

THE ARGOSY

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WHOLE No. 453.

NORMAN BROOKE;

OR,

BREASTING THE BREAKERS.

BY MATTHEW WHITE, JR.

CHAPTER I.

HOW THE NEWS CAME.

I SHALL never forget that last Saturday in June. It was Edna's sixteenth birthday, and Aunt Louise and I had arranged a garden party as a surprise for her.

I had met Fred Jessup at the station at noon, where I had gone to get the Chinese lanterns we had ordered up from Boston, to make sure Edna should not see the express wagon stop and want to know what it meant. Of course, as he was my school chum and one of the invited guests, he knew all about the affair, and I told him of some of the plans we had made for the evening's pleasures.

"What a lucky fellow you are, Norman!" he exclaimed. "Your people are always having something going on that means a good time. When did you hear from your uncle?"

"Yesterday, from Paris. He was going to Switzerland the next day, but seemed more interested about starting for home early next month than anything else. He misses his family terribly."

"You said you didn't go with him because Mrs. Adams dreads the water so, didn't you?" went on Fred.

"Yes, and Edna wouldn't go without her, and I didn't like to leave them alone; and uncle had to go, the doctors said, so he started with a party of friends, as you know. But here are my lanterns; I must sneak in the back way with



"YOU ARE OF COURSE AWARE OF THE FACT THAT DEATH IS THE CAUSE OF GREAT CHANGES."

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them, or Edna may smell a mouse. Don't be fashionable tonight, but come early."

As I walked home, with the package under my arm, Fred's words, "What a lucky fellow you are, Norman!" kept repeating themselves in my mind with strange persistency. I wonder now whether it was in premonition of what was so soon to happen.

I was certainly luckier, if that was the way one ought to put it, than an orphan is generally supposed to be. I had come into the world a month after my father died, and my mother only lived a week after I was born. Her brother, Mr. Adams, and his wife had at once taken me to their home, and, except for the difference in name, I would not have known but I was their very own. Uncle James had a good income from the sugar refinery in which he was interested, and I had always been taught to go to him for everything I wanted just exactly as I would have done to my own parent.

I had just passed my examination for college, and expected to enter Harvard in the fall. Fred's mother was a widow, and Fred, having graduated with me at the Lynnhurst High School, was expecting to go to work in his cousin's hardware store in Boston the first of September. Although he never said much on the subject, I knew he was very anxious to study for a profession, and so I took pains to talk as little as possible about Harvard when he was around.

"I *am* a lucky fellow, and ought to be the most grateful one in the world," I told myself now as I reached our cottage, and peered cautiously over the hedge to see if Edna was about before I ventured in.

The coast was clear, and I soon had the lanterns hid safely away in the depths of my big closet. It had been arranged that Edna should spend the afternoon with her friend, Ella Bridgewater, and take tea there, although she protested some at leaving us on such an occasion.

"But George will bring you and Ella back early, and we'll all have a jolly evening here together," I told her.

By the way, I wish you could see my cousin Edna. I shan't attempt to describe her, nor allow the artist to make a picture of her. But then she is the image of my Aunt Louise, so no wonder I thought there was no girl like her.

As soon as Edna was out of the way, my aunt, the gardener and myself set to work, and with the lanterns and some flags soon had the piazzas and adjoining lawn transformed into gayly decorated retreats. I had engaged a banjo club from Boston to come up and furnish the music, and they were to be met at the station; then there was the caterer to see, so as to make sure that he had the order right; flowers to be procured, and so on; so that I had my hands full, and had just time to snatch a hasty tea with aunt before dressing for the evening.

I was just in the midst of this process, and was trying to decide whether I should put on my duck or my flannel white vest, when there was a knock at the door, and Gretchen, the maid called out: "Here is a note for you, Mr. Norman."

"If that's from the banjo men saying they can't come, somebody'll get hurt," I muttered, as I opened the door on a crack, and reached out my fingers for the missive.

I did not recognize the writing, but hastily breaking the seal, I saw that the date was Lynnhurst, so my fears regarding the banjoists were groundless.

MY DEAR NORMAN,

Of course it will not be necessary for us to send an apology for not coming to tender our congratulations to Miss Edna this evening.

Mrs. Bostwick will take an early opportunity of calling to offer her services to Mrs. Adams in any way that they may be available in this terrible ordeal.

With kindest regards to all.

Very sincerely yours,

ANDREW BOSTWICK.

I read the note through twice and understood it no better after the second perusal than I had after the first.

"It will not be necessary to send an apology for not coming," I repeated to myself. "What on earth does the man mean?"

Mr. Bostwick was a lawyer who lived on the next block, and although he was somewhat old fashioned in his ways, I had never given him credit for being quite as obscure as this note made him.

"And what did he write to me for instead of to Aunt Louise?" I asked myself. "Then this 'terrible ordeal.' What in the name of wonder can he mean by that? I can't imagine unless aunt is going to have a siege of dressmaking and Mrs. Bostwick has told him to express it that way for fun. Still that doesn't explain why they don't come to the party."

However, I had too much to do to bother my head about puzzles just then, and hastily deciding on the flannel vest, I finished my toilet, and rushed off to the station to pilot the banjo club up to the house.

It was a beautiful night, and when I had installed my half dozen musicians in the arbor and started them to playing the "Blue Danube," I thought Lynnhurst had never had such a pretty combination of attractions for the ear and eye.

The guests had already begun to arrive, and aunt and I wondered why Edna did not come. We had charged Ella to be sure and have her back before eight. Just as I was shaking hands with old Mrs. Mosher and assuring her that my cousin would be there in a moment or two to receive her good wishes, I thought I heard some one call "Norman" from the road.

Hastily excusing myself, I hurried out to the gate, and was staggered for an instant at the sight that met my gaze.

There was Edna supported on one side by Dr. Bridgewater, on the other by Ella, her face covered by both hands and her whole frame shaking as if with convulsive subbing. Before I could make a move of any sort, George darted forward and grasped me by the arm.

"Stop that music, Norman," he cried in my ear. "Merciful Heavens, haven't you and Mrs. Adams heard?"

"Heard! Heard what?" I gasped, hundreds of terrible possibilities darting through my mind.

For answer, he took a Boston *Traveler* out of his pocket, and drawing me quickly under a string of lanterns that the breeze was causing to dance as if in time to the music, he pointed to a cable item from Switzerland.

It was very brief, simply telling of the plunging through a bridge of a passenger train. But there was a list of the killed, and the first name in it was that of James C. Adams, Lynnhurst, Mass.

I crushed the paper together in my hand and made a spring for the arbor just as a couple began to waltz on the piazza.

CHAPTER II.

IN WHICH AN OPENING IS PROVIDED FOR ME.

WHEN I look back now to those weeks that followed that last Saturday in June, they seem different in every respect from any other period in my life. I do not remember once to have felt hungry, for instance; all sensations appeared to be absorbed in the one, overpower-

ing sense of loss in that fearful taking out of life of my Uncle James.

A cablegram from one of his friends who was with him in the wrecked train, and who was himself slightly injured, arrived about ten o'clock on the night of the garden party. And it was not till I opened this that I realized the meaning of Mr. Bostwick's note. He must have seen the item in the evening paper as the *Bridgewater* had. If I had only investigated then, one of the keenest pangs in the whole awful affair might have been spared us all.

But there is no need for me to dwell on this dismal epoch in my life. It was the first time within my recollection that death had entered our household, and the peculiar form in which it now came, added horror to the visitation.

After the first shock my aunt and cousin bore up nobly. I felt that now I was the man of the house, and my eighteen years appeared to me to have had two added to them since I had read that brief item in the *Traveler*.

It had been arranged that Uncle James should be brought back and buried in the family plot at Mt. Auburn, and several times his lawyer, Mr. Winkler, came down from Boston to consult with my aunt. I was never present at these interviews, and after each one I noticed that Aunt Louise looked worried and anxious.

I debated with myself whether I should not ask what the trouble was, and whether I could not be of service in the matter, but I reflected, as I had not been taken into confidence in the affair, I had better not meddle. Of the future, beyond the funeral, I had not yet thought. For weeks, as I said, we were all in a more or less dazed condition.

The funeral took place the middle of July. It was a cool day for the season and I remember that Otto, the gardener, brought into the house that morning, the first apples of the year. You will understand later why this fact stands out in my recollection.

I was rather surprised when Mr. Winkler came back with us to Lynnhurst after the burial. I was still more astonished, when on reaching the house, he asked me if I would step into the sitting room, as he wished to speak with me.

We entered together. A plate of the apples Otto had gathered stood on the table. Mr. Winkler took one up, bit into it, and then threw it into the fireplace.

"I think, Norman," he said then, turning to me, "that the gardener showed me some riper ones than those this morning. Will you not see if there are any in the pantry?"

I rose and called Gretchen, told her to investigate, and returned to my seat.

"Norman," then began Mr. Winkler, leaning back in his chair and putting the tips of his fingers together, "you are of course aware of the fact that death is the cause of great changes. Have you thought—" here Gretchen entered with another supply of apples and Mr. Winkler made a long pause until she had gone out again—"Have you thought, I say," he resumed then, "of the change your uncle's death may make in the affairs of this household?"

As he ended thus, Mr. Winkler rested his eyes on me fixedly for an instant, then transferred them to the plate of apples, from which he took the rosiest specimen and began to polish it slowly between the palms of his hands.

"Yes," I answered, "I have thought of the matter and hold myself in readiness for anything, even to giving up Harvard."

"Yes, yes, quite right; I see you are going to be a sensible fellow about it." Mr. Winkler held the apple up for inspection, and I thought he was going to eat it, but he dropped it on the table instead, and went on in a sort of burst:

"Norman, you have no doubt heard and read of many cases where a man supposed to be wealthy, was found after his death to be comparatively poor. That, I regret to say, has been my experience in looking up the affairs of your Uncle James."

Somehow I was not surprised by this statement. It seemed to fit in naturally with the calamity of his death.

"Yes," the lawyer went on, as if pursuing a train of his own thoughts, "this place must be sold to meet some obligations, and after that there will be very little left."

"And Aunt Lousie and Edna?" I exclaimed. "What is to become of them? Surely there must be some provision for them to live upon."

"They will go to Mrs. Adams's brother in Cincinnati," answered Mr. Winkler. "He has offered them a home."

The lawyer paused and looked at me meaningly.

"I understand you, sir," I said. "I must look out for myself. But now I may as well ask one question. My uncle never spoke to me on the subject, and I do not know whether I ever thought of it myself till—till this trouble came. My own father—did he leave nothing for me?"

"Nothing," answered Mr. Winkler briefly.

"Then—"

"Mr. Adams did for you precisely as if you were his own son."

There was silence in the room for an instant after that. I heard some one walk across the floor overhead, and I felt what a trial this must be to my aunt. How much I owed them all! Oh, that I were capable of doing that which would put it in my power to say: "Stay where you are. The home shall not be broken up. I will provide one."

"I have had you in mind, Norman," Mr. Winkler continued. "Mrs. Adams will have to leave for the west very soon—next week, so there would be but little time left for you to look around for a position. Besides this is a bad time of year to find openings. There seemed to be none in Boston. Still, as your people will be so far away, you might as well be in one city as another. I have a friend engaged in the toy business in New York—Mr. Angus Tick. I have written to him about you, told him all the circumstances, made mention of the good education you have had, of your pleasing address, and so on, and I have just received from him an offer of a position in his office for you at a weekly salary of ten dollars."

"You are very kind, Mr. Winkler," I said, but there was not very much enthusiasm in the remark. I was thinking of the fact that I must live in New York, where I did not know a living soul.

"Oh, I did my best for you, you may be sure, Norman," responded the lawyer, who felt that now he might eat the apple he had polished. "I owed that to my friend, Mr. Adams. And let me tell you that ten dollars a week is very high salary for a fellow of your age to receive—a beginner at that. You must prove a faithful employee to show that you are deserving of it. Let me see. He wants you to begin on Monday next, so you had better take the Sunday night train to Fall River. But I must get back to town now. Will see you again tomorrow. Good afternoon," and putting an apple in his pocket, he went off, leaving me sitting there.

CHAPTER III.

WHAT HAPPENED ON THE PILGRIM.

IT was all over—the parting with my aunt and Edna, I mean—and I was on the Fall River boat on my way to New York. According to Mr. Winkler, I suppose I should have felt highly elated at having so easily secured a

position, and one with such an unusually generous salary attached to it.

But in reality I felt bluer than the water which rushed past me as I leaned over the rail of the Pilgrim, resting my head on my hand and thinking about Lynnhurst and all the good times I had had there.

I tried hard not to do this. First, because I knew it was bad for me; and second, because it was really necessary that I think about New York and what I should do with myself after I got there. A lodging place would be the first necessity. I must find a room somewhere the price of which would come far enough within ten dollars to leave me sufficient to pay board, wash bills and car fare. Of clothes I had a large supply on hand, so I determined not to worry about this item at present.

I had purchased the *Herald* and *World* in Boston that afternoon, but as yet had not had the heart to look into them. Now, as I realized that I must have some place to which to send my trunk in the morning, I went inside, turned on the electric light in my stateroom and began to search through the apparently endless columns of advertisements for what I wanted.

My eye had just caught a glimpse of one that I thought might do when the door of my room opened suddenly and a young man staggered in.

I say staggered, not because the young man was drunk, but because we were rounding Point Judith and the boat was rolling heavily.

The fellow was as white as the handkerchief he held up to his face, and it was with a great effort he said: "Excuse me; thought it was my room."

Then he lurched towards the berth. I sprang forward, caught him just in time and let him down easily on the bed. Two or three people stopped at the door to look in, so I stepped back and closed it.

"Can I do anything for you?" I asked, bending over the young fellow, who had lightish hair, and wore a pair of russet shoes and a dark blue suit.

He still kept his face covered with his handkerchief, but shook his head, and I stooped to pick up his straw hat which had fallen to the floor.

"Here, put your feet up. You'll be more comfortable," I said, spreading one of my papers out on the coverlet.

He silently complied, and lay quiet for fully ten minutes, while I sat and watched him, wondering if he had any friends on the boat and trying to explain to myself why he had come into my room.

