THE ARGOSY

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RICH AND LARKIN BEGAN TALKING ACROSS ME ABOUT SOME SEASHORE PLACE.

NORMAN BROOKE;

OR,

*BREASTING THE BREAKERS.**

BY MATTHEW WHITE, JR.

CHAPTER IV.

A VERY PECULIAR STRANGER.

THERE is nothing so powerful in the way of producing content or its opposite as contrast. A few minutes before I had felt that I was a much to be pitied mortal, left without a home, bound for a strange city, and not knowing where I should sleep the next night.

Now, as I sat there looking at the hooks on which that coat and vest had hung, I would have given a good deal to be put back some thirty minutes, with nothing more tangible than these things to trouble me.

The creaking of the bed at this instant roused me from my reflections and warned me that I must face the consequences, whatever they might be, very soon. I looked over into the lower berth, and saw that its occupant had rolled over. His eyes were closed, and I was pretty certain that he was really asleep.

"I wonder if it would do any good to go out and report the theft to the captain?" I asked myself. "The thief must be still on board."

And yet, when I recollected that there were above five hundred souls on board the great boat along with him, the

* Begun in THE ARGOSY of last week.

prospect of capturing him seemed no easier than if the burglary had occurred on shore. Besides, if I left now, and the stranger should wake up while I was gone, and discover his clothes missing, suspicion would be more certain than ever to rest on me. Oh, why had I ever suggested that he take the things off? Verily this was an inauspicious beginning to my career as a business man!

"I wonder if he will have me arrested as soon as we get to New York?" was my next thought. "Surely not, if I tell him about the affair before he has a chance to find it out for himself. I'll wake him up now and do it at once."

But as I rose to cross the room the fellow's eyes opened and fixed themselves on me curiously.

"A terrible thing has happened," I broke out at once. "I fell asleep while I was reading, and some one reached in at the window and took your coat and vest."

I paused here, for I fully expected him to spring up and rave around the place in terrible excitement. But he did nothing of the kind. He just looked at me in the same dazed fashion, and then said in the low tones in which he always spoke, "Who are you, and what's that about your coat and vest? I guess I am scarcely awake yet," and he rubbed his eyes.

"Don't you remember," I went on, "that you came in here feeling ill, mistaking this stateroom for your own, lay down in my berth, and that I suggested you would be more comfortable without your coat and vest? So I took them off for you, hung them——"

"And now they are gone," he finished calmly, propping himself on one elbow and looking at me steadily.

The essence of the hardest part of my trial was concentrated in that look. I tried to endure it unflinchingly, in the consciousness of innocence, and yet, when I recollected that, if innocent, I was at the same time guilty of carelessness in leaving the articles so exposed, I felt my cheeks growing red in spite of me.

"Was there very much money in the pockets?" I asked, feeling that the silence must be broken somehow.

"None at all," he answered. "I carry it all elsewhere."

"And the watch?" I went on.

"Was a valuable gold one, a present from my mother," he answered, in the same even voice.

"But we must be able to get it back!" I exclaimed. "We *shall* get it back! I'll go out and see the captain about it now."

"I'm afraid it won't do any good," he returned; and, stepping out on the floor, he pointed to one of the items in the printed form that hung over the washstand. It read:

Passengers are warned not to leave their windows unfastened, as the company will not be responsible for articles stolen from the rooms.

"I wish I was rich enough to give you the value of what you have lost right now," I said. "I acknowledge that it was terribly careless in me to leave things so exposed."

The fellow still looked pale, and now he reached out backward to support himself by the upper berth, and sat down on the bed again.

"Then you are not well off," he said, glancing at me curiously. "I was under the impression that you were."

I couldn't tell whether there was any sarcasm in the words or not. I suppose, though, that if one judged from my clothes, he might have formed the same impression that this stranger did. Uncle James had been extremely liberal in his allowance, and I always had the best of everything.

"Well, I've got my clothes, a pretty good supply of them, twenty five dollars, and the prospect of a salary in New York of ten a week."

I thought, under the circumstances, the fellow deserved to hear a perfectly frank statement of the condition of affairs with me, so I gave it. Then, remembering about the value of his lost watch for its associations, I added. "But surely the steamboat people will make some effort to recover property lost on their vessels. I'd better go out and report the theft, at any rate, don't you think?"

"It can do no harm," he answered languidly, and then sank back on the pillow.

"Here, you are really ill," I exclaimed. "Let me get your things for you so that you can go to bed here. What is the number of your room?"

"Positively I can't remember," he answered. "I've left the key in the door, too. You're not the only chump aboard," and he smiled faintly.

I smiled too. Really I never thought that I could have felt so delighted at being called a chump.

"It's late now," I said taking out my watch; "ten minutes to eleven. Almost every one will have retired. Tell me some way I can tell your room if I get into it and I'll try the first one with the key sticking in the door."

"There's a light leather dress suit satchel standing on the floor under the window, with the letters D. C. on one end. Bring that," and my odd companion closed his eyes while an expression of pain wrinkled his forehead.

I hurried out into the saloon, which was now almost deserted, and walked along watching for a door with a key in it. I came to one presently and knocked cautiously before entering. There was no response, so I went in and turned on the light. Yes, there was the dress suit case, with the letters D. C. on one end. A handsome black overcoat hung on the door, and in the corner stood a silver headed umbrella. Picking up all three, I returned to my own room, locking the door after me.

"Here," I said, "are all the things I could see there. Make yourself at home here, and I will take your berth—unless you would rather I stayed here," I added significantly.

"Please stay," he said, "if you don't mind taking the upper berth."

"Certainly," I answered, "but I'll go and see the captain first."

I had some trouble in finding this official, but when I did succeed in securing an interview with him and told my story in all its particulars, he said he was very sorry that he could not hold out much hope for the recovery of the stolen articles, but would place the matter in the proper hands and report after every one had left the boat in the morning.

With this I was forced to be content, and I returned to my room in anything but a cheerful frame of mind. My suddenly acquired room mate was between the sheets, sleeping as if there were no such thing as thieves in the world, and undressing quietly, I crept carefully into the upper berth. But I knew that the short and disastrous nap I had already taken was all the sleep I would get that night.

CHAPTER V.

THE NEXT MORNING.

STEADILY on toward New York the boat made her way, and with throbbing brow I lay there in that upper berth, trying to think a way out of the strange predicament into which I had put myself at the very outset of my new career. To be sure "D. C." whatever those initials stood for, had taken his loss in an entirely different spirit from what I had anticipated, but then still waters run deep, and I had no means of assuring myself that he had not already decided to have me taken in charge by an officer as soon as we reached the pier in the morning.

"Well," I reflected with a sickly sort of smile in the dark-

ness, "in that case one of my problems will be solved for me: I won't have to hunt up a lodging house."

Then on top of this came the thought: "What will Mr. Tick say? Even if I succeed in explaining matters satisfactorily at court, I will be late in reporting at the office, and I must account for the fact. And even if I don't have to do this, ten chances to one the whole affair will be out in the papers, and then what sort of a reputation I'll have to start in on!"

Rendered desperate by such forecastings of the future as these, I tried to turn the picture as it were, and look on the brighter side by recalling "D. C.'s" use of the word "chump," and the kindly spirit he had manifested throughout the transaction. But this was only one end of the see saw that my brain kept up through the livelong night, and the first streaks of dawn that sifted in between the slats of the shutters, found me but a sorry specimen to enter on life in the metropolis.

The boat was still plowing her way swiftly through the water, and getting down as cautiously as I could, so as not to disturb my room mate, I pushed the shutter to one side, and looked out.

We were at the lower end of the Sound, close to the Long Island shore, which was lined with handsome villas, surrounded by velvety lawns, dotted with summer houses and tennis courts. Everything looked beautiful in the tinge cast over them by the rising sun, and the sight reminded me so forcibly of Lynnhurst that I closed the shutter with a bang, and turned away.

"Oh, are we in?"

My companion sat up in the berth, rubbing his eyes.

"No," I said. "I'm sorry if I woke you."

"Oh, I guess I was half awake already," he went on. "Where are we?"

I told him, and was about to mount to my berth again, when he put his hand on my sleeve.

"If you don't want to go to sleep again, I'd like to talk to you for a few minutes," he began.

"No, I couldn't sleep if I did try," I rejoined sitting, down on the edge of the berth.

"I hope you're not worrying about that watch," he resumed.

"I am," I responded. "I can't help it. You would if you were in my place, wouldn't you?"

"I am not sure about that. I'm a queer duffer; not a bit like other people. Perhaps that's the reason I didn't fly out at you last night when I found the things were gone. You're coming to New York to live, I think you said last night?"

"Yes, but I haven't the remotest idea where yet," I answered. "I was hunting up a boarding place when you came in last night."

"And interrupted you," he went on, with a smile. "I dare say you wished I had been in the bottom of the Sound before I ever showed my face in here."

"Oh, I think you have been very kind," I hastily returned, which he certainly had, although of course I could not help feeling that it would have been still kinder in him to have sought refuge in his own room, and not have opened the way for me to get into the scrape which still had its meshes around me. "What troubles me principally now," I went on, "is that I have no place to send my trunk when I get to town."

"You might like it at the house where I board," he replied, to my unbounded surprise. "I think you told me that your salary was to be ten dollars a week; would seven be too much for your living expenses? There's a room at our place you can get for that. The house is at 197 West 43d street, near Broadway, you know, and a pleasant location. At any rate, you can order your trunk sent there, and no harm done if you don't like it."

I didn't understand this fellow at all. As he said himself, he was certainly a queer "duffer." At first I was inclined to think he was most disinterestedly kind in suggesting a lodging place for me at his own house, but now, when he spoke about my trunk being sent there, I could not look upon it in any other light than as a hostage to be held for the worth of the watch I had been the means of his losing.

"Three dollars a week isn't much of a margin for washing, car fares, lunches and sundries, is it?" I ventured to remark.

"Depends on your tastes and habits," he replied. "Your car fares needn't be more than sixty cents, put your lunches at one dollar, and your laundry at another, and there you have forty cents a week left for sundries and the bank."

I sat thoughtful for a moment. Here was one way out of a perplexity that had been troubling me. The Pilgrim was fast nearing her dock in New York, nothing had as yet been said about policemen and the station house, and even if these were to be a factor in my case, I recollected now that I had never heard of prisoners taking their trunks to jail with them.

"I'll do it," I said suddenly. "Will you please give me the landlady's name and the number again?" and I took out one of my visiting cards and a pencil.

"Mrs. Alvira Max, 197 West 43d Street, near Longacre Square," he replied. "As soon as I get dressed I'll give you one of my cards—— or no; I won't," he added suddenly. "My case was in that coat. Here, give me one of yours and I'll write it down for you. A fellow never likes to pronounce his own cog. At least I don't."

I took out another card and passed it over to him, together with the pencil. He read my name, then turned it on the other side and wrote his.

DALE CAMERON

I read when he handed it back to me.

Considerable whistling on the part of our boat reminded me of the fact that we must be drawing near our destination, and hastily looking at my watch, I discovered that it was seven o'clock. I had to dress yet, get my breakfast and be at the office by half after eight.

I explained circumstances to Cameron, when he smiled and rejoined, "Well, I'm a gentleman of leisure, so I'll wait and see about my watch and things. Are you going to take breakfast on the boat? You can save time by doing it. I'll get up now and we can have it together."

"Do you think you can wear one of my coats?" I ventured to inquire as I realized that his loss might put him in an awkward fix till he got home.

"Ah, I've another suit in my box, thanks," he said, and twenty minutes later he was attired in a complete change of costume.

Breakfast cost a dollar apiece, and by the time we came on deck the boat was backing into her dock. It was just quarter to eight, so I had time to see the expressman and give him my check. Then leaving Cameron to await developments in the robbery case, and promising to meet him up town at six, I set out for my future scene of labor.

CHAPTER VI.

MR. ANGUS TICK AND HIS BUSINESS METHODS.

MR. TICK'S office was in William Street, but as I had been in New York only two or three times in my life before, I knew no more about the location of this thoroughfare than that it was down town, in the narrow part

of the island. I inquired the way of the first policeman I I met. He directed me to walk up Murray Street and across City Hall Park, which I was very glad to do, as it gave me an opportunity of seeing a celebrated quarter of the city which was quite new to me.

The clock in the City Hall tower pointed to twenty minutes after eight as I crossed the plaza in front of it. As I wasn't sure just how far down William Street I must walk to reach Mr. Tick's number. I quickened my steps, for I did not wish to be late the first morning.

Merely taking a hasty glance at the towering newspaper buildings that flanked the east side of the Park, I hurried along until almost before I expected it my eye caught the sign:

TICK'S TICKLING TOYS,
NOVELTIES AND FANCY GOODS,
Third Floor.

The passageway was narrow, and the stairs were dark and dirty, but I turned in with a plunge and stumbled my way up.

A sign painted in red letters on a glass door, and similar to the one on the street, caused me to halt at the second flight. I glanced in, saw a room piled full of small pasteboard boxes, scattered about in every direction; then, though I wanted to wait for an instant and pull myself together, so to speak, I resolutely denied myself this luxury, turned the knob and walked in.

A clock hanging against the wall in a suggestive position opposite the door, announced that it still wanted five minutes to half after eight, and at first I thought there was nobody around. But a cough near one of the front windows attracted my attention, and, stepping in that direction, I saw a gentleman sitting at a roll top desk there, figuring on a piece of paper.

