

THE ARGOSY

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A Night of Terror.

BY CHARLES E. REDWAY.

"Boys, I think there's something wrong near the cabin."

As Nick Johnson spoke he came to a halt, and turned to his companions with an anxious face.

"What makes you think so?" asked Dick Gibson, glancing around apprehensively.

"I don't know. The feeling has been upon me for the last hour. Hark! what's that?"

The boys listened intently, but could hear nothing.

"What's come over you?" said Dick. "There doesn't appear to be anything alarming around."

"I'm sure I heard something," went on Nick, drawing back the hammer of his flintlock rifle, and straining his eyes through the darkness.

It was too dark in the woods, however, to admit of their seeing more than a dozen yards around them, for although the moon was full the sky was overcast and its light obscured.

After listening a few minutes longer and not being able to hear anything, Dick Gibson said:

"I reckon it's all right, Nick. You're a little nervous and only imagined you heard something. We haven't seen any Indians for more than a week now."

"I know that, but I reckon we'll see 'em before long. I'm sure I heard something."

He put himself in motion again, and the others followed, but Nick held his gun ready for use, and kept his ears open for any further sound.

The five boys were on their way to their cabin further north. They had been down to one of the outlying divisions of the American army with some provisions and clothing, and night had overtaken them.

It was back in the stirring times of the struggle for independence, and these young patriots were doing all they could to assist the army by collecting provisions and clothing for the soldiers, and either delivering them in person or keeping them stored in a hut built for that purpose in the wilderness till some of the soldiers came for them.

The cabin now was full of provisions and other useful articles which only that day the commanding officer of the division they had just visited promised to send for the following morning.

The hut was built at the entrance of a deep ravine, and it was through this gorge the young patriots were making their way. They had just come in the vicinity of the hut when Nick spoke as above.

Pressing on now, they had almost reached the end of the ravine, when once more Nick heard the noise that had at first attracted his attention. It sounded exactly like some one walking through the bushes, and he stopped again, saying in an undertone:

"Fellows, I tell you there's something wrong. I just heard that voice again."

"So did I," said Lon Walters. "Whatever it is, it's ahead of us. There it is again. Hear it!"

There was no doubt about it this time.

Some one was making his way through the bushes, and they strained their eyes in the direction of the sound.

It continued for a few seconds, then ceased. It was probably an Indian, and he had paused close to where the boys stood.

Just then the clouds above began to break. In a few minutes the light of the moon struggled through, and Dick Gibson, who chanced to look up toward the top of the ravine, started and then uttered a low cry.

The question of what was to be done now arose, but for some time they did not know how to act.

To allow the savages to destroy or plunder the hut was not to be thought of, and this is what they would speedily proceed to do unless prevented.

A few minutes' thought convinced Nick that the safest way would be to sneak around to the rear of the hut, and enter through the window, for once inside they felt they would be better able to repel the invaders.

By carefully picking their way thus they managed to pass the spot where the red men stood.

Still keeping in the shadow of the trees they reached a point close to the hut, and worked their course around to the rear without being seen.

The cabin stood in a small clearing, but there were some bushes here and there between the edge of the woods and the rear of the hut, and these helped them to reach the desired position.

Nick at once proceeded to open the window, while Dick Gibson cautiously looked around the corner of the cabin toward the place where the three Indians were last seen. Now they were gone.

Dick continued to watch for some sign of them, and just as Nick succeeded in opening the window, he beheld their shadowy forms skulking in the darkness near the entrance to the ravine.

"Hurry, they're coming," he whispered, and in a few seconds the young trappers were all in the cabin.

The window was quickly barred and the fastening of the door examined; then the young men stationed themselves at the loopholes, and waited for the marauders to show themselves.

This they did in a few minutes, and from the cautious manner in which they approached the cabin it was evident they intended serious mischief.

"Wait till they get close to the hut," said Nick, "then shoot over their heads."

"Better shoot at 'em," said Dick Gibson. "The red rascals, they've got no business here."

"No; don't harm 'em if we can help it," said Nick decisively. "Let's try to scare 'em away first."

In a short time the Indians were close to the cabin. It could be seen that each one carried a rifle, and the young defenders felt decidedly uneasy as they watched them.

As soon as Nick thought they were near enough he was about giving the order to fire, when Lou Walters uttered a sudden cry of fear.

"There's more of 'em," he said, in great alarm. "I reckon we've made a big mistake in coming into the hut."

The boys quickly looked through the loopholes, and saw half a dozen other Indians come out of the darkness, and sneak toward the hut.

Nick began to be seriously alarmed now and was tempted to fire at them instead of over their heads. Before doing this, however, he decided to carry out his first idea, and gave the order to shoot.

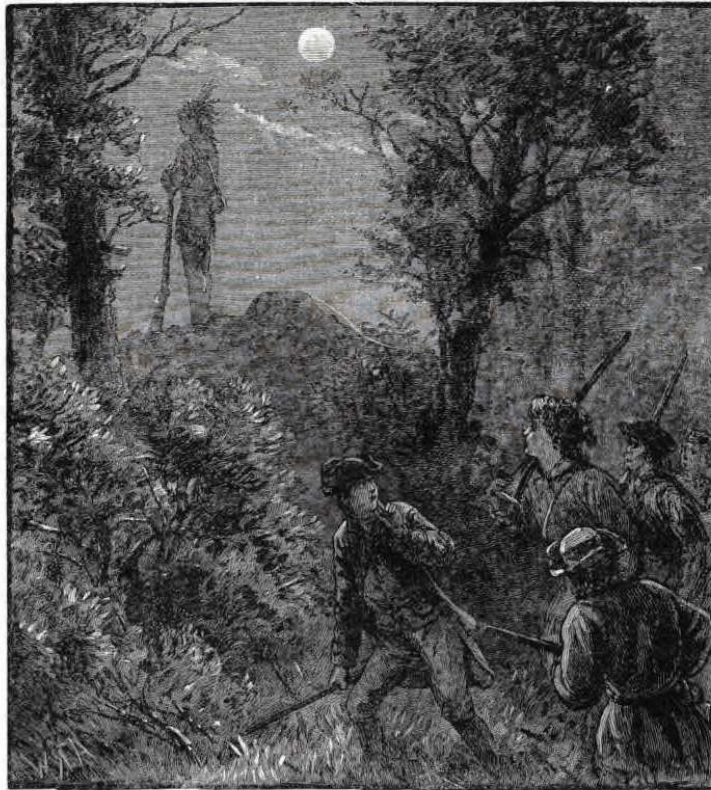
"Three of us 'll do the firing, and the others reload," he said.

The next instant the rifles cracked, and a howl of rage was uttered by the Indians.

Quickly getting behind the nearest trees, they began shooting at the cabin. It was plain they were not to be as easily frightened as Nick had imagined, and that they would not depart until they had plundered the hut.

For some time they continued to shoot at the cabin at intervals, and once a stray bullet came whizzing through one of the loopholes to bury itself in the logs near which Dick Gibson was standing.

"I'll fix you for that, you red fiend."



THE BOYS LIFTED THEIR EYES AND BEHELD AN INDIAN WARRIOR STANDING ON THE SUMMIT OF THE RAVINE.

"Look there," he whispered.

The boys lifted their eyes, and beheld an Indian warrior, standing on the summit of the ravine. He was leaning on the muzzle of his rifle, and his face was turned toward the cabin.

Nick held up his hand warningly. "I was sure of it. There are others near. We must look out for ourselves," he said.

The boys crouched back in the shadow of the trees, and watched the red-skin closely. In a moment two more Indians came into view, and all stood gazing toward the hut.

The cabin was in plain view of the savages from where they stood, and the young trappers knew they were contemplating an attack.

"We must get into the cabin as quick as we can," he said. "They'll try to set the hut on fire in a few minutes, and we'll have a better chance to resist 'em by shooting at them through a loophole."

"Of course we could shoot them down now for that matter, but I don't like to hurt 'em if it can be avoided, and a shot or two from the cabin may frighten 'em off. Besides there may be others."

"We can't get in the hut without their seeing us," said Dick Gibson doubtfully. "Yes, we can. Come on and be careful."

Without the least noise Dick led the way, the others close behind. They were careful to keep behind the trees, and to avoid all places where the light of the moon shone bright.

cried the youth wrathfully. "Just let me catch sight of one of you again!"

But this he was unable to do. The savages were ominously silent now, and the young patriots waited anxiously for their next move.

Suddenly it began to grow darker. A large cloud was passing over the moon, and in a few minutes they were unable to see a dozen feet from the hut. The Indians would be sure to take advantage of this opportunity, and attack the cabin with savage ferocity.

The youths waited breathlessly while the moments passed, and ardently wished the cloud over the moon would disappear. But this it showed no signs of doing as yet, and, with every sense on the alert, they continued to listen for any suggestive sound.

The next moment it came. The cautious tread of footsteps was heard just outside the hut, and a second later something crashed against the door with terrific force. Before the boys knew what had occurred another violent onslaught was made, and the door trembled from top to bottom.

"Jump for your lives, boys!" shouted Nick. "They're breaking in the door with a log or stone. Shoot through the holes on this side. Fire low and wound 'em."

As he ceased speaking another terrific blow was delivered, and the bar across the door was jarred loose. Another such onslaught would crush through it. But the young defenders were already in their places, and in another second the loud reports of their guns echoed deafeningly through the cabin.

Yells of pain and rage succeeded the discharge, and the Indians dropped the battering ram and fled. The boys quickly reloaded, and peeped cautiously through the loopholes.

The cloud had now partly passed away, and the moon shone dimly through. When the full light burst out not an Indian was to be seen, but a large stone which they had used as a ram lay just outside the door.

"Fix up that bar, some one," said Nick. "They'll be back again. The red fiends, they came pretty near getting the best of us that time."

"I hope the moon'll stay out," added Lou Walters, as he began fixing the battered door. "It'll be bad for us if it doesn't."

"If we can succeed in holding the cabin till daylight we'll be all right," continued Nick. "The soldiers will be here for the supplies then."

"We may all be butchered by that time," put in Dick Gibson gloomily.

At the same moment the Indians began yelling, and the young patriots hastily looked through the loopholes to find out what it was about.

For some time they could not see them, but at last, on looking along the top of the ravine above the cabin, the entire band could be discovered jumping around in evident glee, while those awful yells grew louder.

The next moment the boys saw the cause of the uproar, and cries of horror and dismay fell from their lips.

"We'll be crushed to death," gasped Dick Gibson. "If they roll that down upon us, the cabin and all in it will be buried from sight."

Well might the occupants of the hut draw back in despair as they saw what was about to occur.

There was an enormous boulder poised on the summit of the ravine, and the Indians were preparing to roll it down on the cabin. The rascals knew it would demolish the hut and crush the inmates, and were shouting in gleeful anticipation of the terrible havoc.

The stone lay in such a position that it could easily be dislodged, and the boys were powerless to prevent it, for the Indians could get behind the boulder, and the bullets could not harm them.

For a moment the awful peril paralyzed them, and it was not until the savages began to set the stone in motion that they could rouse themselves sufficiently to act.

Then they leveled their guns through the holes and fired, but only yells of derision followed the discharge. The Indians, protected by the boulder, were not harmed.

The next moment the ponderous mass was started down the ravine. Crushing through the underbrush and tearing up the earth in a great furrow, it bounded down the steep incline, while the yells of the Indians as they watched it thunder along were something awful to hear.

In a moment the huge rock would strike the hut, and the boys closed their eyes to shut out the terrible sight.

The next second a terrific crash reached their ears, followed by a scraping, grinding noise. They looked up to see that the boulder had lodged against an enormous tree, and the violent manner in which the latter was swaying showed with what awful force the rock had struck.

With wild shouts of anger and disappointment the savages hastened forward to dislodge it again, but the boys quickly anticipated this move by a volley from their rifles.

"We must keep 'em away from it," cried Nick, excitedly. "If they start it again, nothing can save us."

Several times the savages made an attempt to approach the boulder, but a volley from the cabin speedily checked them. The rock was not more than fifty yards from the hut, and as long as the moon continued to shine the boys could see well enough to defend it.

That was a night the young patriots never forgot. All through the long and weary hours they watched the boulder, and though the enemy made many attempts to set it in motion, the vigilance of the boys prevented it.

As the first streaks of day looked over the woods, however, the Indians seemed to grow desperate. They again opened fire on the hut, and kept it up for more than half an hour. Then in a body, and with loud shouts of rage, they rushed down into the ravine and headed for the cabin.

The boys fired upon them and one was seen to fall, but this only served to make the others more ferocious, and they pressed on. Before the young defenders could reload, the savages reached the door.

Once more the rock was lifted and dashed against it, the shouts of the beseechers ringing out with fresh vigor as the door was seen to yield. Again the ram was drawn back, and this blow almost succeeded.

The boys were working desperately to reload their guns, but they saw it could not be done in time. Two more blows would smash down the obstruction.

"Out of the window with you," cried Nick. "They will be upon us in a moment. We've only one chance for our lives."

They sprang to the window, and unbarred it and began climbing through as another terrific blow was delivered, and the door gave way with a crash.

The yells of the Indians were now diabolical. They rushed inside, brandishing their tomahawks and guns, then, seeing the cabin was deserted, quickly started for the window.

The boys, however, had taken to the woods finishing the charging of their rifles as they ran. Still yelling like demons the Indians started in pursuit, but they were brought to a speedy halt by a volley from above, and, looking up to the top of the ravine, they saw a body of soldiers advancing toward them.

Then their yells were changed from triumph to dismay, as with one accord they fled in the opposite direction.

The soldiers had arrived just in time, but the next day the boys abandoned the hut and located further south, where they remained till the end of the war.

HIS "BUT ONE WORD."

On one occasion in a Western State legislature a vote on a measure was being taken with privilege to explain votes. Every member, of course, wanted to have his say, and nearly every one of them began his remarks with the stereotyped, "Mr. Speaker, I have but one word to say," and ram- bled off into several hundred. At last one of the old Solon's name half way down the alphabet was called, and he arose to speak. "Mr. Speaker," he said, "I have but one word to say, and that is, no," and down he sat. Nobody made a speech after that.—Detroit Free Press.

COLUMBIA'S BIRTH.

Whatever can be known of earth we know.

Sneered Europe's wise men, in their small shells curled; No! said one man in Genoa, and that No

Out of the dark created this New World. —J.R. Lowell.

[This Story began in No. 52.]

THE DIAMOND SEEKERS;

OR, The Mystery of the Five Peaks.

BY WILLIAM MURRAY GRAYDON,
Author of "Under Africa," "In the Name of the Czar," etc.

CHAPTER X.

MAGHULL TURNS TRAITOR.

Fulke was pointing toward the opening of a narrow street that led out from the market place, but when Clegg looked eagerly in that direction, he perceived only the converging rows of huts and the swarm of negroes who were passing up and down. "What is it?" he muttered. "I can't see anything."

"Wait a moment; I don't see him now," replied Fulke. "Be careful not to show an inch of your body. Now look straight at that third hut on the right-hand side—the one with the leopard skin rug before the door. There, do you see that?"

Fulke was trembling with excitement, and so also was Clegg, for just then he caught sight of a face peering from the entrance of the designated hut—a white face, with a heavy black mustache.

After a cautious glance up and down the street the head was followed by the rest of the body, and its owner stood upright, revealing the tall, well known figure of Jonas Maghull.

"There, that's the man you saw," whispered Fulke. "But what he was doing in that hut I can't imagine."

"You are mistaken," said Clegg quickly. "I did not see Maghull at all. I saw John Japp. Maghull may have been with him, though."

Fulke gave a slight whistle. "Hardly!" he exclaimed. "But the thing looks black, I confess. By Jove! there is no telling what deviltry is on foot. That man Maghull always gives me a creepy sensation. I don't like his looks. There he goes now. Come on, I intend to overhaul him."

Maghull had started leisurely down the street after a sharp glance around him, and now both lads hurried in pursuit.

It was high time they left their shelter, for the fierce looking negro who presided over the stall was regarding them with angry and suspicious glances.

Maghull was soon overtaken, and when Fulke clapped him on the shoulder, he wheeled around with a look of pleased surprise.

"Where did you spring from?" he said. "Been taking in the sights, have you?"

"Yes," replied Fulke, who was greatly taken aback by the man's cool demeanor. "Look here, Maghull, did you see anything of our old prisoner, John Japp? Clegg declares he had a glimpse of him a few moments ago, and while we were searching through the crowd we saw you come out of that hut yonder. I thought possibly you might have seen the fellow—if it was really he."

Maghull's face expressed an amazement that was either real or most admirably feigned.

"John Japp here in Coomassie!" he exclaimed. "Why, how could he be? It was surely some one else you saw. Perhaps it was I," he added with a laugh. "I came through the market place a moment ago."

"I saw John Japp, and no one else," said Clegg doggedly.

"Well, if you are absolutely positive that settles the question," replied Maghull. "For my part I certainly saw nothing of him. I stopped at that hut to get a drink of palm wine. I learned to drink it at Zanzibar years ago, and the notion took me to taste it again," he added apologetically.

"Why did you look up and down the street before you came out?" asked Fulke suddenly.

Maghull laughed until his white teeth showed beneath his mustache. "If I did that I was certainly not aware of it," he replied. "I was compelled to crawl out of the hut on my hands and knees. If you think that I am concealing anything from you," he went on, looking his companions straight in the eyes, "we can go back and examine the hut. After that I will help you to search for John Japp, if you think that he is really in Coomassie. It would be little short of a miracle if it should prove true."

"Oh, we don't doubt your word," said Fulke quickly. "I thought you might have seen the man. That is why I came after you. There must be a mistake somewhere. We will go back to the market place and look around a little."

"Well, I wish you success," said Maghull. "If you find John Japp don't let him get away. He is a bad man to be at large."

He nodded slightly, and sauntered on down the street.

The two lads watched him until he was lost to sight in the throng.

"Either that man tells the truth, or he is the most accomplished actor I ever saw in my life," said Fulke.

"Upon my word, Clegg, I am inclined to believe the former is the case. I don't think he is deceiving us. Are you absolutely sure it was not Maghull whom you saw?"

"As sure as we two are standing on this spot I saw John Japp," replied Clegg earnestly. "He had a long black beard, and Maghull had only a mustache. Whether they were together or not is more than I can say."

"I am more than half inclined to think that you are right," said Fulke. "You must have seen either Japp himself or some one that might resemble him. It may be only a coincidence that the two men should have been in the same vicinity at the same time. We can easily find out if Maghull told the truth, and if he did, then I will be satisfied that he knows nothing about Japp. Even if the slave dealer is in Coomassie what could he and Maghull have in common?"

"Nothing, I suppose," replied Clegg. "You can hardly know each other, though Maghull has seen a great deal of the world, and has been in Africa before this. Pieter had not seen him for half a dozen years until he ran across him in London a few weeks ago."

Fulke looked thoughtful for a moment.

"Come on!" he said. "We will verify Maghull's story, and then go back to Pieter. If John Japp is in Coomassie it means danger."

They returned to the hut and peeped into the circular doorway. There sat an old and wrinkled negro, surrounded by flasks and gourds filled with a dark colored liquor. With these exceptions the hut was empty.

"No use in trying to talk to this fellow," said Clegg, and as the negro made signs to them to enter they tossed him a couple of small coins and went away.

"It looks as though Maghull told the truth," said Fulke. "What do you think?"

"The same as you do," answered Clegg. "But I saw John Japp in the flesh. No one can make me believe otherwise."

If Fulke was still incredulous, he wisely refrained from saying so, and the conversation turned on other themes as they hurried through

the town. The sun was low, and Coomassie is not the safest place in the world after dark.

As has been said, the quarters assigned the travelers by the king lay near the center of the town, and consisted of two large, square houses built of sun baked brick. They had evidently been used in former times as slave markets or prisons. They occupied the center of a circular open space.

When the lads got back they found Pieter preparing supper. For prudential reasons, he had abandoned the smaller of the two houses and the entire party were occupying the larger one. The porters were squatted in the far end, and all the baggage was piled on one side.

Raffles and Carimoo were helping with the supper, preparations and Maghull—who had preceded the lads—was smoking his pipe in the doorway, and placidly watching a group of curious negroes who were squatted on the ground at a little distance, sniffing with evident enjoyment the tobacco smoke as it curled toward them.

Pieter had already been informed of Clegg's supposed discovery, but he listened patiently to a second telling of it.