Although I had done all I could for him, I was not altogether at ease over the circumstance. I had read too many stories the heroes of which had been taken in by wily strangers, not to be instantly on my guard against every one who made advances to me. To be sure, I had never heard of sea sickness being employed as a means to work the bunco game, but then I reflected that this was an enterprising age and that the fact that such an expedient was an odd one made it all the more likely that it would be employed.

"I'd like to get a look at the fellow's face," I said to myself. "I've read that criminals can't keep their real character from showing in some of their features."

But my strange companion still kept the handkerchief over his eyes and mouth, and from the heaviness of his breathing I began to fear that he had gone to sleep. The boat had passed the roughest spot and now rode more smoothly.

"I believe I'll rouse him, up," I thought. "I'll want to go to bed myself pretty soon."

I hadn't a big sum of money with me, only twenty five

dollars, which I had been saving up out of my monthly allowance for use at Harvard, and which Aunt Louise insisted I should keep. But there was my gold watch and my valise. No, I decided very emphatically that I would not go to bed, even with another berth in the room, while that fellow was there.

Still, I wasn't sleepy yet, and I might as well give him as long an opportunity as possible to recover. Besides, I had that lodging house to look up. I found that the address I had seen, which I thought might do, must have been in the paper that I had put under my visitor's feet.

"But there are doubtless as many other good ones here." I told myself, as I unfolded the other sheet.

I had just found the department "Rooms to Let," when there was a movement in the lower berth and the voice of the young man said: "You don't mind if I stay here awhile do you?"

I dropped my paper and looked at him, as I said "Oh, no."

He was younger than I had supposed, about twenty two, with a small blond mustache, and almost any one would have described him as good looking.

"I got on at Newport," he continued, "right after a big dinner, and when the boat began to pitch I had to get down on my back somewhere. I saw the key in your door—I'd left mine that way while I went on deck a moment—and first thought this was my room. I'll be all right in a few minutes, I think, if you don't mind my lying here. You're alone, are you?"

"Yes," I answered, adding: "I've got some reading to do, and shan't go to bed for half an hour yet."

"Thank you," he said, and turning his face to the wall, he relapsed into silence.

I couldn't help but think that the whole proceeding was a queer one. Still, the fellow's face was pleasant and his manner exceedingly so. I had the prospect of being too friendless myself to turn the cold shoulder to any one who might ask a favor of me, especially one who was ill, and that my companion was really in such condition his face showed plainly enough.

At this recollection I determined to give more adequate expression to my good Samaritan instincts. Rising, I stepped over to the berth, and seeing that the occupant was staring with wide open eyes at the partition, suggested that he would be more comfortable if he removed his coat and vest.

"Thanks. I guess I would," and as I noticed that he sat up with difficulty, I helped him off with the garments, which I hung on the hooks on the opposite side of the room.

Then he lay down again, and I resumed my hunt for quarters in the metropolis.

Up one column and down another my eye strayed. The immense number of addresses bewildered me, and as I knew but little about New York, I could not be guided in my choice by localities. Then so few of them had the price appended.

It was a weary task, and at last I leaned my head back against the partition by which I sat and tried to imagine for an instant that I didn't have it to do, that I was living at some period prior to Edna's garden party. It didn't take much trying to do this. It really seemed as if I was in Lynnhurst, and Edna and Fred Jessup, Ella Bridgewater, George and I had been out rowing on the river, had got caught in a shower, and, amid much merriment, sought shelter in a barn, on the roof of which the rain was pattering noisily.

It was certainly very real—so real that I felt the water on my face. I put up my hand and found—that I had been

asleep in my stateroom on the Pilgrim, and that a storm had sprung up and was beating in at the window on me.

I rose hastily to close it, and as I did so noticed something that caused me to drop weakly back into my seat again. The coat and vest of the fellow who still lay in the lower berth were gone. Some one had reached in at the window and taken them, watch and chain and all.

(To be continued.)

THE CHINESE CONSPIRACY;

OR,

A NAVAL CADET'S ADVENTURES IN THE CELESTIAL EMPIRE.*

BY ENRIQUE H. LEWIS.

SYNOPSIS OF CHAPTERS PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED.

LAWRENCE COLEMAN is a Naval cadet on board the frigate Benton, flagship of the American fleet on the Asiatic station, Admiral Hewett commanding. The period is during the commencement of hostilities in the late Franco-Chinese war, and it becomes necessary to send a messenger from the Benton's anchorage in the harbor of Foo Chow, China, to the minister at Peking with a cipher dispatch. Ensign Dalton is selected as this messenger. But it comes to the ears of Colonel Monroe, the American consul at Foo Chow, that this young Dalton was selling information to the French concerning the Chinese preparations for war. It has therefore been determined to send Coleman along with him, to keep a watch on his movements and to carry a copy of the dispatch to the minister at Peking in case Dalton should fail to do so.

This duty Lawrence at first declines to perform, even going so far as to tender his resignation from the service, but when it is represented to him that he is only sent as a precautionary measure, he recalls his decision and arranges to leave for Shanghai by next day's steamer, on which he finds that a friend of his—Charlie Travis—is also to be a passenger. On reaching Shanghai Lawrence goes ashore with Charlie, but the coolies who bear their sedan chairs carry them in the darkness to a strange part of the town instead of the point Travis had indicated, and when Charlie protests, they attack both boys and overpower them.

CHAPTER X.

LAWRENCE ABDUCTED.

FROM a cloudless sky the moon was shining brightly down in the little street a few hours later, and its mellow light brought out, with softened details, the grotesque twists and turns of the crooked way. It revealed the facades of the houses on one side, and threw into deeper shadow the other. It sought out and laid bare all the heaps of dried mud, and the ugly piles of refuse scattered here and there, and faintly outlined a spot near the corner of an intersecting street, where sundry indications pointed to a recent struggle.

The wind was blowing fitfully, and it sent eddying clouds of dust, and torn fragments of paper, heavy with the ink from pens which are like unto paint brushes, whirling through the narrow lane. It whistled around the crannies and nooks of decaying walls, and sang merrily through the gaping holes in the roofs of houses in need of repairs, and in the midst of its song came the sound of a moan.

It was followed almost immediately by another, but louder and ending in a gasp. Then a figure, partially hidden in the shade, stirred uneasily, and struggled to a sitting position—but slowly and with many exclamations of pain. It stretched its arms and clasped two very grimy hands around a head streaked and matted with blood, muttering the while in feeble tones,

"By the whiskers of Buddha, what does this mean?" and the voice was familiar.

Then Charlie, for it was he, sore, battered, and much

confused as to his present whereabouts, rose to his feet. Leaning one hand on a friendly beam, that had fallen from the roof of a nearby house, he gazed around him in amazement, and saw with one quick glance the many evidences of the late combat.

It was enough. The truth flashed over him, and his first thought was of his friend, the middy. He ran from one side to the other of the narrow road, and dashed off to the corner of that crossing street. He looked eagerly up and down, but without avail. Nothing in sight, nothing save the crooked houses, the heaps of debris, and the telltale signs of that conflict.

He called out his name:

"Larry! Larry!"

The wind caught the sound, and carried it hither and yon—but it came back in mocking echoes, and that was all.

"Oh, the villains!" he exclaimed, giving it up at last, and his honest eyes dimmed as he thought of the possible fate of his friend. "The treacherous scoundrels! But why did they take him, and leave me? What was their object? Robbery?"

At the thought, he hastily felt in his pockets and found they were empty. Watch, money, all were gone. He then remembered his hand bags, and a hasty search revealed the fact that they had also disappeared. It looked to him very much like robbery, but that did not explain the kidnaping.

Travis was nonplused. He stood for a moment, pondering over the strange outcome of the affair, and, be it entered to his credit, he never gave his own losses another thought. The thieves had taken quite a considerable sum of money from his pockets, and the contents of the satchels were also valuable, but his one regret was for his friend, and he sorrowed exceedingly.

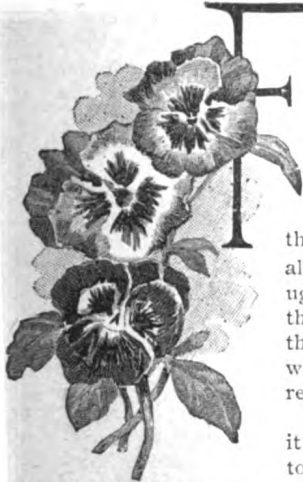
There was no question but that he had been taken away by the coolies. If not his body would be near at hand. To make doubly sure, however, Charlie searched the streets again, but with the same results.

"What on earth had I better do first?" he mused, looking helplessly around. "There is no sense in standing here. Action, my boy, and plenty of it."

He resolved to try and find Rodgers's hong first, so he started off at a lively trot down the street, keeping a wary lookout for any signs of coolies as he ran along. Charlie concluded to return to the steamer and see Dalton as soon as possible, but it was necessary to find the old merchant and get some money first. While he was on his way to interview the ensign, Mr. Rodgers could notify the American consul, and have the police machinery of the city set in motion, but Charlie had little faith in obtaining any favorable results from that inefficient body.

He had turned out of the narrow lane into one a little less crooked, and wider. After running five or six blocks along this, he met a native, and hastily asked him the direction to the hong. The Chinaman looked at his torn clothing and general disreputable appearance in evident amazement, mixed with not a little alarm, but he pointed out the way after much hesitation. It was still some distance off, but Charlie made good time, and arrived at the house soon afterward.

Luckily Mr. Rodgers had not yet retired, so Travis, paying little heed to his exclamations of astonishment and natural surprise, quickly described what had occurred, and, after making himself more presentable, returned to the steamer. Before leaving, however, he obtained some money, and directed his friend to see the consul forthwith, also to give notice of the outrage to the Chee-foo, or magistrate of the main city.



*Begun in No. 450 of THE ARGOSY

When Charlie arrived at the wharf, he found that the steamer had finished loading, and preparations were being made for departure. He hurried on board and asked the purser for Dalton.

"Just gone down to his stateroom," replied the official. "He arrived on board a few minutes before you. But where is the young gentleman, Mr. Coleman?"

Travis briefly explained, and begged him to ask the captain to detain the steamer long enough for him to see the ensign.

"Well, I declare!" was the amazed answer, "knocked down and carried away by thieves, eh? Did you ever hear the like? And such a nice young fellow, too. Certainly I'll tell the captain. Say, your friend is in hard luck, isn't he? Wasn't he the one that was accused of attempted murder by that Chinaman?"

"Yes, yes," replied Charlie hurriedly; "same one. But I will see you later."

As Travis walked away from the garrulous officer, the latter's last remark suggested a new train of thought. Charlie had forgotten the incident on the steamer, but now it looked as if there might be some connection between it and the present affair. He made a mental note of the advisability of finding the wounded Chinaman's present whereabouts.

His loud rap at the ensign's door brought a summons to enter, and as he did so, he saw Dalton slip something into his inner coat pocket. It was so quickly done that Charlie could not discover what the object was, but the action aroused his suspicions at once, and he immediately recalled all that had occurred since leaving Foo Chow, to the ensign's strong disfavor.

"Why, hello, Travis!" exclaimed Dalton, giving Charlie a keen look as he stepped into the room. His face wore an expression of surprise, but it hardly served to hide an evident anxiety, and Travis noticed it.

The latter, with all his blustering ways, and seemingly careless nature, was uncommonly shrewd. He could see through a millstone just as far as any one else without the aid of a convenient hole to assist the vision, and he had about made up his mind that the ensign and Lawrence were mixed up in a conspiracy of some kind, also, as he expressed it: "Dalton was playing the heavy villain, with any amount of red fire!"

Charlie returned the salutation coldly, and then stated just what had occurred, noting, as he went along, the varying phases of astonishment depicted on his auditor's face. Before he had finished, he mentally concluded that, if the ensign was not surprised at the intelligence, he was a splendid actor.

"This is terrible news, Travis!" exclaimed Dalton, after Charlie had stated the facts briefly, and to the point. "Terrible news! And almost improbable. Why, what could have been their motive? If it was only robbery, why did they carry him off, and not you? You are sure he was not left in one of the side streets?"

"Positive. You can rest assured I searched closely before leaving the spot. Now, sir, we had better take steps to have the villain traced without loss of time. I presume you will delay your trip until we can find Coleman, or until the next steamer, any way?"

The ensign hesitated before replying, and Charlie saw that he was laboring under some strong emotion. But, with all his suspicions, he never expected that Dalton would continue his journey without some effort to rescue his brother officer. His credulity was destined to receive a shock.

"I—I—really, Travis, I do not see how I can remain here," stammered the ensign, at last, avoiding Charlie's indignant

glance, and opening the stateroom door. "In fact, it is impossible for me to do so. The business I am on is—"

"Then you intend sailing by this steamer?" interrupted Travis, his anger growing apace. "Am I to understand that you will deliberately abandon your companion on this most important journey?" The last words had a tinge of sarcasm in them, and Dalton perceived it.

"Sir, you do not know what you are saying!" he replied haughtily, stepping out into the saloon, closely followed by Travis. Then he added: "You know nothing of my business, or its import. Please to understand that I will manage my own affairs. I decline to speak further with you on the subject!"

This was a decided change from his previous bearing, and Charlie stared at him in amazement for a moment. Then he turned on his heel, and went on deck without another word, but he had a hard struggle restraining himself from knocking the ensign down where he stood.

As he passed through the doorway leading from the cabin, his rage was so great that he did not see another person stepping in, and the two collided with sufficient force to knock Charlie's hat from his head. He muttered a hasty apology, and was just stooping to recover it, when he was addressed by the newcomer in Chinese:

"I beg your pardon, sir. It was my fault," apologized the man, with a courtly bow.

As Travis straightened up, he recognized the speaker. It was the native he had seen in Dalton's room, playing cards.

"May I ask if your companion has returned on board yet?" was the unexpected continuation.

Charlie looked at him in surprise, and answered in the negative, but gave the reason why. They were standing just where the light streamed through the open door, and Travis plainly noticed a curious change flash over the Chinaman's face, but it was gone in a second, leaving the same wooden expression. Just then the captain and purser came walking up, and the former asked him for full particulars of the abduction. After concluding, Charlie could not help adding that the naval officer yet on board had signified his intention of proceeding on the journey without making any effort at investigation. After this shot, he thanked the two officers for their kindness, and started to pass over the gangplank.