"Is Mr. Tick——" I began, when he stretched out his hand, and said, with a smile:

"Oh, this must be Mr. Brooke, from Boston. I am glad to see you."

I had my valise and a cane and umbrella strapped together, so suppose it was by this means he recognized me.

I should never have taken him for my future employer. I had pictured to myself a grave looking personage, with spectacles perhaps, about fifty, with a grizzled beard, a stoop to his shoulders, and a shine to his coat. The man before me, on the other hand, looked to be not much over thirty five, wore a mustache carefully waxed at the ends, a light suit, whose pattern was the least bit inclined to loudness, and in his shirt front sparkled my particular abhorrence—a large diamond.

But his manner was very cordial as he showed me where to put my valise and hat, and then asked me to sit down and have a little talk before setting to work. I noticed, however, that he kept looking at the clock, and when presently a young fellow entered with a brief "Good morning," an expression of relief crossed his face.

"Now, Mr. Brooke," he began, "as Mr. Winkler has doubtless informed you, I am giving you a very snug berth here. I have wanted some one to assist me personally for some time, so as to permit me to take some needed relaxation, but have not felt that I could trust any one to take my place. My staff of helpers, though an efficient one, are all feather weights when it comes to throwing them on their own resources. Why, sir, I don't dare turn over and take an extra nap in the morning, for, if I was late myself one day, they would all take advantage of it, and come late the next, trusting I would not be here to find it out. Good morning, Larkin."

This last was addressed to a youth of about sixteen, who entered with a rush, mopping the perspiration from his face. I was considerably amazed by Mr. Tick's statement, but could not yet be sure that I understood him correctly. However, he did not leave me long in doubt.

"Now, Brooke," he went on, "ten dollars a week is the largest salary I am paying, and, while your work will not be hard, it is important. My business is fairly prosperous, and, as I say, I think have earned the right to relax a little in my vigilance. I can do this if you prove to be the efficient helper of my hopes. No doubt you think it singular that I put this confidence in an utter stranger. To me, however, this is the only solution of the matter. Indeed, it would be quite impossible to take a man out of my present force and expect him to fill the bill. It must be some one with whom the boys cannot get on familiar terms, some one whom they can respect."

Mr. Tick eyed me narrowly as he added this last. He may have expected to see a flush of pride on my face; if so, he was disappointed. I felt excessively uncomfortable. So I was to be made a watch dog, then! If any flush came out on my countenance at all, it was a flush of shame. But Mr. Tick was continuing:

"I did not select you for the position without knowing my man. Indeed, I stipulated that Mr. Winkler must send me your photograph before I finally decided. While young in years, you are dignified in appearance, and, I am pleased to find, in manner; and I feel, since meeting you, that I have made no mistake. As to your active duties, they will consist in opening the mail, figuring the receipts, dictating letters in reply to those sent in inquiring about the quality of our goods, and so on. Your desk will be next to mine here," and he laid his hand on a flat topped affair that commanded a view both of the clock and of the entire office.

"But come," he added, "I will introduce you to the staff," and putting one hand under my elbow, he led me up to the fellow who had come in first.

"This is Mr. Rich, our bookkeeper," he said. "Mr. Rich, allow me to introduce Mr. Brooke, who is hereafter to be my assistant, and who, in my absence, will *act in my place*."

This last had marked emphasis placed upon it.

Mr. Rich stared at me pretty hard, but put out his hand, which was clammy, and made me glad to drop it.

Then I was taken over to the youth who had come in with a rush—all Mr. Tick's clerks were evidently in their teens—who was tying up packages at the counter. His name was Larkin, and precisely the same form was gone through here as in the other case.

Then I was piloted up to a pale lad, who was working the typewriter in a corner, and whom I had not seen before. He was younger than either of the other two—not more than fifteen, I should think—and Mr. Tick left off the "Mr." in his case, and presented him as Archie Dorset.

This ceremony over, I went back to my desk, where Mr. Tick spent the entire morning in showing me goods, explaining their merits, what I must say in reply to this, that, or the other complaint, and giving me so many other "points" about the business, that when the twelve o'clock whistle blew my head fairly buzzed.

"Now, Brooke," my employer broke off here, "I am going to send you out with Rich and Larkin to have them show you a place to lunch. And this, by the way, will be

the opportunity for you to show me what you can do in the way of maintaining your dignity. It is a test case, remember." Then raising his voice: "Rich, I wish you and Larkin would take Mr. Brooke out to lunch with you."

Rich looked surprised, but said "Certainly, sir." Then we all took our hats and started, I walking gravely in the middle, Rich and Larkin talking across me about some seashore place they had been to on Sunday.

(*To be continued.*)

THE CHINESE CONSPIRACY;

OR,

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

BY ENRIQUE H. LEWIS.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE MYSTERIOUS MESSAGE.

WERE Charlie Travis accused to his face of possessing superstitious traits, he would deny the allegation with scorn and lofty contempt. But nevertheless it must be confessed that his long residence in a country prone to superstition had its melancholy effects.

When he received that mysterious message on board the steamer, and was compelled to pass out on the dock as related, his eagerness to learn the contents was overwhelming. He held the paper—a tightly folded wad—in his hands. It was only necessary to undo the package and read the inscription therein. But he hesitated.

He felt instinctively that it would mean much. A way to rescue the middy, or information leading to that desired end. He did not know who the person was that had given it to him, but he had a shrewd conjecture, and his heart beat high with hope.

Yet this foolish youth sought out a beggar (not hard to find, even at that hour) and bestowed upon him sundry small coins of the Empire; piled them high in the astonished mendicant's hands until they ran over to the ground—and all for luck.

This duty attended to, Charlie tore open the message with an impatience increased by delay. Literally tore it open, and in the operation, rended the common rice paper in twain. A passing wind pounced on the piece which had fluttered from his unsteady grasp, and bore it away.

Dismayed at the misfortune, Charlie stood motionless for a moment, and then broke out in loud lamentation. The beggar stopped in the midst of his joyful calculations and hobbled out of sight around the nearest corner, fearful of being reduced to poverty again.

"Well, of all the confounded accidents, this is the worst!" exclaimed Travis, staring blankly at the part still left in his hand. "Serves me right, too. Why didn't I open it carefully? Might have known this paper would tear easy. Well, it will teach you a lesson, Charlie, my boy—to make haste slowly hereafter."

*Begun in No. 450 of THE ARGOSY.

As he spoke he scanned the contents, and found to his surprise that it was written in Chinese, and ran as follows:

Seek your friend in the mountain retreat of the Wong-Si-Ko band. His rescue from a great danger will depend solely on secrecy and cunning. Do not appeal to the authorities. Attempted action on their part will only result in his immediate death. From Changteh, go forty three leagues west, then north——"

The directions ended suddenly, torn off at the most critical part, and Charlie now realized what his unfortunate and ill timed haste had accomplished. That the note was genuine, he did not doubt for a moment. That it told the truth in regard to Lawrence's peril, his knowledge of the robber band made apparent.

For years a clique of daring thieves had terrorized the Provinces of Hunan and Hupeh, and all efforts of the combined authorities had utterly failed to bring them to justice. They plied their nefarious trade in almost open defiance, and the many expeditions sent in search of their hidden stronghold had resulted in utter failure. The band was supposed to consist of a whole host of followers, and rumor stated that it had ramifications all over the country. Of late a startling idea had gained ground that certain high officials were in secret unison with the chiefs, and that other and greater crimes than petty robberies were aimed at.

All this Charlie knew, and he realized what a stupendous task awaited him. In fact his practical nature made him see at once that the idea of rescuing the middy from such a clique was well nigh hopeless. Even if the mysterious note had not been torn, and he knew the exact location of the stronghold, the chances of one person going there, and single handed and alone, wresting a captive from within the midst of scores of desperate villains, was, to say the least, preposterous.

And now he did not know where it was. Even that aid had been taken from him by the accident. Charlie shook his head slowly as he thought over the matter.

"Chances look almighty slim," he muttered, reading the note again. "Almighty slim. But even so, it doesn't prevent me from trying, and by George, I am going to try! The proper thing under other circumstances would be to notify the counsul, and have him send for a small man-of-war, like the Monocacy or Palos, but as the note says, if any open attempt is made at recapture, Lawrence would be killed at once. I am sorry now that I told Rodgers to notify the consul and the 'Taou tai.' I must try and keep them from acting if I can. It is hardly possible that the magistrate will do anything though, as he is aware of the futility of it. Well, if I am going to do anything myself I had better be moving, Let me see, I think I will go to the Consulate first, and figure out some scheme on the way."

It was now daylight, and the streets of the bund were assuming a business aspect. People were opening their shops, and the market places soon became crowded with eager buyers, Charlie strode through the various throngs, taking little heed of the many curious glances attracted by his unkempt appearance, and evident preoccupation. He was absorbed in thought, and as he threaded his way between the different groups, he tried to map out a plan of warfare.

In passing through a square his attention was suddenly called by the sounds of an altercation going on near the center. Several natives were quarreling violently, and just as he paused they came to blows.

To Charlie's astonishment he recognized in one of the combatants the miscreant who had acted the part of the leader in the preceding night's assault. There he was, as big as life, actually engaged in fighting, and attracting

public attentionto himself in a place where he had perpetrated a bold outrage not ten hours before.

The cool effrontery of the man, his apparent disregard of all danger, fairly staggered Travis, and he looked more keenly to see if he was not mistaken. The second glance convinced him, and he rushed into the midst of the brawling mob, bent on capturing the thief if possible.

The fighting stopped instantly. There was a skurrying of feet, and before Charlie could lay hands on the cooly, he was hustled away and out of reach. Travis tried to follow him, but it seemed as if every Chinaman in the sqaure was determined to get in his way. As fast as he would thurst one aside, another would block the road, and he soon gave it up in despair.

Many black looks were leveled at him, and in one case some one more fearless than the rest, struck him on the back with a pole. The blow was lightly given, but it showed the temper of the crowd, and Charlie discreetly withdrew. Not, however, without threatening the terrors of the law.

"By Jove!" he said to himself, as he walked away, "if the natives will act this way in the foreign settlement of a seaport city, what won't they do in the interior? There is trouble brewing, as sure as you live. I wish I could have caught that confounded rascal, though; I would have first cuffed his ears, and then locked him up. The cheek of the man!"

Still growling, Charlie hurried along, and soon reached the Consulate. Mr. Purcell, the consul, was in his office, making preparations for an immediate search, and greeted Charlie's arrival as opportune. His indignation at the outrage was increasing every minute, and he fairly exploded with rage as Travis entered.

"Sit down, sir, sit down," he said, wheeling around in his chair and turning a very red face to Charlie. "I am glad you have come, sir. This matter must be attended to without delay. Assaulted in the open streets of the bund! Carried away right from under our noses, our noses, sir! Young man, I have been twenty years the Consul General from the United States to this Empire, and this is the first case of the kind that ever occurred. What will the papers of the United States say? What will the papers of the civilized world say? The President of our country, our great and glorious republic, will stand transfixed with horror, sir, when he hears that an American naval officer has been kidnaped from the seaport of a peaceful nation, and he will ask who is the consul of that place, and he will recall Mr. Purcell, sir. I—I——"

The excited man choked at the very idea, and commenced to affix his official seal to a pile of documents at a rate which showed long practice.

"It is all very true, Mr. Purcell," began Charlie; "but I——"

"It requires immediate attention," interrupted the consul, ignoring his attempt at a reply, and wheeling around again. "I have just prepared a message to the 'Tsungtuh' of the Province, and one to the admiral at Foo Chow. A couple of men-of-war must come here without delay, and go up the river."

"You must not send either message, sir!" answered Charlie in a firm voice. "Nor send for war vessels!"

CHAPTER XIV.

OFF TO THE RESCUE.

THE consul stared at Travis in speechless surprise. His face grew more fiery, if possible, and he sputtered. Yes, that is the correct word—he literally sputtered.

"Do not become angry at any apparent disrespect, sir," went on Charlie, feeling a little alarmed, and half inclined to call for medical assistance. "I beg of you to calm yourself. What I meant was, I have information which shows that such an action will really work harm instead of good. Look at this, sir."

He handed the torn scrap of paper to Mr. Purcell; then proceeded to explain how it came into his possession. He also assisted in the translation, and pointed out the necessity of acting as it suggested. The consul calmed down somewhat during the narrative, and at last displayed a willingness to discuss the matter without the use of a very pungent rhetoric.

"Now, sir," said Charlie in conclusion, "that is how the case stands. You can see that it will be the greatest folly to try and rescue Coleman by open means. You know very well that a large body of men could not approach their stronghold. You can also see that an appeal to the Imperial Government would be worse than useless. In fact it would bring the matter to a disastrous end at once. Now, there are only two methods left. One is to patiently wait, and if he is killed, to demand satisfaction at the point of the sword, which, by the way, would be very poor satisfaction to Coleman; or, to try and rescue him by cunning. In my opinion, the latter is the only feasible chance. One man must go, or any way, not more than two. What do you think of it?"

"Well, I really believe you are right," replied the consul, after a minute's pause. "Poor boy; I am afraid he will never see his ship again. I know the power and utter villainy of that band, and the case appears hopeless. The idea of one or two persons trying to rescue a prisoner from them seems ridiculous. And then who on earth would be foolish enough to attempt it?"

"I will attempt it, sir," quietly replied Charlie, rising from his chair. "It has been my intention all along. I have plenty of money, and I have such a regard, and—and liking for Lawrence Coleman that I would risk my life for his and be glad of the chance."