"Yes, that agrees with Maghull's account," he said. "I hope you won't be angry with me, my lad, but really the thing is too absurd for belief. John Japp is somewhere on the coast, at least one hundred and twenty miles from here—if indeed he made his escape from Cape Coast Castle, which is far from certain."

"I questioned some of those black fellows sitting outside a moment ago, and they assured me that no Arabs have been seen in or near Coomassie. Is it likely that Japp would have come on here alone? No, no, my lad, you have seen some one who resembled Japp, or possibly it was Maghull as he himself suggests."

Clegg was doubtless a little hurt, but beyond affirming that he had made no mistake he said nothing.

Fulke hardly knew what to think. He was impressed by Clegg's positive manner, and yet Pieter's logic seemed unanswerable.

Both lads still had some lingering suspicion of Maghull, but they found no opportunity of communicating this to Pieter. Had they done so the future destinies of all might have been vastly changed.

In spite of the noise and confusion in the town, the travelers retired at an early hour. It was Pieter's intention to start at daybreak without leave or license from the king, who would doubtless pay them an early visit in the morning to solicit gifts.

In order that none of the porters—especially the eight Ashantees—might take it into their heads to slip away, as well as to prevent possible theft it was decided to apportion the night into watches.

Clegg took the first, and was followed successively by Pieter and Fulke. At two o'clock in the morning, after a lonely vigil by the doorway, he latter awakened Maghull, whose turn came next, and threw himself wearily on his bed of dried grass.

It was then perfectly quiet. All Coomassie was buried in slumber.

Fulke's last recollection was of seeing Maghull stalk across the open space outside with a rifle on his shoulder. After that he fell to dreaming and was far away from the horrors and dangers of the Dark Continent when a sharp cry rudely broke his vision and called him back to real life.

He pulled himself upright just in time to see two dark figures slip through the doorway and vanish. His mind was still confused and before he could realize the situation, some one stumbled over his head and shoulders, and sprawled in front of him.

Fulke was wide awake now, and crouching himself on the supposed

enemy he exerted all his strength to hold him down. The under man turned on his antagonist, with a sharp yell, but fortunately for Fulke—who found that he had caught a Tartar—a yellow glare of light was just then flashed on the scene by a lantern in the hands of Pieter Bierenbroek.

To his amazement, Fulke discovered that he was struggling with Carimoo. Both regained their feet, but it was a full minute before either could make himself heard, owing to the jabbering of the frightened porters and the excited exclamations of Pieter, Clegg, and Raffles.

When silence was restored, Carimoo managed to explain that while lying awake he had seen two figures stealing toward him through the gloom, and that he had only escaped death from a knife which one carried by rolling to one side with a loud yell. This scared the assassin off, and when the negro rose to pursue them he stumbled over Fulke.

"Who can the scoundrels have been?" exclaimed Pieter. "Where is Jonas Maghull—by the great Mogul he is missing!"

At this instant Clegg uttered a cry of mingled astonishment and alarm. "The map is gone!" he shouted. "My father's map. Look! they cut through the outside of my jacket while I was sleeping. The jacket was buttoned, and the map was in the inside pocket."

"The map, gone!" muttered Pieter incredulously.

He snatched a rifle and rushed outside, but returned an instant later, before the others could follow him.

"No use!" he groaned. "The scoundrels have made good their escape. A dozen narrow streets diverge from the open place. If we try to pursue them the whole town will be in an uproar, and our lives may be imperiled."

"I found this 'ere on the floor," said Raffles, holding out a long two edged knife with a polished wooden handle. "The thieves must 'ave dropped it."

Pieter hastily examined the weapon, and his face blazed with anger.

"John Japp's knife!" he cried hoarsely. "The initials are cut on the handle. What a blind, stupid ass I have been! I might have suspected this."

He turned, and strode over to the negro.

"Carimoo," he demanded, "before you escaped from the slave gang did you explain to John Japp how the diamond mountain could be found?"

"Me tell him what me tell you," replied the negro; "me tell him what diamond mountain look like. Me say it on far side of Kong Mountains."

Pieter groaned aloud. "That was quite enough for the scoundrel to act on. Little wonder he was anxious to escape from prison. Clegg," he added suddenly, "did Jonas Maghull know where you kept that map?"

"Yes, I showed it to him several days ago. You said he was trustworthy."

"I know I did," groaned Pieter. "I am an obstinate, wooden headed idiot. I owe you an apology, my lad, for not believing your story. Had I done so this would not have happened."

"The affair is clear as daylight now. Japp and his gang must have eluded the soldiers, and started at once for Coomassie with the intention of being first at the diamonds. On arriving Japp doubtless left his companions encamped in the vicinity and entered Coomassie alone, probably to seek news of us."

"He encountered Maghull here this afternoon—the two are old friends as likely as not—and induced him to desert by promising a large portion of the treasure, or representing to him that his party were more powerful than ours and could travel more rapidly. Some such arguments he must have used, at any rate, and to such

good purpose that Maghull was won over. Then the two wretches planned the scheme which they have just carried out. No doubt Japp intended to kill Carimoo, hoping that the double loss of our guide and map would compel us to abandon our quest, and return to the coast."

"Ah, wait till I lay my hands on the traitors. By the great Mogul I will make them repent the days they were born." Pieter shook his clenched fists toward the doorway. He was hoarse with rage, and could scarcely speak.

"If I had only known this before," said Fulke bitterly. "I suspected Maghull this afternoon, but his innocent manner disarmed me. The two rascals must have just concluded their interview when Clegg caught sight of Japp."

"They saw us at the same time, and fled to the wine seller's hut for shelter. Maghull dashed out when he thought the coast was clear, and while we were chasing him Japp slipped away. Everything must have been planned by that time."

"I observed this evening that Maghull was anxious to have the fourth watch. It was fortunate Carimoo discovered the villains else the poor fellow would have been killed. Was anything stolen but the map?"

"No," replied Clegg, who had been making an investigation, "but I have no doubt the scoundrels intended to help themselves to the plunder, after they had quietly dispatched Carimoo."

CHAPTER XI.

LEAVES FROM A DIARY.

It was quite evident that any attempt to seek the traitor Maghull and his companion would be worse than useless, for the dark, narrow streets of the town zigzagged in every direction. At the first alarm thousands of negroes would swarm out of the huts, and serious trouble might result.

"I am the last man in the world to counsel a retreat," said Pieter, "but under the present circumstances it will be wise to leave Coomassie at once. The chances are, as I said before, that Japp's party are not far away. It is even possible that the slave dealer is in collusion with the king, and if so we have everything to fear in the way of treachery. We may lose Carimoo, and our porters and baggage as well."

"Japp is a revengeful man, and will never forgive our treatment of him. Either he will push on to the interior, hoping to outdistance us, or he will make another attempt to drive us back to the coast, by depriving us of the means of going ahead. One thing is certain. Our peril increases with every moment we remain here. We must start at once, and endeavor to throw the Arabs off our track by altering our course a little, and by making fast marches."

"Except in strength—for Japp probably has a formidable band—the advantage is with us. Carimoo is a sure guide, whereas these scoundrels have only the map. Still the Arabs may be better able to decipher it than we were."

"Carimoo is worth a thousand maps," said Fulke. "If we get a good start of these fellows we can easily outwit them."

"I'm not so sure of that," replied Pieter, twisting his beard with one hand as was his wont when perplexed over anything. "There may be serious trouble in store for us. However, we won't think of that until it comes. John Japp shall never have those diamonds as long as my good right arm can hold a gun."

"I rather hope that the future will give me an opportunity of settling scores with the scoundrel, and with that treacherous dog Maghull as well. And now for action. Let us pack up and leave Coomassie at once. I don't believe Japp anticipates such a move, and before he discovers our absence we may be miles away."

No one offered any objection to Pieter's plan. It was only too evident that he had outlined the situation correctly, and that the only hope of safety lay in immediate flight.

A cold breakfast was quickly prepared and eaten. Then Pieter drew up his little force in double file, and after rigidly instructing them to make no noise, he led them across the open square, and thence into one of the streets that led northward.

Clegg and Fulke marched in the rear, having special orders to keep a close watch on the porters. The latter, however, had no intention of deserting—probably because of the munificent wages Pieter had promised them—and they showed this by the stealthy, noiseless manner in which they filed through the streets. The dread suspense of that brief march never Pieter nor his companions ever forgot. It was that hour of the morning when sleep is most sound, but here and there a dark head peeped from a hut or a brawny negro rose from the ground and stared in amazement at the little band as they wound onward through the dark, foul smelling streets. No alarm was given, however, for the natives probably deemed it only natural that the travelers should set out on their journey before the oppressive heat of the day came.

It was a terrible moment when the king's palace was dimly seen a short distance to the left, but the procession passed by without being discovered by the royal guards, and a little later the last of the now straggling huts was left behind.

The hill that lay in front was swiftly ascended, and on the crest the travelers paused for a moment. Southward lay the slumbering town of Coomassie and straight ahead were the dim wastes of hill and forest that stretched to the Kong mountains nearly three hundred miles away.

To the eastward, less than a mile distant, a yellow flashing light could be seen amid the trees. It was doubtless the Arab camp, and there, at this very moment, Japp and Maghull were exulting over the stolen map, little dreaming that those whose progress they sought to stay were pressing on with indomitable ardor to the interior—to the mysterious diamond mines beyond the Kong mountains.

"Providence has guided us this night," said Peter, "and has delivered us from the snares of our enemies. May we not forget what we owe to the Supreme Being and may He continue to watch over us in time of future peril."

He removed his hat, and stood for a moment with uncovered head, an example that was followed by the others. Then he gave the word to start, and the little band went swiftly down the hill and pressed on through the fertile country to the northwest.

When the morning dawned they sought the thickest forests, hoping thus to cover their tracks, and by dint of hard marching they encamped that night by a shallow stream amid desolate hills—between twenty and thirty miles from Coomassie.

Nine weeks after that eventful retreat in the early morning from Coomassie, at the close of a long day's march, a little band of twelve—four sun bronzed white men, and eight perspiring negroes—flung down their loads at the mouth of a wooded ravine that wound afar amid the deep shadows of the Kong mountains. Space forbids that the record of those nine weeks, the narrative of peril and misfortune, sickness and suffering, should be described with that accuracy which it merits.

Fortunately Pieter Beerenbroek kept a diary, jotting down at irregular intervals the events of the march, and the following extracts, selected from that little leather clad volume

will give the reader some idea of what the travelers endured before they reached the base of the Kong mountains. They left Coomassie at daybreak on the 12th of November, and the first extract bears a date a week later.

Nov. 19th. Nothing has been seen or heard of Japp and his band, though a week has gone by. God grant we have seen the last of them! We are deviating from our intended course—heading slightly to the northwest. The land is fertile, and food plenty. All are well and in good spirits.

Dec. 2nd. Coomassie is now one hundred and fifty miles distant. We are half way to the Kong mountains. One sad accident has occurred. A Fantee porter was killed by a lion. The two lads are brave and hopeful, and have become the warmest of friends. Carimoo's devotion to Fulke is wonderful; he is constantly on the alert to guard him from harm. All goes well.

Dec. 15th. The last few days have been full of trial and suffering. We are now in a totally unknown part of Africa. Rivers, swamps, and frightful jungles impede our progress. Food is scarce and our reserve supplies are disappearing rapidly. Wild animals howl about the camp at night.

Dec. 18th. Misfortunes seem to thicken. Clegg and Raffles are ill with fever, and can travel but slowly. The country is rugged, and obstructions are of hourly occurrence. What few natives we have seen appear hostile, and run away. The porters are sullen and evidently fear to go on. The spirit of mutiny seems to be rife among them.

Dec. 20th. At daybreak we were attacked by natives, and have been carrying on a running fight all day. While hurriedly fording a river a Fantee porter was knocked over by a spear and swept away with his load. Late in the afternoon the enemy fell back, and we are now encamped, momentarily dreading an attack. Fortunately we have no sickness. Clegg and Raffles are over the fever.

Dec. 21st. The blow has come. Last night the four Kroomen and the two remaining Fantees deserted, killing the faithful Ashantee who was on guard and taking what they could lay their hands on. Pursuit was useless, so we pushed on in haste, abandoning much of our baggage. The seven Ashantees are faithful, and will stick by us. Their leader, Kallcall, is devotedly attached to me since I saved him from a leopard. How our quest will end no man can foresee, but we are resolved to push on. The lads are hopeful and courageous—especially Fulke, whom nothing seems to daunt.

Jan. 9th, 1890. The new year has brought us a change of fortune. Though the country is wild and desolate beyond description, we have no difficulty in getting fruits and game. We are all well and strong. During the past two weeks our progress has been exasperatingly slow, but today a glorious reward gave us fresh courage and hope. Just before sunset we saw from a hill-crest the distant blue peaks of the Kong mountains. They are probably fifty miles away, and beyond them lies our goal.

Where are John Japp and his band? Are we destined to meet again? God forbid!

CHAPTER XII.

AN AMBUSCADE IN THE RAVINE

The remaining fifty miles proved to be thickly beset with difficulties and delays—owing mainly to swamps and dense timber land—but on January 14th, five days after the last quoted entry in Pieter's diary, the travelers reached the high, frowning chain of the Kong mountains, and slept that night in their shadow.

As has been seen, the party were sadly reduced in numbers, and what

was more serious still they had lost—by theft or compulsory abandonment—the greater portion of their baggage. A quantity of ammunition, a few provisions, the medicine chest, and a case of Birmingham rifles—these alone remained, save for the guns, of which each porter had one, while Pieter and his friends still possessed their original two apiece.

But the dark days of suffering and misfortune just ended had failed utterly to crush these hardy explorers, and every heart was animated with courage and hope when the campfire was lit that night among the foothills of the mighty Kong range.

The terrible march from Coomassie had weeded out the weak and cowardly ones, and the seven Ashantees who remained had proved themselves true as steel. It was a fortunate rifle ball that slew the ravenous leopard, and gained Pieter the devotion of the brave Kallcall.

The situation of the travelers was now one that an ardent explorer would have envied, for a little known part of Africa lay behind them, while in front—beyond the mountain barrier—was a region where no white foot had trod.

It is a singular fact that so little should have been known about the Kong mountains as was the case at that time.

Carimoo's guidance had brought the party to a point near the border line of the district of Kong, and probably one hundred miles to the westward of the town of the same name. Though both lie south of the Kong mountains, existing information concerning them is meager. A prosperous gold trade is carried on in the district, while the town itself—a center of numerous converging caravan routes—is populated by Mohammedans who manufacture cotton cloths.

These scanty facts Pieter imparted to his companions, together with some anecdotes concerning the awful treatment of strangers who fall into the hands of the people of Kong. The fear of meeting with a similar fate made his hearers uneasy until Pieter explained that Kong was far away, and that the mountain chain would soon interpose another barrier.

He did not add—as he might have done had he chosen—that worse enemies than the fanatical people of Kong were likely to be encountered in the unknown regions beyond the mountains.

These and similar topics Pieter discussed with his companions until drowsiness and fatigue called a halt. A little later all were sleeping save the Ashantee sentinel, who squatted beside the campfire, watching the smoke and sparks curl into the blackness of the ravine, and listening to the prowling tread of wild beasts in the surrounding thickets.

No premonition of what the morrow was to bring forth disturbed any of the weary sleepers. At dawn all were astir, hungry, full of new life, and in the best of spirits.

In front of them wound the pass which led to the far side of the Kong mountains—to the land of Carimoo's people, and the diamond mines. The negro knew the path well, for years before he had come through with his father, the king, on a raiding expedition against one of the Kong tribes, and had returned by the same way, flushed with victory.

Carimoo's father, if the negro's accounts were true, was a rich and powerful monarch, who ruled over many tribes. This had been some years ago, however, and many changes might have taken place in the interval.

"Before many days you will see your native village, Carimoo," said Pieter, as he busied himself with the breakfast preparations. "If your father still lives, you will be a prince, and if he is dead we may have a chance to assist at your coronation. I hope there has been no upheaval

of the government during your absence. It might make things awkward for us."

It is doubtful if Carimoo fully understood the Hollander's words, but the mention of home brought a happy glow to his face as he strode into the thicket to seek fuel. The next instant a sharp cry brought the others to the spot, and they were amazed to see the body of a huge leopard lying amid the high grass.

"It is not yet rigid," said Pieter. "It must have been killed just before daybreak; ah, look here!"

He seized a knife hilt that protruded from the animal's breast, and drew the blade out by a vigorous jerk.

"An Arab weapon!" he cried hoarsely. "What does this mean?"

No one answered. The Hollander's dazed and startled expression was reflected on every face. The dead leopard told its own story plainly enough.

At one blow the bright prospects and fancied security of the little band had been shattered, and now they felt that a deadly peril was thickening around them.

The silence was more eloquent than words, as they exchanged despairing glances, and peered timidly at the surrounding thickets.

"John Japp is on our trail again," said Pieter huskily. "And I thought we had surely seen the last of him. One of the band has been spying about our camp within an hour or two. The leopard pounced upon him, and more by chance than skill he stabbed the brute to the heart and made his escape. See! here is a slight trail of blood leading through the bushes; the rascal has suffered for his folly."

"The affair must have made some noise," said Fulke. "Did no one hear it?"

The question was answered by the Ashantee who had been on guard during the last watch. He declared that he had heard several ferocious cries just before dawn, but paid no attention to them because he supposed it to be merely a fight between two wild animals.

"That leopard no doubt did us a good turn," said Pieter, "otherwise we might have been attacked while asleep, and shot down in cold blood. I must find out in which direction the spy retreated. Don't any of you follow me unless I give an alarm. I don't intend to go far."

With a hasty inspection of his rifle, Pieter crept forward, and soon vanished in the thicket. Fortunately for the peace of mind of his companions he returned in less than five minutes.

"I traced the fellow across the mouth of the ravine by the blood stains," he said. "He did not turn into the pass, but kept on along the base of the mountains, heading due east. In that direction the slave band are encamped—and probably at no great distance."

"They must have traveled almost due north from Coomassie, thus striking the Kong Mountains between here and the town of Kong. No doubt they knew of this pass, and made it their objective point. It is strange, to say the least, that they should have arrived just at this time."

"They may have been close behind us all the way," suggested Clegg.

"I don't think so," replied Pieter. "But that matters little now. The fact remains that the scoundrels are near by, and that they know of our presence in this vicinity. At this very moment they may be advancing to attack us."

Involuntarily all eyes turned in the direction taken by the injured spy, and every ear was on the alert to catch the least sound that would indicate the approach of John Japp and his cruel band.

"A bad place for an ambuscade," said Fulke with a shudder. "What had we better do?"

"Push ahead at once," answered Pieter, as he led the party back to the camp. "We must be the first to enter the pass. If we fall in that, disaster will surely follow. We have no time for breakfast. The sun will soon be up, and the Arabs—"

The sentence was broken off suddenly, and the Hollander's face paled under the ruddy bronze skin.

"Down! down! every man of you," he whispered hoarsely. "Throw yourselves flat, and don't make a sound for your lives."

Pieter was prone on the ground before the last word left his lips, and the rest were not slow in imitating him. Stretched full length amid the tangled grass, they watched and listened, not daring to ask what the warning meant.

Fortunately the camp had been pitched a little to the left of the ravine's mouth, at the base of a great bowlder, and a fringe of high grass and bushes was on all sides. Otherwise the heaps of baggage, the still smoldering embers of the fire, and the men themselves must have been in plain view from the trail leading into the pass.

The suspense was of brief duration. First a crackling of twigs was heard, and a muttering word or two spoken in a strange tongue. Then, with soft and noiseless tread, a body of men came in sight on the narrow path beyond the straggling copse of bushes—not John Japp and his band whom the hidden watchers confidently expected to see, but a group of burly, half-naked negroes, wearing breeches made of unanned skins, and bearing all manner of barbarous weapons—spears, clubs, great knives, and bows and arrows. Some few were armed with muskets.

The faces of these men were coarse and brutal, and were rendered still more repulsive by huge nose-rings and by the teeth, filed to triangular points, which showed between their thick lips.

The dusky procession went rapidly by in groups of two and three, full forty strong. They glanced neither to right nor left, but kept their eyes straight ahead as though they had some definite purpose in view.

Pieter and his companions saw everything clearly through the open portions of the thicket, and when the last negro had passed into the ravine they ventured to sit upright.