Just as he stepped off the deck, he felt a touch on the arm, and a paper was thrust into his hand. He turned quickly, but only in time to see a form disappear in the semi-obscurity of the passageway leading to the other side of the steamer. Before he could start to follow, the warning bell sounded, and several deck hands commenced hauling in the plank.

Charlie hurried on to the dock at once, and in a few minutes the Tartar Khan moved slowly away, carrying with her the mysterious passenger.

CHAPTER XI.

ON BOARD THE JUNK.

TO return to the midday. When Lawrence was attacked by the coolies, he fought desperately against the overwhelming odds, but sheer weight of numbers prevailed at last, and he fell to the ground, gasping for breath. At that moment he heard Charlie's voice, and immediately following came the sounds of a struggle going on almost over him.

Realizing instantly that his friend had come to his assistance, he tried to regain his feet, but three of the coolies held him prostrate, while a fourth rapidly passed a stout rope around his arms and legs in sundry turus.

Thus trussed and helpless, he saw Travis in the midst of a struggling mob engaged in a most hopeless combat. He saw the bamboo staff descend, and then, with a shudder, Lawrence watched his friend stagger and fall under the cruel stroke. But here his observations were cut short, unceremoniously nipped in the bud from the same cause, for while he lay there tied and unable to defend himself, one of the scoundrels stepped up and dealt him a stunning blow with a billet of wood, but not before Lawrence saw the brute's face and marked it for future retribution.

The pain was so intense that the middy could not refrain from uttering a sharp cry, and with the sound he fainted.

When he again opened his eyes, it was in the midst of profound darkness. His first impressions were of a severe throbbing in the head and a feeling of nausea. He instinctively tried to lift his hands, but found he could not—they were bound, and the discovery instantly recalled the scene in the bund.

"Ah!" he muttered, "that explains this terrible aching in my head. But where am I?"

He was lying on some hard substance, probably wood, and it seemed to be moving uneasily. This, with a peculiar smell, as of foul water, and the close, stifling atmosphere, could only be associated with the hold of a ship. How large a one he could not say.

Lawrence still felt somewhat confused, and he remained quiet for a time, trying to still the painful sensation. Presently he heard a noise overhead, and a small hatch cover was shifted back. Then some one thrust a small lantern through the aperture, and he saw the scowling face of a native peering at him by the dim light.

After a moment's hesitation, the Chinaman shouted something to him in a loud voice. The middy did not understand the words, but he grasped the opportunity and replied, "Let me out of here, you villains! Let me out, I say, or—"

His threat was cut short by a mocking laugh from above, and the cover closed with a bang.

Here was a pretty pickle. The brief interview had showed Lawrence that he was still in the hands of the thieves, for he recognized in the personage just departed the brute who had struck him during the scrimmage.

Lawrence gnashed his teeth at the recollection, and then, like a sensible youth, started to weigh the means of escape. From the light of the lantern he had noticed one thing—the craft was small and evidently a junk. This latter he knew from the peculiar shape of the hold.

Another thing he surmised. From the absence of much motion, they were not under way or else only moving slowly with the aid of the current. Lawrence had been on board several different classes of native craft at odd times, and he now tried to remember how one this size would be constructed.

"From the height of the deck," he concluded, "it must be one of the ordinary river boats; those that trade from port to port on a small scale, and from the smell, it carried rotten paddy last. Now the first thing to do, if I don't want to remain here for those scoundrels to murder me, is to try and get this lashing off my hands. One thing certain—I have not been tied very thoroughly, or else it would hurt me more."

Encouraged by this fact, Lawrence set to work at once. He was lying on his back, with his head and shoulders against the sloping side of the hold, so by making a sudden move and drawing his heels well under, he managed to rise to his feet.

But he had miscalculated the distance to the deck above, and bumped his head with considerable violence against a carline beam. The shock caused him to resume his former

position much faster than he had risen therefrom, and he concluded to wait a minute before proceeding further.

"Great Scott!" he exclaimed; "that is what you call a backset to one's efforts. Whew! My poor skull! It sounded as if it split open. Well, here goes again."

This time he went about it more cautiously, and little by little managed to scramble erect again. By stooping slightly, he found plenty of room, and, it is needless to say, he was careful to remain in that attitude.

Now for his object in wishing to stand upright. When the light had been thrust through the hatchway, Lawrence happened to notice a small cleat in the side, just above him. It was by a mere chance that he saw it, and the little piece of wood suggested a plan for freedom. As he now stood, he was about two feet from the timbers, facing the other way.

"Too far," he calculated aloud. "I must get near enough, so when I fall back the cleat will be just below the lower turn."

It must be remembered that the middy was bound hand and foot with several turns of a stout rope, and as he had been secured hurriedly, they were not very tight; therefore his scheme for releasing himself offered some chances of success.

The junk was almost motionless, only that slight agitation peculiar to a light body in water being perceptible. It was not enough to make Lawrence unsteady on his feet, bound as he was, so he commenced to shift backwards, inch by inch. The floor or bottom was smooth and a trifle greasy from the last cargo, and he was enabled to jerk back both feet at once by bending the knees and springing erect again.

At last Lawrence concluded he was close enough to try the experiment, so, bracing himself for a shock, he bent his head farther over and fell back.

He struck directly against the cleat!

"Ah, so far, so good!" he congratulated himself. "Now for my anti binding trick."

As he spoke, Lawrence shifted about until he got the projecting piece of wood caught in the rope, and pressing his heels against the floor, gave a sudden tug. The turn slipped down a little. Another jerk, and another.

"Eureka!"

The last effort had lowered the rope until he was able to work one arm free. Slipping to the floor, he speedily unfastened the other one, then his legs, and with an exclamation of joy he started for the hatchway.

But he now suddenly remembered that he was unarmed. It behooved him to find some kind of weapon for self defense, or offense, as the case might be. There was a possibility that he might discover something in the hold, so he crept cautiously from one side to the other, examining the bottom.

After looking for a minute, his foot struck against a fragment of wood. Stooping down, he picked it up, and found by feeling that it was a short bit of timber, from the shape, a broken handspike, or capstan bar.

"That will do nicely," muttered Lawrence, weighing it in his hand with ominous intent. "The first person I want to meet now is that rascal who struck me ashore."

Let it not be inferred that the middy was particularly bloodthirsty. Far from it. His kindness of nature and hatred of causing unnecessary pain to any one was well known to his friends, but—his head still ached, and—what do *you* think about it, reader?

Holding the club in his right hand, ready for instant use, Lawrence felt his way to the hatch. The deck overhead curved slightly from the center to the sides, but it was still within reach. There was a stanchion almost directly under the opening, notched so as to form a rude ladder, but dis-

daining the use of this, the midly carefully shoved the stick against the cover and pressing slightly forward, found to his joy that it moved.

Working very cautiously, to avoid making any noise, Lawrence at last had the satisfaction of seeing the stars overhead, and also of obtaining much needed fresh air. He could tell by the light filtering down through the open hatchway that the moon was shining, a fact which did not inspire in his breast that just respect due the satellite. For his present purpose he would have rather had Stygian darkness.

"Can't have everything I want," was his philosophical remark, as he started to "chin" the hatch-combing, "or else I'd be on board the Tartar Khan. Ought to be glad I am free from that rope."

As his head topped the deck he gave a quick glance around and saw that the coast was clear, as far as the sight of any native would make it, but he noticed with surprise that the scene had changed decidedly.

Instead of the waterfront at Shanghai, as he had expected, he looked upon a broad river, untenanted, save by a huge junk away in the misty distance, her ribbed sails resembling the wings of some gigantic bird. Turning his head, Lawrence glanced over a low paddy field, to the edge of which the boat was moored. Here was a chance for escape!

"Anything is better than remaining aboard here," thought the midly, dropping back into the hold. Picking up the club, he slipped it over the edge, and drawing himself up again, crawled on deck.

The junk, though small, carried two masts, and the sails had for some purpose been only partially lowered. This cast a heavy shadow on the after part, which was materially heightened by the high poop.

As Lawrence crept to the side, with the intention of dropping off into the field, he was startled by the sound of a footstep. Then a loud cry rang out, and he wheeled around just in time to see a Chinaman step from the shadows and rush towards him.

CHAPTER XVII.

RECAPTURED.

THE sudden appearance of the Chinaman was so startling that Lawrence stood dumfounded for a moment.

The hasty glance he had taken from the hatchway had led him to believe that the deck was entirely deserted. But now he had a foe to conquer before making good his escape. The midly proceeded to business without loss of time.

As the man reached out to seize him, Lawrence swung the club, and brought it down with a crash on the fellow's shaved pate. The blow was so shrewdly given that he dropped to the deck like a log, and lay there motionless.

But the alarm had done its work. As Lawrence stood there hesitating whether to fly or fight, now that he had been discovered, three other natives issued from the after cabin, and then stopped, apparently aghast at the strange scene.

The tableau was thrilling in the extreme, and under other circumstances, the midly would have applauded its dramatic effects to the echo. Now, as can be imagined, he wasted very few seconds in admiration.

One quick glance over his shoulder, to see how far it was to the side, then, with a bound, he cleared the intervening space, and mounted the low bulwarks. A shout from the rear, and a pattering of hasty feet, warned him that the Chinamen were in active pursuit. Still he hesitated, and remained poised on the railing within their reach. And for a very good reason.

To leap would mean from the frying pan into the fire. Below him stretched a miry swamp, twenty feet up to the rice field, and he well knew how a spring from that height into the bog would result.

But Lawrence had no time for deliberation. The pursuers were close at hand, and just as he turned away from the disappointing sight, all three made a rush towards him. But they grasped at the empty air, and in their haste almost went overboard. The midly, with the quickness of a cat, had shifted his position. Then he jumped to the deck, and before they could recover themselves, thwacked one on the head, and fled aft.

The man uttered a howl of rage and pain, and fell on all fours. There he remained, and during the subsequent proceedings refrained from taking an active part, except with his voice.

Not so his companions. They followed close on Lawrence's heels as far as the poop, then halted for a council of war.

Coleman, still fondling his club, had darted to the queer shaped stern, and climbing on the raised house, stood at bay. He was elevated about ten feet above the lower deck, and could see the two natives directly beneath. They were holding an animated argument, the purport of which seemed to be a change of tactics. At last one of them disappeared in the cabin, leaving his companion on guard.

During the brief respite Lawrence looked about him. The distant sail had vanished, and the whole river, as far as he could see, was deserted. On shore nothing but the paddy field was visible, looking drear and lonely in the gary moonlight. Away off towards the farther edge was a dark smudge that might be a house, or in all probability only a clump of trees. For a foul murder, or any dastardly crime, the scene was peculiarly adapted.

"I wonder how far it is to the city?" he mused, meanwhile keeping a wary eye on the native below him. "I have no idea how long I was unconscious. It might have been one hour, or it might have been four. From the looks of the moon it is very near morning now, any way. This is about the worst fix I have been in yet. I wonder —"

The man below moved slightly, and shouted something in an impatient voice. He was answered from the interior, but the absent man did not reappear. Lawrence crawled forward a couple of feet and waited.

"By George! This is getting interesting!" he exclaimed to himself. "I have a good notion to go down and tackle that yellow faced monkey before the other one comes out. May be he has gone in to get a gun!"

The idea struck Lawrence as being so plausible that he resolved to attack the solitary native at once, and dispose of him, so as to have a better chance with the other. Quickly removing his coat, he tossed it to one side, and grasping the handspike more firmly, prepared to leap to the lower deck.

Just as he neared the edge a slight noise sounded behind, and with a whirl the coils of a rope settled around his shoulders. One quick jerk, and he was drawn back to the deck. Before he could think of offering resistance, a Chinaman was seated on his breast, and another on his legs.

In less than a minute he was again trussed up hand and foot, and his captors were standing over him shaking with triumphant glee. It was well that he did not know the language, as their expressions would have added considerable to his keen sense of humiliation.

To have worked so hard in escaping from the hold, and be recaptured like this! Poor Lawrence almost groaned aloud. And to be circumvented by a stupid Chinaman, to

have victory snatched from his grasp by a mean subterfuge, and the use of a back window which he had not taken into consideration. Here, the groan did pass his lips, but fortunately it was only a weak one, and was not noticed.

The natives were now talking together, and the subject seemed to afford great satisfaction to both. Then one ran to the edge and called down to the lower deck. His summons soon brought the Chinaman Lawrence had thwacked last. Still uttering doleful lamentations, he appeared in sight, rubbing his head, and joined the rest. He bore something in his hands, which the midddy was puzzled to understand the meaning of at first. But he soon ascertained to his intense chagrin and physical pain.

It was a stout bamboo stick, and they were going to whip him!

It was too much? He could stand being defeated in a fair fight, but to be whipped like the veriest cur that runs the streets! He, an American naval officer, to be beaten by a Chinaman! To be thrashed like a disobedient child!

"Never!"

At the cry, uttered with all the strength of his lungs, and inspired by a frenzy of rage and indignation, Lawrence struggled like one possessed.

Alas! The strong lashings yielded not, and the attempt only added a toothsome relish to his captor's feast of victory.

Why describe the harrowing details? It is enough that veracity compels the chronicler to even hint at the abasement of his hero! The curtain is drawn!

* * * * *

A half hour later Lawrence found himself back in the hold, but this time secured to the stanchion under the hatchway. His prison keepers were evidently determined to render another escape impossible, as they had taken extra precautions. The hatch was left partially uncovered, and every now and then, one of the Chinamen would show his villainous face at the opening, each time lowering a lantern until its rays satisfied the sentinel that his prisoner was secure.

The lashings were drawn so tight this time that Lawrence soon began to suffer from its effects, but he gritted his teeth and took care not to let the natives know he felt any pain. In addition to this he was still sore from the little episode on deck, and taking it all and all it was a very miserable young man, miserable in both mind and body, that now occupied the foul smelling hold of the junk.

Although forced to remain physically inert, his mind was active, and he tried to think out the pros and cons of his present situation.

"I wonder what became of poor old Charlie?" he communed with himself, expelling the breath out of his chest as momentary relief from the cutting rope. "That was a terrible blow he received on the head. By George! we are both in hard luck. I wonder when Dalton will hear of this? That's so, the Tartar Khan ought to have sailed by this time!"

The last thought suggested a whole series of important details bearing on his present situation. The startled midddy remembered the cipher messages given him by the admiral. The possibility that they had been stolen, struck him at once and he became greatly alarmed. He could feel the "monkey bag" next his breast, but could not tell whether it was empty or not. He realized what their loss would mean, and bitterly bemoaned the accident that had caused him to stumble at the very commencement of his confidential mission.