Mr. Purcell eyed his caller for a moment; then, jumping to his feet, walked over and grasped Charlie's hand.

"Travis, you are a man!" he exclaimed in a voice husky with emotion; "A man, every inch of you. By Heavens, I wish I was your age; I'd go myself! Well, it shall be as you desire. Of course my duty compels me to make some report, and I will write a long letter to Admiral Hewett, explaining the circumstances. But would you mind giving me an idea of how you intend going about this affair?"

"Certainly not, sir," replied Travis courteously. "I haven't any clear plan worked out yet, but I will probably charter a steam launch to take me as far as I can go by water, and then reach the mountains by mule litter. After that—well, I can't say, you know. Must trust to luck."

"A steam launch, eh? A good idea. And, by George, you shall have mine! It is at your service from this moment. No—no—don't you speak to me about payment! Do you wish to insult me, sir? Humph! I'll have you locked up and stop you from going, sir, if you dare breathe such a thing again. The American Eagle is down at Russel's dock, and it won't take an hour to get her ready. Go and make your arrangements, and come by here on your way to the wharf."

Charlie thanked him and accepted the offer. He knew the launch in question and was aware of its speed and good accommodations. After telling the consul he would call, as desired, he left the office and went to Mr. Rodgers's hong. It was necessary to obtain more money, and he resolved to draw a large amount in case he could do anything in the

way of ransom from Changteh. He also wished to write a letter home.

On arriving at his friend's factory he found that he had gone to the city magistrate's, so Travis, while waiting, wrote his letters.

In the one to his father he merely said that very important business compelled him to go into the interior at once, and that he had turned over the tea matter to Mr. Rodgers. He added that he would explain everything on his return.

Then Charlie, prompted by a thoughtfulness not to be measured by years, hunted up a pair of scissors and clipped a huge lock of hair from his head. Then he selected a nice clean sheet of paper and pinned it thereto. On the top margin he wrote the simple words: "For Mother," and on the bottom added as excuse: "Please see if there are any gray hairs."

Then, as he placed it with the other sheets in an envelope, he murmured to himself: "Don't care a blame if it is red; she'll like to have it, just the same," and, lo! the white surface bore a blemish just by the lock, but it was from an honest tear!

Mr. Rodgers entered the door.

"Ah, Charlie, you are just the man I want to see!" he exclaimed pleasantly. "I have been to the 'Taou tai's,' and he said he would have the matter attended to at once. He made a great many promises, but I am afraid it will end with that. You look rather worn out from loss of sleep and anxiety. Hadn't you better go to bed for a while and rest. Three or four hours will do you all the good in the world."

"Much obliged," replied Charlie. "I would like to, but I haven't time. Want to leave immediately for Changteh. Have a slight clew in that direction. Mr. Purcell has kindly loaned me his launch, and I will probably be gone several weeks."

Travis did not enter into any further explanations. He was afraid the old man would try to dissuade him, and also might send the news home, something he did not wish to occur. After making his business arrangements with Mr. Rodgers, Charlie returned to the consul's office.

In his previous interview with the latter he had not mentioned Dalton's name, but simply stated that the note had been mysteriously thrust in his hand by some person unknown. He now remembered that the ensign had said when he left the steamer the previous night that he was going to the American consul's. It was plainly evident he had not been there, and Travis resolved to speak of it.

"By the way, Mr. Purcell, did Ensign Dalton call here last night?" he asked, after a short conversation on the subject in hand.

"Ensign Dalton? Who is he?" was the surprised reply. "Dalton? I don't know any officer by that name except one now with the Benton at Foo Chow. No person by that name has called here. Why do you ask?"

Charlie thereupon revealed to his astonished hearer all that had occurred since leaving Foo Chow, and gave his suspicions connected therewith. He also told about his chance encounter with the cooly that morning.

The consul was very wroth, and expressed his opinion of the ensign in strong terms. His amazement at Charlie's story can better be imagined than described, and he said that he would communicate with the admiral at once.

"This is the strangest affair I have ever met with in all my diplomatic career," added Mr. Purcell, unconsciously running over a "blue book," as if in search of a similar case. "There is evidently a diabolical conspiracy on foot, and it behooves us members of the corps to look into the matter."

He ceased speaking and sat back in his chair. An expression of deep thought came into his eyes, and he seemed to forget Charlie's presence.

"Well, Mr. Purcell, I must say good by. I want to be off at once," said Travis at last, glancing at the clock on the desk.

"Eh? Oh, yes, you are going up the river. By the way, I have ordered Que to wait for you at Changteh, and, if you do not rejoin the launch in twenty days, to return here with all possible speed. Now, Travis, good luck to you. If you don't come back I'll see that Uncle Sam boils every Chinaman in his own teapot. Good by!"

As Charlie passed out of the office he turned and saw Mr. Purcell in his shirt sleeves, writing at his desk with an enormous quill pen. His energetic efforts boded ill to some one, and Travis smiled in quiet satisfaction as he noticed the results of his seed sowing.

Several hours later the steam launch American Eagle drew into the middle of the stream, and, with a farewell shriek of her whistle, started on her momentous journey.

CHAPTER XV.

AN UNFORTUNATE ACCIDENT.

IF it had not been for his anxiety concerning the middy, Charlie would have felt highly elated at the prospect of a long trip on the well appointed launch on which he now found himself. He was naturally fond of the water, and when at home in Foo Chow, derived much enjoyment from a little craft of his own. But as he looked about the American Eagle, he acknowledged that she was far superior to any he had sailed in before.

Although small, scarcely forty feet over all, yet she had been so ingeniously constructed that the accommodations approached those afforded by a regular seagoing yacht. Almost the entire length was inclosed, and every inch of available space was devoted to the cabin. The fittings were of a most luxurious description, and it was possible to find comforts unlooked for on such a miniature vessel.

The crew consisted of two men and a boy, all natives, but wise beyond their nation in such labors. Mr. Purcell, with a touch of quaint humor, had inaugurated among his henchmen what he called "The Alphabetical System of Renaming Servants." He had taken the letter "Q" as a basis on account of the Chinese style of wearing hair, and had called his head man "Que." The engineer was named "Pe Que" and the boy "O Pe Que." Usage had shortened the last two into "Peke" and "Ope."

After leaving Shanghai, Charlie arranged some minor details about his luggage, and went forward to see the captain. It had taken longer to lay in stores than he had expected, and it was now well on in the afternoon.

He had eaten nothing but a light luncheon since the evening before, and he felt rather hungry, so, seeing Ope, he directed him to prepare dinner at once. There was every arrangement for cooking and serving meals, as Mr. Purcell had made the culinary department a special point.

Charlie found Que in the open pilot house, actively engaged in steering the launch through the crowded harbor. The little wheel was spinning around first to port and then to starboard, and the steersman, in the midst of his labors, kept up a running fire of local pleasantries with other craft, after the good old custom followed by ye ancient stage driver in other climes.

Charlie stood for awhile leaning on the window sill, and talked with Que on various subjects connected with the scene before him. He had not told him his object in going to Changteh yet, and now debated whether it would not be

a good idea to explain the whole affair to the intelligent Chinaman, and thereby secure some information concerning the country of which he himself was naturally ignorant. He had half resolved to risk it, when he heard the sound of a gong beaten by the vigorous hands of Ope, announcing dinner.

The contemplated confidence vanished before the odors of a broiled chicken wafted from aft, and Charlie lost little time in crossing his legs under the bountiful table. His energetic attack on the tempting viands caused Ope to first stare in open mouthed wonder, and then take a surreptitious glance at the pantry supplies. Travis noticed the action, and chuckled mightily thereat.

"This light luncheon will do me until nightfall, Ope," he said, flourishing a ham bone; "then we will have the regular dinner."

The lad hearkened, and then withdrew to a private consultation with his personal Joss in the plate locker. The ensuing smoke from burning paper drove Charlie out into the after standing room.

They were now approaching Woosung, and the launch would soon be plowing through the broad waters of the Yantzs Kiang, her prow pointed westward. It was near sunset, and Travis, from his lounging seat on the after cushions, idly watched the gradual brightening of an old, many storied pagoda on the right bank of the river. He saw the dingy tinsel of the carved edges freshen and blaze forth. He noted, with contemplative enjoyment, the scars of age, and the somber discoloration of time change into streaks of gold and deep colored hues unknown to mortal easels, and then, before the picture was finished, it had vanished in the distance.

"By Jove, this beauty can travel fast," quoth Travis, with keen appreciation, turning his eyes towards the broadening wake. "I wonder what kind of a craft poor old Lawrence is in? Some funeral junk, I suppose. Well, it's—great Heavens, what on earth am I doing?"

Travis sprang to his feet in sudden excitement, and struck both hands together with an involuntary gesture, adding: "Here am I making eight or ten miles an hour in a hurry to rescue a man at a place he can't reach in double the time it will take me to get there. Oh, Charlie Fathead! Ope-e-e-e!"

The Chinese boy ran out of the cabin and salaamed.

"Ope, go and tell your Joss I am a dundering idiot, and ask him if he has any native brains to spare."

But the bewildered lad hied forward with fear winged feet, and took refuge in the pilot house,

Charlie stood vocally scourging himself for a moment, and then hurried in the same direction, with a settled determination to confer with Que, and ask his advice. It was a rather incoherent explanation he poured into the wondering Celestial's ear, but the latter managed to grasp enough of it to complete his wavering doubts as to Charlie's sanity, already brought to his notice by Ope. But his master had given him explicit orders to obey the young man in all things, so he consigned his soul to Buddha, and awaited commands as even a Chinese martyr to duty should.

"Just think, he might be in any of these junks," added Charlie helplessly, glancing at the score of craft in view. "Can't we do anything? Can't we search them somehow, Que?"

The Chinaman looked at him with a pitying smile of superiority, and spake not. The question was unworthy of an answer. Then he relented suddenly, and offered several shrewd suggestions. Such is the vagary of even great minds.

"Better slow down," he said, ringing the engine room bell. "Go slow. Three knot. Keep eye out, you. May be see some cooly that was in fight, eh!" and he shaved the paddles of a passing galley with calm judgment.

Woosung had now disappeared in a bend of the river, and the launch was following the south shore of the Yangtzs Kiang estuary, keeping close in. Several small streams, just deep enough to accommodate a moderate sized native vessel for a few miles up, empty into the larger river here, and, as the American Eagle was passing the mouth of one half hidden in a grove of trees, a junk came sailing out.

Her appearance was so unexpected that those on board the launch were completely taken by surprise. A disastrous collision seemed inevitable. The tide was setting in, and its force, considerably heightened by a steady undertow, swung the bows of the Eagle against the low waist of the junk.

But Que had risen to the occasion. He put the wheel over to port with a single whirl of the spokes, startled the somnolent Peke into galvanic action, and in less time than it takes to tell it there was ten clear feet of water between the two vessels.

Then came a loud outcry from aft.

During the temporary excitement, Charlie had run towards the stern with a boat hook, intending to fend the junk off. When they swung alongside he saw something hanging over the edge of the after house which caused him to stand transfixed with astonishment for a passing moment. Then he uttered a loud cry of joy, and scrambled forward to where the three Chinamen were standing.

"Run alongside that junk, quick!" he shouted to Que. "Start her up, Peke. In with you! Confound it, don't stare like fools; my friend is aboard that boat! See, that's his coat on top of the house. Hurry, men, hurry!"

He danced about on the little deck, and, before the bewildered men could even understand what he meant, he grabbed Peke and shoved him into the engine room. Then, taking Que by the arm, Charlie pointed to where a coat, unmistakably of foreign cut, was dangling over the edge of the junk's after cabin.

"That belongs to my friend, Coleman, and he is aboard there, as sure as you live," explained Travis, in wild excitement, hurriedly. "Put her alongside, Que, and make her fast. I want you and the rest to help me. I'll go and get my revolvers, and we'll get him out of that if we have to kill every mother's son of them."

Charlie left Que at the wheel and ran into the cabin, reappearing almost immediately with a couple of Smith and Wesson's, one of which he gave to the excited Chinaman.

Meanwhile the junk had edged away until she was now almost two hundred feet distant. Her crew were flying about the deck, trimming the unwieldy sails, and one of them, evidently the captain, had climbed up on the house and was directing the maneuvers with an energy that went far to convince Charlie in his suspicions.

The sun had already set, and the fast waning light promised to add another drawback to the coming struggle. It was getting dark so rapidly, in fact, that Charlie saw all possible speed must be made, or the junk would be hidden from view before they could get alongside.

"Can't you put on more steam?" he asked Peke through the engine room window.

The engineer made no reply, but silently turned a cock: There was a sharp snap, followed by a crash, and a dense cloud of vapor enveloped the launch. In an instant she was floating helplessly with the tide, disabled, and the junk disappeared in the gathering gloom.

(To be continued.)

I.

A wealth of flowers before us,
And flowers on either hand;
The flowery vines bend o'er us,
As here alone we stand.

II.

With scent the air is laden;
But oh, that I might call
One flower my own, dear maiden,
The fairest flower of all.

III.

Thou blushest—hues the fairest
Are on thy cheek displayed,
Like reddest rose and rarest
On snowy lilies laid.

IV.

Like violets soft and tender
Those dark and lustrous eyes;
One glance, and I surrender,
Such magic in them lies.