Every face expressed bewilderment and dread. Here was a new peril to contend with. It would be madness to enter the gorge behind this band of cruel savages, whereas to remain where they were was no less dangerous. Even Pieter was nonplused, and only shook his head dubiously when Clegg asked what was to be done.

"We are in a tight place," he said finally, "and I don't see any way out of it. Where do those fellows had from, Carimoo, and what are they after?"

"Me no say where they go," replied Carimoo, "but me know ums well. They bad mens—cannibals. They live near Kong—that way."

He pointed due east along the base of the range.

"By the great Mogul that's pleasant news," muttered Pieter. "Cannibals in front of us and Japp and his gang behind. Is there no other road through these mountains?"

A light shone on Carimoo's face, and springing to his feet he pointed to the west.

"More road that way," he exclaimed, "much bad-velly deep gorge—wild beast there—me hear my peoples tell of it long ago."

"And do you know how to find it?" demanded Pieter, with sudden energy.

Before the negro could open his lips to reply a crashing volley of rifle fire echoed down the ravine, and with the few straggling shots that followed were mingled shrill and blood-curdling yells.

"Do you hear that?" cried Pieter excitedly. "Japp and his fiendish gang

have been lying in ambush up the ravine, knowing that we would come that way, and now those poor negroes have blundered into the trap, and are being shot down. The Arabs no doubt mistook them for us in the gloom.

"Here they come in retreat," exclaimed Fulke. "By Jove, we will have our hands full in a minute—especially if the Arabs are chasing them up."

"Stand your ground, men," commanded Pieter with a quick glance at the heap of baggage. "There is no time to flee. If it comes to the worst aim straight and don't get excited."

He had hardly given the order when the panic stricken negroes came tearing down the gorge, their speed accelerated by a lively rifle fire from the rear. The main body stuck to the path, but a dozen or more swerved to one side, and plunged pell mell into the very midst of the camp.

It was a startling surprise to both parties. Believing themselves to be in the presence of a second division of Japp's band, and thus cut off in both directions, the negroes showed fight and pushed on with the fury of desperation. In the rush and scrimmage that followed Fulke was knocked down and trampled upon, and when he staggered to his feet he was horrified to see a huge savage making for him with a gleaming knife fully two feet long.

At such close quarters Fulke could not use his rifle, but he hastily reversed the weapon and hit his enemy a terrific blow on the shoulder with the stock.

The negro, maddened by rage and pain, wrested the gun from the lad's grasp, and sprang at him with the knife, bent on a revengeful stroke. Fulke was unarmed, and at the mercy of his terrible foe. He turned and fled for life—fled blindly through the bushes and up the stony bed of the ravine, neither heeding nor caring whither he went, for the infuriated negro was at his very heels.

"Crack! a wreath of smoke puffed out from a bowlder to the right of the path, and the negro toppled backward with a shrill yell. A stalwart, black bearded figure emerged from the rock with a smoking rifle in his hand, and Fulke found himself face to face with John Japp.

(To be continued.)

[This Story began in No. 53.]

A Mountain Mystery;

OR,

The Miami Conspiracy.

BY W. BERT FOSTER,

Author of "In Alaskan Waters," "A Lost Expedition," etc.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE MIAMI'S WARNING.

Tom heard a sudden exclamation from one of the occupants of the catboat (there seemed to be two), and she was put about with a velocity that threatened to capsize her.

"Tom Peterson! how under the sun came you out in that peanutshell of a boat?" Tom heard a voice exclaim, and then it was his turn to be amazed again, for the voice was that of his father, Major Miles Peterson!

"Catch my painter and I'll come aboard," replied Tom, sending the slack of the line hurtling through the air toward the Sylph.

The painter was caught and fastened by the major's companion, and then the smaller boat was drawn up so that Tom was able to step aboard the Sylph.

"That was a close shave, Tom," cried the major, grasping his son's hand. "What were you doing out here in that boat? Where's Jack?"

"I was on my way to Rogers City to telegraph to you," Tom replied, answering his father's questions in rotation.

"And you came all the way from the Ducks in that thing?" interrupted the major.

"Yes, I did. That's all there was to do. When I got back to the island yesterday morning I found that Jack had disappeared—been kidnaped by old Ossinike—and I started off this morning to get word to you."

"Kidnaped! Jack!" repeated the major. "I was afraid that something might happen to you, but I didn't look for any trouble in that direction. How did it happen?"

"Well, I said Jack had been kidnaped by Ossinike. I didn't mean just that. He has been captured by the smugglers, I believe, and they will hand him over to Ossinike."

"The smugglers!" exclaimed the major blankly. "What sort of a mess have you been getting into since you left home, Tom?"

Under any other circumstances Tom would have laughed at his father's words and tone; but the matter was altogether too serious to allow of that.

"I'll tell you all about it, father," he said more calmly; "but hadn't we better go on to camp? Jack was taken from there and the smugglers have carried him toward the Canadian shore."

"You're right," returned the major. "Cheney," he added, turning to the man at the Sylph's helm, "just lay on a course for the Ducks again, will you?"

"Aye, aye, sir!" replied the man, and the catboat, with the smaller craft in tow, quickly swung around and headed once more to the northward.

"Now, Tom, tell me what you mean," said the major.

"Better step forward and light that lantern in the bow, major," interposed Cheney. "We don't want to collide with any other boat, or come as nigh it as we did with that one. If you hadn't been mighty handy with your tiller, young man, you'd have felt how wet the Huron is."

"Thanks," returned Tom, ruefully, while his father went forward; "it was only three or four days ago that I tried it. I know just how wet it is."

"Now spin your yarn," said the major, coming back. "What did you mean by saying that the smugglers had carried off Jack? Who are the 'smugglers'?"

"Why, the folks on the Jeannette—you know, the schooner I wrote you about whose captain said he knew you—Captain Rolf Ericson."

"Ericson! I believe you, I do know him," responded the major with emphasis. "A bigger scoundrel doesn't go unhung. Why, there are parties in Michigan who would give five thousand dollars to get him on American soil. I don't know but the State would give as much to get hold of him. Little wonder that he kept close aboard that schooner while she lay at Rogers."

Then Tom continued his story from the time he first left the Outer Duck in the Sylph, to go fishing, until the very moment of his meeting with his father. The boatman, as well as the major, listened to the tale with great interest.

"Do you know this schooner, the Jeannette, Dan?" asked the major, turning to Cheney when Tom had finished.

"Yes, I know her," was the reply; "and I reckon the boy's right about her being a smuggler. The revenue men have overhauled her two or three times but were never able to find anything aboard at all suspicious. They're keen ones, and if Rolf Ericson is at their head I don't wonder they're so lucky. He's a cleaner."

"What do you think about this matter of my ward's disappearance?" asked the major, who evidently had considerable respect for his companion's opinion.

"I think it's pretty clear," responded Cheney. "Your son has got it about straight, I reckon. Without doubt those fellows were instigated by the old Injun to capture the other fellow, and they kept your son in the cabin while the matter was being accomplished. That's plain enough."

The major nodded and remained thoughtfully silent for a few moments. Finally Tom broke the silence with a question.

"But, father, how came you and the Sylph here so opportunely? The fellow at the boat builders' told me that the boat wouldn't be repaired under a week."

"Well, I'll tell you," said the major. "I got your letter in the noon mail day before yesterday and it bothered me so that I took the first train for Rogers City, hoping to get there before the Jeannette sailed. I remembered that rascal Ericson was at once, and knowing that he had every reason to hate me—"

"But why should he hate you?" interrupted Tom.

"Well, that is rather a long story and this is neither the time nor the place to tell it. Let it be enough for me to say now that the fellow served one short term in prison because of me and would have got a much longer one had he not escaped from custody just before his second trial."

"He swore he'd injure me if he could, and to tell the truth, Tom, though I seldom worry about your not being able to take care of yourself, I was startled to think of your being in the scoundrel's power. Knowing just what a desperate fellow Ericson was, I felt that I must follow you and see that you got away from him safely."

"I arrived at Rogers about four hours after the Jeannette, with you aboard, had sailed, and I immediately went to the shipyard and encouraged the man to set a gang of workmen to repairing the Sylph that very night. They worked all night and all day yesterday and this morning Mr Cheney and I got under way."

"We should have been to the islands by this time if it hadn't been for that plaguy calm. Dan knows all about the Ducks, as well as the other islands and both shores of Luke Huron, so he may be of great assistance to us."

"I ought to have suspected something just as soon as I saw that half breed, who was with Ossinike aboard the Jeannette," declared Tom despairingly.

"I don't see what you could have done to avert the kidnaping, if you had," returned his father; "unless you had known enough about it beforehand to have hired another sailboat, as soon as you arrived at Rogers, and got away for the island ahead of the Jeannette. There can be no blame attached to you."

"But it makes me feel so, when I think that I was right aboard of that schooner with Jack, for part of the night, without knowing it."

"Can you run into the channel between the Great and Outer Ducks at night, Dan?" asked the major.

"With my eyes shut," replied the boatman laconically. "I figure, if the wind holds fair, we'll make it just before morning. You might take a trick at the helm, major, and let me get a cat nap, so I shall be fresher."

Major Peterson took the helm at once and Cheney entered the little cabin, rolled himself up in a blanket, and lay down. Tom soon after followed his example, crawling in beside him and not awaking until nearly daylight.

When he did emerge from the cabin he found the cat boat anchored between the two islands where he and Jack had moored her not many days before.

As soon as it grew light enough, all hands went ashore. The camp was just as Tom had left it the morning previous and while he and his father wandered about in search of any traces which might assist them in Jack's recovery, Dan Cheney prepared breakfast.

They had, however, little expectation of finding anything which might suggest a clue to where Ericson and his men had carried their prisoner, for doubtless Jack was taken wholly by

surprise and was unable to do anything, either in defense or in leaving any message for his friends.

Near the shore, where the marks of the boat's keel showed where the smugglers had landed, Tom found something to which he immediately called his father's attention. It was a blanket of Indian manufacture thrown over the stump of a tree which had, at some previous time, been felled; and fastened the blanket to the wood was a hunting knife with a curiously carved handle.

"What did they leave that here for?" inquired Tom, as the major looked at the stump silently.

"That means more than you think, Tom," his father returned. "It is an old Indian sign that no one but such a fellow as that Ossinike would be likely to remember and use, nowadays. The knife plunged through the blanket and fastened near the scene of any Indian raid used to mean 'This much we have done; more we may do,' and that is what Ossinike says to us by the same sign. It is a warning for us not to follow him."

"I guess you're right, major," said Cheney, who had come down from the fire to look at the discovery. "I've heard my grand'ther tell about such things. That old Injun means business, I reckon."

"Then you think that Ossinike himself was aboard the Jeannette and that he took part in Jack's capture?" asked Tom.

"Not necessarily," returned the major. "The old wretch knew of course that I would endeavor to rescue Jack from his clutches, and he sought to intimidate me in this way. Oh, he's a foxy old fellow, is Ossinike! He, just as likely as not, told that half breed rascal to do this, for Ossinike knows that I'm an old backwoodsman and would be likely to remember the meaning of such signs."

"I cannot believe that he was aboard the Jeannette, and I don't know it," Tom declared.

"Well, let's eat something," suggested Cheney, turning away. "Grub's all ready," and this effectually closed the discussion.

CHAPTER IX.

THE JEANNETTE AGAIN.

Major Miles Peterson was a tall, finely built man, with grizzled hair and beard—a man who showed his fifty five years, but nevertheless bore his age with honor. His early years, spent for the most part in the backwoods and new settlements of Michigan and Wisconsin, had hardened his frame and given him a vigor which a much younger man might envy.

While the trio were eating their breakfast on the island, Major Peterson planned their future proceedings in the search for his ward, Jack Hardwick. He had hired Dan Cheney at Rogers City to sail the Sylph, having known the man many years, and now that the situation had taken so grave a color he depended considerably on Dan's good sense and knowledge of the northern shores of the lake to assist them in running the kidnapers to earth.

Dan was some ten years younger than the major, but, like him, had been an old settler in Michigan. Unlike the major, however, Dan's only education had been his experience among men and the reading he had done in later years.

But what he lacked in book lore he made up in wood craft, in his knowledge of all those forces and phases of nature which pertain thereto, and in a quick insight into character.

"Do you have an idea, Dan," the major asked, after the breakfast was disposed of, "where the Jeannette touches on the Canadian shore?"

"Not the least certain idea in the world," replied Cheney promptly. "But I could guess, I suppose."

"Well, where do you 'guess'?"

"If I was 'running' goods from Canada to the other side, I know

about where I'd have my headquarters," Dan replied, with a laugh. "Right back of Great Manitoulin there is a long stretch of high, rocky and wooded shore—a perfect wilderness, in fact—and it would be a mighty easy thing to collect a cargo at 'most any place along there and run it over to Michigan.

"Your son says that the Jeannette made for the passage between the Great Manitoulin and Cockburn Islands and my advice is for us to leave here and lay our course in the same direction. We can't cruise about in Manitoulin Bay very long without running across some traces of the rascals."

"A good idea, Dan," responded the major briskly; "we'll do it."

The tent and camping utensils, which Tom and Jack had brought to the island, were packed in compact packages and hidden in a clump of trees. The small boat belonging to the Jeannette, however, they attached by its painter to the stern of the Sylph and towed it after them when they got under way.

"It may come in handy before we get through with this business," the major said, "for it may be necessary to divide our forces."

From the Outer Duck to Mississagu Strait, which divides Great Manitoulin Island from Cockburn Island, is a distance of about thirty five miles, and as the breeze remained quite fresh the Sylph covered it in about six hours.

The strait is a wide piece of water, the shores of the islands on either side being rocky and barren. Not a sail appeared all that forenoon, for these waters are almost entirely deserted at this time of the year.

Manitoulin Bay is an elongated sheet of water extending from the mouth of the Sault St. Marie as far east as the end of Great Manitoulin Island, where it opens into the larger Georgian Bay. A chain of large islands divides the waters of Manitoulin from those of Lake Huron proper, and countless smaller islands dot the surface of the bay, especially between Great Manitoulin Island and the mainland.

Dan Cheney was familiar with the topography of the bay, and knowing that there would be little possibility of hiding even as small a vessel as the Jeannette to the westward of Mississagu Strait, at once turned the Sylph's bow toward the eastern archipelago. Just beyond the entrance of the strait, however, they went ashore for dinner.

While Tom and Dan were preparing this meal, the major stayed aboard and rummaged in the forward cuddy, appearing finally with a can partially filled with paint, and a brush, much the worse for use.

"What under the sun do you propose to do with those, father?" Tom demanded.

"I thought they were there," returned the major, not replying at once to his son's question. "When we got through painting the Sylph this spring I told Mike to put the paint and brush in there; and I don't believe the sea water's injured them a mite."

"What are you going to do with 'em?" Tom repeated.

"Well, you perhaps noticed that we didn't wait for the shipyard men to paint their work over and the Sylph shows just where she's been repaired. I think I'll fix that, and then paint out her name and call her something else for the present. That Ericson, if he should see her, would recognize her by the name, and that would never do."

"Reckon you're right, major," Dan declared.

"But we can't wait for the paint to dry, father," Tom objected.

"Guess we can wait a couple of hours for it to set a little," returned the major. "The more haste, the less speed, you know. The nearer

like a dirty old fishing smack we make her look the safer we shall be eh Dan?"

Cheney nodded and the major dipped the brush in the can of half dried paint and slapped a brushful of the material on the Sylph's bow, right over her name. The paint was so thick that it covered the name pretty effectually by one application. Then the major treated the two or three new deck boards about the mast in the same manner and then smeared over the name on the stern.

From the cuddy he also brought forth, after some search, a small bottle containing lampblack, with which he rudely drew the name "Molly" on the catboat's stern. When this had been completed no one would have recognized the trim Sylph in her ugly disguise.

"Let her lay there for a couple of hours," said the major, sitting down to partake of the meal now prepared. "We may gain more than we lose by waiting a little."

"But aren't you afraid that our delay will give the Jeannette's captain an opportunity to hand poor Jack over to Ossinike?" urged Tom. "You know they've had two full days the start of us."

"Yes, I know it, but as I look at it, they needed two days or more, for they probably will go to several places along the coast before they meet Ossinike, to pick up their next cargo of contraband goods. They will not fear pursuit for some time yet, for I believe that Ericson lent you that small boat for the purpose of keeping you on the island till I came up with the Sylph. By lending you the boat he kept you from getting the sailboat you would have hired, had he not been so 'generous.'"

"You're right," Tom responded thoughtfully. "I should have got another sailboat if he hadn't lent me this."

"Of course. Well, he felt tolerably safe of your being on the island for a week or more yet. Therefore he will not hurry himself to hand Jack over to the old Indian."

"Don't you think there's any danger of their recognizing the small boat if they should sight her?" Tom asked.

"Not so much danger. She's just like hundreds of other tenders. But it's different with the Sylph, or rather the Molly."

Tom finished his dinner and picking up his gun started up the side of the wooded eminence behind them, intending if possible to get a more extended view of the bay while the boat was drying.

A climb of half an hour brought him to the summit of the hill, from which he could see across the bay and nearly all the archipelago lying between Great Manitoulin and the shore of Canada.

Barrie was one of the nearest islands and is one of the largest of the archipelago. He could see it quite plainly and as he looked he suddenly caught sight of the topsails of a schooner coming out from behind it. The vessel was bearing straight for the opposite shore, its course evidently lying between several of the smaller islands.

Of course the vessel was too far away for him to see it very distinctly, but what schooner other than the Jeannette would be likely to be in these waters?

After assuring himself of the vessel's direction Tom retraced his steps to the shore of the bay and informed his older companions of his discovery. The Jeannette (if it was she) could not be seen from the camp, but both the major and Dan were quite as confident as Tom that it could be none other than the smugglers' schooner.

At the risk of washing the new paint completely off, they at once embarked and laid their course for the northern end of Barrie Island. They had not sailed two miles when the schooner's topsails appeared be-

yond a point of land, and she was evidently standing in the same direction as when Tom first sighted her.

"That's she!" exclaimed the youth confidently. "I'm dead sure that's the Jeannette. I wonder if Jack is still aboard?"

"I reckon we'll have to catch her first before we find that out," muttered Dan Cheney.

(To be continued.)

[This Story began in No. 589.]

Lloyd Abbott's Friend.

BY MATTHEW WHITE, JR.,
Author of "A Publisher at Fifteen," "My Mysterious Fortune," etc.

CHAPTER XIII.—(Continued.)

SOME VERY STRANGE HAPPENINGS
After this rather rude remark, Gordon's face became suffused with color. He rose and stood by the door, motioning for his guest to precede him.

As soon as the heavy portiere had fallen behind them, Gordon threw an arm across Lloyd's shoulders and murmured brokenly, "Forgive me, my dear fellow, for speaking as I did. I'm not myself tonight. We—that is, you will try and forget it, won't you?"

"Don't worry about that, my dear boy. I understand perfectly that something has gone wrong with you, and that's the reason I suggested that perhaps we had better not go to the theater. Maybe I had better go out home."

Lloyd added this after a brief pause. "No, no; you mustn't do that. I want you here to—distract me. It is rather rough on you, though, I am afraid."

"If I can do anything to be of service to you, I shall do it gladly, Gordon."

"Then come with me to the theater, try to distract my thoughts and—don't ask any questions. We'll go to the Lyceum. There's a new piece on there. Now if you'll amuse yourself with the books in my room for a few minutes, I'll drop in to see mother, and then we'll start."

Lloyd was glad to be alone. He wanted an opportunity to think calmly over the position in which he found himself.

To say that he wished himself back home would be but a mild way of expressing it. He would have given a good deal to be there. And yet he saw that he could not go now without offending Gordon.

What could be the mystery—the skeleton in the closet of the Marchmans?

Well, it was no affair of Lloyd's, and yet, in another sense, it seemed very much his affair. It was certainly responsible for making him feel exceedingly uncomfortable.

Gordon made his appearance very soon and they started off. Lloyd enjoyed the play hugely, in spite of the fact that his companion was extremely restless throughout the performance.

"That was fine," said Lloyd, as they came out. "Thank you ever so much for taking me."

"Oh, excuse me, what did you say?" was Gordon's rather disconcerting response.

They went to Delmonico's for supper, which delay brought them in sight of the house on their return just before midnight. As they rounded the corner into Fifth Avenue—for they had come up on the Madison Avenue car—with a quick movement Gordon laid his hand on Lloyd's arm and brought him to a pause.