Suddenly his reflections were interrupted by a noise overhead. Looking up, he saw the face of that Chinaman he had marked out for punishment, leering down at him. Then he recollected, with a start, that this one had not been present in the late *mélée*. It looked now to the midddy as if they must still be near the city of Shanghai, and that this man had just returned on board from a trip there.

The sinister visage disappeared again. Hours passed by with leaden wings, and after what seemed a whole day to Lawrence, certain noises on deck portended that active preparations were being made for getting under way. Presently the junk commenced to wobble about, and then heeled over a little. The creaking of rusty blocks sounded, immediately followed by the flapping of divers sails, and the voyage was commenced.

Lawrence, from his stifling quarters in the hold, took heed of the familiar indications with a sinking heart. So long as he remained in the vicinity of Shanghai, there was some inducement for escape. But now, where were they going? Where, and to what end? Was it out on the bosom of the Yellow Sea, to be lost in its misty depths; or—dreadful thought—was the huge eyed prow turned up the course of the mighty Yangtz Kiang, turned towards the center of that mystic land, the Celestial Empire, where he might linger for years, hidden in some mountain fastness, far beyond the succoring reach of his friends!

He had reached thus far in his melancholy forebodings, when they were interrupted in a most startling manner. The hatch cover was suddenly thrust clear back, and a Chinaman scrambled hastily down the stanchion. Before Lawrence could recover from his surprise, he was seized by the head, and an unsavory gag shoved into his mouth. After this was concluded, the native hurriedly returned to the deck, and, banging the hatch cover to, securely fastened it.

Not until a moment later did Lawrence understand the meaning of this extra precaution. Then he heard the puffing of a steam launch, or yacht alongside, and a voice hailed the junk in tones which caused him to strain at the cruel rope until it cut deep into his flesh.

(To be continued.)

A QUEER SHOW THAT MANY WOULD LIKE TO SEE.

WHAT the clowns, the elephants, the wild beast tamers, and the acrobats of the circus are to the average small boy, the tiny bits of colored paper to be seen in the below described exhibition must be to the heart of the ardent philatelist. Says the *London Queen*:

At Vienna a postage stamp museum was recently opened to the public. The museum will be opened to visitors daily and gratuitously. In one room are shown chronologically all stamps of which specimens exist from 1840 to 1891. Among the postal curiosities shown are balloon letters, pigeon post, and submarine post letters, as they were sent during the siege of Paris in 1870. A collection of forged stamps is also very interesting to the collector. Among the curious objects shown are letters of the Anthropophagi in the Dutch Indies, pieces of wood covered with hieroglyphics, and post cards which have made the tour of the world. For one of these with a penny stamp, which took 119 days to return to its starting point, an offer of 1,000 florins has been made.

There is also a case with a collection of all the coins struck during the Emperor Francis Joseph's reign. The finest object in the collection is believed to be a Mauritius stamp, worth \$2,500 sterling, and a Cape of Good Hope stamp valued at \$500. The exhibition comprises 3,000,000 stamps, and other objects connected with the post.

VERY INCONSIDERATE.

"WE'VE got the meanest missus in town," said Nora. "Phin she wint to Nooport she gave us our wages in advance and closed the house on Fift' Avenner, thereby cuttin' me an' Biddy Doolan out of our social events for the sayson."—*New York Herald*.



THE SUBSCRIPTION PRICE OF THE ARGOSY IS TWO DOLLARS PER YEAR, PAYABLE IN ADVANCE. SINGLE COPIES, FIVE CENTS EACH. DISCONTINUANCES—THE PUBLISHER MUST BE NOTIFIED BY LETTER WHEN A SUBSCRIBER WISHES HIS PAPER STOPPED. THE NUMBER (WHOLE NUMBER) WITH WHICH THE SUBSCRIPTION EXPIRES APPEARS ON THE PRINTED SLIP WITH THE NAME. THE COURTS HAVE DECIDED THAT ALL SUBSCRIBERS TO NEWSPAPERS ARE HELD RESPONSIBLE UNTIL ARREARAGES ARE PAID AND THEIR PAPERS ARE ORDERED TO BE DISCONTINUED.

FRANK A. MUNSEY, Publisher,
155 East 23d Street New York.

THE \$600 Prize Steam Launch that the Davis Boat and Oar Co. are to give away is nearly completed. The weight of it and the name of the lucky winner will be published in this paper the second issue from this date.

* * * *

YOU have often thrown a pebble into a stream and then stood and watched the widening ripples as they skurried off beyond the limit of your vision. In the same way do our actions reach out in their influence far beyond our control or imagining. It matters not whether the action be a good or bad one; it exerts its influence all the same.

To live, therefore, is a matter of infinite responsibility with each one of us in a sense seldom realized. Let us see to it then that the ripples which go out from our personality are of the sort to benefit and not harm our fellows.

* * * *

WHILE ambition is all very good in its way, and the desire to be rich an incitement to diligence and thrift; still it is well for all to realize that the mere possession of wealth is not by any means a certain cause of happiness. A New York society journal recently called upon its readers to "pity the sorrows of a man possessed of some sixty millions or more, but suffering from the lack of absorbing ambition of any sort!"

The millionaire referred to has all that most people desire, but neither mansions, nor yachts, nor houses, nor travel, afford him that contentment of mind that we are all seeking. He is possessed of a vague unrest, a craving for the unattainable—unattainable because he cannot possibly define what he does want.

* * * *

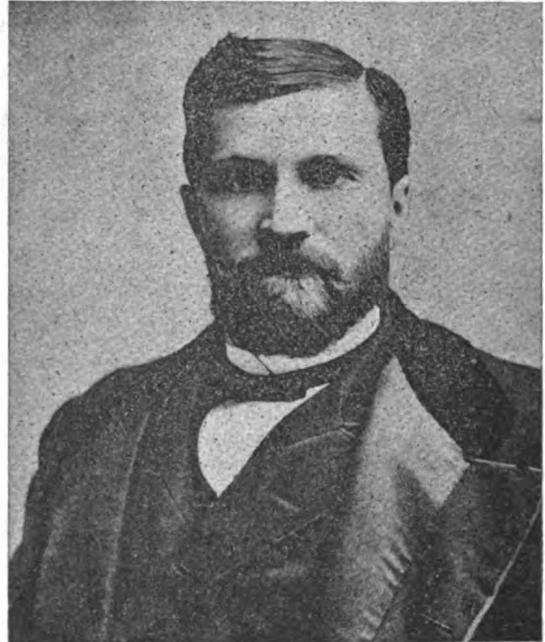
BE comforted then, ye who have to struggle along with just enough to keep the wolf from the door. You have occupation for your mind at any rate, and doubtless sleep sweeter than does many an owner of millions, who is either worrying about keeping them or else lured to death because his possession of them leaves him with nothing to fill out his time.

To be sure this is not the case with all rich men. Many and shining are the examples of those who devote their time and energies to the wise expenditure of their wealth for the benefit of their fellows. But not all are endowed with this blessed capacity for philanthropy, and so we have now and then the sad spectacle above described of a man, who not spurred on by necessity, nor inspired by any natural bent of his own, drifts through life without an aim, like a ship that has lost its rudder.

THOMAS CHIPMAN McRAE,

CONGRESSMAN FROM ARKANSAS.

ADMITTED into the Union in 1836, Arkansas has been a State of somewhat slow development. In the exploitation of its resources, naturally rich and varied, it is behind its sisters of equal age. It still has many of the characteristics of a new country. As in the young commonwealths of the West and Southwest, its



THOMAS C. McRAE.

From a photograph by Bell, Washington.

leading public men have in most cases been immigrants from older communities.

To this rule Congressman McRae is an exception, being a native born Arkansan and a typical son of his State. The place of his birth was Mount Holly, in Union County, and the date December 21, 1851. His education was a thorough one, acquired in private schools in Arkansas, in a New Orleans business college, and at the Washington and Lee University, of Lexington, Virginia. His studies at the university were especially directed toward preparation for a career at the bar, to which he was admitted in January, 1873. He began to practice at Rosston, Nevada County, in the southwestern part of Arkansas, but removed a few years later to Prescott, a larger town in the same county, on the Iron Mountain railroad. Here, where his residence has since been fixed, he built up a successful and influential legal connection.

In 1877 he was elected to the State Legislature. During his service in that body he made his mark as one of the ablest members of his party in the State, and in the succeeding years he was chosen to serve as Presidential elector for General Hancock, as chairman of the Democratic State convention, and as a delegate to the national convention of 1884.

The following year, when James K. Jones was promoted to the United States Senate, Mr. McRae was elected to fill the vacancy thus created in the House of Representatives. Entering the Forty Ninth Congress, he has been successively elected to the Fiftieth, the Fifty First, and the Fifty Second.

At forty years of age, he stands among the better known of the younger members of Congress, having, during his six years' service at the national capital, earned a creditable reputation as a speaker and man of affairs. In the last Congress he acted as a member of the committees on public lands and on the expenditures of the Interior Department.

THE DEERSKIN TALISMAN.*

A TALE OF MEXICAN TREASURE.

BY GILBERT CAMPBELL.

SYNOPSIS OF CHAPTERS PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED.

BOB AND ARTHUR SEDGWICK have come from New England with their father to the mountain ranges of Northern Mexico to wash for gold, the failure of a bank at home having deprived Mr Sedgwick of most of his means. They have had fair success in their search, but have made some enemies among the Greasers, some of whom come up, raid the hut and kill Mr. Sedgwick. But the boys have friends in the mining community near which they live, among them Lopes the Tigrero and Indian Joe. Then Arthur has once befriended a dying Indian, who has told him of vast treasures among tribes from which he was descended, the Caciques of the Aztecs, and gives him a piece of deerskin, which contains symbols that will not only guide him to the Indian city, but will insure him a safe return with the treasure. So Bob and Arthur set out, accompanied by Lopes and Indian Joe.

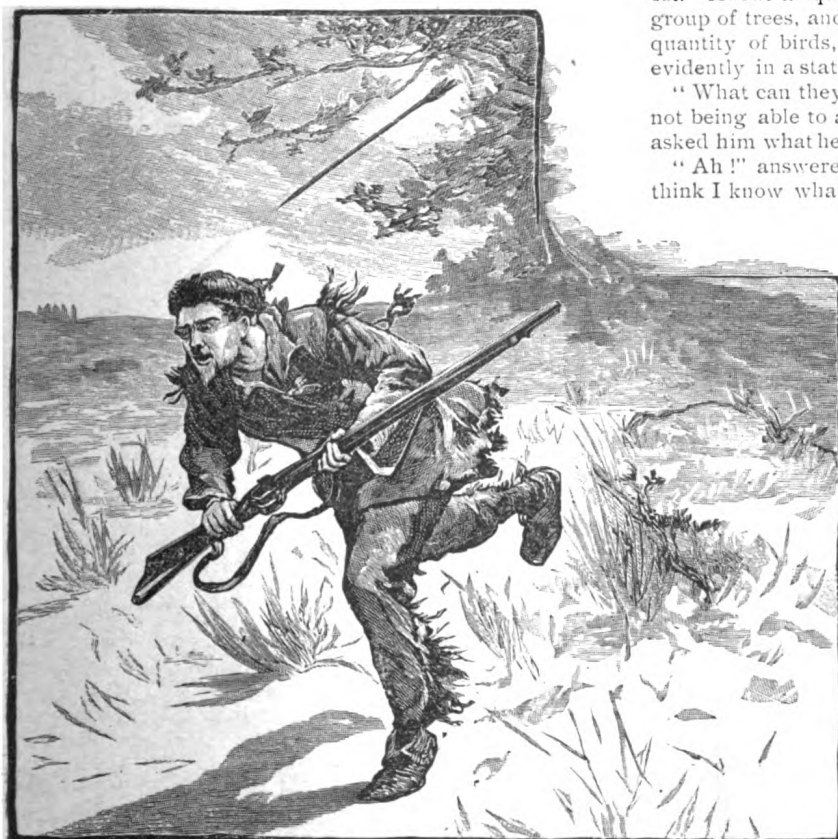
After a three days' journey the party reach the plains, and during one of their encampments Bob takes his rifle and starts out after game. He follows the windings of the Rio Negro, where he sights and wounds a fine doe. Fearful lest she may take to the water if he approaches her too closely, he climbs into the limb of a tree that projects over an elbow of the stream. From this vantage point he is about to try a knife thrust at his prey when what he thought to be trunks of trees floating on the pool turn out to be alligators, one of whom sweeps the deer into the water with its tail. The other alligators make a fierce splashing, each contending for its share of the feast, and Bob decides that it is a good neighborhood to leave. But in starting back he places his hand unwittingly on a serpent, and in the shock this occasions him he loses his balance and plunges into the water not ten yards from the combatants.

CHAPTER VII.

AN UNWELCOME COMPANION.

AS the waters closed over Bob's head, a pang of horror shot through him. He felt that the hideous monsters were all around, and it seemed to him an age before he rose once more to the surface. As he did so, his hand came in contact with his hunting knife, and he instinctively drew it from its sheath.

*Begun in No. 451 of THE ARGOSY.



INDIAN JOE'S RUN FOR LIFE.

Well was it for him that he did this, for not ten feet from him lay one of the largest of the saurians, looking about as if anxious to know the cause of the disturbance, Mechanically Bob struck half a dozen blows at the monster's face, evidently with some effect, for it turned violently around and lashed the water with its tail, while a suffocating musky odor was diffused around.

Not waiting to see the effect of his blows, Bob swam hastily to the shore, and seizing his rifle, felt once more that he was safe. His late antagonist was still swimming in circles, and lashing the water violently with its tail, and to Bob's extreme surprise getting nearer and nearer to the spot upon which he stood. At last it came so close that Bob could resist the temptation no longer, and a well aimed bullet caused the monster, after a few unavailing struggles, to turn over on his back, life being quite extinct. By the aid of a hooked stick Bob managed to get him into shallow water, and he then perceived that he owed his life to the random strokes of his knife, which had blinded the reptile before it could seize him.

That night at the bivouac if Bob had brought in no venison he had at any rate an alligator story to tell, to which all listened with the deepest interest.

