

Adventure

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That's one for you,
"Luenose," said Winthrop.
from "KING CORRIGAN'S
TREASURE"
By H.D. COUZENS

“Silver Shoes”

A Tale of Old Panama

Being a personal narrative of certain adventures that befell one Rodney Marley under Captain Henry Morgan in the year 1669. You'd never guess by that modest title that it referred to the rippingest adventure of the famous old Morgan the Buccaneer.

In the January *ADVENTURE* this unusually stirring yarn by George S. Reed begins. Curiously enough, the old Buccaneer's route was over the very spot where the Canal now is.

Of course you're reading "King Corrigan's Treasure." In the next instalment there's a briny surprise waiting some one on one of the two schooners. Can you guess which one?

Fancy a chicken being the real discoverer of gold in Colorado! And that wasn't the only freak thing that started the world's biggest gold rushes. Read Frank J. Arkins' "Accidents that made Bonanza Kings." It's got fiction beaten a mile.

"The Passenger," by W. Townend, will give you a gulpy throat till the last paragraph sets you smiling again.

There's a variety of other mighty good things too in the January

Adventure

15 cents

All News-stands

A D V E N T U R E



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Arthur Sullivant Hoffman - - - Managing Editor CONTENTS FOR DECEMBER 1912

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EVERY few minutes for several decades past an expedition has set out to lift the two buried treasures, estimated at all the way from \$60,000,000 to nothing whatsoever, that are said to be on Cocos Island, some three hundred miles west-southwest of Punta Arenas, Costa Rica, in the Pacific. Two such expeditions have departed within a month of the present writing.

Once two men went after the treasure, and one of them came back in a small boat with about all he could carry on his person. The other man didn't come back at all.

The stories of the hiding of these two treasures are rather convincing, but too long to give here. It is reasonable to believe that several men knew the general whereabouts of the troves, and the clues held by each of these men have in the course of time been scattered, in the usual mysterious and dramatic fashion, pretty well all over the world. Now and then some one gets hold of one of these clues, and behold! another expedition sets forth.

So that Cocos Island has become not only proverbial, but something of a joke.

THEY are not a joke to one man. August Gissler has given twenty-two years of his life to the quest of that treasure. A large part of that time he has spent on Cocos Island. And if you ever meet August Gissler and talk to him five minutes, the last thing you will think of calling him is a fool.

It is one thing to be sure enough of your clues to spend several weeks looking for vast wealth. It is quite another thing to be so sure of your clues that you do not hesitate to devote your whole lifetime to following them out. One by one August Gissler has gathered all the clues into his own hands. Whatever valuable knowledge exists on this matter, August Gissler holds.

HE HAS his reasons for calmly watching all these expeditions come to the island, dig, despair, depart. He has been called the "King of Cocos Island," and he has been its governor under Costa Rica, to

whom it belongs, and the owner of half of it. He could interfere with many of these parties if he chose. He never interferes.

Why doesn't he get it himself? For the same reason that he lets the others dig unmolested.

Doesn't he know where it is, then? He says he does.

He has been in our office several times. I like him. And I believe in his sincerity.

A tremendous man, with a fine, great gray beard, a good forehead, clear eyes.

AND the story of those twenty-two years! I wish there were space for it here. Could any man with the brains and strength and perseverance that August Gissler has shown in the making of that story spend them all in the pursuit of a will-o'-the-wisp? It doesn't seem probable.

He has shown me many photographs of Cocos Island. An ideal place for buried treasure—or for most other things. A most picturesque spot, some five miles in diameter, its wooded cliffs rising in one place to a peak 2700 feet high. Rivers and bays and coves and all that a treasure island should possess. The chart of the island and its surrounding waters shows everything romantically complete, except that it lacks the weird terms usual to the treasure islands of fiction. So far as I remember, there is no Skull Hill, no Ye Cow Island, no Bloody Cove, no Dead Man's Point. Yet strange things have happened on Cocos Island. Give any place the name of buried treasure and men will die there, not always in their beds.

THERE is, just now, no one on Cocos Island—unless some of these expeditions are messing around there for a while. Time was when August Gissler had quite a little colony of his own, with a few Costa Rican would-be revolutionaries thrown in for good measure. But they're gone now.

There have been times, too, when people on the island were so anxious to leave that they built a vessel to carry them the three hundred miles to the mainland. Just as there have been times when people were so anxious to go there that—Well, we can't go into all that now.

But I wish you could all meet August Gissler and hear about it at first-hand. Or go to Cocos Island and see for yourself.

A. S. H.

Adventure

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KING CORRIGAN'S TREASURE H. D. COUZENS

CHAPTER I

UNION DOWN

THE schooner *Albicore* was wallowing heavily, deep in the water and groaning protestingly with every heave that strained her well-worn timbers. Only a gentle trade-wind was blowing and the sea was a series of long swells, but as the *Albicore* slid down these she lay over slowly and wearily till the water gurgled in at her scuppers, and seemed loath to right herself to a normal balance.

Captain Tobias Cleary stood on the after deck, his large yellow teeth biting firmly on the stem of a short pipe, dividing his attention between a faint smudge of smoke

on the far western horizon and his huge, evil-visaged mate, who stood in the waist enlivening, by curses and threats, the shift of men toiling wearily at the pumps. The *Albicore* belonged to an age that antedated such luxuries as gasoline donkey-engines, and the heart-and-back-breaking seesaw was done at the cost of sweat, blisters and discouragement.

The crew was not only wearied to exhaustion, but in a condition bordering on panic, for in spite of hours of unceasing toil the water had been gaining at the rate of six^{ty} inches an hour. When, on the previous day, the Captain and mate had examined below, the water in the hold had been waist high and had since steadily increased at an alarming rate. Their verdict had been that the garboards had started and no re-

pairs were possible, yet, although the sea was calm and the vessel apparently doomed to sink in a short time, the Captain had resisted all efforts of the crew to launch the boats. Even the mate felt called upon to expostulate mildly.

"I don't mind hazing them men, sir, according to orders," said he, "but what's the bloomin' use? The old hooker's goin' to dive, ain't she, and why not save what them men have left in 'em for the boats?"

"Mr. Canfield," said the Captain, "I'm master of this ship, I reckon, and supposed to know what's needful. When I order the men to cease pumping you can deliver the order; but I intend to call you to witness when the time comes, Mr. Canfield, that everything has been done to save this schooner to the last minute. Is that clear?"

"It is, sir," said the mate, and went back to his duties.

They were directly in the Great Circle track of the big China steamers and when the smudge of smoke appeared in the west the Captain drew a breath of relief. Soon the yellow derrick masts, the funnel and superstructure of one of the Empress liners crept into view over the edge of the sea. When the hull was completely raised he closed his glass and ordered the men to cease pumping and lower the boats. The liner slackened speed at the distance of half a mile and conveyed, by a hoarse toot of her siren, that the officers had seen the flag flying union down at the main peak of the *Albicore*. At a distance of a quarter of a mile she came to a full stop.

Captain Cleary, meantime, went to the cabin, which was ankle-deep in water, opened the chest containing the specie for the incidental expenses of the schooner and carefully deposited therein the log, ship's papers, his chronometer and sextant. Then, with a preliminary surreptitious glance through the companion door, he went to a small bulkhead door leading aft to the lazarette, and disappeared within. In a few minutes he reappeared, called loudly for the mate, and with the latter's help carried the chest on deck and carefully lowered it into one of the boats. The first boat, with the second mate in command, contrary to maritime ethics, had been launched by the panic-stricken crew and was already some distance on its way toward the steamer.

The Captain, with proper nautical pride, was the last to leave the vessel. He wiped

away what might have been an honest tear, or perhaps a dash of spray flicked from the crest of a swell by the wind.

"Good-by, old hooker," said he; "ye've been a good stanch ship, but, — ye, it's a long while ago!"



ABOARD the liner a crowd of passengers and crew were gathered along the rail, giving the vessel a decided list. There were many expressions of sympathy, especially from the lady passengers, for the laboring, deserted schooner and the forlorn little boats creeping so slowly over the sea toward them, and indeed there was a pathos in the dangling ropes and slatting sails of the forsaken vessel, so helpless and futile without the magic touch of human hands to trim her into life.

But the chief officer on the bridge of the steamer fumed and fussed at the snail-like progress of the two boats. The crew of the *Albicore* kept their eyes on the schooner and the officers looked back often, expecting every instant to see her settle down into the deep, mysterious blue of the Pacific. But for some reason the last act in the tragedy was delayed and the *Albicore* continued to float, dangerously low in the water, but sinking no lower.

The second mate's boat reached the steamer and the crew swarmed up the pilot's ladder that had been lowered from the steerage deck. The Captain's boat was about fifteen fathoms away when a sharp exclamation from the mate caused Captain Cleary to look over his shoulder, expecting to see the last of the schooner. At the same time there was a stir on the steamer's deck and cries of excitement from the passengers, the attention of all seeming to be diverted from the small boat to the *Albicore*. The Captain stared, immovable, for a long moment, then an oath burst from his lips like an explosion.

"Hold water!" he roared. "Now hold port, pull starboard! Pull, — ye, pull!"

The men obeyed the first order mechanically, then fumbled helplessly, for they, too, were gazing at the abandoned schooner. The Captain repeated his commands with a supplementary stream of oaths, and after much fouling of oars and general confusion the boat swung round, sheered off from the iron bilge of the towering steamer and started back toward the schooner.

A cheer rose from some of the passengers

who, not understanding, thought this an act of rescue, but the chief officer leaned over the bridge rail. He, too, had been watching the schooner and what he saw made him swear tremendously.

"What foolery is this?" he cried, a burr in his voice, for he was a bearded giant from the Land o' Cakes. "Do ye think a mail-steamer has naught to do but lay here a fortnight for yer whimsicalities?"

But there was no answer from the boat. The Captain did not even look back, and after shouting a torrent of questions at the nonplussed second mate of the *Albicare*, who stood on the deck below, the officer turned on his heel and yanked viciously at the engine-room signal.

CHAPTER II

A STERN CHASE

LEANING easily on the taffrail of the *Albicare* was the tall, rather slight figure of a man in a leather automobile cap. He was puffing lazily at a cigar which he now and then held between finger and thumb and inspected critically. Just as the crew of the second mate's boat boarded the steamer he had walked to the flag halyards, cast them off, lowered the flag, reversed it so that the union was at the top and again sent it aloft.

Having thus disposed of the signal of distress he resumed his lazy attitude at the rail. The maneuvers of the boat appeared to afford him only a languid interest. When it had approached to within a dozen fathoms of the schooner he stepped to the wheel and, with the same deliberation with which he had reversed the flag, gingerly spun the spokes till the slatting sails caught the wind and bellied out, straining at the sheets. The logy vessel heeled heavily and reluctantly, but the wind drove her slowly ahead. There was a yell from the boat.

"Hi, there; drop it! Luff—luff, you fool!" shouted the Captain. "Drop that wheel, you maniac, or luff her up! We're coming aboard!"

"Captain!" cried the mate, "the steamer's leaving!"

It was a fact. The huge liner was churning the water with her powerful screws and presently forged ahead with a single scornful toot, her mystified passengers crowding astern. This immediately caused something

like a panic in the boat. The men cast frightened glances over their shoulders at the schooner and looked helplessly at the departing liner. The man pulling the stern oar half rose to his feet.

"Why, she's quittin' us!" said he, a tired sob in his voice. "Quittin' us like a dog; an' the schooner's sinkin'!"

He opened his mouth to yell at the steamer when the Captain leaned forward, smote him on the jaw with his fist, and he fell in a sprawling heap into the lap of the man behind him.

"Now get up there and grab that oar!" said the Captain. "And keep your mouth shut! We're going to board the *Albicare*. Pull, consarn ye, or, by Christmas! there'll be some heads broken!"

The weary, frightened men looked at their superior as though he had suddenly gone mad, but the habit of obedience was strong and they again bent to their oars. When the boat was close to the schooner the man aboard, who had been watching with a quiet smile, went again to the wheel. This time he juggled with the spokes experimentally, measuring the small boat's progress with his eye. When he found the point at which there was just enough way on the schooner to match the speed of the boat he picked up the end of a rope, noosed it around a spoke, and made it fast to the rail.



CAPTAIN CLEARY'S face was an apoplectic purple. He raged and swore.

"Luff, I tell ye, luff! Throw her into the wind and let me aboard my ship!"

The man leaned over the rail, blew a puff of smoke at the boat and smiled. He was a young man, and his features might have been pleasing had they not been marred by a pair of blackened eyes, a swollen nose and a badly cut lip. His smile of mild enjoyment was therefore somewhat distorted.

"Did you say *your* ship?" he inquired blandly.

"Yes, *my* ship! Who the Davy Jones are you? What are you doing aboard there? Wait till I get my hands on you and I'll teach you whose ship it is! Cast off that rope and let me aboard!"

"You seem excited," said the young man mildly. "You are uttering threats. You appear to be a violent man, like that blue-nosed ruffian in the bow, there," he indicated the mate, "and it would be unwise to

allow you aboard in your present humor. As to this being your ship, you are mistaken. You abandoned her. She is a derelict, forsaken by master and crew. If you have any claim for wages or anything like that, you should submit it to the owners. I refuse to bicker with you. Why the deuce didn't you get aboard that steamer when you had the chance? This schooner may sink any minute. You must have known that her deck is no safe place for any one when you abandoned her."

"Will you luff up and let me aboard?" roared the Captain.

"Not I. I don't like your manner. You are crude and rough. If there are any orders to be given just now, I'll give them myself. You must see that I've got it all over you, my man, and there you sit bellowing orders at me till you're black in the face. As man to man, sir, is it wise?"

The Captain was beyond articulate speech.

"You ask who I am," continued the young man. "My name is Winthrop—Harvey Winthrop, of San Francisco. You probably never heard it before, and that blue-nosed pirate insists it is Smith. But I've met *you* before, several times. It was in the—the lazarette, I think you call it."

The effect of this statement on the Captain was remarkable. With a cry of rage he drew his revolver from his pocket and fired point-blank at the man on the schooner. But pistol-shooting from a small boat in motion is a difficult art, and the bullet only drilled a neat round hole in the mainsail. He kept on firing as fast as he could pull the trigger till his revolver was empty. The shots, however, all went wild. Mr. Harvey Winthrop appeared surprised but not disconcerted. He felt in his pockets and presently brought forth a revolver, large, black and wicked-looking. He broke it open, looked carefully at the cylinder, then rested his elbow solidly on the rail and took deliberate aim at the Captain.

"Really," said he, "you are the worst shot I ever saw. You are angry about something and your gun is empty. Throw it overboard or I'll show you some real shooting. Over with it—lively now!"

The order was snapped out sharply in a very business-like tone and Captain Cleary saw that the revolver was held quite steadily. With a curse he flung his own weapon overboard.

"That is better," said Winthrop. "Perhaps if you can control your very bitter tongue we can talk sensibly. You say you are the Captain of this vessel. You are mistaken. You may have been, but you have abandoned her and are now what they call in polite literature a shipwrecked mariner. No doubt some other ship will come along and pick you up. I shouldn't ignore the next chance if I were you. You haven't anything to eat or drink, you know, and it looks to me as though you were in for an interesting time."

"Will you let us aboard?" asked the Captain.

His voice was quite changed. In fact it had something of a pleading note and he looked anxiously from his men to the schooner.

"I'll think it over," replied Winthrop. "Don't be led away with any false hopes, though. In the meanwhile I've had quite enough of your company. I'm going to leave you for a time and find something to eat."

He went to the wheel, gave it a decided turn, and gradually the schooner drew away.



CAPTAIN CLEARY sat with his chin in his hand and his elbow on his knee, his lips drawn tight and a look of concern growing in his eyes as the space widened between the boat and the schooner. The men dragged dispiritedly at the oars. They were spent, hungry, and tormented with the demon of thirst.

"Mr. Canfield," said the Captain, in a voice ominously calm, "will you have the goodness to tell me who in Sam Hill that man is?"

"Ordinary seaman, sir; name o' Smith. Shipped in Honolulu."

"Then why in Hades hasn't he been on deck doing his work with the rest?"

The mate's face turned a dark red and he avoided his superior's eye. For once in his rough, stormy life he was visibly embarrassed.

"He was sort of—sort of ailing, sir. He was ill, sir, so to speak. I was—was afraid he was dead."

"Dead!" cried the Captain. "He looks it, don't he? He's got a pair of black eyes and it's easy enough to guess where they came from. Your brutality is answerable for this. I believe you hold master's papers,

my man, but you've made such a fine hash of this voyage that I'll make it my business to see that you never serve under them! Put that in your pipe and smoke it, Mr. Canfield!"

The mate viewed his superior with a wry, bitter smile.

"Seems to me, sir, there's things that make your own ticket look a trifle cloudy. Under your orders we quit a sinkin' ship and then under your orders pull back and try to board her, and fishy is no name for it. Maybe I'm wrong, sir; I'm only saying."

CHAPTER III

WINTHROP'S ULTIMATUM

MEANWHILE the schooner drew away, and Winthrop, his hands locked behind him, walked back and forth lost in thought. He was still smoking and he took the long black cigar from his lips and sniffed daintily at the smoke.

"By Jove," said he, "this is certainly a rank cigar. Smells like a scorched bacon rind. I wish I had a cigarette."

He threw the offending weed overboard.

For some time he paced up and down, swaying rather awkwardly to the motion of the vessel, whistling softly. He glanced aloft critically at the simple rig which, nevertheless, seems intricate enough to a landsman.

"I suppose," said he, "that I shall have to have some one to help me handle these sheets and halyards and things. I don't believe I could do it alone even if I had time to study it out. The question is, how am I going to pick my men. Blue-nose, the mate, and the man of the lazarette, who is evidently the Captain, are out of the question. Lord, I'm hungry, and I'd give anything I own for a cigarette!"

He gave over his meditations for a time and went below, returning later with some soggy strips of cold bacon, a handful of biscuit and a pannikin of water. He perched on the top of the house where he sat dangling his legs and nibbling, rather ruefully, at his unsatisfactory meal. From his elevated position he made out two things which had not before been apparent. One was that far off to the west there was visible another smudge of smoke like a tenuous wraith along the horizon; the other, that

they had raised a small sail on the boat astern and were slowly overtaking the schooner.

Winthrop's face was not, ordinarily, a thoughtful one. It wore a quizzical, careless expression as of one who took life as rather a transparent joke and was considerably bored by it, but now, as he sat digging his heels into the dingy paint of the cabin-house, his brows were drawn with lines of perplexity.

"If I had a cigarette," he muttered, "I could think better. That cigar I found was actually a narcotic. Probably belonged to Blue-nose. If I'm to take this ship in charge I've got to think out ways and means or I might as well give up and board that steamer myself. Harvey, buck up! The Lord hates a quitter!"



AS THE small boat drew nearer he released the wheel and the schooner flew up into the wind. Then he resumed his perch on the top of the house and continued his meal with apparent enjoyment as the boat came up astern and he saw the drawn, anxious faces and the hungry eyes following his motions. There was no mistaking the fact that the boat's crew was hungry and thirsty.

He ostentatiously raised the pannikin, took a deep draught and tossed the balance over the rail in a shower of glistening drops. Then, as the boat came alongside, he took a coil of rope in his hand and flung it to the man in the bow, who made fast while the sail was let go. The Captain stood up, prepared to leap aboard, when he found himself staring into the muzzle of Winthrop's revolver.

"Don't be in a hurry," said Winthrop, quietly, but very firmly; "the first one of you who comes aboard without permission will be shot like a dog. Sit still!"

The Captain subsided to his place in the stern. Winthrop, holding the revolver steadily, carefully studied the face of each man in the boat.

"Hungry?" he asked.

"Yes!" the answer came in chorus.

"Thirsty?"

"Ay, fair perishin'!" the response was even louder.

"Any of you men got a cigarette?"

A thin youth of about nineteen, who looked more like a landsman of the slums than a sailor, reached mechanically into the

breast of his shirt and produced a large muslin bag of granulated tobacco and a packet of papers. He held them in his hand uncertainly. Winthrop smiled.

"Hand 'em up here. You've saved my life. Cigarette, you may come aboard!"

The youth handed up the tobacco and papers but glanced fearfully at the schooner and did not move.

"Ain't that ship sinkin'?" he asked.

"If she was, do you think I'd have been fool enough to stand by her all this time?" The revolver-muzzle wavered toward the thin youth. "I told you to come aboard. I can't steal your tobacco from you, you know, and I must have some of it. Step lively!"

The owner of the tobacco climbed over the rail. Winthrop's eyes still roved over the boat.

"What's in that chest there between your knees?" he inquired of the Captain.

"Ship's papers," said Captain Cleary laconically.

"Well, I shall need them. I shall have to ask you to hand them over. Cigarette, will you be so kind as to pass that gentleman the end of a rope?" The grinning youth obeyed. "Correct. Now, Mr. Captain, just make that rope fast to the chest, will you? Hurry, and no trifling or it will be the worse for you!" The cocked revolver was so near the Captain's face that he could see the gray bullets in the cylinder. He made the rope fast. "Now, Cigarette, we'll haul this aboard; it ought to prove useful. Together now!"

The youth obediently hauled away, Winthrop assisting with his left hand, and the chest tumbled aboard. At the same instant the mate, with a snarl of rage, sprang for the rail and was half-way over when the butt of the revolver, with the full swing of Winthrop's arm, struck him on the head and he fell back in the boat, a stream of blood pouring over his face.

"That's one for you, Blue-nose!" said Winthrop. His voice was no longer languid, but had a singular, business-like sharpness. "That's part of what I owe you. Try again and you'll get the rest with interest. Cigarette, take a belaying-pin or something and help me keep order. This ship isn't going down by a long shot. You stand by me, Cigarette, and I'll stand by you. Now is there a cook aboard?"

Nobody in the boat spoke. "The cook's

a Jap. He left in the other boat," volunteered Cigarette.

"Can any of you cook at all? Answer up sharp there!"

"I ban cook vonce on lumber schooner," said a stout Swedish sailor sullenly.

"All right, you'll do. Come aboard, Cookie; step lively! Now you dark man there with the grin! You're the only cheerful one in the party. What are you, end-man, interlocutor, or just plain coon?"

"I sailor, boss. Kanaka man. B'long Hilo, Hawaii."

"Well, you look good to me; come aboard. Cigarette, is this enough men to sail this schooner into Honolulu?"

"I dunno," said Cigarette. "Depends on how the wind holds. Full crew was ten seamen and a cook."

"Too bad, then. We'll have to pray for the right wind, for these will have to do. The rest of you in the boat there, pay attention. You, who call yourself Captain, know best why you turned back when you saw me left aboard and cocksure of myself enough to haul down your signal. You are not coming with us, Captain. As I am not a voluntary member of your crew, I am entitled to whatever salvage there is and will divide it with these men.

"There are a dozen reasons why you can't come aboard and you know them all better than I do. You can explain them to your owners when they ask for an accounting. Mr. Blue-nose, you know very well why you and I can't get along together. I'm leaving you three men for company who look like a congenial lot. They may come in handy when you feel that you must beat some one up. Captain, there's a steamer coming up from the west and she will pick you up. Better be careful how you explain matters or I shall be obliged to explain myself and prove what I know. Cookie, get some water and grub for these men!"



THE new cook promptly brought a breaker of water and some biscuit which he lowered into the boat. Under the threatening muzzle of the revolver the line was cast off and the boat began to drift astern.

"Pleasant voyage, Captain!" called Winthrop. "I might remind you that sometimes honesty is the best policy, especially when you have a mate like Blue-nose."

Captain Cleary stood up, livid with rage, and shook his fist.

"You men aboard there—Hansen, Keawe, Nolan—get that man! Kill him—tie him up or throw him overboard! I'll give you a hundred dollars apiece!"

Cigarette brandished his belaying-pin.

"You mutt!" he called, "if I had one crack at you and that rum of a mate, I'd show you both! *That* for the pair of you!"

He flung the belaying-pin at the boat and spat over the side.

"That'll do, Cigarette," said Winthrop; "don't waste property and words needlessly. Just take that wheel and get some headway on this schooner."

CHAPTER IV

PROGRESS OF THE *Albicore*

THEY had been pumping for hours. Winthrop had set the example, throwing off his coat and turning to, urging the men on with good-natured banter and allowing frequent spells for rest, food and water. But Keawe, the Hawaiian, was the only one who bent to the work with a show of willingness. Hansen was sullen and peevish, complaining bitterly at so early a renewal of the discouraging work, and Cigarette, who, like most seamen, could not understand good-natured familiarity in a superior, at first became sulky and later assumed an air of patronizing contempt.

Nevertheless, Winthrop kept them at the task till they could hold out no longer, when he declared a halt, ruefully nursing a painfully blistered pair of hands. The water in the well had not subsided perceptibly. The men dropped off to sleep like logs on the deck. Winthrop retreated to the cabin, strapped the revolver to his wrist as a precaution, and also went to sleep. Fortunately the wind and sea remained tranquil. When Winthrop awoke he called Cigarette into the cabin.

"Cigarette," said he, indicating the sextant and chronometer case which he had taken from the chest and laid on the cabin table, "do you know anything about the use of those things?"

"Nope; never learned no rudiments," said Cigarette, with a broad grin.

"Too bad," said Winthrop, looking at him curiously. "What *do* you know about sailing a ship?"

"Enough to rate me A. B., meanin' Able-Bodied seaman," said the youth superciliously.

"Very good. I suppose you know all about steering and working the ropes and sails, and whatever else an A. B. is supposed to know?"

"Sure I do, cull!"

"Well, what's the first thing to be done to get this schooner on her way to Honolulu?"

"Pump the rest of the water out of her," said Cigarette sarcastically. "The four of us could get her dry in three or four months."

"Thank you," said Winthrop, drawing a long inhalation from a cigarette made from the sailor's tobacco and blowing out the smoke slowly with great enjoyment; "I might have known that myself, of course. I'll see that you and the others get all the pumping you want, you may be sure. But there's a great deal I've got to learn at once, and I rely on you and Cookie and [the Kana-ka to help me out.

"First, however, there are some other things to be understood. One of them is that I am in full charge of this schooner. I can sink her in no time, and intend to do it if there is any insubordination that interferes with my plans. If she pulls through and it all works out right, you and your friends will have no cause to complain. Your name is Nolan, isn't it?"

"Yes; Terry Nolan."

"Very good. Perhaps you know mine?"

"You're Smith, ordinary seaman, shanghaied at Honolulu. Drunk, I reckon, wasn't you?" his grin was broader than ever.

"Cigarette, I shall call you Nolan hereafter in the interest of discipline. And from now on you'll cut out any flippancy you may have on your chest and realize that I'm Captain of this ship. You will obey orders instantly, and answer me in just the same way and with the same respect as you did your late Captain. Now my name is Winthrop; see if you can remember it. What is my name?"

Nolan passed the back of his hand across his mouth, and the familiar, yellow-toothed grin disappeared magically as though wiped away by the gesture.

"Winthrop—sir."

"What?"

"Captain Winthrop, sir!"

"That is better. I had intended appointing you an officer if you knew anything of

navigation, but as you don't, I'll think it over for a while until you get some of the levity out of your system. Meanwhile these are my quarters and yours are in the forecabin with the others, and you are not to intrude unless at my invitation. Understand?"

"Sure—I mean, yes, sir!"

"Very good, Nolan. That goes for the others, too. I mean no hard feelings, and I'm no tyrant, only there mustn't be any misunderstanding as to who's boss here. I need your advice, but you are not to get swelled up or self-important. I'm glad to have you aboard and thankful to you for sharing your tobacco with me, and I'll treat you white if you do the same by me. Is that all clear now?"

"Yes, sir," said Nolan, and there was no mistaking the heartiness in his tone.

"All right," said Winthrop. "With that understanding we'll get on nicely. I suppose it's hard to respect me as your officer under the circumstances, but you'll have to, and forget that you ever heard of me as Smith in your life. Now get one of those charts and let's see if we can make head or tail of things."



NOLAN found and spread out a chart of the Hawaiian group and Winthrop studied it carefully.

"What time did we leave Honolulu, Nolan?" he asked musingly. "I don't recall it myself."

Nolan successfully stifled an incipient grin.

"Four bells, mornin' watch, sir, on the twenty-sixth."

"Hum! That makes five days we've been at sea. What direction—I should say, what course have we sailed since?"

"About nor'-nor'-east, half east, sir, after leavin' Molokai Channel."

"And about how fast does this schooner sail?"

"She ain't been makin' more'n about five knots, all told on a average, sir."

Winthrop considered the chart with attention, made a few lines and measurements and finally placed a dot with his pencil.

"According to that we ought to be somewhere about here. Now, Nolan, I suppose if we turned on our tracks and sailed back on the opposite course, which is—er—something like about south-southwest, we'd get back somewhere near where we started, wouldn't we?"

Nolan looked doubtful.

"I ain't so sure, sir," said he; "there's things they has to allow for in layin' a course. Leeway an' such."

"Why, hang it," said Winthrop, "look at the way all those islands are spread out, as thick as flies in a butcher shop. If we point her head in any general direction that way, we'd be bound to hit something. I don't see how we could miss it. I never saw such a close flock of islands in my life. Don't that seem reasonable, Nolan?"

"I shouldn't wonder, sir," said Nolan dubiously.

"Well, you go on deck and get her headed south-southwest, and I'll decide what to do later. If there is any help needed, call on me."

Nolan disappeared, flushed with even a little brief authority, and Winthrop sat for a long while looking at the chart. Then he got a number of others and spent half an hour studying them.

"Places everywhere," he muttered, rolling a cigarette of Nolan's tobacco; "interesting places—bully places where a fellow can see and do things. And I've always wanted to be a merry, merry sailor-lad, with my own ship under me. Now if I only had a full crew and a man to work this fool junk they shoot the sun with, I'd let the salvage go hang."

In the Captain's room he found several technical books, one an epitome of navigation, and a nautical almanac, but after half an hour's perusal of trigonometrical signs, columns of logarithms, and a tentative examination of the sextant, he gave it up and threw himself at full length on a damp transom.

"It's no earthly use," said he despondently; "I can't make head or tail of that rubbish, and I wonder how these ignorant, low-browed brutes of mates and skippers ever do it. There'll be the deuce to pay if a storm comes up with only three men and a chump like me to handle things."

Nolan stuck his head in at the top of the companion. "Better come on deck, sir," said he.

CHAPTER V

WINTHROP FINDS A CREW

THE sea was like molten glass and there was not a breath of wind. The schooner rose and fell as gently as the breast of a sleeping child, her sheets dangling and

sails slatting softly. The sun was shining with an unnatural brightness and the air was so clear it seemed fairly to sparkle, but off to the north there was a haze that obscured the horizon like an Indian-summer mist.

"What's the trouble?" asked Winthrop.

Keawe was at the wheel and Nolan and the cook stood in the waist, the latter with his arms folded and a look of anxiety on his face. He was a large, weather-beaten man of about forty, with mild blue eyes and a simple, boyish expression. He turned to Winthrop.

"I tank ve going to have vind, sir," said he.

"What makes you think so? It seems quiet enough to me."

"It's too quiet, sir, and you can smell de vind coming. I ban shipwreck twice on Pacific storm and dey coom yust like dis von."

Winthrop cocked his eye aloft knowingly.

"Then we'd better take in some of that sail, I suppose."

"Yas, sir. But if a storm cooms, dis har schooner can't sail at all. Too much vater below. She can't beat and she can't ron for it, no vay at all."

Winthrop looked around rather helplessly.

"Too bad we can't anchor," said he.

The intended absurdity was lost on Hansen, who looked at him with a new respect.

"Dot's vat I ban going to suckyest. I ban going to say, sir, dot ven ve gat sail off, den I make sea-anchor, and if storm cooms ve ride it out."

"All right," said Winthrop, "go ahead. I guess you're right about the wind, Cookie; look there!"

Along the horizon patches of vapor like Golden Gate fog were flying, and behind was a brown, murky wall. They reduced the sail area to the merest fraction and then Hansen, with a spare staysail, set about making a sea-anchor. When the storm broke it found the *Albicore* snug and riding easily, fully prepared for the heaviest kind of a blow.

The storm lasted four days. It was not a severe storm, or rather they were not far enough to the westward to get its full force. The *Albicore* labored painfully, swept from stem to stern by the heavy seas, for she was too logy to rise. Everything movable on deck, including the two remaining boats, was carried away, and to the men impris-

oned below it was a period of intense strain and anxiety. The three sailors stood it cheerfully enough, however, now that they were assured that the schooner was really sound and able to keep afloat indefinitely. The cook's duties were a sinecure, as there was no opportunity to cook any food, and Winthrop, finding a fair supply of canned stuff in the pantry for the use of the officers, issued it unsparingly.

He spent most of his time in the cabin pouring over charts and tables, endeavoring to acquire something of the elements of navigation, making but little progress till, in the second mate's room, forward of the main cabin, he found a simple work on plane and traverse sailing. This he found fairly intelligible and read it through several times, working out all the examples and planning imaginary courses on the charts.



AT SUNSET of the fourth day the wind fell and the sun showed momentarily an inflamed red through the dense strata of clouds on the western horizon, and the next morning broke fair with a clear sky, a fresh trade-wind blowing and a sea that had quite gone down. The deck was a sad jumble of fouled rigging, smashed rails, and had the general appearance of a complete wreck, but the masts had held and with a few repairs the *Albicore* would be as good as ever.

Winthrop stretched his legs and sniffed the cool trade with delight.

"By Jove!" said he, "this is decidedly worth living for. What poor, starved mortals we are, cooped up in cities! This is my opportunity, the chance of a lifetime. Hang the salvage! I want to sail this old boat somewhere and *do* things with her! I suppose it's piracy, but so much the better. If I only had a crew and could sail her properly!"

He found a binocular glass below, but none of the islands that had appeared so numerous and crowded on the chart were visible. In order to extend his horizon he climbed part way up the main rigging, and here, as he looked around, something suddenly leaped into the object-glass. It was small and elusive, far off to the southwest. It bobbed into view, tantalizingly, for a second at a time, then vanished into the distant hollows or was lost in the roll of the schooner. It appeared to be triangular in shape, as it cut into the sky-line on the crest

of a wave, and might have been the fin of some gigantic sea-monster. It might also have been, thought Winthrop, the sail of a small boat, and, calling Keawe, he sent him aloft with the glass. The Kanaka took a long survey from the cross-trees.

"Cap'n," he finally reported, "that been boat—whale-boat. Plenty men inside."

By the time they had taken the sea-anchor aboard, set the lower sails and got the schooner before the wind they could see the small boat plainly through the glass. It carried a leg-of-mutton sail and was heading directly for the *Albicare*. In an hour's time it was within hailing distance and one of the men halloed lustily. Winthrop answered with a wave of his cap and Nolan threw the schooner into the wind. Then Winthrop, assuring himself that all the chambers of his revolver were loaded, placed the weapon in his coat pocket.



THE boat was a large surf-boat such as are carried by trading vessels among the islands. The man in the stern wielding the long steering-oar and another who sat near him were white men, but the others, of whom Winthrop counted twelve, were dark of skin and he rightly surmised that they were Kanakas. He saw this conglomerate boat-load approaching with mingled feelings. Obviously the men were shipwrecked. What was he to expect of them aboard the *Albicare*?

He was far from sure of his own rights under the salvage regulations, and if the white men were ship's officers he might find his other, half-formed plans interfered with in an awkward way. Yet for common humanity's sake he could not refuse to take a party of castaways aboard and he determined to be prepared for trouble.

"Either this is the crew I've been hoping for," he mused, "or there's going to be the devil of a scrap. Whichever way it is, I guess there'll be some fun."

He called his own men together.

"I picked you men," said he, "to help me work the ship, and so far we've stood by her together. You're good men, and I want you to stand by me to the end. Can I rely on you to back me up if anything happens?"

"Ay, that you can, sir," said Nolan.

"Thanks. Then remember that I'm in charge of this vessel and she belongs to me till she's turned over to the underwriters.

Don't tell what you know to any one and don't take any orders except through me. I'm going to maintain my rights and yours, if possible, and any one who interferes with me is going to get into trouble. That's all, boys. Now stand by with a line and we'll have a look at these people."

The boat came round under the schooner's lee and ranged smartly alongside. They made the line fast and the man in the stern stepped nimbly aboard, followed by the other white man. He was about thirty-five years of age, short, stocky and well-browned by the sun. His sandy hair and mustache were burned to a lighter hue at the ends, and there were many crow's-foot and crisscross lines around a pair of direct, rather disconcerting light-gray eyes.

He wore puttees, duck trousers and a tweed Norfolk jacket, and in spite of his brown skin and lithe, muscular agility, had none of the cut of the merchant seaman about him. His companion, who was several years older, was of a more rugged, weather-scarred type, yet he, too, seemed of a far different grade from that of Captain Cleary or his mate. Both men glanced about shrewdly, taking in details with expert eyes, and Winthrop did not fail to note the curious, quick glances at himself.



HE WAS well aware that there was no look of the sea about him. His clothes, though they were rumpled and soiled, were of a fashionable cut, and the automobile cap was a striking incongruity. The blue-black had faded from around his eyes, leaving a smoky brown hue, and his nose and lip had resumed their normal appearance. A rough stubble covered his face, which was rather pale, with none of the seaman's alertness of expression. His very poise on the deck was unseamanlike. In fact, Harvey Winthrop would have seemed more at home anywhere else than on the deck of a sailing-vessel in an executive capacity. His equanimity, however, was unruffled.

"Welcome aboard, gentlemen," said he calmly. "Glad to see you. You seem to have been in difficulties."

"Well, rather," said the younger man. "There's not much left of us. Allow me to introduce myself. I'm Captain Englehart, late of the schooner *Hihimanu*. This is my mate, Mr. Carncross. Are you in command?"

"Yes," said Harvey, shaking hands. "My name is Winthrop."

"Glad to know you, Captain Winthrop. You seem to have had trouble yourself, though you've still a deck under your feet, which is more than we have. We were standing off for Kauai when we saw the old *Albicore* and she was a sight for sore eyes for Jim and me. Old man Cleary was skipper the last I remember. I see you've been leaking and have only three men on deck. Have you lost anybody?"

"Yes," said Winthrop, "we've lost Captain Cleary and all the rest, but we're not leaking. The ship's as sound as a dollar and will be all right with a little work at the pumps. If your men are fresh enough to turn to, we can have her dry inside in no time."

The Kanakas had come aboard bringing a chest and several bags of miscellany, and finding a pair of davits still intact, had hooked on the falls and hoisted the surf-boat aboard. To Winthrop they were a queer lot, darker than Keawe, the Hawaiian, their features coarser and of a more barbaric cast. Some of them had their hair fluffed out, giving a most odd effect, and one wore a heavy piece of ivory through the cartilage of his nose.

Something in Winthrop exulted. These were Englehart's men, and the fierce-looking Micronesians gave him a kind of thrill as though he were already in touch with unknown men and places and things that he desired.

"Just a moment, gentlemen, till I give some orders," said he, and walked over to Nolan, who was at the wheel.

Captain Englehart shot a quick, shrewd glance at his mate.

"Nolan," said Winthrop hurriedly, "for the present I'll ask you to act as mate. Get the schooner on her course, south-south-west, as before. Then set those black men to work at the pumps. Come below, gentlemen," said he as he rejoined the others.

CHAPTER VI

AN UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN GENTLEMEN

WINTHROP found a bottle of gin in a locker and some glasses and set them on the table. Then he rolled a cigarette and sat back on a transom, waiting for the two men to make conversation.

"Well, sir," said Englehart, swallowing his drink with a relish, "there's no accounting for luck at sea. This was one of those rotary storms, but both you and I were on the edge of it, a long way from the seat of trouble. We were making easy work of it—the *Hihimanu* was a fine little schooner—when a fool tramp steamer, battered into so much junk and without lights, comes blundering along, right out of the heart of things, and shears our bows off clean. We were gone in about ten minutes. Lucky we fell in with you so soon. Jim and I haven't any time to waste. We've pressing business on hand, and the sooner we pick up another schooner the better; eh, Jim?"

"Right!" said Carncross. "Where are you bound, Captain?"

"I was going to Honolulu," said Winthrop.

Englehart shot a look at the telltale compass screwed to the carline overhead, then he and his mate exchanged glances again.

"How long since you took your last observation, Captain?" he asked.

There was a long silence, while Winthrop smoked, and they could hear the creak of the pump as the men bent to their work on deck. Then Winthrop, looking from one to the other, quite unabashed under the steady scrutiny of Englehart's disconcerting eyes, threw away his cigarette-stub with an air of finality.

"Gentlemen," said he, "from now on you can cut out the 'Captain Winthrop.' I'm not a ship-captain and I never sailed anything bigger than a duck-boat at Alameda. But I'm in charge of this vessel. She has been deserted by her master and crew and I've taken her over for the salvage. I've never taken an observation in my life and don't know how, but I'm game to sail this vessel anywhere I want to. Now if you'll tell me just who you are and something about your plans, we may be able to get together."

There was another long silence and Englehart sucked hard on his pipe, his eyes on his mate.

"Have you a chart of Micronesia?" he asked finally.

Winthrop went to the Captain's room and returned with an armful of tin chart-cases which he dumped on the table.

"Help yourself," said he.

Englehart ran through the cases, took out a couple of charts, and with Carncross's

head close to his, pored over them for some time. Finally he indicated a point and looked at his mate inquiringly:

"About three weeks' run, eh, Jim?"

"With this old tub I should say about that," answered Carncross. "Still you're the champion driver, Billy, and I guess you can shade it a little if any man can."

"Looks as though that blow actually saved us time, Jim. The old *Albicare* has seen some stirring times in her day, and we might as well give her another touch of high life before she cashes in. Did I understand you to say," he asked, turning to Winthrop, "that she is sound below the water-line?"

"You did," said Winthrop. "Don't mind me, pray. Go on with your plans, gentlemen. Evidently there is something in prospect and I'm anxious to see what it's like. When you've settled it between yourselves, perhaps I may have something to say."

"The idea is," said Englehart calmly, "that we need another vessel at once, and if this one is sound, as you say, she will just about fill the bill. The course you are steering now, Captain Winthrop, or Mr. Winthrop, if you prefer it, is just about right for Jim and me, but it will take you to the Carolines or the Gilberts before it will Honolulu. The point is that we want the *Albicare*, and so, if you're ready, we may as well get to terms."

Winthrop stood up and leaned across the table.

"What kind of high-handed nonsense is this, if you please? Do you mean to say you think of stealing this ship away from me?"

"Not at all," said Englehart courteously. "I spoke of terms, I believe. However, if it comes to that we'd just as soon steal her as not if we find you unreasonable. Sit down, Mr. Winthrop, and let's talk business."

"When there is any business talked here," said Winthrop, "it will be from my side of the house. I hope you understand that. I've told you that I'm in charge of this vessel. You men don't look like thieves or cut-throats, and I don't suppose you intend pitching me overboard, though if you do I'll guarantee you a run for your money at that. I object to your coming aboard here, a boat-load of castaways, and deliberately disposing of affairs in your high-handed fashion, just because I've admitted that I'm not a *bona fide* navigator. At least

you'll find me man enough to protect my own interests and not be ridden over roughshod. So, before we go any further, please state what you mean in very plain and simple words so that a simple landsman can understand them."



ONCE again Carncross and Englehart looked into each other's eyes. There was a twinkle in Englehart's, and Carncross chuckled and looked at Winthrop with what seemed kindly approval. Englehart leaned forward with his elbows on the table.

"Son," said he, "I guess I began wrong. Now sit down and keep your shirt on, and you might as well let go of that gun you have hold of in your pocket, because it isn't likely there will be any need of it. Here's the proposition: my name is Englehart—Billy Englehart, trader, 'recruiter,' pearler and dabbler in various other forms of activity, and my name is pretty well known in this part of the world, because I've knocked about here for a good many years. No one has ever insinuated, so far, that I wasn't on the level.

"Jim here is nominally my mate, but he's also my partner, and we've seen some pretty rough times together. They might say that Jim Carncross don't always respect little points of maritime law and things of that sort," his eyes twinkled again; "in fact old Jim has been called a smuggler and a few other opprobrious things. At any rate we've turned a good many tricks together, and a short time ago we got wind of something down in Micronesia that looks like a pretty large order.

"We were going after it when that confounded tramp came along and spoiled the show for the time being. We've no time to lose, and there's every chance in the world that at Honolulu we couldn't buy or charter another schooner for love nor money."

Englehart paused, knocked out the ashes on his heel and refilled his pipe. Then he poured himself another drink and passed the bottle to Winthrop. There was something unmistakably attractive about the man, his quiet voice and confident attitude, and Winthrop was deeply interested. As a matter of fact his indignation had been partly assumed. He silently filled his glass.

"Now," continued Englehart, when his pipe was drawing, "I've done some quick figuring, and I guess Jim here has done the

same and will bear me out. There is a nigger in the wood-pile about this old ship being water-logged and deserted by Cleary and his men, but still afloat and sound with you in charge of her. Is that correct?"

Winthrop nodded.

"Well, you've got something up *your* sleeve, then. Have you the ship's manifests handy, and would you mind our having a look at them?"

Winthrop took the papers from Captain Cleary's chest and laid them on the table. Englehart ran them over rapidly.

"Ah, here we are!" said he. "Tea from Hongkong and sugar from Honolulu! Do you grasp that, Jim? This is one of old Tobe Cleary's insurance jobs, you can bank on that. Now, Mr. Winthrop, I'll ask you to overlook my apparent high-handedness. Jim and I have usually got the things we went after, so I may have seemed a trifle arbitrary to you. I have never turned a mean trick yet, and I'll give you my word of honor that I'll give you an absolutely fair deal. Take that as you please from a stranger, but do you mind telling us how you come to be in charge of the *Albicore*?"



WINTHROP rolled another cigarette.

"No, I don't. In fact, I'm dying to get it off my system. My name is Winthrop, as I told you—Harvey Winthrop, and I live in San Francisco. About a month ago I came down to Honolulu to visit my married sister who lives there. Her husband is a good fellow whom I've known since we were kids together, but he has an unfortunate failing. He is addicted to the habit of smoking opium. At certain times he disappears for a while and comes back pretty well shaken and used up. Well, about ten days ago he fell from grace and I went hunting him in my machine. I finally located him in a big Chinese tenement down near the water-front, just about all in. I got him out and took him into a small saloon near by to throw a couple of drinks into him to brace him up.

"There were two or three men there who seemed to know Arthur, at least by name, and they made some offensive remarks. I'm averse to a general row in a strange place, but I guess that water-front whisky wasn't up to standard, because after I had landed Arthur in the machine and got him headed

for home I went back to argue it out with his alleged friends.

"They changed their tactics at once and offered all kinds of apologies. They got me somehow. It may have been a rap from behind, some kind of knock-out stuff, or both. Anyhow, I woke up aboard the *Albicore* in a bunk in the forecastle. A man was kicking me. I have since learned that he was the mate, a big ruffian with a blue nose. Naturally I protested, but I wasn't as fit as usual and he beat me up considerably. I still objected and continued to do so, but he refused to listen. Told me I was an 'ordinary seaman' of the name of Smith and handed me a few more choice uppercuts.

"When I came to I was more indignant than ever. I left the forecastle and walked up aft to where the mate was standing beside the man at the wheel, and demanded to be taken back to Honolulu, or to see the Captain. He was a most unreasonable chap, that mate. Wouldn't listen to a word and offered to kick me forward. I was foolish enough to lose my temper and he went for me again. There was an open hatch behind me and he kicked me clean through it. I landed on my head, and that was all I knew for a long time. When my wits came back I was lying behind a lot of old ropes and sails, very sore and ill and wretched. I was also mad clear through. It seemed up to me to get even with somebody.

"For a while I thought seriously of setting fire to the ship, but I didn't have a match about me, so I lay quiet for some time trying to think out some other plan. I had no desire to go on deck again till it was absolutely necessary. It didn't seem nearly as healthy as the place where I was.

"The hatch overhead was closed, but after a while I heard some kind of a door open and saw light coming through. I thought at first it was some one coming for me and got hold of a big oak block to give him a warm reception, but the man only fumbled about stealthily, breathing hard, and then I heard a soft, grinding noise followed later by a gentle *chug-chug* as though he were hammering with a muffled hammer.

"It was too much for my bump of curiosity. I made an opening to look through, and there was a chap on his knees making auger-holes! When the bit went through, a jet of water would spurt in and he would drive in a plug with a wooden mallet. I caught on to the game in a minute. I'd read

something about it somewhere, and it gradually began to dawn on me that my chance for getting even was close at hand.

"I don't know how long it was I lay there longing for high-balls and beefsteak and a lot of things that taste good and relieve headaches, but it was a long while. Then this chap—he was the Captain—stole in again and knocked out the plugs with his mallet. That was my cue that the time had come, and I just lay there and rolled over and hugged myself and laughed and forgot all about high-balls and everything else except the business in hand.

"The water came rushing in, of course, but it didn't fill the lazarette. It ran off somewhere into the bowels of the ship. I let it run. It was my business to lie low till they left. Two or three times the Captain came back, drove a few plugs, or pulled them out to regulate the flow. He was evidently playing safe and taking no chances till he saw that steamer coming. Then he rushed in, knocked out all the plugs, and soon after I heard them shouting on deck as they lowered the boats.

"Then I crawled over the duffel, found the plugs, drove them all home and the old ship was as tight as ever. After that I came through the door into the cabin here, hunted around for a cigarette and found a revolver which I took in case of emergency. Then I sauntered on deck, monarch of all I surveyed, and took charge. I knew I had salvage rights, as I wasn't a voluntary member of the crew.



"THERE was a steamer there waiting for the last boat, and I tell you, gentlemen, I've never known the unholy joy I did when I saw that boat turn back to try and get aboard, and the liner go on and leave them. I knew I had squared accounts, especially as Blue-nose was aboard. You see, I hauled down the flag, which was union down, and raised it again with the union at the top. That convinced the Captain that I was on to him, and he just had to come back and try to finish the job.

"I monkeyed with the wheel till I managed to get the schooner going and kept those pirates tailing along after me till they were considerably discouraged and worn out. Then I took the ship's papers and other things away from the Captain, picked out the only men who looked human in the

boat and came away. The Captain was annoyed. He was as annoyed as —. I've never seen a man more put out about anything in my life. He took several potshots at me and tried to burn me up with sulphurous language. I have rarely spent a more delightful time and I was sorry to leave them, but there was another vessel in sight and I didn't want any complications, so I came away, as I said. I think that's about all."

Englehart chuckled and Carncross's face wore a broad grin.

"So you kept them trailing after you in the ship's boat, did you?" said Englehart. "How long did that last?"

"Oh, a good while. Several hours. I was sorry for the men, as I had no grudge against them, but I was particularly anxious to have the Captain and mate cultivate a thirst and an appetite before I left them. They had no water in the boat."

"Jim," said Englehart, "you know old Tobe Cleary—the meanest thief on the Seven Seas. I'd have given a heap to have seen the show. Now, Winthrop, tell me this: Is this matter of salvage a very important one to you?"

"To tell the truth, I hadn't given it a thought—that is, from the view-point of dollars and cents; if that's what you mean. I wanted to prove to myself that I had the gall to take charge of a ship and sail her somewhere on my own unmitigated nerve. I've wanted new experiences all my life, but have been hampered by lack of opportunity."

"The reason I asked is because if it was important you would probably be disappointed. This schooner is loaded with tea and sugar. It's a safe bet that the tea is half blue mud to make weight and the sugar no more than so many bags full of sand, while the real cargo has gone on in another boat. You see the *Albicore* is a pretty old boat and the intention was to sink her simply for the insurance and a small rake-off from a bogus cargo. There is very little profit in tea or sugar carried by a small schooner like this. Once in port there'd be an investigation and they'd get at the whole scheme in no time at all, and there wouldn't be much allowance made for salvage. The only way to make anything out of this old tub was to sink her. Now here's what I propose:

"I'll buy the schooner outright from you

at a fair price, recognizing you as absolute owner, and set you ashore somewhere where you will be picked up soon and carried back to civilization. We can't, of course, make any regular port under the circumstances, but I'll give you a draft and see that you get the money. Or, I'll charter the schooner from you at a good price and turn her over to you when we're through.

"Finally, I'll let you in on our deal with Jim and me, recognize you as owner, supercargo, or whatever office you choose. Jim and I will sail her, and we'll whack up even on the result. Then, if you still feel that way, we'll all sail her back and dig the salvage out of the underwriters. Now, Winthrop, I think you'll agree that I've made you three very fair offers. Which will you take?"

Winthrop rose to his feet and gravely shook hands with both Englehart and Carn-cross.

"Heaven bless you!" said he solemnly. "I'll take the last offer, unconditionally. From this moment consider me supercargo of the good ship *Albicore*. Fellow pirates, I thank you for the honor you have thrust upon me. Let's all take a drink!"

CHAPTER VII

THE STORY OF KING CORRIGAN

"NOW," said Englehart, "the first thing to be done is to find our position. I'll overhaul my instruments, and meanwhile you'd better explain the situation to your men and let Jim take charge for a while. We've got to get the water out of her and do some overhauling before we get down to brass tacks. There's some faking to be done, too, so that we'll pass muster in a pinch, as we are about to run afoul of several regulations. I'll give you the yarn in detail later on, Winthrop."

They went on deck, and Winthrop, calling the three men together, explained in a few words as much as he thought advisable. Nolan and Hansen, with the sailor's habit, grumbled a little but finally accepted the new conditions, and, at Winthrop's suggestion, Nolan was appointed second mate.

The chest from the surf-boat contained Englehart's chronometer, fortunately, for the *Albicore's* had run down, and at noon Englehart shot the sun and went below to work out his tables. When he had located

the schooner's position he showed it to Winthrop.

"You can see now, son," said he, "what your chances were of making Honolulu. We're southeast of Midway. You see, you've been drifting across country at a lively rate ever since old Cleary let the Pacific into her insides, and then that storm set you back a whole lot."

"Yes, I see," said Winthrop, with a sigh. "I'm beginning to see that a college education has its limitations. I can't make head or tail of how you arrived at it, but if I'm not too thick-headed to learn I wish you'd teach me how, right away."

That evening, after a rather unwholesome meal prepared by Hansen, Winthrop rolled a cigarette out of the dregs and scrapings of Nolan's tobacco-bag.

"Thank fortune," said he, "that there's some paper left. I shall now have to educate myself to the cut plug that you fellows smoke. I'd give about four hundred dollars for a box of Turkish cigarettes. Otherwise I'm as happy as a clam. Captain, please tell me where we're going and what for. I don't believe I can stand the suspense any longer."

"Did you ever hear of King Corrigan?" asked Englehart.

"Never; I swear it! Wait, though. Isn't he the South Sea four-flusher who used to blow into San Francisco and set it afire? Wore diamond vest-buttons and gave pearls away as souvenirs to chance acquaintances at the Palace bar? I remember they used to strike up the band the minute he hove into the offing, and there was a general scramble for the gold-pieces he tossed over his shoulder. Oh, yes, I recall him now. He was one of the 'characters' that drop in at San Francisco from time to time. I haven't heard of him for a long while, though."

"Well, that's the man. At least those were his methods, and they were the same in Shanghai, Sydney or Nagasaki. Corrigan furnished newspaper copy and bar-room gossip in the principal ports for almost twenty years. Underneath all his tomfoolery he was a hard-bitten, close-fisted, mean-souled Irishman, with no more conscience than a conger-eel. No one knew much about him before he came out here, except that he had deserted a wife and baby back East somewhere. He told of it himself when he was drunk.

"Corrigan was shrewd enough and he had only one idea in his head—to make money. He looked around for a year or so till he found the place he wanted. It was the island of Motuahi, where he dropped in with a little schooner he had bought at a wrecker's auction and patched up, they used to say, with driftwood and packing-boxes.

"He never allowed a white man aboard and had a crew of four or five Kanaka boys, and I guess one of them told him about conditions in Motuahi. He had a lot of cheap trade—gin and needle-guns and turkey-red print—and he gave it away so judiciously that he made himself solid with the chief and his headmen, and then laid up his schooner and settled down for a long spell ashore.



"THERE were no other white men there and the island was run strictly on the feudal system, the old chief having the same power over his subjects as Tembinoka of Apemama. Before long he and Corrigan were as thick as thieves. Corrigan got himself appointed prime minister and hogged all the concessions in sight, which included pearl-shell, copra and bêche-de-mer.

"Before it was fished out Motuahi was one of the richest pearl islands in the Pacific, but no one ever suspected it till Corrigan came along. When the old chief cashed in Corrigan had the foresight to tie up to his oldest wife, an ugly, fat old party, reeking of coconut oil, with jet-black teeth from chewing areca nut, and though he ran an extensive harem on the side, he kept the old *wahine* in the foreground as his favorite wife and adviser. They made him chief, and he immediately sent to Hongkong for an equipment of fine new rifles and organized a standing army.

"Then he really began to let himself out. He saw the possibilities of that island and worked them to the limit. He became a big factor in trade and used to blow into various ports and play the high-roller, just as you've described; but he was doing business all the time on the side—big business—and, you mark me, no one ever so much as shaded Corrigan on a deal of any kind.

"He used to wear an expensive layout of duds on these periodical visits, but back home in Motuahi he stuck to pajamas or a grass skirt. He called himself 'King Corrigan,' and he sure did lord it in regal style.

Had a flag made and a coat of arms, kept up all the strict Kanaka rules of etiquette, held the power of life and death over his subjects, sometimes acting as executioner himself. His standing army of about forty picked men was very useful when white traders would call in to try and get a ground hold on some of the good things in Motuahi. Corrigan never drew a sober breath, but his head was working all the time. He never kept more than working capital in the banks and took the rest of his money, in hard gold, back to Motuahi and put it out of circulation.

"Well, there came a time when Corrigan decided to pull up stakes. He was getting old and he had squeezed Motuahi absolutely dry—cleaned it out and had it all to himself. So he outfitted the navy, which was a schooner with a brass gun in the bow, gave out that he was going on a business trip, sneaked the treasury on board and sailed away. He made the one grand mistake of his life in trusting to a Kanaka crew. The old man's head wasn't as hard as it used to be, I guess. He used to drink nothing but King's peg—brandy and champagne mixed—and his daily allowance was amazing. It began to get to his head at last, and then the Kanakas began nibbling at his stock of drinkables.

"There was only one answer to that. You need all the brains the Lord has given you at sea, but when the edge of a typhoon comes ramping along from the China Sea you need twice as many and four times the legitimate amount of luck or the chances are you'll wind up as shark-bait. King Corrigan and his crew had neither. They were as helpless as so many sheep, and when they hit the bar of this little island we're heading for, the schooner simply dissolved like a lump of sugar, and that was the last of King Corrigan."



INGLEHART cut off a palmful of plug tobacco, rolled it carefully and charged his pipe.

"Only two of 'em came alive out of the mess. One of 'em is my boy up there with the ivory in his nose. The island is only a sand-bar with a few birds on it, as like Midway as two peas. It's the end of a chain of inhabited islands that you'll find there on the chart. The two boys got away in one of the boats that drifted ashore, and as no one has disturbed it, old Corrigan's treas-

ure lies there with the schooner's bones.

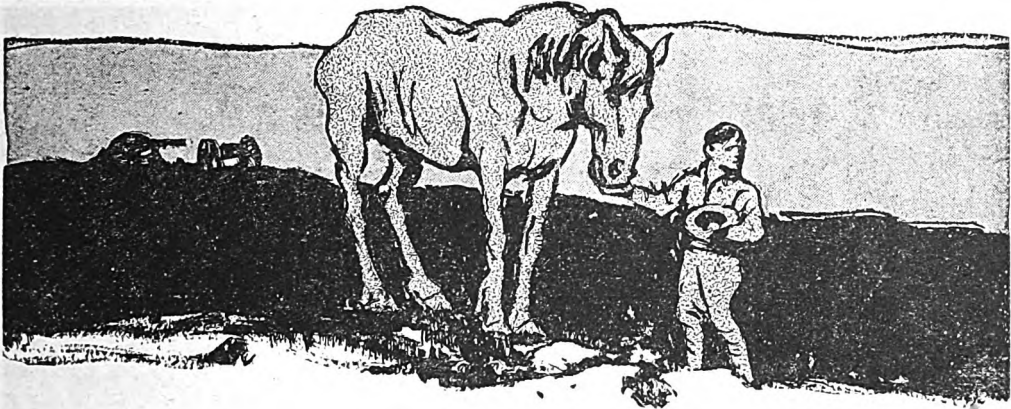
"I don't know what it amounts to. No one ever knew but the old man himself, and he kept his books in his head, but there's as much and more than any one man has any right to own, not to speak of a collection of pearls that can't be duplicated anywhere on earth. Now, my son, that's the proposition. With this old roach-trap and a reasonable amount of luck we're going to fish up King Corrigan's treasure. How does

it strike you, taking a whack at it?"

"Why," said Winthrop, "I'm afraid I'll wake up in the forecandle or the lazarette and find it isn't true. I'm glad to have met you, Captain, infinitely glad, and your proposition is the most attractive thing I've ever heard, but," he sighed audibly, "I wish to thunder I had some Turkish cigarettes!"

At this moment there was a cry on deck of "Sail, ho!"

TO BE CONTINUED



RABBIT

by TALBOT MUNDY

RABBIT" held his head up when the Major sent for him—stiff and proud and truculent as he could hold it—for it was morning, stables and breakfast were not an hour gone, and most of the Battery was there to see. He stood and faced him across the orderly-room desk with his heels tight together, and his little white, snub-nosed face stolid as his father's, who stood not ten paces from him. Rabbit was a soldier's son. But he had to remind himself more than once that he was a soldier's son, in order to keep the tears back.

"You see, Rabbit, my boy," explained the Major—even that martinet had called him Rabbit ever since the day when he had crawled, squeaking with delight among the horses, and the Battery had adopted

him as mascot—"it's not as though you could ever be a gunner. You'll never be able to measure up to the standard, little man, and sooner or later you'd have to leave us anyhow."

He spoke kindly, out of whole-hearted sympathy for the boy, but it would have been far easier for Rabbit had he been off-handed and abrupt. Unflinching and unquestioning obedience had been the first article of Rabbit's creed ever since he had been old enough to understand, but a ten-year-old boy, addressed as such, is susceptible to emotion.

He had to glance over at his father, who was standing rigid and impassive as a statue, before he could meet the Major's eyes again. The parting was going to be just as difficult for Sergeant-major Appleby, and

Rabbit knew it. But the sergeant-major stared straight in front of him, dry-eyed, as he had done at the grave-side of Mrs. Appleby, and Rabbit took heart of grace and copied him.

"Have you any notion what you'd like to be when you're grown up?" asked the Major.

"Please, sir, a gunner!"

It was a thin, wavering voice, even for a ten-year-old, and it was evidently only just within control; but the answer was prompt as a soldier's answer should be.

The Major shook his head.

"I'm sorry, my boy, that it's not possible. Any one as keen as you are ought to turn out a credit to any battery. If the doctor had been able to give you a better bill of health I might have managed to keep you near the battery until we all went home again, or until you were old enough to enlist. As it is, I am afraid you must make up your mind to be a civilian."

Rabbit winced perceptibly at the mention of the word "civilian," and the Major noticed it. He had had his choice, and he too had not chosen to be a civilian.

"There are many things worse," he said kindly. "For one thing, you'll be able to choose your own trade. If you've any preference, I can make a note of it on your papers now, and you'll be taught that particular trade. What would you like to be, now?"

Rabbit hung his head. To his mind there were no grades among civilians, and he had no preference.

"Speak!" said the Major.

"Anything at all!" said Rabbit. "I don't care, sir!"

This time it was the Major who winced; he was beginning to have enough of it. Had war been less probable, he and his brother officers would have gladly subscribed to keep Rabbit in some school near Cape Town, for no one in the battery wanted to be rid of him.

But, now that Rabbit had no mother to look after him, and no rightful place in the married quarters, he would have to go. The Queen's Regulations were quite clear on that point, and although any one with brains can drive the proverbial "coach and horses" through them, the feat takes time; the eve of war is no time for either legal quibbling or sentiment.

"Have you no choice at all?" he asked,

sternly this time, to hide his own discomfort.

Once more Rabbit said nothing, and hung his head. He was the son, and the grandson, and the great-great-grandson of a soldier. What was there to choose?

The Major ruled a line, and signed his name, and blotted it.

"I'll talk it over with your father," he said, placing the paper in a clip beside him.

"Right turn!" ordered the sergeant-major promptly. "Forward! Right turn!"

Rabbit turned and advanced and turned again, more like a ten-year soldier than a child of ten. In another two seconds he was outside in the sunshine, and the fateful interview was over.



HE HAD waited several days in dumb misery for that interview.

He knew the Regulations as exactly as any soldier in the army—far better, in fact, than he knew any of the lessons that the depot schoolmaster had taught him, and he had known exactly what he might expect. But now that it had come, and he had heard the worst, he was dazed. He felt like a criminal, just condemned—bewildered, hopeless, and raging at Society that would be rid of him.

In that minute he would have envied a man condemned to die. Within a week probably, for war was almost surely coming, they would send him home to a school for civilians' sons, where the Army would be a theory and Horse Artillery a myth.

The Battery—his Battery—the glorious, unbeatable, galloping, rattling, blue-and-gold-braided Overtures, would smear khaki-colored paint on their thirteen-pounders and go jingling out of the depot to begin things. And he, Rabbit Appleby, the son of their sergeant-major, would be somewhere on the high seas—steaming farther and ever farther away from them—doomed to oblivion, out of all sight or sound or knowledge of them—damned!

"Oh, strike me everlasting threes about!" he muttered. "It's too much! A man can't bear it!"

But his eyes were dry yet. He had no idea yet of disobedience. He was still a soldier's son.

The smell of the stables greeted him—the smell that he had known already on three continents in his short ten years.

There were friends of his there, and he turned toward them listlessly, without even knowing why he went. Every horse in the battery knew him, and most of them whinnied as he entered; but he went straight on down to the end, where Hector, Number One's near lead, stood.

"Give us a paw, Hector!" he demanded, and the old horse raised a fore-foot obediently.

Rabbit touched it, and then began to rub his muzzle for him. The tears were very close to the surface now.

"You'll be the same as me some day, Hector, only worse," he mumbled, rubbing his cheek against the velvet nose for sympathy. "They'll cast you for a crock, old horse, same as they've cast me now. Won't have no more use for you. They'll sell you to a — civilian contractor, Hector—a half-breed, like as not—an' he'll half-starve you, an' whop the spirit out of you! No more 'Battery, Trot March!' then, Hector, my boy! No more 'Walk Easy!' neither, with your belly full o' service oats, an' your driver smokin' his pipe on your back, an' swingin' his legs easy on either side o' you, an' flickin' the flies off you with his whip.

"No, Hector, old horse, an' no more 'Gallop!' neither, with the center an' wheel-horses too busy keepin' up to wonder where you're leadin' 'em; an' no more 'Action Front!' with the gun bumpin' and jinglin' behind you in a cloud o' dust, an' the trumpet goin', an' a swing and a jerk and unhook, an' you an' the other horses streakin' off as fast as you can lick, an' the men gettin' the range afore you're under cover!

"You got a God, Hector? You pray him then to let you get killed in action sooner than be turned into a bloody civilian!"

"Hi, there! What are you doing in there?" a voice demanded. A new-fledged bombardier showed himself through the doorway at the end.

"Lookin' to see if you'd dropped your epaulets anywhere," said Rabbit, who knew the history—secret and otherwise—of every man in the Overtures.

That particular bombardier had once been a bandsman in an infantry regiment, and had deserted and reenlisted. The shot told, and Rabbit's skin was saved.

"Come out o' there, young 'un! There'll be trouble if one o' the officers comes along and catches you!"

"Trouble for who?" asked Rabbit.

"Trouble for me!"

"Oh, all right," said Rabbit, "if you're afraid o' losin' your stripe, I'll take pity on you!"

He walked down to the end again leisurely, and then made a sudden dive for it, and escaped. He was too miserable, though, to stand at a safe distance and exchange repartee, as the bombardier evidently expected him to do. The bombardier picked up a pebble and flung it after him, but Rabbit never even turned his head. He pushed his hands deep down into his pockets and walked away.



IT WAS the first unsoldierly thing he had done that day or since he could remember, but he kept them there—deep down as he could get them. It was his first attempt to discover what it felt like to be a civilian, and he slouched out of barracks with his shoulders forward and every other mark of the despised civilian that he could think of. He was beginning to feel mutinous. Wild and hitherto unthought-of plans were beginning to simmer in his head, and he made no attempt to check them. If the Battery had no use for him and intended to get rid of him at such short notice, what loyalty did he owe the Battery? None.

He walked toward Greenpoint, neither knowing nor caring whither his footsteps led him, and half-way he turned down on to the beach, and stood there gazing seaward. The despised tears were nearer than ever to the surface now. Only civilians and babies and women ever wept, in Rabbit's scheme of things, but he had stood on that very spot with his mother less than three weeks ago, and the sudden memory of it all but unmanned him.

The road to the cemetery still lay unhealed where the gun-wheels had cut deep ruts in it, and the yellow mound that covered Mrs. Appleby bore nothing but a fading wreath or two. Three days ago he had seen his father stand dry-eyed and grim by his mother's open grave; and dry-eyed and grim stood Rabbit now, as he faced the sea with the memory fresh on him. But the despised civilian slouch had left him, and he stood with squared shoulders and chin erect.

His brain boiled with memory of a lifetime's happenings crowded into ten years—all happy years. He and his mother had

made the passage on a crowded troop-ship twice. Once all the long, weary way to India, and once across the Indian Ocean to South Africa. Those are no idyllic wanderings for delicate women and children under ten; but they had been following a sergeant-major whom they both worshiped, and a Battery that was task-master, and fetish, and pride to all three of them.

They had given their best uncomplainingly, as soldiers' families must do. They had lived and loved and suffered together on three continents, more like two children than like mother and son—two children with one big brother, who loved only the Battery better. But the weakest and the kindest and the wisest of the three had died. Another sacrifice had been made on the altar of Military Glory, that is based on the martyrdom of soldiers' wives, and Rabbit was an orphan three several ways at once: His world was gone from him; he was losing mother, and father and the Battery—the only three things he loved—at one fell swoop.

So the little shriveled, weak-lunged, pasty-faced idealist stared at the antarctic waves sobbing among the rocks, and strove to keep the tears back by clenching his teeth, and driving his heel down among the shingle, and knotting his fists behind him. And as he stared straight out to sea, a rumble rose behind him—a well-remembered rumble that he had listened to soon after he was born, and almost ever since.

"I won't!" he swore, and his chin rose even higher.

A big tear splashed on to his cheek, but he ignored it. He would not admit even to himself that it was there. Not until the wind had blown it dry, and he was certain that there were no more to follow, did he turn round to watch his beloved Battery trundling out of Cape Town to exercise.



HIS eyes glittered with admiration now, and for the moment he ceased to be Rabbit the hopeless orphan. He was Rabbit the enthusiast—the ten-year-old, sharp-eyed military critic. Table Mountain loomed up above him and the Battery, huge and magnificent, but he had no eyes for it. The dust-haze that hung above the moving guns was far more beautiful in his eyes than the mists that draped the mountain folds, just as the somber mountain itself seemed to him insignificant

beside the six black, lazy-looking terrors that could leap at a trumpet-call into thundering life and belch thirteen-pound shrapnel at the bidding of the men who handled them.

"—, they look fine!" he muttered.

And even as he spoke, a trumpet-call rang out and a ripple ran from end to end of the Battery, as the drivers and gunners gathered up their reins.

"Ter-rr-ot!"

The dust-haze became a cloud in instant answer, and the drawn-out line leaped into amazing life, while Rabbit the enthusiast stood spellbound in admiration and watched his beloved Battery rattle and jolt and bump out of sight. It was riding out of reach of him, out of his life forever; it was possibly the last time he would see it go to exercise.

When the last flash of gun and harness had died beneath the dust, and the dust had dipped below the short horizon and disappeared, he flung himself face downward on the shingle. The Battery was the best thing in the world, and he had lost it; there was nothing else to live for! The tears came now in torrents, and he let them come. What did he care? He was a civilian—a ——— civilian outcast, so he had leave to cry, but he drew little consolation from it. A world where men cried to relieve their feelings, where there was no Battery of Royal Horse—no father who was Battery sergeant-major—was no world at all. It was a wilderness!

And as he sobbed, other thoughts came to him. In this new sphere that they had cast him into there would be no discipline; it was a sphere where nobody obeyed, and nobody cared, and every one disgraced himself and his country how he chose. Why not begin now? If the Battery did not want him, he was his own master. If they were sending him to the devil, as they surely were, couldn't he choose his own road?

He left off sobbing as the vague thought crystallized and became a plan. Presently he stood up, and gazed about him through tear-dimmed eyes. It took him a minute or so to recollect his bearings, for the world looked altogether different now that he was a mutineer and everybody's enemy.


It was only the people at home who thought no war was coming. Rabbit knew that, as he knew every other thing that

was common gossip in the Battery. And if war came it would be a big war. Unlike the Government at home, Rabbit knew that too: It would take the army months to reach Johannesburg.

"God strike me action front!" he muttered suddenly. "I'll do it!"

And then he bent his head forward, and ran and ran and ran, afraid that he would relent if he looked behind him.

II

 THE train for Johannesburg that Rabbit meant to take did not leave until nine o'clock that night, and Rabbit had neither food nor money. But there was a guard on that train who was a friend of his, and he counted on being able to blarney and cajole him into letting him ride free. In the meantime, though, he must hide and go hungry, for there would be men of the Battery looking for him the moment he was missed.

He made for the railway station, where the platforms were piled high with war material in case of accident. It was likely to remain there for a week or two yet, and there was only a desultory guard over it, so Rabbit had no difficulty in slipping in among the packing-cases and hiding there. But before long, men of the Army Service Corps came on to the platform, and began to pile the packing-cases helter-skelter on to trucks.

They worked in silence and deadly earnest, overseen by an officer and keen-eyed sergeants who checked the least attempt to take things easy. Rabbit contrived to slip out unobserved and hide himself among the bales of hay. He was sorely puzzled by the haste. If all chance of war were over and the stores were being sent up-country for the use of details, why the hurry? And yet there had been no news of war that morning.

Before the afternoon was half over, men came and started on the hay too, and Rabbit had to watch his chance and make his escape again. This time he chose an empty horse-truck—the end one of a long line that stood waiting on a siding.

"They won't be using these!" he muttered to himself. "Where the guns are, they've got to keep horse-trucks handy, that's a cert!"

But at seven that evening the line of

trucks began to move backward in a rapid-fire succession of noisy jerks, as a shunting-engine pushed it between two platforms. He dared not look out, for he could hear voices on the platform, and the restless incessant movement of trained men standing easy. Next he caught the jingle of a gun-team, and a moment later the train came to a standstill with a jerk, and some one ran down the length of it, opening all the doors. Rabbit crouched into a corner and lay still, quaking; there was only one battery in Cape Town—the Overtures, that he was trying to avoid—and here they were! What, under heaven, he wondered, was happening?

He heard the teams unhooked, and the quick-fire click of the horses' feet on the asphalt platform as they wheeled clear of the guns. And then he heard the guns being run up backward on to trucks. That sound, too, was unmistakable. Then once more came the tramp of horses, this time led, not ridden.

"First twelve in here! Come on! Look alive!" a voice commanded.

He knew that voice well. It was his father's.

Rabbit's only chance was to lie still, if he wanted to escape detection. So he crouched into the darkest corner and lay flat along the blackest shadow he could find. It was about two feet from the end of the truck, cast by an arc-light on the platform. Twelve horses were led in one by one and turned round as they entered to face the side nearest the platform.

"Get over, Hector!" said the driver who led the first horse, pushing him sideways and punching him in the ribs. The horse shifted his feet a little, but if he moved at all it was back toward the driver.

"Get over, d'ye hear! What's the matter with you?"

But the near-lead of Number One stood still, and in came three other horses and lined up beside him; so his driver made his head fast where he was, and went out to bring another one.

"—rum things, horses!" he grumbled, as he slipped round behind their heels. "There's that old skate been loaded and unloaded more times than a yeller dawg can scratch himself, an, 's'elp me Gawd, if he don't go an' jib now at a shadow! They're worse than women!"

But Hector, two feet from the farthest

end, was having his legs stroked for him.

"Good boy, Hector! Good old Hector!"

The shadow had been Rabbit, and the old horse had been afraid to tread on him.



IT SEEMED like an hour later when a whistle blew, and the engine answered it, and the train began to pull out from the station. It started with a succession of little jerks, and the horses were unaccustomed yet to the motion. At each jerk the whole twelve lost their balance, and bunted sideways into one another toward Hector's end. The old horse braced his legs to resist the strain, but presently there came the most prodigious jerk of all; eleven horses bumped against him all together, and he had to give. He jumped for it, and landed against the side, and Rabbit crawled out unscathed between his legs.

After an hour or two, three of the horses at the far end—young ones, that were new to the battery—began to grow restless and squeal and kick. Presently one fell, and plunged and struggled where he lay, and the next horse began to trample on him in his efforts to get clear. It was the makings of a charnel-house.

But Rabbit slipped out behind the others' heels to the far end, and began talking to them; and after a struggle that lasted two agonizing minutes he had the fallen wheeler up again, almost calm, and nuzzling his hand. A minute later a whistle blew shrilly, and the train stopped, and three or four men and the sergeant-major came running with a lantern.

"This one's been down!" exclaimed the man with the lantern suddenly. "See? He's all mucked up on this side! Now how in thunder did he get up again, an' why weren't he trod on?"

"Never mind why!" said the sergeant-major. "Shorten his head-rope! That'll keep him on his feet!"

The man did as he was ordered, and the door closed again, and the train proceeded.

Once more there came the short, sharp, sudden jerks as the engine got up speed, but this time Rabbit stood behind them in the middle, at the risk of being kicked, and talked to them, and instead of kicking and plunging, they stood quietly, and there was no more trouble in that truck. After a while Rabbit grew sleepy, so he lay down on the floor—safe between Hector's legs—

the old horse straddling over him and nosing him restlessly from time to time.

So far, all had gone well. Rabbit was cold and tired and hungry but he was undiscovered yet, and every revolution of the wheels was taking him farther away from Cape Town and the troop-ship that was to carry him to England. But when morning came they stopped the train and led the horses out to water them; there was no hiding then in the truck, in broad daylight.

But Rabbit's wits were sharpened by necessity. He waited until the first six horses had been led out and then slipped out close behind the heels of the last one and dived beneath the truck. There was a foot-board on the far side, and he lay down full-length on it.

But a brakeman began to walk along the train, and he had to dive beneath the truck once more to escape being seen. And now, for the first time since the train had started, he began to be really miserable. He was with his beloved Battery, but not of it, and he dared not show himself. Besides being hungry and thirsty and tired out, he had a feeling of being hunted that was new to him; and added to all that, there was the apparent impossibility of getting back into the truck again undetected.

When the men led back the horses, they would face his way, and one of them would surely see him. He could not hang on to the rods beneath the truck, for he was not strong enough, and hunger was fast beginning to undermine what little strength he had; and if he tried to ride on the foot-board when the train started, he would either fall off, or else be seen, which would be even worse.



BEFORE long a trumpet sounded, and the men began to lead the horses back. Then, in desperation, Rabbit crawled out on to the far side and ran down the length of the train. There were men loafing about the station platform, but they were all of them watching the horses, and no one saw him. At the back end of the train he noticed a truck that had a tarpaulin spread over one end of it. No officer rode in that, he was sure, for they had a carriage to themselves just in front of the brake-van, and his father, he knew, was in the front truck of all, near the horses.

He decided to take a chance on it, and clambered quickly on to the two-inch ridge that ran along the side. From there to the top was a prodigious distance for a tired boy of Rabbit's inches, but he grabbed the top and summoned all his strength and courage for one last effort, urged on by fear of being seen and the even greater yearning to travel with the Battery. He tore his knees on the truck-side, and cut his fingers on the edge, but he got his knee over the top at last, and landed, spent and bleeding, on the truck floor. There he crawled to a corner, and dragged one end of the tarpaulin over him, and lay there, panting with fright and exhaustion.

Ten minutes before the train started, eighteen men climbed into the truck and stood staring about them at the countryside; but the minute the train started they all sat down, and one man sat on Rabbit. That was too much for him. Battery or no Battery, he had reached the limit of his endurance, and he had to betray himself.

"Get off me!" he grunted, struggling underneath the tarpaulin. "Logan, you fat lump!" he exclaimed, panting as he pushed his head out into the daylight. "You weigh more'n a ton! You great fat, good-for-nothing haystack! You've pretty near killed me!"

Logan dragged him out from under the tarpaulin and stood him on his feet.

"God bless my soul!" he exclaimed; "if here ain't Rabbit! You little scut! Your father's nine parts frantic and one part off his head wondering what's come of you!"

Rabbit ducked, and crouched by the side of the truck.

"Think I want the whole Battery to know I'm here?" he demanded. "You fat-head! What d'you want to stick me up there like a flag-pole for? Where's this train going?"

"Stow that, kid! You don't fool us! Waited until you heard the Boers was marchin' on Ladysmith, an' then ask 'Where's the bloomin' train goin'?' as innocent as you please!"

"Ladysmith?" asked Rabbit. "Then war's broke out?"

"Right, first guess!" said Logan sarcastically. "Ladysmith it is, and war's broke out! And this is a battery of Royal Horse, and them, over in them trucks yonder's guns, and in front o' them's horses! Lollin' on the cushions in the carriage just behind

are what are known as officers; 'tween them an' your daddy, the sergeant-major, you'll be in for a pretty warm time of it at the next stop, my son!"

Rabbit squatted on his hunkers, and glared around him, feeling like a beast at bay; he looked, though, like a very pitiable child on the edge of tears.

"D'you mean you're goin' to give me up?" he demanded. "Why, you're Horse Gunners, not——" He searched his mind for the most scathing epithet he could think of. "Not infantry!" The men laughed.

"How can we 'elp givin' you up?" asked Logan.


"Bah! You Garrison Gunner!" sneered Rabbit. "Who held his tongue when you was in Cape Town drunk as Billy-be-damned an' the picket asked me if I'd seen you? How did I help givin' you up, when my father whopped me for not tellin' an' the Major said he'd put me in cells, an' I got C. B. an' all? I'm a Horse Gunner, an' you're a Garrison recruit, an' Militia at that; that's the long and short of it!"

"Poor little devil!" said Logan, laughing. "I'll bet he's hungry! Here, Rabbit, take a bite o' this!"

He produced a huge sandwich—a slab of meat between two tremendous hunks of bread, and Rabbit seized it eagerly. "Gimme a drink first!" he demanded, and Logan handed him his water-bottle.

Rabbit drank, and then ate greedily, while the men sat round and watched him. Then, when he had finished, he crawled in under the tarpaulin again and lay down.

"Now, you men, let me sleep, d'ye hear!" he ordered. "I'm pretty near all in!"

 HE WAS asleep in a minute, and while he slept the men discussed him. It was perfectly true, what he had claimed, that he had saved more than one of them from condign punishment not once but several times. He was past-master of the art of ferreting out the things he should not know, and past-grand-master of the art of holding his tongue once he had discovered them.


From their point of view, and from most other people's for that matter, he was a good, clean little sportsman, and not a man in that truck but liked him. It was less than ten minutes before they had arrived at a decision, and Logan pinched his leg.

"Leggo o' my leg, you lump! D'ye hear? You've a fist like a horse's teeth!"

"Listen, kid!" said Logan. "We won't say a word; but you 'aven't seen us, d'ye hear, an' you wasn't in this 'ere truck! When we get into Ladysmith, you slip out an' hide an' shift for yourself, but not a word about our helpin' you, mind!"

"Bah!" said Rabbit, snuggling up to go to sleep again. "Think I'm a recruity that wants teachin', or what? If you've done preachin', let me sleep!"

III

 WHAT could they do with him? When the train reached Ladysmith he had to show himself, of course, for he had to have food, and all the food in the place had been commandeered by those in authority. They could not send him away to the coast again, for that train was almost the last to get into the beleaguered place; only a few more trains with the naval contingent got in after them, and then Ladysmith was shut off completely from the outer world—the railway lines were torn up by the Boers—and the wires were down. Rabbit had to stay there.

The Major swore, for appearance's sake, and grinned in private, and then forgot the incident amid the rush and turmoil of the hasty preparations for defense. His father hid his delight beneath a fierce mustache, and further disguised it with the aid of a surcingle strap, wrapped twice round his wrist and then lustily applied to the seat of Rabbit's pants. But when the smart of that was over, Rabbit became at once happier than he had ever been in all his life. He was free of the Battery and of Ladysmith.

He had loved the Battery on three continents, but he had never seen it yet in action. He had lain often full-length on the grass and seen the shrapnel go screaming among the dummy targets. But now he lay hidden between rocks, or in some ditch or cranny, and saw real work done—into action at the gallop—action front and unhook faster than the eye could follow almost, and the range picked up at the second shot.

Boom! went the guns, before the horses could scamper under cover. "*Oo-ee-ee-ee-ee-Bang!*" went the whistling shells.

"Got 'em again, first shot!" swore Rabbit. "Oh, God, ain't it fine! Ain't they

splendid! What 'ud they do without Horse Gunners?"

He was small, even for a boy of ten, and could find cover almost anywhere, and for all his weak lungs, he was as active, nearly, as the animal they had named him after; so there was not one engagement in the early days of the siege, in which the guns took part, that Rabbit did not watch from some point of vantage, cheering on the Battery and yelling with delight each time they scored a hit—and that was often.

But the besieging force closed in, and there became less and ever less room for the guns to move in. Before long the quick-firing, light-projectiled horse-guns were guns of position, stationed by sections in hastily prepared redoubts. And Rabbit was chased away from the neighborhood of the redoubts and told to keep inside the township limits.

And then a day came when the supply of feed gave out, and they had to turn the horses loose to shift for themselves on the bullet-swept countryside around. The poor brutes would come whinnying to the lines when bugles and trumpets blew at meal-times, only to be driven away again because there was no food to give them. Rabbit saw his old friend Hector, hungry and tick-ridden, standing miserably as near the lines as any one would let him come, and from then on he had another task to keep him occupied.

His own daily ration was a loaf of bread, and the half of that, which he spared with iron self-sacrifice, made a poor ration for a war-horse. But there were other crusts to be begged and picked up here and there—waste that even sharp-eyed officers could not prevent—and Rabbit was here and there and everywhere, stealing and begging shamelessly.

Day after day, when evening came, the old near-lead of Number One came to a hollow that Rabbit knew of and received his belly-full of bread-crusts, while Rabbit went over him inch by inch and pulled the ticks off him. Every evening, always at the same time and in the same spot, the old horse waited, and Rabbit never failed him once.



THEN one disastrous morning, when the Boers were closing in more determinedly than ever, the Field Artillerymen lost a gun of theirs. It had

been pushed out too far toward the hillside, and the Boers contrived to enfilade it from both flanks. All but a few of the gunners were shot down, and the remainder, to the awful disgust of Rabbit, who was watching from a roof, were ordered to retire and leave it.

"Swabs!" growled Rabbit. "Horse Gunners would have saved it with the drag-ropes! Those Field-Artillerymen ain't fit to be trusted with a gun!"

The Boers tried to make away with it, but they in turn found the rifle-fire too heavy for them, and they were forced to leave it limbered where it was, standing with its useless nose half-pointing toward the township, forlorn and useless as the half-starved horses that wandered on every hand.

It stood there day after day, of no use to either side, and in between his foraging expeditions for Hector's evening meal Rabbit would lie on his stomach on a roof and look at it. That gun obsessed him. Whatever the difference between Horse Artillery and Field, a gun was a gun, and a lost gun was a disgrace to the British army.

"If that had belonged to us," he said to himself, "the Horse Gunners 'ud be all dead by now trying to get it back again, or else it wouldn't be there!"

~ But the gun was evidently given up for lost. Both sides jibbed at the awful loss of life that would be the certain cost of wheeling it away, and it remained where it was, rusting and useless in the rain.

Rabbit thought out a dozen schemes to rescue it—unbelievably intricate schemes, crowded with the minutest sort of technical detail, but even he realized that any one of his plans would entail tremendous loss of life, and he was much too wise to waste time bothering anybody with them. Horse Gunners were needed for the purpose, if there were to be any chance of success, and the Horse Gunners were all of them busy on the far side, without their horses.

But one morning, as he went in search of Hector's supper, he passed a shed, the door of which was open, and, true to the instincts of a forager, he peeped in, and then went in, leaving the door open as a means of retreat behind him. Inside was the discarded gun-harness belonging to his Battery. It was hanging all around the walls in proper order, team by team, and in the middle of the floor stood a bag more than

three parts filled with oats—the last, probably, that were left in Ladysmith.

Rabbit's mind was made up on the instant—he must find another way besides the door into and out of that store-shed. Probably some one had gone to bring more harness or some other stores there, and would be back directly and would lock the door. It would be no use to smash the padlock, for they would only fit another one; he must find some other exit. The walls were of corrugated iron, nailed on to hard-wood uprights and cross-pieces. Inside the shed, leaning against a corner, was a steel crowbar, taller than himself. Rabbit took the crowbar and carried it outside and hid it in a ditch. Then he lay in the ditch himself and waited until the men returned and locked the door and went away again. When they had gone he studied the corrugated iron walls carefully, before starting off on his daily search for bread-crusts, and that night, when he had fed Hector and pulled the ticks off him, he returned and found his crowbar.



HE WORKED on the iron walls all night, for the crowbar was too heavy for him, and he dared not make a noise. But before day broke he had a sheet removed sufficiently at the bottom for him to crawl through, and by using all his strength he found that he could bend it back into place again. The next evening Hector had oats for supper, for Rabbit had slept all day, too utterly tired out to go in search of bread for him.

After that it was oats for Hector every evening. The supply was limited, and Rabbit had to husband it carefully, for he needed the bulk of it for his final coup. He had no time at all now for foraging—hardly time to get his own ration at midday. He had to sleep and get all the rest he could in the daytime, and toil all night.

He had six saddles to carry—six thirty-four-pound saddles—one by one on his head for half-a-mile in the black darkness—and then the harness that went with them, and then the oats. He scooped the oats up into the nose-bags, and carried them, two bags at a time, and hurried back for more. With the last trip he brought the bag and poured all the oats back into it when he reached the hollow where he had laid the harness.

Then he lay down and slept beside the harness, with his head pillowed on the oats.

He got no food at all that day, for he was too tired to go and get it.

The next evening there was another horse standing there with Hector, and Rabbit fed him a small ration of oats and pulled the ticks off him as well.

"That means two to the good to-morrow night!" he muttered. "That blighter'll come again!"

Then he started to lay the harness out properly, as a Horse Artilleryman should—laying the traces on the ground, short traces doubled once, long traces doubled twice; passing the legging round the links and buckling the center strap; laying the collars lengthwise on the traces, linings downward and points facing opposite ways; doubling the breechings up inside the collars; laying the off-horse's saddle, complete with crupper surcingle and girth, on the collars; the near saddle complete on the off-saddle, the bridles on the cantle of the near saddle and the bridoons across its seat.

Rabbit knew his drill as well as any artilleryman in the Battery, but he found it difficult to manage in the dark. He toiled nearly all night over it, but when it was done at last, it was done properly, and he knew there would be no confusion when the climax came. When the harness was at last all piled up neatly, he took six heel-pegs and drove them into the ground in a line at equal distances apart. Then he sighed with the satisfaction of a job well done, and lay down to sleep until the mid-day bugle went.

The next night there was no moon, and Rabbit was half beside himself with glee.

"That's the eternal, everlasting luck of the British army!" he told himself. "God loves a gunner, anyway!"

IV



HE FED Hector a half-ration, and ration to the other horse, and made left him standing, but he gave a full him fast with a heel-rope while he was eating it. Then he took the near bridle and the near saddle from the leading horse's pile and slipped them on to Hector. He had little trouble with the bridle, for the old horse was used to being fingered about and fooled with. When he had finished his oats he held his head down to be rubbed, and Rabbit had the bit in in an instant. But girthing up the saddle was another matter.

Hector was thin, and the girth was loose, and the tongue of the buckle refused to go through its unaccustomed hole.

He managed it at last, though—one hole too loose, but tight enough to serve—and climbed, trembling with excitement, on to Hector's back, with a halter hung over his arm, and some oats in a nose-bag in his whip-hand. The old horse went off at a walk willingly enough, and the other horse tried hard to follow him, but the heel-rope pulled him up tight and he had to stay there whinnying.


"Good!" said Rabbit to himself. "They still go together! This is going to be easier than I thought!"

But what he had to do that night did not prove easy, and no one ever found out how he did it. He had four more horses to round up in the darkness, with the help of Hector. He had to tempt them with oats after he had found them, and slip a halter over them, and tow them in, and tempt them with oats again before he could get the heel-ropes on. And then, when he had them rounded up at last, he had to harness them.

It must have been after midnight before he had them all pegged out in a line, for he dared not take the first ones he could catch. They had to be all team-horses, accustomed to pull together. And it must have been after three o'clock in the morning before he had them all harnessed and hooked up together. He fed them all the rest of the oats, to keep them quiet, and struggled with the girths and heavy saddles in the pitch-black darkness with all the skill and patience that he knew. But at last he loosed the heel-ropes, and clambered once again on Hector, and "Walk, March!" he ordered, laying his whip driver-wise on the shoulder of the off-leader.

Hector led off at the word, and the five scarecrows went with him without much trouble. The wheelers hung back at first, but when Rabbit turned in the saddle and spoke to them they recognized his voice and grew tractable again. Rabbit knew where that gun was; he had watched it so often from the roof-tops that he could have found it almost with his eyes shut, but it was another matter to lead six horses to it over rough ground in the dark. He dared not go faster than a walk, for fear of the noise that he would make, and for fear of pitfalls, and every time he halted to peer ahead of him he had to make more noise than he cared

about to get the gaunt procession started again.

 HE MISSED his way three times, and had to quarter the ground to get back on the trail, but once more luck was with him, for he stumbled over the gun before he expected to, and before any one in the Boer lines had heard him. Then came the crisis. He had to wheel the horses and dismount, and hook them in unheard. They would not wheel. Three times they milled round in a circle before he could get the wheelers anywhere near the pole; and when at last one of them stood on either side of it, they were much too far in front of it, and he could not back them.