"I—I think I have dropped my scarf pin," he exclaimed, one hand at his necktie; "will you mind walking back a little way and seeing if you can find it on the sidewalk?"

"Certainly not," and Lloyd turned about at once.

With eyes intent on the pavement, he was not aware for the first instant or two that his companion had not turned back with him.

"There was a ruby in it, wasn't

there, Gordon?" he asked, and then, as he raised his head, he realized that he was alone.

"Why, he can't be looking for the thing on ground over which we haven't passed yet," he told himself. "What's got into the fellow?"

It was certainly very strange. Could it be possible that Gordon wanted to get rid of him? But this would be childish.

The fellow evidently had some good reason for his singular conduct, and would return in a moment to explain.

So Lloyd kept on in his search for the scarf pin, and continued it till he reached the point where they had left the car.

"He must have lost it before we got out," he reflected. "It's too bad."

He hurried back and when he turned the corner saw some one passing up and down in front of the stoop at the Marchman mansion.

"That must be Gordon now, waiting for me," he decided. "Pretty cool, though, he didn't help me in the hunt."

But as he came closer he realized that the fellow was a little too tall and thick-set for Gordon. And his movements were not at all similar to those of young Marchman.

They reminded Lloyd more of those made by a caged lion than anything else. He would walk the width of the stoop in one direction, then turn sharp round and go the same distance in the other, all the time looking up at the front door as though waiting for some one to come out.

Lloyd was now close enough to be sure that it was not Gordon. On the contrary it was a man of about thirty with a beard.

"I wonder who he is and what he wants?" Lloyd said to himself. "But the queerest thing of all is what has become of Gordon."

He halted and looked behind him. No sign of the missing one there.

"Perhaps he's gone on into the house, in a hurry to see how his mother is."

Lloyd went on toward the stoop and was about to mount the steps when a sharp cry of distress sounded from behind him somewhere.

He turned quickly, but could see no one in that direction. The solitary pacer appeared undisturbed by the cry.

"That sounded strangely like Gordon's voice," Lloyd said to himself, and with the thought a chill ran through his frame.

What if foul play had befallen his young host? This would easily account for his sudden disappearance.

Could the man pacing up and down in front of the Marchman mansion have anything to do with the affair? He was still maintaining his vigil.

Lloyd stood still, trying to locate the cry from memory. He was sure that it was no further off than half way down the block.

But there was no one to be seen in either direction, nobody but the queer man with the restless movements. Lloyd decide to question him and had approached to within three feet of him again, when there was a quick rush of feet behind him, a pull at his coat sleeve, and then Gordon Marchman's voice, crying:

"Quick, Lloyd, follow me."
He started off down the avenue and completely dazed by these strange happenings, Lloyd broke into a run in the endeavor to catch up with him.

CHAPTER XIII.

SINGULAR BEHAVIOR.

"What is it, Gordon? What's the matter?"

Lloyd managed to get out these words as he arrived abreast of young Marchman just as they rounded the corner towards Madison Avenue, thus coming upon the ground over which he had searched for the lost scarf pin.

"Keep on, keep on. I haven't time to talk now," was all Gordon would reply, and he did not in the least slacken his speed.

Lloyd's mystification was now complete. Where were they going? Whom were they pursuing, or who was pursuing them?

He turned his head to look back, but could see no one when they reached Maddison Avenue.

"Down one block, then east again!" Gordon called out to him.

They encountered no one in the quiet region of elegant homes and not till they came to Park Avenue, with its growth of shrubbery in the center over the railroad tunnel, did Gordon pause.

Turning in suddenly on the east side of this street, he leaned back, panting, against the iron railing.

Seen by the light of a street lamp, his face was ghastly pale.

"You are ill, Gordon," said Lloyd. "What made you run that way? Did you see the fellow who stole your pin?"

The other did not reply at once. He stood there with his back against the railing, staring at Lloyd almost as if he did not know who it was.

And at that moment some church clock in the neighborhood began to strike, and did not leave off until its deep tones had pealed forth twelve times.

"Christmas morning!" Lloyd murmured to himself, as the last echo died away.

"Merry Christmas," hovered on his lips, but another glance at Gordon's face kept the words behind them.

"Oh, I—I am all right," young Marchman said now. "I—I suppose you thought it queer my rushing you off this way, but you see—you see—"

A footfall sounded on the other side of the shrubbery. A look of dread crossed Gordon's face.

At that instant a train rushed through the tunnel beneath them, a cloud of steam issued from one of the openings, and for a second they could see nothing.

When the steam blew off, they heard the footfall passing on down the cross street in the direction of the East River.

"I think we can go back home now," Gordon resumed.

He linked his arm in Lloyd's and began talking volubly about the play. But Lloyd was scarcely conscious of what he was hearing.

His mind was a wild tumult of surprises.

What did all these peculiar actions of Gordon Marchman portend? Was it possible the fellow was weak in his mind and subject to attacks of temporary aberration?

On no other theory could Lloyd account for the strange doings that had come under his notice during the past few minutes.

Not fear for himself, but infinite compassion for his friend, took possession of him. So, when they reached the corner of Fifth Avenue again, and Gordon appeared to hesitate before turning toward the house, Lloyd said reassuringly:

"It's all right, Gordon. There's nothing to fear."

The other withdrew his arm quickly and turned on him almost fiercely.

"Nothing to fear!" he repeated. "What do you mean by that? What do you know?"

"I know that you are not well, Gordon, and that you ought to get home as quickly as possible."

They had turned the corner by this time. There was no one in front of the Marchman stoop.

Gordon's manner suddenly changed again. He was a veritable chameleon tonight.

"I'm really ashamed to beg your pardon another time, Lloyd," he said. "But you must think me an ill mannered brute for talking to you as I have done. Please don't treasure it up against me. You won't will you, old fellow?"

"Of course I shan't, my dear boy. I understand perfectly that you are not responsible."

"Not responsible?" Gordon paused suddenly in the act of inserting his key in the lock. "You don't think surely, Lloyd, that—that I have been drinking?"

"Most decidedly I don't." "But you say you understand that I am not responsible for what I do at times. What do you mean by that?"

Gordon had opened the door and now, both having passed into the hall where the light burned dim, he closed it behind them with a sharp click as if to lend additional emphasis to the word "that."

"Simply that you are not well." "Nothing more?"

"Not a thing more." They went up stairs together, and when Gordon had turned up the light in Lloyd's room, he placed a hand on each shoulder of the latter and said earnestly:

"You are prime sort, Lloyd, and I mean to give you the merriest Christmas I possibly can. Good night."

"Good night. But I forgot, you didn't find that pin, did you?"

A peculiar expression came into Gordon's face.

"I'm not sure that I lost it now," he said hastily, and with another "Good night" hurried off to his own room, closing the door behind him.

"Not sure that he lost it," Lloyd repeated to himself, standing in a musing attitude before the bureau.

"Singular case, all through. Poor fellow!"

Lloyd began to undress, but as he was folding up his necktie, a sudden thought made him pause in the process and allow the two ends to fall apart unheeded.

"Singular case? Yes, and perhaps his apparently unaccountable regard for me is one of his freaks. I wonder if Myra—but no, I won't think so unworthily of him. I have started out to be loyal to him, and I shall stick to my colors."

The room was a large one, with no less than four doors. One of these opened into the hall, another into a private bath room, a third evidently into an adjoining apartment, while the fourth gave access to a large closet in which some dresses were hung and whose shelves were piled with blankets and various other articles of household economy.

After taking out a few things, Lloyd placed his satchel in this closet and then closed the door. He was very tired, and thought that consequently he would soon fall asleep.

But just as soon as his head touched the pillow, his brain began to whirl about in a maze of thoughts that seemed to preclude all idea of its ever being in a sufficiently calm state to allow the slumber god to take possession.

"I never could sleep though on the night before Christmas," he told himself. "I was always so excited about the presents I was going to get. But that shouldn't interfere now. I've had my presents."

He turned first on one side, then on the other; courted sleep, tried desperately hard to think of nothing, and brought to bear various other slumber compelling devices of which he had heard. All were without avail.

"I shall be in miserable shape to enjoy the good time Gordon promised me tomorrow," he muttered, tossing restlessly.

Then he suddenly lay perfectly still. He thought he heard some one moving in the closet, the door of which was just at the left of the bed.

He listened intently. Again a rustle seemed to come from that direction.

"But it must be my imagination," he decided. "I was in the closet myself before I came to bed. There was no one there then, and I am sure nobody could have gone in since. I'm just in that nervous state that I can conjure up anything."

Then he came near laughing outright.

"It must be Santa Claus," he murmured. "I keep forgetting that this is Christmas."

This piece of fun seemed to break the spell and pretty soon he found himself dozing off placidly into the Land of Nod. But presently he seemed to be awake again, or was it only a dream?

He saw the closet door open, slowly, noiselessly, and a man came out.

Lloyd's first impulse was to spring up and give the alarm. Then the whole scene appeared to have a glamour cast over it which made it so unreal that he was not at all sure he was not asleep and dreaming.

Indeed, he remembered often waking up suddenly in his room at home and seeing distinctly men moving between him and the window when there was nothing of the sort.

So he lay still, continuing, however, to gaze fixedly at the apparition.

The figure had halted now. It remained in one position so long that Lloyd became thoroughly convinced that it was an apparition, and with this thought last in mind, dropped off into a dreamless sleep.

The sun of a glorious Christmas day was shining brightly when he awoke, roused by a knocking on the door and Gordon's voice wanting to know if he could come in.

CHAPTER XIV.

FOR ANOTHER'S SAKE.

"Certainly you can come in." Lloyd sprang out of bed and hurriedly opened the door. He started to unlock it, but found that it was not fastened.

This struck him as odd, for he distinctly remembered having turned the key before going to bed. But what he saw in Gordon's hand utterly banished all perplexity he might have felt on this head.

"A Merry Christmas to you, my dear fellow!" exclaimed young Marchman as soon as he was in the room. "Here is something to remember me by."

He handed Lloyd a handsome gold watch and chain.

"Oh, I don't feel as if I ought to take this!" exclaimed Lloyd. "It—it's a perfect beauty."

He was left fairly speechless, utterly overwhelmed by this superb gift.

"Well, that's a strange reason for not taking a Christmas present—because it's a perfect beauty. Besides, you really need this, you know. I took lots of satisfaction in buying it for you. Now hurry and get dressed so I can see how the chain looks strung across your vest."

"I can't pretend to thank you enough for this, Gordon. It's just splendid in you to be so thoughtful."

"Why, it didn't take much thought to know that you needed a new watch after losing your old one. And now, while you are getting on your clothes, I'll tell you what Santa Claus brought me."

He began to enumerate diamond cravat pins, silver backed brush and comb, a marquise ring, and so on. He was in great spirits.

The vagaries had been displayed the night before seemed to Lloyd like part of a bad dream.

"How are your mother and sister this morning?" he asked.

"Oh, you will see them at breakfast. Then I am going to take you for a drive in my new cart up to Washington Bridge."

Ten minutes later they went down to the dining room together. Mrs. Marchman and Agnes were already there.

They greeted Lloyd most kindly, wished him a Merry Christmas, and then Mrs. Marchman remarked:

"I can't think what is keeping your father, Gordon. He went into the office just as we came down stairs and said that he would follow us immediately."

"I'll run up and see," rejoined Gordon.

He started, but met Mr. Marchman in the doorway.

"Antoinette," the latter said in an excited voice, "were you in the office this morning?"

"Why, no, Will," replied Mrs. Marchman. "What is the matter?"

"My desk has been broken open and four hundred dollars, money that I was to give the servants and others for their Christmas, has been taken."

"Oh, Will! Are you certain? Perhaps you didn't search in the right place."

Mrs. Marchman went up to her husband and looked anxiously into his face.

"But, my dear, don't I tell you that the desk was broken open, proof positive that a theft was committed?"

"Then—" Mrs. Marchman began, and stopped suddenly, as her glance rested on James, who was removing the covers from the breakfast platters.

Her husband drew her out into the hall and when they were beyond earshot of those in the dining room said gravely:

"That woman Anne you have had here to help with the sewing, has she gone?"

"Yes, she went last night."

"You are positive of that?"

"Of course. I saw her go myself. Indeed I went to the door with her. Her little sister is ill and I snatched up some roses to send to her. But why do you ask these questions?"

"Because I preferred not to believe that any of the servants took the money, when they must have known that it was intended for them. And then I found this by the desk."

Mr. Marchman drew from his pocket a handkerchief.

"See the A embroidered in that corner," he said.

"Where did you find this?" asked his wife.

"Between the desk and the end of the sofa."

"But this isn't a woman's handkerchief. It is too large."

"There are none of the servants whose name begins with A. That woman Anne was the only one I could think of."

"But there's Gordon's friend, young Abbott," exclaimed Mrs. Marchman. "The handkerchief must be his."

"Surely, Antoinette, you don't—"

"Of course I don't mean to imply that he took the money. He probably dropped the handkerchief there when Gordon was showing him the room."

"I wish I could believe so, Antoinette, or that you had not brought young Abbott's name up at all. I did not think of him before."

The two had gone on through the hall until they reached the front drawing room, where Mr. Marchman now seated himself on one of the embroidered divans, resting his chin in his hands in reflective attitude.

"But Will," exclaimed his wife, "it is preposterous to connect a friend of Gordon's with a crime like this."

"He has not known him long. Their acquaintance began in a very peculiar manner, from all I can learn."

"But he would be very foolish to take this money and then remain in the house as he has done. You saw him in the dining room, did you not?"

"Yes, but don't you see that if he didn't remain he would convict himself outright?"

"Do you really believe then that he took the money? Oh, Will, it is impossible. It can't be that my first impressions of him were mistaken ones. What does the finding of the handkerchief prove? I will go and give it to him now and then he will tell us readily enough how he came to drop it there."

Mrs. Marchman started to take the handkerchief from her husband's hands, but he seized hers and drew her gently to him.

"My dear," he said, in a lower tone than he had yet used, "I have not told you all. I did not come to you at once on discovering that the money was gone. I made some investigations of my own first."

(To be continued.)



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A NEW PUTNAM STORY.

Our readers will be delighted to learn that next week we shall begin the publication of

A Rolling Stone.

BY ARTHUR LEE PUTNAM,

Author of "No. 91," "A Bad Lot," etc.

In this latest serial from his pen Mr. Putnam once more presents a series of fascinating pictures of street boy life in the great metropolis. Boys never tire of reading on this theme, but while the theme is old, the author contrives by the deftness of his genius to throw around its treatment the charm of novelty, as a new set of characters come upon the stage to play their various parts, some as heroes, others as plotters, knaves, or jealous rivals.

Do not fail to read the opening chapters of "A Rolling Stone" next week, and tell your friends of the treat they will find in the pages of THE ARGOSY.

MUNSEY'S FOR FEBRUARY.

Attractive as recent numbers of this now famous magazine have been, the current issue marks still another advance in merit. Besides the three serials, short stories and departments, there are no less than seven special articles, superbly illustrated and all treating of subjects in which the general reader has a living interest. Among these articles are "From Chorus Girl to Prima Donna," by Marie Tempest; "American Cartoonists," "Something About Dogs," and "Artists' Models." Then there are six portraits of leading players of the day in The Stage department, while in Etchings there are many flashes of humor struck out in text and picture.

And only think, this great assemblage of good things, inclosed in a most artistic cover, costs only Ten Cents. Is it any wonder that the circulation has gone up with leaps and bounds until now it is close on the 200,000 mark, and still rising. Munsey's at a dime is the marvel of the times.

WASHINGTON.

The 22d of February is almost here again. Washington's Birthday is a holiday second only to the Fourth of July in the intensity of the patriotic fervor that should enter into its celebration.

It has unhappily of late years become the custom in some quarters to speak of the "Father of his Country" in jocular spirit. Such levity is to be frowned down. Washington's unswerving devotion to the cause that was so weak when he espoused it, merits lasting honor and respect.

Do any of you, on cold bitter days of winter, think of the American general

camped, with his half clad and almost shoeless army, amid the snow and ice of Valley Forge? A general who shared the food on his table with the poorest private in his ranks, and to whom his men looked up with blind devotion should not have his fame grow less as the years roll on.

When you hear the honored name of Washington, stop and think of the man who for seven long weary years carried the responsibility of the war which gave us our freedom from the most powerful nation in the world.

DOLLS AND DOLLARS.

A business of \$40,000 a year in the manufacture of paper dolls! The firm that does it, too, is composed entirely of women. Surely this concern's "paper" never goes begging in the market.

Next time, therefore, you see your small sister or cousin playing with "those painted slips" do not look upon them with disdain. Forty thousand dollars is no mean sum to make in these hard times, and the article out of which it is coined is entitled to respect if it is only a doll and a paper one at that.

DO WORK AND DON'T WORRY.

Work seldom kills; worry often does. This is the doctrine that the late Sir Andrew Clark, the celebrated British physician, preached.

He declared that he had never seen a case of a man's breaking down from mere overwork alone. Work on the other hand, he argued, is a great factor in making a man not only happy, but healthy.

In a lecture to medical students, he once summed up the other side of the case thus: "Try to help your patients to accept things as they are, and not to bother about yesterday, which is gone forever; not to bother about tomorrow, which is not theirs; but to take the present day and make the best of it."

And these suggestions for the benefit of sick folks, it would be excellent for well ones to heed too. Do you not think so?

After Coons.

BY A. R. LEACH.

It was a moonlight winter night in the South, and Tom and Jerry who were "town boys," sat with Joe and Sam and the dogs around the big log fire in "he office."

The office on a Virginia farm, one of the real old ones whose buildings and ways antedate the war, is a room built at varying distances from the house, where the master of the place is supposed to attend to his business and receive all visitors other than social callers.

Sometimes there is a chamber overhead where a visitor or a member of the family can sleep when the house is full at such times as holidays, or weddings. The office nowadays is a sort of lounging place for the men and boys of the family, usually the boys, who can make as much noise as they want to without being disturbed by the sound of a maternal knock or a paternal admonishing.

The "Spring Point" boys had taken "the office" for their own exclusive property. They had their saddles and bridles hung upon the walls, and pictures out of illustrated papers tacked up here and there.

Sam, who was always making collections, had his cabinet in one corner, and Joe who read everything he could put his hands on, and played an old fiddle between whiles, had his books and battered old violin case in another. There were fishing poles and "shiny sticks," and Indian clubs, and all sorts of boys' belongings all about.

Joe was playing "The Devil and the Sailors" tonight as they sat by the fire, the big pine knots making the room as bright as day. There was a clatter at the door, and when Sam sang out "Come in!" a coal black woolly head was stuck in, and a thick tongue asked:

"Doesn't you all want to bring de dawgs coon huntin'?"

"That's what we do!" Sam shouted, and ten minutes later they were all outside.

After they had started, Joe went back toward the office.

"Go on!" he called. "I'll be there by the time you reach the creek."

The other boys and the darkies and dogs walked up the creek bank until they came to two "John boats," a sort of skiff, cut off at the end, and then they waited for Joe. He came down through the rustling corn field where the stripped stalks wore still standing. He carried an oilcloth bundle under his arm.

"Brought along a waterproof?" Tom asked.

He was always laughing at his Southern country cousins, because they took better care of their health than he and Jerry did, and were not so tough. The city boys walked where the Southern boys roled.

Joe didn't answer at all, but stepped into the boat and took an oar. They went down the creek for a mile until they came to a little cove in the forest, just the sort of a place where coons would come for crawfish.

The clouds had begun to drift over the moon, but there was a pale light through the mists, which made every object distinguishable.

The dogs were landed first, and ran sniffing about and into the forest, but being trained coon dogs they did not raise the cry until they treed their coon.

That was within ten minutes, and then they set up a yelping led by old Dandy's cry, which made the woods echo.

"Hyar he am!" Heuson cried, "right hyar in this yar seekamore. Gimme th' axe. Th'r ain't no nigger kin climb this yar tree," and taking the axe old Heuson swung it above his head and made the chips fly.

Another darky hacked away at the other side, and in a few minutes the tree was down.

But that was too smart a coon. It waited, sitting up there in the fork of the tree, its ringed tail hanging down; and its bright little eyes glancing this way and that until its resting place began to totter, and then it gave one leap into another tree very near, and running cunningly out upon the end of a branch, where no darky could climb to knock it off. It lay and looked mischievously down, as though it were enjoying the fun as much as anybody.

