready?"

Perez hurried after and cried out,

"Why, sir, if you are in such a hurry to be rid of us, we'll not hinder you. Let us have a boat and be gone."

Captain Rymingtowne turned upon him and stared a moment. You have to suppose at least that he could not read his man clear.

"None of my men leaves the ship, my lad," he said. "We'll hail a shore boat for you."

The which he did in a great roar.

Perez shrugged and made a gesture and laughed nervously.

"You—you are in an ill humor, sir. Have your way. Have your way. I am sure it is nothing to me!"

"Then you'll lose nothing by it," said Captain Rymingtowne and hailed the shore again.

FROM the time they anchored or before, there had been many watchers on the quay, and movement among them. In the last few moments their numbers had increased, and at Captain Rymingtowne's shouts there was a bustle of activity. All this, of course, was to be expected in any port. Since Cadiz had two citadels to garrison, the English seamen were not surprised to see musketeers and halberds in the crowd. So far no man on the *Reckoning* had a suspicion of the design.

Not one boat, but two, pushed off from the quay steps, and not mere cockboats or wherries, but a pair of pinnaces and close packed with men. There were some old fellows in gowns in the stern of the first. Between the oarsmen and on the bottom boards sat soldiers, and the smoke of their matches defiled the clear air.

Captain Rymingtowne swore an English oath and then fiercely said,

"You, Perez! What a pox is this?"

"What should it be?" Perez echoed and licked his lip. His voice sounded shrill. "It will only be the Mayor of the town come off to welcome you. We are ceremonious in Spain. We——"

Captain Rymingtowne broke from him, shouting,

"Man the capstan! All hands on deck!" There was a scurry of bare feet and the trumpet sounded and the *Reckoning* boiled with energy. "Walk her round!" Captain Rymingtowne cried. "Gunner! Starboard cannons! Younkers aloft!"

The *Reckoning* was moving up to her anchor before the pinnaces bumped alongside. There was a tumult of arrogant shouts from them to this tune,

"Halt there, English! Halt! We board you! The Corregidor comes aboard!"

"The devil he does!" Captain Rymingtowne muttered and made for the ladder.

He was in time to find Perez going over the side, and he caught him by neck and wrist and dragged him up again and dashed him down on the deck with intent to knock the sense out of him, and succeeded. Captain Rymingtowne kicked him out of the way, and leaning on the bulwarks shouted,

"Stand off in those boats! Stand off! We are under way and you'll be sunk, my lads!"

But already a man in a gown was on the ladder and climbing up.

"You are for a voyage, are you?" said Captain Rymingtowne.

The man continued to climb.

From the bow the boatswain shouted,

"Up and down, sir!"

"Break her out!" Captain Rymingtowne roared. "Ready cannons! Stand off, those shore boats, or I'll sink you, by God!" He gave the man in the gown a hand to haul him up, and before another could get firmly upon the ladder, threw it down upon the boats. "There's for you! Stand off, you fools! Now," he turned to the man in the gown, "now who the fiend are you?"

"Sir Captain, I am the Corregidor of Cadiz. And you—you are the English Captain Rymingtowne of the ship *Reckoning*."

"Anchor's apeak!" the boatswain shouted.

"You'll have time to know me, my lad," quoth Captain Rymingtowne. He shouted "Shake out the mainsail!" and walked aft to con his ship.

The Corregidor pursued him, crying,

"Sir, you are under arrest. You and your ship—I arrest you in the name of the King of Spain."

"God bless him!" said Captain Rymingtowne. The *Reckoning* was going through the water and the pinnaces labored after her with shouts. From one came a ragged volley of musketry. Captain Rymingtowne turned on his Corregidor. "Now, confound your eyes, this is war!"

"Sir, you are under arrest, I say. You insult the King of Spain. I command you to anchor!"

Captain Rymingtowne said something coarse.

THE outer citadel was now abeam. From its walls came white puffs of smoke and thunder, but again and again the balls whistled harmless through the rigging. As they drew away there was a crash and roar of rent canvas and tackle, and half the mizzen-topmast came thudding down on deck with men bloody beneath it.

Captain Rymingtowne put passion into oaths. But, recording this, he adds piously that the providence of God would not suffer them to be delivered to their enemies. For he was not hurt, nor the helmsman nor the wheel nor steering-gear. The ship held on her course and, for all the wreckage, had lost little of her press of sail. She drew out of range without more harm.

When with ax and lever they cleared away the wreck, it was found that one younker lay dead, and another and the trumpeter had hurts on head and rib and arm. And besides, the wife of Perez lay on the deck, distorted and very still, moaning.

While the seamen toiled, her husband had found his feet and, still dazed, began to look about him and mutter. He saw her plight, but did not come to her.

Captain Rymingtowne, having had his men borne away forward under the boatswain's care—the best surgeon they had—bent over her and raised her head.

"A bad business is it?" said he to her moans. "Can you stand, my girl?"

Gaddi sauntered up with some curiosity in his cold face. From the bulwarks where he was watching the shore line Perez, I suppose, turned to look.

The woman gazed up into Captain Rymingtowne's face, and after a minute, which seems to have impressed him strangely—he talks about a tenderness as of one who was glad to suffer—she smiled.

"You—you would not listen to me," she said, and then she laughed, gaily, innocently, like a child. Again her face was drawn with pain. "You would not take me," she muttered. "You are the first." Captain Rymingtowne confesses that he was troubled by the anguish of shame in her eyes. She raised herself a little. "For the love of God—kiss me—kiss me!" she cried.

Captain Rymingtowne bent over her.

I suppose that Perez had drawn near

before. Captain Rymingtowne was only aware of him crying, "Strumpet, you've played me false!" as he drove his dagger into her heart.

Captain Rymingtowne let her fall and sprang round to seize him, but he had rushed to the bulwarks and dived into the water and was seen striking out tumultuously for the distant shore.

The gunner came running with a musket.

"Let be," said Captain Rymingtowne. "There's water enough to drown him. Let him die slow," and he turned away.

Then his eye was taken by Gaddi, who came sauntering calmly toward him. It was natural, you will agree, that he should be irritated. He protests that Gaddi had been for some time insufferable, and this callousness in the affair of the woman was the last straw. I think that the adventures of the morning had so wrought upon him that he was aching for a chance to explode.

With a rare vehement ferocity he swore at Gaddi,

"You—and a pox on you! Why o' God's name could you not stay him, you limp, languid fool?"

Gaddi shrugged.

"You forget yourself, Captain. You are impudent."

Captain Rymingtowne looked him up and down.

"Now the Lord confound your wooden face!" said he. "You'd face me out, would you? You would talk me down? I'll handle you, my lad! Why, you are no better stuff than your brother that's over the side."

It seems that Gaddi's lean, controlled face exhibited some alarm. He cried out,

"You talk like a fool, sir! What's the fellow to me?"

Captain Rymingtowne was in a mood to find treachery everywhere.

"That's what I'll find out, my lad!" quoth he. "You know too much and you do too little! Gunner, take him in guard, take him forward, him and the Spaniard. Keep them apart, keep them in sight."

"This is not to be borne!" Gaddi cried, as a seaman laid hands on him. "What do you intend, sir?"

"To know what you knew of the rat, and what he knew of you—and what you are!"

"Sir, you'll not dare!" Gaddi stormed.

"Now bless your eyes, get forward!" cried the gunner and thrust him down the ladder to the waist.

IV

CAPTAIN RYMINGTOWNE began to pace the deck. You are not to suppose him anxious. He had, to be sure, run away with the Corregidor of Cadiz, and for that Spain would demand satisfaction. But he and his ship had been fired upon in time of peace without cause, and it was not to be supposed that any Government, least of all the Government which breathed the spirit of Queen Elizabeth, would allow that the King had a claim against him.

Not fear but a passion for revenge made his thoughts unsteady. He had seen men of his killed wantonly. You misconceive him if you do not know that his soul was insurgent for the chance to draw blood from the power that had killed them. Of course he could do it. He could make it easy to snap up a Spanish craft with rich freight enough. It was the season of the coming of the ships from South America with those cargoes of silver and gold which made Spain dominant in the world. The Summer's end always saw one or more of them sail in to Cadiz.

But to seize one would be flat piracy. England could not protect him. When Spain asked for her gold and the head of the man who stole it, it was impossible that she should be denied. England would not risk war to declare her sea-captains pirates. War might be coming, but he knew his Queen well enough to know that she would seek a better occasion and would sacrifice without an argument any man whose folly gave her trouble. Yet he coveted those gold ships passionately. To snatch one of them would be a blow to make Spain wince, a revenge that would ring through Christendom. His anger cried that he was shamed if he were content with less.

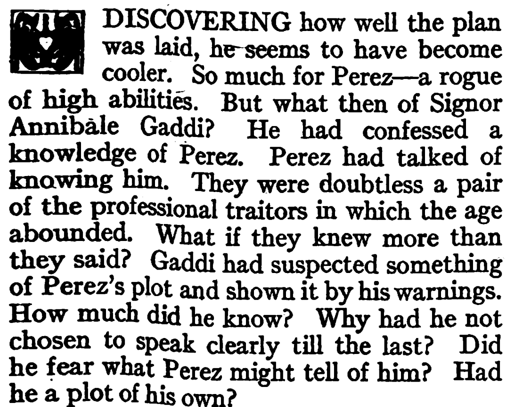
It is hard to imagine him resolving to fling his own life away for the sake of rage over dead men. But he was, beyond doubt, much agitated and unsure of himself. To grow calmer, to make his brain master again he went below and set himself to unravel the mystery from which the whole bad business sprang.

He had no doubt, as soon as he could

make himself think, that Perez had sought a passage to Cadiz to bring him within the grasp of Spain. The woman's task, of course, was to lull his suspicions, to allure him, to decoy him ashore, and because she had turned honest and shrank from that, her husband conceived that she had blabbed and put Captain Rymingtowne on guard. But who had set Perez on?

Captain Rymingtowne began to go through his baggage. Very soon he found letters from the Governor of Valencia and Don Alonzo Girono which made the scheme plain. They were pleased to call Captain Rymingtowne many ill names. They desired to have him and his crew in prison and confiscate his ship. Perez had been paid five hundred ducats to bring the *Reckoning* into a Spanish harbor, Valencia or Alicante or another.

As soon as he knew to which Captain Rymingtowne would consent to go, he was charged to send word. That explained everything, including Perez's strange visit to the Genoese ship. Once in harbor, Perez was to get Captain Rymingtowne on shore, if he could, but the Corregidor of the port would be warned and have a guard ready. Altogether it was a very neat plan. Captain Rymingtowne formally ascribes his escape to Providence.



DISCOVERING how well the plan was laid, he seems to have become cooler. So much for Perez—a rogue of high abilities. But what then of Signor Annibale Gaddi? He had confessed a knowledge of Perez. Perez had talked of knowing him. They were doubtless a pair of the professional traitors in which the age abounded. What if they knew more than they said? Gaddi had suspected something of Perez's plot and shown it by his warnings. How much did he know? Why had he not chosen to speak clearly till the last? Did he fear what Perez might tell of him? Had he a plot of his own?

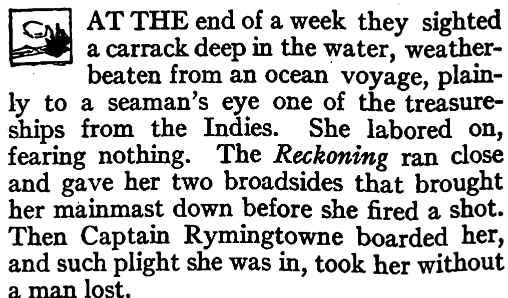
Captain Rymingtowne went to Gaddi's cabin. For some time he found nothing of interest but a coffer heavy with money, but at last, dealing brutally with a locked leather wallet, such as a man might carry in his bosom at a pinch, he found a mass of papers. The first defied him, being in Latin, though he could see they were from Rome and addressed to Englishmen. That was more than enough for suspicions.

Soon he came to Spanish and found himself in the midst of a conspiracy that brought the blood to his brow. There had been rumors of war and revolt and the Queen's murder many a year. Here were plans of war and murder instant. The Queen was to be "taken out of the way." The Duke of Alva was to land in Essex with twenty thousand men. And here a letter from the King of Spain himself to the Duke of Norfolk promised him the Viceroyalty of England! Not the Duke of Norfolk only, but half a dozen other men of note, it was plain, had promised themselves to Spain, and Spain sent money and promised arms. The Autumn was to see England in flames.

Captain Rymingtowne flung himself back in his chair. Here under his hand was matter enough to warrant him though he sank every ship that bore the Spanish flag. The man who brought that wallet to the Queen's council might laugh at any plaint of Spain. I do not find evidence that he was familiar with Scripture, but he professes that he cried out as he gripped the wallet again,

"The Lord hath delivered them into my hand!"

He gave orders that Gaddi was to be strictly guarded. He took care that Gaddi should know nothing of what he had discovered—by telling no man anything. And of what he meant to do, he told nothing, but for a week the *Reckoning* beat to and fro between Cape St. Vincent and Cadiz Bay, always just out of sight of land.



AT THE end of a week they sighted a carrack deep in the water, weather-beaten from an ocean voyage, plainly to a seaman's eye one of the treasure-ships from the Indies. She labored on, fearing nothing. The *Reckoning* ran close and gave her two broadsides that brought her mainmast down before she fired a shot. Then Captain Rymingtowne boarded her, and such plight she was in, took her without a man lost.

Only the boatswain had a pike between his ribs of which, since he was fat, the wound healed slowly. They found aboard her a hundred and fifty thousand pezos of gold and some silver, besides pearls and emeralds, the which they put aboard the *Reckoning* and left the carrack to take the news home to Spain. So they made sail for Bristol very merrily.

A MAN OF IDEAS

by Nevil G. Henshaw

THIS is a story that the little hunchback, Jean Le Bossu, told me one night as we lay before our fire, deep in the heart of the Grand Woods. Dugas's Lake he had called the shallow, rush-grown coulée near which we had pitched our camp, and he had added a few moments later that Dugas was a man of ideas. So it was natural that, as we took our good-night smoke, he should drift quite easily into the tale. He began:

THIS Dugas was ever unfortunate, m'sieu. It commenced when he was a child. He had no brothers, no sisters, to play with. Only his parents who dwelt in a small cabin upon the plantation of M'sieu Prudhomme.

The parents also were unfortunate. They could not even make the small return that is required of a tenant. It was said of them that they were lucky to have but the one child.

On the other hand, M'sieu Prudhomme was rich, he was powerful. In addition to his plantation he owned the bank at Landry. In all this country there was no soul who did not pay him tribute.

One day Dugas's mother fell sick. It was a terrible sickness which must be attended to at once. No doctor lived within ten miles. In the pasture were many horses belonging to M'sieu Prudhomme, and there was no time in which to ask permission. Dugas's father sprang upon one of them and galloped away. M'sieu Prudhomme heard the hoofbeats as they approached his house. He ran forth upon his *galerie*, gun in hand.

"It is a horse-thief!" he cried, and fired.

Afterward he said that he had done it as a joke, that he had only wished to give the father a scare. It was a good joke, but the father was killed!

The mother died at sunset. That also was a joke, but Dugas could not appreciate it. Perhaps he was too young. He was only thirteen.

After this Dugas did as best he could. He lived from house to house. Often he slept in stables. Sometimes, when food was

scarce, he starved. But always Dugas worked, in the field, at the carrier, in the mill—everywhere. And as he worked he began to save, at first a little, afterward each penny that he could earn.

Now this, m'sieu, may seem strange for one so young and alone in the world, but Dugas's parents had not been of our kind. They had come from France, and in their blood had been the love of the land. Ah, that love of the land! For us, with all these great fields, it is hard to understand, but those who know will tell you that it is true. To those French peasants the land is everything. They toil for it unceasingly, gaining it foot by foot, measuring a man's success according to his acres. For a spot no bigger than a garden they will give their very lives, and he who owns a dozen arpents is king. It is very strange.

Thus it was that Dugas saved and, as he did so, he began to look upon M'sieu Prudhomme with that admiration which is born of the land. For him the banker became a model, his success was the goal toward which one should strive.

EACH afternoon, when his work was done, Dugas would go to a little knoll that was behind the sugar house, and would sit there looking out upon the great plantation whose boundaries were lost beyond the horizon. Slowly, carefully he would scan each mile, each acre, here green with the standing cane, there ragged with the flags and stubble. Almost did he count each furrow, each new-turned clod, scooping up little handfuls of earth and letting them run through his fingers, like a miser caressing gold.

"*Dieu,*" he would say to himself with the voice of one at prayer, and in those moments M'sieu Prudhomme became for him as a god.

It is true that the banker had been responsible for the death of both of Dugas's parents, but that had been long before, when Dugas was a child. Things were different in those days and the rich were very powerful. When wronged, the poor could only grumble among themselves. If they were wise, they shrugged their shoulders and hoped for better luck next time.

It was true also that M'sieu Prudhomme became more cruel and grasping every day, collecting his dollars as a weasel sucks one's blood, but Dugas told himself that this was all in the way of business. Once, when the banker was selling the roof above the head of a dying man, Dugas had heard him say,

" 'You can not make an omelet without breaking eggs.' "

At first Dugas laughed at this saying, as at a joke. Afterward, when he had time to think of it, it became his religion.

"*Bien,*" he would say, when his companions reproached him for his niggardly ways, "laugh now, while you have the chance. Later it will be my turn. You are eggs, I tell you—all eggs which have been broken to make this great omelet of a plantation. As for me, I intend to be a cook myself some day. Then, perhaps, I shall use the shells, or whatever else is left of you."

And so Dugas became a veritable miser, denying himself all pleasures and comforts for which one has to pay. At the age of twenty he had saved enough to buy himself a place of twenty acres upon which, at odd moments, he built a small hut and stable. In a year more he had become possessed of a team of mules and the implements necessary for his crop. After this he married and settled down to realize his ambition.

Dugas's wife was not pretty, but she was possessed of an industry which to Dugas was more precious than all the beauty in the world. She had been an orphan, living upon the charity of one of M'sieu Prudhomme's tenants, and for a dot she brought naught save the work of her two strong arms.

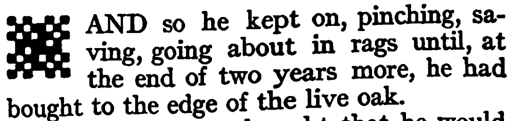
Yet Dugas loved her, not with the hot, fierce love of our kind, but with the cooler, more lasting affection that is born of appreciation. Perhaps you have seen a man pat a faithful work-animal upon his way to the field? It was like that with Dugas and his wife.

Now one would suppose that, after this, Dugas was satisfied. He had his house, his land, his team, a wife of whom he was fond. When people passed his place and stopped to inquire to whom it belonged, he could reply.

"It is mine."

From a tenant he had risen to the position of an independent planter. But Dugas was not satisfied, for in his blood there was always working the desire of the land. When, in the afternoon, he rested from his work upon his doorstep, he could without raising his head see to the end of his possessions.

"Look," he would say to his wife, "if only we owned to the edge of the live oak out there, on foggy days at least, the sky would be our boundary."



AND so he kept on, pinching, saving, going about in rags until, at the end of two years more, he had bought to the edge of the live oak.

After this Dugas thought that he would be content, but again he was disappointed. There are few fogs in this country, and each day the live oak seemed to draw a little nearer. In the end he abandoned himself to the madness of his desire, buying fresh land and then mortgaging it that he might continue in his race to the horizon. Always he was signing papers for M'sieu Prudhomme, for his home, his fields, his teams—for the very bed in which he slept!

"That is all right," he would say to his friends when they warned him. "You are jealous, you eggs, because I have become a cook as I promised you. But what you see now is nothing. Any one can be a cook. Just wait until I am a *chef*, like our M'sieu Prudhomme! This is but the beginning."

"Yes, the beginning of the end," said the friends; and in less than a year their prophecy had come true.

It commenced with the weather, the greatest of all enemies of the planter. It was like a bolt from the sky, that freeze, affecting rich and poor alike. One afternoon there was Dugas's great stand of cane waving lazily in the sunlight, regiment after regiment of green-crowned stalks marching proudly toward the conquered horizon. Next morning the crowns were brown and sere, speaking only too plainly of the frozen, red-streaked ruin below.

At first Dugas was dazed. Later, his fighting spirit, his old strength of ambition, came back to him. He thrust out his jaw and went to count his losses. In the end he found that he could save himself. Already he had sold a part of his crop and, with care, he could still pay the different interests that would fall due.

"So," said he, "one must expect such setbacks. Even the best cooks will sometimes burn their fingers. Another crop and all will be well again."

And then, in less than a week, his wife fell ill.

Now sickness among the rich, m'sieu, is nothing. Among the poor, if it is long enough, it is ruin. With Dugas's wife it was not so much an illness as the effect of her marvelous industry, but it was none the less disastrous. For six months she lay in bed, racked and broken by the hard, pitiless life of the small plantation, and in that time the doctor paid many visits. He lived seven miles from Dugas's home, and his charge was one dollar a mile. Dugas suffered, but he was faithful to his wife. The remainder of his money went like water.

AT THE end of the six months, Dugas saddled a mule and rode into Landry. Not only was his money gone, but his interest was due, and the doctor had refused to come without some guarantee of future payment. It was a very grave cook that knocked at the door of M'sieu Prudhomme.

The banker received his visitor graciously. He was a large man, very stout and flabby, with a sallow, unhealthy color, not unlike that of his beloved gold. Upon his lips there was ever a smile, but his eyes were like two small, round pieces of stone.

"So, Dugas," said he, smiling his hardest, "it is good to see one as prompt as yourself in these hard times. You have brought the interest, of course?"

But Dugas was not to be deceived.

"Come, m'sieu," said he, "you know of my circumstances as well as myself. I must have more money and at once. The interest will have to wait until next year."

At this, the banker lost his smile. He became furiously angry. He snapped at Dugas like a vicious dog. So Dugas was penniless, was he? So he could not pay his interest? He would rob his benefactor, and that in the worst part of a bad year? *Bien*, there was but one thing to do! He would sell Dugas out and so save what he could from the wreck. No doubt the land would sell for nothing at such a time, but it was better to lose a part than all.

Dugas was aghast. Never for a moment had he thought that M'sieu Prudhomme would refuse him aid. True, the banker had been merciless with his tenants, but he, Dugas, was a large landowner—a cook. It had been his belief that these cooks stood by one another in time of trouble. Even in the hardest years M'sieu Prudhomme had prospered. Therefore, Dugas had argued with himself, he would prosper also.

And now he was to be sold out. He was

to return to the position from which he had arisen. He was like a man who has climbed to the top of an almost inaccessible cliff only to be hurled down again.

Dugas rode back like one stupefied, his head upon his breast, his arms swinging uselessly at his sides. When a short distance from his house, a neighbor rode forward to tell him that his wife had died during his absence. He scarce heard the message. One's cup can hold but a certain amount of misery, and Dugas's was already full.

Through the next week, Dugas went about as in a dream. He buried his wife without a tear. He stood by at the sale of his property and saw M'sieu Prudhomme buy it in for the amount of his interest with never the quiver of an eyelid. Then, when it was all over, he made a bundle of his few possessions and slipped away into the quiet of these great woods.

AH, M'SIEU, who knows the bitterness of the moment when Dugas awoke to the truth of his position! There he was, a man of but thirty years, already aged and broken by his struggle for success. And what had it amounted to? All along he had been but an egg, a great, foolish egg, tended carefully by M'sieu Prudhomme that, at its breaking, it might contribute all the more to the great omelet of his possessions.

For the first time Dugas saw that some are born cooks and others eggs and that, strive though the latter may, the former will ever prey upon them. His companions had been the sensible ones, since, having been created eggs, they had been satisfied with their condition. As for himself—he had been a fool. He had lost his wife, his home, his position. Nothing remained to him save revenge.

Now, in this matter of revenge, m'sieu, Dugas showed that, at heart at least, he was still a cook. Most men in his position would have accepted their misfortune with a shrug and a hope for the future, or at best would have taken a shot at the banker. But Dugas was a man of ideas.

To shoot one, after all, is not such a terrible revenge. If the matter is attended to properly there is a report, a gasp, and one's enemy is safe from all further harm. Perhaps he suffers scarce a pang. Perhaps he is transported instantly to a land of eternal happiness. Who can tell?

Thus thought Dugas and, as he thought, he went over his score with M'sieu Prudhomme. There was his father, his mother, his wife, and lastly himself. Surely the crack of a rifle could not settle such a list, especially as the banker was without family or friends and there would be none left to mourn him.

No, he must strike at his enemy through that which he loved best—his money. Thus only could he make the banker suffer and, with each dollar that he took, the suffering would be increased. To Dugas, at least, was granted the satisfaction that he thoroughly knew his man. If he could take a sufficient amount it would be worse than drawing the very life-blood of M'sieu Prudhomme.

Four days Dugas reconnoitered, and at the end of that time he made his plan. It was very simple, but very sure. At Landry he had learned that each month, when the banker was in need of money for the planters' pay-rolls, he procured it from the mint at New Orleans. The money was sent in silver dollars, one thousand at a time, and was delivered by the railroad at the city of Mouton. From Mouton it was brought to Landry by one, Lacour, the agent of M'sieu Prudhomme. Dugas knew Lacour to be a dead shot, but this did not deter him. It was his idea that the agent should have no chance in which to display his skill.

Having formed his plan, Dugas sought for a place in which he could conceal himself during the search that would be made for him. In the end he chose this lake, since, once hidden amid the rushes of its center, he would have his pursuers in the middle and at his mercy.

Now few, m'sieu, would have chosen such a place of concealment, for, as you have seen, to get to the rushes one must cross the middle of the lake, and that middle is very dangerous. Yet Dugas tried it with the few stores that were to last him while in hiding, sinking knee-deep in the treacherous bottom, emerging well-nigh exhausted, his body one great ache from the tenacious grip of the ooze.