Next morning Bob and Indian Joe started at an early hour in search of venison, leaving Arthur and Lopes to take care of the camp.

After assisting in cutting a sufficient supply of wood, and bringing several buckets of water from the adjacent river, Arthur began to find the time hang heavily upon his hands. Listlessly wandering to the edge of the island, he swept his eye across the landscape in search of some object of interest. About a quarter of a mile off was another small group of trees, and hovering about their tops he saw a large quantity of birds, which circled round and round them, evidently in a state of great excitement.

"What can they be about?" said Arthur to himself, and not being able to answer the question, he called Lopes, and asked him what he thought of it.

"Ah!" answered he, shading his eyes with his hand, "I think I know what it means."

"Are they pigeons?" asked Arthur. "For if they are, a few of them would be a welcome addition to our stew pot, and I may as well go over and pick a few off."

"Pigeons, *carrai?*" answered the Tigrero contemptuously. "Where are your eyes, master? The birds you see are orioles, and I expect a snake is plundering their nests, and that is what all the fuss is about."

"You think so, do you?" cried Arthur; "then I'm in it." And hurrying back to the camp, he seized a light, double barreled gun and sped away across the plain.

Very soon he reached the clump of trees, and then he saw that Lopes's suggestion was correct. High up in the branches of one of the trees was a common black snake, some five feet long, making a raid among the nests of the orioles and devouring their eggs whenever he found a supply of them, utterly regardless of the shrill cries of the afflicted parents, who even occasionally mustered up courage to

dart at the robber and strike at him in desperation with their beaks.

Mankind, as a rule, has a rooted antipathy to the serpent tribe, and Arthur was no exception. Raising his gun, he only waited until he could get a clear shot at the plunderer, and then down came the snake, half cut in two by a charge of number six shot. It lay writhing upon the ground, and as the boy was about to finish it with a slash of his hunting knife, he heard behind him something between a cough and a grunt, which caused him to turn rapidly round.

An appalling sight met his eyes. Not twenty yards from him stood a huge grizzly bear, looking at him with an expressive twinkle in his cunning eye, which certainly boded mischief.

For a moment Arthur's heart stood still. He knew sufficient of the savage character of the beast to feel that, though totally unprovoked, it would not for a moment hesitate to attack him, and though, as we have before said, he was excessively swift of foot, yet he was well aware that flight was hopeless, for the grizzly could catch him before he had covered a hundred yards from the space which separated him from the camp.

Only a single chance remained for him, and that was to take refuge in one of the trees that stood around him. The grizzly is no tree climber; and though he might be kept imprisoned there for some time, yet he would be safe from the claws and teeth of the monster.

To plan and execute were but the work of a moment to the active lad. Throwing his gun upon the ground, he made one spring at the nearest branch, and in a few seconds was perched upon an overhanging bow some eighteen feet from the earth. As the bear saw his prey escaping from him, he darted forward with a loud roar, and rising erect upon his hind legs, tore with the claws of his fore feet huge sheets of bark from the stem of the tree.

"Better that than my skin," laughed Arthur, as he saw that his enemy's attempts to reach him were futile. "Take care, you old idiot, or you'll blunt your claws, and that might prove awkward for you!"

The voice of the boy seemed to excite the brute to increased fury. Again and again he attacked the tree as though he would tear it down; then, finding his efforts all in vain, he trotted to the spot where the gun was lying upon the ground and began to wreak his fury on it. As he was tossing it about the remaining loaded barrel exploded, unfortunately without doing him any injury. This seemed rather to astonish him, and leaving it upon the ground, he returned to the tree.

Finding that he could not take the fortress by assault, he seemed determined to change the attack into a blockade, and, lying calmly down at the foot of the tree, he kept one savage eye fixed upon the prisoner, as though determined that he should not escape.

"Ha, ha!" cried Arthur; "that is your game, is it? I'll just see if I can't make you move out of that!" and, crawling carefully along the branch upon which he had taken refuge, he cut off a stout staff some eight feet long, to which he fastened his hunting knife by the aid of his leather belt. Then, descending a branch or two, he, with his improvised lance, made a jab at the bear's back, with such good effect that the blade came back crimsoned with blood.

Up jumped Bruin, and made such a leap at his adversary that, had the boy not sprung upwards with the agility of a cat, those cruel claws would have torn him to the ground. As it was, his newly formed weapon dropped from his grasp, and he remained totally unarmed.

"Nasty brute!" muttered Arthur; "who would have

thought that he could have been so quick? Well, if I am to stay here I may as well look out for a comfortable spot, where I can rest my back, and have a snooze in safety. At any rate, it is lucky that I've had a good breakfast."

With this determination, he began his search through the leafy bower by which he was surrounded, when suddenly his eyes caught sight of something which froze his blood with terror. Not ten feet above him, crouched as if in the act of springing, with its green, glassy eyes glaring into his, and its sharp, white teeth all displayed in a malicious grin, was a cougar, the fiercest of the panther tribe in Mexico.

Arthur felt that his end was near; he was entirely unarmed. Besides, even if he had had his knife, how could he, while balancing himself in the branches, expect to contend with so powerful and ferocious an animal?

If he remained in the tree, he would certainly fall a victim to the cougar, while if he made an effort to escape by descending, there was Master Bruin, eager and willing to make a meal of him.

The position was a terrible one, and little time was given him to think what was best to be done. The tail of the cougar was slowly lashing its dark red flanks, the eyes were glaring with a deeper and more baleful fire, and at last, as though it was worked up to a pitch of frenzy, it gave a savage snarl, and made a spring straight for the shrinking body of the boy.

CHAPTER VIII.

A RUN FOR LIFE.

BOB and Indian Joe had had a successful stalk that morning. Three fine deer had fallen to their rifles, and now, flayed and cut up in most artistic fashion, these were hanging to the branches of a tree so as to be beyond the reach of the wolves, it being the intention of the hunters to bring the mule over in the evening to carry the venison into camp. Meanwhile, tired with their exertions, they had thrown themselves upon the grass in the shade, and Indian Joe had just cut a fresh plug of tobacco, and was about to insert it in his cheek, when Bob accosted him:

"I say, Joe, what do you think of all this treasure story of Arthur's, and what are the odds that the Indians will give it up to us quietly, as he seems to expect?"

"Oh," answered Joe sententiously, "Injins is pizon where-somever you comes across 'em." And, having delivered himself of this opinion, he placed the tobacco in his mouth and began to chew with great solemnity.

"You don't seem to have much opinion of them, at any rate," said Bob, with a laugh; "and yet they call you Indian Joe."

"You wonders why I ain't got no likin' fur 'em," replied Joe. "Look ye here." And as he spoke he twitched off his cap and showed the ghastly wound to which we have before referred.

"They got at you that time, Joe," said Bob, with a half shudder. "Cruel brutes they must be to treat a man like that."

"Brutes indeed," answered Joe. "Wolves is gentlemen to Injins; and a coyote don't stand on too much ceremony. Don't you trust neither on 'em, Master Bob, and you'll hev' a better chance of keeping a whole skin."

"You never told me how you got that ugly crack on the head," said the boy. "Suppose you do so now, while we have our rest."

"Tain't much to tell," replied the hunter. "I wer out beaver trapping, and five Injins came cavertin' about. I knew they meant mischief, for all their friendly ways, so I kep' my eyes skinned. Guess I didn't know if they had

shooting irons or not. Any way, I had cause to know they did have bows and arrows, tomaxes, and scalpors. At last one night, as I was lying by my fire playin' possum, one of the reptiles, though apparently friendly, tries to stick his knife atween my ribs. This ole lump of iron " (slapping his rifle) " was handy, and I let him have a bit o' lead plum, which laid him out in his tracks, and then, potting up ball pouch and knife, I started at a run for Fort Graham, ninety miles away across the plains."

" And did they pursue you? " asked Bob eagerly.

" Guess I didn't see a living soul that night, " replied the hunter, " but I know they weren't far off. You'll bet didn't lose much time, but, after doing some twenty miles, I stopped a bit near a lump of timber to eat, and in a moment if I didn't have two arrows into me before I could draw breath."

" They were on your track, then? " said Bob.

" Yes, they hunted me like bloodhounds. They was afraid to come too close cos of this weppin, and arter my fust lesson I didn't go near no timber, you may be sure; but yer see, Master Bob, what licked me was, I couldn't get no sleep."

" Well, Joe, they were no better off than you, were they? "

" No better off? " said Joe contemptuously. In course they were. While two of them slep', the other two they kep' on arter me. I did try forty winks once, and was woke up by an arrow in my face; arter that, be sure I didn't try it agin, though I delayed the Injin what did it. Well, to cut it short, I got within sight of the fort, and arter firing at the pursuers I dropped like a stone. Guess the boys saw me and came out slick, but not before the brutes had raised my hair, and left me like this. Them three made tracks back, but I'll meet 'em again some day, and p'raps there won't be a fight. No, all Injins is treacherous, but Apaches worst of all," concluded Joe.

" Well, you had a narrow squeak for it, indeed, " commented Bob, " and I don't wonder that you dislike the whole lot; but, for all that, I hope that Arthur's Indian friends will turn out pleasanter acquaintances than yours seem to have done. But come, let us be getting back to camp, for we must return here again for venison."

" Injins ain't of no account, " grumbled Joe, as he prepared to rise; " they are all tarred with the same stick."

Leaving the venison hanging upon the tree, the hunters, with a glance at the sun, prepared to return to the camp, and for about a mile, pursued their way in silence.

Suddenly Bob stopped short. " What is that? " cried he.

" I don't hear nuthin, " answered Joe; " yes, I do now, though. Why, it is the squeal of a cougar, and a skeery sort of noise it are."

" There's another noise, " cried Bob, " a deeper, harsher sound, something like a bellow."

Indian Joe listened intently for a moment.

" Why, if it ain't old Uncle Eph."

" Uncle who? " asked Bob in astonishment.

" A grizzly b'ar, young master; guess he and the cougar have fallen out, " answered Joe. " Let's make tracks and we'll nail 'em both."

They hurried on until they came to a glade in a small group of trees, and there in the very center were the two beasts violently contending for the mastery. The cougar was getting the worst of it; his sharp teeth and claws could make but little impression upon the tough hide of his adversary, and his lithe and sinewy form was but ill adapted to struggle against the bear's enormous weight. Still he fought gamely, though it was evident that he must soon succumb to his more powerful antagonist.

" You take the cougar, " whispered Joe, " and I'll drop Uncle Eph."

Bob nodded assent, when for a moment the two deadly tubes remained stationary, then two streams of fire poured out of them, two sharp reports rang through the glade, and with a last convulsive struggle the two mighty beasts rolled away from each other, and lay quivering in death.

" Well, done, young master, " cried Joe; " a good steady hand you have; now you whip off the cougar's skin, while I do the same for the b'ar."

And, drawing his knife, Joe advanced to his work.

" Stop, " cried some one from an adjoining tree, " I think I have a voice as regards the bear."

CHAPTER IX.

THE MANADA.

BOth Bob and Joe started with astonishment as they perceived the form of Arthur astride upon a bough some fifteen feet from the ground.

" What on earth are you arter up there, like a coon a birds' nesting? " asked Joe.

" Come down, Arthur, " cried his brother, " and tell us the whole story; for a story there is, and a good one, or I am very much mistaken."

In a few moments Arthur had swung himself down from the tree which had afforded him so safe a refuge from Master Grizzly's claws, and briefly made them acquainted with his adventures.

" When I saw the cougar spring, " continued he, as he came to that part of his narration, " I felt that it was all over with me, and I released the grasp which my hands held upon the branch above me; at once I fell, but a forked bough caught me, and as I lay flat upon it I saw the red body of the cougar shoot over; then I heard a heavy thud and two savage roars. As soon as I could collect myself I looked down; the cougar had jumped slap upon Bruin, and there they were hammer and tongs for at least ten minutes before you came up and ended the fight."

" What a fright! " cried Bob. " But, I say, Arthur, you had a narrow squeak for it."

" I had that, " replied his brother—" nearly as close a shave as you had with the alligators."

" Say, young master, " now broke in Joe, who had been listening to the recital with widely opened eyes; " what did yer mean by stopping me when I wer a-goin' to put my bowie into Uncle Eph's hide? Ain't the b'ar mine? Didn't my gun silence him? "

" Just tell me, Joe, " returned the boy, " doesn't the hide, by hunters' law, belong to the one who claims first blood? "

" Right you are, " was the cheery reply; " and I guess my bit of lead performed that operation unless you mean to put in a claim for the cougar's teeth and claws."

" Look here, " returned the boy, " what do you call this, Joe? " and he pointed first to a deep wound in the bear's back, and then to his hunting knife, which, still attached to the staff, lay a short distance off.

" Surely the boy is right! " cried Joe, " and the hide is his fair and square. It showed real grit to spear a grizzly like that, I can tell yer; but now let's get the hides off, and make tracks for the camp."

The task was soon completed, the venison fetched in, and, after a night's rest, they struck their camp, and proceeded on the journey in search of the City of the Cacique.

Toward afternoon, as they were right in the middle of the open plain, they saw, far in front of them, a cloud of dust which seemed rapidly moving in their direction.

"What is that?" said Bob, stopping short.
 "I fancy that I can detect the shapes of horses," returned Arthur, shading his eyes with his hand.
 "Injins!" exclaimed Joe, bringing his rifle to his hip, "and Apaches into the bargain, for the critters mostly go mounted."
 "Indios? No, no, nonsense!" cried Lopes, "it is more than that, it is a manáda."
 "He means a troop of wild horses," explained Arthur, "though I don't see how that can be any worse than Indians."

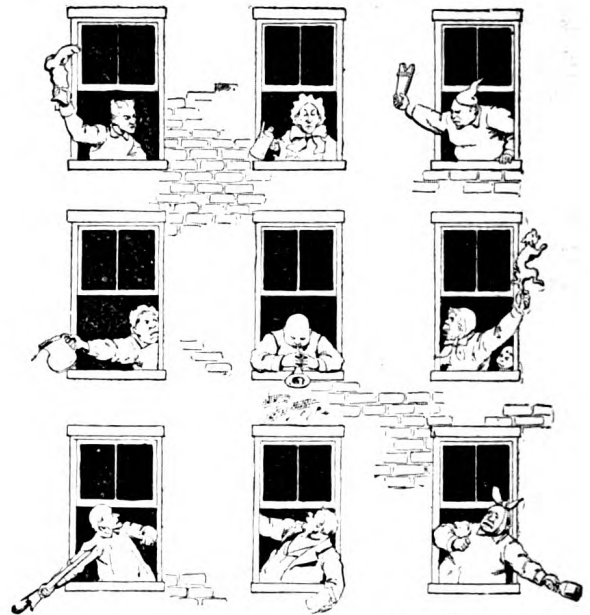
"Not worse?" almost screamed the Tigrero. "They will stop for nothing. Something has stampeded them, and they will trample us to atoms, grind us to powder without even seeing us."