"You'll have to cut this tree down too, Heus," Sam said; "but if this coon is so smart he'll jump again. We can't cut down the whole wood."

Then Joe unwrapped his bundle, and took out a sheaf of green pasteboard rolls.

"Roman candles!" Jerry cried. "What on earth?"

But slow Joe never said a word. He lighted the candle and fired seven red and blue and green fiery balls straight into the face of the most bewildered coon that ever lived, and the poor dazzled creature let go its hold out of sheer amazement, and came crashing down among the dogs.

But it regained its senses on the way down. (It is a pretty hard matter to scare a coon to death, especially if it is an old one and the hero of many fights, as most old ones are in the Virginia woods.)

It fell among the dogs, snapping and snarling, full of game, and sent Paddle, one of the younger ones, yelping home. But old Dandy gave it a bite which settled it, and we took up a dead coon and went on.

"Well, of all the uses for a Roman candle," Tom observed.

"How did you come to think of it?" one of the other boys asked, a little envious maybe, that he had never conceived the idea of using fireworks on a coon hunt himself.

"It just popped into my head, I suppose," Joe replied.

It was hardly a minute until the dogs took up their cry again, but this time there seemed to be a heavier, hoarser note in their voices.

"Goodness, marster!" old Heuson exclaimed, "it 'pears like ole Dandy done hit a big coon this time. I ain't never hear him bark like that in one while."

The other dogs hushed, and two or three of them, young things only in their first season, came back with their tails down. Then above Dandy's spasmodic heavy barks there came a growl, and

suddenly out on the woods their rang a cry which fairly lifted our hair.

It was a deep, whining shriek like a peevish woman in terrible pain, yet with a vicious sound. It made the boys think of the stories they had read of the Irish banshee's cry.

Old Heuson stood still. "Come 'long out o' here!" he said in a loud scared whisper. "Heah that air? It's a panter!"

The darkies made one bolt in the direction of the creek, but the white boys did not move.

"What's a panter?" Tom asked.

"He means a panther," Joe said composedly. "I never heard one before, but the niggers are always telling stories about their being in these woods. I believe it is some of them trying to scare us. Any way I am going to see."

"You jes' come along hyar now, Joe," old Heuson entreated. "What 'm I gwine say to Marster Dick 'n you bodily et up by a panter in these woods? I told you cum home!"

There wasn't a gun in the crowd, but there was the axe, which one of the flying darkies had dropped.

It was full moonlight again, and old Dandy could be seen wildly dancing about a tree that stood in a little clearing which let in the light. The boys went forward, old Heuson grumbling along behind them.

"Pick up that axe, Tom," Joe commanded, "I'm goin' to try a Roman candle on the beast any way. I don't believe anything with such a cowardly yell as that is hard to kill."

He put down his bundle, and struck a match. It broke as he struck it, and the lighted end fell.

He struck another hastily, but before the fuse on the candle he held in his hand was fully lighted, a veritable fountain of fire rose up at their feet.

Green balls, blue balls, yellow balls, white balls of fire, went whizzing into the tree top, by the hundred.

For one instant there was the sight of a tawny side lying along the limb of the tree, the vicious flat head extended, and then there came whirling down through the air, a bulky body, which struck the ground with a thud.

Tom was not a trained football player for nothing. He knew how to jump like lightning, and this time he sprang with uplifted axe, that came down heavy and sharp upon the neck of a full grown panther.

They hardly knew how they got home and told their story, but there is a panther skin rug on the floor of the office these days.

GOLDEN THOUGHTS.

Great minds have wills; feeble ones have wishes.

The sentiment which men find most difficult to bear is pity, especially when they deserve it.—Balzac.

Good fortune sometimes comes to see us in a very shabby-looking carriage.—Ram's Horn.

We can cauterize a wound, but we know no remedy for the hurt produced by words.—Balzac.

The man who is bent on picking a flaw, need not go far; he can find what he wants near home.

I mean to make myself a man, and if I succeed in that, I shall succeed in everything else.—Garfield.

Life is before you, not earthly life alone, but life—a thread running interminably through the warp of eternity.—J. G. Holland.

Pleasure is not the end of life. Pleasure has its uses, but it is a means, not an end. It is the oil which keeps the machinery of life from creaking and grinding and wearing out. He who has a hearty laugh in a company, a laugh which leaves sweet remembrance afterward, has conferred no small boon. No recreation is real which does not recreate. He never has a good time who lives only that he may have a good time.—Lyman Abbott.

The career of a great man remains a monument of human energy. The man dies and disappears, but his thoughts and acts survive, and leave an indelible stamp upon his race. Thus the spirit of his life is prolonged and perpetuated, molding the thought and will, and thereby contributing to form the character of future generations.—Samuel Smiles.

CHATTER.

Words learned by rote a parrot may rehearse,
But talking is not always to converse;
Not more distinct than harmony divine
The constant creaking of a country sign.
—Cowper.

The Horse John Bought.

BY MYRA C. BRECKENRIDGE.

"There—that's John Burroughs; that feller over there on crutches. "Who is he?" Why, ain't you ever heard about John? There ain't a better known man within forty mile than him. He's the bravest man in Roanoke County, yessir, he is!

"Don't look it?" No, of course he don't. I've noticed that brave men don't look much different from other folks—leastways none that I ever see. I went to the war myself an' see some mighty brave things done by the quietest men in the corps.

"Twarn't the blow-hards and blusterers that did 'em. Why, look at General Grant—a quiet-er little feller ye never see than him; but there warn't nothin' could phase him.

Yes, I'll tell ye erbout John. That's what I started in for ter do. He's smart, that chap—is goin' ter make the likeliest lawyer in the State, so they tell me. I reckon you didn't live nowhere about here fifteen year ago. No? Then this'll probably be all news ter you.

John was erbout sixteen then. His father, who was a kinder eccentric an' improvident man, had jest died an' left John erbout five hundred dollars in cash, an' that's all John had 'ceptin' the clothes he stood in. The old man had never let him go ter school none ter speak o'—vowed school warn't no good; but two things the boy had larnt. One was ter keep his mouth shet, 'other was ter tell a good hoss w'en he sees one.

I s'pose, mister, you don't think arry one o' them things is much of a stock in trade for a man ter go Inter business on; but I tell ye, lots o' men would succeed better if they knew, as John did, jest w'en to keep their mouths shet. An' as fer hosses—there's wuss things 'n knowin' the good p'lants in a boss, w'en ye see em.

Wal, as I was a-sayin' I didn't live here in Hubbardston in them days. My dad's place was over ter Kingdon, a good thirty mile away.

Ye see there were sev'ral of us boys, an' as the farm went ter Tom, who was the oldest, I lit out 'bout twelve year ago an' come over here; but that ain't nothin' ter do with John Burroughs. You don't keer erbout hearin' of my fam'ly affairs.

Wal, with his five hun'ed dollars John went ter buyin' an' sellin' stock; he wanted ter make his five hun'ed a thousand, and then he was determined ter git an eddication. John was keen, but he was honest, too, an' folks trusted him.

Why, Judge Curtis, who had a fine place outside o' Kingdon, an' was a gre't feller fer hosses, came up an' bought a pair of heavy hosses of John and recommended him ter other folks.

It went erlong till 'most six months arter John's father died, w'en one mornin' a young feller come inter town ridin' as pretty a little mare as ye ever set eyes on, an' 'twarn't long 'fore he an' John was a-dickerin'. John, in his own mind, knowed jest where there was a mate ter that mare, an' he likewise knew that, if he could git her the owner of the other boss—who was Judge Curtis himself—would pay right handsome for her.

The feller who rid the boss was a well dress't chap an' told a straight enough story, so John bought the critter—an' at a bargain, too, for the chap wanted ter git north in his folks quick's possible, so he said, an' was willin' ter sell cheap. He was a dre'tful dissipated lookin' feller though, and d'rectly he got the money he

steered fer a s'loon 'fors he did anythin' else.

Wal, John he took the hoss an' rubbed her down, an' the more he looked at her the more sartin he was that she'd jest mate with the judge's mare, Betsey. So, in a day 'r two he 'lowed he'd go over ter Kingdon an' see what the judge thought of it.

He put a saddle on the mare an' trotted over ter Kingdon, an' the first thing that happens to him there was ter be 'rested fer hoss stealin'.

Ye 'member that I tol' yer I lived there in them days, an' I happened ter be right on the spot when 'th' deed were done, 'as the story books say.

Three days before, the judge's fancy

fer the same s'picion come over us both. My stepped out an' took hold of the mare's bridle.

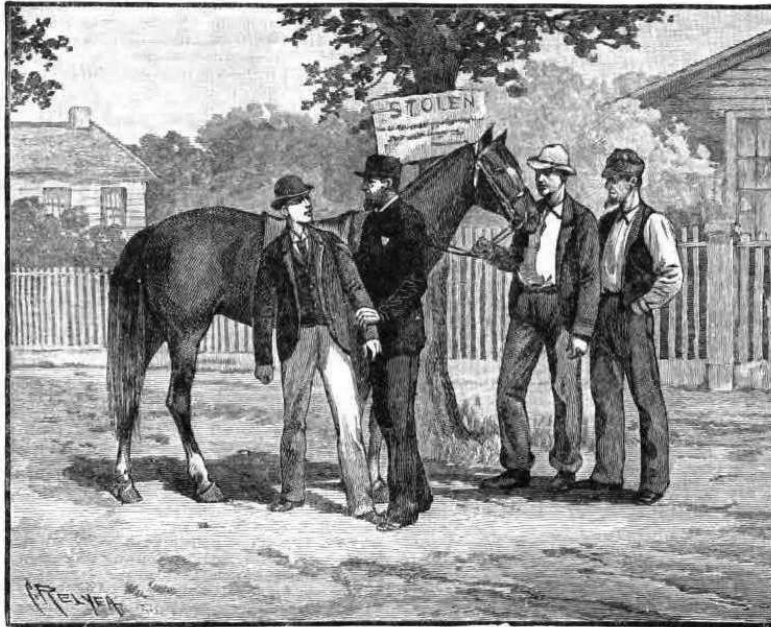
"You'd better git down, young feller," says he. "Let's hear how ye come by this hoss."

"What's the matter with you, any way?" the boy asked, for he hadn't seen the notis on the tree; but he see My in airnest, so he hopped down.

Jest then who sh'd come erlong but Sam Hardy, the constable. He give a look at the mare, then at the notis on the tree, and grabbed the boy to oncet.

"Reckon ye got him first pop," says Sam, makin' sure of John.

"I s'pose you think I stole this mare," John remarked.



"RECKON YER GOT HIM FIRST POP," SAYS SAM.

mare, Betsey, had been stole, an the judge, he took on like as though 'twas his on'y hoss. To add to his vexation his nevy, Paul Curtis, had cleared out on one o' his sprees, too.

Ye see, Paul was a reg'lar good for nothing, if ever there was one. The judge had done everythin' for him, but there was bad blood in his veins—folks said he 'nerthed a taste fer liquor—an' he exercised that taste ev'ry chance he got.

But the judge thought the world of him, an' re'ly he wasn't such a bad sort of a feller, w'en he kept straight. But, 'bout once in so often, he seemed ter jest naterally have ter go on a spree.

There were some that put two and two together an' reckoned that Paul Curtis and the judge's mare had gone off together; but the old judge he wouldn't believe that, 'n' he had started off already arter Paul, havin' heard that he'd been seen down ter Toronto, in Dinwiddie County.

As I was sayin', I happened ter be over in front of Myron Bridge's house w'en John Burroughs rode inter town on that mare. My an' I hed jest been a readin' the notis erbout the judge's hoss w'ich was tacked onto the elum tree 't stands jest a little ter the south o' My's front gate, w'en the boy come trottin' up.

"Great ginger!" sings out My: "that's the judge's mare."

"Ye're right," says I, fer I'd hev known the critter 'f I'd seen her in Richmond.

"Where'd ye find her?" sings out My ter the youngster.

John pulls in the mare w'en he saw we were speakin' ter him an' answers:

"Find who?"

"The mare," says My.

"Didn't find her; I bought her."

My looked at me, an' I looked at him,

"Don't think anything of the kind," My says. "We know yer did it."

"Wal," said Sam. "I lost a dollar on it ter Jim Stevens, the storekeeper. I bet him 't Paul Curtis got away with that hoss, but I see I was mistook."

"It would be a bad day fer you, Sam, if the old judge heard o' yer layin' sech a bet," I told him. "You'd be lookin' fer another job, I reckon. He was that mad with the parson w'en he s'ggested sech a thing that he most had a stroke of ap'plexy."

"So it is Judge Curtis' horse that is stolen, eh?" said John, keepin' pretty cool. "An' they think his nevy did it?"

"That's what some of us thought," said Sam; "but I reckon you'll have ter explain how you come by it 'fore we let yer go."

"I bought it," said John, "an' I thought it was all right, and fer all I know now there may be two hosses v'er nearly alike."

The constable kinder snorted at this, but My and me was fer fair play an' determined ter hear him out.

He told how he bought the hoss an' how he'd come down ter Kingdon ter try and sell it ter the judge, knowin' how good a match it was fer Betsey; but never a word did he let on of his s'picious that it was Paul Curtis who sold him the mare.

John knew that the nevy was dearer ter the judge than life itself, an' that 'twould almost kill the old man if the disgrace should be known by ev'rybody. Therefore he said nothin', which bears out my previous statement that John Burroughs knew w'en to keep his mouth shet.

Sam Hardy was inclined ter be a good deal overbearin' toward the boy; but Myron Bridges 'n' I wouldn't 'low no

bullyin'. The boy's story seemed purty straight, for it didn't look reasonable that 'f he'd stole the hoss he'd come right back inter Kingdon with it—specially as the critter was so well known.

So arter a good deal of kickin' on Sam's part, we got him ter let the boy go free an' ter wait till the judge come home before he did any 'restin'. He took the hoss up ter the judge's stable an' John Burroughs promised not to go out of town till the matter was settled. Ye see, My an' me had so much faith in the truth of his story, that we sort o' went bail for him.

I took him ter dinner; I warn't married then, ye understand, but lived along o' Tom an' his woman.

Wal, I took quite a likin' ter the boy arter he'd tol' me his whole story; but mind ye, he didn't let out a peep erbout the feller that sold him the hoss; I reckon he sized me up fer the leaky of tub I am, an' knew I'd tell all creation an' the ol' cat erbout it! But, jest the same, I likes a feller 't kin keep his mouth shet, 'f I can't do it myself.

P'raps you don't know, hein's your a stranger in these parts, that there's a stream of water right back o' Kingdon that's got the biggest 'n' the quickest drap of arry stream in the State. Wal, 'tis so! It's nigh erbout big 'nough ter call a river, I reckon, an' it does jest fly through 'the cut' 'bout half-er-mile from the village.

Tom (he's been West) says they'd call it a kinyon out there, fer the banks air nigh eighty feet high, 'n' solid granite. Lord! the water runs faster 'n a mill race, an' the bed o' the river's full o' bowlders 'n' as twisted as a ram's horn.

Dad's old place runs smack up ter the bluff, just at its steepest p'nt, an' arther dinner, w'ile I was a-showin' John erbout the farm, we come down nigh ter the river bank. I was jest a-tellin him how that no boat c'd git through ther run safe, an' how there'd been a poor critter drowned there on y the spring before, by reason of his slippin' in above the rapids, w'en all ter once I see Bill Peters on his old piebald mare, a streakin' it up the road toward us like all possessed.

The road runs right erlong the river bank an' there ain't arty a house till ye git ter dad's place, 'fom the time ye leave Bill's.

Wal, Bill's ol' mare were a-poundin' erlong the road, and a-makin' as much noise as one o' them new fangled stone crushers, sich as Roanoke County has jest wasted a pot o' money on.

"Lord!" says I ter John; "must be suthin' the matter, fer I never see that ol' mare o' Bill's out'n a walk before."

Bill come erlong, yellin' like a loon an' a swingin' his hat, as we ran out inter the road ter meet him.

"Git th' rope! git er rope, quick!" he yells. "There's a boat comin' down toward the cut with a man in it."

"Who is it?" says I.

"It's the ol' judge's nevy—an' he's drunker'n a fule. Zury an' me seen him a-comin'." (Zury was Bill's brother, ye know.) "Hain't there no rope hereabouts?"

It seemed's though Bill were so scart that he didn't sense nothin' but that rope.

"What in tarnation good'll a rope do ye?" says I, gitting excited. "F he's that drunk, he won't sense enough ter ketch it an' make fast."

But that young Burroughs, he had his wits erbout him, he had, fer he ran ter the edge of the bluff, an' arter squintin' down inter the cut, sings out:

"Git th' rope, an' let me down over the cliff. I'm light an' you can handle me."

Wall, I pushed Bill off'n his hoss an' got on in his place an' made fer the barn. I knew jest where there was a rope an' I was back with it in a jiffy, with Tom an' Myron Bridges close to my heels.

The boat—a rickety old scow—jest hove in sight then, an' John had stripped off

his jacket and shoes an' was ready. I could see the fligger of Paul Curtis huddled up in the bottom of the boat 'n' like's not he was a deal too drunk to know how near he was ter kingdom come.

Now I tell ye what's a fact, 'twarn't no easy job a-slidin' down the face o' that bluff with nothin' but a strand er rope 'twixt you an' the bollin', surging water! A fall meant death, sure!

My hair fairly riz on end when I was a-lettin' the boy down; but John, he never was phased a bit, fur I could see.

We didn't git him down none too soon, fer the ol' scow come scootin' along like an arrer. John stood on the rock in three feet o' water, an' with the rope 'round his waist, jest at the head of the run, an' as the boat shot past he leant over and grabbed Paul Curtis out.

Bill, he was layin' flat on his belly on the top o' the bluff an' looking over, an' he let out a yell fit ter raise the dead.

"He's got him!" says he.

But that warn't all there was to it by er long shot. He's got him, sure 'nough, but the drunken man lay a dead weight in his arms an' the rope warn't strong enough ter bear 'em both up.

It was powerful slippery on them rocks, an' the boy was chilled ter his marrow, but he took the risk o' stayin' there without any support without a moment's hesitation.

He unhitched the rope from about his own waist and tied it tight erbout Paul Curtis.

"Pull up!" says he, an' jest's we begin ter lift, John slipped an' fell an' went rollin' an' over in the water. "Fore he c'd ketch himself, the current throw him slam ag'inst a big rock that cropped out, an' his laig must o' snapped with the blow.

But he clung on, you bet! Lord! 'twarn't worth that pesky drunken scoundrel's life ter hev that boy suffer the way he did. Leastways, thet's how we all looked at it then.

I tell ye, we snatched that chap up the side o' the wall a leetle quicker'n greased lightning, never mindin' if he did git barked a little in the passage.

By thet time there'd a big crowd got there with more ropes an' things an' a feller by the name of Phillips, who was a house painter and useter climbin' 'round in teeterish places, went down in a chair 'ith another rope 'round his waist, an' helped John Burroughs up. I tell ye, the crowd yelled like 'lection night when he was safe.

'N' erbout thatt time the ol' judge himself arrived an' took both Paul an' John Burroughs home. I will say that he did the harsome thing fer John, but the boy'll allus be lame.

An' w'en the old gentleman come ter know how John had kep' his mouth shet erbout the caper Paul had cut up in stealing the hoss, nothin' was too good fer the boy. Folks never knew anything erbout that part of it till long arterwards, w'en the judge had died, an' Paul told the story himself.

"An' Paul?" Oh, he's as straight as a string. Thatt time was the last 'eason on w'ch arry man ever saw him in liquor, an' he's been John's best friend. He's the big man of this county, Paul is, same's his uncle was, an' next year you'll see him up ter Richmond, in the Senate.

HER WAY.

Little Girl—"If I was a teacher, I'd make everybody behave."

Aunt—"How would you accomplish that?"

Little Girl—"Real easy. When girls was bad, I'd tell them they didn't look pretty; and when liere boys was bad, I'd make them sit with the girls; and when big boys was bad, I wouldn't let them sit with the girls."—Exchange.

THE MATTER WITH A GOOD MANY OF US.

"What is the matter with Spriggins?"

"Alphabetical derangement."

"What do you mean?"

"Not enough V's and X's, and too many I. O. U.'s."—Washington Star.

SNAPPED UP.

George—"You would marry the biggest fool in the world, if he asked you, wouldn't you?"