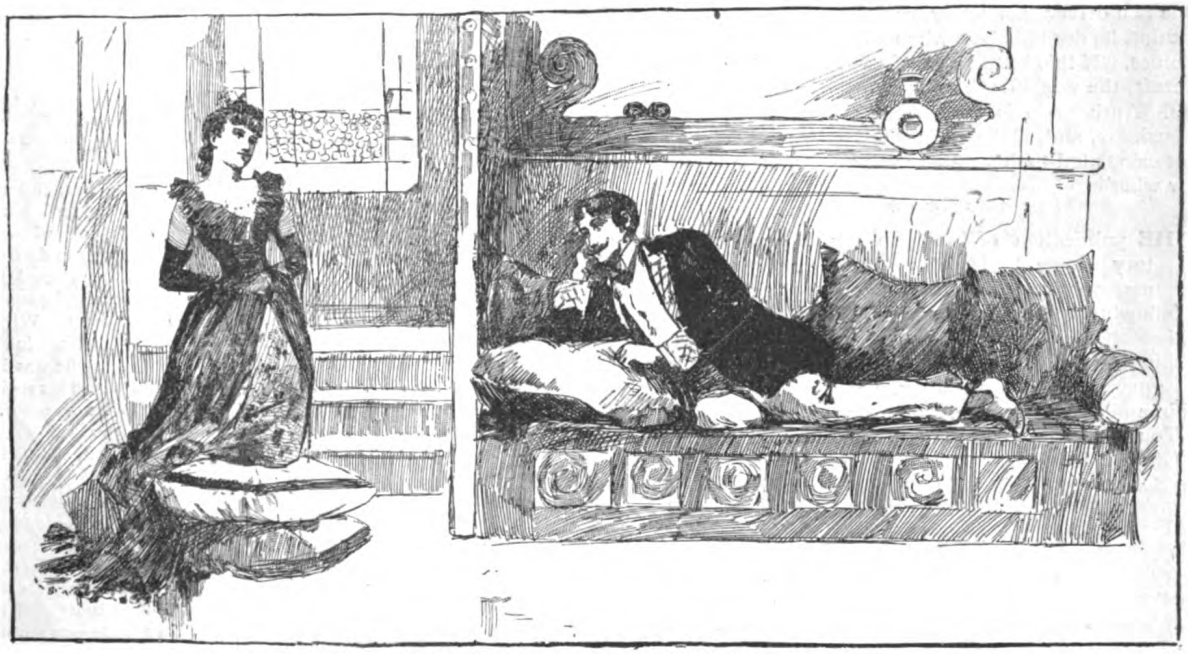
V.

All rank'd in order sightly
My dainty tulips grow;
Thy two lips shine more brightly
Than all the buds that blow.

VI.

Be my petition granted!
Then in my garden green,
Dear maid, thou'lt bloom transplanted,
Of all my flowers the queen!

Richard H. Titherington.



PREPARING TO RECEIVE HIM.

He—"WHAT ARE YOU DOING WITH THOSE CUSHIONS, AMY?"

She—"I'M JUST PRACTICING SITTING DOWN ON SOMETHING SOFT. I EXPECT THAT YOUNG SAPPY IS GOING TO CALL HERE THIS EVENING."

THE ARGOSY

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FRANK A. MUNSEY, Publisher,
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WHILE statisticians are constantly bringing up some city in China, with its "teeming millions" as bearing off the palm for the biggest town in the world, London fills the bill neatly. The English census, which is always taken in one day, was gathered on the first of June of the present year and the resulting figures are 5,656,000.

The immensity of this number of people can best be realized by comparison. For instance all Switzerland contains but 2,933,334 souls, while Chili, Greece and several other well known countries fall even below this. A city that is bigger than a nation is a pretty big town, and the enumeration of its inhabitants in one day is also a very big accomplishment.

* * * *

AUTHORS nowadays do not give their readers a chance to wonder how they work. The market is flooded with reminiscences of famous novelists, who frequently make as much out of telling the public how they came to compose their most celebrated tale as they did out of the story itself.

One pen driver has lately come forward with the statement that he does his best when suffering from an attack of the blues. If this be the unconfessed experience of most of the craft, the world ought to be enriched by some fine literature. Authorship is proverbially known as a poor paying business, and, if the prospect of going to bed supperless is not calculated to depress a man's spirits, we should like to know what is.

* * * *

THE publication of the item entitled "Bringing History Home to Him" in No. 451, has prompted a correspondent in Newark, New Jersey, to send us the following episode in real life:

A bootblack at the railroad station in Elizabeth was once polishing away at the boots of the Hon. Robert Green, then governor of New Jersey, who, in order to give the urchin a pleasant surprise, remarked:

"You don't know who I am, do you, my boy?"

"Oh, yes I do," replied the youngster promptly. "You bees Bob Green's daddy!"

GENERAL OATES,

CONGRESSMAN FROM ALABAMA.

ONE of the most prominent of the Southern members of Congress is General William C. Oates of Alabama. His career has been a varied and eventful one, and he is a notable specimen of the self made American. His father was a farmer, who, born in South Carolina, moved westward to settle in Pike (now Bullock) County, Alabama, where the general was born on the 30th of November, 1835. The boy had no opportunities for education beyond a few terms at a country school. At seventeen he left home and started for the Southwest, to make his own way in the world. For three years he wandered through Louisiana and Texas. Then he returned to Alabama, without a fortune, but with a good deal of valuable experience. He had studied, too, and was now competent to teach school—which was his next employment. As soon as he could afford it, he took a year's course at a law school, having decided to choose the law as the avenue to the success at which he aimed. Then for four months he read in the office of Pugh, Bullock, and Buford, at Eufaula. The

GENERAL OATES.

From a photograph by Bell, Washington

senior member of the firm, it may be noted as a somewhat curious coincidence, has also risen to politicial eminence since the days when General Oates was his pupil; for he is now Senator Pugh of Alabama.

In October, 1858, young Oates was admitted to the bar, and began to practice at Abbeville, Alabama, where he still resides. He also helped to conduct a newspaper, the *Banner*, which entered warmly into the fierce political contests of the times, upholding the doctrine of States' rights to its fatal extreme. When Lincoln was elected President, and Alabama seceded, the young lawyer-editor raised a company which formed part of the Fifteenth Alabama regiment. With the rank of captain, he fought in Antietam and other battles. In April, 1863, he was promoted to a colonelcy. At Gettysburg he was in the thick of the fight around Round Top Mountain, where his regiment lost in killed and wounded nearly two thirds of its strength. In August, 1864, in an engagement before Richmond, the twenty seventh battle in which he had taken part, he lost his right arm, shattered by a Federal bullet.

At the end of the war General Oates returned home with an empty sleeve, and bearing the scars of six other wounds, to find his property swept away. He went bravely to work at his profession, learned to write with his left hand, and persevered until he had again built up a profitable practice. He found time, too, to labor earnestly for the reconstruction of his State and the establishment of order and unity. Public trusts were constantly offered to him. In 1870 he was sent to the Alabama Legislature, and in 1880 to Congress, where he has since sat continuously, having been five times re elected by overwhelming majorities.

At Washington General Oates is known as a "gentleman of the old school," a speaker of considerable talent and force, and one of the most conservative and respected members of his party in the House.

THE DEERSKIN TALISMAN.*

A TALE OF MEXICAN TREASURE.

BY GILBERT CAMPBELL.

CHAPTER IX—(CONTINUED.)

THE MANÂDA.

TO his surprise Arthur saw that both Bob and Indian Joe had thrown aside their rifles and were busily engaged with their hunting knives in cutting the dry grass, of which they were making a large pile.

"Bravo!" cried Arthur. "How dull I was never to have thought of this before. Here, Lopes, lend a hand," added he, giving the trembling Spaniard a thump which nearly sent him on his nose.

All four went to work with a will, the pile of dry grass rose rapidly, but the manâda drew dangerousiy near, led by a magnificent black stallion whose glossy hide was decked with foam.

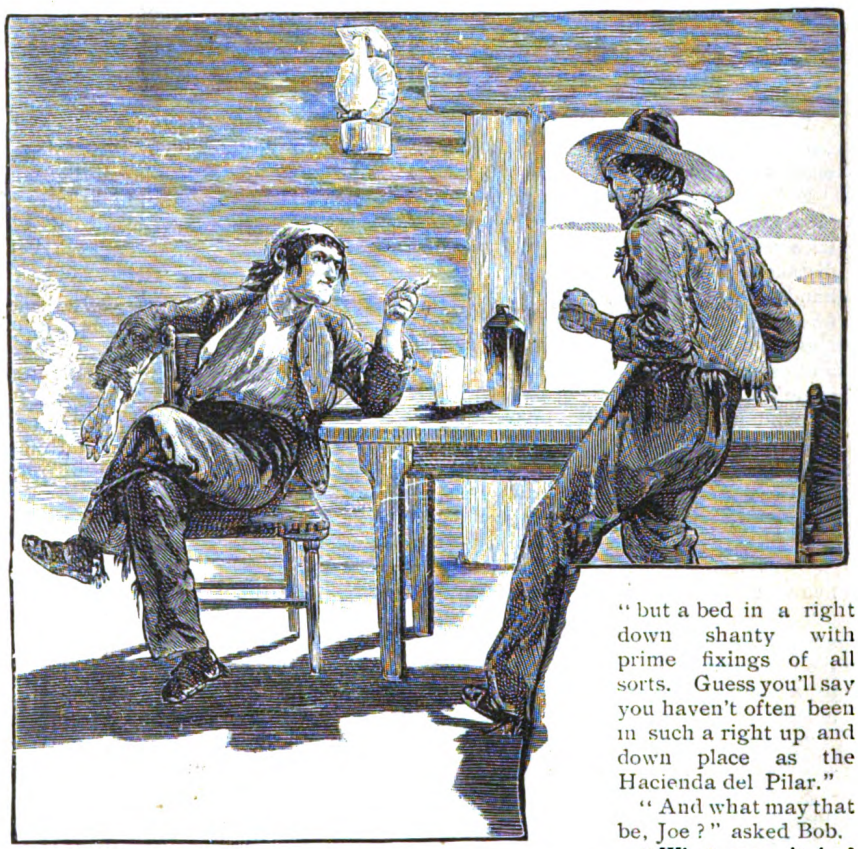
Suddenly Indian Joe stopped, and producing his flint and steel, struck a light. In an instant the dry grass flamed out into a column of fire, and the cavalcade of wild horses, terrified at the blaze, parted right and left, jostling each other violently, and with the speed of a whirlwind passed by on either side.

"What a magnificent creature!" cried Bob as the black stallion swept by. "Here's for a try to crease him."

Creasing, we may explain, is striking the wild horse upon the extreme crest of the neck with a rifle bullet, which without injuring the animal produces insensibility for some minutes, during which time he may easily be secured. No one but a very good shot should attempt this feat, as half an inch too low would most likely prove fatal. Bob took a steady aim, and as he fired, the wild horse sank to the ground, while his companions vanished in a cloud of dust.

"He is dead," said Lopes, hurrying up to him.

"Not a bit!" exclaimed Indian Joe. "As clean a crease as I've ever seen; you *have* got a straight eye, young master, but hobble his legs, quick; the beast is beginning to move, and if he ain't tied pretty smart, he'll kick us to pieces."



CIFUENTES QUICKLY RECOILED.

Lopes speedily hobbled both the fore and hind legs, then fastened a piece of raw hide round his muzzle, and in another instant the noble beast rose tremblingly upon his legs.

"I'll break him in in an hour," cried Lopes enthusiastically, as he threw a slipknot round his neck, and then he cut the hobbles and leaped upon his back.

For a moment sudden surprise kept the beast quiet, then, with a fierce snort, he lashed out right and left, reared and spun round and round in a vain hope to get rid of its rider, and then finding all his efforts in vain, sped away across the plain. By the aid of the hide rope around his muzzle, Lopes kept him in a circle, and then tightening the rope round his neck, brought him to a standstill by choking him. Directly, however, he loosened the cord the horse sped away again. At last he was completely worn out, and submitted to be guided right or left, as his rider chose, and in little more than an hour or two Lopes brought him back covered with dust and sweat and handed him over to Bob, having given him such a lesson as he would remember to the last day of his life.

CHAPTER X.

THE HORSE THIEF.

NIGHT was closing in as the little cavalcade was still moving on under the guidance of Indian Joe, who professed to know this part of the country well.

"No camping out tonight, young masters," cried he, "but a bed in a right down shanty with prime fixings of all sorts. Guess you'll say you haven't often been in such a right up and down place as the Hacienda del Pilar."

"And what may that be, Joe?" asked Bob.

"What may it be? Why, the out-and-outest location that you will find for miles round. You see old Captain Z. P. Fenton, he bought the hull place, stock, lock, and barrel, from a rich Mexican, and he and his boys started a horse and cattle ranch, and it went on getting bigger and bigger, and now I calculate there are forty hard headed fellows there, afraid of nothing, and ready for everything."

"Well," said Arthur, "how far off is this paradise, for I confess that I am getting both tired and hungry, and should not be sorry to indulge in some of the prime fixings you speak of."

"Yonder," broke in Lopes, pointing with his finger to the

*Begun in No. 451 of THE ARGOSY

right; "I know the Hacienda as well as the Señor Josef does; it is just beyond that rising mound."

Cheered by the news, the whole party proceeded with redoubled vigor, and in a short time came to the stockade that surrounded the Hacienda, which was a large, white, flat roofed building, surrounded by long ranges of sheds, which were evidently used for the purpose of stabling. A rough looking fellow with a rifle on his shoulder was on guard at the wicket gate which led through the stockade.