Meanwhile the cloud of dust drew nearer and nearer, and the thunder of hoofs grew more and more audible. The sound was a frightful one.

Arthur eagerly gazed at the advancing troop of wild horses. They formed an extended line of nearly a mile in length, and it was hopeless to think of clearing their front before they would be trampled to death beneath the hoofs of the advancing stallions.

Courageous as the boy was, his cheek blanched at the idea of so terrible a fate, and in his despair he glanced towards his elder brother, hoping to gain some encouragement from him to enable him to meet the death which seemed inevitable.

(To be continued.)

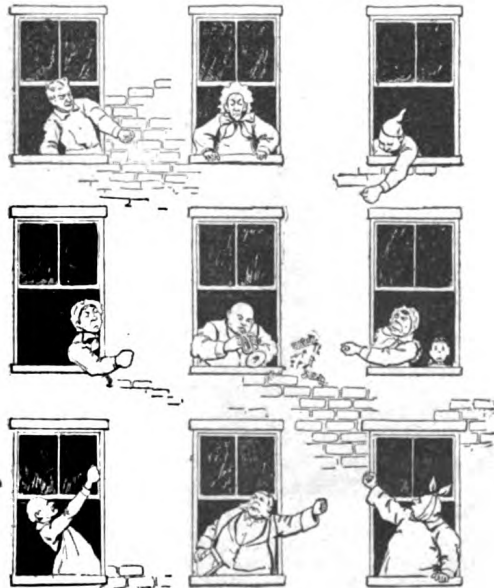


II.

His neighbors simultaneously discover what he is about and make immediate preparations to avenge themselves upon the author of the discordant sounds, each possessing himself or herself of the weapon nearest at hand.

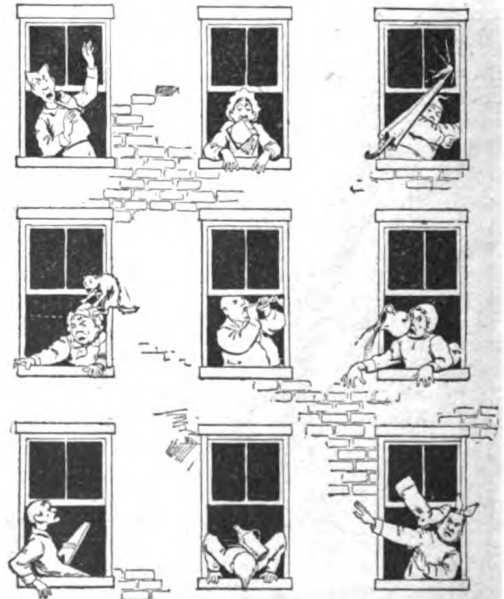
ADOLPHUS'S ESCAPE;

THE VAIN VENGEANCE OF HIS VICTIMS.



I.

MR. ADOLPHUS AUFDEROOF, an enthusiastic amateur musician, discovers a neat method of combining practice on the cornet and enjoyment of the cooling evening breeze. He proceeds to fill this breeze with dulcet (?) notes.



III.

Unfortunately they did not perceive each other, and, as they chose the very moment when Mr. Aufderoof happened to have drawn in his head, their several measures did not result as they had anticipated. They all felt more or less hurt as a consequence.

ARTHUR BLAISDELL'S CHOICE.*

BY W. BERT FOSTER.

SYNOPSIS OF CHAPTERS PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED.

THE two Blaisdell boys—Hal and Arthur—live with their widowed mother in Providence. It has become necessary for the sons to go to work at once, but positions are difficult to get. Arthur has literary tastes, and through the efforts of Mr. Olney, a friend of the family, a situation is obtained for one of the boys on the JOURNAL. In the natural order of things, this would have been taken by Arthur; but just at this time Mr. Olney secures the offer of another place—as that of driver of a milk wagon for Hiram Hart, who lives just outside of the city. Hal seems to do such work; but for the sake of the addition to their slender income, Arthur decides to give the post on the paper to his brother and accept that with Mr. Hart for himself.

He finds it rather dull in the country, but still has some rather lively adventures at a temperance meeting, to which he goes with Bill Olney, who works on the Pegasus place next door, and where he is introduced to Miss Annie Remington and her sister, whom he had met on the road in the morning when they were frightened by the bursting out of the bushes of a trampish looking individual. With the latter, who gives his name as Ben Norton, Arthur Blaisdell afterwards falls into conversation, finds him to be altogether inoffensive, and secures for him a place with old man Hart, Hiram Hart's father, where Arthur himself lives. One day, while on his way to the wood lot where Ben Norton is at work, Arthur is passed by a stranger, mounted on an exceedingly handsome horse. He is amazed a few minutes later by perceiving through the bushes this stranger and Norton face to face, the latter with his axe upraised, as though about to strike. From the conversation then overheard, Arthur gathers that the stranger, whose name he afterwards learns to be Chess Gardner, is trying to influence Ben for evil.

Soon afterwards Hiram falls ill and gets Arthur to promise him that he will take full charge of the place. This word having been passed, Arthur is prevented from accepting a position Mr. Davidson offers him on the JOURNAL. But still harder lines fall to the boy's lot. He is sent to California by the doctor's orders, and shortly afterwards the elder Hart is robbed. He accuses Arthur of the theft, and is on the point of having him arrested when Arthur threatens him with a counter charge of attempted manslaughter, for in his rage the old man has fired an ancient musket at the boy. Matters are compromised, and Ben Norton leaves very suddenly, under what, to Arthur, seem suspicious circumstances. Mr. Davidson learns of the affair through Hal, and announces that he will drive out and bring Arthur in the very next day.

Hal meantime hears from Mont Raymond, an ex-reporter on the JOURNAL, of the robbing of Major Van Slyck's safe. The major is an intimate friend of Chess Gardner's, and remembering what Arthur had said about Gardner's interview with Ben Norton, Hal thinks he has a pretty clear idea as to who the burglar was. But he resolves to keep quiet on the subject for the present, and talk it over with Arthur.

CHAPTER XLII.

AN EMERGENCY.

URING the afternoon news arrived from numerous places along the coast concerning the havoc of the gale which had set in a few days before. Little rain fell, but the wind continued to blow a regular hurricane from the south-east. Finally about four o'clock a telegraph dispatch from the local correspondent at Charlestown, in the extreme southern part of the State, announced that a vessel had gone ashore at the Inlet, and that one or two other sailing craft were in the offing.

"I can't trust that fellow down there," declared Mr. Coffin, on receipt of the intelligence; "he's a perfect fool about writing up anything but personal news. I'm going to send you down, Blaisdell."

"All right," responded Hal. "If I can get some word to my mother I am perfectly willing."

"Very well. You can send word by one of the boys. Deliver will attend to it for you. If you make as good a report of this as you did of the High Rock fire you'll suit me," said the city editor handing him some bills. "Here's twenty five dollars—you never know what might happen, so it's best to go well heeled. That's not considered a very dangerous part of the coast, but you'd better cover the shore pretty thoroughly from the Inlet to Noyes Beach. It's a bad storm—the heaviest in years—and bids fair to be a great deal worse before it's better."

"What's the nearest route?" demanded Hal, eager to be off.

"There's a train leaves in a few minutes—4:15," replied Coffin, consulting his time table. "You'll have to change at Kingston for Wakefield. Hire a team there and drive over to Charlestown. The Inlet isn't far from there. Look sharp and don't let anything of worth escape you; and for pity's sake don't let those Telegraph fellows get ahead of you."

With this admonition ringing in his ears the young reporter departed. He reached Wakefield about six o'clock and after obtaining a lunch, found a boy who for a two dollar note agreed to drive him the seven or eight miles between that village and Charlestown. Here he made it his first duty to telegraph to the office the fact of his arrival and then went to work.

The vessel reported ashore was a fishing schooner, all the crew of which had been saved. After a tramp along the shore for an hour or two he returned to the little cluster of houses dignified by the name of "village," wrote up what notes he had obtained, and telegraphed them to the Journal, receiving an order in reply to remain where he was until the storm had abated. So finding lodgings at the house of an old sea captain, he went to bed and fell asleep almost immediately while the gale rocked the old house, and the booming of the surf plainly sounded in his ears.

Mr. Davidson was a man who, when he had once made up his mind to do a thing, usually did it. So the following morning despite the unpleasantness of the weather, he ordered his light carriage brought to the door and about eight o'clock started out towards the country.

Occasionally a gust of wind blew the light rain in his face, but he was well protected by the rubber boot, and paid little attention to the elements. The gentleman had taken a great fancy to the Blaisdell boys, especially to Arthur, and he had not even now wholly recovered from the anger he had felt on learning of Hart's accusation against the boy.

Little suspecting that such an ally as Mr. Davidson had already taken up his cause, Arthur had arisen that morning in anything but a cheerful mood. Bill Olney had driven away alone on the milk route, and after breakfast Arthur made ready to depart. He had not seen Hiram since the doctors had performed their operation the day before, and he did not ask to now.

Before Arthur had left the farm Joel Webb, who had been spending the night at the Carpenters', came over to the Hart place. Arthur expected that Joel would avoid him and therefore was greatly surprised to have Mr. Webb immediately come towards him, and offer his hand.

"I don't bear you any ill will, Arthur, for what you did to me the other day," he said, in what was intended to be a very forgiving manner.

"Indeed," returned Arthur, who happened to be polishing his boots just outside the back door.

"No. I have heard of your unfortunate connection with the robbery, and I have come to offer my services," and to Arthur's unbounded astonishment he held a bit of pasteboard towards him.

Taking the card in his own hand he read what was printed thereon with considerable curiosity:

JOEL AUDUBON WEBB,

ATTORNEY AT LAW.

"For goodness sake!" he exclaimed. "I thought you were studying medicine. How long since you have taken up the law?"

"I have recently become acquainted with a very influential attorney in the city, and shall probably go into partnership with him. I am studying in his office."

"But why did you give up medicine?"

"Well—hem!" stammered Joel. "I—I decided that I should not be able to stand the exposure to all kinds of disease. My friend tells me that the law is the profession for which I evidently have the most talent."

"I wouldn't have believed it," said Arthur.

"Well, will you trust your case in my care?" inquired Joel.

"I am afraid you are not sufficiently acquainted with legal matters yet, if you have only commenced to study."

"Oh," replied Joel, very confidently. "I'll get the matter postponed first of all, and by the time it would come up again I should have made myself familiar with the law on the case."

"I don't know but you'll make a lawyer after all," said Arthur, laughing; "but I hardly think there will be any case any way, and if there is I think I'd better have a more experienced attorney."

"Then you do not wish my services?" demanded Joel.

"No, sir."

"Very well," returned the embryo lawyer, with asperity, "I shall offer my advice to the other side," and with an expression which boded no mercy to Arthur if he *should* happen to conduct the case for the plaintiff, Joel Audubon walked haughtily away in search of Mr. Hart.

But when Arthur went out to the barn where the farmer was at work, Joel was nowhere about and it is probable that Mr. Hart had seen fit to refuse his services as well as Arthur.

*Began in No 439 of THE ARGOSY

"I am going now, Mr. Hart," said Arthur respectfully.

"Ye be?" and the farmer left his work and came to the door.

"Yes, sir."

The old man eyed him sharply a moment, then he said.

"Hi'll be sorry enough ter hev ye go; but I can't hev ye 'round here if ye've taken ter stealin'."

"I have told you before and I repeat it, Mr. Hart, that I did *not* steal your money."

"It looks mightily ez though 'twas you, and I believe it was," replied the farmer, flushing a little under Arthur's steady gaze. "Now if you'll give back the money and things you hooked—"

"I did not take them," again reiterated Arthur.

"Yes yer did!"

At that instant a light carriage drove up to the gate of the farm yard, and the single occupant, after alighting, approached them. Arthur in great surprise recognized Mr. Davidson.

"Why, sir," he said as the gentleman came toward him, "is there anything I can do for you?"

"Yes, there is," replied Mr. Davidson, shooting a wrathful glance at the farmer in the door of the barn. "Get into my carriage. I've come to take you *away from this—this—place*," he said, at a loss for a word strong enough to express his contempt for the vicinity.

"I wish yer joy with that little thief," said Hart, at once resenting the insult to his farm, while Arthur stared at the proprietor of the *Journal* as though hardly crediting his senses.

"You infernal old scoundrel!" roared Mr. Davidson, shaking his whip threateningly at the farmer. "If you weren't an old man I'd horsewhip you for that." (There was probably about five years difference in their ages!) "Calling this young man a thief! I'd trust him forty times over before I'd believe *your* word," with which parting shot Mr. Davidson bundled Arthur into the carriage and springing after him, drove away from the farm.

"Why—I didn't expect this," stammered Arthur, still staring at the gentleman.

"Of course you didn't," growled Mr. Davidson. "Thought I was an old fool, didn't you? Well, I don't blame you, for I did act like one the last time I saw you! But I want to tell you that I honor a boy like you, and I'm proud of you, too. I came pretty near assaulting that old wretch who has treated you so shamefully."

"How did you know about it?" demanded Arthur.

"Your brother told me all about it."

"Did he go to you—?" began Arthur.

"No, he didn't—I sent for him. You didn't suppose I'd let a man go out of my employ the way Jennings discharged him, did you? Jennings is a good fellow, but he's too nervous. However, I don't know as I should have known anything about it if it hadn't been for a little fellow in the press room—"

"Micky Moriarty?" interrupted Arthur.

"Yes, that was his name. He's a smart little urchin, and it seems Hal got him his place, so he almost worships him. Micky came to me and told me that Hal was discharged, so I looked into the matter. Did you see that article in the *Telegraph*?"

Arthur shook his head.