Ethel—"Oh, George, this is so sudden!"—Vogue.

WHEN THE WHISTLE BLOWS.

You won't find no man fonder much
Of music sweet than me,
The hummin' of the butterfly,
An' of the bumble-bee;
The laughter of young children,
The shout of schoolboy gey,
Is music sweet; each 'nough to chase
The blackest care away;
But there ain't no kind of music
Quicker kin my ear unlock
Than the music of the whistle
When it blows at six o'clock.

I love to hear the music of
The organ in the church;
An' the robin singin' sweetly
On his swain's hazel perch;
An' the babble of the brooklet
As it ripples 'mong the tree;
The sweet, angelic whispers
Of the scented evenin' breeze;
But, b'gosh! there ain't no music
Gives my ear a sweeter shock
Than the music of the whistle
When it blows at six o'clock.

—Yankee Blade.

[This Story began in No. 379.]

Brought to Book.

BY ANNIE ASHMORE,

Author of "The Hethertown Fortune,"
"Who Shall Be the Heir?" etc.

CHAPTER XIV.

WILL GOLDEN TO THE RESCUE.

Tom did not see his kind friend again till next morning, when he thought she must be ill, she looked so pale and sad. But presently she changed his mind and thought she must be troubled about something. Could it be connected with himself?

For often on glancing up at her he caught her gaze fixed upon him with an expression which he could not read—a blending of grief and wonder, and—surely not scorn?

"She can't be beginning to doubt what I told her of father's misfortune because he hasn't answered her letter yet?" speculated the boy, and he said aloud: "Father's letter will surely come today—I'm surprised that it hasn't come before this. And Will—that's my chum—Will Golden, his name is—but he hasn't answered me either, and I asked him to write by return mail."

"Tom," began Mrs. Tryder tremulously, but meeting his unconscious and affectionate eyes she could go no further, but put up her handkerchief to hide her quivering lips, and remained silent for a few moments.

"I'm in trouble, my boy," she said at last, "but I will not speak of it now. This evening perhaps."

She rose, for Tom's breakfast was finished, and she could not stand his wondering gaze.

Tom glanced at the clock, he had ample time, and she was not wont to let him go to his business till the last moment, for she seemed to enter into all his boyish interests with the rare sympathy and insight of love.

Tom was shy and awkward in the presence of real emotion as most boys are, but her strange manner and averted looks cut him to the heart, and he burst out impetuously:

"Won't you tell me what's the matter, Mrs. Tryder? Are you vexed with me?"

She was standing at the window, and wheeled round to look at him fair in the eyes.

"Have you ever done anything that would vex me if I knew it?" asked she. "Think, Tom; I don't mean since you came here, but before I knew you, perhaps."

Tom's cheek burned; it was himself she was angry at then! But what could she be driving at?

"I don't think you would have a right to think less of me if you could know my whole life," said he somewhat proudly. "Of course I've plenty of faults, and am no better than most fellows, but I can honestly say that I've never been guilty of a mean-ness."

His voice rang true, his clear eyes met hers unflinchingly, though wounded affection and hurt pride were visible in his flushing face; and the gentle lady for the first time felt a doubt of his guilt cross her mind; but the next moment she froze again as she remembered the evidence of it, for though human lips may lie, photography cannot, at least Mrs. Tryder believed so.

And that picture of Tom proved by the indubitable testimony of idiotically relaxed facial lines and heavy eyelids that once at least he had been under the degrading influence of strong drink.

"What would you call a mean-ness?" asked she so contemptuously that Tom could hardly believe his ears. "But we will talk of this again," she added, turning away, "pray go now. Good morning."

She left the breakfast room. Tom drew a long breath and then laughed shortly.

"I'm not dreaming, am I?" muttered he. "No, I'm not so lucky. So Mrs. Tryder has made up her mind that I'm a cad, that I've done something shady."

It was now time for him to go to Tryder & Tryder's, but he lingered a few moments longer, wistfully watching the closed door of Mrs. Tryder's private sitting room, in the forlorn hope that she might come even yet and give him the usual kind send off, but the door remained obdurately shut, and he had to depart with a very heavy heart.

His defiant mood left him, his face drooped, he gnawed his lip to control his trembling.

"She was so good to me!" he reflected, "and I liked her so much! Oh I'm sorry—sorry! Who has done this? Walt Smythe?"

Again his mood changed, he raised his head, his eyes flashing as conviction seized him.

"Of course it was, and he managed it while I was at the piano. That's why she left me without a good night while he sneaked out in a hurry. Oh that I could scotch that snake by telling her who Walt Smythe is! I can't without proof to show, I can't."

Mr. Sleath did not appear all day; he had sent a messenger in the morning to announce his illness and to appoint the second in command to take his place. As for Walt Smythe he took very good care to stay away, presumably in dutiful attendance on his uncle.

Just as Tom was about to leave at noon for his lunch at his usual restaurant a brisk tap came on his door, and on his shout to come in, it opened on an apparition which nearly took his breath away.

"Will Golden!" cried he, jumping up so impetuously that his stool toppled over with a crash, "you old fraud. I never was so glad to see anybody."

And he seized both the smiling youth's hands and shook them vigorously, and then dragged him in and kicked the door shut on the inquisitive gazers in the counting room.

"Sit there now and give an account of yourself," added he, shoving his chum into the visitor's chair, and then backing against his desk to feast his eyes upon him.

"You take the cake for giving a fellow a hearty welcome; I feel quite set up to be greeted like this by the millionaire's favorite. Hello, Tom, why that cloud upon your erstwhile sunny brow?"

"Never mind that yet, Will," said Tom with a sigh. "Anyway I'm glad enough you've come; I never needed you more. But I was just going out to lunch—come along and we'll tell each other everything over the grub."

Off they went, arm in arm, both beaming with pleasure, to the great gratification of the tired business men who passed them in the street, for verily their frank young faces were like a bit of sunshine in the

prosaic routine of the day. And as they sat together at the cosy little table which Tom managed to secure for themselves they made matters plain to each other and cleared the decks for action, so to speak.

On receipt of Tom's letter, Will had taken counsel with Mr. Latimer as to what he could do to help Tom, and Mr. Latimer had encouraged him to go on to St. Paul, where, being on the scene, he might find better opportunity to be of use to his chum.

Consequently Will had come straight on instead of writing, had arrived by the morning train, and after carrying his valise to a hotel, had hunted up Tom at his place of business.

In his turn Tom narrated all that had happened since he wrote home: Sleath's attempts to turn Mrs. Tryder against him, and his denial of the embezzlement she had charged him with, also his demand for her proofs; and Walt Smythe's call last evening, with its attending incident, and lastly, Mrs. Tryder's changed manner and strange words to Tom himself that same morning, with his own speculations on the cause.

"So you see I'm no longer her favorite, and it isn't because she's a 'millionaire' that I feel so cut up about it," said Tom simply. "She's been so awfully nice to me from first to last that I can't bear to have her think ill of me. It's that sneak, Walt. I know, but what the better am I of knowing that? I can't go and tattle about his misdeeds. But I wish I knew what he'd said about me!"

"And you shall before the day's out," declared Will emphatically. "As I'm neutral and have no stake in the biz I guess I can chip in here and straighten out the muss a bit; if the truth will straighten it out, I'll call on you this evening and tackle Mrs. Tryder; I guess she'll be ready to own up what Smythe's lie was by the time I'm through with her."

"You'll come home with me, Will; Mrs. Tryder spoke of inviting you and Jean both, and I'm going to take her at her word. I will not act as if I felt guilty when I've done nothing wrong."

Tom's head was high, but the water was in his eyes, too, and Will felt so sorry for him that he fairly yearned to punch Walt Smythe's head.

"I say, Will," continued Tom, "did father speak of writing to Mrs. Tryder soon?"

"He wrote by return of post, he told me so, and that he had inclosed some letters that showed Sleath had been mixed up in the robbery," cried Will. "Hasn't she got it yet?"

"Not a sign of it, though it may come today."

"Um! It's time I took the floor, for what can Mrs. Tryder think if your father seems to neglect answering her?" said Will.

"Well, it's a load off my mind that you're here to stand by me," returned Tom fervently.

Mrs. Tryder was sitting in her own little parlor, lost in very sad thought, when she heard Tom's ring at the door, and then his pleasant voice talking cheerfully to some stranger whom he showed into the drawing room.

"Heaven grant that his father has come on in person, for this distressful doubt is more than I can bear," murmured she.

Next moment Tom tapped gently, and when bidden to enter, opened the door.

"My chum, Will Golden, has come to see us," said he, his bright face falling as he encountered her unsmiling look. "He came to the factory, and I ventured to fetch him home with me. You—you are not annoyed?" stammered uncomfortably.

"No, Tom, I am glad you brought him," said Mrs. Tryder, but with no sign of gladness, for she was thinking that she might gain a still darker insight into Tom's character from the

manner of friends he consorted with. She prepared to pass into the drawing room, but Tom asked, "Has father's letter come yet?"

"No," she said coldly; "no, unless this lad has brought it with him." Tom shook his head, but said no more; he preferred to leave the exoneration of his father to Will.

Mrs. Tryder was more troubled than relieved by the very pleasant appearance of Will, for she had been still more agreeably impressed by Tom's when she saw him first, and what was first impression worth since Tom had turned out badly?

But she greeted him kindly and made him feel at ease, for, thought she, he might be a good boy though Tom was bad; and she made him come in to dinner and stay the evening, throwing aside her trouble to be bright and playful with the stranger, till Will's indignation on his chum's account gave place to warm admiration, and he did not wonder that he had seen the tears in Tom's eyes when he spoke of the estrangement which had arisen between them. Seeing that Tom's friend was with him, Mrs. Tryder intended to say nothing to him that night of the cause of her displeasure, but the boys had made their plans, and by and by she found herself cornered by Will, while Tom sat afar at the piano playing waltzes for himself.

Will, who could be bold as a lion in defense of his chum though he would have been mute as a mouse in his own, opened the campaign by confiding Tom's distress because his father's letter had not arrived yet, and his concern to see that Mrs. Tryder had changed her good opinion of himself, and seemed to believe him guilty of some dishonorable deed.

"I told him that it would soon be seen that the same sneak was at the bottom of both troubles," continued Will, disregarding her hasty sign to be silent, and the icy look which she fixed upon him when he persisted. "If Tom hadn't been an honorable boy he would have put it out of Walt Smythe's power to injure him with you by telling you just who Walt Smythe is. You wanted to know the name of the chap in Grayley's who took the fourteen thousand dollars as Sleath's agent—well, that chap was just Sleath's nephew—Walt Smythe."

CHAPTER XV.

CAUGHT IN HIS OWN TRAP.

"What is this you are telling me?" exclaimed Mrs. Tryder, much startled. "Walter Smythe was employed in Grayley's at the time the packet of bank notes was lost?"

"Yes, indeed, Mrs. Tryder, and the watchman is ready to swear that it was Smythe he caught breaking into the manager's office behind the safe."

"I remember the story," faltered she, turning very pale; "Walter Smythe gave a very different account of himself, as also did his uncle, Mr. Sleath. Please tell me all you know about this, Mr. Golden."

Will was delighted to obey, and for the second time Mrs. Tryder heard the Latimer side of the case, bluntly told by one who had nothing to hide; and for the second time she felt that it was truth she listened to.

"And Mr. Latimer really posted his letter to me bearing the papers I asked him for? I should have received that letter yesterday morning," said she thoughtfully. "I fear I have allowed myself to be deceived, and if so, how cruel—how unjust I have been to Tom."

"Yet still I can't understand how I could believe anything else. Step this way with me for a moment please."

She led Will into the front drawing room, which was virtually the same apartment as the one in which they left Tom, as the folding doors were open, but Tom could not observe them.

Here Mrs. Tryder drew the condemning photograph from her chate-

laine bag and handed it to Will without a word. They stood under the chandelier and Will examined the degraded image of his chum in a blaze of light.

He grew crimson first, and then oddly white under his boyish tan.

"This is beastly!" said he between his teeth. "Of course it was Smythe that gave it to you."

"Is it the truth?" demanded the lady.

"No, no, no! Never in the world! Oh, I could strangle the cur for this!" almost raved Will. "Tom doesn't know what the taste of beer is, much less did he ever make a beast of himself like this thing makes out."

"I long to believe you, my dear boy, but how could any one contrive a photograph which was not true?" said Mrs. Tryder, hoping and doubting.

"They can do all sorts of queer things—expert photographers I mean," replied Will. "Why, I remember one of our fellows who had a kodak used to scare folks half out of their wits by taking their likeness on a glass that had been used before, and from which the first photo had not been completely cleaned off by the acid. The fellow would see his own likeness all right, but by and by as he looked at it he would make out another ghostly face hovering behind it like a spook. Of course nobody ignorant of the trick could imagine how it was done. And a real photographer could produce this appearance of Tom without any more foundation in fact than the spook."

"Yes—yes, I see it could be done," said Mrs. Tryder, studying the photograph. "But who has done this infamous thing? You see there's no name on the back, which suggests that the photographer knew very well that his work was to be put to a bad use, and was ashamed or afraid to own it."

"Well, Mr. Will, you have convinced me that Tom was maligning by this likeness; but this is not all that has been laid to his charge. He has been accused of leaving a little girl who was in his care for the moment to drown, out of revenge on her brother who had quarreled with him. Do you know anything of that affair?"

"I know all about it, Mrs. Tryder, for I was there," cried Will, quivering with excitement. "But before I go into it I would just like to hear how Walt Smythe got you to believe that story?"

"Oh, by the testimony of another photograph, and there could be no deception in its case. It was one of a series of views—winter scenes round Yantic, taken by a reliable photographer whose name appears on the back of each. This one was a night scene of a lake, with young people skating on it by the light of a bonfire. The artist had chanced on the moment when the child was struggling in the water, while Tom basely skated for the shore, and Smythe and another tried to reach her by lying on the edge of the hole."

"And you recognized Tom as the fellow making off?" asked Will.

"I thought I did, but I may have been unduly influenced by the other picture of him," said she doubtfully. "But what have you to tell me about it?"

"Can you let me see that picture?" cried Will.

"No, Walter Smythe would not leave it, indeed he seemed very uneasy all the time I was examining it, and nervously anxious to get it into his own hands again. I thought he felt uncomfortable at exposing a comrade, but you say you were there. Tell me then—"

"I'll tell all you wish to know over that picture," interrupted Will impetuously. "I don't want you to take my word for it, Tom deserves the kind of defense that will leave no after doubts. Can't you get Smythe to

fetch that picture here tonight? Because by tomorrow he may find out that I'm on deck, and he wouldn't show it then for a fortune."

"He shall bring the picture," returned Mrs. Tryder. "Go back to Tom, my dear boy, while I write a note. And I thank you for your loyalty to Tom Latimer. His disgrace was a heavy grief to me."

Giving him a very kind smile she left the room, and Will danced into the front drawing room, swept Tom off the piano stool in passing and waltzed him round the room to a gaily whistled tune.

"Stop—stop!" gasped Tom at last, his anxiety getting the upper hand. "Give us your report. What have you done?"

"I've put a spoke in Smythe's wheel that will land him in the ditch this very night if all goes well," chuckled Will, releasing his partner to throw himself breathlessly into a seat; and he ran over all that had been said.

As may be fancied, Tom was furious when he heard of the despicable falsehoods told by Smythe to his injury; he was even inclined to be angry with Mrs. Tryder for giving ear to them, forgetting that his own magnanimity with regard to Smythe's misdeeds was the cause of her doing so.

"What puzzled me is how he could have got hold of a photo of mine," said Tom, "for I'm very sure I never gave him one."

"Stole it, or had it stolen for him by his father," suggested Will, and we may as well say here that Will's guess was correct.

To Sleath must be given the credit of the plot to ruin Tom in Mrs. Tryder's esteem by causing the sun to bear false witness against him. Walt Smythe knew that Jean Latimer had a good likeness of her brother in her album, and had written to his father to get it for him, and old Smythe had paid Bayers a dollar to sneak into his lodgers' room in their absence and purloin the picture.

As for the lake scene it was an accidental happening; an enterprising photographer had exploited the neighborhood and had then called round among the Yantic people offering his pictures for sale. Walt was at home then, and on recognizing the scene of his cowardice had very naturally slipped it out from among the others and hidden it away in his trunk which was afterward sent to him to St. Paul.

To return to our story, Mrs. Tryder did not reappear till a ring at the door bell announced a new comer, when she walked into the other room and called Will to her.

"That is Walter Smythe, I believe," said she, "bringing the lake scene. I shall close the folding doors and make him repeat his story; you can choose your own time to interrupt him."

"Have you anything in the shape of a magnifying glass?" asked Will hurriedly, pausing in the act of shutting the doors according to her wish.

"Why, yes, I have an excellent monocular," said Mrs. Tryder. "Why did I not think of that myself? For you intend to—" But here the maid could be heard conducting the visitor along the hall, and Will closed the last crack, nodding brightly at Mrs. Tryder as he did so.

Next moment Walter Smythe's voice was audible, greeting the rich lady with all the affectionate gush of one who hopes for future benefits, and hers answering very briefly; and then she asked him to show her the picture once more and repeat the story of his sister's accident.

Walt did not like the task, for he knew what superexcellent memories a certain class of story tellers ought to have, and his was nothing uncommon; however, there was no help for it, and laying the picture on the table he plunged into narration.

The faces of Tom and his chum as

they listened were a study. Contempt for a liar, incredulity at his boldness and rage as he laid on his blackest colors, chased each other over their countenances, till at length action became a necessity, and Will approached the folding doors, signing to Tom to follow him up.

"And you are certain that Tom Latimer knew your sister was drowning when he ran away?" Mrs. Tryder was demanding when a sharp tap sounded behind her, and Walt's hand shot out towards the photograph to snatch it up and hide it, but Mrs. Tryder was quicker yet, and seized it, waving him back.

"Give it to me—that's Latimer, I know," whispered Walt in a panic. "If it is we will hear his side of the story," said the lady, and raising her voice she called: "Come in."

Walt Smythe watched the doors slide back, and Will Golden and Tom Latimer march in, and his mouth dropped open, his eyes bulged in helpless dismay. He slunk behind his hostess as they approached the spot; never was rascal more obviously caught in the very act of his evil doing.

"I've heard all that Smythe has been telling you against me," said Tom, who looked very white and vengeful. "May I look at the scene he has described so graphically?"

As Mrs. Tryder laid the picture on the table in front of Tom with hands that suddenly trembled from the emotion she felt in the wronged boy's presence, Walt made a mad clutch at it, but Will Golden hustled him back without ceremony and then stood guard over him, significantly showing his fists when the wretched culprit glanced longingly at the door.

Tom bent over the lake scene, recognizing each figure engaged in the little drama which Smythe had so treacherously twisted to his disgrace. There was little Amy clinging to the breaking edge of the ice, with her small face half covered by her loosened hair; there was himself, lying full length on the ice with Jean's boa in his hands and its loop round the drowning child, and there was Will Golden behind him grasping his ankles; and that distant form in the shadow of the pine trees on the shore—that was Walt Smythe himself, whom Mrs. Tryder had been made to believe was Tom Latimer, skulking away to save his own skin and revenge himself on a comrade by letting his little sister perish!

Tom ground his teeth as he looked, then he pulled out the monocular from his pocket and laid it on the fleeing coward.

"Look for yourself, Mrs. Tryder," said he sternly, giving place to her. She snatched up the glass and focused it upon the skater; the shadow-wrapped shape grew distinct, the minute proportions magnified into lifelike faithfulness.

"Monstrous!" gasped the lady, "it is Walter Smythe himself!"

"Now look at the other one—the one that's saving Amy," cried Will Golden.

Again she bent over the picture, and the face she had loved and so grieved to lose grew before her, calm and brave, though the peril of death was before him, as she had seen it in her own hour of peril; and she dropped pictures and glass and held out her hands to Tom, saying with streaming tears:

"My own brave Tom Latimer, can you ever forgive me?"

CHAPTER XVI. CAUGHT IN THE ACT.

A rat in a trap is not a very pleasing spectacle at any time, at least to a merciful woman, for vermin though he be, and disgusting as well as mischievous, he still has the capacity to suffer, the spirit to quail in mortal fear, and the nerves to quiver in mortal pain.

Thus Walt Smythe, when caught in the trap set by his own mendacity, aroused more distress than triumph in the gentle heart of Mrs. Tryder, and had she been alone with him I fear she would have been weak enough to let him go without a single turn of the screw, and be only too glad to get rid of the sight of his abject misery.