UPON the following day, having heard that the money was due, Dugas concealed himself in the cherokee hedge which makes a dark alley of the road to Landry. His face was hid-

den by a mask, and in his hand was his rifle, well cleaned and oiled. At his command Lacour dismounted and walked away, the rifle covering him until he had disappeared around a bend of the road. An instant later Dugas was in his place, and galloping for the Grand Woods, the sack of dollars chinking merrily upon his saddle.

Thus far the affair had been easy. All that remained for him now was to reach his hiding-place without leaving too clear a trail for his pursuers to follow.

So Dugas dismounted at the edge of the forest and crept carefully along until he splashed out into the shallow waters of the lake. The sack was upon his shoulder and the rushes were near at hand, yet at the very moment of his success he was met by an unexpected difficulty.

It was the bottom, m'sieu. The soft, treacherous bottom, together with the added weight of the thousand silver dollars. Five paces from the bank Dugas had already sunk above his ankles. Five paces more and he was in above his knees. Yet he struggled on until, not far from the middle, he slid suddenly down to the level of his waist, while the ripples spread out to lap against the rushes, as though beckoning him on to his destruction.

Now the mind, m'sieu, is a curious thing. Most men in Dugas' position would have been terrified. They would have cast the sack of silver aside, and fought their way toward the safety of the shore.

But Dugas was of different mettle. Struggling, sinking, with the cold fingers of the ooze clutching ever higher at his body, he yet found time to form that plan which gave him his reputation.

"*Dieu!*" said he to himself as the thought came to him, "I have indeed been blind not to have seen this before!"

Then, tearing open his prize, he crammed the dollars into his pockets and into the bosom of his blouse, until the sack had been deprived of one-half of its contents. Next, placing the lightened sack in the palm of one hand, he hurled it from him to the edge of his hiding-place where, with infinite care and patience, he finally followed it. A while later, when he splashed ashore again, the sack was once more full and round, lying in plain sight upon the bed of rushes which its weight had crushed down.

THAT afternoon at dusk, Dugas entered Landry by an unfrequented road, and crept through the shadows to the bank of M'sieu Prudhomme. His clothes had been carefully washed and dried so that there was no evidence of his struggle in the lake. Within the bank burned a lamp, and by its light M'sieu Prudhomme bent alone above a ledger. An instant later Dugas stood before his enemy.

"Good evening, m'sieu," said he, "I have come to tell you that I have been a fool."

M'sieu Prudhomme went pale, but his hand crept forth toward the weapon in his desk, for even the greatest coward will protect that which he really loves.

"You have been a thief, my friend," said he. "Despite your mask, you were easily recognized by Lacour."

Dugas smiled.

"It is the same thing, since I might have known that I would be recognized," he replied. "Now that I have come to my senses, I have an offer to make you. Which would you rather have, myself in prison, or your thousand dollars?"

"The money, of course," cried M'sieu Prudhomme. "I care nothing for you."

"Then," said Dugas, "if you will sign a paper releasing me from all blame, I will tell you where the money is. Otherwise you will never find it. You may lock me away until you have accounted for every dollar, and then I will set forth *au large*. I have at last discovered that I am an egg. Therefore one place will be as good for me as another."

Thus, m'sieu, the matter was arranged. In the presence of the constable M'sieu Prudhomme wrote the paper and was told of the location of the money, after which Dugas was locked in that room of the constable's house which was sometimes used as a prison.

Next morning at daybreak M'sieu Prudhomme set forth for the woods alone, since, of the only two men whom he could trust upon such a mission, neither one was available. The first, the constable, must watch his prisoner until the finding of the money. The second, Lacour, the agent, was after his assailant and, as Dugas had sworn that the money lay in plain sight from the bank, there was no time to wait for him.

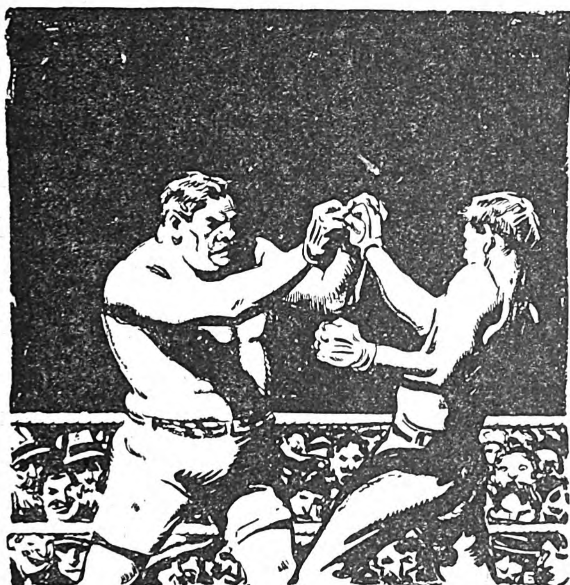
And so, m'sieu, since M'sieu Prudhomme was without a companion, there is nothing

more to tell. Only these trees upon the bank and those rushes out there in the water saw the great cook of Landry as he squeezed his last heap of dollars from humankind. Perhaps he held the sack until it was too late. Perhaps, as is more probable, he carried the silver with him to his doom, clutching the precious dollars to his breast with all the fierceness of the clinging ooze that slowly sucked him down. At all events no single, wild-thrown coin was found either upon the bank or among the rushes, although the banker's trail was plainly seen—going the one way.

"AND Dugas?" I asked as Le Bossu paused to mend the fire.

The little man shrugged.

"He set forth *au large*, as he had promised, m'sieu," he replied. "None could hold him since he had his paper, and the marks of the money-bag were printed deep at the rushes' edge. It is true that some said that Dugas should have warned the banker of the danger of the added weight, but they were the few who had not contributed to the great omelet of M'sieu Prudhomme. As for the rest, they said what they will tell you to this day—that Dugas was a man of ideas."



THE CHAMPION of TEN PINES

by E. A. Morphy

THOUGH the embarrassment was purely temporarary, Mr. Trench felt that he was in a tight place. For some wholly inexplicable reason, Tubby Garvey had failed to forward the four hundred dollars that had to be paid to Geilheimer before Sunday dawned, and Mr. Trench was left stranded in Ten Pines, with his partner Aleck Carrington, and barely twenty dollars of spending money between them.

When no letter had come from Tubby by the noonday mail—the only one that reached Ten Pines from the north—Trench

had got on to the wires and sent telegrams to his friends Lew Callaghan and Jimmy Chope in San Francisco, McCloskey in Chicago and Charley Burkinshaw at New York, in each case appealing for an immediate remittance of five hundred.

Alas, it was Saturday! As Mr. Trench had only too accurately apprehended, each of his friends was at the nearest baseball game or race meeting. It was four o'clock, and no reply had arrived to any of his messages; therefore there was no longer any cause for hope.

The next train out of Ten Pines left shortly before ten o'clock at night. There was no Sunday train.

"I guess, Aleck," said Mr. Trench, "that we're marooned here till Tuesday. I'd ship you back to Market Street to-night if I could; you've no right to be dawdling round Ten Pines with that sick leg of yours; but the price of the wires has raked out the exchequer, and we've scarcely got fifteen dollars left."

"Bill Trench," retorted Mr. Carrington with some acerbity, "you go swallow your foot! Did you ever know me want to quit a busted pal yet?"

At this instant Geilheimer's bartender came into the store with a telegram, and the thrill of relief with which it filled his bosom banished from Mr. Trench's mind all thoughts of a reply to his partner.

"Saved at last, Aleck!" he whispered gaily, as he stood up and held out his hand for the despatch.

The bartender shook his head politely.

"It's not for you, Mr. Trench," said he, "it's for Mr. Carrington. The messenger from the station said he'd wait to see if there was any reply."

Mr. Carrington opened the envelope, read the message, and paled a little.

"No," said he slowly. "There ain't no reply."

Mr. Trench looked at his partner inquiringly, then he took the yellow paper he proffered him. It read:

Come at once, Dolly very ill.

KITTY.

"A bit rough, ain't it?" soliloquized Mr. Carrington.

Mr. Trench closed his jaw tight.

"I guess, Aleck, we'll go have a drink," said he. "We'll let Geilheimer and the mine option and every other —— thing go plumb to ——! You must start home to-night on that!"

THEY walked from the store into the crowded saloon, and Trench ordered the drinks.

Dolly was Mr. Carrington's four-year-old child, and in his eyes she was the most superlatively beautiful and fascinating creature on earth. Kitty was Mr. Carrington's wife.

Next after Kitty, Dolly loved Carrington better than anything else within the pale of her knowledge. Immediately after Carrington in her affections came "Uncle Bill" Trench. Uncle Bill reciprocated that affection. Dolly was the only thing in skirts that had just cause for implicit love of and confidence in that gifted adventurer.

Mr. Carrington filled his glass with whisky to the brim and gulped it down as if it were a pan of ashes.

Mr. Trench tossed off a somewhat shorter drink himself.

As he laid his glass back on the counter of the bar and aimlessly traced circles with it on the polished surface of the mahogany, a burly, bull-necked and boisterous giant stepped forth from the throng behind him and deliberately bashed in his hat.

The man gave no warning, made no comment of any kind. He just lifted a fist like a leg of mutton, and, with one tap of it, jammed Mr. Trench's immaculate derby well down over Mr. Trench's eyes.

Then he drew back with an air of ponderous exultation.

"I allus allowed," said he, "that Ten Pines on a Saturday afternoon was no salubrious spot for dude tiles!"

Even as he spoke, and while Mr. Trench was still struggling to drag the crumpled headpiece from his tormented forehead, Mr. Carrington's revolver was out of his pocket and pointed at the giant's stomach.

"Hands up!" snapped Mr. Carrington.

Before the dazed aggressor fully realized the gravity of the situation, Mr. Trench had wrenched off the offending hat, and, with a back-handed smack that echoed through the bar-room like a pistol-shot, had slapped it against the gaping giant's left ear.

The force of the blow sent the man reeling sideways, and Trench was already advancing to follow up his advantage when he realized that his partner had the man covered,

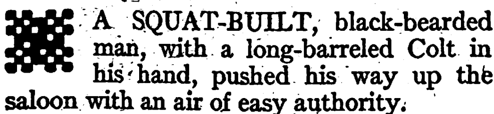
and that therefore he dared not attempt to strike back.

"Easy Bill! Easy!" warned Mr. Carrington. "If I drive a hole in that swill-tub, it'll likely make a mess in this clean and respectable saloon. Let the duck pick up your hat and eat it!"

A yell of great gladness arose from the listeners in the remoter corners of the bar; but those in the immediate vicinity of the budding row shuffled, hurried and uneasy, in a hasty endeavor to escape from the zone of fire.

"This accomplished and highly trained animile," continued Mr. Carrington blandly, "will now oblige the company by pickin' up the hat of our distinguished friend, Mr. Trench, and proceeding to devour the same with such expressions of gusto and approval as——"

"Sorry, gents!" interrupted a sharp and authoritative voice from the doorway through which Trench and his partner had entered a minute earlier. "Sorry, gents; but you must quit larkin'! I'm the only gent licensed for fancy gun-play in this town! Now then, will that tall gent with the black mustache, as is lookin' cross at Jim Oliver, kindly oblige by puttin' up his gun!"



A SQUAT-BUILT, black-bearded man, with a long-barreled Colt in his hand, pushed his way up the saloon with an air of easy authority.

"That's O. K. sir. Tha-ank ye-ou!" he bowed urbanely as Carrington lowered his weapon. "No, you don't, Jim!" he rasped out sharply, in almost the same breath, as the giant, freed from the menace of the pointed revolver, turned tiger-like to spring on Mr. Trench.

"No, you don't, Jim!" he repeated. "No rough house this trip! You'll just keep quiet, or get sent home to bed for your ma to tuck you in snug an' comfy. If you lift a fist while this stranger's gun is down, I'll drop you, solid, in your boots! That's sure pop! Savvy?"

In spite of their troubles, and the apparent perils of the moment, Mr. Carrington and Mr. Trench both beamed their dutiful admiration of the stalwart man-driver, while the giant he addressed as Jim Oliver—now twice balked, and itching all over for vengeance—frothed at the mouth in an agony of impotent rage.

In less than a minute, however, the tactful officer had chevied him out of his fury and gently piloted him to the other end of the saloon, where he left him surrounded by a trusty group of sympathetic citizens. These good friends listened to his angry protests with profound interest, but declined to allow him to approach the offensive strangers who had so discourteously resented having a hat squashed over the face of one of them.

As soon as he had left the angry giant in a place of safety, the officer approached Messrs. Trench and Carrington.

"I dislike seeming disagreeable, gents," said he, "but I must ask you to keep yer hands off yer guns. I'm Sheriff here, an' most any of the boys'll tell you that Mike Hogan ain't no psalm-singing spoil-sport; but it's my duty to keep things peaceful in this town of Ten Pines—peaceful an' calm an' balmy like—an' therefore it's up to me to clap the lid on all gun-fightin'. See?"

"Certainly, certainly," concurred Mr. Trench, "I've got no gun, and I can give you my assurance that my friend, Mr. Carrington, won't draw his again unless in self-defense. But do you think I could coax you to take an official snooze for, say, half an hour or so, while I lay that stall-fed hat-smasher of yours across my knee and give him a spanking where no bones can get broken?"

The peacemaker smiled, but shook his head.

"Nit!" said he. "An' if you take my advice, gents," he added, "you'll light out of this town as smart as you can pick up yer feet. It ain't no healthy place for the likes o' youse on a Saturday afternoon. The society is a shade too mixed; an' this here Jim Oliver as was huntin' trouble ain't no ornary bully as you seem to think he be, but a genuine bang-up, ring-trained heavyweight—a prize-fighter from the word 'go.' That's why he won't pack no gun, and didn't slap back at your friend here. If the boys thought he went heeled, they'd shoot him into ground bait in sheer self-defense the first minute he got drunk."

MR. TRENCH sighed as he thanked the Sheriff for his kindly advice, but regretted that their engagements would not allow either himself or Mr. Carrington to leave Ten Pines for a day or so.

"Well, gents," said the Sheriff, "it's not for me to butt in on your private business. All I can say is as how you might do worse nor lay low while Jim Oliver is on this toot of his. Don't try to do no spankin' of him anyhow. He's too big for it, an' mightn't like it, an' could twist yer two necks for you as easy as rollin' off a log."

Mr. Carrington ventured to interpose a remark at this point and reminded Mr. Trench that he was forgetting the hospitalities. The oversight being rectified, Mr. Hogan resumed:

"Jim Oliver was looking for a fight when he give your friend's hat the knock," he explained, as he drank his best regards to Mr. Carrington. "He has a standin' offer in the bar here of five hundred dollars to a hundred that nobody will stand up again him for six rounds. Some day one o' them heavyweight amateurs in the California Athletic Club will get wind of the chance, an' come an' knock spots off Jim when he's good an' ripe drunk, an' walk off with his five hundred plunks. But there ain't nobody here of his weight an' trainin'; so all he's got to do is put on dog an' swank."

"How long since he's done any proper ring work?" asked Mr. Trench.

"Oh, a couple o' year or thereabout," replied the Sheriff. "They say he was spotted sellin' a fight or something up Reno way, an' it put the kybosh on him with the clubs. That's what fetched him down here, I guess —wants to let the smell o' the trouble wear off in the deodorizin' climate o' Ten Pines."

AT THE other end of the bar, Mr. Oliver still swore and spluttered among his sympathetic friends, loudly denouncing, the while, the rank cowardice of drawing a gun on a notoriously unarmed and law-abiding gentleman like himself. A man that was so utterly lost to all sense of self-respect as to commit such a crime against society, and then go hide behind the protecting wing of the Sheriff, would feed the helpless orphan on a diet of cockroaches and pawn the mourning-wreaths from his dead mother's grave.

The Sheriff glanced down toward the speaker and again shook his head.

"That's a dig at you, gents," said he; "you'll excuse me, if I move off and show myself down there a bit," he added affably; "the boys may be getting excited like, an' it's up to me to keep 'em in soothin'-sirup. Hope to see you again before you quit!"

"Aleck," said Mr. Trench, as Mr. Hogan departed on his mission of pacificator, "you just chase yourself down to the telegraph office and wire Kitty you're leaving here by ten o'clock!"

"What the——" began Carrington.

"Go on, I tell you!" exhorted Trench. "There's five hundred up for surviving six rounds with our genial friend Mr. Jim Oliver, and I'm going to give him a run for his money or bust!"

Mr. Carrington knew too much to expostulate. He shook hands with Mr. Trench.

"You're a brick, Bill," said he. "That's flat. Wish the job was up to me; for I have more weight than you have, and weight counts in a scrap with a geezer of that build. You're barely in the light middleweight class yourself, and that chap's as big as John L. Sullivan."

"Get on with your telegram to Kitty!" interrupted Trench. "I was sizing him up when I swatted him just now. That's why I asked Hogan how long since he'd been in training. He's soft as mush, short in the reach, slow as molasses, and beef to the heel like a Mullingar heifer."

"Honest?" queried Mr. Carrington.

"Sure, Aleck," protested Mr. Trench. "He won't put a spot on me in half a dozen rounds if I don't want him to; and if he'll double the money I'll knock him out in twenty. He's a back number! I'm as hard as nails!"

Mr. Carrington polished off his drink.

"As I stated before, Bill," said he, "you're a brick! It surely looks like suicide, but——"

"Go send your telegram, or I'll be counted out before you get back," cut in Mr. Trench, as he moved out from the bar and commenced shouldering his way down to the group that clustered about Oliver, who was still fiercely orating.

Geilheimer detected the maneuver and hurried to avert a collision between his guest and the prize-fighter.

"He wants to eat you raw, Mr. Trench," he explained. "Better keep off the grass till he cools down."

"But I don't want him to cool down!" protested Trench. "I've just heard that he's laying five hundred dollars to a hundred that nobody can stand up against him for six rounds. If he'll only shut his mouth long enough to let somebody else get in a

word edgewise, I'll offer to corral that five hundred. I want it to buy myself a new hat!"

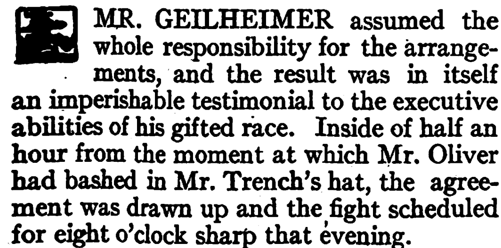
An aurora of unctuous joy lighted the face of Mr. Geilheimer. He clutched at the shapely hand of his guest in a spasm of irrepressible joy.

"My God! but he'll kill you, sure, Mr. Trench!" he almost sobbed in the fulness of his gratitude. "But if you fix the fight in this hotel here, I'll pay the hundred dollars you lose, and give you a hundred more for it anyway, as a share of the profits, myself."

"Taken!" said Mr. Trench promptly, "and I only hope, Mr. Geilheimer," he added, "that you'll only be one hundred dollars out on your bargain!"

A moment later, amid a frantic outburst of cheering, the delighted citizens of Ten Pines learned that their hopes of two years were at last to be gratified, and that Mr. Oliver was going to treat them to an exhibition of boxing at its best, with Mr. Trench as his unfortunate victim.

II



MR. GEILHEIMER assumed the whole responsibility for the arrangements, and the result was in itself an imperishable testimonial to the executive abilities of his gifted race. Inside of half an hour from the moment at which Mr. Oliver had bashed in Mr. Trench's hat, the agreement was drawn up and the fight scheduled for eight o'clock sharp that evening.

Thirty minutes later, the judges, timekeeper and other officials had been duly appointed, and an army of willing hands were busy erecting the ring in the great galvanized iron shed that formed Geilheimer's agricultural storehouse and hay-barn, and were transforming that capacious, if desolate, structure into a well-lighted auditorium for patrons of the fight. By virtue of his position and unimpeachable devotion to fair play in every species of sport, Mr. Mike Hogan, the Sheriff, had been unanimously elected referee.

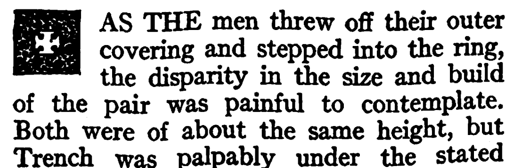
A neatly penned notice in Geilheimer's bar, and another outside Geilheimer's store, announced to all and sundry that the greatest fight ever known in Los Gatos County would take place that evening, when Mr. Bill Trench of San Francisco and New York would stand up against Mr. Jim Oliver of Ten Pines, for six rounds of three minutes each, with one minute rests between, the stakes being a bet of five hundred to one hundred against Mr. Trench's surviving the ordeal. In the event, however, of Mr. Trench's surviving a further six rounds, or knocking out Mr. Oliver at any stage of the proceedings, the Champion of Ten Pines would increase the wager from five hundred to one thousand against the original hundred.

The barn was packed with a good-natured but eager crowd when, at a few minutes to eight, Mr. Trench and his second, Mr. Carrington, emerged from the hotel and proceeded to their seats at the ringside. Oliver was already waiting there, clad in all the glory of a proper ring costume, meretriciously concealed by a gorgeous dressing-gown.

Force of circumstances had limited Mr. Trench's display of costumery to his every-day trousers and an undershirt.

The master of ceremonies climbed into the ring and duly announced the terms and conditions of the contest. His every sentence was punctuated by the applause of the audience.

"I would add," said he, at the conclusion of his remarks, "that whatever his unfortunate plight may be when he leaves this ring, the thanks of the citizens of Ten Pines must ever be the guerdon of the plucky stranger, Mr. Bill Trench, for taking the field against our old friend and respected fellow citizen, Mr. Jim Oliver. We know from Mr. Geilheimer that Mr. Trench is not only not a professional boxer, but that he does not even pose as a skilled amateur in the noble art of self-defense. He is only a sportsman—a sportsman with the heart of a gentleman, and therefore deserving of better luck than seems to be in store for him. He turns the scale at a trifle under one hundred and fifty pounds, and Mr. Oliver hits the bar at about two hundred and twenty pounds. It's up to him now, gents, to stand to Mr. Oliver as best he can, and take his medicine by doing his best with as good a grace as possible."



AS THE men threw off their outer covering and stepped into the ring, the disparity in the size and build of the pair was painful to contemplate. Both were of about the same height, but Trench was palpably under the stated

weight, while Oliver seemed nearer two hundred and fifty pounds than two hundred and twenty. Trench's body and arms showed the pink of condition, he was white-skinned—so peculiarily white-skinned that his face, neck, hands and wrists seemed brown as an Indian's in comparison.

Oliver was inclined to lobster-color throughout. He had the pyramidal head and neck of the great John L. Sullivan, and the overpowering shoulders and chest of that famous champion. But, though his hips were full, his legs were off; and there was a suggestion of paunch that spoke ill for his training. Still, the muscles of shoulder and biceps, the bullocky forearm and ham-like fist, all portended danger for anything they struck.

Above these evidences of power grinned the face of the pure and unadulterated "pug" bully—the beetling brow under a low forehead, the narrow-set eyes, the flattened, bridgeless nose (smashed many times, no doubt, in honorable combat, but withal unbeautiful), the high cheekbone and the massive jaw—all surmounting the pyramid neck that seemed to require a twenty-four-inch collar.

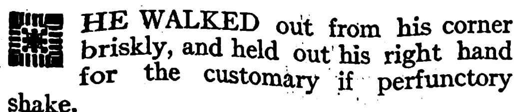
Out of deference to the law and its representatives, the contestants wore three-ounce gloves, so-called. In the absence of the regulation articles, driving-gloves with the fingers cut off, purveyed out of Geilheimer's store, made fearsome substitutes.

As subsequent events proved, the seams on these protecting coverings cut like knuckle-dusters.

The gong sounded. Dead silence fell upon the onlookers as the two men jumped from their corners.

"For God's sake, don't get your face knocked!" was Mr. Carrington's parting injunction, as he backed from the ring.

Trench was a boxer, not a fighter. He had never stood up against a man in a ring before, save in a play for points against another amateur, and with regulation boxing-gloves. But he *could* box, and he knew the ethics of the ring backward. It was his business as well as his instinct to do so; for Mr. Trench was by profession a "sport."



HE WALKED out from his corner briskly, and held out his right hand for the customary if perfunctory shake.

At that instant, and contrary to every tradition of the ring, Oliver shot out his right at Trench's jaw, and, for a fraction of a second, it seemed as though the fight was over then and there.

Had Trench not been a "sport" and a man accustomed to think like lightning, and act when occasion so required before he thought, the blow would have caught him on the point and spun him into a maze of dreams. Before Oliver's blow was half delivered, however, and before the referee or judges could scent a foul, Trench had ducked his head inward, and countered with a straight left on Oliver's nose.

The squelch of the hit, and the big man's grunt of pain and amazement as he received it, were simultaneous. Trench hopped back on both feet, on guard, well covered, waiting the counter attack that he felt must instantly follow. But Oliver only fanned the air with his arms in a dazed effort to strike, while Trench made a superfluous feint at his opponent's body, which he followed with another horrid squelch under his nose.

With a snort of fury the big man hurled himself upon his light-footed tormentor in a desperate effort to clinch and smash him at close quarters. Trench dodged; then, as Oliver closed with him, he again ducked and countered with a stop on the face; and the patrons of Geilheimer's rose in a pandemonium of delighted howls and cheering as they contemplated in the crushed face of their champion a veritable pudding of blood.

Not only had Trench's three hits smashed in the unfortunate giant's nose and split his upper lip, but the outstanding seams of the driving-gloves had ripped the skin off his cheek, and he fought with his face half flayed.

Trench was not wholly unscathed. He had suffered a stiff tap on the chest and a sharp graze on the neck and shoulder as he got in his stop on the nose. This last had cut neat riffles out of his skin where the glove's seams passed.