"Well, it was the meanest slur they have published yet; but I made them take it back," and Mr. Davidson nodded his head in a satisfied manner. "But hullo! I what's that?"

At that moment they were slowly passing the Remington House, and, as Mr. Davidson spoke, Annie appeared on the piazza with something that she waved at them, evidently to draw Arthur's attention. As the carriage stopped, the young girl gave the object to Cæsar, who stood beside her, and, pointing toward Arthur, uttered some command.

Immediately the mastiff bounded across the yard, over the fence, and, reaching the carriage, stood up with his fore paws on the wheel, holding out the object in his mouth to Arthur. It was a sealed envelope.

"Well! well!" ejaculated Mr. Davidson, gazing at Arthur quizzically as Cæsar, after delivering the letter, bounded away again. "What does this mean?"

Arthur broke the seal, and read the following words, penned in Annie's hand:

MY DEAR MR. BLAISDELL:

Will Olney has made it his business to inform every one in the neighborhood of the accusation Mr. Hart has brought against you. But we, as well as all your other friends, believe in you. A. C. K.

"Well, what does she say?" inquired Mr. Davidson, smiling.

Arthur flushed just a little as he handed him the open letter.

"H'm—good girl," said the old gentleman, nodding his head approvingly. "You see you're not without a firm friend as long as 'A. C. R.' believes in you," and he laughed at Arthur's evident confusion.

Just here a heavy gust of wind and rain cut short any further remarks, and Mr. Davidson started his horse up at a better pace. The wind continued to blow more furiously, and, as they crossed the river, the crests of the waves were white, and the wind whipped sheets of spray in their faces.

"Hard on the sailors," said Mr. Davidson. "Don't ever be a sailor, Arthur."

"I shan't unless I can get nothing else to do," returned the boy.

"You won't lack anything to do as long as you behave yourself. I've been saving a place on the *Journal* for you for a month," said the gentleman curtly.

"I wondered what you were going to do with me," said Arthur, laughing.

Mr. Davidson smiled, too.

"I s'pose I did take you off rather unceremoniously," he said. "You haven't any reason for not accepting my offer now, have you?"

"None at all, unless I go in search of Ben Norton, and make him clear me from all connection with that robbery."

"Pooh! I don't mind it. Nobody will believe you did it."

"As long as Mr. Hart thinks I did it, other people will be doubtful, too," said Arthur firmly.

"Well, I don't know but you're right," said Mr. Davidson. "But I wouldn't do any such foolish thing as to go in search of that scamp. You're just as likely to find him by staying in Providence, as by going elsewhere."

It was almost eleven o'clock when they reached the *Journal* office. Mr. Davidson took Arthur up to the city editor himself. Mr. Coffin was as busy as usual, and treated the proprietor with as little ceremony as he did other people. He stopped and shook hands with Arthur, however, when the boy was introduced.

"Glad to see you," he said, hardly raising his eyes from a slip of paper which lay before him on the desk.

"Mr. Coffin will give you your orders," said Mr. Davidson, about to turn away.

"Look here," suddenly demanded the city editor, "when can you be ready to go to work?"

"He's all ready now," said Mr. Davidson, before Arthur could reply.

"All right," said Coffin. "I've just got a telegram from Blaisdell—your brother, I suppose he is. He's at Charlestown. Tells me the storm on the coast is terrible. Two vessels gone ashore at the Inlet, and another reported at Watch Hill. I've got to send somebody down there to help him, and I'll send you. From what I've heard of you, I guess you'll do."

"Of course he will," declared Mr. Davidson, rubbing his hands together. "I'll carry any message you want to send to your mother. There's trains leaving all the time for that direction, isn't there?"

"One leaves in half an hour," said Mr. Coffin curtly. "You'll have to go to Wakefield, take a team from there to Charlestown, and, once there, hunt up your brother. He'll set you to work. Mr. Davidson will see about your having some money."

A few moments later, Arthur, with but a vague idea of how he had come there, found himself comfortably ensconced in a corner of a car seat, and was being whirled rapidly away toward the south.

CHAPTER XLIII.

ARTHUR IS PRESENT AT A FAMILY JAR.

ARTHUR BLAISDELL had seated himself in the third coach from the baggage car, which he had made sure would necessitate no change during the entire journey to Wakefield. The train had hardly got out of the confines of the city when a young man, dressed nicely, although with a certain flashiness about him, entered the car from the direction of the smoker, and walked down the long aisle, evidently looking for a seat.

Arthur immediately moved over and offered him half of his. The stranger was smooth faced save for a mustache, and had a slightly dissipated look. He at once entered familiarly into conversation with Arthur.

"Going far?" he inquired, after laying aside his overcoat and settling himself comfortably in the seat.

"To Wakefield," replied Arthur, mentally deciding that his companion was a traveling salesman of some sort.

"That so?" responded the other. "Just where I'm going myself. Fortunate I fell in with you, isn't it? Ride all the way together, you know. Ever been there before?" went on the voluble young man.

"Never."

"Neither have I," and he laughed good naturedly. "I'm going down to look up the damage done by the storm," he continued, gazing out of the window at the wind driven clouds and the sheets of rain dashing against the pane.

Arthur pricked up his ears at this.

"Is that so?" he inquired.

"Yes; I'm on the *Telegraph*, and you know that never gets left on news," returned the other. "Understand there's a wreck or two along the coast, and of course we want to give the public the very latest intelligence."

"Of course," acquiesced Arthur.

"Now the *Journal*," went on the *Telegraph* reporter, stretching his legs, and speaking loud enough for every one in the vicinity to hear, "that's too slow for this age. Why, it's at least a dozen years behind the times. I used to be on its staff myself, but it was too rusty for any wide awake young fellow to stay on. Most of its reporters are stuffy old fellows who've been pencil pushers for a cycle or two. No chance to work up on *that* sheet."

"Is that so?" queried Arthur, apparently greatly impressed with his companion's remarks.

"Fact," returned the other. "Now the TELEGRAPH," he continued, with an emphasis which can only be expressed by capitals, "I might say never gets left. When you read an item in its columns you can safely bet your last cent on its being correct with a big K. Why—"

"How about that little article they published last week about a certain wine supper up at Blanks's?" inquired Arthur, innocently enough. "I see that they took it all back the next day."

An expansive smile decorated the faces of a number of passengers in the vicinity who knew of the article Arthur mentioned.

"Why—er—well, you see," stammered the *Telegraph* man, scrutinizing the boy sharply, as though half suspecting that Arthur was making game of him, "the fellow who wrote that up got the bounce quicker than lightning."

"So the report he wrote up wasn't true, eh?" asked Arthur.

"'Twas true enough," returned the other doggedly; "but old Davidson kicked up such a row that we had to buckle down to him. He's got the money, and the *Telegraph* is a young plant, you know. But the people are beginning to recognize it as *the* paper."

Arthur smiled, but said nothing.

"Say," inquired his fellow passenger in a low tone, "what's your business?"

"Just at present I am engaged on the *Journal*," replied Arthur amused.

"Ju—*pe-ter!*" ejaculated the other. "You don't mean it? Well, I was a gilly, wasn't I?" and he laughed as good naturedly as ever. "Barked up the wrong tree, didn't I? You haven't been there long, have you? I only—h'm left last week."

"This is my first day," returned Arthur.

"Well, you did get the laugh on me in good shape," said the stranger admiringly. "What's your name? Here's my card," and he handed Arthur a bit of pasteboard on which was engraved:

MONTAGUE RAYMOND.

Arthur was slightly surprised upon discovering his companion's identity, but replied quietly:

"My name is Arthur Blaisdell."

"Whew!" exclaimed Raymond, with a long whistle of surprise. "I thought there was something familiar about your face. You're Hal Blaisdell's brother."

Arthur replied in the affirmative.

"I didn't know you were on the *Telegraph*," he said.

"Jumped right into it—told your brother yesterday," said Mont, recovering from his momentary surprise.

"I hav n't seen Hal since last week," said Arthur. "I only came in from the country today."

"That so? Well you ought to have got on the *Telegraph*. The old *Journal's* too slow, really. What you going to Wakefield for, if it isn't a state secret?"

"Just what you're on," returned Arthur.

"Oh, the wrecks? Old Coffin really has got on to it?"

"Hal's been down there ever since yesterday afternoon," replied Arthur with considerable pride. "Two columns about it in the *Journal* this morning."

"Is that so? Well, you did get ahead of us, didn't you? Hal still down there?"

"Oh, yes."

Mont nodded his head with a satisfied smile.

"I want to see him," he said.

But Arthur congratulated himself on the fact that his brother's eyes were now opened, and that Mr. Raymond's wiles would avail naught with Hal.

Mont continued to discourse at length on the various topics of news then current, including of course, the mysterious robbery at Major Van Slyck's. Arthur had heard about it before leaving the city; but now received from his valuable traveling companion a full history of the affair.

"Chess and I—I don't suppose you know Chess Gardner, do you?" questioned Mont.

Arthur said he had heard of him.

"Oh, yes; from your brother, of course. Well, Chess and I have a little ciew we intend following out, and I shouldn't wonder if in a day or two you *Journal* fellows woke up to find us everlastingly ahead of you. It'll be the making of the *Telegraph* if we should get ahead of the police."

Their arrival at Wakefield cut short Mont's further remarks, and both hurried from the train.

"Going to get a team to go over to Charlestown?" queried Mont.

Arthur nodded:

"So'm I. Good luck to you," and the *Telegraph* reporter hurried away.

Arthur immediately accosted the first man he saw at the station with the question.

"Is there a livery stable here?"

"Wal, there hain't," responded the native, eying the young fellow curiously. "'Suthin' of a storm, hain't it? Wanter hire a team?"

Arthur replied that he did.

"Wal, Bill Griggs'll mabbe let ye one. Lives up there," and the individual jerked his thumb toward a wooden structure that looked something like a tavern, and toward this Arthur turned his steps.

As he approached the building he saw Mont Raymond enter the bar room door.

"He may get ahead of me," thought Arthur, and hurrying on, he turned into the yard.

A man in his shirt sleeves and with a very red face stood in the door of the barn.

"Is this Mr. Griggs?" inquired the young reporter.

"You've struck it jest right," responded the man.

"I want to hire a team to take me over to Charlestown," said Arthur. "What'll you charge?"

"Hain't got but one 't I wanter resk out in this storm an' on these 'ere roads," said Mr. Griggs. "Open beach waggin. Two dollars 'n a half fr the day in advance."

"Harness it up," said Arthur immediately. "Here's your money," and he handed out the required sum.

Mr. Griggs at once led out the horse and with Arthur's ready assistance quickly had him harnessed. The young reporter sprang into the carriage and had just gathered up the reins when a door at the rear of the tavern opened and Mont Raymond appeared, preceded by a short, fleshy woman, evidently the tavern keeper's wife. Mont was wiping his mustache as though he had recently patronized the bar.

"You Bill!" exclaimed the woman, with a strong Teutonic accent, "you clust get dat young man out of dat team. I haf let it."

Griggs muttered something exceedingly uncomplimentary to his spouse, and replied roughly:

"Don't go into hy-sterics, ole gal, fr I jest let it myself."

"I don't care," exclaimed the woman. "Dis chentleman here haf paid me two tollar for it—"

"Well, I've got two and a half," growled Bill. Then to Arthur. "Drive on, young man."

But Mrs. Griggs was too quick for him. Despite her superabundance of flesh she reached the gate before the slow moving horse had got all his legs into action, and grasped the bridle with a very muscular hand.

"You Bill!" she exclaimed, "vat you mean py taking in monies? You gif me dat two tollar an' a helluf, or I will not ledt de hoss go."

To say the least it was an exceedingly uncomfortable position for Arthur.

(To be continued.)

ON STEEDS OF STEEL.

BY MATTHEW WHITE, JR.

CHAPTER XXXI.

HORACE CANBY.

S may be supposed, my announcement that I could solve the mystery of the bank defalcation quite electrified the other members of the Challenge Club. But when I explained why I was sure that the ex-peddler was Horace Canby, Hugh declared he believed I was right and suggested that I go and capture him at once.

"But that's absurd," Mac interposed. "Do you think Will can go up to him, lay his hand on his shoulder, say, 'You are my prisoner,' and have him remain meekly in custody till we reach a landing. There are such things as warrants and constables, you

must remember, my dear Hugh."

"Let's tell the captain of the boat about it then," suggested Steve.

"Tell nobody," I broke in. "All we've got to do is to bide our time and keep our eyes on him."

"Well, you're making a good beginning, I must say," interjected Hugh. "He's nowhere to be seen now."

That was indeed the case. During the excitement of imparting the news to my companions, I had allowed my bird to escape me. Still, he must be somewhere on the boat.

"I'll hunt him up at once," I said. "We make another landing soon and I must have him under observation before that. No, I'd better go alone; there's not so much chance of his recognizing one of us."

I started off forward and carefully noted every passenger, but without finding the man I sought. Coming back to the other fellows, I found that they had seen nothing of him either, and then, as the whistle blew for the landing, I hurried to the gangway, only stopping long enough to call back to Mac, "If I have to leave the boat here, get off at the next stop on this side and wait for me."

Stationing myself close by the plank, I waited and watched for my man. And almost the first person off the boat was he. I was not as instant behind him, but he walked so fast that I knew I would soon lose him again unless I quickened my steps.

The stop had been made at a small place on the opposite side of the river from Bolton. Canby had a small hand satchel and kept on at a terrific pace, straight up the road that led away from the wharf.

"The money's in that bag," I told myself, "and he's going now to hide it somewhere."

Then I mentally measured the ex-peddler's form with my own, with a view to a possible set to between us. He was very slight, as I think I have said before, but still he looked to be wiry, and I felt sure that he must be desperate. Altogether the outlook was not a particularly agreeable one.

I wondered what the family at home would say if they could see the son of the house stealing up a strange country road, on the track of a fellow who was supposed to have made away with fifty thousand dollars of a bank's funds, to say nothing of its president.

A sort of chill crept over me as this last recollection recurred to my mind, and I turned for a final look at the steamer as she swept swiftly up the river, making diagonally for the opposite shore.

Then "Why didn't I bring my machine with me?" was my next thought. "With that I could have run the fellow down inside the town limits, and had some help at capturing him."

Still, the sight of the wheel might have caused him to become suspi-

cious, and, besides, I had no time to think of getting anything off the boat but myself.