"Back!" he ordered, as loudly as he dared, and with his teeth chattering with fright. "Back, you blighters! Oh, God, for just one real man to help me!"

There was a flash on the hillside, and a bullet pinged past him, uncomfortably close.

"Back!" he ordered, louder now, for the Boers had heard him, and nothing mattered; speed was the only thing that could save him.

They began to back in the wrong direction; and another rifle flashed, and then another, and one bullet hit the barrel of the gun.

Rabbit leaped off Hector's back, and seized the rear trace and hauled on it.

"Back!" he ordered.

He yelled now, for the Boers were beginning to volley at him, and they had the range. Occasional bullets rattled among the gun-wheels, and buried themselves in the ground all around him, and the horses were beginning to get scared.

He seized the near-wheeler by the bit and jerked him backward until he had him where he could make him fast to the pole, and then he nipped round to the wheel and hooked him up before he had time to move forward again. But the off-wheeler had swung outward and refused to come in when called. Hector was growing restive, and the whole team began working round toward him as the volleys from the hillside increased in number and speed and accuracy. Rabbit ran to Hector's head and forced him back; then he seized the whip, which he had left hanging from his collar, and ran round flogging at the off-horses. They plunged away from him in fright and he grabbed the trace and hooked them in on that side.

They strained at the traces, all six of them, but a field-gun is heavier than a horse-gun, and the wheels had sunk in deep. Rabbit had time to nip round in front of them and spring on Hector's back before they had the wheels out of the rut. But as he climbed up, a streak of Summer lightning flashed across the sky, and the enemy's marksmen had a chance to see him. Three or four hundred rifles blazed at once, and the air sang with the music of nickel-coated lead.


"Section—Right—Gallop!" yelled Rabbit.

Down came the whip with all his might on the off-leader's scraggy shoulder, and all six horses summoned all their strength, and the gun began to move.

"Come on, you devils! Hup! Hup! Hup!" yelled Rabbit, flogging as he yelled, and the gun moved faster.

But another flash of lightning betrayed him to the Boers, and another volley slit the air around him. Something hit him—he did not know where—but he felt a numb sensation creeping up and down his left side.

A field gun is not meant to gallop with, and strong horses are supposed to pull it. But Rabbit yelled and flogged and got those six poor old starving crocks to galloping, and came rattling, bumping and flogging across the danger-zone with volley after volley tearing up the ground behind him. It was easy enough to guide them. He set their heads straight for Ladysmith, careless of what obstacles there might be in between, and took a chance on it, and his luck rode with him.

 ONE hour before day broke the team pulled up of its own accord, steaming and shaking at the knees, before what had been the Horse Artillery lines. Hector had led them there, for Rabbit was long past guiding them. The volleys and the thundering wheels had roused the garrison. Sentries and outposts and pickets had turned in the alarm, and there were a hundred men running hell-bent-for-leather toward the gun before it halted.

"Take hold of the leaders' heads!" shouted an officer; and some one obeyed the order. "Who is it? What gun's that?"

No one knew, and the officer came closer to investigate.

Rabbit lurched sideways on Hector's back, clutched wildly at the collar and

slipped down into the arms of the officer.

"Poor little devil!" said the officer. "Who is he? Anybody know? He's wounded."

There were some of the Overtures among the crowd who clustered round, and they came closer to look at him.

"Why, it's Rabbit!" said some one. "Here, sergeant-major, here's your boy!"

The sergeant-major came from examining the gun-breech mechanism. He took one quick look at Rabbit and then lifted him in his arms.

"What's up, sonny?" he asked him.

"What's the matter?"

"I got the gun!" said Rabbit.

"What's that?" asked the officer.

"What does he say?"

"He says he got the gun, sir!"

"D'you mean—d'you mean that that

little chap has ridden out with a team and brought that gun in all by himself?"

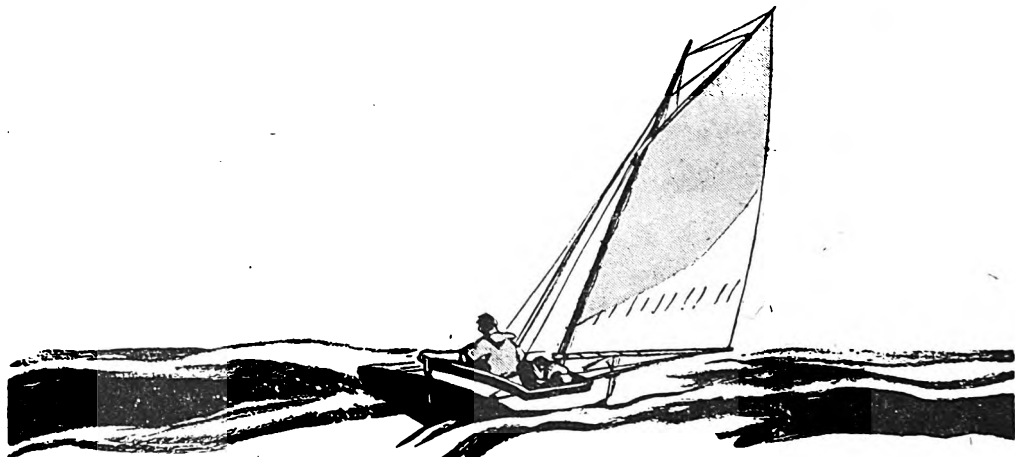
"It seems so, sir!" said the sergeant-major, still holding Rabbit to his breast and hardly looking up to answer.

"Good God!" said the officer. "To think of that gun being out there all these days, and being brought in at last by a child—a mere kid—a civilian too!"

At the word "civilian" Rabbit's eyes opened, and he found strength to clutch his father's arm.

"I ain't a civilian!" he muttered. "By God, I ain't! I never was, an' I never will be! I'm a—I'm a Horse Gunner, an'—an' so help me God, I'll—I'll die one!"

And so they buried him next morning, not at all as a civilian, but with the five regulation volleys, and his Battery standing by on arms reversed.



WILLY TAKES PA SAILING

by GEORGE VAUX BACON

DOWN East in Hingham, Massachusetts, there's an old duck named Amos Bates who has a wad of money and the prettiest daughter you ever saw in your life. Her name is Dorothy. Her hair is just the color of the old man's gold, and her eyes are just the color of the blue of the Atlantic off Green Hill, while the color of her cheeks is most remarkably like the wild roses that grow

along the road to Braintree. Briefly, she's some swell dame.

You've got to hand it to Massachusetts for three things. They have on record the largest passenger-carrying bark that ever landed in America; a conscience that you are always reading about, but with which you never come in contact; and the prettiest girls in the world outside of Virginia.

Old man Bates came under all three

heads. His first ancestor to have struck these iron shores was the cabin-boy on the justly celebrated *Mayflower*. His conscience was remarkable—he had made his money in gas franchises. Dorothy got him under the ropes on the third head.

Dorothy was sweet, romantic and popular. The old man was about as sweet as a last month's oyster-shell, about as romantic as a bank statement and very popular, very—with the cartoonists.

Therefore when Willy Bannister came out of the North—Minnesota, to be absolutely definite—poor except for a tiny income derived, it was said, from writing for Sunday newspapers and things, and met Dorothy, and they both fell madly and publicly in love to the delight of every old gossip in town from the N. Y., N. H. & H. tracks to Hingham Harbor, and Pa Bates got wise, up rose the wrath of him till it smoldered toward the azure skies of even.

For it was at dinner that Pa exploded. Dorothy was just in the act of lapping a strawberry up into her rosy little mouth when Ma gave a nervous gasp, and Pa let go.

"I understand, Dorothy," he began in his best manner, reserved as a rule for newspapermen and beggars, "that there is considerable talk concerning you and this young Bannister person from the West somewhere."

"Is there?" queried Dorothy sweetly, daintily swallowing the happy strawberry she had been negotiating.

Pa Bates laid his knife and fork on the table. Ma's silk underskirt rustled in perturbation, sure indication of a coming storm, as Pa hated it. He looked at his spouse a moment, frowning; then glowered back at Dorothy.

She was regarding him innocently out of a pair of blue eyes filled with gentle surmise.

"Dorothy!"

"Yes, Pa."

"Don't play with me, Dorothy!" he shouted.

"I'm not playing with you, Pa," murmured Dorothy.

Pa Bates loved opposition because he hated to be opposed. Extraordinary, isn't it? But quite common, nevertheless. Dorothy knew her Pa as the little bee knoweth the pretty flower whence it draweth the honey. Pa didn't look like a pretty flower now. If he looked like any kind of flower

at all, he looked like a turnip, which some people contend is not a flower at all, but a fruit. Dorothy thought of a turnip as she looked at Pa and watched him struggle for utterance.

"I forbid you to have anything to do with him! He is a worthless writer. He can't do anything worth while. He is peniless. He is a skiddiddle, a mousey, a nin-compoop, a—a——"

Even Pa's wonderful ability to coin epithets failed him. He rose and pranced out of the dining-room.

Ma's silk skirt rustled again.

"My dear," she began.

"Father is ridiculous! Ridiculous!" flared Dorothy, and, blue eyes flashing, looking very much like a big American Beauty rose crowned with gold, Dorothy banged out of the house across the lawn and disappeared in the direction of the Jerusalem Road.



OF COURSE you know all about the New England coast around Hingham, Scituate, Cohasset, Minot Ledge, Green Hill, Nantasket and all those places. Certainly. Therefore you will not be at all surprised to learn that Dorothy boarded an electric train and went to Nantasket. At that point she gracefully alighted, a thing of beauty and a joy forever to the clustering swains, walked down to the beach and along it, until under the lava cliffs that rise up to make Green Hill she met a very alert-looking young man whom she greeted by being thoroughly and delightedly kissed.

After all, it's the simple things that count. One could go into a whole essay on the subject of simple matters like kissing that are really the most pleasant things in the world. That's what the alert young person from Minnesota named Willy Bannister undoubtedly thought, for, with all the perseverance of a St. Paul blizzard, but with considerable difference in temperature, he continued to kiss those adorable lips, through which had but a few minutes previously passed a strawberry to Paradise, until Dorothy was just as red as she could be, and—oh, you know!

Well, the young man finally said:

"Gee, it's good to see you, Dorothy! Heavens, it's been a long day without you, sweetheart!"

(I wonder where I've heard that before.)

And she answered, her cheeks still like red, red roses:

"Was it really, dear?"

(Whew, old stuff, kid!)

And they walked gaily out of the hidden cove where all these delightful goings-on had been taking place toward the crowded beach, while Peggy told her Willy what Pa had said.

"He called me a mousey, did he—and a skiddiddle?" asked Willy.

"Yes, he did," she pouted.

"The mean old thing!" he exclaimed.

"Oh, Willy!" she laughed.

Now really, this slush proposition is too much. You'll have to cut out listening to the rest of that conversation, because it was simply too mushy for words to convey. Suffice it to say that they spent a whole afternoon together, just as happy as though Pa had thoughtfully died and gone to—ah, Heaven, of course—(where *do* people who make their money out of gas franchises go anyhow?)—and left all the nice money with which he was so stingy for Willy and Dorothy to use for paving-stones in sand palaces on Nantasket Beach.

It was not until a large and undoubtedly rather shocked New England moon beheld Willy and Dorothy engaged in mutually bestowing a kiss of good night that really must have taken well over a minute to bestow, that Dorothy suddenly remembered again that Pa had hurled paternal anathemas and maranathemas at Willy only that very day, and her heart sank within her as she cuddled up to Willy's chest. (The evenings are cool in New England.)

"What are we going to do, dearest?" she pleaded.

Although it was a good deal of a job on this particular occasion, Willy, newspaperman, was used to collecting his wits on a rush order for immediate use. He said:

"Leave that to me, sweetheart. I think I can make him do as we want."



TEN minutes having been passed in saying good night, Dorothy crept mournfully to her bed, while Willy walked down the Jerusalem Road, his mind a perfect blank, trying to think of some way of getting Pa's consent.

Willy tossed on his bed for an hour or so, then suddenly arose and, taking out a pad and pencil, made a few hurried memoranda on the chair beside his bed, and with an

expression of angelic happiness passed away into Slumberland, dreaming of trips to Europe with Dorothy.

Willy had had an inspiration. By cautious use of the telephone in the early morning when it was generally known that Pa wouldn't have got out of bed to answer it if some one had been on the other end pleading to give him a million dollars for a streak of soot and a rusty smoke-stack, Willy got Dorothy on the wire and imparted directions.

Dorothy hung up the receiver and went through her morning toilet with unusual glee and aplomb, even for a healthy young beauty of twenty.

After Pa's morning grouch had been appeased by a breakfast that would have caused Jove to water at the mouth and fire the entire Olympian culinary staff, Dorothy wrapped her perfect arms around his neck, laid her pretty golden head against his old, grizzled and evil one and whispered:

"Pa, dear, may I have a sailboat, please?"

Verily Willy was a young gentleman of resource and cunning. Pa's first and immediate thought was that he had really been very gruff to his beautiful daughter; that it had all undoubtedly been the gossip of a bunch of old hens that had come to his ear, the sharpness of whose tongues he himself, in the past, had had occasion to experience.

"Yes, you may have a sailboat, Dorothy," he consented; "but I must go out in it first to see that it is all right."

When Dorothy kissed him, there was a light of laughter deep down in her eyes that poor Pa took only for tenderness.

"Come down to the Harbor with me this morning and I'll show you the boat I want, Pa dear," she cooed.

"All right," he said, "in a few minutes."

Thus did it happen that an alert young man dressed in the regulation rig of a sailor was pressed into service to show Pa what a fine boat he had for Dorothy. It was a catboat with a great spread of canvas. It sat on the smooth water of the lee side of the pier like a skimming-dish. Pa took one or two looks at it, while Dorothy watched apprehensively, then he slowly descended to its decking. The sailor silently raised the sail and let down the center-board.

Dorothy waved them good-bye as the catboat, suddenly catching the wind, leaned

over on to her beam-ends and streaked out across the harbor like a frightened white humming-bird.

She watched the sail grow smaller and smaller in the distance, then retired to the shade of a large tree under which somebody had built a bench and laughed till she cried.

Pa was not only ignorant of everything on earth connected with boats, but he was afraid of them.

When the catboat had caught the wind full and gone over till the green water raced over her lee decking and little beads of white foam sang merrily by the weatherboarding of her cockpit, Willy (for it was no other than he, disguised as a fisherman, as you no doubt have guessed) saw Pa's hand grip convulsively the edge of the decking upon which he sat. Pa had never seen Willy, so the enjoyment for that young gentleman was unspoiled by any sense of the danger of premature discovery.



I SAILING out of Hingham Harbor through the rocks and shoals that infest its entrance is no light job, even with a spanking breeze dead on your stern quarter. Willy had the delightful joy, every time he went about, and the great sail caught the wind, throwing the boat over till she leaped out from the press of the seas like a living thing, both of the born sailor's pride in his boat and the knowledge that each lurch and swing was an agony of growing fear to Pa.

But Pa had not been a bold bandit of the seas of finance for nothing. He clung to the boat, it is true, with fear written on every angle of his body; but not in his face, which he kept fixedly pointed the other way from the racing water on the lee decking.

Willy smiled gently, and easing a little into the wind, drew in his line. The reaction on Pa was quite apparent. There was a slight tremor throughout all his length.

The green of the sun-kissed water racing by was making him very unhappy; each hairbreadth's deviation of the boat from any single line of balance filled his soul with the landlubber's horror of the cool salt water that chokes one so.

"How do you like the boat, sir?" queried Willy from the tiller.

"Nice boat; but she doesn't seem very—er—safe," growled Pa.

"Oh, she's quite safe, sir," answered Willy sweetly. "You'll see that when we

get out into the bay where there is really some wind. She leans over to it like a dear, but she's as stanch as any liner."

A fresh gale of wind gave the truth to his words. The catboat seemed to lean harder against the water on her lee bow a moment, then rose and leaped ahead with added impetus. An added rapidity sang in the gurgle of foam at her bows. Willy thought he heard a distinct gurgle in Pa's throat.

Hingham Harbor opened out into the inner bay, and they raced across it to Hell Gate and Nantasket Point. Pa looked longingly at the trolley-cars along the tracks by their sheds behind the pavilion on the Point. Willy saw that longing look and a little bird seemed suddenly to sing within his young, blithe heart as he edged a bit more into the wind and struck a bee-line for Hell Gate, through which the incoming tide was rushing with the speed of a mill-race, black as ink, with serried waves upon its surface.

If you can imagine a ship suddenly sailing from the clear free water into a sea of butter, you can imagine how that tide-run stops a boat. She came to an utter standstill suddenly, her halyards wet to the eye-bolts, her higher spars trembling under the stress of the wind, her sail taut, the black tide rushing by her with the speed of an express train.

Pa turned a face the color of the delicate green herbs that grow by the sedges of the mossy brook and said:

"Turn back, I've had enough of this!"

Willy smiled softly at him from the tiller. Pa sat up, slowly and carefully, on the decking and, summoning his whole soul, roared:

"Did you hear me? I said to go back!"

"But," said Willy, "we're not going back."

"What!" roared Pa, the delicate green giving place to a distinct and even more unbecoming purple.

The boyish figure at the tiller leaned slightly toward Pa and spoke gently, yet distinctly, while the wind roared seaward and the sea roared landward, and the sailboat trembled in every fibre:

"You see, I'm Willy."



THERE was a moment's silence, while Pa, open-mouthed, slowly began to absorb into a naturally agile if now somewhat fear-clouded brain the exact status of affairs.

"Well, you little shrimp," finally burst from Pa's epithet-thirsting lips, "you microbe, you gnat, — you, whatever you are! Get back from here with this God-forsaken boat of yours or I'll wring your neck!"

And Pa shot out an ugly-looking jaw.

"If you make a move toward me," said Willy softly, "I'll jibe, and you'll have the pleasure of swimming home in this nice tide-run. You'll get home all right, but you won't call people mousies and skiddidles any more!"

Pa had a sudden horrible vision of his damp and dripping corpse being hauled from the briny deep and laid in state in the drawing-room of his home. The thought was distinctly unpleasant. Pa had, moreover, been in the habit of being the gentleman at the tiller in situations such as this for many years, though the tides and winds that blew at those times were figurative tides and winds, not the real thing, hot off God's footstool.

The tide lessened suddenly, and the catboat shot ahead with a quiver in every line.

Pa's liver became a jelly. He clung to the decking with both hands,

"Let me ashore, I tell you!" he yelled.

"Why, Pa!" said Willy, "and you a great big grown man, too!"

"I never was in a sailboat before," began Pa. "I tell you I think it is going to upset, you fool! Let me out of here! This joke——"

"Pa!" shouted Willy.

Pa brought up sharp just as he was about to grow fluent.

"This is no joke, Pa," began Willy. The tide was rapidly lessening, and the catboat was skimming out beyond the Point, where the horizon was becoming nothing but the edge of the sea to the eastward and the thin line of rocks along Nantasket to the west. "This, continued Willy, "is a business proposition. I wish to marry Dorothy. She wishes to marry me. You are the only person who is disagreeable.

"Dorothy and I have concluded that life without each other is impossible. Therefore, if you will not consent, you and I will sail eastward and eastward until we disappear forever beneath the horizon, while if we are not back by midnight Dorothy will know that you have refused to consent, and she will poison herself. We shall at least be reunited in Heaven."

Willy heaved a deep sigh.

Pa, forgetting the mighty swells over which the skimming boat was now speeding, glared at Willy with bulging eyes.

"You don't mean——" he suddenly burst out.

"I mean what I say," said Willy in a voice that to Pa sounded very, very weary, as though he cared now no more for anything in this world. "If you do not consent, or if you attack me, we will go down through the cool green water together, to sleep forever at the bottom, where there is at least peace."

Pa's lips grew white. There was silence for a few moments.

"Won't you call me Willy, Pa?" asked the figure at the tiller.

"I'll call you hell!" shrieked Pa.

"How can you jest in the very face of death!" Willy's voice was stern. His eyes were hard and cold. He pushed back his hat. Pa looked at the determined young face and became speechless with fright.

"We've fooled here long enough," announced Willy. "I'll give you one minute to say your prayers, then we jibe and go over and—that's all. Get ready!"

"No!" screamed Pa. "Don't! Marry Dorothy, for God's sake, and let me ashore! Oh—oh—oh!"

And falling flat on his stomach on the pounding deck, as Willy promptly went about, Pa at last gave up that Olympian breakfast, and as he gazed down into the rushing water whither it went, cursed feebly and was still. It is strange that no genius has ever coined a word that expresses that most dreadful of all human afflictions, seasickness; but it probably is beyond description in mere words.



BACK tacked Willy against the wind, while Pa lay in agony, clinging to the deck, and cursed the day that he was born. Silently and carefully under his breath he cursed Willy. Then, as his brain cleared, a thought came to him. Only once in his life before had he been obliged to curse a man under his breath. That was at an insurgent legislator who had hung the P. D. Q. sign on a pet franchise ordinance and mailed it back to him. After that episode he had had one of the most brilliant ideas of his life, resulting in the complete annihilation of a

business adversary. He turned to Willy.

"Of course you understand," he said as the catboat slid alongside the pier once more and he painfully crawled out, "that promises made under compulsion are null and void, young man. If you come near the house I'll brain you!"

"I thought you'd do something of the sort," replied Willy casually, as he gently lowered the fluttering mainsail, "so I've made arrangements with the New York *Exhaust* to carry a double-page illustrated feature story of the whole affair next Sunday, in which your cowardly behavior in my boat will figure, written up by the cleverest humor man in New York."

As the dun-deer pauses at the winding of the hunter's horn, so then paused Pa.

"Come on up to the house!" he said.

They walked in silence up from the Harbor to Pa's house. A white figure on the veranda fluttered and disappeared into the front door as they approached.

"Dorothy!" called Pa.

"Yes, Pa," came from within.

"Come here!"

Dorothy presently emerged.

"Do you love Willy?" asked Pa with a visible effort.

"Yes, Pa," assented Dorothy meekly, blue eyes cast down.

"Why?"

"I—I can't help it."

There was a pause.

"That seems to be a — good reason for things where Willy is concerned," finally remarked Pa.

"Yes, Pa."

"Willy!"

"Yes, Pa."

Pa glared and grew purple, but, containing himself, asked:

"Do you love Dorothy?"

"Yes, Pa."

"Why?"

"Because she's the sweetest, dearest, most lovable——"

"Stop!" roared Pa, "there are limits even to my good nature."



THERE was a silence. Pa glared at both of them, Dorothy's lip trembled suspiciously, Willy looked gravely at a fly walking along one of the veranda steps.

"Well, fall in each other's arms and coo!" snapped Pa, and disappeared within the house.

And quite shamelessly Willy and Dorothy promptly fell into each other's arms and obeyed Pa's instructions to the letter—and then some.

Pa met Ma inside the house.

"Maria," he said, "Dorothy's engaged to be married to that young Willy."

"Oh, very well, Amos," said Ma, her silk skirt rustling.

"And, Maria!"

"Yes, Amos."

"I don't want any fool long engagements either. They've got to get married just as soon as they can."

"Yes, Amos," said Ma.

Pa went up to his room to change a completely wilted collar.

As he brushed his scanty locks at the chiffonier mirror, he growled to himself:

"I'm glad Willy isn't in the gas business."

He paused, hair-brush poised in the air, for a full minute.

"I guess I'd better put him in it on my side first," he concluded.

Then he went down-stairs.





A RECORD RESCUE A TALE OF HUDSON'S BAY By STEPHEN ALLEN REYNOLDS

THE phonograph concert was over. The admiring Eskimos had heard each record played twice over, and had listened in amazement to the concluding number of the program—the recording and magic reproduction of the first two verses of their famous “Walrus Hunter’s Song,” as sung into the horn by Kiah.

Watched closely by forty pairs of kindly brown eyes, William Bradford, the third mate of the whaling bark *Sunbeam*, slipped the last waxen record into the case upon the cooper’s bench.

Slowly and regretfully the natives filed out of the temporary deck-house, down the inclined ice-run which led from the star-board gangway of the frozen-in whaler to the even surface of the thick ice below, and into their *igloos* near by which had been built during November of the previous year when the snow had deepened and the salt-water ice thickened sufficiently.

Phonographs were still a novelty to the hardy Innuits of Hudson’s Bay, and although the crew of the *Sunbeam* had long since tired of the semi-monthly concerts held in the deck-house, the natives were always on hand to listen to the wonderful box and horn of the *Kabloonah* [white men].

“Mr. Bradford!” The Captain’s voice came up through the partly opened skylight over his room.

“Ay, ay, sir!” responded the third mate as he snapped shut the lid of the record-case.

“Post a man to keep up that deck-house fire, and then come below.”

“Well, Skipper, what’s up?” inquired the whaleman.

“Got a job cut out for you, Billy,” came back through a cloud of tobacco-smoke.

The third mate was “Mister Bradford” in the presence of others, but in the privacy of the captain’s room “Billy” seemed more fitting, since they both hailed from the same New England village and had been ship-mates upon three arctic voyages. The third mate seated himself under the swinging lamp and waited for the old man to proceed.

“Had a long talk with Kiah this afternoon,” went on Captain Noyes between puffs. “He tells me that that tribe of Kenipatoos that’s Winterin’ at Chesterfield Inlet has a lot of musk-ox hides and the prettiest pair of silver-fox skins that he’s ever laid eyes on. He ran across a huntin’ party of ’em down off the mouth of the Lorillard three days ago, and they’re headin’ back to their Winter *igloos* at Chesterfield. If—”

“If they were sure enough silver-fox skins, why didn’t Kiah make a trade for ’em himself?” broke in the other.

“That’s just the trouble,” explained the old whaleman. “You see Kiah knows more or less about the value of a silver fox, and he’d have willin’ly traded off his dogs or his rifle for ’em, and then sold ’em to us. As it turned out, the Kenipatoos might have forked ’em over for the rifle, but it

was out of order. They wouldn't listen to the dog proposition—had plenty of dogs of their own.

"If we don't get those hides, those fool Kenipatoos will float down to Churchill after the break-up, and the H. B. Company'll get 'em for a few pounds of powder and lead. I'd be willin' to give the Kenipatoos good trade for the silver foxes, 'cause if they're Winter pelts and full-grown they'll fetch at least a thousand apiece."

"And I suppose you want me to get some dogs together and light out for Chesterfield?" assumed Billy.

The Captain nodded and then indicated an unused berth at one side of his room. Neatly arrayed upon a scarlet blanket of the finest wool the third mate saw a pair of repeating rifles, a reloading outfit, a canister of powder, and a bolt of gaudy calico—the latter popular among the squaws throughout the two months of the fleeting arctic Summer. A shining harmonica, three bars of lead, and a few serviceable hunting-knives made up the balance of the assortment of "trade."

"That stuff ought to catch 'em," chuckled Captain Noyes.

"Those Kenipatoos are a funny people," observed Bradford somewhat doubtfully. "They change their minds every few minutes, and sometimes break off right in the middle of a trade. But I know what *will* catch the skins, though, if everything else fails."

"What?"

"One of the phonographs, and a few records!" Billy declared triumphantly.

"Sure as death and taxes!" affirmed the Captain.

"We've got three machines on board," went on Billy. "Two of 'em are promised—one to Kiah for the Winter's deer-meat, and another to the native boat's crew that sights the first whale after the break-up. The third one is my personal property, but if I'm in on this deal with you half-and-half, I'll throw it in."

"That goes," agreed the Captain. "It'll be share and share alike. I don't feel like makin' the trip myself, the mate's still busy with his boils, the second's needed to nurse those scurvy cases for'ard, so it's up to you. You fix it up with Kiah to start to-morrow morning at sun-up. The days are long. With his own dogs and a couple of borrowed ones you ought to make the

inlet inside of three days. You can be back in a week. Kiah knows the inlet country like I know the *Sunbeam*, but I'd advise you to keep to the salt-water ice and hug the shore instead of tryin' the short-cut across country. The snow's gettin' too soft inland to be good sleddin'."

"Just leave it to Kiah and me," laughed Billy as he proceeded to roll the trade articles up in the blanket.



PROMPTLY at five o'clock the next morning Kiah appeared alongside the bark. Attached to his sledge, each by its individual thong of walrus-hide, were seven of his own dogs and two borrowed ones. A half an hour later Captain Noyes waved a parting salutation, Kiah cracked his long whip, and the little expedition was off, headed in a southwesterly direction.

Good progress was made that day, although Kiah complained of the behavior of the two borrowed dogs. They seemed unwilling to work with the hunter's own tried and proven huskies, and upon several occasions tried to break away from the sledge that they might return to their owner's *igloo* near the whaling bark.

Alternately riding and running alongside the sledge, Billy managed to keep warm, for in spite of the high sun and the bright April day the temperature was still well below the freezing-point. As the sun sank behind the low hills inland, at least forty miles lay between them and the imprisoned *Sunbeam*.

Kiah's snow-knife was soon at work, and a wind-break was constructed of snow blocks carved from a drift near the shore. Not daring to trust the borrowed dogs to their own devices throughout the night, Kiah left them tethered to the sledge after tossing each of them a chunk of frozen seal-meat.

When he had brewed a pot of hot tea over his alcohol lamp, the New Englander shared his supper of venison and ship's biscuit with the Eskimo. Then came the evening pipe and a bed of soft furs.

"Snow hard—we leave ice—maybe come Kenipatoo *igloo* to-night," said Kiah the next morning, as he pointed inland at the unbroken expanse of snow.

Billy nodded.

"Just as you say, Kiah," he observed cheerfully. "If we can cut across the

point it means a saving of thirty-five or forty miles. The sooner we get to Chesterfield Inlet, the sooner we'll get back to the *omiak* [ship]."

High noon found them half-way across the isthmus, where a halt was made at a deserted hunting *igloo*. After hot tea and a breathing spell for the dogs, the journey was resumed; and late that evening the tired men and dogs stumbled into the Kenipatoo village of snow huts.



ALTHOUGH almost worn out by his exertions, Billy lost no time in locating the owner of the silver-fox skins and making his trade. The lucky hunter who had trapped the animals had a vague idea of the *Kabloonah* value of his treasures; but knowing that the third mate's bid was far above what he could expect from the Hudson's Bay Company's factor at Fort Churchill, three hundred miles to the southward, he readily accepted the offer.

The Kenipatoo, while appreciating the merits of the repeating rifles, the reloading tools, and various other articles, was at a loss in so far as the phonograph was concerned. Kiah, acting as an interpreter, explained that the machine could talk. Such a thing had never been heard of among the Kenipatoos. The news flew around from hut to hut, and Billy was asked to give a demonstration.

Pausing long enough to trade some minor articles for seven fine musk-ox skins, Billy then carried the phonograph into the head man's *igloo* and proceeded to instruct the new owner of the machine as to its workings.

Eagerly the natives crowded around the white man and the wonderful box. They listened delightedly to band-concert selections. A *Kabloonah* quartette, singing "Old Black Joe," pleased them mightily; and then Billy slipped on a waxen blank, adjusted his recording-sapphire and horn, and asked the head man to speak a few words into the horn. Kiah informed the latter that the machine would repeat his words.

The tall Kenipatoo strode up to the sleeping-platform, a contemptuous, incredulous expression upon his face. It was quite plain that he doubted Kiah's statement. Nevertheless, he roared a verse of guttural song into the horn, and then stood aloof, his arms folded upon the breast of his *koolitang* of fawn-skin.

Billy adjusted his reproducer, released the spring, and the next instant the counterfeit voice of the head man rang through the *igloo*. The result was rather surprising, for, one by one, the superstitious and awe-stricken Kenipatoos wriggled out of the low doorway of the snow hut, until finally Billy found himself alone with Kiah. The latter, at Billy's suggestion, followed the timid natives in order to reassure them and satisfy the head man that the machine was harmless. The mission was fruitless, however, as Kiah returned, a twinkle in his brown eyes.

"Big man—he say all Kenipatoo 'fraid *Kabloonah* devil-box. You take him back *omiak*. You keep skins jus' same."

Laughing long and heartily, Billy put the phonograph away, and after a supper of boiled deer-meat fell into a dreamless sleep. The head man, so Kiah informed him, bade him occupy the *igloo* exclusively until the morning. None of the Kenipatoos desired any further dealings or association with the *Kabloonah* and his "devil-box."



"KENIPATOO dog fight my dog—kill 'um three," Kiah informed Billy the next morning as they were making preparations for an early start.

"That only leaves us six dogs," mused the third mate. "Never mind, Kiah," he went on aloud, "we ain't so heavily loaded as we were, and Captain Noyes and I'll make it all right with you when we get back."

Handicapped by the loss of three dogs, and still further delayed by a three-inch fall of snow, it was dark before they reached the abandoned *igloo* half-way across the inland short-cut. They had made barely twenty miles, and had still some fifty-odd miles to go. The two borrowed dogs, still eager to run back to their own master, were taken into the *igloo* for safe-keeping and imprisoned within the small provision annex with which the Eskimo is wont to improve and enlarge his house of snow.

Early the next morning Billy and Kiah were awakened by an ear-splitting uproar outside the snow house. Growls and whines were heard and an occasional blood-curdling roar. William Bradford was on his third arctic voyage, and he knew well the voice of the hungry polar bear.


"*Nanook! Nanook!*" [bear] called Kiah. Quickly pulling on his seal-skin *mukluks*

and donning his fawn-skin shirt, Billy reached for his repeater and sprang toward the low doorway. Kiah was ahead of him, however, wriggling his way through the narrow outer passage, rifle in hand.

As Billy gained the end of the passage and stood erect he saw the monstrous form of a she-bear standing upright. Gaunt from fasting throughout the long Winter months, her shaggy, yellowish bulk towered above Kiah and one of the dogs. Advancing almost within the reach of the bear, as the Eskimos will in order to make sure of their game, Kiah leveled his rifle and pulled the trigger just as the bear made a half-turn and struck the last dog a crashing blow that knocked it fully fifteen feet away.

Kiah's bullet cut a harmless furrow along the thick hide of the bear's fore shoulder, and before he had time to pump another cartridge into the chamber of his repeater the monster struck the native a rib-crushing blow which knocked him senseless. At the same moment Billy pointed his .30-.30 at the exposed breast of the animal and pressed the trigger. A harmless clicking sound was the result! Like a flash—even as the infuriated animal turned upon him—Billy realized that he had neglected to open his magazine cut-off!

Stepping back a pace or two to evade the cruel paws, the whaleman tugged at the cut-off lever and pumped a cartridge into the chamber of his weapon. As the she-bear followed him up, he took a hasty aim and fired. Again, his fingers working nimbly, he fired another shot full into the red mouth of the brute. She paused in her shuffling stride, and then, with a pierced brain and shattered spinal column, toppled over toward Billy just as he stumbled over the carcass of one of the dogs. A crushing weight bore him to the packed and trampled snow, his head struck upon one of the bone-shod runners of the sled, and his senses departed.

 HOW long he lay there Billy never knew, for when he emerged from the igloo he took no note of the height of the sun. The whining of the borrowed dogs within the snow house must have aroused him. It had grown warmer. Snow was falling upon his upturned face; while prone across his legs lay the nine hundred-pound carcass of the bear. Kiah,

breathing heavily and occasionally groaning, lay a dozen feet distant.

Having regained his full senses, save for the numbing effect of the terrible weight across his legs, Billy managed to free his left leg. After another series of strenuous efforts he was able to liberate his right leg; but no sooner was the limb free and the circulation restored than a sensation of exquisite pain told him that the leg was broken.

Slowly, suffering agonies, Billy crawled toward Kiah and had nearly reached him when the native sat up of his own accord. One side of his fawn-skin *koolitang* was saturated with blood. His breathing was pitiful to hear. The two men gazed at each other without speaking; and then, with one accord, began to crawl toward the snow house. Within the *igloo*, they realized, warmth and shelter were to be found.

Kiah's first move was to regain his rifle; then, crawling upon his hands and knees, he followed Billy toward the tunnel-like entrance. Near by, an injured wolf-dog lay, whining piteously. Kiah paused, and after several painful efforts managed to throw the lever of his repeater. Like the crack of an Eskimo whip, the report of the rifle rang out, and the whines of the husky ceased.

Once inside the *igloo*, the two men discussed their plight. Neither of them had strength enough to clamber upon the fur-covered sleeping-bench of snow blocks, but between them they managed to drag down the deer-skin robes. With these beneath them they were protected from the icy flooring of packed snow.

"What are we to do?" Billy asked himself. Neither of them was able to travel, even in the event that the two borrowed dogs were able to haul the stripped sledge. They were in no immediate danger of freezing or starving, that was true; but something had to be done at once. Twenty miles behind them lay the Kenipatoo village, but the deer-hunting season was over, and it was extremely unlikely that any native would come across them in time to be of assistance.

It was at least fifty miles to the *Sunbeam*. Captain Noyes would not be alarmed at their absence for some days to come. Even then he would not be likely to locate them for some time. If there were only some way to communicate with the vessel before their

alcohol and seal-oil gave out—before they should become unable to do anything for themselves.

Then Billy thought of the two dogs. If turned loose, they would in all probability soon find their way back to their owner. He, in turn, would tell the Captain of their strange return. But, even then, Billy reflected, their trail would be covered by the falling snow, and precious time would elapse before they could be found.

If there were only some way of writing a message and attaching it to one of the dogs! Pencil and paper were out of the question. Billy thought of making an ink-like solution with powder from a cartridge, and then tracing a message on the inner side of one of the fox skins. At that moment he would have given up his interest in the furs and his share in the proceeds of the whaling voyage for a stub of pencil and a piece of paper.



VAGUELY wondering what to do, Billy's eye roved over the pack of furs, and thence to the bladder of seal-oil at one side of the dome-like room. Beside the oil-bag, in its carrying-case covered with brown duck, lay the phonograph. His eyes sparkled in spite of his pain. There lay the solution! It had suddenly occurred to him to make a record and send it to the ship by one of the dogs!

He could dictate a message into the phonograph, stating their plight and their whereabouts. The record could be attached to one of the dogs, and, granted that the dog found his way back to his native owner, and that the owner took the record to the *Sunbeam*, all would be well, for there were two phonographs on board the bark, and the record would surely be tried.

Fighting against his pain, Billy dragged the phonograph toward him, meanwhile explaining his scheme to Kiah. With fingers that trembled in spite of himself, he loosened the cover and wound up the machine. He slipped the waxen blank upon the cylinder, adjusted the recording-sapphire with its chisel-like edge, and after a minute's rest, during which he mustered all his reserve strength, he released the spring and spoke into the horn:

"This is Bradford. My leg is broken. Kiah is injured. Our dogs are gone. Send help at once! We are in a hunting *igloo* on the overland short-cut, about half-way

across to Chesterfield. Bring stimulants, bandages and splints."

After testing the record, Billy wrapped it in cotton wool and tied it up securely in Kiah's seal-skin tobacco-pouch. Then it occurred to him that they had two dogs, and that he might just as well send two records. It would double his chances for relief. The second record took longer in the making, for he was obliged to smooth down one of the band-concert records to a plain surface before it could be used.

After this second record had been wrapped in the third mate's blue handkerchief, the snow block was pulled away from the aperture leading into the provision chamber and the two dogs were coaxed out. To the first dog—a silver-gray—Kiah tied the first record in its sealskin pouch, high up on its shoulders where the animal could neither bite nor rub it off. The native then clipped off the long trace of walrus-hide, thus leaving the dog equipped with a simple harness consisting of collar, leg and breast straps.

This accomplished, Kiah gave his attention to the second record and the other dog, a one-eared gray with brown markings. Twice he was obliged to rest, while Billy barred the *igloo* entrance against the departure of the restive wolf-dogs, but at last his task was at an end.

"*Okshoot!*" he cried as he finished tying the last knot and sank back upon the fur robe.



AT THE word of command Billy crawled away from the entrance, and the dogs were off, the silver-gray in the lead. Unable to crawl through the tunnel to see which direction they took, Billy offered up a silent prayer.

The day was young yet, he went on to reflect; and if the dogs managed to reach the village by the ship that night, he might expect relief late the following night; but a heavy fall of snow might intervene or the dogs lose their way.

Moans from Kiah interrupted his thoughts, so Billy turned to him. Struggling against the sickening, swooning sensation that threatened to overpower him, the sailor examined his companion as best he could. To his surprise, he found that Kiah's skin was not broken, although a bluish-black circle as big as a dinner-plate appeared on one side below the collar-bone. Evi-

dently the blood upon the *koolitang* was not that of the unfortunate native, but must have come from the bear or one of the dogs. Nothing could be done, however, until help arrived.

During the balance of the long arctic day, in the dim light which filtered through the frost-covered sheet of fresh-water ice which served as a window-pane, Billy lay in a sort of stupor. Each time he moved, if ever so slightly, he could feel the ends of the broken bone grating against each other.

Then came the awful darkness of the short night—ages long to Billy—when nothing broke the silence save the distant howling of a wolf and the moans of poor Kiah.

When morning came at last, Billy tried to reach the alcohol lamp that he might melt some snow and brew a cup of tea. His effort was fruitless, however, as his head swam and the smoke-blackened wall of the snow-house seemed to revolve. With a groan he sank back upon the robes; a numbness, starting at his feet, crept over him. Acting mechanically, Billy threw out his right arm and pulled one of the soft fawn-skin robes over his companion. The next instant the numbing wave reached his shoulders. Faster and faster the circular wall seemed to revolve, until finally all was dark and cold.



BILLY opened his eyes. Something warm was trickling down his throat. The *igloo* was ablaze with candle-light. The second mate—the rough-and-ready doctor for the ship's crew—was bandaging his leg. Already it felt better, as the painful grating was no longer possible. Standing over him, with a flask in his hand, Billy perceived Captain Noyes, his kindly old face aglow after the strenuous fifty-mile trip.

"Kiah?" murmured Billy, as his eyes turned toward the group at the far end of the sleeping-platform.

"Two ribs and a collar-bone smashed," said the amateur doctor. "If the busted ends of the ribs haven't pierced his lung, he'll be as good as new in a few weeks."

"And we'll have you up and around soon after the break-up," added the Captain.

"So the dogs fetched the ship all right?" asked Billy as he grew stronger.

"One dog did—the one-eared one. Why? How many did you send?"

Billy explained briefly.

"Then the wolves must've got the silver-gray," assumed the master of the *Sunbeam*. "It's a lucky thing you sent two."

Asked for further details, the Captain went on to tell of the arrival of the dog.

"It must have been just about sun-up this morning when old Ikutlik came aboard and banged at the deck-house door. He woke up some of the men for'ard, and they tried to drive him away. Then he showed the handkerchief and the record. One of the men woke up the steward. He didn't know what to make of it, and was goin' to tell Ikutlik to wait until we got up. About that time they woke me up and I came out to see what the row was about. Ikutlik had the dog with him, and I saw that it'd come a long way. It was foot-sore, and had a bleedin' flank. I didn't just know what to make of it at first; then I thought I'd put the record on one of the machines.

"You could've knocked me over with rope-yarn when I heard your voice; and you can bet those silver-fox skins that I stirred up that bunch of natives! We hooked up every dog in camp except the one-ear, and here we are; and none too soon to save that leg for you.

"And by the way," the Captain concluded, "it's a lucky thing that you've been givin' those concerts all Winter, otherwise Ikutlik wouldn't have known what a phonograph record was. In that case he might've eaten it."

"Nobody but a Yankee would've thought of that phonograph trick," chuckled the second officer, a sea-seasoned Nova Scotian.

"And this Yankee's going to buy that one-eared dog as soon as he gets back to the ship!" asserted Billy. "Furthermore, he's going to keep the dog as long as he lives!"

And he did.



BILLY THE KID



THE MOST FAMOUS OF THE BAD-MEN OF THE WEST

By FRANK J. ARKINS

A HOWLING mob of fortune-hunters crowded into Silver City, New Mexico, in the seventies. The uncovering of mineral wealth was beset with great danger. The Apaches were on the war-path. It was hazardous to travel in the country without an escort, but the magnet of wealth in the mines drew men to the scene notwithstanding. In the citizenship of the community there were rough men, for the early days were typical of those of other mining-camps isolated in the mountains and distant from civilization.

In that community there lived a boy of seventeen years of age, respected and loved by all. He was a favorite among the young men and considered a model youth by the old. He was gentle as a child. His face was delicately molded, his skin as fair as a girl's, his hands small and fingers tapering. Lithe, graceful, self-reliant, he gave every promise of an honorable career.

This boy—William H. Bonney—was employed in a local store and was considered a most accommodating clerk. The gruff community was convulsed with horror and dumfounded with astonishment one afternoon when the news spread like wildfire that Bonney had hacked a man to death with a butcher-knife and was fleeing for his life on the back of a stolen horse.

The murder was particularly atrocious.

It was the result of an altercation in which young Bonney was crossed. Prior to this the boy had never been questioned. In an instant he was transformed into a demon, within a few minutes had added theft to murder, and in seeking a place of safety left behind him a trail as broad as though he were following a macadam road.

At the point of a revolver he compelled strangers to exchange horses with him, seized the best mounts at the various ranches along his way and spread consternation wherever he went. He followed the Mimbres River toward Deming, pursued by a posse from Silver City. Closely pressed, he escaped eastward over the Oregon Mountains, when it was thought he was headed for Mexico.

THE START OF A BAD-MAN'S TRAIL

A WESTERN town was never more surprised. The majority of the people still defended him; there was some reason, his friends declared, for his strange act. But as news came of the way he was striking terror in the Valley of the Pecos where the roughest men in the Southwest lived, the mind of the public was changed. From that time on his murderous exploits filled the hearts of men with fear. The boy's name in Western history became forever after Billy the Kid. His name of Bonney is all

but forgotten. As the Kid, he stands as one of the great historical figures of the cow country, one of the worst youths that ever lived, prince of Bad-Men, the youngest Bad-Man of all.

His appearance among the prospectors and amid the mining-camps of the Oregon Mountains was electrical. Here he conceived the idea that to evade arrest he must fight his way to the front single-handed. He boldly traded horses, obtained credit, bought supplies, because he could shoot straight with a revolver and had threatened the lives of a number of men. Then with all despatch he pushed on to the Valley of the Pecos. This was the scene of the boy's exploits in the taking of human life.

The Pecos Valley was filled with men who had been driven out of Texas by the Rangers, and Billy the Kid's association with these men developed his mania for shedding blood. In his first altercation he realized that it was his life or the other man's. The fact that he was quick with a gun made him feared. He became embittered against one of the stockmen immediately upon his arrival in the Valley.

"I'll make this valley too hot for him and dangerous to his punchers," said the boy.

At once he commenced to use this man's cowboys as targets to practise on. He began a campaign that drew upon him the enmity of everybody. The murder of these innocent men, purely to gratify a spite against their employer, made him a leader among the bands of armed thugs of the region. He had at a bound become a celebrity, and every group of Bad-Men wanted to claim him. But the Kid would have none of that. By degrees he gathered a band of his own.

HOW MANY MEN DID HE KILL?

THE Kid killed more men, wantonly and for sheer love of murder, than any other man of whom there is a record in the West. It will never be known just how many he assassinated. He was a butcher who took delight in slaying the defenseless. He knew no pangs of conscience. He had not one single redeeming trait. He would murder a friend as quickly as an enemy.

He thought nothing of appearing before a cook in charge of a "chuck" wagon, on a lonely desert range, ask for something to

eat, compliment the man upon the quality of the food he had prepared, with apparent gratitude. He would ask him, as if the idea had suddenly popped into his head, whether he was an officer—or had been. Then, as though in doubt, he would shoot him in his tracks. This is no exaggeration. A man whom he left for dead, and who survived long enough to tell the story, was authority for the statement, shortly after his arrival on the Pecos River.

The boy was a terror before whom everybody fled. He rode the fastest horses, he helped himself to the best there was in every community he visited, wiggled out of any number of tight places, and shot his way to freedom a dozen times.

Shortly after his arrival in the valley, he was persuaded, because of his reputation as a Bad-Man, to assist in the arrest of three men charged with murder. They were captured without the firing of a shot, placed on horses, ironed and started jailward. To the deputy sheriff, who with him followed the prisoners across a long, dusty sand plain, he turned suddenly and said,

"Let's kill those fellows."

"Why? They haven't done anything to us."

"They're guilty anyway, and we'll just save the county expense."

"No, Billy, they have not given us a chance to shoot at them—they have not tried to escape."

The deputy tried to argue with him, for he could see the light of murder dancing in the fellow's eyes.

The Kid rode forward, compelling the officer to do likewise, and, according to the story told, shot all three men. The deputy spurred his pony, the Kid after him. They exchanged shots, and the officer escaped with a few wounds.

From that time on it was dangerous for the Kid to enter a community. He raided north through Lincoln County, which was larger than many Eastern States. There was not a line of railway or telegraph in it, and no telephones. It was easy to get away.

At that time there was rivalry between the different outfits. The country was filled with Bad-Men, and they were about evenly divided among the cowmen. Cattle-stealing was a common thing. The Kid became involved in a number of rows, and he took sides. His reputation as a "killer" grew.

Undoubtedly a number of these men were killed as a result of trouble among themselves, and the killing laid to the door of the Kid. It was easy. He could not deny it. No one would have believed him if he had. Besides, the more murders credited to him, the greater the fear in which he would be held.

COWBOYS FOR TARGET-PRACTISE

COMING up out of the sage-brush with a few companions, near where Carlsbad is now, the Kid saw a number of cowboys at a distance. They belonged to an outfit to which for some reason he had taken a violent dislike. Turning to his companions he said:

"It takes practise to be a good shot. How many of you can hit one of those punchers at this distance?"

"It's too far," remarked one.

"You'd better commence to practise if you think that. They'll get you some day."

"But look at the range."

"All right. Watch me."

He raised his revolver, apparently without taking aim, and with his index-finger along the barrel, pulled the thinly filed trigger at the instant he had correctly pointed. The Kid had the whole theory of shooting down to perfection.

A cowboy swayed in his saddle. Then the other members of the Kid's gang began to practise on the punchers, firing at them as long as they were in sight. The Kid fired but one shot, holding a loaded revolver in his hand, for he was taking no chances with his own friends.

A MAN HE DID NOT KILL

THE Kid worked his way up the Rio Pecos, to the Chisholm ranch, along a trail of blood. Mr. Chisholm was tall, spare and fearless. He had fought Bad-Men, cattle-rustlers, and thieves generally for years, and had made money. In some way he became engaged in an altercation with the boy murderer, and in a flash the Kid drew a revolver.

It was an awkward moment, and the old man was equal to it.

"Well, Billy," he laughed, as though it were a joke, "so you're going to kill your grand-daddy, are you?"

He looked at the young fellow in a father-

ly sort of manner. The youngster lowered his revolver slightly, and backed away.

No man will ever know what passed through the Kid's mind at that time. He was facing one of the richest cattlemen in the Southwest, who was one of the largest stock owners in the world. His influence extended over an area embracing four States. To kill him would bring down wrath the thought of which evidently made Billy the Kid quail.

This is the version of Chisholm's friends. Whatever the Kid's idea, he wisely refrained from talking. His mastery of men was in his refusal to enter into discussions, to be drawn into argument or to commit himself in any manner. The uncertain working of his mind was what kept the people in a ferment.

The boy roamed up the Rio Hondo, which tumbled down from the mountains, and terrorized it. He fell out with his companions, and killed several of them. It was not so much the number he killed as the wanton manner in which he went about it. He was heartless, cold-blooded and conscienceless. To him, human life was of no more importance than the swatting of a fly, if that life stood in his way.

So great was the fear of this boyish murderer's name, and so far-reaching his influence among the Bad-Men, that it was only a question of time before the cowmen should make common cause against him. Thieves and rustlers flocked to his standard, for he was the one man they could turn to. Fear of the Kid frequently meant protection for him. Old and grizzled men who were nearly three times his age respected and feared him.

Thus it was that it finally became impossible to get any one to accept the position of sheriff of Lincoln County, for it was only a question of time when he would run across the youthful demon. Administration of the law was lax. The officers were not zealous. Gradually, however, the murderous exploits of the young fiend became such that it was necessary to get rid of him.

The Kid knew that he had terrorized the country. He knew that the instant he let down his guard he would be killed. His safety lay in continuing. He could best prolong his own life by taking the lives of others. This he continued for nearly two years, killing for little or no reason.

THE TURN OF THE TIDE

THEN, one day, even those hard characters who professed to be his friends were amazed by the report that for some trivial incident he had killed a member of his own band. The outlaws were now as anxious to end his career as were the law-abiding people of the village. His friends commenced to murmur. The Kid was now reported in a dozen places at the same time, and these stories he turned to his advantage by appearing at irregular, though frequent, intervals in widely separated cow camps for more than a hundred and fifty miles north and south on the Pecos River.

With his appearance new stories of violent deaths on the range were circulated. Carelessly indifferent, he neither affirmed nor denied the reports. No one could tell what was going on in the mind concealed by a childlike face. His countenance falsely portrayed innocence to every stranger. His manner won confidence and drew friends. Once his identity was revealed, men shrank from him in fear. With hypocritical friendliness his acquaintance was sought. When he arrived in any of the towns he was received with every mark of respect. He returned the salutations from his horse, on which he sat with easy grace. With apparent indifference his eye raked the crowd. It was not his purpose to dismount until he had ascertained whether there was an enemy about him.

Most Bad-Men shoot in self-defense; Billy the Kid differed from all others because he killed in an endeavor to strengthen and lengthen the chain of fear he was gradually winding around the inhabitants of eastern New Mexico. By this time he had a valley one hundred and fifty miles in length in a state of consternation. From the Texas line on the south, following the Pecos River up where the town of Roswell is now, the Kid ranged at large like a roving executioner. As to the numbers he had killed up to the end of 1880, no one will ever know. Nearly every murder was laid at his door. He would not deny them. Some insisted that he assassinated thirty men, others fifty. No one knows. The situation was untenable. He had now reached that point in his career where he killed for sheer love of murder.

Then something happened.

Public demand on the part of the law-abiding citizens, outlaws and Bad-Men brought forward a man who was destined to kill the Kid, and to bring about order in the then most lawless section of the United States. It had been impossible to get a man to accept the nomination of sheriff while the Kid lived. He had picked off the deputies, shot a sheriff or two, and made war, almost single-handed, on the officers of the law.

A SHERIFF COMES TO NEW MEXICO

PAT GARRETT, a lanky Alabamian, who had helped organize the Texas Rangers and had assisted in driving the Bad-Men out of Texas to the first water west of the Staked Plains, was invited by the cattlemen to locate in New Mexico. They wanted him to restore order. The only way that could be done was either to arrest or to kill the Kid.

Garrett's record in Texas as a man-hunter and Bad-Man tamer was known all over the Southwest. In addition to being quick with a gun, he was absolutely without fear. He had restored order in out-of-the-way places in Texas when it seemed as though he were walking to his death. He struck terror to the border ruffian and the frontier character who committed a crime on one side of the International line and evaded arrest by stepping to the other. It was only necessary to tell a Texas Bad-Man that unless he reformed they would send for Garrett.

Garrett was as kind as a woman, slow to anger, persistent as a bulldog. He never shirked in the face of danger, and did not hesitate to ride or stride single-handed into the worst bunch of men that were ever assembled in the Southwest. This was the kind of man necessary in eastern New Mexico, which had been the receiving-ground of the worst element of several States.

Garrett was induced to locate in Lincoln City. He was a man they all walked around. It soon became noised about that when he had acquired a legal residence he would become a candidate for sheriff. Every cattle-thief whom he had run out of the Lone Star State advertised him as a man who would make it go hard with the renegades who found in the Pecos Valley the only place where they could live unmolested. They alternated between fear of

the Kid and of the lanky, impartial Texas Ranger.

He was elected without opposition and took hold with an iron hand. He was an organizer, and men flocked to his standard. They felt, instinctively, that at last a man had arrived who could cope with the situation.

THE CAPTURE OF THE KID

IN NOVEMBER, 1880, Garrett came upon the Kid suddenly and captured him, with several others, after killing one man.

Word had reached Garrett that the Kid and his gang of three were located in an old house a short distance from Sumner.

"We had better make plans to get him," said one of the deputies.

"The plan is to get there before he gets away. I'll tell you what to do on the way."

During the rapid ride he directed his posse to spread out like a fan, the wings of which bent backward with Garrett in the apex and the lead. He took upon himself all danger; he would not permit his deputies to expose themselves unnecessarily.

The way led down a sage-covered "draw," with several bends made by sand-dunes around which the road curved for a distance of about five miles. Before he reached the last bend he pulled up his horse, and waiting for his deputies to come up to him, in the even voice for which he was noted, said:

"I am going to ride ahead. All attention will be centered on me. That will give you a chance to surround the house. I am going to take my time and walk my horse. They may get me, but if they do I want you to make certain that you get him."

The deputies withdrew to right and left, advancing under cover of the sand-hills in an ever-widening circle until they had surrounded the house. Then Garrett rode forward. From his position he could see his deputies, who had dismounted, advancing cautiously through the sage-brush. He permitted his horse to walk slowly, as though utterly unconscious of the presence of the gang. At the door he called loudly.

Some one appeared at the window and, firing a shot at the sheriff, dodged back. It was done in an instant, but in that frac-

tion of a second the man who had fired dropped dead in his tracks! Garrett had dismounted, and with his deputies poured a fusillade of bullets through the sides of the thinly boarded shack. A white handkerchief at the window indicated the surrender of Billy the Kid and his gang. They were terrified by the rain of lead that came shattering through the thin board walls. The deputies were firing at a house in which their quarry was known to be. The outlaws knew not which way to turn, either for protection or for the purpose of fighting back.

"YOU GIVE ME A 'SIX-GUN,' PAT!"

WHEN Garrett reached the railroad with his prisoner he was menaced by a crowd that sought to lynch the Kid.

"It looks as though they are going to get me, Pat," the Kid remarked.

It was an ugly crowd, bent on dealing to the boy the fate he was certain to meet sooner or later.

"Not if I can help it, Billy. You are under my care, and I intend to protect you."

"You give me a 'six-gun,' Pat, and stand aside a few moments, and I will clean out the whole crowd. You'll see them stampede the minute you give me a gun."

"You could help—if you played square."
"I'd have to, old man. I'm in the tightest place I ever was in my life. They'll 'get' us both, if you try it alone. They may get me, anyway. But you are up against it, if you try to defend me alone."

"I'll trust you once, Billy; but understand, no foolishness. I'll 'drop' you if you try it."

The crowd grew more menacing. The demand for the life of the Kid became more insistent. Garrett watched the crowd. He was calculating its temper with judgment sharpened by years of border life. He had been in a great many tight places. He was popular. The members of the crowd did not mean to harm him. If he fought to protect the life of his prisoner, there was a chance that each of them would be killed.

"Listen!" shouted the tall sheriff during a slight lull. "This man is my prisoner. You told me to arrest him. I have. He must have a fair trial. I know he is guilty. But it is for a jury to pronounce him so. You can not take him while I have a breath

of life left, or while Billy the Kid has, either!"

Saying which he passed a revolver to the boy who had struck terror into the Pecos Valley, and said,

"You must get two of us now."

Back to back the sheriff of Lincoln County and the most noted murderer in the Southwest stood. Each was armed. Each was a dead shot. Each knew that if a fight started, the man who could shoot the fastest stood the better chance.

"Now, Billy," cautioned Garrett, "don't shoot unless I tell you to. Remember that without me your life is not worth two bits to-day."

It was impossible to tell what was working in the mind concealed behind the childish face of the Kid. It was equally as impossible to read the thoughts of the determined sheriff who waited with apparent unconcern. The crowd knew and feared the Kid. With only Garrett to fight, the members might have risked it. With a revolver in the Kid's hand, they hesitated.

Garrett was quick to see the advantage he had gained.

"Now you will all move quietly away," he announced decisively.

Sullenly the crowd obeyed.

Held at bay, Garrett placed the Kid aboard the train which arrived a few moments later.

It was a strange sight—these two men, each armed, banded together for mutual protection. On the cars Garrett disarmed the Kid and delivered him safe into the hands of a jailer at a distant point, where protection could be afforded to the blackest as well as the most youthful of the Bad-Men of the Southwest.

THE KEEPER AND THE "MAKINGS."

THE Kid was tried in another county.

He had no friends and no defense. There were plenty of witnesses against him now that he was a prisoner. He was defended by an attorney who made a brave fight. But he was sentenced to be hanged at Lincoln in July, 1881. He was brought back and confined in a jail built after the manner of Mexican houses, of adobe brick, with thick walls around a court or patio. There were two doors, one giving out to the street, the other to the rear. The rear door was latticed with steel and locked and

bolted, as was also the front door. The Kid was imprisoned in the gallery on the second floor, reached by a pair of stairs. The town of Lincoln was filled with men who flocked there after his return and who waited to witness the execution.

The day before he was to be hanged, half a dozen horses stood in the street, lines thrown over their heads—all that is necessary to make a cow-pony remain in one place.

The Kid called from the gallery to the warden.

"Hi there, Bell! I'm going to swing tomorrow. Give me the 'makings,' will you?"

"*Seguro, Miguel,*" shouted the warden, laughing. (Translated into English, the answer meant "Sure, Mike.")

The Kid stepped to the stairs. His hands were manacled in such manner that he had little use of them. The warden reached in his vest pocket for the cigarette-paper, which he placed in his left hand, and with his right felt in his hip pocket for a sack of tobacco.

Like a flash the Kid raised his manacled hands and struck Bell square in the temple. The warden staggered. As he did so the Kid jerked Bell's revolver from its holster, and dealt the jailer a blow on the head that crushed his skull.

"Unfasten the jewelry, and we'll both get away!"

He shouted these words to another prisoner standing inside a cell. The Kid had been allowed the freedom of the galleries. He passed the keys taken from the prostrate warden to the man in the cell, who unlocked his handcuffs. Then, leveling the warden's revolver at the prisoner, he hissed:

"Give me back the keys!"

It was the work of but a moment to reach the barred gate that led into the street where the horses stood. A glance, and he took it all in. From where he stood he could see the form of the warden. Leveling his revolver, he fired a shot that ended his life, and then shot the man who blocked the door.

Once outside, he started a fusillade of bullets up and down the street to keep everybody in the houses. In another instant he was on the best horse and had stampeded the others so that pursuit would be delayed. In a few moments he was out of sight.

A FORTY-EIGHT HOURS' CHASE.

THE FIGHT IN THE DARK

GARRETT was about twenty miles away at the time, after some rustlers. Word was sent to him and he returned post haste, heard the story from excited lips, and stopped only long enough to saddle a fresh horse. Accompanied by a few friends he took the Kid's trail. He rode all that day and night, all the next day, and the next night. He was close upon the youthful murderer a dozen times. The Kid knew this. The only way he would attack Garrett was from behind. He would assassinate him—not fight him. He did not fight anybody.

At the end of forty-eight hours of flight, when tired out, Billy the Kid stopped at the house of a man named Maxwell, near Sumner. Retiring, he figured, doubtless, that Garrett would have to pause for rest also. He did not know that the iron-jawed sheriff was changing horses at every chance—that he was going without food and sleep.

It was early the second morning, probably about 3 A. M., when the silent sheriff saw in front of him the cabin in which the Kid slept. He and his men dismounted and approached the house. Garrett reached the porch with his deputies and quietly stepped into Maxwell's room.

There are several accounts of what took place. One is to the effect that Garrett left his deputies stationed outside beyond the house. He was whispering to Maxwell, when the Kid, who was a light sleeper, awoke, and tiptoeing across the porch, entered, revolver in hand, and asked,

"Who was that who just came? Where is he?"

From his position Garrett could see him distinctly, and had the Kid been looking, he might have distinguished the form of the sheriff, standing by the bedside of Maxwell. The Kid had his revolver in hand, prepared to use it. Garrett knew that, and fired the single shot that killed the Kid.

A second story is to the effect that Garrett reached the porch or gallery of the house, and leaving his deputies to face the other doors that opened out on it, passed into Maxwell's room, and, learning where the Kid was sleeping, pushed the door open suddenly, with the cry,

"Hands up!" and fired.

This story is to the effect that the Kid was only half awake at the time he was killed.

THE story that is generally circulated and believed, the one that was given out to the press at the time, was to the effect that Garrett approached the house so quietly that he reached Maxwell's room before his presence was known, though that individual was awake. The mere presence of the Kid in his house, the knowledge that he was to have been hanged the day previous, had told Maxwell that Garrett was not far behind.

"He's in that room," whispered Maxwell, pointing to a chamber isolated from the rest of the house and at the end of a gallery facing his door. The sheriff stepped out on the porch and joined his deputies.

"We'll wait until daylight, and 'get' him," announced one of the men.

"You fellows wait here; don't move until I return. If I don't come back, take to the brush, and pick him off after sunrise."

"It means death to you."

"I am the sheriff. It's my duty to arrest the Kid."

So saying, he tiptoed quietly down the porch to the door. Placing his ear against it, he listened.

Then, gathering his strength, he gave a push.

"Hands up, Pat!" sounded from within.

The Kid was awake.

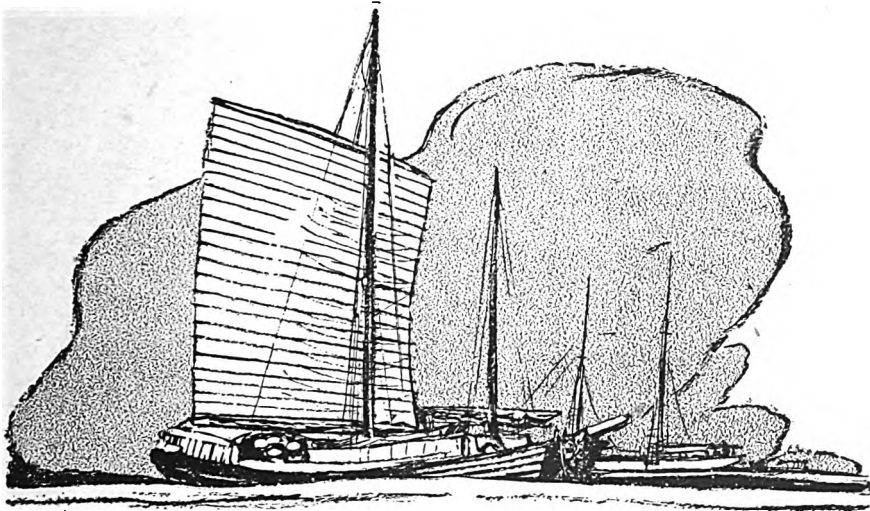
Garrett jumped to one side, and then commenced a duel in the dark.

When Garrett stepped in there was silence for a moment. The sheriff had jumped to the right. The Kid had the best of it, because his eyes were accustomed to the darkness of the room. He had been awakened by the approach of the men. Whether he saw the sheriff silhouetted against the wall or not, will never be known. At any rate he fired—and missed! Then Garrett fired, and instantly stepped to the right.

He stooped and started back to the left, to forestall the Kid if he commenced to sweep his revolver shots in the direction in which the sheriff had jumped. From his vantage-point, as he watched the flash of the Kid's revolver, Garrett correctly gauged the distance, and killed him with the next shot.

Then he stepped to the door and said quietly,

"Bring a lamp."



QUONG TART'S PEARLS

AN INCIDENT IN THE CAREER OF BLACK MORTON, BUCCANEER *By* LEONARD MATTERS

AS THE tide turned, the schooner swung sluggishly with it and dropped back slowly on her hook, almost brushing with her stern the dragon figurehead of her neighboring Hongkong junk, the big pearl-shell eyes of the dragon seemingly staring wide at the effrontery of the smarter vessel. The *Harriet Constance* shuddered like a sick being when she was brought up at the end of the cable, and her nose pointed to the foul ooze that did duty at the entrance to Alligator Creek as a beach, while the dirty scow she had jostled swung betwixt her and what wind there was.

Like a swarm of flies stirred from absorbed and pleasant occupation when the mangy cur on which they have been busy shakes himself and seeks a fresh repose round the street-corner, where the sun has slunk while he has slept, the mass of flotsam and jetsam that had clung lovingly all the afternoon to the schooner's sides broke into disorder when she shifted her berth in the stagnant water.

When she settled herself in her new position the mass busily sagged after her and once more sheathed her with a flagreed mesh of leaves, rotten mangrove apples, decayed fish, and all the noxious garbage from the pearling fleet. Under her counter, that which could not cling to her sides bobbed round in an eddy, as though playing "tag" with her slimy rudder.

The ebbing tide exposed another hundred feet of stinking mangrove swamp, and the last rays of the setting sun beat it fiercely as though making a final effort to extract all the stench and fever from the mud. A little farther out, where the entrance to the creek widened into a little bay with a narrow stretch of clean sand, the decaying oysters sweated and added their pollution to the atmosphere; and, all around, the junks and luggers, hanging like leeches to the shell-beds, contributed their varied and nameless stinks to the reek.

There was hardly any breeze, and even when the sun dropped like a red coal into the sand-ridge across the bay there was no

relief. Swarms of mosquitoes came out of the swamps, bloodthirsty and determined, and fell in hordes on everything that gasped and lived in that fetid atmosphere which filled the nostrils and sickened the palate. Everywhere the polyglot floating population of a couple of hundred beings worked and sweated at the pumps or at the diving gear. The little white beach, above which a couple of rough shacks stood, was dotted with moving figures. All in the community save one were too busily occupied to feel the heat or choke with the stench.

Morton stirred under the little awning stretched over his schooner's after boom and groaned. The pretense at sleep and rest was no good. It was all up now that the mosquitoes had arrived, and he hoisted his seventy-six inches of massiveness on to its bare feet, kicked the greasy pillow down the companion and walked to the rail. He was naked, bar his singlet and duck pants, and his big black face was a picture of disgust and nausea.

"Suffering Moses!" he grunted, "talk about the plagues of Egypt! They had nothin' on this stinkin' hole!"

And slapping his big paw to his cheek, he brought it away, red with his own blood, pressed from the mangled score of mosquitoes he had exterminated at their banquet. He grabbed the hurricane lamp from the oily islander who came aft at that moment to fix the lights for the night, and, unscrewing the cap from the fount, filled the cup-like hollow of his hand with kerosene, which he smeared over his face in the faint hope that it would cause the voracious insects to sheer off. They were stink-proof.

"Where's the mate?" he demanded of the islander, as he shoved the lamp back to him. "Not back yet?"

"No, boss," replied the trimmer, Tutuila Tommy.

Morton received the answer with a grunt, spat viciously at a dirty shark that looked cock-eyed at him from the ofal it was nosing, and told the native to refill the lamp. Lighting a cigar, he leaned on the rail and smoked furiously while he thought and watched the night descend on the scene. His break from New Caledonia with the convict friends of De Passey had been successful, and he had cleaned up a lot of easy money over the affair. There had been one joyous week in Sydney with Sam House,

and then he had left what would soon have become a dangerous locality.

"Sam," he had said, "I'm going to beat it through the Straits and work back after I've cleaned up things there. Guess that crowd over at Cockatoo Island will get hot on my trail in another couple of weeks, and I don't want 'em knockin' my ship about. Know anythin'?"



DID HE? Well, there wasn't anything House didn't know. He knew that old Quong Tart had a fair-sized pearling fleet somewhere up in Torres Straits; and a rumor had reached him that a fine new bed of shell had been located behind Cape York, and he had no reason for not telling Morton.

"That'll do for mine," said the skipper.

The next day he was picking his way up to the Great Barrier Reef, making for the rendezvous of all the lawless characters of the five seas. He didn't leave explicit sailing directions with the harbor-master, neither did he correct the impression that he was making for the islands. In another couple of weeks Admiral Bruce and his squadron would probably be well out in the Pacific looking for him; so where better could he be than hugging the coast in an obscure bay, the existence of which as a fertile poaching-ground for the unlicensed pearlers was hardly likely to be known yet by the authorities?

They generally made their discoveries when the beds had been properly skinned; so, for two good reasons Morton was where he was—stuck in a stinking bay of the mainland, weltering in the tepid breath of the Orient, almost stagnating on the edge of the Straits, when, had he been as reckless as he was believed to be, he would have preferred the freer, breeze-sweetened seas of the Pacific.

Up in the Straits he felt safe from attack. There wasn't much danger of a three-inch breech-loading gun, that could plug a hole in his craft at four thousand yards, coming up in front of a cloud of black smoke; and, barring that, there wasn't anything else "Black" was afraid of. And he was in his true society there. Those among whom he had come were too busy attending to their own affairs to care much for the outside world. For the colored swarms of the Orient—Chow, Jap, Malay, Filipino and Moorman—Morton cared

nothing; and even less for the score or so of whites who had drifted into that Sargossa of iniquity and would never leave it. They were the scalawags of all nations. They found in the Straits a place quite attractive in its way. And being there, where every man had something of a career to hide or forget, prying into a neighbor's business, and particularly into his antecedents, was the offense of all offenses, unforgivable. Better be caught with the fifth ace, or interfere in a Tong war among the Chows, than evince too great a curiosity as to the other man's past.

So, as long as a man minded his own business, didn't entice a rival's best diver away more than once in a season, always kept his gun handy, and avoided the shadows when he walked on shore at night, he was tolerably safe. In case this last statement should leave any misunderstanding to the effect that life was placid and uneventful, let it be added that human existence in those parts in those days was purchased daily by ninety-nine per cent. of struggle; and he who laid himself down to sweat all night had the satisfaction of knowing that he had earned another day's life and would live it—that is, if he had taken the necessary precautions against the dangers of the night.

Taking the society of Alligator Creek by and large, it had no more desire to see the British white ensign than had Morton. The arrival of a war-ship would have been the signal for a general scramble. So, even if any one knew of "Black's" doings in the past and felt an itch to "peach" on him, the general welfare of the community eradicated that itch. The man who wrote—if there was such a man—"Where is the carrion, there is the bird of prey," understood pretty well the second reason for Morton's presence in Alligator Creek. Where an honest man would fear to tread, the plausible Yank delighted to be. Neither knife, nor gun, nor even the more dangerous pearl-shell, spinning, edge on, through the air with the speed and accuracy of the Roman discus, had any terrors for him.

THERE was picking there for his sharp beak, and, like a king condor hovering over the lesser hawks and falcons, he was there among the scum of the Orient waiting the chance to claim his share. For two days he had watched, and not

being overburdened with Micawber-like patience, or faith in things turning up, he was getting restless.

"Guess I'll have to start somethin' round here," he muttered, as he thought over the last two days.

His reflections were cut short by the rhythmic *thur-ruck, thur-ruck* of oars against thole-pins, and he fixed his attention on a phosphorescent streak which told him a boat was approaching from the shore. The streak widened to a disturbance of some dimensions, and the schooner's dingey shot alongside.

"——!" said the mate, as he joined the skipper. "That place beats the band. There's more decayin' shell to the square inch than ever I figured to suffer and escape from alive. This bunch has had a bully time on this patch, Cap."

"Well, I guess I don't want any Smart Alec to tell me that," growled Morton. "I got eyes and nose, ain't I? And don't I know when Chinks and Japs and Malays and Dagoes ain't fightin' that they're makin' dollars too blamed fast to attend to their natcheral dooty of knifin' one another? I ain't been smokin' hop or chewin' betel-nut to lose my five senses, have I? Has there been a single fight this hull darned day? And they're stuck as close together as crows on a dead sheep. When they fight I'll know it's up to me. If they don't, we'll start somethin'. What's got you, anyway?"

"Say, Black, if you're goin' to be so snake-headed because you can't get away with somethin', guess I ain't got any news but what'll keep just as well till you can treat your mate civil," replied the mate in an injured tone. "Because you can see what any man can see, it don't follow that you know all there is to this workin' bee. I didn't come here to tell you what you know, but what you don't. Guess I'll wait, though."

"All right, Bill, go ahead. Wise me up. I'm ready to listen."

"You're talkin' about fight. There's goin' to be a dandy among this bunch as soon as some one starts it," said the mate, mollified by Morton's improved mood and the present of a cigar. "The Dagoes and the Japs are sore because Quong Tart's men beat 'em here by three weeks; and what's more, there's a Tong war right handy among the Chinese. This bed has been a

bonanza for pearls, and the Chinks have got the best of 'em. Seems things is this way:

"Old Quong put his crews on a sort of divvy-up basis. All the lay is pooled, and one of Quong's own trusties receives the pearls and has his own men to open the shell. They're all Hip Sing men, and the others in the bunch, who are Suey Ngs, smell graft with a big G. They don't trust the Sings any. Ling Foo told me. The pearls are pouched by Sam Sing, that eddicated guy ashore, and I guess he keeps 'em with him all the time up in that shack."

"That all?" Morton asked.

"No, it ain't," replied the mate; "that fast lugger, lyin' beyond the junks, sails for Sydney day after to-morrow, and if it interests you it's 'Good-by pearls.'"

The skipper was gazing meditatively across the bay. Close at hand lay the lateen-sailed junks of the Chinese, packed as close as they could be hauled over the richest of the bed. In the deeper water, but still within stone's throw, were two Italian fishing-boats, and behind them floated the Jap luggers. From here and there came the monotonous *tum-tum* of the Chinese fiddles. More melodious sounded an Italian boat-song, such as Black had often heard when he frequented the Dago quarter in 'Frisco, and from the fo'c's'le head of his own craft came the wheeze of a concertina and the plaintive crooning of a mission song by his island crew. Morton listened a while, then turning on his heel, walked aft, threw himself down and tried to sleep.

"Sore as a boil over somethin'," muttered the mate, as he watched his captain's unceremonious departure. "Guess I'll turn in." And he did.

II



IT WAS as black as night could be and still as the water when the mate was roused from sleep by a hand on his shoulder. He grabbed for his revolver instinctively, but Morton's voice reassured him that his throat was not going to be cut by a Chinese pirate.

"Get up, Bill," said the skipper. "I want you and one of the hands. Don't wake the dead, man! Move quietly, can't y'r? Bring the gun, and this auger, and get Tommy. Tell him I'll belt the hide off him if he makes a noise. We're goin' vis-

itin', but it's got to be a surprise party. See?"

The mate had shuffled into his boots by this time and Morton left him. Quietly the skipper walked aft, and seizing the line, hauled the dingey in till her padded nose rubbed the schooner's counter. Bill came up with the Samoan native, and all three noiselessly dropped into the boat and pushed off, the native using the stern scull to avoid the rattle that the oars would have made in the tholes.

Morton conned ship, and in a whisper directed the boat's course to the Chinese lugger, which the mate had referred to some hours earlier. The whole fleet was wrapped in slumber, but even had proper watches been kept, Morton's movements would not have been betrayed, so silently did he run under the stern of the vessel that was used as tender to the junks. Shipping his oar, the native held the dingey hard against the lugger, while Morton and his mate bored silently but unceasingly through the inch planking of tough teak right on the water-line. As each hole went through, the skipper quickly plugged it with a cork, cut to fit exactly, and with a two-foot length of thin stout marline rove through it. When they had finished, it would have taken a sharp eye, looking for trouble, to have detected the punctures. The strings, looped and connected up to a stouter line for future convenience, floated half-submerged among the froth and scum laving the lugger's skin.

"That'll do, Bill," whispered Morton, when half a dozen holes had been bored and plugged, in two series of three each. "Get the lay of it?"

"Some," was Bill's husky response. "She don't reach Sydney."

"She don't sail for it, son," corrected the skipper. "Let's get on."

Leaving the lugger as silently as they had come, the trio worked their way through the Chinese fleet and brought up among the Dago and Jap boats. Behind every one floated a dingey, and from each hung the falls and tackle, nets, hose and lines connected with the diving plants. It wasn't worth hauling everything inboard, when diving stopped after dark and began with daylight.

Every dingey was cut adrift, and with their knives Morton and the mate quietly slashed and severed whatever tackle they

could reach, leaving in their course a tangled mass of damage that would take days to repair. As they pushed off from the last of the Dago boats, Morton chuckled softly.


"If there's any bad blood, this'll stir it up, Bill," he said in a voice sweet and pleasant in contrast with his tone of a few hours previous. "The Dagoes and Japs won't be sore when they find the Chinks haven't suffered any, will they? They won't want to pile up on the Celestial sinners at all, when they guess who did this! There won't be a Tong war, but say! I don't know anythin' if there ain't the finest scrap you ever seen when the yellow skins resume divin' and begin to laugh."

"You're a devil, Cap'n, to think this out; there'll be murder in ten spasms before sun-up," replied the mate. "Let's get back and quench. I'm drier than a smoked-out joss."

The boat was headed for the *Harriet Constance*, Morton humming blithely the same mission song the Kanakas had been singing the night before. In the anticipation of some stirring excitement when the results of his midnight work were discovered, his temper had undergone a complete change and he was happy.

Silently the boat ran into the deeper shadow cast by the schooner, the mate made fast, and the three swung themselves aboard, the skipper warning the Kanaka to keep quiet about the expedition.

"If you say two words about it, or set it to music," he threatened, "I'll bite both your darned ears off! If you shut up, you can get drunk on *kava* when we hit Tutuila again, and I won't do more'n half kill yer. Savee? Bill, let's lubricate."

 A SOFT, cool breeze from the east was gently rippling the water, the hum of the mosquitoes had died away, and a faint light flooded the sky low down over the schooner's bowsprit when Morton stirred from his rug on the after deck. He yawned, rose, and stretched his limbs, which had stiffened with the damp air.

From the junks near at hand there rose little spirals of smoke, indicating that the morning meal was in course of preparation, and a savory smell wafted aft from his own galley. The Chinese were already busying themselves with their diving tackle, and

presently Morton would hear the regular *clank-clank* of the pumps. Farther off, he heard a ripple of laughter from some gay Italian sailor. Ashore, the bell-birds were giving forth their resonant chiming notes. It was a scene of peacefulness. The night had passed, and between its departure and the advent of day there would be one sweet hour of soothing softness.

Even the skipper felt the sweetening influence of nature in her kindest mood in those parts. It was nothing new for him to witness the dawn in the tropics, in scenes of grandeur and beauty among the coral islands, the memory of which made Alligator Creek compare almost unfavorably with a sewer; but that comparison only heightened his appreciation of the soft touch with which nature had laid her hand on the repulsive picture which the broad day would reveal in all its hideousness. With all his roughness, his villainy and his external resemblance to a sore-headed bear, Morton had a delicate sense of the beautiful. His finer feelings were as fine as his visible nature was coarse. For ten minutes he stood there drinking in the purer air, enjoying the calmness of the scene, and watching the day steal forward to rout the rearguard of night. How much longer he would have remained in his reverie can not be told. He was roused from it by a yell of dismay and rage from the same laughing voice that so lately had harmonized with the dawn.

"Up with the curtain! The play begins!" said Morton aloud. "The Dagoes have discovered things. There they go!"

A chorus of cries and curses smote the atmosphere. Morton could hear every word that was said, and he didn't need an academic knowledge of Italian and Greek to understand that the Dagoes had discovered the loss of their boats and the wreckage of their diving tackle. Rage and grief mingled in a rapidly increasing tumult, as the crews rushed about their decks; and the noise brought the mate alongside his skipper.

"Hear 'em," cried Morton; "there's music for you, but jest wait till the Japs get hep to things! Guess that won't be long now."

At that moment further cries rang out; and presently the whole fleet was alive with a babel of tongues. The Japs had realized they were in the same hash, and yelled and

ran about their luggers like beings possessed. The shouts were taken up by the Chinese; and in a moment crew was shouting to crew, the sufferers relating their losses and those who had escaped taunting and teasing the unfortunates. And when the Chinks, finding themselves in no way injured, began to lower their tackle and send their divers down, a perfect storm of madness possessed the others.

"There'll be bloody murder now," said the mate, "you see if there ain't."

"The sooner the better, Bill," answered Morton. "We'll help it along."

And picking up a big yam from a sack near the galley, he drew his long arm back and shot the missile with all his force straight at the head of a grinning Chinese on the nearest junk. The aim was good, and the Celestial went down with a grunt. Believing himself attacked by some one on the nearest Italian craft, the yellow victim of Morton's strong aim was up in an instant.

With a weird yell he made for a heap of shell which the first diver had just sent up, and picking out an oyster as big as a plate and as sharp as a saw, he hurled it with all his might at the Dago skipper standing in the waist of his ship, gazing ruefully over the side at the damage to his gear. The shell hummed through the air with deadly directness. Only the play of the light breeze on the flat broad sides of the missile saved the scalp of the skipper, who heard the whistle of the shell too late to have ducked his head to avoid it. The slightest lift of the breeze sent the shell up a few inches, and with a rip it buried itself in the mainsail loosely gasketed to the boom. The Italian straightened himself and shouted excitedly:

"Swine! Dey trowa de bletty shell! Dey trowa de bletty shell!"

III

MMORTON had started something. In a moment the air was thick and noisy with flying shell, wrested with so much labor from the mud-banks. The Dagoes simply heaved the whole of their week's "take" on the junks or into the sea. Shell spun in all directions, striking decks, sides, spars and gear; whizzing, zipping and clattering like hail. The Japs caught the fever of strife. Knives and re-

volver-shots and smacking shell mingled with curses, shouts and groans in a perfect din.

A shell tore half the cheek away from Big Luigi, the captain of *Il Baccio*. His mate plugged the thrower with a bullet and left him coughing blood on the matting high on the junk's poop. The whip-hand was with the Italians. They had the guns and the bigger store of shell ammunition, the Chinese having sent their big "take" ashore. Had they possessed their boats, the Dagoes would have boarded the junks and cut the throats of every man aboard; but they were helpless.

The Chinese were compelled to seek cover under the high sides of their ships; and though they even sacrificed their stinkpots, brought all the way from Canton and Hongkong to be burned in honor of the josses, the Italians with their revolvers beat down the attack. The only guns of the Chinese were those ashore in the possession of the pearl guard. Presently Morton noticed with pleasure that two sampans were being slyly lowered from the junks farthest from range of the Dago guns and the effective aim of the Jap battery of shell. The boats fell in the lee of the clumsy craft, rowers hastily tumbled into them, and away they went to the shore, their departure made more precipitate by a volley. Morton guessed right when he surmised the Chinese were after firearms and reinforcements.

"Now, Bill," he said calmly, "man the dingey and stand by. There won't be more'n a couple of men ashore presently—forgettin' me and the crew—only that boss grafter, Sam Sing, and a fellow swindler, and they're so civilized they'll be paralyzed with fear over this bobsy-day. You get the schooner out of this berth somehow, with tops'ls and heads'ls ready to break, when I give you my say-so. I'll go collect them pearls."

Morton watched the sampans make the beach, where the shore hands were running about gesticulating wildly over the battle which they could both see and hear. There was a rush from the boats to the shacks; and presently, through his glasses, the skipper saw a man pass a rifle into the hands of another. He wisely judged that the rest of the bunch had collected all the revolvers and other deadly weapons the camp contained; and seeing the sampans, crowded

with every man they could hold, making back to the fleet, he gave the word to his boat's crew, dropped himself into the dingey, and was rowed rapidly away from the schooner.

Morton steered for a little opening in the mangrove swamp, through which he could see the higher land behind, and running her on a bank of firm mud and sand near where the swamp ended and the clean beach of the wider bay began, he jumped out, followed by two of his crew. Even as they stepped through the ankle-deep mud a volley of shots told them that the reinforcements had reached the junks and had thrown themselves into the fight, which would rage for another hour and keep every one too busy to worry about the Yankee skipper and his raid on Quong Tart's treasure-house.

Although out of sight of the shacks and the shell-strewn beach, Morton was easily guided by his nose; and breaking his way through the mangroves to the drier sand beyond the beach line, he led his gang to the rear of the huts, unperceived by Sam Sing, who stood at the water's edge, a white-clothed, awe-stricken spectator of the struggle going on out there in the bay. Black disdained to care whether the solitary Chinaman left ashore saw him now or not.

His sole reason for his stealthy approach had been to prevent the guardian of the treasure getting a chance to clear off with the loot, which was certain to be hidden in the huts or close to them; so, bidding a man keep a sharp eye on Sing, he ordered the others to get busy.

Both roughly built houses were thoroughly ransacked and their contents thrown about without ceremony; but the search was futile. There was no trace of the little bag for which they hunted so keenly; and, when everything had been turned over, the cracks between the boarded walls inspected and the mud floors prodded, and nothing of value came to light, Morton grew impatient.

"Let's have that Mongolian pirate up here," he growled. "I'll make him come through double-quick. What you got there, Tommy?"

The bright Samoan native had seized on a Chinese fiddle and was already making a hideous attempt to extract music from it when the skipper put the question.

"Music, boss," replied the islander.

"Well, you drop it, my son. Got enough squeal on the old hooker already. Business first."



AT THIS moment Sam Sing became painfully aware that the camp had been raided, and he came running up, half-expecting to find that some of the combatants from the fleet had made a rear attack on the land position of his countrymen. Yelling, he dashed for the nearest shack and was half-way through the door when the skipper lurched round the corner, seized him by the pigtail and swung him face about.

The Chinaman had seen only the Kanakas, and his face, when he found himself in the strong grip of the big white giant, was a study of surprise and pain. With a smothered "Whaffor?" he fell on his knees before Black.

"Kinder surprised, eh?" Morton said. "Well, I guess you've come just in time to save the family home from ruthless destruction. Listen. I got jest two minutes to stay, but before I go I want certain jewels which ain't fur off, and I'm goin' to get 'em. Savee?"

"No savee. Wot you want?" cried Sam, as Morton gave his queue an extra tug.

"You will in a minute, you yaller snuffer! I want a bag of pearls you've got hidden round close handy, so pass 'em over, and don't monkey any!" the skipper ordered. "I don't want to fry you on that fire, because I hate the smell of a Chinaman; but, by the Lord Harry, I'll do it in just thirty seconds if I don't clap my eyes on what I want! That's just how she stands. Your men have knocked my ship full of holes with their rotted firin', and I want payment, good and plenty. Now we'll start right in, and to be sure I don't have to kill you for some trick you'll try to play I'll just hang on to this wig of yours."



MORTON dragged the Chinaman to his feet, and Sam, comprehending very well what was wanted, and satisfied that the big sailor meant what he threatened, marched ahead of him to the shack for which he had made a rush but a few moments before. They entered the hut, and the captive's eyes searched the floor where lay the contents of the place in a confused heap just as they had been thrown.

"No here. Gone," he wailed, throwing his hands about.

"Won't work, son; you jest got to find 'em, and quick's the word!" thundered Morton. "They're here, and you know it!"

What the skipper would have done to the hapless victim was barely indicated by his move toward the smoldering fire of leaves and paper bark, when Tutuila Tommy ran up, still holding tightly to the battered old fiddle that had attracted his attention as the most valued prize of the raid. Sam threw one wild glance at the Kanaka, and stretching out his hands, plunged toward him. Morton understood. The search was ended, and with one hand still tightly clutching his captive, the skipper seized the weird instrument with the other.

"We'll swap, Tommy," he said. "Hold our excited friend, or he'll commit hari-kari. I'll operate on the fiddle."

Grinning, he tore the skin from the fiddle and brought forth a gaudy bundle of silk. Hastily he unwound it, found what he sought, and as hastily stuffed as fine a lot of pearls as he had ever seen into his trousers pocket.

"Bring him along," he said as he turned toward the beach once more; "there might be a gun somewhere round, and we don't want even a real mad Chink to plug us as we go."

Dragging the Chinese with them, they made their way back to the dingey, ran her out and pushed off. Morton had no intention, however, of taking Sam out to the fleet to raise a further riot, and before the water deepened he took a last firm grip on the protesting treasurer and gently dumped him into the mud. The dingey was headed for the lugger which had been visited during the night, and Morton ran alongside her while an armistice was in progress be-

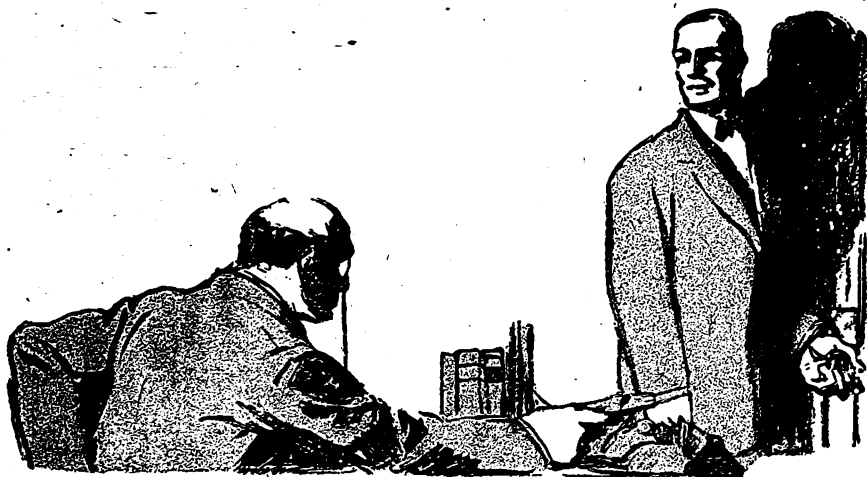
tween the warring parties. The lugger's crew were all taking part in the peace overtures carried on from the foredeck with the nearest Dago craft, and as the American ran alongside several men excitedly came aft, hailing him as the distinguished and disinterested arbiter of terms.

"Leave me out of this," said Black. "You can fight till you've torn every shell out of the bay, and thrown it back agin a dozen times. You can cut one another into little buttonholes, but, by thunder, I don't stay around and have my paint scraped!" His hand was idly playing in the water, his fingers clutching the strings that floated like weeds from the lugger's sides. "If you'd done all the butcherin' you want to, I'd come aboard and settle my little bill against you, but you ain't. You'll agree to peace, and sneak off to-night to cut some throats, so guess I'll git, and come back with the next gunboat and settle up."

The Chinese, who had greeted him as a peacemaker, howled at him as an enemy. Morton saw them prepare for an attack, and, giving one vigorous pull on the lines, he let the water into her with a rush, as he called to his crew to back away and pull for their lives. The dingey sped across the water to the *Harriet Constance*.

Morton bellowed his orders to the mate, and while yet he was clambering over the schooner's rail the anchor was broken and the vessel's sails began to fill. As she moved slowly past the fleet, with all sheets flattened to the whisper of a breeze that wafted across the bay, Black heard one awful wail from the crew of the lugger, rapidly settling by the stern. He smiled maliciously, turned his eyes to the beach, saw there a solitary figure running wildly up and down, and went below to feast his sight on Quong Tart's pearls.