In the storm of cheering that greeted this performance it was plain that, though the bulk of the money was on Oliver, Trench was not without sympathetic friends.

To the worthy burghers of Ten Pines it was a moral certainty that weight would tell in the long run, and that their champion would eventually pulverize the smaller man. But it did them good to see Oliver getting

"chawed up" a bit. They enjoyed it. They saw that this was going to be a scrap from wayback, and no boneless and bloodless walkover.

Again the giant rushed Trench, again Trench leaped aside and avoided punishment that seemed inevitable. Oliver swore like a drunken trooper and cursed Trench in lurid strings of blasphemy. Trench kept his mouth shut, sparred nimbly, and fell back. His two straight blows and the final stop in the face had shown him that he held one vast and incalcuable advantage which he had scarcely dared hope would be so great. He had noted that Oliver was short in the reach for so big a fighter. His own arms, on the other hand, were abnormal for a tall man. His hands hung nearly to his knees. This meant that he was at least two inches longer in the reach than his opponent.

Oliver, with the quick perception of the trained fighter, and despite the drink that was in him, had realized the same important fact. It almost sobered him, and he dashed in again cumbrously in his endeavor to overcome the handicap by forcing Trench to a short-arm fight. Trench, still sparring and feinting and dodging and chasing, kept the untrained champion on the run and rejoiced to hear him stertorously gasp for breath.

Time!

"Nobly done, Bill!" chortled Mr. Carrington, as he flapped the towel over his friend, after sponging the streaks of blood from his face and neck. "You've got your angel by the whiskers if you only keep clear of a clinch. Don't drive him yet a bit, and it's no use maddening him. Just tire him till he can't hit hard enough to smash you, and then get him on the point or on the mark."

CLANK went the gong.

Up sprang the two fighters. This time the silence was not so noticeable. Jocular hints and ribald advice to keep his nose out of sight were chipped up at Oliver from his friends all round the ring. With true Californian respect for pluck—even in the most offensively green-looking tenderfoot—joyous words of encouragement were hurled at Mr. Trench.

"Tap his claret again, Doc!" "Straighten his mouth!" "Push in his bread-basket, Sonny, and make more room for yourself!" and similar charitable exultations were bellowed from every side.

Oliver walked to the center of the ring swiftly. There was no chance for a foul blow this time. His tactics lay in cornering his opponent and forcing him to a close fight.

He had three minutes to do it. Trench had the same three minutes in which to avoid it; therefore he dodged and sparred. The crowd thirsted for more blood and punches, and began to shout and whistle. The giant grinned. Trench felt his good resolutions weaken. He did not like to be chevied by these people. He would show them he knew how to fight.

Then the thought came to him of the possibility of losing: "Little Dolly's pegging out! I must last out six rounds sure, so as to win that five hundred and send Aleck back to her. I can take no chances. Dolly has got no chances. After six rounds, I'll give them the fight of their lives!"

He still sparred and waltzed round his opponent, only coming to close quarters once, when there was a swift exchange of body-blows, but nobody properly hurt. One over the heart rather jolted Trench, but he got one on to Oliver's neck which only just missed the chin and thus evened matters.

Time!

The crowd was murmurous.

Carrington sponged his friend's face and flapped the towel in silence for a few seconds. Then he spoke.

"Go easy. Don't fluster, Bill!" he begged. "Let the —— galoots yelp. It's you that's fighting, not them. Don't mind 'em!"

"Right, Aleck, but pass the word that I'll give 'em a splash if I last till round seven, and maybe then they'll let up."

Again the men met in the center of the ring. Oliver, with insidious strategy, stood open for attack, trusting to beguile Trench into close quarters. But Trench, with his long reach, persisted in remaining clear till Oliver again rushed at him. It was the rush of a bull—a swift and vigilant bull—and as Trench ducked to dodge the blow at his head, Oliver leaped up and bodily flung himself at him, as if to crush him against his chest.

The impact was terrific. Trench, half turning, caught the worst of it on his shoulder, and the giant hooked him a crusher with his left on the side of the chest. He felt the ring spinning, but he instinctively straightened himself and hit one-two, left and right, at the flying bulk of his assailant.

His left caught Oliver behind the ear, his right landed over the kidney.

The blow slithered him over to the ropes, which he hit with a jerk, and Trench rushed up to follow his advantage. But Oliver was less hurt than he looked. As Trench closed incautiously he feinted at his head, and then planted one on his chest that shot him back, reeling, to the center of the ring. He had barely time to brace himself when Oliver was on him again, and he was sparring briskly in self-defense when the blessed clank of the gong saved him.

"Bill, my son," said Aleck Carrington, "you've got to do more leg-work and quit showing off if you want to be sure of standing through your six rounds. There's three more to go."

AGAIN the vision of Dolly Carrington blazed in colors of flame before the mind's eye of Mr. Trench. Darling little curly-headed Dolly; dead maybe by this time, or gasping for breath, and crying for her daddy, who was seconding a bar-room prize-fight in Ten Pines. He saw into Aleck Carrington's heart, and he saw how Kitty Carrington was eating her soul out in hopeless prayers for the father's return before the child died.

"Let them hoot their heads off!" said Mr. Trench to himself. "But I'll fight steady till I've lived through six rounds, and then I'll show them blazes!"

He smiled at Jim Oliver, who feinted, and Trench, refusing to be beguiled, sparred and tapped him, and sparred again, waltzing about like a spot of quicksilver, while Oliver chased him and wasted his ebbing breath in curses that covered the tribe of Trench through twenty-seven generations.

"Stand up to your man, Trench!" shouted the unscientific onlookers, who had no sympathy with his tiring tactics.

"Give him socks, Jim!" implored Oliver's enthusiastic friends. "Flatten him out!"

Time!

Four rounds were gone. Oliver was showing distinct signs of exertion. Trench was fresh as paint.

"Let 'em holler, Bill," implored Mr. Carrington. "As long as you're fighting fair, let 'em holler till they bust! I've big faith in Hogan for referee. He won't let 'em hurt you."

Amid the cheers and jeers of the wildly excited crowd the men met again.

"The blanked coward won't fight, boys!" roared Oliver as he aimed a ferocious blow at Trench's head with his left, which Trench dodged without countering. "He won't fight, boys!" repeated the giant, aiming a fair smasher at the mark which his opponent had seemingly left for an instant unguarded.

Trench dropped his elbow and turned the blow. Simultaneously his right countered on Oliver's jaw and staggered him. It was almost a knock-out. The big man covered himself in full defense while he shook his jarred head and gasped.

Clank went the gong.

Five rounds were over. The five hundred and Aleck Carrington's ticket to San Francisco were very nearly in sight.

"Only one more round, Bill!" whispered Aleck Carrington, and Mr. Trench noticed for the first time that his second seemed to have aged by twenty years since four o'clock that afternoon. "Only three more minutes, and then you can go and make hay or candy out of him and lose nothing."

"Right-o, Aleck! Steady it is!" said Mr. Trench, and he stepped out to make his final stand for Jim Oliver's money.

By this time the backers of the Ten Pines champion had grown anxious. Under no circumstances could they conceive that "Bully" Oliver had sold his friends a pup and was going to fail in his attempt to knock out a slim-built shaver in a boiled shirt and a hard hat like Mr. Trench.

On the other hand, there were only three minutes left in which the knocking-out was to be accomplished, and the respective appearances of Mr. Trench and Mr. Oliver did not seem to warrant any too great confidence in the speedy defeat of the former. It meant a knock-out blow or failure!

THERE are two places where a knock-out blow can be delivered; that is to say, there are two places on the human body that are easily accessible to the boxer, and in either of which a deftly administered hit will render the recipient temporarily *hors de combat*. One of these is known as the "mark," the other as the "point."

The "mark" is a spot about as big as a half crown, immediately below the breast-bone, and covers a network of nerves as complex as the wires in a big telephone-exchange. Its scientific name is the *solar plexus*, and it

is so sensitively tender that it can be readily located with the finger. A blow shrewdly delivered on the mark upsets the entire pneumogastric nerve system at once. Incidentally it stops the proper working of the heart and lungs and causes the most excruciating pain and renders the strongest man senseless.

The "point" is the corner of the jaw at either side of the chin. A well-directed blow on that particular spot will frequently fracture the jaw. In any case, if reasonable force be exerted, it will cause such severe concussion at the base of the brain as to produce instantaneous coma.

Hence the pugilistic euphemism of "putting a man to sleep." It is the immediate result of "one on the point."

As a rule, the effects are but momentary—the counter shock induced by the back of the head striking the floor when the sufferer drops being sufficient to restore partial sensibility.

It is humanly impossible, however, for a fighter who has received a knock-out blow on the mark or on the point to recover so far within the requisite ten seconds after receiving it as to be able to resume his fight. Accordingly he gets counted out.

AS THE sixth round opened, the voices of the crowd howled advice to Jim Oliver in a splendid frenzy.

"Knock him out, Jim!"

"Dope him, old hoss!"

"Bust his solar plexus, Jim!" and dozens of like import.

Jim Oliver heard them and advanced for the first time with a certain degree of respectful caution. His naturally unfortunate face now looked absolutely repulsive with its bloated puffiness and oozing blood. He was panting heavily as he faced Trench, but he made a clever feint at the body, followed by a sounding hit with his left that practically shut Mr. Trench's right eye.

It was the first really palpable hit that the big man had got home, and his followers cheered exultantly.

"Flatten him, Jim!"

"Pshaw! He's only been playin' with him up to now!"

"Go it, Oliver! Put him asleep!"

Trench sprang back out of danger. The giant followed up, swearing triumphantly. Another blow caught Trench on the body, but this time he countered back on Oliver's face. The audience was wildly cheering.

Regardless of punishment—and Trench hit straight and hard—Oliver rushed in and again punched twice at his body. Had the blows been straighter he would have knocked Trench out. As it was, they hurt and nearly winded him. But Trench kept his wits.

He stooped, irresistibly tempting an upper cut. Then, as Oliver struck, he slipped back sideways out of reach.

For a tenth of a second the big man left his body unguarded. Mr. Trench trusted to luck and dropped in with a long right arm—the full force of his body behind the blow.

The flushed red of the heavyweight's face faded into a mottled drab. His hands and elbows closed in convulsively; with knees gathering upward he collapsed, senseless with agony.

Mr. Trench had found Mr. Oliver's solar plexus!

A groan of astonishment went up as the citizens of Ten Pines saw the light-built visitor draw back and clasp his hands behind him in an attitude of calm expectancy while Oliver tottered to the floor.

The referee advanced to where the champion lay helpless and—watch in hand—began counting:

"One — two — three — four—five—six—seven—eight—nine—ten—Mr. Trench wins, gents!" he called loudly. "Bravo, Trench!"

"Good Lord, Bill!" moaned Mr. Carrington, as he swabbed the swiftly blackening eye of Mr. Trench. "Good Lord, Bill, but your beauty's on the fade! It'll take you a week to see through that eye again, and then——"

"Aleck, my son," interrupted his partner gaily, "you just leave my beauty-spots alone, and hike off to catch your 9:43 train! Wire me how our Dolly pulls out as soon as you get home, and give my love to Kitty! Not another word, old Socks! Tell Kitty she'll have to nurse me as well as Dolly if I bring this eye in a sling to San Francisco; and tell Tubby Garvey that, even though he did let us down rather badly, I was able to pay for the option, and we've got the call on the Golden Crown, the finest mine in the State, and it just stinks with pay dirt. I'll stop here and get the papers, and close out with Geilheimer by Monday. Expect me back in town by Tuesday morning. Now it's me for bed!"

III

THE Sabbath sun was high in its cerulean dome when Mr. Trench came looking for breakfast in the dining-room of Geilheimer's hotel. His eye was black as thunder, but Ten Pines was lilting hymns to his sweetness and glory.

Mr. Geilheimer himself came forward to inquire what he would have in the way of nourishment, and at the same time was the proud bearer of his mail.

There were many telegrams and one letter. The telegrams he snatched at first. Five of them were practically identical in wording:

> Too late for to-night. Will wire money Monday morning as requested.

When Mr. Trench read the sixth telegram, however, he rose up and shouted, and very nearly embraced Mr. Geilheimer.

"A bottle of the best, Mr. G.!" he cried. "A bottle of the best, and split it with me! We'll drink to the prettiest girl in all the world!"

Mr. Geilheimer, scenting a romance, pictured something in frills that had wired a glad despatch congratulating the new champion on the conquest of Ten Pines.

The message that had so excited Mr. Trench, however, read simply:

> Dolly O. K. Only croup. ALECK.

While he waited for the champagne to arrive, Mr. Geilheimer apologized about the letter which he had handed to Mr. Trench, but which that gentleman had not yet opened.

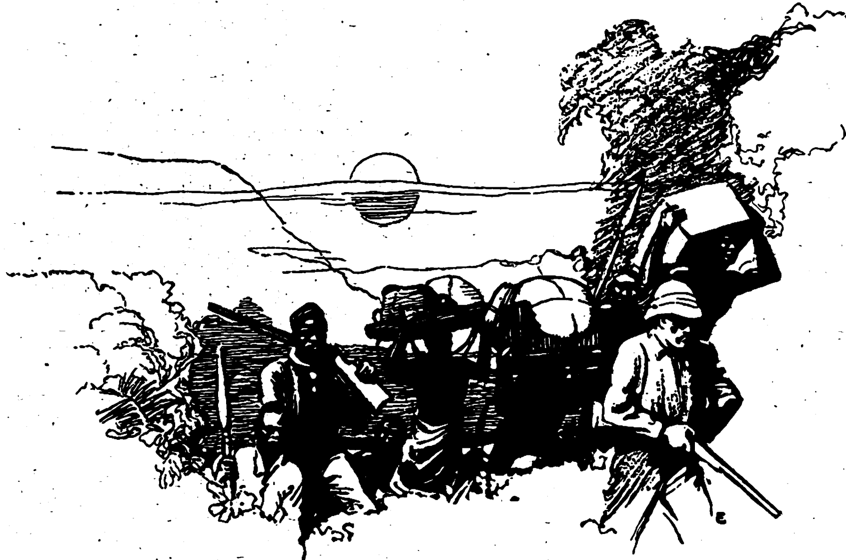
"It came yesterday morning," said he, "and I gave it to the clerk for you; but the chump went and locked it up in the desk, and only fetched it out this morning."

Mr. Trench looked at the envelope and pathetically swore.

Then he stood up in the fulness of his wrath and spoke perishing words to Mr. Geilheimer.

Mr. Geilheimer shuddered as his black-eyed guest tore open the cover of Tubby Garvey's letter and held a fist full of yellow-backed hundred-dollar bills under his nose, as if they were some peculiarly poisonous sort of smelling-bottle.

"Suffering blazes!" moaned Mr. Trench, as he flung the package on the table. "Suffering blazes! Look at that! And to think that Bill Trench let himself be punched into dogmeat just to pay Aleck Carrington's carfare, when two thousand dollars were waiting for him all the time in Ikey Geilheimer's writing-desk!"



"CAPE-TO-CAIRO" GROGAN

by W. Robert Foran

IT IS in true keeping with the spirit of Africa that the first white man to make the journey through its center from south to north should have been a mere youth in years. Africa is to-day, and has been in the past, reclaimed for civilization almost entirely by men in their early twenties. It is the land of golden opportunity for youth.

Captain Ewart Scott Grogan made his remarkable journey when still a Cambridge University undergraduate. It was his way of spending a vacation and, if we are to believe popular rumor, also his way of winning a very charming and beautiful wife. I have heard it said that Grogan was told by the lady who is now his wife, that before she would consent to marry him he must come to her having done that which no other man had been able to accomplish. And out of this romantic dare grew a remarkable achievement.

It seems only fitting that a woman should be the guiding spirit of such an undertaking. Men will attempt much for the love of a woman. History alone proves this. And in harmony with the spirit of the great adventure, the little weather-battered British flag, which Grogan carried throughout his journey, was accepted by her late Majesty Queen Victoria.

The late Cecil Rhodes, greatest of all African pioneers, wrote to Captain Grogan in 1900, as follows:

> I must say that I envy you, for you have done that which has been for centuries the ambition of every explorer, namely, to walk through Africa from south to north. The amusement of the whole thing is that a youth from Cambridge University during his vacation should have succeeded in doing that which ponderous explorers of the world have failed to accomplish. There is a distinct humor in the whole thing. It makes me the more certain that we shall complete the telegraph and railway, for surely I am not going to be beaten by the legs of a Cambridge undergraduate.

I met Grogan for the first time in Nairobi, British East Africa, early in 1904—that is to say, some six years after his historic tramp through the "Dark Continent." He is a tall, clean-cut English gentleman, remarkably handsome and with dark hair and clean-shaven face. He is fully six feet high and splendidly proportioned. He does not look the part of the great explorer. Had I not known otherwise, I should have set him down as an English country squire—a gentleman without a doubt, but scarcely a tamer of the wilds.

Later I got to know him well, for he has taken up land in East Africa and interested himself in the development of the country. He has built a fine stone house on a lovely knoll overlooking Nairobi, and here he now lives with his wife and family.

Grogan first saw Africa during the Matabele war. Rhodesia was then young. The railway had only reached Mafeking, and his experiences during this initial venture were not such as to leave him with any keen desire to repeat the experiment. But the unquenchable spirit of the veldt was upon him, and in comfortable England these trials sank into the misty oblivion of the past; so that in a short twelve months he again started out for Africa's inhospitable shores. But this time his purpose was inspired by the wish to conquer Africa in a new way.

THE STUPENDOUS UNDERTAKING

ACCOMPANIED by Arthur Henry Sharp, Grogan landed, in the end of February, 1898, at Beira, a port of Portuguese East Africa, and set out to march from Rhodesia to Cairo, via the Zambesi, Chiperone, Lake Nyassa, Karonga, Tanganyika, Rusisi Valley, Lake Kivu, Mushari, Rutchuru Valley, Albert Edward Lake, Katwe, Toro, Mboga, Semiliki Valley, Albert Nyanza, Upper Nile, Wadelai, Kero, Abu-Kuka, Bohr, Dinkaland, Nuerland, the Sobat River, and thence to Cairo by way of Khartum.

On glancing at the map of Africa you will realize in part what a stupendous undertaking this was. It is difficult, even these fourteen years afterward, when the strong arm of civilization has made such rapid progress through the hinterland, but what must it have been in those early days, sans railway, sans steamer, sans food, sans comfort? Moreover, remember that not only had they to face dangers innumerable from wild animals, but also from the natives, who had not yet come to accept the power and majesty of the white presence. Sickness, hardships, terrors, all these had to be faced and overcome.

They first enjoyed a short shooting and exploration trip in and around Beira and on the Sabi. They had sundry exciting encounters with lions, buffalo and other wild denizens of the plains and forests; but all were safely brought to a happy conclusion. Near their camp at night they could hear leopards cough, lions roar, hyenas howl, and the other medley of African night sounds.

In a swamp in the Sabi country, Grogan and Sharp came across an extraordinary sight. There was a lagoon in the swamp about four hundred yards wide. About fifty hippopotami were lying about in the water and on the banks. As in most parts the water was not deep enough to cover them, they presented the appearance of so many seals basking in the sunlight.

They climbed in and out, strolled about, rolled in, splashing, blowing, and entirely ignoring the presence of mere man. After watching them for some time, they sent their natives to the far end to drive them past. The natives yelled and threw stones at them. Suddenly the hippo took alarm and rushed *en masse* for the narrow channel of the waterway to the lagoon. Down this they swarmed, kicking the water thirty feet high, throwing their heads back, roaring, thundering and crashing along, while Grogan stood on the bank twenty yards away and took photographs. The banks of every channel and mud-hole in the swamp were lined with yellow masses of crocodiles; thousands and thousands of wildfowl, which were nesting in the hippo holes, kept up a ceaseless din; herds and herds of game were everywhere to be seen; and the whole gave a delightful page out of the book of nature.

The journey to Karonga was less exciting than the later stages. It consisted of nothing more difficult than close calls with lions, buffalo and rhinoceri; occasional attacks of malarial fever, and the discomforts of African travel. From Karonga, which is the starting-place of the Stevenson road across the Tanganyika Plateau, they had a march of over two hundred miles to Lake Tanganyika. Their route followed the Stevenson road, which is neither more nor less than a bare clearing through the bush, although in places a few logs have been thrown across the streams in lieu of bridges and some of the swampy places have been trenched.

LASHED BY THE WATERS OF LAKE TANGANYIKA

WHILE running in a steam launch across Lake Tanganyika to M'towa, they encountered a terrific sea and were for several hours in imminent danger of turning turtle. On these African inland seas the wind rushes down the narrow kloofs and gullies 'twixt lake and mountain, lashing the waters into a frenzy. The machinery of Grogan's launch was tied together with bits of string and patched with strips of sardine-cans. Furthermore, a large hole had been knocked in her bottom and filled in with cement.

The Captain, who was quite new to the lake, did not know where he was going, nor did he care. His idea of navigating consisted in sleeping in his bunk until the native crew told him that the launch had arrived somewhere; even then he never took the trouble to inquire what the place was. His only anxiety was that he might oversleep himself and miss a meal.

Grogan made a side trip into the country of the Awemba, a very powerful tribe of Zulu origin. They are very fond of singing, and each chief maintains his own choir. If a chief should find a man with a good voice, he promptly puts out his eyes to prevent his going elsewhere. They are fearfully atrocious in their habit of mutilations for offenses. It appears to be the chief recreation of these black autocrats. One of their little jokes is to push a victim's head into a large sable antelope horn, rudely adorned and fitted with a mask. Then they cut his throat with a ferocious but very blunt knife. The blood spurting forth into the horn rings a bell, a performance

that gives general satisfaction to all but the one sad exception.

At Ujiji, which is the historic point of Stanley's meeting with Livingstone, they found on the foreshore a gruesome array of grinning skulls, relics of the days of Arab predominance, to remind all travelers that Ujiji was once the heart of the great slave-raiding ulcer of the past.

BLUFFING THE NATIVES

THEY had made up their minds to take the perilous and unknown route to Uganda via Lake Kivu, and with one hundred and fifty native followers and an escort of six totally inexperienced natives with old rifles they set out on the adventurous second stage of the great journey.

For days and days after leaving Ujiji they had to travel along the shingle of a small lake. Often they had to wade up to their middles in the water to avoid the mimosa thorn-trees, which made a passage by land impossible. As the lake was swarming with huge crocodiles, this made the going full of excitement. Added to their other worries, fever reduced them to a pitiable plight. Grogan's temperature went up to 106.9 degrees and left him so weak that he could scarcely walk. But before reaching Usambara, the escort, such as it was, and their cook bolted, leaving their rifles and bayonets on the path. Grogan secured a fresh crew for their canoe and gave chase to the fugitives, but nothing was seen or heard of them again.

At Usambara they were nursed back to partial good health by the German official in charge, and then set out for the Rusisi Valley. After many trying experiences they eventually reached the Lake Kivu district.

Grogan had been warned by a German doctor at Ishangi of the thieving propensities of the light-fingered Waruanda people, who inhabit this territory. One morning he found that they had entered his tent at night and stolen a tin box as well as other things, such as instruments, money, clothes, valuable papers and photographs.

He summoned the local Chief, Ngenzi, and asked him what he intended to do about it. The Chief tried to bluff; but he had mistaken his man, for Grogan promptly clapped him in irons and put him in a tent under a strong guard, with an ultimatum that unless the stolen goods were forthcoming at once there would be trouble. The old Chief finally produced some of the clothes.

Grogan left Sharp in charge of the camp, which they had placed in a state of defense, and, armed with a revolver and an old French cutlass, set out to the Chief's village. He was accompanied by two of his native followers armed with rifles. His bluff came off and he was able to drive off all of Ngenzi's cattle without firing a shot! The natives made a few tentative rushes at him, but they were repulsed by the simple expedient of waving the cutlass in the air.

At least five thousand men sat on the hilltops and watched three men with a joint armament of a revolver, cutlass and two rifles drive off two hundred head of cattle! Such were the terrible Waruanda people, whose reputation had spread far and wide, and whose country had been left alone by the Germans for fear of their military organization.

Shortly after this Grogan experienced considerable trouble with his native followers. One day he found them preparing to desert, and fully thirty were already moving out from the camp when Grogan realized their intentions. It was a critical moment. If the camp broke up, the expedition would be inevitably massacred by the Ruanda.

Grogan took his rifle and dashed after them in pursuit, accompanied by his two Watonga natives, while Sharp, revolver in one hand and rifle in the other, threatened to shoot the first man who moved. Rushing over a ridge, Grogan saw the ringleader, one of the worst of his villainous followers and the originator of the idea of desertion, leading about two hundred yards away. Grogan fired at him, just as he turned the corner of the hill, fully intending to drop him. The bullet removed the man's cap. Down he dropped in the grass, and the whole thirty followed suit.

After a few more shots in the air, to keep up their anxiety, Grogan sent out a head man to order their immediate return to camp. They obeyed, and the situation was saved. Their bluff had been outbluffed, and with ringing cheers the men returned to their fires to jabber and howl with laughter far into the night. From discontent to merry laughter is but a momentary transition with the African.

TOSSED BY AN ELEPHANT

EVENTUALLY Grogan parted company for the time being with Sharp and decided to travel through the Mushari country, which was known to be inhabited by ruthless cannibals.

On his way thither he came across a herd of ten large elephants. A solitary old bull had gone toward the forest on the slopes of Mount Eyres. Grogan elected to follow him, for his spoor was the biggest he had ever seen. In an hour and a half he came in sight of him. Unfortunately he was not standing broadside on, and Grogan could see only a portion of his head and the ridge of his back. It was impossible to go around.