By this time I had grown terribly warm from rapid walking.

"How much longer is this thing going to be kept up?" I reflected, "I wonder if he has noticed that I am following him."

And at that instant he turned his head. I was too far away for him to recognize me, but instantly he slowed up.

"I suppose he wants me to pass him," I decided, "and then he can tell what I am up to. Well, we're getting pretty well into wild country already, so the sooner matters are brought to a crisis the better for me."

So I kept steadily on, and, as Canby walked slower and slower, it wasn't long before I caught up with him.

And now was the decisive moment. I will not say that I did not wish myself back on the steamboat. With my usual impulsiveness I had put myself in a very responsible, not to say perilous position. I knew nothing of these Darlings beyond that acquaintance of two days with the daughter. What if Mr. Darling and this Canby were in league with one another? Their rendezvous might be very near here.

But I had no time to reflect further. I was now on a line with Canby, and, if I was to take the initiative, I must do so at once.

"Why, hello! sold all your tins?"

This, the first thing to say that popped into my head, I got off rapidly as I turned and half faced the fellow whom we had first met as a peddler.

He started; there was no denying that. He recognized me, too; I could see it in his eye, but he quickly brought an expression of complete surprise into his face.

"I beg your pardon," he said. "You have the advantage of me."

"I'm afraid we did," I laughed. "That time you were asleep by the roadside, and my friend's runaway tricycle collided with you. You remember that, surely?"

The fellow unblushingly shook his head, and seemed determined to brave it out. But I had gone too far to draw back now. I decided to take a new tack.

"Then we haven't kept equal pace in our acquaintanceship," I went on. "You appear to have forgotten me entirely, but I have now the pleasure of knowing you by name, *Mr. Canby*."

I don't think the fellow was any more amazed when the tricycle hit him that afternoon.

"You—you are mistaken again," he muttered.

"Oh, no, I'm not, *Horace*."

I'm afraid I was growing reckless, but really I couldn't resist the temptation of seeing him squirm every time I mentioned something that showed I knew some fresh facts about him.

"But there are quantities of strange resemblances in the world," he said, making a great effort to appear at his ease.

"Then, if your name is not Horace Canby, what is it?" I asked quickly, believing that he had not taken another, and that my sudden question would throw him into confusion.

But to my surprise it did nothing of the sort.

"Lawrence Traymore," he answered, and his manner was more composed than it had been at any time during the interview.

I was nonplused for an instant. Could I have been mistaken, after all?

Then I recollected that of course it would have been the most natural thing in the world for him, in assuming his disguise as a peddler, to take a false name along with it. So I passed over this point, and had recourse to some reserve ammunition.

Neither of us had stopped walking, and we were by this time well up on the hillside, and altogether beyond the limits of the village.

"Well," I resumed, "Canby or Traymore, I think I met some friends of yours the other day. In fact, I was in their house only this morning; have been staying there for the last two nights. They are in great trouble, and I would give anything to be able to help them, for they have been very kind to my friends and myself. Perhaps you can aid me in what I want to do. You will no doubt understand what I mean when I tell you that the name of my friends is Darling."

CHAPTER XXXII.

I HEAR A CONFESSION.

I HAD said that I expected Horace Canby would understand what I meant when I told him that the name of the friends to whom I referred was Darling. Still I had not expected quite so emphatic a comprehension as I received.

The fellow suddenly dropped his satchel in the road, and advancing on me, placed a hand on each of my shoulders, as he said excitedly :

"Look here, young man, what do you mean by all this? You are driving at something. Tell me plainly what it is, so I'll know where I stand."

"You are standing in the shadow of State's prison," I responded, in my usual impulsive fashion. "As you want plain speaking I'll give it to you, and say that I believe you know more about that \$50,000 of the People's Bank money than Brandon Darling does."

There was silence for a minute after that—silence long enough for a robin to perch on a twig close behind the ex-peddler, and begin and end his song. Canby's hands dropped away from my shoulders, his head drooped till his eyes looked straight at the ground, and the whole attitude of the man expressed utter and complete despair.

"I haven't spent a cent of it," he murmured feebly, touching with his toe the satchel that still rested in the road. "I couldn't do it. All I've been trying to do since I took it is to think of some way of getting it back."

"But Mr. Darling," I burst out. "What has become of him?"

"I don't know," was the surprising answer. "I thought they'd find him before this."

"Find him!" I exclaimed, instinctively recoiling a step. "You don't mean to say you've put—"

No, no," he cried, holding up both hands in front of his face. "Don't think worse of me than I deserve. There was nothing planned deliberately. I only went down before temptation. But come over here in the grass behind those trees and I'll tell you the whole story. You can advise me then what to do. Here, you carry the bag with the money. I don't want to touch it again."

I was a little doubtful about complying with this last request. What if some officer of the law should appear and find me with the satchel? However, as nobody seemed to suspect Canby but Jack Mills and myself, and as the peddler had already walked off, leaving the bag on the ground, there was nothing for me to do but pick it up and follow him.

As I have said, we were now in the open country, with not a fence to be seen, only the tops of the houses in the village below us, and the river craft that were passing up and down the Hudson. Canby led the way to a shady spot, a little removed from the highway, and here, flinging himself face downward on the grass, he motioned for me to take a seat near him.

"What *would* the fellows say to see me now?" was my thought, as I proceeded to make myself comfortable on the soft turf. "They *might* think I was in worse danger than Hugh was when the tree fell on him."

But still, I didn't feel the least bit afraid. Canby was certainly a most inoffensive looking fellow. To be sure, he might have a pistol, but I was in a good position to watch his every movement.

"I don't know exactly how much information you have about me," he began, tearing up grass blades as he talked, crushing them in his hand, and then letting them drop slowly through his fingers, "but still I might as well tell the whole story. Mr. Darling is an old friend of my father's, and when he died he took me into the bank as a little fellow of thirteen, and has kept me in close relation with himself ever since. I suppose I would have been made one of the tellers, only for my handwriting, which is fearfully poor, and which I cannot seem to alter. At any rate, although my salary was increased a little each year, promotion did not come to me the way it did to the other fellows, and this made me restive. But Mr. Darling trusted me fully, and I was as much a private secretary to him as anything, except I didn't do any of his writing.

"I noticed lately that he was acting a little queerly, and the morning of the—the morning he disappeared, he came to my desk and put a little roll of money down in front of me. 'Horace,' he said, 'I've had a message from the emperor. I've got to go away. You must keep this money for me.' I was so dazed for an instant that I could do nothing but look at the bank notes; then instinctively I proceeded to count them. There were only a few, as I have said, but they were all big ones, and I felt quite limp when I discovered that I held in my hand the sum of fifty thousand dollars.

"I turned to say to Mr. Darling that I could not think of accepting such a responsibility, but he was not in the room. He must have gone out as soon as he finished speaking, and nobody has seen him since."

"And you never told anybody about his giving you the money?" I exclaimed.

"No, that is where the temptation part of it comes in," Canby hastened to explain. "I put the money in my pocket at first, expecting every moment Mr. Darling would come back, when I proposed to hand it over to him and explain that it would be much better if he would keep it himself. But time passed on, and he didn't appear, and then came the revelation of the missing money.

"My first impulse was to give it to the cashier and tell all I knew. Of course I had been questioned, and had said that Mr. Darling had been acting strangely, and that I thought his mind was unbalanced. Now, the possibility of keeping the money and allowing it to be supposed that the president had taken it, flashed over me. All I had to do was to keep silent, and the thing was done. There was no planning to open safe doors or throw the blame on somebody else. The money was already in my pocket, and the blame was fastened on the man who had access to the vault, and who was now missing."

Canby paused, and allowed his face to sink until it was buried in the grass for an instant.

"Oh, what a grateful fellow you ought to be, Will Hasbrouck," I told myself, "that you have not such a burden as this to carry!"

Then the confession went on.

"I didn't really want the money for anything special. I'm not what they call a fast youth. It was the mere fact that it was in my pocket and could be made mine without my lifting a finger that made me do as I did."

"But it seems to me you ran a fearful risk of detection," I interposed. "What if Mr. Darling had come back and told that he had given the money to you?"

"I thought of that, and it didn't seem at all likely that he would. I've read accounts in the papers of business men who suddenly lose their minds in this way, and when they get them back again, they can't remember a thing they did while they were out of their heads. If Mr. Darling had come back the next day he would probably have said he hadn't the remotest idea what had become of the money. Still I felt uneasy in Bolton, and using my employer's absence as an excuse for staying away myself, I sewed the money up in a little bag, fastened it around my neck, and left home."

"But what under the sun made you assume the guise of a peddler?"

"Two reasons. After I had committed myself to keeping the money I felt that I could not spend a cent of it, and yet I must have something to live by. Then a guilty conscience I suppose made me want to keep from being recognized; so I shaved off my mustache, put on my oldest clothes and invested in a stock of tinware as soon as I was far enough from home to feel that the dealer wouldn't know me. I took a little money I had saved up with me, and with this, and what I made by my tins, I bought another outfit when I got to New York, and then, like all criminals, returned to haunt the scene of my crime."

Canby paused and looked over at me oddly. I felt that his story was told, and that he was wondering what I was going to do.

This was a puzzling question to myself. He did not seem in the least like a common criminal; indeed, if he had been I am sure he could not have told me the circumstances of his fall so frankly.

"Does he expect me to let him go free, because of that very frankness, I wonder?" I asked myself.

But the silence was now becoming embarrassing, especially as I was conscious that my companion was closely watching my face.

"Will you come back to Bolton with me, and tell this story to the people in the bank?" I said then.

His eyes dropped immediately, and he began to dig nervously at the turf with his fingers.

"Is that the only way?" he answered in tones so low that I could scarcely catch them.

"It is the only *right* way," I answered, with marked emphasis.

"Do you think they will jail me?" was the next question.

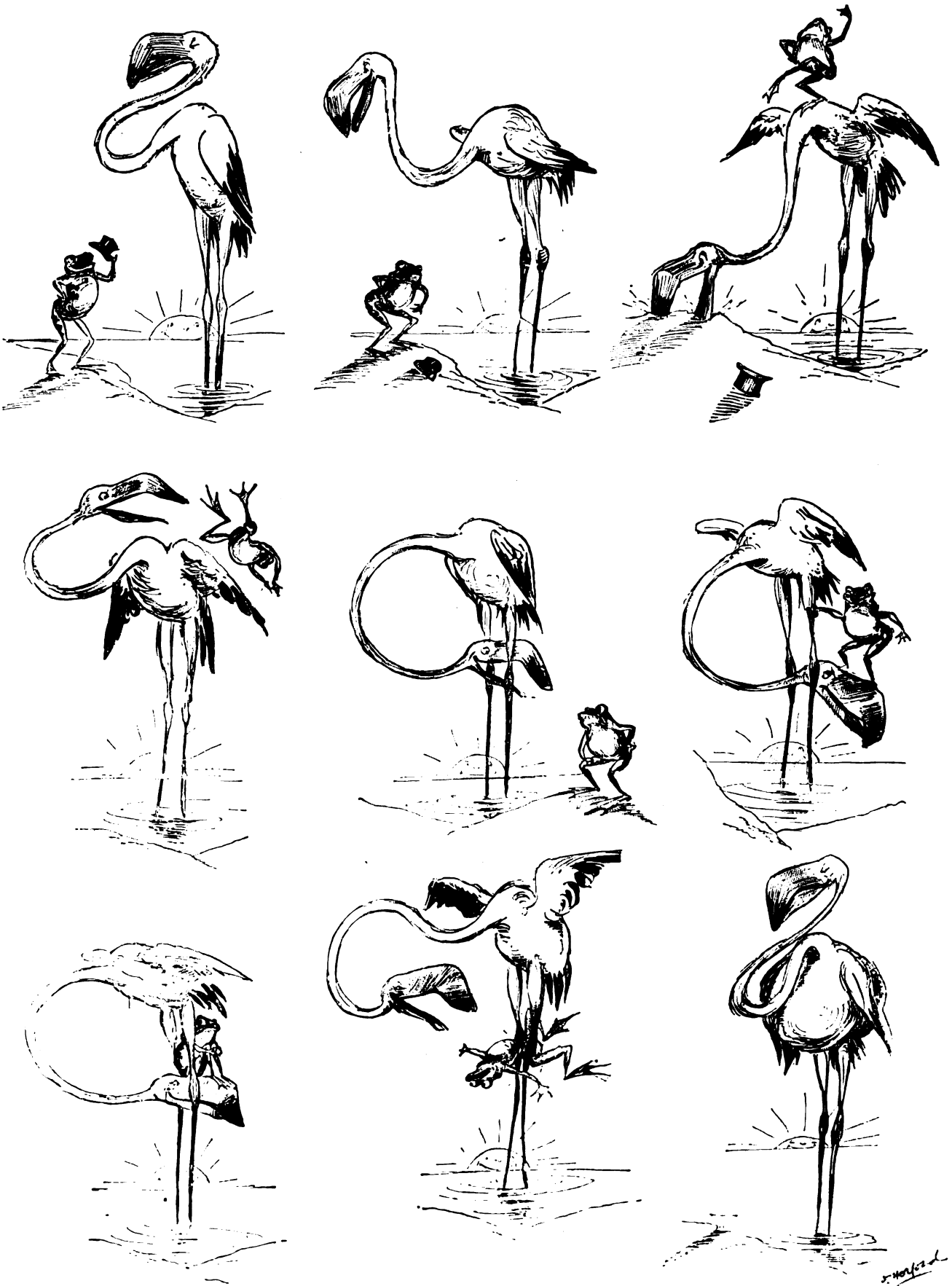
I hesitated a minute, and then spoke out my honest convictions:

"I'm not sure that they will. You see yours is a peculiar case. Of course you have done wrong, but not in the way that most defaulters do. Mr. Darling gave you the money to keep for him; you say you have kept it intact. The wrong you have committed is in allowing it to be supposed that he had gone off with it. Of course there is no need for me to tell you what anguish this has caused to one family and the terrible anxiety it has inflicted on many others. I don't want to preach, although goodness knows you need it bad enough, but if your repentance is sincere you ought to be ready to undo all you have done, and stand the consequences."

(To be continued.)

THE ARGOSY

HE LAUGHS BEST WHO LAUGHS LAST.



J. H. H. H.