THE DEATH CUP

BY HUGH PENDEXTER

FURNIS BEVEN, with as keen a nose for gain as any other hunter of dollars in the city, leaned forward in his chair and stared expectantly at Ezra Stackpole Butterworth, founder of the Bureau of Abnormal Litigation. The old lawyer dropped his gaze thoughtfully and made meaningless marks on the desk blotter. Finally he replied:

"I am retained, Mr. Beven, to safeguard the interests of the company. What you have told me about Professor Thomas Thandyx parallels, however, the information furnished me by my assistant. But you must admit, despite your confidence in your friend, that the circumstances surrounding his death, followed by the coroner's verdict of suicide, warrant my client in refusing to pay over to you the sum of fifty thousand dollars until the situation is fully cleared up."

"Hang it, Mr. Butterworth," cried Beven in an exasperated tone, "Thomas Thandyx was not a man to take his own life! He was absorbed in his experiments with the bolometric apparatus and was, I believe, on the verge of making some astounding discoveries in ray-measurements. But whether he succeeded or failed in his investigations, he was the last person on earth to take his own life."

Mr. Butterworth nodded non-committally and quietly replied:

"Possibly you are correct. But the vial of sulphate of atropin found near his person and the hypodermic syringe found in his clenched hand are indisputable evidences, till offset, that he took his own life. Then there was the dilation of the eyes, one of the characteristics of atropin poisoning, which, you know, is analogous to belladonna."

Beven produced a card and pencil and wrote rapidly. Then he curtly asked:

"If you could be convinced the professor did not commit suicide, would you advise your client to pay over the money?"

"Most assuredly," readily replied Mr. Butterworth. "And once the company is convinced to that extent, there will be no need of any urging from me."

Rising and fingering the card impatiently, Beven frankly observed:

"For the life of me I can't see why the company retained you, Mr. Butterworth, capable lawyer though you are. I should say this was a case for a medico-legal expert."

The old lawyer's tone was cold and formal as he replied:

"The Bureau of Abnormal Litigation, sir, is called upon as a last resort in many

peculiar cases. In many instances we refuse to accept a retainer because of the absence of any unique ingredient in the case. In this instance we accepted the retainer solely because of the irrelevant statement of Annie McCabe, the domestic, who, while on what was supposed to be her death-bed, told the coroner that on entering the room in the evening and while stumbling on the professor's dead body she saw one or more large eyes staring at her from out of the darkness. But despite my first interest in the case I must insist that if Professor Thandyx didn't die of atropin poisoning, self-inflicted, his case bids fair to baffle the toxicologists."

"I appreciate your feelings," said Beven. "It all seems incredible to me because of my long acquaintance with the man and my knowledge that he would be the last to even contemplate such a rash act. Business interests are calling me to Albany for a few days and I will leave my address on this card so that if anything happens which requires my presence you can communicate with me. And in bidding you good day I do so feeling confident that in doing justice to your client you also will deal justly with me."

"You may rest easy on that score," stiffly rejoined Mr. Butterworth, taking the card and filing it away.

As the door closed behind his visitor, he pushed a button, and as if waiting for the summons his tall, thin assistant stepped into the room.

"Jethuel," briskly announced Mr. Butterworth, "I am your audience. Recite all the details bearing on the death of Professor Thandyx."

"Going over what you already are familiar with, sir?" cautiously inquired the assistant, locking and opening his long fingers.

"As if I had never heard of the case," directed the old lawyer.



THE assistant half closed his eyes to get a mental photograph of the known facts and after arranging them in sequence, he began in a low monotone:

"Nine months ago Professor Thomas J. Thandyx, thirty-seven years of age, found himself in need of some ten thousand dollars to prosecute his experiments in measuring unsuspected heat rays. At that

time, as at the time of his death a week ago, his household consisted of himself, a niece, his housekeeper and one maid-servant.

"He proposed to Mr. Furnis Beven, well known in this city as a wealthy real-estate speculator, that the latter let him have the money, taking for security an insurance policy on his life for fifty thousand dollars. At first Mr. Beven refused to make the loan, but finally consented, and until a week ago Professor Thandyx appeared to be in the best of health and spirits, devoting practically all of his time in endeavoring to improve upon the Langley bolometric apparatus preparatory to pursuing his researches.

"A week ago he complained of a severe cold and did not descend from the laboratory for lunch, which, by the way, was not unusual. But at night he did not appear for dinner, which was most unusual. Miss Esther Thandyx, the niece, directed Annie McCabe, the maid, to go to the laboratory and summon him. The servant proceeded to the laboratory and, receiving no response to her knock, opened the door and entered. The room was dark, and before she had taken more than a few steps she tripped over something and fell. But even as she was falling she beheld what she has described as a fiercely glowing white eye, glaring at her. That is all that she can tell, for she swooned in fright, and when she regained her senses she was in bed and under a physician's care."

"In other words, she never knew, until informed, that she had stumbled over the dead body of her employer?" queried Mr. Butterworth, his face now relaxing and appearing almost cheerful in expression.

"Correct, sir," affirmed Jethuel. "Miss Esther waited some ten or fifteen minutes and then hastened to the laboratory. She switched on the lights as she entered the room and consequently was the first to find her uncle's body. The coroner and police were notified. Professor Thandyx's body was slightly swollen and the experts called in by the coroner were frank to say they would have been deeply puzzled had it not been for the atropin and the hypodermic needle. The small vial containing the poison was tipped over and only a few drops remained for chemical analysis. The needle was clutched in the fingers of the right hand and the autopsy revealed to the coroner's satisfaction that the decedent had

succeeded in injecting the colorless fluid."

"Where was the body found?" quietly asked Mr. Butterworth.

"Beside the table which the decedent used as a desk and near the bolometer. On the table was an inkwell, a small dish like a butter-dish containing a white powder, a blank piece of paper and a micrometric slide. On a pedestal near by was a high-power microscope. The presence of the slide on the table indicates that the decedent had been using the microscope."


"All as I have arranged it in my mind," mused Mr. Butterworth. "Let's see: the maid, the coroner and Miss Esther were all taken ill after the body was discovered, I believe."

"Quite right, sir," said Jethuel. "The maid's illness was attributed to her hysteria, but the physician confided to me he had never had a case like it. At one time it was feared she was dying and it was then that she made what was supposed to be her ante-mortem statement. Miss Esther was said to be suffering from a nervous shock because of discovering the body. But again the physician could not conceal from me that he was greatly puzzled and annoyed."

"A moment," quickly obtruded Mr. Butterworth. "How long was she in the laboratory that night?"

"She called the coroner over the telephone and then returned to the laboratory and remained till he came and was in and out of the room until he left. The coroner was laid up for a day, but did not call a physician."

"Queer, peculiar, and therefore interesting," murmured Mr. Butterworth, tapping his nose. "It is almost to be regretted that some one else besides the two women and the coroner could not have been similarly indisposed, so that the transient illness might be made to divulge its origin."

 THE assistant smothered a lean smile and announced:

"After I inspected the room I was taken ill and felt very uncomfortable all day."

"What!" exclaimed Mr. Butterworth.

"Why didn't you tell me before?"

"Because I attached no importance to it."

"How did you feel? Tell me everything!" eagerly demanded Mr. Butterworth.

"I can tell you nothing," sighed Jethuel. "It was entirely different from anything I ever experienced and so I can't describe it. The feeling was abnormal, something unlike anything I ever suffered. In fighting against it I became very weak and my temperature rose rapidly. At last I began to perspire freely and the fever suddenly left me. I have been my normal self ever since. Beg pardon, sir, but does the Bureau find it possible to doubt for a moment that the deceased committed suicide?"

"We believe he did, or——"

"Ahem!" gently prompted the assistant.

"Or that he died while conducting some investigation, possibly falling the victim of some mysterious death-dealing power," grimly replied the old lawyer.

Jethuel lowered his eyes to conceal his open incredulity, and politely reminded: "The vial of poison and the hypo seem quite conclusive, don't you think?"

"From the company's point of view, yes," cynically answered Mr. Butterworth. "Still, the most important thing to be cleared up, in my judgment, is the white eye glaring through the darkness at the domestic."

"Lord bless you, sir! You don't mean to hint there was another in the room? That would mean murder, sir."

"No; the dead man and the girl had the laboratory all to themselves," assured Mr. Butterworth. "But the domestic saw *something*! Can't you appreciate, man, that she saw this something before her fears were aroused and while her mind was thoroughly normal? She entered the room in the same prosaic frame of mind she would have in dusting furniture, or answering the door-bell. She had no suspicion that anything was wrong with her employer. And yet she saw something that in a flash upset her mental equipoise and caused her to swoon. It was no trick of her imagination. And that is why I took the case. We must find out what that *something* was."

"Perhaps you believe it caused the illness of the women, the coroner and myself," whispered the assistant, now openly perturbed.

"I am inclined to believe some evil influence emanated from something in that room," slowly admitted Mr. Butterworth. "The housekeeper did not enter the laboratory and was not taken ill."

"Then, sir, you keep away from that laboratory!" hotly cried Jethuel. "Do

your theorizing in this office, but keep away from that place."

"Tush! Nonsense!" kindly deprecated Mr. Butterworth. "On the contrary, we will visit the laboratory together. The coroner gave orders that nothing be disturbed and we'll find it much as it was on the night the body was discovered. Get two large sponges, a bottle of spring water and some strips of cotton cloth and we'll set forth."


The assistant sullenly turned to the door to obey, but reminded over his shoulder: "We've been overlooking the micrometric slide a bit."

"I have not," returned Mr. Butterworth. "It is the second peculiar feature in the case. Why should a man while apparently conducting some microscopic investigation—one of the most fascinating phases of research—suddenly be obsessed to take his own life?"

"Either temporary insanity or because of despair in not finding what he was looking for," promptly decided Jethuel.

"I wonder, I wonder," mused the old lawyer.

II

 ESTHER THANDYX, a little, pale-faced woman, was eager to tell Mr. Butterworth all she knew about her uncle's movements just prior to his death, but the total of her information was meager and threw no new light on the happenings in the laboratory.

"I last saw my uncle alive on the morning of the day he died," she bravely explained. "We were at the breakfast table. The maid brought in the mail—a letter addressed to him. There! I did not intend to dwell on such trivial things. I can only say my uncle was in the best of spirits, never had any cares or worries, and, beyond suffering with a severe cold, was in his usual splendid health. He was confident of success in his work, was in entire possession of his senses and under no circumstances would ever dream of ending his life."

"Pardon," gently said Mr. Butterworth, "but let us return to the trivial details. I take it you breakfasted about eight o'clock?"

"It was a bit after that hour when the maid brought in the mail," replied Miss Thandyx. "My uncle had worked hard the

day before and in his boyish way declared he would take his time in returning to his labors."

"And the letter? Did you notice anything about the superscription, or whether it had the name of the sender in the corner?"

The girl's eyes widened in surprise as she answered:

"I took no particular interest in his mail. But I am positive there was nothing on the envelope but the address, and that was typewritten. I recall joking him about his heavy mail—he usually received a large parcel of letters and pamphlets on each morning delivery—and suggested that he open his letter without loss of time."

"And what did he do or say?" curiously inquired Mr. Butterworth.

"He laughed a bit and said the letter had to do with laboratory work and could wait a while."

"Did he remain long at the table after receiving the letter?"

"No; he quickly finished his coffee and refused a third cup, which was unusual for him, and repaired to the laboratory."

"Did he usually open his mail at the breakfast table?"

"Almost invariably."

"Huh!" mused the old lawyer, stroking his clean-shaven chin reflectively. "Now we'll go to the laboratory, if you please. I have the coroner's permission to examine the room."

As they followed the girl up-stairs Jethuel whispered:

"He evidently expected the letter and knew it contained something which was connected with his laboratory work."

"Quite so," agreed Mr. Butterworth. "And after announcing his intention of killing time over the morning meal he abruptly left the table, once the letter arrived. I would like very much to find that letter."



ON GAINING the laboratory Miss Thandyx pointed out the position of the body as she had first observed it and then, at Mr. Butterworth's request, retired from the room. On reaching the door she paused long enough to aver earnestly:

"Remember, gentlemen, my uncle did not commit suicide. That he died as the result of some of his investigations I am

positive; for he was ever an enthusiast in his work. Did you know him as I did, you would not for a moment entertain the theory of the coroner and the insurance company."

"We shall be perfectly impartial in our investigations and conclusions, my dear young lady," gravely assured Mr. Butterworth.

Then as the door closed behind her he quickly produced the two sponges and liberally soaked them with the spring water. Next, by means of the cotton bands, he fastened one over his nose and mouth and motioned for his assistant to do likewise.

"What's your theory?" mumbled the assistant, balking a bit at what he deemed a needless precaution. "Do you suspect that the mysterious eye the maid saw was emitted from radium, or some such scientific stuff?"

"I don't know yet," replied Mr. Butterworth. "We'll call these sponges a fancy of mine."

The laboratory was a duplicate of a hundred and one other such rooms devoted to experimental work, and beyond the flat-topped desk in the middle of the acid-stained rug and the microscope on its pedestal the old lawyer found but little to engage his attention.

Motioning Jethuel to stand back of him he leaned over the desk and studied it long and carefully. The inkstand held his keen gaze but a moment, but the piece of white paper and the powder in the dish seemed to interest him deeply. The latter he repeatedly touched with one finger. After some minutes of this odd maneuvering he stepped back and raising his sponge remarked to his puzzled assistant:

"You observe the paper has been folded?"

"Showing it came in an envelope and possibly through the mail," promptly supplied Jethuel.

"I believe it so arrived at this house," said Mr. Butterworth. "But the creases tell something more than that. It has been folded across in several directions, or in precisely the manner in which it would be folded by a lapidist if intended to hold an unmounted gem. No matter how you should open it a gem would not roll out."

"But no one would send a gem through the mail in an envelope," reminded the assistant.

"No one has in this case," dryly rejoined the lawyer. "But the paper has contained a colorless powder—probably this little mound in the small dish. Even my cautious examination of it has set the minute particles afloat. But let us step back by the door and take the position of the maid in entering the room. Miss Thandyx tells us her uncle's body was stretched out on the floor in a line parallel with the threshold. The maid stumbled over it at the moment she saw the eye."

"She would then have been looking toward the desk," declared Jethuel, his face brightening. "I have it! It was the paper she saw!"

"But the paper is foolscap size," protested Mr. Butterworth. "And she insists the white spot glowing in the darkness was clear cut and not abnormal in size. One half of the paper stands up perpendicular to the top of the desk and is between the dish of powder and the door."



REPLACING the sponge, Mr. Butterworth next carefully wheeled the desk into the sunlight by the window and again stared intently at the fine powder. Particles of it, he observed through the medium of a sunbeam, were dancing about and above the paper.

"It is so volatile that merely our presence is sufficient to set it in motion," he muttered.

"Anything else, sir?" asked Jethuel.

"Not here just at present," replied Mr. Butterworth, gingerly placing the dish of powder in the desk drawer. Then he backed to the door, eying the paper with troubled gaze. "We can go now."

At the foot of the stairs they found Miss Thandyx anxiously awaiting them.

"What have you discovered?" she eagerly asked.

"I don't know yet," answered Mr. Butterworth. "But tell me if you have been in the room in the evening since the night of your uncle's death?"

"I looked in last night," she admitted, speaking with some hesitancy. "During the daytime I do not feel I can enter the room; but last night I felt impelled to open the door and look in. I was very nervous and it came hard for me to do, but I seemed driven to it."

"I understand your feelings, I believe,"

soothed Mr. Butterworth. "And did you see the white eye the maid has told about?"

"I saw nothing," sighed Miss Thandyx. "It was because of thinking of that and because I expected to behold something disquieting that I visited the room, I suppose."

Mr. Butterworth's face fell perceptibly and he bowed as if dismissing the subject. On receiving his hat and stick, however, he abruptly asked:

"Your nerves are quite strong now, Miss Thandyx?"

"I consider them so," she modestly replied.

"And had you seen anything uncanny in the room it would not have overcome you as it did the maid?" he persisted.

"It would not," she firmly assured.

"Then I want to ask you to help me a bit. Are you willing to visit that room to-night, say at nine o'clock, and, standing in the doorway, peer within?"

"I am," she readily assented.

"Remember, on no account are you to enter the room, as your presence beyond the threshold is not necessary. Simply stand in the doorway without turning on the lights. If there was any danger in the experiment I should not allow you to make it. After you have done this, call me on the telephone at my home and tell me what you have observed. Are you willing to do this?"


"I will call you up shortly after nine," she promised.

On his way back to the office Mr. Butterworth perplexed his assistant by stopping at a reference library and obtaining an armful of volumes that treated of toxicology.

"Just another whim of mine," he explained in answer to Jethuel's questioning glances. "I make it a point while working on a stubborn case to fill my mind with odds and ends of peculiar kinds of knowledge. Do you remember how we won the Hafnen homicide case by proving to the jury that cigar-ashes will not float on water, thus smashing the evidence of the prosecution's chief witness, who testified the defendant was above him on the river-bank, smoking, and that he saw the ashes of his cigar float by? Never, Jethuel, never ignore trifles of knowledge. Our client's life was saved by cigar-ashes. Any atom of information may become pivotal in your next case."

"Such as your tripping up the nature faker in the Yefton case by proving the honey-bee always turns to the right on entering a flower and wallowing around in a circle," reminded Jethuel.

"You please me, Jethuel," cried Mr. Butterworth, his eyes flashing proudly. "No bit of evidence is immaterial that may save a life or prevent the spoliation of property."

 NEITHER mentioned the case in hand again until the offices of the Bureau were reached. Then the assistant bluntly asked:

"What do you make of the eye, sir?"

"Phosphorescence," snapped Mr. Butterworth, seating himself at a table and arranging the books before him.

"But it did not show last night when Miss Thandyx visited the laboratory," objected Jethuel.

"That is why I moved the desk into the sunlight," explained Mr. Butterworth. "If it is phosphorescence the sunlight will renew its strength and it should glow to-night."

"Even so, how does it connect up with Thandyx's dead body and the vial of poison and the hypodermic needle?" persisted the bewildered assistant.

"I don't know," frankly confessed Mr. Butterworth. "But I am content with learning one truth at a time. When we have learned all the truths we will have found the answer. Now I wish to be alone so that I may concentrate my mind on toxicology."

"And principally on sulphate of atropin," shrewdly guessed the assistant. "It's a product of the deadly nightshade, sir."

"Thanks," muttered Mr. Butterworth, opening a book. "Brief the Easting case on the theory that the law laid down in our favor in the Delling trial now applies—that a confession dictated into a phonographic record can not be introduced by the prosecution unless corroborated by ear-witnesses of the same."

Shortly after nine o'clock that night the old lawyer was summoned to his telephone and at once recognized the voice of Miss Thandyx. There was nothing in her intonation to evidence excitement, but her first words electrified Mr. Butterworth.

"It is as you expected," she began. "I saw the eye glowing in the darkness. It seemed to be over by the window. If not

for your orders I should have entered the room and investigated."

"You are a brave little woman," earnestly replied Mr. Butterworth. "I am greatly indebted to you. I must ask one more favor. Say nothing to any one about what you have seen and allow no one to enter the room before my arrival in the morning."

III



UNACCOMPANIED by his assistant, Mr. Butterworth hastened to the Thandyx house directly after breakfast next morning. Miss Esther briefly repeated her experience of the night before and at the old lawyer's request remained down-stairs while he proceeded to the laboratory.

"And if I do not come down for some time you need not be surprised," he warned. "I have a bit of careful work to do."

His first move on entering the laboratory was to move the microscope to the window beside the desk.

"The spot of phosphorescence is on this end of the paper," he murmured half aloud.

And flattening the paper he carefully worked one end under the objective glass and with breathless caution applied his eye. For nearly fifteen minutes he gently worked the paper back and forth without results.

Then the slight frown faded from his brow and his eyes glistened brightly; certain wavy lines were beginning to appear. With a sharp exclamation that disturbed dust-like particles from the paper he produced a pencil and began making a hasty sketch on a pocket-pad. As he finished, he viewed his work exultingly and with much elation whispered:

"Three stars!"

He next opened the drawer of the desk and gently dipped an end of a sponge into the dust-like powder until a visible quantity adhered to the spicules. This was placed in a paraffin paper bag. Then descending, he bid Miss Thandyx good day and caught a down-town car. His destination was the office of Mr. Dixon, one of the most celebrated microscopists in the State.

Dr. Dixon was pleased to greet his visitor and immediately began recalling the strenuous trial of the twin forgers, in which case the Bureau of Abnormal Litigation had

enlisted his services in freeing the accused.

"It is pleasant to remember that case," admitted Mr. Butterworth, the grim expression about his mouth softening. "But I have something here for you to examine that may prove fully as interesting." As he finished he produced the bag and gently placed the sponge on the table. "I want you to determine what this powder is."

As with practised hand the doctor prepared his microscopic slide and with infinite pains arranged upon it a bit of the sponge tissue containing the powder, the old lawyer continued:

"Please type your report and meet me at two o'clock this afternoon at the Thandyx home, 1283 Holley Street. I shall want you to take a picture there with your micro-photographic apparatus. I am now on my way to surrogate's court. It's the Ryerson will contest. You may have read about it. The testator knit his will into a rug and the Bureau is contending it is a valid instrument. The contestants cite it as proof of the testator's mental incapacity. We reply that he was kept under surveillance and was not allowed either pen or paper. Remember, two o'clock, sharp, please."

"Always at your service, my dear Butterworth," warmly replied the expert, remembering several fat fees he had received from the Bureau.

Jethuel was becoming worried over the absence of his chief when the latter bustled into the outer office and without removing his hat sharply directed:

"Come with me. I have a carriage below."

"Have you been to lunch, sir?" softly inquired the assistant, not rising from his chair.

"Lunch? Let me see—yes—no. I don't know. There'll be time enough for lunch after we've kept this appointment," hurriedly replied Mr. Butterworth.

"There's a pint bottle of milk on the ice in your private office and a fresh box of crackers on the side-table. After you've refreshed yourself we'll go," quietly announced Jethuel.

Mr. Butterworth grew red of face and inflated his chest and prepared to make some peremptory remarks. But in this phase of a situation the tall, lean assistant could be adamant, and venturing only on inaudible grumblings the chief of the

Bureau sullenly hastened to his private office and threw open the door of a small ice-box.

"Be careful not to spill any, or throw any away," warned Jethuel from the door.

With a guilty start and coloring painfully, Mr. Butterworth stepped back from the window and submitted to the inevitable. Nor did his assistant leave him till he had finished the milk and crackers.

"Now are you satisfied?" testily inquired Mr. Butterworth.

"Not quite, sir; but I suppose it will do this time," rejoined Jethuel.



OWING to the enforced luncheon, the two found Dr. Dixon awaiting them when they entered the Thandyx house, and Mr. Butterworth apologized:

"We are late because of the stubbornness of my assistant. Let us lose no more time."

Entering the laboratory, the old lawyer led the way to the desk and indicated a penciled circle on the paper, saying:

"I want a photograph of what's inside that circle. In the drawer you'll find some powder and, after you've taken the picture, I want you to examine it."

"The same kind of powder I examined for you this morning?" asked the expert.

"The same. I wish you to verify my statement to that effect and add your findings to the report you've already drawn up. You'd better place a sponge over your face while working over it."

"There's no need of warning me to do that *now!*" grimly assured the doctor.

After the photograph had been taken, Dr. Dixon quickly rearranged his microscope and carefully began a study of the powder.

"It is the same," he finally announced, pushing back his chair and producing a typewritten statement and writing on it rapidly. Then handing over the folded paper and scowling at the powder he inquired: "Is that all?"

"All, except we'll replace the powder in the drawer," said Mr. Butterworth.

After the doctor had seen them to their carriage the old lawyer became lost in weighty meditations and failed to heed several queries put by his impatient assistant.

"I've been asking, sir, if the case is clearing up any," repeated Jethuel in loud desperation.

"Yes, either that or getting thicker,"

grumbled Mr. Butterworth. "Please remember I haven't yet read Dr. Dixon's report."

But to Jethuel's annoyance he glanced over it rapidly as they drove to their office without divulging its contents. Immediately on gaining his room, Mr. Butterworth searched through his desk till he found a card and directed:

"Télegraph Mr. Beven at this address, Albany, to come back at once, as I believe my client must pay the face of the policy."

"Then the old Bureau loses?" gasped Jethuel.

"The Bureau never loses, so long as justice is done," icily reminded Mr. Butterworth. "And better that the insurance company should pay a million dollars on an honest claim than that Professor Thandyx's reputation should be clouded by the belief he took his own life. This case has been mildly peculiar."

As if struck speechless, he halted abruptly and with mouth agape stared up into the face of his assistant, and the card slipped from his fingers.

"For heaven's sake, what is it, sir?" frantically cried Jethuel, snatching up a telephone-book. "You are ill! I'll call a doctor——"

"Stop!" hoarsely commanded Mr. Butterworth in a husky voice and feebly mopping his brow. "I shall be all right in a moment. Can it be! Can it be!"

"The damnable influence of that laboratory has affected you, sir," groaned the assistant.

With a wry twist of his thin lips the old lawyer barely whispered:

"Yes, it is the influence of the laboratory. But it will pass off shortly."



AS HE slowly regained his composure and the natural color crept back into his cheeks, Jethuel relaxed the tenseness of his pose and meekly asked:

"Shall I send the telegram now?" And he picked up the written address left by Beven.

"Yes, send it now," laboriously replied Mr. Butterworth. "Better still, give it to the clerk to send. Have him file the card in the address-book. I shall need you here. What a world! What a world!"

"It's about as we make it, sir," philosophically observed Jethuel.

"Ay, just as we make it or unmake it," mumbled Mr. Butterworth as he adjusted his spectacles. "But now for the report." And Jethuel was pleased to note the old buoyancy of voice returning.

"I will give you the gist of it," said Mr. Butterworth. "Dr. Dixon finds the powder to be composed of sub-globose spores, measuring from seven to eight microns."

"Which may be what?" politely interrupted Jethuel.

"I'm ashamed of you," severely rebuked Mr. Butterworth. "A micron is a twenty-five thousandth of an inch. Needless for me to explain that there are millions and millions of the spores in the powder we found on the desk. Dr. Dixon completely identifies them as being the spores of the fungus known as the deadly *Amanita*, which you call a toadstool, a non-edible mushroom, fully known as the *Amanita phalloides*."

"Quite a few names for a mushroom," mused Jethuel, rubbing his sallow brow in perplexity as he sought to follow his chief's line of thought.

"It is also called the Destroying Angel, also the Death Cup," rapidly continued Mr. Butterworth. "I read up on it last night during my toxicological researches, although I did not know at the time that I should ever need the knowledge. Always, Jethuel, garner the odds and ends of knowledge as you pass along. One's mind should be a mental junk-shop in the practise of law."

"But what did you learn?" eagerly asked Jethuel.

"I found that no other poison has so puzzled scientists. It grows commonly throughout the United States. Its subtle alkaloid is absorbed by the system and in most cases lies unsuspected from six to twelve hours. Some authorities declare it announces its deadly presence much sooner. Be that as it may, once it clinches its iron grip it never loosens its hold till death comes.

"The poisonous principle is known as phallin, one of the tox-albumins, the poison that's found in rattiesnakes and other venomous animals. It is also the poison that produces death by cholera and diphtheria. This phallin acts directly upon the blood corpuscles and so dissolves them that the serum escapes from the blood-vessels into the alimentary canal, thus draining the whole system of its vitality. In short, a victim of this particular mushroom poisoning dies of systemic strangulation. When

I remind you that the Czar Alexis of Russia died from *Amanita muscaria* poisoning, as also died Count de Vecchi at Washington, and that the *muscaria* is our common fly agaric and not nearly so deadly as the Death Cup, you will understand how death may ensue by inhaling these innumerable and deadly spores, especially when inhaled steadily for several hours by a man suffering from a severe cold, with the membrane of his nose and throat quite raw, thus permitting direct inoculation."

"Then you believe that Professor Thandyx's death was caused by mushroom—" the assistant was excitedly beginning to ask, when he was cut short by the entrance of the clerk, who announced:

"Before I had time to file your wire, Mr. Butterworth, Mr. Beven put in an appearance. I handed it to him and he is now waiting your pleasure in the outer office."

"Show him in, by all means," directed Mr. Butterworth. "Entertain him, Jethuel, for a moment. I wish to look up some papers in the other room."

IV



"BE PATIENT, Mr. Beven, while I rapidly outline the position my client, the insurance company, finds itself to be in," requested Mr. Butterworth, arranging some notes before him.

"At the outset I will frankly admit the company must pay the fifty thousand dollars because of Thandyx's death—"

"Take your time and go as slow as you please," broke in Beven in deep relief.

"In the first place," continued Mr. Butterworth, "the company based its case entirely upon the condition and the position of Professor Thandyx's body and the fact that he apparently had given himself a hypodermic injection of atropin. On examining into the case I find that Miss Thandyx, the maid, the coroner and my own assistant were made ill by lingering in the laboratory a short time. What attracted me to the case in the first place was the white eye seen by the domestic before she had learned of her employer's death. I associated the eye with the cause of the illness of the four persons named.

"Naturally, Mr. Beven, I investigated that eye very carefully and found it to be, as I had expected, phosphorescence. I subjected it to the sunlight and restored its

power so that I could not be mistaken. Next I was curious to determine what had left the phosphorescence and I utilized the microscope Professor Thandyx was using when stricken dead. I found some minute particles, similar to those composing a fine powder and contained in a small dish on the desk. I had an expert examine these, and he pronounces them to be the spores of the Death Cup, the deadly *Amanita phalloides*. It was this fungus that caused the phosphorescence.

"Ah, you begin to suspect the truth. Yes, your old friend, Professor Thandyx, died of mushroom poisoning, induced by inhaling a large quantity of those spores, his death being accelerated no doubt because of immediate inoculation through the membrane of the nose and throat."

"I told you he never committed suicide!" triumphantly declared Beven.

"You were correct, and the coroner and the insurance company were wrong," humbly admitted Mr. Butterworth. "The sulphate of atropin was used as a remedy. It is the only thing known that under certain conditions will offset the effects of the phal-
lin, and it must be administered subcutaneously in doses ranging from one-one-hundred-and-eightieth to one-sixtieth of a grain. Poor Thandyx discovered his danger too late and was only able to barely puncture the skin with the needle."

"You deserve great credit for discovering these things, Mr. Butterworth, and more credit for frankly making them known and advising your client to pay the money," warmly admired Beven.

"A gentleman outside wishes to speak with you, Mr. Butterworth," obtruded the clerk's voice.

"Ask him to wait a moment," directed Mr. Butterworth. Then turning to Beven he calmly continued: "But I have not finished. The spores of the *Amanita* were delivered to Thandyx in the morning and he died that same day. They came from some one he was well acquainted with, some one living in this city. What's more, he was expecting them, showing that he recently had been advised by some person that they were to be mailed on a certain date. But he did not know what they were, else he

would no more have worked over them as he did than he would have fondled a rattlesnake. In examining the spot of phosphorescence I discovered it had been made by the thumb of the person mailing the spores. In arranging the powder, the thumb was allowed to rest heavily on the paper, pressing beneath it sufficient of the minute particles to preserve its impress and also betray its presence by the phosphorescent glow. I am having a photograph of that thumb-print finished. In the meanwhile, I have taken off a correct, if somewhat crude, copy of the thumb-mark, and what do you think, Mr. Beven?"

"You've got me!" gasped Beven.

"Yes, I believe so," grimly smiled the old lawyer. "For the thumb-print I copied contains the three little stars which your thumb made the other morning when you wrote out your Albany address. I discovered it a few minutes ago while directing my assistant to telegraph you to come home. Really, it is quite a unique case. It was quite clever of you to think of the *Amanita*; it is entirely outside the rut of the ordinary. May I ask if you gathered the spores near the city?"

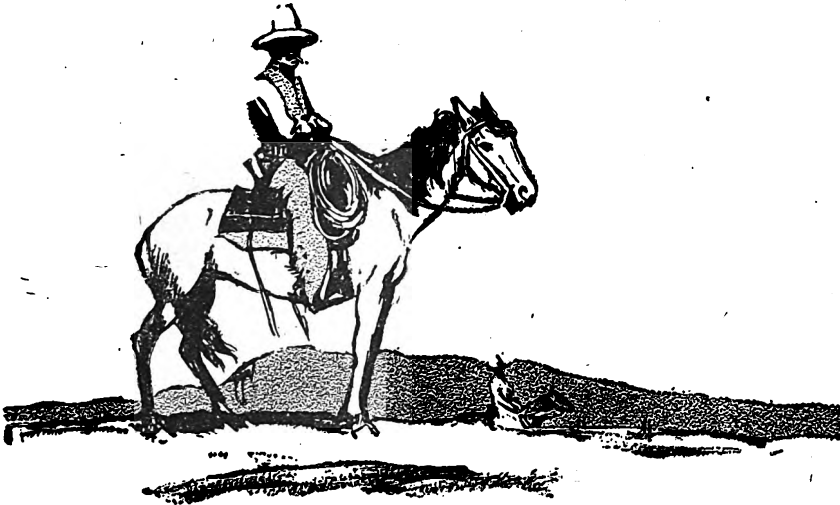
"What — swindle is this?" hoarsely choked Beven, struggling to his feet, his face purple with passion and fear, while his eyes sought some avenue of escape.

"Jethuel, usher in the gentleman from the outer office," sternly commanded Mr. Butterworth.

As a broad-shouldered, smiling individual entered, the old lawyer quietly announced: "Detective Reynolds, this is Furnis Beven. I give him in custody on the charge of foully murdering Professor Thandyx for the purpose of collecting certain life-insurance moneys. Take him away and inform the district attorney I will submit to him to-morrow the facts in the case and my proofs."

"But you said the money would be paid?" reminded Jethuel, once they were alone.

"And so it will. It will go to the professor's estate, as there was no fraud connected with its issuance. Miss Esther Thandyx, as the only next of kin, will receive it all. I shall advise the company to act promptly."



THE THIEF OF THE SOUTH CORRAL *by* MAIA BURNHAM

JOSE, the vaquero *caporal* shambled into the corral, his huge silver spurs with loose, metal chains clanking loudly at every step, and his long lasso, coiled with skilful precision, dangling from his wrist. Long-legged and lean, beady-eyed and cringing of gait, his appearance was noted with a little shiver of repulsion by a young woman of perhaps twenty Summers, who, from the elevation of her round pinto's back, watched the scene from across the low bars of the corral.

José respectfully doffed his great felt sombrero, for he held in deep regard the high-spirited American girl who, as he apprehended her, feared neither man nor beast, and of whom he personally stood somewhat in awe, it being generally understood among the vaqueros and employees of the ranch that she—Niña Alicia, they called her—would eventually inherit this rich estate. The childless owner, Don Guillermo Vasquez, had become pathetically attached to her, the niece and only surviving relative of the fair young wife whose early death had left him desolate.

Doubtless the girl realized the enormous responsibility that would devolve upon her in the event of coming into such an inherit-

ance, for she took a keen and active interest in the management and development of the many acres of rich land so dear to the heart of her uncle. She had rapidly acquired the patois of the natives employed on the place, as well as the purer Spanish spoken by her uncle and the other members of his household; and her intelligent grasp of the questions of economics and expenditures, that were discussed with fatiguing enthusiasm by every one concerned, had earned for her the respectful consideration of the bookkeeper and secretary, one of whom at least, regarded her in the light of a special dispensation of Providence, come to dispel the gloom that had settled upon the ranch after the death of the *patrona*.

Indeed, the poor young secretary adored her hopelessly and in secret, for how could he dream of lifting his eyes to her, with nothing to offer her but his love? No, he could not lift his eyes to her, but he could love her! And he could watch her from the window of his little office in the adobe building which she passed many times daily on her pinto pony, her wide hat-brim so well defending the roguish brown eyes that he could never tell whether she flung him a look or was indifferent to his very existence.

To-day, however, his heart beat high, for she had drawn rein beneath the open window where he bent over his desk listening for the quick *thug-thug* of the pinto's hoofs on the soft earth, and had called out to him:

"Don Francisco!"

"Señorita?" he had answered in surprise.

"They are branding in the south corrals. Can't you come over with me?"

He shook his head in sorrowful negation. "Alas, señorita, I am very busy!"

"Just for a little while?" she urged with the most tempting of smiles, while her dimples played havoc with the young man's desire to do his duty.

"You are very kind—very kind, but I must write a hundred million letters before the post leaves."

Alice pouted for a moment. The secretary thought for the hundredth time that he had never seen so beautiful a maid as this young American in her dust-colored riding-habit with the scarlet kerchief knotted loosely beneath her well-browned chin.

"Well, I am sorry. Some other time, eh?"

"I trust so, and I thank you many times."

He bowed formally. But the young lady was in no great haste. She flicked off a fly from the pony's ear and tightened the fastening of her gauntlet.

"I am afraid my uncle overworks some of his employees. You, for instance, never have time for any amusement. You work all day and you work every night until long after midnight."

"You do Don Guillermo a great injustice, señorita. He is a very good and just man."

"Well, I am sorry you won't come," she said again. "*Hasta luego!*" and she was off in a cloud of dust.



THE branding, a new experience, for Alice, was going on briskly when she arrived at the south corrals. There was a distinctly disagreeable smell of scorched pelts in the air, and the hissing sound of the branding-irons made her wince and feel a little sick; but not for the world would she betray this to José, whom she detested, and who watched her with his alertly shifting eyes more closely than usual. Once or twice his horsehair lasso

darted away from his wrist like an elongated serpent, to coil unerringly around the horns of a young bull that the others, less skilful, had missed; but for the most part his work was confined to the selection and assortment of the cattle that huddled closely together and ran about in frightened groups from corner to corner of the enclosures.

Alice counted them several times, because they shifted so rapidly that counting was difficult. There were seventy-three in all—as many as could be handled before nightfall. One vaquero, throwing his lasso at random, caught a splendid young bull fairly by the horns, but at a covert sign from José he quickly released the animal and turned his attention elsewhere. Alice wondered at this, and noted the bull, a strong, well-formed beast, all black, save for a splash of white like spilled milk on the neck, and a white foreleg.

This incident was repeated, shortly after, in the case of another very young bull of especially fine build and weight. Alice's quick eye caught a surreptitious and uneasy glance from José, who, dragging his big spurs in the dust, slouched noisily toward her, hat in hand, to inquire how she enjoyed it.

"It is interesting," she replied, studying the evil upturned face. "How many are there?"

"There are seventy in the corrals to-day, señorita. And we think they are the finest cattle in Mexico!"

As she trotted back to the house, Alice turned the matter over in her mind. There seemed to be but one conclusion—that José was stealing cattle, and she determined to warn her uncle.

She passed the secretary's window without a glance, but she spent half an hour before her mirror tying and untying her lace neck-scarf when she dressed for dinner. Then she went into the library where the bookkeeper, his wife and the secretary were already assembled, discussing, as always, the affairs of the ranch. She smiled at them radiantly and collectively as she entered, and crossing the room, threw open the long French window that opened on to the deep veranda, that they might see and enjoy the wonderful tropical sunset.

The bookkeeper's wife shivered a little. "There is quite a strong draft," she murmured.

Alice closed the window. "You don't exercise enough," she said good-naturedly. "Now, if you would ride every day——"

"I am afraid of those ugly broncos," complained the lady. "They are always throwing somebody. And besides, there is no place to go!"

"No place to go!" echoed Alice, wide-eyed. "Why, there are ever so many places to go. Think of the waterfall, and the spring, where those beautiful ferns grow!" She waved a brown hand toward a huge bowlful of fern fronds on the table. "There is the post-office, where a grand duchess condescends to deliver the mail to those who are sufficiently respectful——"

"Miss Simpkins is a very fine young woman," interrupted the bookkeeper's wife, with a resentful indrawing of her thin lips, "and not at all proud, even if her father does own the only American hotel within a hundred miles."

Alice smiled broadly at the secretary. The bookkeeper's wife was an established fact on the ranch. Even Don Guillermo had come to accept her philosophically, and treated her with much consideration. The bookkeeper was invaluable to him, and good bookkeepers were almost unheard of in that part of the world.

"Then there are the nurseries," pursued Alice, "where a promising young forest awaits my uncle's pleasure. And there is the machine-shop, which is tremendously interesting, the beautiful stables, the corrals"—the bookkeeper's wife seemed ready to take flight—"why, only to-day I was watching the branding!"

"Señorita!" protested the other woman. "Those are not places for a young lady like you! And the branding! How could you be the willing witness of such a cruel spectacle?"

"It was cruel," admitted Alice. "It hurt me every time those frightful irons went down on the poor beasts. But it seems to be a necessary evil, and I wanted to know about it. I couldn't live on a cattle-ranch and not find out everything about cattle. Why, if my uncle owned a coal-mine, I am sure I would be underground more than half the time. I must see the wheels go round!"

"And you are quite right, my dear," said Don Guillermo, coming into the room and embracing her affectionately. "Some day you will have to lift the whole load

from my old shoulders, and you can not learn 'everything about cattle' too soon to please me!"

"I shall always want to be useful to you, uncle," replied Alice as they went toward the dining-room.

"José is an excellent *caporal*," said Don Guillermo, during the discussion of "business" that lasted throughout the meal, and to which Alice had been an attentive listener. "He has been in my employ seven years, and he has been guilty of very few errors of judgment in the management of the vaqueros and in handling the cattle."

"I detest him!" said Alice suddenly and bluntly. "I don't trust him."



EVERY one looked at her in surprise. The bookkeeper's wife coughed behind her napkin. Don Guillermo shrugged his shoulders with the air of one who easily tolerates unreasoning feminine caprices.

"So much the worse for José," he said without irritation. "He is certainly no beauty, but there is little room for personal prejudice in the case of such an efficient man."

Alice turned her bright brown eyes upon the bookkeeper.

"Did they brand all the cattle in the south corrals to-day?" she asked unconcernedly.

"Yes, señorita. Seventy fine young animals went under the iron. Within the week the branding will be over."

Alice thoughtfully sipped her coffee. José had said seventy, and the bookkeeper had said seventy. She had counted seventy-three, and had seen the lasso lifted twice from the horns of two promising young bulls. Three animals in a single day! It was easy to believe that José was a thief—but the bookkeeper? She looked at him again. In his cheap, ill-fitting suit of gray, guiltless of the jewels that are affected by most Mexicans, his appearance by no means indicated the man of expensive tastes whose salary did not suffice. His face, although unattractive, gave the impression of frankness rather than deceitfulness. Was his honest expression, his unwavering gaze merely the mask of the adept? And if this man, enjoying the entire confidence of his employer would stoop to a small dishonesty, where would the matter end?

At any rate, he bore her scrutiny

remarkably well, evincing neither embarrassment nor annoyance, but somehow she felt that he was greatly relieved when she rose from the table and led the way to the veranda. And a few moments later he retired, with his good wife, to the cottage across the way that they occupied jointly with the secretary.

Francisco sat on the step at Alice's feet, smoking, while Don Guillermo caught up a lantern and went off to the stables to investigate the swollen leg of his favorite saddle-horse.

For a while the two on the veranda sat idly watching the bookkeeper's lantern winging farther and farther into the distance in dignified measure with his deliberate pace. Fireflies flitted about, thick as sparks from igniting driftwood, and the stars seemed wonderfully near and brilliant.

"I shall never like her," said Alice with an accent of finality.

"Nor I," responded Francisco.

"Nor him," she hazarded, tapping the floor with a pair of emphatic heels.

The secretary smoked silently for a moment. "He is a valuable man," he said presently; "an expert accountant."

"I don't believe he is honest," Alice went on precipitately.

Francisco, turning his head slowly, lifted his eyes to her, but the light from the window was too dim for either of them to be sure of the other's expression. He opened his lips to speak, but closed them again instantly.

"Well?" insisted Alice, obstinate and a little angry at his disapproving attitude.

Francisco threw away his cigarette and jammed his hands into his pockets with the manner of one who finds himself unexpectedly in a difficult situation.

"This is the second time you have made that charge to-night, señorita. It is a very serious one."

"It is not so much a charge as an intuition," she retorted, with a note of resentment. She had expected to be understood, not to be suddenly put on the defensive.

"There are few things more treacherous than intuitions. It is safe to distrust them, especially when the integrity of another is concerned." He rose and held out his hand. "Good night, señorita."

"Good night, Don Francisco."

Then, while he still stood on the step, she asked hurriedly.

"You will be free to-morrow afternoon?"

"Very possibly. In what way can I serve you?"

"Will you ride over to the south corrals with me?"

"With much pleasure. At what hour shall I call for you?"

Alice laughed, with the faintest quiver of embarrassment in her voice.

"That would be very formal indeed—to come for me—wouldn't it? Can't you join me when I pass the office?"


He bowed. "As you wish, of course."

Once more he held out his hand, and once more her hand went out to meet it. For a tense moment they stood there in the starlight, his strong, slender fingers closing tightly, almost desperately, about hers.

Then he turned away and went over to the cottage, to spend a night as wakeful as many other nights, and Alice sat long where he had left her, thinking, among other things, of what he had said about intuitions. She comprehended that, as a matter of fact, she really had had no positive evidence of dishonesty on the part of José and the bookkeeper, and that it was therefore clear that she must wait for something more definite to transpire before troubling her uncle with her suspicions. To-morrow at the corrals Francisco would perhaps see for himself that something was awry, and instigate an investigation.

Having thus disposed of the matter, it would seem most natural for a practical young woman like Alice to go within, where her many little self-imposed household duties awaited her; but long after her uncle had gone to his room and the lights had burned out in the farthest corner of the ranch, she still sat in her low chair, motionless, her eyes on the stars. And if sometimes they wandered toward a yellow light that burned in a window in the cottage across the way—

II

 THE next afternoon the bookkeeper's wife, sitting on the cottage porch, watched them ride away in the direction of the south corrals. A smile, not too faint to be malevolent, slightly deepened the wrinkles about her eyes.

Alice's pony tugged impatiently at the bridle. It was not used to this slowly decorous gait, and resented the necessity of

yielding half the roadway to the dignified and ponderous bay that not only seemed to be in no hurry whatever, but was quite indifferent to the pinto's restive crowding.

Alice, laughing buoyantly, tightened the reins.

"Bubbles is used to taking this level stretch at a dead run," she explained, flashing a look, brilliant with animation, upon Francisco. "We two have such good times careering around the ranch. I love every corner of the dear old place, and I believe Bubbles does, too."

Francisco swept an arm westward toward the low-lying hills that bordered Don Guillermo's possessions.

"If an artist wished to immortalize you, señorita, he would need to paint you against that background. The wife of the patron was a beautiful and gentle lady. She loved her husband, but she did not love the ranch. She did not seem to belong here, as—as you do. It is not easy to remember that you are an American, with the fever of the great cities in your blood."

"Oh, I am American enough," laughed Alice. "I am the finished product—born in Chicago, brought up in Chicago, and for years the inmate of a gorgeous Chicago apartment house. Our little box was set between other little boxes of exactly the same size and pattern. Ugh! it was dreadful. It makes me shudder to remember the shut-in existence I led. This is life—free, open, with miles and miles of space, and work to do. Here one does not see a few stars through a pane of glass—one lives among them. This is the only place I shall ever call home!"

"I am glad and proud that you love my country," said Francisco, with a little catch in his voice. "It is a beautiful and noble land, if not a powerful nation."

"As for that," responded the girl quickly, "I am certain that some day this nation will be in a position to clash shields with the strongest of them."

Just then the pinto renewed hostilities with the bay, and in a comical attempt to shove him off the road, jostled roughly against Francisco. This brought forth a sharp rebuke from Alice's whip, which he instantly resented by rising on his hind legs and furiously pitching forward in a fashion well calculated to unseat any one less accustomed to broncos and their ways.

But Alice, after the first little gasp of sur-

prise, caught the stirrup more firmly with her foot, gripped the horn tightly under her knee and, shortening the reins considerably, suffered him to wheel and pitch a few moments to his heart's content. When he was finally subdued she turned toward Francisco—who had been watching her divided between fear and admiration—a face glowing with rich color, and eyes sparkling with the excitement of the struggle.

"Isn't he an incorrigible little beast?" she panted, smiling into his eyes with just a suspicion of girlish vanity.

She was not unreasonably proud of her horsemanship and she did not regret Francisco's presence on this occasion of her pony's bad behavior.

"Señorita mia, you are very wonderful! You do not know the meaning of fear, and you are so kind and so beautiful and——" He suddenly bit his lip and fell silent.

"Yes?" said Alice. "So kind, and so beautiful and—what?" She inclined insinuatingly toward him, rippling with laughter.

The secretary was very pale now. He looked long into her dancing eyes.

"And—I love you!" he said slowly.



THE girl's eyes dropped. The quick color rivaled the crimson scarf at her throat. While these were, indubitably, the words she most wanted to hear, they had nevertheless been spoken at a most unexpected moment and with a certain sudden boldness for which she had her own coquetry to thank. She realized instinctively, with the amazing perspicacity that characterizes all young womanhood in affairs of the heart, that the confession had been wrung from him almost against his will and quite against his better judgment.

While regret for his impetuosity was yet in abeyance before her compelling charm, and Francisco's eyes were still burning with the emotion of the moment, Alice knew that regret was pressing hard upon the impulsive declaration which she had unwittingly provoked, and she put the pinto to a sharp canter. Don Francisco fell into a dubious silence. At the crossroad they came upon Don Guillermo, ambling along in great comfort in his huge Mexican saddle, smiling benevolently upon his little world.

"Ole, Don Francisco!" he called. "And so the girl has rescued the overworked

secretary from the tyranny of the *despacho*, eh? Upon my word, there are not many signs of rejoicing; you are as solemn and moon-eyed as two owls. *Que hay?*"

"Bubbles is ugly," said Alice, "and I am afraid it is too warm for Don Francisco, who prefers writing letters in the cool office to riding in the sun."

"As any sane man would," laughed her uncle, interrupting an attempted protest from the young man.

"We are going to the branding," said Alice. "Of course you will come with us?"

"That I will not. I am too old for such foolishness in such weather. I haven't seen a branding in four years. There is no need, with so many good vaqueros in the corrals. *Adios*, Don Francisco. I commiserate you. Beware of the enthusiasm of my niece; it has been known to end in sunstroke. *Adios, chula mial*" And putting a lazy spur to his steed he ambled away down the shady avenue that led to the stables.

The young people watched him depart with some consternation. His appearance had temporarily relieved the strained situation, and an awkward silence fell upon them. Francisco was occupied with his perplexed thoughts. He felt humbled and ashamed of his lack of self-control. Times without number had he sworn within himself that what had just happened should never happen, and in a second he had been tripped up by a bit of unthinking girlish coquetry. To this young Mexican, an avowal of love, even as hasty and impulsive as this had been, could by no means be lightly disposed of. It was now a point of honor with him, and he gathered whatever courage he could, wherewith to go down to a manful defeat. It never occurred to him that the girl riding beside him was suffering equal torment.

The brown profile, with its curiously determined little up-tilted chin seemed to the young lover suggestive of hauteur, if not actual scorn. Nevertheless he had no thought of seeking to escape what, according to his standards, was the inexorable demand of the situation.

"Señorita," he began, somewhat dispiritedly, "I realize that I have made myself ridiculous in your eyes, and I shall in no sense resent your laughter; but I would like to add that a Mexican gentleman does not play lightly at love with the woman he respects. I am an unimportant and hope-

lessly poor young citizen, but my family is among those most honored in my country, and, although I have nothing to offer you but a name unbesmirched and my entire devotion, I beg you to forgive the boldness with which I lay both at your feet."

They had unconsciously allowed their horses to slacken pace. The corrals were now in sight and the shouts of the vaqueros had been a more or less disconcerting accompaniment to the young secretary's pathetic little speech. Alice kept her face proudly averted and seemed to be entirely absorbed in the scene they were approaching. As a matter of fact she was at her best endeavor to keep back the tears of mortification. If this was not her first proposal, at least it was the first one that might, under other circumstances, have had any serious import for her, and the fact that it appeared to her to be perfunctory and half-hearted in no wise contributed to her self-esteem.

"Of course I understood," she said, still keeping her eyes turned from him, "that you spoke hastily and thoughtlessly. It was not necessary for you to follow it up with a—with anything like that."

She turned the pinto's head into a narrow path that led downward through a wooded slope more directly to the corrals, and added gravely,

"I think we had better say no more about it."

Francisco accepted her rebuke in humble silence and dropped behind her on the crooked by-path. He was grateful that she had not laughed at him. That would have been very hard. And then, he felt a certain dull relief in her knowledge of his love; there would, at least, be no further need of concealment.

Alice rode along without any attempted renewal of the conversation. Her quick young eyes were taking in every detail of the confused scurryings in the crowded corrals. The thick clouds of blinding yellow dust did not deter the girl from coming right up to the bars of the corral, where Francisco took his position beside her.



JOSE in the very midst of the excited cattle, walked about in fearless unconcern and either did not, or pretended he did not, see the newcomers. With his sombrero well drawn down upon his heavy brows, and a face devoid of ex-

pression, he busied himself exclusively with the matter at hand. The unremitting hiss of the branding-irons, although but faintly heard through the shouting and stamping, was yet distinct enough to be the most disagreeable part of the task the girl had set herself.

If counting the cattle was difficult the day before, it was to-day so apparently impossible that any one less interested would hardly have attempted it, but Alice counted them, every one, peering through the dust with eyes half shut, while her lashes and hair took on a fine yellow coating. She knew that the silent young man beside her, although her request for his presence there had not been explained, was too shrewd not to have divined so obvious a reason and would do what was expected of him.

When at last they turned to go she asked, simply, "How many?"

"Seventy-eight," he answered, without further comment.

They threaded their narrow way along the incline that led to the main road and put their horses to a brisk gallop which soon brought them within sight of the adobe office-building.

Then the secretary, bending toward her, said gravely, "Señorita, I am hopeful that you are mistaken."

Alice vouchsafed no reply until they reached the office door, when she reined up with an impatient gesture and he caught the unmistakably combative gleam in her dark eyes.

"I know I am not mistaken! You will see that our count will not tally with the bookkeeper's."

She made no movement to go on, and Francisco, realizing that he had been dismissed, swung from the saddle with the inimitable grace of the Mexican horseman and tethered his animal. Great disapproval was written in his face.

"I shall be most sorry, more sorry than I can tell you, to learn that you are not mistaken. I can not believe that the accountant, who owes so much to Don Guillermo, would do him an injury. But if I can in any way serve you in the matter, do not hesitate to call upon me."

He drew off his glove and touched her brown gauntlet. "*Hasta mas tarde!*" they both said, and giving rein to the impatient Bubbles, Alice was gone in a flash.

Dinner was nearly over that evening before the branding was mentioned. Then it was Don Guillermo himself who inquired about the result of the day's operations.

"They put through seventy-eight animals," said the bookkeeper. "The branding is about all done, with the exception of a few stragglers that will be rounded up within the week."

Alice, glancing quickly at the secretary, who had studiously avoided looking at her, saw his face relax with sudden relief. Afterward she went over to where he stood smoking on the veranda and said in a low tone which was not altogether angelic,

"I still believe that I am right. It will be difficult to prove, because José has been warned, but it will come out in one way or another sometime."

Then she went into the house, and he saw her no more that night.

III



THE short grass and pale oleander leaves fairly glittered with dew in the pure morning light. There had been a rainfall in the night and the rich earth gave up a pungent odor to the already warm, though still oblique, rays of the early sun. Bubbles, in fine humor, with a bunch of pink blossoms stuck coquettishly under his head-strap, pranced along the highway, sending little splashes of mud in every direction. His rider, swinging a sombrero in her free hand, drew the sweet air deep into her robust lungs, tossed back a dark curl that had blown across her cheek, and admonished her pony in the cheeriest of voices.

"Bubbles, you really must try not to step into all the puddles, for you know Miss Simpkins is a very neat and proper person and will see every little speck of mud on my skirt. And I do wish you wouldn't try to shake off the oleanders, because they are vastly becoming to you and it is high time you learned to have some care for our personal appearance. If you are very good and don't try to kick out the brains of Miss Simpkins's little dog Tray, or chew off the young shoots of Miss Simpkins's rose-bush, I will take you home by the short cut, which will get you into the stables at least twenty minutes earlier."

Bubbles turned a pair of listening ears backward, but was not impressed by the

admonition, for when Miss Simpkins's little dog ran out of the post-office to snap at his heels, he promptly wheeled about and responded with a vicious kick, whereupon a terrified yelp brought the post-mistress hurriedly to the door.

"Good morning, Miss Simpkins!" called Alice, in English, drawing a package of letters from her saddle-pocket. "Will you please take these? Is there any mail for me?" Then her eye fell upon a familiar looking bronco, tied at the corner of the house. "There is some one from the ranch inside?"

Miss Simpkins, gathering up the cowed puppy, replied without the faintest show of cordiality that one of the vaqueros had come to purchase a money-order.

Alice, now alert with curiosity, suddenly bestowed upon the simple postmistress a brilliant and seductive smile.

"Could it be José?"

If expression counts for anything, the smile failed utterly, for Miss Simpkins's cold blue eyes lost none of their indifferently business-like expression. Still, she was more willing than usual to talk, and explained that she did not know the vaquero's name. He had come to buy the order for some one else.

Two bright spots of color flared into the girl's cheeks; she shrewdly guessed that she had stumbled on a clew, for it was not at all likely that the pompous José would thus bother himself with the affairs of the other vaqueros.

"I hope the pony didn't hurt your dog, Miss Simpkins," cooed the little diplomat in a tone of deepest concern. "He is such a pretty dog. I have a little silver collar at home that my dog wore when he was a puppy. If you would like to have it I will bring it to you the next time I come over."


This was a master-stroke. Miss Simpkins's face flushed and her dull eyes lit up with genuine pleasure. She hugged her shivering pet still closer, caressing its glossy, unadorned neck, while Bubbles, unnoticed, pulled at her rose-bush.

"José has other errands," went on Alice, quickly pressing her advantage, "and I am returning directly to the ranch, so if you will give me the mail and the receipt for the money-order I will carry it back to the office myself."

Miss Simpkins was quite willing. She hurried into the building and, slipping be-

hind the railing, hastily gathered together the morning's mail. José, meanwhile, having heard Alice's voice, and not wishing to be seen, kept very quiet in his chair behind the door. As the women spoke in English he had no idea of what was transpiring, nor did he observe that the receipt for the money-order was enclosed in an envelope, slipped among the other letters and handed to the girl waiting outside.

Alice made some pretense of a dignified pace in getting away from the village, but, once out of sight around the bend of the road, she gave Bubbles his head and fairly flew homeward. Just what she was going to do was not yet clear; she did not even know to whom the receipt belonged, but she did know that pay-day was too close at hand for a vaquero to have any money worth mentioning.

 CLOSE to the boundary of the ranch, on the short cut, stood an old adobe building which has long served the double purpose of country store and *cantina*, where the vaqueros of the district and the casual passer-by invariably dismounted for an exchange of local gossip and of courtesies at the dingy little bar. Although Alice frequently passed the place unattended, which was contrary to the custom of the young women of that country, she was too familiar a figure to attract unusual attention, and the niece of Don Guillermo was too important a personage to be at any time in danger of molestation.

The vaqueros were more than repaid for the instantaneous dropping of cigarettes and glasses, and wide sweeping of elaborate sombreros, by the swift, impersonal smile which was always their reward. With her sympathetic recognition of all that was unaffected and well-intentioned, she held these simple people in deep regard, and there was no shadow of doubt as to the loyalty and affection they cherished in their unspoiled hearts for her.

This morning she sped swiftly by, hardly noticing a stranger who sat sipping his *comiteco* in the shadow of the vine-covered doorway. Her one idea was to reach the office before José and to put the possibly incriminating receipt into the hands of the secretary. But as she was almost past the place she suddenly jerked up the pinto's head, and turning him sharply about, rode up to a tree at the other side of the road

where a young bull, tied by the horns, drooped dejectedly in the pitiless sunshine.

There was no mistaking the animal—black and splendidly built, with a white fore leg and wide splash of white on the neck. Only too well she remembered the incident that had fixed its curious markings on her memory. Slowly she rode around it. There was no brand on either flank. Turning her head she looked for the first time at the man in the doorway of the *cantina*. He was leaning forward watching her with much interest and in apparent wonderment. For a moment she hesitated, not at all sure of the right course to pursue. Then she rode frankly up to the house. The stranger flung down his sombrero and came toward her.

"*Qué se ofrece, señorita?*"

"That is my uncle's bull," she said, with an indicative toss of her dark head. "Did you notice who tied it there?"

Into the stranger's admiring glance crept a slight smile.

"*Sí, señorita; my servant tied it there.*"

The color in her already pink cheeks deepened noticeably.

"It may have been your uncle's bull yesterday," went on the stranger, noting her embarrassment, "but it is mine to-day. I bought it this morning."

"Of whom?" Alice managed to ask with some show of self-confidence, and now fully aware that her chance had come.

"Of a *ranchero* close by, one Señor Gomez, who furnishes bulls for the Plaza de Toros during the bull-fighting season. Is he your uncle?"

"Oh, no, señor; my uncle is Don Guillermo Vasquez. He does not trade with Señor Gomez. That animal belongs in our corral and should be marked with our brand."

The man raised his brows thoughtfully. This was, to him, not an unknown contingency.

"In which case," said he, after a moment's consideration, "some one has been stealing cattle!"

"I am sure of it," said Alice.

"Then I shall return to Señor Vasquez what is his own. There is no time to lose, as I must return to the capital with all possible speed. Will you permit me to accompany you to your uncle's house?"

Alice willingly consented, tingling with the excitement of the adventure.

"My uncle will see to it that you do not lose your money, señor."

"No one was ever the loser by a bargain with Don Guillermo," said the stranger heartily. "I will call my servant to lead your animal home."



AND so it befell that Francisco, looking out of his little office window, beheld with astonishment the lady of his heart riding up the avenue with an agent of the Plaza de Toros, followed by a *mozo* who led a muddy young bull by the horns.

Don Guillermo came out to lift his niece from the saddle, but she sprang lightly to the ground and ran panting into the secretary's office, waving her bundle of letters triumphantly.

"I have almost got him!" she cried excitedly.

"Who—what?" asked the bewildered young man.

"The thief—the——" she stopped, held by his grave eyes. "Come into the other office," she said briefly, and turned away.

In Don Guillermo's office she found herself confronted by four pairs of questioning eyes, Don Guillermo, absolutely at sea as to the meaning of it all, looking confused and on the verge of one of his rare exhibitions of temper.

"I assure you, sir," he was saying to the stranger, "that my niece has made a serious mistake. All our cattle are marked, and we have no transactions with Señor Gomez."

The bookkeeper, impassive, sat quietly awaiting developments. The agent briefly explained his purchase, his encounter with Alice at the *cantina* and the object of his visit. Alice, meanwhile, stood by the door, nervously tapping her boot with the tip of her riding-whip. She still held the bundle of letters in her hand.

When at last her uncle turned to her she fixed her dark eyes steadily upon the bookkeeper.

"That bull was in the south corral three days ago, but it was not branded. I saw them release it. I noticed it particularly, and I counted the cattle. There were seventy-three, but only seventy were accounted for by this office. This morning I found José at the post-office sending away other people's money." She crossed the room and laid an envelope upon the bookkeeper's

desk. "There is the receipt." There was no doubting the surprise in the bookkeeper's face. She turned to the agent. "How much did you pay for the animal?" she asked.

"Ninety dollars, señorita."

The bookkeeper, who had said not a word, reached calmly for the envelope and drew out the receipt. Then he suddenly turned white to the lips and sat staring stupidly at the paper. The others waited in breathless silence until he raised his haggard eyes and looked at Don Guillermo.

"Señor," he said huskily, "a great calamity has fallen upon me. I must beg for a few hours in which to clear this up, when I will give you entire satisfaction." He arose unsteadily and went over to the safe, from which he took a roll of bills and, handing them to the agent, added, "This belongs to you, sir. The animal is ours."

Don Guillermo suddenly laid an authoritative hand on Alice's shoulder.

"This is no longer a matter for your meddling," he said. "You have done your part well; I must now do mine."

It was Francisco who brought up her horse and thrilled to the pressure of her muddy little boot in his hand as she sprang into the saddle.

"It makes me just sick," she declared, turning upon him with angrily flashing eyes, "to be sent home like a silly child after I have done all the work!"

"I think Don Guillermo is right," he answered quietly. "It has become a man's business, señorita!"

"Oh, as for that," she retorted, "it might easily have been a man's business from the beginning, if there had been a man on the place with any intuition!"

Francisco sighed. "We men are dull creatures, at best," he conceded, as he released the reins, which he had been absently holding. "I am afraid it is all up with the accountant."

"As it should have been a long time ago!" It was plain that the young lady was in a dangerous mood, so the discreet secretary bowed silently and suffered her to depart.

IV



IT WAS late that evening when Don Guillermo and the secretary returned from the office and sat on the veranda to have a quiet smoke together.

Quiet, indeed, they were, and Alice, for all her angry resolution not to betray any further interest in the affair, was finally forced to break the silence that had become unendurable.

"Well?" she inquired, with a sharp little rising inflection that plainly bespoke her grievance.

"It was José," was Don Guillermo's almost reluctant admission. "Your intuitions were sound on that point. The stolen animals have mostly been sold to Gomez. The receipt you captured has made it possible to uncover the whole nefarious business within a few hours."

"One would hardly guess that from your solemn face, uncle. What have you done with José?"

"José is in jail."

"And the bookkeeper?"

Don Guillermo struck a light and lit another cigarette without answering.

"Are you still sure of the bookkeeper's guilt?" asked Francisco in his quiet way.

Alice stared in amazement at the figure in the shadow.

"Of course I am! I was sure that the receipt was for him before we saw him open the envelope. There hasn't been much room for doubt since."

Don Guillermo threw back his head and laughed.

"What queer things women are!" he said. "What with their strange comprehension of the intangible, the things they don't see, and their total misunderstanding of many things they do see, they form a dangerous combination of what a man can absolutely trust and yet should be always wary of. *Chulita mia*, it is plain to me that you will never be able to run this ranch successfully—er—alone! Your wonderful intuitions would work sad havoc among these simple folk, unless balanced and directed by—let us say—a reasonable and, perhaps, good-looking young administrator. Eh, Francisco?"

"Oh, señor!"

The girl sat motionless. After Don Guillermo's paternal soul had had its fill of satisfaction from the young people's embarrassment, he continued more gravely,

"Our accountant stands to-night completely exonerated. He has been hoodwinked and victimized by—"

His cigarette had gone out and he stopped to light another. But Alice was

not caught by the ruse. Although tiptoe with curiosity she was determined not to contribute further to what was, in her opinion, unwarranted enjoyment at her expense, and not by so much as the quiver of a sheeny ruffle did she betray her excitement.

Don Guillermo sent up a thin cloud of smoke, settled himself more comfortably in his deep chair and began again.

"The almost ridiculous prosperity of the ranch has given the bookkeeper and the secretary much more than they could reasonably be expected to perform without assistance, but they have both preferred an increase of salary to a longer list of employees. Francisco has acquired the habit of working late into the night. The accountant, on the other hand, has had help from his wife, who took entire charge of certain books."


He paused again but was disappointed of the expected interrogation, for Alice might have been carved in wood.

At this point Francisco crossed the veranda and took his usual seat on the step at her feet.

"Señorita, you must forgive our seeming willingness to keep you in suspense," he said. "But the fact is, we both hesitate to call the real culprit—thief. It is a very delicate matter, as you will realize when you learn that the collusion was between José and——"

"The bookkeeper's wife!" said Alice at last.

"Just so. José negotiated the sales and sent away the money for the good lady, for which service he was well paid, while her unsuspecting husband accepted without question the doctored accounts. The poor man is absolutely crushed, and of course can no longer bear to live here."

 ALICE suddenly went over to Don Guillermo and slipped a conciliating arm about his neck.

"*Tío!*" she murmured, pressing her soft round cheek against his grizzled hair. "You are always so wise and just! If you had not turned me out of the office to-day I should have accused the poor man openly." She looked toward the secretary, laughing a little. "And I was so angry when you sent me home!"

"Do not underestimate the great service you have performed for us, señorita," answered Francisco, inwardly wondering how

any mortal man could have so passively accepted such a heaven-sent caress.

"It must at least be admitted that neither of you has betrayed any very gratifying signs of enthusiasm," replied the girl, in a tone faintly suggestive of her recent grievance.

Her uncle drew a deep sigh.

"*Bien, mi alma*, there is small cause for rejoicing. After all is said, I had rather lose five times as many animals than have my poor friend brought to so much trouble. And the ranch will be in a fine mess without a head vaquero or a bookkeeper."

He arose, calling for a lantern, and Alice returned to her low chair by the steps. Across the way, in the brightly lighted cottage, shadows flitted rapidly back and forth on the drawn curtains, testifying to hasty preparations for an early departure.

Don Guillermo gripped Francisco by the shoulder as he passed him on the step, giving him an affectionate little shake.

"There will be work indeed for you now, *my son*. To-morrow you will assume charge of the ranch. I am getting too old and lazy, and the girl has yet much to learn." He held up a peremptory silencing finger. "No, we will say no more about it to-night. I am going to look at the lame mare."

Francisco, overwhelmed with his sudden good fortune, sat dumbly watching the retreating figure of his benefactor. Suddenly a glorious vista of bewildering possibilities unrolled before him. Leaning forward he pressed his burning forehead against his tightly clasped fingers, and closed his eyes.

Presently a distracting silken rustle and a quick, nervous laugh made him look up.

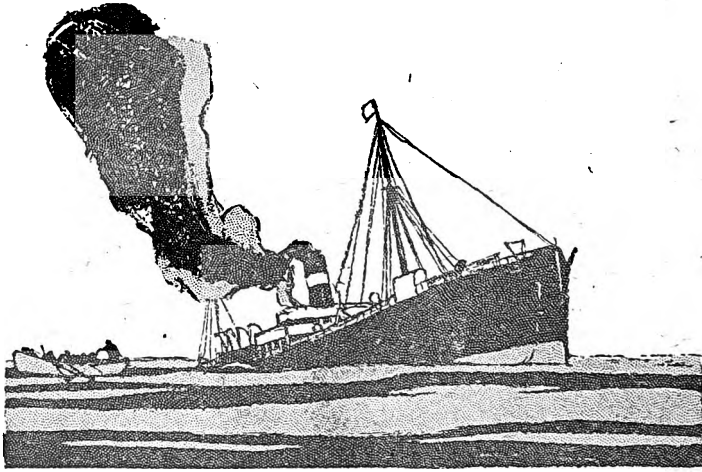
"*Felicitaciones, Señor Administrador!* To-morrow we shall all come to you for orders!"

Alice was bending slightly toward him, smiling teasingly, her deep eyes shining in the dim starlight.

"Oh, señorita," he stammered, "it is too much. Don Guillermo is too generous—I have not deserved it!" Suddenly he wheeled about sharply and caught her hands. "But you—you will not ask me to govern this beautiful little world of yours alone! *Alicia—Alicia mía—te amo!*"

A little brown hand went to his lips. The girl laughed again, but this time with a new and indefinable sweetness.

"How, indeed, could such an important post be intrusted absolutely to a man without a single intuition?"



THE WRECK of the ARABELLA

by W. TOWNEND

ON A calm Sunday afternoon, after the *Umballa*, a short-masted, high-funneled tramp steamer, had passed Cape St. Vincent bound for Genoa with three thousand tons of Scotch coal, Mr. Harrington and I sat side by side on the No. 3 hatch.

Mr. Harrington, who was the second engineer and a man of many anecdotes, talked learnedly on life as he had seen it. I, being ignorant and a mere passenger, borne on the ship's papers as purser, listened humbly.

It was a paragraph in a two weeks' old newspaper that led to the telling of this tale. Mr. Harrington doubted the truth of the paragraph and said so plainly, stating his reasons.

And then he drifted into a dissertation on the ethics of journalism.

"Writing," he said, staring dreamily at the yellow hills of Spain with the tiny white towns at the water's edge and the gaunt purple mountains in the distance bulking against the turquoise sky—"writing is a queer trade. To read what you do read would make you think everything is dead gospel. But it ain't. Now, f'r instance," he cleared his throat and smiled to himself, "when I was younger, and in consequence less of a sinner than I am now, I saw a sight that 'ud make the average man take the pledge an' be a good boy for the rest of

his days. Only, I don't happen to be an average man; more's the pity! Since that time, if you'll believe me, I haven't seen anything more exciting than a drunken second mate sitting on a bunker hatch, telling the superintendent exactly what he thought of him an' his looks. Imagining he was one of the stevedores. I helped him pack his bag later on.

"Anyhow"—Mr. Harrington felt in his coat pocket and produced a shabby leather note-book full of papers—"I'll just read you this." He unfolded a long newspaper cutting and turned it over carefully till the last part was uppermost. "I'm not going to go through the beginning and middle—that's all bally rot—but the end, my soul! You listen! Well written, too, by a young fellow with sandy hair and specs.

"*So the Arabella sank quickly and evenly—got that? It's important—and evenly. There was little time to think, but there was no confusion; everything was done in an orderly manner, as is always the case in the British mercantile marine. Unhappily, as we mentioned above, the heroic Captain Jarvis—you mark that well, son—the heroic Captain Jarvis an' his chief officer, Mr. Frederick Baxter, both perished. Motioning away the crowded boats, the former shouted, 'Pull for your lives, boys, or you'll be sucked under!' There was no other course open, as the danger was apparent. Mr. Baxter, up*

to his waist in water, spoke in a firm tone. 'Good-by, lads,' he said. 'My love to those at home!' The Captain held out his hand. 'Good-by, Mr. Baxter. God bless you!' 'Good-by, sir,' said the other. 'We'll die hand in hand.' Then the ship sank, with those two gallant men holding each other's hands, a long last grip, goin' to their rest till the time comes when the last trump sounds an' the sea shall give up its dead. It is such deeds as this that bring a feeling of pride to every Briton's heart an' make us value our heritage. Captain Jarvis an' Mr. Baxter met their end in a way that will ever be a glorious, never-fading memory to those who saw them die."

Mr. Harrington threw back his head and roared.

"*Hah! hah! hah!* But that little piece at the end makes me yell. The humor of it makes me feel quite silly. It just does. An' we sitting around in our old dirty clothes listening as good as a boat-load of preachers. Now, I'm going to tell you the truth, an' how it all come to be written by the young man with the sandy hair. I'm not likely to forget it, as it was the only time I was ever shipwrecked, or—well, almost the only time.

"Hanging's my death, not drowning. We had a second mate once, the same who talked to the super. as man to man, who had second sight. He told me so; I remember it well. I'd just had a few words with him, owing to a bit of a randan on the question of the steam on deck. An' he ups and prophesies my demise with full and harrowing details."

Mr. Harrington grinned, knocked the dottle of his pipe into his hand, replaced it, put the pipe into his pocket, and resumed his narrative:

NOW, in those dead an' gone days I was young an' inexperienced, an' more of a fool than most. Also, I was second engineer of this self and same *Arabella*, which was my first job with a second's ticket. I was lucky to get the billet, I thought at first. If I'd only known what I did a couple of days after I signed on, that the *Arabella* was a broken-down, undermanned, underfed, dirty, damp, hard-up old coal-box like she was, and like this old *Umballa* is, I'd ha' seen myself as far as the other place before I'd ha' put one foot over the side.

It was good experience, all the same—from a professional point of view, that is. We couldn't keep steam up nohow, try as we could. I spat up some fancy language, I can tell you. No good though; it was like water on a duck's back. The firemen were true British stoke-hole hands, of course, an' between 'em couldn't make out more'n five words of English. I've no use for Dutchmen or Squareheads or—or any of them fancy creeds. Also the donkeyman was a sore affliction—a Presbyterian from Dundee and deaf. Deaf! Why, if you called the old thief all the names in the Gospel according to Saint John the Baptist he'd just grin an' say, "Thankee, a new sweat-rag 'ud do fine!" A bit soft he was, in the upper.

But twenty-five days of continual *swish-swash*, roll, roll, hell and hold on, wet blankets, tinned Chicago an' sudden death—Lord have mercy on us!—makes a man a trifle free with his mother tongue. And my language, as you may shortly have the privilege of seeing for yourself, varies as the barometer, only more so.

Well, the sailors couldn't steer, the firemen could not fire, the cook—it's an insult to the word to call him a cook—could rise to no greater heights than deep-sea lead with dry hash an' biscuits from the store-room for variety, a diet that palls even on such as me, an' the flunkey down aft, with one eye on the cabin an' the other on the ship-chandler's an' his cumshaw, gave us to understand that fair weather or foul he was the one that ran the show.

Many's the time I've said to him, "Steward, why the blazes don't you borrow the carpenter's maul an' knock the maggots out of the beef before sending it down to the mess-room?" But what was the use of talking? We had to fill our crops with what he chose to give us, all the same, and he knew it.

The fact was, the *Arabella* should ha' been on the scrap, not only off the clubs. She did better than that in the end: she managed to earn an honest penny for the owners. We had nothing but trouble with the boilers the whole voyage, nothing but trouble. The water ran out of them as fast as it went in, and the best part of my time was spent in the back-ends stopping and expanding tubes and calking seams. Which is not a pastime for a Christian.

II



WE WENT from Cardiff, with coal, to Las Palmas, then to Marbella, near Gib. In every morning, out every evening. No rest, steam on day and night, loading iron ore. Then—God help us! January, and the western ocean licking its chops for a taste of the old *Arabella*—Philadelphia. Discharged cargo in forty-eight hours—forty-eight, mark you—and loaded case-oil for home. A quick crossing it was too. Twenty-five days across the Atlantic an' twenty-seven back. You didn't have to do much head-work to figure out the average number of revolutions of the cranks per hour in a watch, either. A child could have done that, counting on the fingers of one hand.

Well, I'm not going to spin you a cuffer of the whole of that voyage; it's just about the men I'm telling you now. An' the sad part of it is, that I know — little of them, when all's said an' done. — little!

The chief told me all I ever heard till gettin' on for the final bust-up, and I saw that for myself. Yes, an' that was more than I'd any wish to see. Our skipper, Jarvis his name was, was a red-faced, pot-bellied elephant of a man with a drooping ginger mustache. You could see him coming on deck of a morning, in his old gray suit and carpet slippers, with his mustache running wet like rats' tails from his last drink. And he'd goggle eyes like a codfish, and if he wanted to look at you he'd move his head instead of his eyes. That's gospel! A big man he was, big and blustering and fly-blown. Yes, fly-blown's the word. That's him all over.

The mate was just his opposite. Mr. Baxter, Mr. Freddie Baxter, bent-backed, gray-bearded, white-faced, with little, blood-shot eyes. Mean-looking, and as mad as a hatter.

Good Iron, but we were a nice, happy ship! With those two down aft, nagging at the second mate, a youngster, son of a Baptist minister in the Potteries. He'd gone to sea because he thought it 'ud be a nice genteel sort of life. Poor little beast! He found the old *Arabella* all there for being genteel an' brass-bound. Apprentice in a big full-rigged wind-jammer he was before he come to the *Arabella* as second mate. Steam was what he wanted, he said.

If he'd had a pair of oars an' a square of oilcloth he'd ha' sent a dory along a sight faster than what steam sent the *Arabella*.

I never could get the hang of the goings-on in the cabin or what them two was up to. The skipper an' the mate, I mean. I only know that when the old man was drunk he played old Harry with the furniture, an' when the mate was drunk he'd talk an' talk like a kid, saying the same things over an' over an' over again.

Lord! In harbor, we could stand on the well-deck and look through the ports into the cabin an' see them two sitting at the table, just drinking an' drinking, like a couple of hogs. An' not a word would they say till they were well splashed. Then, regular as clockwork, they'd begin to quarrel. The mate, his little red eyes getting redder an' ugly, an' the skipper grinning an' laughing, sucking his big red mustache an' picking his teeth with a pin. I an' the chief once saw the mate reach for a soda-siphon an' heave at the old man's head. It missed him an' smashed against the wall, an' the old man jumped up an' yelled something, an' the mate put his head on the table an' howled as if his rotten old heart would break. The chief and I saw it as plain as I can see that bloomin' Squarehead over there.

I ASKS the chief, one day, before we fetched up the Canaries, what was the trouble between the skipper and Freddie Baxter. Quiet-spoken old chap the chief was, but he'd gone a bit cranky in consequence o' bein' hit on the top of the head by a monkey-wrench falling from the cylinder tops. It was his last voyage he had told me; he was going to leave the sea for good, and had only come on the *Arabella* a short time before, anyway. He'd saved up a tidy bit, the chief had, which you can't do these days; cumshaw's nothing now—threepence a ton, an' fight for that.

Well, the chief didn't know very much, but he knew enough. Once upon a time those two were on board the old *Huddersfield* together, a boat that took the beach some years ago. And in those days Captain Jarvis was Mr. Jarvis, the mate. An' likewise Mr. Baxter of the *Arabella* was Captain Baxter, a-mixing drinks for himself in his own swivel-chair and walking up to the broker's office in a hard hat, as large


as life of a morning. An' then when I heard that I understood everything. Savvy? And of course I knows that there's more behind, an' that our drunken skipper hated the mate, an' yet was afraid to let him out of his sight for some reason or other.

What the story was, no mortal man knew—only excepting those beauties aft. But the *Huddersfield* went on the rocks on as fine a night as ever a man wanted to see. A bit squally perhaps, the chief said, but nothing to signify, with the second mate on the bridge and old Freddie Baxter between the blankets, snoring. It was Mr. Jarvis's watch below, and the second mate happened to be—well, not quite as his own mother would ha' liked to ha' seen him. An' where did he get it from, eh? Not from Freddie Baxter, that's a certainty. Mr. Jarvis could ha' told—perhaps! An' the *Huddersfield* went ashore.

There was hell and all to pay, of course. Freddie Baxter lost his ticket, in spite of the usual pack of lies at the Board o' Trade inquiry, an' was told a few things about himself, straight an' plain, that must ha' made his hair curl. Naturally he never got another job as master, not even of a mud-hopper. Mr. Jarvis came well out of it, an' was thanked for his quickness of decision and courage an' all sorts of things in a trying situation, thereby gaining much reputation with the owners, who gave him a ship of his own to play about with.

An' three or four years afterward, wantin' a mate, he gets hold of old Freddie, who was on the beach, down an' out, an' gives him the job. So that was how Freddie Baxter came to be mate of the *Arabella*.

III

 NOW, as a voyage, it wasn't much. As a slice of purgatory, it was there every time. The next world has no terrors for me, I tell you, after the *Arabella*. One night at Philadelphia I was taking a turn on the well-deck with the chief. We had just come on board, and being unable to light up, owing to harbor regulations, were thinking about bed. It was a fine night and everybody else was on shore, imperiling their immortal souls with various brands of sin and their insides with bad rye whisky.

"Hullo!" says the chief. "They're at it again!"

I listened. Sure enough, they were singing in the cabin, the old man and Freddie Baxter.

"They're far gone," I says, "or they wouldn't be yelling that thing. Let's wait."

"Let's go aft an' look at them," says the chief, grinning.

An' we moves across the litter of ropes an' tackle an' hatch-covers towards the poop. Then the chief grips me by the arm and I stops.

Freddie Baxter had come out on deck, an' was staggering about from side to side like a tugboat in a beam sea. Then he began to speak, quite clearly and very slow:

"You swine!" he says—I can hear him now—"you swine! You lost me my ship," he says; "you lost me my ship, you lost me my ship, you lost—" Getting more an' more squeaky, going on just in that same way. He saw us standing by the break of the poop. "You two," he says, "you know that man aft? That—that — swine lost me my ship," says he, "an' now I'm only a blasted mate, and he—"

The old man, in his shirt-sleeves an' stocking-feet come out, rolling about helpless-like till he sees Freddie.

"Now then," he shouts, "what the —!" an' he makes for the ladder.

Old Freddie Baxter saw him and waves his fists in the air.

"You," he screams, "you! I'll cut your liver out!" he shrieks, jumping from one foot to another. "You pick of the litter! You mongrel! You yellow cur!"

The old man shook a finger at him.

"You're drunk!" he says. Man, I yelled. Him, as drunk as a fireman with his half-month's advance in his pocket, shaking his finger at the mate. "And," said he, "I'll ask you to remember that—" I thought the mate was going to burst. He was holding on to the top of the number four hatch.

"You got my ship, — you!" he screams; "my ship! An' you got my job," says he, "an' now you want me! Well, you'll have to want! You ran the *Huddersfield* ashore, you ran—"

He stopped to breathe, an' the skipper rushed down at him. He caught hold of his arm, his breath coming like hot steam from an exhaust.

"You shut it," he says, "or you'll be sorry," says he. "You weren't smothered as you should ha' been!" He never so

much as noticed the chief an' myself, not even by a look. The mate kind of crumples up, and the skipper hauls him up the ladder and on to the poop again by the scruff of his neck. "Let's open another bottle," he says, "an' — everything!"

They went below then. We could hear their feet stumbling down the companion.

"That's the — of a fine carry-on!" says the chief.



WELL, one afternoon, a fortnight out, wet and cold and gray, with big green seas chucking us about all ways, I was sitting in my berth waiting to go down to take my watch—four to eight. One bell had gone, an' the mess-room lad had called me. I heard a knock at the door.

"Come in," I says, thinking perhaps it was the mess-room lad again.

Mr. Baxter comes in, looking as if he'd been dead for a week or so, and had just got out of his coffin for a breath of fresh air. Dirty and sniveling, with his beard covered with coffee-stains and tobacco-juice.

"Well?" I says, not over-pleased to see him.

His little eyes blinked round an' he spat on the floor. Dirty old devil, he was! Spit, spit, all the blooming time, like a leaking waste-pipe.

"You haven't," he says, "got such a thing as —"

"Go on," I says.

"It's my watch on deck, and—" says he, "I've a headache, Mr. Harrington."

"Is it salts you're after?" I asks.

"Well," he says, "I was thinking"—and I'm damned if he wasn't rubbing his hands over one another, smirking like a Jew peddler—"I was thinking," he says, "that a drop of—"

I didn't often at that time, not having developed the thirst I have now, carry anything about with me. But it so happened I had a bottle of "Home-sweet-home" in my chest of drawers, so I handed him my tooth-glass an' the bottle, which was half empty.

"Thank you," he says, filling the tumbler full up. He tossed it down as if it had been milk an' water. "That's better," he says, spitting again. Not that it mattered so much really, as my berth was awash. "Did you," says he, "hear me say anything the other night when—"

Poor little beggar! He was clinging on to the handle of my door—and frightened! He just shivered with fright. Why? God only knows. I don't.

"You did," I says to him. "You told a pack of lies: how once you—"

"As sure," he says, "as I'm a Christian, it's true!"

"I was once Emperor of Germany, also President of the United States," I tells him, "but give up both jobs, owin' to ill health and the pay not being sufficient."

"Mr. Harrington, it's true," he says, "I was master of the *Huddersfield*!"

"There's eight bells," I says; "I must clear, an' so must you."

An' with that I runs him out, an' waits till he'd climbed out of the scuttle into the wet.

I never saw him to speak to for days after that. I kept below, never once going on deck, till I felt like a half-baked Geordie in a coal-mine. Hell wasn't the right word, either. I don't mean that we had such a dirty time of it, but it gets on your nerves, when you're kept thinking that every minute you'll soon be on bowing terms with Peter, trying to get him to pass you through on the nod. And, of course, the scrap we were supposed to treat as engines was about as much good as a log-line for a rocket in a nor'wester off Finisterre when the steering-gear's broke down an' you're drifting. See! Hopeless!

What was happening aft, I did not know nor did I care, being too miserable to bother about a little thing like whether we reached home or not. But the mess-room lad told the third—they shared a berth together next the mess-room—that the steward says that they were having a gay time. What with the skipper drunk, and the mate half-dotty seeing pink toads in the mess-room, and the second on his knees in the water, blubbering and praying, took bad in his innards with religion, it must have been as good as a pantomime.

IV



WELL, we got near home, an' run into fine weather. Just a bit choppy, but heaven almost. We were hoping to sight the Lizard any moment, but we didn't, as we ran into a good old Channel fog-bank. We kept on busting ahead, without worrying. A little thing

like a fog and B. T. regulations didn't worry us. I was down in the engine-room the next morning, working at the lathe. The donkey-man was oiling the top and bottom ends and main bearings, like a monkey on a stick, and I remember I was just telling the old Mormon what I thought of his character, and quoting lumps out of Holy Scripture to lend point to my views, when the chief comes sliding down the ladder, having been on deck.

"Here," says he, "that hog on the bridge don't care a —. We'll go on full tilt," he says, "with the place swarming with steamers till we go to glory," says he. "You can hear them all round like a Sunday-school picnic, an' that drunken old greaser won't slow down. Told me to get to — out of it; that he was Captain, and he'd thank me to get off his bridge."

"What are you going to do?" says I. "He's right about being Captain; you can't do anything."

"Can't I?" says the chief. "We're going to half-speed, without ringing the telegraph," ses he. "Slow her down, please." This we does. An' says the chief: "If they don't mind out, I'll — well shut off steam altogether!"

I hops on deck and has a squint round. He was right for once. Thick, white fog, and you could hear the whistles moaning and hooting on every blooming side, lonesome-like. But, Lord! the old man, he didn't care; he was too far gone altogether.

Six bells in the afternoon watch I was lying in my bunk, half-dressed, and suddenly I hears the most awful hooting and whistling you ever struck in all your life. I sits up, quick. I remember that, 'cause my head come bang against the ceiling. Near knocked me silly. The next moment people starts in to yell, and then something crashed into us and we went shaking and rocking from Dan to Beersheba. I hopped out of my bunk on to the floor, hustled on my boots and coat and made for the door.

It was locked, and I was in such a hurry I forgot I had to use a key. I just rattled the handle and cursed. I heard the chief bellow out something, an' bolt through on to the gratings while I swore an' shook the blasted door on its hinges. I remembered my key at last—made me laugh even then—an' got out of my berth. The mess-room lad met me outside. He looked scared.

"Hurry!" he says. "We're sinking!"

"—!" says I. "That means I'll get my feet wet."

I clambered down into the engine-room, as is customary, wondering if I'd ever clamber out again. The chief an' the third were there, doing what was necessary in the way of blowing off steam, etcetry.

"Run into for'ard," says the chief; "between number one hatch an' number two, I think."

"What are you going to do?" I asks. "Wait for orders from the skipper?"

"Orders be —!" he says. "I'm not going to wait on the telegraph with a drunkard, a lunatic, and a revivalist on the bridge! We're going to skip!"

And in less than half a shake we were boosting up the ladder, twenty per.



IT DIDN'T take much to see that it 'ud be a case of nine or ten minutes more at the most. We was a good deal down by the head already, an' the hands were struggling to lower the life-boats. Too rattled to get the canvas covers off or swing the davits out. Lord! I never saw such a muck-up. I hit one or two Squareheads, just to show them that it wasn't no use their acting the fool with me, whatever they might do with the bridge. Efficiency an' discipline's my motto at all costs.

Well, we couldn't see the other fellow, though he was hanging around, squealing like a cow that's just lost a calf. But them deck-hands! Nowadays we're supposed to have life-boat drill every voyage, which is all my eye, an' don't forget it. But 'at that time nobody seemed to know which was the right way to do anything. I suppose it wasn't long before the boats were in the water, but it seemed like a month of Sundays. Scramble! Good Iron! That's no word for it. Those Squareheads and Dutchmen got into those boats all of a heap. Fell into 'em. Helped by me pretty considerable with a boat-hook.

The chief and myself slid down the falls into the port life-boat, and we pushed off a few yards and waited, knowin' that the rest of the crew was in the other boat.

"Where's the old man?" says the chief presently to the second mate, who was for all the world like goat's cheese for color.

"I dunno," he ses, all of a tremble. "He went aft for the papers."

"An'," says I, "what the blazes is that old fool Freddie Baxter doing? Hurry up, you — old idiot!"

For there was the mate, his hands in his pockets, his cap on crooked, slouching along the well-deck toward the poop. Walking as if he was out for an afternoon stroll for his health, he was. We all shouted, and rowed in as near as we could. He just never looked at us, but climbed on to the poop.

The old *Arabella* was listing a bit to port, an' the starboard life-boat with the third engineer and most o' the deck-hands came broadside on round the stern, crabwise. All frightened and giving tongue in many languages. But the mate never paid no attention.

"Come on!" yells the chief. "Jump, Mr. Baxter; jump, man!"

And at that very moment the skipper rushes out of the companion with a black-leather case full of the ship's papers under his arm. He looked like a man who's going stark, staring mad from fear, with his puffy red face quivering and his red mustache all limp.

Absolutely blind-mad he was. We stopped where we were—both boats side by side—an' yelled for them to hurry up. We couldn't go nearer, because of the chance of being sucked under, and the *Arabella* was settling down.

The old man makes a dive for the rail an' puts one leg over. As I live, an' this is gospel truth, the mate followed him an' hoicks him back by the collar. An' the skipper's face goes from red to white, all in a flash.

"Come, come," says the mate, "you're not a-going to leave your ship, Captain Jarvis. That's not the way! You're not a-going like that!" Their feet was under water now. "I want a word with you, Captain Jarvis!"

The skipper roared,

"Let me go, — you!"

But he might have been talking to the hand steering-gear, for all the notice the mate took. Freddie turns to us.

"Keep well away!" he says. "Keep well away, you lubbers, or you'll be dragged under!"

And I tell you we *daren't* go nearer! The hands wouldn't ha' let us, even if we had ha' been very keen to; which, speaking for myself, we wasn't.



BUT we waits, just for what those two drink-sodden crimpers were going to do. The skipper raved and screeched and fought; a big man, too, but he'd no more chance with the little mate than I'd have trying to wrestle with the cranks racing. Freddie had a strong grip on him—by the throat with one hand, and the other grabbing his wrist, with his arm round an awning stanchion for to steady himself.

"For God's sake," shrieks the old man, "let go!"

Crying he was, too. We could hear and see as plain as print.

"Not for hell or heaven," said the mate, "would I let go of you now, you liar!"