For some time he watched the old bull feeding off the leaves of the trees and then, having eaten all the leaves within reach, without apparent effort seize the trunk of the tree about sixteen feet from the ground and lay it flat. The tree had a diameter of fully two feet. Fearing that the elephant might move off into the impenetrable jungle, Grogan took a shot at him, difficult as it was.

He fell instantly, but as quickly recovered himself and dashed away, getting the second barrel in his flank as he did so. For several hours Grogan followed him, without being able to get in another shot. Suddenly he heard a heavy crashing of bushes. The noise was terrific, and it suddenly dawned upon Grogan that the elephant was charging!

Grogan stood still, waiting, as he could not see him owing to the density of the jungle; and it was not until the huge beast's head towered above him that he was able to fire a shot. He emptied both barrels of his heavy rifle into the elephant's face. The whole forest seemed to crumble up, and a second later Grogan found himself ten feet above the ground, well home in a thorn-bush, with his rifle ten yards away in the opposite direction. He heard a roar as of thunder disappearing in the distance. Grogan managed to descend from his spiky perch and, although drenched with the elephant's blood, was unhurt beyond a slightly twisted knee.

THE NIGHTMARE OF HORRORS

ON REACHING the Mushari country, Grogan encountered numbers of natives coming back from the interior of the territory. They proved to be refugees from the Baleka, a tribe of cannibals from the Congo, who were raiding the Mushari country. They told Grogan that those of them who had survived were living in the forest, and that great numbers were dying every day of hunger. On the next day he came across dead bodies lining every path, showing that the tales he had just heard were only too true.

All the paths up the hills that led to the uplands of Mushari were lined with grain and torn skins, relics of those unfortunate natives who had been caught by the Baleka; and dried pools of blood, gaunt skeletons, grinning skulls, and trampled grass told a truly African tale. On arriving at the top of the ridge distant howls informed the party that they had been observed, silhouetted as they were against the skyline.

Strings of blacks, brandishing spears and howling at the expected feast, came running down from a neighboring hill. The diabolical noise of the onrushing natives decided Grogan that the situation was serious. His native guide naively told him, in response to inquiries:

"They are coming to eat us."

Accordingly Grogan kept quiet behind a clump of grass until they were quite close and there was no further doubt of their intentions. Then he opened fire upon them with his light rifle and they disappeared like rabbits into the standing crops.

Grogan hurried on to the huts from which he had seen these people come; but they were too quick for him and fled. A cloud of vultures hovering over the spot gave him an inkling of what he was about to see, but, as Grogan told me, the realization defied description. He can not speak of the awful scenes even to this day without a shudder; it haunts him in his dreams; at dinner it sits on his leg-of-mutton; it bubbles in his soup—in fine, even the Watonga followers of Grogan went forty-eight hours without food rather than eat the potatoes that grew in that country! And negroes have not delicate stomachs. Loathsome, revolting, it was a hideous nightmare of horrors.

Every village had been burned to the ground, and in every direction lay skeletons, nothing but skeletons; and such postures —what tales of horror they told!

Kishari, a beautiful and well-watered country, had been converted into a howling

wilderness. Kameronse had suffered to the same extent. Thus a tract of country fully three thousand square miles in extent had been depopulated and devastated. Grogan estimates that barely two per cent. of the inhabitants had survived the massacre and famine. In Kishari and Kameronse he did not see one single soul.

After this followed two of the worst days in Grogan's life. Rapid movements alone could save him and his party from utter annihilation, and they traveled from sunrise to sunset, camping in patches of forest, and concealing their route by leaving the paths and forcing their way through the grass. Mummies, skulls, limbs, putrefying carcasses, washing to and fro in every limpid stream, marked the course of the fiendish horde of Baleka. An insufferable stench filled the land, concentrating round every defiled homestead.

Fear of being rushed at night made sleep well-nigh impossible, tired as they were. The country was exceedingly beautiful. Wild stretches of undulating hills, streaked with forest and drained by a hundred streams, each with its cargo of bloated corpses, made a terrible combination of Heaven and Hell. Grogan says that, seeing all these things, he wondered whether there were a God. Flights of gorgeous butterflies floated here and there, and, settling on the gruesome relics, gave a finishing touch to the horrors of the land.

In Kameronse, in skirting along a large papyrus swamp, they came across fresh spoor of natives. Grogan had only just seized his gun, when a woman, a girl and two small boys appeared. These his followers captured, and the woman offered to lead them to her relatives. Grogan followed cautiously in her wake, the way leading through very tall grass. As he turned a corner, the guide flashed past him, and Grogan found himself confronting a dozen gentlemen of anthropophagic proclivities on supper intent!

The unexpected appearance of a white man checked their rush, and dodging a spear, he got his chance and dropped one of the Baleka with a shot through his heart. The others turned and fled, with Grogan and his men in hot pursuit. In the cannibals' camp they found the remains of two unfortunate natives, captured the day before, stewing in cooking-pots. Everywhere there were the same gruesome relics.

THE JOURNEY WITH A MADMAN

AFTER reaching Bugoie, Grogan joined forces again with Sharp and traveled on to Uganda with him. But at Toro, Sharp was forced to leave the expedition and return to England on account of urgent private affairs. Grogan decided to continue his journey down the Nile alone.

Skirting Mount Ruwenzori, he struck out for the Semiliki Valley, which is the true source of the Nile. His adventures on his march to Kero in the Lado Enclave of the Congo, to say the least of it, were exciting. Everywhere he had to overcome difficulties which might appear insurmountable to most. At times he had to bluff the unruly natives and so save the lives of himself and his few native followers; and other adventures by the score made up the program of almost every day's progress.

At Kero the Belgian official in charge offered Grogan a passage in a whale-boat down the Nile to Bohr. He set out in company with an old Egyptian Dervish prisoner with a broken leg, one small boy, a Dinka native, a mad criminal in chains, a dozen Belgian native soldiers and sundry other nondescripts. It was no easy trip to make, for the Dervishes had been suppressed for only a year and the river was not so easy of navigation in those days as it is now. It is bad enough now, in all conscience, when one travels in comfortable mail-steamers, but in those days such vessels were an unknown quantity. Finally they reached Bohr after many hardships.

With a total following of fourteen natives, which total included the criminal lunatic, Grogan set out from Bohr to march overland across the arid desert wastes to the Sobat. It is a God-forsaken, dry-sucked, fly-blown wilderness, this Upper Nile country; a desolation of desolations, an infernal region, a howling waste of weed, mosquitoes, flies and fever, backed by a groaning waste of thorns and stones—waterless and waterlogged! But still this Cambridge undergraduate, this youth of dauntless courage, held onward, determined to complete the task he had set himself to accomplish or die in the attempt. And he came mighty near dying many times on that horrible march. As he himself says, the man who has once walked through this country can have no fear of the hereafter.

THE FIGHT WITH THE DINKAS

THE very first day Grogan camped among the Dinkas he was visited by at least a thousand natives, but with the exception of one or two small fracases with the servants they were well-behaved. But on the second day fully fifteen hundred arrived at the camp and became very obstreperous. Grogan ordered them away from the camp and had to hustle some of them pretty roughly.

One of them turned on him and he had to knock him down. Then one young blood danced a dangerous war-dance, brandishing his spear round one of the armed escort, until Grogan took his spear from him and broke it. Grogan had to spend the rest of the afternoon with his hand on his revolver, momentarily expecting a general *émeute*, when no doubt things would have gone badly with him. They behaved after this and finally made off to their villages and left the party in peace.

A week later they experienced more trouble from the Dinkas, and this time it was of more serious proportions. Fully a hundred of them persisted in following Grogan's little party on the march and annoying them. Grogan turned to drive them off, when his followers were seized with a sudden panic and threw down their loads and ran toward Grogan, calling out that they were lost.

The Dinkas thereupon killed one of the soldiers, and two more had their skulls cracked. Grogan shot the chief and another man with his double-barrel rifle; then turning round, he found his servant had bolted with his revolver. At the same moment a Dinka hurled his spear at him, he dodged it, but the man rushed in with a club and dealt a swinging blow at his head which was warded off with no more damage than a wholesome bruise on the arm.

Grogan poked his empty gun at his stomach, and the native turned, receiving a second afterward a dum-dum bullet in the small of his back. Then the Dinkas broke and ran, Grogan's army of eight guns having succeeded in firing two shots.

After dressing the wounds of the two soldiers, who, with the trifling exception of two gaping holes in their heads, seemed little the worse for their experience, they all hurried on, with the Dinkas following until nightfall out of range of Grogan's rifle.

ON TO CAIRO

FINALLY they managed to win their way through to the Sobat, where Grogan met Captain Dunn of the Egyptian Army. It was a lucky meeting for Grogan, for all his followers were sick; meat was non-existent and all the grain was exhausted; and as a final climax to Grogan's sufferings, his hands had begun to turn black on account of long lack of vegetable diet.

The meeting between these two men was characteristic of the British stoical dislike for displays of emotion.

"How do you do?" remarked Dunn casually, as he advanced with outstretched hand.

"Oh, pretty fit, thanks; how are you? Had any good sport?" replied Grogan calmly.

"Oh, pretty fair, but there's not much here. Have a drink? You must be hungry; I'll hurry on lunch. See any elephant? Had any shooting?" Dunn asked as he led the way to his tent.

This after traveling six hundred miles from Bohr overland, across swamps and deserts—and then such a greeting! Verily the British are a strange people, quick to hide their feelings. It was only after they had washed, lunched and discussed the latest news of the Boer War that Dunn thought to ask his guest who he was and where he had come from.

Gradually Grogan made his way down the Nile by gunboat to Khartum, incidentally dropping the first transcontinental mail-bag at Fashoda, which he had carried with him throughout his entire journey. Everywhere he was hailed with a hearty welcome—everywhere as "The Tourist from the South."

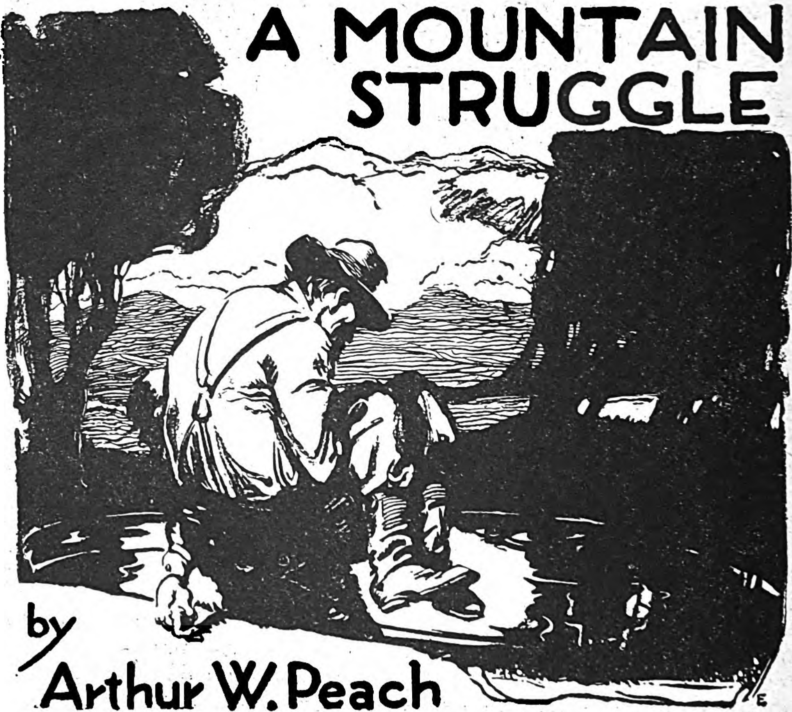
On arrival at Cairo he once more stood in the roar of the multitudes after fourteen months spent in the heart of Africa. Here he was again in the prosaic land of certainty and respectability. But he had won in those long fourteen months never-ending fame as the first white man to traverse Africa from south to north. Surely, as he looks back through the vista of years, he will be proud of such an achievement, for he has full reason to be.

For the rest of his life Grogan will have the prefix "Cape-to-Cairo" tacked on to his name. Not even death can rob him of this proud title.

After traveling through America, Australasia and Argentina, Grogan has gone back to live once more in Central Africa. He has tasted of the waters of the Nile, and, as the Arab saying goes, "He who drinks once of the waters of the Nile, will return to drink again thereof." And, after all, can one blame any one for returning to the country where he can stretch himself in generous emulation, find his apportioned level, and humbly worship at the shrine of creation; where the night-wind sighs to the grazing herds of wild game; where one's thoughts soar to the plaintive wail of the fish-eagle, and one's heart throbs in unison with the vast sob-sob of the grandest of all beasts, that mighty sound that is the very spirit of the veldt, the great untrammeled field of Nature?

For here alone one is free from all carking cares, pettiness, hypocrisy and cant.

A MOUNTAIN STRUGGLE



by Arthur W. Peach

JIM STEVENS, sheriff, on the trail of Sam Lee, in the eyes of the law regarded as the murderer of Bert Blaine, drew his horse to a standstill a mile from Lee's mountain home in order to run over his plan of capture.

From the road where Stevens stopped he could look far up the slope of the densely wooded mountain and see a tiny gleam of light through the dark massed trees. The evening was dusky gray, but shadowy enough to protect a man moving.

Lee had been convicted of the murder of Blaine, sentenced, and taken away; but, a giant in stature and strength, almost in front of the jail he had broken away from his guards and vanished into the solitudes of the mountains in the southern part of the State. It had long been thought certain that he was working cautiously north, and sure enough he had appeared.

Word had come to Stevens not an hour before that Sam had been seen near his mountain home. Not stopping to collect a posse, but leaving one of his deputies to attend to that, Stevens himself, eager to capture the man who had evaded the crack State detectives, had ridden on. In his inner pocket he had the warrant for Lee's

arrest; the next move was to capture the outlaw.

It would be no easy matter: the simple mountaineer was of a gentle nature, but a hard fighter when aroused and a demon because of his great strength.

Up the mountainside the light in Sam's cabin twinkled and smiled cheerfully. Stevens was pretty sure that Sam was there, feeling confident that no one had seen him return and that he could spend a little time with his wife and the little tow-headed youngsters he loved.

Stevens decided to ride up until about a quarter of a mile from the cabin, then leave his horse and go on up cautiously to the cabin.

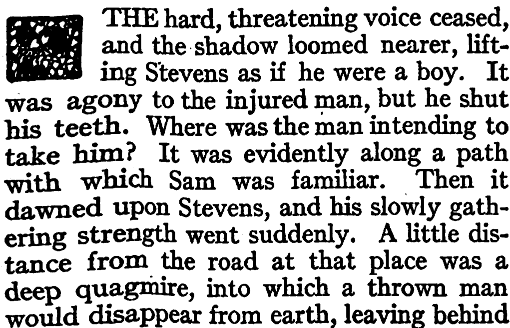
On he rode through the dusk. The soft mountain road gave back little sound to the fall of his horse's hoofs; everything was still, save the whispering of the low wind through the trees, the rustle of the underbrush where some wanderer of the night darted away. When he reached the place he had in mind, he stopped again, startled a little by the odd restlessness of his horse.

Crash! The night seemed to be suddenly rent with fire and full of sound and turmoil and hideous crackling; and then he fell down—down—down.

The hush of night again; up above him the stars—a terrific pain in his head; and Stevens realized. Sam had not lingered at the house; some way or other he had become suspicious, and had been on the watch far down the road. Stevens tried to rise and groaned. He was bound rigid.

A big shadow moved near him, and a grim, hoarse voice said,

"Wal, Jim Stevens, I guess ye won't lead me down with them twisters o' yern, will ye? I caught ye a good un as ye sot thar lookin' at the stars, an' now I'm goin' ter see thet ye don't bother me fer *somewhile!*"



THE hard, threatening voice ceased, and the shadow loomed nearer, lifting Stevens as if he were a boy. It was agony to the injured man, but he shut his teeth. Where was the man intending to take him? It was evidently along a path with which Sam was familiar. Then it dawned upon Stevens, and his slowly gathering strength went suddenly. A little distance from the road at that place was a deep quagmire, into which a thrown man would disappear from earth, leaving behind no mortal trace save a few yellow bubbles in the morning. Under the shadow of the night, bound as he was, he would sink, slowly and surely, just as he was thrown in, face first or not, into the slimy mud.

Stevens sought to rally his strength for a last desperate struggle, but the blow had weakened him; it was all he could do to think.

Sam paused. And suddenly a despairing scheme flamed into Stevens' mind. Lee was simple as a child: it might be worth trying—there was nothing else to do.

As the man gripped him as if to throw him, Stevens drove his voice into action:

"Hold on! Sam, for God's sake, hold on! You're wrong on this! Wait—I've got your pardon papers here—in my coat!"

A silence fell. The heavy form stood motionless.

"My pawdon papers?" the voice repeated as a man might speak if a loved one dead had risen. "My pawdon papers, Jim? Is it honest true?"

There was a quiver of supreme hope in the swift question.

"Before God I swear it!" Stevens cried, the fear of death upon him, the damp dew of the quagmire breathing upon his face.

"Jim, I b'lieve ye! I b'lieve ye—ye wouldn't lie ter a man on that! Jim, I'm dogged sorry, but I couldn't do nuthin' else," the voice ran on, anxious as a child grieving for some injury done in a moment of anger. His big hands fumbled at Stevens's bonds and released him.

"Git up, Jim, git up. Why'n Gawd's name didn't ye tell me afore?"

"I was muddled—my head—dazed—I couldn't think," Stevens said hastily, rising unsteadily with the help of Sam.

"I did hit ye a hard un, but—I was desprit. I'd come so far ter see the woman an' the kids; an' then when I got word they knew I was around, I set watch. But I'm free! I'm free! I knowed it would come out all right; I never killed Bert. But come on, Jim; come! Go kinder easy up ter the shack, an' I'll git the woman ter fix up a layout, an' we'll celebrate—that's what! Here, let me help ye!"

The great arms grasped Stevens and swung him up. Soon they were in the road where the horse still lingered.

"You climb on the hoss, an' I'll lead him up," Sam suggested.

They started up. Stevens was weak still,

and the death to which he had been so near made his heart beat weakly even then. But as they went up the rough mountain road carefully, he began to get a grip on himself and plan the next move in the game. He would get Lee this time or know the reason why. He would wait until his full strength returned, then—Stevens felt for his revolver—it was gone; Lee had seen to that, naturally. Some way or other he must get hold of a gun.

As they drew near the cabin, Lee called. The door was thrown open and a woman's figure appeared in the light; a group of little figures squeezed in around her.

Sam's voice rang out,

"I'm free, woman! I'm free! Jim Stevens brought the papers, but I——"

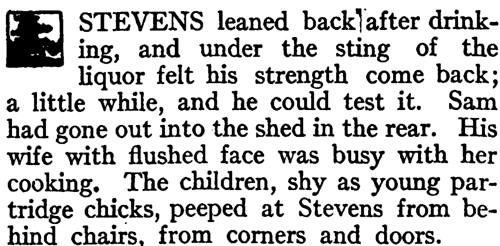
"Free! Oh, Sammy!" In the breathless words was a joyous rapture that seemed to vibrate like chimes on the night air.

"That's right, girl; I'm free! Come on, Jim!"

Stevens slid slowly from his horse. "I guess I'm all right," he said, refusing the other's aid.

Inside, the smiling Sam drew up a rough chair to the table.

"Set down, Jim, an' we'll hev a little drink an' some grub."



STEVENS leaned back after drinking, and under the sting of the liquor felt his strength come back; a little while, and he could test it. Sam had gone out into the shed in the rear. His wife with flushed face was busy with her cooking. The children, shy as young partridge chicks, peeped at Stevens from behind chairs, from corners and doors.

When Sam came in the children went to him with a rush. He dropped his armful of wood and gathered them all in his great arms.

"Yer pap's free, little uns—yer pap's free! An' he's goin' ter be here, now, wid you-uns!" he exclaimed.

"Yer goin' ter stay yere, pap?" a wee, doubtful voice piped.

"Sure nuff, Joey; sure nuff. Now let me fix the fire fer yer ma."

Stevens watched and listened with a sense of keen discomfort. The evident love between them touched him in spite of himself, and his inner discord was emphasized when Sam went on to explain how he had hit Stevens. She immediately, womanlike, came over, examined his bruised head, and finding the skin broken, bandaged the wound with a cooling ointment; and Sam, turning from watching, looked sober and pained.

"Gawd, Jim, I didn't mean ter bang ye's hard as that! But I'm stronger'n I think."

When the food was ready, the whole family gathered around the rough table, and Stevens saw a home-scene such as he never had witnessed.

The whole room seemed to pulsate with joy. The girlish face of Sam's wife was radiant, and Sam wore a continual smile. They chatted of future plans, about the intimate details of household affairs; and Stevens listened and planned.

If he could once get his hand on a gun, the rest would be easy. They were happy together now, but *he* had his duty to perform. Sam was a murderer; and hate grew strong in Stevens's heart as he thought of the death that had been so near in the quagmire—a beastly death. But he must wait until he could get hold of his own revolver or another. He wondered what Sam had done with his.

When the meal was over, Sam drew up the rough benches before the fire.

"Set up, Jim, an' smoke a pipe o' peace."

As they drew up together, Sam reached a big, clumsy hand into the pocket of his shirt, and Stevens fairly gasped as he saw held out to him his own revolver.

"Thar's yer wepun, Jim. I tuk it from ye right at the start; ye're too good a hand with a gun. I thought I'd leave it beside ye by the quag."

"Leave it *by* me *by* the quag?" Stevens ejaculated. "You mean *in* the quag!" he added, a little sarcastically.

The big boyish face turned squarely to his, and the eyes were puzzled; slowly the truth seemed to come to Lee.

"Was ye thinkin' I was goin' ter throw ye inter it? Jim, was ye thinkin' that? Why, I thought I'd take ye and leave ye by the quag, so's if a posse was follerin' ye, don't ye know, an' ye was missin', that ud be the first place they'd look? Sure! But I wa'n't goin' ter throw ye in! I ain't no low-down killer like that, Jim. I used to get fired up when I drink; but I never killed a man—I never killed Blaine; that cuss Cheaton did it—but you heard all that at the trial. Say, Steve," he said suddenly, "le's see them blessed papers. I can't read 'em ner

none o' my crowd, but I'd like to feel 'em, ye know, jest feel 'em, p'rhaps ye'll read 'em, Jim; I won't git it all till ye come to the word 'pawdon'. But I'd like to hear how they sound!"

Stevens went back to his coat, which hung near the door. He braced himself, he was ready, he must do his duty. He noted that Sam was relighting his pipe, and instead of reaching for the papers he turned and carefully covered the broad back at a spot beneath which the heart was beating.

Then he spoke sharply:

"Sam, I have papers here, but they're for your arrest, and I've got you dead!"

The rough face turned, pipe half to mouth, and stared with wide, wondering eyes.

"What's that, Jim?" Then he saw the leveled revolver, and jumped as if an electric shock had burned through him. His dim brain gathered the truth; the pipe fell from his hand, and bounded away on the rough wooden floor.

Stevens expected to see a heavy form spring as a panther springs, every muscle taut for the death grapple, but the thick, muscle-piled figure sagged in the bench as if stricken, the rugged lines of the face went gray and old, and the lips drooled oddly,

"Jim, ye lied ter me—an' it ain't true! Ye lied ter me!"

Into the door his wife came humming a bit of a jig tune. She stopped short, dazed, and the youth and happiness was smashed in her face as if by one blow of an unseen hand; she wavered as the last words of Sam beat the truth in upon her, gave a little choking cry, and collapsed on the threshold. The frightened children huddled in a corner and began to cry.

IT WAS only a moment's time, but in it Stevens's thoughts flashed with the speed of light. A sudden sickening filled him as he saw what he had done from another view-point—the view-point of the man who had believed in him and trusted him. Lied—that was just what he had done, and he had sworn before his God; lied to save his own, miserable hide! The disgust that swept over him turned bitter the very saliva in his mouth. That big form, drooping across the bench as if the very life and soul had gone out of it, could not be a murderer—the law to the contrary; he had not meant to throw him to death in the quagmire—had returned the very gun; and he had lied to him like a dirty, contemptible coward—he, Jim Stevens, to save——

Red-hot anger at himself raged through him. Stevens threw the revolver savagely into the shed; he would take his medicine from the law, but he would never bring Sam Lee in.

One step carried him to the stricken mountaineer, crushed dumb by the terrible ending of his dream. Stevens laid one hand hard on the sagging shoulder.

"Sam, I'm a rotten coward! I won't arrest you! You're free—free!"

The blue eyes turned up dully, unrayed by a gleam of intelligence, and for one fearful moment Stevens wondered whether the mind had gone under the shock. "You let me go free? But I ain't pawdoned?"

Remorse ripped and tore through Stevens's soul, and his voice shook as he looked into the gray face.

"No, Sam, I never even heard it mentioned. I lied to you. The paper I have is a warrant for your arrest. But I believe in you, Sam, an' I'll do all I can for you."

The even voice ran on in answer:

"I didn't do it, Jim. I wa'n't nothin' but a cheap drinkin' kid. They b'lieved Cheaton. I'd kill *him* ef I could!" Under the spur of slow anger, realization of the truth seemed to come; he rose tensely from his seat; his voice pitched itself above the insane monotone until it was almost a shout—"Jim, yer goin' ter let me go?"

"Sammy," Stevens looked into the brightening eyes, "you are free—all the mountains are yours. I'll look after your family; and if you tell me where you hide, I'll get word through to you. You must go before daybreak."

The mountaineer lifted his bulk slowly like one roused from a beautiful dream.

"I see, Jim. Yes, I'll go, but I hate to leave the woman and the kids. But, Jim, I'm 'bligded ter ye. They'll be hard on ye, if ye tell. But ye don't need ter."

Stevens smiled.