Immediately upon being challenged, Joe went up to the guard, and, after a short conversation, motioned to the party to advance and pass through the gate.

"And don't you come none of your high falutin tricks here, youngsters," said the sentry roughly, "for, remember, *he* is here."

"*He*—who is he?" asked Bob.

"The Judge," answered the man. "Don't put on such an air of innocence, as if you didn't know what I meant."

"What judge?" asked Arthur. "Is there a court held here, then?"

"Well, you are a pair of innocent lambs to be here away from your mother's apron strings. Perhaps you have heard of *Judge Lynch*, eh? Well, he is here," replied the man, roughly.

Without another word they entered the inclosure, and when they turned a corner of the building a strange sight was presented to their eyes.

Before a blazing fire were seated some fifteen or twenty men, many holding torches in their hands; all were armed with pistol and bowie, while their rifles were stacked a short distance off. In the center was an unarmed man, whose hands were bound behind him; his hat, pulled low over his forehead, prevented his features from being recognized. Near him a tall, black bearded man was standing, who was addressing the audience as the boys and their companions came up.

"And now, Fellow Regulators," said he, "I've put the matter straight afore you. This chap and a pal o' his were caught a-mukin' off with two of our nags. Bill Standon, he tried to stop em', and they fired on him and killed him as dead as a herring; 'tother chap he got away, and this one we nailed. Now ain't the case clear?"

"Ask him what he has got to say, judge," cried four or five voices simultaneously.

"Hev you got anything to say, mister?" asked the first speaker, turning to the prisoner. "Cos if you hev, now is the time to speak, or be forever hereafter silent," he added, as a sudden recollection of some forgotten form flashed across his mind.

"Move his hat, judge, and let us see the fellow's face," shouted a man near the fire.

The judge removed the prisoner's hat, and with a thrill of mingled horror and astonishment the boys recognized the lineaments of Cifuentes.

"Cifuentes himself!" exclaimed Joe, slapping the butt of his long rifle.

"Aha! have they caught you at last?" cried Lopes, springing to the front, and shaking his fist at the prisoner.

"What! You know him, do you?" asked the judge.

"Si, si, señor," said the Tigrero, bursting with excitement; "I know him—gambler, horse thief, and murderer; I know him. Look at these brave young caballeros," he added, pushing Bob and Arthur forward. "This villain and his band burnt their hut and slew their father not many days ago."

"It's false," growled the prisoner. "I don't know the man, and as for the boys, I never saw their faces before. I never killed your comrade; it was the man with me that fired the shot; he told me he had bought the horses, and asked me to help him to take them away."

"Fellow Regulators, you hear what the prisoner says," continued the judge. "So now pronounce your verdict."

"Guilty" was uttered as with one voice.

"And your sentence?"

"Death."

"I ratifies that; the stolen property to act as executioner, I suppose."

"Yes, yes!" rang out from the assembled crowd.

Without another word a horse was led up.

Cifuentes, with his hands still bound, was placed upon its back, and then, each man grasping a torch, the robber was led out of the inclosure.

Tired as the boys were, they followed. A feeling of relief came over them that the punishment of their father's murderer was to be undertaken by other hands.

The procession moved towards a clump of trees that stood some quarter of a mile from the walls of the Hacienda. When this was reached a convenient bough was selected, to which a noose was attached. The horse, with its helpless rider was then placed beneath it, and the rope fastened round the doomed man's neck.

"And now, Cifuentes," said the judge in solemn tones, "we leave you to the judgment of Providence. When the horse that you stole chooses to move, you will be a dead man, and the Lord have mercy on your soul."

All prepared to leave the wretched man to his fate, when in despairing accents he cried out:

"Stop. My sentence is just, but give me life, and I will never more trouble you. Let me but get away and you shall never hear of or see me again."

"Cifuentes," answered the judge, "you are wasting precious moments; your fate is fixed, and nothing can save you."

"My bitter maledictions upon you then, and upon that coward, Halfhung Simon who deserted me," cried the infuriated miscreant; and all at once withdrew, leaving him to his fate.

After a time Bob and Arthur slept, though their visions were disturbed by thoughts of Cifuentes.

Next morning they were roused by Joe.

"Young masters," whispered he, "that critter upon which Cifuentes was to take his last ride ain't come back; there's something wrong. I guess I'm going to prospect a little."

All seized their arms, and proceeded to the place of execution. There hung a portion of the rope evidently severed by some sharp instrument; but of the robber or the horse no traces could be seen.

CHAPTER XI.

A MURDEROUS PLOT.

SOME thirty miles from the Hacienda del Pilar two desperadoes were seated at a rough table in a small jacal, or Mexican cabin, drinking deep draughts of fiery mezcal. One was the man Cifuentes, whom we saw last beneath the tree, awaiting the death to which the judgment of the Regulators had condemned him. In the other it was easy to detect the cunning features of Halfhung Simon.

"Ha!" cried Cifuentes, "I thought that you had cheated your comrade, but you have proved stanch and true, and when I first heard your step behind me——"

"You thought it was the evil one coming to claim his own, didn't you?" returned the other with a sneering laugh.

"Never mind what I thought," answered Cifuentes sul

lenly ; "at any rate I felt glad enough when your knife cut through the noose that those Yankee dogs had tied round my neck."

"Ha, ha!" laughed Simon, who seemed inspired by some taunting spirit ; "to hear you, Cifuentes, mumbling your prayers like any old monk, and making vows to lead a better life, was enough to make a fellow split. And then the shriek you gave when you heard me behind you! Ha, ha! it *was* a game!"

"Silence!" roared Cifuentes, in a fury. "It was because I was afraid your clumsy footsteps would startle the horse, and you know my life hung by a thread."

"A thread, indeed," cried Simon with a fresh access of merriment. "Say a stout hempen rope, and——"

But before he could finish Cifuentes, snatching a knife from the table, sprang at him with a look of malignant ferocity, but as quickly recoiled as he was met by the shining barrel of a revolver which Simon drew from his bosom and presented at his heart.

"Come, come," said the latter soothingly. "I did not mean to vex you. Can't you take a joke, man? Sit down and have some more mezcal, and let us talk over our plans."

Muttering under his breath, Cifuentes sat sulkily down and refilled his pannikin from the earthen jar that stood upon the table. After a deep draught he seemed to master his passion by a strong effort, and held out his hand in token of reconciliation.

"I was wrong," he said, "though I've gone through enough during the past twelve hours to spoil any man's temper; but, Simon, I must have revenge upon the whole gang—that old rascal Joe, Sedgwick's two cubs, and, above all, on that scoundrel, Lopes, the Tigrero."

"And so you shall, comrade mine," cried Simon with a laugh ; "ain't I as much aggrieved as you at not getting the gold, and losing so many stanch comrades into the bargain?"

"But I am unarmed ; those Regulators took every weapon from me, and I've no money to buy others."

"Don't you fret about that. Antonio, the half breed, who keeps this out-of-the-way house, will oblige you with what you want if I ask him. At any rate, you managed to bring off your horse, didn't you?"

"A pretty brute for a man to run his neck into a noose for ; but let us get the weapons. We are too near the Regulators to linger here much longer."

"Here, Antonio," shouted Simon, and in a moment a villainous looking half breed entered the room.

"This gentleman is my friend, and would like to make a deal with you for the rifle and revolver that the French gentleman left here some two months ago. Just show them, will you?"

Antonio grinned, disappeared, and shortly returned with a handsome silver mounted rifle and a revolver, both of French manufacture.

Cifuentes took them and examined them carefully.

"Pretty toys," he remarked, "but they will do for the present. Pray what is the price, Señor Antonio?"

"Fifty dollars," answered the half breed laconically.

"Fifty fiddlesticks!" broke in Simon. "Never mind, however ; as my friend will take a little credit, the price will suit him well enough."

"Me want cash," replied Antonio sententiously.

"A common want, *amigo*," returned Cifuentes calmly. "A desire of the flesh that we should all endeavor to conquer. Pray how much did you give for these arms?"

Antonio, with a savage grin, half drew from its sheath a formidable knife that hung by his side.

"I thought so," returned Cifuentes coolly ; "there are a few telltale stains on the silver which you ought to have rubbed off. However, don't be alarmed. I have money at Puebla, and will send you the amount due on my arrival there."

"What! The Frenchman slept so soundly that you tried a little blood letting to see if that would not awaken him?" asked Simon.

The half breed was silent.

"Well, get the horses ready. After that confidence I don't think we'll stay the night here, for you might feel inclined to try your skill again."

The horses were soon ready, and the two villains mounting them, rode away from the jacal, Simon singing in a low tone a song, the refrain of which was :

"We'll meet the unwary traveler,
As whistling home he goes,
And we'll take tribute from him,
His money and his clothes."

"Simon," said Cifuentes, suddenly breaking the silence, "we must wipe out the lot of them, but at present they are four to one, and all of them, even the young vermin, dead shots, so we must be wary."

"By their being at the Hacienda del Pilar they must be making for the southern road, and that leads direct to the ferry of the St. Jacinto. The river will be high now, and the ferryboat will only hold two beside old Gomez, the ferryman. If we push on and cross the ferry, there is a low hill covered with brushwood where we can lie hid, and it will be hard if, separated as they will be in crossing the river, we cannot make sure of the lot."

"The scheme is good," answered Cifuentes, after a moment's thought. "How far do you call it to the ferry?"

"Not above thirteen miles. We can easily get there by evening, cross the river, and hide ourselves on the hill, without even the ferryman being a bit the wiser.

"How shall we do for food?" asked Cifuentes. "For we must not light a fire or hunt in the neighborhood."

"I've got some pork and venison in this haversack," answered Simon, "with rye bread enough to last us two days, and a good jar of mezcal at my saddle bow. Water we can get in plenty from the St. Jacinto, though I do not think that is a drink either of us require much of."

"Well, well," said Cifuentes with a mocking sigh, "we must try to acquire a taste for it ; but I really think this time we shall be able to stamp out this gang effectually."

"It is a pity they haven't apparently much money with them ; the job won't be a very profitable one. However, we can't have all we want in this world," remarked Simon.

"Oh, don't despair. I fancy both Joe and the Tigrero have got their savings with them, and the boys will have Jim Sedgwick's gold dust. But come. Let us push on. We ought to be at the ferry before sunset." And putting their horses to a trot, the villains rode off to execute their murderous work.

(*To be continued.*)

HE KNEW HER.

A CORRESPONDENT gives the following incident as one that actually occurred in a local business house :

CUSTOMER (comes smiling to cashier's desk)—"Will you please cash this check for me?"

CASHIER—"Yes, if you can be identified."

CUSTOMER—"Oh, ah—yes—well—how do I do that?"

CASHIER—"Bring some one who knows you."

CUSTOMER—"Oh, yes, there is my husband; he knows me."—*Philadelphia Ledger.*

ON STEEDS OF STEEL:

OR,

*THE TOUR OF THE CHALLENGE CLUB.**

CHAPTER XXXIII.

BACK TO BOLTON.

I HAD warmed up while I was speaking, and by the time I had finished the speech which closed the last chapter I quite forgot the peculiar circumstances of the interview and said out just what I thought.

"It must be fearful to be in prison," was the other's reply after an instant. „ I've been thinking a good deal of it lately. How the days must drag— everything always the same—and then the disgrace of it all! Oh, what a fool I've been—what a fool!"

He dropped his head among the blades of grass and a shiver went through him. I pitied him from the bottom of my heart. And then a queer thought came to me. I wished that I had a Kodak with me.

"I'd like to take a picture of the fellow just as he lies now and have it published so thousands of young men could see it. With a few lines of explanation it ought to be better than a sermon for them."

But time was passing, and all the while there was Marian Darling suffering across the river. Even though I could not bring her father back to her, I could lift a heavy burden from her heart.

"I'll do all I can for you," I said, "if you'll come right back to Bolton with me. Do you know whether we can get across the river here?"

"Yes, we can get a boat down at the village. Parties are being constantly rowed over,"

"Will you come now then?" I asked.

"Yes, you take the bag, will you?" and he sprang to his feet on the instant, and squared his shoulders.

"What did you take the money from around your waist and put it in this satchel for?" I inquired as we started off down the hill.

"Because I couldn't stand it so close to me," he answered, with a liitle shudder, and then for a few minutes we walked on in silence.

But I had quantities to think about, although everthing had come about so quietly that I couldn't seem to realize half of it. What would the fellows say? I was positive they were worrying pretty considerably about me now and I couldn't blame them. And how were we going to connect with one another again if I went back to Bolton? Still I had told them to get off and wait at the next west shore stop and if they only did that faithfuily I'd be sure to get back to them some time.

I wished I could telegraph the good news, but as I hadn' t told them to inquire for a message, I couldn't very well do that. However, the rest would be a good thing for Hugh.

"Canby's reflections, poor fellow, can't be as pleasant as mine are," I told myself. He certainly looked utterly disconsolate, and I should not have been surprised any minute to see him break away and run for it. But he didn't, and presently we reached the village.

"There's a boat just loading up now," exclaimed Canby, pointing to the wharf.

We quickened our steps, and I bargained with the boatman to take us over for a quarter each, which I paid in advance.

There was a lady aboard, and as soon as we got started she turned to me and began to talk about the bank robbery.

"Have they caught President Darling yet?" she asked. "I thought being so near you might have heard later news than is given in the papers."