God! He seemed to be just enjoying it! I tell you I felt bad. It was pretty bad, too. The old *Arabella* was sinking slow and solemn as those two stood there on the poop with the water lapping their ankles.

"Hit him!" shouts the bo'sun—in the other boat he was—"hit him, you blasted fool!" he shouts.

But the skipper was too far gone. Just had his mouth open, shrieking and choking.

"Your last chance," says the mate.

"Whose fault was it that the *Huddersfield* went ashore?"

"Mine!" yells the skipper. "— your soul, mine! Let me go!"

"Did you," says the mate, "or did you not lie about it?"

We had rowed away a few yards, but we rested on our oars and waited.

"Yes!" yells the skipper. "Yes, I did! Oh! Christ!" he says, sobbing.

The water was up to their knees. The mate still gripped him tight.

"You an' me," he says, spitting—"you an' me isn't going to see to-morrow's sun rise. And it won't be finished then, neither. 'Cause," says he, "hell ain't large enough to hold you an' me together! Take this!" says he. "An' this!"

Then, letting go the old man's wrist, he fetches him a crack on the jaw. An' with a sort o' gurgle the *Arabella* went down, with that little gray-haired fiend hitting at the skipper's face.

God! But I just leans over the side of the boat an' was sick. An' the chief was cryin' and the second mate babbling out prayers, enough for a whole ship's company, let alone those two sinners.

WELL, we was picked up soon after by the ship that rammed us. A West Hartlepool boat with her bow plates all stove in. An' by breakfast time the next day we was all on shore, being looked after by the Shipwrecked Mariner's people.

And I give you my solemn davy, the only newspaper man that had track of us was that young chap in specs, who was out for a scoop, so he said, just sweatin' with excitement.

So it weren't no use-tryin' not to dodge him, and the chief passed the word to the hands not to talk or there'd be big trouble. Of course, the owners of the *Arabella* being on the cheap always, the crew was most of 'em foreigners, so it was easier than if they were our own men.

Anyhow, the chief turned about and give the young chap the true history of the wreck of the *Arabella*. With "Good-by, Mr. Baxter; God bless you!" and "Good-by, sir; we'll die hand in hand!" as large as life. Lord forgive us! But laugh! Also not forgetting the long last grip. The only grip, as far as I know, was Freddie Baxter with his fingers round the skipper's gullet. So I suppose that was what he meant. And, mark this! What was the most surprising thing of all?

That bit of Gospel history was copied into every — London paper, full column, with big headings. *British Seamen Die With Their Ship*, and all that sort of guff! So that's why I don't put much trust in them there newspapers, knowing what I do about the sinking of the *Arabella*.



WHEN BOYS WENT FORTH TO BATTLE

THE CHARGE OF THE V. M. I. CADETS
AT NEW MARKET IN 1864

PAULINA S. WINFIELD

By

IN MAY, 1864, the Virginia Military Institute, at Lexington, sent out from her sheltering walls her whole student body to aid in opposing an invading force overwhelming in numbers and injured to war. And responding to the training and discipline of this school, in the capture of Von Kleis-

er's battery at New Market, Virginia, the corps of cadets enrolled themselves among the heroes of the world.

Captain Franklin E. Town, late Captain of the Signal Corps, United States Army, in his official capacity an eye-witness of this incident, writing to an old cadet of the Virginia Military Institute, says of it:

As a military spectacle it was most beautiful; as a deed of war it was most grand. I do not believe the history of war contains record of a deed more chivalrous, more daring, or more honorable than the charge of those boys to a victory of which veterans might well be proud.

With the tide of battle beating almost up to their Institute doors, as with one heart this youthful corps had long chafed at the restraints of daily drill and dress parade and fruitless maneuver, and yearned for the crash and roar of genuine combat. Many with the consent of parents or guardians were resigning, others openly courted dismissal, and some had even stolen away in the night to take their places with the army. Among those who remained, the conviction was strong that being well disciplined and equipped, duty and patriotism alike required them to join their comrades in the field.

In March of '64 a mass-meeting of the corps passed resolutions offering its services to Lee. His response was to the effect that they were rendering valuable assistance where they were, but if necessary he would call them into action.

THE FIRST TASTE OF WAR

AT THE very beginning of the war, in 1861, the Institute had lent her magnificent corps of cadets to serve under Jackson as drill-masters to the raw and undisciplined volunteers gathered at Richmond. After three months of arduous labor this corps was disbanded, and almost every member of it enlisted in the army.

But the necessity becoming apparent of preparing efficient officers to take the place of those wounded or slain in battle, by order of the Governor of Virginia the Institute was reopened in January, 1862. Hence none of the boy soldiers engaged at New Market had been in training for a period much exceeding two years, while the youthful members of the "rat" class had donned the uniform only a few months before the charge.

True, from time to time, select bodies drawn from their ranks had responded to calls for service, and had been given practical experience of march and bivouac in the field. Some of them had had their baptism of fire at McDowell, following Stonewall Jackson to Franklin in pursuit of the discomfited generals Schenck and Milroy. And just one year before their testing the corps

of cadets, eight companies, under their commandant, Major Scott Shipp, had been deputed as an escort to receive and bury with military honors the body of their hero.

Borne on the shoulders of eight of their number, Jackson was reverently laid in the class-room, where in times of peace he had honorably filled the chair of Natural and Experimental Philosophy at the Institute. His lips, though forever stilled, perhaps never spoke so eloquently. And mindful of the message, when the call came to go to the relief of the Shenandoah Valley, the scene of Jackson's most brilliant achievements, the lads were ready to quit themselves like men.

The summons was coincident with the starving policy determined upon by Grant in the Spring of '64 as the quickest and most effective way of putting an end to the war. The Federal forces, estimated at from eight to ten thousand, under General Franz Sigel, were swarming up the Shenandoah Valley, bent on a campaign of devastation. Lee, with his already decimated army facing Grant in the Wilderness, could spare no troops to oppose the advance.

But the rich stores in the fertile valley upon which he relied for the sustenance of his veterans must be protected. General John C. Breckinridge, a superb and gallant figure, whose presence alone was sufficient to arouse youthful enthusiasm, was called from the defense of the Salt Works in southeastern Virginia, and instructed to assemble all available forces at Staunton. The order went forth that the cadets should join him there at the earliest possible moment.

THE LONG ROLL

MAY the tenth being the anniversary of the death of Jackson, all academic duty was suspended at the Institute that the day might be fittingly observed. The battalion marched to the cemetery and with proper ceremonies unfurled over the grave a Confederate banner, the gift of an English admirer. Some of the lads never resumed their tasks. For at midnight on the silence came the beating of drums. It was the long roll. The cadets turned listlessly out of bed. Such calls had not been infrequent.

"A little old fire," some of them grumbled. "Or, maybe, another absentee."

B'lieve Lee's forgotten us. Don't reckon he'll ever give us a chance."

But as the companies were marched together on the college campus a curious excitement took possession of them. "Could it be a call to arms?"

"Attention!" commanded the adjutant.

He unfolded a paper and began to read by the light of a flickering lantern, shaking visibly. Standing in absolute silence in the military position of dress parade, when the truth dawned upon them as the orders were given the boys broke into wild cheers.

Daylight found them, a band of two hundred and fifty lads, ranging from fourteen to nineteen years of age, four companies of infantry and a section of artillery, led by Colonel Scott Shipp, himself a young man of twenty-four, marching gaily by the Staunton pike.

Staunton received them with open admiration as they filed through the streets in their trig gray uniforms, muskets shining, ready to report to Breckinridge and join his command. Their boyish appearance, so attractive to the girls who filled the various colleges and pathetic to the matrons of the town, excited the mirth of the veterans. "The new issue," they jeered. "Go home to mama." A band struck up "Rock-a-by-baby," and convulsed with laughter the men accompanied it, rocking their guns in their arms as if putting a baby to sleep. The next time they greeted the "babies" it was with bared heads and shouts of applause.

ON TO NEW MARKET

PASSING on through Harrisonburg by the Valley pike, on the evening of the fourteenth they pitched camp within nine miles of New Market. The march, seventy miles from Lexington, had progressed steadily through rain and mud. Warmth and food were grateful. These supplied, wrapped in their blankets, and unmindful of the angel that follows in the wake of armies, sleep came unbidden to youthful eyes.

The old town of New Market, made famous by the day's valorous fray, straggles along the Valley pike in a narrow plain lying between Massanutton Mountain and a bold range of foothills. The crest of Shirley's Hill to the left of the pike, on which the cadets took position about one o'clock on Sunday, May the fifteenth, was

perhaps half a mile from the first line of the enemy. In the intervening space the hill descends to a transverse road, hedged on one side by a stake-and-rider fence. At that time a stone wall formed the other boundary and girdled the slope of a similar elevation beyond. On the broad plateau of this opposite height, in a little Lutheran churchyard among the monuments of the dead, the Federals had posted a battery in rear of their infantry lines.

Aiming over the heads of their own troops, the battery opened fire as soon as the battalion in which the cadets were ranged came in sight.

The Confederate troops, about three thousand strong, under the general command of Breckinridge, were disposed south of the town. Two thousand of these under General Gabriel Wharton, an old V. M. I. cadet, were posted on the west side of the pike; Echols's brigade, the cadets, and Colonel Edgar's battalion forming the second line.

The Federal forces under Sigel were formed in two lines north of New Market, and spread like "grasshoppers for multitude" from Smith's Creek, a mile on the east, to the crest of the hill and into the woods on the west. Between these opposing forces lay the town with a population sifted of its able-bodied males and composed mostly of women, children and old men.

The remaining thousand Confederate troops, stationed on the pike and eastward, were made up of the artillery, ten pieces with the two cadet guns commanded by Cadet Captain Minge, and a small body of cavalry led by General Imboden.

This narrative is concerned only with the forces in position on Shirley's Hill.

FIRST BLOOD

IT WAS not General Wharton's first intention to use the cadets, as he believed he could dislodge the Federals with his own brigade. Concealed by some friendly cedars, he went down the hill afoot in order to get a better command of the situation. Observing that the Federal batteries had full sweep of the face of the hill, he sent instructions to the officers in charge of the first line to advance double-quick down the slope regardless of order, halting and reforming at the road in the ravine.

This move was accomplished with such rapidity that the enemy failed to get their range and overshot, not a single man receiving a wound. Echols, with whom the the cadets were brigaded, followed at two hundred and fifty paces in the rear. By the time this second line had reached the same ground the Federal gunners had got the exact range.

General Wharton's directions had not been transmitted to Colonel Shipp, leading the cadets. The command was to advance.

The battery in the churchyard pouring deadly fire must be silenced. Down came the corps with beautiful precision, moving with the light tripping gait of the French infantry, as if on dress parade.

"Double-quick!" shouted Colonel Shipp, perceiving their exposure to the enemy's guns; and they broke into a long trot. But in a moment there was a terrible crash. A shell had exploded in their very faces. Captain Hill, tactical officer of Company C, and five of the lads went down. But as the order was given, "Close up, men," they ran together elbow to elbow and filled the gap.

Leaving their comrades to welter in their blood under the falling rain and amid the screeching bullets plowing the earth around them, they pressed on to join the veterans, and pausing under cover of the stone fence only long enough to correct the alignment, began clambering over the wall and up the bank to the top of the hill where the enemy was posted.

THE CHECKED RETREAT

AS THEY advanced, giving and receiving a withering fire, twice the Federal line retired. Captain Town, already quoted, says of the battery now doing such deadly work:

"Von Kleiser's battery consisted of four brass Napoleon guns and two twelve-pounder howitzers. It was a good battery, and its commander was very proud of it."

Wharton's brigade secured two guns of this battery, and the remaining four galloped back to a sheltered position in Bushong's farmyard, half a mile away. The cadets in the meantime had captured over one hundred prisoners, burly Hessians for the most part, speaking a jargon of broken English, and much surprised, as they so aptly expressed it at the remarkable daring

of the "leetle devils mit der white vlag."

The distance between the new and old positions of the Federal forces was not great, but the guns were dealing death. "Advance!" came the order. Wet to the skin, their natty uniforms begrimed with clay, many of them robbed of their shoes by the same stiff clay, all exhausted, the boys responded with a cheer. They ran to the charge.

Captain Town says of the battle at this point:

"As the cadets advanced, our guns played with the utmost vigor upon their lines; at first with shrapnel, then, as they came nearer, with canister, and, finally, with double loads of canister. As the battalion continued to advance, our gunners loaded at the last without stopping to sponge, and I think it would have been impossible to eject from the guns more missiles than those boys faced in their wild charge up that hill."

Here at one discharge three cadets, Cabell, Crockett and Jones, were mowed down, terribly mangled by the canister. Here also fell Cadet McDowell, of North Carolina, sixteen years old, small and slight and boyish, shot through the heart. A little nearer to the enemy lay Atwell, a gaping wound in his leg. He died later in the agony of lockjaw.

Here Jefferson received his fatal wound, and brave Joseph Wheelwright. Stanard went down a little farther on. Men were falling right and left, and Colonel Shipp was wounded. The veterans seemed to waver slightly. There was a moment of hesitancy, of irresolution.

Some one cried, "Lie down!" All obeyed, firing from the knee, all except Evans, the daring ensign, who still stood erect, a target six-foot-two, waving the colors. Captain Frank Preston, assistant professor, commanding Company B, had lost an arm at Winchester. He laughed as he lay down on his remaining one, saying he would at least save that. The corps was suffering heavily.

"Fall back and rally on Edgar's battalion!" some one ordered. But Cadet Pizzini, first sergeant of Company B, the fire of Corsica in his veins, raised his rifle and shouted he would shoot the first man who ran. Cadet Captain Colonna, Company D, rallied his men with words of encouragement.

THE CHARGE OF THE WHITE AND GOLD
FLAG

THE decisive moment had come. It was either a final charge or fall back; capture of the battery with victory, or defeat. At this juncture Henry A. Wise, Jr., commanding Company A, sprang to his feet and gave the order to rise and charge. Moving in-advance of the corps at double time, he led them toward the guns. The battery unlimbered for a last volley. On through fire and smoke and groans of the dying, through clay made redder with blood, they pressed up to the foe. The artillery teams were surrounded and disabled.

The gunners dropped their sponges and ran for their lives. The cadets leaped upon the battery, and it was theirs. Evans now proudly flung out the flag, the corps flag of white and gold, bearing a picture of Washington, which had so greatly excited the curiosity of the enemy throughout the battle.

While valiant deeds were done that day on other parts of the field, the Sixty-second Virginia claiming to have made possible the victory, the cadets had truly turned the tide at a critical moment. The rest of the battle was a mere rout, the Federals hurrying down the pike, hotly pursued by Confederate infantry and cavalry.

The engagement closed at 6:30 P.M., the enemy having fled across the North Fork of the Shenandoah River, burning the bridge behind them.

The Federal loss was from eight hundred to fifteen hundred; the Confederate about four hundred killed and wounded, more than half of this having fallen on the cadets and the Sixty-second, the cadet loss being eight killed and forty-eight wounded, out of two hundred and fifty engaged.

The sixteenth and seventeenth were spent in burying the dead and caring for the wounded on both sides. On the nineteenth began the return to Staunton, whence the cadets were ordered to report at Camp Lee, Richmond. The march was a triumphal procession, and at Richmond an ovation awaited the battalion. Drawn up in the Capitol Square, they received a vote of thanks from the Confederate Congress, then

in session, and were presented with a State flag by the Governor of Virginia.

THE HEROISM OF YOUTH

INCIDENTS in connection with the battle, always more interesting than the details of combat, were not wanting. When Cadet Jefferson fell, two of his comrades hastened to his aid. Indifferent to his own sufferings, he waved them aside. Pointing to the front, he said:

"That is the place for you! You can do me no good."

He was a mere lad, fifteen years of age, blue-eyed and golden-haired, with an almost girlish beauty. After the battle he was borne in an ambulance to the home of a citizen of the town by Cadet Ezekiel, then just a little Jew boy of no special promise, now the noted sculptor, Sir Moses Ezekiel, of Rome, knighted by the Italian Government in recognition of his skill as an artist.

Though tenderly nursed by his faithful comrade and the daughter of the house, Jefferson did not long survive the probing for the bullet that had pierced his breast. On the third day, just before his death, he requested Ezekiel to read from the fourteenth chapter of St. John's Gospel. Forgetting all differences of creed, the Jew poured into the ears of his dying friend those sweet words of cheer, significant in this crucial hour to the Israelite as well as to the passing spirit of his Christian comrade:

"Let not your heart be troubled; ye believe in God, believe also in *me*. In my Father's house are many mansions. I go to prepare a place for you."

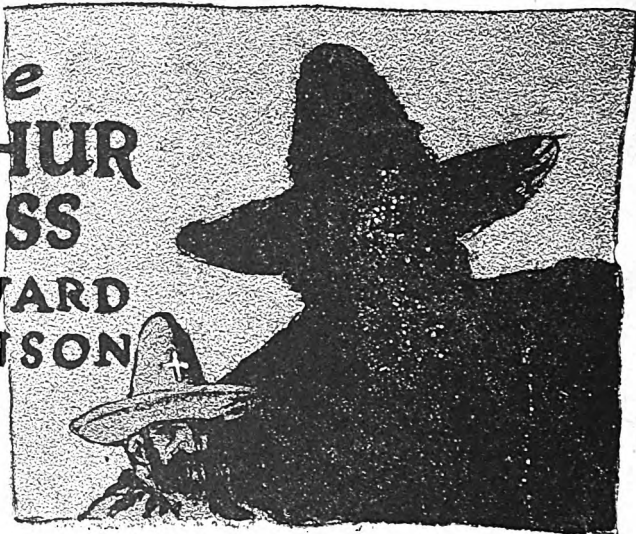
John S. Wise, since distinguished as a politician, a lawyer and an author, was one of those cadets who fell on Shirley's Hill at the outset of the battle. He received only a slight flesh wound, but was disabled for further service.

J. B. Stanard, a comrade of Wise's, confessed to his friend on the eve of battle a presentiment that he would be killed. Yet as he breathed his last in the old Bushong house, almost in the moment of victory, his message to his mother was:

"I fell where I wished to fall, fighting for my country, and I did not fight in vain."

The SULPHUR CROSS

by LEDWARD
RAWLINSO



PANCORBA is a desolate village perched on the barren rocks of the coast of Peru, with a thunderous surf incessantly pounding at its feet and an implacable sun burning and blistering overhead.

Outside of the arrival of the black-funneled passenger-tramps of the Pacific Mail, the only diversion the place affords is the burial of the latest victim of bubonic plague or knife-wounds in the little cemetery that separates the village from a desert cursed with eternal barrenness and a range of hills scorched by volcanic fire and gangrened with sulphur.

The entrance to the harbor is a narrow gateway of rock, at which on "surf days"—when the red flag is hoisted—the foaming waters charge and recharge at a terrific speed, flinging clouds of glittering white spray high into the air. It is not unusual for a steamer to lie dragging on her anchor for a week awaiting an opportunity to get inside the harbor and discharge her miscellaneous freight into the bulky lighters, receiving in return a cargo of copper ore from the mines of Cobrepuro, some ten leagues away.

A few baked-mud huts with corrugated iron roofs for the swarthy, half-naked laborers, any one of whom would be delighted to stick a knife into your abdomen for fifty cents; a store, a warehouse, and a tottering wooden hotel make up the village.

The permanent white population is very

small—to be exact, one. Up to a year ago this lone individual was Brook, the agent of the Compañía de Cobrepuro, whose duty it was to live in the heat and the dust and the smells and superintend the shipment of ore. The pay was good, but as he always considered it incumbent upon him to entertain a never-ending stream of ships' captains cursed with voracious appetites and perpetual thirsts, he usually came out with a deficit at the end of the month.

Shaken with drink and jaundiced by fever, Brook stuck manfully at his post to the end, a post that had sent fifty men to the cemetery before him and shipped the specters of a hundred more to Valparaiso and Buenos Aires. The only *gringo* on the company's pay-roll, Brook was a tall, spare man, with a lean, dissipated face and a watery eye, the result of three years of steady inebriation. He was the youngest son of an English nobleman, and at times, when he had consumed an inordinate quantity of brandy and only a little soda, he babbled a woman's name.

That was the old, old story—the story of a man and a woman which will be told as long as water trickles down from the hills.

At night, when the sickly yellow stars come peeping out through the hot heavens the bar-room of the hotel is crowded to its gaudy walls with a perspiring mass of Peruvians, Chilians and half-breeds, all religiously endeavoring to corrode the cast-iron linings of their stomachs with countless

glasses of *aguadiente*, *chica*, *pisco*, and other cheap and vicious drinks. If a man gets so drunk as not to be able to sit in his chair, the bartender will feed it to him with a spoon as he lies on the sawdust-covered floor without extra charge.



LIFE is short in Pancorba; men go to their death with great swiftness.

And the pace continues right to the brink of the grave, for the law of the *Compañía de Cobrepuro* decrees that the dead shall be buried within twelve hours.

The day the woman came panting up the stone steps from the little custom-house on the wharf, her baggage one small suit-case, Brook opened his eyes and wondered. When she signed her name on the register of the hotel as *La Viuda de Medollina*—the widow from *Medollina*—his heart began to beat a trifle faster than it should.

She was a striking-looking woman, exquisite of limb and feature, and with a peculiar undulating suggestion to her movements which gave one the impression that the flesh of which she was formed had been poured molten into the clinging folds of the dress she wore. Her face had a pale, ethereal look; her eyes, black as the blackest night, were filled with an unfathomable sorrow.

Until long after midnight Brook sat outside the door of his room smoking and drinking unceasingly. Somehow a strange sense of isolation that nothing would mitigate crept over him; his life was suddenly twisted beyond recognition. Up to this it had seemed as though he had been in *Pancorba* all his life; that all the women he had ever known had been slatternly *Peruanas* and fat, unwholesome squaws. Now the arrival of the widow had started him thinking, and the more he thought the more brandy he consumed.

The voice of the woman he loved was calling.

Next morning when he came trudging down the long, rambling veranda that runs round three sides of the hotel, he found the widow sitting in a steamer-chair gazing listlessly out at the great blue Pacific. As he passed, the woman spoke.

"Pardon me, señor," she said in Spanish, fanning herself nervously.

Brook wheeled sharply and took off his hat.

"I am at your service, madam," he replied deferentially.

She looked at him over her fan and he could see that she was inwardly distressed.

"Could you tell me," she asked, "whether *Señor Henri Jovet* is here?"

"He is not, madam," said Brook, suppressing his amazement. "He is out at *Cobrepuro*."

A wave of disappointment crept over the woman's face. She looked away to the shimmering ocean for a second, her big, black eyes swiftly speculating. Then she turned her head and said,

"Will he be here soon?"

"Yes, to-morrow night," answered Brook. "He always rides into town on Saturdays. That's the big night in *Pancorba*—everybody comes down from the mines."

"Thank you," said the widow with a forced smile that showed a row of fine teeth, white and regular like an ivory carving. "I want to see him."

The Englishman stood for a moment in thoughtful silence.

"I am sending a man to *Cobrepuro* after breakfast," he explained at length. "Shall I give him a message from you?"

"No, please don't," pleaded the woman. "I do not want *Jovet* to know that I am here until he arrives. I want to give him a surprise."

There was a contemptuous click to the last word. Her face hardened and there was a gleam of malice in her eyes.

"I shall respect your wishes, madam," said Brook, replacing his hat on his head.

"Again I thank you," exclaimed the widow. "I can trust you, I know."



AND as Brook stalked into the bar-room for his morning bracer, a thousand questions came singing through his brain. What kind of being was behind the dark, fiery eyes and the pale, unhappy face? What had such a beautiful creature in common with *Henri Jovet*, the coarse and sullen brute whose reputation was spoken of in whispers in every café from *Panama* to *Punta Arenas* and from *Port Stanley* to *Pernambuco*; the man with the wild, glistening eyes of an animal, the man who had untold murders to his name?

The more Brook thought about it, the more puzzled he became; a mad desire to solve the mystery took possession of him, a madness that he made no effort to check. He had not forgotten that *Jovet* had once emptied his sluices and jumped his claim

up the Orinoco, and he had long awaited an opportunity to settle for that. Now, if necessary, he would make an opportunity. He had nursed his noiseless vengeance long enough.

Mechanically he drank a glass of absinthe, set the glass down, and after signing the *vale* pushed before him by the sleepy waiter, returned to the veranda. The woman was still there. To her apparent surprise, Brook sank lightly into the unoccupied chair by her side.

There was a second of awkward silence; then the Englishman took off his hat, and with a hungry, lonesome look in his eyes, began:

"Madam," he said quietly, "I hope you will pardon this intrusion, but if it is not asking too much, I'd like to know what you want with a man like Jovet. He's not a man for a woman like you to associate with. Don't you know he's—he's a——"

A faint smile flickered over the woman's face.

"I want him on a matter of business—personal business," she said, in a low, strained voice, interrupting him.

Brook looked up perplexed.

"Could I do the business for you?" he inquired boldly. "I'm the British Consul here, Lord Mayor, Health Officer, Intendente and Corregidor."

"A thousand thanks," answered the woman with a peculiar tenderness in her voice. "I am afraid I must do it myself."

"If you could tell me what the business is," persisted the Englishman earnestly, "I could probably help you."



THE woman dropped her fan in her lap and for a time scrutinized him calmly; then she leaned forward, something of the crouching tigress in the poise of her body. A wild expression swept over her eyes.

"I am going to kill him, to kill him!" she panted.

Brook looked at her in amazement; he was thrilling all over and his face was scarlet.

"A great many men have tried to do that, but they all failed," he warned a little grimly.

"The Holy Mother will see that I do not fail!" exclaimed the woman, reverently crossing herself. "Listen and I will tell you why.

"Six months ago I was married in San José. My husband was the owner and captain of one of the river steamers, and as there was a great deal of freight going to the coast at that season of the year—hides, tagua nuts and cacao—we decided to spend our honeymoon on board. After the ceremony the people all came down to the wharf to bid us good-by, and as we stood together on the bridge and saw the handkerchiefs and the *mantas* waving, tears of happiness came tumbling down from my eyes. How short was that happiness! *Madre mia!*"

Brook was listening intently; the woman's eyes inexorably compelled his gaze.

"At La Platina we took on more freight and one passenger," she continued, "the only one we had. He was a big, bearded Frenchman, and carried a heavy revolver hung on a belt of cartridges about his waist. The moment I saw him I knew by his eyes that he had a dangerous soul within him, and a cold, deadening fear went to my heart. A woman's instinct is strong, señor. 'Tis a gift from God to offset her frailty.

"When I went up the little ladder to the bridge where my husband was at work, he remarked about the pallor in my cheeks.

"That passenger," I said, 'makes me afraid; he is treacherous.'

"Arturo tried to laugh my fears away and was just telling me of the fun we would have at Puerta Buena when he saw the passenger's face for the first time.

"*Por Dios!*" he gasped; 'that man is Henri Jovet!'

"That was enough. I knew the rest. For a year the police of three Republics had hunted him through the mountains and the valleys, and for a year he had laid them low as quickly as they came within the range of his deadly *pistola*. Up the Putumayo he murdered the owner of a rubber concession, took charge of the tract himself, and after taking into his service a horde of criminals and beach-combers, the flotsam and jetsam of the ports of the Amazon, treated the terrorized Indian slaves to indescribable tortures. His brutal nature relished the loathsome sights of the slave camps, the haggard faces and excoriated ankles of the shackled prisoners, the howling of the unfortunate wretches as a barbed whip tore their backs into ribbons of quivering flesh, the lepers——"

Brook shuddered involuntarily.

"They say here," he interrupted, "that at the end of the season when the *gaucheros* were paid the results of their labors in the fever-infested jungles, Jovet and his *mayordomos* hid themselves in the forest and shot the Indians one by one as they took the trails for their homes, and in this manner got the money back again."

The woman nodded gravely.

"That is not the worst by any means," she went on. "The very mention of the name Jovet sends a cold chill of fear to the heart of every man, be he cannibal or *cholo*, within a thousand miles of the palm-fringed banks of the Putumayo.

"And there was this brute, this man with the gleaming eyes of a jaguar, on board our little boat, calmly smoking a cigarette!

"My husband spoke: 'The Government of Peru has offered ten thousand *soles* for his arrest,' he whispered. 'Perhaps——'

"Just at that moment the engines stopped and the *Ventura* gradually slowed down until she was merely drifting with the current. Arturo blew frantically down the speaking-tube to the engine-room to ascertain what the trouble was, but receiving no answer he started down below. I followed close behind, trembling like one with the ague. As we reached the deck, Jovet approached; his face was positively fiendish, his eyes shone green with frenzy, like the eyes of a mad dog. In his hand was a revolver.

"What kind of a game is this you're playing?" he roared."


The woman quivered as a wave of emotion passed through her; her bosom heaved tumultuously.

"My husband's lips framed a reply," she sobbed, "but before he could utter the words there was a blinding flash! When the smoke cleared away Arturo lay dead!"

Here she gave a low, hysterical laugh that changed to a stifled scream:

"I loved him, oh, how I loved him!"

She moaned desolately, holding her head in her slender, half-white hands and rocking her body to and fro.

 BROOK sat watching her pityingly. The glow had gone from his face and his eyes were full of pain. She was certainly the most beautiful creature he had ever seen, and there was some-

thing in her half-appealing confidence that made every nerve in his body tingle.

"And you came here to kill Jovet?" he said when she had recovered somewhat.

The woman drew herself slowly up.

"I have tasted the cup of bitterness," she said in a voice that quavered and broke. "Now I must drink of the waters of sacrifice."

Their eyes met. She suddenly saw what was in his mind.

"Señor——"

"Madam!" interposed the Englishman, rising briskly to his feet, "to-morrow night Jovet will be here in this hotel robbing the ignorant laborers of the coin their aching bodies have minted in the poisonous shafts of Cobrepuro. It will be a pleasure for me to transact this little business for you at that time."

The woman sank into a chair and sobb shook her body from head to foot.

II



IT WAS Saturday night. Brook had stayed in his room the whole day, drinking unusually hard, for after all it was a hard task, this that was before him. It is one thing to kill a man in the heat of passion and another coldly, deliberately, to plan his death at an appointed hour, no matter how deserving he may be of capital punishment.

When the Englishman entered the bar-room he was drunk, very drunk; the corners of his mouth twitched and his head rolled from side to side like a palsied old man's. In the dismal light of the kerosene lamp that hung on a chain in the center of the low-roofed room his face seemed yellower than ever; the hollows in his cheeks and the bones in his hands were startlingly noticeable.

As usual, the place was crowded with natives and half-breeds from the mines of Cobrepuro, all loaded with pesos and magnificent thirsts. The air was heavy with the smell of liquor and clouded with the smoke of offensive, coarse tobacco.

Brook looked dazedly round, nodded to the bartender, and lurched unsteadily forward to the portable roulette where Henri Jovet sat intently watching the little white ball.

"Stand up—you—you big scoundrel!" he commanded, pointing a shaky forefinger

at the bearded Frenchman and making a frantic attempt to retain his balance. "I'm going to—make you—eat crow!"

The Frenchman leaned back and a frown gathered on his forehead.

"You are talking to me, m'sieu?"

With considerable difficulty Brook unholstered a revolver.

"Yesh, I'm talking to you," he snarled. "You've—you've played your gamesh long—long enough! Make your—your peace with your God—if you've got one. Then—get out your gun!"

The Frenchman hesitated an instant, while his eyes, which burned with lurid blue flame, wavered a moment.

"Get up—up you—coward!" cried Brook exultantly as he clutched at the table with both hands. His voice was almost a scream.

Jovet rose calmly to his feet. He was a big, greasy-looking man, over six feet in height, thick-set and heavily nourished, and hairy as a gorilla.

"About what is our quarrel, m'sieu?" he asked in a low, cutting tone.

Brook swayed from side to side for a moment, then fell to the floor with a crash, where he lay for a time muttering maledictions between his teeth. By a supreme exertion he scrambled laboriously to his feet amid roars of laughter.

Jovet sank heavily back into his chair.

"Quarrel?" muttered Brook embracing one of the wooden pillars that supported the roof. "Thish—ish no quarrel. Ish jush a settlemen' of accounts. You jumped my—claims—up the Orin—the Orinoco for one thing, and you—you killed the—Captain of the—*Ventura* for another."

For the next fifteen minutes the Englishman spat and sputtered a merciless, disjointed, tongue-lashing, baring the Frenchman's soul naked as no man had ever dared do it before.



DURING this time Jovet sat motionless, his arms tightly folded. His coarse and sullen face was suffused with a murderous fury that drew the blood from beneath his tan and left him a ghastly white. For a space there was a heavy silence, then the big man pushed back his chair and came to his feet.

"This Englishman knows too much," he growled as he whipped out a revolver.

There was a wild stampede for the door. Only one remained, a khaki-clad native,

who refused to leave his seat in the far corner of the room. Quietly sipping a glass of *chica*, he sat with his back turned on the two men, apparently indifferent to the impending tragedy.

Suddenly the proprietor, a fat, round-faced Chilean, rushed into the room.

"*Por Dios!*" he cried, wringing his hands. "Don't shoot in here! If you must fight, it is dark and lonely on the beach, and the tide will carry away the wreckage. But this man"—and here he pointed to Brook—"is too *boracho* to stand. Besides that, señor, he is a good customer, very good."

"Muñoz," yelled the scowling Frenchman, "this is no affair of yours! If we do any damage I'll pay you for it and pay you well. Now get out!"

"Yesh—get out," articulated Brook as he plunged toward the proprietor.

But the effort was too much; like a stricken bullock he again dropped heavily to the floor.

Quick as a flash the Chilean jumped on a chair, lifted the lamp from its chain, and fled in terror of the Frenchman's wrath.

Jovet stood in the darkness cursing.

"Lesh shoot—without a light," muttered Brook. "You're drunk—and—and I'm sober. Ish only fair—only fair."

"*Très bien, m'sieu,*" said the Frenchman with a rasping laugh. "It shall be so. I am like the tiger, I can see in the dark."

While the Englishman struggled to his feet, Jovet struck a light, took a glass of *chica* from one of the tables and dropped several matches in it.



FOR a few seconds the flickering, yellow light in his hand showed the convulsive fury of his features and the frenzy in his eyes.

"Because you are the only man who ever had the nerve to lay for me in the open, and because you are miserably drunk, you little rat, I am going to give you the advantage," snarled the Frenchman. "With the damp sulphur ends of these matches I make a heavy cross on my *sombrero*, so. It looks like a bunch of fireflies in the canes along the Putumayo. Now I put the hat back on my head. You are drunk and I am sober, but so long as the sulphur burns you will know by my hat where I am. Aim a little below the cross and you will get a bull's-eye—perhaps. You see I am

not a coward after all, m'sieu. I take my chances."

Through the sickening darkness gleamed a phosphorescent cross, unearthly and unreal, from which arose a ghostly, vaporous smoke.

For a second there was an agonizing silence; Jovet spoke again.

"Are you ready?" he demanded slowly.

"Yesh."

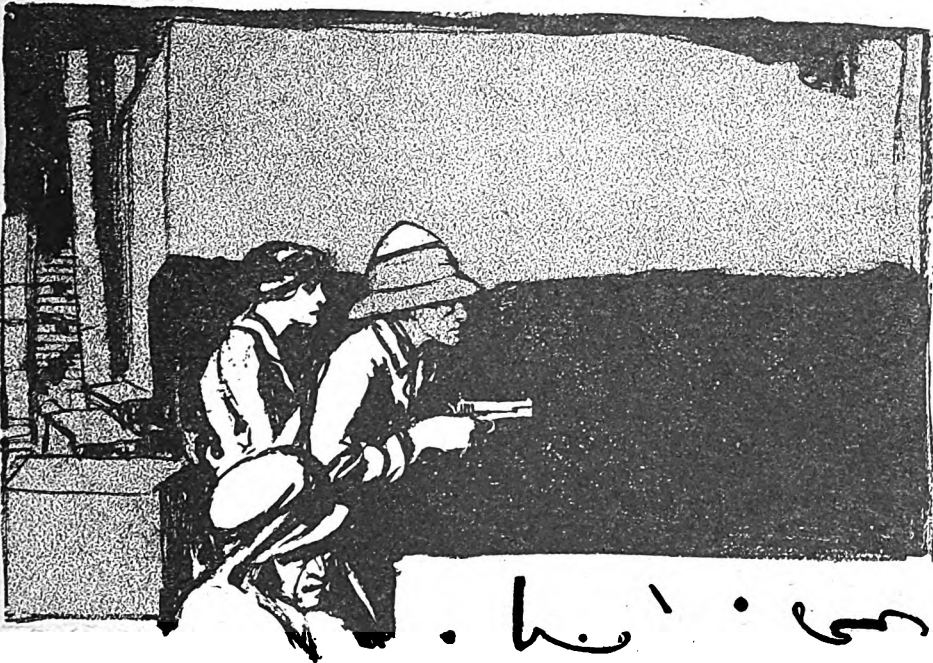
"Then——"

Before the sentence was finished, a shot

rang out and a man crashed to the floor.

When the trembling Chilian returned with the lamp, the onlookers saw a strange sight. At one end of the room lay the Frenchman rolling and writhing in the agony of death. In the far corner, steadying herself with the table at which she had been seated all evening, was a woman in a man's suit of khaki, a smoking revolver in her hand, a mocking smile upon her lips.

She was the widow—the widow from Medollina.



AROMANCE of NEW YORK and TEHERAN

by GRACE SARTWELL MASON

and JOHN NORTHERN HILLIARD

CHAPTER XXVIII

THE CITY OF BEAUTIFUL THINGS

THEY had breakfast among the ruins of the Palace of Xerxes—among fragments of fluted columns and tumbled-down doorways through which the envoys of tributary nations once marched in gorgeous proces-

sion bearing gifts to the Great King; among sculptured panels and slabs that had taken an army to hoist into position; among shattered friezes and tablets strewn about the stylobate whereon the "King of Kings" reared his mansion of marble and stone.

On every hand were ruin and decay. Ravens croaked in the deserted palaces; and a kite poised over the City That Was

They sat on a stone tablet carved with a cuneiform inscription and ate their meal of *sandjiak* and tea above a legend that ran:

I AM XERXES, THE GREAT KING, THE KING OF KINGS, KING OF THE NATIONS WITH THEIR MANY PEOPLES, KING OF THIS GREAT EARTH, EVEN TO AFAR!

"People are like frogs in a puddle," observed Jaggard; "you can catch 'em and throw 'em back and catch 'em again. Old King Xerxes used to sit on his peacock throne and hook 'em; and now the Czar's got out his little rod and line. You'd think they'd get tired of it, but they keep on nibbling at the bait."

Savidge nodded absently. He was going over in his mind their position and his chances of recovering the stolen maps. He was the only one of the party that had either food or arms. In their flight from the Bakhtiari everything Judy and her escort possessed had been left behind.

There was food enough to last the four of them a day—with economy. The question of rations was not serious, for six miles to the south of them was a tiny *chapar khanah*; but there was another aspect to the situation that was not so cheerful. With the brightening of the dawn a wind had risen. It was now swooping up from the south in spirals of sand, and it had completely obliterated every mark by which they might trace Wolkonsky in his flight from the Lost City.

"Couldn't we start on and trust to luck to hit his trail?" Judy asked.

Savidge shook his head.

"The horses need rest. We might be able to travel for another twelve hours, but the horses couldn't without rest. And do you see those sand-devils? The whole surface of the Plain of Mervdasht has shifted over night. The keenest Siberian bloodhound couldn't nose a trail a yard away from the Grand Staircase. You see, we don't know which way Wolkonsky's headed. He may have gone north to Ispahan or south to Shiraz, intending to work around by the Persian Gulf and the Arabian Sea. He may have gone straight east, intending to make Teheran by the way of Yezd, or he may have gone west to Bushire. It's a pretty big country, you see; and a chap can drop out of sight a lot easier than at

home, where the telephone or telegraph can pick him up most anywhere."

"Then what can we do?" she cried.

Savidge looked with a smile at the little figure perched on the carved tablet of Xerxes. Dusty, sunburnt, in a flannel shirt, with her hair in a heavy schoolgirl braid, and a faded silk handkerchief knotted about her throat, she had never looked so pretty to him. For in spite of fatigue and lack of sleep, she was dauntlessly ready to go anywhere and do anything that he said. She was very tired, but there was a valiant spirit in every line of her.

"We'll take it easy during the heat of the day," he replied. "Late in the afternoon we'll start for Shiraz. There we can get into communication with Gholam Reza or Nadir Shah. They'll find out quickly enough where Wolkonsky is, and then we can set out on his trail."

"Couldn't you appeal to the American minister at Teheran?"

Savidge laughed his mirthless laugh.

"My dear girl, the American minister at Teheran is about as important as the secretary of a Chamber of Commerce. The real power in Persia is the Russian minister. No; all we can do just now is to trust to the men of the Cause. If Wolkonsky gets to Teheran first, there'll be about as much show of getting those maps back as there is of getting ice-cream cones over there in the Hall of a Hundred Columns!"



JUDY wrung her hands together.

"John! There's something else—what became of those papers you were carrying from the Eastern Securities Company? Has he got those, too?"

"He has those, too."

Judy made a gesture of utter despair.

"Then we've lost the whole Game! The maps are gone, and he knows the amount of the Company's bid—everything!"

Savidge's eyes began to twinkle. He looked at her with a boyish and irresponsible grin.

"You know, Judy," he drawled, "I've a sneaking idea Wolkonsky doesn't know he's carrying the Company's papers!"


"John!" she gasped, and backed away from him as if she thought he was losing his mind. "What *do* you mean?"

But he refused to answer. He only laughed and put his arm about her shoulders.

"Come along, and let's forget the whole blame thing for an hour. Let's pretend we're tourists doing Persepolis. I'll be the special conductor and you'll be the tourist—come along!"

She saw that he wanted to forget for a time the task that lay ahead of him, and she threw herself into his mood. While Jaggard took watchman's duties and Hassan watered the horses in a tiny stream that ran at the foot of the hills back of Persepolis, she wandered with her husband through the silent squares and ruined palaces of the Lost City. To Judy it was not a "city" at all, but merely a gigantic platform of hewn stone, stippled with splintered blocks and shattered columns, with huge plinths falling into dust and walls rent with great cracks, with ruined archways standing gap-toothed to the winds, and battered sculpture representing the gods and the puissant kings of ancient Iran.

But to Savidge, the Lost City meant a great deal more. He "Baedekered" her through the silent streets and reconstructed the city before her eyes with the enthusiasm of the savant. This was his hobby—quarrying in the ruins of ancient civilizations; and down in his heart of hearts John Savidge was prouder of his monograph on Persepolis, which was read before the Ninth International Congress of Orientalists, than of his record as a builder of railways and bridges.

 HE KINDLED to his subject as he saw Judy's eyes glow, her cheeks flush. A raven, perched on a broken column, croaked his displeasure when they invaded the Palace of Darius, which stands on the highest part of the platform. Pigeons cooed in the ruined temple where two score years previously the explorer Stanley had carved his name high on a broken pillar.

Savidge rebuilt for her the gorgeous Palace of Xerxes, deciphering the inscribed tablets and friezes. He fascinated her with his description of the Hall of a Hundred Columns, as it stood when Darius held there his ceremonies of state. Kicking aside a mass of rubble and débris—the detritus of centuries—he disclosed a chunk of carbonized cedar.

"More than two thousand years ago," he said, "this piece of wood was part of a wonderful ceiling—a ceiling of cedar, carved

and chiseled and polished, inlaid with gold and silver and ivory, studded with topazes and rubies and with turquoises from the mines of Nishapur. This ceiling had a thousand beams and they were supported by pillars hewn out of solid rock. Can you see it—the friezes ornamented with scrolls and soffits of gold; the walls hung with the most gorgeous tapestries from the looms of Khorasan; and the dados of hammered brass?

"Sometimes, when I had been working down here for weeks, I used to believe I could see the place as it looked in its great days, rising out of the plain here, with the sun flashing on its temples and palaces!"

"Why! did you live here?" she asked wonderingly.

"Months, off and on. I worked up most of my plans here. It was the safest place I could find. They took me for an unusually batty archeologist and let me alone. You remember I told you about the underground chambers and the mile or two of passageways? I was practically the first to discover them. Of course, others had known about them, but none of the later explorers had them on their maps. I poked around and found the stairway that led to them, and down there I worked. Maybe there'll be time to go down there before we leave, but now you must get some sleep—Jove! what a wind!"

They stepped out from a huge block of stone that had sheltered them and gasped in the sudden and unexpected gale. A dusky cloud of desert sand swirled across the Lost City, blotting out the sun and filling Judy's hair and eyes with grit.

"I thought so," muttered Savidge; "we're in for a regular sand blizzard—about the worst thing that can happen down here. May keep up for two or three days and—and I haven't a thing to smoke!"

CHAPTER XXIX

BENEATH THE GIANT CISTERN

BY THE time they rejoined Jaggard among the ruins of the Palace of Xerxes, the wind was so strong it was all Judy could do to stand up against it. She noticed that already the sand had drifted inches deep on the north side of each fallen column and block of stone, and lay ribbed across the stone floor of the plateau. The

air was a maelstrom of whirling sand, blotting out the landscape. Behind the dusky cloud the sun was nothing but a sickly, yellow blur. The sand-laden wind swirled over the city with a long-drawn-out swishing noise like the sound of huge-girthed rollers breaking on a level shore.

They could just make out the figure of Hassan fighting his way toward them through the storm. He had picketed the horses in the hills back of the city; Jaggard was gathering up blankets and saddles that were fast being drifted under the sand and placing them in a sheltered place behind the mound in the center of the plateau.

"Keep together!" Savidge had to raise his voice in order to be heard above the hullabaloo of the wind.


He untied the pugree from Judy's helmet and swathed it about the upper part of her face.

"We won't be able to stand it up here in a minute!" he shouted. "Follow me!"

They closed up and picked their way slowly and painfully across the great stylobate, Savidge leading and Hassan bringing up the rear with some blankets. They could not see a half dozen feet ahead of them and Jaggard and Judy had to rely wholly upon Savidge's intimate knowledge of the ground. The wind whistled about their ears, the sand pelted them, and their clothes looked as if they had been through a flour-mill.

After what seemed to Judy hours of blind groping, they stopped in front of a huge block of stone against which the sand splashed like waves against a breakwater. Above them, through the yellow blur, Judy could make out the vague leer of the great winged bull. Savidge stooped down and slipped between the forelegs of the beast. Judy followed and found herself in darkness that reverberated with the sound of his voice.

"Don't move! We're at the head of a steep flight of stairs. Wait till I light a match!"

 IN THE brief flare of the match he found her hand and guided her to the first step of the stairs. Then the match went out, and they descended through abysmal darkness. It seemed to Judy they went down a thousand steps, more or less, into the very bowels of the earth.

"Now, stand still where you are," said Savidge's voice.

He struck a second match and they could see him fumbling at the wall near the foot of the stairs. Plunging his arm in to the elbow he brought out a handful of candles. When he had given each of them one, he led the way down a short passage to what appeared to be an enormous hall or crypt, with two rows of huge pillars springing upward into the darkness. Their four will-o'-the-wisp lights made little golden patches of radiance in the velvet blackness; their voices echoed uncannily when they spoke to one another.

Judy noticed that one of the walls at the end of the chamber was perforated with window-like openings.

"We're directly under the Porch of Xerxes at the head of the Great Stairway," Savidge explained. "Those openings lead to channels that used to connect with the cistern overhead. That cistern had a capacity of several million gallons of water and I've a theory that when too many of his enemies got dangerous, Darius used to put them in this room, close the doors and turn the water on. There's no other way to account for the channels—and I wouldn't put it past those old kings!"

"Pleasant chaps!" murmured Jaggard.

He was, as usual, serenely ready for anything. He and Savidge had been sizing each other up since daylight in furtive man-fashion, and each had come to the conclusion that the other would be a very good backer in a fight. There had been small opportunity for conversation between them; but Judy had told her husband of Jaggard's championing her cause, and Savidge had expressed his gratitude briefly, with perhaps the slightest twinge of jealousy in his heart that another man should have been the one to share Judy's first adventures.

"Is the stairway we came down the only way out of here?" Jaggard asked, coming back from a stroll around the crypt. "There's another passageway opening off the end of this room."

"That's the second way out," answered Savidge. "It comes up in the propylæum of the Hall of a Hundred Columns. There may have been a way out in Darius's day through the cistern, but now the channels are choked with sand and the débris of centuries. There are two stairways only

CHAPTER XXX

HIDE AND SEEK

that I know of—and I flatter myself I know Persepolis under ground as no other man alive knows it.”

Jaggard took his candle and went off on an exploring trip of his own, after Savidge had cautioned him against losing himself in the maze of passageways; Hassan composed himself, Oriental fashion, on his heels near the stairway and went to sleep. Savidge folded a blanket on the stone floor in front of one of the huge pillars and bade Judy try to get a little sleep.

THE air in the great chamber was fresh and the place had not a vestige of dampness, owing to an elaborate system of air-passages running in from under the Great Stairway and the Porch of Xerxes. But the darkness was complete, except where their candles pricked the gloom; and when they spoke aloud, their voices echoed so hollowly that they fell to speaking in low tones as if afraid of disturbing the ghosts of hapless men and women that had come to their end in this forgotten chamber.

Judy sat down obediently on the blankets, but her eyes were very wide and bright.

“I don’t think I can sleep,” she said. “It’s the spookiest place I’ve ever seen. Would you—would you mind sitting down? I’m not scared, you know, but I’d feel more comfortable if you sat down. There’s plenty of room on these blankets.”

Savidge needed no second invitation. He dropped down beside her, and to make quite sure she was not afraid, he put his arm around her and she leaned her cheek quite naturally against his shoulder. And they talked. Their theme was older than the Lost City itself. It was born when the world was born; and it will be young when the ashes of the world go sifting down the Milky Way.

Doubtless other couples had sat in that fatal crypt and seen a radiance in the darkness; but Judy and John Savidge took no account of them. They were wrapt in contemplation of their own singular case; and they told each other the things that lovers have recounted since the world was born—how and when and where it all began.

Gradually they worked down to the present, from those incredible days when he had been the Man from Bagdad, and she was The Little Girl in the Cage.

THEY confessed to each other those weaknesses that become adorable in the person one loves. She admitted being afraid of the dark, and he confessed to a romantic imagination that no Board of Directors ever would have suspected.

“What I loved in you first, Judy, was your way of looking as if you actually saw the things I described to you. I wouldn’t have admitted it to you then, but I’m just as keen about picturing out things as you are. Do you know, I can shut my eyes and see that railroad we’re going to build across this sleeping land? I can see the construction gangs stringing out across the plains, and the bridge-builders with their cranes and pile-piers, and the supply trains creeping after.”

“I know—I know!” she whispered.

“It’s God’s own gift—the talent to dream. That’s one reason why I could work down here all those months and keep from going crazy with the loneliness of the place. To me it never was a Dead City. I built it up all over again. Sometimes I used to have a queer feeling that I had been here before—ages and ages ago, you know. I suppose that sounds like rot, doesn’t it? In the States, in the great cities of the world, I shouldn’t dare even to think of such a thing. But here—well, here it’s different. Anything is possible here, in these old ruins, among the scowling faces of all these outlandish gods and men, among these tombs of world-old warriors and kings.

“Many a night, Judy, I’ve lain up there in the Palace of Xerxes, looking up through the shattered columns at the stars and fancying that the world had rolled back two thousand years—the knightly years, as Henley calls them—and that I was a King in Babylon and all the monarchs of the tributary nations marched humbly before me bearing gifts! And as I lay there under the stars I could hear the thunder of my warriors clattering up the great stone staircase with the heads of my enemies on their saddle-bows, and—”

Savidge’s voice was blotted out by a rumble like that of heavy artillery racketing over a stony pavement. Judy clutched her husband’s arm and the pair looked at each

other with questioning eyes. The rumble grew louder and louder, rolled over their heads and then died away as suddenly as it came, leaving a silence so thick and heavy it seemed to soak up the very sound of their breathing.

"Your dream—coming true!" she gasped.


"That's horsemen riding up the stone stairway!" Savidge cried, springing to his feet.

"The Bakhtiari!" she whispered.

"No, I don't believe it. They're too superstitious to come into the city."

"Then who?"

"That's what I'm going to find out!"

 JAGGARD'S candle could be seen bobbing toward them from the depths of a remote passageway like the ghost of a lonely firefly; and Hassan came striding across the chamber with a question in his face. Savidge took from under a fold of his *abba* a brace of automatic pistols. One he gave to Jaggard and the other to Hassan.

"Likely enough it's some caravaners driven in by the storm," Savidge continued; "but we can't afford to take any chances. I'm going up there to see—no, there's no danger, Judy! I know where they are, and even if they discover our horses they won't know where we are. Stay over there in the center of the chamber and keep your candle lighted. Hassan, guard the bottom of the stairs, there, and Jaggard, will you watch the second passageway? When I'm coming back, I'll give an owl's hoot—one. If I give two, put out your lights at once and wait for me over there at the entrance to the second passage where Jaggard will be. Understand?"

They nodded assent, and Savidge crept silently up the stairs and disappeared into the darkness above. How long they waited there in the gloom none of them knew. They lost all track of time. And none of them spoke. Hassan, always silent and somber, was rooted at the foot of the stairs, his dark face as impassive and inscrutable as ever. Jaggard, too, was silent.

Judy from her pillar could see his candle at the other end of the room, a tiny point of light in the immensity of the place. She held her own candle in her hand. Its light struck upward on her white face and disheveled hair. Her eyes were

enormous and dark with suspense, and she leaned forward a little, straining her ears to catch the sound of Savidge's voice or his returning footsteps.

After an interminable wait, her ears, grown acute by reason of the strain upon her nerves, caught a faint scratching sound on the stairs. She saw Hassan slide back the bolt of the automatic, and in the same instant, there came down through the gloom the faint cry of an owl. It was instantly followed by another. Hassan snatched up his candle and sprang toward her. As he clutched her arm he blew out both candles.

"Quick, Mem sahib!"

He drew her silently and swiftly across the chamber to where Jaggard was standing in the passageway. In less than a minute they heard the sound of feet feeling their way over the stone floor, and Savidge joined them. When he spoke, his voice was exultant.

"It's Wolkonsky and a woman!" he said.

"Miss Arlundsden!" whispered Judy.

Savidge spoke a few quick words to Hassan in the vernacular and they heard the Arab's sandaled feet padding softly down the second passageway.


"They were driven back by the storm," Savidge explained. "There are two natives with them, and they're all coming down here."

"Good!" cried Jaggard. "We can fight it out here man to man."

"Not yet," replied Savidge. "We're even as far as numbers go; but you forget we can muster only two pistols between us. They've got rifles and revolvers. We'll have to try strategy first. Listen!"

Voices could be heard coming nearer down the first stairway.

"We haven't any time to lose," Savidge added. "I'll go ahead. Follow me close."

 HE PICKED up Judy's blankets and gave them to Jaggard, taking the automatic pistol himself. Silently the three groped their way through the long dark passage, their hands slipping along the smooth-faced wall. After several turnings, Savidge lit a candle and they found themselves blinking in a large chamber similar to the one they had left. Savidge pointed to a flight of stone steps in one corner.

"That's the second way out. Hassan is above by this time, guarding the other way—"

—the one we came down. We've got Wolkonsky trapped—underground!"

"Nailed up right and tight!" Jaggard chuckled.

"And the best part of it is he doesn't know we're here!" said Judy. Her eyes were sparkling with excitement.

"He knows by this time." Savidge smiled at her puzzled expression. "It wouldn't take long for a chap like Wolkonsky to guess what became of those candles. We'd better get up above before he catches us here."

At the top of the stairs a narrow shaft of light located for them the entrance into the open air. Savidge looked out cautiously, and then slipped through the narrow opening. They were standing under a propylæum in front of the ruins of the Hall of a Hundred Columns. Across the open court they could see the pair of winged bulls, near one of which stood Hassan, his head bent as if he was listening, the pistol held cocked in his hand. The storm had somewhat abated, although the air was still full of a light swirl of sand.

"Jaggard, suppose you take Mrs. Savidge over there to a sheltered spot and make her comfortable. She ought to get a little rest. It may be hours before they attempt to come up from down there. I'll stand guard here." And aside to Jaggard he added: "Take her out of range."

Judy opened her mouth to protest, but before a word got out they heard Hassan's voice exclaim harshly in the vernacular. Then there came the sound of a revolver-shot across the stone plateau, followed immediately by the long, shattering report of an automatic.

"They're rushing Hassan!" Savidge exclaimed. "Judy, keep under cover. Guard this entrance, Jaggard!"

And he started running through the sand-laden air toward the smoke-puffs that curled about the legs of the great stone beast that guarded the first entrance to the underground city.

CHAPTER XXXI

A FIGHT AND A RETREAT

FOR one tense moment Judy stood with her heart pounding in her throat. Then there swept over her the realization that Savidge was in danger. She forgot

everything else; forgot that she was a quiet and eminently sensible young woman in whose life battle, murder and sudden death had played no more stirring part than is vouchsafed by a virile imagination; forgot that she was a part of the highly intensified and complicated civilization of the twentieth century—forgot everything in fact except that she was a woman and must be fighting with her man.

In that moment she sloughed the factitious culture of the centuries and became the primitive woman, akin to the woman of the cave that trudged shoulder to shoulder with her man and took her part in the hoeing.

Through the light swirl of the sand, she saw three men at the feet of the winged bull—Hassan and two others that had thrown themselves out upon him from the narrow doorway. Then there came a fusillade of shots and the smoke blotted out the combatants. She ran toward them with a bird-like sensation of lightness and swiftness, oblivious to the crashing of the automatics, absolutely, for the moment, without fear. Just as she came near enough to make out their figures through the smoke and flying sand, she saw Hassan stagger backward and fall with a flinging up of one arm, and Savidge spring toward him, his pistol leveled at the opening to the underground passage.

Only one of the attacking party was visible and he had retreated to the doorway. Judy darted upon the automatic that Hassan had dropped; and she had time even in that crowded instant to think gratefully of Jaggard, who had taught her to use a pistol with some effect, during the long ride to Tabriz.

When she straightened up from the ground Savidge was standing close to the side of the entrance to the underground stairway. His face was set and his eyes had in them the glint of cold steel. At his feet the blood was trickling in a thin thread from a wound in Hassan's head. Judy kept her eyes averted from that sinister line of crimson and gripped her pistol. After a long minute of listening, Savidge looked around at her, saw her white, exalted face and the pistol gripped in her hand.

"Good girl!" he smiled at her.

"Hassan—is he dead?" she whispered.

Savidge shook his head.

"Only a scalp wound, I think. I want

you to stand here and listen for any sound from the stairway. They've retreated with one man wounded, but they'll probably rush the second entrance over there as soon as they get their second wind. I'll stand guard there and send Jaggard over here to fix up Hassan. Keep away from the opening!"

He bent for an instant over Hassan, then he patted her on the shoulder.

"Good girl!" he said again, and hastened across the ruined city to the propylæum in front of the Hall of One Hundred Columns.

The soldier that receives a decoration from the hands of his general for gallantry on the field of battle could not feel prouder than Judy felt over that touch on her shoulder and those two simple words of praise. It established a new bond between them; for, after all is said and done, the highest expression of love between a man and a woman is experienced only by those that have fronted a great danger together and looked unflinchingly into the eyes of death.



PISTOL in hand, she took up her post beside the forelegs of the great stone bull. In a moment Jaggard appeared, bound up Hassan's head and proceeded to half carry, half drag him to the shelter of the ruins where they had eaten their breakfast. He then went to the hills back of the city for water to bathe the wound.

The wind went down, the air cleared and the sun shone out, scorching bright from a turquoise sky. About a hundred yards away across the ruins that strewed the plateau, Judy could see her husband leaning against a pillar, his pistol in hand, alertly waiting. A burning, oppressive quiet settled over the Lost City; the horses, picketed not far away among the ruins of Xerxes' Palace, stood quiet with drooping heads; a kite hung for a moment high up against the brazen blue of the sky, and then sailed away with a languorous movement of its wings. Savidge waved to her to sit down, and she sank back in the shadow cast by the great wings of the bull.

It was not much past the middle of the afternoon, but it seemed to her that days had passed since they first sighted the Lost City looming up through the dawn. She sat on her heels, the automatic clutched in

her hand, her ears straining for sounds of movement beyond the narrow opening. She and Savidge were too far apart for conversation, but she could watch his every movement, and she kept her eyes fixed on him, dreading the sound of the first shot that should announce Wolkonsky's second attempt to get out of the trap in which he found himself.

But no sound broke the stillness of the afternoon heat. Jaggard came back with water and finished his dressing of Hassan's wound. Then he made tea and brought her a cup, with a generous piece of *sandjiak* and some date-paste. She ate and drank eagerly, unaware that the two men had gone on half rations that she might have enough. It was decided, upon her insistence, that Savidge, who had not slept for two nights, should be relieved by Jaggard and get two hours' rest. Hassan had recovered consciousness and Jaggard believed he would be up and around in a few hours.

The important thing was that Savidge should be in good form for the night's events—whatever they were to be—and, somewhat reluctantly, he gave up his post to Jaggard. Bringing his blanket over to where Judy sat, he stretched out in the shade of the winged bull.

"I hate to sleep and leave you on guard, Judy," he said. "Are you sure you can stand it, girl?"

"I never felt more wide awake in my life! I'm equal to anything. I only wish they would come up!" she cried, her eyes very big and bright.

Savidge laughed drowsily,

"Good little Judy! Didn't I say she would make a good soldier—"

His voice trailed off and he was asleep before the sentence was finished.

Judy laid the revolver on her knees and sat with her chin in her hands. Many curious and undreamed of thoughts went through her mind. Very close to the surface of every normal woman sleeps that other woman who has not forgotten the cave days. In Judy the cave-woman had awakened. As she sat there watching over her sleeping man, listening for the sound of his enemies' approach, she was as old as the sun-bitten stones themselves.

Something elemental and eternal awoke in her; a new look brooded in her eyes. When the sun dropped lower and shone hot upon him, she moved so that she could

still shade him from its rays; and a sweet, deep expression came into her face.

CHAPTER XXXII

"ALWAYS TOGETHER, JUDY, TO THE END "

THE sun had gone down and the sudden twilight was creeping like a blue spirit through the ruins of the city, and the jackals were beginning to tune up for their evening concert, when Savidge awoke.

"Well, dear, how goes it?" he asked as he stretched his arms.

"All quiet along the Polvar! Haven't heard so much as a whisper all the afternoon."

"Which means they're brewing something for to-night," he said. "You must have something to eat—if there's anything left, and turn in for a good long rest."

"I've been thinking—can't I keep guard with you to-night?"

He looked at her tenderly and shook his head.

"Please, John," she pleaded, "I want to be with you if—if anything should happen!"

He took her face between his two hands, looked down into her eyes as if he would find the soul in their liquid depths, and kissed her full upon the lips.

"You must sleep to-night." The solicitude in his voice was very sweet to her. "You must get all the rest you can. We may have to get away any moment, and you must be ready to ride long and hard."

"But you—you may be in danger!"

Savidge gave her slender shoulders a little shake.

"Don't worry your little head about me! I've got the whip-hand of our friend, and he knows it! He got all he wanted this morning, and I reckon he'll be mighty careful the next move he makes."

"But he won't stay down there like a rat in a trap!"

"And starve? I guess not! He'll either try to fight his way out, or work some sort of trick."

"He may surrender."

Savidge shook his head.

"Wolkonsky's not one of the surrendering kind. No, he'll fight it out—unless—unless—"

"Unless what?"

Judy looked up quickly. She saw that he was debating some question with himself.

"Oh, I just happened to think of the woman—Miss Arlundsén," he said, with an attempt at lightness that did not deceive her. "Her being down there sort of complicates matters for Wolkonsky."

Judy flushed to her temples.

"And my being up here complicates matters for you, is that what you mean?"

"Yes," he answered honestly, "it does. If you were not here—oh, my dear, my dear, don't misunderstand me!" He took her face again between his hands and kissed the eyes that looked wistfully into his own. "Don't you see how it is, Judy? It is because I love you so—it's because you have become so precious to me that I'm afraid—yes, afraid! That's the only word for it. I've lived so many centuries without you that if anything should happen to you now, it would mean the end for me!"

She leaned closer to him and pressed her cheek softly against his shoulder. And thus they stood for a moment thinking of many things. At last she moved with a sigh and slipped her arm about his neck.

"You are a man," she said slowly, "and must do your work. Whatever happens, you must do your work. You are not made for little things, John, dear. Oh, I know more about you than you dream! Hassan has told me—and Jaggard. Your bravery is a word in the East." She drew his head down to hers. "I love you, dear, because you are a man!"

"And I love you," he whispered, "because you are a woman, the bravest and the most glorious woman in all the world, and—"

"The happiest, dear," she said.

FROM the tangle of ruins at the other end of the stone plateau came a succession of weird cries. Judy started and shrank closer to her husband.

"It's nothing," Savidge answered her. "It's only the owls waking up. They'll keep that up all night, and the jackals will answer them from out there on the plain. So you see, I won't be lonesome."

"I wish I could stay with you," she urged.

"So do I, dear, but you must get some sleep. Stay here a minute while I go see how Hassan is coming on and get a bite for you to eat."

When he came back he brought water and a small piece of *sandjiak*—the last in

the saddle-bags. She refused to touch it until he had consented to take a mouthful; and they ate this very inadequate meal sitting on the same block of stone, while the moon came up magnificently to turn the Lost City into a silver miracle. Across the plateau they could see Jaggard at his post, entirely comfortable and quite at home.

"I like your friend, Judy," Savidge said. "He stands four-square to the winds and doesn't scare worth a cent."

Judy looked pleased.

"I knew you would like him, for he, too, is a man. I never could have got down here without Jaggard."

"I know, I know. He's done me a service that I can never repay. Just the same, Judy, I confess—I don't mind telling you now—I was a little jealous of your Mr. Jaggard."

Judy laughed.

"Jealous? Tom Jaggard is not the kind of man that falls in love with every woman he meets. He's not a woman's man. He has treated me as if I were his sister. He's not the kind to settle down by his own fire-side. Wives, he puts it, are excess baggage."

"Excess baggage!" Savidge repeated. "Some wives would be exactly that."

She looked up at him with wistful, sea-green eyes, and he read the question in them.

"Not you, Judy," he said. "You're just what I said you would be, that day in the mezzanine balcony. You're the kind that will always play the game, and play it like a soldier."

Her face flushed and her eyes glowed with happiness.

"I don't ask for anything but the chance to play it with you, John. Wherever you go, whatever chances you have to take, I want to be with you—if I'm fit."

"You're fit," he nodded with a touch of grimness in his face. "I don't know how we're coming out of this situation, exactly. They've got the arms and I've got the position, and neither of us has any food. But sooner or later I believe I am going to win this Game. And I'd rather have you to help me, Judy, than any man I have ever known."

High up in a broken column an owl hooted and a jackal answered from out the great spaces of the night.

"You must turn in now, Judy," Savidge

said. "I've fixed your blankets over there in the Palace of Xerxes, and Hassan will be there to guard you. You won't be afraid, will you, girl?"

"I won't be afraid with you over here," she replied. "I should never be afraid anywhere with you."

She stood up and looked at him for a moment earnestly.

"If I were not here, nothing could make you go away and lose your chance at Wolkonsky, not even starvation. Isn't that so?"

Savidge nodded his head slowly.

"Well, nothing on earth can make me give up either—not even starvation. We'll fight it out together, John—as we'll fight everything together—to the end."

Savidge put his hand on her shoulder and looked at her indomitable little face, at her sensitive mouth and her steady eyes.

"Always together, Judy," he said softly; "to the end!"

CHAPTER XXXIII

A TRUCE

THE moon was high above the fragmentary hills back of the city, and the stars were wheeling down the track of night when Judy drew the blankets over her and lay down. She had never felt less like sleep, except that first night in the *bala-khanah* at Akstafa. She thought of that night now, of how lonely she had been among all those strange figures and bizarre surroundings, and how she had missed John Savidge that first night of their separation. And then her thoughts wandered down the long trail to Tabriz, to Ispahan, to that unreal performance of magic in the shadow of the rock tombs of the Achæmenian kings.

She lived again that wonderful tremulous moment of recognition, the rush for the horses, the pursuit of the Bakhtiari. Her nerves quivered; her heart pounded; the blood rioted through her body as she felt again the mad embrace, the wild kiss in that quixotic instant before John Savidge swung her into the saddle and they spurred away from the pursuing tribesmen.

She could not sleep; the blankets seemed to stifle her. She threw them aside and stood up. A shadowy figure, the head swathed in white, rose up from beside a broken column.

"Is it you, Memsahib?" a voice inquired.
 "Yes, Hassan."

The Arab squatted down again by the column.

Judy drew a long breath and looked over the sleeping city. The moonlight threw fantastic shadows over the ruins. An owl, perched near by, hooted at her querulously, and from across the plain came the melancholy howling of jackals. Across the stone plateau the black bulk of the winged bulls leamed between her and the horizon and she knew that Savidge was standing in their shadow, waiting, watching, as unafraid and untiring as the granite beasts themselves. She touched her lips with her fingers and blew a kiss to him.

"Good night, John, dear," she said very softly.

Then she cuddled down in her blankets and paid no more attention to the hooting owls or the dolorous voices of the *wawi*. The hundred and one noises of the night dropped half-toned on her ear and she fell asleep.

The sun was high in the sky of flawless turquoise when she awoke. For a moment she lay blinking her eyes, trying to think where she was or what had happened. Then she started to her feet with a feeling that she had missed the performance of some duty. She ran around the corner of the ruined wall and looked at once for Savidge.

He was sitting beside the winged bull, pistol in hand, just as she had left him the night before. He waved to her a greeting and she put the tips of her fingers to her lips. Hassan, she saw, was guarding the second underground entrance, and Jaggard was nowhere in sight. It did not take Judy long to do her toilet. She arranged her hair as well as she could without a mirror, indulged in a dry wash and brushed the sand from her clothes.



SAVIDGE met her with a smiling face. There had been no trouble during the night, he told her. The enemy had not even ventured up-stairs. He had solved the food question by sending Jaggard to a *chapar-khanah* a half-dozen miles away across the Plain of Mervdasht. He had started shortly after daybreak, and if nothing unforeseen occurred, he should be back in time to prepare the noonday meal.

"Sorry, Judy," Savidge said, "but I've nothing to offer you for breakfast but water. Do you think you can stand it till noon?"

She assured him she was as fit as a fiddle. The water-bottle was brought out from the cool shade of the stone foundation on which the winged bulls stood and Judy took a long draught. Her night's sleep had rested her and she looked fresh and young and ready for anything. Savidge, on the other hand, was haggard with the night's vigil. She was trying to induce him to let her take over the guard duty, while he slept for an hour or two, when he held up one hand for silence, and she saw his fingers tighten over the butt of the revolver as he tiptoed forward a pace.

She listened intently and to her ears there came a faint sound as of something metallic being drawn across the stone floor below. Savidge motioned her back, and she crouched against the side of the great bull, every nerve in her body quivering in sudden excitement. The noise came nearer and stopped. Then the long black barrel of a rifle was thrust out between the forelegs of the winged bull. Tied to the end of the barrel was a white handkerchief. The besieged were offering a flag of truce.

"Come out!" called Savidge.

The rifle was pushed out on to the platform, and was followed at once by Wolkonsky, as smiling and debonair as if he were making a morning call. He saluted Savidge, who holstered his pistol as soon as he recognized the Chief.

"I didn't know you at first in that make-up," Wolkonsky said pleasantly. "Ah, Madame Savidge, this is a pleasure."

He doffed his helmet and bowed with grave courtesy. Then he turned to Savidge.

"I am glad Madame is here—it makes my task easier. For myself and my men, I ask no quarter; but one can not make war on women—is it not so, Monsieur Savidge?"

Savidge nodded his head, and waited.

"It is for Mademoiselle Arlunsen that I ask your favor. She is not well. She is in need of food and water, and—well, we have neither." He shrugged his shoulders. "For myself, it is all in the Game."

"Quite so," said Savidge bruskiy. "Miss Arlunsen is at liberty to come out and share our food."

Wolkonsky raised his hand in the military salute.

"I thank you, monsieur; and I give you my word that while Mademoiselle Arlundsens is with you we will make no attack."

"I accept the pledge," replied Savidge, returning the salute.

"I have one more favor to ask," Wolkonsky added. "Our horses——"

"They have been watered and fed."

Wolkonsky smiled.

"You are a generous enemy, Monsieur Savidge."

He bowed again to Judy and disappeared between the forelegs of the winged bull. Savidge looked at Judy and smiled.

"I think the bird is coming to the net," he said enigmatically.

"But we haven't any food for her!" Judy protested.

"No, my dear, we haven't. But by the same token we couldn't let Mr. Wolkonsky know that we are as near starvation as he is. You stay here and receive Miss Arlundsens—you're old friends, I believe. I want a few words with Hassan."

"But suppose they rush out and attack us?"

Savidge shook his head.

"Wolkonsky has passed his word, and nothing in this world or the next could make him break his pledge. While Miss Arlundsens is out here Wolkonsky will not raise his finger against us."

CHAPTER XXXIV

"YOU HAVE LOST THE GAME, MONSIEUR SAVIDGE"

SAVIDGE and Hassan were deep in consultation when Lina Arlundsens appeared at the entrance of the first passage. Her face was pale and drawn, her eyes had a tired expression; but she nodded to Judy in her usual cool manner.

"I didn't expect to see you here," she said easily.

"No, I suppose not," returned Judy coldly. "I shouldn't think you would want to see me after—after——"

Miss Arlundsens shrugged her shoulders.

"Why not?" she asked coolly.

"Because of those papers you stole from me," Judy flared.

"Stole? That is a hard word, Mrs. Savidge. But I suppose from your point of view you have a right to feel indignant. I dare say that your husband does not look

at the matter in such a narrow light."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean just this: that what you call stealing, I call duty, and that is what John Savidge would call it, too. Steal? Bah! What do you know about the Game? What do you know about the big things?" She snapped her fingers disdainfully. "We're not playing this thing for copecks or rubles, my dear. We're playing it for Empire."

"I—I don't understand," faltered Judy.

"No, of course you don't. Sometimes I don't understand it myself. I only know that all around me the greatest of all games is being played, with the whole world for a board and real kings and queens and knights for the chessmen. You and I are only pawns in the game, my dear, and we have no say as to where we shall be placed."

She sat down wearily on a block of stone.

"I took your papers, Mrs. Savidge. That's what I was sent to the caravan for. I took your papers because it was a part of the Game. I am not ashamed. Rather I am proud of it as the most skilful piece of work I have ever done for the Service." A smile flickered across her face. "Even M'sieu Jaggard complimented me on it, and I dare say you will agree with him—some day!"

Judy looked at the face of the other woman and saw the pitiless sunlight bring out the hard and weary lines that her life had etched there; and in her heart there stirred an unwilling sort of admiration and undeniable pity. For after all, this other woman was a fighter, too, and a good player of the Game. And, furthermore, she did not look in that instant as if the playing had brought her a great deal of happiness.


"I think I understand you better than I did," Judy said honestly. "But there is one thing I don't understand—how you read the papers after you got them?"

"The cipher?" Miss Arlundsens smiled again, this time showing the white line of her perfect teeth. "My dear Mrs. Savidge, that was the simplest part of the work. When I first saw you, I knew your husband must be very much in love with you; and when I heard your name—ah, Judith is so pretty a name, you know! Womanlike I jumped to a conclusion. By experimenting I found out my conclusion was right—your husband had used your name as the key-word. It was merely a matter of intuition, you see."

"That's the way Mr. Jaggard figured it out," Judy admitted.

Lina Arlundsén elevated her eyebrows ever so slightly.

"Mr. Jaggard is a very clever man," she said. She stood up languidly and put her hand to her head. "My eyes are torturing me," she said. "In my saddle-bags are some colored glasses. If you don't mind I will get them and come back."

 SHE swung across the stone plateau with her old familiar stride, and was almost at once lost to sight behind the mound where Wolkonsky's horses were picketed. Judy looked across to the Hall of One Hundred Columns where her husband stood talking to Hassan. She saw Savidge glance once at Miss Arlundsén's retreating figure and go on with his conversation. Judy sat down and looked across the Plain of Mervdasht. Near the horizon was a cloud of dust and she wondered if it could be the Bakhtiari, or Jaggard coming back.

Her speculations were interrupted by the sharp, sudden sound of horse's hoofs clattering on the stone platform. As she sprang to her feet she heard Savidge call out a command to halt, and the next instant Lina Arlundsén appeared from behind the mound, mounted and riding at a gallop straight for the Great Stairway. At her left Judy was aware of Savidge running across the plateau. He shouted out a second command to halt, to which the rider paid no attention.

It was spectacular, blood-stirring—her splendid dash across the rock-strewn plateau! Savidge called to her once more; then, just before the horse reached the top of the Great Stairway, he raised his pistol and fired!

At the report the horse stumbled, gave a leap forward and then fell to its knees, throwing the woman to the ground. She fell on her head and lay quiet. Savidge ran up as the horse scrambled to its feet—the bullet had creased its shoulder—caught it by the bridle, ran it toward the Great Stairway and sent it clattering down the steps. The loud rattle of its hoofs startled the doves from their nesting places in the Palace of Darius.

Judy ran toward the unconscious woman as Savidge cried,

"Search her, Judy!"

With one hand she unbuttoned the flannel blouse and with the other she searched beneath it. Just as Savidge hastened back to her, she straightened up with an exultant cry. Under Miss Arlundsén's blouse were folded a half-dozen sheets of draughtsman's cloth. Judy pulled them out and Savidge rapidly scanned them.

"They're all there—every one of my maps!" he announced.

Then he bent down and examined the body, feeling the bones of the arms and legs and putting his ear to the heart.

"A nasty fall, but no bones are broken," he said. "Judy, spread the blankets behind the propylæum. Hassan and I must get her out of sight at once. Under no circumstances must she be seen; for I have a notion it won't be long before our friends come up from below."



SAVIDGE'S words were prophetic. Less than an hour after Lina Arlundsén's dramatic attempt to escape from the Lost City, the flag of truce was again thrust out between the forelegs of the winged bull at the first entrance, and Wolkonsky made his second appearance. There was a cynical smile on his face as he greeted Savidge.

"There is no use of parleying," he said bluntly. "You have lost the Game, Monsieur Savidge."

"Quite so," agreed Savidge, in his most laconic voice.

"I kept my word," continued Wolkonsky. "I made no move while Mademoiselle Arlundsén was up here. But I did not pass my word that she should not escape—with your maps."

"Quite so," said Savidge. "But how did you know she escaped?"

The Russian chuckled.

"We heard her riding down the stairway."

Savidge smiled grimly.

"That was clever, Wolkonsky, — clever!"

The head of the Secret Service held out his hand.

"At any rate, Monsieur Savidge, we can shake hands. You know there's nothing personal between us. Since that night at Samarkand, when you fought us single-handed, I have admired you more than any man I know. You've made life worth living for me. You've given me more

trouble in the last few years than all the Nihilists in Russia and—and personally there's nothing in the world I wouldn't do for you."

"Thanks," said Savidge dryly. "There's only one thing you can do for me—now."

"What is that?"

Savidge pointed to the belt around Wolkonsky's waist.

"My gun," he said.

"To be sure. I have carried it ever since that day at Tiflis."

He handed the belt to Savidge, who buckled it around his own waist. "Now I feel more like myself," the American said gaily, patting the holster affectionately. "I didn't expect to get the old boy back till I got to Teheran—on official business!"

The Russian smiled.

"What do you say on these occasions? Ah, yes! Something about the plans of mice and men—is not that so?"

"We have a better one than that—to the victor belong the spoils. I congratulate you, Wolkonsky, and assure you I have no hard feelings. But the Game isn't finished yet, and I have a fancy we shall meet again somewhere. Perhaps in Teheran; who knows?"

"Who knows?" answered the Russian gravely.

CHAPTER XXXV

AWAY FROM THE CITY THAT WAS

A QUARTER of an hour later Savidge and Judy stood arm in arm at the head of the Great Stairway and watched Wolkonsky ride away. At the foot he turned and waved his hand to them and they waved back. They might have been host and hostess speeding a parting guest. Savidge looked after him and Judy saw his face wrinkle up in one of his rare boyish smiles.

"I reckon the Chief won't be so jolly when he gets to Shiraz and looks for the lady," he chuckled. "And perhaps he won't be so friendly when we meet in Teheran on the first day of June."

Judy looked at him with a puzzled expression in her eyes.

"But the Company's paper—the bids and agreements, you know—what will you do about it? What did you do with it?"

"Gave it to Wolkonsky for safe-keeping."

"What do you mean?"

Savidge looked down into his wife's round eyes and smiled.

"I mean just what I say. When I was arrested in Tiflis I gave the paper to Wolkonsky to keep for me—only he didn't know it!"

"You're not serious?"

"Never more serious in my life. Look here!" He unbuckled the gun-belt and opened the holster. "See that stitching?" he asked, pointing to a seam that ran around the top of the holster. "In reality there are two holsters—one sewed inside the other. The paper is between the inside and outside leathers."

Judy gasped again.

"And you handed it to him in Tiflis! Think of the chances you were taking!"

"My dear, haven't I told you that the man that never takes a chance loses just as often as the man that does? It was the one thing I could do under the circumstances. Knowing Wolkonsky's reputation for keeping his word, I figured he would hand me over that gun in Teheran if he once agreed to do so. So I took a chance on his guessing there was a paper sewed in the holster. In this Game there's half in learning when to take a chance, you see."

It was late in the afternoon when Jaggard returned with food, leading Miss Arlundsens's horse, which he had picked up on the plain. The reason for his long delay, he explained, was a wide detour he had to make to escape a scouting party of Bakhtiari, probably the same party whose dust Judy saw near the horizon at the very time Lina Arlundsens made her attempt to escape. Savidge told him the story of the last few hours, in a few words.

"Well, I'll be hornswoggled!" was his only comment.

He walked away to pay a visit to Miss Arlundsens, who had regained consciousness soon after Wolkonsky left the Lost City, and was now recovering from her fall in the shade of the distant ruins.



IN A few moments Jaggard came back to them.

"The Lina lady has got a few beauty-marks on her face and a splitting headache; otherwise she's all right. She says she'll ride on to Shiraz to-night, with your permission."

"She can't go alone," said Savidge, "and

I had planned to get a little sleep and set out for Ispahan at midnight. I can't afford to lose any more time."

"She isn't going alone," Jaggard replied, wrinkling his round face and pursing his lips.

He stood in his old familiar attitude, legs wide apart, shoulders inclined slightly forward, thumbs hooked in the corners of his trousers pockets. A long, level ray of the setting sun fell on him, and once more Judy was reminded of the Yama Yama man.

"You don't mean——" she began.

"I do," said Jaggard. "I'm on my way south to the Gulf, and Shiraz is one of the points of interest on the way."

"But we have counted on your going with us to Teheran."

Jaggard slowly shook his head.

"You don't need me any more, Mrs. Savidge, and—and—don't you remember those lines you quoted up there at Akstafa?"

"For to admire an' for to see,
For to be'old the world so wide,"

she repeated softly.

"Exactly," said Jaggard. "That fits me to a T. I've got to keep on going; I've got to see how the whole blooming world is made before I die. There's an old fakir waiting for me somewhere up the Bubbling Well Road. He's promised to show me his little bag o' tricks, and—and I'm overdue now."

Again from the top of the Stairway they watched the Great Jaggard ride away with Miss Arlundsens.

"The world is a very small place, Jaggard—we'll see you again," Savidge called after him.

"Oh, yes! Somewhere, when we're swinging 'round the circle, we'll meet up," he answered, grinning back at them.

Judy gazed after the big red head of the Tramp Royal as he turned and rode off, and she reflected with a little contraction of her heart that they would, in all probability, never see his friendly face again. They, too, were tramps, and they had no abiding place, no roof-tree whose hospitality they could offer to this other wanderer. As if he had read her thought, Savidge said:


"When we get a little house of our own, Judy, we'll send out the word to Jaggard and have him come to see us. Shall we?"

She looked up at him quickly.

"Oh, shall we have a house—a real home?"

There was no mistaking the rapture in her voice.

"Why, Judy, you little hypocrite!" he laughed at her, "I thought you wanted to wander the rest of your life—never to live between walls or under a fixed roof?"

 SHE looked away from him across the great plain. The sun had set and the iridescent glory had faded from the world. It lay gray and lonely, already touched by the mystery of night. Among the ruins of the Palace of Xerxes, Hassan was making tea over a tiny fire. Her eyes turned wistfully from the desert to the little homely spot of cheer where the Arab boiled his kettle.

"I want first of all to be with you, John," she said slowly. "If it means wandering, then I want to be a wanderer. But I should like somewhere in the world a little house that would be ours, yours and mine, to which we could go back sometimes, and—and where I could have you safe!"

She hid her face against his shoulder. Putting up his hand, he felt her tears against his fingers.

"I know, I know," he whispered, his lips touching her hair. "And where I could have you safe."

They clung to each other for an instant; and then Savidge held her off and looked at her tenderly and gravely.

"There's the work to be done, you know, Judy. I've won out so far, but the Game's not played down here yet. I think we'll put the big road through, all right, but there'll still be fighting to do. I can't give it up till the last spike is driven, till I am sure the Bear has learned to keep his claws off. And then, after that, there'll be other work to do, maybe on the other side of the world. We're skirmishers ahead of the railroad, dear—you mustn't forget that; and when the big work calls I'll have to go."

Her eyes were steady and free from tears as she looked back at him.

"I know. You've got to do your work. And when it calls, we'll go; *we*, you understand, John?"

He nodded his head slowly.

"I would lay down my life to keep you safe, Judy, but I thank God you're the kind of woman that will fight with her man! We'll have a bungalow or two tucked away in the sweetest corners of the world, anywhere you choose—Japan, Ceylon, the

South Seas, the East, America. And when the work lets us, we'll go home—we'll go home. And you can write your stories, volumes of 'em, Judy—what?"

"Stories," she murmured thoughtfully. "No, I don't believe I'll ever write another story. I don't have to, for I'm happy! And I'm living one that suits me better than any story I ever dreamed!"



THE moon was high in the heavens when they rode away from the Lost City. The sky burned with a fierce white fire and the plain of Mervdasht look-

ed like a level sea in the silvery light. For a long time they rode heel to heel in silence. Then they checked their horses and turned for a last look at the City That Was. It lay squat on the horizon—lonely, silent, a derelict of Time!

"And now the journey really begins," Judy said softly.

Savidge patted her hand:

"You're wrong, my dear. The journey really ended back there in the Lost City, didn't it, Billy, old boy?"

But Billy only pricked up his ears and plodded on through the night.

THE END



THE LUCK OF THE ANNIE CROSBY

by FREDERICK WILLIAM WALLACE

SHE wasn't an old vessel, and there was nothing in her general appearance to suggest her being hoodooed or a Jonah, yet all the Anchorville trawlers were afraid of the *Annie Crosby*. Ten years ago the fishing schooner slid from the ways of Tom Flanagan's yard at Little Harbor, and at that time she was the last word in her particular class of design.

Flanagan was an old "rule of thumb" ship-builder. He dispensed with the blue-

print designs of naval architects and built his vessels from small wooden models which he carved and whittled himself, and the graceful, easy lines and natural sea-kindliness of his miniatures were faithfully reproduced in the larger replicas.

Flanagan-built vessels were nothing out of the ordinary. They cut no swaths in fishing-vessel architecture like the first Burgess and McManus models, but still they had the name of being "able" boats. The *Annie Crosby* made her first "haddocking"

trip with her owner, old Bill Crosby, as skipper, and for the year's fishing she was "high-liner" out of Anchorville. She could sail fairly well, steered easy, and was able to carry her kites in a breeze of wind without rolling half her lee deck under.

The foc'sle was dry and comfortable, and even with a full fare of one hundred and twenty thousand in the pens, she worked through the tide-rips off the Cape and in the Bay without burying herself in green water like a half-tide rock. For five successive years she was a lucky vessel, and Winter and Summer made her "haddocking" and "hakeing" trips as regular as a clock, with good average fares, and hardly the loss of a draw-bucket to offset against her battles with Winter winds and seas.

Her ill luck seemed to commence with the Crosby family. First of all, young Bill Crosby, the skipper's only son, was washed off the main-boom while reefing the main-sail and found a premature grave in the shoal water off the Seal Island. The old man was badly cut up over the death of his son and took such an aversion to the sea that he gave up the command of the *Annie Crosby* to Joe Thompson. From then on she acted "queer"—so much so that a hardened old trawler like Thompson refused to take her out and left her for a smaller and older vessel.

Her gang, nearly all of whom had sailed in her ever since she was launched, all deserted her and went in other vessels, and successive skippers and crews always gave her up after one trip. What was the matter with her? It's pretty hard to say exactly. Builders say she had developed some latent structural defect and talked of misplaced centers of effort and stability. Flanagan disowned her as he would an illegitimate child; while fishermen would shake their heads sagaciously and opine that she had hit a "hard-luck streak."

"Some one's put a wish on her," they said, "an' it's a bad one. Ever sence young Crosby went overboard she's carried it, an' we cal'late she'll carry it until she goes under, an' when she does she'll be dirty enough t' take th' gang with her!"

Men who had made trips on the hoodooed schooner swore with full-blooded emphasis that she had taken on every fault known to a fishing-vessel with the exception of leaking. She would not steer on occasions; she developed a lee helm at times, and was

painfully slow at coming about. She shipped green water and flooded foc'sle and cabin whether it was rough or calm. Her skippers seemed to make their sets in holes and could seldom strike fish. They were always getting their dories astray, and if there was any dirty weather or fog flying around, the *Annie Crosby* got it. The dog-fish and sharks played havoc with her crew's gear, while as for carrying sail, she'd roll down to her hatch-combings in a Summer squall until skippers became positively afraid to hoist anything above her four lowers.



JUDSON KEMBLE was her last skipper, and Kemble was of a type of fisherman who feared nothing.

No one would carry sail longer, nor hang on to his gear like him, nor dare driving for the land in thick and boisterous weather. It was Jud Kemble and a rough and tough Anchorville gang who drove out from Portland in a Winter's gale with a bigger cargo of rum inside their skins than ever came out of a prohibition town.

Kemble and Jimmy Thomas to the wheel, hilariously drunk with a long-neck of rum on the wheel-box between them and driving out to sea in a blinding snow-storm and with Ram Island Ledge creaming in acres of whitewater almost under their bilge. However, that's another story, but it serves to illustrate the type of man who left the *Annie Crosby* scared white on his first trip. After that she lay to the wharf with sun and wind bleaching her decks and rigging, and her gaunt, weatherworn spars festooned with Irish pennants of ragged gear.

Skipper Crosby tried to sell her, but nobody would buy, and as the old man had no other source of income he worked around the smoke-houses and the fish flakes. He wouldn't go to sea again even when vessels were offered him, and thus he could be seen, a tired, broken old man, possessed with haunting memories of the boy who went to his death in the swirling rips of the Fundy tides.

Misfortune seemed to pursue the old skipper ashore. His wife brooded over the boy's loss and it affected her mind. She would wander down to the wharves and question the crews of incoming vessels for news of her son.

"Young Willy Crosby, you know," she would say in plaintive tones. "They say

he was lost at sea, but I know he'll come back some day. He's told me so in dreams many a time. 'I'll be back, mother,' he said. 'Come to the wharf an' meet me like you used to do, an' we'll walk up the hill together.' These were his very words, men, an' only a few nights ago I saw him a-comin' up the wharf a-shouldering the clothes-bag I made for him with my own hands. Have you any news of him, men? Young Willy Crosby, my boy that went fishin' in the *Annie* five years agone?"

Hardened fishermen would dodge behind sheds when they saw her coming. They hated to see the look on her face when they made the inevitable reply, and though they always answered with a hopeful,

"He's not with us this trip, ma'am, but maybe he'll come in on one o' the other vessels."

It made them gulp hard when they spoke. Men would swear hoarsely to hide their emotions when old Bill Crosby limped down the dock to take his wife away, and if any one of the Anchorville crowd could do anything to make the old couple happy, it would have been done long ago.

Then came a climax to Bill Crosby's hard luck. On a bitter night in Midwinter his house went on fire, and with his wife in his arms the old man staggered into the snow and watched his home go up in flames. There was no insurance, and when he returned next day to view the blackened ruins, he held a few minutes' bitter communion with his thoughts. With grim determination upon his rugged features he went back to his wife.

"Annie," he said, "I'm goin' fishin' again."

At first she flashed him a look of fear, but her old delusion proving stronger, she crooned,

"Go out an' find him, Will! I'll be to the wharf when you both come in from sea!"



THE schooner, having been Flanagan-built, had a hull like an old-time frigate, and five years alongside the wharf made but little difference to her stanch hardwood frame. Though to all appearance dilapidated and weatherworn, yet she was as tight and as seaworthy as any of the Anchorville fleet, and a little scraping of masts and booms, a lick of paint, some calking and the reeving and

setting up of new running-gear and standing rigging would make her ready for sea again.

Crosby had no money, but his credit was good, and Clarence Dickey, storekeeper and vessel owner, readily responded to Crosby's halting appeal for financial aid.

"Jest a little credit for some gear, Mr. Dickey. I'll try an' pay it back on th' first trip——"

Dickey interrupted him with a wave of his cigar.

"Go to th' store, Bill, an' git all ye want. Pay for it when ye can. I'm only too pleased t' help ye out, an' wish ye every kind o' good luck."

And after the old man stumbled out, murmuring his thanks, the vessel owner turned to his son-in-law, Harry Winslow, just in from a trip:

"Poor old Crosby's a-goin' t' try his luck again," he said with a shake of his head. "I'm afraid he's too old for fishin', an' with such a beast of a vessel, too. He's agoin' t' have trouble shippin' a gang, though to be sure he always had good trips when he sailed her, an' it's possible th' boys 'll remember that an' ship with him."