"Never mind me, Sam. Remember, go before daylight. See? A posse follows me. I'll start back now."

Outside, after Stevens had mounted, the mountaineer held up one strong, friendly hand; the girl-wife was crying softly; tightly to her clung the wondering children.

"Jim, ye've guv me a chance agin, though ye didn't bring the pawdon; but I'll come out right, some day, ef they don't pot me fust."

"Some day, sure, Sammy. So long."

INTO the shop where Marks, first deputy-sheriff, was bending over a part of a harness, Stevens strode. The lank harness-maker jumped as if stung. "Great shades of Cæsar! Steve, you look like a bloomin' ghost-man!"

"Never mind how I look! You're to arrest me. I had Sam Lee all landed last night, and let him go—purposely."

Marks sat down and picked up the harness.

"Well, you did, eh? The boys must have missed you. A couple of 'em set out after you. Guess you haven't heard the news, then?"

"News?"

"Sure! Not five minutes after you left, that little sneakin' cuss of a Cheaton went up to Judge MacPherson and 'fessed up. He's been livin' in mortal fear ever since Sam got loose, an' when he heard Sam was in these parts, his nerve went up. They've got him in jail now. He—Man alive! you're settin' in a pan of horness-oil! What the——"

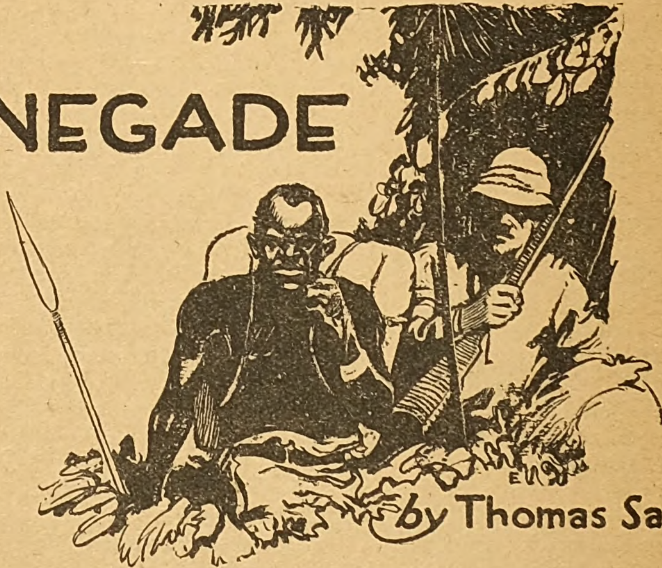
"You say Sam is innocent?"

"That's what I meant to imply. That Cheaton—now what you goin' to do?

"I'm going to get the papers from the Judge that'll show he's innocent; then I'll take them to Sam."

Marks started. "You're all in now; you'll be a dead one when you git there!" he shouted after him.

"But I'll get there!" the answer came back.



CHAPTER I

VEILED ORDERS

HE agent-general glanced from the letter in his hand to the company's political officer and spoke diffidently.

"Low, I have work for you;" he hesitated, and Low took the opportunity to unburden himself.

"Glad to hear it, sir. I am not averse to idleness when there's a little music after chop and a few voices to swell the chorus; but here—" he disgustedly glanced at the sheet-iron sheds of the trading compound— "it is nothing but vicious cocktails and innocuous service gossip. I'm glad to go on the job again. But is it anything serious, sir?" he questioned his superior's hesitation.

"I think not; though one really never

knows where these investigations are leading to, as you are aware, Low. It is not its seriousness that makes me hesitate to put it up to you. Low, it is not very nice work I have to send you on this time."

"The work of a political spy never is overly nice," the other answered. "But I play the game as squarely as it is played, and the end justifies the means; one in my business can not afford to stand on nice points of sentiment."

"Y-e-s," hesitatingly. "But this time you are called upon to shadow a woman—a white woman!"

Low shot his lean face forward, exclaiming in surprise,

"Shadow a woman! What, here in Nigeria? Phew!"

The agent-general glanced down at the letter.

"It is not my order, Low, nor do I know what the object is. But, here, read for yourself the letter of the Earl of Scrantling, our chairman-director." He thrust the letter in Low's hand.

The letter was addressed to the agent-general, and was as short as it was explicit:

Dear Sir:
Select a trustworthy and close-mouthed officer and send him at once to Las Palmas, there to watch the West African boats for Edith Claybourne. I have information that she is shortly leaving Liverpool for Las Palmas, but think she is really headed farther—either the Gold Coast or Nigeria. I want her shadowed and fullest reports of her actions and any one she meets mailed me at once. If possible let the shadow gain her confidence. Spare no expense. Charge same to political expenses.
SCRANTLING

Low slowly raised his face to his superior's, disgust and question struggling there for mastery. The agent-general shrugged his shoulders, as if disdaining personal responsibility.

"I'm sorry, Low," he said. "But it's up to you to accept or refuse. Of course you understand that refusal would mean your finish as far as the company's service is concerned."

"But what does it mean?" cried the investigator. "Is she an adventuress, or is it personal spite, or what? One does not like to play spy in the dark. For myself I have no false respect for the other sex; I have known them treacherous and capable of dirty work, and have no compunction in unmasking villainy, so long as it is villainy."

The agent-general was thoughtful awhile, then answered cautiously,

"This is between you and me, Low, and in no sense official. Claybourne is a family name of the Earl's, and I smell a family skeleton in this inquiry. At the same time, I do not think his lordship would use the company's funds nor risk the exposure of private matters by employing a company's officer in this work, since it was easy for him to have the party shadowed by a detective agency.

"Now I take it, Low, that you are in no position to turn down this proposition—you've been out here too long to be of use in the crowded cities of civilization or to knock under to the restrictions of its commercial life. Take my advice and board the stern-wheeler for Burutu and make the Liverpool mail for Las Palmas right away. Here is my signature for your expenses," he said, thrusting into Low's hand a short note, setting forth:

To Whom It May Concern:
Bearer is on company's service. Credit him and charge to the Claybourne Inquiry.
ROBERT MILLER, A. G.

Low absently folded the paper and thrust it into his shirt pocket. Then he shook his head with sudden resolve, the mouth grimming with a touch of that hardness that had made him the company's trusted political officer.

"It's all in the day's work," he said. "But I hope the woman is ill-favored in features and character, or I may fall down on the assignment. Good-by, sir. I send the reports to you, I suppose?"

"Of course. Good-by, and good-luck, Low."

CHAPTER II

MISS CLAYBOURNE HEARS OF THE RENEGADE

LOW stood on the piazza of the secluded Spanish hotel which he had chosen rather than the English hotel, where the officers en-voyage to and from the Coasts were wont to stop. His eyes were on the smoke-trail of a liner swinging in from the sun-dappled ocean to the oily calm of the breakwater.

His nature was at war with itself; the romantic side of him was teased by the quaint,

sleeping town of Las Palmas and the plaintive lilt of the blind flutist at the big portals of the cathedral; all the high-strung idealism in which he was so apt was buoyed to that pitch that makes one feel at friendship with all mankind—he loved the gay-dressed crowds of the market-place, the thousand perfumes that rose from old Spanish gardens, the song of the wild canaries that have given the islands their name. But the symphony was discorded by the mail-boat and the consciousness that aboard her was a white woman whom he was to shadow.

Had there been any way out—any chance of withdrawing, he would have taken it; but it was too late in the day for that. His duty was plain. He snatched up his panama and swung down the dusty road to the docks, where he put off with the customs boat for the ship. Every oar-stroke that brought him nearer his "subject" increased his unhappiness, and his anxiety as he searched the faces of the score of women lining the rail climaxed into wretched self-disgust.

It would have been an easy matter to ask the stewardess to identify Edith Claybourne, but that would be risking exposure of his interest in her and would, if it came to her ears, put her on guard. Though intensely hating his position, he mingled among the tourists and wives of Gold Coast officials until he caught her name. A stout matronly woman was speaking,

"Don't you really get off here, Miss Claybourne? Do you really mean to say you are going down to those horrid fever coasts? Why, I love my husband, but I would not, nor would the major let me, accompany him down there. They say the sun just makes havoc of one's complexion, not to mention the havoc the barbarism makes of one's morals."

Low turned swiftly to the party thus addressed, and his heart sank into his canvas shoes. He saw a girl, or young woman, of womanly height, straight bearing, with a hint of athleticism in the carriage of her shoulders, and a face— Just what it was about the face that caught his soul in worship was hard to define; it was not so much its mere beauty—the delicate chiseling and the large, clear, gray eyes—as the character, the repose, blurred by an atmosphere of sadness.

He took all this in at a glimpse, for hers was one of those faces that impress themselves at once, and as swift was his conclusion that she was a girl of high ideals, with absolutely nothing of the common adventuress about her. With this conclusion came a swift impulse to watch her, not for her destruction, but for her safety. Then he heard her answering the stout woman, and her voice carried depth, feeling and sincerity with very curious intensity, though her words were merely idle civility.

"I am not frightened for my complexion, and as for morals, I hope they are not so superficial as to be degraded by a glimpse of barbarism. Yes, I stay aboard."

He jumped out of his dreams; he had to act quickly and get his grips aboard, which necessitated going ashore and phoning to his hotel, then to ponder the chances of a race between the disembarkation of the passengers for Las Palmas and the tropical laziness of a Spanish porter. Fortunately the latter won, and Low sailed with sufficient clean linen to save his reputation.

ABOARD ship acquaintanceship is quickly made, and when the boat is coasting with but half-a-dozen passengers it quickly becomes a family household. Low, while not forgetting his instructions to win Edith Claybourne's confidence, found those instructions so much to his distaste as to let things take their course. As for the girl, she neither avoided nor favored him, nor any other of the few men aboard.

One thing he did discover was her keen interest in the Oil Rivers. Whenever the stories turned on the Niger and the whites of the Niger, her face became alert and eager. Others noted this, and took advantage of it to cultivate her friendship, but found her unresponsive.

She volunteered nothing of herself, nor of her object in venturing where few white women care to venture, and it became an intuitive understanding with the men to respect her reticence, though in the little smoking-room they sometimes conjectured. Low felt himself handicapped by his secret interest in her, or he would have tried frankly to know her more intimately. There was a strong bond between them in music; she played the violin with skill and deep feeling. Often in the lush, airless nights off the Gold Coast he listened to "Träumerei" in the saloon and fancied he was listening to

an outpouring of the girl's own soul. He himself was no mean performer on the harmonica, that humble but handy little instrument that finds its way where more commodious instruments are inaccessible, but as he listened to the strains from her violin he thought he would never have the heart to take up the harmonica again.

The strong attraction she exercised over him only deepened his wretchedness over his treacherous spy-work on her, and he had an uncomfortable doubt of himself if it came to a show-down between this attraction and loyalty to the company. Meanwhile he had to play a waiting game—feed her strange hunger for knowledge of the Niger and if possible find out the mystery of this hunger.

He got a clue in a very chance way. One night Peabody was relating one of the wild episodes of a renegade named Dimsdale. Richard Dimsdale had appeared in the Oil Rivers about three years before, and at once started relentless war on the company, with no seeming object but to cut the company's quarterly dividend. If the company sent an expedition to make a trade treaty, Dimsdale made heroic struggles to get in ahead and secure the chief's signature to a treaty of his own, which he never exploited, but played dog-in-the-manger with holding it over the company.

To-night Peabody was telling a story of the renegade's influence with the blacks, and his strange tricks to acquire that influence, how he drank effervescent salts and fooled the blacks into believing it boiling water, thus getting a reputation for *ju-juism* (occultism), and how he used facial paralysis to gain a reputation for having the dreaded Evil Eye.

Low, who had been quietly watching Edith Claybourne—a dreaming habit he had got into—was surprised to see her face lose its sweet calm for intense interest. Lips parted, eyes fastened on Peabody, her long fine violin fingers locked and interlocked in a way that showed great excitement, her ears straining for every word touching Dimsdale. She listened to the telling of his strange influence over the company, which had several times had him in its power, only to let him go on command, so gossip said, from high authorities in London.

There was a hint that he was a relative of the noble chairman-director of the company, and that his fight was against his august relative, who dared not take extreme measures because of the family scandal involved. The girl listened with heaving breast and an interest that roused Low's jealousy, though he would not admit to himself it was jealousy.

YET when she came so far out of her reserve as actually to ask him what he knew of the renegade, he did not spare the man for want of any good feeling toward him. They were negotiating the jollops of the smoky bar, heading for the Niger Delta, when she brought up the topic of Dimsdale, as if knowing that they would soon be at their destination and that this was her last chance. Her question was abrupt, as if suddenly forced from her.

"Do you really think this Mr. Dimsdale is as wicked as they say?"

There was a girlish wistfulness and a little quaver in her voice that made Low comment inwardly on the curious facility of a woman to dream heroes out of rascals with mysterious backgrounds. He answered perhaps a little sharply:

"I have small regard for whites who lead Africans in warfare against their own country."

"Perhaps he thinks the blacks have a right to their own country," she answered quietly, almost like an unintentional snub, and added, "Have you ever seen him? One can judge a man so much better when they come face-to-face with him, don't you think, Mr. Low?"

She met his eyes in that frank way of real companionship.

"I saw him but a few moments," Low admitted. "And then they were rather strenuous moments. He had come in under promise of personal safety to treat with our commanding officer in the Agades fight—that time he led the Fulani against us over the trouble about the right of the company to raise hut-tax."

"Well," she said after a slight pause, "judging him personally, do you think he is really bad?"

"I should say he is a good man gone wrong," Low admitted. "I do not judge him; one must know his past—what wrongs have been done him to so embitter him—to get a correct estimate of the man."

"Thank you," she said, and then colored, as if she had made a slip.

Low was too surprised at that admission

of her personal interest in the man to say anything, and then a grim humor took him as he suddenly remembered his instructions to win her confidence.

He wished with all his heart he had not surprised her secret from her, for he saw no option but to put it in his reports, and he was worried over what cupboard skeleton it might give the key to. He began to get a hint of the object of her journey, though no more than the barest hint. Yet in a few hours she must declare herself, for she had only the choice of returning by the boat she was on, or taking passage by the company's stern-wheelers to where her destination must be given beforehand and her object expressly stated. She seemed aware of this herself—a nervousness in her manner as the ship neared the sheet-iron buildings that made a blazing white splotch against the rich green of the jungle.

CHAPTER III

LOW HAS A TALK WITH SABBO

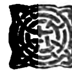
LOW found himself facing a hard problem. To shadow a woman in crowded civilization was easy, but to keep on her trail without exposure of his surveillance in Nigeria was impossible. If he had been furnished with any data on the plot or mystery involved, he could have acted through deduction of her next movements, but now he could only conjecture. Was she corresponding with Dimsdale? Was there an assignment?

Perhaps Dimsdale intended sending home by her his trade treaties, which could be marketed in London and an opposition company floated? Or he might even be working for a foreign power—Germany had long attempted to get a footing in Nigerian spheres. He thought these probabilities over, yet placed little credit in them. He had a strong feeling that her interest in Dimsdale was deeply personal—that not mere commercialism, but something closer the heartpulse was at the bottom of her long journey. Besides, she was not the kind of girl to play traitor to her country, unless Dimsdale had over her that powerful attraction that will make a woman crawl any mire for her love.

She was evidently a girl capable of deep passion, yet not the kind of girl to suffer infatuation. But the mere thought of her in love with Dimsdale was harder to bear than thought of traitorship. He had a feeling that she had something more than mere regard for himself; there had been little touches—common interests, likes and dislikes, and she had often gravitated to him in an unconscious way, plainly finding comfort in his companionship.

As for himself, he was no longer fooled about his interest in her; the glance of her fine eyes, her little mannerisms, the careless touch of her fingers as she emphasized something she said, and the way her low, rich voice persisted in his dreams at night, the happiness her presence brought him, and his inward curses against the Fate that made him spy on her told only one story. "Shadow-man! Spying on a woman!" he apostrophized himself, and sweated to find a way out.

He had got to that point where his loyalty to the company demanded his resignation, but his love for Edith Claybourne whispered: "Stay and serve her; keep any other spy from being hounded on to her." There was something in her loneliness that appealed to him. Whatever her object, she was but a girl, alone, facing savagery, of which she got a bad taste the moment the boat dropped anchor off the little port.



A LONG mahogany dug-out manned by Sierra Leonese in the beggarliest of loin-cloths swept out, and the black in charge swaggered up the companion-ladder. From a top silk hat, which he wore with nothing more than the loincloth, he took an envelope and approached the purser.

"Hey, you," he impudently accosted the purser, "I got a letter for you."

"Say 'sir' when you address a white man, you black limb of the Evil One!" snapped the enraged purser.

The black slowly dropped his left eyelid.

"That don't go with me, Mr. Pursah," he answered. "I ain't no bush nigger; I done been to Liverpool."

The next moment the little purser had planked his foot to the black's stomach and the man dropped to the deck groaning; then he kicked him to his feet, then made him kneel again while he presented the letter.

Edith Claybourne had witnessed the scene before Low could place himself between her and the barbarity; it had happened too quickly. She glanced up at him

with a little quiver to her under lip, and he parted his lips to assuage the horror, when his ears caught the name of Dimsdale, and he saw that she too had heard; her face sprang alert, listening to what the purser was saying.

"Why doesn't Mr. Dimsdale come himself?"

"He done be too busy, and——"

"Sir!" corrected the purser.

"Him done be too busy, sah," the cowed negro responded. "Him give me dat there letter, and dis here money to pay for de freight and say, 'Sabbo, go get dem cases what come for me'—Sah."

"All right," snapped the purser. "Get your canoe forward under the port derrick and we'll drop 'em into you.'

Low saw relief spring into Edith Claybourne's face, and he said to himself, "She never expected to find Dimsdale so easily; this is just luck, and she is trying not to show it in her face—she does not want me to know that she is interested in the renegade."

And then he tested her by asking whether she was debarking there. She said she was, and excused herself to go below and pack. There was sudden assurance in her manner in place of the nervousness that had marked it the last few hours. Plainly the unexpected had happened, and the girl accepted it as good-fortune.

IT WAS up to Low to do some hard thinking. What game was Dimsdale at that he was shipping in goods and himself lying perdu? He must get an answer to this, for he saw clearly that if he was to get a line on the mystery it would not be through hanging to the skirts of Edith Claybourne, but through a little investigating. Accordingly he went forward to the mahogany dug-out and opened conversation with the silk-hatted Sierra Leonese, who proved, under bribe of tobacco, to be as garrulous as he was mysterious.

"Sah, it ain't good to make mouf about Massa Dimsdale; him done hab *ju-ju*, and him ears hear and him eyes see eberyting what go on eberywhere." The superstitious fellow glanced fearfully about him.

Low laughed and commented,

"So Dimsdale is at his old tricks—scaring you with his *ju-ju* and Evil Eye nonsense."

"It ain't nonsense, sah; I done see him with mine own eyes swallow an egg and bring it out o' his'n ear," the negro affirmed. "We niggers done all be rich pretty soon. Massa Dimsdale going to make us all rich. I will hab five wives and neber work no more. We done fit out for a long journey. Dese here cases done contain barter goods. Massa Dimsdale hab thirty carriers close by—round dat dere island;" he pointed into the heat haze of the sweltering delta, and then his enthusiasm burst out again. "We am all going back to Sierra Leone and be gentlemen when Massa Dimsdale pay us."

"Where is he getting these riches?"

"*Ssh!* Dat am secret. Massa Dimsdale done neber tell nobody. But you done excuse me; my boat is ready. You ain't got anudder plug o' terbaccer on you, ain't you?"

Low smilingly gave the rascal a plug, and watched the last case dumped into the mahogany. There was a slip of the rope and the case dropped heavily, bursting open, exposing rifles. Yet the cases were plainly marked "Glassware."

"Oh," soliloquized Low, "this Dimsdale is running guns, which means a nigger jail if we catch him! But what the deuce has Edith Claybourne to do with gun-running? How would she join Dimsdale, if he was her objective?"

Low was still a little uncertain on this point, for she had made no attempt to communicate with the renegade through his Sierra Leonese. But even as he revolved these questions, she came on deck, neatly dressed in field khaki with a fawn terrai hat. Behind her came a steward with her light baggage. She ran to the rail and beckoned the negro who had been talking with Low and he came up on deck with a grin of surprise.

She quickly made known her wishes to be transported in the canoe to his master. She was quite open about it. The negro stepped back, shaking his bullet head in the negative. For a moment she was nonplussed; then an inspiration seized her. She took from a grip a photo and showed it to the black. Instantly his manner changed to servile deference, and he exclaimed in awe,

"It am de massa's spirit picture. Oh ay, lady, we done take you."

Her face lit up at that, but before descending the gangway she turned to Low, holding out her little hand.

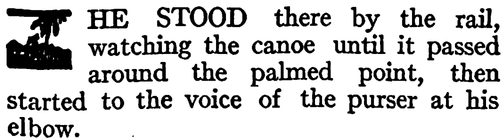
"Mr. Low," she said, "I have to thank you for many kindnesses. And I want to ask you to think well of me, however strange and seemingly covert my behavior may appear in seeking information from you of Mr. Dimsdale, and now in going to him, whilst all the while not admitting any connection with him. I feel it very deeply, my friend—you have been my friend—that I have been unable to be frank with you; but there are things involved—a trouble which I am not free to confide, especially to an officer of the trading company that regards Mr. Dimsdale as its bitterest enemy."

She had spoken with such feeling that he was touched, and his conscience was keenly pricked by his own treacherous secret. He ached then and there to come out with a frank confession of his traitorous interest in her—only, like herself, it was not his secret. Instead he bowed over her hand, speaking from his heart,

"Dear Miss Claybourne, if I can serve you, call on me. If you will look on me as your friend, I am happy. I do not ask you for your secret—God knows I am not free of wretched secrets myself—but I feel, I know that what you do is honest and right. It gives me real pain to see you plunging into this barbarous country all alone. But——"

He stopped, not knowing what to say.

"Thank you," she said simply, and next moment was gone.



HE STOOD there by the rail, watching the canoe until it passed around the palmed point, then started to the voice of the purser at his elbow.

"That's what I call pluck," said the official. "I'd think twice before I'd trust myself to that crew of savages. And I saw that girl cry because a palm-oil ruffian presumed on a shipboard acquaintanceship to tell her a risque story. Girls are mysteries," he opined.

Low scarcely heard him. Something had gone out of his life—a brightness had faded. It was as if he had been listening to the song of a lark, and a hunter had suddenly come and taken the bird's life, leaving empty silence. What was the meaning of it all? What was this wild renegade to Edith Claybourne that she trusted her honor and life implicitly to him, going to his outlaw camp?

His cogitations were interrupted by the company's shipping agent.

"Back on the job, Low, eh? Lucky devil; moving all the time, and no worry nor stagnation like we poor deluded agents."

Low came back to the actual with his old grim smile and a brief comment that we all think the other fellow has it easy because we judge from the surface. The agent smiled incredulously, envying the investigator his apparently idle goings and comings.

"Well, but what is it this time—ivory poachers or nigger intrigue or what? But there, you political officers hedge yourself with silence and bluff us all; you are wrapped in importances."

His talkativeness jarred Low's tensed feeling and he ended it abruptly.

"Have you a steam launch in good order?" he asked. And, as the other nodded, he continued, "Then I'll take it, for an indefinite period. Perhaps I shall call on you for supplies, all which you will debit to the Claybourne Inquiry. And, by-the-way, if you get any order for supplies in quantities from unknown parties—anything that might be for an expedition into the interior, refuse them—say you are short."

"Gee, that's the lay, eh? But you are too late; there was a crew of coast niggers in here yesterday with English money, buying supplies to beat the band. What is it, the Germans? All right, if you must be so —— secretive," the garrulous agent aggrievedly flung at Low's shut face.

CHAPTER IV

A VISIT TO DIMSDALE'S CAMP

LOW lost no time in boarding the launch and getting away. His object was to land on the other side of the island where Dimsdale was outfitting and creep through the swamp to spy out the camp. This was effected with little difficulty, except for the discomfort of the struggle through the dense crocodile-infested swamp.

As he neared the camp, he heard the noises that mark the preparatory work of African expeditions, and then saw the camp itself through the mangroves. About the ground were strewn stores, which the Sierra Leonese carriers were making up into regulation forty-pound headloads, whilst to one side was Dimsdale drilling twelve fighting

Housa with rifles. His crisp commands snapped like gunshots on the jungle quiet as he drilled the Housa in the uses of the rifle and in formations.

But what particularly caught the spy's interest was Edith Claybourne. She stood against a tent-flap, her eyes fastened on the tall, sinister figure of the renegade with an expression that certainly was not hero-worship, yet had a pathos—a sympathy in it that roused Low's jealousy. He had to admit that Dimsdale was of the stuff to fill a girl with dreams—his decisive authority, patience, broken with quick explosions of rage, short as they were sudden, all marked him a leader of wild men.

Then he saw that which took his breath away. Two blacks were stitching tarpaulin to two long poles, making a rude stretcher. The deduction was evident: Edith Claybourne was going with the expedition! If the water-skins were anything to go by, they were about to venture the hardships of the Fulani country. What was the object? There was no trade in those barren sun-baked lands—no treaties worth the going after—nothing but savages, sun and thirst. And how could he keep in touch with his "subject" in that country without exposure?

In Dimsdale he had to deal with a man who had himself played all the tricks, who was suspicious through experience and watchful by nature. Then rage against Dimsdale shook him—rage that he should lead gentle, cultured Edith Claybourne through the barbarities of the Fulani country. Suddenly astonishment banished rage as he saw Dimsdale dismiss the Housa and, walking over to the girl, familiarly lay his hand on her shoulder, and thus, talking in low tones, move toward the tent, which they evidently shared in common.