But she had two tougher spirits to counsel her, and in the hearts of Tom Latimer and his chum there was no tenderness towards the culprit and would be no pity until he had done something to deserve it.

"Question him yourselves, dear boys, I can't bear the sight of the wretch," murmured Mrs. Tryder from the depths of her chair.

The first shock of the revelation was over, and she was recovering her composure; but, as has been observed before, she was a very emotional woman and felt things deeply. So now her abhorrence of the paltry little trespasser, cowering on a distant sofa, was so great that, since she could not send him away, she kept the broad back of her chair to him; while her remorse at her unjust suspicions of Tom continued to occupy her so completely that she was incapable of making the most of the situation.

"Walt's in such a wax that he'll let any number of cats out of the bag to save himself, if you threaten him with the penitentiary for conspiracy," quoth bold Will Gordon.

"We all know as well as if we'd seen it that he stole the fourteen thousand dollars at Grayley's; let's make him own up and tell Uncle Sleath's part of it."

"You are right, Will Golden, and I'm a foolish woman to shrink from anything while Mr. Latimer is in trouble on account of my money and my dishonest manager," said Mrs. Tryder, rousing herself.

So they conferred in low tones till she felt capable of dealing with the rogue; and then she took Tom's arm and returned to the back drawing room, where Walt sat with his elbows on his knees and his head in his hands, a pitiable object truly, but one which appealed in vain to the lady's heart, now that her sense of justice was awakened.

"Walter Smythe, sit up and listen to me," she began and the severity of her manner killed the last hope in the trapped rat's heart. "You have only one chance of escaping punishment for your wicked conduct, and that chance is confession.

"Already we know that you were your uncle's tool in the theft at Grayley's, so you may as well explain the whole shameful plot and throw yourself on my mercy. Although I am the injured party, I need not remind you that I am likely to be more lenient with you than the law would be."

Walt's slender legs twisted themselves round the leg of the sofa in a spasmodic of terror at the allusion. They almost seemed to say that the police officer who tried to drag their owner away to jail would have to drag the sofa along with him.

And so after one or two feeble plaints which met with naught but threatening silence, Walt Smythe decided to deliver up his dear uncle Sleath to the just reward of his misdeeds in exchange for his own more precious safety; and as Will had foretold, he untied the string of his sack of secrets and let cat after cat jump out to the wonder of the spectators.

We pass over all these revelations to be laid before the reader by and by, and pause on the last and most genuine surprise of them all, as our tribunal had had a very fair idea of all the rest.

"You say we won't find your uncle at home?" repeated Tom, staring.

"Isn't he sick in bed?"

"No, he ain't sick a-bed," retorted Walt with a fleeting grin. "He's on his way to New York by this time, I guess."

"To New York!" shouted the boys,

while Mrs. Tryder gave a shocked exclamation.

"He has gone to secure his plunder, of course?" she demanded.

Walt mumbled that he had gone to try.

"Ah, what shall we do?" cried Mrs. Tryder in dismay, "Simon Sleath will stick at nothing now that his disgrace is certain, and this very night he may break into—"

"Listen, I've got a plan," interrupted Tom eagerly, and drawing her out of earshot of the culprit he suggested that a telegram should be sent his father at once, warning him of the impending robbery. Mr. Latimer would know best how to manage the matter.

"And we will start by the night train for New York," said Mrs. Tryder with revived spirit. "We may be in time to confront the man with the evidence of his crime in his hands. And as yonder miserable creature if left behind, we shall take him along with us."

"Oh, I couldn't go there!" shrieked Walt, all aghast when he heard his doom. "Grayley's sure to put me in the penitentiary. Ah, ma'am, won't you let me off?"

"Have I not promised you safety?" said Mrs. Tryder coldly. "Be quiet, then, for very shame."

"Here comes that old duffer again. Wonder he isn't tired of trying to see the chief," commented one of Grayley's junior clerks two days afterwards. "Seems stuck on the lunch hour, too, when Latimer's sure to be out; wanted to wait in the chief's office yesterday, but Arkwright didn't see it."

"Well, I s'pose I've got to tell Arkwright he's here again; be back in a jiff," said the youngest youth and therefore the runner of errands, "don't start 'em till I get back, will you?"

And off he darted to meet Mr. Arkwright, already hastening toward the patriarchal stranger with marked deference of manner.

"Hello! Methuseiah turns out to be somebody," muttered the lad, and gladly resigning him to the civilities of his superior, he sped back to his companions, who were uproariously enjoying themselves in their office during the absence of the manager.

They had arranged a miniature race course on the inclined flap of one of the desks, and were betting briskly on the rival merits of two grotesque puppets shaped after Palmer Cox's famous Brownies; a big marble inside each mannikin was his motive power which set him moving eccentrically down the slope with a slight shove to start him.

So absorbed were the youngsters over their sport that they never noticed that Mr. Arkwright ushered the stranger through their room past their bending bodies as they watched the race with their heads almost bumping each other across the racers. Unlocking the manager's door he ushered him inside.

"Mr. Latimer will be back in half an hour," said Mr. Arkwright, politely handing the old man a chair. "The morning paper's there on the desk; I'll just close this door I guess, as the young men may disturb you."

When he was alone, with the door honestly shut between him and all mankind, the aged man erected his bowed shoulders, and gazed round the dingy office with eyes which sparkled with more than the fire of youth.

"What luck!" mused he. "I never expected such a chance as this. I thought I'd have to feign sick and scare Latimer into running out for brandy or such like after I'd accustomed the clerks to seeing the feeble old man about; but to be shoved right in here alone! Lord! What a fool that man is! Hist! Can I try it now?"

Now he listened! Now his greedy eyes devoured the low safe which stood against the opposite wall!

Suddenly he stood up. For an old

man the feat was wonderful, for though stout as well as old the movement was as supple as an acrobat's.

Another pause, while he listened to the laughter and chaffing of the Brownie racers in the next room, and the occasional step of a passer-by in the lane outside.

Then he made three or four long silent strides across the floor, and halted at the further end of the safe. One last gleaming glance around, and his right hand darted down to a spot on the wall about a foot from the floor where the papering was torn. He thrust the hand in behind the safe, up to the wrist.

A slight click sounded behind him; he started round with a packet in his hand and uttered a furious cry. What he had taken for one side of the glazed bookcase was a masked window; it was wide open and a group of faces, pale with excitement, confronted him.

Mr. Latimer, Mrs. Tryder, Tom and the polite Arkwright who had so "foolishly" left him alone with his booty! He saw them all. They were looking at him and at the cash in his clutch, which he had worked so long and patiently to get. There was no possibility of deceiving them; no hope of escape!

The wretched man saw in a flash how he had wrecked his life for naught. He was a detected felon, who would be thrust behind prison bars for years of his old age, never to hold up his head among honest men any more.

He tottered backward, grasping at the air, the packet falling unheeded, and when Mr. Latimer and Mr. Arkwright ran round from the side room in which they had waited for him to find the stolen cash, he was lying on the floor in a dead swoon.

(To be continued.)

[This Story began in No. 57.]

Rupert's Ambition.

BY HORATIO ALGER, JR.,

Author of "Chester Rand," "Lester's Luck," "Ragged Dick Series," etc.

CHAPTER XXVII.

AN INGENIOUS TRICK.

One morning a tailor's boy entered the Somerset Hotel with a bundle which he carried to the clerk.

"It is an overcoat for Mr. Silas Drayton," he said.

"Very well," said the clerk. "You can leave it and we will send it to his room."

Upon this the boy left the hotel. A young man of twenty-five or thereabouts, who was sitting near by, listened attentively to what passed between the boy and the clerk.

The latter summoned Rupert, and said: "Here is the key of 58. You may take up this coat and leave it in the room. It belongs to Mr. Drayton."

"All right, sir."

Rupert started with the bundle, and the young man started for the elevator, and got into it, just as it was about to ascend.

"I want to go up to No. 58," he said.

"Very well."

When they reached the third floor the elevator boy halted.

"You will find No. 58 on this floor," he said.

"Thank you."

The young man found the room, and was standing in front of it when Rupert made his appearance.

"Is that my uncle's coat?" he asked.

"It is Mr. Drayton's coat."

"Exactly. Mr. Drayton is my uncle. You may give it to me, and I will take it in. Have you the key?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then you may give it to me; I came up without one."

He spoke with such assurance that Rupert, accustomed as he was to impostors, was quite taken in. He hand-

ed the package and the key to the young man, who at once opened the door and went into the room.

When Rupert had got half way down stairs he began to wonder if he had not made a mistake.

He did not feel at all sure that the young man to whom he had handed the bundle had any right to claim it. As it might prove to be a serious mistake he went to the clerk and inquired, "Has Mr. Drayton got a nephew stopping here?"

"No. Why do you ask?"

"I am afraid I have made a blunder. At the door of No. 58 I met a young man who told me he was Mr. Drayton's nephew, and asked me to hand him the bundle."

"Did he come down stairs?"

"No, he went into the room."

"I didn't think you could be so easily imposed upon, Rupert. The man is undoubtedly an adventurer. Describe him."

Rupert did so.

"He had been sitting in the office for half an hour. He must have seen the tailor's boy bring in the bundle."

"He is up stairs yet. Can't we get back the coat?"

"You will know him when you see him again?"

"Oh, yes."

Then take your position by the elevator, and if you see him come down signal to the detective whom I will also station there. He will take care of him."

Ten minutes later the elevator reached the office floor. Among those who stepped out was the young man, wearing an overcoat considerably too large for him. It was clear that he had put it on in No. 58, and was now about to wear it out of the hotel.

He stepped out of the elevator, and with a slight glance about him made briskly for the door. But he had taken only two steps when Rupert caught him by the arm.

"I want to see you a minute," he said.

"I am in a hurry. I have an appointment. I will see you on my return."

But the detective had now stepped forward.

"You will have to stop now," he said firmly.

"I don't understand you. By what right do you detain me?"

"Where did you get that overcoat you have on?"

"It is my own. Hasn't a man a right to wear an overcoat?"

"Yes, if it belongs to him. This seems too large for you."

"True," said the young man, "it belongs to my uncle, Mr. Drayton."

"Indeed! Then how do you happen to be wearing it?"

"I have borrowed it for the day. Really this is very annoying."

"What is your name?"

"Charles Drayton," answered the young man with some hesitation.

"You will have to take off the coat, and accompany me to the police station."

"This is an outrage!" exclaimed the young man. "My uncle will be very angry."

"If he identifies you, and assures us that it was by his authority you borrowed the coat, we will apologize."

"But that won't make up to me for your unwarrantable interference. Take the coat and let me go."

In spite of his protestations, however, Mr. Charles Drayton, as he called himself, was escorted to the nearest police station, and held for examination. He was tried and would have been sentenced to a term of imprisonment, Mr. Silas Drayton disclaiming all relationship, had not the old gentleman taken pity on him and declined to prosecute.

It appeared at the trial that the young man was well known to the police as Sidney Marvin, an expert thief, born in London, but for three years a resident of the United States.

Mr. Drayton was blamed for allowing him to escape punishment, but he was

a soft hearted man, and disposed to give the young man another chance.

CHAPTER XXVIII. RUPERT RESIGNS HIS SITUATION.

Rupert had been a bell boy for more than a year. He found his employers very pleasant and considerate, and his salary was larger probably than he could get anywhere else. Still the position was not likely to lead to anything better, unless he might in time qualify himself to be a hotel clerk.

Sometimes he talked over the matter with Leslie, but the latter had the advantage of knowing just what he aspired to. He was determined some day to be an actor, and was content to remain in his present place till there was an opening for him on the stage.

One day Rupert received a letter from Colorado. He knew, of course, that the letter was written by his old acquaintance, Giles Packard, from whom he heard occasionally. This was the letter:

"Friend Rupert—

"I have been meaning for some time to write to you, but my mode of life is not favorable to letter writing, and whenever I take my pen in hand I feel as awkward as a Chinaman would with a knife and fork. I think it is three months since I heard from you, but I hope you are well and getting on nicely. How is the little boy you took charge of? It was a pretty big responsibility for a lad of your age, but I am sure you would take better care of him than a good many older persons.

"Don't forget that you promised to let me know if you needed some help. Even small boys cost something to bring up, and I have plenty while you are only beginning life. I suppose you are still a bell boy at the Somerset Hotel. Now that is a good position for a boy, but it seems to me that it is about time you took up something else. Before choosing what it shall be, I want you to come out and make me a visit. I feel pretty lonely sometimes, having neither 'chick or child,' unless I count you. I think it would do you good to see a little something of the far West. I inclose a draft for two hundred dollars for your expenses out here. If all is right I want you either to ask for a vacation or leave your situation, and start as soon as you can. Don't be afraid, for I will see that you don't suffer, even if you don't get a new place right off."

Here followed some directions as to finding him, and then the letter ended.

The proposal struck Rupert favorably. He had a natural desire to travel, and had a great anxiety to see Chicago and other places of which he had heard a great deal.

He went at once to the proprietor of the hotel and showed him the letter.

"You want to accept the invitation, I suppose?" said the landlord.

"Yes, sir, if it won't inconvenience you."

"As it happens one of my old friends wants me to give his son a place in the hotel. I had thought of discharging Leslie to make room for him, but if you really wish to give up your position I will put him in your place."

"That will suit me, sir."

"But in that case I cannot take you back on your return."

"I will not expect you to do so. I think I can find something outside, and Mr. Packard agreed to see me through."

"That draft looks like it. I will send for the boy at once, and during the balance of the week you can instruct him in his duties."

"I am sorry you are going, Rupert," said Leslie. "If you get acquainted with any managers on your Western trip, speak a good word for me."

"I will."

"I am going to play at a benefit next week Wednesday. It is a variety entertainment, and I am to give imitations of celebrated actors. I've got Irving down fine. You ought to stay and see me."

"Perhaps you will give me a private rehearsal. It wouldn't be convenient for me to put off my journey."

"I will. Come into my room tonight, and you shall see me imitate Irving, Booth and Joe Jefferson."

Rupert stayed two days in Chicago, and visited the principal localities, including Jackson Park, soon to become known all over the country as the site of the World's Fair. He was impressed with the business activity and greatness of the Queen City of the West, and left it reluctantly at the end of two days. At the railroad station, while purchasing his ticket to Denver, his attention was called to a tall old man who looked to be nearly seventy. He was thin and bent, and his face was sad. His suit was black, but it was well worn and looked shabby. His eyes were fixed on Rupert as he bought his ticket, and he heaved a sigh.

"I envy you, young man," he said in answer to Rupert's inquiring look.

"Why so?" asked the bell boy.

"Because you are going to Denver."

"Do you wish to go there?"

"Yes, but it is impossible."

"Why is that? Won't your business permit you?"

"Alas, I have no business. I came to Chicago from my old home in Rochester, New York, hoping to get a situation as bookkeeper. I understand bookkeeping thoroughly, and for fifteen years occupied that position in one of the largest firms in Buffalo. But they went out of business, and I was thrown on my own resources."

"Had you not laid up any money?"

"Yes. I took what I had, and went by invitation to make my home at the house of a niece in Rochester, who was married to a man named Jackson. I had three thousand dollars, and I thought that if I should get something to do I might with the help of that live comfortably for the balance of my days. That was a year ago, and I was then sixty five. I can hardly expect to live many years, and I considered myself well provided for."

"Well, I sought out my niece, and was cordially received by her husband and herself after they learned that I had money. I agreed to board with them and sought a position in my old line. But a man over sixty is at a disadvantage when he is seeking employment. In vain I showed a first class recommendation from my past employers in Buffalo."

"I dare say you understand your business," one and another said to me, "but you are too old for us. We want a young man who can hustle."

"But I can hustle, too," I said.

"They only laughed."

"You are too old to work. You ought to retire," they said.

"I reported my disappointment to my niece and her husband."

"Uncle John," said my nephew, "I feel for you, and I will try to do something for you. I think I can make a place for you in my store. I can't afford to pay you high wages. If you will work for ten dollars a week I will employ you."

"I was very glad to accept this proposal, though I had in my time been paid a hundred dollars a month."

"I entered the store, and had reason to think that I was doing satisfactory work. But at the end of three weeks, Eben Jackson called me aside and said, 'Uncle John, I have been figuring up my expenses, and I don't see how I can afford to employ you.'"

"You wish me to go, then?"

"I shall have to dispense with your services unless I can get additional capital to enlarge my business."

"Presently he made me a proposal."

"If you will lend me three thousand dollars," he said, "and allow me to use it in my business, I will pay you six per cent. interest, and advance your wages to twelve dollars a week."

"I thought over this proposal and

determined to accept it. Eben Jackson was very plausible and smooth spoken, and I saw no reason to doubt him. I transferred my small capital to him. He increased his stock, but only by five hundred dollars worth, as I afterwards ascertained, and I continued to work for him. For a month he paid me twelve dollars per week, then he reduced me to ten, on the plea that business was poor, afterwards to eight, and finally he allowed me only my board. I became indignant and demanded my money back, but he absolutely refused to repay it. I consulted a lawyer, but found upon inquiry that he had made over all his property to his wife. I saw that nothing was to be expected, and a month since I left Rochester and came to Chicago, in the hope of finding employment here."

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE ST. JAMES HOTEL, IN DENVER.

"What has been your success here, Mr. Plympton?" inquired Rupert.

"No better than in Rochester. Why is it that no one is willing to employ an old man? I am in good bodily health, and I can do as good work as I ever could, but no one will have me."

"Chicago seems to be a city of young men—more so than New York."

"Have you noticed that? Some of the successful business men are men young enough to be my sons."

"I understood you to say that you wished to go to Denver. Have you any reason to think you will succeed any better there?"

"No, but I have a nephew somewhere in Colorado, and perhaps in Denver. If I can fall in with him, I am sure he will help me. I haven't seen Giles for twenty years, but—"

"Giles?" repeated Rupert in surprise. "What is his full name?"

"Giles Packard. He is my sister's son."

"Well, that is astonishing," ejaculated Rupert.

"What is astonishing?"

"Your nephew is my particular friend, and I am going out to Colorado at his special invitation."

"Is it possible?" asked the old man eagerly. "Then you know where he lives?"

"Yes."

"Will you tell him you met me and ask him if he will send money to bring me on to where he lives? Giles was always good hearted, and I am sure he will do it."

"It won't be necessary to wait. I will buy you another ticket, and take you on with me."

John Plympton's face lighted up with joy.

"How kind you are!" he said, grasping Rupert's hand. "I hope when you are old you will find some one who will be as kind to you. You are not related to me in any way, you only saw me within the hour, yet you are going to do me a great kindness. May heaven bless you!"

"Thank you, but don't give me too much credit. I am sure Mr. Packard will approve what I am doing, and will consider it a favor done to himself."

"I hope so, but my niece's treatment has made me uncertain how far the ties of relationship will be regarded. Yet, I will accept your offer thankfully."

Rupert lost no time in purchasing another ticket and secured Pullman accommodations for himself and his new acquaintance.

"You used to live in Buffalo," he said.

"Yes, I worked in one place there for fifteen years."

"Did you ever hear of the firm of Rollins & Lorimer?"

"Certainly. They were dry goods merchants."

"I am Rupert Rollins, son of the senior partner."

"Is it possible? I knew your father well. He was a fine man."

"I am glad to hear you say so."

"But I didn't like Mr. Lorimer as well."

"I have little reason to like him, for he ruined my poor father, and indirectly caused his death."

"I am not surprised to hear it. I never had any dealings with Mr. Lorimer, but I knew his reputation. Is your mother living?"

"Yes, thank God. She is living, and my sister Grace as well."

"Did your father lose all his property?"

"All."

"How then is your mother getting along?"

Rupert explained.

"And yourself? Are you in any employment?"

"I have been a bell boy in a New York hotel for the last year and a half."

"You could hardly be very well paid."

"Yes, I received larger pay than I would have received in a mercantile house. But I have finally given up the business."

"What do you propose to do?"

"I shall ask the advice of your nephew. He is a very good friend of mine—the best I have outside my own family with one exception—and I shall be guided by what he says."

"I wish I had been able to go to him instead of to my niece and her husband."

"I don't see how they could have treated you so meanly."

"Mary would have treated me better, but she is under the thumb of her husband, and he is as mean a man as I ever encountered."

"Excepting Mr. Lorimer."