"No, I believe they have not *found* h.m yet; I answered, with the slightest possible accent on the "found"

I glanced at Canby. He was looking over the gunwale into the water, with an expression that caused me to move a trifle nearer to him. I wanted to be close at hand in case he should attempt a spring.

"But do you see how a man of such position and influence could deliberately take that money and go off leaving his family in that way?" persisted the woman.

"No, I don't see how he *could* do it," I replied, "for I don't believe he *did* do it."

"Oh, you surprise me!"she exclaimed. "Perhaps you have another clew," she added, giving me a keen look.

I most certainly had another clew, but I didn't feel called upon to inform her of the fact, so I merely said we might all be surprised when the next day's papers came out, and then turned to ask Canby if the bank was far from the river.

"About three squares," he answered, adding quickly: "You'll come there with me, won't you?"

"Certainly," I told him, and then to keep from being interviewed any further by the woman passenger, I proceeded to relate how Hugh had been injured by the falling tree which had resulted in things turning out as they did.

"What would you have done if I hadn't followed you?" I went on in a low tone.

"I don't know. I got off there simply because some fellow on the boat began to talk to me about—about the affair, and I felt that I must put the river between me and Bolton. After coming all the way from New York purposely to be near, too," he added, with a bitter little laugh.

"Tell me your name, won't you?" he went on after an instant. "I feel that you have been a good friend to me, and—and I'll need all of those I can get now."

I took a card containing my New York address out of my pocket book and handed it to him, and soon afterwards we reached Bolton. We were obliged to wait until after that woman had got out, and then she attached herself to us and asked if we wouldn't please show her the way to the People's Bank. Of course there was nothing for it but to invite her to walk along with us, and I wish you could have seen her look of amazement when we reached the place, and with a "Here it is" I dodged in at the door just behind Canby.

I passed the bag to him now, declaring that he must be the one to give it up. He took it without a word, and walked straight to the back of the building, to the room with "Cashier" blown in the glass of the door.

A youngish man with gray hair was sitting here, bending over a desk. Canby touched him on the shoulder, and then placed the bag down in front of him.

"Here's all the money, Mr. Taylor," he said. "Mr. Darling didn't carry it off. He's lost his mind, and I've lost my honor, but I've suffered terribly. What are you going to do with me?"

Mr. Taylor never looked at him. His eyes were fixed on something in the outer room behind us, and I turned to see what could be of so much more importance than what he had just heard.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE PLEASURE THAT CAME AFTER BUSINESS.

WHAT I saw when I turned around was well calculated to make the cashier lose interest for the time being in Horace Canby and his confession. For it was no less a person than Mr. Darling himself who had just walked into the bank. I knew him from his resemblance to the large crayon portrait that hung over the dining room mantelpiece in the cottage.

Canby followed my gaze, and grasped my arm with the startled exclamation, "There's Mr. Darling now!" Then, as if rooted to the spot, we both stood and watched the bank president as he advanced towards us.

"He is certainly not a crazy man," I told myself, as his nearer approach gave me a clearer view of his countenance.

There was not that vacillating look in the eye which one always associates with a brainless person. Straight past the files of staring clerks he came, paying no attention to any of them; then, seeing Mr. Taylor over our shoulders, he said: "Ah, Taylor, I wish to speak with you a minute," and disappeared with the cashier within the president's private office.

The clerks at once began to exchange exclamations of wonder, and I longed for my bicycle, that I might dash out to tell the good news to Marian. Then

"What do you suppose it all means?" Canby whispered in my ear. "What are they going to do with me?"

"I don't know about you," I answered, "but I think I can account for Mr. Darling. I've read newspaper accounts of men who have suddenly gone off just the way he did, and then come back after a few days or a week, utterly unable to tell where they had been in the meantime, and not realizing that they had been away at all until their friends informed them of the fact."

Two minutes later Mr. Taylor came out and announced that Mr

*Begun in No. 450 of THE ARGOSY.

Darling would like to speak with Canby, and when the latter had gone inside I made bold to ask the cashier whether my theory was not the correct one.

"Yes," he answered; "the thing seems most incomprehensible. He did not realize that he had been away more than a few minutes—says that he came directly from the barber's back here."

"Did—did you tell him about the money?" I ventured to inquire.

"Bless me, forgot all about you, young man," he broke out. "Certainly it's all right. Here, Quinn, take this young gentleman down to Stevens and tell him to take him over to Bassetts in the Belle. And stay, say to the young ladies they may go along if they like," and with these words he was off before I could get out a "Thank you."

Quinn was the butler, who, now, bidding me wait an instant, disappeared in the house.

THE CONDUCTOR WAS DOWN ON HIS KNEES TRYING TO PROVE THAT THERE WAS A DEFECT IN THE WHEEL.

"No, not yet," was the reply. "Now tell me all you know of this Canby business. Come in and sit down."

So I began at our first meeting with the tin peddler, and went rapidly over the facts with which my readers are already acquainted.

"I don't think Canby is so wicked as he is weak," I concluded. "Shall you have him arrested?"

"That I cannot say positively at present," rejoined Mr. Taylor, "but I think not. We are greatly indebted to you, and if there——"

"Oh, please don't speak of a reward," I hastily interposed, imagining the horror of the Hasbroucks at seeing the name of one of the clan figuring prominently in the newspapers as an amateur detective. "The only recompense I ask is that you will send the news of Mr. Darling's return as soon as possible out to his daughter, and tell me the quickest way in which I can rejoin my friends at Bassets."

"Mr. Darling himself is going home at once," was the response, "and I am sure that Mr. Dixon, one of our directors, will be only too happy to place his steam launch at the disposal of one who has rendered the bank such service. I will give you a note to him."

Fifteen minutes later I was pressing the electric button beside the front door of an imposing villa on the river bank. Mr. Dixon was at home, and when I had sent my note in by the butler he came out on the piazza in a great state of excitement. He seemed more interested in the return of Mr. Darling than in the restoration of the money; and, clapping his hat on his head, was about to start for the bank at once, when I meekly interposed: "And is it all right about the steam launch, Mr. Dixon?"

"'Tell the young ladies they may go along if they like,'" I mused, taking a turn on the piazza. "I wonder if they know I'm to be of the party? And great Scott, who'll introduce us? I can't think of anybody but the butler. What a queer old duffer that Dixon is!"

Quinn now re-appeared, and in obedience to his "Right this way, sir," I followed him down a winding gravel path, across a pretty bridge that spanned the railroad track, and out on a little rocky promontory. Here there was a tiny dock, moored to which lay a perfect beauty of a steam launch.

"Wouldn't the fellows envy me this!" I thought, as I stepped aboard and took a seat under the awning in the stern, while Quinn imparted instructions to the bronzed man in sailor rig who had been swabbing off the forward deck.

"And don't forget to wait for the young ladies," I heard him say, as he started back for the house.

"So they're coming, are they?" I told myself, and slipping my hands over the edge, I proceeded to wash the stains of travel from my finger tips, wiping them on my pocket handkerchief.

I was about to spread this article out to dry in the sun when the sound of laughter just behind me caused me to thrust it, a damp lump, back into my pocket and try to imagine how I was to get over the awkwardness of being thrown into the company of some young ladies to whom I didn't see any chance of being presented, for a glance over my shoulder assured me that Quinn had not come back.

On they came, evidently in the gayest spirits. There were four of them, and as I watched Stevens hand them aboard it seemed to me as

if each was prettier than the one who had preceded her. They were all young, too, the oldest not over sixteen.

I rose and took off my cap as they entered the cockpit, and then for one dreadful minute we stood facing each other. I felt my face growing as red as the stripes in the awning, and then the youngest of the girls stepped forward and said: "I'm afraid papa was so excited about bank affairs that he forgot something. I thought he was down here and would—would——"

Here she stuck, and I set out to do my share.

"My name is Hasbrouck—Will Hasbrouck, Miss Dixon," I said.

"And this is my cousin Miss Arden, her sister, Miss Ethel, and my friend Miss Drake."

I ducked three times, and opened my mouth to say that I was the most to be envied of mortals, not only to have a trip in a launch like the Belle accorded me, but to have it flavored by the presence of such delightful fellow voyagers. I say I opened my mouth to express some such flowery sentiment when Steven opened the whistle and emitted such a blast that I fell back on one of the cushions as though the sound had been something tangible and struck me.

Of course this set everybody laughing, and that put an end to all formality, and then, I tell you, I just began to have a good time, all the better for its being so utterly unexpected.

One of the girls had brought a banjo, another a bag of lemons, a third a basket of cake, and after we had got out in the river we had music, and then I helped Miss Dixon make lemonade, and as there were only three glasses aboard we had great sport washing them overboard, especially when Miss Drake let one slip through her fingers and I gallantly caught it with my hat.

Of course we all got acquainted very rapidly, and never will I forget the expression on three boys' faces, as they sat in disconsolate fashion along the string piece of the steamboat wharf at Bassetts and gazed open mouthed at their captain, rounding to in grand style in that trim little launch in the midst of that bevy of pretty girls.

CHAPTER XXXV.

LOST IN THE WOODS.

AS soon as I had been landed and the Belle had turned her shapely prow down the river and steamed away again, I was set upon by all three of the Challengers with imperative demands to explain in the shortest possible order what it all meant.

"It means lots," I exclaimed; "and if you will sit down quietly and let your legs swing again I will tell you the most astounding story you ever heard," which I proceeded to do.

"That closes another chapter of the tour's adventures, then," remarked Hugh, when the tale was ended and an exhaustive line of comment had been made upon it.

"And the biggest one," added Steve.

"Don't crow till you're out of the woods," was Mac's warning admonition. "You can't tell what the future may have in store for us."

"Well, I hope for one thing that it has a good dinner," I interrupted, taking out my watch.

"Dinner!" cried Hugh. "What do you want with dinner? Didn't we see you stowing away lemonade and cake coming up the river?"

"It's lucky I did, then," I retorted. "It's nearly half past two now. Have you fellows had anything?"

"Corned beef and cabbage, yes, up at the Palace Hotel," responded Mac with a grimace.

"Where are the machines, then?" I asked. "We might as well toddle along till supper time. That is if Hugh feels able to ride."

"I'm fairly aching to get in the saddle again," was his own report of his condition, and forthwith we adjourned to the hotel where our wheels had been left.

"Now which way?" Mac wanted to know when we were all ready to start.

My chase after Canby had brought us over on the west bank of the river before we intended touching it, and it was therefore necessary to re-arrange our route.

"Let's go home," suggested Steve. "We've dawdled away so much time now having adventures that we'll exceed our limit if we keep on as far north, as we intended."

I was in favor of this plan, too, as I was a little fearful of the effects of too much riding on Hugh since his accident, so, after a brief discussion, our handle bars were turned southward and we started off.

It was glorious to get in the saddle again, and I set the pace pretty swift for five minutes or so till I remembered about Hugh, when I slowed down at once. Then the roads became poor, full of stones and ruts, so that finally we were compelled to get off and walk or else run the risk of being shaken to pieces and having our tires all cut up.

A dinner of lemonade and cake was not the sort of diet best calculated to prepare one for such an experience as this, so it was not long before I began to be conscious of an ardent desire for supper time to come around. And the time for the evening repast was coming fast enough, but the prospects for the supper itself were growing slimmer with equal rapidity.

For the past two or three miles we had not passed a house, and the last we had seen were little shanties in the woods, at which we would not think of expecting to get a meal.

"Do you know where you are, Will?" Mac demanded when we had dismounted for at least the thirteenth time and the woods ahead seemed to be growing denser.

"No, of course I don't," I answered quickly. "How should I, when I've never been there before?"

"Oh, but I mean you haven't even a rough idea of the direction in which you are going, have you?" he persisted.

And I had to confess that I had not.

"We must have taken the wrong turn when we were coasting down that hill soon after we left Bassetts?" suggested Hugh. "You meant to keep along the road parallel with the river, didn't you, Will?"

I nodded.

"Well, my impression is that we've been trending inland all the time," he went on. "If it wasn't cloudy we could easily tell by the position of the sun."

"Shall we go back then," I ventured to hint.

"Oh no," came the answering chorus, for which I did not blame them, as the only redeeming virtue possessed by the course we had first traversed was that it was a descending one.

"Then the only thing to do is to press on," I continued, adding, "They say all roads lead to Rome, so if we keep going long enough we ought to bring up eventually in the town of that name in this State."

As there was a comparatively smooth stretch ahead of us just here, we mounted and rode on for a bit, but the road soon grew poor again. It was now after six, and the clouds that had come up soon after we left Bassetts made it dark already, especially in the woods through which we were passing and which seemed to have no end. My stomach by this time felt like a bottomless pit, but I was more concerned on Hugh's account than on my own. He began to look very pale and was constantly falling behind, whether we were trundling or riding. And then I recollected the doctor's injunction that he should not attempt to ride till the following day. My adventure with Canby had driven it out of my head.

"Here, this won't do," I said to myself.

But then came the conviction that it would have to do, for how any of us could set about bettering things I didn't see. Presently matters came to a crisis when Hugh collapsed in the middle of the road and declared he couldn't go a step further without something to eat.

We gathered around him in anxious concern, and never before had I felt my responsibilities as captain weigh so heavily upon me. But I tried to keep my faculties in order and think rapidly.

"These woods can't continue much further," I said, "as we are surely not in the Adirondack forests. You, Steve, stay here with Hugh, while Mac and I press on as rapidly as we can to some settlement from which we will send a carriage back.

"But you fellows must be dead tired out," Hugh objected.