"I doubt it," replied Winslow. "I'd like t' see him get a crowd, but she's made an awful name for herself. I know fellers as wouldn't take their gear out of her when they quit for fear th' hoodoo 'ud stick. Jimmy Thomas once lost three tubs with me, an' sooner'n go over to th' *Annie* an' git what he left in her, he worked night an' day riggin' new gear on th' run t' Brown's—he was that scared t' touch th' trawl he'd used in that craft. Even Judson Kemble left all his charts an' dunnage in his berth when he left her, an' her hold's half full o' his gang's gear. I was pretty desperate when I took your old *Valfrey* out, but I hadn't th' nerve t' tackle th' *Annie Crosby*."

With the assistance of several fishermen who were laying off waiting for Spring fishing and who volunteered to bear a hand, Crosby soon had the schooner fitted out, but when her old sails were brought out of the loft and bent on, men avoided Bill Crosby like the plague. Fishermen asked to ship on the *Annie* were either staying ashore or else bound to another vessel, and though the pool-rooms, the sailmaker's lofts and the Main Street were full of loafing trawlers, yet all were engaged when Crosby hove in sight.


He telephoned to all the Bay ports for men, but his vessel's reputation had preceded him and refusals met his appeals, and it was with a very heavy heart that he realized that his efforts to get a gang were fruitless. There was Jud Kemble to be interviewed yet and Jud had a name for daredevil recklessness, but Jud had had a round turn with the *Annie's* vagaries and Crosby recalled his lurid criticisms when he left her.

Still, if Jud Kemble could be induced to go, men might follow him. Kemble was boat-fishing then, having completed some hair-raising trips in the schooner *West Wind* by piling her up on the Mud Harbor Ledges. Yes, Kemble was his last hope, so the old skipper hired a rig and drove out to see him.

The notorious Judson was combing trawls in front of his cottage when Crosby brought to an anchor alongside him. There was a questioning lift in his eyes when the old skipper approached and spoke.

"Ye hev th' name o' bein' a pretty bold man, Kemble," said Crosby. "Men say ye've scared more gangs at sea with yer carryin' on ways than any other skipper out of Anchorville."

"Aye, they say so," answered Kemble, nonchalantly sending a stream of tobacco-juice into a bait-bucket.

 CROSBY paused, and his little blue eyes scanned the hard, leathery, lined features of the redoubtable "Hell-driving Jud Kemble" as if he were weighing in his mind what to say next.

"Ye've bin afeard yerself tho', Jud," said the old skipper, after his scrutiny. "I've seen ye frightened—so frightened ye'd a'most sink inter yer jack-boots, an' a good many men down to Anchorville remember seein' ye as white as yer vessel's mains'l with pure scare—"

Kemble spat deliberately:

"Cap'n Crosby! Th' men as *saw* me as white as my own mains'l, I cal'late, were a — sight whiter'n me, an' I kin tell ye that! On your own vessel it was, too, an' I reckon th' gang that was with me that time'll never forgit th' night she rolled down an' came up with a dory a-hangin' on her forecrosstrees. It would ha' scared many a better man."

"Aye, so ye say," continued the other, "but it was your own fault. Ye were

crackin' on an' carryin' sail when ye sh'd ha' bin hove-to under fores'l an' jumbo 'stead o' travelin' with your four lowers an' stays'l flyin'. However, that's no matter, an' it ain't what I hired that one-hoss shay t' come an' see ye about. When I started a-comin' up here, I was told it warn't no use, as th' boys to Anchorville said ye warn't th' man you were. Ye've lost your nerve, they said—"

Judson jumped off the tub with a bull roar.

"Lost my nerve? Ain't th' man I were? Th' — ye say! Man an' boy, I've bin sailin' for thirty year, an' I never seen th' man yet that 'ud drive where I wouldn't follow! I've swung my whole mains'l when other fellers were down to a reefed fores'l. I've had gangs lock me in th' cabin an' take sail off a vessel themselves 'cause they were afeard! D'ye hear? Scared so stiff that they'd quit cursin'. I've seen men on deck from th' time we swung off until we ran th' lines ashore to Anchorville wharf, an' all afeard t' go below. Th' best men in Anchorville, aye, an' from Nigger Cape t' Gloucester, a-swearin' at me an' showin' white faces! An' ye say I've lost my nerve? By th' Lord Harry, there are fellers I c'd name that lost all th' nerve they ever had when I hung th' *West Wind* on th' Ledge, an' whimperin' an' prayin' like a — lot o' sky-pilots when we came through th' rips in th' dories! Lost my nerve, eh? I'd like t' see th' man as'll give me a dare!"

Crosby listened to Kemble's tirade with an enigmatical smile.

"I'll take ye, Jud," he said quietly. "I'll dare ye."

"How?" queried the other with some heat.

"Ship with me for one trip in the *Annie Crosby* again!"

The valiant Kemble was fetched up all standing. His face betrayed a host of varying expressions, and he stammered a lame excuse.

"I—I—I ain't cal'latin' t' go vessel-fishin' again. I hev my own motor-boat now an' some lobsterin' t' look after."

"For one trip only, Jud," insisted Crosby. "I'm takin' her out an' I want a gang. If you go, others'll follow."

"No, no," answered Kemble. "I ain't for shippin' on that craft—"

"Not even ef I take her? Me that brought her all th' luck she ever had?"

"No, sirree! Not even ef th' Ring-Tailed Gabriel twirled her wheel!"

"Huh!" There was marked contempt on old Crosby's face as he rose to his feet. "Here's Jud Kemble—th' man that ain't a-scared of anythin' livin' or dead, by his own sayin'—afear'd t' ship for a ten-day trip with an' old, worn-out man like me. Ye take a dare from me—a man what never carried sail nor had th' name of it. A man what always made good stocks. Waal, there ain't no doubt but what th' boys were right. Jud Kemble's lost his nerve, an' he ain't that 'drive-her-an'-be-damned' feller he useter be. Good day!"


And he strode across to the buggy and drove away.

That night Kemble drove into town and with many oaths inquired for the whereabouts of Captain Crosby. When he found the old skipper in Jack Watson's sail-loft his language could be heard all over the wharf:

"Afraid t' ship on yer old tub, am I?" he roared, with vivid accentuations. "Lost my nerve, have I? Waal, you let me know when you're a-goin' t' sail an' ye'll find Jud Kemble on deck when it's 'h'ist th' mains'l! Brown's Bank or Hell, I'll make a wake for th' rest t' steer by!"

And while Crosby wrung the hand off his former skipper, Kemble's words went down in Anchorville chronicles as choice phrases for future quotations.

II

 IT WAS Kemble who scraped a gang together. A harum-scarum crowd they were—young fellows mostly, with enough adventurous spirit in them to twist the devil's tail if dared to do so. The daring Judson's method of inducing men to ship was strangely similar to the manner in which he himself had been entrapped, and by playing on the latent "not to be outdone" natures of young, hardy men devoid of lively imaginations, he soon had a six-dory crowd aboard.

On a cold, dreary morning in early March the *Annie Crosby* put to sea, with poor Mrs. Crosby as the sole witness of her departure.

"You'll bring him back, Will?" she cried with plaintive appeal in her voice, and the old skipper waved his hand reassuringly.

"All right, mother. You run along home

now. 'Tis a bitter mornin' to be standin' around. We'll be back soon."

And while the schooner was standing out to sea, the figure of the skipper's wife could be seen on the wharf-end watching them until they cleared the Heads.

"'Tis purty hard, that," murmured Kemble to his dory-mate, Tom Jenkins. "Poor ol' woman, she's allus expectin' t' see her lad again. Sink me! I get a shaky feelin' every time I see her askin' th' boys for news of her son, an' him dead an' gone these five years an' more. Wonder ef that grub-pilin' Portygee has breakfast ready yet?" And after the manner of men who live hard, he polished off his sympathetic utterances with a string of fluent oaths.

So the ill-starred *Annie Crosby* sped down the Bay with a fair wind over the quarter and her bowsprit pointing south-half-east for Brown's. The lighthouse-keeper at Anchorville Heads stared hard at her when she passed out and roused his assistant to view the sight of the hoodooed vessel standing for the Bay, while crews of incoming fishermen and coasters clambered aloft to have a better look at the *Annie Crosby* bound for the Banks again/after years of idleness.

Watching her every movement with no little trepidation, her crowd managed to make the northern edge of Brown's without mishap, and after two days' good fishing on the forty-fifty fathom water, the redoubtable Judson Kemble had to stand for a good deal of foc'sle chaff.

"An' this is th' vessel that scared you, Juddy?" a man would remark. "Cripes! It beats me how an old ordinary pedler like Crosby kin take this ol' hooker an' put her thro' her paces 'thout any rollin' down or runnin' under. Why, when you had her she played th' devil an' all with ye. Sure, I can't see anythin' wrong with her. She steers all right an' hangs a-joggin' as well as Harry Winslow's slick vessel."

"You ain't finished this trip yet," growled Kemble in reply. "You'll get yer belly-full afore you're through fishin', unless her five years to th' wharf has killed her hard-luck streak. Wait an' see, my bucko, afore ye start shoutin'."

For three more days they fished on various berths, making good average sets for six dories. The weather was particularly fine for the month of March: light westerly winds and smooth seas, and a barometer

standing steady on the "Set Fair." Kemble didn't like it. He was nerved for something to happen and felt disappointed that nothing did happen. He became the butt of the rough foc'sle banter and watched weather and vessel with an anxious eye and forever croaked forebodings of the future.



WITH fifty thousand fine haddock and cod below, Crosby was in fine humor and calculated making another day on the berth and swinging off for home. Next day, however, the weather changed. The sun arose in a pinky mist to the east'ard, and both temperature and barometer started falling. Kemble, over the breakfast-table, chuckled over the forecast of bad weather to come, and regaled the gang with all the *Annie's* bad points in a breeze of wind.

"No fishin' t' day, I cal'late," he said. "I kin smell a roarin', rippin' southeaster a-makin' up, an' sleet an' snow'll be flyin' aplenty afore long. She'll start her capers soon, bullies, an' I'll bet some o' you'll wish th' Almighty hed struck ye stiff afore ye ever shipped on this hooker when she opens up her bag o' dirty tricks—

She would not steer, nor stay, nor wear.
 "Leave her, Johnny, leave her!
 She shipped it green an' made us swear,
 An' it's time for us to leave her!"

And singing the old chantey in a cracked voice, Kemble rolled into his bunk.

By noon there was a rising lift to the gray-green surges and a Wintry spite in the wind, which came from the south'ard. A lead-colored sky pressed down from zenith to nadir, and the vessel staggered over the desolation of somber sea with jib triced up on the stay, jumbo tail-rope to windward, and fore and main sails set. The decks and rails began to scale with thin ice, while the spray which swept up from the bows filmed the lower portions of the sails with a frigid glaze. The skipper paced the weather quarter muffled to the eyes in oilskins, and in comparison with the rest of the crowd he was the most unconcerned man aboard. The *Annie* had never played any tricks with him, and he was inclined to believe that her former skippers did not handle her properly.

After dinner an American schooner jogging to loo'ard started taking her mainsail

in, and an instant later she was blotted out in a squall of whirling sleet and snow. The puff hit the *Annie Crosby* a regular knock-down blow, and for a moment she was hove-down to her lee deadeyes in a wild boiling of hissing froth. From foc'sle and cabin the gang came tumbling up, and fear was written large on many faces. Kemble, cursing like a trooper, clawed his way aft to the skipper at the wheel, and his words resounded above the roar,

"Here she starts, bullies!" he bawled. "Th' lid o' Davy's locker is openin' for the *Annie* now! Stand by for the long set!"

While the gang hung on like bats to the weather dories or the main rigging, expecting every moment to see the vessel roll over, Crosby sung out,

"Draw away th' jumbo! It's knockin' her off!"

Before a man had a chance to execute the order, a wild blast came swooping along and the schooner reeled for an instant and went down to the combings of the main hatch. The lee dories and the light board in the lee fore rigging disappeared in white-water, till, with a crack like a gun, the tail-rope parted and gradually the vessel came up with her decks full to the rail with chilly Atlantic.

Crosby, as cool as the water which flooded her decks, sat astride the wheel-box hanging on to the spokes, and there was a smile on his face when he spoke to Kemble alongside him,

"She goes so far an' no farther. Get th' mains'l in. We'll heave-to."

It was a very frightened crowd of men who rolled the big sail up, and to their credit is a record time for furling sail. The boom was in the crotch, guyed with turn-buckles, heaver and chains, and the canvas stowed in less than ten minutes. Hove-to under foresail and jumbo, she rode out the rest of the day.

THE *Annie Crosby* was only beginning. She could do more hair-raising tricks than that, and Kemble, in the foc'sle, laughed sarcastically and gibed at the fears of the gang endeavoring to hang into their bunks.

"I know this brute!" he cried. "This little knock-down ain't nawthin' to what she kin do when she gits wound up. She'll play — with yer nerves yet afore she ties up in Anchorville again—ef she ever does."

"But she's stiff, too," remarked a lower-bunk man. "She'll allus come up, Juddy. Ye must give her credit for that."

"Aye!" rumbled Kemble. "She'll allus come up, but some o' these nights she'll take a wallop on th' port tack an' come up on th' starboard, an' where th' blazes will we be when she does? She's still carryin' her bad luck. It commenced when the old man lost his son an' she'll carry it until she takes ol' Crosby himself to th' bottom."

"How did that happen, Jud?" inquired the lower-bunk man. "You were aboard her then, an' I've h'ard it said that you were on th' foot-ropes when th' lad went. D'ye reckon thar' was anythin' onnatural about th' boy?"

"Onnatural?" cried the other with a hoarse laugh. "Why, you're as superstitious as an ol' woman! What th' blazes are ye tryin' t' nose out now?"

"Waal, I h'ard that th' skipper was kinder hard on th' boy an' sent him out t' th' reef earrin' when he didn't wanter go. He was a kinder scared lad in a breeze o' wind, they say."

"Aye, he was. Jest about as scared as some o' you were this afternoon. He had a trick o' loafin' below when th' skipper sung out, an' when reefin' he was allus to be found as far for'ard as th' gurry-kid—as far from th' boom end as he c'd git. The ol' man useter notice it an' it made him kinder riled t' think that his son sh'd be a quitter. He found him sojerin' by th' heel o' th' mast that night off'n th' Seal Island an' ordered him out on th' boom. Th' boy was scared, but he went, an' jest as him and I were haulin' out, she rammed th' boom inter a big 'un an' he was gone. That's all there was to it, an' many a fine lad's gone th' same way."

"Waal, Jud," continued the other after hearing Kemble's explanation. "There's plenty good fishermen that's nervous when it comes t' reefin' down in a breeze. I kin remember th' first time I went on th' boom. I was purty well scared hangin' out thar' an' th' seas lickin' up an' th' boom——"

"Shucks!" interrupted Kemble with a sarcastic laugh. "Tis drivin' an ox-team in Anchorville ye sh'd be, Dan. It's safer than drivin' a vessel or fishin'. Heave me over a doughnut, cook! It's my watch in a few minutes, an' ef I stop here much longer, these fellers'll make *me* nervous."

When Kemble and his dory-mate oiled

up and clambered on deck; the weather settled down to a fine, old-fashioned March blizzard. Working around to the nor'west, the wind and seas increased in fury and size and the vessel lurched, staggered and pitched around on the harried combers. Alternate squalls of hail and snow whirled out of the blackness, and below decks the gang listened to the howl of the wind and lay awake in expectant apprehension. They were not afraid of the weather—fishermen are used to gales at sea—but they were deadly afraid of the vessel, and while some cursed their foolishness in shipping upon the *Annie Crosby*, the fundamental reasons for her uncanny behavior were discussed from both the constructive and occult points of view.

"She's developed some fault in her hull," was the opinion of one who scoffed at the theory of "bein' ha'nted," and for some time there were attacks and counter attacks by the orators of the foc'sle parliament. Fishermen's arguments consist, for the most part, of all hands talking and nobody listening, and it ended with both parties leaving the question to the Portuguese cook for decision.

"What's your opinion, Manuel? What d'ye think's th' matter with this ol' peddler?"

Manuel, sparing of speech and gamboge of complexion, hove a tin of ginger-cake into the shack locker before replying. Men were afraid of Manuel. He had an uncanny way about him which inspired fear and respect and they awaited his verdict.

"De boy was de ol' man's luck. Lose de boy, lose de luck. Get de boy back, get de luck back."

"How in blazes kin ye do that, Manyule? How kin ye git young Crosby back when he's drowned years ago?"

"No sabe. Get de boy back, get de luck back. Ol' man make lose de boy. Ol' man make lose de luck. Same t'ing happen in Horta boat my home. Dat's all I say."

And with this enigmatical answer he rolled into his bunk.



THE gang had hardly essayed sleep when a loud cry was heard from the deck and the foc'sle slide was closed with a bang. There was an eerie silence for a few seconds as men arose on their elbows in affright and then the vessel seemed to have been smashed with the Hammer

of Thor. The mournful howling of the wind merged into a wild shriek, to be drowned an instant later by the thunderous, staggering crash of a terrific sea.

Men in the weather bunks were catapulted out of them and sent hurtling down on those to leeward. The lamps flared up and went out, leaving the foc'sle in black darkness, and a hellish pandemonium reigned. Everything not bolted fetched adrift; the stove spilled red-hot embers into the gloom as covers and pots clattered away; crockery jumped out of the racks and smashed against the lee lockers; coal, lamps, oil-cans, torches, potatoes, and supplies burst open the locker doors and joined the débris to leeward.

Men shrieked, cursed and called on the Almighty while they fought and trampled upon one another as they attempted to rise to their feet. Terror held sway in the Stygian darkness, and above the awful roar of the gale outside could be heard the crashing and splintering of wood, the shouts and cries of frightened, maddened men, and the hissing of water pouring down on the stove through the ventilator. The air was foul with steam and bilge and the odors of panting, wrestling humanity.

"Mother of God! She's going!" cried a hoarse voice, and they fought to reach the ladder. Better to die in the open than like a rat in a trap, and while prayers mingled with oaths, the men slithered and swayed with the lurching of the vessel upon the slanting, flooded floor. Then slowly, very slowly it seemed, the schooner righted, while the imprisoned fishermen pounded on the closed hatch and yelled to be released.

It was Kemble's face which peered down on them when the hatch was slid back, and in his eyes was the light of joyous vindication.

"What th' — are ye yellin' about?" he bawled above the noise. "By Godfrey, ye'd think th' devil himself was a-grippin' ye all by th' nape o' th' neck like he did th' haddie by th' row ye're makin'! Ye had an awful time, ye say? Waal, I cal'late ye didn't hev th' time me'n Tom Jenkins had in scramblin' up t' th' masthead. Cripes, she a'most filled my boots when I was astride o' th' mainspreaders, an' a fine job we had climbin' with half th' rattlin's gone!"

And the reaction coming with the sound of his sarcastic, fearless voice, men were heard to laugh hysterically.

After the squall which hove her down, the wind eased off and the gang turned to clearing up the battered decks. The dories were gone from the chocks and the foresail and foreboom were ripped and broken where the weather nest of dories had been hurled against them. Part of the port rail had been carried away as well as the booby hatch, and the gear coiled upon the pins was streaming in loose ends over the side. The skipper surveyed the wreckage silently and spoke to the undaunted Kemble in a strangely weak voice,

"Get th' fores'l reefed above that rip. Fish th' boom, ef ye can, or else cut it away an' shackle th' sheet to th' clew. Keep her hove-to till daylight, then we'll swing off an' get home. I'm an old man, Judson, an' my luck's agin me."

Passing his hand over his eyes, he staggered aft to his berth—a man with his spirit broken.

III



THE skipper stayed in his berth until daylight and some of the after gang said they heard him praying. There was no levity in their remarks then, for with the exception of the hard-shelled Kemble, all were genuinely scared. They were all ready for immediate precipitation into Eternity, and when Manuel fished out a string of beads, he was solemnly instructed to say a good word for the rest of the crowd, whether they were Anglicans, Methodists, Presbyterians or Baptists.

It was Kemble who got the damage fixed up and the vessel heading north for Anchorville again, and if his shipmates had become extremely virtuous in their language and conversation, he made up the deficiency by the lurid anathemas he employed in discussing the faults of the *Annie Crosby*. The skipper said nothing, but spent the time moodily pacing the quarter. He spoke to nobody and ate his meals in silence. He had aged perceptibly. His shoulders stooped and there was a febleness in his gait which came more from a depression of spirit than from the weakness of age, and his eyes reflected the soul of a man who is beaten, subjected, down and out.

His ill luck had driven him to the wall, and there was no fight left in him. He was a ruined man, doomed to spend a miserable existence with the poor woman who

forever cried for the son he had driven to his death. These were his thoughts as he paced the deck and the men spoke but little in his presence. They sympathized with him, but all prayed for the moment when they could jump to the cap log of the Anchorville Wharf.

Clawing in to the nor'wester under riding-sail, foresail single-reefed, and jumbo, they hauled off the Bank and stood up for the Bay, and when night fell, dark, squally and as thick as mud with alternate sleet and snow, they snatched a glimpse of Blonde Rock buoy light between the storms. Kemble was alone in the cabin reading, when the skipper came below from his pacing and sat on the locker beside him. There was a wistful, childish light in his eyes as he spoke for the first time.

"Judson," he said slowly, "you were on this vessel when my lad went over th' side. D'ye think I did wrong that night?"

"Wrong?" grunted Kemble, throwing down the magazine. "What d'ye mean, Cap?"

"Why, in sendin' th' lad out on th' boom-end. He was a nervous lad, ye'll remember, an' maybe I was rather rough with him."

"Shucks!" cried the other indignantly. "That warn't anythin' wrong on your part. He was a husky lad an' jest as able as any one aboard. It was jest his luck, an' plenty better men hev gone th' same way."

Crosby nodded his head and cut a fill of tobacco. With the unlighted pipe in his hand he looked up and spoke again,

"That was a funny thing th' cook was a-sayin' last night?"

Kemble started.

"What? An' how do you know what th' yallerbelly said?"

"I was jest a-goin' down for a mug-up when I h'ard them all talkin'."

"Aye," growled Kemble. "Fishermen's jaw. Any blame' thing that comes to the end o' their tongues. When they ain't got their mouths full o' grub, it's full o' nigger-head; an' when it ain't that, it's full o' bazzoo an' rum notions. Don't take any stock in th' guff o' a passel o' scared kids."

And while the skipper relapsed into silence, Kemble proceeded to read "The Amours of Madame du Barry."

When Kemble finished his edifying reading it was to find the skipper asleep upon

the locker and to hear a hail from the lookout on deck:

"Red light on th' lee bow!"



THE man at the wheel was young Tony Anderson and the lookout was his dory-mate, Jim Lachance.

Both had extremely crude notions regarding the rule of the road, and the extent of their knowledge was summarized by the regulation that vessels close-hauled had the right of way over vessels running free, and that a vessel close-hauled on the starboard tack had the right of way over a vessel close-hauled on the port tack. Anderson at the wheel stared at the light ahead and to leeward, and puzzled his brains for the maneuver to execute in such a case.

"What'll I do, Jim?" he cried to his dory-mate pacing the waist. "I stand on, don't I? We're close-hauled port tack, but he must be freeing."

Jim's voice could be heard next,

"Holy Sailor! He's haulin' close, Tony. I'm thinkin' he's close-hauled starb'd tack an' a square-rigger an' intendin' t' stand on! I cal'l'ate ye better luff or bear away. I leave it t' you."

Kemble waited to hear no more. With one spring he was up the companion and, glancing at the red port light close aboard to leeward, he roared,

"Hard up, you mud-brained gawk, an' let him git clear! Port yer helm!"

In his flurry, the wheelsman jammed the wheel hard down and the vessel came up to the wind as the long flying jib-boom of a lumber-laden barkentine poked through the *Annie Crosby's* triced-up jib. With a crash the blunt forefoot smacked the schooner on the starboard bow by the fore-rigging and for a few breathless seconds the two vessels rolled and slammed each other amidst the pandemonium of thundering canvas and thrashing blocks. The force of the barkentine's blow drove the fishing schooner's bow to port, and as her sails filled on the starboard tack she fetched clear.

"What vessel's that?" came from the foc'slehead of the barkentine seesawing with her foreyards aback and her head sails a-shiver.

"Prickly Heat of Boston, Captain Scratch!" bawled Kemble with a laugh as they stood away, and appreciatively he listened to the curses of the watch officer

as he yelled for a lantern. To the skipper he said, "I don't think thar's much damage. He came up when he saw we warn't agoin' t' clear, an' his foretops'ls jammed off his way. He only give us a lick."

"Yaas! fine leeck," growled Manuel. "Jes' 'noff leeck to drive de fore chain-plate bolts t'roo into ma bunk. *Caramba!* I not know what heet me!"

"Bring torches, some o' you!" cried the skipper. "Is she makin' any water below?"

"Nawthin' as we kin see," replied a man. Condemning their eyes for shipping in such an unfortunate vessel, the gang examined the damage. The jib stay and jib had been carried away; starboard anchor stock was broken, and the rail and chain plates in the wake of the starboard fore rigging were driven in. Below the waterline she was unharmed.

"She's all right," said the skipper wearily. "Get that jib in, boys, an' set up a preventer stay aft here. We'll get her back on th' port tack after I make a cast. I cal'late we hev th' Seal Island on th' starb'd bow thar'. Keep a lookout for th' light, an' git a man to th' wheel that kin keep clear of other vessels."

Staggering aft he prepared to take a sounding.

"Let her come up," he said to Jenkins, who had relieved the discomfited Anderson at the wheel. Hauling in the lead-line, he felt the knots.

"Twenty-eight fathom," he muttered. "Six years to-night since th' boy went an' on this same spot. I'm plumbin' his grave, poor lad, an' 'twas me that sent him to it. Oh, Willy-boy, 'twas a sad hour for me when I told your mother!"

"That was a close call, Dad!"

The voice came out of the darkness and the skipper dropped the lead to the deck.

"Lord save me! Who was that?" he cried in a fearsome voice.

"It's me, Dad, an' a close shave I had. No more fishin' for me. Oh, but th' water's cold—so cold! I'm freezin'—"

Crosby was conscious of a form approaching him along the weather side of the gurry-kid. For a tense moment he stared at the staggering shape, then his nerve failed and with a hoarse, choking cry he toppled and fell to the deck, while the figure stooped down and tried to lift the inert form.

"Aft here, fellers! Th' ol' man's petered out!"

"Holy Moses! who th' blazes is singin' out?" And Kemble and Lachance came aft on the run. "What's th' matter? Who's this?"

He made a grab at the arm of the man stooping over the skipper.

"It's me, Juddy. I've clum' aboard again, an' th' ol' man's fainted."

"Young Bill Crosby, by th' 'ternal flames!" yelled Kemble, and knocking Lachance over in his fright, he ran for the foc'sle and landed among the gang, feet first. "He's aboard again! He's aboard again!" he cried and the sight of his pallid face struck terror into the hearts of the assembled men.

"Who?" "What's th' racket?" "What in God's name has happened?" they cried as they crowded around him.

"Crosby—young Bill Crosby drowned off'n here six year ago—come aboard—standin' aft over th' ol' man! Vessel's ha'nted, an' we're dead men—ay, dead men!"



CLATTERING down the foc'sle steps came Jenkins from the wheel, and his eyes almost lay out on his cheeks with fright.

"Young Crosby's aboard!" he cried. "Come an' hollered t' me t' give him a hand in gittin' th' skipper below! When I saw who it was, I jams th' wheel down an' beat it. She's ha'nted! — the hour, Jud Kemble, when I listened to yer jaw an' came dory-mates with ye on this cursed craft! She's hoodooed an' ha'nted, an' devil a one of us'll see Anchorville again!"

"Below thar, fellers!" came a voice. "Up on deck some o' you! What's th' matter? I ain't a ghost!"

"That's young Crosby's voice!" cried Kemble, recovering a little from his momentary scare.

The others backed away into the darkest corners of the foc'sle.

"Is Jud Kemble down thar'?"

"It's your call, Jud," cried Jenkins. "You were on th' boom with him an' he wants you. You an' th' skipper he's come for."

The look of fear in Kemble's eyes changed to one of contempt as he gazed around at the frightened fishermen.

"Huh!" he said with a toss of his head. "Jud Kemble has to go, has he? Waal, I cal'late he's got more guts in him than any o' you, so he'll go!"

And while the terror-enthralled men watched him with apprehensive eyes, he hitched up his belt and clambered up the ladder.

"Is that you, Kemble?"

"Ay! It's me," replied the other in a none too steady voice. "What d'ye want o' me, Billy?"

"Why, nawthin' more'n a change o' clothes an' a mug-up. Th' water's precious cold. What's th' matter with th' ol' man an' th' gang? They seem scared t' see me back."

"I sh'd think they were," answered Kemble bravely. "When a man's bin at th' bottom o' th' sea for nigh six year, I cal'late most folks 'ud be scared!"

"What are ye talkin' about, Jud? Hev ye gone crazy? Sure, 'twas only five minutes ago when I dropped off'n th' boom. Say! Hev I gone bug-too? I never saw that feller at th' wheel afore an' th' ol' man seems aged up awful in five minutes. An' tell me, Jud. How is it we're carryin' th' ridin'-sail when a few minutes ago 'twas th' mains'l we were reefin'?"

"I—I—I don't know," stuttered Kemble. "Hadn't ye better be goin' back?"

"Back where, you ol' fool?"

"Back whar' ye come from. It ain't right t' be scarin' folks like this. Hev ye got anythin' agin us?"

"Jud Kemble," replied the ghost, "ye must be drunk again! Clear th' way, I'm for havin' a mug-up."

As the reincarnation of William Crosby junior pushed Kemble aside and stepped into the foc'sle gangway, the crowd in the foc'sle were thrown into consternation. Manuel jumped into the oilskin locker with his beads and muttered aves and credos to St. Anthony, while several of the gang crawled up into the peak or hid behind foremast and pawl-post, from which places they peeped curiously at the man coming down the ladder.

He was a husky, well-built fellow, clad in faded blue dungaree and half-leg boots. His face was partially covered by a thick black beard and mustache, and he was bleeding from a cut on top of the head.

"It's Bill Crosby, all right!" cried a quavering voice, "but he's grown a beard since I saw him last."

"Who th' devil are you?" cried the man in the dungarees, gazing hard at his identifier.

"Me?" faltered the other, crowding behind the foremast. "I'm only a poor fisherman. I never done you any harm, did I, Bill Crosby? Hanley's my name—Joe Hanley."

"Joe Hanley?" cried the bearded man. "How in Jupiter did you git aboard here? Sure, you were fishin' with Fred Hanson in th' *Minnehaha* when I knew you last."

"Ay, but that war six year ago!"

The man calling himself William Crosby passed his hand across his eyes and flopped down on a locker.

"Seem's t' me thar's somethin' wrong. How did I git them limejuicer's rags? How did them strangers git aboard here? Whar's th' oilskins I was dressed in when I went over th' side? I cal'late I must be dreamin' or else this clip on th' head has druv me silly——"

Kemble's voice interrupted the ominous silence:

"He's down here, skipper." And he came down the ladder, with old Crosby following at his heels.



THE crowd watched the skipper with spellbound gaze as he stepped unsteadily up to the man in the dungarees. The silence of the foc'sle was broken only by the heavy breathing of the assembled men, the mutterings of Manuel, the slatting of the jumbo sheet overhead, and the swash of the seas outside. The bearded man was the first to speak. Passing his hand over his eyes again as if to clear away a foggy vision, he looked up at his father with a weary, tired expression in his face.

"What's th' matter, Dad? Don't you know me? What has happened?"

The skipper started at the sound of the man's voice and he placed his hands upon his shoulders hesitatingly as if he were afraid the stranger would vanish at the touch. With the feel of solid flesh the old man's eyes reflected the light of a new-found joy.

"It's my boy, sure!" he said with a gladness note in his voice. "Th' Lord has answered our prayers! He hath taken, but He hath given back! Billy-boy, your mother's waitin' for ye; waitin' for ye back home!"

And men swore in their amazement as father and son embraced in an ecstasy of rediscovered happiness.

IV



THE reappearance of William Crosby junior was a subject which caused a furore around Anchorville County, and for a long time men believed he was a visitor from the spirit world, while the *Annie Crosby* outshone the mythical *Flying Dutchman*. Crosby junior was alive, very much alive, but on being questioned as to his whereabouts during the period of his supposed death, he was unable to elucidate the mystery. Clarence Dickey, Lloyd's agent and vessel owner, took up the case and supplied much of the missing information, and to him we are indebted for the further facts.

All that Crosby could remember was clambering out on the boom foot-ropes with Kemble and being washed off by a sea. For some twenty minutes he was whirled around in the rips and carried down by wind and tide in the direction of a large bark which was lying hove-to down to leeward of the *Annie Crosby*. He remembered shouting before a sea hove him smash against the bark's side. When he gained consciousness again, he found himself lying across the foot-ropes of the *Annie Crosby's* bowsprit. That was all he could recollect.

Six years of his life was a complete blank. Medical men heard of his case and came many miles to examine him. Their diagnoses were mostly of the same character. The blow on the head which he had received on striking the side of the bark had caused a pressure of the skull on a section of the brain, inducing a species of mental aphasia, or complete loss of memory. Dickey proved that he was picked up by the Italian bark *Maria Dunan*, bound from Yarmouth to Buenos Ayres. In Buenos Ayres he left her and shipped around the Horn to Chile in a Swedish ship. After that trace of him is lost, as he deserted in Antofagasta.

Without knowledge of his home, name or past life, he had drifted around for nearly six years, and a paragraph in a shipping journal seems to be the only clue as to his strange reappearance. It stated that John Smith, able seaman, was reported as lost from the jibboom of the barkentine *Daydream* while in collision with an unknown vessel off the Seal Island. The barkentine was lumber-laden and bound from Annap-

olis to Cienfuegos in Cuba, and there is not the least doubt but what this was the vessel which collided with the *Annie Crosby*.

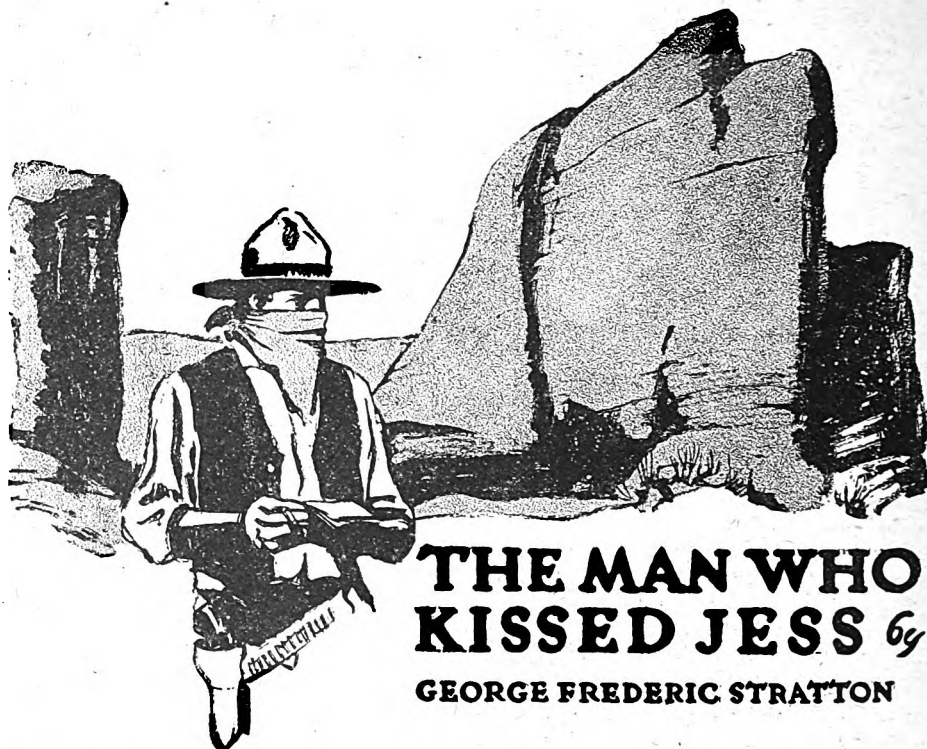
It is thought that Smith or Crosby was out on the jibboom tying up the inner jib when the vessels came together, and he was swept off the spar by the fisherman's jibstay. In falling he must have struck the schooner's bowsprit with his head, and fell unconscious into the foot-ropes below. The blow caused him to regain his memory, but with a complete blank of the intervening six years. Such cases are by no means uncommon, but there are men who swear that young Crosby is a spirit, albeit a very live one.



WHEN the *Annie Crosby* hauled into the wharf after her exciting trip, her crowd, with the exception of Kemble, the skipper and his son, jumped for the cap log and ran. They wouldn't even draw their shares of the catch, telling the skipper to keep the money, and for many days each man held an enthralled audience in the various fishermen's rendezvous around town. Thus ended a strange chain of coincidences.

Mrs. Crosby had her son back, and as her delusion was confirmed, she regained her proper mind and was happy. The local parson said it was the workings of Providence, and compared Skipper Crosby to the biblical Job in his Sunday sermon. The Anchorville fishermen shook their heads and swore it was "queer," while Kemble, the tough and hard-shelled, and in command again, said it was, "jest sheer bull luck!"

And the *Annie Crosby*? If you wish to see her after reading of these things, just step along the long wharf until you come to the carenage. Stand along on the starboard hand for a spell until you come to the building with a dozen or so brand-new banker's dories outside. The signboard above the door reads "Crosby & Son. Boatbuilders." But at their little wharf you will see a bank schooner, sun-bleached and weatherworn, and spending the balance of her days resting on the red tidal mud of the Anchorville beach. Her luck might have changed with the Crosbys, but Old Man Crosby doesn't believe in tempting Providence too much.



THE MAN WHO KISSED JESS *by*

GEORGE FREDERIC STRATTON

BAKERSFIELD must have been christened through one of those not uncommon idiosyncracies that determinately ascribe a quality to a place which it does not possess. There was not any semblance of a field nearer to Bakersfield than the Ventura Valley, which was four-score of miles to the northwest and over the Mojada Mountains.

West, east and south was the desert, yellow, parched and quiveringly hazy in the glaring sunshine. Among the scattered crude dwellings of the town were small patches of truck gardens, relievingly green because watered by the tailings of a creek which zigzagged across the dozen miles of desert from the Mojadas; a creek which reversed the universal order of waterways by wasting instead of gathering in its course, and becoming fractionally smaller at its outlet than it was at its source.

On the rough platform of the rough station two men stood gazing into the west at the trail of black smoke that marked the coming of the Denver Limited. From the Last Chance Saloon across the hub-deep sand trail called Main Street strolled three

other men, typical Westerners, probably from the Summer sheep ranges up in the Mojada canyons. They passed the first two without any greeting, and, strolling to the other end of the platform, waited.

As the Limited glided in and barely came to a stop, those three men boarded the smoker, the other two swung on to a day-coach. Before they had dropped into their seats the sharp blasts of the exhaust had already blurred into a steady, continuous hiss. Gower, the engineer, hated Bakersfield, and always shut off steam with profane obligatos in response to the flag, for ahead of him was Thunder Canyon and the divide, with its exasperating eight-mile-an-hour crawl, which was heart-breaking after the sixty-mile pace across the desert.

A half-dozen miles were covered before the two men exchanged any words. Then Hidreth, the smaller and rougher of the two, muttered:

"D'ye know who that girl is up forward, on the other side, Curly? The one under the half-acre blue hat."

Curly gazed at it and smiled.

"Don't recognize the hat, or the back view."

"That's ole Hous Lisby's daughter. Him as sunk all he had and then himself in that Seven Troughs Gulch prospect hole. You knew Lisby?"

"I sure did!" agreed Curly. "And I had reason, good and plenty, to remember him. I never heard what became of that girl. Where does she live?"

"Over at Rawhide. Got an ole aunt she lives with, an' I reckon she don't no more than livè. She's a reporter!"

"A what?"

"Reporter! Writes stuff for the Rawhide *Gazette* about weddin's an' deaths an' elopements an' similar frivolousness."

Curly made no comment. He sat gazing at the hat and tattooing his finger-tips against the window. Presently Hidreth murmured:

"We've reached the grade. Guess I'll meander forward. We've got everything clear; three shots an' we drop off at Seven Rod!"

Curley nodded assent.

When Hidreth had left the car he sauntered along the aisle until he came to a vacant seat opposite the one occupied by the girl under the hat. The seat in front of her had been turned over, and on it was her small suitcase. Curly was by no means of hesitating characteristics when he had a purpose: and he would have dropped into that seat; but a quick glance at her decided him to seek for a less obtrusive approach. She glanced at him coolly, and as instantly fixed her eyes on the window, looking at it but not through it.

AND Curly pondered on some excuse for addressing her. A pencil lying by a note-book in her lap gave him the chance. It rolled to the floor and to his feet, and picking it up, he stepped across and handed it to her with a courteous smile. Then he sat down opposite and remarked:

"You do not remember me, Miss Lisby, which the same isn't anyways remarkable. You were some younger when I saw you ridin' your father's burro up in Seven Troughs, and some smaller, too."

The girl's eyes, at first cold, level and defensive, brightened into a smile. The mention of her father, especially back to the days when she rode a burro, swept away conventionality.

"I do not remember you," she said

frankly, "and we had very few visitors up there."

"You would not remember me," agreed Curly, "because I was never at your camp. It was up in the mountain I got mingled with your father—the cleanest man that ever staked a claim, and the nerviest! It was up there he did me such good service. I think I owe my life to him, and before the chance came to even-up, he'd passed in his checks—er—you know what I mean, Miss Lisby."

She had looked at him steadily, eagerly, hoping for more insight into his acquaintance with her father. She saw the sharp glint of reminiscent regret come into his fine clear eyes and his brows furrow horizontally in sympathy.

"I never heard of any particular instance of the kind," she murmured.

"If there's time, I'll tell you about it," he smiled. "Just now, I want to speak about yourself. I hear that you are writin' for the Rawhide *Gazette*."

Her eyebrows went up prettily, and her lips curved into a humorous but deprecatory smile.

"I am trying to do that," she responded, "but I feel just a bit cramped. Rawhide is not a very exciting place."

Curly laughed.

"It's sure a tame little ole speck!"

"But," she continued, "I manage to get a paragraph now and then to send to a bigger paper. Oh, if I were only a man! If I could get out as men do, and see the things men see, there'd be plenty to write about. But nothing ever happens to me. Even if I make a little journey it's perfectly humdrum. The stage I'm in never gets held up."



CURLY started violently and glanced at her sharply. There was an enthusiastic flash in her eyes, a warm color in her cheeks and a pleading, dissatisfied curve to her lips. He had had experience with faces and he knew that the girl was hungry for her work, for chances to see and write up the deeper things of life.

"You're some eager for news!" he said earnestly.

"News! It's scoops I want! They're the only things that will put me on to a great city paper. Scoops! Oh, if I only had the luck that Jessie Woodruff had!

Did you hear about her—the Rawhide school-teacher?”

“I haven’t been in Rawhide for several years, Miss Lisby.”

“Jess was coming over from Larrinta. She was the only passenger, and the stage was held up at the Seven Troughs Canyon by Balmy Rockcliffe! Just think; the notorious Balmy, the gentleman road-agent. He got the bag of money—four or five thousand dollars, that was going in to pay off the Seven Troughs Mining Company’s men. And he was so impressed with Jess that he actually roped his horse behind the stage and rode with her for three miles. Then, while he was busy making love to her—they say he’s awful at that, although Jess wouldn’t admit it—another road-agent held them up, and as Balmy wasn’t ready he had to put up his hands.

“I think that’s the richest thing that ever happened on a road! One robber holding up another!”

Curly smiled grimly.

“It was some sarcastic, Miss Lisby.”

“Sarcastic! That’s all to come. Jess sneaked Balmy’s revolver and shot the road-agent. Just crippled his gun-arm, and he rode off. I don’t see why she didn’t turn on Balmy then, but she didn’t, and he got his gun back. Then he said it was time for him to go, and he grasped her in his arms and kissed her! Just fancy—a highwayman! And then he rode off and forgot to take the money with him. Left it in the seat with Jess! Oh, what a scoop! If I could have sent that to the *Denver Star* I’d be drawing salary from them now.”

Curly marveled at the luminous eyes, twinkling with merriment, and the eagerness of the parted lips.

“That’s a sure good story!” he agreed. “I wish I could put you on to another as good; but I can do something toward it.” He grinned as her hand instinctively reached for the little note-book. “You won’t write it yet,” he warned, “because it hasn’t happened. It’s to come, plumb soon; right on this train!”

The laugh shaded from her eyes and her curving lips. Instead came the level, steady glance from beneath prettily uplifted brows—the look of a capable, self-reliant girl watching for opportunity.

“There’s a moving-picture outfit on this train,” continued Curly, “and right soon

they’ll go through a hold-up performance. Of course, that’s been done, good an’ plenty; but this is in a new way. We’ll take the interior pictures, showing the men laying out the train crew and robbin’ the passengers in their seats. You won’t see the baggage and express work, because a woman wouldn’t fit into those pictures very good; but you’ll see us as we work through here.”

“And are you in it?” she inquired.

“Sure! I’m the—er—manager of the outfit. Now, you’ll have plenty chance to snap some pictures; I see you have a camera. And the story you can write afterward. Course, it won’t be the same as a genuine hold-up, but you’ll get ahead of the films, an’ that ought to be some sort of a scoop! Oughtn’t it?”

The old gleam of enthusiasm was back in her eyes and glowing cheeks.

“It will make a fine story!” she exclaimed. “Especially if I can get a few good pictures, Mr.—er—”

“I’d rather give you my name after the show,” retorted Curly. “Now, when we’ve cleaned up this car, we’ll drop off and show an escape scene up the Seven Rod Canyon. Get your window open, and you can take that all in.”

“Oh, I’m so much obliged to you!” she exclaimed. “This may mean so much to me; for I’m going over to Denver now to see if I can’t get a chance on the *Star*; and don’t you see, a good story like this will help me. It surely will!”

“I think you’ll get it,” said Curly quietly and perhaps a little grimly.

And at the moment three revolver-shots echoed from the walls of the canyon up which they were slowly climbing. Curly’s hand went like a flash to his hip, and the girl laughed.

“You move quick,” she said. “That’s more like cowboy than a moving-picture professor.”

“We catch the tricks,” explained Curly. “That’s a signal. They’re commencing on the baggage car. Let me have your note-book.”

She handed it to him, and he hastily scribbled over one page. Then tossing it back on the seat, he urged:

“Promise me that you’ll not read that till after the show. It’ll round up your story more than you think, if you leave it till then.”



THEN he sauntered forward to the smoking-car. The girl saw him close the door and stand inside, and, unable to restrain her impatience, she seized her camera, walked to the door and peered through.

The play had just commenced. Curly stood just inside the car, a revolver in each hand pointed warningly along each side. At the farther end were three other men in threatening attitudes and with pointed guns.

Coming down the aisle, guarded by one of the actor robbers, was a colored porter carrying a canvas sack with which he paused at every seat for valuables.

It was splendid acting, Miss Lisby thought; the consternation and indignation of the passengers being particularly well depicted; but they made fast time and she had to scurry back to her seat, where she focussed her camera for the first snap of the exciting scenes.

Curly led. With a vigorous stride he advanced a dozen feet into her car, facing the passengers, and in a clear and not unpleasant voice commanded:

"Hands up, gentlemen! Up high! Every one!"

His pose and determined face were superb, the girl thought, as she snapped a picture, devoutly hoping it was timed properly. Only two other members of the troupe came into her car, and the colored porter carried the sack. Curly led slowly down the aisle, pausing at every seat. In the rear came the two other impersonators, one stepping backward, his revolver warningly aiming at the passengers they had passed.

Miss Lisby was particularly impressed with the porter. He was trembling as if palsied, and his eyes and lips had shaded to an ashen gray. She had never seen such realistic acting.

As he shakingly held the sack toward her, Curly said sharply:

"There's nothing there! Come right on!" and they passed her.

She took three pictures as they acted out that car, although a savage scowl from one of the rear actors almost chilled her blood, it was so real; but she returned a bewitchingly appreciative smile.

Then they passed out, leaving one man at the door, with his gun menacingly displayed.

She glanced along the passengers and decided that they were all members of the troupe; their acting was extraordinarily good. Across the aisle, a little back of her, a sweet-faced old lady was sobbing pitifully.

Two seats ahead a man, in effective Jewish make-up, was waving his hands frantically and calling on Father Abraham to witness his ruin. She glanced curiously about for the picture machine, but missed it, probably while the point of view was being shifted.



SUDDENLY the bell-cord rattled sharply through the holders and she thought of the "Escape scene." She threw up her window, and as the slow-moving train slackened its speed she saw the actors spring off and scramble along the wall of a stupendous cliff.

A shot rang out from one of the cars, followed by a half-dozen from the actors, who ran like rabbits across a tiny, level stretch of sage-brush and darted round an enormous boulder which buttressed the entrance to a side canyon.

The train had come to a stop, and the wails and fierce objurgations of the actor passengers rang out. She saw a group of the train hands spring from the platforms and run to the entrance of the canyon, but more shots greeted them and they dodged back instantly, one of them pitching headlong to the ground and then lying motionless.

Intensely impressed by the effectiveness of it all, and yet puzzled at some of the incidents, she watched the prostrate actor picked up and carried to the baggage-car. Then she settled back in her seat to wait the actors' return, but in less than two minutes the hoarse blasts of the exhaust steam blurted out and the train commenced to move.

As she reached the opening of the Seven Rod Canyon she saw a group of men on horses, riding on a scrambling trot back into the mountains along the rough trail, and with an impetuous glow of admiration at the splendid setting of the exciting scene she snapped her camera shutter again. Thus the play ended.

Filled with wonder at the completeness and effectiveness of all the details, she thought of her note-book and Curly's assertion that what he had written would round

out the story. And it did, for this is what she read:

The hold-up is genuine. I told that yarn about moving-picture business so you wouldn't lose your nerve and spoil your pictures. It was little enough to do for the girl whose father did all he did for me. You've got a scoop, good and plenty.

BALMY ROCKCLIFFE.

She dropped back in her seat, aghast. "Balmy Rockcliffe! the famous outlaw of the intermountain region! The man who kissed Jess!"

The next morning, glowing with exultation, she read the double-column headlines in the *Star*:

THE GREAT HOLD-UP ON THE DENVER LIMITED

UNPARALLELED NERVE OF
OUR SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

SHE TAKES NOTES AND PHOTOGRAPHS OF
THE NOTORIOUS BALMY ROCKCLIFFE
AND HIS GANG

WHILE FOUR REVOLVERS ARE POINTED AT
HER AND THE OTHER PASSENGERS

"I'm so glad," she murmured, "that only one man was killed." And added, with a distinct gleam of appreciation, "And that wasn't Balmy Rockcliffe."



THE SUBJUGATION OF THE HIGH PRIESTESS

by W. ROBERT FORAN

SITUATED on the border of German East Africa and not far from the shores of that vast inland sea, the Victoria Lake, is a little country peopled by the Kisii. The tribe numbers some ten thousand souls, is rich in cattle and crops, and possesses a domain which might well be the envy of any farmer. The land is well watered and the climate is wonderful, despite the fact that it is within a few miles of the equator. While the days are hot, the nights are so cool that it is necessary to have fires and wear thick woolen clothing.

Deep valleys, rich in crops and pasture, nestle between green-grassed hills. Through them course clear, cool brooks and rivers.

As far as the eye can reach are to be seen innumerable brown, dome-shaped, thatched native huts and granaries, some almost hidden from view by tall patches of corn and *matama* (native flour). Vast herds of cattle and sheep roam the valleys and hillsides attended by little black, naked children. It would be hard indeed to conceive a fairer land of promise and plenty.

The Kisii people are closely akin to the most warlike tribe of British East Africa, the Masai, but, unlike them, prefer nature's garments to the skins of goats and cattle. The men are tall and beautifully formed. The women are comely, and shaped like bronze statues. Untamed and uncivilized, they are mere savage children of the

wilderness, knowing no God and obeying the rules and laws of their high priestess, or Laibon, as they call her, with no thought about anything in the world but their cattle and crops.

The Laibon held supreme power over the land and people. She was queen and god in one. Her law and her word were obeyed without question. If she ordained that a man, woman or child should die, the tribesmen executed her command without a murmur. No monarch could have held greater power on earth than she. Not only was she credited with spiritual and temporal power, but also with the art of healing and foretelling the future.

Into this little kingdom came one day the mighty power of Great Britain in the shape of a young District Commissioner with an escort of some fifty black African armed police. The Kisii people had never before seen a white man and looked upon him as a species of unknown god. His appearance was strange to them, and he had new ways.

At first they looked askance at him when he established a camp in the heart of their country. They steered clear of him, and sat on the hilltops watching his every movement. In course of time they lost their fear of him and came into his camp to see for themselves what manner of man this newcomer was. They saw that his followers, who were men of their own color and talked a language closely resembling their own, obeyed him with implicit obedience. They inspected the rifles and watched the small army drill with amazement.

"What new game is this?" they asked themselves.



THE Laibon held aloof, watching with deep suspicion and mistrust the interest this white man was taking in her kingdom. But the District Commissioner went calmly about his business of claiming the country for his king and of adding it to the vast empire. He was undismayed at the task, which might have made many a man, built of less stern stuff, quail. Fear was an unknown quantity with him, and never for a moment did the thought that he stood alone amidst thousands of savages discourage him. His duty was very real, and to him a never-ending source of satisfaction.

Day by day he drilled his small body of troops, built a grass-roofed mud house for himself and huts for his men, an office, and a large open-sided grass shed for a court-house. In between these onerous duties he steadily won the people by kindness and curiosity. An African native will always interest himself in things that are new to him.

In course of time he sent for the Chiefs and told them why he was there and that he meant to stay. The Laibon ignored his command to attend the *baraza* (meeting). The young District Commissioner laughed quietly to himself, for he knew that his time was not far distant. Soon the people would look to him for everything and learn to ignore their High Priestess. The Chiefs received him well and listened with deep attention to all he had to say. They watched with wonder when he threw a bottle into the air and shot it to pieces with his rifle.


"What magic is this?" they asked, shaking their heads.

Deep guttural groans of awe and astonishment greeted him at every new thing he showed them. He set some grass on fire with the aid of a magnifying-glass; he let them look upon their faces in a mirror for the first time in their lives; he killed a running deer with a shot from his sporting rifle; and performed a dozen or more similar tricks, simple to us, but the blackest magic to these unsophisticated children. From that moment the people accepted him as their overlord and master. Here was a magician who was more capable than their own Laibon. What more natural, then, than that they should accept him as the god of gods?

As the months dragged by, the influence of the Commissioner rapidly gained in magnitude, while that of the Laibon declined. She brooded disgustedly over her downfall and sought a means of ridding the land of this strange new god who had stolen her power from her. At last her chance came and, being clever, she seized it.

The Commissioner set to work and built himself a stone house out of quarried granite. His work now gave him more ample time for looking after his material comforts. He had taught the natives to bring all their sicknesses and troubles to him for settlement, and he had dealt wisely but firmly with them, so that they came to

lean more and more upon him for help. The Laibon, however, had not entirely lost control. With that patience and cunning which is inherent in all African natives, she bided her time but gave no sign of her discontent with the conditions.

 WHEN the stone residence of the Commissioner was finished, she sent for all the chiefs and held a big *baraza*. In impassioned tones she addressed them, reminding them of the loyalty and affection which were her just dues.


"O my brothers, what is this that you have done?" she cried to them. "Who is this white-skinned man you have taken to your bosoms? Why do you listen to all this man says and no longer pay heed to the words of your lawful Laibon? Would you then give your country to this man who is a stranger? He is one and we are many. Kill him, and then we can live as we lived before, in peace and comfort! When he is dead, no more white men will come to breed disloyalty among you. There are no more like him in the world. Everything he says is false and everything he does is a sham! He can not heal your bodies and foretell rain, good crops, and large increases to your cattle. Yet all these things can I do and have done for you. Then why do you turn your back upon me, your Laibon, and listen to this white man? Kill him, and we shall live forever in peace and comfort as we have done before he came to upset us. I have spoken. Act not and the blood be upon your own heads!"

Her speech was received in sullen silence. The Chiefs had lost faith in her to a large extent. But their awe of her had not entirely disappeared. The situation was indeed a grave one and there was nobody to warn the Commissioner. He went about his daily duties, ever on the alert to feel the pulse of discontent among his adopted people, but unflinchingly determined to do his duty, come what might.

It so happened that I was on a tour of inspection of my police in the Kisumu Province and my duties took me to Kisii. I arrived at the Commissioner's station a few days after the Laibon's secret meeting with the Chiefs. Her words had already begun to bear fruit. As I had journeyed through the country, accompanied by an armed police escort of eight men and my native

porters, I had noticed that the villagers were dressed in their war-paint and were fully armed. I was suspicious, for I had heard that the country was peaceful and well-disposed to the British rule in the person of the Commissioner. I saw that the villagers were watching me intently, and I came to the conclusion that they thought more and more that white men must be coming to take their country from them.

On arrival at the Commissioner's I informed him of what I had observed along the road. I could see that my news proved disconcerting. That night after dinner we discussed the situation fully, and I promised to hasten back to my headquarters at Kisumu and send him out another fifty armed police to strengthen his garrison.

 EARLY next morning a messenger arrived with urgent orders for me to come into my headquarters as soon as possible to meet my chief, who was about to inspect my force. I left the Commissioner with feelings of deep misgiving, for with him I could feel that trouble was brewing. If I had had more men with me I should have felt impelled to leave some of them with him, for I knew that an African rebellion flares up in a second or two and without much warning of its coming.

The road into Kisumu, on the Victoria Lake, took me through some of the most thickly populated regions of the Kisii country. As I approached the villages the men and women fled and hid in the corn patches, eying me suspiciously. I did not like the look of the situation at all and sent a runner back to the Commissioner to warn him to prepare for an uprising, as I felt sure the natives were about to cause mischief. Meanwhile I hastened on, determined to cover the eighty-four miles into Kisumu as soon as possible, and send back a large reinforcement.

After leaving the Kisii hills behind us we marched hour after hour across the dreary hot flat land near the great lake, and through swamps and marshes, where the mosquitoes and dreaded *tse-tse* fly held sway. On the afternoon of the third day we arrived at Kisumu. My first thought was to arrange for the despatch of some additional police to the Commissioner at Kisii. I arranged for the reinforcements to start at noon on the following day in charge of one of my junior officers.

Early next morning a police orderly arrived with an urgent letter from the Provincial Commissioner and handed it to me with a salute.

I tore the official envelope open and hastily scanned the contents of the letter. It was brief, but to the point:


District Commissioner of Police:

A native runner has just arrived from Kisii bringing me word that the District Commissioner has been speared and dangerously wounded by the natives in an attack on his escort when patrolling the vicinity of his post. The whole country is up, and it is feared many policemen, Somali traders, and Indian merchants have been massacred.

You will leave as soon as possible for Kisii with all available men, and rations and ammunition for a month, and accompanied by a doctor to attend to the Commissioner's wounds. You will travel with all practicable speed, and on arrival at the post will place it in a state of defense. Two regiments of native infantry will be despatched to the scene of rebellion as soon as they can be brought here from Nairobi.

You are to remember that you are to act on the defensive and not offensive until receipt of further orders.

Such, then, were my instructions to return to the little native State which I had just left behind me with feelings of deep foreboding for the safety of my young friend, the official in charge. My fears had been materialized only too quickly, and it was indeed sorrowful reading to learn that my friend had paid such a severe penalty for trying to aid the savages placed in his care.

 I LOST no time in getting my men ready for their long march to the relief of Kisii. In two and a half hours I was ready to march out with sixty men, thirty thousand rounds of ammunition and provisions for myself, police, and porters for at least a month.

The bugle rang out the "advance" and away we swung on the first lap of our long forced march. Forced march it was to be, to that I had fully made up my mind. There were no crowds to cheer us, no bands to play us on our road, all the pomp and circumstance given to the departure of troops to war was lacking.

All day we trailed across the hot desert plain toward a ford that I knew would save us many hours' dreary marching round a deep bay of the lake. I was informed that at this point there would be a number of native canoes to ferry us across. Time

was of the utmost importance. Every minute gained might mean the saving of a valuable life. Night came on and still we marched forward at a steady rate by the light of a kindly moon and the brilliant tropical stars. The native porters who were carrying the sixty and seventy pound loads of cartridges and food at last had to rest. I gave the order to halt for an hour.

In the distance we could hear the snorting and splashing of the hippopotami as they emerged from the lake to graze upon the shore. Intermingling with these weird sounds were the droning of the native drums in the numerous villages on either side of our path, the buzzing of hungry mosquitoes, and the occasional call of a water-fowl, disturbed from its nightly slumber.


Just before we continued our march, a Maxim gun and section of native soldiers in charge of it arrived to join my force. They had been sent on to me by my second in command. I was grateful for the added confidence their presence gave me, for sixty men against many thousand natives are rather big odds, especially if, as in this case, these sixty men were armed with obsolete and practically useless Martini-Henry rifles.

At daybreak we reached the ferry on the lake shore. We found some dozen native canoes tied up to the bank and we had soon commandeered them and their owners to transport us across the bay. To march round by road would occupy at least a day, but I figured to cross the bay in six hours by means of the canoes. I left in the last batch of canoes, and after being poled through a narrow, muddy, shallow channel in the papyrus reeds we found ourselves in the open waters of the bay of the huge Victoria Lake.

Now a native canoe is not the most comfortable boat at the best of times, for they are constructed out of the burnt-out trunks of trees with built-up sides made out of bark. These bulwarks are laced together by pieces of rawhide and the calking of the seams is primitive and ineffective. All native canoes leak badly even if they are but lightly loaded. On this particular occasion we were very much overloaded. At the best of times the canoe could hold with comfort but four men.

Our own canoe held two native paddlers, my native servant, my orderly, my

cook, a bugler, myself and six large loads of personal effects. The water poured into the canoe through the sides, and it took us all our time to keep it bailed out. To add to our troubles, when only half-way across the bay a stiff breeze sprang up, converting the hitherto smooth lake into a choppy sea. We shipped more and more water until I deemed it advisable to make for the shore, as the water was gaining rapidly upon us. We only just reached the papyrus-fringed edge of the lake when the canoe sank beneath us, leaving us standing up to our necks in water with the loads held high on our heads.

 WE WERE in a very unpleasant predicament, for the lake swarms with hungry crocodiles, so we scrambled hastily up into the reeds, but they gave way under our weight. We shouted lustily for help, and presently a canoe shot out of the reeds to our rescue. Luckily no crocodiles appeared to be in our immediate vicinity and eventually we reached the remainder of my men and partook of a scratch meal.

We continued our march, and presently were climbing the high hills into the Kisii country. I decided to travel to the post by a direct line across country and not follow the native road, which was very winding. This plan gave me the advantage of seeing what the villagers were doing as well as saving time. Toward nightfall we reached the borders of the enemy's country and I halted my men to rest them, for I knew that the last stages of the journey would be hard work and possibly enlivened with much fighting. I expected to have to fight my way through to the post.

While the men and porters rested, being thoroughly exhausted after their thirty-six hours' march without more than a few snatches of sleep obtained during my occasional half-hour halts along the road, the doctor and I advanced cautiously to reconnoiter the position. The path we had been following had traversed a hilly country, intersected by numerous valleys. I had halted on the summit of one of these hills.

On the opposite hill there were innumerable native villages dotted about in among thick patches of maize and *matama*. I watched them through glasses and saw that the villagers were aware of our advent. They were wearing their full war-

paint, consisting of large head-dresses made of ostrich plumes, painted bodies, long-bladed narrow spears, bows and arrows, and native swords strapped to their waists. As we approached the bottom of the valley they retreated farther up the hillside, all the time uttering blood-curdling yells and hideous cries of defiance.

I had seen enough to know that we should probably experience resistance on our line of march, but I was determined to make the post by daylight, come what might. I knew that to march through the night was to court extreme danger, but the thought of the poor Commissioner lying at the post with a serious spear wound and no doctor to attend to him was uppermost in my mind.

We returned to the men and after a few mouthfuls of hastily cooked food we recommenced our journey. Fortunately it was bright moonlight. When we reached the opposite hills we heard the war-drums beating all around us, but could not see the natives, and so had to advance with the utmost caution. We must have traveled six miles or more when the first attack came.

A shower of arrows fell in our midst, fortunately leaving us all untouched. It was time to get busy.

"Form square—fix bayonets—independent volleys—Commence!"

The men hastily formed square with the porters in the center, and I took a place at the Maxim in the center of the front rank of the square. The volleys rang out, and by the shouting and groans I knew that some of the bullets had taken effect. Still the arrows flew into our midst, but harming no one. Then all was still again.

I gave the order to advance in square formation. The Maxim party packed up their gun in a few seconds and we continued our way, with the men ready to repel any charge with their bayonets. The native porters so far had behaved very well, but I did not know how long this was going to last.



JUST before daylight the Kisii attacked again from a distance, and we repeated our previous tactics. But the enemy had become bolder and showed themselves. I set to work with the Maxim and this put them to flight with considerable loss, as I could tell by their shouts of dismay. Again we started

onward, and as the sun rose in the heavens we reached the summit of the hill overlooking the Commissioner's house. All was quiet, and every village we had passed was deserted. We halted for a few moments on the hilltop while I inspected the post through my glasses. We could see the Union Jack waving proudly in the light breeze above the Commissioner's house, and thus knew that he was still in the land of the living. Sentries could be seen dotted here and there about the buildings.

We quickly descended the hill and in fifteen minutes or so had arrived. Our march was a record for East Africa, for we had covered the eighty-four miles in forty-eight hours, despite the terrific heat and the heavy loads of the porters. We were greeted warmly by the garrison, and the doctor and I made our way hastily to the Commissioner's side. He was in bed, suffering greatly but fully conscious.

A hasty examination showed that a spear had entered his abdomen and passed through his body, just missing the spine. We soon had his wound cleansed and banded, and the doctor stated that he would recover. It had been a very narrow escape.

From what he told us, it appeared that he had sallied out soon after we had left him to go to Kisumu, in order to see for himself what the trouble was among the natives. He had gone some six to ten miles from the post when suddenly he was attacked by a hundred or more Kisii warriors. He and his men fired volleys at them and eventually drove them off, but not before one of the warriors had thrown his spear at him, wounding him severely. Then his men had made a litter out of boughs and poles and had carried him back to the post. He had just been able to give orders for the defense of the post and to send in word of his plight to the Provincial Commissioner at Kisumu before he had collapsed entirely.

Seeing that he was now safe and in the doctor's hands, I turned my attentions to fortifying the camp against attack. We erected barbed-wire entanglements all round the post and dug some trenches behind them. Then placing sentries on guard to watch the enemy's movements, I threw myself on my camp cot to snatch a few hours' much-needed rest. I had not slept for two days and was completely worn out.



IT SEEMED only a few minutes after I had gone off to sleep before I was awakened by the sound of firing. I jumped to my feet and ran out of my tent to see what had happened. The hilltops were black with Kisii warriors dressed in all their savage-looking war paraphernalia, and the valley between them and ourselves was also crowded with advancing warriors. I could hear the war drums beating and the horns blowing. This meant business. I ordered the bugler to sound the "assembly" followed by the "alarm." My small garrison fell in hastily and took up their positions in the trenches.

I seated myself at the Maxim, which had been placed in a very advantageous position. On came the black hordes of the enemy without any fear of our rifles. The men started firing rapidly into them and I turned on the Maxim, fairly mowing them down; but still they kept running toward us. Two hundred yards—one hundred and fifty—one hundred yards divided us, and then suddenly they broke and ran, unable to stand the hail of rifle and Maxim fire any longer. We followed them up with a steady fire from our rifles, but they halted when they had reached the summit of the opposite hill.

We took a rest and to my delight found that none of us had been wounded. We had been extraordinarily lucky, for the natives had poured a perfect deluge of arrows and spears into our midst.

My orders had been to act on the defensive. So far I had carried them out to the letter, but now I made up my mind to teach the Kisii a lesson. Selecting some twenty-five men and taking the Maxim with me I made a sortie toward the enemy. When they saw me start, they retreated over the brow of the hill. At every village I came to I set fire to the huts and the granaries and captured the stock. Whenever we saw any of the enemy we gave them a few volleys in order to make them keep moving.

They had learned that our rifles were things to be avoided. When they had charged the camp they had lost fully one hundred men killed and Heaven only knows how many wounded. I never was able to ascertain their losses, for when a native is wounded he goes off into the bush and hides himself until death claims him. He will not attempt to take treatment unless he


has long been in touch with civilization and learned the benefits and efficacy of the white man's medicine.

After three hours' marching, burning huts and capturing stock, I gave the order to return to the post. We took a different route and burned every hut we came across, the countryside being now filled with smoke from the burning grass roofs. We had captured some five hundred head of cattle on this little jaunt, and I was well pleased with myself.

Suddenly, however, as we were burning a village, the war-drums beat again and in a few minutes we had our hands full repelling a most determined attack. The Kisii charged right up to our rifles and suffered terrific loss. Again and again we drove them back, but they returned with renewed vigor. It began to look black for us, as we had but one hundred and fifty rounds a man and two thousand for the Maxim gun. Much of this had already been expended.

As the enemy rushed us for the sixth time I poured a steady fire into their midst from the Maxim, which by this time was almost red-hot. I had to take the water-bottles from my men to pour into the water-jacket of the gun in order to keep it cool, yet as fast as I filled the jacket the water boiled over. But no men could stand for long against the fire we were pouring into them, and at last the Kisii fled, leaving some two hundred and fifty dead upon the ground. We had not come off free either. One of my best non-commissioned officers was killed and several of the men had been wounded.

We hastily buried our dead comrade and I bound up the wounds of the injured. Then I ordered the advance and reached the post without being molested further. I had done a good day's work and was satisfied that the Kisii would henceforth have a wholesome regard for the white man's weapons.

 THAT night I called up two of my best men and ordered them to go out to the Laibon's village and endeavor to capture her. I told them that they were to make as little noise as possible and to come back if they saw they could not accomplish their task without risking certain death. I knew that two native policemen would have a far better chance

of succeeding than if I sent a large party, who would be sure to make a noise and attract attention.

Soon after sunrise I was on the watch for the return of the two men. I had not long to wait, for soon a party of men and a herd of cattle came toward the post. Glasses showed me that my two men were of the party. When they came closer I saw that the other people in the party were prisoners, for they were all tied together.

I ran down the hill to meet them and on reaching them received the men's report. They had gone to the Laibon's village stealthily soon after midnight and had crept into her hut without being noticed. They had jumped upon her as she slept, and gagged and bound her. Then carrying her between them, they had escaped without noise to a safe distance. From there they had driven the old Priestess before them.

On the way back to camp they had surprised a party of Kisii with a big herd of cattle and had managed to capture the greater part of the cattle and five of the warriors. They told their story with an air of utmost unconcern and as if they had done nothing out of the ordinary. For them I suppose it was nothing very wonderful, but from our Western point of view their action was extremely plucky, to say the least of it.

I knew that this capture would practically end the trouble, and I chuckled with delight when I thought of the feelings of the military when they found on arrival that the work had been almost completed. We had only to punish the tribe for their murders of policemen, traders and merchants, and to exact a heavy fine for their assault on the Commissioner, and our task would be complete. The Kisii had already learned that the white man was able to deal with them severely owing to his superiority of weapons. They had acquired a dread of the magic "smoke-gun," and a still greater dread of the irritating, destructive Maxim.

About noon that day the advance company of the military arrived, without having experienced much opposition on the road. They reported that the natives had fled on their approach into the hills. I explained to the officer in command why this was, and he was deeply chagrined to find that we had done nearly all the fighting necessary. However, he was too good a sportsman to show me any ill-will for my scoop on the military.



NEXT day the two regiments of native infantry arrived and proceeded through the country, burning the villages and capturing the cattle, purely as an object-lesson. In two weeks the uprising was stifled and all the Chiefs had come in and paid their respects to the Government, at the same time promising never again to stir up mischief or rebellion.

The military returned to their station at Nairobi, and I was ordered to bring the Laibon and the captured cattle into Kisumu. The other prisoners were released. On the march in, I had many long talks with the old Laibon and explained to her as best I could the mightiness and power of the British Government. She expressed herself as much interested to find that there were so many white men in the world. She told me that when she asked her people to kill the Commissioner she thought that there were only one or two white men in the country, and that if she got rid of them all would be well.

On the last day we were companions in camp, the old lady said that when she returned to Kisii to her own people she would make the Commissioner her husband and co-ruler. I did not like to hurt the old lady's feelings by telling her that the Commissioner would have other views on this marriage question, and moreover that she would not be permitted to return to her own people for some years to come.

The Commissioner recovered from his wound and is still guiding the destinies of

the Kisii people, who now devotedly respect and obey him. The cattle captured from the tribe have all been given back in payment for their labor in making roads and bridges in the territory and generally opening up the resources of this rich land. The Laibon, thoroughly tamed and partially understanding the delights and benefits of civilization, lives in semi-state in a far distant district of British East Africa.

She has been shown the wonderful works of the white man in Africa, and now recognizes that there are far greater magicians in this world than herself. She is entirely content with her lot and bears no ill-will to any one, least of all the paternal Government which has made her life, as a queen in exile, so full of pleasure and contentment. She has been subjugated and tamed. It had to be, and it is well that it came early, before the lesson was too hard to learn.

Kings come and go in Africa as in other countries, but it is seldom that one finds an African queen ruling over a tribe. In all my wanderings in Africa I have come across but one other like case; but this is a story in itself, and must wait for another day. Suffice it to say, that if any one visited Kisii now he would find the country in a state of great prosperity and the people contented and happy. What more could they want possibly, unless it be their Laibon? And yet, curiously enough, her name is now never even mentioned. She is forgotten. Maybe she forgets too.



THE PEACEABLE MEN

By BERTON BRALEY

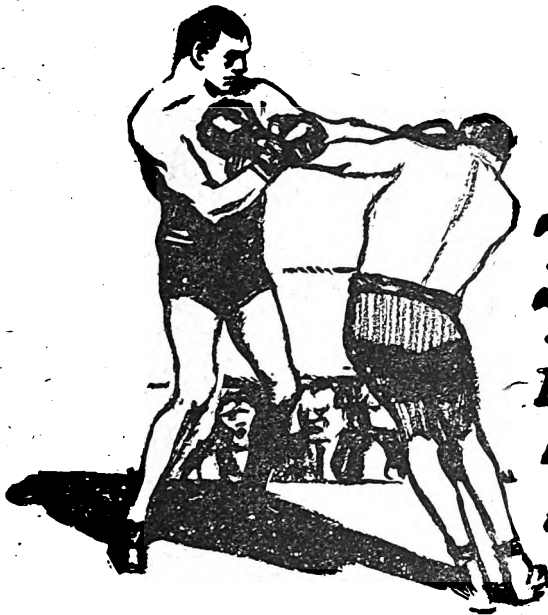
FAHEY, Mulcahey, McCann,
Dooley, Gilhooley an' Flynn,
Each wan a good Irish man,
All of thim peaceable min,
Got off the ship fer a stroll,
Wint in a bar for a dhrink,
Each of thim flashin' a roll,
Makin' the bar-tendher blink.

Prisintly gathered a gang—
Gang that was certainly tough,
Rowin' around the shebang,
Cuttin' up ugly an' rough.
Twenty-five min at the least
Hovered around fer to rob,
Plannin' a spree an' a feast
Whin they had finished the job.

Somebody stharterd a fight,
Somebody pulled out a knife;
Trouble was surely in sight,
There was a row fer yer life!
Guns all a-wavin' in air,
Shots an' a smother av smoke;
Manny an uplifted chair,
Manny a cranium broke.

Fahey, Mulcahey, McCann,
Dooley, Gilhooley an' Flynn,
Each wan a peaceable man,
Each av thim unarmed min,
Did just the best that they could,
Fightin' their way to the door;
Bar was a splinter av wood,
Glass scattered over the floor.

Prisintly all things was sthille—
Sthille as a village asleep,
Thim who had stharterd the mill
Lyn' around in a heap.
Out av that dump came the clan
Smilin' as whin they came in—
Fahey, Mulcahey, McCann,
Dooley, Gilhooley an' Flynn!



THE TOP OF THE LADDER

Billy Blain slips badly but he gets there ~

by **WALTER GALT**

GEOGHAN had contrived to make himself exceedingly unpopular, for even in pugilistic circles a man is expected to draw the line somewhere. Not even in that torment of unexpected undercurrents is a man allowed to float on two tides at once.

After very careful scheming he had laid a trap for Billy Blain and his manager, O'Hanlon, and the two of them had walked into it very neatly. That, according to the high-flung ethics of his profession, was quite permissible, and even praiseworthy, for it proved the possession of brains.

But when Billy, driven to it by no other motive than loyalty to his friend O'Hanlon, fought his way out of the trap, and won—beating the runner-up for the welter-weight championship—Geoghan openly congratulated him in full view of Einstein. Moreover, when Billy entered the ring contrary to expectations, Geoghan bet on him, and Einstein, his partner in iniquity, saw him do it.

So Einstein, who was not without influence of a certain sort, became Geoghan's bitter enemy, and did not let a single opportunity go by to damage Geoghan in every way he could. There is an age-old adage about thieves sticking together. As a matter of fact they hardly ever do; but by dint of constant repetition the adage has become the first article of the crooks'


creed, and he who is caught in the act of breaking it is sure of the deadly enmity of all the rest.

Einstein would probably have acted similarly himself, had the opportunity been given him, but the point was that he had caught Geoghan doing it; he jumped at once to the conclusion that the trap had been set for himself instead of Billy Blain, since it had been he who was caught in it, and he swore vengeance. He sent Geoghan's name round, in every quarter where he had any influence at all. That astute gentleman found himself quietly, but emphatically, boycotted by every fight-promoter and manager of account in New York. No one in pugilistic circles would even talk to him.

O'Hanlon was not included in the exclusive circle; word was not passed to him. The genial Irishman was looked on as an interloper and a fool, who had achieved a meteoric success in spite of his ignorance of the game. It was considered on all sides that his luck could not possibly last, and nobody minded in the least whether Geoghan, or anybody else, for that matter, swindled him or not.

The sporting writers and the fight-followers and even the fight-promoters had come to believe by now that Billy Blain was something more than a meteorite; he had made them believe it by winning fights

instead of talking. But the fight-promoters meant to bring him to a proper sense of their importance before admitting him to their charmed circle. And they meant to freeze O'Hanlon out.

 SO IT happened that before three days had passed after Billy's battle with Dick Snyder the only members-in-good-standing of the fighting world who would even talk to Geoghan were Billy Blain and O'Hanlon; and since a man of Geoghan's stamp soon gets weary of his own society, he set out one afternoon to find them.

As he passed the corner of Sixth Avenue and Fourteenth Street he saw an old acquaintance of his, who was not connected with the fight-game and who had consequently not dropped his acquaintance yet.

"Hullo, Swanson!" he exclaimed. "Where did you pick up that black eye? Gad! It's a beauty!"

"I'm not very proud of it!" said Swanson. "I got it from a man about half my size! Look at my nose, too! Isn't it a treat?"

"How did it happen?" asked Geoghan, not expecting to be told the truth, for he knew Swanson, but interested to know whether he would display his usual ingenuity in lying.

"Most extraordinary thing you ever saw in your life!" said Swanson. "I was standing still on Sixth Avenue somewhere about Fiftieth Street, waiting for a friend to turn up. He was late, and I was looking up and down the street for him. Suddenly a man about half my size rushed up to me and hit me in the eye and punched my nose and knocked me over backward! I never saw him before in my life! I'd know him again, though, believe me!"

"Did he rob you?" asked Geoghan.

"No. Didn't take a thing! Just knocked me down and ran—ran like a rat—couldn't see him for dust and small stones!"

"Well, I'll be ——!" said Geoghan. "If you can't think up a better story than that, Swanson, you must be getting dried up! You don't expect to put that yarn over, do you?"

"It's the Gospel truth!" said Swanson.

"Mn—yes!" said Geoghan.

Two women passed them, and the elder woman bowed.

Geoghan raised his hat, a little nervous-

ly, but Swanson turned his back toward them.

"Sorry, Geoghan," he said, "but I've got to hurry; there's a man waiting for me."

"I'll bet it's not a girl!" said Geoghan. "Not with your map in that state! All right, so long!"



"WHO did you bow to, ma?" asked the girl.

"That was the gentleman who called on me and told me that Billy Blain was a prize-fighter. I'm everlastingly indebted to him! If it hadn't been for him, Billy might have gone on deceiving you right along, and you'd have been married to a low-down pugilist before you knew it. As it is, he'll have to leave the ring before he marries you. I'll never be able to forget the kindness that gentleman did in calling on me the way he did and telling me. I call it real good of him to go to all that trouble."

"What did he say his name was, ma?"

"That's just it; I never can remember names. I was so afraid he was going to speak just then that I hurried on; I'd have been mortified almost to death if he'd spoken and I hadn't been able to remember what his name was—after him being so kind."

"Billy pointed him out to me that night when we all had supper together after the fight. He's Mr. Geoghan, that's who he is, ma. He's another fight-manager, like Mr. O'Hanlon, only in a bigger way."

"Nonsense, child! You don't tell me! You must be making a mistake."

"No, ma. I never forget faces. That was Mr. Geoghan. And who do you suppose the man was he was talking to?"

"How should I know, child?"

"That was the masher that Billy beat the day I first met him—the one that put his arm through mine, and wouldn't go away until Billy knocked him down. You'll say I'm wrong about that too, I suppose!"

"No, child; I allow you'd know *him* again. But that makes me all the more certain that the other wasn't Mr.—Mr.—what did you say his name was?"

"Geoghan."

"Ah, yes, Geoghan. Well, it makes me all the more certain it wasn't him. It can't have been the gentleman who called on me, after all."

"But he raised his hat, ma!"

"Well, I bowed first, didn't I?"

"Yes, but there were lots of people around, and if he hadn't recognized you he wouldn't have known you were bowing to him."

"Oh, don't argue, child! 'Pon my word, Maud, you're something awful! Can't you take your mother's word for something now and then?"

"I can take Billy's," answered Maud mutinously.

Her mother reflected for a moment. There were a dozen answers that she had ready for that statement, and any one of them would have stung. She decided, though, that since she had been forced to accept Billy as her future son-in-law, she would be ill-advised to say bitter things about him. However little she might like pugilists, her daughter was going to marry one of them, and whatever she said against them as a class might be likely to react.

"I expect we were both wrong," she said after a minute.

"I wasn't," answered her daughter; "and I'm going to tell Billy the minute I see him."

She saw Billy Blain that evening, for she telephoned for him. He left Geoghan and O'Hanlon engaged in a heated argument over the merits of partnerships; Geoghan was trying to persuade O'Hanlon that he could serve his own interests and Billy's best by sharing the duties—and rewards—of managership. He claimed that he knew more about the fight-game than O'Hanlon did, and that his experience would enable them to steer clear of countless pitfalls, and consequently would be well worth the fifteen per cent. of the gross receipts at which he valued it.

O'Hanlon seemed half inclined to listen to him, much to Billy's anxiety. He would have much rather stayed where he was in order to veto the proposal when the time came. But a call from Maud Watson was something he could not refuse, and he hurried to her as fast as the "L" could take him.



TWO hours later he returned, and found Geoghan and O'Hanlon still thrashing out the same subject. They had reached the point of arguing about the proper division of the profits, and the light in Geoghan's eye betrayed the

fact that he thought himself a winner. The expression on his face changed, though, as Billy entered.

The little man looked so fierce that Geoghan half rose from his chair instinctively, and as Billy crossed the room toward him he stood up, as casually as he could, but quite evidently nervous.

"What's up, Billy?" asked O'Hanlon.

Billy ignored him. He faced Geoghan with his fists clenched, and in an attitude that there was no mistaking.

"You dirty swine!" he growled. "Get out o' here!"

"What d'you mean?" demanded Geoghan.

O'Hanlon sprang to his feet and came around the table.

"What's he done, Billy? Here! Stop that! Now, tell me what he's done."

He forced himself in between Billy and Geoghan, and flung one huge, hairy arm around Billy and held him.

"Lemme go!" swore Billy. "Lemme go, d'ye hear! Let me get at him! Go and see my girl, would he, behind my back—make out he was some sort o' saint, an' tell her mother I'm a crook! That's who told her I was fightin' for a living—him! See what I do to him!"

"Steady, Billy! D'you know this for a fact?"

"Course I do! Hasn't she just told me? Leggo, d'ye hear! Lemme get at him!"

"So-ho!" said O'Hanlon. "So that's the way you abused my confidence, is it Geoghan? You're a bright beauty, aren't you? Keep still, will you, you little runt! I'll attend to this."

Geoghan made a bolt for the door.

"No you don't!" said O'Hanlon. "You wait!" He leaned the broad of his back against the door, still keeping hold of Billy. "And you had the nerve to come round here on top o' that, had you, and try to get me to go into partnership with you?"

He gave Billy a push that sent him spinning over into a corner, and then grabbed Geoghan by the arm. Geoghan struggled, but he might as well have fought against a steam crane for all the good it did him; O'Hanlon picked him up and held him in his arms with scarcely any apparent effort.

"Open that door now, Billy!" he ordered.

Billy obeyed him, grumbling.

"Might ha' let me have a go at him!" he complained.

O'Hanlon carried the struggling Geoghan to the head of the single flight of stairs and paused again.

"Get down those stairs," he ordered Billy, "and open the street door. Hurry, now!"

Billy did as he was told and stood aside. Then the engineer set Geoghan on his feet facing the stairs, and suddenly with one tremendous kick he sent him flying down them face forward and out through the door into the street; and Billy slammed the door after him.

"Don't see why you should take that on yourself!" grumbled Billy. "That was my quarrel!"

"You save yourself for the ring, my son! 'Twon't matter if I get hurt! It 'ud cost money if you did!"

Outside in the street Geoghan picked himself up and felt for broken bones. As he limped away he turned once, and looked up at the window of O'Hanlon's sitting-room.

"All right!" he muttered. "If I don't get even over this, my name's not Geoghan.—that's all!"

II



BILLY and O'Hanlon sat vis-à-vis to Mrs. Watson and her daughter at a table in the Garibaldi Restaurant, which is considered the height of respectability by people in Mrs. Watson's circle, and the depth of dulness by the crowd that shifts along the Great White Way. A month or more had passed since Billy's last fight, for he had pledged himself to have one try for the championship and then quit the ring. And the champion seemed disinclined to fight.

"For heaven's sake, keep your hands underneath the table!" said Mrs. Watson, frowning at Billy. "They're something awful—you'll have everybody in the restaurant knowing you're a prize-fighter!"

A hot answer trembled on the verge of Billy's lips, but he thought better of it, and left off fidgeting with his coffee-cup. He scowled, though, as he laid his hands on his knees. O'Hanlon raised his own hairy, knotted paw, and looked at it intently.

"Come to think of it," he said thoughtfully, "mine aren't what you'd call bouquets either! Are they?"

"Ah! But you're an engineer, and you

came by yours honestly. That's different."

"It don't make 'em look any different," said O'Hanlon.

"Besides, mother, Billy's going to be an engineer," said the daughter, looking very proudly at Billy, and very coldly indeed at her mother.

"Bah!" said her mother. "Tell that to Sweeny! He told you he was a fireman, when he was a prize-fighter all along! That's another of the tales he tells you!"

"He was a fireman!" answered Maud hotly.

"Yes. Once! And believe me, if he keeps his promise and turns honest, and leaves off earning his living in vulgar prize-fights, he'll go back and be a fireman—and that's nearly as bad as being a pugilist! I don't hold with picking up strangers on the street and getting engaged to them. I'll never get used to the idea as long as I live!"

"You'll have to get used to Billy, ma. I'm going to marry him."

Mrs. Watson sniffed.

"A fireman for a son-in-law indeed! I wonder what my husband would have said if he'd lived to see it."


"Don't you believe it!" said O'Hanlon. "I'm training Billy, and I know what he's doing. He's making more progress with his engineering lessons than I'd have believed possible. By the time he's finished the course he's taking, and with what I show him, he'll be able to get a good job anywhere. He'd stay in the ring if I had my way, but since he's made up his mind to quit before he marries, I don't mind telling you that there isn't a better man of his inches in New York!"

"Well, when's he going to quit?"

"Soon as I've fought the champion," said Billy.

"Tut," said Mrs. Watson; "that's all talk! Why don't you fight him, then, and get it over?"

"It's pretty notorious," said O'Hanlon, "that the present champion of the welter-weight division doesn't want to fight. He's a man named Harry Adams. I dare say you've seen his name on the bill-boards. He's making plenty of money in vaudeville just now, and he doesn't care to risk getting beaten while there's all that easy money to be picked up. I've tried every way I know to force him into it, but you can't make a man fight if he don't want to."

 MAUD WATSON put her elbow on the table and leaned over toward O'Hanlon.

"But if he won't fight, doesn't he lose the championship?" she asked him.

"Not in this burg," said O'Hanlon. "Y'see, Miss, it's this way. First he said Billy had no claim to fight him—wasn't in his class, and all that kind o' dope. But the sporting writers on the newspapers put an end to that talk. I went around and saw 'em all, and put it up to 'em, and next day they all came out with a write-up for Billy and said he had a clear right to challenge."

"Take your elbow off the table, child!" interposed Mrs. Watson suddenly. "Heavens, what manners! One would think you were a pugilist's wife already."

"Don't, ma! Go on, Mr. O'Hanlon—I'm awfully interested."

"Well, then he started making all kinds of other objections, but we met him each time; we even agreed to weigh at three o'clock on the day of the fight, so that he could go into the ring as heavy as he liked. Billy 'ud fight him if he weighed a ton, durn him!"

"Well? He couldn't get out of it then, could he?"

"Oh, yes! He stuck out for a five-thousand-dollar side bet—money to be posted now, and fight or forfeit.

"Y'see, he knew we hadn't got five thousand dollars, or at least he guessed we hadn't, and he happened to be right. And that's where we stand now. Billy and I can raise pretty nearly four thousand between us, and I can borrow enough to make it up to four thousand five hundred. But where the rest's to come from, Lord knows! I only wish to goodness the Skipper were here! He'd fork out like a shot!"

"Who's the Skipper? I haven't heard about him?"

"Billy's and my old skipper—commanded the old *Diogenes* until she sank. I wonder Billy didn't tell you about him. He's helped the two of us before now. He got a new ship from the same company, and he's somewhere down the East Coast now—at sea anyhow, and out of reach."

"So if you had the five hundred dollars you could make the champion agree to fight?"

"Sure!" said O'Hanlon. "We'd call his bluff. We've agreed to all his other terms

already. We've agreed about the weight, and we've let him name the place. There's a twelve-thousand-dollar purse offered, and we've even agreed to let him have two-thirds of that, win or lose; and now he's made us this offer in writing, or, rather, his manager has. I'd simply post the money, and let the newspapers know I'd done it, and he'd have to fight."

"It seems a pity you can't raise it," said the girl. "D'you think Billy'd win?"

"I'm game to back him with all the money I've got in the world," said O'Hanlon.

"How long have you got in which to raise the money?" she asked.

"Oh, a day or two. Till the end of the week, anyhow."

"Well, I wouldn't despair if I were you. Come along, ma; let's be going. Going to see us home, Billy?"

"You bet I am!" said Billy. "Come on, O'Hanlon; you walk with Mrs. Watson."

And O'Hanlon rose from his seat with a rather wry face and proceeded to do as he was told.

"Durned little runt!" he muttered. "Well, I suppose I went courtin' once. It's so long ago, though, that I've pretty near forgotten it."



NEXT evening, just as Billy and O'Hanlon had finished supper, a knock came at the door, and Billy went to open it. A messenger boy handed him a letter and asked for a receipt. Billy signed the slip—closed the door again—examined the handwriting on the envelope—tore it open—read what was inside it, and then sat down in his chair again with a gasp.

"Well, I'll be ——!" he exclaimed.

"What is it, sonny? Let's have a look."

"All right," said Billy, "read it for yourself. Now, there's what I call a real girl!"

Billy handed him the note, and O'Hanlon grabbed it and read it. It ran:

DEAR BILLY:

If mother knew what I was doing, she'd have a fit. Besides, she wouldn't let me. I drew this five hundred dollars out of the savings bank to-day, and I'd send you more if I had it. With that, and what Mr. O'Hanlon told me you have between you, and what he said he could borrow, you ought to have enough to make the champion fight. Go in and win, Billy!

Ever yours,

MAUD.

"Where's the money?" asked O'Hanlon.

"Here."

"Hand it over!"

"What for?"

"To do what she says, of course."

"D'you think I'm going to take it? What d'you take me for, you great Irishman?"

"What d'you propose to do with it, then?"

"Give it her back, of course."

"If ye do that, I'll go up and get it back from her myself."

"Then I won't fight," said Billy.

"Yes, ye will, my son. She's a fine girl, that is. She's sent ye her money to prove that she has confidence in ye; an' it's up to you now to show her that her confidence isn't misplaced. Hand that money over, now; come on."

They argued for an hour to no purpose, and finally they both of them went and called on Miss Watson. They had the good fortune to catch Mrs. Watson away from home, and for another hour they argued in the stuffy little parlor.


Under the stress of Maud Watson's coaxing Billy gave way in the end, and on the morning following O'Hanlon deposited five thousand dollars with the official stakeholder of the Stars and Stripes Athletic Club, and he and Billy attached their signatures to an agreement for a ten-round fight with Harry Adams.

"I don't like it, though," said Billy, as they walked away. "It's all very well for you an' me, Terrence; we're men, an' if we go broke it doesn't matter. But Maud's a girl—she's a — good girl too! And if I lose her five hundred, she's all in."

"Rot!" said O'Hanlon; "ye're not going to lose it! Ye'll win, sonny! Ye're going to win! As you say, though, she's a — good girl."

"I wonder why that swine Geoghan was hanging round the office at the Stars and Stripes," said Billy, apropos, apparently, of nothing.

III

 GEOGHAN was getting very weary of the boycott that he met with on every end and side, but his weariness had no effect upon his enmity for O'Hanlon and Billy Blain. He nursed it until it became an absolute obsession. Seen through his prejudiced eyes, Billy and

O'Hanlon were the two people responsible for his present discomfort. He overlooked the fact that he had laid a mean trap for them, and had tried to rob them of every cent they had. And since O'Hanlon had kicked him ignominiously down-stairs into the street, he had been able to think of no fate that was bad enough for either of them. He would have killed them both cheerfully if he could have done so without risk to himself.