Once they stopped, and the girl reached to his collar and turned it up to protect the back of his neck against the sun. The action irritated Low, but not more than Dimsdale's off-handed acceptance of her care. What was their relationship? Certainly not that of passionate lovers. It seemed more like that of long-married couples; but the girl carried another name and exhibited ringless fingers. The question became a miserable obsession with him. He hated those familiar touches fiercely, and this hate and question sharpened his determination to fulfil the letter of his instructions and spy her every movement. Nor could he think of letting her go alone with the renegade into the Fulani bad lands. But how keep in touch with her without self-exposure?

There could not be two white men in that country without each other's presence being made known through the medium of the telegraphing tom-toms. The only alternative was to go in disguise. The moment he reached this decision he had also decided on the disguise he would assume. Retracing his steps through the jungle and boarding the launch for the shipping station, he set about his preparations with a determination that the hazard should not fail for want of detail and caution. Had he been perfectly honest with himself he might have questioned whether it was loyalty to his employers or a pregnant desire to be near Edith Claybourne in her dangerous trust in the renegade that guided his actions.

HE WANTED a skin-stain, but the agent at the port had nothing. Low tried the doctor of the Liverpool boat.

"Skin-dye, is it?" said the doctor. "I know the very thing; the stewardess——"

"Stewardess?"

"We dropped her with the women at Las Palmas, to pick her up on the home run. She uses a walnut stain to dye her hair. Tip the cabin-boy to steal the bottle; he'll do it like a shot, for the stewardess thinks it is her business to run the steward's department. Gee, the poor old thing will arrive in Liverpool with white hair, and *bang* goes her job."

His urgent need of the stain dulled any scruples Low might have had. Half-a-crown seduced the cabin-boy, and Low soon returned with the precious bottle to the launch, and lost no time getting away.

His plan was to slip up the Niger to Bida, and there take the trail for the Fulani, thus getting in ahead of Dimsdale, who dared not use the exposed river for his expedition, but intended going through the bush. Unfortunately the superstitions of his crew brought on a chapter of accidents. The launch was nearing a rock known as the Ju-ju Rock, and until recently the scene of bloody fetish orgies, which had given it a bad reputation among the poor blacks, who

firmly believed it was inhabited by evil genii. The company's troops had recently wiped out the nest of wizards, but had not succeeded in wiping out the natives' superstitious horror of the rock.

Low was at the wheel himself as they approached the rock. He was steering for the calm waters that lay in the shadow thrown by the rock over the eastern passage, when he gave the wheel over to a local pilot and went below to get out the *dash* for the *serekai* of Bida, whose village he expected to make before dark. As he had to pass through the Bida country he must secure the *serekai's* good will with the customary exchange of presents. Anxious to avoid delay, he wanted everything in readiness.

As he was selecting a purple cloth for *dash*, he suddenly felt the launch scrape rock, careen off and rock in boiling waters. He dashed on deck, and found the boat tossing in the rapids of the western passage. Instantly he knew what had happened: the pilot's superstitious fear of the shadow thrown by the rock over the eastern passage had made him dare the rapids. In a glance Low saw they were too far in to make a turn or back out. For two hours he maneuvered the little craft against the seething current, until his arms had no strength left in them and his hands lost their grip.

It looked like disaster, when a curious turn of Fate swept the launch into calm waters, where they got anchor hold and with use of winch and cable tediously and laboriously hauled her beyond the rapids. But the delay brought him to Bida after dark, and custom demanded that he wait over until morning to pay his visit to the *serekai*. This so seriously endangered his chances of heading off Dimsdale that he determined to take a hazard and send one of his men to purchase certain things he wanted and then to take the trail without the customary formalities. So bringing the launch to bank below the village, he sent a negro in to purchase the articles he wanted for his disguise.

"Hey, Tom Gin!" he called out to a trustworthy black. "Take these cowries and go to the village and barter me a burnoose, a turban, one pair of sandals, a Koran and a string of those beads which the mahdis [Mohammedan missionaries] wear. Savvy?"

"Oh ay, sah, I done savvy you."

The man swaggered off on his errand.

Losing no time, Low used the wait to apply the hair-stain to his face, neck, hands and the ankles that would be exposed by the sandals. It took nearly two hours to accomplish this artistically, and yet Tom Gin had not returned. Still unalarmed, judging that the natives' tedious system of bartering was keeping his negro, Low stretched himself on the grass mat he must henceforth accustom himself to in his character as a mahdi, and quickly dropped into sound sleep with that happy facility of men who live outdoor lives.

CHAPTER V

"AND MOHAMMED IS HIS PROPHET"

HE WOKE out of a curious dream. He sat up, looking straight before him as if expecting to see somebody standing there. A moment ago in his dreams Edith Claybourne had stood there. This feeling was so strong with him that he got up and went over the camp. It was just breaking dawn—a still, white, unfolding African dawn that picks out objects with great clearness. It was soon evident he had dreamed, which was more than curious, for he was not a dreaming subject. The feeling of her near presence was so strong with him that he was sure he had experienced some occult phenomena—he still felt her presence, and knew that she was in trouble and had appealed to him. He tried in vain to argue the feeling away as a delusion built on his daily thoughts of her.

"I dreamed," he soliloquized; "I have had her so much in thought that the subconscious mind visualized her in my sleep." But in his heart he felt that this was not the true explanation; the vision had been too intensely real. It made him suddenly urgent to be on the trail. But Tom Gin had not returned, and now Low saw himself in a bad fix, for, having stained himself, he could not go into Bida as a white man and "make palaver."

There was nothing for it but to send in another negro after the other, with no guarantee that he would return. He told the man to go in quietly and move among the market throng with his ears cocked and return quickly with what he could discover. The black nodded intelligently and asked for a calabash of salt to peddle. It was a

good idea, and Low waited his return hopefully.

He was back in a short while, with a characteristic negro story of how Tom Gin had swaggered through the village with his cowries, buying the articles he was sent for on sight, until he had aroused the natives' suspicions and had been clapped in an underground hole. This was more than unfortunate; it was disaster. Low consigned poor Tom Gin to his ground-hole, and hoped it was hot enough there to sweat the braggartism out of him.

He was trying to scheme means to the mahdi outfit so necessary to his plan, when a long shadow fell on him and he looked up at a swarthy man dressed in the very clothes he so urgently desired. Such a strange presentation of the very thing in his thoughts made him suspect an hallucination of the mind and he put forth his hand to touch the figure, when the man leaped back with a muttered curse,

"Dog of a swine-eating infidel! Darest thou touch a holy pilgrim and follower of the Faithful!"

"A mahdi!" cried Low, and made a quick sign to his negroes to close around the fellow. The next proceeding was simple highway robbery, though Low excused his conscience on the ground that he was only borrowing, and carried the deception to the extent of ordering his blacks to retain the mahdi aboard the launch until his return, that he might return the burnoose, turban, sandals and Koran and beads which he was assuming without apology, all his senses tensed to the strange dream of Edith Claybourne. Ordering his men to take the launch to some secluded cove and wait his return, he set out on the trail for the Fulani country.

HIS disguise filled his most sanguine expectations; every village he touched gave him that reverence all wild peoples give to prophets crying a new religion. His mode never varied. Approaching a village openly, he would stalk into the market-place and in strident voice call on the people to reform from their ways and give their hearts unto Allah. "*Allah il Allah!*" (God, the One God) was his password for free yams and mealies, and his only trouble was to shake the witless here and there who would follow him, thinking they were walking straight to Paradise. All this while he kept his ears alert to any gossip of a white man in the country.

In four days he struck the great ivory caravan route and found himself in slightly familiar ground, having once headed a small expedition sent out by the company to discover why the ivory that used to come down in immense quantities had suddenly ceased. The expedition had met strong opposition from the Fulani and had to return without accomplishing its object. It was one of the few failures that rankled with the political officer, and he remembered it now, with resolve to use the present opportunity to discover the reason for the loss of that ivory trade.

He was now in the Fulani country, and anything more unpromising of ivory was impossible to imagine; there was scarcely enough water to keep alive the small crops of the impoverished villages, much less to support elephant herds. Here he discovered that the people did not understand his Housa dialect. But they offered no opposition, seeming anxious to be his friends, though they one and all made gestures that seemed to warn him of trouble ahead. These gestures were always the same: the blacks would face the direction he was heading, then deliberately turn their backs and walk away in the opposite direction, as if advising his return; or they would drop to the ground and simulate a deathly sleep, and at one village they all left their huts and walked from the village a little way and made him understand that the village was deserted.

Some terrible tragedy was involved and some great danger lay ahead of him, yet his instructions and the imperious call of Edith Claybourne kept him on his quest. It was curious and foreboding that he heard not one word of the white man and white woman. Ordinarily the approach of a white woman would have been tomtomed all over the country as one of the great wonders in the monotony of their existence.

ON THE early morning march of the fifth day of his quest, he spied the thatches of a large village, and was at once struck by the absence of smoke. As he drew nearer to the huts he was alarmed by the utter silence—the total absence of the domestic sounds peculiar to African villages; not the bleat of a single

goat nor cackle of a hen broke the dreadful silence.

Then he noted that the yam patches were uncultivated, and to climax his forebodings, he missed the familiar avenging vultures that always hover over the villages. By now he had arrived in the hut-lanes. Everywhere silence and still-life assailed him. He shuddered, and hurried on. But the next village told the same desertion. The silence seemed to eat into him. He knew he was in the presence of some terrible tragedy. But what? He thought over the gestures of the natives. Why had they gone through that play of deep sleep? Suddenly it came to him in one horrifying understanding. Sleeping sickness had depopulated the country!

He stood stock still in the middle of the village. His first thought was to beat a quick retreat from that charnel-house, but there came a sharp visualization of Edith Claybourne as she had appeared to him in his dream. Had she traveled the horror of those silent villages? Even as he asked the question his eyes caught sight of an empty condensed-milk can. It was a strange and incontrovertible evidence of the passing of the expedition, sweeping away all hesitation of his course. He plunged ahead.

The next two days were a nightmare—sun, thirst, hunger and body weariness; his finger-nails bled from scratching yams from the baked earth, and his thirst reckoned the very feet between the village wells. At last, at the end of the second day, he saw a thin streak of smoke up-curling from a village. He could have cried out for the joy of it—its promise of human beings and the end of the terrible silence that was playing havoc with his nerves. He ran down to the village, but recalled the dignity owing his mahdi disguise in time to save self-exposure. He stalked into the open market-place with his usual cry to a half-hundred sullen-faced blacks.

"*Allah il Allah,*" he monotoned, holding out his open palms to show he came in peace.

But there was no response; the blacks regarded him incuriously, huddling together like black crows staring at a scarecrow. He made signs that he wanted food, pointing to his open mouth. They made answer graphic of their poverty by turning upside down a mealie pot, showing its emptiness. Then he saw that some were bleeding, and the ground was torn by a recent scuffle. At that moment a man stepped forward and put something into his hand, which, to his utter bewilderment, he found to be a miniature on ivory of a lady—a sunny face that had never known anxiety, under a wealth of whisping light-brown hair!

Then the man who had given him the miniature caught up a stick and began tracing in the sand, first, a tall, thin man with something on his head that Low eventually deciphered as a helmet; then other men, each with a rifle, crudely drawn with straight lines and curves, yet unmistakable. The deduction was obvious: Dimsdale had recently passed and had been in a mix-up with the Fulani. The discovery put heart into his quest, and he started off at once on the trail, flinging out his cry, "*Allah il Allah.*" Suddenly he stood stock still in surprise as a voice from a hut finished the slogan of Mohammedanism in the Housa tongue:

"And Mohammed is His Prophet."

A moment only the surprise viced his limbs, then he got into swift action, running along the huts, shouting to the Housa to declare himself.

A voice groaned, "Save me, holy pilgrim, from these barbarians!"

LOW dashed into the hut whence the prayer came and discovered a Housa trussed like a chicken for the cooking-pot. It was the work of a moment to sever the grass ropes and get the prisoner on his feet. Then he hurried him out on the trail, without opposition from the sulky and cowed Fulani. As they marched, he heard the man's story. Thinking he was speaking to a pilgrim, the Housa spared nothing of the story.

"This is the story, holy one: A white man is marching through the country. With him is a white witch. The white man is a devil; he speaks, he acts, he rages like the tornadoes that come out of nowhere. This country is fetish—the Evil Spirit has cursed it! There is no food. We come to this village and the Housa are hungry. They steal yams. The Fulani fight for their yams. The white man just one devil! He punish us for stealing. We throw down our guns and say we go no farther. He call me and say I am the bad Housa and he give me over to the Fulani for punishment and example."

"Whither does he travel, and why?" asked Low.

"He travels for the dying-place of the elephants, where there is much ivory that will make us all rich."

"Great Scott!" thought Low, "I never thought of that. Dimsdale has discovered the source of the ivory and is beating the company to it!"

And then he eagerly questioned the man as to the white woman's health. The Housa's answer was a bombshell.

"The white man quarrel with the white woman in their tongue all the time. She sob, sob like the *kanda.*"

Low plunged ahead in sudden rage. Well he knew the sobbing *kanda*, or hyena, that prowls around the villages by night, uttering a kind of wearying sob, which the natives say is the sob of lost souls. A hundred throbbing questions crowded his thoughts: What of the miniature? Who treasured it so that they carried it through the heart of Africa? And that dream of his at Bida, so curiously confirmed in the Housa's story of Edith Claybourne's trouble? There was an uncanniness about it; indeed, this uncanniness hung over the whole adventure. There was one comfort to be extracted from the Housa's story: Dimsdale was not so degraded that he failed to punish severely the thieving of his followers from the poor natives. Yet that graphic sentence, "She sob, sob like the *kanda*," blurred everything else, urging him to forced marches with a desperate courage that mocked thirst and fatigue. What tragedy could have so broken Edith Claybourne's spirited calm like that?

The country began to change, the barren shale that burned through the thin soles of his sandals giving place to rank high grass, and when the evening harmattan set in there was a welcome snifter of water, evidently from the distant shores of Lake Tchad. The fable of the dying-place of the elephants began to take on plausibility.

CHAPTER VI

"HE ROBBED ME OF ALL I HELD DEAR"

HE WAS swinging through the grass late one hot afternoon when he heard a pitched voice in sharp authority, and almost tumbled into Dimsdale's camp. He clapped a hand on the Housa's wrist and stopped him. Thus he stood there, screened by the grass, sizing up the situation.

The expedition was evidently just striking camp for the evening march, after the rest through the heat of the day. Some trouble had occurred, and Dimsdale was threatening the Housa:

"You fellows had better get it into your heads that there is one *massa* to this expedition and he is going to be obeyed. I have brought you into this country and I will bring you out—bring you out rich, every man of you! You Housa say it is against your caste pride to carry packs. Good; I respect your pride, but owing to so many desertions among the Sierra Leonese I have to make temporary carriers of you. Now I give the order, and shall not repeat it. The first man who refuses, dies! Shoulder your packs!" he cried, at the same time whipping out his revolver.

Muttering sullenly, the Housa tried to meet his eye with subordination; then one man took up a pack, and one by one the others sulkily followed his example. The renegade snapped,

"March!"

Up to now Low had been too intensely interested in the scene to look for the girl, but now he saw with alarm and surprise that she was not in camp. In his anxiety he forgot himself—was on the point of rushing forward and demanding explanations from Dimsdale, but recalled himself in time, seeing the futility of a lone man demanding explanations from one who had the backing of a dozen rifles; instead he went forward in his mahdi character and hailed the column,

"*Allah il Allah!*" he cried.

The Housa returned a joyful shout, lustily finishing the cry,

"And Mohammed is His Prophet!"

Dimsdale turned swiftly, and noting the happy effect the arrival of the supposed mahdi had on his Housa, invited Low to travel with the column. Low, acting out his part, shouted,

"Dog of a swine-eating Christian!"

Then he at once mixed with the Housa, drawing his burnoose round him in contempt as he passed the heathen Sierra Leonese. He began mumbling texts of the Koran, interspersing questions about the expedition. He learned that the white woman had gone on ahead, for as she trav-

eled in a litter, her pace was slower, and she always left an hour or so ahead of the camp.

The feeling that he was near her to offer what protection he could, lightened his heart of the heaviness it had carried the last few days, though he was not without anxiety as to whether his disguise would fool her. He thought of their exquisite companionship aboard the mail boat, and felt sure that she must have noted mannerisms that would make recognition very possible.

WHEN they sighted the litter, borne on the shoulders of two giant Sierra Leonese, he felt his heart cruelly thumping his ribs; a sense of suffocation, though it was now cool evening. But his eyes were on Dimsdale, to see how he would act and to get a line on that "Sob, sob like *kanda*." His senses were alert, his muscles tensed to thwart the renegade in any lawless approach of Edith Claybourne. He shadowed Dimsdale to the side of the litter.

A white supple hand—the little feminine hand with the fine violin fingers he had never forgotten—reached from the litter and gripped the renegade's brown fist. Then her rich, full voice floated over the soft tread of naked feet.

"Was there more trouble, Dick?" she asked, with a hint of weariness that stabbed Low to the heart.

"It is settled," Dimsdale answered shortly. "The Housa think their caste pride is smirched because I made them shoulder the packs. There will be no more trouble," he added significantly.

"Oh, Dick," she sighed, "it is all so horrid and brutal! Was there any more flogging?"

"No. Don't bother your head. The hard part of it is all over. In a few days we shall be on the return, each man with his head-load of ivory."

"Supposing this story about the elephants coming to this place to die is only a negro fable, like so many things they say?"

Dimsdale answered with almost rude brevity,

"I tell you not to trouble your head! There is always a certain amount of truth behind these nigger fables, and I mean to get in ahead of the company."

Low hated him right there for his unfeelingness to her fears, and again the old mystery of their relationship came sharply to the fore. But he had little time to think; she was speaking again, and in enigma.

"You are all right, Dick?" she asked, with a little touch of fear, as if she were intruding on forbidden ground. "You have not—not touched *that?*" she added.

"No!" he rapped out. "Why will you harp on it?"

"I did not mean to harp on it, but my anxiety got the better of me. Oh, Dick, try and fight it out with yourself. Dick, dear,"—Low jumped at that endearment as if he had been shot, but grimly got a grip on himself—"Dear," she repeated, "do you ever think of the old days—the old innocent days, when you taught me to row, to shoot and to ride? We were such great chums, Dick. Do you remember your dreams, your brave plans? Oh, Dick, you were so clean and bright and——"

"And that devil had not played —— with my life, Edith," he said, quietly but with horrible intensity. Every word seethed with hate, and then, laughing in dry bitterness, he added sneeringly,

"His Grace the Earl of Scrantling! Fine high-sounding name for the man we know, eh, Edith?"

"Don't, Dick!" she cried. "Can't you forget him?"

"No; I can't, and I won't! It's he that I am hitting in this expedition. Do you think I care a fig for the ivory? No; but I do care to beat the company. I know for a certainty that an expedition is setting out for the stuff next month, and it will be my laugh when they find the nest robbed. He robbed me once—robbed me of all I held dear—robbed me by lies; and now I rob, rob and rob him as long as I have two legs to travel on and a head to plan! It is no good harping on it, Edith; it is all I live for!"

"And that other thing."

"Edith!" it was the cry of a tortured soul. "For God's sake let it rest! It is my curse, and mine only. Why should you take part in it?"

"Because I love, poor, dear old Dick. I'd rather see you dead! Oh, Dick, by the days of our youth and the dreams of our youth, try and fight this thing. Fight it with all your soul and strength! Dick, I pray nightly for you—I pray God to lend you strength!"

"God!" he sneered and laughed; and

then she, as if to charm away his sinful mood, began to sing simple, old-fashioned airs that fell on the still, starlit night like a child singing itself to sleep.

Her songs brought no joy to Low. He was face to face with that "dear," and "Edith" so familiarly passed between them. And what was this "other thing" that had made Dimsdale cry out with such pain when she breathed the bare hint of it? Was it this that made her "Sob, sob like the *kanda?*" As he was cogitating these questions he heard a whisper in his ear, and turned to see a Housa making signs for him to fall back with the men. Seeing from the man's excitement that something unusual was going on, he dropped back, and was instantly the most important actor in one of those dramas so common to African expeditions.

He was ordered to read the stars for augury and to invoke the blessings of Allah on a treacherous plot hatched against the whites. The Housa had brooded over the insult to their caste pride until they were in a mutinous state and had plotted to murder Dimsdale and the "white witch" when they came to the ivory, which they would bring down to the Niger themselves and barter independently to the company.

CHAPTER VII

THE MAHDI UNCOVERED

LOW found himself in a terrible situation. How could he warn Dimsdale without exposing his disguise, thus putting himself at the mercy of the renegade's unrestrained temper when he found all his movements had been followed by a spy of the company he so fiercely hated? Then, too, Low would be banished from the expedition, thus leaving the girl unprotected, for Low was not assured that Dimsdale meant her no harm. His sharp manner with her and total want of sympathy with her unselfish prayers for him; his curses when she had so pitifully urged him to fight against "the other thing," placed her in a very precarious position. Was this curse the man's terrible temper? They told stories in the trading-stations of his summary dealings with the natives, and once he had been tried for murder when he had shot down some mutinous followers in a sudden blaze of mad rage.

He must temporize with the Housa. Accordingly he read the stars and pronounced them unfavorable to the plot; but fearing to lose his hold over the men with this adverse reading, he bade them wait, promising that the morrow might be more propitious.

His fear of the demon in Dimsdale got a sharp confirmation just after the expedition camped that night. Edith Claybourne was preparing a simple supper over a grass fire for herself and Dimsdale while the latter took the Housa and beat the grass round the camp to clear the place of snakes. Low, in his mahdi character, was free to indulge his dreams and watch the girl's slight silhouette as she set about her simple task.

He quickly saw that her heart was not in her work, but that she was surreptitiously watching Dimsdale, her manner that of one watching for an opportunity. As the dark forms of the beaters widened the circle, she began to cast eyes toward Dimsdale's private pack, which his bearer had thrown down by the tent. Suddenly Low saw her slip over toward it like a hare and begin quickly to loosen its straps, then hurriedly search the contents.

Then with horror he saw Dimsdale coming over to her, with that in his face that showed the demon uppermost. It was on Low's tongue to cry a warning, but he checked the impulse in time. The next moment the renegade was on her, his tongue lashing viciously:

"Leave my pack alone! By——, I will not stand for that! Edith, go about your business!"

She turned to him, thrusting forth both hands with a piteous gesture of appeal, then sank to her knees, burying her face in her palms, sobbing as if her heart were choking her.

"I did it to save you from yourself. It is your chance—now or never!"

"When there's any saving to be done, I will do it, thank you, Edith! Please don't ever attempt this trick again, or there will be serious trouble!"

"Do you speak to me like that! Oh, Dick, you have stabbed me!"

He suddenly began pacing to and fro over the beaten ground, groaning out self-reproaches.

"I am cursed! Oh, my God, that doctor had better have let me die than have given me this curse! I did not mean to speak so, Edith. I am possessed of a devil—I am

burned up within, and—God, I must have it!"

He jumped toward the pack; but she threw herself before him, pleading,

"Fight, fight with all your soul! Just this once, and next time it will be easier."

But he roughly pushed her aside, and Low, unable to bear any more without interfering, simply ran away from it.

HIS position was terrible; every fiber in him urged him to go to Edith Dimsdale and tell her she was not alone—that he was there, her servant in all things. But that would mean explanations, and how could he explain that he was there to spy on her? No, his usefulness lay in his disguise, only he prayed that the temptation to disclose himself be not too great. In the tense scene he had just witnessed he got a sharp insight into the renegade's character; he saw a man of strong passion and a certain nobleness that wrongs had perverted.

If he proclaimed his identity he would get short shrift from Dimsdale. Thus he found himself a helpless spectator in the unfolding drama. Yet he was not altogether helpless. He was able for the present to check the incipient mutiny of the Housa. But how long he would be able to stall off the trouble by his pretended reading of the oracles as unpropitious to their plot, was the trouble.

All that night the men huddled together, muttering charms against Dimsdale and talking over the blissful life they would lead when they shared the ivory among themselves. But when dawn broke and Dimsdale formed the column, giving his orders crisply, threateningly, his eyes—fine, large, gray eyes—snapping with a curious intensity in them that had given rise to the negroes' superstitions that he possessed the power of the dreaded Evil Eye, they sullenly fell in line. And at his sharp, "March!" every man put his right foot forward.

Low was pleased to see that Edith Claybourne's litter stayed with the column; undoubtedly Dimsdale ordered this because of the leopards that now infested the plains.

Low was hungry for a sight of her face in daylight. Once he went forward to the side of her litter, but Dimsdale turned on him, blazing.

"Get back in your place!" he snapped, raising a cruel, tapering hippo thong to lend brutal force to his order. It hissed through the air like a striking snake, coming down on the shoulder of Low's flowing burnoose. It was a dangerous moment with Low; but he managed to get a grip on himself, and quietly fell back with the carriers.

The demon was rampant in Dimsdale this morning; his vicious thong cracked over the bare heads of stragglers or curled round their calves, and always his own stride set the pace.

The land began to take a slight dip, with sluggish creeks and treacherous bogs, and everywhere the spoor of big game. The Housa noted this, and began climbing each other's backs in hopes of sighting the still waters of Lake Tchad. The mutterings behind Dimsdale's back grew louder and again and again they questioned Low for a sign to throw down their packs and rush the renegade.

"Holy one, see thou the black bird in the sky? Is it not good omen?" one would ask.

And then another,

"I heard a whisper in the grass. Is it not good omen?"

Low shook his head and mumbled over his beads ere he answered,

"It is not good omen. Wait."

Whereat they grumbled, and it was plain that he could not hold them much longer. Then Dimsdale himself gave them the very opportunity they sought. The column crossed the recent spoor of rhinoceri and Dimsdale took his rifle, in hopes of getting fresh meat for the column.