"No, we're not!" I rejoined quickly. "Not so much tired as we are hungry, and our going ahead will assure us getting something to eat all the sooner. Now you'll stay right here, sure? You can get under those trees there if it starts to rain."

"All right, but I hate to have you go," and with these parting words of Dinsmore's ringing in our ears, Mac and I started off.

It was terrible riding, as by this time it was so dark we could not see the stones in the path. If we had been mounted on Ordinaries we'd have taken about a header a minute. As it was we kept doggedly on till presently, when we had ridden for about a quarter of an hour, and there was no change in the aspect of things, Mac remarked:

"Say, Will, don't you hear the sound of escaping steam somewhere ahead?"

"Yes," I answered. "We must be near a railroad."

"And what's more, a station on a railroad," added Mac. "That engine is evidently standing still."

But as yet there was no evidence of the woods giving way to a settlement of any sort, and I was wondering what sort of a stopping place this could be when we came plump upon the locomotive, and had all we could do to stop before we ran into it.

It had halted just across our path, and as we presently discovered, for a very good reason. The driving wheels had left the track, and a group consisting of engineer, conductor, brakeman and some of the passengers were eagerly discussing the situation.

There seemed to be considerable doubt as to what had caused the accident.

The conductor was down on his knees trying to prove that it was due to a defect in the wheel, while the engineer was equally positive that there had been some obstruction on the track.

"But when are we going to move on again?" a dudish looking passenger, with a cane and a single eye glass wanted to know.

"We can't move on at all till we get this thing back on the track," answered the conductor, "and we can't do that unless somebody walks six miles and telegraphs to Kingston for the wrecking car."

The dude gave a groan, turned away, and his eye lighted on me.

"Here," he cried, "just the thing. Send this fellow on his bicycle. He can do it in half the time," and immediately Mac and I became the target for a general stare.

(*To be concluded.*)

THIS GOAT WORE FULL DRESS.

WHY does everybody laugh when a goat is brought into the conversation? You know they do, and you will probably laugh, too, when you read the following item from the Boston *Transcript*:

Richmond, Maine, is the home of a clown goat which is a source of much amusement all along the Kennebec. He is a great pet among the steamboat men, and a regular visitor at the wharf when steamers arrive or depart. One day Billy's owner missed him, but two days afterward, when the steamer Kennebec arrived, the goat walked calmly down the gangplank, dressed in a pair of old trousers, a swallow tail coat, and a stovepipe hat. He had been to Boston with his friends, the deck hands, and came home with an increased dignity of bearing naturally consequent upon a visit to that learned town. When a lady in the waiting room petted him, the goat whipped her veil from her face, and swallowed it in a twinkling. Then he went home in his new togs, which he has probably since eaten.

WHO WAKES THE WAKERS?

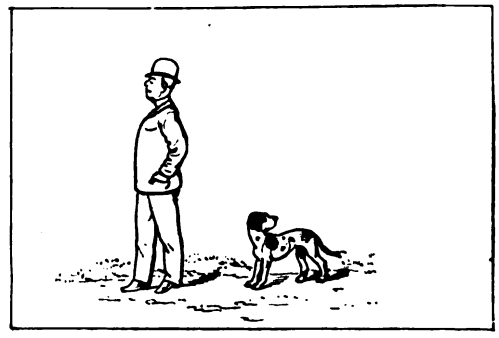
PARIS would seem to be the home of men who follow queeer occupations. For instance, there are the individuals who make a business of raising the maggots one finds in cheeses. These are sold to fishermen for bait. A still stranger calling is thus described by a writer in *The Epoch*:

I was, until recently, often awakened at four o'clock in the morning by a shrill whistle intended to arouse a wine dealer and restaurateur near by, whose late hours prevented him from getting up as early in the morning as his business required. I have now got accustomed to this whistle, but at first I was disturbed, and, determined to know who the person was who came so regularly every morning to interrupt my slumber, I discovered, upon inquiry, that the whistler was one of those individuals who belong to the class known as *reveilleurs*, or men who go about rousing up workmen and others who are obliged to be at their post early, and who do not feel sufficiently sure of themselves to get up without being called.

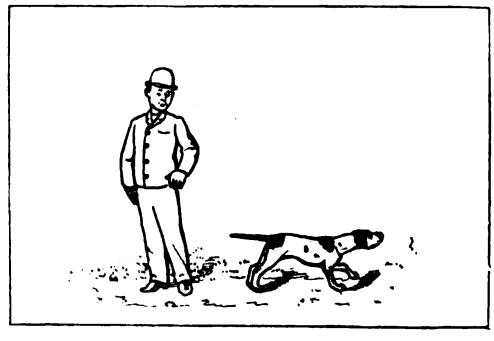
The means of awakening these sleepy persons are numerous, and agreed upon beforehand. Some are drawn from their slumbers by a shrill whistle, others by cat calls, violent sneezing, whip snapping, and various strange noises which are immediately understood by the interested parties. In the railway round houses there are always one or two *reveilleurs* employed by the company, whose occupation is to call the engineers and firemen of the early trains. They are obliged to be on hand two hours before the departure of the train.

The private awakener has a little notebook with the names and addresses of his customers, and follows his route with the same punctuality as a letter carrier; he makes the cry agreed upon in front of every house where he is expected, and never goes away until he has seen a window opened or received a response. For this service he is paid one cent a day by each person called up, and his average earnings are thirty cents a day. Some of these *reveilleurs*, as soon as they have finished calling the heavy sleepers, go to the Central Markets and give a helping hand to the market gardeners in unloading their wagons. Then, after taking breakfast, they visit the auction sales and try to get a job to carry home an article for the purchaser. In this way they make fifty or sixty cents a day.

THE HARD TALE OF A PERSISTENT POINTER.

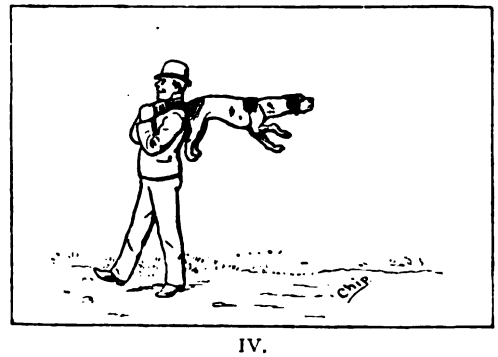


I.
"Come along, Sport."



II.
"That dog has started to point again."

III.
"Well, if he won't come——"



IV.
"I shall have to carry him, that's all."

ARTHUR BLAISDELL'S CHOICE.*

BY W. BERT FOSTER.

CHAPTER XLIV.

THE FURY OF THE STORM.

"OLE gal, you let that boy go," roared Mr. Griggs; but it was noticeable that he made no motion to come to Arthur's assistance; in fact, he kept a respectable distance from his better half's powerful right arm.

"You gimme dat monies, or I no let him go," declared the woman firmly. "I vasn't goin' to haf you spend all dat monies an' me get none. You hands it ofer to me now."

"I'll see you hanged first," growled Bill.

"Den you gets down oudt of dere, young man," said Mrs. Griggs to Arthur. "Dis chentlemans haf hired de team of *me*, an' Bill vill chust gif you your monies pack."

"You ole fool!" ejaculated her husband. "I'm a-gettin' more for the waggin than you be."

"No, you von't get von cent," declared the matron, while Mont, lighting a cigar, came toward the team.

It began to look as though Arthur would have to foot it to Charlestown.

"Whip up and drive right over the ole hag!" cried Bill, from what he considered a safe position in the barn door

This so enraged the lady that she dropped the bridle and went in pursuit of her recreant lord, who disappeared in the interior of the barn. It was Arthur's opportunity, and he made the most of it by immediately driving out of the yard. Once outside, he felt himself safe from pursuit, and stopped to view the battle from afar.

Mont Raymond had stopped the irate Mrs. Griggs on her way to the barn and demanded his money, and she, seeing that Arthur had escaped, complied with evident reluctance. Then she continued her pursuit of the wayward William.

As she disappeared in the barn door, Arthur saw the head and shoulders of Mr. Griggs appear through the scuttle in the roof, and a moment later they were followed by his entire body. Then he laid hold of the short ladder by which he had reached the scuttle from the floor of the upper loft, and drew it up after him.

Here, astride the ridgepole, with the ladder balanced across his knees, he sat in his shirt sleeves and with head uncovered, while the rain wet him to the skin, "monarch of all he surveyed!"

"Ye better drive erlong!" he yelled to Arthur. "She's a reg'lar terror when she gits started. But I've got the best of her now!"

Which last remark rather astonished his listener.

"Say, Arthur," said Mont Raymond, approaching the carriage, "I guess there's only one turnout in town, and if you haven't any objections I'll ride along with you. Perhaps I can pick something up in Charlestown or along the road."

"You're perfectly welcome to a ride as far as I go your way," replied Arthur, and Mont, nothing loath, clambered up to the seat.

They drove away from the tavern with their umbrellas elevated above their heads, and overcoats buttoned up, for it still continued to rain. As they rounded the first turn in the road, Mr. Griggs was still astride the peak of the barn roof, performing the gymnastic feat of balancing the ladder, while he held a parley with his spouse in the yard below.

"Quite an adventure," laughed Mont, puffing away at his cigar. "That woman was a perfect virago. Do you smoke, Art?"

Arthur answered negatively.

"Nor take a drink with a fellow?"

"No, sir."

"Bad as your brother, although we did get a glass of wine down him the other night," said Mont with a laugh.

Arthur flashed an angry glance at him, but said nothing.

"Well, if *you* won't drink, *I* would like to have a glass of something warming. I don't really like this paddling 'round like a duck after news. Here's a road house in sight, I think. Just stop a minute while I run in for something, will you?"

"Mr. Raymond," said Arthur firmly, "I am perfectly willing you should ride with me, but as long as you do you must go without liquor. I think you've had quite enough, and any way, I don't propose to ride with a lager beer saloon, or anything that smells like one."

"Confound it! who asked you to?" growled Mont surlily. "Well, which road do you take now?"

They were nearing a fork in the highway, near which stood the hotel Mont had noticed. No one appeared to be about the premises, although the house was evidently occupied.

"I'll get out and knock 'em up," said Arthur, and, passing the reins to his companion, he sprang down.

A gust of wind whirling 'round the corner of the house caught his umbrella as he leaped, and by the time he reached the ground what was left of the article was flying up towards the eaves. Mont Raymond laughed.

"It looks as though an express train had run into it," he said, watching the wreck of the umbrella in its rapid flight. "Hurry up and find out which road we take, and then get under mine."

Running up the steps to the door, Arthur hammered at the portal, and soon a stout, beery looking individual answered his summons.

"Which road to Charlestown?" inquired Arthur.

"Turn to the left," replied the man, hardly opening the door wide enough to see his questioner.

His voice, carried by the blast, reached Mont Raymond's ears, and he started up the horse before Arthur reached the wagon.

"Hold on!" shouted Arthur.

With a loud laugh, Mont slapped the horse's back with the reins, and the team whirled away from the spot, leaving Arthur standing astounded in the rain!

But the young reporter did not intend to allow himself to be left in the lurch in this contemptible manner if he could help it, and he started in rapid pursuit of the retreating team. The old horse was not much of a speeder, and before the forks of the road had been passed, Arthur reached the wagon and seized the tail board.

Mont, who had been urging the animal to its utmost, now turned his attention to the boy, and tried to beat him off with his umbrella. But Arthur seized the article, and, jerking it from his hand, threw it into the bushes beside the road, and then sprang into the rear of the carriage.

The next instant he had reached the seat, seized the treacherous Mont by the arm, and, snatching the reins from his grasp, stopped the horse.

"Get out of this carriage," he commanded angrily.

Mont made a feeble attempt to laugh it off.

"Oh, come, now," he said, "don't get mad. Just a little fun, you you know."

"That's all right," returned Arthur grimly. "I'm going to have some fun now myself."

"Oh, but I shouldn't have left you in the lurch," declared Mont. "Only wanted to scare you a little."

"You will get out of this wagon mighty quick," said his companion firmly, "or I'll throw you out. You can take your choice."

Mont chose to dismount, and, heaping bitter reproaches upon the young reporter's head, went to rescue his umbrella from the bushes. Without waiting for any further words, Arthur drove on, and left him to follow or turn back, as he pleased. Subsequent events showed that the festive Montague footed it the rest of the distance to Charlestown.

Arthur arrived at the village about half past two. Almost the first person he saw was Hal, who was just coming out of the house where he lodged.

"I had all but given up," he said, grasping his brother's hand. "Charlie telegraphed me about noon that you had started, and I thought you must have been waylaid or lost."

While they were putting the team in the stable at the rear of the house Arthur quickly rehearsed his adventures since leaving the city.

"I'm glad and I'm sorry," said Hal, "that you left Mont on the road. He's not such a bad fellow after all, though that was a mean trick if he really intended to leave you."

*Begun in No 439 of THE ARGOSY

"I admire your taste if you like *him*," said Arthur, a little crossly.

"Well, don't squabble," admonished Hal. "I was just starting along the beach towards Noyes's when you came. It's a pretty stiff walk, but it'll be easier for us than it would be for the horse, so we'll leave your turnout here. The storm has been dreadful, Art."

"I should think it had been. But you look as though you'd kept dry," returned Arthur, noticing for the first time that his brother was dressed in a suit of oilskins throughout.

"Yes," said Hal with a laugh; "I borrowed 'em from Cap'n Henry, the man I'm staying with. They belong to the captain's son, who is away to sea. A little too large for me, aren't they? But they keep me dry. Wish I could get you some."