Since he had learned that Billy was really signed up to fight the champion he had racked his brains continually to find a way of putting a stop to the fight, but his position was different now to what it had been before he was boycotted. He could neither approach O'Hanlon nor any of the men who would be likely to take an interest in some plan to "skin" the Irishman.

He had been at the fight-hall when the agreement for the fight was signed, and he knew, more or less, the terms of it. He knew, for instance, that O'Hanlon had been forced to post five thousand dollars, and from what he knew already of his and Billy's circumstances he divined that five thousand dollars was not far from being all they had between them.

"And even that's most of it my money, — them!" he muttered.

The more he thought about it the more obvious it seemed to him that if he could stop the fight now he would wreak the finest vengeance possible, for Billy and O'Hanlon would be ruined. He had that thought on his mind as he left Sharkey's on the morning before the day on which the fight was scheduled to take place; it was boiling in his brain—fermenting there—almost making a madman of him.

But he was no nearer a solution of the problem when his acquaintance, Swanson, joined him and walked with him a block or two. Nor had he thought out the answer to it when, a few moments later, Billy and O'Hanlon passed him at a street corner and Swanson plucked his sleeve.

"See that little man?" said Swanson. "I'll be — if that isn't the guy that knocked me down the other day!"

"Why don't you beat him up, then?" asked Geoghan, not looking.

"Don't like the looks of that big friend of his!" said Swanson. "He looks like more than I could tackle!"


Geoghan looked then; and as he looked

the worried expression left his face, and it took on a low, mean look of cunning.

"Point out the man who blacked your eye again," he demanded; "I want to be sure."

"There—that one! The little man walking on the right side of the giant with a red beard."

"Now, may the devil run away with me," said Geoghan to himself, "if I haven't found the answer to it! Come in here!" he said out aloud to Swanson.

 HE DREW his acquaintance into a saloon and ordered drinks.

"Are you quite sure it was the man?" he asked as soon as the drinks were served.

"Sure! Know him in a thousand!"

"Would you swear to him?"

"Yes. Why?"

"I happen to know his name and where he lives."

"The devil you do!"

"Yes. And it so happens that it would serve my purpose very well indeed to get him arrested. Supposing you come round with me, now, and swear out a warrant agin him?"

"Not me!" An habitual masher, such as Swanson, was the last man likely to fall in line with a suggestion of that kind; he knew just how much sympathy he was likely to receive from a magistrate when his assailant's version of the story was heard. But he did not relish the notion of making a clean breast of the affair to Geoghan either. "I haven't the time to waste hanging about the court, for one thing; and I don't care for the publicity either. The papers would be sure to get hold of it."

"Well, now, as I told you, I'd like very much to have him arrested. And you want to get even, don't you?"

"I'd like to get even, yes. But not that way."

"Supposing I could make it worth your while?"

"How?"

"Supposing you got five hundred out of it, d'you think that would compensate you for the beating, and the trouble it 'ud put you to to swear out a warrant?"

"Sure thing! But how am I going to get it? A beak wouldn't award me damages, and I'm not going to waste time

bringing a civil suit against him without witnesses."

"I thought you were a grown man," said Geoghan; "you're talking like a kid!"

"Well, what's the idea?"

"If I promise you five hundred by ten o'clock to-morrow night—or five minutes past ten, say—will you go and swear out a warrant for his arrest, and arrange to have it served on him when I say the word?"

"But where's the five hundred coming from?"

"From me—out of my pocket."

"You're on!"

"Good! Now your time's mine until I bring this off—that a deal?"

"Yes. What d'you want me to do?"

"Stay here until I come back. I want to know where to find you."

"How long'll you be gone?"

"An hour—two hours, maybe. But stay here till I come back. I might be here sooner."



GEOGHAN left him waiting in the saloon and sought out another acquaintance of his, a tobacconist—a man who was burdened with about as few principles as himself, but who had not yet got himself ostracised by the ring fraternity.

"You got the ear of Mike Evans?" he demanded, as soon as the door of the room behind the shop had closed on him.

"Yes," said the seller of cigars. "He owes me a pretty large account. If his man Adams pulls off the fight to-night I'm hoping to connect."

"What difference'll that make? They get two-thirds of the purse any way—win or lose."

"You don't say! Well, all the same they pay easier when they're winning; soon as they lose, they begin to draw their horns in."

"Well, now, look here. I've an idea that they're not overkeen on this fight. I believe they'd back out if it wasn't that their money's posted. But Mike won't talk to me; we've had a bit of a tiff, and haven't made it up yet. You cut round and see Mike, and ask him how much he'll give you if the fight's called off—that's to say provided the other side don't show up, and their money's forfeited. That 'ud mean five thousand dollars easy money to them. You ought to get two out of it."

"Two thou?"

"Sure. But do what I say. Cut round and ask him. I'll look after the shop while you're gone. Ask him how much he'll give, and don't mention my name."

The tobacconist was gone rather more than half an hour, but at the end of that time he came back radiant.

"It's as you said, Geoghan; they're not one bit keen on fighting. They tried to bluff, though, and the biggest offer I could get was a thousand, and even at that they want a guarantee."

"How d'you mean, guarantee?"

"Why, they're afraid there's some funny business behind it, and they want to be sure. They say they'll bet. They're ready to bet a thousand, at even money, that the other man will turn up on time; if he don't turn up, they pay. But they say the money's got to be posted."

"——!" said Geoghan.

"Why, man, what's the matter? That's a perfectly fair offer. If you're so dead sure the other side won't show up, what's the harm in posting the money?"

"I'm sure all right," said Geoghan; "but it happens that a thousand's just about all I've got at the moment—things have been very slack with me lately."

"There's your chance all ready waiting for you to turn it into two thousand."

"I'll have to do it," said Geoghan, pulling out a wad of bills and throwing them on to the counter. "Go and put the money up, and bring me a receipt for it, and a statement of the bet in writing—signed by Mike Evans."

"All right. Where do I come in over this?"

"What d'you want?"

"I ought to get a hundred at least."

"You —— shark! Why, if I could do the thing myself I'd have made two thousand out of it!"

"Oh, well, if you're going to be a piker like that——"

"Oh, —— you, all right! I suppose you'll have to have it. Go and fetch me the receipt."



GEOGHAN waited until the signed receipt was brought him, and then he left in a hurry to find Swanson.

"Look here, I'm making practically nothing out of this," he said; "I'm simply trying to even up an old score, and I'm pretty hard up just at present. Supposing

we call that two-fifty, instead of five hundred. I find I can't afford five."

"——! Two-fifty? No, sir!"

Swanson had had several drinks while he waited in the saloon for Geoghan; his imagination had been working, and he had already spent the money in his mind.

"I'm not going to hang around and get my name in all the papers for a measly two-fifty. Keep your promise, man! Five hundred goes!"

"But I tell you I can't afford it!"

"Shouldn't have promised, then! I always thought you were a man of your word!"

"So I am."

"Well, prove it!"

Geoghan swore vilely under his breath; either he had lost his cunning, or else his luck had petered out, for he seemed unable to get his own way in anything these days.

"Very well," he said; "it's got to be five hundred, if you hold me to it."

"Money down!" said Swanson promptly.

"Not on your tin-type! You get your money at ten fifteen to-morrow night!"

"I'll meet you half-way! Half down, and half when he's arrested!"

"No, sir!"

"I've got to have money now—I need it!"

"You don't get it out of me!"

"Good-night, then! I've wasted time enough!"

"I'll do this with you," said Geoghan, calling him back. "I'll give you half when he's arrested, and the rest at ten fifteen. But understand; I don't want him arrested till to-morrow afternoon!"

"Why?"

"There'll be all the less time for him to find bail."

Swanson agreed at last to those terms because he had to. He could get none better out of Geoghan, and five hundred dollars was a bait that tempted him much too lucringly for him to hold out very long. Half an hour later Geoghan left him on the understanding that they were to meet at the same place on the following morning, and go together to swear out the necessary warrant.

IV



BILLY was lurching with his sweetheart and her mother and O'Hanlon when the blow came. It was three-thirty, and he and his opponent had weighed in at noon at the Stars and Stripes

Athletic Club. That formality over, he and O'Hanlon had met the women at a restaurant where Billy was to eat his last full meal before the fight.

"There's that swine Geoghan again!" said Billy suddenly, looking toward the door. "I wonder what he's doing here. He was outside when we were weighing, 'cause I saw him when we came out; an' he followed us here. I seen him behind us on the street once or twice."

"We'll soon know," said O'Hanlon; "he's coming over here. Who's that with him?"

"Dunno," said Billy; "dunno either of 'em."

Three men advanced toward the table—Geoghan, Swanson, and another man.

"That one's the bloke I punched!" said Billy.

The whole party was on the alert by this time—nerves on end, and everybody in the restaurant looked toward them, attracted by that strange sixth sense that causes crowds to jump into a panic.

"Oh, something dreadful's going to happen!" said Mrs. Watson; "I know it is!"

"Nonsense, ma!" said her daughter promptly. "And even if it did, Billy would know how to deal with it!"

But Billy did not know. His idea of how to meet a difficulty was by promptly showing fight, and that would have been the worst mistake he could have made.

"There's your man!" said Swanson, advancing and pointing toward Billy.

The smallest man of the three—he in the blue suit—stepped up to Billy's side.

"Your name William Blain?" he asked.

"That's me!" said Billy.

"Pugilist by any chance?"

"Yep."

"Well, I've got a warrant here for you!"

It was as though a bolt had fallen from the blue and had exploded in among them. The four sat still for a second in dumb silence, bereft of their senses by the unexpectedness of it. Then the silence was broken by Billy springing to his feet. The table was between them, but he made as though he were about to spring at Geoghan. O'Hanlon seized him.

"Sit down, sonny! Sit down!" he ordered. He forced him back into his chair, and held him there. "What's the trouble, officer?" he asked.

"Arrested for felonious assault—committed on the person of this man here about

three weeks ago. I'll read the warrant to him at the station-house, or here if he prefers it. Are you coming quietly?" he demanded, turning to Billy.

"Come on, sonny!" said O'Hanlon; "I'll go with you; we'll arrange this some way."

He looked at Mrs. Watson. She had fallen forward in a dead faint, with her head resting on the table, and her daughter was leaning over her.

"Go on, Mr. O'Hanlon!" said Maud Watson gamely. "Go and look after Billy. I'll take mother home. I can manage! 'Phone me there, and let me know what happens."

"Good girl!" said O'Hanlon. "Trust me!"

He felt very far from confident, though, as he left the restaurant with Billy. The sight of the plainclothes officer on the other side of his protégé was far from reassuring, and Geoghan's malicious grin as he waited just outside the doorway to see them pass maddened him until he was hard put to it to restrain himself, to say nothing of Billy.



BILLY was dumb with misery. He was thinking of Maud Watson's five hundred dollars, which he seemed certain to forfeit now, and wondering how in the world he would ever contrive to pay her back; all of the way to the station-house his own plight and the four thousand dollars that he and O'Hanlon stood to lose never once occurred to his mind.

It was the thought of his girl that troubled him. She had been a loyal little friend; she had believed him; she had backed him with all the money that she had in the world on the mere strength of her faith in him. And now he was going to fail her! He could have killed himself. He was still dumb when he reached the station-house, and O'Hanlon had to answer questions for him—place of birth, age, and so on.

He said nothing even when they locked him in the cell and the iron door slammed behind him; he simply sat there with his hands laid on his knees and glared dumbly through the bars.

"How much'll it take to bail him out?" asked O'Hanlon of the man behind the desk.

"Felonious assault—um-m-m—'bout a thousand dollars."

"Cash?"

"Cash or bond for that amount."

O'Hanlon stood for a moment before the desk trying to collect his thoughts. Then he dived down into his trousers pocket and produced ten dollars; it was all he had. He had posted every other cent with the official stakeholder on behalf of Billy.


He had borrowed every cent he could get from every friend he knew who had any money, to the same purpose; and now he had until ten o'clock in which to raise a thousand dollars.

He must do it, too, otherwise Billy would remain in the cell and there would be no fight and the money would be forfeited. Come to think of it, he had only until nine o'clock. It would take time to get Billy out and to get him to the fight-hall. If only the Skipper were here! But the Skipper wasn't.

Thought of the Skipper gave him an idea, though. The Skipper had command of a new ship; she was a fast ship, for a tramp, and she was homeward-bound. He wasn't sure at all when she was due, but she might be due to-night; at all events he determined to go first of all to West Street and find out.

He dashed out of the station-house, and wasted ten precious minutes in looking for a taxicab; then he took a cross-town car, and sat in it, cursing and drumming with his heels at the delay as it dawdled amid the traffic.

The horse-car that he got into in West Street was worse, and he got out of it again and ran; and when he arrived at the office of his old employers he was so out of breath and beside himself with anxiety that for more than a minute he could not make himself understood.

 "ANY of the owners here?" he managed to blurt at last.

"No," said the clerk; "the senior partner was here this morning, but he left for Philadelphia by the midday train."

"What do I care where he's gone to!" swore O'Hanlon. "Have ye got a thousand dollars in the office?"

"Strange thing if we hadn't!" said the clerk.

"Give it to me, then!"

"Have you an order?"

"No, I've not. I'll fix that with Mr. Bellamy when he comes back."

"Sorry, Mr. O'Hanlon," said the clerk;

"I'm not allowed to pay out the firm's money without a voucher signed by one of the partners; you've been with us long enough to know that."

"I was with ye long enough for ye to know me, ye mean! I need the money in a hurry—I need it to bail out a friend."

"Sorry, Mr. O'Hanlon, but I'm not allowed to do it."

"Lend it me yourself, then!"

"I'd lend it to you like a shot, but I haven't a thousand cents to my name."

"Own any real estate?"

"Me?"

"Oh, —!" said O'Hanlon. "What'll I do—what'll I do? If only the Skipper were here!"

"Which skipper?"

"My old skipper—Hanson. He's got the *Desdemona*, homeward-bound now. When's she due?"

"She was due in at eight o'clock to-night; we received word, though, this morning that she had broken down."

"I must have been a very sinful man!" said O'Hanlon wearily, and collapsing on to a chair. "Lordy, though, I'm paying for it! This is the limit!"

"We got a wire this morning to say that she'd put into Philly for repairs; that's why one of the partners went there."

"What?" yelled O'Hanlon, jumping up again. "You say she's in Philly?"

"Yep. What's the excitement?"

"Then the Skipper's there? A wire 'ud reach him?"

"It might."

"How d'ye mean—might?"

"Well, unless he's dead, or the wires are down, or something o' that sort."

But O'Hanlon had no time to waste on answering. He crammed his hat on and rushed out through the door again to the nearest telegraph office.

There he broke three pencils and spoiled a dozen blanks; but the resulting telegram was a master piece. If the cost of sending it did make a big hole in his last ten dollars, it stated the whole position to the Skipper beyond any possibility of misunderstanding.

Terence O'Hanlon did not waste the tenth part of a second in wondering what the Skipper would do when he received it. That was a matter beyond the pale of speculation; it was a certainty to a man who knew him as well as Terence did.



HE JUMPED on a car again and returned to the station-house, and asked permission to speak again to Billy.

"Billy!" he shouted, before the door leading to the cells was opened wide enough for him to pass. "Billy, ye little runt! It's all right! The Skipper's in Philadelphia. I've wired him. Ye'll be bailed out in an hour or two. Shake, ye varmint!"

He thrust his great, hairy paw between the bars.

"Not me!" said Billy, waking out of his lethargy. "If I'm going to be bailed out, I'll need that paw to fight with. I've shook hands with you before. Go an' get me a sandwich an' a cup o' coffee."

It was ten minutes to six before news came from the Skipper, but O'Hanlon never for a moment doubted him; and when at last his answer did come, it was in the form of an order for fifteen hundred dollars.

"Trust him!" muttered O'Hanlon, as he cashed the order; "if I'd asked him for two thousand, he'd have sent three. Good old Skipper! Lordy, but it's good to have a friend like that!"

He reached the station-house again as happy as though nothing untoward had happened, and walked up to the desk with an air of confidence that rather astonished the man in blue behind it.

"Here's a thousand," said O'Hanlon. "I'll have my man out, please!"

"Can't let him out like that," said the officer.

"But you said a thousand."

"So I did. But he's in for felonious assault. You'll have to get a magistrate to sign the bail-bond."

"Where in — can I get a magistrate at this time o' night?" demanded O'Hanlon, nearly mad again with anxiety.

"Dunno, I'm sure," said the man in blue, whittling a toothpick with interest.

V



McLAUGHLIN ROSS, the magistrate, was the keenest follower of fights in all New York. There was never an important night at any of the well-known clubs that did not find him seated in the front row, watching every move in the game, appreciating every point, and enjoying himself thoroughly. He seldom applauded, and never unless the ap-

plause was well deserved, but his thin, ascetic-looking face beamed with pleasure when a fight was well contested, and there was no one in New York better able to judge a fight than he.

He was not a late-comer either; he liked to be there for the preliminaries, on the off chance of being able to get a line on some embryo champion. His habit of attending fights was well known in the sporting world and among certain of his friends; but he rather naturally did not encourage the discussion of it in the press. O'Hanlon knew nothing of it.

On the night on which Billy was advertised to fight Harry Adams for the welter-weight championship the hall was packed; there was nothing but standing room to be had five minutes after the opening of the doors, and uncommonly little of that.

McLaughlin Ross even found himself wedged in tightly on a bench in the front row behind where the reporters sat; but he seemed satisfied in spite of the close quarters. It was going to be an exceptionally good night, with four elimination contests for light-weights to begin with, then the big fight between Blain and Harry Adams, and after that two more bouts for light-weights. Every single bout was likely to be hotly contested, and the house hummed from wall to wall with tense expectation.

But at the start things fell flat. In the first round of all one of the contestants hurt himself, and the referee was obliged to stop the fight. That was followed by a very poor fight indeed, ending in a draw, and in the third fight—which was nothing but a slugging-match from the start—one of the men was knocked out early in the second round.

By the time nine o'clock came, the preliminaries were over, and the house waited impatiently for the appearance of the champion and his challenger. But for ten minutes the ring was empty, and nobody appeared.

Then one of the hall attendants forced his way through the crowd to where McLaughlin Ross sat, and passed a note to him. Nobody in the whole hall noticed the incident; but McLaughlin Ross unfolded the note, read it, raised his eyebrows, seemed to hesitate—and then rose and left the hall. He had to exercise all the strength and patience he possessed in order to fight his way out through the crowd.



PRESENTLY a man climbed into the ring and held up his hand for silence. He made a short speech in which he said that the challenger—Billy Blain—had failed to appear as yet. He had weighed in that afternoon, but nobody had seen him since. The bout was scheduled, however, for ten o'clock, so there was nothing else to do but wait for him until then. Should he fail to appear by ten o'clock, the decision would go to Harry Adams by default, and Blain's forfeit-money—which had been posted three weeks ago—would be handed to the champion.

There was a murmur of disappointment, followed by shouts of "Put on some one else!" "Why wait?" "Put on one of the last bouts!" The announcer climbed into the ring again, and once more held up his hand.

"Gentlemen," he said, when the babel of voices had died down enough for him to be heard, "the champion objects. The main bout is slated to commence at ten o'clock. He claims his right to be in the ring then, and to claim the other man's forfeit-money should he not have put in an appearance in the meantime. The champion, gentlemen, is within his rights."

An outburst of hisses followed that speech. There were yells of "Piker!" "Cheap skate!" "Robber!" but the champion stood his ground.

At half past nine he crawled between the ropes and sat down on a stool in his corner and waited, huddled up in a blue bathrobe; he talked every now and then to his seconds, but for the most part he sat and stared straight in front of him, with a grin hovering round the corners of his mouth. Behind him, squeezed in among the crowd that jammed an alleyway, stood Geoghan; he too was grinning.

The crowd, for lack of anything better to do, poked fun at him, and before he had been in the ring ten minutes he began to wish that he had stayed out of it until a little nearer ten o'clock. Some of the thrusts of wit went home and brought a wince; and the moment that the crowd saw he was rattled the "joshing" increased tenfold.

By ten minutes to ten he was as red as a boiled beet with indignation, and only kept from answering back the nearest of his tormentors by the restraining efforts of his seconds. By the time that the referee,

watch in hand, stepped into the ring the house was in a tumult, and nobody noticed McLaughlin Ross, preceded by a stalwart attendant, force his way back through the crowd and once more take his place at the ring side. So nobody noticed, either, that he was smiling.

"Five more minutes," said the referee.

Once more the house was in an uproar. Attendants at the back began to shout for order; half of the crowd stood up, and the other half shouted to them to sit down again; the referee held up his hand for silence vainly, and it looked as though the police would have to be called in to stop the disturbance. Then suddenly, as though some unseen power had shut the noise off with a lid, the shouting died down, and everybody strained his eyes in one direction.

"One more minute!" said the referee.



A MAN entered from the side and hurried down the one clear gangway—a red-bearded giant of a man. He held a Derby hat in his freckled fist, and the hat was obviously much too small to be his own; when he reached the ring, he tossed it over the ropes into the center and stood waiting—looking at the referee.

"Who are you?" asked the official.

"Terence O'Hanlon—second for Billy Blain. He's here. Are we on time?"

"You are," said the referee; "by half a minute."

A pin might have been heard to drop while O'Hanlon entered and the men were speaking; but the moment O'Hanlon turned and walked out again to fetch his principal, a roar went up that seemed to shake the house to its foundations. When Billy, preceded by O'Hanlon, came leisurely along the gangway, he received an ovation such as a conquering general might expect; the crowd grew almost frantic as he climbed between the ropes, and as he took his seat on the stool in his corner of the ring they made the whole building shake again with their ovation.

Then they turned again on his opponent, and "joshed" him even more unmercifully than they had before, and did their best to make him realize that it seldom pays to try to win by taking advantage of technicalities—at least openly. By the time that the referee called the two men to the center, the champion was mad all the way.

through to the middle. His pride was hurt; he was disappointed at Billy's having put in an appearance after all; and he felt that somebody had made a fool of him.

True, he was one thousand dollars to the good now that Billy had entered the ring; but he stood to lose five thousand if Billy won the fight, and he had lost a measure of popularity by his tactics that no man in his position can afford to lose. The combination made him very nervous, in addition to the fact that he had already lost his temper. Billy Blain looked as cool, though, as if he were about to begin practise instead of a fight for the welter-weight championship.

"Now, you two," said the referee—a new official whom Billy had never seen before—"remember what I say! You're to break at the word. And if I see anything I don't like, I'll caution either of you once—not oftener. Have you got that?"

The two men nodded, and then glared at one another.

"He'll have a — thin chance o' findin' fault wif you!" growled Adams. "I'll get your number early. You're easy!"

"You don't say!" answered Billy.

He was feeling fine. The reaction, after the depression that overwhelmed him in the lock-up, was at its zenith; and since he was sound in mind and body, it brought his courage and ambition to their highest pitch. He felt no more afraid of the champion than he had been of infinitely lesser lights.

Billy was no fool, though; he was a born fighter, with an instinctive as well as an acquired knowledge of the game, and he did not make the mistake of underrating his opponent. Ever uppermost in his mind was the thought that Maud Watson had trusted him, and that he had to "make good;" so at the call of time he acted strictly on the defensive and allowed Adams to lead off. He defended himself stiffly, too, and was deliberately clumsy in his movements; he wanted to make the champion believe he was afraid of him, and so make him incautious. His tactics had the desired effect.

Adams was a man whose face had been worth a fortune to him. He could contort it into such a picture of concentrated ferocity and hate that his opponents, even old-timers some of them, felt nervous at the sight of it. He struck a fighting attitude that was deliberately calculated to heighten

the impression of hellish savagery. Billy, clumsy though he seemed to be, took no harm whatever from the champion's rushes and tremendous wallops. They missed him by an infinitesimal margin each time, but he succeeded in creating the impression that he was rather scared, and as the round progressed Adams developed the tactics that seemed to meet with such success, and gave Billy an opportunity of studying the weak points of them.



IN THE ring, as in other matters, the more a man concentrates his energy on one system of attack the more likely he is to leave his weaker points unguarded; it was so with Adams. Billy did not find his ferocious rushes easy, for they were the result of years of study and experience and were accompanied by sparing of a very high order, but he was able to withstand them without any serious apparent effort, and he realized after two minutes of retreating backward round and round the ring that every time the champion rushed he left a large, easy, unguarded target below his right arm.

And suddenly Billy Blain woke up. The champion crouched and straightened, shooting out his right with an impact whose speed was almost too quick for the eye to follow; it was aimed at Billy's stomach, and was intended for a knock-out. It had every ounce of his weight and trained strength and venomous desire to hurt behind it. But Billy was not there.

The champion swung past him, off his balance, and Billy landed below his armpit with a short-arm right that sent him reeling sideways to the ropes. There Billy pounced on him and hammered him mercilessly for fifteen seconds, forcing him to clinch to save himself. Billy bored into the clinch, and drove him backward to his corner with a succession of chopping lefts and rights.

And in that clinch he made the discovery that the champion was no particular expert at in-fighting. He was heavier than Billy by a pound or two, and stronger; but his specialty was rushing and long-range hammering, and he evidently liked to keep his opponent at a distance. Before the gong went, Billy had decided on the tactics which would win him the fight, if it was to be won.

"How d'you like it, sonny?" asked

O'Hanlon, plying the towel vigorously.

"Fine!" said Billy.

"Ye seemed asleep at the start!"

"I'll put him to sleep before the finish!"

"Good boy! Go to it! It's win or bust, Billy!"

"Win or bust it is!" said Billy.



WHEN the gong went for the second round he started to walk quite slowly for the center; but from his side, thinking Billy was lagging a little because he did not like the prospect, the champion came in with a rush. Before he reached Billy's side of the ring, though, Billy bent a little forward and suddenly rushed in to meet him. They met with a shock, as rams meet, Billy countering on the champion's jaw with a crashing blow that sent his head back; and then he bored in with a right-hand to the stomach, and crossed his left to the jaw again.

The champion drew back to get his distance for a swing, but Billy followed him, never letting him get out of reach for the fraction of a second, and for the first half-minute of the round it almost looked as though he had the champion beaten. O'Hanlon was too excited even to cheer.

But he was making the pace a killer—working like a blacksmith to make the most of his advantage. The champion was getting the worst of it, for every one of Billy's punches hurt, and they showered on him. But Billy was getting blown, and when the champion at last managed to slip away from him, he failed to follow. He had to cover up and wait for the attack.

It was not long in coming. Adams thought he had him dazed, and there are very few points about taking an opponent at a disadvantage that a ring champion does not know. Speed now was the one thing requisite—to get in with a smashing swing before Billy could recover his senses. He came in like lightning, crouching, and drawing back his right for a tremendous wallop, calculated, if it reached, to lift Billy from off his feet.

But it did not reach. Billy leaped suddenly to the right, and landed on his unguarded left side with a blow that lacked sufficient steam to do much damage, but sent him to the floor for the count of three. And when the champion rose again, he seemed less disposed to try to finish his adversary so early in the game. He was satisfied to stall

out the remainder of the round, keeping Billy at a distance, but doing all the running away himself instead of rushing in and slugging.

"That was fine, sonny!" said O'Hanlon.

"It weren't," said Billy. "He's found out how to get me!"

"How?"

"Aw, shut up! Watch!"



BILLY had discovered, with the sixth sense that a fighter has, that if his opponent continued his retreating tactics he would win the fight.

So he went into the middle for the third round like a lame duck. He looked dazed. The champion waited for him, meaning to stall out another round and tire him out. He stood in the center of the ring on the defensive, and grinningly invited Billy to help himself. But Billy declined the invitation. A look of pain came over his face, and his right arm went to his side, as though a punch had hurt. The action left his guard imperfect for a second, and the opening was too tempting for the champion.

He wasted time, though, crouching and preparing for one of his tremendous swings; he wasted a tenth part of a second at the very least, and when the swing did start, it found Billy awake again, and empty air where he had been. This time it was the champion's head that suffered. Billy landed on his ear with a blow that sounded as though it must almost knock his head off.

The champion reeled, and Billy landed on his kidneys with a fair, square knuckle wallop that knocked him down on to his face, and brought a red splurge out on his skin that spread and spread and looked ever angrier. The champion recovered at the count of nine, but from then on the fight was Billy's.

It went all of nine rounds, though. Adams had pluck, for what man who has fought his way up to a championship has not? He clinched and hung on, hoping for a foul, or a lucky chance blow that might end the fight in his favor; and though Billy had him groggy, and kept him groggy from the middle of the third round onward, his skill was such that he was never less than dangerous.

By a lucky blow in the fifth he closed one of Billy's eyes, and long before the ninth came Billy's nose and face were


running blood. Some of the blood coagulated on Adams's glove, with the result that Billy received a long, ugly looking cut above the eyebrows, and the blood that ran into his eyes from it troubled him more than a little and made him wild.

But the result was no longer in doubt for a second; it was simply a question of whether he could knock the champion out or not. The house yelled for a knock-out, and Billy tried for one, wasting a lot of strength and time in trying for it too soon, before the champion was really at his mercy. In the ninth round the champion leaned against the ropes, his face and hair a mass of blood, his hands dropped to his sides, and his knees trembling.

"Knock him out!" yelled the spectators. "Hand him the good-by punch!"

"Stand back!" said the referee. "Get to your corner!"

He placed his hand on Billy's shoulder, in token that he had won, and the house bellowed an ovation to him twice as tremendous, almost, as the one he had received on entering.

 "OH, BILLY, my boy!" exclaimed O'Hanlon. "Ye — bloody little runt! I could hug ye for this!"

"You let me be, you — Irishman!" spluttered Billy, spitting out blood between words. "I'm sore, d'ye hear."

"I'll bet ye are! But ye're champion, d'ye get me? Champion!"

McLaughlin Ross had followed Billy from the ring. He passed him in the gangway, and reached the dressing-room before him; but there was too much blood in Billy's eyes for him to notice it. O'Hanlon steered him along with one arm round him, but before he reached the door Billy straightened and shoved him away.

"Go an' get the money!" he ordered. "I'm all right. Get the coin, an' put aside a thousand extra for Maud!"

O'Hanlon pushed him through the doorway and went to do his bidding.

"No he needn't, Billy!" said a voice; "my five hundred's all I want! I must have that before ma finds out!"

"Lordy!" said Billy, blinking at the electric light; "you here, Maud?"

"Oh, Billy! I saw the fight! I saw every bit of it through that hole in the boarding! I stood up on the table, and watched it from start to finish!"

"But how did you get here?" demanded Billy, still half dazed.

"Mr. McLaughlin Ross! He wouldn't let me wait outside in the street, and I wouldn't go away; so he smuggled me in here!"

"Who's he?"

"The magistrate who signed your bail-bond."

"Gawd!" said Billy, "I forgot that! How did Terence get hold of him?"

"He didn't. Mr. O'Hanlon 'phoned me from the station-house that you couldn't get out without a magistrate, and he didn't know where to get one. I knew. My mother and Mr. McLaughlin Ross's sister went to school together; they're great friends. I knew Mr. Ross attended nearly all the fights in the city, and I guessed where he'd be; so I came here in a taxicab, and bribed one of the attendants to take a note in to him."

"Good for you!" said Billy.

"And are you through with fighting now, Billy?"


"Didn't I promise?"

She flung her arms around him, and kissed him, in spite of the blood that smeared his face—and hers.

"That'll do!" said Billy bashfully. "You'll have to get out of this. This is no place for a gal."

"All right!" she laughed. "I'll wait for you."

And she went out on the arm of Mr. Ross.

 "AND it's this way, sonny," said O'Hanlon. "That guy Swanson has cleared out. They say Geoghan paid him money to have you arrested, so's you couldn't fight. He got the money before the fight started, and bolted when you showed up after all, for fear Geoghan would be after him to get the money back."

"That ends it?" asked Billy.

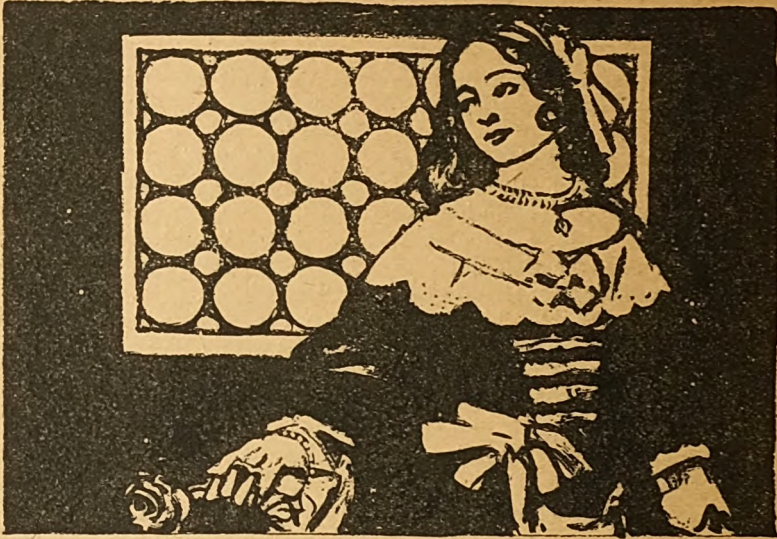
"You'll have to surrender to your bail to-morrow morning, but Swanson won't be there to prosecute."

"I wonder what it cost that swine Geoghan?" wondered Billy.

"Lord knows!" said O'Hanlon, helping him on with his jacket. "They say he's broke to the world, though."

"Oh, good—good—good!" said Billy.

And the champion and his manager walked out of the fight-hall arm in arm.



THE AMBASSADOR'S DAUGHTER. *A Tale of Dick, the Seaman Trained by Doricot*—by H·C·BAILEY

ALDERMAN FRY had grown in girth and conceit of himself. Hence a turning of his chin toward heaven and an oscillation of his gait. For neither in conceit nor girth had he ever been lacking. It is stranger that he had become in a degree mellow. He was now civil to his equals and almost genial to his apprentices. He was even on speaking terms with his daughter. Thus you see that prosperity may be good for a man.

He was accounted the richest fellow in Bristol. The endeavors of Captain Rymingtowne had sent him from the Mediterranean moneys and merchandise which surprised him and dazzled his neighbors. His own considerable energy caused these

gains to multiply fast. Behind his back folks said that his seafaring, his capture by the Moors and his days of slavery had made him twice as good a man of business. It seems certain that these vicissitudes made him more than twice as human. But that was easier.

So as he strutted the quay he was saluted with much honor and some affection. He was more than common friendly. His spirits were exuberant. He had been advised that Captain Rymingtowne and his profitable ship the *Reckoning* were coming home at last, and he conceived that if Captain Rymingtowne was ready to make an end of the venture, there must be a noble account to render.

According to the letters from Genoa, the

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.

ship was some weeks behind her time, and if any other captain had been aboard her, he might have been uneasy. It was not possible for him to think that Captain Rymingtonne could fail. Therefore he took the air on the quay, exuding satisfaction. But if he felt divinely prosperous and important he was not in other ways a fool.

For days past he had remarked strangers in Bristol who took an interest in him. Some two or three of them had made acquaintance with him and been very conversational. None of them confessed any knowledge of the others, and yet he had found reason to believe that they were all friends. On this October morning he saw them on the quay again, and two pleasant babblers, engaging him in talk, began to ask questions of the *Reckoning*.

He remembered that their conversation had set the same way before. And as before, he dismissed the *Reckoning* and its business carelessly, like a trifle beneath a great merchant's notice. But he did not dismiss them. He was very affable on many matters, trying to discover what their trade might be. He could make certain of nothing but that they were no merchants. It was equally important that he could not be certain one of them was English. He began to wonder what the *Reckoning* had been doing and what would happen when she came home. He was not frightened.



THAT night after supper there was a little rapping at his back door.

The man whom his servant brought up through the garden was Captain Rymingtonne. It says much for the reformation of Alderman Fry that he gave greeting with a grip of both hands and a hearty "My dear lad! Here's a happy day!" before he asked after the ship.

"I ha' not brought her with me," said Captain Rymingtonne grimly.

The Alderman changed color and coughed. But he still behaved well.

"I'll be bound it's no fault of yours," quoth he.

Captain Rymingtonne laughed.

"It is not," he agreed. "I could never get her through your back door. Take heart, old gentleman. She's safe enough. She'll be near Avonmouth by now."

"You came ashore?" The Alderman was still startled. "You came on by land?"

"From Bridgewater. And why? Be-

cause I look for more trouble at home in England than in ten year of sea, fighting the heathen. I ha' gutted a Spanish treasure-ship and all her gold is aboard the *Reckoning*."

The Alderman breathed heavily.

"We be at peace with Spain," he said. "This is flat piracy."

"Pirates it is," quoth Captain Rymingtonne. "Be you afraid?"

You see the two of them stare at each other. Captain Rymingtonne big and everywhere rectangular, his face lean and dark brown, the heavy chin thrust out, the eyes very deep beneath the brow—the Alderman all curves of fat, his bald shiny head, his full face crimson with good living, the protruding eyes blinking nervously. Yet in his straight close lips, in his calm pose, there is something of the pugnacity, something of the resolution obvious in Captain Rymingtonne.

"Spain will want her gold back, Dick Rymingtonne, and your head with it," said the Alderman quietly. "There have been some queer folk in Bristol this week or more asking me after you."

Captain Rymingtonne laughed.

"I guessed that. Well, old gentleman, will you stand with me?"

"I ha' done well by you this ten year," said the Alderman. "I'll stand with you short of losing my head with you. But I doubt you lost it, my lad, when you played pirates with Spain." He looked puzzled. "Yet that's not like you neither."

"It is not," said Captain Rymingtonne with satisfaction. "Look you now. Spain fired on me first. I was in Cadiz harbor, peaceful, about no harm, and the forts tried to sink me. So I went out and took a ship to pay for my spars. Was that like me?"

"Maybe. But maybe they'll not thank you at court for making war on Spain."

"Will they not? I had caught aboard my ship an Italian spy which was bringing letters to the Duke of Norfolk and many another promising them Spanish money and arms for a rebellion. There's a great, devilish plot. And I have it all here," he tapped his chest. "Now d'ye take me? When Madame Queen reads what I have here she'll not quarrel with me for taking toll of Spain. So I am, for London as fast as I can ride.

"I thought I should be hindered here if I came openly aboard the *Reckoning*. The

Spanish Embassy will have wind of me, and the Spaniards and their friends will be quaking for that spy of theirs and his letters. So there will be trouble when the *Reckoning* comes in—that's the business of those queer folk of yours. And here's your part: let none of them aboard her; let no man get wind of what she brings till you have word from me in London. Can you keep all safe?"

"On my own ship in Bristol harbor?" The Alderman laughed. "I think so! I think so! 'Sheart, let me see the man who will meddle with her! Saving the Queen's writ."

"They'll not have that yet. They'll not dare, not knowing how much I know. But I doubt they'll try your Mayor and magistrates."

"How much is the gold aboard her?" said the Alderman.

"A hundred thousand pesos."

The Alderman lost his breath.

"A hundred thousand pesos! My dear lad!" He chuckled. "Us Bristol folk, we stand together. I'll answer for master Mayor and the bench. Oh, we're right Englishmen in Bristol! My dear lad!"

"And so good night to you," quoth Captain Rymingtowne. "I have stayed too long."

And he would stay no moment longer, even for a toast to his ship.

II



HE WAS not, I conceive, at his best on a horse. There was too much bone in him for the fastest going. But, like several of his descendants, he could drive a horse along, and it appears from the record of this journey that upon it he did so marvelously. You understand his zeal. The letters of Annibale Gaddi, as you may learn from the histories, were enough to set England aflame if they reached those for whom they were meant. If they came to Elizabeth and my Lord Burghley, some of the proudest peers would be attainted and struck down and the Ambassador of Spain would have an overwhelming charge to answer.

No wonder that Messer Gaddi had friends anxiously waiting him in Bristol. For the Spanish Embassy had had time to learn that the ship by which he was coming had dared attack the treasure-fleet of the

Most Catholic King. It was of instant importance to many powerful persons that they should discover whether her captain had been prompted to such desperate villainy by detection of Messer Gaddi's secrets.

Captain Rymingtowne, who, save once or twice, gave his enemies credit for wits, appreciated this amply and rode hard through the night. One thing, and one thing only that I can see, was in his favor. He knew the road from Bristol to Reading as a dog knows the way from kitchen to kennel. As he came by the cross-roads of Newton St. Leo he thought he heard horses behind him. Over the four miles to Bath he made sure of it and swore according to his abilities. The Spanish rogues were keener than they had right to be. To land at Bridgewater, to steal into Bristol and out again by night, should have given him a day's law. But plainly the Alderman's house had been watched and the rogues had marked their quarry.


He says that he then congratulated himself because he had not trusted to himself alone. He had landed another man at Bridgewater and sent him off with other papers by a different road. But if I understand Captain Rymingtowne, there was not much congratulation of any one in his mind. It was entirely busy with hatred and malice.

He came to Bath and knocked up the hostler at the Rose and Crown, and loudly proclaimed that he was tired out and would sleep for a week. He had hardly been lighted to a bare room when his pursuers rode into the yard. He blew out his candle and bolted his door and stole to the window. He heard a genial diplomatic conversation, in which, without asking the hostler anything direct, his pursuers learned that a gentleman had come just before them with a horse near foundered, himself not much better, and gone to bed.

They seemed satisfied. As they tramped along the passage to their room one tapped at his door. Dick grunted sleepily. There was tapping again. Then in the sleepest voice he drawled out,

"Go to the devil and come back in the morning!"

To which there was laughter and whispering and then silence. They had concluded that till the morning he was safe or that it was dangerous to be violent.

 CAPTAIN RYMINGTOWNE waited an hour and then got out of the window. He stole up to the hostler's loft, waked him and, silenced his grumbling with a gold-piece, gave another for the hire of a fresh horse and was away. All through the night he rode without alarm and all the next day, till at Reading, reeling in the saddle for lack of sleep and food, he judged it safe to halt. He dined vigorously and slept a sailor's four hours and was lounging out to the inn yard when a smiling fellow met him, saying,

"How goes the world, Captain Rymingtowne?"

"God bless you, who is he?" Dick drawled and stared at his man stupidly.

Three other fellows with a bottle of wine were watching.

The man laughed and struck him jovially on the shoulder.

"What, would you deny your name, Captain? Why, what's the matter?"

"The matter's a maggot in your head, my lad. I be none of your captains."

"Sheart, sir, you give me the lie?" the man cried and clapped hand on his sword. The fellows behind started up.

"Here, drawer; here, landlord," Dick called. "Here's brawling! Here's a bully which draws sword upon me, and me a peaceful man with an errand to the Mayor."

The landlord came boisterously to the rescue, protesting of the credit of his house, and Dick slunk away in a hurry. He was aware of one of the wine-drinkers following him, and he asked loudly of an hostler where the Mayor kept house.

All the way there the spy tracked him, but ventured no hostility. His worship the Mayor was a tanner and busy among his pits. Having seen Captain Rymingtowne pass the yard gates, the spy retired to a discreet distance. Captain Rymingtowne found the Mayor, looked him over, determined (so he says) that his worship was "a brisk lad who would do the business," and answered a curt greeting with,

"Good-morrow to you. Walk apart. I've a word for your ear."

"Make it short, sir."

"I am a sea-captain, Rymingtowne to name, new come to Bristol after a voyage from Italy and Spain. I ride to London with papers for the Queen and Council. Papers, to be short with you, worth the Queen's own life. Now, sir, here are trait-

ors and vile foreigners seeking to make an end of these and me. As I came out of my inn I marked three or four which have pursued me from Bristol, and one of them tried to fix a quarrel on me. Prithee, if you be her Majesty's loyal subject, lay them by the heels."


"What then? Will you appear against them? Will you swear them traitors?"

"Not I. I must for London with what speed I can. But I would not have them after me to cut my throat and steal my papers as soon as I be beyond the town."

"And that's reason too," said the Mayor and scratched his head. "But law's law, my lad, and how can I send folks to gaol wi' nought sworn against 'em." Then he winked. "But brawlers, says you? We'll have 'em in the stocks for brawlers and rogues and masterless men. What, Robin, go call the constables and bid 'em call the watch. Come in and crack a quart, Captain. We'll give 'em a night and a day cooling their heels, and when they're out again you'll be safe in London."

"You shall not be sorry for it," said Captain Rymingtowne, and referred him to Alderman Fry and the Squire of Assynton.

In a little while Captain Rymingtowne passed out through the tanyard gates with the Mayor and his posse and saw the spy scud away. When they came to the inn the quarrelsome gentleman and his fellows were already getting to horse. Captain Rymingtowne pointed them out and then went round the corner. There was much protest and some scuffling, but to threats and complaints the Mayor was deaf, and with blows his constables dealt truculently. Captain Rymingtowne saw a company of four haled away and was satisfied. But he was not quite sure that there had not been five in the party. He rode out of Reading meditative.

 HIS doubt was determined as he came through Maidenhead thicket.

Soon after Twyford he had thought that he was followed. He made sure of it in the next six miles. But there was only one on his track, and of one he had no fear. He rode hard, not so much for shaking off the spy (which in fact he never did) as to make London before midnight.

In Slough he took a fresh horse and so did the spy. It was dark then or soon after. They kept the same pace and the same dis-

tance apart for some fifteen miles or more. On the London side of Brentford Captain Rymingtowne was surprised by the spy's passing and spurring on till sight and sound of him were altogether lost. He could not tell what to make of it. The spy might not be a spy after all. He was not sure of having seen the man's face among the wine-drinkers. It was possible, though hardly credible, that his close pursuit for thirty miles was mere chance. Or else he thought it all he could do to make sure that Captain Rymingtowne was come to London, and so had ridden on to advise his masters. Captain Rymingtowne (he blames himself for this) thought no more about him and rode at his ease meditating how he would approach Burghley and the Queen.

A little beyond Kensington church some horsemen dashed out of a lane. Captain Rymingtowne was hardly aware of them before he was in the midst of them and a whirl of swords. He plucked at his own, he felt himself reel in the saddle, and all the world shook and seethed away from him.

III



WHEN he woke he was in bed. His head ached and throbbed, and as he moved he became aware of other pains. There were bandages on his head and his left arm and he seemed to have bruises everywhere. As soon as he was completely conscious of his body he began to think. Then he heard a door shut and sat up. There was no one in the room. It was a somber place, lit by two of the narrowest windows. Wainscot and floor were dingy. No tapestry nor carpet nor even rushes clothed its nakedness. There was no more furniture than the bed and a table beside it. But the bed had a richness of design and comfort. The table was inlaid with many colored woods.

Captain Rymingtowne was puzzled. Then it occurred to him that he had nothing on but his shirt. His clothes were not to be seen. With his clothes had gone those boasted invaluable papers. Captain Rymingtowne gave a grim chûckle.

A man came softly into the room. He was of the middle size and very neat, in black with white at his throat and wrists. He was of middle age, quiet, even stealthy in his movements. His face was clean shaven and pale and insignificant.

"Do I see you or do I not see you?" said Captain Rymingtowne slowly. "Which is to say, are you or are you not? God help you, 'tis easier to believe you are not."

"Have you come to your senses?" the man said in English.

Captain Rymingtowne laughed.

"I do think I had none for to come to, my lad. Where be I, if you please?"

"Whether you live or die, it is no use to you to know that," the man smiled. "But I do not see why you should die."

"God bless you," said Captain Rymingtowne heartily.

"It is in fact wholly your own affair and to us—to me—no matter."

"Thank you, to be sure," said Captain Rymingtowne. "And who are you?"

The man waved his hand.

"You will understand, sir, that no one who cares for your life knows you are here. Therefore it is wholly agreeable to us, if you choose, that here you should die."

Captain Rymingtowne gaped at him.

"None o' my friends knows I am here," he repeated slowly. "And so it is, to be sure. But there's some knows I am not where I ought to be."

"Bah, if you think it will help you to play with words!"

"God forgive you, would I play at anything with my head aching the way it is?" said Captain Rymingtowne plaintively. "Hark'e, when my friends find me not where they look for me, they will be seeking me in likely places. But maybe you would understand better if I spoke Spanish."

The man gave no sign of discomfiture save that it was a moment before he answered.

"Whether I am Spanish is not so much the question as whether you are a fool. Consider, my friend: your friends may look for you long and not find so much as your grave."

"There'll be more graves than mine dug over this business," said Captain Rymingtowne. He waited for an answer, and, as none came at once, went on more loudly: "Spanish? To be sure you're Spanish and this the Ambassador's house. Well, you ha' tied yourselves in a pretty tangle." He laughed. "Od's life, I would like to know what you said when you found the papers on me was naught but copies!"

The man was visibly disconcerted. Cap-

tain Rymingtowne's command of his wits and the situation appeared to surprise him. But he recovered himself quickly.

"For my part, sir, I said 'There is no fool so foolish as the fool who thinks he is cunning,'" and with that he put a comfit in his mouth and smiled.

"Well, well, what would you be without your joke?" said Captain Rymingtowne tolerantly and smiled back.

THERE was then a pause, each gentleman waiting for the other to return to the point. Captain Rymingtowne waited the better. It is to be supposed that he had more confidence, more self-command, more conceit—what you will—or merely that he looked more irritating. For at last the man in black broke out peevishly,

"If you think you can escape, sirrah, you deceive yourself."

"Escape?" Captain Rymingtowne echoed. "God bless you, how should I, without any breeches?"

"Oh, you waste my time, sir."

"So do you mine. And God he knows how I be to stop you. But do I grumble? Not I. It's a restful bed and I ha' not had one long enough this ten year."

"You will play the fool, I see. I warn you, it ill suits with your condition. Hark ye, sirrah, you think we dare not touch you because you have spied on our secrets, because you have stolen papers of moment, because when we laid you by the heels we found on you only copies and not those letters themselves. But it's enough you have read the letters and know the matter of them. There's reason enough we should not let you go alive, unless you will be guided by our will."

"We, we, we," quoth Captain Rymingtowne, imitating the voice of a little pig. "Who is 'we,' so please you? The King of Spain? I make a long nose at him. Or the traitors he hath hired here? To the devil with all such."

"You are a foul pirate, sirrah!" the man fumed.

"That in your teeth. It's your King of Spain that's a black pirate, a bully, a false thief! No harm I ever did him till he meddled with me and mine. Now, by God's heart, I'll teach him keep his paws to himself!"

The man was startled by such coarse

vehemence and in some dismay stammered out,

"You brag, sirrah. You talk like a man in wine. You mistake your condition, indeed!"

"Do I so?" Captain Rymingtowne grew more vigorous as the other retreated. "There be letters signed by the King of Spain, enough to hang his hired traitors every one, and burst his vile plots and bring down bloody war upon him. And while you do stand blowing there they be coming to the Queen's own hand. And naught that you can do can stay them. Od rot you, you thought you were clever when you had me knocked o' the head! But I guessed you would be at some such tricks and I sent my papers by a sure way."

"Much good may it do you!" said the man angrily. "Come, sirrah, have it as you will. Suppose the letters in your Queen's hand and her ranting and roaring in her fishwife's fashion. Suppose the headsman busy and war at hand. Why, then, do you think we shall be gentle in our revenge? If our designs be spoilt by you, be sure you shall not live to boast of it."

Captain Rymingtowne lay down in bed again.

"So be it," said he and stretched himself. "A man has to pay for his pleasures. By God, I'll pay what I've got for a stab at Spain!"

The man seemed to find him puzzling.

"You make a bold front," he confessed.

"I pay you the compliment not to believe in it. You are no fanatic to want death when you might live. Come, sir, I'll make you an offer. Give us the means to come at your messenger, let us get back our papers, and for the rest we may compound with you."

"Platt-ill?" quoth Captain Rymingtowne.

"For the gold on your ship, we will hold a generous account. Any losses you can show shall be four times paid and for your yielding you shall have a thousand pesos."

"I'll have what I hold and no less. You may take what you can and no more," quoth Captain Rymingtowne.

"Are you ready to die, sirrah?" the man sneered.

"If I can hurt you by it, my lord."

A moment the man looked down at him.

"You will be something less stubborn when you have lacked food and drink a day," he said.

Captain Rymingtowne shut his eyes and pretended to snore. Then he heard the door bang and the click of the lock and was alone.



WHAT do you make of him? For my part, I incline to think he was a little light in the head. In his record of the ferocious conversation I seem to see signs that his sober judgment thought he had been a little exuberant. It is not that I doubt his capacity for dying rather than give in. In spite of his vigorous commercial instincts, he was always, I conceive, resolute to yield nothing when his passions were moved, and that the machinations of Spain had moved him profoundly there is no doubt.

But I wonder, and I think after it was all over he wondered why he did not pretend to bargain with this Spanish diplomat. He would at least have got some breakfast by it. He might with luck and good management have won safe away. But doubtless his brain was a trifle feverish.

After the excitement he slept, at first with such turbulent dreams that he found himself again and again waking with a start and a cry, then more quietly without distress or fear. Evening sunlight was pouring in through the windows when he woke at his ease. The pain in his head was gone and he laughed. Then a woman's voice said gently,

"My lord the bear likes his trap." He raised himself on his elbow and saw a little plump creature smile down at him. She was vividly black and red and white. Her silver brocade was rich and set off her roundness gracefully. "I suppose you could eat me raw?" she said, and put her head on one side.

"Without sauce, my dear," said Captain Rymingtowne.

She stooped and set on the bed a little tray of food, a pasty and a flask of wine.

Captain Rymingtowne considered it critically and then once more the woman.

"Who may you be?" he said.

"I am Isabella de Espes, the Ambassador's daughter," she made a gay curtsy, "so please you."

"You might be," Captain Rymingtowne conceded and prodded at the pasty with a fork; "but then what's this?"

The lady frowned and struck a tragic attitude.

"Aha! the knight errant imprisoned smell-eth poison in his meat! Nay, child, it will not hurt you. Eat, drink, and be merry."

"Why?" quoth Captain Rymingtowne.

"Because you had the sense to make friends of a friend of mine. Do you remember Teresa de Fazardo? A sweet child."

Captain Rymingtowne looked her small person up and down.

"As I remember her she would have made two of you."

"In body, good sir," she agreed. "But who knows the circumferences of my soul? Teresa and I we have loved each other as sisters do not ever since I broke her arm when she stole my Venetian doll. We were eight years old, my lord, and sweet angels. I am so still, indeed, but Teresa, you know, is married. Well, from Murcia she writ to me in London that if ever a Captain Rymingtowne came near me I was to make eyes at him. The which I do, sire, according to my capacities."



HERE Captain Rymingtowne began to eat. He said no grace.

Isabella's color grew and her eyes were brighter.

"My good lord, I think Teresa guessed that you would find yourself at war with my father and Spain. Wherein she desired my good offices. But the truth is I stand in need of yours."

Captain Rymingtowne looked up from his platter.

"God help you," he said with his mouth full.

She drooped a little and looked at the ground.

"Nay, sir, I know by Teresa's story that you'll not be cruel to a woman who seeks your aid in hard case."

Captain Rymingtowne, who was about his third draught of wine, put it down in a hurry.

"Why, how now," quoth he, "what's the use of a man with his head broke?"

"Indeed, sir, it's this matter which broke your head," she said sorrowfully. "See, you have come by letters which betray a plot wherein many noble Englishmen are deep. Yes, and they will go to the scaffold if those letters reach your Queen. And yet there are great and grand men among them, is it not?"

Her Spanish accent was more marked, her phrases quaint as she grew plaintive.

"You may say so," Dick said with satisfaction. "There's the Duke of Norfolk, and he holds his head high."

"The Duke of Norfolk," she repeated. "Ah, sir, you will not be cruel. No, you are not—not for women. But I—I—oh, what if I tell you that if the Duke of Norfolk suffers, I shall die!"

"Why, God ha' mercy!" Captain Rymingtonne was honestly startled. "What's he to you or you to him?"

"Do you ask a woman what a man is to her?" Isabella murmured. "Oh, sir, you will not break my heart? You will save him?"

She knelt down prettily by the bed and took Captain Rymingtonne's hands.

His face became very angular.

"Heart, mistress?" he said. "If the Duke of Norfolk hath meddled with your heart, a traitor he is, to you as well as to England. For it is in those letters that he counts to marry the Queen of Scots."

Isabella buried her face in the bedclothes and her shoulders shook.

"But I can not give him up!" she murmured. Disheveled hair, a flushed face, were lifted close to Captain Rymingtonne.

"Ah, sir, you will do me grace! You will stay those letters! You will save him which is my life!"

Captain Rymingtonne confesses to a pause before he answered:

"If he has made himself aught to you, a knave he is and like a knave let him die. You are well rid of him!"

"I will not believe it!" she cried. "He could not be false to me!"

Captain Rymingtonne shrugged his shoulders.

"If he let you hope anything of him, false he is. For he has coveted this Scottish marriage to make him as good as a king!"

"What care I?" she grew fierce. "Did I say he had let me hope anything? It is I who hoped—who hoped——"

"I am sorry for it," said Captain Rymingtonne gravely.

She lifted her hands to him. He shook his head.

She started up.

"Oh, you are hard! You are hard! You'll not help me, then? You'll not stay the letters? You'll have him die, and the saints know how many more—and for what, I pray you? Will you rest the happier?"

"I did not begin the business, mistress,"

said Captain Rymingtonne. "I asked no better than to come quietly home. Spaniards forced me strike at them, and when I struck here was this plot stripped bare. I'll not let Queen Bess go in danger, ay all England, to save the necks of a few rich knaves that play double to be richer!"

"Well, let them die then!" she crowed fiercely. "And you, you will die first! I tell you, sir, if you will not serve him, my father will hold you there till you rot!"

"If 'tis to be so, so it will be," quoth Captain Rymingtonne. "It's out of my hand now."

She stamped her foot.

"Oh, you make me rage, with your slow, cold ways. Look, you can go out to-night, safe, if you'll but do our will."

Captain Rymingtonne laughed.

"I like my own better, my dear."

"You want to die, then?" she crowed. "Why, have you nothing to hope, nothing to want? What was it Teresa said? There is a woman somewhere you have. And you——"

"And I'll bid you good night, my dear," said Captain Rymingtonne and looked grim.

She stared at him a long minute, then muttered to herself in Spanish. She did not know or had forgot that he understood it.

"It's a mule she will drive, poor soul." But he could then make nothing of that. She smiled. "You are hateful, do you understand?" she said. "Teresa was perfectly right. A man? Oh no, a piece of wood! Well, what am I to do for you? I have no breeches and you can not go walking in your shirt." She rattled on at such a pace that Captain Rymingtonne was altogether puzzled. "And what would you look like in a petticoat? The Virgin forgive me! But I must see!"

She fled out.

IV



IN A LITTLE while the door opened again and a bundle of clothes was thrown in. Captain Rymingtonne to his vast embarrassment found them all feminine. He could hardly persuade himself into them. The versatile Isabella was beyond his wits. Her variations on tragic despair and flippancy seemed hardly credible and he was consumed by a fear that she meant to make him ridiculous. He sat

on the edge of the bed contemplating her petticoats with horror.

Then the door opened again and her head came in and in Spanish she swore at him and vanished.

For some strange reason, that seems to have decided him. Gingerly he tied the things on, gingerly and maladroitly. She stole in before he was finished and gave a stifled shriek and took over the business.

Captain Rymingtowne records that after she had done, the things felt less as if they were slipping off. He also thanked heaven that it was twilight. The shoes he could not get into, so she made him pull off the stockings. She tied a kerchief all over his head and neck and spun him round, telling him he was finished.

"And what Teresa ever saw in you," quoth she, "God help the wench, I can not tell! Now remember, you are the washer-woman going home, and so good e'en to you!"

She thrust him out into the corridor and on and on and down a narrow stairway. At the foot of it a maid-servant waited, who plucked at him, crying,

"Here, Mother Meg, come on with you! I'm waiting half an hour."

Arm in arm they went across a stable-yard and out by a little gate in the wall. They were then in a dark, narrow lane with high buildings on either hand. The maid kilted her skirts and hurried, but Captain Rymingtowne, who found his bare feet at odds with the kidney-stones, was slow and she objurgated. He seems to have been humble, which I ascribe to the petticoats. At the top of the lane Captain Rymingtowne beheld a wide street by which came marching a company of the Yeomen of the Guard. The maid servant propelled him round the corner and fled. He asked the way to Whitehall and was told that he was in the Strand.

You guess, no doubt, that the Yeomen were on the way to ask explanations of the Spanish Ambassador. The story of their coming is this: When Captain Rymingtowne landed at Bridgewater he brought with him a youth of resolution and enterprise, Job Child, who was given the damning letters found upon Annibale Gaddi and bidden make the best of his speed by Glastonbury and Frome to Assynton. There he was to give the packet to the Squire, Mr. Rymingtowne, and tell how his Captain,

fearing ambush, had taken only copies with him on his way to London. The rest the Captain left to Mr. Rymingtowne's wits and good-will.



THIS confidence was not, as you see, disappointed. Job Child did his part and the Squire of Assynton took charge. A glance through the letters told him how to act. He had dealt with plots, Italian and Spanish, before Captain Rymingtowne was breeched. He accepted no risks. He put all his serving-men on horseback—and some one else, but that for a different reason. Thus adequately guarded, he whirled off to London.

On the day after Captain Rymingtowne was waylaid by Kensington church the letters came to Lord Burghley's hands. There was matter enough in them to warrant any violence against the Ambassador. Since Captain Rymingtowne had not come, it was thought likely that the Ambassador knew why he tarried. The Yeomen were dispatched to search the embassy and bring the Ambassador to Whitehall.

You can understand that Don Guerau would be excited when the Yeomen knocked at his door. He was also much annoyed. Burghley seems to have thought that he lost his temper and his head. But I do not feel that Burghley understood his character. When the lieutenant of the Yeomen announced that he was come to search the embassy and, if need be, would break down gate and door, Don Guerau gave orders that Captain Rymingtowne should be stabbed and thrown into the river.

That is what moved Burghley's contempt, but he was, after all, very English. Morality apart, it seems to have been the wisest thing to do. For if Captain Rymingtowne had been discovered wounded in the embassy, the Ambassador's complicity in the plot and apprehension of wrath to come must have been patent, while a dead body found in the river could prove nothing. But the fellows sent to do the deed found, as you anticipate, no Captain Rymingtowne to murder. Their leader, who was a man of resource and feared that he would be blamed for the escape, thought it best to report to Don Guerau that they had done as they were bidden.

Then, confident that he had abolished the chief witness against him, Don Guerau gave orders to let the Yeomen in. With a

grim satisfaction, I conceive, he waited while they searched, and haughtily, disdainfully, breathing threats of his master's vengeance, he let himself be conducted to Whitehall.

Captain Rymingtowne was there before him. You conceive the disgust of Burghley's servants—for my lord was of austere manners—when a creature which, so far as it was distinctly like anything, seemed to be a herb-woman or a tavern drudge, demanded instant speech of their master. They answered with reproachful rebukes, and as the creature grew insistent—it was a religious household—with exhortations. At last, reluctantly, they fetched an irritated secretary.

"A word in your ear, my lad," quoth Captain Rymingtowne, and in a whisper revealed so much that the supercilious young man's knees were loosened. Recovering himself he fled, and with little more delay Captain Rymingtowne was conducted to Burghley's presence.



AS HE went he plucked the kerchief from his head, but I suppose he looked, with his bandage and his petticoats and his bare legs, none the more rational for that. It was doubtless fortunate that the Squire of Assynton sat with Burghley waiting the issue of that expedition to the Ambassador's. After an amazed glance at the amazing creature who grinned upon him, Burghley turned to Mr. Rymingtowne.

"Is this your man, sir?" he asked.

But Mr. Rymingtowne was already on his feet holding out his hand.

"Here's a happy issue, sir," he said heartily. "As you see, my lord, this is my man."

"Thank you for that," quoth Captain Rymingtowne, gripping hard.

"So," Burghley tapped on the table.

"Well, sir, you are the man then who hath been practising piracy against Spain."

Captain Rymingtowne straightened himself:

"If we be to begin calling names, there's some I can lay my tongue to."

Burghley looked at him sourly. He had no kindness for sea-captains who made private wars. He was never grateful to amateurs who meddled with high policy. But at this moment the secretary came in a hurry to whisper that the Queen desired

my lord's presence and Mr. Rymingtowne's. Mr. Rymingtowne smiled.

"Shall we take him with us?" and he nodded at the quaint creature in petticoats.

Burghley frowned as he gathered his papers, but once outside the door said severely,

"For what I know, she may command him."

He could never make his Queen as correct as he desired.

V



AND the truth is that in a little while an usher in the royal livery summoned Captain Rymingtowne.

Whether Queen Elizabeth was more curious about the man himself or his adventures or Burghley's brief censorious account of his petticoats, we need not debate. For her taste, which liked strong flavors in everything except wine, would relish all these matters, and it is certain that when she beheld his big broken head and his unfeminine shape in stomacher and skirt and his bare masculine legs at the bottom thereof, she broke out laughing,

"God's body! God's body! here's a chimera! A horrid monster, i' sooth. Confess, my lord, he made you quake in your modest shoes!"

She jerked her royal elbow at Burghley. Leicester, the popinjay, and her bluff cousin, old Hunsdon, joined in her laughter. Mr. Rymingtowne allowed himself to smile. Burghley coughed and the Puritan Walsingham looked down his nose.

"Well, sirrah, what have you been at that you look so wanton?" she chuckled, and flung herself back like a man for all her jeweled hair and ruff and farthingale.

Then Captain Rymingtowne said,

"Please your Majesty, knocked o' the head by the Spanish Ambassador's bullies and locked up in his house without my breeches. But that's beginning at the end."

"Your head's clear enough, good fellow. Begin where you will, o' God's name."

So Captain Rymingtowne told of those two who came aboard his ship at Genoa, how he was fired upon at Cadiz and how he had taken from the baggage of Annibale Gaddi the letters which betrayed the plot.

"The letters," Burghley took him up, "being these? You will swear to them, sir?"

They were passed across the table.

Captain Rymingtowne shuffled them. He remembered Isabella de Espes and her tragic plea for Norfolk as her lover. To be sure, he had promised her nothing. He could not conceive that it would be anything but a happy deliverance for her if Norfolk went to the block. And yet he owed her what he could do. He looked at the letters and gave them all back save one.

"I'll swear to those," said he, "but as touching this paper—" he hesitated, folding it one way and another.

Burghley checked them in a hurry and looked up.

"That—that is the chief piece against my lord of Norfolk."

"How now?" the Queen cried. "What's Norfolk to you, sirrah?"

Captain Rymingtowne shrugged his shoulders.

"Naught and less. But maybe 'tis some use that I be here alive to swear to my letters?"

"Od's heart!" the Queen laughed, "I'll thank thee for not dying till I had a sight of thee in thy petticoats! What then?"

"A word in your private ear, ma'am."

Leicester cried out "Insolence!" and there was a mutter of reproof.

But the Queen rose, laughing.

"Well, sir, walk apart in the window, but speak me modestly; I am but a maid."



SO INTO the curtained embrasure they went and Captain Rymingtowne told of Isabella and how she plead and how she saved him. The Queen clapped her hand on his shoulder and swore,

"God's body, a brave tale!" Laughing, she turned to Burghley, "I did not know that Don Guerau had a daughter."

"She came from Spain last week, madame."

"Last week, sirrah," the Queen echoed, turning again to Captain Rymingtowne.

"Then if my lord of Norfolk hath won her maiden heart, he is something brisker than ever I thought him. Go to, I'll swear she hath never seen him."

"I do not understand, then," said Captain Rymingtowne stolidly.

"Why, sir, then you know little of women but their petticoats. And, God guide us, not much of them neither! Did you ever hear tell that a girl will play on a man to see what stuff there is in him? Out on you

for a cold fellow! I'll not say but the wench had a notion of saving the knave for her father's sake. But I'll swear she thought most of making you caper. So now, sirrah, the letter." Captain Rymingtowne surrendered it, something abashed. "And now, since you prove so little right to them, we must have you out of those petticoats."

She clapped her hands and dismissed him to an usher who gave him to some of the Chamberlain's men.

Now while Captain Rymingtowne was getting into breeches, Don Guerau was brought to Whitehall and the Queen's cabinet. He entered with an explosion. The majesty of Spain was outraged. His person and his house, sacred by all laws human and divine, had suffered violence. Spain would know how to avenge him.

The Queen looked at Burghley, who said,

"To which, sir, you well know the answer: that you have abused the right of your office. I shall briefly show it to your confusion. But first I accuse you of violence to the Queen's liegeman, Captain Rymingtowne."

"The pirate?" said Don Guerau coldly. "Is he back in England? Then I advise you to take order that he make swift acquaintance with the hangman. For my master will be satisfied with no less."

"Satisfied!" Burghley sneered. "Ay, your good faith craves satisfaction!"

But the Queen broke out,

"Hangman, quotha! And who made you hangman in England, sirrah?"

Don Guerau drew himself up.

"Your dignity, madame, is in your own hand. You will not so diminish my master's."

"Why, I suppose your house knows nothing of Captain Rymingtowne?" said Burghley.

"You had best ask your own guardsmen, my lord."

"Ay, ay. They found nothing, I hear? We must look for him elsewhere. You can not tell us where to seek?"

"My lord, I should demean myself to answer your insults."

"You have taken no order about Captain Rymingtowne?" Burghley insisted.

"My lord, I leave your own knaves to you."

And then the Queen said,

"Bring the good Captain."

DON GUERAU, for all his years of diplomacy, was visibly startled. After a moment he put on an air of careless defiance, but there was effort in it. Captain Rymingtowne came in. He was now inside a sedate doublet and hose, and the bandage had gone from his head. He made his best bow, which was, I conceive, not beautiful.

"Here is your man, sir," the Queen cried. "Will you brazen it more? Did you never seek to murder him? Did you never threaten him with death if he would not keep your plots secret? God's death, speak truth at last!"

Don Guerau, who believed Captain Rymingtowne safe in the Thames, who could not be sure whether this was the man or a sham, was in some difficulty. But he did well enough.

"If this be the pirate," he said coldly, "I claim justice on him. For your Majesty's words, I know not what wild tale you are cheated with."

"Justice!" the Queen thundered. "Ay, sir, you shall have justice before all Christendom! Back to your house, and there you rest under guard till we have taken order with your hellish plots! See to it, my lord! Get you gone, sir!"

"My master, madame, will know how to answer this."

"By God, it will tax his wits!" the Queen said.

With a shrug for her coarse manners, Don Guerau went his way.

For a moment the Queen beat on the table, frowning, then with a grim smile she looked up at Captain Rymingtowne:

"Well, sirrah, you have managed your business prettily. Here be storms to uphold you in your piracies."

"By your good leave, ma'am," said Captain Rymingtowne, "there was no piracy to it, for I never put a hand to their treasure-ships till I found them plotting bloody murder against you."

"Ay, you're a saint!" she laughed. "And now, sirrah, tell me how much Spanish gold

is there aboard your good ship in Bristol?"

"I'll be blithe to give account to your officers, ma'am."

"Nay, if we're to make accounts with you, God help us!" she cried in high good humor. I suppose they understood each other very well. There was a certain tiara of emeralds which came afterward to her royal head. Not without gossip.

"Well, go to. Away with you, for a rogue. We must go into these mysteries of yours." She tapped the letters.

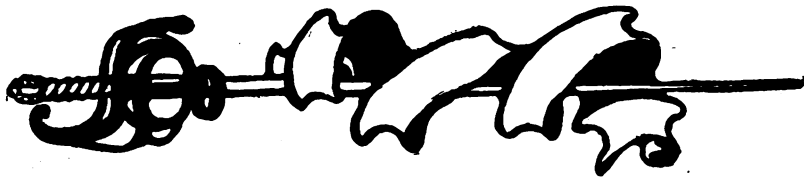


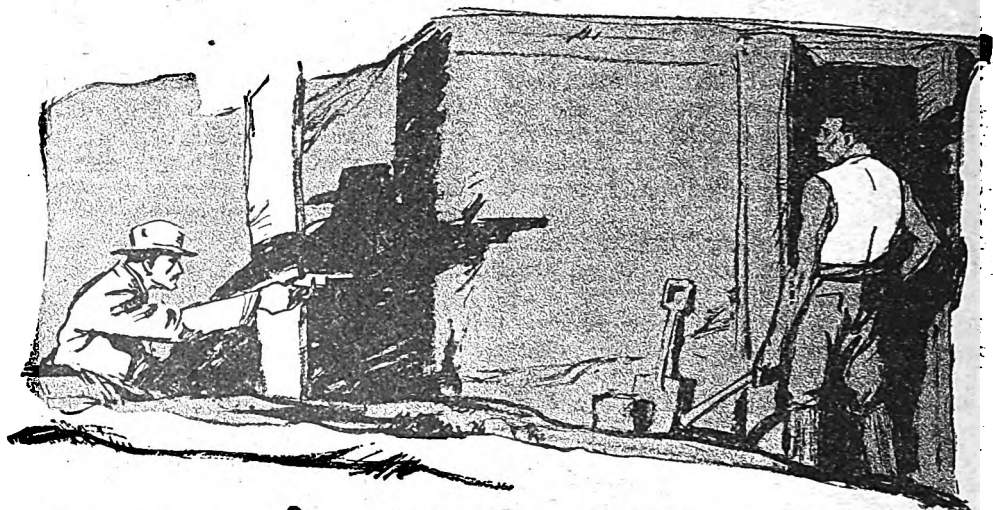
THEN Mr. Rymingtowne took Captain Rymingtowne to find his daughter Mary. For she had chosen to come to court with that hurrying company of his. What made her do it, I do not find anywhere explained. But it seems that when Captain Rymingtowne came to her in a corner of the hall, he found her alone and pale and anxious-eyed and his coming made her start up and sink down again trembling.

"Good morrow to you," said Captain Rymingtowne, and at that she began to laugh queerly.

"To be sure," said a gay voice behind them, "you do look better in breeches." Captain Rymingtowne jumped round to see Isabella de Espes. "God speed you, sir," said she with a curtsy. "So that," she nodded her round head at Mistress Rymingtowne, "that is why you were so cold to me. I'll not say but you have taste. Madame, give you joy of him. He is a faithful soul—for a man. Or my small self is not long enough temptation. Who knows? For by what I hear, Teresa had more luck with him. And now good night to you. They tell me I must be locked up with my father, poor gentleman!" Away she flitted, but turned again to whisper in Mary's ear: "My dear, it's a mule to drive. But try coaxing."

But Captain Rymingtowne found that Mary's eyes looked at him with a difference. He found it hard to explain to her that such suspicions did him wrong.





A MAN'S OWN BUSINESS

By HENRY OYEN

BY GOLLY, I'm glad I ain't a sailor!" Plainclothes-man MacCarn floundered hurriedly out of the pitching rowboat and gave a sigh of relief when he found the firm planking of the new crib pier beneath his feet. "That's close enough to drowning for me." He looked back at the mile of choppy Lake Michigan over which he had been rowed. "Believe me, next time I do any business out here, I'll have a tug!"

The boatman, tying his rolling craft to a pile, laughed,

"Ain't scared, are you? That little wind ain't nothin'."

"Nothing to you, you mean," said MacCarn. "It's your business. It ain't mine. It gets my goat. Every man to his own business. Never mind, though; just you wait here a few minutes and you'll be rowing two of us back. I've got a little business of my own down in this tunnel."

The great, new crib, circular in shape and sixty feet in diameter, marked the lake end of the mile-long tunnel that the city was driving under the lake bed in its hunt for better water. The other end was back under the sky-scrapers of the city. For weeks the sand-hogs of the crib—a crew of sixty men—had been driving toward shore through the blue clay, shale and rock far

down below the waters of the lake. From the shore a similar gang had been tunneling out to meet them. Twice a day a tug came out to the crib, bearing provisions.

Save for this it was isolated. To the sixty men who worked at the crib it was a world apart. They lived, worked, ate, slept, and occasionally died there. It was an excellent place for one who wished to drop out of the world for a space. Or to hide from the police. That was why plainclothes-man MacCarn had business at the crib this forenoon.

"The sup'rintendent?" repeated the old watchman who sat smoking at a door in the circular structure. "He's down at the tunnel. Want to see him? You'll have to have a pass."

MacCarn produced the pass.

"All right," said the watchman. "Come on, this way; I'll take you down to him."

As he entered the crib, MacCarn caught the smell of charred timbers, the same smell that is in a burned building when the firemen have gone away.

"What's that from?" he asked, sniffing.

"Oh, they had another fire down in the storeroom on the floor below this morning," said his guide carelessly. "Lot of baled hay for the mules got to burning. Had

quite a time with it. They got it beat now, though."

"Fire, eh?" said MacCarn, looking around. "You'd sort of be up against it here if you had a real bad fire, wouldn't you?"

"Oh, we'd be all right up here," said the watchman, ringing for the elevator. "We could get out in the lake on the mud-scows. But the lads down in the tunnel—they'd have to get up mighty quick or they wouldn't get up at all. They'd be suffocated down there if they couldn't get up quick."

MacCarn shook his head.

"It's a risky business, this tunnel digging, that's sure."

The boy on the elevator sniffed and swore.

"They hain't got that fire out yet, Barney," he protested to the watchman. "There's a lot of smoke back in that hay. Every time I come up I can feel the heat, too. And they've quit throwing water on it," he sneered, dropping his car. "Take a look for yourself."

The first floor down was jammed to the shaft with stores of all kinds, the greatest bulk being a huge pile of baled hay. Threads of smoke could be seen seeping between the bales.

"It looks bad," said the old watchman. "And there's all that powder on this floor, too. But I s'pose they know what they're about."



THE next floor was the bunk-room of the men. Below that the eating-room. Below the eating-floor was the mule-stable, below that the machine-shop, then the engine-room, and at last, a hundred feet down, they came to the bottom.

MacCarn stepped out on the mud-littered floor and peered around blindly. Directly opposite the elevator he made out the black mouth of the tunnel. A string of dump-cars came rumbling out, and the men pushing them shouted to him to get out of the way.

"Ain't used to being in a tunnel, are you?" said the watchman. "Come on; this way. Here's the sup'rintendent over by the tool-bin."

The superintendent, a giant of a man, turned from watching the dump-cars.

"Want to see me?"

"I do," said MacCarn. He was nettled

because he was out of place. "You've got a big nigger working here who answers to the name of Bad Bill. He's about seven feet high and four wide. He's got one eye knocked out and a blue scar running down his neck from the ear to the shoulder. Recognize the description? Well, he bumped off a friend of his over in the black belt about two weeks ago. A dirty, mean job. Came out here to hide. I want him."

"How do you know he's here?" asked the superintendent.

"D'you s'pose I'd come chasing down into this mud-hole if I didn't know?" retorted MacCarn. "He wrote to his woman. You know him?"

"I guess I do, all right," replied the big man. "He's the biggest, toughest smoke in the whole gang, and that's going some."

"That's him," snapped MacCarn. "Where is he? Lead me to him, and let me get out of here as quick as I can."

The superintendent laughed a little.

"Make you nervous to be down under the lake?"

"It ain't my business," said MacCarn. "I don't like it. Where's my nigger?"

"Well, right at this minute he's about half a mile from here," was the reply. "He's working in the heading gang at the far end of the tunnel."

"Half a mile?" MacCarn peered down the wet tunnel. The electric lights strung along the roof only faintly disturbed the darkness. "The whole tunnel's going to be only a mile, ain't it?"

"Just about. Our heading gang is pretty close to meeting the land gang right now. Only a few licks more and we're through. But, say, you don't want to go chasing 'way down there after your man, officer. Get yourself all mussed up. Come out soaked to the skin. Besides, you'll be in the way."

The superintendent looked at his watch.

"It's only fifteen minutes to noon now. They'll all be coming up here to feed soon. All you've got to do is to sit right down here and wait, and your man'll come walking right into your hands. Sit down; make yourself at home on that bunch of shovels."

MacCarn sat down.

"By golly, I wouldn't like your job!" he said, peering around in the inky gloom. "You're down here like mice in a hole. I feel like I was trapped. No, sir, I don't care for it in mine!"

The superintendent laughed.

"Well, now, I'll tell you, I wouldn't care for your job," he said. "You'll have a picnic pinching this big nigger. You're quite welcome. I'd as soon take a wild grizzly bear. He won't like it—being pinched for murder."


"Doesn't make any difference whether he does or not," said MacCarn. "That ain't the question. I'm here to get him!"

"Do you know the make of the brute?"

"Oh, he's a big, bad nigger, all right," agreed MacCarn. "That's got nothing to do with it, though."

"I wouldn't like the job."

"Every man to his own business," said MacCarn. "That's mine."

 MEN began to come out of the darkness of the tunnel, big, slouchy, rubber-booted men. Half of them were negroes. They walked heavily and dripped wet clay at every step. They looked sullenly at the superintendent and MacCarn, and dropped stolidly down in the mud to wait for the elevator to carry them up to the eating-floor.

Five minutes passed. Ten minutes. Fifty men were lounging around on the crib-bottom awaiting the signal for the noon meal.

"All here but the half-dozen in the heading gang," said the superintendent. "Your man will be here in a minute now. —! What's that?"

A sudden roar, a cracking of timbers, and a violent blast of air came down to them from above. The iron of the elevator-shaft trembled.

"That's the powder," quietly spoke a man near the superintendent. "Good thing the stock is low. Ah! There she goes. Fire, be gad!"

The lounging men sprang to their feet and surged up to the elevator-shaft as a gong up in the engine-room began to jangle hideously.

"What's up?" asked MacCarn.

"Fire-alarm," said the superintendent. "The powder up in the store-room must have let go." He tore open the door of the shaft and peered up. "Get on this first car when she comes down," he said quietly to MacCarn. "She only carries half the gang, and she may not make two trips."

MacCarn looked around at the crowd.

"My man isn't here yet," he said.

Out of the noise and smoke up above the elevator came down with a rush.

"Hustle, fer Gawd's sake!" coughed the elevator boy. "Fire busted out sudden in the hay. Got to the powder. Blew up. Storeroom floor's burning fast! Pile in!"

The car was loaded to its capacity, thirty men, in half as many seconds. The superintendent was among those who remained behind.

"Get on," he said to MacCarn.

MacCarn shook his head.


"I'll wait for my man."

The elevator shot up. They could hear the roar of the flames as the rushing car made a draft. A little smoke came dropping down the shaft. The air began to grow warm and light. Suddenly a negro dropped to his hands and knees and hid his face in his hands.

"Oh, Gawdy, Gawdy! We's go'n' die, we's go'n' die!"

The superintendent's booted foot sent him rolling.

"Shut up, you! I'll knock the head off the first man who starts anything!"

 OUT of the tunnel came running, big-eyed and gasping, the last of the men, the six of the heading gang. And in the lead was a one-eyed, vicious-faced negro who made even the huge superintendent look commonplace.

"Wha' all dat noise?" he demanded. "Wha's de matteh?"

"She's afire up above," replied a man. "Powder blew up. We got to get up quick or we'll be suffocated down here like rats!"

"Oh, da's it, huh?" said the giant. He forced his way, kicking and striking viciously, through the crowd that clung to the shaft. "Well, I'll get up 'f anybody does!"

"Sure," said MacCarn. The negro leaped like a startled animal as the handcuff clicked on his right wrist. "Sure, you'll get up! Here with your other mitt!"

A cloud of smoke, forced downward by the elevator, belched out of the shaft. The car came dropping to the bottom with a thud. The boy, half-blinded, half-choked with smoke, flung open the door.

"In, in!" he gasped. "In—in!"

The men jammed into the car with a single rush. MacCarn's man hung back. MacCarn stayed with him.

"Come on, you; get in!" screamed the superintendent.

The negro tore free with a jerk and backed toward the tunnel.

"Come on, officer! He's done for now. He'll be suffocated in ten minutes."

MacCarn took one step toward the car. The big negro was under a light at the mouth of the tunnel. MacCarn saw his face.

"Come on, man, for God's sake!" cried the superintendent.

But MacCarn had stopped. The negro turned and dived into the tunnel on the run. And there was no terror in his expression. He was grinning triumphantly. And upon all the other faces in the crib-bottom, even the superintendent's, rank terror rode unashamed. That negro, somehow, had the laugh on the whole crowd.

"That nigger has got something big up his sleeve," flashed MacCarn's thoughts. "What is it?"

"Come on!" The mob in the elevator was cursing for precious seconds wasted.

"He can't get away. He's done for himself. Come on!"

But now MacCarn, veteran plainclothesman, was working at his own business. His police instinct dictated his actions. It was much the same as an old hound catching a warm scent. That negro was making his escape!

MacCarn knew what his business was.

"Go on up!" he said. "I'm going to get my man!"

"It's suicide!" cried the superintendent.

"All right," said MacCarn. "Go on!"

He started for the tunnel as the car shot up through the smoke. The thought that he had staked his life on the whispers of his police instinct never entered his mind. MacCarn was working at his trade.

He drew his revolver and entered the mouth of the tunnel cautiously.

"I wonder what that fellow has got up his sleeve," he mused.

His man was out of sight, lost in the semi-darkness of the tunnel. Far ahead MacCarn could hear the sound of his running feet on the ties of the dump-track.

"What is it?" repeated MacCarn. "He's going to put something over. I saw that plain enough. But what can it be?"

The sound of the negro's footsteps died out in the distance. MacCarn followed. He noticed that the air steadily was be-

coming warmer and lighter. His breath came shorter, quicker.

"Ten minutes, the boss said," he mused. "I'd better hurry, too."



HE BEGAN to run down the poorly lighted tunnel. The dump-track was littered with clay and pieces of stone, and the going was heavy.

"Half a mile," thought MacCarn. "That's six blocks. Well, there's one good thing, there's no place for him to hide. He can't get away."

He ran with his revolver held ready before him, his eyes carefully searching the semi-darkness ahead.

"Huh! That dinge must have gone clear to the end," he said, as no sign of his man appeared. "But what in the divvil is the idea?"

As he approached the heading he saw that the end of the tunnel was well lighted. MacCarn, back in the darkness, stopped and crouched down to watch what went on in the sphere of light ahead.

The heading gang had stopped work against a face of crumbly rock. The negro was working at the rock. He was ramming powder-sticks into a dozen holes that had been drilled before the gang quit at noon. He was working like a fiend. He seemed to spread himself all over the facing at once, to do a dozen things at the same time. Sweat was pouring from him in streams. The handcuff jingled on his wrist. And as he worked he half-chanted, half-laughed a song of triumph.

"Ho-ho! He-he! Dat white 'tective t'ink he go'n' ketch Bad Bill. He-he! Dat white man get cold feet. Ho-ho! Bad Bill don' get cold feet. No, seh! Deh can't no one ketch Bad Bill what's got cold feet! Bad Bill, too good a man to be ketched that way! He-he!"

MacCarn saw that he was connecting a set of wires to the charges that he had placed in the holes. The wires ran back to a dry battery. The negro picked up the battery and came running back toward MacCarn. MacCarn retreated farther into the darkness. The big black lay face down in the dump track twenty feet from the facing and touched off his blast.

MacCarn was knocked flat on his back. When he got up, the first thing that struck him was that something had happened to the air. It was cooler, fresher. It was

moving. He felt the current of it against his face. His face was toward the end of the tunnel.

The negro already was up in the tangle of rock that his blast had torn down. He was plentifully smeared with blood, but he had a crowbar in his hand and was tearing away at the shattered stone. And he was yelling more triumphantly than ever.

"Ho-ho! He-he! Dem fools fohget we's only got to shoot froo dis san'stone 'foh we hits de oddeh gang! Ho-ho! Deh fohgets one of ouah drills done go froo befoh noon. He-he! Bad Bill don' fohget. No seh! Dem white men gets cold feet and run like rabbits. Bad Bill don' run. Bill he come down heah and shoot his way froo! Ho ho! He-he!"



THEN MacCarn saw where the fresh air came from. There was a hole the size of a man's head in the facing! Through the hole could be seen the electric lights on the roof of the shore section of the tunnel!

With his bar the negro was pulling down chunks of rock that would each have made a good team-load. The hole grew larger rapidly. MacCarn stood back and watched.

"So that was it," he mused. "No wonder he showed that he had something big up his sleeve!" He chuckled softly. "Work, you big smoke, work! The quicker you're through, the quicker I get you. And the quicker I get out of this darned tunnel! Work!"

With a final heave at a huge piece of rock, the giant made the hole big enough. He threw down his bar and laughed with great guffaws that shook him to the heels.

"Ho-ho! He-he! Dey can't no man what's got cold feet ketch Bad Bill. No seh! Ho-ho! He-he!"

He stooped to squeeze through the hole.

"Just a minute, smoke!"

MacCarn's voice was icy and domineering.

The negro sprang into the air and whirled around.

"Foh Gawd!" he gasped. His single eye was starting from his head. "Whah, whah——"

He quailed and backed up against the facing, with his hands in the air. The muzzle of MacCarn's pistol was no more relentless than the eyes above them.

"Foh Gawd!" gasped the negro. "Foh Gawd's sake!"

MacCarn came close up to him.

"Now, smoke," he said, crisply, "the other wrist!"

The negro stared, helpless and dumb. MacCarn drove the pistol-barrel against the pit of his stomach.

"The other wrist!" he commanded. And the negro stood limp as a rag while the second cuff clicked home.

"Good enough," said MacCarn, swinging him around. "Turn around. What's the matter; getting cold feet? Bend over. That's right. Don't get cold feet. Get through that hole. In you go. That's right."

MacCarn rapped his revolver against the huge boots that dragged through the hole ahead of him.

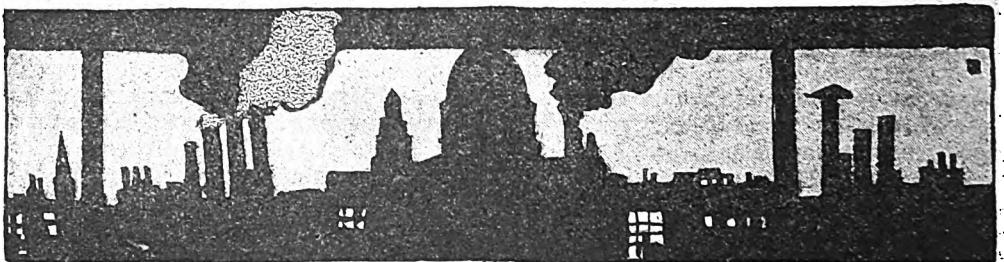
"Ho-ho! He-he!" he gurgled, imitatingly. "Whah's dat you said about cold feet, smoke? He-he! Cold feet! Ho-ho!"



THE superintendent of the shore section of the tunnel gaped as MacCarn came marching his prisoner up to the shaft.

"Where in the name of saints did you come from?" he demanded.

"From the other tunnel," said MacCarn. "My man tried to make a get-away by blasting his way through. And now get me that elevator, quick, and let me get out of here. You fellows can have all the tunnels in the world. I don't like 'em in my business!"





The
CHAMPAGNE BUBBLE
CARMELITA SOFIA McCANN
COMES HOME and MAKES SOME
MONEY
By **CLARICE VALLETTE McCAULEY**

CARMELITA SOFIA McCANN favored the fussy little foreigner in the adjacent Pullman chair with a glance of amused indifference. Ever since their train had left Pueblo his efforts to get acquainted had been so patent that just west of San Bernardino she had decided to relieve the tedium of the trip by a gracious unconventionality she was far from feeling.

For the fair Carmelita was decidedly grouchy, the reason being that she was vexed, homesick and blue; her vexation being the result—in a manner—of the homesickness, and her blueness of both. A sudden longing for the town of her birth, whose familiar streets she had not seen in two years, had driven her to abandon comfortable quarters and a series of very profitable games of bridge in Denver for the sake of a glimpse of her old home, in spite of the fact that her better judgment told her that it was home no longer.

She was in that most difficult of all moods when a woman would rather scrape acquaintance with a dirty child or a neglected pup, than tolerate the most flattering attentions of a Beau Brummel. This, however, Jean Raoul Bourgeret—who was one of those dense egotists who have known

many women without ever knowing *woman*—did not guess, so that her rare smiles and monosyllabic replies but piqued his interest and curiosity. Palpably there was so much more to Carmelita than appeared on the surface.

Grasping eagerly at the opportunity her last remark had given him, and totally oblivious to her half-disdainful tolerance, he ran hastily through the contents of his card-case and presented his pasteboard credential with exaggerated gallantry.

"Delighted, believe me, mademoiselle, that you let me introduce myself by name. As you see, I am connect' with L'Association Universelle as, what you call here, General Manager."

"So I see. Been in this country long?"

"In California ten months, but previously I have been in New York for several years, associate' with a big firm of importers—Vidal & Bergevin. You may have heard of them?"

"I believe I have," lied Carmelita politely.

"So? I am very well acquaint' here, too, in Los Angeles, and though it is not strictly *au fait* to introduce myself in this fashion, still in *Amerique*—"

"Exactly!" drawled Carmelita. "In

America it goes! Don't let that upset you. I'm enough of a cosmopolite to understand your point of view; besides, I'm sufficiently over seven to go home when it begins to rain." And ignoring the puzzled expression that crept over the Frenchman's face as he endeavored to grasp her meaning, she read from the card in her hand:

JEAN RAOUL BOURGERET

STRINGER BUILDING

SUITE 1800

LOS ANGELES, CAL.

L'ASSOCIATION UNIVERSELLE POUR LA DISTRIBUTION DES VINS DE FRANCE ET DE LA CALIFORNIE

BOULEVARD HAUSSMANN,
PARIS, FRANCE

"Just so!" said Carmelita pensively. "Isn't that a new idea?"

"Pardon?"

"I mean for French and California wines to make common cause."

"Well, it is what over there they call—an experiment! Here we call it a sure thing!"

"Does your company handle our wines as agents, or do you control any vineyards here?"

"Control?" cried the Frenchman impulsively. "Why, my dear young lady, we own them all; all the big ones. I have amalgamate' the whole bunch!"

There was a moment's pause. Privately, Carmelita thought him a second Ananias; aloud, she said thoughtfully:

"I used to know quite a few of our big grape-growers. I wonder if any of them——"

"We have the Wulner, Fostern, Kohl, Markland, Brandt vineyards; they are all in the San Gabriel valley. Then we have the Mead——"

"Mead?"