THE moment his helmet disappeared in the high grass a change came over the Housa, and Low knew the climax was come.

"The white witch!" they whispered, and begged him to give them a sign. Then one threw down his load and unslung his rifle.

Low acted like a shot. From under his burnoose he drew two pistols, and faced the riflemen.

"Pile arms!" he snapped in English.

Taken by surprise most of the men obeyed the order to which they had been accustomed ere they deserted the company's service. Those who hesitated found Low's revolver staring into their eyes and hurried to comply with the order. Then Low turn-

ed to a hulking Sierra Leonese, whom he at once recognized as Sabbo, who had boarded the Liverpool boat for Dimsdale's cases. He ordered him to stand guard over the rifles. The man did not move, but stared in limp paralysis at the supposed mahdi who gave white man's orders so authoritatively. Low had to repeat the order, and add a threat. Sabbo woke suddenly out of his trance.

"Oh ay, sah; just as you say, sah."

He took up a rifle and stood over the pile, facing the scowling Housa.

Low turned toward the litter, just in time to see Edith Claybourne advancing afoot. She looked at him and his two revolvers with surprise, then at Sabbo, whom she addressed.

"I heard English—a white man speaking?" she questioned.

Sabbo, jerking his massive head at Low, gave a mixed answer:

"Dis here mahdi ain't no mahdi, missy. If he ain't a white man, den I ain't no nigger."

Low was vainly trying to get an explanation on his tongue, but the suddenness of the unmasking and the shamefulness of his position as spy confused him. Then she spoke.

"It is *you*," she quietly said, and then, "I knew you would come—I dreamed you were coming."

"Dreamed," he managed to mutter. "I, too, dreamed; I dreamed you called to me."

He found himself talking to her quite naturally, for all the world as if there were no miracle in this meeting and her quick penetration of his disguise.

"Ah," she said, "I was in great trouble, and when Dick told me that the company would certainly try to keep track of his expedition, which he could not hide from them, I guessed you would be sent out, so I tried ever so hard to let you know I was in trouble."

"But how? Good God, how?" he cried. "I saw you back there by the Niger, when you were hundreds of miles away!"

"Oh," she said, "have you not heard of projected consciousness? Every one was taking lessons in it when I was in London. It was all the rage. It is simple: If you wish to bring yourself before some one, you think hard of that person. If he and you are what the professor called 'sympathetics,' you can bring yourself before him—make him think of you—*see* you."

"Then you are in trouble?" he said, that fact dwarfing the mystery of "sympathetics," which in a less tense situation would have aroused his interest to the highest pitch.

"The night I called you—yes; I was in deep trouble. Please don't make me explain; it is too terrible, and too near my heart's wishes. Some day, perhaps, but not now. Are you here as our friend or do you come for the company against Dick?"

"I am in the service of the company," he was forced to answer. "But I am your friend, and his, since you ask for both. Will you believe, whatever circumstances may show otherwise, that I am your friend?"

FOR several tense moments she met his eyes, then put out her hand, speaking with simple truth,

"Yes, I will believe you are my friend. I feel you are my friend. Now, will you tell me what the trouble is here?"

He briefly explained the plot of the Housa to murder the whites and steal the ivory.

"Oh," she cried, wringing her hands, "it has been like that all the way; first the carriers began deserting, then we had trouble with the villages, and—and everything was so brutal! Now this!" she sobbed. "I can not bear it. And when Dick comes in, what are you to tell him? If you say you are acting under orders from the company, he will go up in the air at once. You must not judge him too harshly. He is not himself. There is——" She stopped, hesitating, then finished the sentence with a wild gesture of her two hands, "There is a cause. Please don't make me explain. But you can't tell him you are under orders from the company; you *must* not!"

"But I can't maintain this disguise when every nigger in the column knows I am white and every Housa is itching to get his hand on my throat for my mahdi play. Anyway, your—your——" He paused, hoping she would help him out and settle the irritating mystery of their relationship. But as she said nothing, he went on, "Anyway, Dimsdale is too shrewd to be fooled, and besides, he will know me as the political officer of the company, for we have met before, and not very pleasant meetings either. I see no way but to meet the situation frankly. I am only one man, and not able to offer any real resistance to his plan to steal this

ivory—for it is a steal, as the company's treaty rights give it exclusive trading privileges in this country. Besides, I think he is fooling himself about this dying-place of the elephants."

He flushed under his dye at the lie he was acting in letting her think that he had been sent to spy on Dimsdale. Evidently she never suspected that he might have been sent to spy on her. He could not but wonder at this and the whole mystery of her appearance on the coast. Something in her openness and truth made him blurt out a question:

"Whatever made you brave these barbarities? What could have brought you out?"

Instantly he regretted the impulsive question. But she replied without offense,

"I came to Dick—to save him from himself." She forestalled his next question with a plea, "Do not ask me—it is my dreadful secret!"

"I will respect your wishes. Forgive my inquisitiveness. I, too, have my wretched secret."

He was thinking of his orders from the Earl of Scrantling.

"You?" she began, when a shot rang out close at hand, quickly followed by a second and a third, then the crash of some monster charging through the grass.

Next moment a wounded rhinoceros rushed straight into the camp. The men scattered right and left before the monster. Low caught the girl and threw her out of the path of the maddened beast, which lurched a dozen steps and fell. In a moment Low had snatched up a rifle and put a finishing shot through its brain.

An out-of-breath voice behind him said,

"You know how to use a rifle then, father?"

Low turned round and found himself facing Dimsdale. He answered quietly in English,

"I ought to; I have shot anything from pheasants to elephants."

He held his rifle ready for the least movement Dimsdale might make.

CHAPTER VIII

EDITH TELLS A STORY

FOR several tense moments they stood thus, eye meeting eye, wit fighting wit, will against will. Then Dimsdale broke the spell, laughing raucously.

"You have the drop on me," he grudgingly admitted. "I ought to have suspected you, but I did not think the company would get knowledge of my expedition in time to make a move. Well, what are you going to do about it? You must recognize that you are one man, and I——" he waved his hand over his followers. "What are you going to do about it?"

Edith Claybourne stepped forward, anticipating Low's answer.

"Dick, dear," she touched his arm, "Mr. Low has just saved our lives; the Housa were going to shoot me, and then you, when you returned."

The renegade looked around, and saw the whole story in the stacked rifles and the sullen expressions of the men.

"My God, Edith!" he cried, "have I brought you to this?" Then he turned to Low, and with the impulsiveness of his quick nature held out his hand. "I thank you," he said, "not for *my* life, but for Edith's. What is coming to me, I have earned, but Edith——" He put his left arm protectingly about the girl as he gripped Low's hand with his right, speaking feelingly, "I am sorry, Mr. Low, that you and I are in opposition; but we can fight a square game, and come what may, I will never forget this debt to you!" Again turning to the girl he repeated, "Good God, Edith!"

His eyes caressed her in a way that sharply focused the question, the burning question of their relationship.

Low replied simply that they were three whites in a very tight place and it was best to sink differences for a while.

"You had better get a whip hand over those negroes who are gorging themselves on the rhinoceros, for after their long meat fast they will sicken on that raw flesh."

It was a terrible picture of animalism to which he had drawn attention. The blacks swarmed over the beast's carcass like flies on a dead dog, hacking away the flesh with their knives and eating it as they worked.

Dimsdale went at them and drove them off with his hippo thong. When he had them cowed he set them to cutting the meat in strips, while others built grass fires to smoke the flesh. To set his men an example, he stripped off his khaki riding-jacket and started to rolling back his shirt sleeve, but stopped suddenly, glancing at Low. Finding the latter's eyes on him, he

quickly pulled the sleeve down to his wrist and buttoned it; but not before L w had seen, in one terrible penetration, that which gave him the horrible key to the mystery hidden in his pack and the meaning of Edith Claybourne's enigmatical words that she was "Saving him from himself," and her talk of his "curse."

Now he knew what she would steal from the pack, and why she pleaded with him to fight his demon; now he knew the dreadful meaning of the strange glitter that at times shone in Dimsdale's eyes. Little red scars all over the man's forearm—the little scars a hypodermic syringe would make! It told the pitiful tale of a good man gone wrong on a drug weakness.

BUT why should the girl take it upon her frail body to try and save him? Why should she call his curse "her dreadful secret"? Why did the Earl of Scrantling want her shadowed? Evidently the Earl knew of her intended journey to the coasts; but did he suspect that she was heading for the renegade, and was jealousy the motive of the shadowing? And what of the miniature he still carried inside his burnoose?

The thought of the miniature reminded him that he should return it to its owner. He turned to Edith Claybourne, who had stayed where she was when Dimsdale went over to the dead beast. He found her eyes fastened on him with a curious trouble—a kind of shame in them. Instantly he knew she was aware that he had seen the telltale forearm and had read his own thoughts. There was something in this way of hers of reading his thoughts that heightened the strong bond between them, which she had so aptly termed when she had said they were "sympathetics." It made her familiar relations with Dimsdale not only an irritating mystery but a reproach.

Now that he shared her secret, there seemed no barrier between them. But why should Dimsdale's weakness be her dreadful secret? Why should she cast her eyes down and color before him, as if the discovery shamed her?

She spoke, her eyes still on the ground, and almost her first words cleared up the relationship and buoyed hopes that he had not dared acknowledge to himself.

"You saw?" she gasped. And then in a sobbing whisper, "You condemn him; I know you condemn my poor brother!"

"Your *brother?*"

"Why, yes; didn't you know?"

"Good Heavens, I never dreamed! But—but how—your names?"

"His name is Richard Dimsdale Claybourne. He dropped the family name when he took up his filibustering, after his big trouble."

"His big trouble?"

She looked over to where Dimsdale stood on the rhinoceros, directing the cutting up and curing, and then laid her small hand on Low's arm.

"Come to the tent; I will tell you the whole story. I don't know why I tell you," she added, with almost childlike candor, "but you have been so good to me, and anyway I know you are my friend.

"The story goes a long way back, to when we were all children together," she said, seating herself on a camp-stool and motioning him to another at her side. "I had a dear chum—Alma Lane, and——"

Low suddenly recalled the miniature, and pulling it from his burnoose, gave it into her hand.

"Oh," she cried, "I am so glad! I was dreadfully upset over losing it. You see, it brings a message and a promise. Listen." She laid her hand on his knee, in her frank and friendly way. "Dick and I grew up together, and we had fine times," she sighed. "Dick fell in love with my chum, Alma Lane—that's her miniature. Alma liked Dick, but our cousin, Harry Claybourne, afterward Earl of Scrantling, came to visit us, and he also fell in love with Alma. He was favored by her family, because he was in line for the title and estates, while poor Dick had only his brains to depend on.

"Her family crowded poor Alma, and were always preaching about Dick's wildness and escapades, and were so insistent in foretelling disaster that she didn't know which way to turn. Then Harry inherited the title and was made head of the Royal Sokoto Company. The first thing he did was to offer Dick a good job. Dick was all shaken up over it, for the enmity between the cousins was undisguised. He accepted in good faith, without a suspicion of any treachery on the Earl's part. He came out here and was lost for two years—except for the few letters he could get to Alma.

"SUDDENLY his name became a headliner in the home papers. He was on trial out here for brutality, murder and other awful things. The witnesses were all Africans, whose terrible tales stirred all England to such an extent that there was talk of revoking the company's charter, for he was in charge of an expedition sent out by the company at the time. Some said he was the scapegoat for the company, others said this and others that, and the only one who said nothing at all was Dick. He was sentenced to five years in a Gold Coast jail!

"At home we were not allowed to breathe his name. He was dead, and the Earl of Scrantling courted Alma. One night at the old home Alma and I were in an arbor at the end of the Italian garden. We were talking over girl days, when a man suddenly presented himself to us. At first he was so changed that I hardly recognized my brother; but when I did——"

She paused, to get a grip on her emotion, then continued more quietly: "He told us his story, Alma and me, and we knew he spoke the truth. Others believed him—the whites at Sierra Leone who helped him to escape that negro prison, and the officers of the ship aboard which he stowed away. Every one believed his story and secretly helped him, even the doctor who relieved his horrible sufferings after the exposure he suffered in his escape and the wreck that dreadful jail made of his body. They were all terribly, terribly good to him.

"The doctor meant well, but he pumped morphine into poor Dick and saved his body at the expense of his soul. But that developed later. His story is told in a few words: The whole trouble with the blacks was the conspiracy of the Earl to defame him—the very expedition had been fostered with deliberate intention for his destruction. It was only Dick's will and courage that brought the blacks out alive.

"He does not deny that there were cruelties, but he explained how the men sulked, and the fatalism that came over them, and how he had to rouse them with floggings, and quell mutiny with the execution of the ringleaders.

"I believed him, and Alma believed him. We wrote out his story and tried ever so hard to get it published; but the company was too strong politically, and the papers feared libel suit.

"We used to meet Dick every night in the arbor, bringing stolen food with us. We talked and planned and hoped, but all to no good. Then his physical sufferings returned. Racked with malaria, suffering muscle paralysis from sun exposure, without hope, the poor fellow found solace with the hypodermic syringe!

"Alma had told him she could wait—would wait. But this last thing was the finish, unless he could fight it. He promised to return to Africa and fight it, thinking that the strenuous outdoor life and the climate he had become accustomed to would help him.

"For a long time we heard nothing of him, for he could not write. Then one day when the Earl was visiting, he told us that a certain renegade who was giving the company a great deal of trouble was none other than Dick. Then I knew he had given up hope.

"I prayed for him, and schemed for him, and tried to reach him by letter. At last I determined to come out and see what our old love could do. I could not journey on the Niger without it being known to the Earl, so I went to him frankly and expressed my object and asked his help. He dared not openly turn me down, but simulated interest in my mission—talked largely of the family honor, but gave himself away in the end by asking if I took Dick a message from Alma.

"Now I had teased Alma into giving me her miniature on a promise that I was not to give it to him until he could swear he had not used the drug for three months. I had to confess it, whereat he refused me safe conduct.

"But I was determined to come. He said in that case he would have me shadowed for my own safety in Africa, because if anything happened to me it would start talk and family scandal. It was curious, but do you know that when I first met you aboard the ship I actually suspected you were to be my shadow?"

She gave a subdued little laugh at her own foolishness.

It relieved Low more than he could express to learn that he was shadowing her for her own security and not for her destruction, but it brought him face to face with the shame of his spy-work and the effect of it on her regard for him when the time came for explanations.

CHAPTER IX

DIMSDALE'S PACK

MORE immediate trouble, however, for the while pushed this worry in the background. He mentally reviewed the situation. Dimsdale, as he continued to call the renegade, was after the ivory of the fabled dying-place of the elephants. If he really got ivory he brought himself up against the company. But if he failed to get ivory, then the company had no interest in his expedition. But what of the demon in him when he faced failure? And what of the dreadful return march, without hope, through that pestilential country, with hostile natives all the way, and sullen, mutinying negroes watching their opportunity?

His thoughts were interrupted by Edith Claybourne. She touched his arm, saying,

"Now you know Dick's terrible secret, you will help me to save him, will you not?"

He turned swiftly at her appeal and caught her hand, speaking from his heart:

"Yes, with all my heart and soul! I feel with you that your brother has good in him—that he can be brought back to the high-souled boy who taught you to row and shoot and ride. Oh, yes," he quickly forestalled the question in her eyes, "I heard your plea to him that night he ordered me back among the Housa, and enforced the command with his thong. No, I bear no enmity; he thought he was dealing with one of those religious fakirs and trouble-makers. What shall I do?"

She answered in a low voice,

"Steal and destroy the drug. Find some way to do it as if it were an accident. He carries it in his pack. Do this—do it for him, and for my sake, if you will, and I—oh, there is no word for my feelings toward you—I will pray for your happiness, always!"

He answered in tense undertone, for Dimsdale was coming over to them,

"You could forgive me *my* dreadful secret?"

"I could forgive you anything," she answered sincerely. "I know you would do nothing dishonorable."

At that moment the long shadow of the renegade fell across them and his voice in cold displeasure jarred on them.

"Edith, are you going to talk with Mr. Low all day?"

There was a brother's arrogant protection of his sister in the tone which she slightly resented.

"Dick, you forget yourself. We are under obligations to Mr. Low, and, anyway, it is good to talk over things. Mr. Low puts little faith in your ivory quest," she said, remembering Low's remark in their first conversation and adroitly using it to turn her brother's attention.

"Mr. Low might give me credit for a little experience and sense," Dimsdale retorted, angry at having his judgment debated.

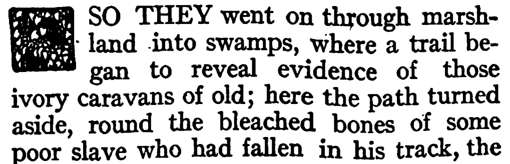
Low, thinking to pave the way and lessen the bitterness of Dimsdale's disappointment, stoutly affirmed his doubts of the fable. Dimsdale took him up impetuously.

"I know it is a fable, but these fables always hide—sometimes purposefully—facts. You know yourself that immense quantities of ivory used to come over the Fulani trail. This trade suddenly ceased when the sleeping sickness depopulated the country. It is evident that the ivory source has thus been untapped for something like two years, and there you are. But why talk when we should be on the march? If you are joining forces with us, Mr. Low, I must ask you to take orders. Form the column."

"Dick!" his sister cried reprovingly.

But Low was too much the man to dispute so little a thing as leadership. He swung off at once to get the men in line, yet glanced back in time to see Dimsdale sneaking to his pack, which he took with him under cover of the tent, that no one should witness his degradation.

Low caught a glimpse of Edith Claybourne, standing looking after her brother, her fingers convulsively clutching her field skirt, her face pitiful in its misery. The sight spurred him to a desperate determination; from that moment he never lost sight of Dimsdale's pack. But the renegade never let the Sierra Leonese who carried his drug out of his sight during the marches, and when in camp he used the pack for a pillow. The drug was life itself to him, and he guarded it accordingly. Low watched like a stalking cat.



SO THEY went on through marshland into swamps, where a trail began to reveal evidence of those ivory caravans of old; here the path turned aside, round the bleached bones of some poor slave who had fallen in his track, the

whole caravan coming after, having simply stepped around the body. The land was broken up with sluggish creeks, through which the blacks shouldered the whites, crawling out of the slime like flies from molasses. Low judged they were traveling the overflow lands of Lake Tchad, and he held out hope of a near end to Edith Claybourne.

"By sundown we should sight the lake," he said, walking by her litter. "Do you see that flock of flamingoes? Well, there is evidence that the lake is near."

She glanced away at the tall figure of her brother heading the column before she spoke, and then it was in a whisper:

"Suppose there is no ivory? Suppose it is all a myth? Dick will be terrible!" she gasped. "You have had no chance to get at the pack?"

"None; he guards it as close as his honor."

"Try!" she breathed. "Take a risk. Think; if the drug were destroyed, he could not get any for months—not until we come to the coasts; and they say that if a man can go without it for a month or so he will lose the craving."

"Yes; but he will go through hell! Have you no thought of that?"

"No hell can be worse than the hell he is in! Oh, destroy the drug, even if you have to do it at point of gun! If you knew the Dick of old—the brave, kind, dear old Dick—you would rather see him dead than slave to this thing!"

He answered her prayer with a bulldog determination.

"I will get the drug—come what will, I will get it! I think my chance will come when we sight the water and the column will be thrown into excitement. I am watching. Trust me."

"I do trust you," she said with sweet conviction, and added a few words from her heart: "I don't know what would have happened to Dick and me if you had not come."

"I am glad I am here," he made quiet answer, and hesitated to say something of all his heart suffered for her, but just then Dimsdale shot at a beast in the grass, raising huge flocks of tern and geese that hovered like a cloud overhead, snowing down white feathers.

The blacks raised a great shout:

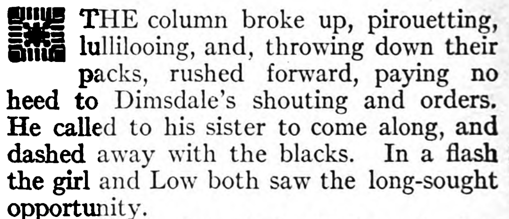
"The water! O-o-h, we am come to de dying-place ob de elephants!"

Sabbo tossed a negro to his great shoulders, speaking in excitement,

"Done you see water? Done you see ivory? What done you see?"

The man shaded his eyes from the sun and looked long down the swamp, while all the column waited breathlessly. Then he spoke in broken sentences,

"I see still water—dere ain't no life—dere ain't no canoes." Suddenly he yelled in lungful excitement, "I see ivory! O-o-h, I see ivory!"



THE column broke up, pirouetting, lullilooing, and, throwing down their packs, rushed forward, paying no heed to Dimsdale's shouting and orders. He called to his sister to come along, and dashed away with the blacks. In a flash the girl and Low both saw the long-sought opportunity.

"Look!" she breathed. "His carrier has fallen! See, the pack is rolling into a creek! Do something!"

But he was gone before she had finished. As he ran, he stooped to snatch up a gourd of red pepper such as every black carries with him to season his mealies. Coming up behind Dimsdale's negro just as he was fumbling to his feet, he threw the pepper into the man's eyes, blinding him. It was the work of a moment to push the pack into the creek. Before the man recovered his sight Low had slipped back to where Edith Dimsdale stood by her litter, which her excited bearers had put down when they joined the rush to the lake.

She wrung her hands, moaning,

"His rage will be terrible! The poor black! Save him!"

The same thing had been worrying Low, who had no heart to see the innocent negro squirming under Dimsdale's cruel hippo thong. His plan was quickly formed. He went up to the man, who had just cleared his smarting eyes of the pepper and was searching frantically for the pack.

"What is the trouble?" Low innocently asked.

"Oh, Lor' A'mighty!" the poor wretch groaned. "Massa's pack done vanish!" He crooked his thumb as a charm against *ju-ju*, and then moaned in anguish. "De massa sure done kill me! Oh, oh, I done be scared to death!"

Low gripped his arm.

"Stop your blubbering! Listen. Stop

your blubbering, or you will have the massa here one-time. You must run away. Take one of the water-skins and as much of the dried rhinoceros flesh as you can carry and make quick time for the Niger. Go!"

The man lost not a moment in carrying out the suggestion. Then Low and the girl went slowly forward to where the cries of the negroes rose. A creek blocked their passage. Without hesitation he took her up in his arms and carried her over, setting her down on the opposite bank, avoiding looking at her flushed face. It was their first close physical contact and it thrilled him to the marrow. But he had no time to indulge sentiment. Something in the cries of the negroes hinted at catastrophe, and he hurried the girl forward.

CHAPTER X

THE DYING-PLACE OF THE ELEPHANTS

THEY came on a low shore to tideless waters. Along the washed sands, as far as eye could see, were the bleached skeletons of elephants. At first glance Low was deceived and cried out, "It is the ivory!" But the attitude and groans of the negroes down there quickly undeceived him. Then Dimsdale came to them, and his set face hid a bitter disappointment his pride would not let him show. In his hand he carried a wizard's carved mask and feather head-dress. He spoke with a grim self-control:

"If we were after fertilizers we have found a small fortune in bones, if they could be gotten to the coast."

"Bones?" Low questioned.

"Yes, the bones of poisoned elephants, but not one tusk nor one ivory tooth! The laugh is on me," he added, subduing his bitterness. "The wizard's mask tells me the whole story. The rascals used to poison the elephants when they came at the dry season to drink at the lake. I have found the trail of the beasts, leading away to some distant forests. They won't be coming at this time of the year, and, anyway, I don't think I could poison the poor things for the sake of their tusks. This will make a great story against me, but——" he made a gesture with his hands, as if wiping the episode off his mind, then suddenly changed back to his quick action. "We must start the return march before the blacks have time to sulk over this disappointment. We shall have trouble, for I have been generous to them in my promises of riches. We must get back to the packs; we ought never to have let the blacks discard them. One must have strict discipline," he said, and looked over the negroes, huddling together with black, scowling faces.

It was evident at once to both Low and Edith Claybourne that he was looking for his own bearer; they even saw the relief in his face when he found the man missing and they read his thoughts as he suddenly left them, leaving Low to get the blacks in line.

"He thinks his man stayed by his pack," whispered Edith. "He is going to forget this disappointment. Oh, it is dreadful! My poor, poor brother!" she cried, her eyes swimming with compassion. "Don't condemn him, please, Mr. Low!"

"I condemn no one," he answered. "What he fights against, I have no conception of; for, I speak truly, I never had to fight any weaknesses, and one never knows whether they might not be in the same clutches. But we must be moving, and steeling ourselves to meet his suspicions. He will not question—he will be too ashamed for such an open confession, but he will watch our faces. Let us hurry," he urged, and began at once harrying the sulky negroes out of the fatalism that had fallen on them with the catastrophe.

THIS was strenuous work, for they were perfectly willing to sit down there by the lake and die. Life has a very meager hold on the semi-savage; at most, it means but plenty of simple food and colorless idleness, not worth the fatigue and hardships of the long marches through the pestilential Fulani country.

Low found himself face to face with the fist and boot work that had gained the renegade the reputation for brutality. He sent Edith ahead, to spare her. It was not pretty work, but it was short; a leg bone snatched from a skeleton and used as a club had more force than argument in gettings the blacks moving. Then he hurried after the girl, coming up with her just as she met Dimsdale returning. His face struggled to hide his emotion as he spoke.

"Edith, my man has disappeared with my pack." His eyes met hers, not with suspicion, but flashing an exchange of understanding. "I do not know what I shall do."

"Oh, Dick!" she said. "You must fight it out!"

But he answered harshly,

"The negro has gone back along the trail; I will pick a couple of men and follow, leaving you in care of Mr. Low, who will take charge of the column."