"Well, never mind," said Arthur. "I'm wet through now—couldn't get any wetter if I tried—so it don't much matter."

By this time the two brothers had turned down a hard beaten clam shell road and were approaching the beach. The fierce wind, blowing directly from the south, dashed the rain in their faces, cutting as sharply as hail.

"By Jove!" shouted Arthur in his brother's ear, "this beats old Welcome Arnold's line storm—you know the one when the salt water was blown 'way up to his peach orchard."

Hal nodded.

"It is terrible," he said. "We had to see a little lumber schooner go to pieces about two miles below here this morning without being able to save any of the crew. I never want to see such a sight again, Art."

"Isn't there a life saving station here?"

"None nearer than Point Judith. Cap'n Henry's got an old lifeboat housed in his yard. But the schooner went to smash before they could go for it."

At that instant they came in sight of the wild, storm swept beach.

"Good Heavens!" exclaimed Arthur, seizing his brother's arm. "Look there, Hal!"

Across the angry waters the black hulk of a square rigged vessel was plainly visible, riding before the gale directly towards the shore!

CHAPTER XLV.

TO THE RESCUE!

CLINGING to each other's hands the two brothers ran down the slope of the hummock of hard packed, clayey sand, and from the summit of which they had descried the unfortunate bark. A crowd of anxious men were gathered on the beach, a number of tall, dark complexioned, straight haired Indians among them, for a good portion of the residents of this section of Rhode Island are the descendants of the original possessors of the soil.

A tall, broad shouldered man, with a voice like a bull, was the central figure of the excited throng. He nodded briefly to Hal.

"That's Cap'n Henry," said Hal, and Arthur gazed with interest at the sunburned, rugged features of the old salt.

"Nothin'll save 'em," the captain was saying as the boys joined the group. "They've had plenty of time ter sheer off, but the blamed fools must be crazy. That brig'll dig her nose into the sand in less'n no time!"

The gale howled around them strongly enough to sweep them from their feet. The breakers broke and thundered on the strand, the water sometimes running up to the very feet of the crowd of anxious men. But it was unnoticed. All eyes were turned on the doomed vessel.

"It's a haulin' 'round ter the east'ard," declared somebody, as a fresh blast assailed them.

"If we had a mortar and line 'twouldn't do no good in this gale," Arthur heard Captain Henry say. "We couldn't throw a line out to where they'll strike."

The crests of the great waves were white with boiling foam, while sheets of spray were whipped from the surface of the water by the wind and dashed furiously in their faces. It was with difficulty that Hal and Arthur were able to keep their feet.

The brig came bow on, apparently without an effort being made by her crew to avert the catastrophe. Little could they have done, however, for the masts, spars, and rigging, were simply a mass of splintered wood and tangled cordage.

"God help them—we can't!" murmured Captain Henry, gazing through an old spyglass at the approaching ship. "They're tryin' to make signals to us, but we can't do anything for 'em the Lord knows!"

"Can't we try the lifeboat, cap'n?" shouted Hal.

"Might's well launch a chip on the Mississippi River and 'spect it ter come back ter ye as ter risk a boat in *this* sea," growled the "cap'n."

"Perhaps it may abate some," suggested Arthur; "and if the boat was down here we might be able to use it."

At that very instant the vessel struck!

She ran her nose into the sand, swung half round and lay helpless, while the waves in their fury dashed over her. Turned broadside as she was to the sea, the billows would quickly pound her to pieces.

"Come on, boys," roared the "cap'n." "I can't stand idle an' see these poor fellows washed off. Let's git the boat down here any way," and leading the way with powerful strides, the captain turned towards the house.

About half the company followed him, among them Arthur and Hal. The *Journal* was forgotten in the presence of this terrible catastrophe, and filled with pity for the unfortunate seamen the brothers worked like beavers in the attempt to get the boat down to the beach.

The boat already stood on four cart wheels and the "cap'n" made sure that everything was in the craft before they moved it. Some laid hold of the dragging rope, while others put their shoulder to the wheels, and the heavy boat was started.

Once out upon the firm road it moved easier, and the distance to the beach was covered at a rapid trot. The wind had hauled completely round to the eastward and was blowing as heavily as ever.

"There hain't a moment to be lost," roared Captain Henry, "ef we wanter save them poor critters. I've got a boy at sea and f'r his sake I'll go and steer the boat."

A number of men immediately came forward, among them two or three Indians, and offered their services. The boat was run down to the very brink of the waves, and an attempt was made to launch it. But it proved an utter failure.

A great wave rolling towards the beach, broke just over it and almost filled it with whirling, seething sea water, while the force of the blow smashed the seat of the bow oarsman.

The lifeboat had to be run back again and the water turned out.

"Try it again," shouted the "cap'n."

But the men held back. It was almost certain death to attempt to reach the wreck, and life is dear to every man. After a moment's hesitation three men resumed their places, but the others did not move.

"Come, men," roared Captain Henry. "Show yer colors."

"That's all right," growled one of the men, "but I've got a wife and children to home."

"Don't let any man go unless he feels it his duty," said the leader earnestly. "But rather than stand here and see them poor fellows drown I'll go to them alone!"

He had hardly spoken when two figures sprang forward and laid hold of the boat, one on either side. They were Hal and Arthur.

"Go back, Hal," exclaimed the younger brother. "We mustn't both go."

"I shall go if you do," returned Hal firmly.

"Now men! don't let boys do better than you!" cried Captain Henry, and the other vacancies were quickly filled.

Then with an "Altogether boys!" from the "cap'n" the lifeboat was again run down the beach. They ran into the surf almost shoulder deep, then sprang aboard and grasped the oars.

"Pull," was the "cap'n's" command, as half standing in the stern he held the steering oar in a giant's grasp.

The oarsmen bent to the task, and despite the fierceness of the gale some progress was made towards the doomed ship. Arthur and Hal worked as they had never worked before. Boat racing at school was nothing compared with this desperate effort to save the wrecked seamen.

"A thunder squall," exclaimed the captain, jerking his head towards a great mass of black cloud which was sweeping down towards them, around the edges of which forked lightnings continually played.

"If we ketch *that*," muttered the man next Arthur, "we'll go to Davy Jones sure's shootin'."

But no one abated his efforts, and the life boat continued to approach the helpless vessel. The crew could now be seen clinging to the rigging or lashed to the rail.

Nearer and nearer the rescuing party approached and finally the captain brought the boat skillfully around under the brig's quarter.

"Quick, two of you!" he roared. "Jump aboard there and fend off."

Arthur in the bow and Hal near the stern were quick to obey the

command, and, climbing over the rail, which, because of the heeling over of the wreck, was only a short distance above the lifeboat, they kept the latter from staving against the side of the brig with their oars.

"Lively there, men, you who want to go ashore!" cried Captain Henry.

But the crew of the brig were already crowding to the side. One man was washed overboard and lost in his frantic endeavor to be first in the lifeboat.

"There! we can't take any more now," declared the captain in his stentorian voice. "We'll come back for the rest. Come along, boys."

There were still two of the brig's crew beside Arthur and Hal on the deck, and without an instant's warning they both rashly leaped into the boat, almost swamping the now heavily loaded craft.

At that very instant a man came staggering along the deck from the direction of the companionway, bearing the form of a woman.

"Wait! take her with you!" he shouted, and even in that moment of terror and excitement Arthur recognized a familiar voice. "Don't leave your captain's wife!"

"We're overloaded now!" yelled one of the rescued seamen, striving to push off the boat.

"Drop her in here!" commanded Captain Henry. "We'll not leave a woman to perish."

The stranger leaned forward and dropped the inanimate form into the outstretched arms below, and then, seizing Arthur's oar, he gave the lifeboat a push toward the shore. The two boys were left with the stranger on the deck of the wrecked brig!

"If you can pray, my lads, pray now!" exclaimed the unknown man. "In ten minutes we shall be in kingdom come!"

A vivid flash of lightning lit up the scene, and, gazing at the speaker in startled surprise Arthur recognized the features of Ben Norton!

(To be continued.)

A ROCKING CHAIR-LESS COUNTRY.

GREAT was the wonder among the friends of a young lady who went abroad some time since and included among her trunks and bandboxes a rocking chair. As she was going simply to Europe, and not to the far East, where they sit on the floor, it certainly seemed odd that she should burden herself with such a common article of household furniture. But our friend was wiser than the lady whose luckless experience is thus described in the *Boston Transcript:*

A friend writes from Italy of a rather odd incident of travel in that country. In a small party of Americans is one invalid woman who is in a very weak and nervous condition and all of whose wants and notions are gratified, as nearly as her friends can gratify them. Arriving in one of the Italian cities recently in a very nervous state, this invalid lady felt that she could be comfortable, or obtain any rest, in nothing else than a rocking chair, and begged that one be brought her. Of course her friends were bent upon meeting the wish, and at once asked the proprietor of the hotel for a rocking chair.

The proprietor said he was desolated, but there was not an "American chair" in the house. They told him of the lady's condition and asked him if he could not go out and find a rocking chair for her; and the man immediately put on his hat and started out on his quest. Two, three hours went past and the man did not return. It was evident that he was making a faithful search of the town for that rare article in Italy, a rocking chair. At last there came a rap at the door, and the proprietor appeared, looking so complacent that the Americans were sure he had succeeded. He smiled, and said in good Italian:

"I have searched the city through, and I have been unable to find a rocking chair; but I have found for the poor lady what I suppose will do just as well."

He beckoned to a servant in the corridor, who advanced and deposited within the room—a rocking horse!

DOMESTIC HABITS OF WILD AFRICANS.

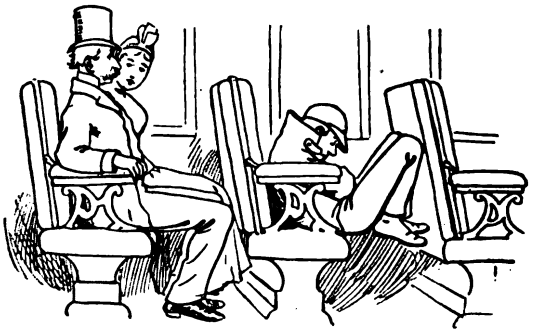
It is not uncommon for small boys, with a lofty scorn for the conventionalities of civilized life, to express a wish that they had been born in the Sandwich Islands, or some other far away spot, where they would not be obliged to brush their hair before coming to meals, or make sure that they had got on a clean collar. Such lads will doubtless be surprised to learn the following facts about members of the savage races in Africa, culled from an article on the subject in the *Popular Science Monthly.*

Great attention is given in most of the tribes to the care of the body. The teeth are cleansed with a stick which has been chewed into a kind of brush. The hands are washed frequently, not by turning and twisting and rubbing them together one with the other, as with us, but by a straight up and down rubbing, such as is given to the other limbs. This manner of washing is so characteristic that an African might be distinguished by it from a European without reference to the color. The sun is their only towel.

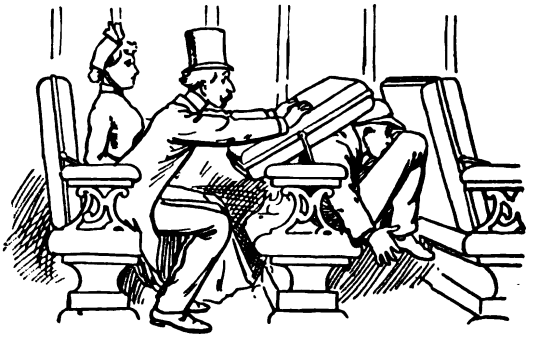
At eating, the negro, having always first washed his hands and rinsed his mouth, sits upon the ground, holds the larger pieces between his teeth while he cuts off a bite with his knife, but does not use both hands to hold food, except in gnawing bones; with the usual dishes he lays his right arm over his knees, and, reaching into the pot, molds the thick mess into lumps about the size of a walnut, which he throws into his mouth with a jerk, without scattering any of the food. Politeness is shown to the host or the housewife after eating, by smacking their lips loudly enough to be heard.

The negro is careful about the outer matters in drinking. He will always rinse his mouth first, even when he is intensely thirsty. If the cup is not too small he takes it in both hands, and he likes to sit down with it. If the vessel is large and open he draws in the water from the surface with his lips, without bringing them in contact with the dish. Sometimes negroes pour water into their mouths. When drinking at ponds and rivers the water is carried to the mouth with the hand. For some mystic reason it is considered bad to lie flat down when drinking from rivers. The fear of being snapped up by a crocodile may have something to do with the matter.

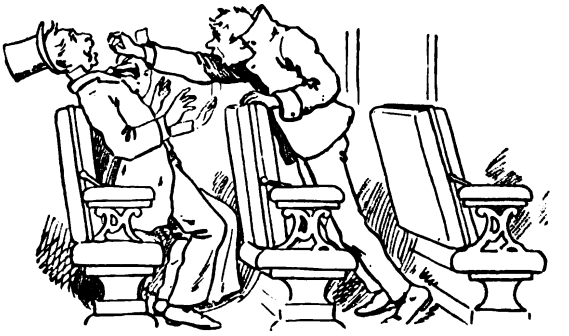
SEEN ON A LATE TRAIN.



I. SHE—"George, just turn over that seat in front of us and we'll have more room."



II. HE—"It works mighty hard—it must be locked."



III. GENTLEMAN WHO HAD BEEN OCCUPYING SEAT—"No, by gosh, it ain't locked!"