"There isn't much choice between them."

"Did he give you a note for the three thousand dollars you lent him?"

"Yes, I have his note—but what is it worth?"

"Keep it and show it to Mr. Packard. He may be able to advise you how to secure it."

"Do you know if Giles has been successful? Has he bettered himself in Colorado?"

"I have reason to think that he is a rich man. He has been very kind to me who am a recent acquaintance, and I am sure he will not turn his back upon his uncle."

This assurance brightened up the old man, who rapidly recovered his cheerfulness, and looked forward to a meeting with the nephew whom he had not seen for twenty years.

Rupert had telegraphed to Mr. Packard when he would reach Denver, and received a return telegram directing him to go to the St. James Hotel. Thither he repaired, taking his companion with him.

Mr. Plympton displayed some anxiety as they were approaching Denver.

"Perhaps my nephew will receive me coldly," he said. "If he does there will be nothing left me but destitution and the poorhouse."

"Don't be alarmed, Mr. Plympton," rejoined Rupert. "You have not seen your nephew for twenty years. I have met him more recently, and I probably know him better than you. Leave all in my hands. I will speak to him about you."

They reached the St. James and Rupert engaged rooms for both. On examining the hotel register he found that Giles Packard had already arrived. He had been in the hotel hardly half an hour when Mr. Packard entered.

His face lighted up with pleasure when he saw Rupert.

"I am delighted to see you, Rupert," he said. "Somehow you seem very near to me. I shall take you after a day or two in Denver with my cattle ranch near Red Gulch, and I think I can promise you a good time and a comfortable home for as long as you are willing to stay."

"Have you room for another, Mr. Packard? I have brought a companion with me."

"Why certainly. Any friend of yours shall have a cordial welcome." "But he is nearer to you than to me."

Mr. Packard's face expressed surprise.

"I don't understand you." "I found a relative of yours in Chicago. He was in hard luck, and I thought you would be willing to help him. Here he is."

He led Giles Packard up to his uncle, who anxiously scanned the face of his nephew.

"Don't you know me, Giles?" he asked in a tremulous tone.

"Surely you are not my uncle John?"

"The same, I hope you will forgive me for seeking you out."

"Don't speak like that, Uncle John. I have not forgotten that I am your nephew."

"But, Giles, I come to you as a pauper."

"I have enough for us both. Did you save nothing, then, by your long years of business?"

"I saved three thousand dollars."

Then he explained how he had been defrauded of it by Eben Jackson.

Giles Packard's face became stern.

"The scoundrel!" he exclaimed.

"And after he got your money, he had no further use for you?"

"No, he turned me out to starve."

"You were very imprudent in trusting him with the money."

"So I was, but he promised, if I lent it to him, that he would give me a position in his store."

"And he broke his promise?"

"No; he employed me for about two months, but in the end he would only give me my board, and refused to let me have money enough to buy a suit of clothes. Then I became indignant and left the house."

"Did you make an effort to recover the money?"

"Yes, but it was of no use. He refused to give it back."

"He must have given you a note?"

"Yes, I have his note."

"I will give you the money, and you will transfer the note to me. He will find me a different customer to deal with."

"Keep the money yourself, Giles, and pay me interest on it. I shall not be afraid to trust you."

"I will. If I treat you as Eben Jackson did, may I lose all my property and become a pauper."

"You are sure you can afford to do this, Giles? You have accumulated some property?"

"Well," answered Giles, smiling, "I am not a millionaire, but I think perhaps I might realize seventy five thousand dollars if I should take account of stock. I have been very successful in gathering property, but I have had a great many lonely hours."

"Don't you need a bookkeeper?" asked the old man eagerly.

"Yes, I can find you something to do in your own line, Uncle John. My business isn't very complicated, but I find it necessary to keep some accounts. I will give you a home and you shall want for nothing. Has Eben Jackson got any children?"

"Yes, he has two, a boy and a girl. They are fourteen and eleven."

"What sort of children are they?"

"The boy is like his father. He never treated me with respect, but looked upon me as a poor relation. The girl is of a better disposition."

"And they would be among my heirs. I will look them up some day, and shape my will accordingly. Shall you be ready to go back with me on Monday, Rupert?"

"I will be ready whenever you are, Mr. Packard."

CHAPTER XXX.

PACKARD'S HOME AT RED GULCH.

Mr. Packard's cattle ranch was located in one of the extensive parks for which Colorado is noted. It

included several square miles of territory. The cattleman had erected a dwelling, covering a good deal of ground, but only one story high. While it was comfortable, it was easy to see that it was the home of a bachelor.

He had as housekeeper the widow of a herdsman, or perhaps I may say, cowboy, who had died a year before. She cooked and took care of the house.

"Well, Rupert," he said, "this is my home. Mrs. Jones, get ready two rooms for my friends here. Uncle John, you are the oldest and shall have the choice."

"Any room will do for me, Giles," said the old man modestly.

"You shall have as good a one as the house affords."

"You treat me differently from Eben Jackson. He gave me a small room in the attic."

"And did his wife allow that?"

"She has very little to say. Her husband's will is law in that household."

"I am sorry for her. She deserved a better fate. As a girl she was good hearted and had a cheerful disposition."

"She is greatly changed. I am afraid her husband has taught her to be selfish. She seemed to have little more consideration for me than Eben."

Rupert found that Mr. Packard was a cattle owner on a large scale. He had a great number of cowboys in his employ, over whom he exercised supervision.

"Is all your property in cattle, Giles?" asked his uncle.

"No, I have mining interests. The money I have made in the cattle business I have invested, at least partially, in mines and mining claims. I don't believe in having all my eggs in one basket."

"You seem to have done well in coming out West."

"Yes, when I came out here I probably was not worth over two thousand dollars all told. Now I am worth somewhere from seventy five to one hundred thousand."

"I should think you would marry."

Giles Packard shook his head.

"When a man reaches the age of forty five unmarried," he said, "he had better remain so. After that marriage is a lottery."

Mr. Packard's guests found that he lived in a generous style. His housekeeper was an excellent cook, and his table was well supplied. But the days seemed long without employment.

Rupert was supplied with a saddle horse and rode far and wide with his host, but John Plympton had reached an age when a man enjoys better home comforts than out of door exercise.

"Giles," he said on the third day, "I am tired of doing nothing. Suppose you bring out your books and give me something to do."

"I will, Uncle John. When I was in Denver I bought some new books, and I will commission you to transfer my accounts from the old ones. I never was much of a bookkeeper, and I am not sure whether you can understand my entries. However, you will be able to refer to me when you get puzzled."

The old man felt quite happy when set to work in his old business. As Mr. Packard's books covered a period of over fifteen years he found the task by no means a short one, but this pleased him all the more.

"I like to feel that I am earning my living," he said.

"What do you think of me as a bookkeeper, Uncle John?"

"I think you would find it hard to obtain a position in any first class house," answered the old man, smiling.

"I have no doubt you are right. However, I never was ambitious to become a bookkeeper. What salary were you accustomed to earn?"

"A hundred dollars a month."

"You couldn't get rich on that. I have done better than that. Every man to his trade, as some wise man has said."

"Are you fond of hunting, Rupert?" asked Giles Packard one day.

"When I lived in the country I used to go gunning sometimes."

"We have some very good hunting here. I should like to go with you, but at present my business will not permit. I think, however, that I can find you a companion, if you would like to try it."

"I should," answered Rupert promptly.

"There is a man who lives about three miles from me in a small house near the river. He is a shiftless sort of fellow, but he is a good hunter. I will offer him pay to go with you, and his living during the trip. You will find it pleasant to stay about a week. I suppose you won't mind roughing it."

"No, that is what I shall like."

"Then I will send for Ben—his name is Ben Boone—and you can start bright and early Monday morning."

CHAPTER XXXI.

BEN BOONE.

Ben Boone was a tall, loose jointed man with a shambling gait, who looked as if he wished to get through life as easily as possible. It would be hard to find a man less ambitious.

His movements were slow, and he seemed the incarnation of laziness. He was slow in speech as in action.

Yet he was a successful hunter and had tramped about Colorado so much that no better guide could be found.

"I heard you wanted to see me, Mr. Packard," he said, when he made his appearance.

"Yes, I may have something for you to do. How are you getting on?"

"Not at all, squire. I'm a dreadfully unlucky man."

"So should I have been if I had been as lazy as you."

"What's the use of workin'. Things allus goes ag'inst me."

"I don't believe you would succeed under any circumstances. Do you know what makes the difference between you and me?"

"I reckon you was born to be rich."

"I was not rich till I came to Colorado, but when I came here I went to work."

Ben shrugged his shoulders.

"I've worked, too," he said, "but what's the good of it all?"

"Not much good in your case, I admit. However, I don't suppose you can be made over again, and if you could I don't think I would undertake it. There's one thing you do understand and that is hunting. You've been pretty much all over Colorado."

"Yes, squire."

"I have a young friend here who would like to spend a week among the hills. He may not do much in the way of hunting, but he will carry a gun with him. He would like to explore the country a little under your guidance. I believe that is the only kind of work you are willing to undertake."

"Yes," answered Ben in a tone of satisfaction. "I don't mind that."

"Then I'll tell you what I will do. You will take my young friend with you—his name is Rupert Rollins, and see that he has a good time."

"I'll do that, squire."

"I will furnish you with provisions sufficient to last you both a week, and will give you three dollars a day for your trouble. If there are any other expenses Rupert will have money and will pay them. You won't need to spend anything, so there is no reason why you shouldn't save all your wages. How is your wife?"

"Oh, she's allus complainin'. She's had the fever'n ager last week."

"It is fortunate you have no children, for you don't seem to provide for even your wife."

"That's because I ain't lucky."

"Luck doesn't often come in the

way of a shiftless man like yourself. Well, do you accept my offer?"

"Yes, squire. I'll be glad to do it."

"Send your wife here tomorrow morning. I will give her a part of your wages so that she will have enough to carry her through while you are away."

"Give it to me, squire. I'll give it to her."

Giles Packard regarded him keenly. "I can't trust you," he said. "If I give her the money I shall be sure she gets it."

"How much are you goin' to give her?"

"Two days' pay—six dollars. When you return, if you are away seven days there will be fifteen dollars for you."

Ben Boone grumbled some. He thought three dollars would be enough for his wife, but Mr. Packard was obstinate. He understood Ben thoroughly, and had very little confidence in him.

"You may be surprised, Rupert, that I should send you with such a man, but, shiftless and lazy as he is, he understands his business. He will prove a good guide, and will make you acquainted with some of the wonders of Colorado."

"I am quite satisfied, Mr. Packard."

"Uncle John, if you wish to join the party I am entirely willing, and will pay your expenses also."

"No, Giles, I am getting too old for adventure. I have got to an age when a man prefers the chimney corner to camping out. It will do very well for Rupert, but I am about fifty years older than he is, and fifty years make a great difference. He can tell me all about his trip when he comes back."

"So I will, Mr. Plympton," said Rupert with a smile.

Rupert looked forward to the journey with eager interest. He had always been fond of out of door sports, and the hunting expedition seemed to promise an experience entirely new to him. He little imagined what shape a portion of this experience would take.

(To be continued.)

A MISSING DIVISION OF THE DAY.

It is Tennyson who writes of the land of the lotus eaters where it is always afternoon. This is in striking contrast to Washington, D. C., where, according to the Indianapolis "Journal," it is always morning.

Strangers in the capital city, says the "Journal," often remark the custom of addressing one at all times of the day by the uniform salutation, "good morning." It sounds odd to a Westerner to hear the address him with "good morning" at five o'clock in the afternoon. This custom is as old as the Congress of the United States and the hours of executive business in the various departments.

It is said to be directly due to the morning hour in Congress.

The standing rules of the two houses of Congress provide for a "morning hour," which extends from twelve to two o'clock, and that provision has made it common to refer to "morning business" in Congress, which occurs before the regular order. Frequently the regular order is not resumed, and the morning hour is extended until four or five o'clock, especially in the latter days of the session, and when there is a great jam of business. In the executive department reference is made to the "morning's work" during the entire day. This is all, of course, official parlance. The custom has grown so that it extends throughout social life and in all sorts of business, until it is morning until all government business is at an end in Washington. When the sun goes down and twilight sets in it is "good evening." It is never afternoon in the national capital.

VERY.

A servant of a London naturalist, whose collection contained one of the few extant perfect eggs of the extinct great auk, recently dropped and broke the egg while showing it to

a visitor. Aukward.—Philadelphia Ledger.



Mr. Thomas Farrenkopf

Swellings in the Neck

was troubled me for 12 years. Medical attendance and operations on my neck at Mount Sinai hospital did not give permanent improvement. It by taking three bottles of Hood's Sarsaparilla, the swelling has entirely disappeared, and sufficiently praise

Hood's Sarsaparilla

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HOOD'S PILLS cure Constipation. 25c.

SKATES AND SLEDS UP TO DATE.

Up to the date of writing the winter has been such a mild one that dread visions of icy ice bills for next summer rise before the housekeeper's mental vision. Still, the nous blizzard of 1888 fell in March, so it is not come amiss to tell our readers what Boston "Herald" has to say about some improvements in skates and sleds. One of the most remarkable innovations tried this year is an exaggerated development of the "High Dutch" skate, which will be remembered, had for its claim to renown the fact that the increased height of the foot rest, or clog, lengthened the leg so much, and so, of course, increased the weight of the skate, and increased it at the heel where it was most effective, namely the end. This stands to reason: for, as it is easier to roll down a hill, so it is easier to push a moving body to a greater momentum than to move a stationary one. This is the idea of the new skate, which consists of the skate blade with a support of el rising from the toe and heel, until they joined together, and from that point extending upward in a single rod, having a foot rest like a pair of skates. The rigid rod is continued up to the knee of the skater, and is secured to the leg by straps, the foot being strapped on to rest just the same as a foot would be to a clog. The skate blades are nearly double the length of an ordinary blade, and estimated that the length of each stroke is increased nearly three times, and that the speed of the skater will be increased under the present records are cut down nearly a half. It is claimed that after the first effect of the usual strain on the ankle is worn off, the new device is not more trying than the old one, and that a beginner with the new idea can, if he can get a fair start, pick it up almost immediately. It is well known that a man on stilts will outpace a man walking, so there is every reason to suppose that a skater on stilts will do the same. Any one who feels like trying the new idea can do so at very moderate cost, for any ironworker soon fit an old pair of skates with the new device. Ladies have not been neglected this year, it will gladden many hearts to know that there is a new idea to relieve their ankles of strain, and so keep them from becoming so quickly. In this skate the old time clog is used, with its toe strap and el strap, these being believed to give the most satisfactory support without cramping the wearer. The ankle strengthener is a new invention of the metal of the steel blade, this being tapered from the heel upward to the tip of the boot, and is held in place by the heel but broad straps, which, clasp the ankle and give it a wonderful amount of support. There are many men who will be glad to adopt this, and the skate is practically the same article as those without the support, and ankle skaters should always avoid clamp skates, and should use the old broad clog and two straps. It may not be quite as stylish, but there will be much more comfort. The small boy, also, has not been forgotten. This year the improvement in his toy is one so great but so simple that every one is inclined to wonder "Why did I not think of that?" This is what is styled a sible sled, and consists of an ordinary sled with runners of T-shaped spring steel, but

very flexible otherwise. The boy picks up his sled, runs with it up the most slippery slope. He does not lie down and drag his leg to steer by, but swings his legs forward and places them on the steering bar in front; the hind foot is the passenger (if there be one) and by pressing one foot or the other the corners are turned, snags avoided, and, last but not least, the sled runs swifter and much further each journey, because it is relieved of the dragging behind it.

We all know what a difference a dragging rope makes to a racing boat, and the same applies with tenfold force to a coasting sled. These do not cost any more than the old ones, best quality, and the boys may recognize them at sight by the steering bar being in front, curved like Cupid's bow to support the feet.

A somewhat curious idea is found in a power propelled sled, intended by the inventor to run equally well over wet snow, dry snow, or ice, and which is propelled with a special device or arrangement to enable it to be easily conveyed over any piece of ground that is bare of snow and ice. It is briefly, a large coasting sled, on rather high runners having a high and broad wheel on each side, shaped and arranged like the paddle wheel of a ferryboat.

These wheels are fitted with suitable spoke or point arrangements to engage with the ice or snow, and the motor power may either be applied by hand or from a benzine engine, or a plunger battery such as is used in an electric boat. It is not entirely designed for pleasure; its chief use is to be found in the ice cutting fields and in the far Northwest, but, as it is claimed to be capable of the speed of over ten miles an hour, it is more than probable that its chief use will be of a pleasurable type.

UP IN A BALLOON AND DOWN UNDER A PARACHUTE.

From a trained nurse to a balloonist is a far cry, or rather, in this case, a long jump, as Mrs. Romig includes parachute leaping among her present accomplishments. She is known professionally as Miss Hazel Keyes, and is the wife of an aeronaut whose health failed. Finding that astounding well people paid better than ministering to sick ones, she gave up the hospital and took to the air.

"How does it feel to jump out of a balloon?" a reporter for an Oregon paper asked her.

The sensations are diametrically opposite to the general idea that prevails among people who never made such attempts," was her reply. "When you ascend, for instance, instead of feeling yourself lifted bodily and swiftly up into space, you have a realistic sense of staying just exactly where you were, and of the earth falling away and downward from you. This farthing business just so long as your balloon continues to rise. When it comes to a standstill, you realize for the first time that you have moved upward, and, of course, the wonderful panorama opens out below you, and you get instant advice of the immense altitude you have attained.

"The descent from such a tremendous height by the parachute is another thing, though it makes something of the same sensation, reversed. You seem to see the earth ascending to meet you, but your progress downward is so gentle and so much more deliberate that you cannot but know you are going down. This fact is forcibly impressed on your mind when you cut loose from the balloon. The descent, then, until the parachute fills, is as sheer and sudden and direct as any unpremeditated fall you ever experienced, ranging in depth, according to the volume of wind from twenty five to 100 feet, and this is the most unpleasant part of my business."

"The same precaution of holding the breath is as absolutely necessary in this first fall as it is when you are submerged in the water, and, in default of such precaution, you are equally liable to strangulation and death, as in the water."

In response to a question as to the longest jump she had made in her career as an aeronaut, Mrs. Romig said that in 1890, at Baker's Beach, just inside the Golden Gate at San Francisco, she made a perfectly successful jump from an altitude determined by mathematical instruments to be just a fraction over two and a half miles. She alighted safely, but being fully protected with a life preserver (which she always dons when exhibiting near rivers, lakes, or other large bodies of water), she was all right when picked up by the boatmen who went instantly to her relief.

Mrs. Romig says: "The easiest place in which to land is a body of water or a plowed field, but of the two I prefer the field."

GIANT WAVES.

Not long since a big steamer belonging to one of the prominent trans-

atlantic lines was obliged to put back to New York for repairs after encountering a tidal wave that narrowly escaped swamping her. Waves of this sort may be classed with icebergs as among the dangers of the deep against which any precautions that may be taken avail but little. Luckily these waves are of very infrequent occurrence.

The biggest one ever known, according to the Ashton "Reporter," was that caused by the Peruvian earthquake of August 13, 1868. In no other instance, we are assured, has it been known that a well marked wave of enormous proportions has been propagated over the largest ocean track of the globe by

an earthquake whose action has been limited to a relatively small region not situated in the center, but on one side of the wide area traversed by the wave.

At Arica it was fifty feet high, and enveloped the town, carrying two warships nearly a mile beyond the railway to the north of the town. The single sea traveled northward and westward. Its height at San Pedro, in California, was sixty feet. It inundated the smaller members of the Sandwich group, 3,300 miles away, and reached Yokohama, in Japan, in the early hours of the morning, after taking in New Zealand on the way. It spent itself finally in the South Atlantic, having traversed nearly the whole globe.

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He could not go through the village with it, and so took a cut across the fields. By and by, in the gathering dusk, he wandered into a bog hole and sank into the mire. The more he struggled the deeper he sank, until, getting alarmed, he cried justly for help. His shouts brought a neighbor with a lantern.

"Why, Jonas, what does this mean?" asked the good Samaritan. "How in the world came you here?"

"I was in a hurry to get home," said the thief, "and so I cut across. Then I got into this bog. The more I tried to pull myself out the deeper I got in, and finally I went back to the road and got this plank to see if I couldn't get myself out with that."—Christian Secretary.

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