"You know him?"

There was a sharp note in the inquiry that Carmelita was quick to feel. Instantly she retreated.

"Not any more than any of the others. They are all just names to me, but familiar ones, Monsieur Bourgeret."

"He has a pretty good vineyard, that fellow Mead; but it is badly manage'."

"Is that so?" Carmelita's voice was the quintessence of polite indifference.

"To tell the truth, I am dissappoint' in most of them. We have the grand idea,

but it will take time and work—much work. He began to gather up his things—the train was nearing Pasadena. Carmelita looked at his card.

"Shall I keep this?"

"If you will be so kind. Perhaps, some day——" his eyes implored.

"Oh, we're sure to meet," smiled Carmelita. "We have mutual friends."

"If I might do myself the honor to call?"

"I'll let you know—when I am settled."

"Then I shall say, '*au plaisir de vous revoir, mademoiselle.*'"

"*A bientôt,*" she replied, rallying her class-room French, to the radiant delight of the much-impressed Bourgeret, who stood, hat in hand, on the platform until Carmelita could no longer see him from the window.



"WHAT a fool a man is to blab about his business to strangers like that! It doesn't take a Sherlock Holmes to see that there's something crooked in his game. I'd like to know how Bobbie Mead came to get mixed up with that crowd. Why, he's the only one of the lot that isn't a simon-pure lemon. 'I'll have to look into this!' as the parrot said when he flew against the mirror."

She tucked the card into her hand-bag for future reference, and with reawakened interest turned her attention to the familiar landmarks along the Arroyo Seco.

Not until she had stepped down from the Santa Fé express and tipped the porter who extended her small traveling-bag, did it occur to her to think of the sensation she might have created had she chosen to announce her contemplated return. As she made her easy way down the familiar platform, her usual independent insouciance was pricked by an expectant flutter—a childish longing for a familiar face.

Her roving glance, halting hopefully on the gateman's back (it was not Denny's; she needed no scrutiny to tell her that), swept searchingly over the faces grouped around the railing. For one incredulous moment her heart stood still, then went pounding on again, as when in her tomboyish girlhood she had been guilty of soiling too many frocks or eating too much jam. For there, gradually insinuating his thin, wiry figure through the crowd, and grinning confidently at her with the best imitation of mischievous delight she had ever

seen on his inscrutable face, was the nurse, playmate, disciplinarian, and adviser of her childhood.

"*Hola ma, Missee C'lam!*" grinned the Celestial.

"Holy ma, yourself! you old yellow rascal, you. Where on earth did you drop from? It's just like old times. Aren't you surprised to see me?"

The familiar blue silk coat, the lean figure, the sleek head circled tightly with its long cue, differentiated him but slightly from hundreds of his race, but Carmelita, accustomed as she had been to Oriental servants, had never lumped Sing Hi with the others who had helped make life bearable for the luxury-loving, indolent mother and the hospitable and convivially inclined father.

He alone, of all that erratic household, had never failed to temper leniency with justice, and had always managed to command from the impulsive, high-tempered girl a genuine liking and respect.

With unruffled matter-of-factness Sing extended his hand for the light bag she carried. Carmelita yielded it without protest. Then, checking an impatient desire to shake the tantalizing figure beside her, she asked suavely:

"Can't you talk, Sing? If you don't unburden your mind pretty soon, I'll stick pins in you to see if you're real. How do you happen to be at this station?"

"Wha' for you hully up so?" vouchsafed Sing, his supernatural gravity, however, not concealing his pleasure at the sight of his old charge. "Me wolkee fo' Mistlah Ploht'h at Hotel Van Nuys. Him say tel'glam dome—all samee hol' fas' Missee C'lameeta's mail! Velly well! Sing meet-um tlain, one—two—tee times, allee samee till you a'live. You sabee?"

Carmelita grinned her appreciation.

"Nobody but a dear old chump like you would lose a whole day's work fidgeting around here waiting for me, and then greet me like a wooden Indian when I got here!"

Sing Hi turned his unflinching stare, than which, in truth, nothing could have been more blank, gravely on the girl. Then he grunted disapprovingly:

"No good! You not-um bit likee mammy! Senolah M'Clan nice an' fat, jus' likee pink li'l babby. You too skinnee, Missee C'lam; too muchee hully up! allee same daddy!"

"Well, what are you going to do about it?" pouted Carmelita. "I couldn't vegetate the way mama did."

Sing did not answer for a moment. Carmelita waited, a little smile curving her mouth. She knew him well enough to surmise that he had something to say. It amused her to make him say it without her help.

"You stay in Los Ang'les l'il while, Missee C'lam?"

"All Winter, I expect."

"You go housekeep', mebbe? Takee bung'lo? Me know heap good boy, catch um cheap! Me cookee li'l pig, licee cakes, allee samee muchee sweets. You likee, say?"

Carmelita threw back her head and laughed jocosely. Sing's glum face relaxed, though he still watched her anxiously.

"You got-um muchee money?" he ventured.

"Heaps of it, you cautious old maid. If you like, I'll make a bonfire and burn some for you."

"You blun um, allee lightee," grunted the Celestial. "Allee samee daddy; plentee money to-day, to-mollo' stony blokee!"

Carmelita tossed her pretty chin with all the assurance of a spoiled child.

"Oh, quit croaking, Sing. When all I have is gone, there'll be more where it came from."

"Um-m-m! Me sabee!" singsonged the Chinaman meaningly. "Blime-by, to-mollo' mebbe, Sing come see what you want um do."

"Oh, I'll want the bungalow, all right; I'm sick of hotels, and it'll be perfectly splendid! That is—" she threw him a drolly pleading glance—"if you won't boss me around too much. Eh, Sing?"

But the wily Sing—even as in days long past—failed to rise to the insinuation. He stared complacently over Carmelita's head.

"You got um tlunk checks?" he queried irrelevantly. "I send um up."

He took the checks, signaled a cab, gave the driver the requisite directions, and held open the door for Carmelita, all with the humble and perfectly respectful mastery of the situation that had made him so noteworthy a member of the McCann household. Then he stood a moment watching the departing vehicle with philosophical immobility.

"Heap nicee gal, Missee C'lam. Jus'

likee daddy," he muttered reflectively. "Heap good bizness head. Um-m-m! — bad luck fo' somebody!"

With which enigmatical remark he disappeared in the direction of the baggage-room.

II



IT WAS in pursuit of domesticity—and future credit—that Carmelita Sofia left the Van Nuys early the following morning and walked briskly down Spring Street to the Twelfth National Bank. There she opened an account with a check the size of which caused the astute teller to whistle softly under his breath. For he knew Carmelita, and well remembered that her last account had been put to sudden rout by a rapid sequence of checks made to the order of the brokerage firm through whose efforts she had last attempted to stem a quickly receding financial tide.

Ed Norris, the broker in the case, was one of those who boasted that his father had made Terry McCann (as a matter of fact it was the other way about), and conscious that she was exceedingly well-attired and looked uncommonly like ready money, Carmelita judged that it might not be inadvisable to give him a chance to draw his own conclusions. This he promptly did in the first all-embracing stare.

"Well, well!" he cried effusively, "when did you get back? You're handsomer than ever, Carmelita. You surely look the goods. I suppose you know the old State's gone for Suffrage? Say! I can put you on to a good thing if you want. On the level, no kidding!"

Carmelita laughed merrily:

"Yes, I've heard about the Suffrage stunt, Ed, and for that reason it'll be impossible for me to take advantage of your good thing, just now. You see, I might have to run for Mayor, or the Senate, and then I'd need my little barrel for campaign expenses."

"I see you at it!" jeered Norris pleasantly.

"Yes, you don't!" retorted Carmelita. "But, seriously, I expect to have a few good things of my own soon, and may need all my cash."

"So? Going in for promotion?"

Although he smiled, his voice held a certain seriousness, a certain respect, as

was due the daughter of Terry McCann. "Perhaps!" smiled Carmelita. "It's very much *sub rosa* at present, Ed, but it's sure to be a big thing," she added vaguely. "I'll let you know when I need you."

Outside the door, she chuckled mischievously. She had no real object in thus piquing the broker's curiosity, but she was still enjoying his mystification when she ran into Billy Betts of the *Daily Wave*. He fell back before her with an expression of profound astonishment.

"Well, of all the nerve!" he exclaimed incredulously. "Little did I think you'd ever show yourself again."

"Mercy! Why, one might think, to hear you," pouted Carmelita, "that I'd robbed a bank or misused the mails, instead of having merely, once upon a Summer day, invented an innocent little game to amuse the speculating public."

"Oh, all right!" What's it to be this time—and who?"

Betts managed to cloak his hunger for copy under an affable anxiety.

"You can't get any sensations from me," declared Carmelita. "Of course, you might announce that 'Miss Carmelita Sofia McCann has returned to her native city, after an interval of two years spent abroad.'"

"Abroad? Where?"

"In London! In dear old London town," hummed Carmelita musingly. "To be exact, Billy, I was there just two months, but they were very profitably spent. I'm going to settle down here for the Winter as soon as I can find a bungalow. We'll have a housewarming; I'll let you know when. *Adios, Billy.*"

Billy Betts looked after the tall, slender figure, and his eyes lighted up with the enthusiasm of the story-hunter.

"Gosh! To think how near I was to hinking out for the East. Not for mine! I wouldn't miss what's coming off here, not for a half-interest in the Alaska coal-fields! I wonder what her game is this time?"

From which it might have been deduced that there were a few people in this world who thought they were on to Carmelita.



A HALF-HOUR later, Carmelita, closing the door of a real-estate office upon an extremely well-satisfied young man who had agreed to furnish her a thoroughly desirable Winter home at Pasadena, walked absent-mindedly into the very

person of whom she was thinking. She held out both hands in unconcealed pleasure. As for the young man, his doleful, pre-occupied face grew almost cheerful.

"You're about the finest piece of work I've laid eyes on in many a weary day, Carmelita."

"Not so bad, yourself, Bob, except that you look as if your thoughts were a trifle mussed—like a brindled cow's at a skating-rink, or—what's wrong, Bobbie?"

"Tell me what isn't; that'd be easier. Say! Did you ever have it handed to you so hot that just to look at a cup of black coffee made you feel dizzy?"

"Well, I never yet saw the day that I wanted mine cold," grinned the girl. "What's the row? You're not in love? No? What then? Business bad?"

"Bad? Bad? Why, there isn't any!" exclaimed Mead. "They've stolen me chee-ild and trun me down! And I guess it's up to me to get a move on and start all over."

"What on earth——"

"You see, I sold out to L'Association Universelle——"

"So I heard. I met the promoter of the concern on the train, coming overland. His name is——"

"Bourgeret! and he is a —— scoundrel, if you want my honest opinion. He and his merry crew have landed me high and dry, confound it! They've got me as helpless as a deep-sea fish on top of Wilson's Peak."

Carmelita's eyes sparkled. Her education in shady finance had been much broader than Mead's. It required no great stretch of imagination to see what could have been done to that innocent youth, and she was much more interested in knowing how it had been done than she was willing to betray offhand. So her voice held only puzzled solicitude as she said:

"Of course, I don't understand at all, Bobbie. Won't you tell me all about it?"

"Won't I?" said Mead. "You bet I will. You haven't lunched? Good! Then let's go where the lights are soft and the music sweet and low. That's the only fit setting for a harrowing tale like mine."

They turned into the Angelus, Carmelita agog with curiosity, and Mead only too anxious to unburden his troubles.

"This Bourgeret," he began at once, "represents the most powerful syndicate

of wine-growers in the world. Eight months ago he rounded us all up; that is, seven of us, including myself, and made us a proposition to go into an amalgamation that would make us practically one concern, controlling both the producing and selling ends of the wine business, here and in Europe. It looked good to me, for I always have been in favor of lopping off expenses by central management; and what made it seem better was the association with the men who make and sell the French wines, for in a fashion we were strong rivals, especially in the United States trade."

"Yes, yes, I see!" said Carmelita, with difficulty restraining her impatience. "Go on, Bobbie."

"Making a long story short," continued Mead, "Bourgeret offered me thirty per cent. of the stock in a ten million corporation—L'Association Universelle—for my business, and I fell for it! Naturally, I figured that with the largest individual interest in the company I would have a voice in the management, especially as I counted on Kohl and Brandt to stand back of my judgment. But not so! That little French cuss has actually banded those other fellows together in such a way that no matter what motion I make at a directors' meeting, they vote it down; and I'm getting tired of opening my mouth among them."

"Yes, but how about business?" said Carmelita.

"It's just as I said, they've utterly ruined it. My property was the best of the lot, as I don't need to tell you. First came the French troubles about champagne territory, then the manipulation of affairs here by Bourgeret; so that our business dwindled away like a snowball on a hot stove, and the market for our stock shrunk with it, until now I can't even borrow on it, except from him."

"Huh!" said Carmelita, leaning forward suddenly. "Then Bourgeret will advance money on it, eh?"

"Yes, but he's absolutely the only man in Los Angeles who will. Like a chump, I held on to my stock, instead of selling when it was first floated. The price ran up to one hundred and twenty-five then, and now I don't believe I could sell for more than ten."

"Just where would that price let you out, Bobbie?"

"Roughly," speaking, at less than one-

fifth the actual value of my property, not allowing anything for good-will or its future prospects. Gee, it's tough, Carmelita! I worked hard to build it up, too."

"I can't see that you've been shedding flesh in anything bigger than ten-pound rolls while you were doing it," laughed Carmelita. "But just the same, I don't want to see that mazurka-dancing frog-eater waltz off with your business without giving you a run for it; and that's what's in sight, unless I miss my guess. You say he's got seventy per cent. of the stock under his control?"

"Practically so, yes. There were some shares sold on the Exchange that he hasn't actually got his hands on, but——"

"Is there any trading in them at all, now?"

"Only occasionally, and not much lately. He's practically killed the demand by his management."

"H'm! Mis-management," said Carmelita slowly. "Say, Bobbie! How much money have you got that isn't anchored?"

"I might scrape up forty or fifty thousand dollars."

"Good! You'll need it, so don't let it slip away till I see you again. And don't be afraid to loosen up when I say the word. I'm going to take a fall out of this flossy little son of France, or my name isn't McCann."

"I'd willingly give fifty thousand to get my business out of that combination, Carmelita, but——" he paused a second, then continued anxiously—"I can't let you get mixed up in this!"

"Why not? I need the fifty thousand!" drawled Carmelita drolly. "Or has some other girl got a better note?"

"No, of course not! But you can't go against Bourgeret."

"Oh, can't I, though? Now just tell me why not?"

"He's—he's got millions back of him!"

"Has he indeed? All right! That makes it all the jollier. Maybe I'll take some of them away from him before the game is over. There's no fun pitting wits against a piker."

"But it isn't only Bourgeret, it's the people behind him. I'd be a dog to let you, Carmelita."

"Thanks, old boy! But stop and think who I've got behind me! Generations of McCanns, and all of them lived by their wits! Also a long line of De la Guerras—the fem-

inine portion of whom, at least, won out on their looks!"

"By Jove! it is a combination!" mused Mead admiringly.

"Can you beat it?" demanded Carmelita gleefully. "Say, Bobbie, let's chuck this eating game. I've got something more important on my mind."

Half an hour later she was placing her order with a well-known Broadway broker.

"Take every share that's offered," she directed, "at the market! You understand?"

Howell Bubbidge nodded.

"Certainly, Miss McCann. But I think it's only fair to tell you that the stock isn't being traded in much lately, and only on a declining market."

"All the better for it!" said Carmelita. "The lower it goes the more I'll be pleased—while I'm buying it. Just work quietly; don't stir up the animals."

"You don't want us to bid for it, then?"

"No. Absorb any that comes out, and if it doesn't come fast enough, we can change our tactics later."

As Carmelita left the office the broker turned to his partner.

"That's Terry McCann's daughter, Harry. I wonder what she wants with L'Association Universelle stock? Surely not buying it for investment. Something doing there or I'm badly mistaken."

"You can't always tell about these wise girls. They're as apt as not to grab off a phoney, once they think they know something about the game."

III



THE big yellow car left the vineyards at Dolgeville behind, skirted the road alongside the wooded levels of the Arroyo Seco, past the ostrich farm, through south Pasadena with its wonderful homes, by field after field of California poppies, and finally rolled up at top speed over a little curving bit of white road and stopped before a long, low, rambling bungalow, half-hidden by eucalyptus and pepper trees.

A bright-faced Japanese boy ran out from somewhere in the garden and took the wheel as Carmelita jumped lightly down. To her question: "Any one been here, Taki?" he answered negatively, and she went slowly up through the garden, pausing now to smell a rose or a carnation.

At the veranda steps she filled both her hands with camellias, and stood drinking in the sweet-scented breath wafted from the flowering hills. To the southwest, Redondo and its waving acres of carnations, then San Pedro, and beyond that—like an island of malachite in a sapphire sea—her well-beloved Catalina! Why, it was like being at home again among friends! She gave a long, happy sigh, and shaking herself free from the glory of sunshine, of green valley and jeweled gardens, went into [the cool, quiet room beyond.

There she found Sing sitting cross-legged on a straw mat, painstakingly mending a silken stocking, stretched to the better betrayal of its shameless holes on a teacup, frail as an eggshell and about as transparent. He nodded abstractedly in her direction and began at once:

"Um-m-m Mistlah Boug'lay, he been here."

"He was? Why, Taki told me——"

"Taki!" snorted Sing wrathfully.

"What him know? Him no good!"

"What did Mr. Bourgeret want, Sing?"

Carmelita had early learned to ignore racial prejudices.

"How can tell? Him no say."

"I'll bet you were rude to him."

Sing grinned a trifle elfishly.

"Me no likee!"

"Why not? Don't be silly, Sing. He's a good sort."

"Allee samee heap bum dlesseh! All time one gland mix-up! Nite-time pantee, day-time coatee! Wha' you call um? Negl'-jay shuhtee, di'mon' buttons! Him one—fool!"

"Sing! You're positively the most profane thing I've ever had around me excepting daddy. I won't stand for it! You'd better mend your ways instead of my—oh, I do wish you wouldn't flaunt my—my deficiencies all over the house like that. If you must darn my hose, don't do it in front of me. It makes me feel as if I were ten years old again."

Sing chuckled slyly. To him Carmelita would never be anything but a child.

"Me no cla'e!" he protested blandly.

"Heap pletty stockee; heap pletty——"

Carmelita evaded further compliments by flight, Sing ducking skilfully to avoid the shower of blossoms she threw at him, and calmly resuming his occupation and his singsong droning. Presently, however, at a

call from the next room, he rose nonchalantly and pattered through the doorway.

Carmelita sat before her dressing-table, her loose gown of thick creamy stuff falling away from her ivory neck. She was lazily pulling out innumerable hairpins, letting down braid after braid of shining ebony hair that curled and crackled with vitality.

"Sing!" — her voice was suspiciously plaintive—"I've got a headache. You know the kind; nobody but you could ever brush them away."



THE Chinaman moved apathetically to the dressing-table and examined the brushes with thoughtful care, Carmelita watching him, her lips twitching. Having selected a pair to his liking, he stood behind her like a graven image, while the brushes swept with rhythmic precision through the luxuriant mane. Amusedly conscious that he watched her, Carmelita sat back with drooping eyelids, hands folded limply in her lap. As she had expected, she had not long to wait. Sing's curiosity got the better of his dignified silence.

"Wha' you want now?" he demanded bluntly. "You got um wha' Mistlah M'-Clan call 'ax-to-glin'?"

"Why, you must be a mind-reader, you old yellow fraud!" retorted Carmelita, laughing in spite of herself. "Tell me, have we been spending a great deal of money, Sing?"

"Um-m-m, heap muchee!"

"Oh, I just hate economy! You didn't want me to have Taki, and you were stingy about the rugs. I really don't know why I endure you at all, except as a salutary discipline. Now, see here, about this housewarming. I really need the moral support of a new gown."

"You got um tlunks full," cautioned the Celestial warningly, but Carmelita paid no attention to him.

"I'd like to make a tremendous impression, only I can't seem to decide on the proper thing," she rattled on. "What would you suggest, Sing?"

Sighing with the forced resignation of an indulgent parent, the Chinaman looked speculatively over the head he was so sedulously brushing to the vivid face reflected in the glass.

"Led?" he hazarded laconically.

"Oh, Sing! don't be so obvious. I haven't worn red since I got out of short dresses, just because every one seemed to expect it of me. Try again!"

"Um-m-m! Me sabe, Misse C'lam. You catch um lemon dress with orange tlimmin's, and litlee dash o' black now an' then!"

"What nonsense! Why, I wouldn't wear that combination to a dog-fight, and I'd never dress in red if there was nothing left but Eve's choice. Sing, you're no artist!"

"Wha' fo' you askee me?" snapped the Chinaman irritably. "Me got um plente wolk. You catchee me fo' cookee, no fo' dlessmakee. Wha' fo' you takee me?"

"I don't take you at all! You're an ugly old crosspatch!" wailed Carmelita, "and you're pulling my hair terribly. Now, if you'd only have been reasonable, I'd have told you about the beauty I saw in a shop this morning."

"Um-m-m!" grunted Sing.

"It made me think of cobwebs, champagne, moonlight!" Carmelita's gestures were as elaborately vague as her description. "It looked like a soap-bubble!"

Sing snorted derisively.

"Sloap-blub'l? You no sloap-blub'l gal; you clazeel!" and he shuffled indignantly toward the door.

"Come back a minute!" Carmelita's eyes were dancing.

"No got time!" flashed the Chinaman angrily.

Nevertheless he stopped.

"Say, Sing!" Carmelita was meekness personified. "Would you mind telling me what kind of a girl a 'sloap-blub'l gal' is?"

"Pink cheek, yello' hair, blue eye! You no sloap-blub'l gal!" reiterated Sing, slamming the door behind him. And even in the kitchen, to the accompaniment of an ostentatious rattling of dishes, he muttered occasionally: "Um-m-m-m! 'Sloap Blub'l! Misse C'lam sluh't nly clazeel!"



IT WAS, however, the 'soap bubble' dress that Carmelita elected to order for the housewarming, and, serene in her assurance that it was not the gown he had anathematized, Sing condescended to give it his unqualified approval. It was the dress, too, that had something to do with the idea which followed, for as she surveyed her shimmering, iridescent self in the mirror, Carmelita said thoughtfully:

"How did they ever weave these phantom colors together into anything tangible enough for a needle? It's as elusive as the bead on champagne. By the way, Sing, what's ordered for the liquid end of the entertainment to-morrow night?"

"Wha' kind champagne you wantee? Pomlee, Lodlee, Cleek-O, Mumm's?" chanted Sing.

"I'm sure I don't know," said his mistress indifferently, trying the effect of a necklace of topazes against her slender throat. "Let's see: there'll be two Englishmen—they'll want theirs dry! Norris comes from Honolulu—they do say his mother was an octoroon; he'll want his sweet! Monsieur Bourgeret is a wine-expert; heaven only knows what his taste'll be. Then we have a couple of Irishmen, and the ladies. They don't count in this: they're like me—everything's champagne that bubbles!"

"You make um heap smalt talk!" said the Chinaman wisely. "Why you no mix um bland, eh?"

Carmelita swung around from the mirror and stared at the grinning yellow face.

"What? Are you joking, or what do you mean? Could it be done?"

"You bet you' lifee! Dump um all in one bla'l; bime-by, come out allee same one wine—wha' you call um, 'blend'?"

"But wouldn't the wine get flat? Wouldn't the bubbles—the effervescence—be gone?"

Sing shook his head slowly, poising first on one foot, then the other. Carmelita waited with what patience she could muster. She knew that he had worked in the vineyards of Fresno and in the wineries about San José. Her confidence in his sagacity, especially when he was on a subject he understood, was absolute. When he spoke, it was with a merry twinkle in his shrewd black eyes that showed that the idea was beginning to take root.

"One time we make um heap big banquet up at Sanosay. Boss make um joke! Him put one big bla'l on table, all white-silv'y hoopee, um-m—"

"Oh, leave out the trimmings," said Carmelita impatiently.

"We takee eight, mebbe ten cases champagne, all dif'nt kinds; poh um in bla'l. Bla'l tight, air no can get in, champagne blub'ls no can get out! We dlaw it out tluoh li'l spigottee—"

"We'll do it, too!" cried Carmelita excitedly. "It'll be a good joke to get them guessing, especially Bourgeret and Mead. I'll tell them it's a new brand!"

"Bouig-lay—him smalt Aleck! Fool um easy," said Sing. "Mead no so easy. Him know sometling about wine."

"Oh, I'm not so sure!" broke in Carmelita. "Better men than Bobbie Mead have fallen for easier things than this. You go ahead and do your prettiest in the mix-up line, Sing. I'll do the rest."

Alone, as she peeled off the glittering splendor that had sheathed her, she murmured frowningly to her reflection:

"Who knows? Maybe there'll be something less ephemeral in this than a joke. I wonder?"

IV



FROM the road the jumble of merry voices blended with the desultory tinkling of a string quartet hidden among the orange-trees. The garden was heavy with the fragrance of a thousand flowers, roses in thickets, aloes in hedges, and carnations everywhere, and, bordering the walk, from the branches of the trees, festooned across the veranda, gilded Japanese lanterns of every size and shape.

Through the open door to the reception hall came the clinking of glasses and clouds of fragrant Havana. In the room within, Taki and another Japanese boy flitted about, unostentatiously deft and noiseless, while the omnipresent Sing—a white-coated, shiningly immaculate, inscrutably smiling Celestial—appeared like a pregnant exclamation point at the end of each well-served course.

Around the table—flushed faces bent toward her eagerly, eyes sparkling, and hands softly applauding—sat Carmelita's guests, and their hostess, the well-pleased focus of their attention, stood, slender glass in hand, imbued with all the magnetism of the moment, in thrall, in fact, to what we will call—scorning a less lenient name—her *muse improvisatrice*.

"I guess," said Mead, "that you served us with Pommery!"

"Too sweet," muttered the Frenchman in a low aside.

Barney Nolan, making his sixth attempt to solve the puzzle, broke in facetiously.

"Faith, it's the 'widdy'!"

"Pardon?" The Frenchman was a trifle leary of Nolan's jests, especially when there were ladies present.

"The widdy, ye know," explained Nolan. "Aw, phwat's her name, Carm'leeta?"

"Veuve Clicquot?"

"Th' same!"

Monsieur Bourgeret shook his head, smiling at the incomprehensible Irishman.

"Come, Monsieur Bourgeret," said Carmelita invitingly, "they've all had a guess except you. What do you think it is? What do you make of it?"

The Frenchman shrugged his shoulders enigmatically.

"Mademoiselle, I take off my hat to you. I admit, reluctantly, it is true, that I don't know!"

Carmelita swept him a gratified little curtsy.

"Such humility from such a source is overwhelming!"

"Quit your teasing, Carmelita," begged Norris. "Whatever it is, it's blamed good! We're waiting to drink your health. You can tell us the story afterward."

Again Taki and his assistant moved deftly around the silver-hooped container of the golden-amber liquid. Once more the glasses flashed in the soft lamplight, and strings of bubbles, like jewels on a chain, swirled up from the bottom of crystal goblets, lost themselves in fragrance, and were replaced by others.

"Delicious!" gurgled little Mrs. Norris, a jovial person who always shared her husband's good times.

"*Un bouquet exquis!*" admitted Bourgeret, slowly bringing his lips together and drawing in a deep breath of the bewildering flavor.

"Sure, 'tis as good as any Mumm's I ever tasted!" declared Nolan emphatically.

Billy Betts turned suddenly to Carmelita. He had been watching her from the corner of his eye, and had not spoken for some time.

"If this is a new one, Carmelita, let's have it!" he coaxed. "Christen your Sphinxian nectar, and don't be so blamed tantalizing."

Carmelita wheeled upon him radiantly, accepting the challenge in his eyes.

"Bravo! Mr. Betts has guessed it; he shall go up head! It is a new champagne;

one that—prepare to be surprised—was made expressly for the occasion.” With one graceful wave of her hand she quelled the fusillade of comment and inquiry, and with pretty deference turned to the Frenchman at her right. “Monsieur Bourgeret, we are all in the kindergarten class as compared with you. What would you say was the principal cost element in champagne?”

Bourgeret smiled thoughtfully.

“Mademoiselle, how should I say? The scarcity of the champagne grape, the selective care with which the juice of one variety is married to another, the uncertainty of bottle fermentation, the long period of storage during the process of aging, the—” he hesitated, and Carmelita ran on quickly:

“I see. And what would you say if a process were invented that not only minimized every point you have mentioned, but entirely did away with the necessity for prolonged storage?”



BOURGERET reached for his glass and twirled its slender stem between his well-kept fingers before he replied.

“I should say, mademoiselle,” he said finally, as if wondering vaguely what Carmelita could possibly be driving at, “that such a discovery would completely revolutionize the champagne industry. But, my dear young lady, how do I know just what it would do? It is too problematic to discuss.”

“Not at all.”

“Wasn’t there some such process invented for aging whisky?” suggested Betts.

“Of course!” replied Mead. “The ‘Takimine’ process. By the way, Norris, whatever became of it? Wasn’t it practical?”

Ed Norris made a wry face, and said with mock solemnity:

“S-sh! ’Twas gobbled up by the Trust.” Carmelita broke in with a low chuckle, and he looked at her sharply. “What d’you know about it?” he demanded severely.

“Oh, nothing! I was just wondering if it was an electrical process; that’s all.”

“Well, then, it was! What of it?”

“Then,” said Carmelita—and her voice was like the wine, cool and sparkling—“if the Takimine process bore the same relation to whisky that the *Royale* process bears to champagne, you may depend

upon it, gentlemen, that it was practical!”

“Meaning—just what?” asked Mead perplexedly.

“That the contents of this barrel, the champagne which you gentlemen have been so good as to praise, was made by the *Royale* process, of which, by the way, I am the owner! It is a process of aging and electrical change, and by its use the wine you have been drinking was made in a little less than forty-eight hours!”

If Carmelita had tossed a bomb into the middle of the table the effect could hardly have been more startling. In an instant all six of the men were on their feet talking wildly.

“*Mon Dieu! C’est impossible! incroyabile!*” This from Bourgeret to his nearest neighbor.

“And then some!” laughed Billy Betts. “See here, Miss McCann, what sort of a hocus-pocus bag of magician’s tricks are you—”

“Just a moment, please!” said Carmelita reprovingly. “I hadn’t quite finished. This wine can be made—in fact, it was made—from the most ordinary varieties of grapes. We used the cheapest grades of California white wines,” she added smilingly.

“If my old pal, Munchausen, heard this, he’d die of envy!” whispered Betts. “Quite sure you’re well?”

“But, *enfant!*” [protested Bourgeret from the other side of the table, “what is this *Royale* process? Is it French? And if so, why—”

“Why do you, the representative of the greatest wine interests in the world, hear of it first in America?” continued Carmelita suavely. “That I am unable to say, Monsieur Bourgeret, for the *Royale* process was named after its inventor—Constant Benjamin Royale, *Fils!* Is his name familiar to you? No? He was a fellow-countryman of yours.”

The Frenchman shook his head helplessly. There were many reasons why he found Carmelita’s announcements demoralizing, and she, sensing it, pressed the advantage still further. Fixing her gaze upon a bowl of beaten brass which formed a spot of light against the dull Flemish oak background of the wainscoting, she seemed to see in it the picture she described.

It was a fanciful setting: an obscure little café, haunted by an ashen-faced, absinthe-

dripping old Frenchman, who dreamed of the fortunes he might have made if his son, the real inventor of the process, had but lived, and it ended tragically in a hospital, with the unfortunate's widow generously provided for, and the process—which every one else had derided as a dope dream—in Carmelita's possession. And when she had finished they toasted the wine, and the woman, with a cheer.



ONLY Bourgeret, upon whose face amazement, admiration, and chagrin were struggling for the mastery, choked a little over his, and tasted yet again before he ventured to say:

"Of course you contemplate disposing of this process, mademoiselle?"

"No, monsieur!" replied Carmelita, with sudden gravity. "I propose keeping it for my own use."

"Surely you do not intend engaging in business yourself?"

"And why not, pray?" Carmelita's eyes danced merrily. "Why not make California the world's greatest champagne producing center?" she ran on banteringly. "Our vineyards are equal to those of Rheims and Epernay, are they not? Have we not every facility for leading the world in wine-production?"

"Hear! Hear!" applauded Bobbie Mead, while Betts broke in enthusiastically:

"Arpad Haraszthy thought so, by Jove! He pinned his faith to the Mission grape."

"Exactly!" assented Carmelita, bowing graciously in his direction. "My daddy was interested in that, and we'll prove him right yet! With Mission grapes and the *Royale* process, a champagne can be produced that will put the best the world has ever yet had out of the running entirely! And it will be a wine that can be manufactured, too, at a cost of less than forty cents a gallon!"

"*Mon Dieu! quelle audace!*" muttered Bourgeret between his teeth. But before the evening was over he rose gallantly to a request for a toast. "*Majesté aux cheveux d'or,*" he called the new champagne, with other poetical references somewhat lost on his hearers.

Watching the last of her departing guests down the moonlit road two hours later, Carmelita was recalled to the existence of her accomplice by a voice at her side.

"Wha' fo' you makee such heap big lies?"

hissed Sing severely. "You amaze me!"

"Sometimes I amaze myself, Sing," answered Carmelita, with a little shivering sigh, as the chill breath from Mount Lowe stirred the orange-trees behind her. "I suppose it's because it's in the blood—I'm made that way." Suddenly she straightened up. "But didn't they swallow it easily, though? I've half a notion to carry it through. My friend Bourgeret has got just one coming to him, and I'd like to be the one to deliver the goods!"

V



IT HAD not been quite clear to Carmelita just how she was to use her amazing story to her own and Mead's advantage. It had pleased her to fling it challenge-wise at her guests, and that she could actually fool Mead, and set Bourgeret to concocting cablegrams by the dim light of the gray dawn had only occurred to her as a possibility. She had not realized fully the extent of the Frenchman's chagrin and its cause, but she had been quick to see that the possibilities of an artificial champagne were much more real to Bourgeret and his foreign friends than they were to the innocent Mead, and that in proportion to their knowledge would be their terror of rivals.

The next morning, Carmelita, in the charming disarray of a breakfast gown, ate her grapefruit and sipped her coffee, and lounging comfortably, prepared to see whether the *Daily Wave* had been inspired to notice her housewarming.

Billy Betts had risen nobly to his duty. In the society columns was a glowing account of the affair, with the bungalow, its hostess, and the "representative citizens" who had been guests all fitly mentioned in colorful adjectives. In a short paragraph in the business section of the paper a great commercial future was prophesied for the common varieties of California sweet wines, and there was even a sly hint of an impending sensational discovery.

It was borne in on Carmelita that Billy had shown both tact and skill, and that he might aptly fill a place in her still nebulous campaign. Just as her hand sought the telephone on the table beside her, the bell rang peremptorily.

"Hello, Billy!" she breathed into the receiver. "How are you?"

"How did you know it was *me?*" came the surprised ratification from the other end of the line.

"Promise not to tell any one and I'll let you in on it," gurgled Carmelita. "I'm possessed of *second sight!* That's how I know a lot of things. But it surely was nice of you to call me up, and——"

"I say, Miss McCann," Betts broke in anxiously, "I want that champagne find of yours for a feature story."

"The very idea!" protested Carmelita, with beautiful inconsistency. "Why, I never supposed that you would abuse my hospitality, Mr. Betts!"

"I have to consider my duty to my paper," parried Betts. "It's a blamed good story and I want it. Besides," he added jestingly, "a little publicity won't hurt your game, whatever it is!"

"William Betts, you talk like a man with a next-morning thirst," retorted Carmelita. "Your voice doesn't sound one bit nice, and your language is far from classy. Your duty is to me! Besides, I want you for my press agent!"

"Thanks, fair lady. In that case, why can't I begin right now?"

"Because I'm not ready. I'm not joking, Billy. As Publicity Promoter for the—California Dry Sparkling Champagne Company—you're likely to be a very busy man."

"I'm certain of it if I can ever find that euphoniously named corporation. Say it again, please! May I ask just why I am so highly honored?"

"Of course! I have the *Wave* before me, and it occurred to me that any one who betrayed the more-than-human intelligence in appreciating imaginative work that you do, might reel off some perfectly lovely creative stunts of his own, if given half a chance."

"Yes, but a newspaper man needs a modicum of fact to start with."

"And you shall have it!"

"Some structure 'airy as a cobweb,' I suppose. Eh?"

"And quite as practicable—for the spider."

"But I won't touch it unless I know——"

"What?"

"Everything! I'll not perjure my soul in the dark."

"How really touching! Behold the unimpeachable journalistic honor we hear so much about—and strain our eyes in vain

to see!" gibed Carmelita. "You've never distorted some foolish soul's dearest principles to make comedy for the gallery. Oh, no, not you! You've never unearthed some poor chap's youthful iniquities the very minute he was past defending himself, just to satisfy the curious and perverted. You've never rummaged about in the rag-bag of a woman's past, collecting soiled linen enough for a Sunday feature. Bah! Billy, you make me tired!"

"Isn't maligning over the phone actionable in——"


"This is a private phone, and the world's much too busy to listen to my ravings. Now will you help me?"

"I will not! Not, at least, until I know what I'm doing."

"Ah! Thanks for the 'at least.' Billy, I need you. Honest Injun, I do! What I'll perpetrate with you to help me is not a marker to what I might accomplish without your restraining hand. Please, Billy! You know you can't afford to miss this story. You're absolutely the only man I'd trust to get me out of a scrape if—why, you snivelin' coyote! You're laughing at me. I'm on to you, all right. I couldn't keep you out if I tried. Say, listen! I'll phone you just as soon as I get the offices rented, Billy. Meanwhile, *adios!*"

And Carmelita hung up the receiver, favoring Sing, who had just entered the room, with an exaggerated wink.

"He's as easy as you are, you sassy old Chinese hen with one chicken," she chuckled flippantly.

 TWO hours later Carmelita, in the private office of Ed Norris, was regaling that all-absorbed gentleman with the most fascinating line of conversation he had listened to in many a day. Her methods chimed in so well with his own ideas—ideas which a prolonged run of hard luck had lately made impracticable—that it would indeed have been a most forlorn hope upon which he would have refused to embark.

To most of Carmelita's plans he gave ready acquiescence, but when she absolutely refused to allow him to make a public offering of the stock, he looked blank indeed.

"But you want to sell it, don't you?"

"That all depends."

"Surely you don't imagine that you're

going to be able to finance as big a thing as this all alone?"

"N-n-no. That would be rather extravagant. Never invest your own money when another man's would do as well. But I've got a third party up my sleeve, Ed. He'll stand for fifty thousand, if necessary, and only asks to be kept in the background for the present."

"Good! That makes a cinch of it! But just the same, without losing control, you'll want to slough off some stock," argued Norris persistently.

"Oh, well, perhaps!" assented Carmelita, "but not to the public."

Norris lost his temper.

"Then, in heaven's name, how do you propose to swing the thing?"

"Geewillikens, man!" retorted Carmelita, mocking his impatience, "any fool can swing a thing he's really got; but it takes imagination and just a trifle of art to get money safely on something that doesn't exist!"

A sudden white light blazed in upon Norris. It routed his perplexities, but it nearly blinded him.

"What a blitherin' chump I am! You mean——"

"Exactly! All that, and more too!"

"No electric process?"

"No Constant Benjamin Royale, no inventive son, no anything!" climaxed Carmelita.

"Phew! But the wine? That was real enough."

"Oh, yes, that was a stroke of genius. The credit for it belongs to Sing; so don't ask embarrassing questions. As you said, the wine was real, and that's all you need to know. Now, do you see the game?"

Norris drew in a long breath. He had expected to uncover fake somewhere in the deal, but had not suspected the thoroughness of the hoax.

"Who's the fish?" he asked feebly.

"Just who would you imagine?"

"Um-m—Bourgeret?" hazarded Norris dubiously.

"Good guess! He's carrying water on both shoulders, or pretends to. As a matter of fact, the only thing he's loyal to is his own bank-account. Now, I wouldn't fool the dear public for anything, but it's up to me to land this smart Aleck, and you've got to help me!"

"Looks to me as if he's in the hole al-

ready. This Association, I mean. He's picked up a lot of dead ones there that——"

"Yes, I know; and he's got Bobbie Mead, too."

"Oh, ho! So that's the nigger in the wood-pile, eh?"

Carmelita drew herself up haughtily.

"Your remark, Mr. Norris, is what I suppose Bourgeret would call *double entendre*, and it isn't pretty of you. If you mean to insinuate that that's why I'm interested—primarily, yes! If you mean that Bobbie Mead's business is one of the reasons for L'Association Universelle—you are also right, and a bit keener than I ever gave you credit for being."

"Oh, don't get cross," said Norris conciliatingly. "I meant no harm. But it is pretty big bait for one little fish."



"BOBBIE MEAD'S business is a going one, the only really valuable one in the lot, and admirably adapted to Bourgeret's future plans. It has a first-class bottling department, equipped with up-to-date machinery. Moreover, its owner is easy. Bobbie knows a lot about grapes, but he's a baby in finance! Cast your eyes over this statement at your leisure, and you'll see what I mean. Bobbie has acted like a sleeping infant with a stick of candy. I'm going to get his business back for him, and then some!"

"Going after gore?" laughed Norris, admiringly. "It's mighty good of you; but I don't just see how this champagne deal of yours is going to make the raffle."

"Of course you don't; neither do I, quite! But I've got a few aces left that you haven't seen yet," Carmelita smiled meaningly.

"You've got me guessing, I'll admit that," said Norris. "You'd better make a clean breast of it—we can work better."

"Well," continued Carmelita, "you remember the champagne riots in France when thousands upon thousands of cases of near champagne were smashed?"

"Sure!"

"But you never heard of the thousands of cases of sweet wines that had been subjected to the champagne process and then spirited safely away to this country, did you? I thought not. L'Association Universelle is the open gateway for these spurious brands, and Bourgeret is, of course, manipulating their sale to the detriment

of our native wines. Can you imagine what a jolt he'll get when I hang out my shingle as a competitor?"

Norris whistled softly.

"That'll be an awful slap in the face."

"Yes, and that's only a starter. There's an old warehouse down on the Southern Pacific tracks, just opposite to the one that Bobbie Mead's father used for so many years as a bottling establishment—the one now used by L'Association Universelle. I want that warehouse. Get it for me on as short a lease as possible, will you?"

"I'll go after it right now," said Norris.

"Say! you are going to do things to that little bald-headed Frenchman, aren't you?"

"Am I?" chuckled Carmelita. "Just watch the smoke!"

VI



IT GOES without saying that with two such past-masters in the arts of promotion and publicity as Edward Norris and Billy Betts for her henchmen, not to mention Mead's bank-account, which that bewildered youth placed at her disposal, Carmelita's scheme swung forward with unparalleled alacrity. Her story was accepted with that touching credulity which is always the portion of the colossal lie well told. Much of the credit for this was due Billy Betts, who managed to keep the company continually in the public eye.

Then one morning, Jean Raoul Bourgeret, glancing from his office window across the road at a large brick building upon which he long had cherished designs, saw, running along the ridge of the roof in letters ten feet high, a sign reading:

CALIFORNIA DRY SPARKLING
CHAMPAGNE COMPANY. THE
WINE THAT WILL CONQUER
THE WORLD

Whereupon he woke up to the realization that his particular *bête noir* had grown to gargantuan proportions. It was no longer, as he had fondly hoped, one of those hot-air propositions that remained forever clouded in nebulous theory; it was no longer an optimistic Americanism, but an actual concern that manifested its good faith by a tangible asset in the shape of a real factory building with a showy sign on it.

That this is usually the first acquisition of the company whose foundation was built on the sand, Jean Raoul had yet to learn, so that in a frenzy of alarm, he made the wires hum with cipher cablegrams to the powers he represented. They, secure in their omnipotence, were not so easily frightened. True, they had heard rumors, thanks to Billy Betts, that even London—dear old conservative London—was reaching out eagerly for reinforcements to the supply that in late years had proven inadequate. Champagne was going up. For years the crops had been failing steadily, and never had the champagne grape been scarcer. From day to day it was becoming more impossible for merchants to fill their orders.

At a time when Bourgeret saw several years of golden profits, by palming off the spurious champagnes of southern France for the real article, the threatened competition of Carmelita's new venture spelled complete disaster. From his associates abroad he could get but one expression of opinion: buy out the opposition! Yet when, very gingerly, through her attorney, he approached the head of the California Dry Sparkling Champagne Company, the answer came back that the *Royale* process was literally invaluable to its owner—and was not for sale.

Then he sought a personal interview with Carmelita.

It was a very businesslike young woman in a smartly tailored suit who rose from behind a huge roller-top desk, conveniently closing it on a pile of bills for certain inexplicably large orders of imported champagne, delivered at her bungalow on the day of the housewarming.

Jean Raoul Bourgeret, momentarily blinded to everything but her beauty, devoutly wished himself a single man, and wondered a bit wildly whether he would not better have continued conducting his negotiations through her lawyer—who did not possess Irish eyes set in a face of almost classic perfection.



CARMELITA was graciousness itself, all interest in his business, all naive deference to his opinions, and yet, beneath the silken glove, so coolly inflexible in her determination, or so it seemed to him, to ruin L'Association Universelle, that once or twice he drew in his breath shiveringly, as if from a dash of icy water.

Driven at last to desperation for something to say, he blurted out:

"Miss McCann, if you persist in this Quixotic undertaking, you will not only ruin me—you will ruin yourself!"

"Why Quixotic?" smiled Carmelita. "And since when does competition spell disaster?"

"But this is not competition, it is murder!" cried Bourgeret. "Why should you deliberately depreciate the price of champagne, make nectar as cheap as beer, and at such a time, when its scarcity should more than double its value? You will flood the world and kill your own market."

"Then I will gradually raise the price and make it a luxury again," said Carmelita politely. "Can you imagine a more fascinating game? Don't shake your head; it's done every day in the stock market—sending prices up and down, at the pleasure of those who rule! Is it not?"

"You talk like a beautiful child!" exclaimed the Frenchman, "and I thought you had a head for business. Can't you see that you are going about this in the wrong way?"

"How?" faltered Carmelita.

"All this criminal publicity!" said Bourgeret craftily. "You—you have already reduced the value of your discovery by half." His eyes brightened hopefully. "Why, to me and my associates the *Royale* process would have been worth just twice as much had it been offered us before all this talk."

"Well, what do you care," asked Carmelita, airily, "since nobody's asking you to buy it?"

"But, mademoiselle, that is just it! We want it! We can't afford to be without it. On the other hand, you can not afford to combat all the wine interests of the world."

"So you open your doors and invite me in?" grimaced Carmelita. "How good of you! Let me see, I have forgotten just how philanthropic you were. My attorney told me your offer."

"We will take over the *Royale* process and give you one million dollars for it!" said Bourgeret hurriedly. "One-half in cash, the balance at the end of one year."

"*Vraiment?*" exclaimed Carmelita. "You make me laugh! You surely *must* expect to do well with it, if you can make the deferred payment so soon. But I have said

that I would not sell, Monsieur Bourgeret, and I meant it!"

"Would you consider an offer to cease operations for a time—say for a term of years—for a handsome price?"

"To cease operations?" said Carmelita slowly. "Now? Why, my dear sir, our machinery will be here within ten days, and we should be marketing our product within sixty!" she added, bluffing magnificently.

Bourgeret rallied himself for a final effort.

"Mademoiselle! If you will but suspend all operations under your *Royale* process for, let us say, five years, I will take over your plant, take your lease off your hands, give you one hundred thousand dollars in cash, and ten thousand shares of stock in L'Association Universelle. In other words, I will make you one of us!"

"Now that's what I call real kind of you," said Carmelita innocently. "But it isn't enough to make it worth while considering."

"For an option on the *Royale* process at the end of the five years," persisted the Frenchman, "I will increase my offer to one hundred and twenty-five thousand dollars and twelve thousand five hundred shares of stock."

"It's no use," she said, "I couldn't give you an option. Besides, I would do nothing without first consulting my associate, Mr. Norris. However," she added thoughtfully, "if you care to put your very best offer in writing, I'll promise to consider it, and give you my decision later in the day."

Bourgeret grasped eagerly at the opportunity, and seating himself at an adjacent table, wrote rapidly for a few minutes.

Carmelita gave but an indifferent glance at the contents of the paper he presently put before her, and with a friendly handshake she speeded the reluctant Frenchman's leave, forcing him to be content with her promise for an early acceptance or refusal.

But hardly had the door closed behind him when she reached for the telephone.

"Hello! Get me Mr. Norris, quick!" She tapped impatiently on the receiver a moment, then, "Hello, Ed! Listen! Here is the latest from our friend the enemy. Bourgeret offers me one hundred and fifty thousand in cash, and fifteen thousand shares of L'Association Universelle stock if I will stop everything for five years, he to take over the warehouse lease and the plant. What d'you think of it?"

"Did he give you that in writing?"

"Sure, you booby! I wonder who you think he was dealing with?"

"Of course, you cinched it? No? Why not?"

"I told him that before closing with him I would have to consult with my associate—Mr. Edward Norris," answered Carmelita demurely.

"Well, you are the limit!"

"I shouldn't wonder if Bourgeret is of that same opinion," she said calmly. "If he isn't, he soon will be. How would it be if you and Potts came over here and drew up these papers for me?"



FOR all of one week Jean Raoul Bourgeret lived the glorious dream of a man who thinks he has an incontestable right to blazon on his shield the motto of the immortal Washington: "*Exitus acta probat.*" But when, at the annual stockholders' meeting of L'Association Universelle, Carmelita Sofia McCann appeared as an active participant, with a proxy to vote Mead's stock, and bowled over every one of his carefully cherished plans, electing Bobbie Mead as president, unseating the Frenchman's dummy board of directors and replacing them with others of her own choice—men to whom she had previously transferred the one share of stock necessary to qualify them under the law for such service—it dawned upon him that the young lady was emphatically

starting something—something very big.

A hasty glance at the company books showed that, in addition to Mead's thirty per cent. of stock, and her own fifteen per cent., she had quietly taken ownership through purchases made in the open market of enough shares to give her a full fifty-five per cent. vote at the meeting, enough to oust him from the saddle and the company's control. He saw his plans for wrecking the company and securing possession of its assets without the expenditure of a single dollar entirely frustrated, and hurriedly left the meeting, seething with discomfited rage.

Late that afternoon, as Carmelita was entering her car in front of Mead's office, the impetuous Bourgeret halted beside her. He had regained his suavity, but his first words showed that he realized what had been done to him.

"*Mademoiselle, je vous fais mes compliments,*" he said wearily. Then, with a little touch of venom he strove in vain to conceal, "You are certainly one—clever little lady, though your acquaintance to me has been a very expensive one!"

"Indade thin," replied Carmelita mischievously, "'tis me father I take after. He had tur'ble expensive tastes, to be sure, an' champagne was one of his hobbies. Though he did say," she added, as an afterthought, "that he nivr liked th' bubbles half so well as whin he made th' other fellow pay for them!"





BIG BULL BURGOYNE

By DONALD FRANCIS MCGREW

MTROOP rode into the canyon, a disgusted and wearied troop, for they had been undergoing treatment during the last three days to make "devils out of priests." Each and every man felt equal to "plugging" Second Lieutenant Ralph Burgoyne in the back, should the occasion afford, and the glances that were directed at his straight young figure were full of hate.

The cause of the trouble between the troop and "Sissy" Burgoyne sprang from many causes. First, the officer was fresh from the Point, while M Troop was composed of veterans of the Malalos campaign as well as having a backbone of old Indian fighters; second, since taking command after the wounding of "Bull" Corcoran, a fighting, rough-souled, whole-hearted first lieutenant dear to their hearts, he had made life a tragedy for them.

The days of eight-mile battle-fronts had gone, and the island of Luzon had become the stage for a volcanic bush warfare, arising here, there and everywhere, so that the troops were of necessity spread all over the provinces in search of the guerrilla bands. For two weeks M Troop had been on the march, having started with two companies of U. S. Volunteer infantry from San José and separated from them some five days back with the intention of attacking a certain guerrilla stronghold simultaneously but from different points. Two evenings after this separation Corcoran had been badly wounded by a stray shot from the bushes, a calamity not only for Corcoran, but for M Troop as well, for it left "this shavey, this unwashed sissy, this swelled head of a kid in command."

And Burgoyne richly deserved their

epithets. His contempt for the personnel of the regulars was supreme.

"Rather a company of volunteers any day," he had told Corcoran. "They're better educated, cleaner men, better all the way round. Look at those last recruits we got—scum of the earth, that's sure!"

Corcoran's reply had been an indulgent smile; he knew the caliber the regular branch can instil in even "the scum of the earth." And, when struck by that shot, he had whispered to First Sergeant Owens:

"Take care of Ralphy, Sergeant, take care of Ralphy."

Taking care of Ralphy had been a hard task, however.

"Looks to me like he's taking care of us," growled the "top" to grizzled old Sergeant James,

"Righto! Ride straight, no slouching in the saddles, no more coconuts, no more chickens, no more beno, double guards, no more bathing except when he decides the water ain't full of germs—oh, I guess he's taking care of us, all right. *Poco pronto*, though, when we hit the real thing we'll see if we're the scum of the earth and what he's made of."



THIS was the feeling throughout the surly troop, upon whom he had forced compliance with every nagging little rule of the "Blue Book" during a hike through rice-paddies, cogan-patches, and up into the stifling mountain trails.

"It ain't that a man would mind it so much," growled Trumble, "if he knew that all the other outfits had to put up with these things. But after Corcoran—"

"Let's cheer up a bit," said Brashares, trying to force a grin. "Maybe we'll get

into it soon and that may change our luck."

"Think we'll ever catch them and see a fight?" eagerly questioned the recruit. "What'll we do with him in command?"

"Guess we'll see a fight this time. And him? Oh, some one may have to spank that duckling. As for what we'll do with or without him, it'll be like that bear."

"What bear?"

"Ain't you never heard about the bear? My, my! Fellow meets the bear on a ledge with a cliff wall on one side and a thousand-foot drop on the other. Fellow says to the Lord, 'O Lord, I never prayed before, but if you can't help me, please don't help the bear, and you'll see the — fight you ever see in your born days!'"

The recruit grinned, but Brashares' eyes were now on the scene ahead. They were just passing through a gap in an old rock barricade thrown up across the fissure, beyond which the canyon broke into two distinct passages, one straight ahead until lost to view in a distant bend, the other to the right and apparently ending at another barricade similar to the one they were passing. On all sides were corrugated, heavily wooded walls.

"You'd better halt and reconnoiter," grunted Brashares, as they came to a halt.

But the lieutenant did not pause long.

"I expect the advance guard took the right way," he mused, and turned to give the command, "Forward, march!"

The words never left his lips.

From canyon wall to canyon wall rolled reverberating crashes of musketry.

For a fractional instant the ashen-faced troop remained motionless, awaiting the command to wheel to the rear. But the shocked lieutenant seemed mesmerized by that quality of too-loud sounds within narrow confines which changes the roar into a hum seemingly far away, and though he opened his mouth to speak, no sound came from him.

Then chaos reigned in the canyon. Horses reared on their hind legs, their nostrils red, their screams of pain mingling with the staccato reports of their riders, who fired from precarious positions along their necks and sought at the same time to jerk them to the rear. Others threw their riders and bolted outright, while, to lessen their chances of being hit, a number of the men vaulted out of the saddles with guns in

hand and sought the protection of every available boulder.

Then and only then did the lieutenant's voice break through his restricted chords. But the havoc had been wrought. Already the frenzied horses had turned to bolt in panic to the rear. A bullet struck a soldier near him, tore through his body and hit the officer's maddened horse, and before he could restrain him the animal had wheeled in unison with the wounded man's and was tearing back into the churning mass like a fiend possessed. He tore at the bit and shrieked and cried at the men to halt and form, but he had momentarily lost his chance, and just as he crossed the gap his horse went down, throwing him violently, but mercifully, to oblivion.



IN THE canyon it had become a question of every man for himself.

But the older men who had reached the barricade immediately fell behind it, letting their horses go, and began to spank the air with vicious reports in the direction of the cliffs. The fire there lessened from a steady roll to spasmodic flashes under the effect of this, so that the retreat of the men in the canyon became less precarious, and, falling back from rock to rock, the unfortunates reached the barricade in a last dash on hands and knees under their companions' solid stream of lead.

"What do you think of the bear now?" asked Brashares as he inserted five more shots in his Krag.

"It's some b-b-bear," stuttered the pop-eyed recruit.

His eyes were on the scene in the fissure, which now presented a gory view of distorted dead horses and men.

"Take your eyes off them," grunted Brashares. "See?" Trumble's hat had been shot away. "Your head will go next if you don't keep down while you're loading. Shoot at those flashes there in the bushes."

"Who the — is in command of this outfit, anyway?" yelled Tulares.

"Don't need anybody in command. We can lick the earth!" bawled Grogan. "— sight better off without that sissy. Oh, Lord, I must be wild!"

And he rose up and sent a volley of shots at the cliff so rapidly that it sounded like one long report, then dropped with a howl of glee.

"Just d' same," O'Hearn ejaculated, "we'd better be gettin' outa dis hole pronto. It's too hot to be comfortable!"

As though in answer to his remark, Sergeant Owens now sent word down the line that those on the left of the gap would follow him, save a few left to keep up a deceptive fire, while Sergeant James would remain in charge of the barricade.

"Don't take any more chances now than you have to," Sergeant James ordered as he watched Owens and his men disappear behind a grotto to the left, which was out of sight of the enemy's front. "Stick up your hats to shoot at, and when you fire get to one side of them."

Following his further orders, the men began to drop out of the firing as designated, so that finally only a few reports came from their position. The men cursed, wondering at this maneuver, and eagerly awaited the outcome of the first sergeant's move. But the effect of the ruse was soon apparent.

The firing swelled to a jubilant roar from the Filipino side, then dwindled, and from behind the shrubs and trees appeared native after native, all shouting and screaming in ecstasy at the result of their murderous shots. With true Oriental abandon they danced and waved their guns like maniacs and cursed the silent barricade gloatingly.

"You're counting your chicks before they're hatched," grinned Brashares.

At that moment a crash from the cliff verified his prediction.

"Now!" yelled James. "Get up and give 'em —!"

As one man they arose and, working their gun-bolts like mad, poured volley after volley into the surprised pulahnes, who, caught between two fires, broke in terror for the rear. M Troop's two detachments arose and went after them with a vengeance.



MEANWHILE Burgoyne, who with the rest of the wounded had been dragged into the grotto, lay like one dead until Sergeant Farling shoved a bottle of brandy between his lips and brought him to. Sergeant Farling had charge of the pack-train to the rear, but had left the corralling of the loose horses to a corporal and run up to investigate the state of affairs.

"Here, me bye," said the old fellow kindly, "take a nip o' this. It's only a bump

you have; sure I can't find any holes in you."

The young officer did not reprove the old sergeant for his unmilitary statement. Perhaps it was because he did not hear. He arose unsteadily, his face a map of shame and rage, and blurted:

"Where's the troop, Sergeant?"

"Sure, they're after givin' those dagoes a bit of a lambastin', that's all. Sit doon, lootinint, they'll take care of thim."

But Lieutenant Burgoyne was off over the hill in the direction of the distant firing.

"Nivir even asked me where I got this," grunted Farling. "Well—" he tipped the bottle up to his lips.

"Gimme a swig o' that!" yelled one of the men. "You old hand-shaker, I believe you let him take near all of it."

"Well," and the old fellow looked down his nose at the wounded man, "this is only for r'yalty, but seein' it's you I'll give you a bit of a taste. Take it. I'm off now to see whether the byes need me or not."

He ran down the canyon with the wounded man's opinions of his conceptions of royalty ringing in his ears.

Having taken a shorter route, he arrived at the troop before the officer. He was forced to move the last fifty yards on his hands and knees, for the canyon swept out into a highland plain upon which a battle now raged of much larger proportions than the first. Ensnconed in a gully ahead of him lay M Troop, while in the western distance rose a semicircle of entrenchments sheltering a host of guerrillas.

Their front hung thick with the smoke of a steady fire they were directing at M Troop and a river to the right where the infantry detachment had come up and were now effecting a passage with rafts. Protected by a gun detachment on the opposite side and a company of Macabebes who had already made the crossing, they were about to land the last rafts when Farling reached his troop.

"Wow!" he panted, dropping beside Brashares, "some little shindy, hey?"

"Why in — didn't you stay behind and take care of those rations, you old fat rascal?" grinned Brashares. "How's the shavey?"

"Comin' this way with all sails set, last I see of the bye."

"Why didn't you tie him? We're a dog-gone sight better off."

Farling looked down the line of firing men and smiled. With the lieutenant out of the question, M Troop had become its old jubilant fighting self, and even the recruits were firing carefully now, with full attention to each shot. Scum of the earth they might be, but also a first-class fighting machine who knew their business if given half a chance. Farling crawled down the gully past Todd, Jenkins, Tulares and Sergeant McGruder, and lay down alongside Sergeant Owens.

"Well——" he began.

"Now what do you think of that?" Owens cut in.

He pointed at the Macabebes, who were charging across the plain.

"Crazy!" ejaculated Farling. "Where the devil did they get that flag, now?"

"I don't know. I'll bet the crazy little devils never got no orders from the major. Just got up and went. Fool move, too. All they had to do was wait till they got that gun detachment across the river, when they could blow those gugas out of their boots. Ah, look at that!"

THE guerrillas had not broken ranks as the Macabebes figured, and their fire had repulsed the main body part way across the field, where they now fell to the ground in a line of skirmishers. But a few of them, carried beyond themselves by the impetuosity of the charge, had plunged on close to the embankments, the standard-bearer in their midst. A hundred of the more hardy Filipinos leaped out at them, mowed them down in a rush, and retreated with the flag in their possession. Their yells of derision came faintly to M Troop across the cogan grass.

"By ——!" howled one recruit, "are we going to stand for them keeping that flag?"

"You lay down and keep quiet!" snapped Owens. Then to Farling: "Ain't no place for any fool charge when there's no need of it. We'll get that flag when that gun gets over to protect our advance."

"Right!" shouted Tulares. "We ain't no bloomin' heroes."

Like calls came from the rest. They took a business-like view of a business-like proposition, as became regulars, and were content to sit tight until the proper moment, though keeping up a steady fire the while. They had lost heavily in the canyon and did not propose to lose any more unneces-

sarily. And now as they fired from their protected positions they kept up a running fire of talk.

"I say, McGruder," called Grogan to Sergeant McGruder as he noticed the latter grunt and grab at his shoulder, "I say, McGruder, what's the matter with your kilt, mon?"

McGruder growled at him, but Todd answered:

"I dinna ken, sor, but I think he bashed me in the limber."

"Aweel, aweel," cried Grogan. "Aboot face, mon, tak' a few pacie to the rear, an' ——" he dodged a flying canteen from the peppery Scotchman's hands amid the laughter of the troop.

"Blye me, Todd," exclaimed the Englishman Jenkins, "it's bloody well rotten to joke the man when 'e's 'it!"

The solemn-faced Todd looked at him out of his bleached blue eyes.

"What do you want to do, you poor cantankerous insect? Have a sob-fest every time a man's hit?"

"My eyes, no. But hit's no bally time for jokes, hespecially when hit's as bloody nip and tuck as hit is hout there."

"Nip and tuck? Oh, yes. Like the Irish crew and the Dutch crew that got up the tug-of-war on the roof-garden. The Dutch were nearest the edge, the Irish in the middle, and both chewing their tongues and pulling for dear Lord's sake when——"

"Well?" said Tulares, looking thoughtfully at his gun-bolt.

"Some one cut the rope."

Pandemonium now rose wild around him, materially abetted by Jenkins' stare of perplexity.

"But I say, Todd——" he sputtered.

"What now, you remnant of perdition?"

"Blye me, you know that there's walls around a bloody roof-garden!"

Pandemonium again rose on high, only to be cut short as though a common hand had closed their mouths. With a queer wail, Jenkins arose, grasping at his breast, his face distorted, his knees wobbling.

"I've got it!" he screamed. "I've got it!"

Then his eyes fell on Lieutenant Burgoyne standing just behind him.

"Ah," screamed the wounded man, "there you are, you bleedin', rotten beggar! Thank the Almighty I gets a chawnce to bawl you before I goes. Oh, you bloody

rotten coward, you, as has nagged the bleedin' life hout of us these last three dyes! Back there lies me bunkie, you 'ound, hall because of your swell'-eaded hignorance, an' several more. But you carn't get your bleedin' flippers on me where I'm going, you rotter, an' may Gawd damn your soul to everlastin' Hell!"



THE silence of death fell on M Troop. The man's awful words rang in their ears; they looked as in a trance at the officer they hated. His mouth fell open, his facial muscles danced ungovernably, he seemed rooted to the spot by the man's voice. Then as Jenkins sank to the ground he leaped to the front of the troop, a man transformed.

"I'm a coward, am I?" he shrieked, throwing his bloody hat on the ground. "You don't like me, eh? You'd like to shoot me in the back, eh?" He whipped out his saber. "And you think because I made a mistake back there that I'm yellow clear through? It would tickle you to know it, wouldn't it? Well, ——— you, I'm not! A ——— of a fine bunch of regulars you are! Look over there!" He pointed to the place where the volunteer infantry had begun to advance in skirmishing platoons to back up the position the Macabebes still held stubbornly. "Look at that! You brag about your being regulars and yet, when you haven't got any officer over you, you lay here like the rotters you are and let a bunch of volunteers outfight you when your country's flag is in the hands of the enemy! I'm a coward, am I? Come on, you cowards, come on, and follow me!"

He paused for breath, but not a man moved.

"Aren't you going to come?" he screamed in derision.

"Why in ——— don't you give the command?" growled a voice across the silence.

A ludicrous light played over the officer's face. His mouth fell open. He straightened with a snap.

"Call off!" he jerked. A rattle of numbers went down the line from right to left. "Forty-six, fall out and take left of the line. Sergeant Blackburn, right of the second platoon. Sergeant Owens, first platoon, Sergeant James, second platoon. Platoons; count fours!" With a zest and snap equal to his own, M Troop spat out the numbers.

"Tsun!" he called. They stood erect. "Right forward, fours right!"

The column formed and swept out on the sward with the steady tramp of Roman legions. "There ain't no ——— whipper-snapper going to out-game this layout if we know it!" showed plainly in every face.

Nor did he. He gave them "Left front into line!" and they executed it as though on parade. Though a man occasionally coughed and fell, they closed the gaps and kept their integrity with grim lips and backs as straight as ramrods. He gave them, "As skirmishers, guide right!" They trotted out to the positions with minute care as to pace and allotted distances. "Forward, double time—march!" And, until he halted them, they trotted forward at the regulation gait.

"First platoon, at five hundred yards, fire at will—commence firing!" was his next order. "Second platoon, forward, double time—march!"

While the second platoon trotted fifty yards ahead, Sergeant Owens' men swept the top of the trenches with lead, and when they had dropped to position, arose at the shavey's command and trotted up alongside Sergeant James, who in turn covered their advance. Trumpeter Wells had taken his place beside the officer now, and was repeating the commands on his bugle.

"Blow 'Cease firing,'" snapped Burgoyne. "At four hundred and fifty yards—troop ready—troop aim—fire!"

Each and every man took pride in pulling his trigger at the same instant. The crashing result reëchoed and reëchoed across the fields. A faint cheer now rolled to them from the infantry.


"First platoon, forward, double time—march!" commanded the grim youngster. "Second platoon, at four hundred and fifty yards, fire five volleys!"

"Ready—load!" bawled Sergeant James. A clicking of magazines went down the line, and the gun-bolts snapped viciously. "Aim!" The guns protruded toward the entrenchments, the cheeks cuddled the stocks. "Fire!"

Out ripped the solid blast.

"Load!" again bawled Sergeant James; and the performance was repeated. When they had completed their volleys and the first platoon dropped to repeat them, they again advanced. And again the infantry

cheered them across the fields, while they fairly burned the air with the rapidity of their fire. But M Troop said not a word. They would show this cub that they were regulars, always had been regulars, and always would be, by the eternal gods; therefore they went through the formations as though at drill, albeit the majority of the Filipinos now directed their fire at their steady advance.

 BUT gradually a new feeling sprang up between officer and men as they advanced and fired those solid, steady volleys. There is an unwritten law in the service to which all officers must adhere and by which all officers must rise or fall in the respect of their men—that is, he must be psychologically cool, he must be “square,” but above all he must be “game.” And here was one they were now beginning to forgive the mistake of the canyon and the “rawhiding” of the past; for undoubtedly he was “game,” and cool as well.

The officer was undergoing a change also. These ragged, unkempt men who had delighted in beno and the loot of the hike were showing themselves not only human beings, but regulars of the stamina his young dreams had always pictured. Too late he cooled and saw the logic of their attitude toward the charge under the conditions; but he had started it and now would go on to the entrenchments. A bullet took him in the shoulder. He staggered, but went grimly on.

Seeing that, Trumpeter Wells went ahead in spite of his shattered foot, vowing

grimly: “Ain’t he the game? I’ll blow this trumpet up to that trench now if I lose both arms and legs!”


Another shot took Burgoyne in the leg. He stumbled, Wells catching him.

“At three hundred yards,” he called, jerking erect, “first platoon, fire at will, com—commence firing!”

The last came in a whisper. Staggering crazily, the trumpeter and officer sought to follow the advancing second platoon; but now from a horde of brazen American and Macabebe throats broke forth a yell that beat out and over the trenches to echo thunderously back from the hills. The infantry and Macabebes had risen *en masse* to charge the trenches.

“That’s enough of this — foolishness!” yelled Grogan. “Come on, you terriers, there’s no volunteer outfit going to beat us to that flag!”

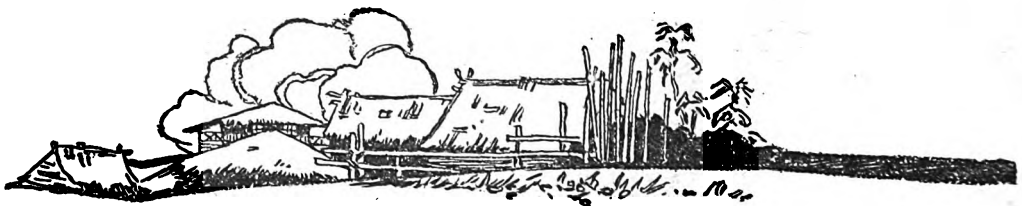
M Troop spit on its hands and went for those trenches like tigers.

 “PHEW!” panted Brashares twenty minutes later as he lay watching the last of the guerrillas disappear in the distance, “that was *some* go, eh? But we’ve got a real man to take Bull Corcoran’s place, eh?”

“Bull Corcoran? Bull Corcoran? What’s the matter with Big Bull Burgoyne?”

The cheer that went up caused the wounded officer to smile faintly at the doctor bending over him.

“Finest lot of men in the world,” he whispered. “Big — Bull — Burgoyne! Humph! Sounds like a punch in the nose, don’t it?”





THE WHITE CARNATION

by
KATE L. McLAURIN

CHAPTER I

DEATH AND THE FLOWER

PETERS was a butler by vocation, but by instinct he was a philosopher. He often in a quiet way prided himself on his apt and instantaneous observations of people and events that came under his notice. Therefore it was not unnatural that after his unconscious gasp of horror the first thought to come into his mind was:

"He was worth fifty million, and he couldn't buy a decent death in his own bed!"

And truly the end of his master was far from the peaceful one the prayer-book teaches us to desire.

Stretched on a rug before a fire that had long since gone out was Roger Holt. The

early morning light came through the window and fell on the figure of the aged millionaire, who was lying on his back, gazing with hard, unseeing eyes at the ceiling. He was dressed, as Peters had last seen him, in evening clothes, and in the hand that lay on the rug was clasped a flower, a carnation, as fresh and fragrant as if it had just come from the greenhouse.

Peters knelt by the body, touched the cold face, then the chest, and for the first time his near-sighted eyes saw the dark stain that outlined the figure on the rug. He bent lower and examined it carefully, then in a whisper of surprise and terror said,

"Murdered!"

He looked about the room and saw that nothing had been disturbed, everything was in its accustomed place—even the chairs were arranged as he had left them the

night before. The whisky and soda stood on the tabouret by the fireplace. Nothing was changed save that the heavy velvet curtain had been pulled back from the window at the left of the mantle. And there was nothing in the great gloomy room that Peters had not seen a thousand times, except the white carnation in the dead man's hand.

It was strange, too, that much as Mr. Holt cared for flowers and many as he usually had about him, the butler could not remember that he had ever seen such a blossom in the house before—it was in full bloom, pure white and sweet—overpoweringly sweet.



SUDDENLY Peters looked up from the form on the floor, but for a moment he did not turn toward the door though he knew some one stood there looking into the room. It was strange how he knew it, for there had been no sound and ordinarily he was not sensitive; but the cold room, the shock of his ghastly find, made his nerves as keen as a high-strung woman's. At length he gathered his courage and turned.

"Oh, Miss Frances, don't come in——"

But it was too late, for as he rose the young woman came into the room, and as she passed the center-table the body was clear to her view.

"Peters — my father — what ——" She dropped on her knees by the dead man. "It can't be—it can't—Father!"

It was a wild imploring cry, not one of sorrow but of terror and supplication. Her face had grown as white as the silk blouse she wore, and as her eyes took in the stiff yellowish hand with its death-grip on the white flower, a scream rent the stillness of the great library that contained enough pain and terror nearly to freeze the blood in Peters's veins.

"Oh, Miss Frances——"

But no further word was necessary, for a terrible convulsion shook her body and the next moment she fainted, falling across the body of her father.

Peters lifted her carefully, and before he had time to lay her on the couch he heard some one running down the stairs and as he turned he saw young Bob Holt.

"Oh, Mr. Bob, your sister has fainted and your father——"

The young man came rapidly to the couch.

"Open the window and get some water! Quick, Peters!"

He took her hands in one of his and passed his fingers over her still face while Peters struggled with the window. Impatient of the delay, Holt turned to the tabouret for water, and as he did his eyes fell on the dead man stretched on the rug.

"My God! Father!"

He stared at the picture before him as if it fascinated rather than repelled him, then remembering the need of his sister, he drew the water from the siphon and went back to her. Signs of returning life were visible—her eyelids fluttered and the lips parted. He lifted her in his arms and carried her swiftly and silently up-stairs to her own room.

"Bob," she whispered as he laid her on her bed, "you saw?"

"Yes, never mind now. I'll call Meta for you."



HE RANG the bell for her maid, and without waiting for her to appear, hastened down to the library. He found Peters still in charge.

"I've telephoned for the police, Mr. Bob," the old man said.

"Why?" the young man demanded, wheeling on him. "My father had a stroke or something—send for the doctor; it's too late, but we will want to know."

"He didn't have a stroke—he was stabbed or shot in the back!"

"Shot?"

"Yes, sir; you can see all the blood soaked up by the rug. Look."

Young Holt shuddered, but he did not glance toward the still form on the rug. He resolutely kept his eyes turned away as he said,

"Get Dickens and have my father moved to his room."

"Oh, sir, we dare not move him; we must wait for the police. I beg your pardon, Mr. Bob. I would not oppose you, but I am acting by Mr. Holt's orders."

"What do you mean?" the young man asked.

"Every night Mr. Holt left whatever orders he wanted attended to early in the morning on a piece of paper under this candlestick." He pointed to a beautifully wrought silver candelabrum at one end of the table. "Force of habit made me look this morning, not as I was expecting to find anything——"

His emotion choked him and he handed a small slip of paper to young Holt.

On the paper was scratched in a faint, irregular scrawl:


Peters—police.

Bob Holt read the paper, handed it back to Peters and said quietly,

"Very well, lock the room until they come. I'll go dress."

He turned and left the room. Not once since his accidental glance had he looked at his father. His composure was complete; whatever grief or excitement he felt was hidden beneath a perfectly calm exterior. Peters looked at him, trying to reconcile this self-contained youth with the wilful, high-spirited Mr. Bob that had caused his father so much annoyance ever since he had grown up. It came to him that this was the first time in many years that he had seen father and son meet with quiet on both sides.

Peters turned his gaze back to the dead man. The sun was now streaming through the window and made more ghastly than ever the figure on the hearth-rug. The old man was thin and worn with age and many cares. The sunken cheeks threw into high relief the wide staring eyes, and the sweet white flower in the dead hand emphasized its yellow, claw-like appearance. Peters moved toward the window to draw the curtain; it seemed needlessly cruel to expose such a sight to the pitiless sunlight. Then he remembered he was not to touch anything until the police arrived.

 "WHAT'S wrong, Peters?" a voice at his back asked, and he turned to face Mr. Alexander Todd, the late Mr. Holt's private secretary.

"Mr. Holt, sir, is dead," the butler said mournfully.

"Dead!" Mr. Todd exclaimed as he came into the room. "How did it happen?"

"I don't know, sir; I found him here some time ago. Mr. Bob has ordered me to lock up the room until the police come."

"Police—what right has he?" the secretary looked up from the side of the dead man.

"He is Mr. Holt's son and now he is master here!" Peters said with a touch of sharpness in his voice.

A short, disagreeable laugh from Mr. Todd answered him,

"Mr. Holt's son—yes, one is apt to forget."

His eyes wandered about the room in a restless, seeking glance; then without further word he followed Peters and stood while the butler locked the door and left old Roger Holt alone with his tragedy and mystery.

CHAPTER II

THE CRY FROM ABOVE

GREYSTONE, the country home of Roger Holt, stood in a great wooded park, five miles from the village of Jason and an hour's motor-trip from New York. The house itself was a huge structure built after the design of a Norman castle—the center tower flanked by two short wings which ended in towers of small size. It was a strange sight, as one drove out from the conventional American village, to come across this bold austere pile so reminiscent of feudal days. The interior was in the same manner—great gloomy rooms, wide baronial halls and over all the feeling of age and solemnity.

It was always a matter of wonder to the few visitors who came to Greystone how such an atmosphere of antiquity could have been established and maintained and by a California millionaire, a man typically American in birth and achievement.

About the house was a large area of beautifully cultivated lawn, and to the left a vast greenhouse which was famous the country over for its collection of rare and wonderful plants. Back of the conservatory was the head gardener's cottage. At the rear of the house were the stables and servants' quarters. Only Peters and the personal attendants of the family slept in the house proper.

As Peters turned from the library door he saw the servants moving to and fro, and realized that as yet news of the tragedy had not reached them. He went about his own duties as though no unusual circumstance had marred the morning. As he threw open the window in the music-room and gazed out on the fair young day he wondered whether it were not all a dream of the night before, and whether, if he returned and unlocked the library door, would he not find it as he had every morning for the past fifteen years.

As he went back to the hall he saw Mr. Todd assorting the morning mail and

noticed the large pile of letters he held in his hands—all for Mr. Holt, Peters knew.



AT THAT moment young Holt came down the stairs and approached the table where Todd was standing.

"Any mail for me?" he asked.

"Two letters," the secretary answered coldly.

"Is that my father's mail?" Bob Holt asked, indicating the pile in Todd's hands.

"Yes," the other answered, turning on his heel to move away.

"Then will you please leave it here?"

Holt's voice was quiet and firm.

"I always take charge of Mr. Holt's mail."

"My father is dead, and until we know his wishes, I am in charge here."

He held out his hands, and after a moment's hesitation Todd handed him the pile of letters. The two men looked at each other for a moment with ill-concealed enmity. Holt was the first to break the glance. He turned to Peters and asked whether the servants knew of his father's death.

"No, sir, not yet—here is the library key."

"Then say nothing until the coroner comes," Holt said as he dropped the key into his coat pocket. "Where is Dickens?"

"Why, I haven't seen him this morning—I'll see if I can find him."

Peters went off in search of the dead man's valet, and young Holt, after depositing the mail on the hall table, turned to go upstairs, but before he reached the first step the door-bell rang and, thinking it might be the Coroner, he went himself to answer it. His surmise was correct, for he admitted Coroner James, his deputy and Dr. Cross from Jason.

"I'm glad you came so quickly; my father is dead—murdered, we fear."

Exclamations of surprise and regret escaped the new arrivals as they followed young Holt to the library. They stood about the body while the doctor bent over to make the examination. He turned the body over and exposed a small tear in the coat below the left shoulder-blade, through this tear the blood had flowed freely and the coat and rug soaked it up.

"He was shot—the bullet went in clean and smooth—right to the heart, I should say, for death was instantaneous."

"If he was shot by some one in the room the force should have been enough to take the bullet straight through the body," the Coroner remarked. "It may have been fired from some distance, and at any rate it is now lodged in the body, probably just back of the ribs."

"You found no revolver—no weapon of any kind in the room?" the Coroner asked Bob Holt.

"No; everything was as you see it."

"He died with the flower in his hand, for he holds it with a death-grip," the Doctor put in.

"We will hold the inquest at two o'clock. In the meantime, Mr. Holt, accept my sincere sympathy," said the Coroner.

"Thank you," the young man answered dully.

At that moment Peters rushed in—at least he rushed as fast as his stiff old legs would let him.

"Oh, Mr. Bob," he cried, "Dickens—he isn't dead, but he is drugged, I think; at any rate I can't wake him!"



WITHOUT further word the four men followed him. At the left of the library was a door that opened into a short narrow passage; this in turn led into Mr. Holt's bedroom; just off this apartment was the valet's room. Here they found Dickens. The room was in a state of confusion, and, half undressed, the valet lay across the bed in a heavy stupor. The Doctor went to him.

"Throw open the windows," he ordered, and began the work of restoration. "There are too many of us in here—he needs air, as much as he can get; he is in a fair way to sleep himself to death."

The man's breath came in little gasps and seemed to come from no greater depth than his throat. The face was as white as the bed linen save for the heavy blue shadows beneath the eyes and about the mouth.

The Coroner motioned to his deputy to withdraw, and young Holt was about to follow when he turned to the official and asked permission to remove the body of his father. The Coroner nodded his consent and, accompanied by Peters, Holt returned to the library.

As the deputy who preceded them threw open the door that led into the library he found Alexander Todd in the act of replacing a book on one of the shelves. The

secretary glanced around as the men entered, and without speaking left the room.

One of the young footmen was called in and helped Peters and the deputy bear the dead millionaire to his bed.

By this time the gruesomeness of the affair was beginning to tell on young Holt, and his round, usually smiling face was pale and drawn. His hands worked together nervously and he constantly looked over his shoulder as if he expected to find some one or something lurking behind him. So far there had been no evidence of grief—at first only an unnatural calm which had gradually given way to a hurried, feverish anxiety.

He remained in the library while the men bore his father away, and when the door had closed behind them he went rapidly to the desk. It was open and he picked up a pile of addressed and stamped letters ready for the morning mail. He glanced over the addresses hurriedly and when he found the one that he wanted, he thrust it into his pocket, closed the desk and turned just in time to see the door that led into the hall shut softly. Some one had been watching him! He crossed the room swiftly, flung open the door and looked out, but there was no one to be seen.

Then there fell on his ear a long, low wail that rose gradually into a shrill scream. It was a cry devoid of all thought and feeling—a thing primitive and terrible, and it broke the quiet of the great gloomy house like the first vivid flash of lightning that presages a storm.

Young Holt leaned against the wall for support. He was weakened, terrified. He looked up and saw his sister Frances coming down the stairs. She had recovered her self-possession, though she was pale and anxious.

"Bob, you heard?" she said, as she came toward him.

Without answering he brushed past her and dashed up-stairs, then up other stairs, and was soon lost in the gloom of the upper house.

CHAPTER III

TWO UNSUCCESSFUL INTERVIEWS

THE world generally is interested in a multi-millionaire, and when to his wealth is added a sudden and mysterious

death, the interest is immeasurably increased. Therefore it was not strange that by two o'clock, the hour of the inquest, there was a steady stream of automobiles to the great gate. An army of newspaper reporters from the city arrived, and it was all the village officials could do to prevent them taking possession of the house. They interviewed young Holt, Peters, the secretary, the servants, and before the inquest started sent off reams of stuff describing the house, the family and everything else that might be of interest to their readers.

So far no one had been admitted to the library and the reporters had to wait until the inquest for a detailed description of that most important room. By two o'clock all of the city papers had out extras with great headlines announcing the murder.

Aware of the importance of the case and doubtful of his own ability to handle it, Coroner James sent a telegram that was answered in person by a quiet man who arrived at the Holt place twenty minutes before the inquest began. He was taken by James to the library, and the two were closeted together while the Coroner reviewed the case as he knew it.

The newcomer listened, then made a rapid and thorough examination of the room. Under one corner of the rug he found a small bright object which he dropped into his pocket. The rest of the room yielded no tangible evidence, and whatever the quiet man found in the way of a clue he kept to himself. He passed from the library into the bedroom and surveyed the dead man. A sheet had been thrown over him, and as the detective drew it back he saw the white flower still clutched in the withered yellow hand. The carnation was beginning to wilt and gave off a sweet, sickening odor.


After this room had undergone an examination, the Coroner conducted the detective into the room of Dickens, the valet of Mr. Holt.

Here they found the man awake but still in a drowsy, heavy state. The Doctor was with him and nodded to the two men as they came in.

Henshaw, the detective, was the first to break the silence.

"Has he said anything?"

"Not yet—I haven't pressed him. He had a close call," the Doctor whispered.

 AT THIS the man, who was propped up in the bed, which had been wheeled to the window, opened his eyes and looked at the detective.

"Dickens, who drugged you?" Henshaw asked.

The man made no answer but continued to stare at him with unblinking eyes.

"He needs more time," the Doctor put in.

"Dickens," said the detective sharply, "Mr. Holt is dead."

Still the man gazed at him with an unchanging stare.

"It's useless," the Doctor said; "wait until later."

"Very well," said Henshaw, and a slight smile flitted over his usually expressionless face. "Don't leave him for a moment, Doctor."

Then he turned and surveyed the room, ran his eyes over the dresser that held numerous bottles; several of these he uncorked and smelled. Finally he went over to the table on which was writing material and a book-rack packed tight with books. He ran over the titles, turned over the papers and wheeled suddenly back to the man on the bed. For a few seconds he looked at the valet, then said to the Doctor,

"He is not to leave his bed nor to touch a thing in the room—he is in a bad way, Doctor, and needs your careful watching." With this he took the Coroner's arm and returned to the bedroom of the dead millionaire. As he shut the door he said casually, "That man is shamming."

"You mean he wasn't drugged?"

"Oh, no, he was drugged, but now—well, he heard every word I said and saw everything I did; but did you notice his books? Strange literary taste for a valet!"

Without waiting to explain, Henshaw left the Coroner and made his way to the side lawn where he examined the ground under the library windows. There were no footprints save those of the gardener who had set out the border of Spring flowers which ran the whole length of the house. The planting must have been very recent, for the earth showed fresh turning and the footprints were still quite plain.

Across the lawn some two hundred feet was the greenhouse that had been Mr. Holt's pride, and just behind this peeped the top of a small gray stone cottage, the home of the head gardener.

Henshaw walked in this direction and

turned to get a better view of the Holt mansion. The thing that struck him first was the new wing which had been built long after the house proper and stood off from it in a way that was noticeable. On the ground floor it opened into the house only by way of the passage into the library. This wing was three stories in height, the two upper stories lighted by narrow, deep-set windows which gave a forbidding, sinister aspect.



NOT wishing to attract attention by his observations, Henshaw entered the conservatory where he found a gardener in the act of transplanting some young plants. He looked up as the stranger came in and said a cheery, "Good morning."

"Are you the head gardener?"

"I am Barrows, sir," he answered; "the head gardener."

"You know, of course, of Mr. Holt's death?"

"Death?" the other exclaimed.

"They found him this morning with a white carnation in his hand."

"A carnation?" the gardener said in surprise. "It didn't come from here, for that's the one flower Mr. Holt wouldn't have growing here."

"Why not?" Henshaw asked.

Barrows shrugged his shoulders to indicate that the whims of the rich were far beyond his simple comprehension. Then he looked shrewdly at Henshaw.

"You are a detective, eh?"

Henshaw looked at him quickly.

"What made you think so?"

"Newspaper reading is my only diversion and there is always a detective where there is a murder."

"But I didn't say Mr. Holt was murdered," the detective said.

"I thought you did, sir. I am glad if the old gentleman had a Christian death." And he went back to his plants.

Henshaw stood for a moment looking at him. He was a tall, wiry man past middle life, with a seamed, careworn face and well-shaped, deft hands. His clothes were shabby and he wore an old silk handkerchief wound around his neck. Henshaw left the conservatory and started back to the house.

"Umph!" he said aloud and to himself, "Barrows has known better days, and Dickens reads books on spiritism. Umph!"


CHAPTER IV

THE INQUEST

AT FIVE minutes past two the library doors were closed and the inquest begun. The large room was crowded and the windows had to be thrown open to make it bearable. These windows looked out over a green lawn to the rose-garden and greenhouse beyond. A gardener was setting out young plants and the mild May sun flooded the scene, making it one of sweetness and light—a decided contrast to the great, dark room with its solemn book-cases, heavy furniture and crowd of eager-impatient people.

The newspaper men were in one corner and at the table sat the Coroner, a trifle nervous over this big case. Behind him was the hastily gathered jury, and in rear of them, sitting in deep shadow, was Henshaw, the detective.

The Doctor was called first and testified that Mr. Holt died from the effects of a bullet, which entered the body below the left shoulder and probably entered the heart, causing instant death. The bullet was still in the body and it would take X-rays to locate it. He thought Mr. Holt must have been dead some seven hours or more when he reached him.

 THE Doctor was excused and returned to his patient, Dickens. Peters was called next and gave his name as Jeremy Peters, aged sixty years, an Englishman by birth, and Mr. Holt's servant for over twenty-five years and previous to that had served his wife's family.

"Tell how you found Mr. Holt this morning," said the Coroner.

"It's my custom to open the library every morning at eight o'clock. I air the room and put fresh flowers in the vases—Mr. Holt was always fond of flowers; his greenhouse is the finest anywhere. This morning when I came in from the hall I was surprised to see the curtain drawn back from the window, as I had drawn it close last night."

"What time did you leave Mr. Holt last night?"

"About eleven I put the whisky and soda on the table, and trimmed the candles. Mr. Holt liked them to read by. Then

drew the curtain and left him for the night."

"Did he seem well and cheerful?"

"No, sir, he was quite gloomy, and scarcely answered my 'Good-night, sir!'"

"Then you went to bed?"

"Yes, sir, after locking up the house."

"Did you go into Mr. Holt's bedroom?"

"No, sir, I seldom went in there; Mr. Holt's bedroom and his valet's room were recent additions to the house, and none of the servants went into them except for cleaning purposes."

"When was this addition built?" the coroner asked.

"Two years ago. Mr. Holt always regretted that it spoiled the line of the house, but he seemed happier off by himself."

"Did he seem to fear anything?"

"No, sir. I think Mr. Holt was without fear."

"Continue your story of finding him."

"When I first came in, the table hid him from view and it was not until I had gotten close by that I saw him on the rug."

"What was your first thought?"

"I hesitate to tell you, sir, as you may think it lacking in delicacy and feeling, but if you insist——"

"I do," the Coroner said, with a slight smile, and every one in the room leaned forward to catch Peters's indelicate thought.

"It came into my mind offhand like, 'He had millions of dollars and he couldn't buy a decent death in his own bed!'"

A grim smile passed around the room.

"When did you notify young Mr. Holt?"

"I was about to go to Mr. Bob when Miss Frances came into the room; she saw her father and screamed, then fainted. Mr. Bob came down and after taking his sister out came back and ordered me to lock the room."

"Which you did——"

"One moment, please," broke in the juror sitting nearest Henshaw: "Did any one enter the room this morning besides Mr. Holt's children?"

"Yes, Mr. Todd, Mr. Holt's secretary, was in for a few minutes."


"Did he know of Mr. Holt's death before he came in?"

"No, sir; he said as he came in, 'What's wrong, Peters?'"

"Who notified the Coroner?" It was the same juror speaking.

"I did, sir, after finding this piece of paper under the candelabrum."

He took from his pocket the paper and handed it to the Coroner, who read out:
 "Peters—police."

 HERE was a genuine sensation; there was a moment's silence, then a buzz of talk, while every head in the room was craned forward to catch a glimpse of the piece of paper. The Coroner passed it to the jurors and at last it reached Henshaw, who had been sitting tense and eager ever since Peters had made the announcement. He looked it over carefully and put it in his pocket.

The Doctor had said that Mr. Holt's death was instantaneous, and in that event the paper was written before the shot or by a hand other than the dead man's. This did not occur to the Coroner, for he went on with the investigation as if this were not a point of great importance and Henshaw was evidently pleased that he did not take it up.

"You say you have been with Mr. Holt nearly thirty years—that was before he came East?"

"Yes, sir, I came to this country with the Naughton family, and when Mr. Holt married Miss Margaret I became one of his household."

"This was in California?"

"Yes, sir."

"And when Mr. and Mrs. Holt moved East you came with them?"

"Mrs. Holt did not come East; she died one year after she was married."

"Then Mr. Holt's children are by his second wife?"

For an instant Peters hesitated, then answered,

"Yes, sir; Mr. Bob and Miss Frances are the children of the last Mrs. Holt."

"After the first Mrs. Holt's death did Mr. Holt come East?"

"Yes, sir, at once. A year later he married and settled here; he brought me on, and I have been his butler ever since."

At that moment a small piece of paper was thrust into the Coroner's hands by one of the men at his back; it had been sent out by Henshaw, but in a way to attract no attention. The Coroner read it.

"Now, Peters, the first Mrs. Holt—did her family return to England?"

"Her father died three months before she did. Her brother went back to England after his father's fortune was divided."

"Were they people of wealth?"

"Not at home, but Mr. Naughton's brother had come to California and made a fortune; it was his death that brought the family to this country."

"Did Mr. Naughton oppose his daughter's marriage to Mr. Holt?"

Peters paused again. Whether it was the natural pause of an old man who thinks slowly or whether he was undecided as to his answer was not clear.

"Mr. Holt was a great deal older than Miss Margaret; her father did not quite like that, but there was no other objection."

"She was a very young girl?"

"She was very young, but a widow, sir."

"What was her name?"