She caught his arm, speaking in low passion, the gist of which Low caught from the reiterated sentence, "Fight it out." But he pushed her away, almost rudely, and called out from the negroes Sabbo and Tom Gin. Then provisioning, he stepped to his sister, kissed her and swung off, promising to wait for her when he had caught his bearer.

She stood there looking after him, and then turned, tottering, and would have fallen had not Low run to her and put his arm about her. She was crying, in a dreadful silent way, the tears running down her face.

"For God's sake, darling," the endearment slipped from him unnoticed, "don't cry so—it breaks my heart to see you cry! It is all right; he will never catch his bearer, the black is too thoroughly frightened for that, and it is a good thing that he has his mind on something when his blood cries out for the drug."

"I want to be near him then," she moaned. "I could help him, comfort him. What will come of it, I don't know. His despair will be terrible. I'm afraid."

"Of what? His rage? What can he do—self-destruction? He is not the kind of man to do that. Come, Edith, think; isn't it better that he should be alone when the fight with himself comes? He would not like you or me to see; he'd go off into the bush even if he were with us. Come; let me see you into your litter, then we will march."

CHAPTER XI

ORO BUNDI

THOSE marches were never after forgotten by Edith Claybourne or Low; the bald cruel sun by day and the cold, unsympathetic moon by night; the primeval desolateness of those uncharted lands; the constant trying watchfulness over the sullen and mutinous blacks and the near-disasters their irresponsibility provoked—once the lazy rascals emptied the water-skins, and no wells in prospect for twenty-four hours; and the ever-gnawing uncertainty as to the fate of Dimsdale.

The girl's calm courage and encouragement was Low's meat and strength those days; his thoughts were always of her, and she—he had not to ask—a touch, a glance of her fine eyes, a thousand little comforts she found for him when in camp, marked the development of the close attunement that was the song-motif in the wailing strains of those symphonic weeks.

The exhausting rigors of the march left little energy for light chatter or exchange of personalities, so this felt happiness lay unspoken. Besides, Low was restrained from intruding personal things by a delicate respect for her unprotectedness, and a heavy conscience as to his unconfessed spy work. Many times it was on his tongue to confess to the instructions he had received to shadow her, nor did he hesitate from moral cowardice, but from a strong dislike to intrude self on her worry over her brother.

Dimsdale left behind him neither trace nor sign, but was evidently pushing on after the carrier with all the energy of his impetuous rage. The first they heard of him was at the village of the Fulani survivors of the pestilence. A negro superstitiously brought them a strip of goatskin parchment, on which Dimsdale had scribbled a message in the blood of a buzzard, using a wing quill for a pen. The note was as concise as it was graphic. It ran:

Edith:
I suffer the tortures of the damned! I have no hope of catching my carrier. If you knew how I suffer!

It was unsigned, evidently tossed off in the agony of his sufferings, without thought to the pain it must give his sister.

Low comforted her, pointing out that her brother was evidently keeping ahead of them that they might not witness his self-struggle. That he was fighting, Low had no doubt, and his confidence put cheer into the girl. She took his two hands, standing there before the gaping Fulani, and spoke from her heart:

"You are so good and patient with me, and have not one word against poor Dick. I don't know what to say—how to tell all I feel about you—you—you are so good!"

"Don't!" he cried, his guilty secret wringing his conscience. "You do not know me."

"Not — know — you? After — these —

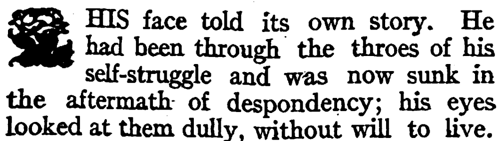
marches? Oh! but I know you better than you know yourself! Sometimes it seems to me that I have known you always—that first meeting aboard ship seems ages back."

This was music to him; but now or never the thing he had to say must out. He pulled his hands free of her clasp and began, in quick, gulping confession, to tell the whole wretched business, how he had gone to the Grand Canaries on the Earl's orders to pick her up and shadow her; how his tongue had been tied by duty; and of his conscience misery.

At first she was surprised, but recovering, made light of his confession, seeing only all he had done for her. Woman-like, she jumped to the heart of things with a simple declaration of her faith.

"You are you. I know you truly, and if duty forced you into a false position, it was none of your seeking nor inclination. Please say no more about it; I have forgotten it. All I remember is that but for you our bones—poor Dick's and mine—would be bleaching out there in the swamp. Please, my dear friend, never mention that again. Come, let us try and overtake my brother."

He felt as if a great burden had fallen from him—a ringing buoyancy permeated his voice as he gave the order to march. The negroes seemed to catch the change, responding with shouts, for the morrow should bring them to the Niger, where the weary marches would be over. They had bartered a tom-tom from the Fulani and now stepped to its throb and an improvised chant they made up about the white man who had brought them out of the Bad Lands. Thus they came to Bida, and there found Dimsdale waiting them.



HIS face told its own story. He had been through the throes of his self-struggle and was now sunk in the aftermath of despondency; his eyes looked at them dully, without will to live.

Edith ran to him, throwing her arms around him, then set herself to rebuilding his manhood, while Low busied about the work of getting the expedition afloat for Lokoja.

Dimsdale offered no suggestion as to his future, but under Edith's tactful care he came slowly out of his despondency, as much to spare her as anything, and lent ear to her plans. She urged him to go to the Governor of the Gold Coast, an old college chum of his, and interest him in his story and get him to use his influence to wipe off the past, officially, then he would be free either to develop his concessions or sell out to the company at a good figure.

He listened patiently to the end, then jerked up his head, speaking raucously,

"I don't care a fig for the concessions or money. What use have I for money without——" he hesitated a moment, then plunged, "without Alma?"

For answer she took the miniature from her coat and put it into his hand.

He seized it like a hungry man seizing food, fumbling it with his hands as if he were caressing the original, then he swiftly pressed it to his lips. Suddenly he looked at his sister, jerking out a question,

"Why do you give me this? That is all over and done with."

"No. Alma sent it to you."

"Alma—sent—it?"

"Yes; and with a message."

"Edith, good God, Edith, don't play with me! It is all over and done with—a dream forgotten!"

"Alma has not forgotten. She gave me the miniature for you, saying, 'Give it to him when he has conquered himself. Tell him my heart is unchanged and unchangeable.'"

"Oh, Edith, what are you saying? It can't be!"

"It is, Dick, dear; Alma is unchanged."

"Oh, Edith, and that negro who stole my curse was my angel in disguise."

"He did not steal your pack," she quietly answered.

"What do you mean?"

"What I say; he did not steal it. Oro Bundi—I mean Mr. Low," she corrected, coloring over her inadvertent use of the pet name she had taken from the mouths of the negroes, who had dubbed the authoritative political officer Oro Bundi, meaning Iron Man—"Mr. Low kicked your pack into the creek and told the frightened negro to run away from your wrath."

He bowed his head in shame, resting his face in his palms propped on his elbows on the table in the small cabin of the launch, but at a touch of her hand he looked up.

"Then I have to thank Low for everything—for life and——"

He left the sentence unfinished, looking down again on the miniature.

"Oh, you had better say nothing about it; he would rather you didn't," she quickly answered.

Something like a smile crossed his thin face as he replied,

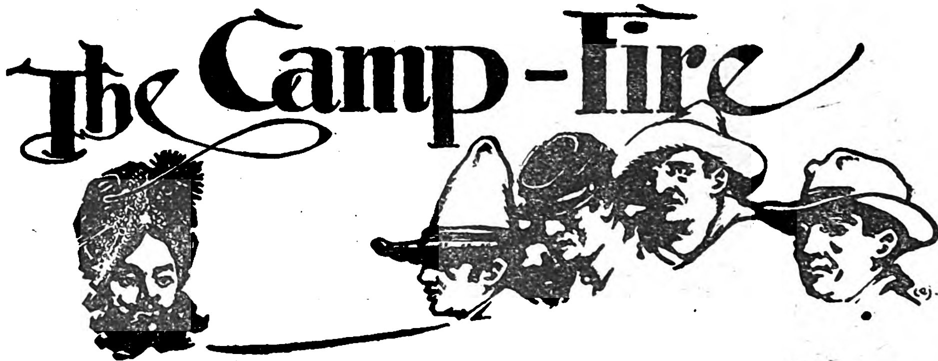
"You seem to know what would please and what would displease him, Edith. Is there—is there anything between you?"

"Y-e-s," she stammered, coloring, "there is a great deal between us. We are going to talk it over when he comes to England on leave. Oh, Dick," she thrilled, throwing her arms about his neck and burying her telltale face on his shoulder, "I am very happy, and all through your trouble."

"You love him?"

She raised her head at that, meeting his look with shining eyes; she tried to speak, but a pebble in her throat choked the words, instead she kissed him and again dropped her head in hiding on his shoulder, but quickly raised it again, listening to Low's strident cheery orders from the bridge.

"Ho, canoemen! Take up your paddles! Go to it!" Then he bawled to the engineer of the launch, "Let her rip, Brimah!"



A Meeting-Place for Readers, Writers and Adventurers

THE Camp-Fire already knows that George C. Hull was born in India and grew up among the moonshiners of Tennessee. He is entitled to write his story of the Philippines in this number, "The Coolie and the Coward," by virtue of fighting with the Colorado Volunteers before Manila (his blouse was creased by a Mauser bullet) and of half a year's campaigning against the insurgents afterward (served with the Kansans at the battle of Caloocan; also in smaller unpleasantnesses). He is likewise entitled to write stories laid in a number of other places, having the spirit of adventure strong within him. Yesterday I had a letter from him, written in Honolulu.

ADVENTURE'S office is gradually beginning to assume the aspect of a museum—jaguar and rattlesnake skins, moccasins taken from a dead Apache before he'd had time to grow cold after the bullet got him, relics of a Mexican bull-fight, photographs of far places, Aztec pottery, a cane strangely carved by a Yaqui Indian, cocoa-pods, and so on. We like it, Mr. Olds and I—sort of counteracts the telephone, steam-heater and other emblems of an acute civilization.

And just now Stephen A. Reynolds is on the trail of a harpoon embedded in a whale that escaped from a boat's crew from the *Canton*, on which Mr. Reynolds made his two-year arctic whaling voyage to the North Atlantic in 1893. Several years later the whale was killed in the Pacific, still carrying the harpoon with the name "*Canton*" stamped upon it. The huge mammal had made the famous and difficult Northwest Passage.

ADVENTURE even goes in for jewelry, for among our most prized possessions are two specimens of chalchihuitl, the long-lost sacred gem of the ancient Aztecs, which Mr.

Charles D. Beers, its rediscoverer, sent to us. If downright beauty has anything to do with it, chalchihuitl ought to take a foremost place among the precious stones. And some day we'll tell the romantic tale of how Mr. Beers found it, and what the old Indian chief said its markings mean.

I HEAR that Captain Fritz Duquesne has just come back from somewhere south of here—the Isthmus of Panama among other places. But I haven't seen him yet and can not tell the Camp-Fire what his adventures have been since his elephant-selling trip, nor whether he and his wife have entirely recovered from the injuries received in the riot at Kingston, Jamaica.

FRANK J. ARKINS, who wrote "When Men Played for Big Stakes," was editor of a daily paper in Cripple Creek during the boom days. Some time the Camp-Fire will hear what happened when the circus with a righteous advance-agent came to town.

IT SEEMS he is a real person, this Jaggard in our serial with the stenographic name (no, that queer-looking pot-hook title isn't Arabic or anything like that. Just plain shorthand, Isaac Pitman method). "Jaggard is not a creature of the imagination," writes John Northern Hilliard, one of the joint authors, "but is built from a vagabond magician whom I have known very well. So far as I know he is rather new as a type in fiction, and interesting to me because he is so full of stories."

HERE is a Canadian member of the Camp-Fire with an interesting coincidence concerning our August cover, the one bearing the picture of Judy, the heroine of this same serial with a shorthand title:

Toronto, Canada.

Talk about "Constant Reader"! Haven't missed an issue of ADVENTURE since it first came out—and the yarns are bully. I've known chaps who have been in several of the yarns, or at least who took part in the events from which the story was written. Captain Boynton's old blockade-runner is still running from Toronto to Niagara. She is called the *Corona*, and is a fine ship even now.

Now as to your present issue of August. The face on the cover is an exact colored photo of a friend of mine living in ——, Ontario, who is one of seven children, all being of different nationalities. Mr. —— was for many years constructor of big works for the British Government, and each child was born in a different country—England, Spain, Mexico, Portugal, Turkey, Peru and the Argentine.

The one whose photo appears on your cover was born in Turkey, and it struck me as quite a coincidence that a painting should be so exact; and even the yarn is about railroading in foreign parts.

AS TO Algot Lange's three-year expedition to the unknown territory of the upper Amazon and its tributaries. In the August number we stated that he wanted men. At this writing something over a hundred and ten applications have been forwarded to Mr. Lange from this office. Others have gone direct to his headquarters at the University Museum, University of Pennsylvania. "I have had to hire a secretary to handle the mail that comes in from you. It simply pours," he writes me.

Who said that the spirit of adventure is dead?

And all of these applicants are members of the Camp-Fire. I am proud of that. I have, of course, nothing whatever to do with selecting the men, but from what Mr. Lange writes me, it is likely there will be at least one or two Camp-Fire men among the tiny handful he takes with him. Whoever goes will go through sheer love of adventure, for I do not think Mr. Lange promises any financial profit, and the three years will be three years not of amusement and easy living, but of untold hardship and danger.

When Mr. Lange brings his little steamer to New York I can give you more of the details, though they will be well on their way by the time you read this. Three cheers for them, and here's hoping they all come back safe from the many dangers that will assail them.

E. A. MORPHY wrote "The Champion of Ten Pines," and it's a good story. But I don't like his letters to me. They're too blamed amusing. I'd like to give all of each of them to the Camp-Fire, but whenever I start to pick out something I find I can't stop, and before I know it have filled our entire space with E. A. Morphy. And it wouldn't be such a bad filling at that. However, by next month, I think I'll be able to narrow it down to the double anecdote of Santa Anna's exile in Jamaica after our war with Mexico, and Sergeant Danny Byrne's cock-fight in the Khaibar when the English were fighting the Afridis in 1897.

HERE is a letter from a Chicago Camp-Fire member that ought to interest Mr. Ditmars, the reptile authority of the Bronx Zoo, New York, whom Mr. Lange is anxious to convince that there are snakes fifty feet long in the Amazon country:

I have not the slightest doubt that Mr. Lange will be able to secure the skin, at least, of a snake that will measure fifty feet or better, for I have in my possession a skin from a snake which I shot on the upper waters of the Rio San Francisco, in Brazil—and that is not considered snake territory as compared with the Amazon—and it is thirty-four feet long. I also have photographs of skins that will measure twenty-two feet four inches, eleven feet three inches, and nine feet, and for fear of being accused of having "snakes" I will not mention the length of a snake as paced off for me by a native, the skin of which he had sold, but still retained the head, and in the mouth were the skull and projecting horns of a steer which the snake was unable to swallow.

This sounds big, but when one takes into consideration the fact that those snakes kill by constriction, and their strength is so great that they can crush the bones of a steer to suit their swallowing capacity, the feat is not to be compared with that of a garden snake swallowing a toad the size of one's fist without first reducing it to a pulp, which is a common occurrence.

As I said, I will not attempt to make any one believe the length of this snake, even after having seen its head myself, for I have already been called some things because of my tales of things I have seen in Brazil, but I will watch the pages of ADVENTURE for reports from Mr. Lange, and then I might say something.

This merely to prepare you for possible things that Mr. Lange will be able to show you when he returns.

Also the following letter, from another man and place:

I have read about Mr. Lange's expedition in the August number of ADVENTURE, and, believe me, he is telling the straight goods when he says he has seen snakes there fifty feet long. I know they are there. I have seen them. I spent sixteen years and nine months there as a prisoner in the hands of some of these interior tribes of Brazilian Indians.

I know where there is a lake containing enough gold, washed from the surrounding mountains, to make J. D.'s bank-roll look like a plugged nickel. I also know that that is the most utterly wretched, unhealthy, God-forsaken country on the face of the earth. I am the sole survivor of a party of seven hearty, healthy young fellows that entered that country. I weighed one hundred and eighty-five pounds at the start. I got out weighing one hundred and ten, bringing the last one of my partners, who died on shipboard and was buried at sea. I had never intended to tell of my visit to this country, but recent events, the rubber people's cruelty, etc., have made me change my mind. There is a price on my head down there, so you will please not use my name or address in your magazine or furnish it to private parties without my approval.

I intend going back after some of that yellow metal as soon as I regain my health and equip a suitable expedition.

IN ADDITION to his African experiences, Thomas Samson Miller has been pretty well all over Canada, and knows our own Pacific Coast, Central America and Honolulu. He began in a little English village and now lives and writes in San Francisco. "I am one of the few Englishmen who believe in America and am almost Americanized."

"The Renegade," like his other West African tales, shows us that country as it is, for Mr. Miller was himself at one time employed by the Royal Niger Chartered Company.

BE SURE that this adventurer will be very welcome when he comes in, and I hope he caught the 8:45 so that there will be no delay in his arrival. Part of his letter expressed his liking for our magazine and part of it was of a private nature, but the rest is a leaf from a wanderer's note-book, and therefore belongs to the Camp-Fire:

I am quite a traveler myself. I have been around the world two times, not as a passenger, but before the mast, and have beach-combed several ports such as Hong-Kong, Manila, as far up as Tong Kin. Have been all over Europe sightseeing in my own peculiar fashion, and have traveled all over the United States and Canada via side-door Pullmans and blind-baggages. Which at the present writing, I am sorry to say, that I have to travel under the same conditions, as when I went aboard of a certain Norwegian tramp in Bahia I did not ask any questions, and the result was when I landed at this port I did not receive any compensation for my labor on the aforesaid trip. So I landed in Tampa with a sailor's outfit of fifty-four pieces, consisting of a pack of cards and a pair of dirty socks.

I'm going to lay over here until the 8:45 train pulls out to-night, as the Southern trains are not very fast and then again not very comfortable, and this is the fastest one I know of. If one gets caught, it is six months on the turpentine farm, but that makes this kind of riding all the more interesting. They are having their rainy season in these parts and the consequences are that one can not find it very comfortable in the open. And talk about your mosquitoes! The State of Jersey or Jersey meadows or flats are a paradise alongside of this State.

I am a New Yorker by birth, but have spent very little time there, only on visits or to spend my money when I had it and then blow again. I expect to be in New York in about two or three weeks if not sooner. Will call on you personally with your permission.

WHEN I finally saw how I could get away for my 1911 vacation in 1912, it seemed only fair to the magazine that my time should be spent in some quarter of the globe especially dedicated to adventure. What more so than the Spanish Main itself,

with its memories of buccaneers and treasure-laden Spanish galleons; of Sir Henry Morgan, Blackbeard, Captain Kidd; of Drake, Raleigh, Frobisher, Rodney, Hawkins; of Columbus, Balboa and a host of other adventurers, explorers, noble gentlemen and professional devils? Of course I was a little late for the real doings. I knew there wasn't a chance in the world of my being able to lay hands on a treasure-laden Spanish galleon, but then there wasn't a chance in the world of any buccaneers laying hands on me. Which is an advantage on any vacation.

And anyhow, it was still the same old Spanish Main. Maybe there was still—well, I headed for it. To make the chances a little better, I included a bit of the Mosquito Coast, a taste of Central America, and a look at that great modern adventure, the Panama Canal.

Really, it was a pretty conscientious layout from the adventure point of view, considering the limitations of my time and other things, and how far off real adventure is when you want it, or sort of want it. Also, I'd never seen the Tropics—never been any closer than Florida, New Orleans and Tangier, and I felt I could edit the magazine better if I'd broiled even a little while under the sun of the Torrid Zone and maybe seen a revolution or two.

Well, I went. And this is what happened:

I SAW two wrecks, one on the extreme eastern end of Cuba and one on the southern coast of Jamaica. Steamships, both of them, and each was grounded carefully on a gentle, sandy beach with neat little infant-size wavelets playing harmlessly around and a blue sky overhead. One was handy to a lighthouse; the other to a town. Both seemed quite intact and looked as if they had just run in shore to land their crews for a picnic-party and were waiting for them to come back.

I saw some whales, too, but they were punk little whales and stayed 'way off, and some people said they were only porpoises. But what's the use of having a whale 'way off if you're only going to call him a porpoise? I saw whales.

Then we came to Port Royal, famous rendezvous of pirates, said once to have been the richest and wickedest town in the world. But an earthquake has sunk it beneath the sea. They say you can still see it down there on certain days, but when I was there it wasn't one of the days. We went on up the winding harbor and docked at Kingston. Two per cent. of the population of Jamaica is white, and I saw some of them.

AT COLON we got off and hunted for the Canal. I'd expected to see it sticking out into the ocean somehow. Which reminds me. When I got home I found that 1912 is the open season for the Canal, being the last chance to see it before the water comes in. I live in a Jersey suburb about eight feet in diameter, but even from there four or five other people have "done" it this year. Two of the lady neighbors, who hadn't been, were talking it over:

"Where will they get the water to fill it with anyway?" asked one.

"Why, from the ocean, I suppose," replied her friend.

"Oh, is it near the ocean?"

They are both very intelligent, too, these lady neighbors; so it only goes to show how much we can learn by going down to see the Canal at first-hand. Now when I went down I saw almost at once that the Canal *is* near the ocean. Not that I am a specially good observer or more intelligent than the average; any one could have seen as much. The point is to go where you can see it for yourself.

In fact, I found that it is near *two* oceans, which, at first thought, might seem an unnecessary extravagance on the part of the engineers who planned it, since of course there is enough water in one ocean to fill a canal with. But they're taking every precaution down there. Perhaps they have it close to two oceans so that when the Atlantic is rough they can fill it with nice smooth water from the Pacific, and *vice versa*. Rest assured, there was some good reason for it.

But then, of course, arises the question: Why, if they have it located so that they can fill it from the Atlantic Ocean, or from the Pacific Ocean, or from both the Atlantic Ocean and the Pacific Ocean, though this last would seem unnecessary except in the case of some dire emergency such as a shortage of water in both oceans at the same time—why, having what would seem a perfectly safe supply of water under all ordinary conditions, are the engineers in charge planning to fill it with water secured by damming the Chagres River and forming a

fresh-water lake of some one hundred and sixty-four square miles?

But then, for that matter, why should they want to fill it with water at all?

HOWEVER, to proceed with my adventurous journey. Naturally, I took the railroad across the Isthmus to Panama—my first chance to see real tropical jungle or "bush," albeit somewhat trimmed and tamed by the hand of man. Would you believe it? Except for the very water in the occasional swamps, the whole blooming place was dry and parched and almost dusty! All my ideas of tropical vegetation knocked into a cocked hat. They explained that it was the tag-end of an unusually dry Dry Season and that it was awfully wet and dank, etc., in the Rainy Season; but I felt rather bad over it.

I didn't even see a mosquito all the time I was in the Canal Zone, nor even along the Mosquito Coast. Jersey for mine. To be sure there were four live and very large cockroaches in my room at the hotel, and one dead one left over by the previous occupant, and I suppose I oughtn't to complain, for none of the rest of the people I knew had even that much luck. Perhaps my hopes had been too high. But I'd wanted to see monkeys and parrots and alligators and such. No alligators. Just skins and stories. Saw only four monkeys on the whole trip; three of them were chained and the other one didn't need to be. Two parrots, one on board ship coming home. Once, in San José, I thought I had fleas, but they turned out to be hives.

I didn't even suffer with the heat. Not to amount to anything. Hot in the middle of the day, but cool at night. Nothing in the same class with a hot, sultry, Summer day in New York. Just a kind of amateur heat.

WE PUT in at Almirante, and a convenient railroad took us around and showed us 800,000,000,000 square miles of bananas, all neatly planted and cultivated, just as if it were nothing but corn. I don't know just how I had expected them to treat bananas, but it wasn't in this matter-of-fact way. They never even let a banana get ripe and look yellow.

Then came the sample Central American republic, Costa Rica. It's an honest fact that they haven't had a revolution in Costa Rica for sixty years! And I sort of expecting they might pull one or two off while I was there!

Earthquake country, too. Passed through the ruins of Cartago. A friend of mine had been there when it was destroyed—only two years ago. Was in a shop, with the clerk and proprietor. He and one of the others leaped out the door and escaped by a hair's breadth, pursued down the street by falling telephone-poles and electric-light wires; the third man was buried in the ruins of the shop. Seemed as if I ought to draw a little excitement here anyhow. Natives were shaking their heads and saying it was "earthquake weather."

Well, we had one sure enough. As soon as I found out about it I went down to the town seismograph and saw it myself. A scratch one-sixteenth of an inch long on a black disk. I hope I may never pass through the like again. Terrifying experience.

Volcanoes all around, too. Nothing doing.

SO I took the train back from San José to the coast—a mountain road with a climb of over a mile in its hundred miles of tortuously winding track. Counted a thirty-two-ply compound curve myself. Famous for its washouts, and the Rainy Season was expected any minute. We suffered only from the dust.

Arriving at the ship, I found I'd missed the only adventure of the trip—the ship's barber had caught a shark, fishing over the side.

Then we turned around and sailed home, in company with forty-five thousand bunches of bananas and a day's loading of coffee on a ship that was almost insultingly comfortable, clean and safe. Arrived on time at New York, and was laid up two weeks with a mixture of grippe and bronchitis. Here endeth ye Adventurous Voyage to ye Spanish Main.

AND yet—I had a perfectly corking time! It's quick and easy to talk about the things that didn't happen, but it would take a long, long time to tell of all the wonders I did see. My brain is crowded with a thousand strange and vivid pictures; those of you who know the Tropics may remember what the first glimpse of them meant to you. I shall not particularize—except to say that I saw a Canal that made me proud of being an American.

And I want to go back.

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