"Mrs. Dawson Harrow."

"Isn't it true that Mr. Holt and his son had quarreled?" the Coroner asked, feeling that he had exhausted the first Mrs. Holt.

"I do not know, sir. Mr. Bob has been away from home for a year, but he came back four days ago and his father was glad to see him."

"Did he see his father last night?"

"Yes, sir, he went into the library just as I left."

"Did you see him after that?"

"He came to my room to give me a letter which he wanted sent off the first thing this morning."

"Was this customary?"

"No, sir, but he didn't want it sent with the other mail, so I sent it by James this morning so it would catch the first mail out of Jason."

"Did you notice to whom it was sent?"

The old fellow drew himself up and for the first time answered quickly and with force,

"I did not, sir! I have spent my life with gentlemen!"

"That will do, Peters."



PETERS'S testimony had thrown no real light on the mystery, but had aroused the interest and curiosity of the crowd and touched on several points that an investigator might follow up with much profit. The old man made a favorable impression on those in the room, his bearing was dignified and his story, told with accuracy and simplicity of manner, disposed all toward him.

Frances Holt, the daughter of the dead man, was called next. She came into the room looking the picture of fresh, frank

girlhood. She was still pale from the morning's experience, but her nineteen years and splendid health had triumphed over conditions. She was dressed in black with a touch of white at the throat, and the impression that she gave was a normal, sane, athletic type of young womanhood.

After the preliminary questions, the Coroner asked her to tell what she knew of her father's death.

She looked at him with surprise in her eyes.

"That is very little, I am afraid. I came into the library this morning and saw Peters bending over my father. I fainted and my brother carried me up-stairs."

"Are you usually up so early in the morning?"

"It was after eight; yes, I am often up by that time."

"Why did you stop by the library?"

"To see father. He and I often went to the conservatory early in the morning. Barrows was going to set out some new roses this morning and we had planned to watch him."

This explanation, indicating as it did a beautiful relation between father and daughter and their mutual love for flowers, was a strangely pathetic note in this grim tragedy. There was intense stillness in the room while she waited for the next question.

"Can you explain the white carnation in your father's hand?"

"No, I never saw one in the house before."

"Do you know of any one who hated your father?"

"No."

"Did he ever strike you as being nervous or afraid?"

She paused for a moment before answering:

"On two nights I was awakened by a knock at my door—it was father. He asked me for the little revolver that he knew I had. He seemed quite nervous, and I wanted to call Peters or Dickens."

"Why not your brother—wasn't he home then?"

"Yes—" For a moment there was a frightened look on the girl's face as if she had said too much, but it passed quickly and she went on: "I didn't suggest my brother or Mr. Todd because I thought his

valet or Peters, who is an old friend as well as servant, would suit him better."

A smile flitted over the face of Henshaw at the way the girl had covered up her indiscretion by coupling her brother's name with Mr. Todd's, and by emphasizing that she thought only of the servants, she removed all design from her failure to call her brother.

"Did you give your father the revolver?"

"No, I put on a dressing-gown and came down to the library with him. He wouldn't explain why he was nervous, and I read to him until daybreak. By that time he was drowsy and went off to bed."

"Where is the revolver now?"

"Up-stairs in my desk."

"That will do, Miss Holt. The deputy will accompany you up-stairs and bring down the revolver that you spoke of."

The girl withdrew and her brother was called next.



ROBERT FRANKLIN HOLT, aged twenty-three, was a tall, blond youth of athletic build. He had large, gray eyes, and heavy lashes that curled up at the ends and gave him a questioning, expectant look. Neither the mouth nor chin spoke of strength; in fact, the whole face was that of a gay, reckless nature. Just now he was pale and haggard, and avoided as much as possible the glances of the curious folk gathered in his father's library.

He told of hearing his sister scream while he was dressing, and on rushing down to the library found her in a faint and his father dead.

"When did you last see your father alive?" the Coroner asked.

"I left him last night at twelve. I am sure of the hour, for the clock was striking as I left the room."

"Will you tell something of your last talk with your father?"

"We talked of my future."

"Pleasantly?"

"I regret to say we did not agree."

"What was the nature of the contention?"

"For some reason my father wanted me to go abroad for a year. I needed to acquire 'the refinement and culture of the Old World,' he said. I objected to going, as my interests are all here in this country."

"You quarreled?"

"No; my father was kinder than usual and gave me until to-day to make up my mind."

This admission caused a stir among the jurors and gave the reporters another bold headline. The Coroner and Henshaw alone were unaffected by Holt's last statement.

"When you went away from home a year ago was it after a quarrel with your father?"

"Yes."

"You came home four days ago—of your own accord or at his request?"

"He sent for me," Bob Holt replied.

"When you left your father last night you wrote a letter and gave it to Peters to mail. To whom was the letter sent?"

The young man showed his surprise and a slow flush spread over his face.

"I decline to answer. It was a personal letter and in no way bears on the case."

"You were afraid to put it in the post-bag?"

"It was a personal letter that I did not want others to handle."

"Who besides Peters handles the mail-bag?"

"I don't know, but two letters I wrote my father never reached him."

"Do you suspect any one?"

"I must decline to answer."

"Mr. Holt, you must see the importance of this inquiry and that to block the way of justice——"

"I can't see, Mr. James, how my private affairs have anything to do with my father's death. Otherwise I am ready to tell you all I know."

During this controversy Henshaw had pulled from his pocket the small bright object that he had picked up on the library floor. He scratched a few words on a piece of paper and sent both by way of the jurors. The Coroner read the slip, then held up to view a pearl cuff-button.

"Can you identify this, Mr. Holt?"

Bob Holt took it in his hand and looked it over.

"Yes, it belongs to Mr. Todd, my father's secretary."

"You are sure?"

"Yes, it was my sister's present to him last Christmas. She was ill at the time and I did her shopping for her."

"That will do. Call Mr. Alexander Todd," the Coroner said.

CHAPTER V

MISS HOLT'S REVOLVER

MR. TODD entered; his tall, slight figure and finely chiseled features gave him an air of elegance and distinction that had been lacking in the two children of Mr. Holt. He spoke in a well-modulated voice and with a decided English accent. He gave his name as Alexander Todd, and stated that he had been Mr. Holt's secretary for three years.

"Are you an Englishman, Mr. Todd?"

"Yes. I met Mr. Holt when he was abroad three years ago. His secretary died while he was over there and I took the position at once."

"Will you tell us anything that you know that will throw light on the death of Mr. Holt?"

"I am afraid I can be of little assistance. Last night at dinner I noticed that Mr. Holt was preoccupied and worried. He scarcely spoke during the dinner—a thing unusual for him. Afterward I came into the library with him and went over some business that he wanted wound up."

"What was the nature of this business?"

"A number of bills had come in; we went over them, made out checks, and left them in his desk to be mailed this morning."

"Were these personal debts?" the Coroner asked.

"No, they were his son's bills."

"Were these bills usually sent to Mr. Holt?" the Coroner asked.

"No, it was a new arrangement. It was the second of the month and the bills for April as well as for the past year came in. They were put in shape and left in the desk there," and Mr. Todd indicated the desk in the corner.

"After you left Mr. Holt, did you go to bed?"

"No, I went out for a short walk and got back just as Peters was closing up for the night. I spoke to him and went to my room, read until late and then retired. This morning I came down early as is my custom, saw the library door open and learned from Peters that Mr. Holt was dead."

"You know nothing about Mr. Holt that would lead you to imagine that some one desired his life?"

"No."

"Mr. Todd, when three men entered the room this morning they found you in here alone——"

"I was returning a book to the shelf."

"Didn't you know that nothing was to be taken from or put into the room until after the inquest?" the Coroner asked.

"No, I did not; in fact I came in a little later and found Mr. Holt at his father's desk, so I was not alone in my ignorance of the restrictions."

"What was Mr. Holt doing at the desk?"

"He was looking over the pile of bills," Mr. Todd answered.

"Did he take them away?"

"Only one; the rest he returned to the desk."

The secretary spoke in a cool, impersonal tone so that it was difficult to tell whether he was giving this damaging testimony through ignorance or design.

"Do you remember how many bills there were?"

"Yes, ten."

"Could you enumerate them?"

"Possibly, but my memorandum is in the desk and would be more exact."

"Will you please get it?"



MR. TODD moved to the desk with every eye following him. He took from his chain a key, unlocked a lower drawer and took out a paper. In the meantime the Coroner opened the desk and found the pile of bills. They were addressed and stamped, but not sealed.

"Now, Mr. Todd, will you verify these by your memorandum?"

And the Coroner read out the list of names, then looked up at Mr. Todd.

"The florist bill is missing," Todd answered, with an inflection that a careful listener might have interpreted as disappointment.

The bills and memorandum were returned to the desk and the Coroner went on with his examination.

"Mr. Todd, can you identify this?" and he held up the pearl cuff-link.

The secretary looked at it for a moment and said slowly,

"Certainly, it belongs to me."

He spoke calmly, but a change came over him. He paled perceptibly and the serene, unruffled look he had worn during the examination gave way to a worried, anxious look that was plain to every one in the room.

"It was found in the library this morning near Mr. Holt. Can you explain that?" the Coroner asked.

"No—no, I can't explain it. I was not wearing that set last night, and I can't imagine how it came to be in the library."

His voice sank almost to a whisper as he finished his sentence. And while the reporters were busy with new scare heads about "The telltale cuff-link and the sudden fright of Mr. Alexander Todd," the door opened and the deputy who had accompanied Miss Holt up-stairs entered.

"Miss Holt's revolver has disappeared—we've looked everywhere and it can't be found!"

CHAPTER VI

SOME DISCOVERIES AND A NAME

FRANCES HOLT came in just behind the deputy and in answer to the Coroner's questions said that the revolver had been in her desk on the previous day. Her maid knew nothing of its disappearance, nor indeed that it was usually kept in the desk. No one else had access to her room. The Coroner thanked her for her information and she withdrew. Mr. Todd was excused and left the room with her. He held the door open for her to pass out and bowed low, but no word was said.

Attracting as little attention as possible, Henshaw slipped out of the room into the hall. And as he closed the library door behind him, he saw Frances Holt and Mr. Todd standing at the foot of the stairs. He was talking earnestly to her and once laid his hand on her arm. She threw it off and with an emphatic "Never!" and went on up the stairs. The secretary stood for a moment in deep thought, then he turned and Henshaw advanced to meet him.

"Mr. Todd," he said in a calm, persuasive voice, "your desire to be of help to the law was evident at the inquest and I feel sure you will help us a trifle further."

"I should be glad to shed any light on this lamentable tragedy, but I am afraid that I have told all that I know."

"Can you give me the name of the florist whose bill is missing?"

"Yes, it was Shaw & Company."

"You were surprised to find that bill missing; now which one did you expect to find gone?" Henshaw asked.

"I intended to show no surprise," the secretary answered coldly.

"Certainly not, but you did expect the bill from Thorn & Company to be missing, didn't you?"

Todd had started away, but this last remark brought him around at once.


"Why do you think that?" he demanded.

"You don't deny it, I see. Well, Mr. Todd, Thorn sells nothing but firearms. I am right, am I not?"

"Yes," the other answered, "it was a bill for a Smith & Wesson .22."

"Oh, then you knew Mr. Holt was shot with a .22?"

"No, I——" he replied in a startled voice. "As neither the bullet nor revolver has been found, I couldn't know, but one instinctively connects a revolver with death, and the bill made an impression on me."

 MR. TODD had recovered his equanimity by this time and stood waiting for Henshaw's next question.

"When you first entered the room this morning you said 'What's wrong, Peters?' Am I right?"

"I think so—yes."

"Will you tell me how you knew anything was wrong?"

"I did not," the other said positively.

"But you asked 'What's wrong' instead of 'Is anything wrong.' The first certainly implies a knowledge that all was not well."

"I see your point," Todd put in. "I knew something was wrong because as I came down-stairs I saw Mr. Holt carrying his sister to her room."

"One more question, Mr. Todd: When Mr. Holt took the florist bill which pocket did he put it in?"

"In the left-hand coat pocket. I am sorry if I have compromised him—I wish him no harm."

"Certainly not," Henshaw answered. "And thank you very much."

Just then the library door was thrown open and the crowd filed out. The inquest was over, the jury having agreed that Mr. Holt met his death from a shot fired by an unknown assailant. The Coroner and a reporter came up to Henshaw and gave him the verdict. He answered with a shrug of the shoulders.

The reporter asked for the Coroner's opinion and the latter refused to commit

himself, though he admitted that much damaging evidence had been given and said that he expected the guilty man to be under arrest in less than thirty-six hours. As the reporter left, Henshaw looked at him quizzically.

"Do you really believe that?"

"What?" Coroner James asked.

"About getting the guilty man—if it is a man—in thirty-six hours?"

"I don't think I could, but I have every confidence in you."

"Then I'll tell you it is a queer case, and the only way we are going to get at the bottom of it is to find what is the emotional disturbance they are all suffering from—Peters, Todd, the two Holts, all got so far in their testimony, then shifted. We have got to find the why of that shifting. Todd and young Holt dislike each other, that is plain. Todd gave all the evidence he could against Holt and when that cuff-link showed up he lost his nerve."

"What's your idea of Todd?" the Coroner asked.

"If I didn't constitutionally distrust the obvious, I'd say—but I'll tell you all about it later. How far do you want me to go in the matter?"

"As far as you can. I have told young Holt and he wants you to go ahead."

"That sounds well," Henshaw answered, "but wait until I start; you will see that not one of them will lift a finger to help me. But it's an interesting case."

He rubbed his hands together in anticipation of the joy in the struggle.



BY SIX o'clock the house was cleared of all strangers and the great gate of the park locked for the night.

The last person to leave was the Doctor, whose efforts had at last been rewarded by the complete recovery of Dickens, the valet of the late Roger Holt. Henshaw went to him and got from him a story so confused and jumbled that it added nothing to the clearness of the case.

On the night previous at shortly after twelve he had gone to the library in response to a call from Mr. Holt. He found the old gentleman alone and completely dressed. At that time of night he usually had on his dressing-gown. He told Dickens to go to bed, that he would call if he wanted him. Dickens went to his room and made ready for bed. He heard his door open, and before

he could turn, his lights were switched off, he was caught in a powerful grip, thrown on the bed and a handkerchief with some powerful odor clapped on his face. The next he knew the Doctor was bending over him.

"When I was in here with the Doctor why didn't you answer my questions? You heard me."

Dickens was stout and middle-aged, and would pass for a man devoid of imagination and sensibility, but the effect of his recent experience was to leave him pale and shaken, and before he answered Henshaw's question he looked about anxiously.

"I was afraid," he began in a low voice; "even now I am afraid. I don't know who killed him or doped me, but it had hands like claws—nothing but bones!" He shuddered. "I've been wanting for a long time to leave; I felt all this coming." His voice sank to a whisper. "This house is haunted; any night you can hear, and one time I saw—oh!" he screamed and turned, then pulling himself together, he muttered, "something touched me on the shoulder—it was like a claw!"

Henshaw took his arm.

"It's just your nerves. Come on, have something to eat, then you won't think so much about ghosts and the like."

Henshaw turned the nervous valet over to Peters with orders to feed him well. The savory odors coming from the kitchen seemed to put new life and courage into Dickens, so Henshaw left him and went in search of young Bob Holt. The very thought of the florist bill in the young man's pocket made the detective impatient. He was fortunate enough to meet him in the hall.

"Mr. Holt," said the detective, "will you come into the library? There are several points that I want to go over with you."

"Can't we go into some other room? It is depressing in there," the young man answered.

He presented a marked contrast to his appearance early that morning. He was nervous and anxious, and his efforts to conceal his emotions were decidedly unsuccessful.

"It is necessary that I go in there, and I need you. I would suggest you have Peters bring you a good stiff drink; the strain has been too much."

"Thank you, no—I've had too much of the stuff in my life, and last night I promised

father I'd cut it—I want it terribly now, but you see——"



HE TURNED his haggard young face to Henshaw and the detective took his arm and moved with him toward the library. When they reached the door there was a miscalculation of step, for Henshaw fell against the young man and when he recovered his poise the envelope in Holt's left coat pocket was resting safely in his own.

"Some time ago, Mr. Holt, you bought a revolver from Thorn & Co. Will you tell me what became of that revolver?" Henshaw asked when he had closed the library door behind.

Holt looked at him in surprise:

"How did you know? That's useless, I guess. I did buy a revolver. It was a fancy pearl-handled affair, and was a birthday present to Frances. She always wanted one, and father was willing."

"How long ago was this?"

"Five weeks, I think."

"You know that your father was shot with a .22 caliber revolver?"

"No; I thought they hadn't found the bullet."

"They will to-morrow with X-rays, but I know a good deal about wounds of this kind and I am pretty sure," Henshaw said quietly.

"Well, still, I can't see—you certainly don't mean that Frances had anything to do with father's death—why, she was his one comfort!"

"The revolver was stolen from your sister's desk yesterday or last night."

"Stolen?" the youth demanded in a wild, excited tone.

"She can't find it to-day—she had it yesterday."

"Have you found it? Do you know who has it?" Holt asked breathlessly.

"No, I have no trace of it," Henshaw answered.

"Excuse me——"

Holt started toward the door when the detective's voice stopped him.

"It's only fair to tell you that your behavior is very damaging to your cause."

He spoke slowly and without turning around, his object being to hold the young man while he took the envelope from his pocket, opened it and ran over the latter part of a long itemized bill.

"I don't care," Holt said defiantly; "I have no cause to damage—I——"

His hand was on the door-knob.

"One moment then, Mr. Holt; your father was found with a white carnation in his hand, a flower he disliked. On April 29th you bought at Shaw's two dozen white carnations. Did you bring them here?"

Holt left the door and came to the center of the room, shaking with anger and surprise:

"How do you know? What has that to do with this? My affairs are my own business! I won't be spied on and questioned! I——" His face was livid with rage and his eyes had the wild look of a trapped animal. "Don't you push me too far!" he tapped his forehead. "We are all queer; we can't stand it—we——" His voice died away and a convulsion shook his body. Henshaw took him by the arm and pressed him into a chair.

"Never mind now; it has been a little too much for you."

He dared not press the young man then, as he was near a mental and physical collapse. Henshaw laid his hand on the youth's shoulder and reassured him. In a little while he grew quieter and Henshaw saw his lips move. He bent his head and caught one word—it was nothing but a woman's name, but there are times in the affairs of men when the most important thing in the world is a woman's name, and Henshaw knew that when he had found the girl who answered to the name of "Jean" he would be much nearer a solution of the mystery.

CHAPTER VII

A VISION, A FIGHT AND A FIND

HENSHAW waited until the paroxysm of fear and grief had passed before he spoke, then in a very kind voice he said,

"If you would only talk freely to me it would save so much time and you a great deal of discomfort."

Holt looked at him a moment then shook his head,

"I have told you all I can."

He started toward the door, Henshaw said no detaining word, and after the door had closed behind him the detective turned his attention to the room.

He stood in the center of the library and

ran his eyes from floor to ceiling all the way around the walls. On three sides of the room, save where the doors broke the line, were high bookcases. There were three of these doors: one at the right, and opposite the two windows, led into the hall; the second opened into the music-room and the third led into the passage that connected the library with Mr. Holt's bedroom.

The chairs used at the inquest had been removed and the furniture restored to former positions. A large davenport stood in an oblique line from the fireplace. The long library table and the deep soft chair at its right stood just before the fire. At Henshaw's request Peters had arranged everything as it was on the night previous. The only thing missing was the rug on which the body of Roger Holt had been found. Another rug was in its place and covered the dark stain on the hardwood floor.

Henshaw went over the room carefully, standing in one position, then another, walking this way, then that, trying to work out some theory of distance. Mr. Holt was evidently seated in his chair when the first intimation of the intruder reached him. As he rose from his chair, he dropped his paper—a copy of the *London Times*. Henshaw found it that morning by the chair, and from the way it was thrown it seemed to the detective that Holt had turned to the right, that is, toward the door that led to his own room.

The tendency in times of fear or surprise is to make a backward movement. If an enemy should approach and one had a book in hand, the instinctive move would be to throw the book to the free side; in other words, one would unconsciously clear the deck for action. Of course there is a chance that one might throw the book at the approaching enemy, Henshaw reflected with a smile, but Mr. Holt didn't; he dropped it to the left of his chair and turned. Who it was that came in and what happened, were the things to find out. And the paper with "Peters—police" must be cleared up. For Holt couldn't have written it after he was shot, and it is scarcely possible that he wrote it with the assassin in the room, if——

Henshaw's mind wandered off on a new line of speculation. He went to the window and looked out; it was a moonless night and the lawn lay in a shadow that deepened until it reached the black of the

woods beyond. A single light met his eyes, coming from the head-gardener's house just behind the conservatory. He leaned out and a faint sound reached his ears and he made out a leaping figure. At that moment the silence was broken by the baying of a deep-throated dog, not the bark or snarl of a dog who scents an enemy, but the long, melancholy wail of a lonesome dog, called by the superstitious the "death howl."



IT WAS quite impossible, Henshaw thought, that some one had stood outside the window and fired the shot, for the dog watched every night and no stranger would be safe. There it was again—every line of reasoning, every scrap of evidence that had turned up, led away from the mysterious-stranger theory. The dog knew the members of the household; Mr. Todd told of taking a walk about the lawn after he left Mr. Holt. The door opened and Henshaw turned from the window to see Peters.

"It's eleven o'clock and I make the rounds at this time, sir," he explained.

"Come in, Peters. I want to know something about this dog that is making so much noise out here."

"It's a custom of his, sir, to bay like that. I often wondered how Mr. Holt stood it, but, do you know, I think he liked it."

"The dog was out as usual last night?"

"Oh, yes, I heard him baying as I locked the front door. Mr. Todd came in just then and I remarked to him that Danger—that's the dog's name—was calling for him."

"Mr. Todd could walk about without the dog molesting him?"

"Yes, sir, Mr. Todd is his favorite, unless it is Miss Frances. One night Mr. Holt, Miss Frances and Mr. Todd were here in the library and Danger was barking outside as if he was about to tear some one to pieces. Mr. Holt got tired of the noise for once and said he thought he would have him chained up. Mr. Todd went to the window and called Danger just once. The dog leaped to the window and Mr. Todd said,

"Don't be so noisy, Danger."

"He put down the window and for a long time we could hear the dog whine outside the window, but he stopped the barking. Oh, Mr. Todd can do anything with Danger, sir."

The old man finished his story with a shake of the head.

"Mr. Holt was partial to Mr. Todd, I fancy."

"Yes, sir, he liked him very much—too much I sometimes thought."

"You mean he hardened Mr. Holt against his son?"

Peters looked at him with surprise in his kind old eyes:

"I never said so, sir, but how could you know it?"

"A number of things tell me so. Did you ever hear Mr. Todd talk to Mr. Holt about the refining influence of Europe?"

"One night as I came in the library I heard Mr. Todd say, 'It takes the Old World to polish a man'—those were his very words."

"I am sure of that," Henshaw said with a gleam of satisfaction in his eyes.

He touched the tips of his fingers together and smiled blandly at the butler, who found such a genial atmosphere so agreeable after the stress of the day that he unbound and babbled on of many things. Henshaw, remembering his rebuke to the Coroner when asked whether he had noticed the name on Bob Holt's letter, was careful to put his questions in a way that would not offend the old man's sensibilities. In a roundabout way he asked what Todd's attitude was toward Miss Holt.

"Respectful, I should say, sir, nothing more."

The scene he had stumbled on in the hall came back to Henshaw: the earnest pleading of the man and the vehement "Never" of the girl—"respectful" was scarcely an accurate description of the encounter.



PETERS at last took his leave.

The clock on the mantel struck twelve and Henshaw switched off the light and sat down in Mr. Holt's easy chair to think it over. A fire had been built, for the night was chilly, but the detective had neglected it and by now it had burned so low that it gave off only a dull-red glow which soon died out, leaving the room in blackness.

For some time Henshaw sat in thought, assorting the facts he had gathered, trying to fit them together like a picture-puzzle. Abstractedly he held out his hand to the dead fire and as he did a ray of light fell on it. He turned quickly and in the doorway that led to Mr. Holt's room saw a picture that for a moment paralyzed every

faculty. It was a girl holding aloft a candle which shed a soft glow over her. Henshaw gazed at her for an interminable time, it afterward seemed to him. Never in life, never in an art-gallery, not even in any wild flight of imagination had he seen anything to compare with the beauty of this girl. She was tall and slight, dressed in a soft white robe that fell in straight lines from her shoulders.

Her face, pure oval and white as the gown that she wore, was a worthy frame for the great, dark, somber eyes. Her dark hair in two long braids hung over her shoulders and swept down to her knees. She stood for a space staring into the room, then a startled look came into her face: she had caught sight of the man in the chair. She turned, and as she raised her other hand the detective saw that she held in it a white carnation!

Henshaw jumped to his feet and switched on the light, crossed the room and flung open the door that led into the passage. There was no one to be seen, but a faint sweet odor filled the little hallway. The hallway was about eight feet in length and six in breadth. At one end was the library door, at the other the door of Mr. Holt's bedroom. The walls were oaken panels and a single light hung from the ceiling. Henshaw turned this light on and gazed about him, then moved cautiously and opened Mr. Holt's room. A low light burned in the room. On the bed was stretched the dead millionaire. The windows were lowered from the top and the chill night air filled the room. The door that led into the valet's room was open, and in here sat two men-servants who were supposed to keep watch over their late master. One man sat facing the door, and no one could enter Mr. Holt's room without being seen by this footman. He rose as Henshaw came in.

"Did any one come in here just now?"

"No, sir."

"I think you are right, but I want to look around."

He turned on the light and made a careful search of the room, the closets, the bathroom and the valet's room, but there was no trace of the white-robed girl—there was not even a suspicion of the faint sweet odor that filled the passage.



WHEN Henshaw had finished his investigation he returned to the passage and went over it, looking for the way of the girl's escape. If there was

a secret door or sliding panel it must be to the left, for the right wall was even with the right wall of the library and beyond this wall was the open hall of the house with no place for an unknown room or secret stairway.

Now the passage was only six feet in width, while the library and bedroom were fully fifteen feet across; that left nine feet between the oaken wall and the outer stone wall. The girl must have gone through some secret door into this open space!

Henshaw took his pocket-lamp and made a close inspection of the oaken surface, but to no avail. There was no break in the wall, not even a crack—the long panels came down from the ceiling and fitted together smoothly with three-inch strips of lighter wood covering the meeting-place. Henshaw went into the library, picked up the poker at the fireplace and returned to the passage.

The wall was divided into four panels. He tapped the first with the poker—it gave forth a hollow sound, the second likewise; it was as if one had struck wood that covered an open space. The fourth panel was like the first and second, but the third held the mystery—what was back of it that made the dull heavy sound he could not figure out. If this panel held a door it would give out a higher, lighter sound than the others.

He returned the poker to the fireplace and let himself quietly out of the library into the great hall. His thin-soled, rubber-heeled shoes made no noise as he felt his way up the dark stairs. He must find out what rooms were over the library and Mr. Holt's apartment. He had noticed in the afternoon that the extra wing which contained Mr. Holt's room was three stories in height and practically isolated from the rest of the house. On the main floor the only entrance to this wing was through the library.

When Henshaw reached the upper hall he saw a night-light in the shape of a Roman lamp burning low, and by it he was able to make out that there was a door just over the library door. No light came through the transom, and with his ear at the keyhole he could hear no sound of life within. Just opposite this door was a hall which branched off from the main hall, and down this passageway, Henshaw had learned from Peters, was Mr. Todd's room. The two doors

at the left side of the main hall opened into Miss Frances Holt's apartments. The detective looked about for the stairway that led to the third story, but it was not in sight, so he moved cautiously down the branch hall until he came in touch of it. Here it was very dark and he remembered with regret that his dark lantern was on the library table.



HE FELT his way up the stairs, but his progress was slow, for each step carried him into deeper darkness. As he reached the top step he was aware for the first time that some one was near him. He heard the breath come and go in quick gasps as if some one were laboring under a great excitement. Just then a blow fell on him. He heard the cane or stick whiz and ducked in time to save his head, catching the blow on the shoulder and at the same time making a grab for his assailant. It was a man, and unconsciously Henshaw felt a great sense of relief. The two men clinched and a short hard tussle ensued.

Henshaw, uncertain of his footing, and not knowing how near the stairway they were, fought desperately to throw off the other, but the unknown clung to him. They swayed, jabbed, clinched, neither speaking a word, but their hard breathing sounded through the darkness. The unknown grew more aggressive as the moments passed; he was fighting desperately, working the detective back toward the stairway. While he struggled to hold his ground, the thought uppermost in Henshaw's mind was to mark the man so that he would know him afterward—he must bruise or scratch where it would show.

He worked one hand free and held his little finger ready to give the scratch, but as he thrust his hand forward it struck the other about the hip-line and recoiled from the blow, but only for a second. He thrust it back, and this time it closed over a revolver, a small revolver! It was in the left coat pocket, and Henshaw wanted it as he had wanted few things in his life. He bored in, his head against the other's chest; another short struggle and it was done—the small weapon was in Henshaw's hand.

But it was a doubtful victory, for the other with a stiff jab sent the detective backward down the stairs. Henshaw caught himself before he reached the land-

ing, and got to his feet quite bumped and worse for wear but holding steadfastly to his trophy. He stood for a moment, listening. All was still above. He felt his way back to the hall, and in the light of the hall lamp he looked at his find. It was a small fancy revolver, Smith and Wesson .22, and there was one empty chamber!

CHAPTER VIII

THE SECRET OF THE PANEL

THE next day the experts came down from the city with instruments and apparatus necessary for finding the bullet; when it was produced it fitted exactly the empty chamber of the revolver in Henshaw's possession. Having revealed as much as it ever would, the body of Roger Holt was made ready for the burial which was to take place the next day.

In the early afternoon Henshaw made a hurried trip to Jason. He sent several telegrams and talked over the telephone with a member of the architectural firm of Brown & McKay, who were the designers of the original house, but had nothing to do with the addition. Tetlow, they thought, was the man. At the Tetlow office they admitted building the addition, but had not kept the plans and refused any information.

Henshaw returned to Greystone about three o'clock and found the usual army of newspaper men about, and the news that Mr. Holt's will had not been found. His lawyer was out from the city and stated that Mr. Holt made a will about nine months before. He also gave out that recently he had a letter from Mr. Holt saying that he wanted to see him on the sixth of April in regard to a new will, the old one having outlived its favor.

Mr. Harmon would not say what disposal the dead millionaire had made of his property, but added that, unless a will turned up, the estate would be divided equally among the Holt children. When Henshaw heard the lawyer make this statement, a new and strange light came into his eyes; he seemed to have heard very good news.

From the lawyer's remarks it was plain that the lost will had discriminated in favor of one of the children, and it was probable that as it was made nine months ago, shortly after Holt's quarrel with his son, the boy was the one who suffered in the will. The

wish of the dead man to make a new will may have meant one of many things—that he was to reinstate Bob or that he was to cut him off entirely. At any rate, there was small doubt that the old and new wills were of great interest to the young man. When he heard of the loss he showed neither surprise nor regret; as a matter of fact his face had taken on a stolid, dogged look that concealed whatever he thought or felt about his father's death.

Beyond a brief interview with her father's lawyer, Frances Holt kept to her room all day. She refused to see the reporters and so far Henshaw had not asked for an interview. He was not ready to tell of finding the revolver, as he still hoped to find what man in the house had contested the upper stairway with him on the night before.

Bob Holt showed no sign of having been in a fight, and a fleeting glimpse he had of Mr. Todd showed that gentleman to be in perfect condition. He went over the servants, but with the exception of Peters they were all slim young men whose indoor life would scarcely turn out the hardy specimen that had grappled with Henshaw and thrown him with such force down the stairs.

The only clue that the detective had to the identity of the man was a slight odor. In the stress of the fight he had almost missed it, but as his mind went back over the whole circumstance he was aware that there had been an odor that reminded him of something medical—a hospital, an operation, drugs. As the last thought came he jumped to his feet and went rapidly through Mr. Holt's room to the valet's room behind.



ON THE day previous he had noticed bottles of all sizes on the dresser. He found that some of them had been removed and only a few harmless-smelling lotions left behind. Dickens had, of course, not occupied the room since Mr. Holt's death. He went in search of Dickens, but learned from Peters that he had gone to the village on an errand—for whom, Henshaw could not learn.

"There is no talk or sign that Mr. Todd is leaving, is there, Peters?"

"No, sir; he is making all the arrangements for the funeral. I dare say he will be here some time yet," the butler answered.

"Peters, Dickens tells me that the house

is haunted. Do the other servants feel that way?"

"Haunted, sir?" asked Peters, with fine contempt in his tone. "This house is too new to be haunted; our old place near Arundel may have had a ghost, but not this house."

"Who has the old English home now?"

"I don't know, sir; Miss Margaret's—that was the first Mrs. Holt—brother went back just before her death. We never kept track of him or heard anything about the old place. It was a sad subject to Mr. Holt."

"Did Mr. Holt ever hear from his first wife's brother?"

"No, sir. We heard once he was married, but after that we never heard of Mr. Charles Naughton."

The old man mumbled as he set the table to rights. The candelabrum had not been used since Mrs. Holt's death, but it still stood in its old place on the table. Peters picked it up and moved it to the mantel, and as he passed Henshaw a faint familiar odor struck the detective's nose! It was the exquisite fragrance that had filled the passage after the disappearance of the beautiful girl on the night before. Henshaw looked at the old butler with heightened interest and very gently he touched with his fingers the bit of lace that was hanging from the old man's pocket, and as he drew it forth he held in his hand a woman's dainty handkerchief. One smell was enough—it was the same, and he had at last a clue to the girl with the white carnation!

"Peters," he said quietly, "this came from your pocket."

The butler turned, and when he saw the handkerchief he started as if he had been caught stealing it.

"That, sir, that handkerchief?" he said, fighting for time.

"Just this, Peters. It's a lady's, that is plain, and a very dainty lady's."

"Yes, sir, of course it is a lady's. I found it on the stairway."

"On the first flight or the second?"

"The first; sir, it belongs to Miss Frances. I must take it to her."

He held out his hand to receive it.

"I don't agree with you; it has a very distinct perfume, one that Miss Frances Holt doesn't use."

"Why, sir, I don't know, but Miss Frances is the only lady that's here, so I thought it must be hers. She may——"

"What room is over this, Peters?" Henshaw asked without giving the old man a chance to finish his feeble excuses.

"It's a spare room, sir; it was Mr. Holt's before he moved down here."

"And the room just behind—the one over Mr. Holt's bedroom?"

"Oh, that is a part of the new wing; only the first floor of the addition has ever been opened up."

The old butler spoke so simply that Henshaw almost wondered whether he were not quite honest in his pretended ignorance of the girl's presence in the house. Suppose the second and third story of the new wing were so locked off from the rest of the house and communicated with the lower floor only by means of the secret way behind the panels so that even the servants and family were not aware of the use of the upper stories?



COULD it be possible that Peters, who had been associated with the Holt family for nearly thirty years, could be ignorant of it? No, it was not probable even if it were possible. The butler was deeper than he seemed, and his story of finding the handkerchief on the stairway was a fabrication. He had been in one of the locked rooms; doubtless he knew the secret of the panel.

He would be more likely to know than any one in the house except Mr. Todd, who had got so close to Mr. Holt that he was dictating the father's policy toward his son. And yet, so far as he knew, Mr. Todd had shown no interest in the library; the only way of access to his mind ran back over his acquaintance with the secretary.

"Peters," he said a few seconds after, "when you came in here with young Mr. Holt and the Coroner's deputy to move Mr. Holt's body, do you remember seeing Mr. Todd at one of the book-shelves?"

"Yes, sir, I remember perfectly."

"Where was he standing?"

Peters pointed to the bookcase at the left of the door to the passage.

"He was arranging the books there. Is that all, sir?" The butler tried to keep his tone even, but he could scarcely hide his eagerness to be away from Henshaw's inconvenient questions.

"That will do," the detective answered.

Nothing would have suited him better at that moment than the immediate disap-

pearance of Peters. He watched the old man out, locked the door after him and moved to the shelf that had been pointed out. There were six tiers of shelves built into the wall so that the outer edges extended only a few inches beyond the wall line.

Henshaw ran over the shelves carefully; no unnecessary cleaning had been done in the room since the tragedy, as there was still hope that a clue might turn up in some unexpected way.

The finger-prints of Mr. Todd were found on the fifth shelf, ten books from the end nearest the door. Henshaw removed several volumes and disclosed the oaken wall that backed the shelves.

It was too dark to see clearly the details of the wall, so he went to the table for his lamp and poked in and around the books until he found a small square cut in the smooth surface of the wood. On one side were tiny hinges and with his knife he was able to swing the small door open. He was rewarded by the sight of a push-button—that was all.

But this button was of great importance or it would not have been hidden so carefully. He stood for a moment in thought, then opened the door that led into the passage, returned and pressed the button—whether he was calling for help or turning on lights or exploding a bomb, he did not know, and the faint click that answered his pressure was not enlightening. He went to the opened door just in time to see the third panel slide slowly up through the ceiling and leave a dark open space!

Looking down into this opening, Henshaw saw machinery, and cables rising from the machinery, and then he knew that the button had set in motion an automatic elevator.

In a few moments a small, beautifully appointed car stood before him. It came down so slowly, so silently, that it seemed almost like a ghost elevator.

It was clear now that the dull sound the panel had given off was from the weight behind, which formed the balance for the car. He had been unable to find the opening because the panel moved from the floor up. But it was no time for reflections; the car stood waiting.

Henshaw stepped in, turned on the light, pressed the button and was raised slowly to the top of the house!

CHAPTER IX

MR. TODD'S CUFF-BUTTON IS MATCHED

WHEN the car had reached its destination it stopped of its own accord. Henshaw stepped out and found himself in a tiny hall which corresponded to the passage on the first floor. There was a door at each end, the one that connected with the house was closed, but the other leading into the new wing stood open. All this he was able to see from the light in the elevator. He first turned off the light and moved cautiously toward the open door and peered into the room.

It was in deep shadow and the flash of his lamp showed it to be unoccupied. One window was raised and a swift breeze blew in. It rattled a paper on the desk, and Henshaw drew back into the shadow, waiting to be sure that the coast was clear. He strained his ears to catch the least sound, but all was still—so still that when the deep baying of Danger in the yard below floated up he involuntarily shuddered. He knew that he was at the "break" of the case; that this expedition would either clear the mystery or complicate things so that a solution would be well-nigh impossible.

He moved again into the room, and now, sure that no one was about, he felt for the switch to turn on the lights; but in vain: there were no electric lights, in the room, yet his flash showed him every size and shape of silver candlesticks all filled with fresh tapers.

It was clear that the occupant of the room had been away for some time, for no light had been struck and it was now nearly ten o'clock.

Who the occupant of this room was he was sure beyond all doubt, for the first sensation he had been conscious of when he entered was the faint exquisite fragrance the girl had left behind her in the passage on the night before and which had clung to the handkerchief Peters pretended to have found on the stairway.

Henshaw felt elated that he had tracked the girl to her hiding-place. That it was not shut off from the rest of the house he now knew, for she was not here and had not used the elevator. There was a chance that she might be in the room to the rear of the one in which he now stood—the one that

corresponded to the valet's on the main floor.



HE WENT straight across the room and found the door, opened it and listened; here too all was still. He turned back; lighted several candles and looked about him. He was in an amazingly beautiful and strange room.

It was a great square apartment, done entirely in silver and white. The walls were hung with heavy silver-colored silk, the carpet a deep soft velvet, white in tone, and the couch and chairs upholstered in the same shade. There was a table covered with books, some of them bound in white leather, others in white silk slips. There was no book-plate or name in any of the books, which were chiefly poetical in nature. Nowhere in the room could he get a clue to the identity of the owner—it was simply a white and silver salon that might have belonged to any woman of perfect taste.

Just back of this was a bedroom, and off this were a bath and another small room—probably a maid's quarters. The first bedroom was in white to match the salon. By the single bed was a *prie-dieu*, and above it hung a white ivory crucifix. The rest was the furniture common to a lady's apartment.

Henshaw then examined the windows. They had the same peculiarity that those in the salon had—they were barred! The bars were not on the outside that they might be seen from the yard below, but were near the glass of the windows which were themselves well set in from the outer wall line. The girl was a prisoner or—but time was flying and Henshaw must finish his investigations and leave speculation to the future.

On the dresser he found the bottle which held the subtle perfume that had proved such a valuable clue in his search for the girl. But the girl—where was she? That she was concerned in the death of Mr. Holt was plain. The only carnations that had been in the house came from her room—Henshaw had seen her with one in her hand on the night previous. She had a secret way of coming to Mr. Holt's rooms—Here his thoughts stopped, for at that moment he opened the little jewel-case on the dresser and saw a pearl cuff-button that was an exact match of the one he had found in the library on the morning after Mr. Holt's

death, and which Mr. Alexander Todd admitted belonged to him!

CHAPTER X

MORE DISCOVERIES AND A FLIGHT

AFTER this find the rest of the apartment was subjected to a thorough examination, but to no avail; it had yielded all the clue it would to the murder of Mr. Holt and the identity of Henshaw's beautiful midnight visitor. He snuffed out the candles that had aided his search and returned to the passage; there the car stood waiting to convey him below stairs. But there was still the door that opened into the house proper to try.

It was locked, and as he pushed against it his body sank into a soft substance that told him that the door was well padded! Whatever noises were made in this sequestered part of the house would not reach the ears of those on the other side of the door, and the barred windows made the escape of the girl absolutely impossible. But she was out of her room now. By whose help?

Aware that he had exhausted the possibilities of this floor or the part that was open to him, the detective returned to the lower floor to pursue his investigations of the top of the house by way of the staircase where he had met the unknown on the night before.

In the library he found everything as he had left it and his first move was to put the books back over the push-button; then he unlocked the door that led into the hall and looked out. All was still. Across the hall in the great drawing-room lay the body of Roger Holt ready for burial on the following day. A dim light burned in the room and two footmen kept watch. The heavy scent of many flowers filled the air. The rarest and sweetest from Mr. Holt's greenhouse had been sent in and filled all the vases in the drawing-room—this was as Frances Holt thought her father would have wished.

Very few flowers had come from friends and only a handful of telegrams of sympathy. The Holt family, for one of such prominence and wealth, had very few friends. The old man had outgrown the friends of his youth and of late years he had lived too much to himself to make new ones.

Henshaw slipped quietly up-stairs to try his luck again. He found the upper hall

well lighted this time and glanced curiously at the doors that opened on to it. Those to the left entered Frances Holt's room, the right door near the front of the house was Bob Holt's, and just behind it was another door—the one to the unused room that had been Mr. Holt's before the addition was built.



IT WAS either in here or the room behind it, in the new wing, that the girl now was. She had probably been smuggled out of her own room and hidden in here to escape his notice, and Peters may have found her handkerchief on a stairway after all, for she didn't leave her floor by way of the elevator.

But the door was before him. He tried it and it opened at his touch. He found himself in a chintz-hung room, slightly musty, but apparently an innocent enough room. He switched on the lights and looked about, but there was no one in it, and more surprising still there was no door that connected this room with the new wing! Immediately his interest shifted to the second floor of the addition. What could it contain when there was no way to get in or out of it? The elevator that ran between the first and third floor did not stop at the second at all, and as far as he could discover there was no stairway, and yet it was scarcely possible that it was sealed up and served no purpose at all.

Henshaw left the chintz-hung room and went down the hall to the stairway. The lights were on and he had no reason to fear another encounter.


When he reached the third floor he was in a long hall that ran straight across the house from east to west. A door opposite him was open and he saw a great billiard-room. Somewhere up here, he knew, were the rooms of Peters and other servants, but it was the room that led to the wing that attracted him and he made his way to it. Fortune favored him—the door was unlocked. Pushing it open quietly, he entered a great bare room; it was without furniture and served only one purpose—to hold the top of a stairway that led down. For a moment Henshaw had to figure just where this stairway did lead. It rose abruptly out of the floor, just the top of it showing in the southeast corner of the room.

While taking in the room, he had been standing in the door. Now he closed it, and

as he did he heard a faint click that told him he had locked himself in. He turned back and examined the lock, it was a spring catch that opened from without by turning the knob, but on the inside it required a key to get out. Everything pointed to the fact that the girl was a prisoner; people could come to her, but her only way out was by way of the elevator to the passage below.

A single electric bulb responded when Henshaw turned on the switch. He first tried the door that led into the anteroom of the white and silver salon. This unlocked on the principle of the outer door. He held the door open that he might not be locked out of the room he had struggled so to reach. Sure now that he could get out again by way of the elevator, he returned to the stairway in the southeast corner of the bare room.

He peered down, but it was dark, and he barely made out a door at the foot of the narrow steep stairway that ran down between the outer wall and the back of the elevator shaft.

 AS HENSHAW descended and opened the door, he found himself in a large, well-lighted room, and one glance showed him that he was in a model kitchen. As he entered, an elderly woman who was standing at the table turned around and when she saw the detective a startled look came over her face.

"I hope I didn't frighten you," he said.

The woman looked at him, then touching her ear and mouth shook her head. She was deaf and dumb!

Henshaw spelt to her on his fingers that he was sorry; again she shook her head.

"Well," he said, "even if you can't hear it's a relief to talk. I am looking for the young lady up-stairs. Know where she is?" He looked inquiringly at her and pointed above.

Again she shook her head and extended her hand toward the stove to indicate that her business lay there. Henshaw signed to her that he must look through the rooms. She shrugged her shoulders and stood aside.

The kitchen contained nothing mysterious, with its white-tiled floor and walls and perfect sanitary arrangements. Back of this was a pantry and the cook's bedroom. Nothing more, no clue to the girl save that she was a person of great importance and

the new wing had practically been built as a home for her.

Henshaw came back to the kitchen and found the cook bending over a waste-basket. As he looked down he saw that it contained a number of wilted white carnations. He picked them up and counted them—there were twenty-two in number! Now he knew for whom Bob Holt had bought the two dozen. Here were twenty-two, the twenty-third had been in the girl's hand when Henshaw first saw her and Mr. Holt held the last in his hand when he died.

He broke off one of the withered flowers and dropped it in his pocket, then, turning to the cook who had been watching him all of this time with great interest, he said,

"You know, don't you, that Mr. Holt has been killed?"

The woman's eyes dilated with surprise, and Henshaw laughed.

"You see, you hear me perfectly. I knew from the way you turned when I first came in that you heard me."

The cook shook her head, then, after a moment, said in a slow, heavy voice,

"Yes, I hear, but I got my position because I pretended to be a deaf-mute, and this is the first word I have spoken in two years!"

"Why did you have to pretend to be deaf and dumb?"

"I don't know. I know as much about up-stairs as you do. I just cook, that is all; cook such stuff as would feed a bird. I saw an advertisement for a deaf-mute cook, I needed work and I pretended to be one, that's all."

"Mr. Holt engaged you?"

"Yes, but I am not going to say any more. I may have cheated him, but I've kept my bargain!"

She closed her lips and shook her head.

"Well, just tell me one thing more: How did you get in and out of here?"


"I only go out twice a week and that for a ride in one of Mr. Holt's automobiles."

"How do you get provisions in here?"

"They come up on a dumb-waiter from the basement. That's all I can say."

She turned her back on him and picked up a bit of sewing which soon engrossed her entire attention. Henshaw could but regard her as a very remarkable member of her sex—two years of silence and even now no inclination to talk. Otherwise she seemed a healthy, sane woman. He returned to the

third floor and reached the library again by way of the convenient elevator.

 AS HE opened the library door the clock struck twelve. He had had no sleep for forty-eight hours, so he sank into a chair, tired from the long strain of thought and work behind him. The lights were out and he might have dozed off but for the baying of Danger outside. He knew the dog was out near the stables, and as he lay and listened the baying grew fiercer, then stopped suddenly as if the dog were obeying a command to be silent.

It caught Henshaw's ear, and he sprang from his chair and rushed through the passage and Mr. Holt's room to the valet's old quarters, from which the stables could be seen. He was just in time to see a large touring-car turn out into the road that led to the great gate. He threw up the window and faintly the sound of the disappearing machine came to him.

CHAPTER XI

AN INTERVIEW WITH FRANCES HOLT

THEY were taking her away—he knew it instinctively. She held the key to the mystery and they were taking her away from all chance of the detective's finding her. He leaned out of the window to catch the last sound of the machine. If they would only keep on their way to the great gate all would be well, for one of Henshaw's men was posted there and would trail the car; but if there was another way out of the grounds, he was sure they would avoid the main gate, for whoever was taking the girl away was aware of her importance to the police and would do his best to keep their flight under cover.


It might be any member of the household that had arranged this flight, for so far the girl was connected with every one of them. Bob Holt brought her the carnations on his return home, one of which was found in Mr. Holt's hand; Peters had her handkerchief; Frances Holt's revolver was found in the pocket of a man guarding the top floor; Mr. Todd's missing cuff-button was found in her room; the deaf and dumb cook had tried to hide the withered flowers from the detective. It was plain now, the emotional disturbance they all suffered from at the inquest. He had promised Coroner

James to find that "disturbance," and he had found her only to lose her.

He turned back into the library and telephoned into Jason. Fortunately Coroner James was at home and agreed to have men on the outlook for the Holt car and to telephone to Armitage, the first village in the other direction from Greystone, to do likewise.

James read out two telegrams that had just come from the San Francisco police saying that a detective was at work on the early history of Roger Holt, and would have a report in a few hours. James promised to come out with the report when it arrived. The other message was from New York, and stated that at one time Bob Holt had an affair with a chorus girl by the name of Jean Gale. That was some time ago, and the police were now trying to locate the girl.

As Henshaw hung up the receiver he thought over this last bit of news and wondered just how important it was. Jean was the name that Bob Holt had said over and over to himself. These thoughts were cut short by the sound of an opening door and Henshaw turned to see Frances Holt come into the room.

 SHE was in a state of great excitement, and as it was the first time Henshaw had seen her since the inquest, he was unprepared for the change in her. She looked old and worn, there was none of the usual color in the face and her eyes were troubled and restless. Henshaw looked at her for a moment, expecting her to recoil when she found him in the room, but her first words reassured him.

"I am glad you are here. I was afraid I was alone in the house with——"

She shuddered and indicated the direction of the drawing-room.

"Your brother and Mr. Todd?" he questioned.

"My brother wasn't in his room, and Mr. Todd—I don't know—I was too afraid to look for any one, the house is so still. It always has been still, but now——"

She glanced about apprehensively.

"You aren't afraid of the dead?" Henshaw asked gently. "They are so harmless."

"I don't know," she broke in. "I never was afraid before in my life, but for the past twenty-four hours I have been in a state of

abject fear. I don't know exactly what I fear, but, please tell me, have you found—my revolver?" Her voice sank to a whisper and her hands worked together nervously; she was in a state of abject fear.

"I have your little revolver, Miss Holt; I found it last night," he said quietly.

"Why didn't you tell me? It would have made such a difference."

"How could I know that you were so worried about it?"

"Of course, how could you, when I scarcely know myself? Won't you tell me where you found it?"

"I will if you will tell me why you were so worried. It was taken from your desk, you said."

"Yes," the girl answered slowly.

"You suspected some one?"

"No, I did not, only it seemed too horrible to think of father being killed with my—but he wasn't, was he? If you have found it, you know."

She was begging to be reassured and Henshaw had to give himself a good brace before he answered her.

"Yes, he was killed with it. I found one chamber empty, and the bullet that killed Mr. Holt came from that chamber."

"Oh!" It was a cry of genuine sorrow, and the girl sank into a chair and covered her eyes with her shaking hands.

"I found it in a man's pocket," Henshaw said quietly.

"A man's?" She looked up, and as she did a new light came to the detective.

"You thought the beautiful girl on the top floor had it?" he asked.

"I—I," she stammered as she rose from her chair, "I don't understand you."

"You must know, Miss Holt, about the girl that is kept on the third floor of the new wing," Henshaw said.

"Have you seen her?" she asked.

Henshaw nodded, and her next question was the strangest that had been asked during his stay in the house. In it was a new note in the gloomy affair, and for a moment Frances Holt seemed to forget her fear and grief, and her face was sweet and tender as she said,

"Isn't she beautiful?"

Henshaw paused, then answered in the same spirit,

"I have never seen her equal."

Frances Holt smiled.

"Poor beautiful Jean!" she murmured.



JEAN! The name brought Henshaw back to his trade. Jean, the name Bob Holt had muttered—it was clear they all knew and loved her. Mr. Holt had rebuilt his house for her—the mysterious, lovely prisoner. For a moment Henshaw's well-trained mind turned topsy-turvy, and he pictured her in ten different rôles in as many seconds.

"Who is she?" he asked.

"My sister," the girl answered.

"Sister?"

"Yes, father's child by his first wife."

"Why is she kept a prisoner?"

"She isn't any more than is necessary. You might as well know, for I suppose it will all come out somehow. My father's marriage to his first wife was not a real one, though they did not know it until it was too late. She was supposed to be a young widow when she came to America with her father and brother. Her husband had been an officer stationed out in India. He was supposed to have been lost in the jungle and killed by some wild animal, as pieces of his clothing were found. At any rate his wife received news of his death and a short time after came to California with her family.

"She met and married father, and just before the birth of Jean the English husband turned up. He had been short in his regimental accounts and got away, leaving the impression that he was dead. He got back to England somehow and from there followed his wife to America. She was a delicate little woman and his coming nearly killed her. He blackmailed and harassed her. All of this was just before Jean's birth. She died two days after, and left a written statement of the whole case. I have read it—her grief was terrible. After her death there was the problem of the baby. The Naughtons were conventional people, and father's too, so little Jean grew up under another name and in the care of strangers. She was always a quiet little thing, and when she was about fourteen the first symptoms of her malady appeared."

"Malady?" the detective asked.

"Yes, they say it is only a question of time before she is hopelessly insane. At first it was just melancholia; she wouldn't have anything to do with people and grew stranger and more silent as the years went by. Father brought her here five years ago and since then she has had many violent

spells. It's so terrible, because she is naturally so sweet and so beautiful—we all adore her!"

Great tears were rolling down the girl's face as she finished her story. It had cost her a great effort to reveal this family secret, and Henshaw knew that she had been driven to it by the hope that she would thus spare Jean the spying and surveillance that she must necessarily suffer from as a member of the Holt household.

"Did you see her often?" Henshaw asked.

"No, very seldom; once a month probably."

"Did she ever leave her apartment except to come down here?"

"Once or twice; she is fond of Bob, and once he prevailed on her to come out. He has always felt that different treatment would cure her, but the doctors say the prenatal influence is too strong to overcome."

"Doctors aren't infallible and your brother may be right. Why did you think she had your revolver?" he asked suddenly.

"I didn't. How could I?" the girl said nervously.

"You did think so and your brother likewise. When I told him that it had been stolen from your desk, he behaved like a madman and I caught the word 'Jean.' It will help matters if you clear up that point now. Why were you both afraid?"

His voice was gentle and reassuring.



"I HAVE told you so much I can't draw back now, I suppose." She paused for a moment, then went on: "When Bob came home Jean seemed almost happy, and one day he got her to come down to my room with him. I was at the desk when they came in, and in my joy at seeing her I forgot to close the drawer that held the little gun. Jean came over and her eye caught it at once and before I could stop her she picked it up. 'Pretty,' she said at once. The pearl handle and bright metal pleased her. I took it away and she said, 'Give it to me; it would make me happy.' Bob and I had one thought—that she meant death would make her happy. It was on her mind all the while she was in the room, and before she left she asked for it again. Now you see?"

"You were afraid she might have come back for it?"

"Yes," the girl answered. "At first I never thought of father's death in

connection with my revolver. My alarm was all for Jean."

"Why have they taken her away from here?" Henshaw asked abruptly.

"Taken her away?" she repeated.

"Yes, just a little while ago in the touring-car."

"You must be mistaken. Why, he wouldn't dare!"

"Who?"

"I don't know—I don't know what I am saying! I don't believe she has gone! You must be mistaken!"

"I am not; I have been all through the new wing, the second as well as third story; she is out of it. Some one brought her down from the third to the second, then down the main stairway to this floor and out to the stables. She dropped her handkerchief on the way; Peters found it."

"Peters?" Frances Holt asked.

"Yes, I found it in his pocket to-night. Now who had enough influence over her to get her to leave the house?"

"No one, I think. We have never been able to get her to leave the house for a moment, and I am sure no one could get her away if she were conscious—"

She paused and for a moment Frances Holt and the detective looked at each other; the same thought came like a flash to them. His mind worked back rapidly.

"You have hit it," he said at last; "she was not conscious; the drug was used again."

"Drug—again!" she exclaimed.

"Yes, it was used on Dickens, and last night on the third floor I got a smell of it. Probably they planned to take her away last night and I broke in just at the wrong time."

Just then the door was thrown open and Bob Holt burst into the room.

"Frances!" he cried; then seeing the detective he made an effort to control his excitement. "I want to see you alone."

"There is no need, Bob. I know what is wrong; so does Mr. Henshaw. He saw the machine when it went out."

"Machine?" he demanded.

"Yes, some one took Jean away in the big touring-car."

Without answering her, Bob Holt went over to the desk and picked up the telephone that connected the library with the other parts of the Holt establishment. He pressed the button for the stable, and when he was answered he asked:

"Who ordered the black car, John? This is Mr. Bob speaking—Who?—I did? There has been a mistake! Come to the library at once!" He hung up the receiver and turned to the others. "He says I ordered it myself! Of course I did not—it's Todd!" he cried, wheeling on his sister. "He is meddling again, but this time——"

He did not finish, for a quiet voice at the door said,

"Pardon, I heard my name and I thought I might be wanted."

It was Mr. Alexander Todd!

CHAPTER XII

THE FINDING OF JEAN

MR. TODD stood for a moment looking at the others in the room. No one spoke, Bob Holt not having recovered from his surprise and the other two waiting for him to break the silence.

"Well," said the secretary, "how have I been meddling?"

"Did you order out the black car tonight?" Holt asked.

"I did not, but if I had I would have been within my rights. My contract with Mr. Holt has another month to run, and one clause in that contract reads that in view of the remoteness of Greystone I was to have a motor at my disposal."

"But not for such a purpose!" the young man answered.

"What purpose?"

"For taking Jean away without our consent."

Mr. Todd stiffened and his mouth set in a hard line, but he showed no surprise.

"So you have told your father's secret to an outsider! That would have pleased him!" he said in a bitter, ironical voice.

"You are wrong," Frances Holt broke in. "I told Mr. Henshaw about Jean."

"You!" he said in amazement.

"Yes, I am tired of making a dark secret out of what is only a great misfortune. If you did not take Jean away you must help us find her!"

She looked appealingly at him.

"I will with pleasure," he bowed to her.

There was a knock at the door, Bob Holt went to open it and admitted John, the head coachman.

"John, I want to know about the black car. You say I ordered it?"

"Yes, sir. I was out of the stable at the time and Jim answered the phone. You ordered the car taken to the porte-cochère and left there, as you wanted to drive it yourself. Jim took it around and left it. An hour later the car rolled around to the stable and Jim touched his cap to you."

"To me? He is sure?" Holt asked.

"Yes, sir, he thought to you; he recognized your coat and cap."

"Did he notice anything unusual about the car?" Henshaw asked.

"No, sir; that is, he mentioned that the curtains of the tonneau were lowered. Then you handed him this note. It was addressed to me and as soon as I came in he gave it to me; I was about to carry out your instruction when you telephoned me to come here."

He took a note from his pocket and handed it to Holt, who read it and passed it over to the detective. It read:

At two o'clock send to southeast gate and bring back car.

There was no signature.

Henshaw turned to Holt,

"Is this your writing?"

"It is a good imitation of it, at least."

"How did you happen to be away from the stable at this time?" Henshaw asked the coachman.

"I was in the drawing-room taking my turn watching by Mr. Holt."

"Ah, now we will go. Mr. Holt and John, come with me. Mr. Todd, Miss Holt is nervous; I leave her in your care."

Mr. Todd bowed in reply and the three men started when the secretary's voice stopped them:

"Mr. Henshaw, don't get too far away from John. Danger does not like strangers."



THE detective smiled in reply and followed young Holt and John.

They went out the back way and started out toward the stable. As they neared it Danger leaped up to them and Henshaw took advantage of the presence of John to make friends with the dog. They had not rounded the stable when Danger bounded forward, and as he did, a man lurched out of the shadows and in an unsteady voice cried out,

"Call him off!" It was Dickens, the valet of the late Mr. Holt, reeling drunk!

"Dickens," said Bob Holt, as soon as he was sure of his man, "what are you doing out this time of night?"

The man staggered up to him and mumbled out that he was just back from town where he had been sent on an errand, that he took a drink to forget his grief at the death of Mr. Holt and so was delayed. He began to cry as he finished this speech and Henshaw took hold of his arm to steady him.

"How did you get out here from town?" he asked.

"I walked—all the way—I walked."

He staggered and would have fallen had not the detective braced him.

"All right; you are a good walker if you are drunk."

Then turning to John he asked him to call one of his men.

A young man appeared.

"Here," said Henshaw, "take this man and help him to bed. Stay with him until we come back," he whispered in the man's ear and slipped something into his hand.

Having disposed of the drunken valet, the three went on their way, Danger running along with them. The way before them was a narrow road used only by the tradespeople who brought their wares to the house. It skirted the conservatory and ran close to the head gardener's cottage. As they passed the latter Danger paused and whined, and John suggested taking him back and chaining him up.

"Let him alone; in some ways he has got it on all of us," Henshaw said.

They walked on down the road that ran between two rows of trees that made the way dark. Henshaw turned his light on the ground and kept track of the automobile which had so recently passed this way. In the silence that fell the detective went over the latest development of this strange case—the forged note that was a clever imitation of Bob Holt's writing. He took it out of his pocket and looked at it by the light of his dark lantern. It was clever, but an expert could tell that it was an imitation, especially as Henshaw had made a study of young Holt's writing. There was something about it, however, that struck the detective as strangely familiar. It was the letter S. It was not Bob Holt's, but he was sure he had seen it somewhere else, and at that, in Mr. Holt's house.



THEN in one of those flashes where Intuition illumines what Reason has left dark, he knew that the hand that had forged this note to the coachman had written the slip of paper found under the candelabrum. He had guessed before that the latter was not written by Mr. Holt, whose death instantly followed the shot. Some one had come in, found the old man dead, and, knowing his custom of leaving instruction to Peters, wrote the paper and left the room.

This would scarcely have been the murderer, as he would naturally be the last to think of calling the police. So that in spite of this discovery Henshaw found himself no nearer a solution of the mystery; rather the reverse. It showed, however, that he was matched against a keen and far-planning brain, and another thing was clear, that though one mind might be back of all of the mystery, there were coworkers, for no single person could be in so many different places in such a short space of time.

By this time the party of three emerged from the dark road and saw standing by the gate the big black car. All the lights were out, and it was a forbidding object with its lowered shades and half-opened door. Henshaw asked the others to wait where they were while he went forward to make an examination of the footprints. He first opened wide the door of the car and peered in—the fragrance of the beautiful girl filled the tonneau! They were on the right track now beyond all doubt.

He closed the door and bent down to the ground; the prints were quite plain, and he could make out that some one had gotten down from the driver's seat, opened the door and then turned toward the gate. There he had paused, standing still on one foot while the other tapped the ground. He was nervous, that was certain, but whether he stood here talking to some one, or whether he was waiting for the vehicle that was to meet him here to take the girl away, was not certain.


The gate was unlocked, and calling to the others to wait, Henshaw went outside. Here he found signs of another automobile, a lighter and smaller car. Some one had stepped from the tonneau of this machine and walked to the gate, and here evidently talked to the man inside the gate. The machine outside turned and went back the way it had come. This way ran alongside

of the fence of the Greystone Park and joined the main road at the northeast corner of the estate.

There was one curious thing about the whole thing—the inside man did not venture out of the grounds, but was joined by the newcomer, who followed him a short distance to the rear to the black car. Here the first man paused and leaned forward. It was plain that he now lifted the girl from the tonneau. Henshaw followed the footprints until they were lost on the grass, then he called John, who was holding Danger, and asked him to take the car back to the stable.

"I want you with me, Mr. Holt. Now, Danger!" he called to the released dog, who bounded to him. He pulled from his pocket a soft white object and held it under the dog's nose and whispered one word in his ear.

Danger sniffed it, ran around nosing the ground, let out a mighty bark of joy and was off, Henshaw and Holt behind him.

 THE trail took them off the roadway and wound in and out of the shrubs and low-hanging trees. It was the blackest time of the night, and what faint light the waning stars gave was shut out by the branches of the new-leaved trees. Holt and the detective stumbled several times and once the former bumped against an unseen tree, but they went on, following the lead of Danger.

Suddenly the dog began to bark and at the same time the men reached a clearing and saw Danger on the small porch of the head gardener's cottage. Here the trail had stopped.

"That would have been a fine trick, if it had only worked!" Henshaw cried.

"What?" young Holt asked.

Without answering him, the detective ran up the steps and rang the bell. There was a long wait before Barrows, the head gardener, fully dressed, but yawning as though they had interrupted a nap, opened the door.

"We want to see the young lady that was brought here some time ago," Henshaw said.

"What young lady?" the man asked stupidly.

Bob Holt stepped forward. "We know that the young lady is here, Barrows."

"Of course; you brought her here yourself, sir."

"I—" the young man began, but a signal from Henshaw silenced him.

"Never mind; we want to go to her."

The gardener without another word turned and led the way down a passage and pushed open a door gently.

"She is there, sir. I have listened several times, but she hasn't made a sound."

"All right," said Henshaw quietly, as he moved into the room with Holt just behind him.

He advanced to the bed. There was a deathlike stillness in the dark room, and for a moment he hesitated to turn his lantern on the bed; when he did, it illumined the figure lying there. It was Jean, so beautiful, so still. Henshaw bent lower, touched her hand, then her throat gently, switched off his light.

"We are too late," he said hoarsely.

"What do you mean?" Holt asked.

"She is dead!"

CHAPTER XIII

MR. TODD TALKS

FOR a moment neither man spoke, and during the silence the first light of the new day stole into the room. Bob Holt sank on his knees by the bed, his frame shaken with grief. Henshaw, whispering that he would return, left the room and sought out Barrows.

"Tell me how the young lady was brought here."

"I was sound asleep when my bell rang; I went to the door, and a young man in an automobile coat and cap said he was Mr. Holt and that he wanted a room for a young lady who was ill and couldn't sleep in the house. He and another man in a big coat, too, brought the young lady in. It struck me as queer, but he said he was Mr. Holt; so I said nothing, but showed him the room. I hope everything is all right."

"I hope so too," Henshaw said as he opened the front door and went out of the house.

He stopped by the stable and called John.

"I want you to come out and keep your eye on that cottage. Don't by any chance let Barrows slip away, and if I whistle bring him to the library dead or alive!"

He hurried to the library, half expecting to find Mr. Todd, but he and Frances Holt had long since left the room. He walked

over to the desk where the service buttons were and pressed the one that called Peters. Then he took from his pocket the two forged papers and compared them again, and from the lower drawer of the desk he extracted the memorandum that had figured at the inquest. He laid the three papers on the desk. He was well pleased with the result. He thrust the papers in his pocket as the library door opened and he turned to see Mr. Todd. The secretary was calm and fresh looking, and greeted Henshaw with a smile.

"Well, was your expedition successful?"

"Yes, in a way—I found her."

"Ah!"

"She is as beautiful now as ever."

"Why shouldn't she be?"

"Sudden death has a way of disfiguring its victim!"

"Death?" Todd cried. "Why, Jean—I saw her only a short while ago——"

"I know you saw her alive, but you left the working out of your plan to others and it failed."

"What do you know?" Todd asked desperately.

"That you ordered the car in Bob Holt's name, that you directly or indirectly gave the drug to Jean Holt and carried her to the waiting car, and that on your way to the gate you gave the forged note to Jim at the stable! When you got to the gate you waited for Dickens, who was to bring the automobile from town. When he arrived he was drunk and you dared not trust the girl to him, and as you could not leave the grounds yourself without arousing suspicion, you carried her to the gardener's cottage. I am right, am I not?"

"Yes," the other answered wearily; he spoke as if a weight were off his mind now that the detective knew.



"I KNOW of your movements, Mr. Todd, but I can only guess at your motive."

"I can only tell you that it seemed to me that she must be gotten out of this house before——"

"I found her."

Todd nodded and Henshaw went on.

"You thought she killed her father. I gathered that when I found the mate to your cuff-button in her room."

"Yes, I gave her the buttons one night in this library; it was a rule in the house to

give her anything that she admired, and the pearl and platinum setting caught her eye."

"I know," said Henshaw, thinking of the white and silver salon at the top of the house.

"When the button turned up at the inquest I thought that in a violent spell she had killed him."

"Up to that time you were sure that Bob Holt——"

Todd's face darkened:

"I can not discuss that—my conduct, I fear, was unpardonable."

"Well, to go back to Miss Jean Holt: you thought she——"

"Yes, I was sure of it when Miss Frances' revolver was stolen. It was pearl and silver, and Jean had seen it. Then my one idea was to get her away. I sent Martha, her maid, to Armitage to make arrangements. Dickens met her there and drove her out here in the machine, but, as you know, he was drunk and spoiled the plan, for I dared not trust the two women to his driving. Martha and I carried Jean to the gardener's cottage and I hurried here and got in the house just in time to hear Bob denounce me."

At that moment the telephone rang and when Henshaw picked up the receiver the voice of Coroner James called out,

"Good morning."

"Good morning. Well?" Henshaw asked.

"Two messages for you; one from Warren in 'Frisco. Know him?"

Know him? It was to Warren that Henshaw wired the moment 'Frisco came into the mystery. Whatever was to be found out, he knew Warren was the man.

"Here it is," and the Coroner read out:

"Year ago, Clay, New York lawyer, wrote Winter's agency here to trace an Englishman by name of Dawson Harrow, an ex-officer, aged between fifty and sixty, only mark of identification saber-cut on the neck; not heard of in ten years. Winters traced man to England five years ago. Present whereabouts unknown. This may be connected with your case, as Harrow was husband of first Mrs. Holt. Warren."

Henshaw listened while James read this out and asked for the next. It was from Brainard, an English detective, and read: "Arundel register gives Alexander Todd Naughton born July 24, 18——"

"Thanks," Henshaw said as he hung up the receiver and turned to Todd.

"Mr. Todd, did Mr. Holt know that you were his first wife's nephew?"


Todd sprang up.

"No, certainly not!"

"The Arundel birth register has given us positive information even if your face hadn't long since given you away."

"What do you mean?" the secretary demanded.

"Don't you know that your mouth and chin, especially the dimple in the chin, are identical with Jean Holt's?"

 THE secretary looked at him a moment before speaking.

"You are right. My father was Charles Naughton, the brother of Margaret Naughton Harrow, who married Mr. Holt. You know that my grandfather came to this country to claim the large fortune that his brother left him. Very soon after his daughter married Mr. Holt, my grandfather died and the estate was divided between his two children. My father took his share and returned to England, married my mother, squandered his fortune and deserted his wife when I was ten years old. My mother resumed her maiden name and we went to London, where she worked to educate me. I was brought up in the most pinching poverty, and all the wrong I have done has been from the ugly spirit that developed during those hard days.

"We heard of my father's death and when I was twenty I lost my mother. After many ups and downs I became a secretary for an English gentleman and was getting on very well, though my lack of money and subordinate position were hard to bear. One day a detective called on me. It seems that he had been looking for me for some time, as there was a man in America who wanted to get in touch with me."

"To tell you of the illegality of your aunt's marriage to Holt."

"Yes, that was the first I knew of it, and he told of the fortune which really belonged to me as her only living blood-relation, but which was now absorbed in the Holt fortune. You can imagine my state of mind when, shortly afterward, Mr. Holt came to visit my employer. I made friends with him, and it ended by his making me the offer to come to America. I seized the chance, as I knew I would then have an opportunity to investigate the matter before I made any move."

"Then you never saw the man who gave you the information. What was his name?"

"John Roberts, though of course I fancy that was an assumed name. No. I have never met him, though I have done many things at his instance that I have not wished to do."

"Blackmail, eh? Threatened to tell Mr. Holt after you had decided not to?"

"Yes, just about. I admit that I came here with many wicked designs, but one by one they have dropped away. After I knew Jean and her condition my attitude toward her mother's money changed, and then there are other reasons."

The scene between Todd and Frances Holt in the hall just after the inquest came to Henshaw, and he was sure that he knew what the "other reasons" were.


"You say you left Martha with Miss Jean in the gardener's cottage?"

"Yes, I would not have left her alone with——"

"With Barrows, although you got him his position. Martha probably heard us coming and got out to avoid the responsibility of——"

There was a knock at the door and in answer to Henshaw's, "Come in," Peters entered.

"Peters, I want you to accompany me to the gardener's cottage shortly. Please wait for me in the hall."

 THE old man withdrew and the detective turned to Todd.

"One thing more, Mr. Todd. Why did you write the 'Peters—police' paper and leave it in the library?"

"Tuesday night I couldn't sleep, so I came down to the library late—about two o'clock, I should say. I found Mr. Holt dead. I had promised him that if he was ever found dead I would start the investigation. I was afraid, a coward I suppose, and I took that way of arousing suspicion."

"Then Mr. Holt feared. No wonder he wanted his daughter's revolver! You suspected Bob Holt—why?" Henshaw asked.

"I had rather forget that, but I really do not deserve any consideration. He had quarreled time and again with his father; I knew he had bought a revolver and that his father had given him until the next day to make up his mind to go to Europe."

"And you wanted him out of the way

because he stood between you and his sister Frances?"

Mr. Todd bowed his head.

"Mr. Henshaw, my shame is complete. Will you not spare me? If I am spared, I will strive to redeem myself—" He did not finish his sentence, for something out of the window caught his eye and he cried out, "Thank God!"

Henshaw looked and saw Bob Holt crossing the lawn, and Jean was walking by his side!

"SHE isn't dead!" he cried joyfully.

"No," the detective answered, "but my position was desperate and I had to use desperate methods."

"It seems scarcely necessary to make a man suffer as you have made me," Mr. Todd said with much bitterness.

"It was necessary, I assure you," replied Henshaw.

"But what do you know now? Mr. Holt's death is as great a mystery as ever."

"Far from it. There is one point that we are not likely ever to clear up—that is, who stole the revolver from Miss Holt's desk—but we will know who used it."

"Do you mean that you know?" Mr. Todd was greatly excited at the thought.

"I am quite sure."

At that moment the door opened and Bob Holt came in; he was alone.

"Where is your sister?—I am sorry I found it necessary to give you such a shock, but I knew that you would soon know to the contrary."

"Peters took her up to Frances. Isn't it wonderful? When she waked it was as if she had had a long fine sleep. I have always believed that she could be cured—now I am sure of it!"

Young Holt was radiant.

"Did she tell you anything?"

"Nothing about this present affair, but something very curious about father. She came down here very late the night he died. She came to bring him a white carnation. He spoke of her mother for the first time to her, and told her that this flower had been her favorite, that her mother always wore one. Jean asked me to get her more of them; that is all."

"That is a great deal. She was in here Tuesday night and saw her father shortly before he died; this must have been near one o'clock. Later than that a man en-

tered your father's bedroom and first visited Dickens, who between his love of liquor and fear of spirits is not a very reliable person, as Mr. Todd knows. I dare say this morning some automobile owner is looking in vain for his machine, but Dickens left it somewhere down the road last night and its owner will have to hustle to find it."

"But who was it that got into father's room?"

"I hope to tell you very soon. At any rate, after disposing of the valet, he returned to the bedroom; here—this is only a guess, but it is the only one we can make—he found your sister's revolver. Your father must have taken it himself. At the inquest she testified that he had asked her for it and that she refused. We know that he felt the need of it, and he was the type of man to get what he needed. The murderer evidently found it in the bedroom and crept into the library.

"As he opened the door, Mr. Holt rose from his chair and faced him. Something happened, for there was no interview; the intruder never advanced beyond the library door and Mr. Holt did not move more than one foot. I think the man came for the purpose of an interview or theft rather than murder, for he was not armed until he found the small revolver. But for some reason—either a sudden fright or fit of rage; personally, I think it was the sight of the white carnation that Mr. Holt had in his hand—as your father reached for the poker or some weapon to defend himself, the man at the door fired. Later I will give my evidence in detail, but you will find this very exact."

"But who was the man?" young Holt demanded.

"The man we all know as Barrows, the head gardener!"

"Barrows!" Mr. Todd cried. "Why, I—"

"Yes, I know he came through you, but it was the plan of that blackmailing Roberts and you were forced to do it. You must tell Mr. Holt and his sister your story another time; just now we have something else before us."



HE OPENED the door into the hall and found Peters waiting. Calling the old man to him he hurried out of the house, the other men following close behind.

They reached the gardener's cottage and Henshaw ran up the steps, pushed open the door and entered the house, but nowhere was Barrows to be seen.

In one room there were the embers of a fire, and the charred pieces of half-burned paper showed he had been there recently.

The back door of the cottage was opposite an entrance to the greenhouse. Henshaw glanced at the ground and signaled the men to follow. The morning light flooded the conservatory and the fragrance of hundreds of blossoms greeted them, but was unnoticed in the horror of the scene before them.

Barrows lay on his back in one of the passages between the flower tables, his clothes bespattered with blood and the death agony still on his face. Henshaw bent down and picked up the blunt knife that had cut the artery in the left wrist. He then lifted the head and took off the long gray wig that had given the gardener the appearance of a benevolent Dutchman, and unwound the silk handkerchief from his throat.

"Peters," he said, turning to the old man, "have you ever seen him before?"

The butler looked at the prone figure

closely; the stony brown eyes seemed to answer his stare. Henshaw pointed to the neck; at the left was a long peculiar scar—a saber-cut!

"Yes, yes!" the old man cried; "it's Miss Margaret's first husband! It's——"

"Dawson Harrow," Henshaw finished, "liar, thief, blackmailer, murderer and suicide! The world is well rid of him."



FOR two years the old house was closed, and when it was opened it was to welcome the home-coming of a happy, united group.

Peters, old and feeble, but still full of manner, stood at the door and received first Frances Holt and her new husband, Alexander Todd Naughton. He greeted them, and Bob Holt, who followed with a cordial, respectful smile, which grew into a look of joy and thanksgiving as the last member of the party entered. It was Jean Holt, well in mind and body, the shadows gone from her lovely eyes and faint color in her cheeks.

Peters, with his old habit of making observations, said to himself, "Miss Margaret didn't leave behind a white carnation after all, but a full-blown June rose!"

And he looked at Jean and smiled again.

THE OUTRIDERS

by H. BEDFORD-JONES

THERE'S a shard of a shattered rifle-butt in the sands of the Kizil Kum;
There's a faded rag of an unknown flag in the deeps of the Andes' gloom;
There's a crimson smudge on a camel-loop where an Afghan tent is spread—
And this is all that the winds recall of the Men Whose Blood Was Red.

And it's "Brown was across the harbor mouth when a searchlight showed him clear;"
Or "When Smith was drilled and his last man killed they hoisted him on a spear;"
Or "The sprawled-out chap that you potted last gave Billy his bit of lead—"
And this is all that their mates recall of the Men Whose Blood Was Red.

But soft in the surge of the German Seas, or under the Sussex skies,
Or low in the drone of the Northwoods' moan comes a murmur that never dies.
"There was pity and love in his heart for all—ah, God, let me hear his tread!"
And this is all their mothers recall of the Men Whose Blood Was Red.



THE CAMP-FIRE A MEETING-PLACE FOR READERS, WRITERS AND ADVENTURERS ~ ~ ~



I FELT that Ledward Rawlinson had never had an introduction to the Camp-Fire that did him justice as a dyed-in-the-wool adventurer, so I asked him for a brief outline of his wanderings. It follows. "It reeks of the personal pronoun as a slaughter-house of gore, but it can't be helped," says he. "I was tempted to stick in a few 'we's' to break the monotony, but unfortunately I always traveled alone; my erratic nature always prevented any one from accompanying me more than two consecutive miles."

When I was three months old my family moved from England to Holland, remaining there four years. From my Dutch nurse I learned my first language. After that we returned to England and at the first opportunity I became a wanderer in my own right.

By beating my way across this country I reached Frisco and there signed on a black old tramp for a cruise to Hawaii and the South Seas.

Next came New Zealand, then Australia. From Australia I went to Ceylon and from there to Monte Carlo. I narrowly escaped having to walk from Monaco to Paris, but managed to save enough for a third-class ticket and somehow or other eked out an existence in a little café near the Gare St. Lazare.

Again I was back in New York. Three months later I sailed for the west coast of South America, spending two years south of Panama—Peru, Bolivia, Chile, a trip through the Straits of Magellan, and then by way of the Falkland Islands up the east coast as far north as Rio. Next came Spain and Portugal and again to Monte Carlo.

Back to sea again—Singapore, the Protectorate of Johore, up the Malacca Strait to Penang. Then followed a trip up the Yang-tse-Kiang. My intention of going into the heart of the Chinese Empire and into Tibet I had to abandon on account of uprisings north of Hankow; also funds were getting low.

Japan I saw on a bicycle.

I HAVE been shot at in the dark and stabbed at in the daylight, and jailed for another man's crime. I have slept in temples, barns and out-houses, and tramped the streets of Shanghai, Tokyo and Yokohama looking for work.

I lay in the gutter of a street in the heart of the native quarter of Port Said vomiting my heart out while the natives gathered round to watch the fun.

I have been a hobo, tropical tramp, sailor, carpenter, ranch-hand, laborer, painter, waiter, dishwasher, cook, doctor, paymaster, bookkeeper, edi-

tor, school-teacher, deputy sheriff, secretary to a diplomat, etc.

I have worshiped in Mohammedan temples, at Shinto shrines; cried "*Namu Amida Butsu*" at the feet of the Great Buddha at Kamukara, and once fell in love with a Salvation Army girl on Fourteenth Street, New York.

They have taken me for an Irishman, a Scotchman, an American and even a Swiss. I once applied to a British consul for a passport and he refused same because I looked like an American and talked like one. As it was absolutely necessary that I identify myself immediately, I tried to run the gauntlet on the American consul. He said I looked like an Englishman and talked like one. And I never did get that passport. I am a man without a country.

The Henry Jovet in his story in this issue, "The Sulphur Cross," is drawn from a man who a few years ago had an unspeakable reputation in the rubber camps along the Beni. (The daily papers have lately given us some idea of the atrocities in the Peruvian rubber country along the Putumayo, the scene of our story.) The incident of the story, however, is fiction.

IN THIS issue is "The Wreck of the *Arabella*," being our fourth story by W. Townend, another of those wanderers who ought to have a whole meeting of the Camp-Fire to cover their adventurings properly. Soldiers and sailors interest him more than almost anything else, and one of his favorite amusements is knocking around the world on tramp steamers. Once he took a Prussian fireman ashore at Algiers to see a dentist. A battalion of French Zouaves came along—but I mustn't start on that now. It isn't terribly exciting anyhow—nobody was killed.

DONALD FRANCIS MCGREW, I am sorry to report, is conducting an unwilling campaign against that tough old warrior, the Grippe, and that other tough old guy, Insomnia. I had written him for any real facts that might lurk behind his

story in this issue, "Big Bull Burgoyne," and it was Mrs. McGrew who answered my letter, giving me the bad news and the information asked for. So much of Mr. McGrew's stories is drawn from actual happenings—a good deal of it from his own experiences—that I was pretty sure there were real people and facts behind the present tale. As it appears there were:

He asked me to give you the data on the "Burgoyne" story as you requested. The names, he says, are of course fictitious, though the actions of the men and officer are true as related to him by a former troop-mate, who had been in several outfits. As the officer is still in the service, Mr. McGrew doubts the advisability of having his real name appear in the Camp-Fire, though he says to tell you in confidence that his name is ——. The man who told Mr. McGrew the story is called Grogan in his tale, and he is now a chief of section in a battery on the border at Ft. Bliss; but Grogan is not his name. This man was in China during the Boxer trouble, as well as Cuba and the islands, and Mr. McGrew says is one of the finest-looking soldiers he ever had the fortune to meet, as well as being one of the bravest. Mr. McGrew was with him nearly three years, and is indebted to him for several tales that did not come under his own personal experience. He took some of his well-known characters, inserted them, added a little humor, and you have the story.

A GREEK I know, who is in close touch with the Balkan Committee, told me not long ago that a most wonderful thing is coming to pass in that troubled and turbulent southeastern corner of Europe. Perhaps by the time you read this it will already have become history, though predictions are not safe in that quarter.

The trouble with the Balkans has always been that Roumania, Serbia, Montenegro, Macedonia, Bulgaria, Albania, and all the rest of them have been so bitterly torn by dissensions and differences among themselves—religious, racial and political, that the canny Turk has always been able to "get away with it." Now, my friend tells me, a new era dawns. These age-long hates and jealousies, particularly the antagonism between the Greeks and Bulgarians, are being buried, at least for long enough to present a united front against the common foe, whom Italy is just now keeping in such a profuse perspiration. The Committee seems to count on Italy's eventually taking the dangerous plunge into the peace of Europe and beginning a campaign against Turkey proper. That will be the Balkans' time to rise and remove the Turk. And if

all goes as planned, I judge it will be "some removal."

It is interesting to recall that Gladstone, who had so much at heart a uniting of the multitudinous warring factions of what we call the Balkans, used to say that if ever a successful Balkan Federation could be brought to pass it would have before it one of the brightest futures in Europe.

THESE little peeks into international affairs, these little glimpses behind the scenes that come to me now and then, are by no means the least interesting of the many interesting things that fall to the lot of the editor of ADVENTURE. For instance, there's a South American republic of comparatively peaceful habits that is planning to hand a riot to one of its neighbors. There has been no breath of it in the public prints, but the man who was asked to personally conduct the riot happened into the office.

Hints of what really lies behind newspaper reports of doings in the Philippines are also entertaining. While as for Mexico, well, some of the unpublished contemporary history from that caldron—why, we had in the office a perfectly corking article written from the inner inside of things down there and there was a suspicious moisture about my eyes for a week because it was too infernally red-hot for a ladylike magazine such as ADVENTURE to touch with a ten-foot pole. Also there's a man down there who sends me a letter now and then—when there's an American to carry it out of the country personally, that—but I guess it's time to stop talking.

GEORGE VAUX BACON, whose "Willy Takes Pa Sailing" has probably caused you a few chuckles, was once the "humorous guy" on the *Cleveland Press*.

MISS KATE L. McLAURIN, who wrote "The White Carnation," comes naturally by her ability to write mystery stories, having spent her childhood in that famous old mystery house, the Hindman Mansion, in Helena, Arkansas. Also, there was an old leaning and longing for the law as a profession before she went on the stage, where she has played the lead with Edgar Selwyn in "Strongheart," with Robert Edson in "The Call of the North," a season with Henrietta Crosman and "Going Some."

Miss McLaurin is a Mississippian by birth, a niece of the late Senator A. J. McLaurin and a great-niece of Governor Aaron Brown of Tennessee, who was also a member of President Buchanan's Cabinet.

THE following about the man who "gave neither his name nor address," from H. Bedford - Jones, whose poem "The Outriders," appears in this issue, makes interesting reading:

CHICAGO, ILL.

MY DEAR MR. HOFFMAN:

In the September Camp-Fire—the first thing in the magazine I read—I struck something that puzzled me. That was the letter in regard to Fischer by the writer who "gave neither his name nor address."

The letter in question is part of a yarn told me by a man a good many hundred miles north of here. I'm not sure about the names, but the style of the letter, its general tone, and the story (about the piney-woods hoosiers, Tony's girl, and the rest) is exactly as I had it from "Man-Who-Makes-No-Shadow," as he called himself. Only, he didn't tell you all about Tony's girl, which is some yarn in itself. I'll bet two dollars to a doughnut I know who wrote you that letter, and if you could make space to send a greeting to "Man-Who-Makes-No-Shadow" from Soan-ge-taha, I'd appreciate it. Last I knew of him he hadn't been away from the shack for three years, but he got ADVENTURE each month, sooner or later. Queer chap—part Indian—been in everything from the Custer war to the Welsh Fusiliers. He's the one all right—usually signs his letters by the above name, or simply "Chief;" they have no address, but smell of the woods. I want to hear from him.

Of course we are glad to make space for a greeting to Man-Who-Makes-No-Shadow from Soan-ge-taha, and here's hoping they find each other again through ADVENTURE. That is one of the things the Camp-Fire is for—to help one adventurer pick up the lost trail of a friend who has disappeared into the world at large.

RECENTLY I received a decided jolt. A man, who had not received from Algot Lange a prompt reply to his application to join the expedition to the Amazon, wrote to me and complained. Of course I had nothing whatever to do with selecting men for the expedition, beyond forwarding applications sent through our office, and I've already told the Camp-Fire that Mr. Lange had to hire a secretary to handle his mail. (A hundred and forty odd were forwarded by us and then I quit counting.)

That wasn't what jolted me, but he said

something like this—"That is, if the expedition is really on the level." I recovered enough to write him and say that it was, and he sent me a reply that made me like him.

Nor was *that* what jolted me. This is what did it. ADVENTURE prints two things—fiction and facts. Naturally we don't expect anybody to believe that our fiction is true, though we try to keep it true to life, and there is an amazing amount of cold, hard fact behind a good deal of it. But when it comes to the two or three articles we publish every month and present as fact, that is a different matter. To the best of our knowledge and belief, what we print as fact *is* fact.

LIKE every one else we've ever met or heard of, we may make mistakes or be deceived, but heaven knows we never consciously offer anything for fact that is not fact. ADVENTURE is now well started on its third year, and during that time it would seem that we have been fairly careful as well as fortunate in this matter. For if our field is a peculiarly difficult one to check up—have you ever considered just *how* hard it is to be sure of things and events in all the out-of-the-way corners of the earth?—it is also a field in which it is peculiarly difficult to make a mistake without being told about it. Among our readers are numbered the very men who know about the out-of-the-way corners of the earth, and they are quick to call attention to any error.

For example, in "The Storming of Dargai" in the August issue the date of that event was given as 1907, and the result has been letters from all over the map explaining that the correct date is 1897. And there is a difference of opinion as to the exact tune the bagpipes played during the charge which I haven't yet been able to get definitely settled. So you see we are pretty sure to know about it if we do make a mistake.

All the above is as true of the Camp-Fire as it is of our articles.

SO WHEN this man wished to know whether our talk about Algot Lange's expedition was "on the level" it came as a jolt. If he had doubts, there must be others. Probably I should have realized this before; in a world full of lies and gold-bricks and bull-cons and such, naturally there will always be some people to suspect

anything that comes up. But I hadn't realized it before, as it happened.

What am I going to do about it? Oh, nothing. What would *you* do in my place? Explain that you "were on the level"? I've just done so, in a way; but why should they believe that any more than the other things? And it doesn't matter very much. I think most of you know that the "Camp-Fire" is straight talk and that ADVENTURE and its publishers stand for straight dealing.

PERHAPS because it has been attacked by the *Wanderlust*, one page of the Camp-Fire has gone adventuring to the front of the magazine. Sometimes, being restless, it will be a little different from the remainder of the department, but always akin to it and generally a part of it.

You see, every well-regulated magazine has to begin on a right-hand page. Also there has to be a contents page. Result: another page, which we don't want filled with advertisements. We'd rather have that page in the back of the book, but can you see any way to get it there?

HERE is a little story from Talbot Mundy: When Lord Roberts of Kandahar took over the command of the British army in South Africa he issued a characteristic order forbidding plundering or looting in any form under penalty of death. That order was rigidly enforced whenever possible, but particularly so during the earlier stages of the war, before the systematic devastating of the country commenced.

In the meantime Tommy Atkins had to subsist on campaign rations, and Tommy did not like it. One private of a cockney regiment was doing night outpost duty, leaning on his rifle, and thinking, probably, of the delicious food his people at home were eating at that very minute; no doubt his thoughts made the temptation that came to him too acute to be resisted.

It came in the form of a sheep—a poor starved, mangy, lost sheep weighing about fifteen or twenty pounds. To any one but a soldier on campaign or a convict in a jail the thought of eating such a fragment of skin and bone would have been repulsive, but to Tommy it was nothing less than mutton on the hoof, to be treated as such. He lunged at it with his bayonet, but the steel glanced off and the wounded sheep man-

aged to back away a yard or two. Tommy followed it, and was about to lunge again when he sighted an officer making his rounds of inspection; also, it was quite evident that the officer had seen the wounding of the sheep.

The situation was serious, but presence of mind on Tommy's part saved it. He stepped up to the sheep and skewered it properly this time, then he turned to the approaching officer, and "Did you see that, sir?" he said. "The — brute bit me!"

NOW and then it's annoying to be editor of ADVENTURE. So many tempting opportunities arise and it is possible to take advantage of so few of them. For example, a letter from a man up in British Columbia who wants some one to go with him after moose and caribou up toward the headwaters of the Stikine River next February or March. Two months or so, with dog-teams. By that time there will be railway transportation from Prince Rupert to New Hazelton, whence the start will be made. To go some two hundred miles north from there. Unfortunately, being editor of ADVENTURE isn't merely a business of taking vacations. Though I don't mind admitting there's a deal of fun in it just the same.

HE SAYS many people think it came from China. It didn't. Christiania, Norway, is responsible for it. He was born there with it twenty-eight years ago. (Henry Oyen's last name is the subject of discussion.) A year later he brought it to the Big Woods belt of northern Wisconsin, but it was his six years as special writer on the Chicago *Sunday Tribune* that brought him his adventures. Here is a glimpse behind the scenes of his story in this number:

Plain-clothes man MacCarn is pretty near real life. His name isn't MacCarn, but he comes of that breed, and the adventure of "A Man's Own Business" was one of what he calls his "funny experiences." He worked for twenty years in the Desplains Street district in Chicago, and those who know say that was the toughest police district in the world. In the cool, dark mornings, after the night's work was done, I used to walk with him through the black paths of his district, and when the spirit moved him he would tell strange tales of the adventures that had befallen him. He was one of the bravest men I will ever meet and one of the most honest. Here's to you, Mac; you were all MAN!

ARTHUR SULLIVANT HOFFMAN

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